Chief Gall and Chief John Grass: Cultural mediators or sellouts?

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Chief Gall and Chief John Grass: Cultural Mediators or Sellouts?

by

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presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

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During the late nineteenth century, the Lakota were forced to live upon reservations, where the federal government tried to turn them into self-sufficient Christian farmers and ranchers. Gall and John Grass, two late nineteenth century Lakota chiefs that were placed under the supervision of the Grand River Agency and later under the Standing Rock Agency, continuously looked after their people’s interests and helped them adapt to their new life on the reservation. Due to their opposition to the Ghost Dance, their desire to send Lakota children to school, and their roles as Justices of the Court of Indian Offenses, District Farmers, ranchers, and Christian converts, historians generally have portrayed Gall and Grass in simplistic and absolute terms as traitors and/or “progressives” who wholeheartedly abandoned the Lakota culture.

In actuality, however, Gall and Grass adapted to the situation and became what we now know in more nuanced terms as cultural brokers, which enhanced their own prestige and aided their fellow Lakota. Gall and Grass only adopted those aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited their people, while continuing to embrace the Lakota culture. For example, although Grass helped build log houses on the reservation for his followers, he built a dance hall in the center of the homes, where he led his people in various Lakota dances. Gall and Grass both supported sending their children to school because they firmly believed that the education that the Lakota children would receive would enable them to deal with whites better and would help prepare the children to compete in the new American economic system that was thrust upon them. Gall and Grass both eventually converted to Christianity because that was the only social activity allowed on the reservation. Furthermore, like the vast majority of Lakota converts, they blended Christianity with Lakota beliefs and practices. Therefore, Gall and Grass should be remembered as patriotic cultural brokers who helped their people adapt to life on the reservation rather than as traitorous “progressives.”
# Table of Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abstract</td>
<td>ii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Table of Contents</td>
<td>iii</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preface</td>
<td>iv</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter One: Charging Bear (John Grass) and Gall: The Warriors</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Two: The After-Shock of the Battle of the Little Bighorn</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Three: The Edmunds and Dawes Commissions</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Four: Further Adaptation to the Reservation, 1883-1887</td>
<td>128</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Five: The Sioux Act of 1889</td>
<td>145</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Six: The Ghost Dance</td>
<td>194</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Seven: Gall and Grass as Christians</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chapter Eight: Gall’s Last Days</td>
<td>212</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conclusion</td>
<td>225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bibliography</td>
<td>243</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Appendix A: Photographs</td>
<td>250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Preface

The primary purpose of this essay is to challenge the prevailing interpretation of John Grass and Gall as progressives rather than to provide a comprehensive biography of either man. The secondary purpose of this paper is to encourage further research on Grass, Gall, and Standing Rock Reservation.

I would like to thank Dan L. Flores, Pamela Voekel, Richmond L. Clow, Carla Homstad, Henri Mann, and Dave Beck for their support and guidance. I would also like to thank my parents and my girlfriend, Petra Collins, for their moral support.
Introduction

After Christopher Columbus sailed to “India,” he wrote a letter to the people back home about his encounters with the natives. Nancy Shoemaker summarized Columbus’ descriptions in the letter by stating, “The Caribs were bloodthirsty cannibals, always attacking the Arawaks, who were simple, friendly, cowardly, and generous. The Arawaks had a specialized knowledge about their own environment, but were childlike upon encountering European technology.” Columbus’ categorization of the Arawaks as Noble Savages parallels the prevailing interpretations of Chief Gall, the nineteenth-century Uncpapa leader, and Chief John Grass, the nineteenth-century Lakota Blackfeet leader, as “progressives.” Due to their roles as Indian judges, district farmers, ranchers, supporters of Indian schools, opponents of the Ghost Dance, Christian converts, and eventual supporters of the Sioux Act of 1889, many of their contemporaries and most historians have simplistically labeled Gall and Grass as “progressives” or “white” Indians. In other words, the prevailing interpretation of the two chiefs, like Columbus’ portrayal of the Arawaks, falls prey to viewing Indians in absolute terms. In reality, life on Standing Rock reservation did not magically transform Gall or Grass into “white” men or “progressives.” Instead, they adapted to the situation and became what we now know in more nuanced terms as cultural brokers, which enhanced their own prestige and aided their fellow Lakota.¹

Portraying Indians, such as Gall and Grass, as cultural brokers represents nothing new to historians. According to historian Jerry A. Davis, “In 1851, Francis Parkman’s two-volume The Conspiracy of Pontiac established the pattern of Indian mediative

¹ For a summary of Christopher Columbus’ letter consult Nancy Shoemaker, “Point of View,” Chronicle of Higher Learning, unknown date (Handout given by Professor Flores to the students in History 594,
Parkman claims that Pontiac’s charismatic personality and his ability to broker power among tribes and French settlers enabled him to control the Great Lakes region in the mid-eighteenth century. From Parkman’s work through the present, historians and ethnohistorians have commonly placed Indians within the broker-mediator framework.

For example, Margaret Connell Szasz’s *Between Indian and White Worlds: The Cultural Broker* contains fourteen essays that all revolve around a cultural broker theme. Michael Steltenkamp’s book, *Black Elk: Holy Man of the Oglala*, provides another example.

Steltenkamp portrays Black Elk as a mediator who helped his people adapt to reservation life. Black Elk, a traditional holy man, became a Catholic catechist and faithfully served his people for sixty years on the reservation. The holy man, however, was not an old-time medicine man, or one who betrayed his native beliefs in favor of something completely different. Black Elk mediated between the two cultures by translating Christianity into the Lakota way of life. A few other examples of the cultural broker theme can be found in Richard White’s book, *The Middle Ground*, David Rich Lewis’ essay, “Reservation Leadership and the Progressive-Traditional Dichotomy: William Wash and the Northern Utes, 1865-1928,” and Darcee McLaren’s essay, “Living the Middle Ground: Two Dakota Missionaries, 1887-1912.” In fact, according to Davis, “The image of the broker-mediator has emerged as the central theme in ethnohistory.”

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How could a 145-year-old method currently represent a key focus in ethnohistory? Until the 1950s, most social scientists and government officials believed assimilation was the only option available to Indians if they wanted to survive. Through a linear process, white traits would be learned as Indian traits were lost in an equal amount. Therefore, according to Darcee McLaren, historians labeled Indians near the end of either pole as “traditional” or “progressive.” However, after a hundred years, Indian cultures had not disappeared. As McLaren states:

... native studies shifted from theories of assimilation to theories of continuity, renewal, and transformation. Present day studies of culture contact and change tend to agree that the unilinear continuum is far too simplistic to explain the lives and actions of the individuals who constitute these changing cultures. There is also a consensus that the traditional/progressive dichotomy does not exist except in a gross sense, and that adherence to it as an analytical concept can inhibit understanding. Instead contemporary anthropologists see culture contact as highly flexible and dynamic, involving both reinforcement and tension, reproduction and transformation.

In other words, the complexity of the real world and the enduring nature of Indian cultures forced social scientists to reevaluate their ineffectual categorization of Indians as “progressives” or “traditionalists.”

Historians, however, often still use these absolute terms, as David Rich Lewis states:

Often qualified with quotation marks, they have become a kind of professional shorthand for describing individuals, factionalism, and the process of acculturation. The unspoken understanding is that we are simplifying a complex, dynamic situation out of necessity, trusting that colleagues will recognize our dilemma and hoping that others will not read overly static meanings into these useful, if somewhat misleading, terms. We deny the dichotomy but we fall back on it, perhaps because in our histories we do not understand or cannot fully untangle the temporal threads of personal motive and behavior which guide individuals and draw

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them into factions or groups.

The weakness of this progressive-traditional dichotomy becomes most apparent in attempts to categorize complex individuals, particularly the intermediaries, the middlemen, the cultural brokers, the ‘150% men’ who operate on the cultural margins. 4

John Grass and Gall became such figures among the Lakota during the second half of the nineteenth century. Most historians, however, for a variety of reasons, still cling to the outdated and ineffective progressive-traditional dichotomy in their interpretations of Gall and Grass. Other interpretive problems include an inadequate account of the two chiefs because scholars largely ignore them. Only a handful of secondary sources contain ten or more detailed pages on Gall and/or Grass. These two chiefs receive little consideration from historians because their fellow Lakota and contemporary, Sitting Bull, who was also placed on Standing Rock, has mesmerized historians and dominated their attention. Therefore, historians have overlooked Gall and Grass, two very important Lakota leaders. 5

Similarly problematic, an incomplete record of Gall persists because most of the sources that examine the chief only deal with his pre-reservation years. As David Rich Lewis states:

In the search for escape and a sense of authenticity in a manufactured world, Euro-Americans have placed American Indians outside of history, relegating them to an idealized past that never existed, refusing to allow them to be or become modern— the art of historic Gitchigooism. . .

5 The following five secondary sources contain ten or more detailed pages on Gall: Charles A. Eastman, Indian Heroes and Great Chieftains (Boston: Little, Brown, and Co., 1927); Mildred Fielder, Sioux Indian Leaders (Seattle: Superior Publishing Co., 1975); Edward A. Milligan, Dakota Twilight: The Standing Rock Sioux, 1874-1890 (Hicksville, NY: Exposition Press, 1976); Fr. Louis L. Pfäffer, James McLaughlin: The Man with an Indian Heart (New York: Vantage Press, 1978); and Robert M. Utley, The Lance and the Shield (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1993). Utley’s The Lance and the Shield, Pfäffer’s James McLaughlin, and Milligan’s Dakota Twilight are the only secondary sources that contain ten or more detailed pages on John Grass.
Indians did not disappear or remain static nineteenth-century caricatures but grew in number, in political and economic power, and in the diversity of their experiences.

In other words, many historians incorrectly relegate Gall and other Indians to an idealized past. Just reviewing the titles of books demonstrates this problem. A couple of examples include Robert M. Utley's *Last Days of the Sioux Nation* and Edward A. Milligan's *Dakota Twilight: The Standing Rock Sioux 1874-1890*. Charles Eastman's biographical essay, "Gall," in *Indian Heroes and Chieftains* provides another example. The fourteen-page biography only devotes two lines to Gall's thirteen years on Standing Rock. Eastman states, "His [Gall's] spirit was much worn and he lost strength from that time on. That superb manhood dwindled and in a few years he died." Unfortunately, the tendency to place Gall in a romanticized past causes scholars to examine his actual role on Standing Rock insufficiently.

Third, some scholars fail to portray Gall and Grass properly because they too heavily depend on and trust James McLaughlin's view of the chiefs. From September of 1881 until shortly after Gall's death in 1894, James McLaughlin was the Indian Agent at Standing Rock Reservation. While in charge of that agency, McLaughlin believed Sitting Bull was the biggest obstacle in his attempts to assimilate the Lakota. Therefore, despite the fact that Sitting Bull farmed and requested Episcopalian missionaries to come to Grand River to teach him and his followers, McLaughlin labeled Sitting Bull a "traditionalist" or a "savage." On the other hand, McLaughlin appointed Gall as Chief of the Uncpapas and Grass as Chief of the Blackfeet Sioux to reduce Sitting Bull's

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influence. McLaughlin viewed Gall and Grass as mindless puppets and incorrectly labeled them as "progressives." In actuality, Gall and Grass had their own agendas and only adopted certain aspects of the Euro-American culture in order to aid the Lakota on Standing Rock.⁷

Unfortunately, Father Louis Pfaller and Robert M. Utley accept McLaughlin's view of Gall and Grass. For example, Pfaller's book, *James McLaughlin: The Man With an Indian Heart*, states, "He [McLaughlin] rewarded the progressive Indians [John Grass and Gall] by making them chiefs, policemen or district farmers." Pfaller's book heavily relies on McLaughlin's personal papers and government records, but hardly uses any Indian sources at all. Accordingly, Pfaller follows McLaughlin in labeling Gall and Grass as "progressives." Robert Utley's book, *The Lance and the Shield*, relies even less on Indian sources than Pfaller's biography of McLaughlin. Instead, Utley relies on information from McLaughlin, the U.S. government, and the U.S. army. Utley's respect and chivalrous attitude toward McLaughlin is evident throughout his book. Therefore, Utley, like McLaughlin, labels Gall and John Grass as "progressives"; but at least he qualifies the term with quotation marks.⁸

Last, as David Rich Lewis suggests, a full interpretation of Gall does not exist because historians have too easily fallen back on the traditional-progressive dichotomy, [Footnotes]

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rather than taking the time to examine the complex motivations of an individual. The
cultural broker model is clearly a much more effective tool for examining the
complexities of men like Gall or John Grass. In sum, most of the scholarly work on Gall
and Grass adheres to the outdated and absolute traditional-progressive dichotomy, which
leaves an ugly void in the historical record.9

Three secondary works, however, do briefly hint that the term “progressive”
insufficiently describes Gall (none, however, suggests the term is inappropriate for
Grass). For example, Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve’s *They Led a Nation* contains a one-
page biography of Gall. The brief biography devotes one line challenging the dominant
interpretation of Gall. She states, “Gall took no part in the Messiah Ghost Dance
religion, but worked with his people to convince them that cooperation was the only
recourse left.” Unfortunately, Sneve does not provide any footnotes or evidence to
support any of her claims. Mildred Fielder’s book, *Sioux Indian Leaders*, also contains a
one-page biography of Gall. Fielder’s biography similarly contains a single line, which
begins to challenge the “progressive” label applied to Gall. Fielder writes, “That he
[Gall] could completely reverse himself for the sake of his followers is a mark of the
man’s greatness.” Unfortunately, as Jack W. Marken and Herbert T. Hoover point out,
Fielder’s book, is “Based upon secondary sources . . . it is not very reliable.” Vine
Deloria’s *Custer Died For Your Sins* also briefly suggests in a couple of paragraphs that
Gall adapted for the good of his people. Deloria, like Fielder and Sneve, however, fails
to develop an adequate challenge to the prevailing notion of the Uncpapa chief.

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Therefore, a need to revise the prevailing interpretation of Gall and Grass still exists.\(^{10}\)

Before I suggest such a revision, I must define the terms “progressive,” “traditionalist,” and cultural mediator for the purpose of this thesis. A “progressive” will be defined as a native who freely chose to discard his or her culture and replace it with the white man’s customs. A “traditionalist” will be defined as a native who embraces his or her culture and rejects foreign customs, beliefs, and practices, including the Anglo-American culture. Furthermore, a cultural broker is a patriot who mediates with non-Indians and who adopts some aspects of the Anglo-American culture in order to help his people to adapt and to survive, while the term “progressive” implies that any such labeled natives have betrayed their people. A cultural broker will be defined within this thesis as a person with one foot in the Indian world, and one foot in the white man’s world, who mediated between the two cultures for his own benefit, and/or his people’s benefit. Grass and Gall fall within this definition of the term cultural broker, since they continued to honor the Lakota culture, while adopting some of the white man’s ways. They firmly believed that such a course was the only viable option for their people if they were to have any chance at survival and prosperity. Cultural brokers, like Gall and Grass, live on the edge of change and conflict and respond in a flexible manner unlike “traditionalists” and “progressives” to bring understanding to distinct peoples.

Chapter One: Charging Bear (John Grass) and Gall: The Warriors

From the 1850s through the summer of 1876, John Grass and Gall defended the hunting grounds of their people against enemy tribes and non-Indians. They quickly proved their manhood and earned warrior names. By the early to mid-1860s, Gall’s impeccable reputation as a warrior caused the Hunkpapa tribe to recognize him as a chief. Could Gall or Grass, heroic patriots, simply become “white” men, after fighting so hard for the existence of their people for over twenty years?

During the same time period, Gall preferred to hunt and gather food, but in times of need, he usually went to some U. S. Indian agency to receive beef. Gall acted as a cultural mediator, when he tried to keep a foot in each world by pursuing buffalo, while exploiting the agency system. As a result, he had more experience with the government’s employees than most members of the Hunkpapa tribe. Due to Gall’s familiarity with whites, the Hunkpapa believed Gall was best suited to mediate with governmental officials. Therefore, when the government wanted to end Red Cloud’s War and held a peace conference at Fort Rice in 1868, Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapa tribe sent Gall as their chief representative.

The Peace Commission at Fort Rice presented an agreement to the Lakota that would become known as the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Under the terms of the treaty, the Great Sioux Reserve, consisting of the western half of Dakota Territory, would be created for the Lakota. In response to Red Cloud’s demands, the treaty stipulated that the Bozeman Trail and all posts situated along that road would be abandoned. The treaty also required the government to help make the Lakota into self-sufficient farmers. The treaty was so complex that even the commissioners did not fully comprehend it. Gall and
the other Indians who signed the treaty at Fort Rice could not have understood that they committed the Lakota to end their war with the United States and to ultimately settle on a reservation, where they were to farm and raise livestock. Gall signed the treaty because he believed the agreement required the United States to close all of its forts along the Missouri River in Hunkpapa and Blackfeet territory. In reality, the treaty only stipulated that the Bozeman Trail and all of the posts along that road would be closed. If Gall had realized the full implication of the treaty, he would have never placed his mark on that document. When Gall and Sitting Bull realized that the posts in the Missouri River valley would not be abandoned, they led attacks on U.S. soldiers stationed there over the next several years.

Soon after Congress ratified the Fort Laramie of 1868, Grand River Indian Agency was established at the mouth of the Grand River in Dakota Territory. The agency was responsible for both the Blackfeet and Hunkpapa Lakota. In 1873 the Grand River Agency was moved to Standing Rock, and became known as the Standing Rock Agency. John Grass’ father, The Grass, and his band of Blackfeet Lakota practiced agriculture on the Great Sioux Reserve under the supervision of the Grand River/Standing Rock Indian agents. The Grass became discouraged, however, because the government did not uphold the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. The government failed to issue them adequate farm implements, and failed to provide adequate schools for their children. The United States’ failure to help the Lakota become self-reliant would eventually cause John Grass and Gall to complain to the government. They would spend years trying to get the United States to fulfill its pledge to make the Lakota into self-sufficient farmers and ranchers.
During the 1870s, a gold rush occurred in the Black Hills on the Great Sioux Reserve. Due to public pressure, the government tried to acquire the Black Hills, but the Lakota refused. The gold rush resulted in the Battle of the Little Bighorn, which greatly embarrassed the United States. In response to Custer’s defeat, the federal government became more aggressive towards the Lakota and ended their dominance on the northern Great Plains.

Lakota Culture

The westernmost group of the Sioux Indians are known as the Lakota. The Lakota consist of the following seven tribes: Oglala, Brule, Miniconjou, Two Kettle, Sans Arc, Hunkpapa or Uncpapa, and Blackfeet or Sihasapa. John Grass was a Blackfeet, while Gall was a Hunkpapa.¹

Each tribe claimed and defended its own hunting grounds. Since they were interrelated, the Lakota tribes did not defend their territories against one another. An outsider would not have been able to distinguish between the Hunkpapas, Blackfeet, and San Arcs, for the three tribes extensively intermarried and frequently traveled and camped together. According to historian Robert Utley, the three tribes occupied a territory extending west from the Missouri River “below the mouth of the Yellowstone-Elk River to the Sioux” River.²

Warfare, like hunting, was one of the most important aspects of the Lakota culture. The Northern Cheyenne and Northern Arapaho were allied with the Lakota. The three groups constantly fought against enemy tribes in order to retain or expand their hunting grounds. They engaged in war in order to obtain more horses, the symbol of

¹ Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 4-5.
wealth among the Lakota, to avenge past injuries, to increase their reputations as warriors, and to receive war honors, which decided leadership. Utley also accurately observes that the Lakota made war because “they had always fought and knew of no other way.”3

By the time Gall and Grass were warriors, the Lakota had little difficulty fighting the Arikara or Rees, Mandan, and Hidatsa (sometimes called Gros Ventres), stationary tribes that lived in earthen houses along the Missouri River, between the Knife River and the Grand River, well within the territory of the Hunkpapa and Blackfeet. The three tribes had once been strong opponents of the Lakota, but in the late 1700s smallpox had crushed their ability to stand up to the Sioux.4

As a result, the Lakota were able to move into the bountiful hunting grounds that were west of the Missouri River, where they fought Kiowas, Crows, Shoshones, Assiniboines, and Skidi Pauwnees to gain further access to these rich buffalo hunting grounds. The Lakota’s most formidable tribal enemies were the Crows to the west and the Assiniboines to the north. The expanding Lakota continually drove the Crows westward. By 1850, when Gall and Grass were emerging as warriors, the hunting grounds of the Crows and Lakota overlapped into a war zone along the Powder River. The edge of the Assiniboine territory stretched along the Missouri River northwest of the mouth of the Yellowstone River. The Lakota and Assiniboine often ventured deep into

2 Ibid., 5.
3 Ibid., 8.
4 Jeffrey Ostler, “‘They Regard Their Passing As Wakan’: Interpreting Western Sioux Explanations For The Bison’s Decline,” Western Historical Quarterly 30:4 (Winter 1999), 479. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 8.
each other’s hunting grounds.\footnote{Ibid. See also Ostler, “‘They Regard Their Passing As Wakan’: Interpreting Western Sioux Explanations For The Bison’s Decline,” 479; Catherine Price, The Oglala People, 1841-1879 A Political History (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1996), 1-2.}

The Lakota primarily ate meat, but they also gathered fruits, roots, and vegetables. They caught trout, bass, and other fish, and hunted antelope, elk, deer, bear, buffalo, ducks, geese, and other smaller game. The grasses on the northern Great Plains sustained both the wild game and their domesticated horses that provided the Hunkpapa and Blackfeet with a mode of transportation. The river valleys within their hunting grounds were lined with cottonwoods and willows, and provided shelter and fuel.\footnote{Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 5.}

Although the Lakota hunted a wide variety of animals, their entire culture was centered around the buffalo, their staple food. Their economy completely depended on the bison. They made their clothing, teepees, bedding, containers, and furniture from the hide and fur. The sinew was used to make bowstrings and bindings, and all of their tools were constructed from the bones.\footnote{Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 5.}

Since the bison formed the basis of their economy, it also strongly influenced the political, social, and spiritual aspects of their culture. They were forced to follow the migration of the buffalo, which also determined their annual cycle of life. The tendencies of the buffalo influenced the organization and roles of the governing bodies of the tribe and bands. The bison also inspired their spiritual beliefs and ceremonies.\footnote{Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 5.}

The tiyospaye (band), a group of Indians interrelated through blood, marriage, or adoption, was the center of tribal life. According to historian Richmond L. Clow, an itancan (band chief) “governed through persuasion and by example, always aware of the importance of displaying the Lakota virtues of bravery, fortitude, wisdom, and
generosity." A band chief also had to follow recommendations from a council of elders. When the council met, all decisions had to be unanimous. When a unanimous vote could not be reached, decisions were put off or never made, which could result in factionalism.9

No one felt obligated to abide by a counsel’s decision or a band chief’s order. A dissenter could leave at time and join another band or wander the plains alone. In certain situations like a communal hunt, a battle, or anything else involving the whole band, however, everyone had to obey. During these undertakings the chiefs depended upon men’s societies to keep order. From such groups, came the akicita who enforced the chiefs’ and elders’ decisions. In short, the akicita acted as policemen, judges, jailers, and executioners.10

Kinship ensured that everyone within a band belonged unless someone committed a terrible offense and was expelled. As Utley states, “Kingship, in fact, forged the unity not only of the band but of the Lakota people as a whole.” The primary goal of Lakota life was to obey the rules of kinship and to be a good relative. Historian Catherine Price further explains, “Kinship relationships and obligations served as the ordering principles of society as embodied in the Lakota password Mitakuye oyasin, ‘We are all related.’” Kinship relationships were so significant that few Lakota individuals could interact with strangers in a comfortable manner until some sort of a kinship relationship was established. Kinship relationships and communalism supplied comfort and safety.11

A council of elders also met at the tribal level to make policy decisions affecting

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7 Ibid., 7-8.
8 Ibid., 8.
warfare, the hunt, social affairs, and spiritual matters. The tribal council consisted of men who had experience in war, the hunt, in spiritual matters, and in making peace. The tribal council, like the council of elders at the band level, only acted as a unified whole. According to Clow, the tribal councilmen set aside their differences and discussed "each issue until all agreed on a plan of action." The Lakota used this system to prevent ambitious individuals from making decisions for the entire tribe. Four executives, known as "shirt wearers," enforced the tribal council's policies with the aid of the akicita. The shirt wearers increased the perception of a tribal identity and dealt with the problems associated with neighboring tribes.¹²

Normally the bands only met together once a year for the annual Sun Dance, the most important tribal ceremony of the Lakota. The Sun Dance, a ceremony in which the entire world was renewed or regenerated, was held for 12 days in June. Participants made various forms of self-sacrifice and danced until they collapsed from fatigue and/or received divine intervention in the form of a vision. The Sun Dance helped cement tribal ties and culminated with the regeneration of the spiritual and social world of the Lakota.¹³

Once the Sun Dance was over, the tribe split up and bands searched for bison until winter arrived. Family groups normally hunted together, but, when a large herd of buffalo were discovered, a communal hunt was undertaken. The akicita would govern over any such large-scale communal hunt. During the winter the bands retreated to the shelter of river valleys, where they waited out the season, until warmer spring weather and grasses revived their horses, thereby allowing them to become more mobile. The

cycle would begin again with the Sun Dance in June.  

Youth

John Grass was born around 1837 on the Grand River in South Dakota. His original name was Jumping Bear. The surname Grass was dynastic and was held by his father, Used-as-a-Shield or “The Grass,” and his grandfather before him. Jumping Bear was destined to become the head chief of the Blackfeet Lakota. At age seventeen, Grass earned a warrior name, Charging Bear, because of his exploits against the Crows and Mandans. At about the same time, Charging Bear undertook the Sun Dance ceremony to test his endurance and make a personal sacrifice for his people.

Gall was born around 1838 on the Moreau River in South Dakota. His father died, while Gall was still a boy. As a result, his mother was a poverty-stricken widow, so the Hunkpapa tribe raised him as an orphan. Gall’s family originally gave him the name Bear-Shedding-His-Hair. Later, he received the name Pizi, which means Gall, because as a child, he tried to eat the gall of an animal. The Hunkpapas only numbered a few hundred, so everyone in the tribe knew everyone else. Sitting Bull, the most well-known Hunkpapa, was a year or two older than Gall, and became his playmate. Gall established himself as a warrior and a hunter by his early teens.

When he was a still a boy, Gall’s father held a ceremony to express his love for his son. After the ceremony, Gall received yet another name, Red Walker. During the

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event Gall was dressed completely in vermilion with long streamers and had to march up and down before the guests. Red Walker’s father lavished gifts upon the assembled guests in order to gain their respect.17

**Fort Laramie Treaty of 1851**

In September of 1851 the federal government called a meeting of all the tribes on the Northern Plains for a treaty negotiation. Settlers had began to come through the Great Plains in order to farm in Oregon or to prospect for gold in California. The United States recently had acquired the entire Southwest from Mexico, and had just settled the dispute over the northern boundary of Oregon with Great Britain. As a result, many non-Indians traveled up the Platte River Road for Oregon and California. The government called the council to try and make it safer for white Americans to journey through Indian lands to the west coast.18

Members of the Sioux, Cheyennes, Arapahos, Shoshones, Crows, Assiniboines, Arikaras, Mandans, and Hidatsas attended the council at Fort Laramie. The records are unclear as to how many Lakota from the upper Missouri were in attendance.19

The treaty required all of the Indians to make peace with the United States and between all of the tribes. The government could build roads and military and other posts on their lands, but promised to protect them from the hostilities of non-Indians. The treaty established boundaries for each of the tribes, and set aside lands for the Sioux, which commenced at:

The mouth of the White Earth River, on the Missouri River; thence in a southwesterly direction to the forks of the Platte River; thence up the north fork of the Platte River to a point know as the Red Butte, or where the

17 Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History*, 220.
18 Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 43.
19 Ibid.
road leaves the river; thence along the range of mountains known as the Black Hills, to the head-waters of Heart River; thence down Heart River to its mouth; and thence down the Missouri River to the place of beginning.

For its part, the government pledged to give the Indians $50,000 worth of annuities per annum for a period of 50 years. This was a measly sum for so many tribes of Indians and in its ratification, the U. S. Senate reduced the term to only fifteen years.20

The treaty caused a lot of confusion and trouble for the Lakota. The government mistakenly believed the Indians understood the agreement and would obey the provisions of the treaty. Even if the Lakota had comprehended the treaty, they would have been unable to stop the battles with other tribes, for such warfare was a fundamental part of the culture of every tribe. Furthermore, fewer than 20 Lakota chiefs had signed the document; not a single member of either the Hunkpapa or Blackfeet tribe put his mark on the treaty. When officials came on their annual visits to distribute the annuities to the Lakota, they chastised the Indians for continuing to fight the Arikaras, Assiniboines, and Crows. The Lakota refused to end their warfare with their native enemies and the cycle continued year after year.21

The treaty also led to factionalism among the Lakota. As historian Robert Utley aptly observed, it divided them horizontally and vertically. Although the Hunkpapas and Blackfeet were more united against accepting the annuities and the stipulations of the treaty than the Miniconjous, San Arcs, and Two Kettles there was some division within the former two tribes. The younger men tended to favor the war, while the elders wanted peace and saw no harm in accepting the annuities. The young warriors, including Gall

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20 Treaty of Fort Laramie, Sept. 17, 1851, as published in Treaties & Agreements and the Proceedings of the Treaties and Agreements of the Tribes and Bands of the Sioux Nation (A Publication of The Institute For the Development of Indian Law, 1973), 38-44. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 43.
21 Ibid., 44.
and Sitting Bull, wanted to continue raiding other tribes in order to prove their manhood and to gain respect and recognition and status, which older men already enjoyed.  

**Inter-tribal Warfare**

During the 1850s and early 1860s, most of the Blackfeet and Hunkpapa continued to engage in constant warfare with the Assiniboines, Crows, and other enemy tribes. Sitting Bull and Gall, however, generally refused to lead their warriors against non-Indians, but sometimes whites got in the way of their inter-tribal warfare and were killed.

Sometime during the early to mid-1850s, Sitting Bull and Gall co-founded the Midnight Strong Hearts Society. The regular Strong Hearts Society was a warrior society that functioned as akicita over their tribe. The Midnight Strong Hearts Society was an elite group within the larger elite Strong Hearts Society. Gall had grown into an exceptionally strong and hardy warrior, weighing well over 200 pounds. He had “intense eyes, large flat nose, and thick lips,” and was highly respected for his war record.

In 1857 the Midnight Strong Hearts Society made Sitting Bull a war chief, and he also became a war chief of the Hunkpapa. Four of Sitting Bull’s close friends, including Gall, had nominated him as their tribal war chief. Gall would continue to be Sitting Bull’s close friend for the rest of his life. Although Gall was often stoic, most of the Lakota felt that Gall was easier to approach than Sitting Bull who was even more reserved.

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22 Ibid.
24 Ibid., 18-22.
25 Ibid., 22.
Gall and Bloody Knife Become Bitter Enemies

Bloody Knife or Long Mandan and Gall grew up together, but they eventually became arch-rivals. Bloody Knife’s mother was an Arikara, while his father was a Hunkpapa. Bloody Knife was born into his father’s camp and was raised as a Hunkpapa. Bloody Knife had a difficult childhood because all of his peers constantly ridiculed him for being half Arikara. The Arikara, Mandan, and Hidatsa were sedentary tribes that lived well within Blackfeet and Hunkpapa territory. Therefore, the Lakota considered all three of these tribes to be bitter enemies. The Arikara were once powerful foes, but smallpox destroyed their ability to oppose the Lakota. Due to the constant prejudice, when Bloody Knife was about 12 years old, he and his mother left his father and went to live in an Arikara village near Fort Berthold.26

When Bloody Knife was about 20 years old, he desired to visit his father’s band, which was camping near the mouth of the Rosebud River. When he reached their camp, an old boyhood nemesis recognized Bloody Knife. The old enemy was now an important warrior, who ordered the other soldiers to strip and beat Bloody Knife. A young Gall and some other Lakota warriors beat him until blood streamed down his back, and told him to quickly leave or die.27

Then, in the fall of 1862, Gall lead a war party of Hunkpapas against a group of Arikara hunters. When Gall and his warriors found the Arikara hunting party, they killed two of Bloody Knife’s younger brothers. As a result, Bloody Knife hated Gall with an overwhelming passion and swore revenge.28

28 Ibid., 170.
Warfare Erupts

During the summer of 1862, gold was discovered along the upper Missouri, in present day Montana, far to the west of Hunkpapa/Blackfeet territory. The discovery, however, lead to a large influx of miners, who traveled to the gold fields through the lands of the Hunkpapa/Blackfeet, along the corridor of the Missouri River, which angered the Lakota, who began to attack the intruders. As a result, tensions mounted between the Lakota and the United States.29

During their warfare with the Crows and Assiniboines in the 1850s and early 1860s, Sitting Bull had refused to lead his warriors against non-Indians as long as they did not intrude upon Hunkpapa land. The Minnesota Uprising of 1862, however, influenced the Hunkpapa and Blackfeet to make war on whites. In 1862 Dakota Indians in Minnesota rose against white settlers because they were nearly starved to death on the reservation. The U. S. Army crushed the uprising, but some of the Dakota fled west to find refuge among the Hunkpapa and Blackfeet. In 1863 and 1864, Generals Alfred Sully and Henry H. Sibley led campaigns against the Hunkpapa and Blackfeet tribes and the Dakota refugees. Their mission was to complete the conquest of the Dakota and to stop the Lakota from attacking emigrants.30

Sulley’s and Sibley’s campaigns led to a number of minor battles, including Gall’s first known encounter with the U. S. Army just east of Bismarck at the Battle of the Big Mound on July 24, 1863. Gall and a number of Hunkpapas and Blackfeet were hunting buffalo east of the Missouri River, when retreating Dakota ran into their camps. Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, and Dakota warriors fought Sibley’s forces at Big Mound, as their

29 Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 51, 71.
On July 12, 1864, during the Sibley campaign, the Lakota captured Fanny Kelly, a white woman. John Grass, who had taken part in some of the battles, came to her rescue. Kelly credited the warrior Jumping Bear or John Grass for saving her life and for ensuring that her ransom was successfully accomplished.

In 1863 and 1864 Sibley and Sully completely squashed the rebellion in Minnesota, but were unable to defeat the Lakota. After their encounters with these two generals, the Lakota decided to make war on the United States. Sitting Bull and Gall began to attack the forts along the upper Missouri, and continued well into the 1870s. The actions of Sully and Sibley marked the beginning of a long war between the Lakota and the United States, which did not end until Sitting Bull surrendered in 1881.

In 1864 prospectors discovered that the corridor of the Platte River provided better access to the gold in Montana than the Missouri River. John M. Bozeman established a shortcut, known as the Bozeman Trail, which connected the Platte with the gold fields. This large influx of miners into the Powder River country would eventually lead to Red Cloud’s War (1866-68).

In August of 1865 U.S. soldiers began to build forts in the Lakota’s hunting grounds on the Powder River. Countless whites followed the Bozeman Trail to the gold mines in Montana and Idaho, which violated the Treaty of 1851. In response to the influx of non-Indians in the Powder River Country, High Hump, a Lakota warrior, led a
war party in an attack on Camp Connor, later known as Fort Reno. When the Lakota warriors encountered some army scouts near the camp, Charging Bear or John Grass was first to overtake the retreating scouts and counted coup on one of them, when he touched a scout with his bow.35

**Gall’s Near-Death Experience**

By 1865 Gall’s reputation as a warrior caused some of the Hunkpapa to follow him as their chief. During the onset of winter in that year, Chief Gall and his four lodges of Hunkpapa, went to Fort Berthold to trade. Sitting Bull and Gall regularly came to the fort to trade. Gall and his followers decided to camp in the willows, south of the fort. A company of U. S. soldiers was stationed at the fort, but their general orders were to defend, rather than to pursue, in order to maintain peace with all of the various Indians in the area. The Hunkpapas were then trying to make peace with the Mandans, Arikaras, and Hidatsas, and form an alliance with them. Disease and constant warfare with the Blackfeet, Hunkpapa, and Yanktonai had decimated these three sedentary tribes, who desperately wanted peace with the Lakota.36

Bloody Knife, however, soured the peaceful intents of his nemesis, Gall. Bloody Knife had watched Gall’s followers prepare their camp below the fort, and instantly proceeded to the officers’ lodgings. He asked the commanding officer if he wanted “the bad Sioux who has been killing these white men found dead and scalped in lonely places along this river [Missouri River].” The commander instructed one of his lieutenants and some of his soldiers to follow Bloody Knife to the Hunkpapa camp and to kill Gall and

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36 Taylor, “Bloody Knife and Gall,” 169. See also Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 74-75; Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History*, 222.
anyone who interfered.37

Bloody Knife brought them to Gall’s lodge, which was surrounded. When a surprised Gall came out of his teepee, he was shot, kicked, and stabbed numerous times with bayonets. A soldier even pinned him to the ground with a bayonet through his stout chest and had to step on Gall in order to pull it out of his breast. As blood profusely poured out of his wound, mouth, and nose, the lieutenant declared that Gall was as good as dead. “‘Not yet—but I’ll make him dead,’” Bloody Knife declared, as he loaded buckshot into his gun. Bloody Knife pointed the loaded weapon at Gall’s face and emptied both barrels, but the lieutenant had pushed the gun to one side, so it missed Gall’s head by only a few inches. All of the Hunkpapa quickly scattered and the soldiers soon left to get warm at Fort Berthold.38

Shortly after everyone left, Gall regained consciousness, nearly naked in the snow. The Hunkpapa were known for being the hardiest tribe of the Sioux, but Gall was exceptionally resilient, even for a Hunkpapa. Historian Stanley Vestal was correct when he observed, “Gall was a Hunkpapa of the Hunkpapa.” Gall summoned all of his strength, stood up, and stumbled away. It was extremely cold and snowing and all of his allies had fled, not wanting to remain near the Arikara village by Fort Berthold, and his nearest friend, Harry Chin, lived 20 miles away. When he reached the trees along the Missouri River, he was fortunate to find an abandoned fire, where he spent the night.39

In the morning the Rees went to scalp Gall’s body. When they discovered that Gall had escaped, they requested the help of the soldiers, who tried to follow Gall’s bloody trail, but the snow had covered his tracks. On the following day, Gall arrived at

38 Ibid. See also Vestal, New Sources of Indian History, 222.
the dwelling of his friend Harry Chin, a medicine woman. The old woman was widely
known for successfully healing gunshot wounds, and with her expertise Gall survived.\footnote{Ibid., 222-23.}

It took an extremely long time for Gall’s wounds to heal. One of the wounds was
still open over a year later. These injuries would bother Gall for the remainder of his life
and probably hastened his death. Gall’s survival impressed his Hunkpapa peers, and
influenced their decision to send him to Fort Rice in 1868 as their representative.\footnote{Ibid., 223. See also Taylor, “Bloody Knife and Gall,” 171-72.}

Although Gall disliked whites prior to his near-death experience, he truly hated
them afterwards. He vowed revenge, and, as soon as he was physically able to make war,
he killed seven whites, but their deaths were unable to quench his thirst for revenge.\footnote{Vestal, \textit{New Sources of Indian History}, 223-24.}

\textbf{Red Cloud’s War, 1866-68}

During the summer of 1866, the United States completed three military posts,
Forts Phil Kearny, Reno, and C. F. Smith, along the Bozeman Trail. This action
infuriated the western Lakota and Northern Cheyenne, who commenced a persistent
campaign against the soldiers in the Powder River country. Red Cloud, an Oglala chief,
led these warriors, who primarily consisted of Oglalas, Miniconjous, and Northern
Cheyennes. Their effective campaigns overshadowed Sitting Bull’s and Gall’s similar
efforts along the Missouri River. On December 21, 1866, Crazy Horse, an Oglala
warrior, led a war party against the white soldiers near the Big Horn Mountains. Under
Crazy Horse’s guidance, the warriors used decoys to trick Captain William J. Fetterman
and 80 soldiers to leave Ft. Phil Kearny. Every single soldier, including Fetterman, was

\footnote{\textit{Ibid.}, 222-23.}
The government created another new target for the Hunkpapa when Fort Buford was built at the confluence of the Little Yellowstone and Missouri rivers. In December of 1866 Sitting Bull and his followers attacked the fort and were able to seize and burn down a portion of it. For the next decade, Sitting Bull, Gall, and their Strong Heart Society warriors attacked the fort and terrorized whites for hundreds of miles around it. By the end of 1866 the U. S. soldiers began to recognize their persistent enemy, Gall, and nicknamed him "the fighting cock of the Sioux."  

In 1867 the government constructed another target, Fort Stevenson, on the east side of the Missouri River below Fort Berthold. Sitting Bull, Gall, and the other Hunkpapas harassed the non-Indians in the vicinity of this fort as well. They also interfered with the mail route between Fort Totten at Devil’s Lake and Fort Stevenson, and killed a number of couriers.  

During a battle on November 25, 1867, Gall took a bullet in his stout chest, but, again, the hardy warrior survived. Gall’s success and bravery caught his tribe’s attention. Sitting Bull adopted him as a brother and Gall’s reputation and influence as a warrior chief was greatly increased among the Hunkpapa.  

While the Hunkpapa harassed Forts Buford and Stevenson, their allies to the west continued to attack Forts Phil Kearny and C. F. Smith and any non-Indians who dared to travel on the Bozeman Trail. The western Lakota and Northern Cheyenne demanded that the government abandon its three military posts along the trail. Due to the effectiveness

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44 Hoover, American Indian Leaders, 156. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield 71-72; Fielder, Sioux Indian Leaders, 57.
of the western Indians, the United States desired peace. The government’s desire for peace would ultimately lead to the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which would have important consequences for Gall, Grass, and the rest of the Lakota.47

**Treaty of 1868**

In 1868 the U. S. government held a peace conference at Fort Rice in order to end Red Cloud’s War. Father Pierre-Jean De Smet, a Catholic missionary, bravely journeyed to Sitting Bull’s camp near the mouth of the Powder River, and convinced the Hunkpapa to send representatives to Fort Rice to negotiate with the commissioners. Sitting Bull decided to send Gall now The-Man-Who-Goes-In-The-Middle as his leading delegate, along with some other minor chiefs, including Bull Owl.48

The Hunkpapa chose Gall for a number of reasons. Gall’s near-death experience in 1865 at the hands of U. S. soldiers, and his resulting hatred of white men had greatly impressed his peers, and influenced them to select Gall. Although Gall had an impeccable reputation as a warrior and hunter, he was also chosen for his familiarity with whites. When wild game was abundant, Gall preferred the chase, but in times of need, he usually went to some U. S. Indian agency to receive beef. Such Indians, as historian Robert Utley has observed, tried “to keep a foot in each world, following the herds in the unceded territory but also exploiting the agency system to whatever limits the government would tolerate.” As a result, he had more experience with the government’s employees than most members of Sitting Bull’s camp. Therefore, the Hunkpapa believed Gall was best suited to mediate with the government. Gall’s willingness to turn to the

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45 Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 73.
46 Fielder, *Sioux Indian Leaders*, 57. See also Sneve, *They Led a Nation*, 20.
47 Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 75.
48 Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History*, 219-20, 224. See also Larson, *Red Cloud*, 101-36.
federal government for food in times of need provided early evidence of Gall acting as a cultural broker on his people’s behalf.\textsuperscript{49}

Gall’s speech at Fort Rice in 1968 provides yet another example. When the Hunkpapa delegates arrived at Fort Rice, only three members of the Peace Commission greeted them because the commissioners had split themselves into two groups so they could make several treaties more efficiently. The three members at Fort Rice consisted of General William S. Harney, General Alfred H. Terry, and General John B. Sanborn, who chaired the group.\textsuperscript{50}

Sanborn warned the Lakota that there would soon not be enough wild game to support them, and that the U. S. soldiers had never completely attempted to subjugate them. He also declared that the forts and steamboats along the Missouri River could not be removed because they were required to protect the Indians from white settlers. The proposed agreement, in response to Red Cloud’s demands, however, stipulated that all of the forts along the Bozeman Trail, west of Hunkpapa/Blackfeet territory, would be abandoned, and that all of the roads leading to them would be closed. The treaty also proposed to create a Great Sioux Reservation, consisting of all the land west of the Missouri River, in present-day South Dakota, which included their sacred Black Hills. Although the government asked the Lakota to forfeit their right to occupy any land outside of the reservation, the treaty guaranteed them the right to hunt “on any lands north of” the North Platte River, “and on the Republican Fork of the Smoky Hill River, so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase.” The most important aspect of the treaty stated that no further lands cessions could be made

\textsuperscript{49} Utley, \textit{The Lance and the Shield}, 85. See also Vestal, \textit{New Sources of Indian History}, 220-24.
\textsuperscript{50} \textit{Ibid.}, 224.
without the consent of at least \(\frac{3}{4}\) of all the adult Lakota and Arapaho males.\(^{51}\)

The treaty offered various benefits to those Indians who desired to farm on the proposed reservation. When the head of a family decided to settle down on the reservation, he would be allowed to select 320 acres of land, which would be recorded in his name. After an Indian selected his tract of farm land, he and his family became eligible to receive instructions in farming, seeds and implements for four years, clothing for 20 years, a cow, two oxen, and one pound of meat and flour per day per person for four years. The treaty also provided a schoolhouse for every 30 Lakota children who wanted to attend, and the services of a physician, farmer, blacksmith, carpenter, engineer, and miller for a period of 10 years. These provisions, however, would only be given while the Lakota and Arapaho learned to become self-sufficient farmers. The proposed agreement also stipulated that a gristmill, a sawmill, and a shingle-machine would be built on their reserve. Furthermore, the government pledged to expel any non-Indians who trespassed on their reservation. In return, the Indians were not to oppose the construction of railroads outside of their reserve, nor harass military forts below the North Platte River.\(^{52}\)

Although the full transcript of the proceedings at Fort Rice on July 2, 1868 has never been published, historian Stanley Vestal quotes a small portion of it, including part of Gall’s speech, in his book *New Sources of Indian History*. According to Vestal, Gall wore a fur robe and held his rifle as he defiantly spoke the following words to the commissioners:


\(^{52}\) *Ibid.* See also Vestal, *New Sources of Indian History*, 224-25.
God raised me with one thing only, and I keep that yet. There is one thing that I do not like. The whites ruin our country. If we make peace, the military posts on this Missouri River must be removed and the steamboats stopped from coming up here. Below here is the Running Water, which is our country. You fought me and I had to fight back: I am a soldier. The annuities you speak of we don't want. Our intention is to take no present.

You talk of peace. If we make peace, you will not hold it. We told the good Black robe (DeSmet) who has been to our camp that we did not like these things. I have been sent here by my people to see and hear what you have got to say. My people told me to get powder and ball, and I want that.

Now many things have happened that are not our fault. We are blamed for many things. I have been stabbed. If you want to make peace with me, you must remove this Fort Rice, and stop the steamboats. If you won't, I must get all these friendly (Agency) Indians to move away. I have told all this to them, and now I tell you.53

Historian Mildred Fielder also reprinted a portion of a newspaper article, which contained part of Gall's speech at Fort Rice. According to Fielder's partial republication of that undated article, Gall faced the commissioners and angrily declared:

I have been driven from one gulch to another, to mountains and plains, far from home by your soldiers. I have been hunted, hounded, and wounded by them.

My wounds have not yet healed, and I am not ready to take you by the hand and call you friend . . . Many of these men before me were at the treaty of Fort Laramie [1851]. The promises the Great Father made were utterly false. He told us one thing and did another.

If we kill a bad white man who molests us, we are hounded until we have paid with twenty lives for one. . . . Your hands are red with blood, you see the bleeding wounds on my breast. . . . Not until this is burned down and I can see my foot prints in the dead ashes will I believe what you say. Not until the wounds I carry are healed, the lands that belong to us restored, will I sign a treaty with you.

At the end of his speech, Gall demanded 20 kegs of powder. Bull Owl also declared that the forts and steamboats on the Missouri River be removed, "so that the buffalo will

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53 Gall, as cited in Vestal, ed., New Sources of Indian History, 225-26, emphasis in original.
come back.”54

On July 2, 1868, when the Indians signed the treaty, Gall’s name appeared first at the top of the document because he mistakenly thought the treaty would close the forts in Uncpapa and Blackfeet territory on the upper Missouri River. As historian Robert Utley observed, “His [Gall’s] speech contained no hint of an understanding that the commissioners expected him to sign a document that had already been worked out, no hint even that he fathomed the nature of the treaty.” The treaty was so complex that even the commissioners had difficulty comprehending it. Utley also properly concluded that the treaty:

was a sweeping blueprint for the future of the Sioux that no chief who signed could have even dimly comprehended. . . .

Gall can hardly be reproached for not perceiving that he had bound the Hunkapas not only to end their war against the whites but ultimately to settle on and remain on a reservation, there to give up the chase, obey the dictates of a white agent, dress like white people, live like white people, and learn to farm like white people.

Gall signed his warrior name, “Stands In the Middle.” Although John Grass did not mark his name on that document, his father, “The Grass,” signed the treaty.55

A couple of months later, when Sitting Bull and Gall realized that the forts in their homeland would remain open, they attacked Fort Buford and killed three soldiers and injured three more. Some of the chiefs became upset with Gall because the military posts on the Missouri River were not abandoned, but Sitting Bull just laughed, and jokingly declared, “‘You must not blame Gall. Everyone knows that he will do anything for a

54 See Fielder, Sioux Indian Leaders, 57, which also contains a portion of Gall’s speech, as cited in “Gall’s Oratory Impressed Country,” Rapid City Journal, no date. Bull Owl, as cited in Vestal, New Sources of Indian History, 225-26. Lewis F. Crawford, ed., Rekindling Camp Fires: The Exploits of Ben Arnold (Connor) (Wa-si-cu Tam-a-he-ca): An Authentic Narrative of Sixty Years in the Old West as Indian Fighter, Gold Miner, Cowboy, Hunter and Army Scout (Bismarck: Capital Book Co., 1925), 166-72, contains another version of Gall’s speech, which is very similar to the version published in Fielder’s book.
square meal.” The government did honor the treaty by closing the military forts along the Bozeman Trail, while Sitting Bull, Gall, and their followers continued to raid the forts on the upper Missouri for the next several years.56

**Grand River Agency Is Established for the Blackfeet and Hunkpapa**

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 had established the Great Sioux Reserve, which was administered by a number of agencies. In April of 1868 the Grand River Agency was established at the mouth of the Grand River near the present location of the town of Mobridge, South Dakota. A Congressionally appointed committee selected the location of this new agency. From April of 1868 to July of 1869, John A. Johnston was the acting Indian Agent at Grand River. The new agency was responsible for all of the land between the Grand and Cannon Ball rivers, which constituted a part of the Great Sioux Reserve. The new agency oversaw many of the Blackfeet, including John Grass’ followers, the Hunkpapa, and the Upper and Lower Yanktonai, and became the distribution point for the rations, clothing, and other goods provided in the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868.57

Prior to the creation of the Grand River Agency, the Crow Creek or Upper Missouri Agency had administered these four groups of Lakota that primarily were

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located around Fort Rice, where a few of the Lower Yanktonais had planted about 20 acres in 1868. When the new reservation and Grand River Agency were created for them, the Blackfeet, Hunkpapa, and Upper and Lower Yanktonais were forced to abandon their lands near Fort Rice, and move to Grand River. Eventually, the Grand River Agency would be moved to Ft. Yates, and become known as the Standing Rock Agency.58

During the early part of 1869, President Ulysses S. Grant moved into the White House and inaugurated his Peace Policy towards Native Americans. Due to the failed implementation of Federal Indian policy which resulted in outbreaks, including the Minnesota Uprising of 1862, humanitarian reformers who were led by missionaries placed pressure on the government for administrative changes. Although Grant did make some administrative changes, his Peace Policy continued and tried to perfect the reservation policy, which had began shortly after the Mexican War (1846-48). According to historian Harold Umber, under his Peace Policy, Grant tried to make position of Indian agent “less dependent on politics and in that way attract and keep a better class of men working for the benefit of the Indian.” Grant’s administration tried to make the office of Indian agent less dependent on politics by granting Christian denominations sole rights to proselytize on reservations.

The Standing Rock Indians greatly respected Father DeSmet who had earlier convinced Sitting Bull to send Gall to Fort Rice in 1868. Many of the elder Indians, even

those who had not converted to Christianity, wore the crucifixes that DeSmet had given them in 1868. For generations, the oral tradition of the Lakota held that one day men with white skin and beards would arrive and speak of three crosses, which was the religion they should follow. Therefore, Grant assigned the Grand River Agency to the Catholic Church in 1870. As a result, from 1871 through 1894, all of the Indian Agents for Grand River Agency and later Standing Rock Agency were Catholic.59

On July 17, 1869, Captain J. A. Hearn succeeded Johnston as the Indian Agent at Grand River. When Hearn arrived at Grand River, he recommended that the agency be moved up the river within 15 miles of Fort Rice, so the military could quickly respond to any troubles, especially from the Hunkpapa warriors. During the summer of 1869, there were approximately 4500 Indians under Hearn’s charge, who expressed their desire to farm, but who were forced to depend on the government’s weekly rations. By August 16, the agent responded to their request when he contracted for 100 tons of hay and for the breaking of 600 acres of land for the Indians at Grand River. John A. Burbank, Governor of Dakota Territory, and Superintendent of Indian Affairs in Dakota Territory, however, became upset with Hearn’s unauthorized contracts, and refused to appropriate funds for the hay or for the breaking of 300 acres of land.60


In March of 1870 about 1100 starving Lakota arrived at Grand River. Many of them had never been to the agency before. Hearn issued them clothing from last year's issue.\(^{61}\)

During the same month, “the Grass,” Head Chief of the Blackfeet and John Grass’s father, also requested a separate agency for his people along the Moreau River, about 20 miles south of the Grand River Agency. The Grass wanted the government to plow land along the Moreau River, so his band could began to plant corn and other crops. In April the Grass and his band waited at the mouth of the Moreau River, and again asked the government to fulfill the previous year’s promise to break land for them. Although the government had promised to help the Blackfeet farm, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs ignored their request. In September Agent Hearn again requested the Commissioner to break and fence land on the Moreau for the Grass band, which consisted of about ¼ of the entire Blackfeet tribe, so they could plant there in the spring of 1871.\(^{62}\)

During the spring and summer of 1870, many of the Indians only came to Grand River to collect the rations provided for them in the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868, and then left to hunt and/or gather food. In June a large number of them waited to receive their


\(^{62}\) Ibid. See also J. A. Hearn, Indian Agent, Grand River Agency, “Monthly Report for April” to E. S. Parker, May 1, 1870, in Records of the Dakota Superintendency of Indian Affairs, 1861-1870 and 1877-1878 and of the Wyoming Superintendency, 1870, M1016, RG 75, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1976, roll 8,
rations before going on their usual summer hunt of the buffalo. The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 had created the Great Sioux Reserve, but Article 11 of the same also guaranteed the Lakota and Arapaho to hunt on some of the land outside of their reservation. In 1868 the Lakota had relinquished their right to reside on lands outside of their reserve, but they retained "the right to hunt on any lands north of North Platte, and on the Republican Fork of the Smoky Hill River, so long as the buffalo may range thereon in such numbers as to justify the chase."\(^3\)

During the spring and summer of 1870, the Indians received monthly, rather than weekly rations. In March, May, July, and August, the Grass was one of the chiefs who received monthly rations at Grand River. The chiefs were responsible for dividing the rations among their followers. None of the agency's reports or letters mention John Grass, so it is not known if he came in to receive rations in 1870, but if he had his father would have issued them to him.\(^4\)

**Defensive Tactics**

During the summer of 1870, Sitting Bull led a war party of about 200 warriors against Fort Buford. It was the last time Sitting Bull attacked the fort or any of the military posts below Fort Buford. Thereafter, Sitting Bull focused on defensive tactics rather than offensive ones.\(^5\)


At the same time, the hunting grounds of the Lakota expanded to the west. During the 1850s, the Powder River was the western boundary of Hunkpapa territory. By the 1870s, however, the Crows had been pushed significantly westward, and the Lakota considered the Bighorn River as the western boundary of their hunting grounds. Therefore, the hunting bands of Lakota began to hunt and to winter further to the west, in present-day Montana.66

As a result, the non-reservation Indians came into very little contact with whites. The Northern Pacific Railroad, however, threatened to end their isolation. The proposed railway would link St. Paul, Minnesota, with Seattle, and would be laid through the Yellowstone Valley, the center of the lands claimed by the non-reservation Lakota. The Sioux had fought with the Crows for years in order to lay claim to the Yellowstone and its tributaries. The railway threatened to frighten away the buffalo and to bring in masses of non-Indians into their newly acquired territory.67

The Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 had stipulated that the Indians would not oppose railways on the Great Plains, and even allowed roads on the Great Sioux Reserve if the Indians were compensated. Gall was the only chief of the hunting bands who had signed the treaty, but, as discussed above, he was under the impression that the forts along the upper Missouri would be closed when he placed his mark on that document. Gall, Sitting Bull, and the other chiefs of the hunting bands only knew that the drainage basin of the Yellowstone River belonged to them. Therefore, they decided to wage a defensive war against the railroad and any white intruders.68

66 Ibid., 91.
67 Ibid., 91-93.
68 Ibid., 92-93.
Grand River

By September of 1870, a warehouse, a blacksmith shop, a carpenter shop, a cook house, a dinning room, and dwellings for employees were constructed at Grand River Agency. Two companies of the 17th Infantry were then stationed at Grand River.69

In December of 1870 W. F. Cady succeeded Hearn as Indian Agent at Grand River. Near the end of January, 1871, the Grass, and Cady requested E. S. Parker, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to move the agency. Cady complained that there were no agricultural lands within 25 miles of the Grand River Agency and recommended that the agency be moved to Standing Rock, where there were better farmlands. Grass' father also complained about the lack of fertile land near the Grand River Agency and again requested that the Blackfeet be allowed to farm along the Moreau River, 30 miles below the Grand River Agency. Cady further suggested that a sub-agency of his proposed Standing Rock Agency be created at the Moreau River for the Blackfeet. Cady and The Grass believed that there was enough farmland along the Moreau to sustain all of the Blackfeet and even enough good land to induce the Hunkpapa to surrender and farm as well.70

In April of 1871 Grand River was assigned its fourth agent, J. C. O'Connor, in three years. When he assumed the position of Indian Agent at Grand River, O'Connor,

like his predecessor, requested permission from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to break land along the Moreau River for the Grass and his band.\textsuperscript{71}

During the following month, O'Connor hired six mules to break 100 acres for the Grass's band, near the Moreau River, on the western side of the Missouri River, about 25 miles below the agency. The 420 Blackfeet under John Grass' father were able to raise a successful crop corn in 1871 on the 100 acres of broken land. The Lower Yanktonais, under the leadership of Two Bears, their head chief, also successfully harvested 200 acres of land.\textsuperscript{72}

In 1871 two Jesuits, Francis X. Kuppens and Peter De Meester, arrived at Grand River and built a church and school. Their Jesuit society appropriated moneys to pay for the construction of the two buildings. The two men met with Sitting Bull, but they largely failed in their attempt to convert the Lakota. In August of 1871 the two Jesuits ended their attempt to Christianize the Grand River Indians and moved back to St. Louis.\textsuperscript{73}

In September of 1871 O'Connor again recommended moving the agency to Standing Rock. The agent believed that the land around Grand River was not suited for farming, and that the few hundred acres of river bottoms, which were planted in 1871


constituted the only good agricultural land in the area, except for Standing Rock, located about 50 miles above the agency. The Upper Yanktonais desired to plant fields around Standing Rock in the spring. O’Connor also wanted to move the agency because Grand River was on low ground, which was subject to frequent flooding, and had been extensively eroded over the previous three years. So much of the land had washed away that the agency’s warehouse was in danger of falling into the river.74

During 1871, very few of the Grand River Indians left to hunt the buffalo. The Indians were forced to give up their annual hunt, as there were no bison within 400 miles of the agency.75

Shortly before O’Connor submitted his annual report on September 7, 1871, troops left Ft. Rice, along with the Northern Pacific Railroad’s surveying crew, which aroused the Grand River Indians. Many of reservation Indians feared that Sitting Bull’s band and the other “hostile” Lakota would attack the surveyors, and that the government would place the blame on the Indians residing at the agency.76

During the winter of 1871-1872, Gall and his followers came to the Grand River Agency to live on government issued rations and to receive other annuities. Gall and his lodges had previously spent an entire winter at the agency, subsisting on rations. During the winter of 1871-1872, even Sitting Bull and his followers received rations at Fort Peck. Many of the Indians at the Grand River Agency were upset that the Northern Pacific Railroad was being built, and threatened to attack the crews conducting the work.

75 Ibid.
76 Ibid.
During the early part of June, Gall and his followers left Grand River to hunt buffalo, and O'Connor did not expect them to attack the railroad crews.\footnote{J. C. O'Connor, U. S. Indian Agent, to F. A. Walker, CIA, June 17, 1872, in Letters Rec'd by the OIA, 1824-1881, M234, RG 75, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1958, roll 305, 439-41. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 95.}

By August 31, 1872, The Grass and his followers had raised a good crop of corn below the Moreau River. The Lower and Upper Yanktonais also planted small pieces of land, but the Hunkpapas refused to cultivate any land. The Hunkpapas and many of the other Indians at Grand River, however, wished to raise stock. O'Connor also requested the Interior Department to help them become stockmen. The agent noted that their land was better suited for ranching than for farming, and that a pastoral life would more easily be accepted by the previously nomadic Lakota. The land immediately around the agency was sandy and totally unfit for cultivation. All of the land that was successfully farmed in 1872 was situated along river bottoms, quite a distance from Grand River, which made it difficult for the Indians to haul supplies from the agency's headquarters.\footnote{J. C. O'Connor, U. S. Indian Agent, to F. A. Walker, CIA, June 17, 1872, in Letters Rec'd by the OIA, 1824-1881, M234, RG 75, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1958, roll 305, 439-41. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 95.}

**Gall and Sitting Bull Defend Their Hunting Grounds**

The Northern Pacific Railroad desired to complete their preliminary surveys of 1871. The U. S. Army ordered over 1000 soldiers to protect their survey crew in 1872. A force of 600 soldiers marched west from Fort Rice, while Major Eugene M. Baker lead about 500 more men down the Yellowstone from Fort Ellis, near Bozeman.\footnote{J. C. O'Connor, U. S. Indian Agent, to F. A. Walker, CIA, June 17, 1872, in Letters Rec'd by the OIA, 1824-1881, M234, RG 75, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1958, roll 305, 439-41. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 95.}

On August 12, 1872, Major Baker and his troops guarded a survey crew of about 20 Northern Pacific employees. Their base camp was situated on the Yellowstone River, across from the mouth of Arrow Creek. Sitting Bull, Crazy Horse, and a party of Brule and Hunkpapa warriors came across their camp. The Lakota warriors had just finished
their annual Sun Dance and were preparing to battle a group of Crows who had dared to venture into the Yellowstone Valley. Instead of attacking the Crows, they attacked Baker’s company and the railroad employees. During the battle, Sitting Bull sat on the ground and smoked a pipe in a care-free manner, while bullets zipped all around him. His act of bravery greatly impressed his peers. They killed one soldier and one railway worker and injured two soldiers, while two Lakota died and about six were injured. The Lakota warriors also killed all of the whites’ cattle and a few of their mules and horses. The battle was a draw, but afterwards the crew refused to go any further down the Yellowstone, and they quickly retreated back to Fort Ellis.\textsuperscript{80}

Just a few days after the Battle of Arrow Creek, a messenger informed Sitting Bull that U. S. soldiers were marching from the east. Gall had sent the courier to his adopted brother. Gall and about 20 to 30 warriors had learned that a large force of soldiers had left Fort Rice under Colonel David S. Stanley.\textsuperscript{81}

On the morning of August 16, Gall led his small group of warriors against Stanley’s soldiers who were camped on O’Fallon’s Creek. The soldiers, however, were able to repel their attack.\textsuperscript{82}

Gall, however, continued to harass the soldiers along O’Fallon’s Creek and the Yellowstone River. Stanley proceeded to the mouth of the Powder River, where he was supposed to meet up with Baker. Instead of finding Baker at the Powder River, Stanley encountered another attack from Gall’s party.\textsuperscript{83}

\textsuperscript{79} Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 106-7.
\textsuperscript{80} Ibid., 107-10.
\textsuperscript{81} Ibid., 110-11.
\textsuperscript{82} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{83} Ibid.
Eventually, Gall set his gun on the ground and boldly requested to talk with Stanley. The colonel disarmed himself and met the chief on the riverbank. Gall wanted to know why the soldiers had ventured into Hunkpapa territory. When Stanley told him they were conducting surveys for a railroad, Gall demanded that they pay for the right of way, and threatened to unite the Lakota in order to fight them.84

Sitting Bull soon arrived with some warriors, but they were not sufficient to defeat Stanley decisively. Sitting Bull and Gall, however, used guerilla tactics and harassed the soldiers along their return march up O’Fallon’s Creek. They fired on the soldiers from bluffs and killed any non-Indians who strayed too far from Stanley’s main forces.85

Despite the constant harassment from the Lakota, the Northern Pacific railroad reached the upper Missouri River, where the town of Bismarck was quickly established on the east side of the river. On the other side of the river, Fort Abraham Lincoln was erected and became the headquarters of Lieutenant Colonel George Armstrong Custer’s 7th Cavalry.86

On June 20, 1873, Custer and Stanley led another survey party. The Lakota did not learn of their presence until they reached the Yellowstone River in August. From about August 4 through August 11, the Lakota fought with the soldiers under Custer and Stanley at the indecisive Battle of the Yellowstone. It was the last time, however, that the Lakota would go to battle over the proposed railroad. As a result of the Panic of 1873,

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid.
86 Ibid., 111-12.
the railhead was not extended west of Bismarck. Not until 1879 would the Northern Pacific company extend the railway over the Missouri River, towards Montana.87

**Grand River Agency Moves to Standing Rock**

The Grand River Agency, responsible for the Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, and Upper and Lower Yanktonais, was moved to Standing Rock in 1873, which was located on the Missouri River, midway between the Cannonball and Grand rivers, about 100 miles south of Bismarck. The area around the new headquarters, like the land surrounding their old agency, was desolate and largely not fit for agriculture. The new Standing Rock Agency was situated about 75 miles above the previous agency by water or about 45 miles by land. By July 22, 1873, the entire agency, except for the buildings, which were not worth the expense of moving, had been relocated.88

Although the agency was relocated in order to provide the Indians with more agricultural lands and because the former location was subject to frequent flooding, it was also moved so they would be closer to Fort Abraham Lincoln, the headquarters of Custer’s infamous Seventh Calvary. Fort Lincoln was only 50 miles up the Missouri from Standing Rock.89

In the autumn of 1873, Agent Edmond Palmer, O’Connor’s successor, described the new agency as being located on “high table-land,” which was “accessible to steamboats at all stages of water.” He also noted that there was an abundance of

87 Ibid., 112-14.
89 Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 145.
cottonwood timber both above and below the Standing Rock Agency, with enough good land nearby to provide all of the Indians ample room to farm.\textsuperscript{90}

As a result of the move, the Indians had to abandon their old farms along the river bottoms near their old agency, which dissatisfied some of the Lakota. In 1873 the 5,000 plus Indians assigned to the Grand River Agency cultivated about 650 acres of land, which they had to abandon at the end of the growing season. For the last time, The Grass and his lodges planted about ten miles below the Moreau River, on the west side of the Missouri River. A directive from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs stipulated that all Indians had to reside within 15 miles of their respective agencies. Despite Palmer’s optimism, the order forced the Grand River Indians to move off of some of the best agricultural lands on their reservation, including Blackfeet fields below the Moreau River, and to relocate within 15 miles of Standing Rock, which historian Edward Milligan has described as a “semibadlands area.”\textsuperscript{91}

Since the Indians were forced to abandon all of their farms, Palmer requested authority from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to break \(\frac{1}{2}\) acre per family, or about 500 acres, in the vicinity of their new agency. The agent also recommended establishing a school for them at Standing Rock and to build about 300 log houses for the Indians at their new agency.\textsuperscript{92}


In the spring of 1874, Palmer only had 200 acres of land broken for the 6,440 Indians at Standing Rock. He also issued them corn and vegetable seeds. Due to grasshoppers and drought, they had a poor harvest. The women performed most of the agricultural work because most of the men considered labor degrading. Their prejudice against farm work existed because, within the Lakota’s cultural framework, the men were supposed to hunt and to make war, while the women gathered food and took care of other domestic duties. Palmer also complained that due to Congress’ limitation of only $5,000 per year for the pay of agency employees, the Indians would receive very little assistance in farming.93

The Indian Appropriation Act for the fiscal year ending June 30, 1875, which was approved on June 22, 1874, required all able-bodied Indian men between the ages of 18 and 45 to perform beneficial labor on their reservations in order to receive provisions. The men had to perform enough work to equal the value of the supplies they received. Since the Lakota Indians at Standing Rock were just making the first steps towards becoming farmers, and since the men still considered labor as beneath them, Palmer asked E. P. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to exempt the Standing Rock Indians from the labor requirement.94

During 1874, a physician’s house, an agent’s house, three storehouses, a blacksmith shop, a carpenter shop, a council house, quarters for the agency’s employees, a stable, and corals were built at Standing Rock. Six houses for the Indians were also built. Palmer asked the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to help the Indians build more
houses, as their teepees failed to keep them warm during the harsh winters at the agency, forcing them to leave for forested areas.95

The winter of 1874-75 was extremely severe. In January the temperature almost constantly remained between 28 and 32 degrees below zero. To make matters even worse, large amounts of snow piled up. Due to the snow and cold weather, no wild game was obtainable for the Indians to eat. In November the rations failed to arrive at Grand River, forcing Agent Palmer to issue only half-rations. Even by cutting the rations in half, the agent was sure all of the corn and flour would be eaten before April, and their salted meat was already depleted. A ring of traders were intercepting and stealing a large part of the provisions sent to Standing Rock. Congress finally acted in April of 1875, when $150,000 was appropriated to relieve the Indians. The government, however, continued to act slowly, and the required provisions did not arrive until the Indians were in agony from starvation. This act of bad faith convinced many of the Standing Rock Indians that the government had turned its back on purpose in order to starve them. As a result, a large number of them left Standing Rock and joined Sitting Bull’s bands to the north. As Edward Milligan noted, “if sufficient rations had been available at all times, and their needs had been taken care of these Indians would have remained on the reservation.”96

In April of 1875 Gall and two other chiefs, Little Wound and Hawk, and their followers, consisting of about 50 lodges, arrived at Standing Rock in a starving condition. The Indians had resided on the reservation prior to Palmer’s appointment as Indian

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Agent. Gall and the other newly arrived Indians agreed to stay on the reserve. The
Hunkpapa chief and warrior also enrolled himself and some of the Indians in his band.
Slave, Little Knife, and Red Horn, three other chiefs from Sitting Bull’s camp, also
enrolled themselves and their lodges at Grand River in 1875. These additional Indians
further taxed the meager rations at the agency. Gall’s actions further demonstrated his
willingness to turn to the federal government in time of need in order to ensure the
survival of his people.97

Black Hill’s Gold Rush and the Allison Commission

During the latter part of 1874, a gold rush occurred in the Black Hills. President
Ulysses Simpson Grant, who served eight years (1869-77) as president, did not even
attempt to stop this mass intrusion of prospectors; if the government had acted it would
have been futile to try and stop the flow of miners into Lakota territory, in any case. The
intrusions and inaction on the part of the Federal government were in violation with the
Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Lakota and Cheyenne warriors had discovered gold in the
Black Hills many years before the Battle of the Little Bighorn. According to two
Northern Cheyenne Indians, Hollow Breast and Fighting Bear, “Swan, a Cheyenne,
discovered gold in the Black Hills . . . and took so much to traders. Traders kept it secret.
Swan was able to buy all he wanted. The story leaked out, and the Army officers
investigated.” In 1874 Colonel George Custer led an expedition into the Black Hills, and
in the early part of 1875 Colonel Nelson Miles lead another expedition into the Badlands.
They both found substantial amounts of gold. Soon countless whites were invading the
Black Hills, which was supposedly reserved only for the Lakota and their allies under the

97 Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 24-25.
The finds of Custer and Miles caused Edward P. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs (CIA), to demand for the acquisition of the Black Hills. Smith stated:

The fact that these Indians [Lakota] are making but little if any use of the Black Hills has no bearing upon the question of what is a fair and equivalent for the surrender of these rare facilities for farming and grazing. They are children, utterly unable to comprehend their own great necessities just ahead; . . . Their ignorance of themselves and of true values makes the stronger appeal to our sense of what is right and fair.99

At the same time, Commissioner Smith also tried to persuade Congress to buy the hunting rights of the Lakota, which were reserved to them under the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868. Smith supported a bill, which, according to Columbus Delano, Secretary of the Interior, involved an appropriation of $50,000 “for the purpose of extinguishing the rights to the country norther [sic] of the North Platte and east of the summits of the Big Horn Mountains, and to hunt over the same.” On January 30, 1875, Smith reported to the Secretary of the Interior that:

It is very desirable to put an end to these hunting parties north of the North Platte River, as they are of no material advantage, to the Indians engaged in such hunts, (since the buffalo have in the main left the country,) but are a source of continual annoyance to white settlers in that country, and so long as said rights are not extinguished the settlement of that country will be postponed.

Unfortunately, Smith’s call for a “fair” and “just” compensation fell on deaf ears.100

97 Ibid., 38. See also John Burke, U. S. Indian Agent, Standing Rock, to E. P. Smith, CIA, Sept. 1, 1875, in ARCIA, 1875, in ARSOI, 746-50.
99 ARCIA, 1875, House Ex. Doc. no. 1, 44th Cong., 1st sess., serial 1680, 511.
100C. Delano, Secretary of the Interior, to the Speaker of the House of Representatives, Feb. 1, 1875, and Commissioner Smith to Delano, Jan. 30, 1875, both in Sioux Indians. Letter From the Secretary of the Interior, Submitting an amendment to Indian appropriation bill asking an appropriation to extinguish rights to hunt, under treaty of April 29, 1868, with Sioux Indians, House Ex. Doc. No. 144, 43rd Cong., 2d sess., serial 1751, 1-2; Treaty With the Sioux – Brule, Oglala, Miniconjou, Yanktonai, Hunkpapa, Blackfeet, Cuthead, Two Kettle, Sans Arcs, and Santee – And Arapaho, Apr. 29, 1868, as published in
In June of 1875 the executive branch appointed a commission to try to buy the Black Hills from the Lakota. Senator William B. Allison of Iowa headed the commission. The other appointed members of the Allison Commission consisted of Brigadier General Alfred H. Terry, U. S. Army; Abram Comingo, of Missouri; Rev. S. D. Hinman, of Dakota Territory; G. P. Beauvais, of Missouri; Albert G. Lawrence, of Rhode Island; and W. H. Ashby, of Nebraska. Allison was instructed to tell the Lakota that, if they did not sign, the government would stop its annual expenditure of over $1,000,000 dollars a year, for Article 9 of the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868 had only required the government to issue rations for four years. The treaty defined the rations as one pound of beef and one pound of flour per day per person.  

The Allison commission only offered $6,000,000 to buy the Black Hills, or $400,000 per year to lease the mineral rights of the Black Hills. Most of the commissioners thought it would be easier to lease the land rather than obtain the consent necessary to acquire full title from the Indians. A majority of the Lakota refused to consider any temporary mining rights. Historian Donald Worster is probably right when he concluded that the old chiefs rejected a mining lease because they knew "'temporary' might mean 'forever.'" Some of the Lakota, including Red Cloud, realized how extremely valuable the minerals on their land were. Therefore, a majority of the Lakota demanded a high price of $70,000,000, and rejected all of the Allison commission's proposals. A small group of Lakota also refused to sell the Black Hills for any price. The commission failed in their mission, and submitted a summary report to

Congress. Historian Donald Worster summarized the commissioner’s conclusions and recommendations to Congress in the following words: “Once again came the harsh warning: Submit or starve. There was no other choice.”102

Continued Agricultural Failures at Standing Rock and Another New Agent

On May 1, 1875, the Lakota at Standing Rock received yet another new agent, John Burke, who replaced Palmer. Burke was appointed in order to help the Catholic Church rule and convert the Indians at the agency.103

During 1875, the Indians’ crops at Standing Rock failed on account of grasshoppers, forcing them once again to depend completely on the government’s meager rations. Furthermore, the Indians still lacked the necessary implements to become self-sufficient farmers, and many of them still were without houses. These conditions eventually would force John Grass and even Gall to act as mediators and to demand that the federal government fulfill its treaty obligations by turning the Lakota into self-sufficient farmers. They wanted to become prosperous farmers because the government’s rations were meager at best and the bison were facing near extinction on the northern Great Plains.104

Battle of the Little Bighorn

In November of 1875 Sitting Bull and his followers planned on wintering at the

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103 Milligan, *Dakota Twilight*, 39. See also John Burke, U. S. Indian Agent, Standing Rock, to E. P. Smith, CIA, Sept. 1, 1875, in ARCIA, 1875, in ARSOI, 1875, 746-50.
divide between the White Earth and Knife Rivers. Sitting Bull also vowed to harass the military posts at Ft. Abraham Lincoln and Ft. Buford. The Hunkpapa medicine man threatened to burn out-buildings and hay stacks and to kill anyone who strayed outside of the forts. As a result, the officers in charge of Forts Lincoln and Rice were instructed to be ready to pursue Sitting Bull, if he or his followers followed through on their threats to annoy Forts Lincoln and Buford.105

At the same time, the failure of the Allison Commission and the frantic gold rush to the Black Hills forced President Grant to act. Grant held a secret council with a number of leading generals and officials from the Office of Indian Affairs in order to work out a plan. The meeting resulted in two important decisions. The orders prohibiting miners from entering the Black Hills would continue to be Grant's "official" policy, but the army would not make any attempt to keep them out. Grant also decided that the government had to force the hunting bands to relinquish the Black Hills and make them permanently live on reservations. In other words, Grant wanted to let white settlers overtake their lands and desired to use military force in order to reduce the power of Sitting Bull and the hunting bands in order to obtain the Black Hills from the Lakota, but he wanted Indians and non-Indian reformers who were led by missionaries to think that he was still upholding the Treaty of 1868.106

On December 22, 1875, Agent John Burke received orders from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs instructing him to tell Sitting Bull's band, which

104 John Burke, U. S. Indian Agent, Standing Rock, to E. P. Smith, CIA, Sept. 1, 1875, in ARCIA, 1875, in ARSOI, 1875, 746-50; Edward P. Smith, CIA, to SOI, November 1, 1875, in ARCIA, 1875, in ARSOI, 1875, 507. See also Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 46-48.
included Gall, and the other "hostile" Indians to return to Standing Rock by January 31, 1876, or face the wrath of the U. S. military. The Office of Indian Affairs had decided to issue the warning in order to mask Grant's aggressive policy. The weather, however, was so cold and the snow was so deep that a courier could not have even reached Sitting Bull's camp on the Little Bighorn by December 31.107

On December 28, 1875, Captain J. S. Poland, commander of the military forces stationed at Standing Rock, interviewed John Grass who Poland labeled, "a chief of the Blackfeet." Grass informed Poland that Chief Gall and the majority of the 18 to 20 lodges that followed him had left the agency after receiving rations. Grass also informed Poland that Gall and his followers traded in their rations for metal cartridges obtained at J. W. Casselbury's store. Casselbury or Galpin held a government issued license to trade with the Indians at Standing Rock. According to Grass, Gall and most of his band went to join up with Sitting Bull.108

While the messengers attempted to reach the "hostile" Lakota in Montana, Burke established the first day school at Standing Rock, which pleased the reservation Indians, who had been demanding a school for years, as provided in the treaty of 1868. The Blackfeet and Hunkpapas, however, were preoccupied with their concern for their relatives in the "hostile" camp.109

Most of the hunting bands simply ignored the government's ultimatum. They did

108 Ibid.
109 Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 58.
not understand that a full-scale war was about to erupt and they wanted to hunt buffalo. Some responded that in the early spring they would trade in their buffalo robes and furs, and they could then discuss their future. They claimed they were peaceful and did not want to go to war with whites. When Sitting Bull received the message in February, he vowed to defend his hunting grounds from the whites, but he was peaceful the entire winter. The Hunkpapas’ winter camp was located on the mouth of the Powder River and many of them peacefully visited and traded at Fort Berthold and Fort Peck.¹¹⁰

Further to the west, however, Miniconjous, Sans Arcs, and Northern Cheyennes harassed Fort Pease on the Tongue River. By March, they had forced the U. S. Army to abandon the post. The Indians who had attacked Fort Pease met up with all of the other hunting bands shortly after the soldiers left the fort. In March all of the hunting bands were located in small groups along the Powder River and its eastern tributaries.¹¹¹

On March 17, 1876, soldiers attacked a camp of about 60 lodges of Northern Cheyennes on the Powder River. The soldiers killed four Indians and injured another six and destroyed their village. The Northern Cheyennes desperately needed food, shelter, and clothes. They traveled down the Powder River, trying to find help. They eventually came across Sitting Bull who generously supplied them with food, clothing, and shelter. As a result of the unprovoked attack, many of the chiefs and headmen, who had previously favored peace, began to demand a full-scale war with the United States.¹¹²

Although General Philip Sheridan commanded the government’s offensive against the Lakota from his headquarters in Chicago, his underlings, General Alfred H.

¹¹¹ Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 128.
Terry in St. Paul, and General George Crook in Omaha, executed the campaigns against the Lakota. Terry was not able to leave St. Paul until the spring, so the winter campaign was postponed.113

In April the chiefs of the hunting bands held a council in order to formulate a unified plan. The number of Cheyennes and Lakota, who seldom or never went to one of the agencies was less than 3,400 people, including only 1,000 warriors. Crazy Horse and Sitting Bull were the two most powerful leaders at the meeting. They decided to continue Sitting Bull's policy of only waging a defensive fight. The hunting bands hoped many Indians would leave the agencies in the spring and join them, but they did not know how many would come. In the meantime, the hunting bands decided to stick together in one large group and to continue to follow and to hunt the buffalo. They believed that if they combined into a single village, they would be better able to defend themselves from any attack from the U. S. Army.114

During April and May, the hunting bands joined up with the Indians under Sitting Bull and Crazy Horse. By the middle of June they numbered about 3,000 people, which included approximately 800 warriors. Only a few lodges from the agencies had joined them at their village on the upper portion of the Rosebud River.115

From June 4 to June 6, 1876, Sitting Bull lead the Hunkpapa in a Sun Dance, which took place in the Rosebud Valley, about 45 miles above the Yellowstone River. Only the Hunkpapas took part in the ceremony, but members of other tribes watched the event. Sitting Bull removed 100 pieces of flesh from his arms as an offering to

112 Ibid., 130. See also Porter, “Crazy Horse, Lakota Leadership, and the Fort Laramie Treaty,” in Legacy New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn, 55-57.
113 Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 131.
Wakantanka. He danced until he fainted from fatigue and pain, which resulted in a vision. In his vision, Sitting Bull foresaw a great military victory for his people.116

On June 18, the hunting bands moved their camp to the valley of the Little Bighorn. From June 18 to June 24, a large number of agency Indians finally arrived. During those six days their numbers increased from 3,000 to 7,000 people. The number of warriors also significantly increased from 800 to 1,800. On June 24, they relocated their camp eight miles below their old village. The Hunkpapa portion of the village was situated about two miles below the mouth of Reno Creek.117

On May 17, 1876, the entire Seventh Cavalry, under the command of General George Armstrong Custer, left Fort Abraham Lincoln. His regiment consisted of 750 men, or about ¾ of General Terry’s force. Terry planned on overseeing the action from a supply base. The remaining 250 soldiers under Terry were infantrymen, who were ordered to guard the make-shift base. About 37 Ree scouts also rode with Custer, including Gall’s nemesis, Bloody Knife who still thirsted for revenge.118

On June 21, General George Armstrong Custer, General Alfred Terry, and Colonel John Gibbon met on board a steamboat located near the confluence of the Yellowstone and Rosebud rivers. Terry ordered Custer to go up the Rosebud to attack the Lakota and Northern Cheyennes. At the same time, Terry and Gibbon merged their forces into one and moved towards the mouth of the Little Bighorn, where they would try

115 Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 134-35.
116 Ibid., 137-38. See also Vestal, Sitting Bull, 157-58.
117 Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 142-43.
118 Ibid., 145-46. See also Colin G. Calloway, “Army Allies or Tribal Survival? The ‘Other Indians’ in the 1876 Campaign,” in Legacy New Perspectives on the Battle of the Little Bighorn, 67.
and stop the Indians from retreating north.119

From June 22 to June 24, Custer and his men marched up the Rosebud and found a trail of previously occupied village sites. On the morning of June 24, they discovered the site where Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapas had performed the Sun Dance.120

On the next day, Custer followed their trail up Davis Creek, but the “hostile” Indians became aware of his presence. Therefore, Custer decided to find and attack their village before they had time to retreat. Custer unwisely divided his forces into three groups and decided to attack before Terry and Gibbon arrived. He sent a battalion of 175 men under Major Marcus A. Reno, including Bloody Knife and 15 Ree scouts, to cross the Little Bighorn and attack the warriors. Custer also led an attack from a different direction with 215 men. Last, Captain Benton followed in the rear with another battalion of men. Crazy Horse and Gall led the Sioux in battle, while Sitting Bull watched and coordinated the battle from a distance because he was so weak from the hundred flesh offerings he had just made for his people in the Sun Dance ceremony. The Ree scouts under Reno killed Gall’s two wives and three children. Bloody Knife, Gall’s archenemy, was one of the scouts under Reno, and may have possibly killed Gall’s family members. Inspired by his grief and anger, Gall led a counterattack, which forced Reno to retreat. Reno’s retreat allowed the Lakota and Cheyenne warriors to concentrate on Custer’s forces. All of the 210 men under Custer’s direct command were killed and more than one-half of the Seventh Cavalry were killed, while the Indians only lost about a dozen men. The battle would send shockwaves throughout all of America, which would arouse the wrath of the U. S. military. The Lakota’s dominance of the northern Great Plains

119 Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 145-46.
120 Ibid., 146-47.
would soon be over.121

**Conclusion**

From the 1850s through the summer of 1876, John Grass and Gall patriotically defended the hunting grounds of their people against enemy tribes and non-Indians. They quickly proved their manhood and earned warrior names. In the introduction to this thesis, a cultural mediator was defined as a patriot who mediates with non-Indians and who adopts some aspects of the Anglo-American culture in order to help his people to adapt and to survive. On the other hand, at the beginning of this thesis, the definition of the term “progressive” implied that any such labeled natives have betrayed their people. Could Gall or Grass, heroic warriors who defended the Lakota for over 20 years, become “progressives” and betray their people as that term suggests?

During the same time period, Gall preferred to hunt and gather food, but in times of need, he usually went to some U. S. Indian agency to receive beef. Gall acted as a cultural mediator, when he tried to keep a foot in each world by pursuing buffalo, while exploiting the agency system. As a result, he had more experience with the government’s employees than most members of the Hunkpapa tribe. Due to Gall’s familiarity with whites, the Hunkpapa believed Gall was best suited to mediate with governmental officials. Therefore, when the government wanted to end Red Cloud’s War and held a peace conference at Fort Rice in 1868, Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapa tribe sent Gall as

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their chief representative. Gall signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 because he falsely thought it required the government to abandon its posts in Hunkpapa territory and did not fathom that the treaty would ultimately create a reservation for the Lakota, where they would have to reside and farm and raise livestock like white men.

In accordance with the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Grand River Agency, which was later moved to Standing Rock, was created for the Blackfeet and Hunkpapa tribes. Grass' father, The Grass, and his band of Blackfeet Lakota practiced agriculture on the Great Sioux Reserve under the supervision of the Grand River/Standing Rock Indian agents. The Grass became discouraged, however, because the government did not uphold the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. The government failed to issue them adequate farm implements, and failed to provide adequate schools for their children. The United States' failure to help the Lakota become self-reliant would eventually force John Grass and Gall to act as cultural mediators by complaining to various governmental officials about the situation. They would spend years trying to convince the United States to fulfill its pledge to make the Lakota into self-sufficient farmers.

In response to the Black Hills Gold rush and the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the government eventually would force the Lakota to settle permanently on their reservations, where Grass and Gall would have to act as cultural mediators and adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture in order to survive.
Chapter Two: The After-Shock of the Battle of the Little Bighorn

After the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the United States government decided to use a more aggressive approach in order to obtain the Black Hills. On August 15, 1876, Congress declared that all of the land previously occupied by the Lakota that was west of the 103d meridian, including the Black Hills, now belonged to the Federal government. Congress also ordered all of the Lakota to return to their designated agencies.

Congress then proceeded to appoint the Manypenny Commission in order to secure the Black Hills through a formal agreement. The Manypenny Commission basically promised that the federal government would help the Lakota become self-sufficient farmers and ranchers if they consented to the proposed treaty. Grass made a long speech to the commissioners, while Gall and his followers ignored Congress’ order and continued to hunt west of the 103d meridian. Grass demanded that the government provide ample schools and rations for the Lakota. He also asked the government to give the Lakota farm implements and to make a better effort at helping them become self-sufficient farmers and ranchers. In sum, Grass signed the agreement because the government threatened to starve the Lakota if they did not sign, and he thought the agreement would enable his people to become self-sufficient and help insure their survival.

Shortly after Grass signed the Black Hills Treaty, the U. S. Army captured him at the Battle of Slim Buttes. Ironically, Grass soon became an Indian scout for the U.S. Army in order to act as a buffer between non-reservation Indians and American soldiers. He believed his role, as an Indian scout would help convince some of the Lakota to surrender peacefully, which would reduce the number of Indian casualties. In fact, Grass
did persuade a large number of non-reservation Indians to surrender peacefully to the soldiers at Fort Yates, which may have saved some of their lives. Working as a scout also fit into the Lakota culture as an honorable occupation. The Lakota considered agriculture an occupation fit for women, while the men hunted and fought in war. Furthermore, the pay of an Indian scout was better than any occupation Grass could have secured on the reservation. Grass' father and grandfather also served as scouts for the U. S. military, which gave more continuity to his role as a scout. Grass became a scout in order to save the lives of non-reservation Indians, which also allowed the chief to redefine himself within the cultural framework of the Lakota.

In response to the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the United States military persistently pursued the non-reservation Lakota. Due to this constant harassment, Sitting Bull, Gall, and their bands fled to Canada in the spring of 1877. Gall and his followers lived as refugees in the Northwest Territories until January 2, 1881, when Gall surrendered to the United States out of hunger. The Lakota refugees successfully sustained themselves by hunting buffalo in Canada during their first year as expatriates. In 1878, however, buffalo became scarce in Canada, and the majority of the Lakota, including Gall and Sitting Bull, eventually surrendered out of hunger to the United States government. Gall had done all he could over the years to defend the Lakota and to sustain their pursuit of the buffalo, but the near extinction of the bison forced him to surrender. As a result, Gall realized the Lakota would have to live on a reservation and adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture in order to survive.

From 1877 through 1881, Grass acted as a cultural mediator on the Great Sioux Reserve in a number of ways. He helped construct a sufficient number of log houses
with wood stoves for his followers, thus providing further evidence that he was willing to adopt those aspects of the Euro-American culture that economically benefited the Lakota people. Although Grass built homes like a white man, he erected a dance hall in the center of his band’s 50 homes in 1879. Grass continued to embrace his native culture and led his people in dances on the reservation. Grass hunted wild game and gathered food whenever an opportunity arose, but he also raised cattle and practiced agriculture in order to help feed his people. Grass also asked for a 320-acre allotment as provided in the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. He thought an allotment would help end his family’s dependence on the government’s meager rations. During the late 1870s, only about ½ an acre of land per Indian was cultivated at Standing Rock. Grass probably believed a 320-acre allotment would allow his family to cultivate a much larger crop. He also continued to make moccasins from hides, thus providing further evidence that Grass combined aspects of both cultures in order to sustain his people’s needs. He even sold his beef hides and used the money to buy a mowing machine for the Standing Rock Indians, which enabled them to cut more hay for their livestock. When the army commander at Fort Yates and the Indian agent at Standing Rock bickered with one another, Grass played them off against one another in an attempt to gain advantages for his followers. In sum, Grass continued to embrace the Lakota culture, but he was willing to adopt those aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited the Lakota. At the same time, Grass continued to pressure the federal government to help make the Lakota into self-sufficient farmers and ranchers. He knew they could no longer solely depend on hunting and gathering food, for Sitting Bull and Gall had surrendered out of hunger.

The Federal Government Reacts to the Battle of the Little Bighorn
After the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the government decided to take a more aggressive approach in acquiring the Black Hills. On July 29, 1876, the Commissioner of Indians Affairs turned control of the agencies responsible for the Lakota over to the military. The CIA instructed Burke to turn control of the agency over to the military in order to prevent the Indians from leaving the reserve. The CIA also told Burke that the "hostiles" would not be allowed at the agency unless they unconditionally surrendered and were disarmed.¹

On August 15, 1876, less than two months after the battle, Congress issued a bold proclamation, declaring that all of the land previously occupied by the Lakota that was west of the 103rd meridian, including the Black Hills, now belonged to the federal government. Congress' declaration violated the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, which required the consent of at least ⅔ of all the adult Lakota males, prior to any further land cessions. Congress also ordered all of the Lakota to leave their unceded lands, and to go back to their designated agencies. The proclamation also threatened to force all of the Lakota to live in Indian Territory (present-day Oklahoma).²

At the same time, Burke instructed Grass to report to Colonel Poland, commander of the garrison at Standing Rock. Poland ordered Grass to leave his farm, which was located about 15 miles below the agency, and to move closer to the garrison. The colonel also told the Yanktonais to desert their farms east of the Missouri River and to live closer to the agency. These peaceful Indians who had been promised protection were not allowed to harvest their crops and were forced to abandon their farms. The government's

¹ Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 62-64.
² Worster, Under Western Skies, 126-28.
promise to help them become self-sufficient remained unfulfilled.3

On August 24, 1876, President Ulysses S. Grant appointed a commission of nine men to obtain concessions from the Lakota and their allies that were a party to the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. A former Commissioner of Indian Affairs (1853-56), George W. Manypenny, of Columbus, Ohio, headed the commission, which also consisted of the following additional eight men: H. C. Bulis, Decorah, Iowa; Newton Edmunds, Yankton, Dakota Territory; Rev. H. B. Whipple, Faribault, Minnesota; A. G. Boone, Denver, Colorado; A. S. Gaylord, Assistant Attorney-General, Washington, D. C.; General H. H. Sibley, St. Paul, Minnesota; and J. W. Daniels, St. Peter, Minnesota. J. Q. Smith, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, instructed the commissioners to travel to the various Lakota agencies to obtain their peaceful acquiescence to Congress’ August 15th proclamation. The CIA also ordered the commissioners to try and get the Lakota to agree to move to Indian Territory. Smith then submitted the following instructions to the commissioners:

If, however, they decline to agree to such removal, they should be informed that they will be obliged to go to the Missouri River to receive such supplies as may be provided – in probably scanty and diminishing quantities – under further acts of Congress and the existing treaties with them.4

Smith also summarized Congress’ intent to not appropriate any additional funds for the subsistence of the Sioux Indians represented directly or indirectly by the treaty of

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1868, unless they agreed to the following terms:

1st. To relinquish all right and claim to any country outside the boundaries of the permanent reservation established by the treaty of 1868.
2d. To relinquish all right and claim to so much of their said permanent reservation as lies west of the one hundred and third meridian of longitude.
3d. To grant right of way over the permanent reservation to that part thereof which lies west of the one hundred and third meridian of longitude for wagon and other roads from convenient and accessible points on the Missouri River, not exceeding three in number.
4th. To receive all such supplies as are provided for by said act and by said treaty of 1868, at such points and places on their said reservation, and in the vicinity of the Missouri River, as the President may designate.
5th. To enter into such agreement or arrangement with the President of the United States as shall be calculated and designed to enable said Indians to become self-supporting.5

On August 19, 1876, Burke submitted his annual report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. His report provided further evidence that, although the government had promised to help them become self-sufficient farmers, the lands around Standing Rock were not suited to agriculture. Burke summarized their condition as "one of utter helplessness." He also observed:

It is now, and will probably in the future be, impossible for these Indians to become self-sustaining here. The game on which they formerly subsisted is out of their reach, and their attempts at farming are hopeless, because whatever has been planted so far has been in some places entirely, in others over one-half, ravaged by the grasshoppers. The severe frosts of winter, the droughts and hailstorms of summer, and the sandy or alkaline nature of the soil in general, are additional and irremediable impediments to agriculture. This state of things is all the more to be regretted because the Indians, have, in both years that I had charge of them, shown great willingness to comply with the advice given to them by the Great Father.6

Chairman Manypenny followed Smith's instructions and devised an agreement to submit to the Lakota. The chairman plan was to first inform the Indians of Congress'
stipulations, and that the commissioners did not have the authority to amend them, but did have the power to formulate a plan to help them become self-sufficient. According to Manypenny, the commission’s plan, as presented to the Indians was as follows:

To provide ample rations for their subsistence until able to support themselves, such rations in all cases to be issued to the head of each separate family.

That when said Indians shall be located upon land suitable for cultivation, rations shall be issued only to those persons who labor, the sick, infirm, and aged excepted.

That whenever the Government shall establish schools, as provided by the treaty of 1868, no rations shall be issued to children between the ages of six and fourteen years, the sick and infirm excepted, unless said children shall regularly attend school.

That they shall be subject to the laws of the United States, and select as many headmen from each band to maintain order as the President may deem necessary.

That all agents, traders, farmers, carpenters, blacksmiths, and other employees [sic] of the Government within their reservation shall be lawfully married and living with their families on the reservation.

That no person of white or mixed blood, whose fitness morally or otherwise is not, in the opinion of the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, conducive to the welfare of the Indians, shall receive any benefit from this agreement or former treaties, and may be expelled from the reservation.

The federal government’s promises to educate the Lakota and to make them into self-sufficient farmers played important roles in the lives of Gall and John Grass. For the remainder of their lives, Gall and Grass would mediate with various federal officials and demand that the government uphold its pledge to turn the Lakota into prosperous farmers.

John Grass Surrenders at the Battle of Slim Buttes

On September 1, 1876, the military expelled Burke, and Captain B. E. Johnston, 1st Infantry, became the Acting Agent at Standing Rock. During the first week of

6 John Burke, U. S. Indian Agent, Standing Rock, to CIA, Aug. 19, 1876, in ARCIA, 1876, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 44th Cong. 2d sess., serial 1749, 442-44.

7 George W. Manypenny, et al. to J. Q. Smith, CIA, Dec. 18, 1876, in Manypenny Report, 6.
September, Johnson called in all of the leading chiefs at Standing Rock for a meeting. Johnston told the 30 to 40 headmen that he was their new agent and chastised them for letting their young men leave the reserve to fight the U.S. soldiers. The agent also ordered that all of their men must come to the agency and surrender to the military. His words infuriated John Grass, one of the chiefs in attendance. According to their new agent, Grass declared:

That his young men would not come in and be arrested by the military; that they would not be slaves; that he had never had anybody talk to him before as I had done; that he was a great Chief, and could stand up and look anyone in the face; that he had expected soft words; that he did not believe the Great Father had sent any such word; that if he had, his young men would not come in; that they would go to Cheyenne Agency, where they would received better treatment; that he had heard from there, that the young men that had been out with the hostiles, and , had come in and laid down their arms had been given rations, and were allowed to go where they please; and that they had not been made slaves.

Grass did refuse to obey Johnston, for he would soon be captured off of the reservation at the Battle of Slim Buttes.8

By September 5, 1876, the Standing Rock agent had issued rations for 3,049 Indians, which did not include all of the Lakota placed on that agency. Thirty-eight lodges, including John Grass’, which consisted of 113 Blackfeet, were visiting Cheyenne River Agency. At the same time, another eight lodges gathered cherries and 45 were in Sitting Bull’s camp.9

While the Manypenny commission prepared to visit the various Lakota agencies, the government also decided to use its military more aggressively to force the so-called

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“hostile” Lakota, which then included Gall and Sitting Bull, onto the Great Sioux Reserve. Colonel Nelson Miles stated, “It [the Battle of the Little Bighorn] seemed to magnify in the public mind the power and terrors of the Sioux Nation, and immediate orders were sent to different parts of the country directing that detachments of troops be ordered to the seat of war.” On September 9, 1876, General George Crook and his men encountered a sizable force of Lakota at the head of the Moreau River, near Slim Buttes. During the Battle of Slim Buttes, Charging Bear and his wife were captured. According to Stanley Vestal, Charging Bear surrendered. Soon he would fight as a scout against the non-reservation Indians.\textsuperscript{10}

\textbf{Grass as an Indian Scout}

During the spring of 1876, Kill Eagle, a Blackfeet chief, and his followers left the Standing Rock Agency to hunt. During the second week of September of that year, Agent Johnston sent John Grass, as a scout, along with the agency’s interpreter, and a few of Grass’ men to find Kill Eagle’s camp in order to try and persuade him to come back to the agency and turn in all of his arms and ponies and become a prisoner of the U. S. Army. Grass succeeded in fulfilling his mission, for after five days, on September 17, Kill Eagle and approximately 140 of his followers surrendered to the soldiers at Ft. Yates. Grass’ actions may have saved some of their lives from the wrath of the U. S. military. The intervention also provided further evidence that Grass was willing to mediate with


non-Indians and to adopt some of the customs of white Americans if such mediations and adaptations facilitated the survival of the Lakota.11

Upon his surrender, Johnston interviewed Kill Eagle to determine if he had any knowledge of Sitting Bull’s band, and to ascertain why Kill Eagle had left the reserve. The chief claimed he left the reserve because his people needed “lodges, robes and skins,” and he thought he could obtain them before the soldiers would arrive. Kill Eagle had thought it was better for his people to go out and hunt for food and clothing rather than to die of hunger at Standing Rock, where the rations were scarce. The winter of 1875 and 1876 was so harsh that the Standing Rock Indians literally faced starvation. While his people were hunting buffalo, they came across Sitting Bull and his band. When Johnston asked if Gall was out there with Sitting Bull, Kill Eagle replied, “He is, with as big a belly as ever.” According to Kill Eagle, he and his people were out hunting buffalo with bows and arrows while the Battle of the Little Bighorn occurred.12

Kill Eagle also informed Johnston that he and John Grass’ father, “The Shield,” had helped return a white woman to safety. Kill Eagle and his band were hunting near the mouth of the Moreau River, when some of the non-reservation Indians told them that they had captured a white woman. Kill Eagle held a feast for all of the Blackfeet chiefs and asked them to help him buy the white woman. Kill Eagle and his fellow Blackfeet chiefs provided 14 horses. Kill Eagle’s brother went to the “hostile” camp and offered the horses for the woman, but they refused. Therefore, his brother and 13 warriors forcibly took the woman and brought her to Kill Eagle’s lodge. Kill Eagle brought her to

The Shield, whose band was camped about 20 miles below the Moreau River. The Shield, Kill Eagle, and about 100 warriors then escorted her to Fort Sully, where they turned her over to the commanding officer.\textsuperscript{13}

In sum, John Grass had realized that war with the United States would only destroy the Lakota and had begun to urge his people to abandon the chase for more settled occupations. Grass also believed that Indian scouts, such as himself, would help encourage the non-reservation Indians to come peacefully onto an agency, which could save their lives and help ensure peace and the survival of the Lakota.\textsuperscript{14}

Working as a scout also fit into the Lakota culture as an honorable occupation. Agriculture was considered women’s work to the Lakota, while the men proved their manhood by hunting and waging war. For example, in 1874 Agent Edmond Palmer stated, “the Indians under my charge . . . still have the same prejudice as ever, considering labor degrading and beneath them. With few exceptions, whatever labor has to be performed is done by women.” As scouts, they were able to roam their homeland, but as farmers, they were confined to limited areas on the reservation. Furthermore, within the Lakota culture, warfare was the primary method of proving one’s manhood. A young boy was not considered an adult male until he had counted his first coup upon an enemy. A successful coup required the young man to sneak up on his foe without any weapons and touch his enemy with a stick or his own hands. Therefore, most preferred to


\textsuperscript{14} For Grass’ view of the ability of Indian scouts to encourage the peaceful surrender of “hostile” Indians, see Agent J. A. Stephan to Commissioner H. Price, April 21, 1881, in Major James McLaughlin Papers, 1855-1937, Louis Pfaller, ed., St. Paul: Dakota Microfilm, 1968, roll 32, and William F. Drum to the Asst.
be scouts, rather than farmers. The income the Indians received as scouts was also much higher than any other job they could obtain on or off the reservation. Grass' father and grandfather also were scouts for the U.S. army under Colonel Henry Leavenworth in 1823, which gives even more continuity to John Grass' decision to become a scout.

While he was a scout, Grass simultaneously was emerged into two distinct cultures and acted as a cultural mediator for the U.S. military. Grass worked as an Indian Scout because he wanted to serve as a buffer between non-reservation Indians and American soldiers in order to save as many Indian lives as possible. Furthermore, his role as an Indian scout allowed him to redefine himself within the cultural framework of the Lakota.¹⁵

**Results of the Manypenny Commission**

In September of 1876 the Manypenny Commission set off for the various Lakota agencies. On October 9th, after obtaining signatures at the Spotted Tail Agency, they arrived at the Standing Rock Agency and met with the chiefs and headmen. The commissioners believed these elders represented the 2,344 Lakota at that agency, and did not attempt to obtain the consent of ¾ of all the adult males then under the jurisdiction of the Standing Rock Agency. On that day, Commissioner Whipple summarized the government's offer. He promised a house and 160 acres of land for the head of every

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household, a school for every 13 Indian children, and rations for all of Lakota, if they
would sign the agreement. Commissioner Bulis also threatened the headmen with the
following words: “The longer we are delayed here the longer you will be in having your
rations permanently secured to you and if you reject this treaty your rations will be cut off
from this issue.”

On the next day, under continuing threats of starvation, the commissioners and
headmen of Standing Rock Agency met in a long day of council. Gall, Sitting Bull, and
their followers were not present, as they had refused to follow Congress’ order to come to
the agency. John Grass, however, attended the assembly, and was the first Lakota leader
to speak that day. In his opening speech, Grass stated:

You come here from the Great Father to inquire of me about my land. I
will never find another land better than the one I have. . . . I told my
grandfather that I would never leave the land on the Missouri River. . . .
We wish to remain here. . . . I am going to say something that will not
please you before I sign the agreement: I desire to know whether the
commissioners are willing to erase that part of the propositions where you
ask the Indians to go to a strange country [Indian Territory].

Manypenny replied that the government never intended to force the Lakota to go to
Indian Territory without their consent. According to the chairman of the commission, the
government wanted to move them to Indian Territory out of “kindness,” because the
Indians would probably never be able to become self-sufficient tilling the soil on the
Great Sioux Reserve.

Grass then continued with the following words:

The chiefs that are here are going to speak of a country for
difficult it was for Indian scouts to find an equal paying job.

16 Ibid., 6-7. See also “Proceedings of council held at Standing Rock agency, Dakota, October 10, 1876,
between the Indians at said agency and the commission appointed to negotiate with the Sioux,” in
Manypenny Report, 44-46; Worster, Under Western Skies, 126-29.
17 “Proceedings of council held at Standing Rock agency, Dakota, October 10, 1876, between the Indians at
said agency and the commission appointed to negotiate with the Sioux,” in Manypenny Report, 46-47.
themselves. We wish to have the reservation extended to the mouth of the Heart River, to the head of O'Fallen’s Creek, and along a portion of the Little Missouri. . .

I have considered the words you have brought me, and I am ready to answer you. The chiefs you see here have all come to the same conclusion. You have brought words to the chiefs here that will bring life to their children; that will make their children live; they answer how [signifying their approval] to that. And now since they have ceded their country to you, they want to tell you of certain things that they shall want for their families, and people, and children so that they will become self-supporting – the things you have spoken to us about. The affairs at this agency are allotted to a society of Christians. . . . I want them to live in this country and instruct our children. We want wagons that are good wagons, and will last for ten years; and we want some light wagons so that I can ride over the country rapidly. We want cows and bulls for breeding purposes. We want some sheep and hogs. We want mares and stallions for breeding purposes. We want mowing-machines, and large plows; we also want small plows, and cultivators, and harrows. We want yokes of heavy cattle for plowing. I want a house with at least three rooms in it. I want furniture for the house. . . . We have not seen the Great Father and discussed this matter with him. I wish that I could see him and talk these matters over with him. If I could see him, I think he would have a reply for me in regard to these things that I am asking for. I wish when the Great Father buys anything for my people – provisions, annuity, goods, &c. – that he would send me a list of the articles purchased. I want this list to be sent to me every year, for all goods purchased. I also want a copy of this agreement left with me. Is the present President the one that has been buying goods and annuities for the Indian? Are the men that have been our agents here, from time to time, still living? The Great Father has not been respected or obeyed; I have not been respected, I have been abused together with the Great Father. The Great Father thinks I have received all that has been purchased for me, but that which I receive is the smallest part of what has been provided for us. Notwithstanding that I did not receive them, they are mine still; they were all for me, and are still mine, and I expect to get them, and shall look for them. . . . I wish the Great Father would select a physician, a man who is capable of treating sick Indians, and who can cure them, and send him to us. I want a sawyer, a blacksmith, and a man that can work in tin to make pans, kettles, cups, &c. I also want an expert carpenter. I want a trader that will trade with us at the same prices that he trades with the whites, one that will not charge an Indian more than he does a white man. I have a trader here, but he treats me badly. He has a bad way of trading. Tell the Great Father to take him away and send a man in his place who is acquainted with Indians and with Indian ways, a man who can live with the Indians and be their friend. I wish they would send three or four traders. We want you to consider our half-breeds and the white men who are married to our women
as part of our people…

I have reference to Indians who are not here, who are away from the agency, Indians who live according to the Great Spirit's law, and who want to come but cannot. I wish that these last words of mine might be listened to and that I can have another opportunity of sending out to those people. I am telling you of my mind and desires. Those who try to be good and want to be good we ought to give them a chance to speak for themselves, and those that want to be bad should have a last chance to speak for themselves. That is all I have to say.  

After Grass spoke, a number of other Lakota leaders made similar statements and requests to the commissioners. Manypenny promised that all of their requests would be considered in Washington. At that point, 48 headmen and chiefs, including John Grass, signed the treaty. The treaty of 1868 had stipulated that any further land cessions would require the consent of 3/4 of all the adult males that belonged to Indian groups that were a party to that treaty. These few signatures were well below 3/4 of the adult males then living under the jurisdiction of the Standing Rock Agency. The commission then proceeded to the Cheyenne River Agency, and continued to collect a few signatures from chiefs and headmen at all the other Lakota agencies.

Grass' words before the Manypenny Commission demonstrated his realization that his people had to adapt some of the white man's ways in order to survive and to have any chance at prosperity. Therefore, Grass used his skills as a cultural mediator and asked for various farming implements, houses, furniture, livestock, rations, and schools for all of his people. He also requested the government to send carpenters, blacksmiths, tinsmiths, physicians, and farmers to the various Lakota agencies. The chief proclaimed his desire to live on the Missouri River rather than in Indian Territory, and asked the

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18 Ibid., 46-48.
19 Ibid. 54-55; Worster, Under Western Skies, 126-30. See also Manypenny Report, 21-28, which contains a copy of the Manypenny treaty, which lists all the Indians at Standing Rock and the other various Lakota agencies, who signed this agreement.
government to extend the boundaries of the Sioux Reserve. He proceeded to inform the commissioners of his desire to speak with the President about these matters, and of his belief that those Indians not in attendance at the Manypenny council should be able to present their views as well. In sum, Grass signed the agreement because the government threatened to starve the Lakota if they did not sign, and he thought the agreement would enable his people to become self-sufficient and help insure their survival. He also may not have fully understand the full implications of the agreement, for as Donald Worster observes, “there is some evidence that they [the chiefs who signed the Manypenny agreement] were confused about what was happening, they were under heavy threats to yield or go hungry.”

Standing Rock Lakota Are Disarmed

The Battle of the Little Bighorn caused tensions to mount between the government and the Lakota, which caused the U. S. military to seize the arms and ponies of Chief Red Cloud and his Ogallala followers. Many of the Indians peacefully residing at the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River agencies also voluntarily turned in their guns, horses, and mules as a sign of good will towards the government. By November 18, 1876, Lt. Colonel W. P. Carlin, the commanding officer at the Headquarters Post of Standing Rock, confiscated 1400 hundred ponies and mules and all of the guns at Standing Rock. When the government would later demand further land from the Lakota in the 1880s, Gall and Grass would request that their people be reimbursed for the animals taken from them in 1876.


On December 18, 1876, the commissioners submitted the signed agreement and a summary report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. In their report the commissioners expressed much more sympathy for the Indians than their predecessors had. They also concluded that whites had instigated the war, when they observed, "After the most careful examination into the causes of this war, . . . we alone are responsible. The treaty was broken, but not by savages. . . . Have we been uniformly unjust? We answer unhesitatingly, 'yes.'" They ended their report by urging the federal government to ratify and uphold the Manypenny agreement, rather than to repeat another cycle of making and breaking a treaty with the Lakota. In other words, the commission’s report concluded that if the government was going to punish them by seizing their lands, then the government must forever solemnly uphold the Manypenny agreement, and henceforth help them to become self-sufficient and prosperous. The commissioners, like their predecessor, the Allison Commission, recommended moving the Lakota to Indian Territory, where they could learn from other Indians who had already become farmers, and where the soil and climate were more conducive to agriculture.22

Gall and Sitting Bull Seek Refuge in Canada

Meanwhile, the military continued its assault on the remaining Lakota under Gall, Sitting Bull, and Crazy Horse. Most of the Lakota were afraid of further retaliation by the government and reported to the Indian agencies as Congress had ordered after the Battle of the Little Bighorn. Sitting Bull and Gall were left with fewer than a thousand of the most defiant Indians. General Crook and Colonel Nelson Miles persistently harassed

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22 George W. Manypenny to J. Q. Smith, CIA, Dec. 18, 1876, in Manypenny Report, 10-18. See also Worster, Under Western Skies, 126-30.
them even in the winter. Grass participated in this continual campaign as a scout for General Crook. The steady harassment allowed the Lakota no time to hunt or gather food. Sitting Bull’s people were slowly starving and he realized the white soldiers were here to stay. Having few other options, in the spring of 1877, Sitting Bull, Gall, and their followers went north to the Northwest Territories, Canada.23

The Northwest Mounted Police, which had been organized in 1871, enforced the Queen’s law in the Northwest Territories. From Fort Walsh in the Cypress Hills, the police force tried to deal with the problem of the Lakota refugees. The Canadian government believed the United States’ policy towards the Lakota was too harsh, but did not want to damage its relationship with the United States. In any case, the small force of Northwest Mounted Police would have been unable to stop the Lakota from entering Canada. Therefore, the Canadian government decided to allow the Lakota to stay as refugees. At the same time, however, the Canadian government tried to convince the Lakota to return to the United States.24

Major James M. Walsh was the commanding officer at Fort Walsh. Walsh met with Sitting Bull, Gall, and the other Lakota and informed them that the Canadian government would allow them to live peacefully in Canada. Walsh told them they could stay if they did not fight with other Indian tribes in Canada. Walsh further instructed them to obey Canadian law and not to utilize the Northwest Territories as base to launch attacks against the United States, or they would be stripped of their status as expatriates.25

23 Utley, *The Lance and the Shield*, 171-82. John Bourke states that Charging Bear was captured at the Battle of Slim Buttes and served as a scout during the latter part of 1876 under General Crook in *On the Border with Crook*, 391.
During their first year in Canada, Sitting Bull, Gall, and the other Lakota refugees lived peacefully in Canada primarily because there were enough buffalo to sustain them. Large numbers of buffalo roamed over the plains between the Cypress Hills and Wood Mountain. The Lakota killed enough buffalo to last them through the winter and sold the hides to traders at Wood Mountain. The refugees developed a friendship with the Mounted Police who erected East End Post near Wood Mountain to keep watch over the Lakota.26

**John Grass Meets Agent W. F. Hughes**

On February 17 and 18, 1877, W. F. Hughes, Agent Johnston’s successor, interviewed a number of the Blackfeet and Hunkpapa chiefs, including John Grass. Hughes, a Roman Catholic, conducted these interviews to determine the Indians’ current status and to introduce himself formally to the chiefs. During the interview, Grass demanded to know if the government would fulfill its treaty obligations and help the Lakota become self-sufficient farmers and stockmen, when he answered:

> We would like to farm. If you will help us we are willing to farm. I mean all the Blackfeet. We want to farm together at our old place (about fourteen miles south of the Agency on the West side of the river.) We want to plant everything that will grow here.

> If you help us we are willing to work in building houses – every family that wants to live in a house, and all my people would live in houses if they had them.

> We are willing to send our children to school – all are willing (Nearly all of the Chiefs having children, stood up, at the request of the Agent to show that they acquiesced.)

Grass also complained that the government rations were never enough to sustain his people. The Head Chief of the Blackfeet also promised to try and keep his people from joining the “hostile” Lakota. Grass concluded his speech to Hughes, when he declared:

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We stood up when you asked about sending our children to school. Now I want you to tell me true about something and I want you to stand up. I mean about all the questions you have asked – about farming, building houses etc. – (Agent stood up.) Now you make my heart good.

Grass’ first encounter with Hughes further demonstrated how dedicated the chief was to making sure the government fulfilled its pledge to make the Lakota economically self-sufficient. As soon as they introduced themselves to each other, Grass demanded to know if Hughes and the federal government intended to uphold the treaties with the Lakota.27

**Act of February 28, 1877**

In February of 1877, in reaction to the Manypenny commission’s report, Senator Allison introduced a bill in the Senate, which would ratify the agreement obtained by that commission, but would not require the Lakota to move south. President Ulysses Grant signed the “agreement” into law on February 28, even though the land cession violated the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. The Ft. Laramie Treaty had stipulated that any further land cessions would first require the consent of at least ⅓ of all adult males. Only a handful of headmen had signed the Manypenny agreement; therefore, the land cession violated the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. When the president signed the Act of February 28, Dakota Territory assumed jurisdiction over the Black Hills.28

Although far less than ¼ of all adult male Lakota Indians signed the treaty of February 28, 1877, not a single member of Congress raised the question of whether the agreement was acquired unfairly. Furthermore, Congress was silent on how the Lakota

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were suppose to become prosperous farmers in an area that was not well suited to agriculture. Congress also did not address the fact that many of the Indians who had signed were confused and under threats to sign or starve. These issues, however, would be raised repeatedly in years to come. For example, a letter dated April 6, 1918, to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs on behalf of the Sioux Nation, the Northern Cheyennes, and the Arapahos listed the following six allegations against the “agreement” of February 28:

1) That far less than three-fourths of the Indians signed said treaty.

2) That those who did sign the so-called treaty did so under duress and threats from certain officials and and [sic] the fear of being moved to the Indian Territory.

3) That with only one exception said treaty was not read and fully explained in Council.

4) That the chiefs and head men who signed the agreement were not duly authorized by the Sioux Nation to do so as provided in article 12 of the Laramie treaty.

5) That the Arapaho, parties to the treaty or agreement of 1876, many were away hunting at the time and consequently only 5 signatures were obtained.

6) That the Sioux Nation, Northern Cheyennes and Arapaho, allege and contend that the Black Hills country has not been legally ceded to the United States as provided in the article 13 of the Laramie treaty.

The seizure of the Black Hills is important because it left a lasting impression on Gall and Charging Bear, which affected their reactions when the federal government demanded further land cessions from the Lakota in the 1880s.29

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29 Worster, *Under Western Skies*, 126, 128-29. See also Sioux Nation, Northern Cheyennes and Arapahos
Agriculture at Standing Rock

Although the government had pledged to help the Lakota become self-sufficient farmers, in 1877 the Standing Rock Indians lacked the agricultural implements and knowledge to become prosperous cultivators. None of the Indians had plows, and only a few of them had wagons or horses capable of pulling them if they even had one. As a result, they could do very little plowing and had great difficulty harvesting their crops after they matured, and had to rely on insufficient government rations.30

During the spring of 1877, the Indians at Standing Rock plowed 200 acres of old land, and the government broke an additional 600 acres. The Indians also plowed and cultivated 200 acres of the new land, for a total of 400 acres. In addition to their crops, they also cut 100 tons of hay to feed their stock. Due to their large shortage of agricultural machinery, Chiefs John Grass and Two Bears sold their beef hides in order to each buy a mowing machine for their respective bands, thus providing further evidence of Grass' life-long effort to look after the interests of his people. Agent Hughes hoped the two machines would enable the Indians to cut more hay in the following year.31

Throughout the 1870s the War Department officials and Interior Department officials who were stationed at Standing Rock bickered with each other. The interdepartmental problem at Standing Rock was symptomatic of the national dilemma of governing Indians. The War Department was responsible for Indian affairs for many years, but jurisdiction over Indian matters was transferred to the Interior Department in 1849. Although the Interior Department became responsible for Indian affairs, the

necessities of force or threat of force in dealing with Indians had made the Interior Department dependent upon the military. The continual dependence on military force led to confusion of jurisdiction between the two departments and made cooperation the most important element in administrating Indian affairs. Historian Harold Umber observes:

The interdepartmental struggle at Standing Rock in the late 1870's retarded the implementation of programs for Indian assimilation. Indians, caught between the two forces, grew to suspect the government agents and policies because their efforts to adapt to a new way of life were hindered.

The interdepartmental feud at Standing Rock did not end until James McLaughlin was appointed as Indian agent in 1881. McLaughlin cooperated with the War Department, and primarily used the military as a psychological weapon to be utilized only in dire situations.32

Although the interdepartmental problems did retard programs designed to help make the Standing Rock Indians into self-sufficient farmers and ranchers, Grass tried to use this interdepartmental feud to his people's advantage by playing them against one another. Although Grass tended to favor the Interior Department, he did sometimes make complaints to the officers at Fort Yates when the Interior Department's agent failed to address his people's needs. In September of 1877 John Grass and a number of other chiefs went to Lt. Colonel W. P. Carlin, commanding officer at Fort Yates. Upon their arrival, the chiefs issued a number of complaints against Hughes, their agent. They complained that their rations were issued in an unjust manner and that the flour that was given to them was not edible. The chiefs also declared that Hughes treated them in an "uncivil and cross way" and that he "takes beef hides to pay a butcher, while in fact no

31 Ibid.
32 Umber, "Interdepartmental Conflict Between Fort Yates and Standing Rock: Problems of Indian Administration, 1870-1881," 4-13, 34.
one butchers their beef for them.” Grass and his peers further noted that their lands had been improperly plowed and that the agent would not let them sell the wood that they had cut. Last they asserted that Army officers have not “witnessed the receipt of stores arriving for the Indians,” as promised by the Manypenny Commission, before the Black Hills Treaty was signed.33

Hughes, for his part, admitted that many of their complaints were justified. The government issued flour had “for some time past, been very poor,” but Hughes asserted that he had alerted the Commissioner of Indian Affairs of this fact. The agent also stated that the Commissioner had instructed him to confiscate their beef hides. Hughes claimed he had tried his best to help them sell their wood in accordance with the Office of Indian Affairs’ instructions. He also declared that their land was properly broken, but admitted that their rations were “insufficient and does not satisfy them.” Hughes had informed the Interior Department about the problem, but their rations “could not be increased without the action of Congress.”34

On October 1, 1877, John Grass, Head Chief of the Blackfeet, and the head chiefs of the Lower Yanktonais, Upper Yanktonais, and Hunkpapas at Standing Rock requested President Rutherford B. Hayes to reduce the number of chiefs at their agency to 20. They wanted each tribe to have one head chief and four lesser chiefs, in order to gain an audience with Hayes and probably to consolidate their own power as well. At that time, there were 46 chiefs at the agency, which the head chiefs believed was "too large for the

good of our people." The headmen observed that their desire to cut the number of chiefs would please the government. The prevailing policy of the time was to reduce their chiefs and tribal cohesion, in order to make them into independent self-sufficient farmers, therefore their request must have pleased the executive branch. The four head chiefs also requested to go to Washington in order to have an audience with Hayes, so they could discuss and hopefully improve their people's present condition.\(^{35}\)

Three days later, on October 4\(^{th}\), the military delivered approximately 194 cows to the agency and issued them to the Indians. John Grass, Head Chief of the Blackfeet, received 49 of these animals and drove them to his camp, 15 miles south of the agency. He then fed them on hay, which Grass had cut himself at no expense to the government. Grass had learned how to herd cattle and to cut hay for his people's livestock; he adopted these aspects of the Anglo-American culture in order to feed his people.\(^{36}\)

In February of 1878 W. P. Carlin, the commanding officer at the Post of Standing Rock, told U. S. Congressman R. H. Knapp that the charges made against Hughes were all true. According to Carlin, Hughes who was appointed because he was a Roman Catholic was thoroughly dishonest. Although the Catholic Church was responsible for appointing agents at Standing Rock under President Grant's Peace Policy, Carlin even claimed that the Catholic missionaries at Standing Rock preferred any protestant to

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Hughes.\textsuperscript{37}

The missionaries, fathers and sisters of the Benedictine Order continued to run the agency’s two schools. Sixty students attended the two schools, but as many as 150 children would have attended school if there had been enough room and enough teachers for all of them. The failure of the government to provide enough schools and teachers for the Standing Rock Indians violated the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 and the Black Hills Treaty and would force Grass to continue his efforts of ensuring that the federal government fulfill the treaty obligations to the Lakota.\textsuperscript{38}

\textbf{Buffalo Become Scarce in Canada}

In 1878 the scarcity of buffalo in Canada forced Sitting Bull and his followers began to straddle the boundary in search of food. Some of the refugees that ventured into Montana in search of food led raids on other tribes and stole stock from white ranchers. The raids angered both the United States and Canadian governments. As a result, by the summer of 1879, the Canadian government stiffened and increased its efforts to persuade the Lakota to return to the United States.\textsuperscript{39}

\textbf{Grass Requests an Allotment and Builds Houses for the Blackfeet}

On April 5, 1878, Grass wrote a letter to Agent Hughes requesting an allotment in severalty. Article six of the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868 stipulated that any head of an Indian family, who desired to farm, “shall have the privilege to select ... a tract of land within said reservation, not exceeding three hundred and twenty acres in extent,” which would become the property of his family for as long as they cultivated it. In his letter

\textsuperscript{38}Milligan, \textit{Dakota Twilight}, 89-90.
\textsuperscript{39}Utley, \textit{The Lance and the Shield}, 202-213.
Grass observed that he was the head of a family who had decided to farm and requested a 320-acre allotment in severalty, as provided in the Ft. Laramie Treaty. The Ft. Laramie Treaty also provided other various goods to those Indians who decided to take an allotment. Article 8 of the Ft. Laramie Treaty further stipulated that when a family head received lands in severalty:

he shall be entitled to receive seeds and agricultural implements for the first year, not exceeding in value one hundred dollars, and for each succeeding year he shall continue to farm, for a period of three years more, he shall be entitled to receive seeds and implements as aforesaid, not exceeding in value twenty-five dollars.  

Grass wanted an allotment because he wanted to free his family of their dependence on the government's meager rations. The federal government considered allotment one of the key elements to acculturation. Grass knew the Lakota had to adopt the agricultural and stock-raising methods employed by non-Indians in order to survive and in order to have any chance at prosperity, but that did not mean he was ready to abandon the Lakota culture. He simply wanted an allotment so his family could raise their own crops and would receive badly needed farm implements and seeds.

Furthermore, in 1878 there was only about ½ of an acre of land planted for each Indian under the jurisdiction of the Standing Rock Agency. Grass probably thought a 320-acre allotment would enable him to cultivate more land, thereby greatly increasing the ratio of food his family received. Grass believed an allotment would be an important step towards making his family self-sufficient and no longer reliant upon the government's

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In May of 1878 John Grass supervised the construction of fifty houses for the Blackfeet who numbered about 650. At the same time, the Blackfeet also had 200 acres of land that were ready to plant. The 610 Upper Yanktonais also had 160 acres ready to seed, while the 822 Lower Yanktonais had 270 acres ready to plant and 526 Hunkpapas had 170 acres. As discussed in the preceding paragraph, there was only about a half of an acre for each Indian at Standing Rock forcing them to continue to rely on government issued rations. The meager weekly rations were always consumed in five days or less. Therefore, Hughes asked the Interior Department to increase their rations by 25 percent.\textsuperscript{42}

The military had so depleted the timber around the agency that Hughes had to haul in timber from five miles away for firewood and planking. Hughes also warned that, if the soldiers continued to reside at the agency, the Indians would have to travel 10 to 15 miles to obtain wood. As a result, the Secretary of the Interior attempted to work out an arrangement with the military in order to avoid any future possible conflicts, between the two departments, in regard to the timber around Standing Rock. The military, however, continued to use a large amount of firewood, which eventually caused Grass to act as a mediator and issue complaints against the soldiers to the federal government.\textsuperscript{43}

Near the end of July, John Grass had 80 children in his Blackfeet band who


wished to attend school. Therefore, Grass requested that the government uphold the Treaty of 1868 and build a school in his village, about 15 miles south of the agency, so his people's children could learn how to become self-reliant. Again, Grass was willing to adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited the Lakota people, but that did not mean he wanted to adopt the white man's customs and beliefs in a wholesale fashion as the term "progressive" implies.  

Three of the cultural mediators identified in Szasz’s book, *Between Indian and White Worlds The Cultural Broker*, taught school in southeast Alaska. Three female native teachers, Sarah Dickinson, Tillie Paul, and Frances Willard instructed Tlingit and Haida Indians in southeast Alaska in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. According to historian Victoria Wyatt, “their mission was to educate their people about the non-native society that was growing around them and to prepare the coming generation to function and compete successfully in the new system.” As cultural brokers, Grass and Gall supported educating the Lakota children for the same exact reason.  

By the end of August, the Standing Rock Indians had approximately 400 ponies, less than one per family. They also owned 250 Interior Department issued cows. The War Department also gave them 300 cows as compensation for the 2,000 ponies that the U. S. Army had confiscated from them in 1876. The Indians, however, were unsatisfied with both the number and quality of the cows that the War Department had given them. Furthermore, they lacked barns to provide shelter for their stock through the harsh conditions.

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Although John Grass had bought a mowing machine for his people, the Standing Rock Indians were only able to cut 300 tons of hay, which would not sustain their stock through the winter. Their hay cutting implements were still extremely limited and the Indians had no experience using them. Therefore, Hughes requested an appropriation of $5,000 or $6,000 for hay to feed the agency and Indian stock.47

In 1878 Hughes described Grass as "a bright, smart, enterprising person, and deserves to be encouraged." During the summer, Grass built 35 log houses. According to Hughes, the Blackfeet wanted to live in the new homes "as soon as the department furnishes cook-stoves to use in them."48

Due to the numerous charges made against Hughes, on August 30, 1878, President Hayes suspended him "from the office of Agent" at Standing Rock. Hughes was charged with trying to wrest control of Standing Rock Agency from the Interior Department. Hayes' order was sent to Hughes on September 3. Hughes acknowledged his guilt when he submitted his resignation, which was to take effect on September 30, 1878. L. M. Kelly briefly served as agent until Father J. A. Stephan, a Catholic priest, replaced him in October.49

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On September 11, 1878, Grass and three others requested permission to travel to Ft. Berthold for the purpose of securing skins. They intended to make moccasins from the hides for themselves and for their children. Agent W. F. Hughes forwarded their request to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs and recommended that their request be approved because they had "been working well" and do not "leave the agency without permission." Although Grass was forced to live on the reservation and was willing to adopt some aspects of the white man's culture that economically benefited the Lakota, he and his family continued to construct and wear moccasins, which provided evidence that Grass did not replace the ways of the Lakota with American customs and values in a wholesale fashion.50

By September 24, 1878, Grass and his followers began to put roofs on the 50 houses that they were building for themselves. The Blackfeet sawed boards to cover them. Due to the scarcity of timber around the agency, it was difficult to obtain the saw logs. Agent D. M. Kelley also requested authority from the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to buy windows, doors, and 50 stoves for their houses, so they could be occupied during the upcoming winter. The agent also informed the Commissioner that the Lakota had been unable to procure enough hay to sustain their stock through the winter.51

On October 10, 1878, the Acting Secretary of the Interior granted Kelley the authority to purchase doors, windows, and 50 stoves for the houses of Grass' band. He also instructed the agent to buy 50 tons of hay for the agency's stock. Under Grass'

leadership, his band had obtained houses to keep them warm throughout the harsh winters of Dakota. Again, Grass was willing to adopt those aspects of the American culture that benefited the Lakota.52

On December 16, 1878, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs authorized Stephan to establish an Indian police force at Standing Rock. Initially there were 14 Indian policemen, but their number was increased to 30 in July of 1879. Many of them formerly were Akicita, the warrior-policemen of the Lakota. Therefore, the concept of tribal policemen fit within their cultural framework, which made them more acceptable to the Lakota. Furthermore, when an Indian held the office of policeman, it allowed him to redefine himself in a culturally acceptable manner. The police force made sure that the Indians did not leave the agency without permission and acted as messengers. Stephan believed they were the only protection the agency needed and suggested that the U. S. soldiers stationed at Fort Yates could be done away with.53

The next year Grass' followers continued to build more log houses for themselves. Although the Acting Secretary of the Interior had instructed the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to buy them windows and doors in October of 1878, many of their houses were still without windows and doors the following spring. Therefore, in July of 1879 Agent Stephan, under the authority of the E. A. Hayt, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, planned to use money appropriated by the government to buy the needed doors and windows. Stephan also moved some of their 50 original houses in John Grass' village and rebuilt them. By July 29, 1879, the Blackfeet had

53 J. A. Stephan, U. S. Indian Agent, Standing Rock, to CIA, Aug. 21, 1879, in ARCIa, 1879, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 46th Cong., 2d sess., serial 1910, 152-56. See also Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 93. For further
almost finished erecting 60 more new houses. Stephan believed that there was enough money left in the fund to complete all of the homes, including the 32 relocated ones.\textsuperscript{54}

In February of 1879 Stephan proposed a plan to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to build 60 log homes on 80-acre land parcels for the Indians who desired to farm. Stephan presented this plan in order to weaken their band and tribal ties. John Grass' band constructed 50 houses, but in the middle they had erected a dance hall. Several times a week the Indians danced there all night and spoke of their coups bravery in battle. Stephan felt the hall impeded their assimilation and believed individual tracts would help rectify the situation. Although Grass was an agency Indian who had been forced to farm with the government's insignificant help, he was still a Lakota in his heart, and led the Indians at Standing Rock in dances. In other words, he had one foot in the world of the Lakota and one foot in the world of the Anglo-American culture, which has been one of the standard definitions of a cultural mediator.\textsuperscript{55}

In 1879 the Indians only cultivated a small amount of land, which yielded 25,000 bushels of corn, once again insufficient for their population. As a result, Stephan suggested that the Indians plant wheat instead of corn since non-Indian farmers were successfully raising wheat in that part of the country. Stephan hoped wheat would provide the solution to their agricultural woes. He also noted that they still lacked the necessary implements to become self-sustaining farmers.\textsuperscript{56}

\textsuperscript{55} Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 91-92. See also Lewis, "Reservation Leadership and the Progressive-Traditional Dichotomy," 421.
During 1879, 122 family heads agreed to take individual tracts of 80 acres each. The Commissioner authorized that an additional 1,200 acres of land be broken where the Indians had chosen their parcels of land.\(^5\)\(^7\)

Stephan also recommended to the Commissioner that the Standing Rock Indians be issued 2,000 cows and 2,000 calves, so they could build up a large enough herd of beef cattle within six years to become self-sufficient. He wanted 350 head for the Farm School and three for each family, so all of the Indians could learn how to care for cattle.\(^5\)\(^8\)

In 1879 Stephan complained of the lack of timber around the agency. Ever since steamboats were first placed on the Missouri, non-Indians had chopped wood all along the river on the reservation in order to provide fuel for the vessels, which violated the law. Therefore, Stephan suggested that the Indians be granted the sole privilege to chop and to sell wood to the freight boats. He observed, “white men, . . . can seek a new field of labor, while the Indians, confined to the reservation, cannot.”\(^5\)\(^9\)

The Department of the Interior continued to try to destroy their tribal ties when the issuance of rations was altered. Beginning in 1879, rations were given to the head of each family rather than to the chiefs.\(^6\)\(^0\)

In 1879 the Farm School and the boarding school continued to be insufficient for the 2,583 Indians at Standing Rock. Only 15 boys attended the Farm School, which was run by lay brothers, while 50 boys studied under Father Jerome Hunt at the boarding school. About 200 more boys wanted to attend school, but the reservation lacked adequate facilities and teachers. Furthermore, the girls’ school could only house 30

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\(^{58}\) \textit{Ibid.} See also Milligan, \textit{Dakota Twilight}, 92-93.
students, so only about a quarter of the girls, who wished to attend school were able to. The government continued to violate the Treaty of Fort Laramie of 1868 and the Black Hills Treaty, which stipulated that schools would be provided for all of the Lakota. These conditions would eventually cause Grass to speak out.\textsuperscript{61}

The rations issued during the winter of 1879-1880 were once again insufficient. Due to the food shortage, 36 Indians petitioned for the removal of Stephan as their agent. Grass, however, did not sign the petition. According to the 36 Indians, during the last two weeks of December, they suffered "from the want of meat" and "have had nothing but the entrails of the slaughtered cattle . . . and that consequently many of" them became ill.\textsuperscript{62}

During the winter of 1879-1880 and the following spring, John Grass once again became entangled in the continued conflict between the Interior Department's Indian Agent and the commanding officer at Fort Yates. On January 20, 1880, Stephan submitted a signed statement from John Grass, which contradicted General Carlin's accusation that Grass had issued complaints against Stephen. Grass asserted that he and his people never said anything bad about Stephan, and liked him as their agent. Stephan also informed the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that Carlin, the commanding officer at Fort Yates, had been giving the Indians guns and had been allowing them to go off the reservation to hunt, which disrupted their attempts to farm and become stockmen. Furthermore, when Stephan told the Lakota to quit dancing and look after their cattle and crops, Carlin allowed them to conduct their dances within the confines of the military

\textsuperscript{59} Ibid., 93; J. A. Stephan, U. S. Indian Agent, Standing Rock, to CIA, Aug. 21, 1879, in ARCIA, 1879, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 46\textsuperscript{th} Cong., 2d sess., serial 1910, 152-56.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{61} Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 93-94.

Grass and the three other head chiefs at Standing Rock notified the President of their desire to rid the agency of U. S. soldiers in a letter, dated March 10, 1880. The head chiefs complained that the soldiers stationed at Fort Yates used about 4,000 cords of firewood each year and hauled eight to ten saw logs each day from the military's log camp. All of the timber along Missouri River was almost completely depleted to 10 miles north and eight miles south of the Standing Rock Agency. As a result, the chiefs observed, "in a few years we will have not enough wood left, to keep us and our children from freezing or even [for] cooking our meals." They feared that their agency would have to be moved again, due to a lack of timber, which would force them to abandon their farms, houses, and agency buildings. Once again the head chiefs asked the government to reimburse them for the 2,500 ponies that the Army had confiscated from them in 1876. They had been promised a cow for each pony, but, according to the chiefs, they had only received 320 cows so far. According to the chiefs, if the army had given them the cows "when promised," they "would have large herds of cattle now."

Furthermore, the chiefs stated that the soldiers often were "drunk and run after our women, use bad language and only learn us badness. The soldiers cannot civilize us, they need it themselves." Therefore, Grass and the other three head chiefs requested the President to reduce the number of soldiers at the agency from seven companies to one.

They also stated that they did not desire a military agent and were satisfied with Stephan because he "has done more to help us along than all the other agents you ever sent here." Grass tried to use the interdepartmental conflict at Standing Rock to his people's advantage by requesting the abandonment of Fort Yates. Grass mainly wanted the fort closed because the soldiers use a lot of firewood, which made it more difficult for the Lakota to secure firewood for themselves. Grass also probably thought that the closure of the fort would lessen the chance of an armed conflict developing between the Standing Rock Indians and the soldiers stationed at Fort Yates.64

Lt. Colonel W. P. Carlin, commanding officer at Fort Yates, added more fuel to the fire when he made complaints against Stephan. According to Carlin, the Indians thought Stephan was old and ineffective, and desired a military agent. Carlin also accused the agent of withholding rations from the Lakota, "without any good reason whatsoever," resulting in starvation, since they completely depended on the government issued foodstuff. Carlin claimed that they had not received rations "for many months, perhaps a year." The Indians were not allowed to possess guns for hunting unless they obtained special permission. Due to their decrepit condition, Carlin had issued them guns so they could try to hunt game and avoid death.65

In reality the agent did not withhold rations from the Standing Rock Indians, but their shipment to the agency was delayed as usual. In September of 1880 Stephan

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complained about "the manner in which agency goods are shipped." The agent observed:

Supplies are often shipped when the season has so far advanced that navigation is closed, the river ice-bound for months, and the railroad blockaded by snow for many weeks at a time; when this is the case it is utterly impossible to carry goods overland. These goods, so indispensable in the winter time, are consequently left in some railroad depot or warehouse for five or six months. A triplicate bill of lading should be furnished the agent with every shipment. It often happens that one-half of the invoice bill is sent by steamer and the remainder in installments by subsequent boats, perhaps months afterwards.

Neglect in forwarding supplies has caused much uneasiness among agents and has been the means of numerous disturbances between them and the Indians. 66

On about June 9, 1880, John Grass and the other three head chiefs at Standing Rock asked their Acting Agent if they could travel to Washington to speak with the Commissioner of Indian Affairs. The four head chiefs wanted to inform the Commissioner of their present condition and to ask him for help in acquiring "the articles they so much" needed, which obviously included farm implements, stock, larger rations, and additional teachers and schools. They wanted to go to the capital in order to ask the government to fulfill the Black Hills Treaty by helping them become self-sufficient farmers. They also asked to be justly reimbursed for the ponies that the army had taken from them in 1876 and for all of the wood the soldiers at Fort Yates had cut. 67

Throughout 1880 Stephan also recommended that Fort Yates be abandoned. The agent pointed out that Fort Abraham Lincoln was only 51 miles away and could easily be called in if troubles erupted at Standing Rock. Furthermore, Stephan believed that the Indian policemen were sufficient for all emergencies and that the Indians were all

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peaceful. The soldiers also hired and protected contractors to cut about 1000 tons of hay per year to feed the military’s horses, mules, and cows. The contractors cut hay whenever they pleased, forcing the Indians to travel a far distance from their agency in order to cut hay for themselves. As a result, the Indians’ hay crop was extremely poor in 1880. The problem would soon be exacerbated because the Interior Department issued 500 cows to the Indians during the summer, and the Northern Pacific Railroad agreed to give the Standing Rock Indians 2,500 head of cattle to compensate them for the right-of-way for their railway, which was being built from the Missouri to the Yellowstone Rivers.  

In response to the interdepartmental feud at Standing Rock, the Army Quartermaster at Bismarck began to spread a rumor that the garrison at Fort Yates would be reduced to two garrisons. The Quartermaster also hinted that the fort would even be abandoned if the Indian Bureau so desired. The Quartermaster also noted that the primary object was to oust Carlin. When Carlin heard the rumors, he relinquished his command in order to try to save Fort Yates. As a result of the numerous complaints, the Secretary of the Interior ordered the abandonment of Fort Yates, but, in June of 1880 the governor of Dakota Territory convinced the federal government to overturn the order.

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thereby maintaining the military post at Standing Rock.69

On March 2, 1880, while the interdepartmental troubles took place on Standing Rock, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs ruled that religious denominations would no longer have exclusive missionary rights to Indian reservations. As a result, Episcopalian missionaries would soon establish a church and school on Standing Rock and would soon compete with Catholic missionaries at Standing Rock for the Indians' souls.70

While Sitting Bull and Gall continued to seek refuge in Canada, John Grass not only continued to try and farm at Standing Rock, he also helped watch over the agency's stock. He received $30 from the Agent J. A. Stephan for herding the agency's cattle for 62 days in July and August of 1880.71

In 1880 Grass lived south of the agency's headquarters. About 720 Blackfeet then lived within the lands assigned to the Standing Rock Agency. In addition to the Blackfeet, there also were 521 Hunkpapas, 488 Upper Yanktonais, and 882 Lower Yanktonais. At Standing Rock 115 Indians planted individual tracts of land, ranging from 2 to 12 acres each. Grass planted six acres of corn, potatoes, beans, and squashes, on an unfenced parcel of land, located south of the agency. He also cut 25 tons of hay for


70 Rahill, The Catholic Missions and Grant's Peace Policy 1870-1884, 305-8.

71 J. A. Stephan, Indian Agent, Report of Irregular Employes at Standing Rock Agency, For the month ending July 31st, 1880, and Report of Irregular Employees At Standing Rock Agency, For the month ending
his stock. Shield, John Grass' mother, also planted three fields in common with 17 other Indians. The three fields comprised about 267 acres. She and her partners cut 320 tons of hay in common as well. \(^2\)

At the same time, Stephan ordered the agency employees to plant 300 acres of wheat to try to provide support for his recommendation to have the Indians plant wheat, rather than corn and other vegetables, which had been the norm up to that point. According to historian Edward Milligan, the 300 acres averaged about 10 bushels per acre, "at a time when forty to fifty bushels were considered a good crop." The employees also planted 130 acres of oats, which only yielded about 20 bushels per acre, well below the norm for oats. \(^3\)

The school buildings continued to prove inadequate for the needs of the children at Standing Rock. The boys at the Farm School broke and cultivated 110 acres, with about 25 acres in wheat, 30 acres in oats, and the remaining 55 acres in corn and other assorted vegetables. Thirty-six pupils attended the boarding school. The girls' boarding school was moved from Standing Rock to the Farm School, which was located 15 miles south of the agency. According to Stephan, the school was relocated because the soldiers at Fort Yates had constantly visited and annoyed the girls, "with motives of the worst kind." \(^4\)

Although Grass farmed and raised stock, he still embraced the Lakota culture.


\(^3\) Milligan, *Dakota Twilight*, 96-97.
Grass demonstrated his adherence to their culture when he became one of the leaders of the Kiss Dance at Standing Rock. In November of 1880 a number of Indians at the agency introduced the dance to their people. Stephan described the Kiss Dance as “highly immoral in its tendency.” According to Stephan, James H. Stewart, the agency clerk, “reported it as disgusting and very immoral.” Based on its name and their descriptions, the dance must have been charged with sexuality. Stephan thought the dance threatened to impede the assimilation of the Lakota. Therefore, the agent called Grass, one of the most ardent supporters of the dance, to his office, where he told the chief that the Kiss Dance was prohibited. Grass, however, vowed to obtain written permission from the President, which would override Stephan’s ban of the dance. Therefore, the agent asked E. Marble, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs, to send a written order banning the dance so he could show the order to the Indians at Standing Rock.75

**Gall’s Surrender**

At the same time, Gall, Sitting Bull, and their followers continued to live in asylum in Canada. The Canadian government refused to give them any food or aid and the buffalo remained scarce in the Northwest Territories. Due to hunger, Gall broke from Sitting Bull and wished to surrender to the U.S. government. Gall’s attempt to surrender was his first open confrontation with Sitting Bull. Edwin H. Allison, an American scout and interpreter, helped convince Gall to surrender. After talking with Allison on October 26, 1880, Gall returned to Sitting Bull’s camp to try to convince 20 families to surrender.

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Sitting Bull became suspicious and confronted Gall. According to Allison,

Chief Gall, characteristically prompt in action, had leaped into the midst of camp, and publicly called upon all who acknowledged him as their Chief, to separate themselves from the followers of Sitting Bull, and prepare immediately to follow him to Fort Buford.

Historian Stanley Vestal has strongly disputed Allison’s claim that Gall and Sitting Bull argued in Canada and never got along again. Vestal interviewed Hunkpapa eyewitnesses that had no knowledge of this alleged dispute. Furthermore, when Sitting Bull would later arrive at Fort Yates as a prisoner, Gall was the first person to greet and hug him. Contemporary Hunkpapas have also asserted that the two men were never enemies. As Vestal states, “anyone unfamiliar with the constant carping and back-biting which goes on in an Indian camp might have supposed at times that he [Gall] was a mortal enemy of his chief [Sitting Bull]; but it was not so.” Historian Robert Utley has also asserted that Gall and Sitting Bull were close throughout their lives. Allison’s tendency to greatly exaggerate and alter the truth provides further evidence in support of Vestal’s and Utley’s interpretations of the relationship between Gall and Sitting Bull.76

Gall, however, did not end up surrendering so easily. On Christmas Eve, 1880, Gall and Allison went to talk with Major Guido Ilges and five companies at Popular Creek. Ilges tried to strong-arm Gall, and, in turn insulted Gall. The “peace talks” turned into a shouting match. On December 31, Ilges ordered an attack upon the Lakota camp. After the first few shots, Gall held up a white flag and surrendered. On January 2, 1881, Gall convinced 300 Lakota to turn themselves in as well. Sitting Bull and his few

75 J. A. Stephan, U. S. Indian Agent, to E. Marble, Acting Commissioner of Indian Affairs (CIA), November 22, 1880, Letters Rec’d. by the OIA, 1824-1881, M234, RG 75, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1958, roll 852. Unfortunately, no further description of the Kiss Dance was found.
76 Edwin H. Allison, The Surrender of Sitting Bull (Columbus, OH: Walker Lithograph and Printing, 1891), 50-76. See also Vestal, New Sources of Indian History, pp. 246-253; Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 22, 241.

**Conclusion**

Gall’s experiences in Canada forced him to realize that the Lakota would have to live on a reservation and adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture in order to survive. While Gall unsuccesssfully attempted to live on buffalo in Canada, Grass had already reached the same conclusion. Grass signed the Black Hills Treaty because he believed the government would stop issuing badly needed rations to the Lakota if they rejected the agreement. Grass also signed the Black Hills Treaty because he believed the terms of the agreement would ensure the survival of the Lakota people. Grass continued to hunt and to gather food whenever an opportunity presented itself, but he also raised livestock and practiced agriculture at Standing Rock in order to sustain his people. During the late 1870s, Grass asked for a 320-acre allotment, as provided in the Fort Laramie Treaty. He believed an allotment would be an important step towards self-sufficiency for his family and would help free them of their dependence on the federal government. Grass also continued to demand that the government fulfill its treaty pledges to the Lakota and help them become prosperous farmers and ranchers. Grass also wanted the government to provide adequate schools for the Lakota children, so they would be better equipped to compete in the new economic system. As discussed above, three cultural brokers in Margaret Szasz’s book, supported schools for the same reason. Sarah Dickinson, Tillie Paul, and Frances Willard, three native female teachers, taught school to Indians in southeast Alaska in order help them become self-relian in the
economic system that was forced upon them by non-Indians. Although Grass built log houses for the Blackfeet Lakota, he erected a dance hall in the center of his bands' 50 homes, where he led the Lakota in various dances, including the Kiss Dance, which upset the Indian agent at Standing Rock. Grass also served as an Indian scout for the U. S. Army in order to act as a buffer between American soldiers and non-reservation Indians. His role as an Indian scout also allowed Grass to redefine himself within the cultural framework of the Lakota. In sum, Grass continued to adhere to the Lakota culture, but was willing to adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited his people. Despite all of this evidence that Gall and Grass were cultural brokers, they would soon be described in absolute terms as "progressives." Could Gall or Grass, heroic patriots, simply become "white" men, after fighting so hard for the existence of their people for close to twenty years?

Chapter Three: The Edmunds and Dawes Commissions

In 1882 and 1883 Gall adjusted to life on the Great Sioux Reserve. By 1882 Gall had realized that the buffalo were nearly extinct and that further armed confrontations with the U. S. military would only lead to further hardships for the Lakota. Therefore, Gall began to farm in 1882. Gall, like Grass, was willing to adopt American agricultural techniques in order to feed the Lakota people because they had no other practical choice. The two men, however, continued to hunt buffalo when provided with an opportunity. During the summer of 1882, Gall and Grass were members of a large Lakota hunting party. Agent James McLaughlin led the buffalo hunt, which was a huge success. In sum, Gall and Grass acted as cultural mediators when they blended Lakota hunting practices with American farming techniques and government issued rations.

While Gall was adjusting to his new life on the reservation, the federal government began to pressure the Lakota for another land cession. In 1882 the Edmunds Commission presented an agreement to the Lakota. Under the terms of the agreement, the Lakota would cede about half of the Great Sioux Reserve in return for 25,000 cows and 1,000 bulls. When the Edmunds Commission came to Standing Rock, the commissioners did not explain that the proposed agreement required the Lakota to relinquish about half of their reservation. Most of the Indians only thought that the agreement defined the boundaries of the Great Sioux Reserve. The commissioners even threatened to starve the Lakota people if they did not accept the agreement. Furthermore, Bishop Marty told the Standing Rock Indians that God would be upset if they rejected the commissioners' proposal. As a result, many of the male Indians at Standing Rock, including Grass and Gall, rushed up to sign the Edmunds agreement in 1882.
Due to numerous allegations made against the Edmunds Commission, Congress appointed the Dawes Commission in 1883 to investigate the matter. Although Grass and Gall did not act as successful cultural mediators when they signed the Edmunds agreement, their testimonies before the Dawes Commission resulted in positive benefits for their people. They testified that the Edmunds agreement was not fully explained to them before they signed it. Grass observed that the Edmunds Commission did not explain that their proposal required the Lakota to cede more land to the United States. Grass also testified that the Standing Rock Indians were threatened into consenting to the Edmunds agreement. The testimony of Gall, Grass, and other Lakota leaders resulted in a scathing report on the tactics of the Edmunds Commission. The Dawes Report convinced Congress to reject the Edmunds agreement, and also stopped further attempts to break up the Great Sioux Reserve for the next several years.

When the Dawes Commission came to Standing Rock in 1883, Grass also used the occasion to express his people's anger, which was aroused by the government's failure to uphold earlier treaties with the Sioux. He simply wanted the Lakota to have the ability to support themselves and testified before the Dawes Commission that the government had not fulfilled its pledge to make the Lakota self-sufficient. As a result, the Dawes Commission recommended that the federal government help the Lakota to become self-sufficient stockmen, and to give them at least $1,000,000 for their land. In sum, although Grass and Gall did not act as successful mediators when they signed the Edmunds agreement, their testimonies before the Dawes Commission corrected their mistake and had positive benefits for the Lakota people.

**Sitting Bull Arrives and Gall Begin to Farm**
After their surrender, the government assigned Gall and his followers to the Standing Rock Agency, while Sitting Bull and the Indians who had surrendered with him were taken to Fort Yates as prisoners. As discussed earlier, when Sitting Bull arrived at Fort Yates, Gall was the first person to greet and hug him. Three weeks later, the Secretary of War ordered the military to take Sitting Bull and his fellow prisoners down the Missouri River to Fort Randall, a military post, where they were to be held as prisoners of war until the federal government could decide what to do with them.¹

On September 6, 1881, Sitting Bull learned of the Secretary’s order and became furious. Sitting Bull declared that he would rather be killed than moved to Fort Randall. When the news spread, other groups of Indians at Standing Rock also became defiant. Gall and Crow King and their bands threatened to join Sitting Bull in a revolt against federal authorities. However, Colonel Charles C. Gilbert, commander at Fort Yates, was able to separate Sitting Bull and his followers and pushed them up against the river with his troops. The soldiers forced them onto a steamer, which brought Sitting Bull and his fellow captives to Fort Randall, where they lived for the next 20 months.²

Agent James McLaughlin instantly liked Grass and Gall and disliked Sitting Bull. McLaughlin described his first impression of Sitting Bull, when he observed, “It was on the day I arrived to take charge of the agency at Standing Rock, September 8, 1881, that I saw him first. He [Sitting Bull] was a stocky man, with an evil face and shifty eyes.” The agent believed Sitting Bull represented his largest obstacle in the attempt to assimilate the Lakota. When Sitting Bull was killed during the Ghost Dance troubles, McLaughlin described Sitting Bull and with the following words:

¹ Vestal, New Sources of Indian History, pp. 246-253. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 240.
² Ibid., 240-42.
A more lovely landscape, a scene more replete with the suggestion of a holy peace, could not be imagined; and there at my feet lay, stilled forever, the form which had been the tenement of the turbulent spirit of Sitting Bull, who had striven all his life to bar the progress of the white man, who made the setting for this all-pervading peace, while a few rods away stood the dismantled fort built to hold that spirit back.

Crafty, avaricious, mendacious, and ambitious, Sitting Bull possessed all of the faults of an Indian and none of the nobler attributes which have gone far to redeem some of his people from their deeds of guilt. He had no single quality that would serve to draw his people to him, yet he was by far the most influential man of his nation for many years, -- neither Gall, Spotted Tail, nor Red Cloud, all greater men in every sense, exerting the power he did.

McLaughlin summarized his view of Grass, when he declared, “I believe him [Grass] to be the ablest Sioux Indian living.”

McLaughlin’s opinion of Sitting Bull was important because he would serve as Indian Agent at Standing Rock for the next 14 years, a tenure that would help bring some stability to the agency. With the surrender of the last remaining Lakota, the government refused to acknowledge the tribal chiefs. Bureaucrats reasoned that the tribal authority of the chiefs counteracted the then prevailing attempt to assimilate the Lakota. Instead of recognizing and dealing with all of the tribal chiefs, the various Lakota Indian agents appointed a handful of Lakota males as chiefs, men who may or may not have been tribally recognized. McLaughlin and the federal government refused to identify Sitting Bull as a chief, but continued to recognize Gall and Grass as chiefs.

The government’s Peace Policy ended shortly after McLaughlin’s appointment as Indian Agent. McLaughlin was the last Indian Agent at Standing Rock that was

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nominated to that position by the Catholic Church. The practice of allowing religious denominations to chose Indian agents was quickly coming to an end. According to historian Peter J. Rahill, U. S. Senators were putting an end to this practice because they wanted “to regain the patronage of naming Indian agents.” Numerous other factors also caused Congress to end the Peace Policy. During Grant’s administration, complaints against Indian agents continued. A number of the Indian agents that were chosen by Christian denominations were corrupt. Christian denominations also fiercely competed with one another to gain control of Indian agencies, which made it more difficult for the Interior Department to spearhead a united effort in their administration of Indian affairs. The Interior Department also wanted to have the power to promote competent agents from posts of little importance to more significant ones. In other words, according to historian Paul Stuart, the Interior Department wanted to replace religious appointment with “a system of central office control.”

Due to extremely hot weather, grasshoppers, and a succession of intense storms, most of the Indians’ crops at Standing Rock failed. To make matters worse, one-third of their stock had been lost during the severe winter of 1880-81. Agent Stephans noted that most of their surviving crop was used to feed Sitting Bull and his followers who had arrived at the agency “in a very destitute condition.”

About 1,000 of the Lakota who had surrendered in 1881, including Gall, began to cultivate fields in 1882. McLaughlin reported that these 1,000 Lakota “were anxious to possess stock and work-cattle, and with a few ox teams to aid them in farm work next

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spring.” Gall had realized that the buffalo were nearly extinct and that any further military encounters with the United States would only lead to further hardships and starvation. The Hunkpapa warrior, like Sitting Bull, had only surrendered due to starvation. Therefore, Gall, like Grass, had no choice but to farm.7

“The Last Buffalo Hunt”

In the summer of 1882, for the first time in many years, a large herd of buffalo fed on the grasslands at the western end of the Great Sioux Reservation, which were under the jurisdiction of the Standing Rock Agency. The herd consisted of more than half of the then remaining buffalo on the northern Great Plains. The Standing Rock Indians believed that Pte [the buffalo], then near extinction at the hands of hunters, had come to the reserve so he could fulfill his destiny and die to provide them with hides, meat, and sinew. When news of the buffalo reached the agency, McLaughlin realized the futility of trying to stop them from going after the herd. Therefore, the agent suggested to John Grass, Gall, and other Lakota elders that a hunt should be organized at once.8

Grass and Chief Crazy Walking cautioned their people to move slowly. Annie McLaughlin summarized their actions in the following words: “Both men knew that the whites were prone to misjudge the intent of the red man when he went out in force and carrying arms. They reminded their people that it was the Buffalo hunt that led the Sioux to the Little Big Horn.” Grass, Gall, and other headmen then went into council to discuss the matter. They passed and smoked a pipe, each taking turns speaking, and

decided to pursue the herd.9

When Steve Burk and James Stitsell asked McLaughlin to consider the effect that such a proposed hunt would have on the population of the bison, the agent thought that if the Lakota did not kill them, another party surely would. In Bismarck and Miles City, professional white hide-hunters had learned of the large herd, and, like the Lakota, began to organize expeditions. McLaughlin also believed that the Crows would pursue the herd. Annie McLaughlin also noted that her father-in-law “was certain that the buffalo were more numerous than supposed.”10

On the seventh of June, entire families of Indians began to prepare for the hunt. The Indians brought out guns and cleaned them, while the agent distributed cartridges. The best clothes and decorations were brought out. The wives competed with one another in adorning the outfits of the hunters in their families. The ponies and horses received careful attention and were loaded with various supplies and gear.11

A few days later, on the tenth of June, about 800 hunters rode west. The whole entourage, however, totaled between two and three thousand Standing Rock Indians, for women, old men, children, and physically disabled persons also went on the expedition. On June 15th, the agent and a small party of whites caught up with the tribal hunters at their first camp near the junction of Cedar Creek and the Cannon Ball River, about 50 miles west of Ft. Yates.12

When McLaughlin arrived at the camp, he observed that “The buffalo hunt was unquestionably the most important business of the year to the Sioux, and in going into the

9 Ibid.
10 Ibid.
11 Ibid. See also McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 100-1.
hunt an elaborate ceremonial, was indulged by them." He found around 2,000 Indians seated on the ground, arranged in a crescent-shaped body, which opened to the west. The tribal leaders were situated at the south horn of the crescent. Running Antelope, the leader of the hunt, stood at the extreme end. Near him was an altar where eight young scouts sat. He told the scouts of the importance of their hunt, of the need for the meat, and of the joy that would fills their homes if they were stocked with meat throughout the winter.\footnote{12}

According to Annie Goodreau McLaughlin, "Then came Gall, the powerfully built chieftain who spoke seldom and with great dignity." Annie McLaughlin continued summarizing the event when she observed:

After he [Running Antelope] . . . finished [sic] his speech and turned to face Gall, the powerfully built chieftain who led the charge that over-ran Custer. His shirt was open to the waist in the summer sun, and sweat streamed across his barrel chest as he raised his voice in description of the land that lay to the west. He spoke of the breaks that let down into the Grand River.

Carefully he described the one place where a pound could be made. If the herds were found near that place, they should plan on driving them over the cliff. He spoke of the signs by which they would recognize the waters of Hidden Wood Creek, the trickle of Stinking Water Creek and other landmarks which would guide them to where Pte fed on the succulent grasses of June.\footnote{14}

Kills Eagle then walked out to the scouts and instructed them on how to best sneak up to the herd. He also told them to make sure to locate the primary herd. Kills Eagle then returned to his assigned place, and Running Antelope became the center of


\footnote{14} Ibid.
Running Antelope proceeded to light a red pipe, and blew smoke toward the ground, the sky, and to the north. The 8 scouts then each took turns smoking the pipe. When the pipe was returned to Running Antelope, the whole camp became excited and made joyous chants in anticipation of the hunt.

The scouts and Agent McLaughlin then jumped up onto their horses and quickly rode through a gap in the circle. The scouts and agent were escorted some distance before they turned around and raced back to see who could first ride back between the horns of the crescent. Between the horns, three freshly cut bushes were set up about ten yards apart. If the winner of the race failed to topple any of the bushes, the Lakota believed the hunt would be a failure. If the leader knocked over a single bush, it would be a slightly successful hunt, while two toppled bushes would indicate a fairly successful hunt, and three upset bushes meant that they would kill an enormous amount of bison. McLaughlin won the race back to the crescent and managed to knock over all three bushes, which greatly increased his esteem among the Standing Rock Indians.

Two days later, on June 17th, the scouts encountered the main herd, and relayed its location to the main hunting party. Two days later, the party completely surrounded the buffalo and killed all of the animals within the circle they had formed. Annie McLaughlin observed:

Gall showed his ability as a hunter in a charge. He jumped from the back of the horse, even as it was gored [sic], landed on the back of a running cow, then to the ground. As his heels hit the ground he planted his lance in the sticking spot of another young bull, and then ran to the shelter of a

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
17 Ibid. See also McLaughlin, *My Friend the Indian*, 105-6.
Gall also demonstrated his ability as a mediator. During the hunt, two large groups of Indians became engaged in a fight with one another. Some of them took out their guns and threatened to start a real battle. At that point, Gall intervened and confiscated their guns. The chief refused to return their weapons until the two groups became friends once again. William V. Wade, a soldier then stationed at the agency, wrote in his memoirs that Bill Pamphlin “was quite sure if Gaul [sic] had not been there he was quite sure many of the Indians would have been killed.”

On June 17th, the hunters relentlessly killed the animals all day long, without taking any time to butcher them. Approximately 2,000 buffalo were killed that day. At about sunset, the women began to butcher and smoke the meat, while the men continued to kill smaller portions of the herd. This continued until the 19th, when the warriors finally took a rest. McLaughlin was surprised that the Indians restrained themselves even though there still were bison to hunt. They stopped on the 19th when about 5,000 of the animals had been killed because at that point they had ample meat to carry them through

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19 Mr. William V. Wade, personal memoirs, 1925, in Wade, William V., 1850-1927, Ms. Papers, Small Manuscript Collection 20038, North Dakota State Historical Society (NDSHS). This collection only consists of this single item. There is some discrepancy as to when this hunt took place. According to Mr. Wade's memoirs, the “Last Buffalo Hunt by the Sioux” occurred in 1884. In his autobiography, Agent McLaughlin, however, noted that it occurred in June of 1882. Annie Goodreau McLaughlin wrote in her memoirs that “The Last Buffalo Hunt” took place in 1883, only nine months after her father took the office of Indian Agent at Standing Rock. James McLaughlin assumed that position on September 8, 1881 (McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 98), thus making 1882 (11 months later) the correct year of the hunt, rather than 1883, as Annie had mistakenly written. Mr. Wade did not write his memoirs until 1925, long after the “Last Buffalo Hunt,” and probably mistakenly noted in his memoirs that it occurred in 1884. Furthermore, there is no indication in McLaughlin's autobiography or in the Major James McLaughlin Papers, 1855-1937, that McLaughlin, Grass, and Gall ever went together on another buffalo hunt after 1882.
the winter.\textsuperscript{20}

In sum, although Grass and Gall were reservation farmers, they still wanted to practice Lakota hunting rituals whenever an opportunity arose. Gall and Grass were forced to blend Lakota hunting practices with the government’s rations and the white man’s farming techniques, thus providing further evidence that the term “cultural broker” more aptly describes their lives than the term “progressive.” The hunt of 1882 itself was an overwhelming success, but, unfortunately, the buffalo would never again be seen in such numbers on the northern Great Plains.

Although the Indians at Standing Rock successfully raised crops of wheat, oats, and various assorted vegetables in 1882, the total acreage farmed remained small for such a large population. Only 1,400 acres were cultivated to feed the 3,755 Indians at the agency, or about 1/3 of an acre per person. They would have planted more acres in wheat, but the agency still lacked a grist mill.\textsuperscript{21}

The Standing Rock Lakota also continued to suffer from other insufficiencies. Large cottonwood trees on the reservation could have provided building materials for the Indians, but the agency still lacked a saw mill. The agency’s school facilities also continued to be inadequate. The boys’ school was discontinued and the pupils were placed in the industrial farm school. Due to the poor facilities, only 27 students were allowed to attend the farm school. The former boys’ school was expanded a little and converted into a girls’ boarding school, where 35 girls were housed. The girls’ day school provided enough room for another 23 students. The three schools only provided

enough room for about 75 students out of the 763 children between the ages of seven and 16 years at Standing Rock. As Agent McLaughlin declared, "facilities for their education here are entirely inadequate."

**Edmunds Commission**

The clamor to break up the Great Sioux Reservation became a national issue in 1882. Congress and the rapidly increasing white settlers in the Dakotas contended that the Indians could not possibly use, occupy, or improve the vast tract of land that comprised the Great Sioux Reservation. Therefore, in the Sundry Civil Appropriation Act of August 7, 1882, Congress authorized the Secretary of the Interior to negotiate with the Sioux for a modification of the existing treaties and agreements. On September 15, 1882, H. M. Teller, Secretary of the Interior, proceeded to appoint a commission of three men, Newton Edmunds and Peter C. Shannon of Yankton, Dakota, and James H. Teller of Cleveland, with instructions to go to the various agencies to ascertain whether the Sioux would be willing to sell part of their land. According to the provisions of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, any further tribal land cessions required the signatures of 3/4 of the adult males.

H. Price, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, instructed the commissioners that their

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22 Ibid., 105-6.
“object in visiting these Indians will be to ascertain whether they are willing to negotiate for the cession to the United States of any portion of their reservation, and if so, what portion.” Price, however, did not stipulate what the commission should offer them for their land. The CIA also told them that according to the treaty of February 28, 1877 (19 Stat., 254) the provisions of the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868 were to remain in force, except for the changes stipulated in the subsequent agreement. Therefore, the 12th article of the 1868 treaty (15 Stat., 639), which required the consent of at least ¾ of all adult Lakota males, prior to any further land cession, was still in effect. In accordance with the Ft. Laramie Treaty, Price also ordered the commission to procure the consent of at least ¾ of the adult males after presenting them with an agreement for another land cession.²⁴

On October 2, 1882, the commissioners asked H. M. Teller, Secretary of the Interior, if a ¾ majority or better was necessary, since the treaty of 1877, which was only signed by a headmen and chiefs, was ratified by Congress with full knowledge of article 12 of the Ft. Laramie Treaty. The commissioners questioned if the ratification of the 1877 treaty repealed article 12. Teller reviewed the matter, and he determined that the Lakota leaders would suffice, but the CIA also told the commission to secure “as full a representation of each tribe or band as may be possible.”²⁵

The committee offered to buy about one-half of the Great Sioux Reservation for only 25,000 cows and 1,000 bulls. Article I of the Edmunds agreement stipulated that the Lakota cede “all of the Great Sioux Reservation—as reserved to them by the treaty of 1868, and modified by the agreement of 1876—not herein specifically reserved and set

apart as separate reservations for them.” The agreement proposed to create 6 separate reservations for the Lakota and provided a description of the lands for each reservation.

The agreement proposed to make a separate reservation for the Standing Rock Agency Indians and described the boundaries of the reserve in the following words:

Beginning at a point at low-water mark, on the east bank of the Missouri River, opposite the mouth of cannon ball river; thence down said east bank along said low-water mark to a point opposite the mouth of Grand River, thence westerly to said Grand River, and up and along the middle channel of the same to its intersection with the one hundred and second meridian of longitude; thence north along said meridian to its intersection with the south branch of Cannon Ball River also known as Cedar Creek; thence down said south branch of Cannon Ball River to its intersection with the main Cannon Ball River, and down said main Cannon Ball River to the Missouri River at the place of beginning.26

H. M. Teller, the Secretary of the Interior, reasoned:

The consideration for the land ceded consists principally of cattle for purposes of stock-raising, to which the country reserved by the Indians is especially adapted. The raising of stock is the most natural and effective means by which the Indians can aid in their own support, and may also be made an instrument for elevating and improving their general condition.

The sum required for carrying out this agreement is therefore in effect only an advance of capital to the Indians, the returns upon which will eventually relieve the government of a large annual expenditure for their support.27

After obtaining some signatures at the Santee, Pine Ridge, and Rosebud agencies, the commissioners went to the Standing Rock Agency, where 143 Indians, including Gall

and Grass, signed the agreement, on November 30, 1882.\textsuperscript{28}

Again, it appears that the agents of the government did not fully explain the terms of the treaty before Gall and Grass signed. According to the commission’s report, Agent McLaughlin summarized Grass’ actions that day in the following words:

The Indians did not deny signing the agreement, but said they did not fully understand it, and that it was because Bishop Marty advised them to sign it that they did so. John Grass stated that it was his intention to have signed the agreement, but that he wanted to have a fuller explanation of matters and further conditions granted before doing so; but that before he had this bought about there was a rush made by some Indians to sign, then all rushed up and signed without knowing clearly what they were signing.

Historian Robert Utley has also concluded that:

At Standing Rock Edmunds spread confusion, fear, and ultimately panic among the Indians. Convinced of the ultimate benefit of the measure to the Sioux, McLaughlin and Bishop Marty worked for its acceptance. Marty even leaving the impression that failure to sign would displease God. At length John Grass and other rushed to sign. As Grass later explained, “Those men fairly made my head dizzy, and my signing it was an accident.”

Grass also later testified before Senator Henry L. Dawes that the Edmunds Commission never explained to any of the Indians that the agreement stipulated a further land cession.

Historian Edward Milligan has also noted that “the vast majority of the Indians thought it merely set the boundaries of their reservation [Great Sioux Reservation] because of the wording of Article II” and did not comprehend the full implications of the agreement.

Utley came to the same conclusion when he further observed:

Edmunds went beyond the intent of the law... He brought intense pressure to bear, made much of the many advantages to the Indians, and barely mentioned that he was asking them to part with half of their remaining land. They [the Lakota] grew dizzy under the avalanche of words. At each agency the chiefs held out as long as they could, but

\textsuperscript{28} Edmunds Report, 34-42. See also unratified Agreement With the Sioux of Various Tribes, 1882-1883, in Kappler, \textit{Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties}, vol. II, 1065-73; Dawes Report, III.
someone always started a stampede and they lined up to sign.  

**Dawes Commission**

Partially in response to the small number of signatures obtained by the Edmunds Commission, and, partly in response to various allegations made against that commission, the U. S. Senate appointed another committee, under a resolution of March 2, 1883, to investigate the condition of the Sioux in Montana and Dakota Territories. Senator Henry L. Dawes of Massachusetts chaired the commission, while Senators John A. Logan of Illinois, Angus Cameron of Wisconsin, John T. Morgan of Alabama, and George G. Vest of Missouri comprised the rest of the committee. The commission proceeded to visit all of the Lakota agencies, where they primarily focused on the tactics of the Edmunds Commission. Dawes and his fellow commissioners arrived at Standing Rock on August 21, 1883. The senators wanted to talk to the Indians on that day, but Gall stated, “We have come a great way, and at short notice, and we want your gentlemen to tell the agent to give us something to eat.”

Grass and Sitting Bull spoke before the commission on the following day. Grass’s speech shed light upon the ruthless tactics of the Edmunds Commission.

Question [by Senator Dawes]. Were you here last fall when the agreement about your land was made? — Answer [by John Glass (sic)].
Yes, sir.
Q. Did you sign the paper?—A. Yes, sir.
Q. Did you understand what the agreement meant?—A. There was some of it I didn’t understand.
Q. What was there about it you didn’t understand?—A. I understand they made up a great deal of talk after they went away that we didn’t say, and

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29 Newton Edmunds, et al., to Secretary of the Interior (SOI), Dec. 31, 1889, Enclosure No. 4, in Edmunds Report, 64. See also “The Sioux Reservation,” New York Times, 30 March 1886, p. 4, col. 4; Dawes Report, 64-66; Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 257; Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 106-7; Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 42. For a complete copy of the unratified Edmund’s agreement, see Kappler, Indian Affairs. Laws and Treaties., vol. II, 1065-73 or Edmunds Report, 34-42.

they accused us of doing something that was pretty bad.

Q. What did you understand they made up after they went away that the Indians didn't say?—A. We understand they said they had made an agreement with us to feed us for only ten years, and that we had signed the agreement to that effect.

Q. Was there anything else?—A. They said the whole thing was simple, and we understood it when we signed the paper.

Q. Did you understand that you were giving up a part of your reservation to the Government?—A. No, sir.

Q. Did the other Indians understand that they were giving up a portion of the land when they signed the paper?—A. No, sir.

Q. What did you think the agreement about giving up land to the Great Father meant?—A. Those men talked a great deal, and we were bewildered. It was not with willing hearts we signed the paper.

Q. Didn't these men tell the Indians that the paper meant that they should give up a part of their reservation for some cows and bulls?—A. Yes; that is what they told us.

Q. Did the Indians agree to give up apart of their reservation for these cows and bulls?—A. We never said we would give up any of our land and take cows and bulls for it.

Q. Didn't you mean to agree to it when you put your name to the paper?—A. I did not.

Q. What did you mean by putting your name to the paper? What did you suppose you had done?—A. Those men made my head dizzy, and my signing it was an accident.

Q. What did those men say to you to get you to sign the paper?—A. We talked with them about the land they wanted, and they said they would give us cows; and I argued with them because I was looking to the benefit of my people in the future; and I wanted them to keep their land [emphasis added]. When I was talking to them the Indians all at once rushed up from behind me and signed the paper, and everything was so mixed up, I didn't know what I was doing until after I had signed the paper.

Q. Did you expect to have your land and the cows both?—A. No; we wanted nothing but our land.

Q. Which would you rather have, the 25,000 cows or the land?—A. We prefer the land.

Q. What made the Indians behind you rush up to sign the paper if they did not want to give up the land for the cows?—A. The white men talked in a threatening way and the crowd of Indians behind me got frightened and rushed up and signed the paper.

Q. What was the threatening way in which they talked to the Indians?—A. The man for whom we have a higher regard than for any other white man is Bishop Marty; and he stood before us and told us if we did not sign it we might as well take a knife and stab ourselves; the consequences would be equally as bad. That is what frightened the Indians; and he told us,
also, if we did not sign the paper we would be displeasing God. If you were talking for your people, and they got frightened, and committed an act because they were frightened, how could you stop them?

Q. Do you think that is the reason so many Indians at Standing Rock signed the paper?—A. All these men present know that was the reason they went up and signed that paper.

Q. What did the commissioners say to frighten the Indians?—A. They told us they could send us away from here to a different country if they wished to do it. Three men talked in great detail, but I cannot remember in detail all they said.

Q. Did some of the Indians at Standing Rock sign the paper recently?—A. No, sir.

Q. Are any of them willing to sign it to-day?—A. No; we will not sign that paper a second time.

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Q. Would you not be willing to let the United States have some of your land if you could get pay enough for it?—A. We have not offered our land for sale. If any one offers us a suitable price we are all willing and ready to sell some of our land.

Q. Do you think the Sioux can make use of all the land they have now?—A. We know we can't use it all.

Q. Do you think it would be better to let the United States Government have some of it, and take a good many cows for it?—A. I am unable to tell you now what the people think about selling their land.

Q. Do you know about how much the Indians agreed in that agreement to let the United States have; what portion of their land they agreed to give the United States?—A. Of course those commissioners did not know the landmarks, and it seems as if they made a hurried mark across the reservation, regardless of anything, and we do not know the size of the land they cut off.

Q. Were there any Indians at Standing Rock who knew how much land there was in that agreement?—A. I do not believe there is an Indian here who understood it, because those men did not understand it themselves.

Q. Did those white men mark out on paper any part or the land that was in the agreement, that was to be given to the Government?—A. They showed it to us, but we did not understand how it was.

Q. Did the white men mark tell the Indians how much land they were giving up to the United States?—A. I will not say positively, but I am pretty certain they did not say anything about the size of the country the Indians were giving up. [He consults with the other chiefs.] I have asked some of the chiefs around me, and they do not remember hearing the white men say anything about the size of it.

Q. Did they say anything about the valley of the Cheyenne River?—A. They made no mention of it that we can remember.

By Mr. Cameron: . . . Q. If you do not give a part of it [Great Sioux Reserve] to the United States what do you expect to do with it?—A. We want to know what is going to be done about the agreements we made
with the Government in the past, which have never been fulfilled, before we say anything about what we are going to do with our land in the future. Q. What agreements have been made with them that have not been fulfilled?—A. The treaty at Fort Laramie, and the one at Fort Rice. That is what I mean. Some parts of those treaties have never been fulfilled.31

At that point, Black Eye answered Cameron’s question for John Grass. Black Eye recalled that the government had promised to build the Lakota houses, to give each of them chickens, sheep, horses, a cow, a bull, and wagons. The government had built them some houses, but Black Eye complained that they were poorly erected out of pine.32

After Black Eye’s response, Dawes proceeded to question John Grass again. His questions and Grass’ answers were as follows:

Question. Do the Indians expect to keep all their land and not do anything toward taking care of themselves?—Answer. We have been arguing about the boundary lines of our reservation, and we have come here to ask you to make them plain for us.
Q. Would you and your people like to live as white men live?—A. Do you mean that for me personally?
Q. Do you think these Indians?—your friends at this agency here—want to learn how to live as white men live?—A. Yes, sir; they do.
Q. Does each one of them want to have a farm that he can keep everybody else off if he wants to?—A. Of course; that is the way we want to live, but we are not able to do it now.
Q. Would the Indians around Standing Rock like to have the Government help them to be farmers like white me?—Of course we would like to have the Government help us to do this. We are not able to have farms and cultivate them ourselves without help, but we have commenced to plant small fields, and will have to do this until we can take farms of our own [emphasis added].
Q. Do you want the Government at Washington to help you to do that?—A. Yes, sir.
Q. What do the Indians want the Government to do that will help them to have farms for themselves like white men. [Witness consults with the other chiefs.]—A. We want the Great Father to help us with everything that will aid us in becoming farmers.
Q. Would the Indian be willing for the Great Father to take part of what he spends for them now and use it to help them become farmers? [No

31 Ibid., 64-66, emphasis added. The Dawes Report mistakenly referred to John Grass as John Glass.
32 Ibid., 67.
Q. Do you think the Great Father will give the Indians all they want to eat and wear, and still help them to become farmers besides? [No answer.]

In sum, according to the Dawes Commission’s report, the Edmunds Commission did not fully explain the agreement to the Indians. As discussed earlier, the Edmunds Commission did not fully explain to the Indians that the agreement required them to cede almost half of the Great Sioux Reserve and most of the Lakota thought the proposed agreement would only outline the boundaries of the Great Sioux Reserve. Had Grass known the full effects of the Edmunds agreement, he would have never wrote his name on that document, for he truly wanted what was best for his people. In his testimony before the Dawes Commission, Grass also observed that his people would be willing to sell some of their unused land, if the federal government would give them a just price, and help them to become successful farmers and stockmen, so they could fully support themselves, with less interference from the government. Grass was only willing to sell some of their lands because he realized that the Great Sioux Reservation contained more lands than the Lakota could use. The chief also used the occasion to express his people’s anger aroused by the government’s failure to uphold earlier treaties with the Sioux. He simply wanted the Lakota to have the ability to support themselves and used the opportunity to point out that the government had not fulfilled its pledge to make the Lakota self-sufficient.

After Grass spoke, Sitting Bull soon made a long speech to the Dawes Commission. Sitting Bull took a much more aggressive approach than Gall, Grass, or any of the other Indians at Standing Rock. Sitting Bull became enraged when the commission refused to give him more respect than the other Indians. Sitting Bull pointed
out that the Great Spirit had made him a chief and an important man. The holy man, like
the other Lakota who appeared before the commission, criticized the past actions of the
government. Sitting Bull, however, unlike Grass or Gall, did so in an insulting manner.
Sitting Bull told the commissioners, "You have conducted yourselves like men who
have been drinking whiskey, and I came here to give you some advice." [Here Sitting
Bull waved his hand and at once the Indians left the room in a body]." The action of the
other Lakota showed that, for the time being at least, they still respected Sitting Bull as a
chief and a holy man. Their action also demonstrated that McLaughlin was wrong in his
autobiography when he claimed that "Grass, Gall, Crow King, and some of the others . . .
fought Sitting Bull's influence at all times." Although the Standing Rock Indians still
respected Sitting Bill, McLaughlin had appointed Grass and Gall as chiefs, while Sitting
Bull was not a government-appointed chief. The commissioners responded sharply to
Sitting Bull. They stopped him from speaking and refused to listen to him.34

Sitting Bull later apologized for his actions, but he maintained that he was indeed
a chief no matter what the government officials said. As Robert Utley correctly
explained, "It was a pathetic performance lacking the dignity expected of a chief,
inappropriate to the setting. Unlike Gall and Grass, Sitting Bull had not learned how to
address white officials as self-important as he." Grass's tact, grace and ability to speak
English caused the commissioners to listen. His adaptations once again helped his
people.35

Utley, on the other hand, inaccurately claimed, "A few meaningless observations

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33 Ibid., emphasis added.
34 Ibid., 71-73 and 79-82; McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 35.
35 Dawes Report, 79-82. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 258. "Three Noted Chiefs of the
Sioux," Harper's Weekly, Dec. 20, 1890, stated, "Two of the judges are members of the police force, and
had been coaxed out of Grass” before Dawes asked Sitting Bull to speak. Grass’s speech helped the senators realize the deception of the Edmunds Commission, and clearly influenced the conclusions of Senator Dawes. In their final report, which was submitted to the U. S. Senate, the Dawes Commission concluded that the vast majority of the Lakota opposed the treaty, and that the terms of the treaty were not fully explained to them. Furthermore, the commissioners declared that some of the Indians had been entirely misled or threatened in order to obtain their consent, and cited the attached testimonies of Grass, Red Cloud, and others in support of their claims. The Dawes Commission also recommended that the Lakota be fairly compensated for their lands. As a result, the Dawes Commission suggested aiding the Lakota to become self-sufficient stockmen, and to give them at least $1,000,000 for their land. Dawes and his fellow commissioners also implied that the government had violated the Treaty of 1868 when the Black Hills were taken from the Lakota.36

Furthermore, in July of 1883, after hearing testimonies from various Indians and non-Indians who were present at the commissioners’ proceedings at the agencies, Senator Dawes informed the Secretary of the Interior:

1st. That a large part of the Indians were made to understand, not that it was a treaty parting with a large tract of land (11,000,000 of acres), but only a treaty separating the different bands, and conferring title to these bands in separate divisions of the existing reservation.
2d. That at one or two of the agencies the Indians were given to understand that “in the event of their not signing the agreement they should be deprived of homes and farms without compensation, and, if need be, removed by the military.”

As a result, in October of 1883 the Dawes Report convinced Congress not to ratify the Edmunds agreement, and also stopped further attempts to break up the reservation for the third one is John Grass, who, speaks English.”
next several years.37

The Edmunds Commission responded to the Senate’s rejection of their work in December of 1883, when they observed, “the obtaining of the signatures of three-fourths of the adult male Indians, as required, was regarded by us as a work of detail merely.” The commission also noted that their last instructions from the CIA, dated October 3, 1882, told them to ignore article 12 of the Ft. Laramie Treaty, since Congress abrogated said article, when the treaty of 1877 was ratified. Furthermore, the commissioners claimed that the Indians knew the agreement stipulated a land cession. Perhaps, some of the Indians did realize that the arrangement required another land cession, but based on the various testimonies contained in the Dawes Report, none of the Indians had any idea as to the vast amount of land that they would lose, if the treaty was ratified.38

Overall, Grass and Gall acted as successful cultural mediators in 1882 and 1883. They blended Lakota hunting practices with government issued rations and American farming techniques in order to feed their people. Although they acted rashly when they signed the Edmunds agreement, their testimony before the Dawes Commission helped correct their mistake and helped end any further attempts to reduce the Great Sioux Reserve for the next several years.

36 Dawes Report, I-XII. See also Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 258; McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 272-73.
37 Ibid. See also H. Price, CIA, to P. Conchman, La Beau, Dakota Territory, Oct. 4, 1883, in Edmunds Report, 57; H. L. Dawes to H. M. Teller, SOI, July 17, 1883, in Edmunds Report, part 2, serial 2165, 2; Dawes Report, V-VIII.
Chapter Four: Further Adaptation to the Reservation, 1883-1887

From 1883 through 1887, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators and continued to help the Standing Rock Indians adjust to their new life on the reservation. Agent McLaughlin divided the reservation into a number of agricultural districts, which were governed by district farmers. The district farmers were responsible for teaching the Indians within his district how to farm and raise livestock. McLaughlin appointed Grass and Gall to the position of district farmer. As district farmers, Grass and Gall acted as cultural mediators by teaching their people how to farm and to raise livestock. They knew they had to adopt some of the white man’s ways in order to survive. Even Sitting Bull farmed, raised farm animals, and sent his children to school in the early to mid-1880s.

Despite Grass’ and Gall’s noble attempts to teach the Lakota how to farm, the government continued to fall short of its promise to make them into self-reliant farmers. The Indians’ fields also continued to be plagued by droughts and grasshoppers. For example, in 1887 the Indians cultivated less than ½ an acre of land per person, and grasshoppers and drought ravaged their crops. Despite its treaty obligations, the government had still not provided the Standing Rock Indians with enough farm implements to make them self-sufficient, but even if they did have proper equipment, the Indians still would have been cursed with frequent droughts, poor soil, and grasshoppers. In any case, Grass and Gall realized that the United States had failed to help the Standing Rock Indians become self-reliant farmers. Therefore, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators by asking the federal government to provide adequate farm equipment for their people.
Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators by continuing to request additional schools for the Lakota children. They succeeded in persuading Episcopalian missionaries to build St. Elizabeth’s Church with an adjoining rectory on the mouth of Oak Creek in 1885. The next year Grass and Gall moved their bands near St. Elizabeth’s because they hoped that their children would be able to attend classes there. The Episcopalian missionaries, however, did not construct a boarding school there until 1890, but the missionaries would send teachers into John Grass’s camp in order to instruct the Blackfeet and Hunkpapa children. As discussed earlier, Grass and Gall, like other cultural mediators identified in Szasz’s book, *Between Indian and White Worlds The Cultural Broker*, supported schools because they would teach their children how to compete in the American economic system. Although Grass and Gall helped establish St. Elizabeth’s, the school facilities on the reservation were still inadequate to serve the needs of the Indians. The government still had not fulfilled its treaty obligation to provide schools for all of the Lakota. Grass and Gall realized this and would continue to ask the government to establish a sufficient number of schools for the Standing Rock Indians.

During the mid- to late- 1880s, Grass served as a judge on the Standing Rock Court of Indian Offenses, another position that required him to act as a cultural broker. As a judge, Grass heard civil and criminal cases involving Standing Rock Indians. The chief supported the Indian police force and the Court of Indian Offenses because it allowed the Indians to maintain peace and order without the involvement of the U. S. soldiers stationed at Fort Yates. Grass would even ask the government to close Fort Yates because the Indian police and Indian judges made the post obsolete. The chief did
not want the military to maintain order on the reservation because he feared a misunderstanding between Indians and soldiers could lead to disastrous results for the Lakota. Grass also probably realized that the Indians were more likely to get a fair trial before his court than before a federal court with white jurors and white judges. Gall eventually would accept a position as judge for similar reasons.

Although Grass and Gall adopted those aspects of the American culture that benefited the Standing Rock Indians, they still embraced the Lakota culture. For example, Gall knew how to build log houses, but he still continued to build tepees in 1884. Gall also continued to practice polygamy on the reservation. In 1885 McLaughlin ordered Gall to not acquire a second wife, but the Hunkpapa chief took another wife behind the agent’s back. Ironically, polygamy was one of the most common offenses that were brought before the Court of Indian Offenses at Standing Rock. In sum, from 1883 through 1887, Gall and Grass continued to embrace the Lakota culture, while adopting those aspects of the American culture that benefited the Standing Rock Indians. Gall and Grass would continue to follow this path throughout the remainder of their lives.

**Gall and Grass as District Farmers**

In 1883 McLaughlin reported to J. P. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, that “Gall is one of my District farmers and a progressive Indian who was a strong advocate of law and order and on the side of the government.” Standing Rock was divided into twenty farming districts with an Indian farmer in charge of each district. The district farmers and agency employees instructed the Indians in farming on the reservation. The agent also observed, “The late hostile element [meaning Sitting Bull, Gall, and the other ex-refugees of Canada] is . . . locating upon claims, cultivating fields,
building log-cabins, and doing as well as could be expected with the means at their disposal.”

Gall and Grass chose to farm simply because they had no other choice. The previous staple of the Lakota, the buffalo, by then teetered on the verge of extinction. In fact, Gall and Sitting Bull surrendered only because of their desperate starvation. As the Pine Ridge Agent stated in his report for 1881, “His [the Indian] tastes and wants were simple, and easily supplied from the game that was found around him in abundance, and ... the scarcity of this means of living forced him to resort to the agency life.” Furthermore, the annuity provisions in their treaties would eventually expire, which pushed them even harder to farm in order to survive, and the rations given to the Standing Rock Indians were insufficient for their needs. As discussed earlier, Congress also passed legislation on March 3, 1875, which required “all able bodied Indians between the ages of eighteen and forty-five must labor for the benefit of themselves or of the tribe, in order to be entitled to rations.”

Most of the Lakota probably also found it easier to learn how to farm from a district farmer, like Grass or Gall, than to learn from the government-appointed non-Indian farmers at Standing Rock. As historian Louis Pfeller observes, “When such leaders as Gall ... and Grass were seen making hay or hoeing potatoes, other warriors overcame their horror for manual labor.” Mad Bear, a Hunkpapa, also told T.J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, on January 2, 1890, that the Lakota learned nothing

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2 U. S. Indian Agent at Pine Ridge to H. Price, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, Sept. 1, 1881, in ARDA, 1881, House Ex. Doc. no. 1, 47th Cong., 2nd sess., serial 2018, 104-5. See also ARDA, 1890, in ARSOI, 1890, vol. 2, xcv; “Conference With The Sioux Chiefs, Held By Commissioner Morgan In The Office Of
from the white farmers. Mad Bear stated:

If a farmer would have a good field of his own and everything in good shape, the Indians would have a good example to go by. The farmers don't have good fields of their own, and not speaking their language, the Indians can gain no knowledge from them. They go into a field and motion around a little with their hands, and the Indians don't know what they mean.

On the same day, Grass also told Commissioner Morgan that the white farmers were incompetent. Grass continued, “I speak of it because when our young men want a position they are told that they are incompetent, and that somebody else ought to have the position. Some Indians show a good example . . . and should be encouraged to fill these places.” Grass and Gall acted as cultural mediators when they taught their fellow Indians how to farm practice agriculture. They helped their people adopt white farming techniques because they knew the Lakota had to learn how to farm in order to survive. Grass also acted as a cultural mediator when he pointed out that there were some Indians who were more qualified to serve as an Agency farmer than the non-Indians who currently held that position.3

Basically, Gall, Grass, and even Sitting Bull who was allowed to return to Standing Rock after 20 months of imprisonment had to farm or face starvation. With respect to Sitting Bull, in 1883 McLaughlin noted:

Sitting Bull worked with the others, using a hoe, but rather awkwardly, and in two days they had their fields nicely planted. I visited him in the field while at work, . . . and, in reply to the question if he found planting so very difficult he answered, ‘No,’ that he was now determined to become a farmer in earnest.

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3 Pfaller, James McLaughlin: The Man with an Indian Heart, 76. See also “Conference With The Sioux Chiefs, Held By Commissioner Morgan In the Office Of Indian Affairs, January 2, 1890,” 6, in Major James McLaughlin Papers, 1855-1937, Louis Pfaller, ed., St. Paul: Dakota Microfilm, 1968, roll 34.
When Sitting Bull was interviewed in May of 1883, the Hunkpapa medicine man declared that he was happy to farm because the buffalo were dead.4

Despite their valiant efforts, hot weather and a severe drought killed most of the Indians' crops in 1883. The crop failure was not confined to the Great Sioux Reserve, but was general throughout that particular section of Dakota Territory. Due to the continual crop failures at Standing Rock, some experts and a number of religious societies advocated giving large herds of cattle to them in order to make the Lakota self-reliant. While Sitting Bull was imprisoned at Fort Randall, he too advocated stock raising as the best profession for his people. Cattlemen opposed this idea because they wanted to raise their own livestock on Lakota grass. McLaughlin also opposed such measures because "a pastoral life on the western plains is but a small remove from the hunting life of the wild Indian and it will perpetuate that nomadic spirit and love of roaming without any of the comforts of a fixed abode, which an agricultural life ... alone affords." The U. S. Army also preferred to keep the Lakota stationary.5

At a council in February of 1884, Gall, Grass, Sitting Bull, and other various Indians acted as cultural mediators, when they told McLaughlin of their wish for an Episcopalian church and school near the Cannon Ball River. The agency was no longer solely assigned to the Catholic Church, and, Sitting Bull claimed that the "Black Gowns" (Catholic missionaries) had done nothing for his people. Sitting Bull and the others now believed that the "White Gowns" (Episcopalians) "were the best friends of the Indians."  

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5 James McLaughlin to H. Price, CIA, Aug. 15, 1883, in ARClA, 1883, House Ex. Doc. no. 1, 49th Cong., 1st sess., serial 2191, 106. James McLaughlin as cited in Pfaller, James McLaughlin: The Man with an Indian Heart, 74. See also James McLaughlin to Wm. H. Byron, Board of Indian Commissioners, New York City, Dec. 12, 1883, in James McLaughlin, 1842-1923, Papers, untitled file, Box 3, Small Manuscript
The Episcopalian missionaries had in fact already built a small school on the Grand River, but Gall, Grass, and Sitting Bull wanted the Episcopalians to build another school and a church on the Cannon Ball River. As discussed earlier, Grass and Gall wanted the Lakota children to attend school so they would be better equipped to deal with whites and the new economy that was forced upon them. Again, Grass and Gall were willing to adopt those aspects of the white culture that benefited their people.6

In 1884 the Indians were able to plant a total of 1,900 acres, which yielded an excellent harvest. The vast majority of their land was planted in corn because the agency still lacked a grist mill. Gall and Grass were instrumental in this success for they were both district farmers in that year with annual salaries of $30 each. Despite their successful harvest, the government had still not provided the Lakota with proper agricultural equipment, which greatly hindered their attempts.7

Despite Gall’s position as a district farmer, he still embrace the Lakota culture. For example, on December 26, 1884, McLaughlin authorized Gall and his companions to buy 16 teepee poles and materials to decorate the tepees. Although Gall was a district farmer, and knew how to build log-cabins, he still constructed tepees, thus providing further evidence that Gall was a cultural mediator, with one foot in each world.8

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Grass as a Tribal Judge

By 1885 John Grass had become a tribal judge on the Standing Rock Court of Indian Offenses. Prior to Grass’ appointment, the Indian Police had served as the judges. Grass would hold this position until March 31, 1890, when compensation for the judges ceased; thereafter, the tribal police once again served as judges. Gall also eventually served as a tribal judge from 1889 to 1890. Two years later, however, Grass would serve again as a judge on the agency’s court, and held the title of Chief Justice of the Court of Indian Offenses when he died in 1918.9

H.M. Teller, the Secretary of Interior, first authorized Courts of Indian Offenses in 1883. The Secretary allowed the agents to set up the courts as they saw fit. According to historian William Hagan, most of the agents decided to act as judges. The agents also often appointed white underlings or favorite Indians as judges. A small minority of the agents even allowed the Indians to elect their judges. Teller wanted the new courts to end new plural marriages, decrease the influence of old medicine men, and end the destruction of property belonging to dead Indians. In other words, the courts would facilitate the assimilation of Indians. Teller, however, clearly opposed using the Courts of Indian Offenses to end existing plural marriages. The government also hoped that the

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Courts of Indian Offenses would ease the burden on the federal court system.\textsuperscript{10}

McLaughlin began a Court of Indian Offenses at Standing Rock in October of 1883, with sessions held every other Saturday. The court at Standing Rock either imprisoned guilty parties in the guard house at the agency or fined them. If they owned a firearm, the guilty parties had to forfeit it to the court. Without a hunting rifle, McLaughlin thought the Lakota would pay more attention to their farms and cause less trouble. Furthermore, McLaughlin believed they no longer needed guns because the buffalo were nearly extinct. McLaughlin also observed that the Indians greatly respected the court's decisions. For example, in 1889 McLaughlin reported:

In every instance the decision of the court has been sustained by public sentiment, and not a single appeal to higher authority was asked. The three judges of the court are John Grass, head chief of the Blackfeet Sioux band; Chief Gall, of the Hunkpapa band, leader of the progressive element of the late hostile Sioux; and Standing Soldier, of the Lower Yanktonais; all of whom are full blood Indians, eminent among and respected by, their people.\textsuperscript{11}

Historian Edward Milligan asserts that the decisions of these three judges in 1890 proved "they had gone a long way to copy the white man's examples." Gall, Grass, and the Lakota, however, probably preferred to handle their problems on the reservation, rather than to appear before a white judge and jury in the federal court system. Gall and Grass also realized fighting the U.S. government would only lead to more troubles for their people. For example, the December 20, 1890 edition of Harper's Weekly cited Gall as stating, "I think it better for us to live as we are living rather than create trouble, not


knowing how it will end.” A letter written shortly before Wounded Knee by Grass and several other Lakota Indians provides another example. In the letter they stated, “Another thing we also forgot that is to ask your assistance in procuring better salaries for our Police and then we can keep Peace and Order on our reservation without the assistance of the military.” In other words, Grass and Gall thought the tribal police and tribal judges maintained order without military interference, which lessened the chance of an armed conflict between the Lakota and the United States. Gall and Grass acted as cultural mediators when they helped enforce American laws and passed judgement on cases involving Standing Rock Indians. They primarily supported the tribal legal system because it gave the Lakota a limited amount of self-government and decreased the role of the United States military on the reservation.

Gall Desires to Take a Second Wife

According to McLaughlin, “One morning in the year 1885 . . . he [Gall] came to the office and asked for a private interview.” McLaughlin further described Gall’s appearance and action that morning with the following words:

He was a fine, big man, showing in his attitude the pride he had in his chieftaincy and his prowess as a warrior. He was very mysterious in his actions that day, which was the more surprising, in that he was habitually open and even impressive in his carelessness of surroundings. He looked to about to see that we were alone and then said: “Father I have come to have a talk. . . . When you came here we agreed, you and I, that I should come and talk straight when I wanted advice and that we were to be friends. . . . Father, I have changed my habits; I follow the footsteps of the white man, for I know he is wiser than I am and that the Indian way is no longer the way to go. But, my friend, I cannot change my heart. We may catch a bird but we cannot make it change its tune.

Gall continued by observing: "I know that it is not right, for I have said I will be as the white man, and what Pizi [Gall] says, he will do."\(^{13}\)

McLaughlin then lectured Gall on how he had made a promise to the Great Father to only take a single wife, and that his sacrifice would be appreciated. The agent did not use any religious arguments, because as he observed, "There was no use appealing to his religious sensibilities, for Gall held to the Indian code and there was nothing in that to prevent polygamy."\(^{14}\)

When McLaughlin’s speech was over, Gall declared his desire for a single wife, the one he had not yet married. Gall then observed that his then current wife was old and needed a replacement. The chief also requested the agent to divorce them. McLaughlin, however, only had the power to divorce Indians with multiple wives, who desired to divorce all but one of them.\(^{15}\)

McLaughlin noted that Gall paused to think for a moment and declared:

I have promised to go the white man’s way and I stand by my word, but I might not have promised if I thought my heart would sing again at the coming of a woman. I will pay the price of being as white men are.

McLaughlin stated that he “heard no more of Gall’s love-affair,” but the Hunkpapa did eventually take a second wife. Gall divorced this second wife when he was baptized in 1891.\(^{16}\)

\(^{13}\) McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 61-63, emphasis added.

\(^{14}\) Ibid., 63-64, emphasis added.

\(^{15}\) Ibid., 64.

\(^{16}\) Ibid. See William McK. Chapman, ed., Remember the Wind: A Prairie Memoir (Philadelphia and New York: J. B. Lippincott Company, 1965), 210-12, for a review of Gall’s baptism in 1891, whereupon he gave his second wife to another Indian.
McLaughlin’s descriptions of the event properly portrayed Gall as a man who steadfastly embraced the Lakota culture, but who had been forced to adopt the white man's ways. Gall, almost always a man of his word, fell in love with a younger woman, and despite the government’s strong stance against polygamy and McLaughlin’s instructions to not marry her, the chief eventually took her as his second wife. According to Historian Edward Milligan, McLaughlin made Gall a district farmer “because Gall had become submissive.” Gall, however, defied the government and took a second wife, thus proving that he was not a submissive “progressive” as Milligan contends.17

**Agriculture, Religion, Crime, and Education, 1885-1887**

In May of 1885 Bishop Hare of the Episcopalian Church stationed a missionary at St. Elizabeth’s, a newly erected church and rectory, which was located on Oak Creek, about 35 miles south of the agency. Grass, Gall, and Sitting Bull had received their wish for another Protestant mission.18

The Indians at Standing Rock made some strides in farming and stock raising in 1885. They broke an additional 750 acres and cultivated a total of 2,750 acres, which yielded a good harvest primarily consisting of corn. Gall continued to serve as one of the 20 district farmers. Hail, however, destroyed 2/3 of the crops planted within the farm school district. The Indians no longer held any cattle in common, but they still herded with one another without any problems. Their cattle had also naturally increased by 290

head. The Standing Rock Lakota had also purchased twenty additional mowing machines and five rakes in order to procure enough hay for their animals.¹⁹

By February 11, 1886, Gall and Grass had moved their people to St. Elizabeth’s Missionary on Oak Creek so that their children could be instructed there. James McLaughlin noted that Bishop Hare had “an Indian teaching school in the Blackfeet Camp at John Grass’ old place, where Two Packs, one of John Grass’ cousins, lives, and who works hard for them, he being a member of that church.” The Episcopalian missionaries finally erected a day school in the vicinity of St. Elizabeth’s Church on Oak Creek in 1890, where the children in Gall’s and Grass’ bands would attend school. Grass and Gall had successfully acted as cultural mediator by persuading the Episcopalian Church to establish a school for their people near the mouth of Oak Creek. As discussed earlier, Gall and Grass, like three native cultural mediators identified in Szasz’s book, supported schools for Indians because they trained Indians to compete successfully in the new economic system.²⁰

In 1886 the Indians planted about 3,500 acres of land, which largely resulted in another agricultural failure. About 2,000 acres was devoted to corn, while wheat, oats, and various assorted vegetables were planted in the remaining 1,500 acres. Due to

¹⁹James McLaughlin to CIA, August 26, 1885, in ARCIA, 1885, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 49th Cong., 1st sess., serial 2379, 277-78. See also Milligan, Dakota Twilight, 113; Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 256.
drought, extremely hot weather, and hailstorms, the Indians, like most of the non-Indian settlers in that portion of Dakota Territory, lost much of their crops.\textsuperscript{21}

Two government boarding schools, five government day schools, and one mission school operated in 1886. The agricultural boarding school and industrial boarding school only had a combined capacity of 160 students, while the five government days schools had a total capacity of 215 pupils. The mission school on Grand River could house another 40 students. Due to the lack of facilities for the 1,003 children between the ages of six and 16, the schools were often overcrowded. The government had still failed to uphold the Treaty of 1868 and provide adequate facilities.\textsuperscript{22}

In August of 1886 McLaughlin noted that John Grass, "an intelligent Indian who speaks English," and two members of the Indian police force served as judges on the agency's Court of Indian Offenses. The court held bi-weekly sessions in a room at the agency police headquarters. The agent also observed that their:

\begin{quote}
decisions, impartially rendered, have been accepted in all cases the past year without any complaint, except in three instances where an appeal was made, and in two of which a rehearing was ordered upon additional testimony being produced. McLaughlin also requested the Commissioner of Indian Affairs to authorize salaries of $20 per month for the policemen and judges to "add to the usefulness of the court by the increased dignity that such separation would establish."\textsuperscript{23}
\end{quote}

In 1887 the Indians planted 3,500 acres, which was again primarily devoted to corn. The amount of cultivated land still averaged less than one acre per Indian at Standing Rock. Although there was an early drought in May, which reduced the yield of

\textsuperscript{21} James McLaughlin to CIA, August 26, 1886, in \textit{ARCIA, 1886}, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 49th Cong., 2d sess., serial 2567, 305-6.
\textsuperscript{22} \textit{Ibid.} 306-8.
\textsuperscript{23} \textit{Ibid.} 309-10.
their early crops, their later crops developed into an average harvest. Every family cultivated farms ranging from garden patches to 40-acre tracts.\textsuperscript{24}

**Gall Defends Sitting Bull**

In the autumn of 1887, Mr. Sepastian Beck, evidently an early settler on the northern Great Plains, made allegations that Sitting Bull and his followers attacked whites at Deadwood Gulch during the summer of 1875. Beck told the federal government that the Indians also took a white man hostage, and defiled white women. J. D. C. Atkins, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, instructed McLaughlin to investigate the matter.\textsuperscript{25}

After receiving the CIA’s orders, the agent decided to interview Gall who was with Sitting Bull during the summer of the alleged events. McLaughlin summarized the interview in a letter, dated September 3, 1887, to the CIA. McLaughlin described Gall to the Commissioner when he observed, “Gall, who is an Indian more than ordinary intelligence [sic], upright and honest, and was one of the most aggressive hostiles of the Sitting Bull Sioux from 1872 to 1881, but . . . whose word can be strictly relied upon.” Gall told McLaughlin that the allegations were entirely false. McLaughlin also submitted newspapers clippings to the CIA, which contradicted Beck’s statements.\textsuperscript{26}

**Sitting Bull’s Reputation Is Questioned**

A couple of months later, U. S. Indian Inspector E. D. Bannister arrived at Standing Rock. Bannister was surprised to find that the newspaper stories about Sitting Bull were “false in every particular.” When the Inspector visited Sitting Bull’s home, he

\textsuperscript{24} James McLaughlin to CIA, Aug. 26, 1887, in *ARClA*, 1887, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 50th Cong., 1st sess., serial 2542, 130.
met his two wives and eight children, four of whom regularly attended the school at Grand River. According to historian Louis Pfaller, Sitting Bull, like Gall and Grass, “wanted the Indian children to learn how to read and write so they could outwit the whites and gain advantages for the Sioux.” Sitting Bull had 18 head of cattle, four horses, 24 ponies, and various farm implements, including a harness, wagons, and a mower, which he bought with his own money. He used the mower to cut hay to feed his animals through the winter. The Hunkpapa medicine man also plowed seven acres for corn, five for oats, eight for wheat, and two for potatoes and other various vegetables. Bannister also observed that Sitting Bull’s “manner and disposition was submissive and his talk mild and mostly rational.” Bannister’s observations provide further evidence that labeling certain Indians, such as Sitting Bull, as “traditionalists,” and certain Indians, like Gall and Grass, as “progressives,” is an interpretation with serious flaws.27

**Conclusion**

From 1883 through 1887, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators in a number of ways, while trying to help the Standing Rock Indians adjust to their new life on the reservation. As district farmers, Grass and Gall acted as cultural mediators by helping their people learn how to farm and raise livestock. Despite Grass’ and Gall’s attempt to teach the Lakota how to farm, the government continued to fall short of its promise to make them into self-reliant farmers. The government failed to provide the Standing Rock Indians with adequate farm equipment. The United States also failed to provide the Lakota with adequate school facilities. Therefore, Grass and Gall continued

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to act as cultural mediators by asking the federal government to provide adequate farm equipment for their people and to build more schools on the reservation. The two chiefs succeeded to convince the Episcopalian Church to build a school for their bands on the mouth of Oak Creek. As discussed earlier, Grass and Gall, like other native cultural mediators, supported schools because they would teach their children how to compete in the American economic system. Grass' role as a judge on the Standing Rock Court of Indian Offenses also required him to act as a cultural broker. Grass supported the Indian police force and the Court of Indian Offenses because they maintained order on the reservation without the involvement of the U. S. Army. Grass also realized that the Indians were more likely to get a fair trial before his court than before a federal court with white jurors and white judges. Gall eventually would accept a position as judge for similar reasons.

Although Grass and Gall adopted those aspects of the American culture that benefited the Standing Rock Indians, they still embraced the Lakota culture. For example, Gall continued to build teepees and took a second wife in 1885. In sum, from 1883 through 1887, Gall and Grass continued to embrace the Lakota culture, while adopting those aspects of the American culture that benefited the Standing Rock Indians. Gall and Grass would continue to follow this path throughout the remainder of their lives.

Chapter Five: The Sioux Act of 1889

Historians have also misinterpreted Gall and Grass as “progressives” because of their eventual support for the Sioux Act of 1889, which broke up the Great Sioux Reservation into six separate reservations (Pine Ridge, Rosebud, Cheyenne River, Standing Rock, Lower Brule, and Crow Creek). Grass and Gall, however, acted as cultural mediators who consented to the Sioux Bill because they believed it was in their people’s best interest. Grass and Gall correctly feared that the government would take their land with no or little compensation if they did not sign. Both the Crook Commission and Agent McLaughlin warned the Lakota that the government would never offer them a better deal. The Crook Commission also threatened to take their land without compensation if the Lakota rejected the treaty. Furthermore, Grass and Gall remembered that the government had seized the Black Hills without obtaining the consent of ¾ of the adult Lakota males. The two chiefs also wanted the government to help their people truly become self-sufficient farmers and stockmen, and realized that the Sioux Bill was their best chance to reach that goal. The techniques of the Crook Commission gave the Lakota some hope for the future. Furthermore, Grass and Gall knew the government would probably not be able to stop, or would not even try to stop, all of the land-hungry whites from squatting on and/or taking their land if the bill was rejected. Under President Grant, the government did not attempt to keep whites out the Black Hills, which Grass surely remembered. Therefore, Grass and Gall successfully acted as cultural mediators when they signed the Sioux Act of 1889 because that act was the best deal that the government would have ever offered the Lakota for their surplus lands.
Before they signed, Grass also acted as a successful cultural mediator by gaining some additional concessions from the Crook Commission. A “progressive,” on the other hand, would have accepted the government's first offer for their land, while a “traditionalist” would have refused to sell their land for any price.

After they signed the treaty, Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators when they issued various complaints to the commissioners. They asked the government to pay the Standing Rock Indians who served as farmers, judges, and policemen adequate salaries for their efforts. Grass and Gall observed that the Indian farmers worked very hard at teaching the Standing Rock Indians how to farm and to raise livestock. Gall still held the position of District Farmer and continued to act as a cultural mediator by helping Indians learn how to farm and to raise livestock. As discussed earlier, Grass and Gall supported the Indian police and Indian judges because they allowed the Indians to govern themselves without the interference of the U. S. military and federal court system. For these reasons, both men accepted appointments as Indian judges on the Court of Indian Affairs at Standing Rock Agency. Grass also asked the Crook Commission to devise a better method of issuing cattle to the Standing Rock Indians. Overall, Grass and Gall successfully acted as cultural mediators by securing the best price that the government would give the Lakota for their surplus lands. Furthermore, if the Lakota had rejected the Sioux Bill of 1889, the government probably would have taken their land with little or no compensation. Grass and Gall also made the most of the deliberations by presenting the Lakota's needs to the commissioners.

In 1889 and 1890, Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators by persisting to ask the government to uphold the treaties of 1868 and 1877. The treaties obligated the
government to turn the Lakota into self-reliant farmers and ranchers. The Lakota, however, were still far from being self-sufficient in 1889 and 1890. A three-year drought (1887-89) had ravaged their crops. As a result, Grass and Gall continued to try to convince the government to put forth a better effort at making the Lakota self-reliant.

The government also failed to provide adequate school facilities for all of the Lakota children at Standing Rock. As discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, Grass and Gall supported the schools because the educators would teach their children how to better deal with non-Indians. Even Sitting Bull who has been portrayed falsely as the ultimate “traditionalist” favored sending Lakota children to school so they would be better able to deal with whites. After they signed the Sioux Bill of 1889, Grass and Gall were sent as delegates to Washington, D. C. to discuss the additional promises made by the Crook Commission. In Washington they acted as cultural mediators when they asked the government to build more schools for the Lakota so they would not have to send their children to Eastern boarding schools.

In addition to the three-year drought, the Commissioner of Indian Affairs severely cut the beef rations of the Lakota by millions of pounds of meat. Even before the cut in rations, Grass had complained to the Crook Commission that the Lakota had not received the rations as provided in the treaties of 1868 and 1877. The severe ration cut coupled with the three years greatly damped the hope for the future that the Crook Commission had given the Lakota. The Indians suffered from lack of food, but at least they received meager rations. The non-Indians in the area were much worse off because they did not even have the pitiful rations that were issued to the Lakota. This wretched condition made the Lakota ripe for the Ghost Dance movement.
Pratt Commission

The approval of the General Allotment Act, on February 8, 1887, provided people who supported the opening of the Sioux Reserve with the legal basis to fulfill that desire. Senator Henry Dawes sponsored and advocated the bill, hence, it became known as the Dawes Act. Allotment in severalty had been stipulated in a number of treaties with Indians, and a few tribes had already been allotted. Congress intended the Dawes Act to apply the concept to the remaining Indians. The head of each Indian family would be able to apply for a patent for 160 acres of land. The government would hold the patent in trust for 25 years. At the end of the 25-year trust period, the Indian would receive full control over the patented land, and also become a full citizen of the state or territory where he lived. When all of the Indians on a reservation received allotments, or sooner, if the President so deemed, the federal government could negotiate with them for title to their surplus land. Once title passed to the government, the land would be open for settlement under the Homestead Laws. The allotment system had disastrous results for Indians. Between 1887 and 1933, Indians lost 91 million acres of land that had been allotted to them, which equaled 2/3 of all the land owned by Indians in 1887. As a result, 90,000 Indian allottees became landless.¹

The Dawes Act of 1887 caused various parties with interest in Dakota Territory to pressure Congress to negotiate with the Lakota for their surplus lands. Consequently, on

December 12, 1887, Senator Dawes, introduced a bill (S. 1) to divide the Sioux Reserve into separate reservations, and to obtain title to the remaining land. His bill passed both houses of Congress, and, on April 30, 1888 (the Sioux Act of 1888), received the President’s approval. As Utley observed, the act, however, “reversed the order of procedure” established by the General Allotment Act. The Sioux Act of 1888 stipulated that the Lakota’s surplus lands were to be obtained prior to the surveying and allotting of their farm lands.2

The Sioux Act of 1888 offered to buy about 9,000,000 acres of land from the Lakota, and to divide the Great Sioux Reservation into six separate reservations: Standing Rock, Lower Brule, Crow Creek, Cheyenne River, Pine Ridge, and Rosebud, where allotment was to occur at a gradual pace. The Lakota were to receive 50 cents per acre for their land, which would immediately be open to settlement under the Homestead Laws. In return, the Sioux were to receive title to their reservation lands rather than a simple right to occupancy. Moneys derived from the sale of their surplus lands would first be used to reimburse the government for the cost of the act, with all of the remaining funds deposited to Lakota credit in an interest-bearing fund, which was to be expended on educational purposes. The federal government also pledged to maintain the educational benefits stipulated in the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868 for an additional 20 years. As in the Edmunds Commission’s offer, the Sioux Bill of 1888 also offered to give the Lakota 25,000 cows and 1,000 bulls. The government also assured the Lakota that the head of each household and single adults, who took allotments, would received $20 in cash, two milk cows, two oxen, with yoke and chain, a plow, a wagon, a hoe, an

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2 Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation*, 43-45. See also *Congressional Record*, 50th Cong., 1st sess., 1887, 19, pt. 1, 188. For a copy of the Act of April 30, 1888, see 25 Stat., 94, or ARSIA, 1888, in ARSOI,
axe, a harrow, a pitchfork, and sufficient seeds to cover five acres of land for two years.

Section 24 of the Sioux Act of 1888 also stipulated that the act had to be ratified in accordance with Article 12 of the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868. In other words, at least \( \frac{3}{4} \) of all adult Lakota males had to consent to the proposed agreement before it could become a binding agreement.\(^3\)

McLaughlin privately thought that the government offered inadequate compensation, while most whites believed the proposal would benefit the following parties in the following manners: Farmers would be able to buy a farm for only eighty dollars; the Indians would receive a large sum of money for land they did not use; and the federal government would be able to reduce the amount of money it spent supporting the Lakota. Although McLaughlin felt the Sioux Bill was unfair, he was expected to help the Pratt Commission convince the Indians to sign it.\(^4\)

On July 9, 1888, William F. Vilas, Secretary of the Interior, appointed a commission to secure the Lakota's approval of the Sioux Act of 1888. The commission was composed of Captain R.H. Pratt, U. S. Army and Head of the Carlisle Indian School, Reverend William J. Cleveland, of New Jersey, and Judge John V. Wright, of Tennessee, and became known as the Pratt Commission. Pratt had worked with Indians for ten years as the head of Carlisle, an Indian boarding school. The Lakota disliked Pratt, for as Robert Utley noted, they only remembered him as the man, “who had taken their children away to a far-off place from which some never returned.” This combined with the seizure of the Black Hills, the ruthless tactics of the Edmund’s Commission, and the

\(^{3}\) Ibid. See also Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation*, 44-45.

failure on the part of the federal government to uphold various stipulations in existing treaties with the Lakota would cause the Sioux to almost unanimously stand up against the Pratt Commission's offer.⁵

The commissioners first visited the Standing Rock Agency, where a council was opened on Monday, July 23, 1888, which continued through August 21. The Standing Rock Lakota nominated Gall, John Grass, Mad Bear, and Big Head to inform the commission that no one would sign. Pratt and the other commissioners began by explaining the terms of the proposed treaty to the Standing Rock Indians over the course of three full days. On July 27, the commissioner asked the Indians to come forward and respond to their offer.⁶

On that day, Pratt informed the Indians that, in accordance with the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Sioux Act of 1888 would require the consent of ¾ of the Lakota. Grass promptly retorted:

That thing was never done here before. There was only from one to two hundred names on the treaty of 1876, and it is only on this occasion that we have the right to do that. . . . The Black Hills treaty is null and void, then, because there are only two hundred names on the treaty.

Pratt told Grass that in 1876 the Lakota waived that stipulation in the 1868 treaty, in order to conduct the negotiations through their leaders. Pratt also claimed that the vast majority of the Lakota did accept the Black Hills Treaty, since over the last ten years they had accepted rations and other benefits guaranteed to them in that treaty. Grass then declared that the price offered for their lands was too low, and even if the commission

stayed for five months, the Indians would not sign the agreement. The chief also
declared his anger over how the councils interfered with their agricultural pursuits, and
how it threatened to destroy their crops. Shortly after Grass’ initial speech, the council
adjourned until July 30.\(^7\)

According to the July 28 and 29, 1888, editions of the *New York Times*, Gall,
Grass, and the other chiefs refused to sign because they remembered how the United
States took the Black Hills from them with almost no compensation. The Indians also
wondered if the federal government was trying to trick them out of valuable resources
(gold) in the ground again. The July 28, 1888 edition of the *New York Times* cited Gall
as stating, “We must talk slow” because of the past trickery of the federal government. In
fact, one day later the *New York Times* claimed:

> Chief Gall makes the strongest arguments against the treaty. He says
every time a treaty is made it is either misunderstood by the Indians or else
the whites violate it; that unless the Indians stop this foolishness and keep
what lands they have left their children will grow up poor and call their
fathers fools.

Edward Milligan states in his book, *Dakota Twilight*, that by 1883 “Gall had become
submissive.” However, Gall’s above statements hardly appear to be the words of a
submissive.\(^8\)

On July 30 through August 1, the commissioners continued to try and persuade
the Indians to sign. Again, Grass said that 50 cents was too low, and asked for a copy of
the Sioux Bill of 1888, a copy of the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868, and a copy of the Black
Hills Treaty. The chief gave those documents to younger members of the Lakota to

\(^6\) Pratt Report, 56-133.
\(^7\) Pratt Report, 85-86.
examine. After their review of the documents, Gall and Grass told the commissioner that the government had failed to uphold various aspects of both treaties. Grass especially pointed out that the Treaty of 1868 promised to provide the Lakota with schools from 1869 through 1889, but that the government had only provided schools for about the last ten years. Pratt responded when he promised that the government would fulfill all of the assurances in the treaties of 1868 and 1876, if only they would sign the Sioux Bill of 1888. Pratt also told the Standing Rock Lakota that Gall and Grass were misleading their people, and were acting stubborn and foolish.9

Pratt’s accusation aroused Gall, who angrily stood up and declared the following words to Pratt:

A little while ago I made a speech and told you I was through. My friends are afraid of you. You make so many signs with your hands that I am afraid of you. You speak to us just the same as children. You might as well come out and say, Gall, you are a bad man, and Mad Bear, you are a bad man, and John Grass, you are a bad man, and Big Head, you are a bad man. . . . You are keeping us here. You see me as I stand here. I say that I never will touch either one of those papers. The people you see around here have fields of oats, wheat, and pumpkins, and potatoes. Some of them have a great many cattle, and we have left them at home. Some of us have already heard from people who came from our places that some of our fields are eaten up. Who will pay for that?

At that point, Grass, who, like Gall, was a district farmer in 1888, also jumped up and demanded to know if the commission would reimburse them for their losses.10

On the August 2 and 3, Grass, again, mentioned that the government offered too low of a price for their land. During both days the commissioners tried to counter Gall’s

and Grass' earlier statements, and further explained the proposed agreement. The council adjourned near the end of the day on the third.\footnote{Pratt Report, 116-17.}

The commissioners and about 600 Indians reassembled on August 7. For the first time during their meetings with the Standing Rock Indians, the frustrated commissioners began to issue threats. Commissioner Cleveland warned them that if they continued to listen to Gall, Grass, Mad Bear, and Big Head that the Lakota risked losing everything. He also threatened that the federal government might eventually have to send in troops to take their land if they refused to sign the Sioux Bill of 1888. Cleveland also declared, “You do not know the danger you are in. I do not mean danger of war, but I mean danger of the Government taking action that will make you sorry the longest day you live that you refused to take this good offer.” Grass then stood up and asked four times if any one wanted to sign the treaty, but not a single Indian came forward. After Grass sat down, Pratt implied that the government would cut off their rations, unless they signed. The commissioners again asked the Indians to sign, but Grass refuted, “Why doesn’t the Great Father own us, that he keeps asking us these questions? . . . Is he going to throw us away?” Pratt then remarked that the Indians were “throwing themselves away.” The \textit{New York Times} also reported that Judge Wright told them to sign or else the government would take their lands without compensation and scatter them throughout the reservations in the West.\footnote{Pratt Report, 116-17.}

The mounting tension and threats from the commissioners greatly angered Gall. The Hunkpapa warrior stood up and declared, “We are through now. We have gotten entirely through, and have brought this matter to a conclusion in a good humor. We have
spoken to you pleasantly, and we have got much to do at home, and are going home to­day.” Gall signaled the Indians, and a number of them began to leave on horse and foot. McLaughlin, however, rose up and instructed them to wait. Gall and his followers followed his orders and returned to their places. Cleveland proceeded to make a few closing remarks and adjourned the council.13

Apparently, Sitting Bull was upset that the Standing Rock Indians did not select him as one of their four ambassadors to the Pratt Commission. The August 21st edition of the New York Times stated, “Sitting Bull cuts no conspicuous figure at this great pow­wow. He is sullen and defiant, and has nothing to say whatever. His jealousy of Chief Gall is daily becoming more pronounced and it is feared that a serious turn in affairs will be the result.” The commission left Standing Rock with only 22 signatures on August 21, and proceeded to the Crow Creek and Lower Brule agencies.14

Even though the commissioners left Standing Rock, Grass continued to use his influence against them. The September 4th edition of the New York Times stated:

He [Grass] determined, however to oppose it, and since then has been pretty roundly abused in the reports from the conferences. It is true that he was about to leave the Standing Rock Agency without leave in order to influence some of the other agencies against the plan of the commission, his arrest was justifiable.

Grass was willing to go to prison for the sake of his people’s future.15

At Crow Creek and Lower Brule the commission only obtained a total of 364 signatures. As a result, even if the vast majority of the Lakota at Pine Ridge, Rosebud,

13 Ibid. See also Pratt Report, 132.
and Cheyenne River consented to the agreement, the commissioners would still not have secured the needed $\frac{3}{4}$ majority. Therefore, Pratt called all six of the agents and the headmen from each agency to meet at Lower Brule for a council on September 22.\textsuperscript{16}

The council, however, did not assemble until September 24, 1888. Agent McLaughlin, Louis Primeau, interpreter, and 10 delegates, including Grass, Mad Bear, Big Head, and Sitting Bull, represented the Standing Rock Indians. All three members of the Pratt Commission were present as well, but Gall did not attend the meetings at Lower Brule.\textsuperscript{17}

Although Grass and Sitting Bull did not speak before the commissioners at Lower Brule, various other delegates stood up and made various demands. They asked that the price for their land be raised from 50 cents to $1.25, and they also asked if each agency could send another delegation to Washington, D. C., where the matter could be discussed directly with the President and/or the Secretary of the Interior. All 150 delegates showed no signs of relenting, and stood fast against all of Pratt’s threats and persuasions. On September 27, Pratt claimed Congress would not consider raising the price, and that a trip to the nation’s capital would be futile. The Pratt Commission had failed.\textsuperscript{18}

On October 3, 1888, McLaughlin, however, received an order to go to Washington D.C. with fourteen Indians and an interpreter. On October 13, they arrived in D.C. with delegations from all the other Sioux agencies. McLaughlin brought Gall, John Grass, Sitting Bull, Mad Bear, Big Head, Gray Eagle, Fire Heart, Thunder Hawk, Bear’s Rib, Hairy Chin, Two Bears, High Bear, Walking Eagle, and High Eagle with

\textsuperscript{15}\textit{New York Times} 1 Sept. 1888, p. 4, col. 2.
\textsuperscript{16} Utley, \textit{The Last Days of the Sioux Nation}, 47.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid. See also Pratt Report, 13, 196–226.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid. See also Utley, \textit{The Last Days of the Sioux Nation}, 47.
him. The entire delegation of all the Lakota agencies totaled seventy-two men.¹⁹

The October 11th edition of the *New York Times* stated that Grass was among those who had refused to sign because fifty cents per acre was too low. The article quoted Grass as stating:

My reasons for refusing to support the Sioux bill are as follows: The new act offers 50 cents per acre for all the land to be relinquished by its ratification, and this 50 cents per acre is made contingent upon the land being taken by homesteaders, which from the character of the land — it being chiefly adapted for grazing — it is doubtful if ever more than one-third of it could be taken under the homestead laws, and as there is no provision in the act for land not thus taken. Few homesteaders would have the benefit of the large growing ranges without cost, and the Indians would thus receive nothing for such homestead portions. Furthermore 50 cents per acre is inadequate compensation, and $1 per acre clear of all expenses to the Indians would be but a nominal price. Our treaty of 1868, by which we ceded large tracts of country, provides a yoke of oxen and a cow for every family that locates upon land and begins farming, and as soon as certificates of allotment are received each family to receive $100 worth of agricultural implements the first year and $25 a year for the three succeeding years.

We are now nearly all located upon farms and entitled to this, but the Government has not yet made any surveys to enable us to take out our certificates allotment. The same treaty also promises schools and instructors for a period of 20 years, but about 10 years of the treaty had expired before any school or teachers had been given to us. It also promises $10 per year, in such articles as may be deemed most necessary for each person while roaming, and $20 a year for each person who settles upon the reservation, these provisions to continue for a period of 30 years. The treaty of 1876, by which we ceded the Black Hills country, provides for our subsistence for such a length of time as may be required, as, after specifying certain rations agreed upon, it says, such rations or so much thereof as may be necessary, shall be continued until the Indians are able to support themselves; therefore, by the treaties of 1868 and 1876 our ox teams, cows, wagons, agricultural implements, schools, annuity goods and subsistence, are all provided for, and the new act, which contemplates the cession of some 11,000,000 acres of our present reservation, simply offers what is clearly due us and is our right under the existing treaties, with the exception of a loan of $1,000,000 which it proposes to place in the United States Treasury at 5 per cent per annum, on-half of which is to be expended for educational purposes and the other half to be divided pro rata among those interested, which would be about $1 a year for each man and

woman and child.

We are not at all opposed to disposing of any surplus lands we may have if a fair proposition is made to us. We have full faith in the good intentions of the Great Father and his desire to do justice to the Indians, also in the lawmakers, when they know the facts, and we trust to the fair-minded consideration of all good white people in advocating justice and right toward us.

The rumors that the Sioux are liable to resort to arms to oppose the act are totally without foundation. We recognize the power of the Government and now consider ourselves a part of it. We are not so ignorant as we were 10 years ago, and in our present stand simply refuse to have an unfair act forced upon us and we appeal to all good white people to aid us. [This has all the marks of having been copyedited by the newspaper.]

Grass' words demonstrate that he had learned an important lesson from the government’s theft of the Black Hills. Furthermore, he took advantage of the publicity and told his people’s side of the story to the whole world in a New York Times’ interview.20

The large group of Indian delegates caused a lot of commotion in Washington. Reporters and other curious onlookers followed them everywhere. They went to the Smithsonian Institute, where they admired George Catlin’s paintings. When the delegates visited the National Zoo, Grey Eagle tried to buy a monkey.21

The headmen also discovered and happily took part in the then current fad, cigarettes. While the other delegates took big long drags from cigarettes, Sitting Bull smoked a cigar. A senator’s secretary had given him the cigar, which he thoroughly enjoyed.22

When a reporter from The Washington Post met Sitting Bull, he realized that McLaughlin’s depiction of him as an absolute “traditionalist” may not have been altogether accurate. In his article, the reporter observed that Sitting Bull had a house,

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21 Utley, The Lance and the Shield, 275.
land to cultivate, some cattle, and five children, who all attended the schools on the reservation.\textsuperscript{23}

Gall, an extremely large, stout man, who weighed at least 250 pounds, also attracted onlookers. Ironically, Captain Edward S. Godfrey, a former troop commander under Reno, invited Gall to dinner at an sophisticated restaurant. According to Utley, one of the people who attended the dinner declared, "'The big Sioux mogul took to oysters in the shell like a Norfolk oysterman.'"\textsuperscript{24}

On October 13, 15, and 17, 1888, the delegation met in council with William F. Vilas, Secretary of the Interior. The first day largely was preliminary. On October 15\textsuperscript{th}, Vilas asked the Indians to state their views in regard to the Sioux Bill of 1888 and the Pratt Commission's attempt to obtain their consent to the same. Grass stood up and first requested that the government deliver all of the annuities that were provided for the Lakota in the treaty of 1868. Grass also stated that, according to the terms presented by the Allison Commission, the Great Sioux Reserve should be much larger. He pointed to a map and proclaimed that the western boundary of the reserve should be extended, for the government falsely claimed that the Lakota had sold the land located within the proposed extension, in the Black Hills Treaty. Grass also requested that the price for their surplus land be raised from 50 cents to a $1.25 per acre. The chief also observed that the Sioux Bill of 1888 called for allotment in severalty, and allowed the head of each family to take 160 acres of agricultural land, or 320 acres of grazing land. He asked the Secretary to change that part of the bill, so that the entire reservation would be classified as pastoral land. Therefore, when the reservation was allotted, they would each receive

\textsuperscript{23} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid.
320 acres. Grass also requested that the proposed Standing Rock Reservation would be increased from 70 to 90 miles in length. After Grass spoke, various other Indians stood up and issued similar complaints and demands.25

On October 17, the Secretary responded to the delegates' complaints and requests. Vilas explained to the Indians that the Sioux Bill of 1888 was an act of Congress, which the executive branch could not alter. Vilas, however, said, if the delegates so desired, he would try to get Congress to incorporate some of the delegates' demands in another similar bill, and would send another commission to secure the consent of the Lakota. He presented a modified form of the bill, which proposed to raise the price offered for their land, but did not increase it to $1.25. Under the terms of the modified bill, the Lakota would receive $1 per acre during the first three years that the act would be in effect. The Lakota would then receive 75 cents per acre during the fourth and fifth year that the act would be in effect. After five years, the Lakota would only receive 50 cents per acre.26

On October 19, 1888, a majority of the delegates, including Gall, Grass, and Sitting Bull, presented Vilas with the “Majority Report of Sioux Indian Delegation,” which summarized their demands, and responded to the Secretary’s proposed modifications. Although historians have commonly portrayed Sitting Bull as the ultimate “traditionalist,” he was willing to sell the Lakota’s surplus land, but, like Gall and Grass, he wanted at least a $1.25 per acre for all of their extra land. In reality, Sitting Bull was a cultural mediator who farmed, raised livestock, and sent his children to

24 Ibid.
school. If Sitting Bull had been the ultimate “traditionalist,” he would have refused to sell the surplus lands of the Lakota at any price. A “progressive,” on the other hand would have been accepted the government’s first offer for their land, while a cultural broker, like Grass, Gall, and Sitting, would have tried to mediate with the government in order to obtain the best possible price for the Lakota’s surplus land.27

Grass, Gall, Sitting Bull, and the other Indians who signed the Majority Report thanked Vilas for his proposal, but again demanded $1.25 per acre. Their report requested the government to pay for the survey of their lands, and also asked the government to issue all of the annuities guaranteed them in the treaty of 1868. Fourteen delegates also submitted a “Minority Report” to the Secretary, which accepted his modified version of the Sioux Bill. None of the Standing Rock Indians signed the Minority Report.28

Vilas refused to accept the demands made in the “Majority Report” and the Pratt Commission gave up in disgust. Consequently, McLaughlin had to expel a lot of energy in convincing the chairman to provide the delegates with an audience with President Cleveland. The Indians met with Cleveland and returned home.29

The Pratt Commission summarized the events in a scathing report. They chastised the Lakota for not signing a just offer, which would help them become self-sufficient. The commissioners also suggested that the Sioux Reserve be opened to

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26 Pratt Report, 240-47. Pages 246-47 of the Pratt Report contain a copy of the “Modifications of the Act Proposed by the Secretary of the Interior.”
29 Ibid., 280.
settlement without their consent.\textsuperscript{30}

Their report also discussed the failed effort to make the Lakota Indians self-sufficient farmers. During the twenty years since the treaty of 1868, they had been encouraged to grow crops. They were given some agricultural implements and teams. Physicians, carpenters, and blacksmiths were sent to work for them. Farmers were hired to teach them how to raise crops and to fence in their fields. The government also provided schools for some of their children, and rations for all the Lakota.\textsuperscript{31}

The Pratt Commission observed that the 20-year attempt to assimilate the Lakota had “discouraging results.” In 1887 there were 4,545 Indians living under the jurisdiction of the Standing Rock Agency. They only planted 3,500 acres in that year, less than an acre per person. The commission declared, “This is the result of twenty years of effort on the part of the Government at Standing Rock Agency.” The Pratt Commission also agreed with the opinion of the agent at Cheyenne River, who, according to the commissioners believed, “Unless by some means results more in proportion to the expenditure made annually by the Government to assist them in farming are attained . . . efforts to have these Indians cultivate any large areas of land” should cease.\textsuperscript{32}

A couple of months later, McLaughlin sent photographs of the Standing Rock delegates to J. H. Oberly, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, with a brief description of each Indian. He observed that Gall was “A man of great force and character, quick to resent an insult and as ready to acknowledge his own mistakes. His is a progressive and a strong advocate of the new life entered upon by the Sioux.” The agent thought even more

\textsuperscript{30} R. H. Pratt, et al. to Wm. F. Vilas, SOI, Nov. 24, 1888, in Pratt Report, 2-30. See also Utley, \textit{The Last Days of the Sioux Nation}, 47.
\textsuperscript{32} \textit{Ibid.}
highly of John Grass for he stated:

John Grass. Hereditary Head Chief of the Blackfeet Sioux. A statesman in every sense of the term. A ready debater. Is constantly seeking knowledge and enlightenment. Open to conviction by proofs. Is manly and honorable and is the recognized leader of the Indians of the Standing Rock Agency. (I believe him to be the ablest Sioux Indian living).\textsuperscript{33}

\textbf{Agriculture, Livestock, and Justice, 1888}

The Standing Rock Indians made some progress towards fulfilling the United States' desire to turn them into independent farmers and ranchers. They cultivated 4,200 acres under sufficient rains during the whole summer. All of their crops, except corn, developed into fully average harvests. The Standing Rock Lakota also built 85 log cabins, a number of sheds and stables for their livestock, and 10,000 rods of new fence. Their number of cattle naturally increased by 972 to a total of 3,847 head. They also owned 54 American horses and 2,240 ponies.\textsuperscript{34}

John Grass and the two Indian policemen, who served as judges at Standing Rock's court, heard 49 criminal cases during the year. McLaughlin complained that the police force should be independent from the judges since the policemen had to make arrests and bring the alleged parties before the court. He suggested that the most competent men at the agency should be selected as judges and paid an adequate salary for their services in order to "give the court more dignity and relieve the officers of the police force from an embarrassing position." He also recommended giving the judges salaries because they had to hold bi-weekly sessions, which forced them "to travel from 15 to 40


The Crook Commission and the Acts of March 2, 1889

The passage of the Omnibus bill, in February of 1889, placed even more pressure on Congress to open the Great Sioux Reserve up for settlement. Under the terms of the Omnibus bill, North and South Dakota, along with Montana and Washington, were to be admitted as states. Thereafter, senators and congress, rather than mere territorial delegates, would advocate the division of the Lakota Reservation. Furthermore, Benjamin Harrison, a Republican, was elected as President in 1888. Dakota Territory primarily consisted of Republicans, so Harrison was even more committed to obtaining another land cession from the Lakota than his predecessor, Cleveland.36

Congress bowed to the pressure and passed two acts, which were both approved on March 2, 1889. Section three, of the Indian Appropriation Act of March 2, 1889, authorized the President to appoint another committee to secure the best possible agreement with the Lakota, which Congress would then either ratify or reject. The Sioux Act of March 2, 1889, entitled “An act to divide a portion of the reservation of the Sioux Nation of Indians in Dakota into separate reservations and to secure the relinquishment of the Indian title to the remainder, and for other purposes,” stipulated specific terms in a new agreement, which the Lakota had to accept or reject as a whole. The commission was only suppose to negotiate if the Indians rejected the Sioux Act of 1889. Again, the commissioners were instructed that the consent of at least ¾ of the adult males was

required to make the act a binding treaty.\textsuperscript{37}

On May 20, 1889, the executive branch appointed Charles Foster, former governor of Ohio, as the chairman. William Warner, of Kansas City, Missouri, and Major General George Crook also received appointments. Warner and Foster, prominent Republicans, had no previous experience with Indians. Crook, however, was familiar with the Lakota, who called him “Gray Fox.” Crook had fought against them and forced many of the Lakota to surrender in the 1870s. Although Gray Fox’s presence probably brought back bad memories for the Sioux, they trusted him more than most white men.\textsuperscript{38}

The act of March 2, 1889 offered a more liberal proposal than the two previous ones. Many of the written grievances of the delegation to Washington were addressed. For example, under the terms of the Act of 1889, the government offered the Sioux $1.25 for every acre sold to settlers during the first three years, seventy-five cents for the next two years, and fifty cents for any leftover land, rather than the originally proposal of fifty cents per acre. It was reasoned that all of the best land would be selected within the first three years, which is why the price was to be lowered after three years. Under the Sioux Act of 1888, the Lakota were required to reimburse the government for the cost of administrating the surveying and allotting of their land. The Sioux Act of 1889, however, required the federal government to pay for the entire cost. Since the prospect of receiving


land in severalty frightened and upset the Lakota, the Act of 1889 stipulated that the allotment process could not commence on a reservation until a majority of the adult males desired it, and then the head of each family would obtain 320, rather than 160, acres. The family heads would also receive all the benefits offered to them in the Act of 1888 plus an additional $30 to use to improve each of their eventual allotments. The Act of March 2, 1889 also appropriated $28,500 to reimburse Red Cloud’s followers for ponies taken from them by the U. S. Army during the war of 1876.39

Section three of the Sioux Bill also defined the boundaries of the proposed Standing Rock Reservation in the following terms:

Beginning at point in the center of the main channel of the Missouri River, opposite the mouth of Cannon Ball River; thence down the center of the main channel to a point ten miles north of the mouth of the Moreau River, including also within said reservation all island, if any, in said river; thence due west to the one hundred and second degree of west longitude from Greenwich; thence down said South Branch of Cannon Ball River, also known as Cedar Creek; thence down said South Branch of Cannon Ball River to its intersection with the main Cannon Ball River, an down said main Cannon Ball River to the center of the main channel of the Missouri River at the place of beginning.

According to the Crook Commission, there were 2,672,640 acres within the boundaries of this proposed reservation for the 4,016 Indians under the Standing Rock Agency.40

Once again, the majority of the Lakota agreed to stand fast and not sign the agreement. Each agency chose several headmen to inform the commission of their decision to reject proposal. Crook, unlike Pratt, knew how to negotiate with the Lakota. The commission proceeded as if they were completely without time restraints. Enormous feasts were held to ease the Indians’ minds. The commissioners also allowed the Indians to dance, which had been forbidden as an Indian offense since 1883. Crook also played

various factions of the Lakota against one another, and privately met with various Indians in order to obtain signatures.\textsuperscript{41}

At the same time, the threatening and menacing nature of the Edmunds Commission continued to dominate the councils of 1889. Crook, however, was more subtle than his predecessors had been. The Crook Commission realized that the government would probably seize the Lakota’s land with much less compensation if they rejected the Act of 1889. Furthermore, the commissioners also wanted the Sioux to give their consent because the act had the potential to help the Lakota become self-sufficient.\textsuperscript{42}

About two weeks prior to the departure of the commissioners, the May 15th, 1889 edition of the \textit{New York Times} gave a preview of the threats Crook would make, when the newspaper reported:

\begin{quote}
The Indians, Mr. Crook says, realize the fact that the position they now occupy with relation to the Government cannot always remain the same, and that, should they refuse to ratify this treaty, another not so favorable to their interests might be passed, and that, too, without asking their pleasure in the matter or consulting them with regard to its provisions.\textsuperscript{43}
\end{quote}

The Pratt Commission’s experience at Standing Rock convinced the Crook Commission to go first to the Rosebud Agency. They arrived at the later agency on May 31, 1889. When the ban on dancing was lifted there, the Indians returned the gesture when they gave Chairman Foster the name “Young Man Proud of His Tail.” Despite these expressions of good will, the vast majority of the Rosebud Indians opposed the agreement.\textsuperscript{44}

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid. See also Crook Report, 190.
\textsuperscript{41} Utley, \textit{The Last Days of the Sioux Nation}, 49. See also Greene, “The Sioux Land Commission of 1889,” 45-60.
\textsuperscript{42} Utley, \textit{The Last Days of the Sioux Nation}, 49-50.
\textsuperscript{44} Greene, “The Sioux Land Commission of 1889,” 49.
On June 3, the commissioners explained the proposed arrangement at Rosebud. The next day the council assembled again. The Indians asked for more time to make up their minds and expressed fears and concerns shared by many of the Lakota at all six agencies. Many of them feared the allotment system was the government’s attempt to imprison them on fenced-in parcels of land. Some also were against breaking up the Great Sioux Reserve into six separate reservations because such action would disintegrate tribal unity. The complex legal terminology of the agreement confused the Indians and caused them to hesitate. They did not want to give up their current condition for one they could not understand.45

Some of the mixed bloods and squaw men (non-Indians married to an Indian woman) understood and supported the Sioux Bill of 1889, while most of the opposition stemmed from the full bloods, who made up the majority of the Rosebud Indian population. Crook took advantage of this factionalism and used the mixed bloods and squaw men to acquire the support of the full bloods.46

Eventually, most of the full bloods were persuaded to mark the agreement. On June 7, the council reassembled. On that day, Crook chastised the Lakota for primarily living on rations, and for failing to make significant steps towards becoming self-sufficient agriculturists. Crook also promised that the bill would not affect the amount of Government rations to the Lakota, which caused an old Brule Chief, Swift Bear, to change his mind and support the agreement. Other various full bloods also changed their mind, causing a large number of Indians to sign the bill. When some of the more defiant Indians realized over ¾ of the adult males at Rosebud supported the agreement, they

signed as well, for they feared they would not be entitled to the benefits of the agreement unless they placed their mark on treaty. According to historian Robert Larson, the Crook Commission had instilled these fears in the full-blooded Lakota “by implying, in the friendly, low-keyed manner used by all three commissioners, that those who resisted would miss out on all the advantages of those who did not.” The Crook Commission used this same threat at the other Lakota agencies in order to convince the Indians to sign. The commissioners secured 1,455 signatures from the 1,476 adult males at Rosebud, and proceeded to Pine Ridge on June 13.47

After the commissioners left Rosebud, the Bismarck Daily Tribune conducted an interview with Sitting Bull in order to gauge his personal feelings towards the bill. The newspaper noted that Sitting Bull was suffering from heart problems, and probably would not live much longer. Based on past treaties, Sitting Bull distrusted the government and said he would never sign the bill because the whites would only try to fool the Indians out of their land. He, like John Grass and Gall, supported educating his people’s children, so that one day, the Lakota would have the ability to deal with whites. Sitting Bull observed:

> We know nothing of books and the whites have footed us. Now we are approached with another treaty, but us old men will not sign it. We are not able to deal with your people, but in a few years our young men will know how to handle papers. They are going to school and will soon know how to trade with the government.48

Although the Crook Commission succeeded at Rosebud, they faced much sterner opposition at Pine Ridge. That agency consisted of Oglala Lakota who primarily followed Red Cloud. Unlike the Rosebud Indians, the Indians at Pine Ridge had a strong

47 Ibid. See also Crook Report, 43-69, 242-64; Larson, Red Cloud Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux, 258-60.
chief, whose reputation and status were almost mythical. The commission first met with the Pine Ridge Indians on June 15, 1889. On that day, some of Red Cloud’s followers defiantly greeted the commissioners armed and mounted and dressed for battle. The mounted Oglalas tried to disperse the assembled Lakota.49

The council reassembled on June 17. Red Cloud stood fast and expressed his anger over the government’s failure to provide them with all of the goods and services guaranteed to the Lakota in the Ft. Laramie and Black Hills treaties. He defiantly declared, “You want to buy more land, and I looked around to see if I could see any boxes of money that you brought here to buy more land, and I could not see any, and now I think this is the talk of sugar again just as this paper [Black Hills Treaty] was.”50

Again, Crook tried to use mixed bloods and squawmen to try to convince the full bloods that primarily followed Red Cloud, to sign the bill. He also continued to speak with Indians individually. Red Cloud and nearly all of his followers, however, resisted all of Crook’s maneuvers and threats. When the commissioners left the agency, during the last week of June, they had only secured 684 signatures from over 1,500 adult males at Pine Ridge.51

The commission then proceeded to Lower Brule, Santee, Cheyenne River, and Crow Creek, where they used similar tactics, but received mixed results. They secured almost unanimous approval at the Santee Agency, and also obtained the required ¾ majority consent at Lower Brule. At Crow Creek, however, they only secured less than half of the 305 possible votes. Many of the Cheyenne River Indians were angry over the

50 Ibid, 79. See also Larson, Red Cloud Warrior-Statesman of the Lakota Sioux, 258-60.
proposed boundaries for their reservation. The Sioux Act of 1889 made the Cheyenne River the southern boundary, which would prevent the Indians from cultivating the fertile lands along the south bank of the river. A frustrated Crook threatened to call in the military in order to get some Indians to sign, but still fell short of obtaining a $\frac{3}{4}$ majority.52

When the commission arrived at Standing Rock, on July 25, 1889, they required 600 signatures from the 1,121 eligible voters in order to ratify the Sioux Bill. McLaughlin now personally felt that the offer represented the best deal the Indians could hope to acquire. Therefore, he told the commissioners that with a few concessions they should be able to obtain the needed signatures. He told them to promise that Congress would appropriate $200,000 to reimburse the Sioux of Standing Rock and Cheyenne River for the ponies confiscated from them by the U. S. military in 1876. The Sioux bill already provided compensation for the ponies taken from Red Cloud’s and Red Leaf’s followers, but did not mention the Standing Rock and Cheyenne River agencies. Red Cloud’s and Red Leaf’s horses were confiscated, in 1876, in order to prevent them from leaving the reservation. Some of the peaceful Indians at Standing Rock and Cheyenne River also lost ponies, but they had voluntarily given theirs up as a sign of good faith. McLaughlin also told the commissioners to continue the maintenance of the schools for twenty years, as provided in the Ft. Laramie Treaty of 1868, and recommended that they make a few other minor cessions as well in order to secure at least 600 signatures.53

On July 26, the council began at Standing Rock. The first day of council was

53 McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 281-87. See also Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 52.
preliminary. Foster stood up and explained the terms of the Sioux Bill. When he was done, John Grass asked for a copy of the Treaty of 1868 and to give the Indians some time to respond because a flood was delaying some of the Lakota from attending. Grass, distrustful of the government, also asked if his people could have their own stenographer, in addition to the commission's stenographer. Grass wanted to hire a man from Bismarck for the job, who would not be able to come to the agency until Monday. Crook consented and the council adjourned.54

On July 30, the council reassembled, but Grass' stenographer, a newspaper reporter, was unable to come. Therefore, Grass consented to use the report of the government's stenographer for that day. Grass then stood up and opposed the offer in a long speech. Grass asked the government to maintain their schools for twenty full years, as provided in the Treaty of 1868. Although the Head Chief of the Blackfeet noted that the Sioux Bill of 1889 offered more money for their land than its predecessor, Grass complained that they were only to receive $1.25 per acre for the first three years that the land was available under Homestead Laws. He wanted the Lakota to receive $1.25 for all of their land, with no three-year time limit. The old chief also made a number of other less significant complaints, and, like the majority of the Standing Rock Indians, refused their offer. Grass finished and summarized his denouncement when he declared:

I said yesterday that from what I have seen of this act, that there is nothing I have seen there to justify me to put my name there. That I said yesterday, and I say it to-day. I also told you yesterday that my people you see here, they can't for the reason I have mentioned bring their names there and put them on that paper. [Applause.] I don't know how many times you expect me to refuse, but this is the second time that I have refused. If I respect a man and think he is a man, and I ask him to do anything, and if he refuses me, well I think that he has refused and that is sufficient. I don't accuse you of doing that, but the ones that were here

54 Crook Report, 187-94.
last year they did it, and I want to see if you are going to do the same thing as they did, or not. At that time we refused, but they kept us here, and kept us here, and on that account we lost a great deal of our crops, and lost a great deal by it. That is all.55

Grass continued to oppose and complain about the offer when the council met on the following day. He again declared that the government offered too little for their land, for the Lakota no longer possessed vast tracts. Grass also stated:

Your main object in visiting here is to get us to relinquish a certain part of land, and under that is to tell us what road for us to push ourselves forward on, and what road the Great Father wishes us to go on. We try to follow the wishes of the Great Father by following the road he has pointed out, and we have proved that by going out upon the reservation here and trying to farm, and taking up claims. But you have spoken as if we were not trying to follow the road the Great Father has pointed out for us. But we say, that the price that is to be paid for the land is not enough.56

Foster and Crook responded to Grass’ speech with threats. Chairman Foster warned them that the government would take their land, with far less compensation, if they refused to sign. He reminded them that previously a railroad had come through their lands because the government had stepped in and taken control of the lands required for the railway. The government, he explained, had the power to obtain land for public purposes, with or without the consent of the previous owner. Crook also issued threats after Grass spoke. The general declared, “There is one thing almost certain, that Congress will not give you any better terms than it offers you now, if it gives you as good.”57

Grass also used the Catholic Church against the Crook Commission, and the government in general. For example, on July 31, 1889, Samuel A. Dickey, a Roman Catholic, wrote to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs: “John Grass is simply the

56 Ibid., 202-9.
spokesman of the Church in and through half bred Catholics and school teachers who are teaching the superiority of the Pope and Church and the inferiority of our President as well as inferiority of our Government.” Dickey continued, pointing out that the Catholic Church and John Grass severely opposed the opening of the Standing Rock Reservation to settlement. According to Dickey, the Catholic Church believed that the Lakota were not ready for allotment and the sale of their “excess” land to white settlers. In other words, Grass, ever a cultural mediator, used the Catholic Church to protect the interests of his people.\(^5\text{8}\)

According to historian Darcee McLaren, two other cultural mediators, John Thunder and Peter Hunter used the Presbyterian Church in a similar manner. The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) of the Presbyterian Church in Canada hired Thunder and Hunter, two Dakota Indians, to look after their own people in southern Manitoba. McLaren observes:

> However, Thunder and Hunter’s goals and perception of the missionary role were not necessarily those of the FMC. Applying historian Richard White’s (1991) theoretical framework of the middle ground shows that both men used the office of missionary and the symbols of Christianity to communicate their needs to the dominant white society and to achieve their goals on behalf of the Dakota people.

Like Thunder and Hunter, Grass used the power and symbolism of the Catholic Church to protect the interests of his people.\(^5\text{9}\)


\(^5\text{7}\) Ibid., 205-6.


\(^5\text{9}\) McLaren, “Living the Middle Ground: Two Dakota Missionaries, 1887-1912,” 277.
Bull urged the people [Standing Rock Indians] not to give in simply because the commission would not leave, but to push for adjournment so they could get back to their farms.” Sitting Bull’s concern for the Indians’ farms provided further evidence that the term “cultural broker” more adequately describes Sitting Bull than the term “traditionalist.” He too was willing to adopt those aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited the Lakota.60

The council did not meet again until August 3. During the two-day recess, McLaughlin decided to speak with John Grass in private to persuade him to sign the agreement. McLaughlin, who had previously spoken against the Sioux Bill of 1888, wholeheartedly tried this time, because he now felt the Sioux Bill of 1889 was the best agreement that the Indians would ever be offered. The agent sincerely feared the government would take their land with little or no compensation if they refused to consent to the proposed treaty. Based on the government’s past actions and the mounting pressure from settlers desiring the Lakota’s land, McLaughlin’s fears were justified. McLaughlin’s family also had interests in the proposed agreement, for his wife, Louise, and their children and grandchildren were mixed-blooded Lakota Indians. McLaughlin spoke to Nick Cadotte, Grass’ brother-in-law, to arrange a meeting with the chief. Grass, however, did not want to meet the agent at Cadotte’s house because the chief’s followers were closely watching him. Therefore, on August 2, Grass met McLaughlin at an empty building.61

The agent told Grass that it was time for both of them to recede from the position

they held the previous year. He also warned that Congress probably would pass the bill, whether or not the ¾ majority was achieved, and that Congress might open the reservation without their consent. McLaughlin knew Grass would be afraid of losing face if he reversed his stance before the other Indians. Therefore, he suggested that the chief obtain all he could for his people by demanding a number of cessions, which would also allow Grass to change his position in a graceful manner. McLaughlin achieved his goal and convinced the chief to support the bill. The agent also spoke with Gall, Mad Bear, and Big Head, also chosen by the Standing Rock Indians as their representatives, and successfully persuaded them as well.62

On August 3, the council reconvened, and Grass was the first Indian to speak. He instantly began to demand various concessions from the Crook Commission. Grass wanted the proposed boundary line between Cheyenne River and Standing Rock to be moved five miles south, which would increase the area of the Standing Rock Reservation. He asked the commissioners to reimburse the Standing Rock Indians for the ponies they had voluntarily turned over to the U. S. Army in 1876. Crook thought their request was just and promised to ask Congress to reimburse them for their animals. Grass also made the commission guarantee that all of the provisions of the previous treaties would be continued, and that the money used to fulfill those treaties would not come from the interest-bearing fund offered to them in the Sioux Bill. Grass also asked the commissioners to define and survey the western edge of the proposed Standing Rock Reservation, so that non-Indians would not be able to trespass on the reserve. Grass feared non-Indian settlers would try to squat on their reservation and/or bring their stock onto the reservation to feed if the boundaries were not surveyed. Commissioner Warner

62 Ibid. See also Utley, Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 226-28.
then observed that the Sioux Bill of 1889 provided an appropriation of $100,000 to 
survey their boundaries, so whites would not be able to trespass and would be expelled by 
their agent.\textsuperscript{63}

On August 5, after gaining additional concessions and additional guarantees from 
the Crook Commission, Grass came forward and signed the treaty. The vast majority of 
the Standing Rock Indians, including Gall, followed their elected representative, Grass, 
and signed as well, while Sitting Bull and some of his followers futilely tried to stampede 
them to stop them from signing. Sitting Bull, however, was not the ultimate 
"traditionalist." As discussed earlier, Sitting Bull was willing to sell their surplus lands, 
but he the Lakota to receive more money for their lands than the Crook Commission 
offered. Many of Sitting Bull's followers, however, deserted him because they knew that 
opposing the U. S. government would only bring them more hardships. Even White Bull, 
Sitting's Bull nephew and adopted son, signed, which enraged Sitting Bull. Despite 
Sitting Bull's efforts, the commissioners believed they had secured the required 
signatures.\textsuperscript{64}

On August 6, the commissioners called one last council to bid the Indians 
farewell. Grass stood up and explained why his position had changed. He stated:

My friends, the treaty you have brought here and presented I 
differed with you at first. I knew I was not strong enough to keep up this 
difference between you and I, and then I looked for the best word for my 
people, and that is the reason I did what I did. And also to-day I think I 
have done the best for myself.\textsuperscript{65}

\textsuperscript{63} Crook Report, 209-17. 
\textsuperscript{64} Ibid., 209-17, 297-308. See also Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 225-28; Greene, "The Sioux 
Land Commission of 1889," 65; "Chief John Grass Was Orator, Judge, Shining Example For All," 
Superior Wisconsin Telegram, 25 May 1918, in Major James McLaughlin Papers, 1855-1937, Louis 
York Times, 4 Sept. 1888, p. 4, col. 6, states that Sitting Bull wanted to run White Bull off of the 
reservation for signing the agreement. 
\textsuperscript{65} Crook Report, 213-17.
Grass then complained about the government’s beef rations. The government, he said, would soon bring them live cattle, which were supposed to sustain them for entire year. But, over the winter, the animals lost significant weight. When they were killed, however, the Indians were issued rations according to the cattle’s weight when they were received at the agency. As each winter progressed, the Indians received smaller and smaller rations, and about half of the meat was lost. Grass asked, “Do you think that is right or not? I don’t think it is.” Foster agreed that it was wrong.66

Grass then offered some suggestions to rectify the problem in the following words:

The beef that is put in here for a year they should put in enough to last until spring, when they should get some more, and let the contractor take care of his beef, and bring up the weight; and if he don’t he will be the loser, and then will only get paid for the number of pounds of beef there is in the spring. This has been carried on here for many years, and I think the Great Father has paid for many pounds of meat we did not receive. I calculated to say something about it here in council; but we were excited, and it slipped my memory, and I wished to mention it now.67

Grass also spoke about the Indians, who served as police, judges, and farmers at Standing Rock. Grass, a judge of the Indian Court of Offenses at Standing Rock, summarized the beneficial effects of such men when he observed:

I wish to speak next about our police force here, and also in regard to the judges. I also want to mention the district farmers that have positions here, that is, the employes [sic]. [Great applause.] There are three Indians on the reservation here that hold the position of judges, to show the Indians, and learn them the right ways and civilize them as much as possible, and I am one of them. Inside of the boundaries of our reservation, those men you see standing there are our policemen, and they take care of everybody inside of our reservation, and see that they behave themselves. The district farmers I speak of have to go around and have a certain district to go and look after and see that the Indians take care of his
fields, and see that the will raise good crops. **These three positions I speak of, whenever a man holds a position of that kind, they help our people** [emphasis added], and show them in the road that is right.

Gall, a district farmer, also stated, “I wish their [the Indian employees’] pay would be increased, as I am one of them myself. [Laughter.]” The Hunkpapa warrior reasoned, “The work that we are assigned to do is to go out in the hottest weather and look after the crops in our district, and it is very hard work.”

Grass and Gall also made a few other minor requests to the commissioners. Crook told the Indians that they did not have the power to change the Sioux Bill, but that the Commissioners would try to convince Congress to modify the bill, so it would include the various demands made by the Standing Rock and other Lakota Indians. The commission then left for Chicago.

At Chicago, the commission realized they fell a few votes shy of the required ¾ majority. Therefore, they instructed McLaughlin to obtain the last few needed signatures from the Standing Rock Indians. McLaughlin easily obtained more signatures from the Indians under his supervision. After the agent concluded his efforts, the Crook Commission declared that they had secured the ¾ majority, plus an additional 130 signatures.

In conclusion, Grass and Gall eventually consented to the Sioux Bill because they believed it was in their people’s best interest. Grass and Gall feared that the government would take their land with no or little compensation if they did not sign. Both the Crook Commission and Agent McLaughlin warned the Lakota that the government would never

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offer them a better deal. The Crook Commission also threatened to take their land without compensation if the Lakota rejected the treaty. The two chiefs also wanted the government to help their people truly become self-sufficient farmers and stockmen, and realized that the Sioux Bill was their best chance to reach that goal. As historian Jerome A. Greene stated, “Crook’s persuasive techniques instilled in the Sioux something long missing: hope for the future.” Furthermore, Grass and Gall knew the government would probably not be able to stop, or would not even try to stop, all of the land-hungry whites from squatting on and/or taking their land if the bill was rejected. Under President Grant, the government did not attempt to keep whites out the Black Hills, which Grass surely remembered. Therefore, Grass and Gall successfully acted as cultural mediators when they signed the Sioux Act of 1889 because that act was the best deal that the government would have ever offered the Lakota for their surplus lands. As the Superior Wisconsin Telegram stated, “it was John Grass and Chief Gall who brought it [Sioux Act of 1889] about after lengthy debates in which these two always protected the rights of their people.”

After they signed the treaty, Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators when they issued various complaints to the commissioners. They asked the government to pay the Standing Rock Indians who served as farmers, judges, and policemen adequate salaries for their efforts. Grass and Gall observed that the Indian farmers worked very hard at teaching the Standing Rock Indians how to farm and to raise livestock. As discussed earlier, they supported the Indian police and Indian judges because they

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allowed the Indians to govern themselves without the interference of the U. S. military. They also believed that an Indian would be more likely to receive a fair trial before the agency’s court than before a federal court with white jurors and a white judge. Grass also asked the government to devise a better method of issuing cattle to the Standing Rock Indians. Overall, Grass and Gall successfully acted as cultural mediators by securing the best price that the government would give the Lakota for their surplus lands.

Furthermore, if the Lakota had rejected the Sioux Bill of 1889, the government probably would have taken their land with little or no compensation.

**John Grass Falls Ill**

On August 29, 1889, shortly after the Crook Commission departed from Standing Rock, John Grass suffered a severe sunstroke while cutting hay. At the same time, according to McLaughlin, Grass also “lost considerable blood from a . . . hemorrhage [sic] of the lungs.” Ambler Caskie, the agency physician, however, refused to treat Grass, which greatly angered McLaughlin and prompted him to bring charges against the physician. The agent complained to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that Caskie spent all of his time with his family and neglected his duties as physician. McLaughlin claimed that Indians in need of medical attention often could not locate or contact Caskie. When McLaughlin sent instructions to Caskie to treat Grass’ sunstroke, Caskie claimed he was ill and refused to travel the 36 miles to Grass’ house. McLaughlin strongly believed that Caskie feigned his illness so that he would not have to travel such a distance in order to treat Grass.72

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McLaughlin also informed the CIA that Caskie’s faked illness and refusal to treat Grass was exceptionally problematic since Grass was “the ablest Sioux” and “the most influential Indian here” and that “his death . . . would be a great loss to their people.” Therefore, McLaughlin strongly urged the CIA to dismiss Caskie and find a suitable replacement. As for John Grass, he eventually recovered.73

Delegation to Washington, D. C.

Because the land commission had made so many additional promises to the Lakota to induce them to accept the Sioux Bill of 1889, the Office of Indian Affairs (OIA) decided to bring a delegation of chiefs from each agency to Washington. The OIA wanted the delegates to help the government compile a list of the additional promises made at the agencies. Most of these supplementary assurances would require additional legislation and additional appropriations in order to carry them through. General Crook believed his honor was at stake and did not want politicians to ignore the additional promises. Therefore, Crook personally attended the meetings when the delegates came to the capital in December of 1889.74

On December 18, 1889, the delegates met with John W. Noble, Secretary of the Interior, and the entire Crook Commission. The Standing Rock delegates consisted of John Grass, Gall, Mad Bear, Bear Face, and Big Head, but did not include Sitting Bull.

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74 Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle, 229.
The Indians asked the Noble and the other officials to omit the rule that the government would not recognize or allow the Lakota to select any new chiefs. Many of the chiefs, who had brought them to the Great Sioux Reserve were now old and senile. The surprised officials knew that President Harrison had adopted the policies of the Indian welfare groups. One of the primary goals of these groups was to discard the chiefs so the government could more easily control individual Indians. The government also wanted to turn Native Americans into independent self-sufficient Christian farmers, and believed tribalism and chiefs impeded that goal.  

The delegates made various other complaints before Noble, but primarily focused on the issuance of their rations. Many of the delegates, including John Grass, declared that they had not received their rations as provided in the Ft. Laramie and Black Hills treaties. Crook was also worried over their rations, for he had given the Indians at Pine Ridge a written agreement, promising that the Sioux Bill of 1889 would not affect their rations. The commissioners had to make similar pledges at the other agencies as well in order to get them to sign.

Almost immediately after the Indians had accepted the treaty, however, T. J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, cut the beef rations at Pine Ridge by 2,000,000 pounds, 1,000,000 pounds at Rosebud, and made similar slashes at the other Lakota agencies. According to historian Jerome A. Greene, a worried Crook declared, "It will be impossible to convince them [Lakota], that it is not one result of their signing." The CIA ordered the cuts because the Lakota had padded their numbers in order to obtain more rations and supplies. Indians at Rosebud were drawing rations on the names of

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about 2,000 dead Indians, while the Indians at Pine Ridge had been adopting the same
tactics. Government officials, who had no authority to do so, had been cutting their
rations. By the early 1880s, the Indians were only given 2/3 of the full rations provided
for them in their treaties with the government. The Indians failed to report deaths and
borrowed neighboring children to pad their population figures in order to obtain almost
the full rations guaranteed them in the treaties. Historian George E. Hyde correctly
observed, “Yes, they cheated; they had to; for if they had simply protested the cuts . . . no
one would have heard and nothing would have been done to aid them.” Before making
the cuts, Morgan figured the daily allowance of beef per person at approximately 1.9
pounds, instead of the three pounds pledged to them in 1877.77

As a result of Morgan’s further cuts, the delegates all pleaded for the government
to restore their rations. For example, American Horse declared, “All we depend on now
is the rations we get from the Government, and now, if it is taken away from us, I don’t
know what we will depend on when the spring comes.” During the meeting, Secretary
Noble accepted the majority of the Crook Commission’s promises that fell within his
authority and promised to try to persuade Congress to appropriate funds to carry them
through.78

On the following day, the delegates then briefly met with President Harrison.
Grass asked Harrison to erect large schools at all of their agencies, so their children could
attend school at home rather than be sent to Eastern boarding schools. Harrison,
however, evaded the rations issue, and Morgan had refused to increase their rations.

77 Hyde, *A Sioux Chronicle*, 230-31. See also Crook Report, 218-34; Greene, “The Sioux Land
Crook, however, promised that he would ask Congress to increase their rations when he presented the report of his commission. The depressed delegates returned home.\textsuperscript{79}

On Christmas Eve the commissioners submitted their final report to Noble, which declared that the Lakota had only agreed to the Sioux Bill of 1889 because they trusted the commission to obtain for them a large number of additional benefits. Many of the additional promises – lifting a ban on some of their “innocent” dances which did not include their Sun Dance, the construction of gristmills, equal treatment of full bloods and mixed bloods, and employment of Indians at the agencies whenever possible - were within the administrative authority of the Secretary of the Interior, who consented to most of them. The more significant ones, however, required Congressional legislation. Additional educational appropriations, compensation for the ponies taken from the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Indians in 1876, immediate access to the interest on their permanent fund, and most importantly, an appropriation of $100,000 to increase their beef allowance to its pre-cut level, were among those promises that required Congress to act.\textsuperscript{80}

The cut in rations greatly affected the Lakota. From 1887 through 1889 they had lost the majority of their crops due to drought, and, in 1889, they had been forced to leave their farms for weeks to attended meetings with the Crook Commission. Although the commissioners strongly recommended appropriating more money to feed the Lakota, Congress put it aside to consider later. The ignored Sioux had to live through the winter in hunger and disillusionment. To make matters worse, there were outbreaks of measles,

whooping cough, and influenza in their camps, which caused many of the Lakota to die. The death rate at Standing Rock was especially high. According to historian Robert Utley, “at Pine Ridge alone, the death rate” increased to 45 per month in a small population of about 5,550.81

The successive crop failures forced McLaughlin to reevaluate the situation and he began to urge that the government to try to turn the Lakota into independent ranchers rather than into self-sufficient farmers. In 1889 McLaughlin told the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that their land was “much better adapted for grazing than for farming purposes, owing to protracted drought, which seldom fails to visit . . . either in the spring or summer months.” McLaughlin even suggested to the CIA that the Standing Rock Indians abandon matters “agricultural, except the cultivation of vegetable gardens, and . . . turn their attention to stock-growing exclusively.”82

**Gall Becomes a Justice of the Court of Indian Offenses**

While the Crook Commission gathered signatures, McLaughlin made Gall a tribal judge. Gall served as a judge from January 1, 1889 to March 31, 1890. In 1889 Gall, Grass, and Standing Soldier, a Lower Yanktonai, presided over the agency’s Court of Indian Affairs. During the year, they heard approximately 83 cases. According to McLaughlin, “all the decisions have been intelligently and impartially rendered upon the evidence adduced.” Offenders were sometimes sentenced to imprisonment or hard labor. Guilty parties also often had to forfeit their guns. McLaughlin observed that “in every instance the decision of the court has been sustained by public sentiment, and not a single
appeal to higher authority was asked."^83

In 1918 the *Superior Wisconsin Telegram* interviewed B. F. Barry, a professional photographer, who also held a high opinion of the Standing Rock Court of Indian Offenses. According to that newspaper, Barry observed:

Chief John Grass was best known as an orator, but he was entitled to just as much recognition, if not more as a member of the Indian court at Standing Rock agency, where he proved himself imbued with a strong sense of right and justice to all. Chief Gall was a member of the court, also, and I do not know of a court in the land where there was more dignity than in that court—or a better chance for getting justice, too, for that matter.

The December 20, 1890 edition of *Harper’s Weekly* supported McLaughlin’s and Barry's characterizations. The article reported, “The impartiality and excellent judgement displayed in the conduct of this court [Court of Indian Offenses at Standing Rock with Gall and Grass presiding] have been noteworthy, and its decisions have almost invariably been accepted without complaint.” Compensation for the judges ceased on March 31, 1890, and thereafter, the tribal police served as judges, rather than Gall and Grass. Years later, however, Grass would serve again as the Chief Justice of the Court of Indian Offenses at Standing Rock.^84

According to McLaughlin, although Gall was a judge and a district farmer, the Hunkpapa chief, unlike Grass, was “non-committal on the subject of allotments.” Gall

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wore "citizens' dress," but continued to wear his hair long and, unlike Grass, did not understand or speak English, providing further evidence that Gall acted as a cultural broker by combining various aspects of the Lakota and Euro-American cultures.\(^8\)

**Disillusionment**

The disillusionment of the Lakota, worsened, when on February 10, 1890, President Harrison proclaimed the acceptance of the Sioux Bill and opened the ceded land to settlement under Homestead laws. Utley properly summarized Harrison's decision when he observed:

> The promises had not been carried out. No surveys had been made to determine the precise boundaries of the new reservations. No provision had been made for Indians living in the ceded land to take allotments there. Here was the ultimate in bad faith.\(^6\)

On the same day, Harrison also sent a message to Congress, asking them to consider all of the commissioners' pledges to the Lakota, but also declared that the Indians' approval of the act had not been made dependent on the fulfillment of any of their promises. Harrison, however, was wrong; the commission would have failed without the additional pledges.\(^7\)

One group of boomers attempted to make claims on land within the newly created Lower Brule Reservation, but U. S. troops from Ft. Randall were sent and stopped the trespassers. Otherwise, due to the worst drought on record in the area (1887-1889), the anticipated rush failed to occur. The drought had not only devastated crops, it also killed most of the grasses on the pastoral lands. Overall, non-Indians were worse off, for they

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\(^8\) James McLaughlin to CIA, in *ARCIA*, 1890, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 51st Cong., 2d sess., serial 2637, 40-41. See the photograph section between pages 302 and 303 of Utley's *The Lance and the Shield*, for an 1888 photograph of Gall wearing a pair of pants and a coat with long hair.

\(^6\) Utley, *The Last Days of the Sioux Nation*, 57.

did not receive any sort of government rations. While the Lakota protested their short rations, many of the non-Indian settlers literally starved. Some of the leading citizens of South Dakota even started to protest against the proposal to admit them as a state because they did not want attention called to Dakota Territory, where their people wore rags and begged for food, providing more evidence that Dakota was a place where farmers could not subsist.88

This had produced mixed results for the Lakota. It rescued them from hordes of settlers and boomers, who would have shown little care for the Indians. It also meant that they would probably only receive 50 to 75 cents per acre for their land, since the price of $1.25 per acre only lasted for three years. The Lakota depended on immediately receiving money for their land in order to have any chance at becoming self-sufficient farmers and/or ranchers. The money was also supposed to help them build schools, but no one wanted to buy any of their land.89

President Harrison submitted a copy of the Crook Commission’s report to Congress on February 10, along with a draft of a bill that included all of the commission’s suggestions. Harrison also asked Congress to enact legislation at once.90

As February, March, and April passed by, the Lakota realized that Congress, having acquired their land, did not intend to fulfill the pledges of the Crook Commission. General Crook died in March of 1890, which the Indians saw as a bad sign. Robert Utley cited Red Cloud as having declared, “Then General Crook came; he, at least, had never lied to us. His words gave our people hope. He died. Then hope died again. Despair

88 The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 57-59. See also Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle, 231-35.
89 Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 57-58. See also Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle, 231-35.
90 Utley, The Last Days of the Sioux Nation, 58.
The Senate had a more humane and liberal record in the administration of Indian affairs than the House did. On April 26, the former passed the bill. The House, however, rejected the most significant provisions. Furthermore, the House postponed the approval of the annual Indian Appropriation Act for fiscal year 1891. The Indian Appropriation Act was not passed until August 19, 1890, which was too late for the Lakota. Consequently, clothing, food, and other annuities did not arrive at their agencies until the middle of the winter. The act also only provided $950,000 for the Lakota, which was $50,000 less than the amount needed for the entire ration allowance.

According to Robert Utley, an old Indian who had attended numerous treaty negotiations summarized the fiasco in the following words: "They made us many promises, more than I can remember, but they never kept but one; they promised to take our land and they took it."

**Conclusion**

Grass acted as a cultural mediator when he used the power of the Catholic Church against the Crook Commission. According to historian Darcee McLaren, two other cultural mediators, John Thunder and Peter Hunter used the Presbyterian Church in a similar manner. The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) of the Presbyterian Church in Canada hired Thunder and Hunter, two Dakota Indians, to look after their own people in southern Manitoba. McLaren observes:

> However, Thunder and Hunter’s goals and perception of the missionary role were not necessarily those of the FMC. Applying historian Richard White’s (1991) theoretical framework of the middle ground shows that

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91 Ibid., 58-59.
92 Ibid., 59. See also Greene, “The Sioux Land Commission of 1889,” 67-68.
both men used the office of missionary and the symbols of Christianity to communicate their needs to the dominant white society and to achieve their goals on behalf of the Dakota people.

Like Thunder and Hunter, Grass used the power and symbolism of Christianity to protect the interests of native people. 94

Historians have also misinterpreted Gall and Grass as “progressives” because of their eventual support for the Sioux Act of 1889. Grass and Gall, however, acted as cultural mediators who eventually consented to the Sioux Bill because they believed it was in their people’s best interest. Grass and Gall correctly feared that the government would take their land with no or little compensation if they did not sign. Both Agent McLaughlin and the Crook Commission warned them that if they rejected the bill the federal government would take their lands with much less compensation. At the same time, the two chiefs wanted the government to help their Lakota truly become self-sufficient farmers and stockmen, and realized that the Sioux Bill was their best chance to reach that goal. The techniques of the Crook Commission gave the Lakota some hope for the future. Furthermore, Grass and Gall knew the government would probably not be able to stop, or would not even try to stop, all of the land-hungry whites from squatting on and/or taking their land if the bill was rejected. Therefore, Grass and Gall decided to sign the Sioux Bill of 1889.

If Grass and Gall were “progressives,” they would have accepted the government’s first offer for the Lakota’s land, while a “traditionalist” would have refused to sell the land at any price. Instead, Grass and Gall successfully acted as cultural mediators by securing the best price that the government would have given the Lakota for their surplus lands. For example, Grass and Gall were some of the key leaders who had
convinced the Lakota to reject the Sioux Bill of 1888. The government responded to the rejection of the Lakota by proposing a much more liberal offer to the Lakota in the Sioux Bill of 1889. Also, before Grass and Gall signed the Sioux Bill of 1889, Grass gained some additional concessions from the Crook Commission thus providing further evidence that they successfully acted as mediators by securing the best possible deal from the government for the surplus Lakota lands. Furthermore, if the Lakota had rejected the Sioux Bill of 1889, the government probably would have taken their land with little or no compensation.

After they signed the treaty, Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators when they issued various complaints to the commissioners. They asked the government to pay the Standing Rock Indians who served as farmers, judges, and policemen adequate salaries for their efforts. Grass and Gall observed that the Indian farmers worked very hard at teaching the Standing Rock Indians how to farm and to raise livestock. Gall still held the position of District Farmer and continued to act as a cultural mediator by helping Indians learn how to farm and to raise livestock. As discussed earlier, Grass and Gall supported the Indian police and Indian judges because they allowed the Indians to govern themselves without the interference of the U. S. military and federal court system. For these reasons, both men accepted appointments as Indian judges on the Court of Indian Affairs at Standing Rock Agency.

In 1889 and 1890, Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators by asking the government to uphold the treaties of 1868 and 1877. Grass and Gall continued to try to convince the government to put forth a better effort at making the Lakota self-reliant.

The United States also continued to fail to provide adequate school facilities for

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all of the Lakota children at Standing Rock. As discussed in earlier chapters, Gall and Grass, like other cultural mediators identified in Szasz's book, supported the schools because the educators taught the children how to better deal with non-Indians and how to better compete in the new economic system. Even Sitting Bull who has been portrayed falsely as the ultimate "traditionalist" favored sending Lakota children to school so they would be better able to deal with whites.\(^5\) When Grass and Gall were sent as delegates to Washington, D. C. to discuss the additional promises made by the Crook Commission, they asked the government to build more schools for the Lakota so they would not have to send their children to Eastern boarding schools.

A three-year drought (1887-89) coupled with a severe cut in the Lakota's beef rations caused suffering among them. The Indians suffered from lack of food, but at least they received meager government issued rations. This despair of the Lakota made them ripe for the Ghost Dance movement.

Chapter Six: The Ghost Dance

Gall and Grass opposed the Ghost Dance, not because they no longer embraced the Lakota culture, but because it threatened the future existence of their people. Ironically, shortly before the Ghost Dance erupted in violence, Gall had requested permission to go to Cheyenne River to dance for ponies, providing evidence that he still wanted to adhere to the Lakota culture, unless it attracted the wrath of the federal government. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Grass also led various dances, including the Kiss Dance, on the reservation, but he too opposed the Ghost Dance because he feared it would arouse the wrath of the U. S. military.

Gall and Grass also acted as intermediaries or cultural brokers when they mediated between Agent McLaughlin and the Ghost Dancers. Grass and Gall tried to persuade the dancers to surrender peacefully. Grass and Gall did convince some of them to quit dancing, which very well may have saved their lives. Fearful of an armed confrontation between the Lakota and the United States, Grass also tried to convince the government to use Indian scouts and Indian policemen to stop the Ghost Dances so the U. S. military would not have to become involved.

When the arrest of Sitting Bull erupted in violence, Gall and Grass bravely defended the Episcopalian missionary school, the school children, and the missionaries from the Ghost Dancers for a number of different reasons. As already noted, Gall and Grass, like other native cultural mediators identified in Szasz’s book, supported sending Indian children to school because missionaries and teachers would teach the children how to compete successfully in the new economic system. Furthermore, the two men had been instrumental in convincing the Episcopalian missionaries to build St. Elizabeth’s
school for their bands’ children. Obviously, Gall also worried about his grandchildren who attended the school, which further explains why he camped out at the mission during the Ghost Dance conflict.

**Gall Wants to Dance for Ponies**

Although the government had banned dancing among the Lakota in 1884, Gall still embraced his culture, and continued to dance. In May of 1890 Gall headed a party of about 50 Indians, who requested a pass from McLaughlin allowing them to travel to the Cheyenne River Agency to dance for ponies. McLaughlin refused to issue a pass, which greatly disappointed Gall’s party. The U.S. Indian agent at the Cheyenne River Agency received a letter from McLaughlin that asked him to force any member of Gall’s party to return to Standing Rock, if they showed up at his agency without permission. Despite the fact that Gall’s entire family was Episcopalian in 1890, he still practiced the Lakota dances. Furthermore, Gall continued to value ponies highly, as the symbols of power among the previously nomadic Lakota. Ironically, Gall would soon try to stop the Indians at Standing Rock from dancing, not because he no longer embraced their culture, but because the non-Christian dances attracted the attention of the U. S. military.

**Ghost Dance**

Although Grass and Gall blended Christianity and the Lakota’s sacred beliefs and

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practices together, they decided to oppose the Ghost Dance, which was a revitalization movement of the Lakota culture, because it threatened to arouse the military’s wrath. The loss of more land, cuts in their rations, a hard winter, hunger, disease, and the reservation system’s erosion of Lakota culture all led to a resentful Sioux. The timing of the Ghost Dance religion could not have been better.3

The Ghost Dance religion began when a Paiute holy man named Wovoka had a vision. Wovoka spoke to the Great Spirit and to the spirits of dead Indians in his vision. They told Wovoka that the Indians must dance the Ghost Dance and reject the white man’s culture. Through intense prayer and dancing, Wovoka promised better times in the near future. The Ghost Dance movement spread to the lower Sioux agencies. On October 13, 1890, Kicking Bear, one of the Ghost Dance leaders at the lower Sioux agencies, came to Standing Rock. He told an expanded version of the Ghost Dance message or prophecy to Sitting Bull and promised that through intense prayer and dancing they could produce a messiah, who would appear in the spring of 1891. The messiah would then vanquish whites, make the buffalo flourish again, restore their old way of life, and renew the world. Although Sitting Bull was skeptical that a messiah would appear, he became one of the leaders of the Ghost Dance movement on Standing Rock Reservation. As Utley observes, Sitting Bull felt a “commanding obligation to himself and [his followers] to test the new faith.” Historian Jeffrey Ostler further explains, “Robert P. Higheagle, who grew up on Standing Rock Reservation, observed in the early 1930s that Sitting Bull ‘couldn’t very well get out of the Ghost Dance craze as

(“Three Noted Chiefs of the Sioux,” Dec. 20, 1890, 995) reported that every member of Gall’s family was Episcopalian.

the tribe wanted to try it and it was the duty of the chief to listen and try with the people."\textsuperscript{4}

Many Lakota joined Sitting Bull and continuously danced the Ghost Dance until their fatigue induced visions, in which they spoke to dead ancestors. Sitting Bull interpreted the visions for his people. Soon over 200 families were dancing with Sitting Bull, and only three out of a possible 90 students attended the reservation’s schools. McLaughlin could not prevent the growth of Sitting Bull’s following. He knew they were communicating with the Ghost Dancers on the other Sioux reservations, and feared Sitting Bull had enough followers to start an uprising among the Lakota. Meanwhile, Sitting Bull’s medicine was still strong. He foresaw his own death in a vision. A meadowlark in Sitting Bull’s vision told him that the Lakota would kill him.\textsuperscript{5}

At the same time, Gall, Grass, and some other prominent Indians on Standing Rock Reservation opposed the Ghost Dance. During the second week of November, all of the Indians were called to the agency’s headquarters to receive their rations. Some reasoned that those who came in would acknowledge their loyalty to the federal government. All of the Standing Rock Indians did come to receive their rations, except for Sitting Bull and his most defiant followers. When all of the Indian leaders arrived to receive their rations, McLaughlin called them into council. The agent told their leaders that the Ghost Dance defied the government, which could lead to horrible consequences. After McLaughlin’s speech was over, Grass, Gall, and some of the other chiefs pledged


\textsuperscript{5} \textit{ARCIA}, 1891, House Ex. Doc. No. 1, 52d Cong., 1st sess., serial 2934, 123-45.; Utley, \textit{The Lance and the...
to help the agent discourage the movement.⁶

Gall, a man of his word, was able to convince some of the Ghost Dancers to stop dancing and to send their children to school, which, according to McLaughlin, infuriated Sitting Bull. On November 29, 1890, Gall wrote a letter to McLaughlin, stating:

Gall wishes to report what he has done up to-day. -- He says he held a council at the Mouth of Little Oak Creek yesterday and asked the Indians to stop dancing and send their children to school, which they all agreed to do. Running Horse in behalf of his band upheld Gall. He says he has employed ‘Hawk Man’ and a fellow called ‘Onkce Wanibli’ to act as Spies, with the understanding that they were to be made policemen at once. . . . He says he has not been to Bull’s Camp yet, but he says that he will go up to-day and they are dancing yet up there, he says he brought a Wagon load of children to school today.⁷

Gall’s council at the mouth of Little Oak Creek probably took place near the boarding school for girls and boys at St. Elizabeth’s Church. Although the church and rectory had been erected in 1885, the school was established during the early part of 1890. During the height of the Ghost Dance troubles, Gall and Grass defended St. Elizabeth’s. Although Gall had not yet converted to Christianity by 1890, his entire family belonged to St. Elizabeth’s Church. According to Miss Mary S. Francis, the first principal of St. Elizabeth’s boarding school, Gall’s daughter, Nancy Shave Elk, “was a staunch member of the church and tried to” convince Gall to join. Several of Gall’s grandchildren also attended the school at the mission, which further explains why he camped out at the mission during the Ghost Dance ordeal. When violence erupted, Gall offered to escort Mary Francis and the children up to the agency’s headquarters at Ft. Shield.

⁷ James McLaughlin to Herbert Welsh, January 12, 1891, in James McLaughlin, 1842-1923, Papers, untitled File, Box 2, Small Manuscript Collection A455, NDSHS; Gall to James McLaughlin, Nov. 29, 1890, as published in New Sources of Indian History, 1850-1891, ed. by Stanley Vestal (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1934), 40-41.
Yates. Francis, however, held fast and never left the mission.8

Years later, Francis expressed her respect for Gall in a newspaper interview.

He was very dignified in his manner and appearance. He spoke often about the Custer fight and said that he planned the attack, but he claimed that it was only done in self-defense. Gall was a very good Indian for one who had been so wild in his earlier days.

He constituted himself as a kind of superintendent, tried to influence parents to send their children to school, brought back pupils who ran away. His daughters, Mrs. Nancy Shave Elk and Mrs. Sarah Shoots Near, took an active part in church work.9

While the two chiefs protected the school, Grass delivered rations for the pupils at St. Elizabeth’s. Under McLaughlin’s authority, Grass also killed and butchered live animals at the school, in order to sustain the students, until it was cold enough outside to freeze the meat.10

In response to the Ghost Dance troubles, on December 5, 1890, the Interior Department ordered the agents at all of the Lakota agencies “to issue to the Sioux Indians the full rations prescribed in the agreement of February 28, 1877 (19 Stats., 254).” The Lakota, however, continued to receive their beef cattle on a semi-annual basis, resulting in a lot of shrinkage over the winter. According to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, this procedure finally was changed for the fiscal year of 1892, when “the contracts for furnishing beef cattle for all the Sioux agencies” were “made as far as possible for weekly or monthly deliveries of cattle, thus insuring the issue to the Indians the full


9 Mary Francis as cited by Chapman, ed., Remember the Wind, 211-12.

10 James McLaughlin to Rev. Edward Ashley, St. Elizabeth’s Mission, Sept. 29, 1890, in Major James McLaughlin Papers, 1855-1937, Louis Pfaller, ed., St. Paul: Dakota Microfilm, 1968, roll 21, frames 305-6. See also James McLaughlin to Miss Mary S. Francis, St. Elizabeth’s School, November 10, 1890, in Major
quantity of beef purchased for them."

Unfortunately, McLaughlin’s prophecy of trouble soon came true. At Pine Ridge, Agent Dan Roger called in the army to help him end the dancing by Kicking Bear and his followers. The dancers fled to high ground in the Badlands to a place called the Stronghold, which had a fresh water source and was protected by high cliffs. The dancers sent an invitation to Sitting Bull, which asked him to appear as the messiah would at the Stronghold.

On December 11, 1890, Sitting Bull wrote a letter to McLaughlin, requesting his permission to leave for Pine Ridge and the Stronghold. In his letter, Sitting Bull stressed the peaceful nature of the Ghost Dance when he declared, “I wish no one come to in my Pray with they gund [sic] or knife: So all the Indians Pray to god for life & try to find out good Road. & do noting. [sic] wrong. In they life: This is what we want & Pray to god but you did not bleaven [sic] us.” Sitting Bull also said he knew that McLaughlin thought he was a fool who continuously obstructed the civilization of the Lakota. Sitting Bull was correct in his assumption that the agent was mistrustful, for McLaughlin ordered his arrest when he received the letter.

In the hope of avoiding a possible slaughter, Grass and Gall suggested using Indian scouts and the Indian police force to convince the Ghost Dancers to surrender peacefully. On December 12, 1890, Lt. Col. W. F. Drum, 12th Infantry, observed:

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John Grass, Gall, and others who have come out and declared themselves as opposed to the ghost dance and in favor of peace. These Indians are just now feeling uneasy as being between two fires. The white settlers distrust and fear them and in case of an outbreak they are afraid they would suffer at the hands of both soldiers and hostiles. . . . John Grass is of opinion that . . . Indian Scouts would have an excellent effect more by moral influence than by force, as they would be able to gradually draw away any friends they have in the hostile element and leave but a few to receive such punishment as the Government might see fit to inflict.

While the dancing continued, a number of Standing Rock Indians, including John Grass, also petitioned the government to appropriate additional funds for their tribal police in order to keep peace on the reservation without the involvement of the U. S. military.  

Just before the attempted arrest of Sitting Bull, Gall asked to be armed. McLaughlin later concluded that “If he [Gall] had been given the guns he asked for, the death of Sitting Bull might have been precipitated – also an internecine war might have resulted.” It is doubtful that Gall would have killed Sitting Bull, his adopted brother and close friend. Gall, however, would have defended his family and St. Elizabeth’s school against an attack by Ghost dancers.

On December 13, 1890, the Standing Rock Indian police and a detachment of U.S. soldiers were sent to arrest Sitting Bull. The attempted arrest resulted in the death of eight Ghost Dancers, including Sitting Bull and his son, Crow Foot, and six Indian policemen. The holy man’s vision had been fulfilled.

On December 15, 1890, two days after Sitting Bull’s death, Grass and Gall, again

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15 McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 35.

requested guns from McLaughlin so they could defend the school at St. Elizabeth’s from the Ghost Dancers. Grass and Gall camped at the mission on Oak Creek in order to defend the school, the teachers, and the students. Apparently, the two chiefs had not yet heard about the death of Sitting Bull, for they asked McLaughlin for an update on the situation and asked for instructions.\textsuperscript{17}

Five days later, Gall summarized his position on the Ghost Dance when he told \textit{Harper’s Weekly}:

\begin{quote}
He \[Gall\] takes no part in the ghost dance \[sic\], nor does he lend his sanction to it. He feels that the Indians fail to appreciate and want old times, which have been magnified in their imagination by tradition, to return. \textit{“I think it better,” he said, \ldots for us to live as we are living rather than create trouble, not knowing how it will end.”}\textsuperscript{18}
\end{quote}

After Sitting Bull’s death, his former followers became extremely fearful. Many of them fled south to the Cheyenne River Agency, where they informed Big Foot, the leader of the dance at that agency, that Sitting Bull had been killed. Big Foot decided to leave Cheyenne River in order to try to meet up with the Pine Ridge dancers at the Stronghold. According to historian Jeffrey Ostler, “the western army saw the Indian Bureau’s loss of control at Pine Ridge as an opportunity to claim an expanded role in Indian affairs,” which resulted in a massive military mobilization in the hope that such a display would convince the Lakota Ghost Dancers to surrender. On his way to Pine Ridge, Big Foot caught pneumonia and decided to surrender. When the Seventh Cavalry tried to disarm Big Foot and his followers on December 29, 1890, tensions exploded, and the U. S. Army opened fire on the entire band, which included women and children. The total number of Indians killed is not known, but at least 84 men and boys, 44 women, and

\textsuperscript{17} Chief John Grass and Chief Gall Pizi to Major James McLaughlin, Dec. 15, 1890, in Vestal, \textit{New Sources of Indian History}, 56-57.
18 children died during the massacre. Seven more Lakota also died at the Pine Ridge hospital as a result of injuries sustained at Wounded Knee. Ostler claims, “The orders to disarm Big Foot’s band were reckless and unnecessary . . . [and] were also related to the army’s objective of demonstrating the superiority of military solutions in order to advance claims to broader authority over Indian affairs.” The massacre very well could have led to a full blown war, but General Nelson Miles gradually pushed the remaining dancers to the Pine Ridge Agency, where Kicking Bear surrendered on January 15, 1891, thereby ending the conflict. 

**Conclusion**

In sum, Gall and Grass opposed the Ghost Dance, not because they no longer embraced the Lakota culture, but because it threatened the future existence of their people. As historian Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve observed, “Gall took no part in the Messiah Ghost Dance religion, but worked with his people to convince them that cooperation was the only recourse left.” Ironically, in May of 1890, shortly before the Ghost Dance erupted in violence, Gall had requested permission to go to Cheyenne River to dance for ponies, providing evidence that he still wanted to adhere to the Lakota culture, unless it attracted the wrath of the federal government. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Grass also led various dances, including the Kiss Dance, on the reservation, but he too opposed the Ghost Dance because he feared it would arouse the wrath of the U. S. military.

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Gall and Grass also acted as intermediaries or cultural brokers when they mediated between McLaughlin and the dancers. According to Jerry A. Davis, Canadian anthropologist Robert Paine has identified one type of cultural brokers as the "'go-between,' or interparty purveyor, [who] expects no remuneration or alternation for services provided." Gall and Grass acted as "go-betweens," or "interparty purveyors," who expected nothing in return for their services when they mediated between the government and the Ghost Dancers. They only hoped to persuade some of the dancers to surrender peacefully. Grass and Gall did convince some of them to quit dancing, which very well may have saved their lives. Fearful of an armed confrontation between the Lakota and the United States, Grass also tried to convince the government to use Indian scouts and Indian policemen to stop the Ghost Dances so the U. S. military would not have to become involved.20

Furthermore, while the armed conflict took place on Standing Rock, Gall and Grass bravely defended the Episcopalian missionary school, the school children, and the missionaries from the Ghost Dancers for a number of different reasons. As already noted, Gall and Grass, like other native cultural mediators identified in Szasz's book, supported sending Indian children to school because missionaries and teachers would teach the children how to compete successfully in the new economic system. Furthermore, both chiefs had emotional ties to the school. Gall and Grass had been instrumental in convincing the Episcopalian missionaries to build St. Elizabeth's school for their bands' children. Gall also had supported the school by serving as a

Superintendent who made sure that children got to school. Gall also guarded the school because his grandchildren attended classes there.\textsuperscript{21}

Chapter Seven: Gall and Grass as Christians

Gall and Grass also have been unfairly portrayed as “progressives” because of their conversion to Christianity. As Christian Indians, however, they acted as cultural mediators rather than, as “progressives” who wanted to live exactly like white men. Grass and Gall converted to Christianity primarily because it was the only social and religious activity allowed on Standing Rock Reservation. In order to socialize with the other bands of Lakota on Standing Rock, Grass and Gall had to become Christians. The two chiefs also acted as cultural mediators by blending Lakota and Christian beliefs and practices. For example, Gall fasted prior to his first communion; fasting was a common practice before both Lakota and Christian ceremonies. Furthermore, like the vast majority of the Lakota, they probably reinterpreted the annual denominational meetings as the Lakota sun dance. As discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, Grass, like other cultural mediators identified by McLaren, used the power and symbolism of Christianity to protect Native American interests. For example, in 1889 Grass had used the power of the Catholic Church against the Crook Commission.¹

The government had outlawed the practice of the spiritual beliefs of the Lakota. In 1882 McLaughlin had ended the Sun Dance at Standing Rock, and, in 1884 the federal government banned the Lakota from all dances, including their most important ceremony, the Sun Dance. Christian church services became the only religious and social activities permitted on the Lakota reservations. As demonstrated at Wounded Knee, any other activity would have caused a reaction from the U.S. military. Furthermore, as Vine Deloria has asserted that, “No missionary ever realized that it was less the reality of his religion and more the threat of extinction that brought converts to him. Or if he did
realize it, he never acknowledged it.” Deloria goes on to say, “they translated certain
Indian ceremonies and rites into Christian celebrations.” For example, both religions
advocated fasting before religious ceremonies. The Lakota also reinterpreted the annual
Sun Dance as the annual assembly of missions at each agency. In 1893 McLaughlin
observed:

Each of the three denominations engaged in missionary work here
have an annual meeting of their respective members at some one of the
Sioux agencies, alternating between the agencies from year to year. The
Roman Catholic congress is held on July 4, the Protestant Episcopal
convocation in the latter part of August or early in September, and the
Congregational conference during the month of September, and nearly
every member of the church represented on the several Sioux agencies
make the pilgrimage to the agency where the annual meeting is held. In
these visits every member of the family is usually of the party, which
consume from two to six weeks, according to the distance traveled, during
which time their fields and cattle are neglected and considerable loss is
thus occasioned. These annual journeys, in large cavalcades, are looked
forward to by the Indians for months in advance, in consequence of which
many neglect cultivation of their fields and other necessary work, and to a
majority of those participating it simply takes the place of the annual hunt
and summer encampment of the old Indian life.2

Vine Deloria also discusses how his grandfather convinced Gall to convert to
Deloria, whose Lakota name was Tipisapa, worked as an Episcopal missionary on
Standing Rock. Philip Deloria also was chief of a band of Lakota. According to
McLaughlin, Rev. Deloria was “a native minister of the Protestant Episcopal Church”
and had “charge of St. Elizabeth’s mission, on Oak creek [sic], 35 miles south of the
agency.”1 *The Mandan News* also listed the reverend as John Grass’ cousin. Rev. Deloria

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*New Sources of Indian History*, 288.
spent a large amount of time trying to convert Gall. Vine Deloria states:

My grandfather gave Gall every argument in the book and some outside the book but the old man was adamant in keeping the old Indian ways. Neither the joys of heaven nor the perils of hell would sway the old man. But finally, because he was fond of my grandfather, he decided to become an Episcopalian.3

As discussed in the previous chapter, Gall’s entire family, including his daughters and grandchildren were already members at St. Elizabeth’s, which must have also induced the chief’s baptism. Furthermore, several of Gall’s grandchildren attended the boarding school at St. Elizabeth’s where Gall acted as a superintendent. By 1890 Gall’s daughter, Nancy Shave Elk, had convinced his entire family to convert to Episcopalianism, and surely must have tried to convince her father as well. On July 4, 1891, Gall was baptized and became a member of St. Elizabeth’s Church.4

Although Gall had promised McLaughlin that he would not take a second wife, he did eventually take another wife. When the chief was baptized on July 4, he was married to In the Center, his first wife, in a Christian ceremony. Gall gave his second wife to Bloody Knife, one of agency’s Indian policemen. McLaughlin noted in his autobiography that Gall never took a second wife on the reservation, and, when he compiled the annual censuses at Standing Rock, McLaughlin continuously only listed a single wife, In the Center, for Gall. Gall must have been able to keep one hell of a secret,

4 Chapman, ed., Remember the Wind, 210-12.
or else, McLaughlin never revealed that the Hunkpapa chief took a second wife.  

After his baptism, Gall prepared to receive his first communion on Christmas. Gall fasted all day before the evening mass on Christmas Eve. The weather was terribly cold and the little wood stove in the church worked poorly. Gall, "as the most respected member of the community," got to sit next to the small stove. Philip Deloria offered the chalice of wine to Gall first. Gall took the wine and chugged all of it before he sat down. The wine had been intended for the whole congregation. Therefore, Gall drank a large amount of alcohol on an empty stomach after fasting all day. Deloria goes on to state:

'Grandson,' he called to my Grandfather, 'now I see why you wanted me to become a Christian. I feel fine, so nice and warm and happy. Why didn’t you tell me that Christians did this every Sunday. If you had told me about this, I would have joined your church years ago.'

Attendance vastly increased the following Sunday. Gall’s example and influence helped many Indians to adapt to the situation by converting to Christianity, the only social activity permitted on their reservation. Furthermore, Gall converted out of respect to a Lakota chief rather than simply to mimic white Christians. Gall also acted as a cultural mediator by blending Lakota spiritual beliefs with Christianity. Fasting before ceremonies was common to both religions. Although the custom of fasting prior to receiving communion was a common Christian practice, when Gall fasted before his first communion he probably interpreted the custom within the cultural framework of the Lakota by thinking that it purify him for the ceremony. Gall also probably reinterpreted the annual denominational meetings as the sun dance.  

Grass also converted to Christianity, but he became a Roman Catholic rather than

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5 Ibid., 211-12. See also McLaughlin, My Friend the Indian, 61-64. See Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940, M234, RG 75, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1965, 547-549, for copies of the 1885-1894 censuses of Standing Rock, which continuously list Gall as only having a single wife, In the Center.
an Episcopalian. Evidently prior to his own baptism, Grass had one of his sons baptized at St. Peter’s Roman Catholic Church at Ft. Yates in 1879. The baptismal records for that church listed his son’s Indian name as “Sunkaleskayua” (sp.), and his new Christian name as “Joannes.” John Grass, however, was not baptized until much later. He initially became a member of the Episcopalian Church, but later converted to Catholicism.

According to historian Stanley Vestal, Grass stated that he became a Catholic because the “Episcopal church . . . did not give as much as he thot [sic] he should have.” Father Bernard Strassmaier, a member of the Benedictine order, who had arrived in Dakota Territory in December of 1886, converted John Grass to Catholicism sometime after that date. He received the Christian name of John, however, long before Father Bernard baptized him. In his autobiography, McLaughlin noted that “to him [Grass] the army officers gave the Christian name of John long before I became acquainted with the man.”

In all likelihood, Grass, like the vast majority of the Lakota, also blended Christianity with the sacred beliefs of the Lakota. Grass had used the Catholic Church to try to stop the approval of the Sioux Bill of 1889, indicating that he had become a Catholic by that date.7

**Conclusion**

Although Gall and Grass converted to Christianity, they did not want to abandon the spiritual beliefs and customs of the Lakota. Grass and Gall converted to Christianity

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primarily because it was the only social and religious activity allowed on the reservation. Grass and Gall converted so they could socialize with other Indians, and not because they desired to live exactly as white men did, as the term "progressive" implies.

Gall and Grass, like Black Elk, acted as cultural mediators by blending Lakota and Christian beliefs and practices. For example, Gall fasted prior to his first communion; fasting was a common practice before both Lakota and Christian ceremonies. Furthermore, like the vast majority of the Lakota, Grass and Gall probably reinterpreted the annual denominational meetings as the Lakota sun dance. Historian Michael Steltenkamp has portrayed Black Elk in a similar manner. Black Elk, a traditional holy man, became a Catholic catechist and faithfully served his people for sixty years on the reservation. The holy man, however, was not an old-time medicine man, or one who betrayed his native beliefs in favor of something completely different. Instead, according to Steltenkamp, Black Elk, like Grass and Gall, mediated between the two cultures by translating Christianity into the Lakota way of life and by helping the Lakota adapt to reservation life.8

As discussed in Chapter 5 of this thesis, Grass, like other cultural mediators identified by McLaren, used the power and symbolism of Christianity to protect Native American interests. For example, in 1889 Grass had used the power of the Catholic Church against the Crook Commission.9

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Chapter Eight: Gall’s Last Days

From 1891 through 1894, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators who looked after the interests of their people. For example, Gall continued to ask the government to reimburse the Standing Rock Indians for the ponies that the U. S. Army had confiscated in 1876. In 1893 the government finally fulfilled the Crook Commission’s promise by paying for the animals that had been taken from the Standing Rock Indians in 1876. Grass persisted to ask the government to pay the Lakota the money provided to them under Article 8 of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 so the Standing Rock Indians could construct better houses for themselves. Gall also continued to serve as a District Farmer, a position that required him to act as a cultural mediator.

As discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, as a District Farmer, Gall helped the Lakota adapt to their new life by teaching the Indians in his district how to farm and to raise livestock. Grass also continued to serve as an Indian judge, another position that required an Indian to act as a cultural broker. As discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, Grass supported the Indian police and the Indians judges because they allowed the Standing Rock Indians to govern themselves without the interference of the federal court system and the U. S. military. During the last four years of Gall’s life, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators who looked after their people’s interests. After Gall’s death, Grass would continue to follow this course of action.

On January 30, 1891, John Grass and Mad Bear went to Washington D. C. to discuss the Ghost Dance fiasco and the death of Sitting Bull with T. J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs. As a result of the conferences with the Lakota delegates, Morgan instructed the Sioux Agents to inform the Lakota that all of the
promises made by the Crook Commission had become law with one exception. In response to the Ghost Dance troubles, the last Congress had finally empowered the Interior Department to fulfill all of the commission's promises, except for $187,039 for the Crow Creek Reservation Indians. The CIA also ordered the agents to tell the Lakota that they were finally receiving the full rations promised to them, that additional schools were being built for them, and that the government was in the process of issuing "cows, etc." to those Indians, who were already entitled to them, "according to existing agreements." Although the government made some important steps towards fulfilling the treaty obligations with the Lakota, Congress and the Interior Department only acted in response to the Ghost Dance, the death of Sitting Bull, and the massacre at Wounded Knee.1

Shortly after their meeting with the CIA in Washington, Grass and a number of other Lakota wrote a letter to Morgan requesting the government to uphold Article 8 of the Treaty of 1868. Article 8 stipulated the following:

When the head of a family or lodge shall have selected lands and received his certificate as above directed, and the agent shall be satisfied that he intends in good faith to commence cultivating the soil for a living, he shall be entitled to receive seeds and agricultural implements for the first year, not exceeding in value one hundred dollars, and for each succeeding year he shall continue to farm, for a period of three years more, he shall be entitled to receive seeds and implements as aforesaid, not exceeding in value twenty-five dollars.

Grass and his peers asserted that the Crook Commission had promised "those that had not availed themselves of the benefit [Article 8 of the Treaty of 1868] could get what they most need now to the equivalent of" the goods provided for in Article 8. Therefore,

Grass asked the government to send them the money due under Article 8 so the Lakota could build better houses, which was what they needed the most. Grass also asked Senator Dawes to help the Lakota in procuring the money due them.²

The government continued to violate the Treaty of 1868 by not providing adequate school facilities for the Standing Rock Indians. In 1891 there were seven government day schools, two government boarding schools, and an Episcopalian boarding school, St. Elizabeth’s, on the Standing Rock Reservation. The capacity of the ten schools totaled 520, while the number of school children at Standing Rock numbered 818. The government, however, claimed that the remaining children could be bused north to Devil’s Lake, where they could be accommodated at the Indian schools at Fort Totten.³

By 1891, due to the lack of rainfall, hailstorms, and early frosts, stock raising had become the primary industry among the Standing Rock Indians. The nearly 4,000 Indians on the reservation owned about 6,550 head of cattle at the end of the year.⁴

Although stock raising had become their staple industry, the Indians continued to farm. They cultivated about 5,000 acres, or about 1.25 acres per person, which yielded good harvests, and, for the first time, the Indians harvested more oats than corn.⁵

**Gall's Complaint to the Federal Government**

In 1889 Gall had refused to sign an agreement with the Crook commission unless they would promise to pay the Lakota $200,000 for the ponies confiscated from them by the U. S. military in 1876. The chief successfully gained this concession, but years later

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he would have to demand the government to fulfill this promise and pay $200,000 for their animals. By May of 1892 the Lakota had still not received the money for their ponies, which caused Gall further stress. Representing the claimants, Gall went to Agent McLaughlin’s office on May 20, 1892 to complain about the matter.⁶

Gall proceeded to summarize the full extent of his people’s complaint to the agent. He reminded McLaughlin that when the Lakota had signed the Act of March 2, 1889, it was strictly understood that the government would pay for the ponies. He also noted that the Act of January 19, 1891 had appropriated funds to uphold this agreement. Furthermore, a Special Indian Agent had come to the reservation, in 1891, to obtain proofs of ownership from the various claimants. Full of frustration, Gall demanded to know why they had not yet been paid. According to McLaughlin, Gall explained that the Lakota could not understand such delays, which caused “disappointment, and distrust, also uneasiness and disaffection.”⁷

McLaughlin promised to try to obtain answers to his questions. The agent upheld his pledge when he wrote a letter the next day to T. J. Morgan, Commissioner of Indian Affairs, requesting the information so that he “may give an intelligent reply.”⁸

In 1892 John Grass once again became a judge on the Standing Rock Court of Indian Offenses. Grass and the other two judges, Gabriel Grayeagle and David Standing Soldier, received annual salaries of $120. McLaughlin, however, felt that their salaries were too low and asked the CIA to increase their salaries in order to provide the court

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⁵ Ibid.
⁷ Ibid.
⁸ Ibid.
with more dignity. During the year, the court heard 42 civil cases and 30 criminal cases. The criminal case involved the following alleged crimes: assault, seduction, drunkenness, larceny, blackmailing, wife beating, attempted rape, bastardy, and adultery, while four of the civil cases were divorce proceedings. According to McLaughlin, in 1893 the court heard 67 cases during the year and "is gradually preparing the Indians for the State courts of North and South Dakota, in which they will eventually be incorporated."

In 1892 McLaughlin reported, "Standing Rock Indian Reservation can not be classified as an agricultural section, and is much better adapted for stock-raising, which latter is being now made the leading industry; but all Indians are required to cultivate small farms," ranging from one to 40 acres. The amount of land cultivated altogether amounted to about 5,000 acres. During the early part of the summer, there was abundant rain, which resulted in a "fair yield" of crops. Gall, who still lived near the mouth of Oak Creek, near St. Elizabeth's mission, continued to serve as a district farmer and received an annual salary of $120 for his services.

The Indians' cattle naturally increased by 1,176 in 1892, and, during the month of August, 2,200 cows, 2,200 calves, and 88 bulls were issued to them, thereby, almost doubling the number of Indian owned cattle. When U. S. Indian Inspector James Cisney visited Standing Rock in 1892, he, like McLaughlin, concluded, "stock raising is the only industry by which the Indians can become self-supporting."
Each Indian family continued to farm small tracts of land, ranging from one "to 30 acres each," totaling "5,000 acres under cultivation." Due to a prolonged summer drought, however, their planted crops yielded extremely poor harvests in 1893. In response to the terrible yields, McLaughlin observed:

The Indians of this agency have made commendable efforts at farming for several years past with results neither profitable nor encouraging; but their failure in this industry can not be attributed to "Indian farming," from the fact that white men coming into this belt . . . have invariably been unsuccessful . . . The cause of failure in farming on this reservation is not from barrenness of soil, which is rich and very fertile in many portions, but it is due to the lack of moisture to nourish the crops during the growing season, which, together with hot winds that usually pass over this section during the months of June or July, . . . makes returns to the agriculturist . . . uncertain and unprofitable.12

By 1893 there were three sub-issue stations on the reservation. One was located at Cannon Ball, about 25 miles north of the agency, while another one was situated at Grand River, approximately 40 miles south of the agency. The third station was built on Oak Creek, 38 miles south of the agency, which was where Gall and Grass probably received their biweekly rations since they both lived in that locality. McLaughlin also recommended that the Interior Department build another sub-issue station at the juncture of Cannon Ball River and Cedar Creek so that all of the Indians could journey to and from their homes and a sub-issue station in a single day.13

The Indians luckily began to cut hay early in the year for their cattle and were able to procure 11,000 tons to carry their animals through the winter prior to the drought, hot weather, and range fires during the middle and later part of the summer. In August of 1893 the Indians owned "9,763 head of cattle and 3,506 horses and ponies." Their cows

gave birth to 2,725 calves during the year. In response to the range fires, McLaughlin suggested to the CIA that the Indians only grow small vegetable gardens and make fire breaks on the reservation rather than to use their energy breaking fields. Their agent reasoned:

with a certainty of the ranges being secured from fire, [livestock] can be made a success here, and it being the only means at present by which the Indians can become prosperous, the cattle industry should be made paramount to everything else on the reservation, the education of the children alone excepted.\textsuperscript{14}

In 1893 the federal government finally fulfilled the Crook Commission’s promise to reimburse the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock Indians for the ponies that the U. S. military had confiscated from them in 1876. Nearly 800 claimants at the Standing Rock Agency were paid $81,525.34 in two installments on January 14 on June 30, 1893. The payments were made in accordance with the Act of January 19, 1891, which appropriated $200,000 “for payment for 5,000 ponies at $40 per head,” to the Indians of the Cheyenne River and Standing Rock agencies.\textsuperscript{15}

Once again, hot winds and a drought throughout the summer destroyed the vast majority of the Indians’ crops in 1894. Each Indian family continued to cultivate small gardens or small fields, ranging from one to 20 acres, with a total of about 5,000 acres planted.\textsuperscript{16}

The Indians continued to make some progress in ranching. In May of 1894 contractors brought 2,462 heifers and 94 bulls to the agency. Every family received at least one heifer. Their cows also gave birth to 3,059 calves. In August of 1894 the 3,858

\textsuperscript{13} Ibid. 237.
\textsuperscript{14} Ibid., 236-37.
\textsuperscript{15} Ibid., 240. For a copy of the Act of Jan. 19, 1891, see 26 Stat., 720-21.
\textsuperscript{16} James McLaughlin to CIA, Aug. 25, 1894, in ARCIA, 1894, in ARSOI, 1894, vol. 2, 224-25.
Standing Rock Indians owned 13,565 head of cattle and 4,416 horses and ponies.

McLaughlin continued strongly to advocate stock raising, which he observed was "their chief industry." 17

The Court of Indian Affairs continued to hold biweekly sessions at the agency and began to hold occasional sessions at the several sub-issue stations on the reservation during 1894. Grass, Grayeagle, and Standing Soldier continued to serve as the agency's judges. The court heard 15 criminal cases and sentenced 27 guilty parties to confinement and hard labor. According to McLaughlin, 50 civil cases also were tried before this court, which were "adjudicated to the entire satisfaction of the parties concerned." 18

**Gall’s Death**

Gall, at about the age of 56, died of unknown causes in his home, on the evening of Saturday, December 8, 1894, leaving behind his 59-year-old wife, Stands in the Middle or In the Center, his favorite daughter, Nancy Shave Elk, and a 16-year-old nephew, Chase, who lived with his uncle that year. Gall’s family buried him at St. Elizabeth’s Cemetery, located about a quarter of a mile to the northeast of St. Elizabeth’s Episcopal Mission. 19

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17 Ibid., 225. See also “Maj. McLaughlin Returns,” Bismarck Tribune, 20 June 1894, p. 3, col. 4.


19 “Chief Gaul Is Dead,” Bismarck Weekly Tribune 14 Dec. 1894. See also Ray H. Mattison, “Report on Historical Aspects of the Oahe Reservoir Area, Missouri River, South and North Dakota,” South Dakota Historical Collections 27 (1954), 88; Chapman, Remember the Wind, 212; James McLaughlin, Census of the Sioux Indians of Standing Rock Agency, June 30, 1894, Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940, M595, RG 75, roll 549, frame 116, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1965. The exact cause of Gall’s death is unknown. McLaughlin described him as portly in his later years, and knew that Gall was taking medication to lose weight around the time of his death. Therefore, McLaughlin speculated that diet pills “hastened” his death. See James McLaughlin, “Biographical Sketch of Gall,” enclosed in James McLaughlin to CIA, Aug. 21, 1905, in Major James McLaughlin Papers, 1855-1937, Louis Pfaller, ed., St. Paul: Dakota Microfilm, 1968, roll 26, frames 890-91. Others have also claimed that a wagon fell on Gall, but according to Vestal, the
Conclusion

From 1891 through 1894, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators who looked after the interests of their people. For example, Gall continued to ask the government to reimburse the Standing Rock Indians for the ponies that the U. S. Army had confiscated in 1876. The Crook Commission had promised that they would try to get the federal government to pay for their animal. In 1893 the government finally fulfilled this promise. Grass also continued to ask the government to pay the Lakota the money provided to them under Article 8 of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Grass told the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that the Standing Rock Indians wanted the money so they could build better houses for themselves, which was what they needed most at that time. Gall also continued to serve as a District Farmer, a position that required him to act as a cultural mediator. As discussed in earlier chapters of this thesis, as a District Farmer, Gall helped the Lakota adapt to their new life by teaching the Indians in his district how to farm and to raise livestock. Grass also continued to serve as an Indian judge, another position that required an Indian to act as a cultural broker. As discussed in Chapter 4 of this thesis, Grass supported the Indian police and the Indians judges because they allowed the Standing Rock Indians to govern themselves without the interference of the federal court system and the U. S. military. During the last four years of Gall’s life, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators who looked after their people’s interests. After Gall’s death, Grass would continue to follow this course.

Epilogue

Shortly after Gall’s death, McLaughlin was promoted to an U. S. Indian Inspector, bayonet wounds he had received in 1865 hastened his death. See Vestal, New Sources of Indian History, 223-24.
while John W. Cramsie succeeded him as the agent at Standing Rock.\textsuperscript{20}

After the departures of Gall and McLaughlin, Grass continued to devote the remainder of his life looking after the interests of the Lakota. Grass continued to help his people to adapt and to fight for their rights. For example, after Gall’s death, Grass made numerous trips on his people’s behalf to Washington, D.C. On some of these journeys, Grass asked the federal government for the payment of the $7 million still owed the Lakota as a balance from the account of the Black Hills treaty. Historian Stanley Vestal described one such journey to the nation’s capital with the following words:

John Grass is said to have taken himself very seriously. He was an eloquent man and a mouthpiece for the agents at Standing Rock, as well as a chief of the Blackfeet Sioux. Therefore he was frequently sent to Washington as a member of Indian delegations. John Grass did not like to be teased and could not take a joke on himself very gracefully, they say. It is seldom that an Indian gets bald-headed unless as a result of sickness, but John Grass was partly bald. Once when in Washington his brother-in-law was with him. Brothers-in-law among the Sioux are very intimate and are privileged to tease each other. One day when the delegation was seated at the dinner table John’s brother-in-law said: “The very idea that my brother-in-law should be ashamed of being bald-headed. If you go to Congress over there you will see those white men proud of their bald heads. They polish their heads and dress up. John, why don’t you cut off your hair on the sides and polish your bald head like those Senators and Congressmen?” John Grass was very much embarrassed. He did not like that remark. This is said to have happened in 1914.\textsuperscript{21}

John Grass also acted as a cultural mediator who looked after the interests of his people when he gave a speech at the Slope Fair in Mandan. According to an untitled


\textsuperscript{21} “Chief Grass Was Orator, Judge, Shining Example For All,” Superior Wisconsin Telegram, 25 May 1918, in McLaughlin Papers, M234, roll 15, frames 106-7. “John Grass Nearly Done With Life,” Mandan Pioneer Daily, 6 May 1916, in untitled File, Box 1, Alfred Burton Welch, 1874-1945, Papers, Manuscript Collection B602, NDSHS. Vestal, New Sources of Indian History, 341-2.
article in the October 7, 1915, issue of the *Bismarck Tribune*, John Grass, "chief justice [sic] of the Sioux," made a public speech at the Slope Fair in Mandan, a city that adjoins Bismarck. At the fair, Grass summarized his life, and characterized himself as a man who still cherished his native culture, but who also realized that his people had to adapt the white man's ways in order to survive and prosper. The chief also spoke out in favor of extending suffrage to all adult Indians. The *Bismarck Tribune* quoted Grass as having stated the following words at the fair:

   I am an Indian and called upon to address you. It is not that I prefer not to talk to you in your own tongue, but that as an Indian I am doing the best I can. . . .

   Years ago this place here was where he [we] hunted out buffalo and the deer, where we Indians lived and thought as savages. We can now see the change, the progress that has been made, and we have learned to know and respect the white man and his ways.

   It was sixty-one years ago that I first saw a white man. They said to me "Remember John Grass, some day you and your children will be changed." The prophecy of the pioneer traders has come true. While I could see changes were coming, I am surprised at the result. I am nothing but a Sioux, but I tell you that from my childhood days up, I realized that changes would come and it was my desire that it might be so.

   Now the Indians and the whites may intermingle, we are all ruled by the same government and belong to one great nation. . . . The way things are planted to produce more than four times what we can secure, was to me the most marvelous of all the things of the white man, and impressed me more than anything in my sixty years of acquaintance [sic] with the white man.

   It is a fact that our commissioner [CIA], Cato Sells, at Washington, has seen fit to curtail our amusements. He has forbidden us to put on our old costumes and war paint and I believe he is mistaken. We know that the days of our wars are past. . . .

   Some day soon, the Indians will no longer be denied the ballot, and then in our new Sioux county we will be found a smaller nation, and will by laws made in the white man's ways govern ourselves.

Although Grass farmed, raised livestock, and was in charge of the Court of Indian Affairs at Standing Rock, he continued to embrace the Lakota culture during the last 24 years of his life. For example, in 1915 he still wanted the Lakota to be allowed to wear their war
paint and native garments. Furthermore, at the Slope Fair, Grass said he preferred to use his native tongue, but he chose to speak in English at the fair so he could present the needs of the Lakota to a broader audience. At the fair, Grass also publicly pushed for Indians’ suffrage so the Lakota could govern themselves. In sum, after Gall’s death, Grass continued to embrace the Lakota culture and continued to act as an intermediary, or a cultural broker, who looked after the best interests of his people.22

On May 10, 1918, Grass, nearly 80 years old, died in his little house. According to the Bismarck Tribune, the old chief had been ill for over a year, and had passed away “with his faithful wife at his bedside.” Hundreds of people attended his funeral at Fort Yates. According to The Mandan News, at the time of his death, Grass’ 66-year-old wife, Amanda Grass, still lived at the reservation, while his grandson, Albert Grass, was engaged in World War I in France. At the same time, several of John Grass’ sisters and his cousin, Rev. Deloria, resided at Wakpala, and another cousin, Rev. H. H. Welsh, lived in Cannon Ball. Upon his grandfather’s death, Albert became the hereditary Head Chief of the Blackfeet Lakota.23

Although the federal government had entered into various treaties, promising to help the Lakota become self-sufficient, and, although Gall and Grass had spent their entire lives trying to get the government to fulfill those obligations, the Lakota were

22 Untitled article, Bismarck Tribune, 7 October 1915, in “John Grass Biography File,” NDSHS.
23 “Chief Justice of Teton-Dakota Tribe Passes Away Near Age of 80 at Home on Standing Rock,” Bismarck Tribune, 15 May 1918, p. 4; “Foster Father of Capt. Welch Dies,” The Mandan News, 17 May 1918, p. 1. See also James B. Kitch, Superintendent, Census of the Sioux Indians of Standing Rock Agency, June 30, 1917, Indian Census Rolls, 1885-1940, M595, RG 75, roll 554, frame 553, Washington, D. C.: NA, 1965. The lack of available primary records in North Dakota and Montana relative to Standing Rock Reservation for the post-Ghost Dance period makes it impossible to interpret the last 24 years of John Grass’ life in an adequate fashion without making a trip to the Kansas City National Archives and Records Administration, where the vast majority of Standing Rock records are located. Unfortunately, as discussed in the introduction to this thesis, historians largely have ignored the post-Ghost Dance era of Standing Rock making it even more difficult to interpret the last 24 years of Grass’ life without a research trip to Kansas City.
completely dependent on government rations in 1920, two years after Grass’ death.  
During World War I, the price of beef skyrocketed, and the Lakota sold off almost all of  
their cattle. By 1920 their cattle were gone and Indian farming was almost non-existent.  
The Lakota were forced to live on the small amount of money they received from leasing  
their lands to non-Indians and on government assistance. To make matters worse, their  
housing and education systems were in shambles as well. Despite the valiant efforts of  
Gall and Grass, their people were no better off in 1920 than when the government entered  
into treaties with them in 1868, 1877, and 1889, obligating the federal government to  
help the Lakota become self-supportive.24

24 Hyde, A Sioux Chronicle, xvii-xx.
Conclusion

Before I present my conclusion, I must again define the terms “progressive,” “traditionalist,” and cultural mediator for the purpose of this thesis. A “progressive” was defined as a native who freely chose to discard his or her culture and to replace it with the white man’s customs. A “traditionalist” was defined as a native who embraces his or her culture and rejects foreign customs, beliefs, and practices, including the Euro-American culture. Furthermore, a cultural broker is a patriot who mediates with non-Indians and who adopts some aspects of the Anglo-American culture in order to help his people to adapt and to survive, while the term “progressive” implies that any such labeled natives have betrayed their people and their native culture. A cultural broker is a person with one foot in the Indian world, and one foot in the white man’s world, who mediated between the two cultures for his own benefit, and/or his people’s benefit. Grass and Gall fall within this definition of the term cultural broker, since they continued to honor the Lakota culture, while adopting those aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited their people. They firmly believed that such a course was the only viable option for their people if they were to have any chance at survival and prosperity. Cultural brokers, like Gall and Grass, live on the edge of change and conflict and respond in a flexible manner, to bring understanding to distinct peoples.

Labeling Gall and Grass as “progressives” is similar to Columbus’ description of the Arawaks as noble “savages.” Nancy Shoemaker summarized Columbus’ descriptions in the letter by stating, “The Caribs were bloodthirsty cannibals, always attacking the Arawaks, who were simple, friendly, cowardly, and generous. The Arawaks had a specialized knowledge about their own environment, but were childlike upon
encountering European technology.” Columbus' categorization of the Arawaks as Noble Savages parallels the prevailing interpretations of Chief Gall, the nineteenth-century Uncpapa leader, and Chief John Grass, the nineteenth-century Lakota Blackfeet leader, as “progressives.” At the same time, interpreting Sitting Bull as a “traditionalist” is similar to Columbus' portrayal of the Caribs as bloodthirsty “savages.” All of these interpretations fall prey to absolute and unfair descriptions. Because the terms “progressive” and “traditionalist” are such absolute terms, most early reservation Indians fail to fit neatly within either label. Instead, according to Jerry A. Davis, most Indians acted as cultural brokers. Davis writes, “Indians’ persistently untenable positions in society generally did not make the cultural broker unique; rather, it made the concept of brokerage characteristically ordinary.”

Furthermore, as McLaren states:

... native studies shifted from theories of assimilation to theories of continuity, renewal, and transformation. Present day studies of culture contact and change tend to agree that the unilinear continuum is far too simplistic to explain the lives and actions of the individuals who constitute these changing cultures. There is also a consensus that the traditional/progressive dichotomy does not exist except in a gross sense, and that adherence to it as an analytical concept can inhibit understanding. Instead contemporary anthropologists see culture contact as highly flexible and dynamic, involving both reinforcement and tension, reproduction and transformation.

In other words, the complexity of the real world and the enduring nature of Indian cultures forced social scientists to reevaluate their ineffectual categorization of Indians as “progressives” or “traditionalists.”

 Historians, however, often still use these absolute terms, as David Rich Lewis

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1Nancy Shoemaker, “Point of View,” Chronicle of Higher Learning, unknown date (Handout given by Professor Flores to the students in History 594, University of Montana, Spring Semester, 1997). See also Davis, “The ‘Cultural Broker’ in History and Ethnohistory,” 35.
Often qualified with quotation marks, they have become a kind of professional shorthand for describing individuals, factionalism, and the process of acculturation. The unspoken understanding is that we are simplifying a complex, dynamic situation out of necessity, trusting that colleagues will recognize our dilemma and hoping that others will not read overly static meanings into these useful, if somewhat misleading, terms. We deny the dichotomy but we fall back on it, perhaps because in our histories we do not understand or cannot fully untangle the temporal threads of personal motive and behavior which guide individuals and draw them into factions or groups.

The weakness of this progressive-traditional dichotomy becomes most apparent in attempts to categorize complex individuals, particularly the intermediaries, the middlemen, the cultural brokers, the ‘150% men’ who operate on the cultural margins.³

Gall, Grass, and even Sitting Bull should be remembered as cultural brokers or as mediators between two worlds, instead of being remembered as “progressives” (Gall and Grass) or as a “traditionalist” (Sitting Bull). All three chiefs acted as “intermediaries, the middlemen, the cultural brokers, the ‘150% men’ who operated on the cultural margins.” All three men embraced the Lakota culture throughout their lives, but all three men also utilized the white man’s ways to one extent or another in order to maintain the culture of the Lakota and/or to help their people adapt so they would have a better chance at prosperity. Gall, Sitting Bull, and John Grass did not simply chose to adopt the white man’s ways freely. In actuality, they had no choice but to adapt. As Sitting Bull once said, “‘white men, who belong to another land, have come upon us, and are forcing us to live according to their ideas. That is an injustice; we have never dreamed of making white men live as we live.’”⁴

³ Lewis, “Reservation Leadership and the Progressive-Traditional Dichotomy,” 421.
From the 1850s through the summer of 1876, John Grass and Gall patriotically defended the hunting grounds of their people against enemy tribes and non-Indians. They quickly proved their manhood and earned warrior names. In the introduction to this thesis, a cultural mediator was defined as a patriot who mediates with non-Indians and who adopts some aspects of the Anglo-American culture in order to help his people to adapt and to survive. On the other hand, at the beginning of this thesis, the definition of the term “progressive” implied that any such labeled natives have betrayed their people and their native culture. Could Gall or Grass, heroic warriors who defended the Lakota for over 20 years, become “progressives” on the reservation and betray their people as that term suggests?

During the 1850s, 1860s, and 1870s, Gall preferred to hunt and gather food, but in times of need, he usually went to some U. S. Indian agency to receive beef. Gall acted as a cultural mediator, when he tried to keep a foot in each world by pursuing buffalo, while exploiting the agency system. As a result, he had more experience with the government’s employees than most members of the Hunkpapa tribe. Due to Gall’s familiarity with whites, the Hunkpapa believed Gall was best suited to mediate with governmental officials.

Therefore, when the government wanted to end Red Cloud’s War and held a peace conference at Fort Rice in 1868, Sitting Bull and the Hunkpapa tribe sent Gall as their chief representative. Gall signed the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868 because he falsely thought it required the government to abandon its posts in Hunkpapa territory and did not fathom that the treaty would ultimately create a reservation for the Lakota, where they would have to reside and farm and raise livestock like white men.
In accordance with the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868, the Grand River Agency, which was later moved to Standing Rock, was created for the Blackfeet and Hunkpapa Lakota. Grass' father, The Grass, and his band of Blackfeet Lakota practiced agriculture on the Great Sioux Reserve under the supervision of the Grand River/Standing Rock Indian agents. The Grass became discouraged, however, because the government did not uphold the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. The government failed to issue them adequate farm implements, and failed to provide adequate schools for their children. The United States' failure to help the Lakota become self-reliant would eventually force John Grass and Gall to act as cultural mediators by complaining to various governmental officials about the situation. They would spend years trying to convince the United States to fulfill its pledge to make the Lakota into self-sufficient farmers and/or ranchers.

Gall's experiences in Canada forced him to realize that the Lakota would have to live on a reservation and adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture in order to survive. While Gall unsuccessfully attempted to live on buffalo in Canada, Grass had already reached the same conclusion. Grass signed the Black Hills Treaty because he believed the government would stop issuing badly needed rations to the Lakota if they rejected the agreement. Grass also signed the Black Hills Treaty because he believed the terms of the agreement would ensure the survival of the Lakota people. Grass continued to hunt and to gather food whenever an opportunity presented itself, but he also raised livestock and practiced agriculture at Standing Rock in order to sustain his people. During the late 1870s, Grass asked for a 320-acre allotment, as provided in the Fort Laramie Treaty. He believed an allotment would be an important step towards self-sufficiency for his family and would help free them of their dependence on the federal
government. Grass also continued to demand that the government fulfill its treaty
pledges to the Lakota and help them become prosperous farmers and ranchers.

Grass also wanted the government to provide adequate schools for the Lakota
children so they would be better able to deal with non-Indians. Gall and Sitting Bull also
supported sending Lakota children to school for the same reason. As discussed in earlier
chapters of this thesis, three cultural brokers identified in Margaret Szasz's book,
*Between Indian and White Worlds The Cultural Broker*, also supported Indian schools.
During the late 1800s and early 1900s, Sarah Dickinson, Tillie Paul, and Frances Willard,
three native female teachers, taught school to Tlingit and Haida Indians in southeast
Alaska. Historian Victoria Wyatt observes:

> They [Dickinson, Paul, and Willard] accepted a new form of spirituality
> and a new type of educational system and sought to use it as a vehicle to
> help their peers. Their mission was to educate their people about the non­
> native society that was growing around them and to prepare the coming
generation to function and compete successfully in the new system.

Like Dickinson, Paul, and Willard, Grass, Gall, and even Sitting Bull acted as cultural
mediators by supporting Indian schools so Native Americans would be better able to
function in the new economic system.5

Although Grass built log houses for the Blackfeet Lakota in the late 1870s, he
continued to embrace the Lakota culture. For example, Grass erected a dance hall in the
center of his bands' 50 homes, where he led the Lakota in various dances, including the
Kiss Dance, which upset the Indian agent at Standing Rock.

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5 Wyatt, “Female Teachers in Southeast Alaska: Sarah Dickinson, Tillie Paul, and Frances Willard,” in
*Between Indian and White Worlds The Cultural Broker* ed. by Margaret Connoll Szasz, 179-96. See also
Mission, 1828-1829,” in *Between Indian and White Worlds The Cultural Broker* ed. by Margaret Connoll
Szasz, 122-35.
During the late 1870s, while Gall and Sitting Bull lived as refugees in Canada, Grass also served as an Indian scout for the U. S. Army in order to act as a buffer between American soldiers and non-reservation Indians. Grass believed Indian Scouts could induce non-reservation Indians to surrender peacefully, and, thereby, prevent an armed confrontation with the U. S. Army, which would have only made things even worse for the Lakota. His role as an Indian scout also allowed Grass to redefine himself within the cultural framework of the Lakota. As a scout, he roamed the former hunting grounds of the Lakota and had the opportunity to prove his manhood as a warrior, which was much preferred to farm work. Most of the Lakota believed that men should hunt and make war, while the women practiced agricultural and gathered food. Therefore, the role of Indian Scout easily was reinterpreted as an honorable position within the cultural framework of the Lakota. Furthermore, the pay of an Indian Scout was much better than any other position Grass could have obtained on the reservation. In sum, during the late 1870s, Grass continued to adhere to the Lakota culture, but was willing to adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited his people. Despite all of this evidence that Gall and Grass were cultural brokers, they would soon be described in absolute terms as “progressives.”

In response to the Black Hills Gold rush and the Battle of the Little Bighorn, the government eventually forced the vast majority of the Lakota to settle permanently on the Great Sioux Reserve, where Grass and Gall would have to act as cultural mediators and adopt certain aspects of the Euro-American culture in order to survive.

Overall, Grass and Gall acted as successful cultural mediators in 1882 and 1883. They blended Lakota hunting practices with government issued rations and American
farming techniques in order to feed their people. Although they acted rashly when they signed the Edmunds agreement, their testimony before the Dawes Commission helped correct their mistake and helped end any further attempts to reduce the Great Sioux Reserve for the next several years.

From 1883 through 1887, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators in a number of ways, while trying to help the Standing Rock Indians adjust to their new life on the reservation. As district farmers, Grass and Gall acted as cultural mediators by helping their people learn how to farm and raise livestock. Despite Grass' and Gall's attempt to teach the Lakota how to farm, the government continued to fall short of its promise to make them into self-reliant farmers. The government failed to provide the Standing Rock Indians with adequate farm equipment. The United States also failed to provide the Lakota with adequate school facilities. Therefore, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators by asking the federal government to provide adequate farm equipment for their people and to build more schools on the reservation. The two chiefs succeeded to convince the Episcopalian Church to build a school for their bands on the mouth of Oak Creek.

Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators by serving as judges on the Standing Rock Court of Indian Offense. They had one foot in each world when they enforced American law on an Indian reservation. Grass supported the Indian police force and the Court of Indian Offenses because they maintained order on the reservation without the involvement of the U. S. Army. Grass also realized that the Indians were more likely to get a fair trial before the Court of Indian Offenses than before a federal court with white jurors and white judges. Grass also supported the Indian police because
they were very similar to the Lakota’s akicita, or policemen, who had enforced rules and regulations among the previously nomadic Lakota. As a result, Grass and Gall were able to reinterpret the roles of the Indian policemen and Indian judges within the cultural framework of the Lakota. Gall eventually would accept a position as judge for similar reasons. Their roles as judges of the Court of Indian Affairs provided further evidence that Gall and Grass were willing to accept those aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited the Lakota people.

Grass also acted as a cultural mediator when he used the power of the Catholic Church against the Crook Commission. According to historian Darcee McLaren, two other cultural mediators, John Thunder and Peter Hunter used the Presbyterian Church in a similar manner. The Foreign Mission Committee (FMC) of the Presbyterian Church in Canada hired Thunder and Hunter, two Dakota Indians, to look after their own people in southern Manitoba. McLaren observes:

However, Thunder and Hunter’s goals and perception of the missionary role were not necessarily those of the FMC. Applying historian Richard White’s (1991) theoretical framework of the middle ground shows that both men used the office of missionary and the symbols of Christianity to communicate their needs to the dominant white society and to achieve their goals on behalf of the Dakota people.

Like Thunder and Hunter, Grass used the power and symbolism of Christianity to protect the interests of native people.6

Historians have also misinterpreted Gall and Grass as “progressives” because of their eventual support for the Sioux Act of 1889. Grass and Gall, however, acted as cultural mediators who eventually consented to the Sioux Bill because they believed it was in their people’s best interest. Grass and Gall correctly feared that the government

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would take their land with no or little compensation if they did not sign. Both Agent
McLaughlin and the Crook Commission warned them that if they rejected the bill the
federal government would take their lands with much less compensation. At the same
time, the two chiefs wanted the government to help their Lakota truly become self-
sufficient farmers and stockmen, and realized that the Sioux Bill was their best chance to
reach that goal. The techniques of the Crook Commission gave the Lakota some hope for
the future. Furthermore, Grass and Gall knew the government would probably not be
able to stop, or would not even try to stop, all of the land-hungry whites from squatting
on and/or taking their land if the bill was rejected. Therefore, Grass and Gall decided to
sign the Sioux Bill of 1889.

If Grass and Gall were “progressives,” they would have accepted the
government’s first offer for the Lakota’s land, while a “traditionalist” would have refused
to sell the land at any price. Instead, Grass and Gall successfully acted as cultural
mediators by securing the best price that the government would have given the Lakota for
their surplus lands. For example, Grass and Gall were some of the key leaders who had
convinced the Lakota to reject the Sioux Bill of 1888. The government responded to the
rejection of the Lakota by proposing a much more liberal offer to the Lakota in the Sioux
Bill of 1889. Also, before Grass and Gall signed the Sioux Bill of 1889, Grass gained
some additional concessions from the Crook Commission thus providing further evidence
that they successfully acted as mediators by securing the best possible deal from the
government for the surplus Lakota lands. Furthermore, if the Lakota had rejected the
Sioux Bill of 1889, the government probably would have taken their land with little or no
compensation.
After they signed the treaty, Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators when they issued various complaints to the commissioners. They asked the government to pay the Standing Rock Indians who served as farmers, judges, and policemen adequate salaries for their efforts. Grass and Gall observed that the Indian farmers worked very hard at teaching the Standing Rock Indians how to farm and to raise livestock. Gall still held the position of District Farmer and continued to act as a cultural mediator by helping Indians learn how to farm and to raise livestock.

In 1889 and 1890, Grass and Gall also acted as cultural mediators by asking the government to uphold the treaties of 1868 and 1877. Grass and Gall continued to try to convince the government to put forth a better effort at making the Lakota self-reliant.

At the same time, the United States continued to fail to provide adequate school facilities for all of the Lakota children at Standing Rock. As discussed in earlier, Gall and Grass, like other cultural mediators identified in Szasz’s book, supported the schools because the educators taught the children how to better deal with non-Indians and how to better compete in the new economic system. Even Sitting Bull who has been portrayed falsely as the ultimate “traditionalist” favored sending Lakota children to school so they would be better able to deal with whites. When Grass and Gall were sent as delegates to Washington, D. C. to discuss the additional promises made by the Crook Commission, they asked the government to build more schools for the Lakota so they would not have to send their children to Eastern boarding schools.

A three-year drought (1887-89) coupled with a severe cut in the Lakota’s beef caused suffering among them. The Indians suffered from lack of food, but at least they
received meager government issued rations. This despair of the Lakota made them ripe for the Ghost Dance movement.

Gall and Grass opposed the Ghost Dance, not because they no longer embraced the Lakota culture, but because it threatened the future existence of their people. As historian Virginia Driving Hawk Sneve observed, “Gall took no part in the Messiah Ghost Dance religion, but worked with his people to convince them that cooperation was the only recourse left.” Ironically, in May of 1890, shortly before the Ghost Dance erupted in violence, Gall had requested permission to go to Cheyenne River to dance for ponies, providing evidence that he still wanted to adhere to the Lakota culture, unless it attracted the wrath of the federal government. As discussed in Chapter 2 of this thesis, Grass also led various dances, including the Kiss Dance, on the reservation, but he too opposed the Ghost Dance because he feared it would arouse the wrath of the U. S. military.

Gall and Grass also acted as intermediaries or cultural brokers when they mediated between McLaughlin and the dancers. According to Jerry A. Davis, Canadian anthropologist Robert Paine has identified one type of cultural brokers as the “‘go-between,’ or interparty purveyor, [who] expects no remuneration or alternation for services provided.” Gall and Grass acted as “go-betweens,” or “interparty purveyors,” who expected nothing in return for their services when they mediated between the government and the Ghost Dancers. They only hoped to persuade some of the dancers to surrender peacefully. Grass and Gall did convince some of them to quit dancing, which very well may have saved their lives. Fearful of an armed confrontation between the Lakota and the United States, Grass also tried to convince the government to use Indian
scouts and Indian policemen to stop the Ghost Dances so the U. S. military would not have to become involved.7

Furthermore, while the armed conflict took place on Standing Rock, Gall and Grass bravely defended the Episcopalian missionary school, the school children, and the missionaries from the Ghost Dancers for a number of different reasons. As already noted, Gall and Grass, like other native cultural mediators identified in Szasz’s book, supported sending Indian children to school because educators would teach the children how to compete successfully in the new economic system. Furthermore, both chiefs had emotional ties to the school. Gall and Grass had been instrumental in convincing the Episcopalian missionaries to build St. Elizabeth’s school for their bands’ children. Gall also had supported the school by serving as a Superintendent who made sure that children got to school. Gall also guarded the school because his grandchildren attended classes there.

Although Gall and Grass converted to Christianity, they did not want to abandon the spiritual beliefs and customs of the Lakota. Grass and Gall converted to Christianity primarily because it was the only social and religious activity allowed on the reservation. Grass and Gall converted so they could socialize with other Indians, and not because they desired to live exactly as white men did, as the term “progressive” implies.

Furthermore, Gall and Grass, like Black Elk, acted as cultural mediators by blending Lakota and Christian beliefs and practices. For example, Gall fasted prior to his first communion; fasting was a common practice before both Lakota and Christian ceremonies. Furthermore, like the vast majority of the Lakota, Grass and Gall probably reinterpreted the annual denominational meetings as the Lakota sun dance. Historian

Michael Steltenkamp has portrayed Black Elk in a similar manner. Black Elk, a traditional holy man, became a Catholic catechist and faithfully served his people for sixty years on the reservation. The holy man, however, was not an old-time medicine man, or one who betrayed his native beliefs in favor of something completely different. Instead, according to Steltenkamp, Black Elk, like Grass and Gall, mediated between the two cultures by translating Christianity into the Lakota way of life and by helping the Lakota adapt to their new life on the reservation.⁸

From 1891 through 1894, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators who looked after the interests of their people. For example, Gall continued to ask the government to reimburse the Standing Rock Indians for the ponies that the U. S. Army had confiscated in 1876. The Crook Commission had promised that they would try to get the federal government to pay for their animal. In 1893 the government finally fulfilled this promise. Grass also continued to ask the government to pay the Lakota the money provided to them under Article 8 of the Fort Laramie Treaty of 1868. Grass told the Commissioner of Indian Affairs that the Standing Rock Indians wanted the money so they could build better houses for themselves, which was what they needed most at that time. Gall also continued to serve as a District Farmer, a position that required him to act as a cultural mediator. Grass also continued to serve as an Indian judge, another position that required an Indian to act as a cultural broker. During the last four years of Gall’s life, Grass and Gall continued to act as cultural mediators who looked after their people’s interests. After Gall’s death, Grass would continue to follow this course.

After Gall’s death in 1894, Grass continued to devote the remainder of his life

looking after the interests of the Lakota. Grass continued to act as a cultural mediator by persisting to help his people adapt to life on the reservation and by continuing to fight for the rights of the Lakota. For example, after Gall’s death, Grass made numerous trips on his people’s behalf to Washington, D.C. On some of these journeys, Grass asked the federal government for the payment of the $7 million still owed the Lakota as a balance from the account of the Black Hills treaty.

John Grass also acted as a cultural mediator who looked after the interests of his people when he gave a speech at the Slope Fair in Mandan. According to an untitled article in the October 7, 1915, issue of the *Bismarck Tribune*, John Grass, “chief justice [sic] of the Sioux,” made a public speech at the Slope Fair in Mandan, a city that adjoins Bismarck. At the fair, Grass summarized his life, and characterized himself as a man who still cherished his native culture, but who also realized that his people had to adapt the white man’s ways in order to survive and prosper. The chief also spoke out in favor of extending suffrage to all adult Indians. The *Bismarck Tribune* quoted Grass as having stated the following words at the fair:

I am an Indian and called upon to address you. It is not that I prefer not to talk to you in your own tongue, but that as an Indian I am doing the best I can. . . .

Years ago this place here was where he [we] hunted out buffalo and the deer, where we Indians lived and thought as savages. We can now see the change, the progress that has been made, and we have learned to know and respect the white man and his ways.

It was sixty-one years ago that I first saw a white man. They said to me “Remember John Grass, some day you and your children will be changed.” The prophecy of the pioneer traders has come true. While I could see changes were coming, I am surprised at the result. I am nothing but a Sioux, but I tell you that from my childhood days up, I realized that changes would come and it was my desire that it might be so. Now the Indians and the whites may intermingle, we are all ruled by the same government and belong to one great nation. . . . The way things are planted to produce more than four times what we can secure, was to me
the most marvelous of all the things of the white man, and impressed me more than anything in my sixty years of acquaintance [sic] with the white
man.

It is a fact that our commissioner [CIA], Cato Sells, at Washington, has seen fit to curtail our amusements. He has forbidden us to put on our old costumes and war paint and I believe he is mistaken. We know that the days of our wars are past.

Some day soon, the Indians will no longer be denied the ballot, and then in our new Sioux county we will be found a smaller nation, and will by laws made in the white man's ways govern ourselves.

Although Grass farmed, raised livestock, and was in charge of the Court of Indian Affairs at Standing Rock, he continued to embrace the Lakota culture during the last 24 years of his life. For example, in 1915 he still wanted the Lakota to be allowed to dance and to wear their war paint and native garments. Furthermore, at the Slope Fair, Grass said he preferred to use his native tongue, but he chose to speak in English at the fair so he could present the needs of the Lakota to a broader audience. At the fair, Grass also publicly pushed for Indians' suffrage so the Lakota could govern themselves. In sum, after Gall's death, Grass continued to embrace the Lakota culture and continued to act as an intermediary, or a cultural broker, who looked after the best interests of his people until he died on May 10, 1918.

Although the federal government had entered into various treaties, promising to help the Lakota become self-sufficient, and, although Gall and Grass had spent their entire lives trying to get the government to fulfill those obligations, the Lakota were completely dependent on government rations in 1920, two years after Grass' death. During World War I, the price of beef skyrocketed, and the Lakota sold off almost all of their cattle. By 1920 their cattle were gone and Indian farming was almost non-existent. The Lakota were forced to live on the small amount of money they received from leasing

9 Untitled article, Bismarck Tribune, 7 October 1915, in "John Grass Biography File," NDSHS.
their lands to non-Indians and on government assistance. To make matters worse, their housing and education systems were in shambles as well. Despite the valiant efforts of Gall and Grass, their people were no better off in 1920 than when the government entered into treaties with them in 1868, 1877, and 1889, obligating the federal government to help the Lakota become self-supportive.¹⁰

This thesis has not just added a few more names to the list of cultural mediators. This thesis represents the most complete and most documented biography of Gall and Grass, two of the most important 19th century Lakota leaders. Historians largely have ignored these two important men, but this thesis has patched or filled a void in the secondary records. This thesis has also freed Gall and Grass from the stigma attached to the term “progressive,” which implies that any such labeled Indians have betrayed their people and their native culture. Gall and Grass never betrayed their people or their culture. Instead, they were patriotic cultural brokers who spent their entire lives looking after the interests of the Hunkpapa and Blackfeet Lakota. Grass and Gall embraced their native culture throughout their lives, and were willing to adopt those aspects of the Euro-American culture that benefited the Lakota. The two chiefs should be celebrated as Indian patriots.

This thesis also has provided additional evidence that the “progressive/traditionalist” dichotomy is a poor method to use when interpreting Native Americans. As Davis states, “The weakness of this progressive-traditional dichotomy becomes most apparent in attempts to categorize complex individuals, particularly the intermediaries, the middlemen, the cultural brokers, the ‘150% men’ who operate on the cultural margins [men like Grass, Gall, and Sitting Bull].” Even Sitting Bull who

normally has been portrayed as the ultimate “traditionalist” was really a cultural broker. Sitting Bull farmed, raised livestock, lived in a log house, and sent his kids to school on the reservation. Furthermore, Sitting Bull was willing to sell the Lakota’s surplus lands for the right price. Hopefully, this thesis will further persuade historians and anthropologists to abandon the outdated “progressive/traditionalist” dichotomy for the more accurate and more flexible cultural mediator interpretive model.11

In conclusion, absolute terms, such as “progressives” and “traditionalists” inadequately describe Gall, Grass, and Sitting Bull. Although Gall and Grass increased their prestige and power by their own actions, the two chiefs primarily mediated between two worlds for the benefit of the Lakota, in part, because they knew they had no other practical choice. Sitting Bull’s description of reservation Indians adequately describes Gall, Grass, and ironically even Sitting Bull himself: “‘All [reservation] agency Indians I have seen . . . are neither red warriors nor white farmers.’”12

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Appendix A: Photographs

Photographs Courtesy of Frank B. Fiske Photograph Collection, North Dakota State Historical Society

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photograph Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1061 Grass, John</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1210 Grass, John</td>
<td>252</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2023 Grass, Mr. And Mrs. and Child</td>
<td>253</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2139 Grass, Mr. and Mrs.</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2311 Grass, Mrs.</td>
<td>255</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3139 Grass, John</td>
<td>256</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Photograph Title/Description Page

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Photograph Title/Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Gall with hair in braids</td>
<td>257</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gall (3/4 with bow &amp; arrows)</td>
<td>258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gall. Holding pipe.</td>
<td>259</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sitting Bull’s House &amp; Family</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Gall and nephew</td>
<td>261</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Albert Grass, wife, and two children</td>
<td>262</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Grass (Pehige) “Blackfoot Tribe” Father of John Grass 1872</td>
<td>263</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass, John (Dakota Indian). Bust.</td>
<td>264</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Grass and Mr. Fairbault</td>
<td>265</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First Photograph Ever Taken of Chief Gall Taken At Fort Buford, N. Dak. In 1881</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chief Gall’s Mother</td>
<td>267</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>