Industrial development at the Crow Indian Reservation

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INDUSTRIAL DEVELOPMENT AT THE
CROW INDIAN RESERVATION

By
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B.B.A., North Texas State University, 1970

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degree of
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Chairman, Board of Examiners
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Date
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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

American Indians, as a group, rate last in the economic position of all non-white ethnic groups living in the United States. Unemployment rates have been noted as high as 79 per cent and the future economic picture leaves much to be desired. One contributing factor to the plight of the American Indian is his lack of mobility. In this regard, Alan L. Sorkin stated:

Living on a reservation that is far removed from the mainstream of American life, the Indian is often torn between a desire to remain on the reservation, preserving his tribal culture despite limited economic opportunity, and a desire to break away for a chance of greater economic benefits in an alien environment.

Recently, however, American industry has taken a look at the feasibility of locating plants on reservations. Robert L. Friedlander, vice president of Thomas H. Miner and Associates, Inc., noted that:

It amazes me when I see American companies setting up factories all over the world because they think

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2Ibid., vii.
they can't afford to manufacture here in the U.S. . . . there's no need for industry to go to Taiwan when it can find many of the same advantages on an Indian reservation.3

Industrial development on Indian reservations produces a ray of hope. Jobs there will not only provide an impetus to the economic development but will also provide an opportunity for the Indian worker to remain on the reservation. This, in turn, will enable their tribal culture to be preserved.

**Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this study was twofold: first, identifying, describing and analyzing the inherent problems involved in industrial development at the Crow Indian Reservation; second, analyzing the feasibility of industrial expansion at the Crow Indian Reservation, Montana.

**Analysis of the Problem**

Published information concerning industrial development on Indian reservations is extremely limited. The only research readily available on this subject is Sorkin's book entitled *American Indians and Federal Aid*.4 One chapter of his book is devoted to the industrial development problems of Indian reservations. His analysis of the problems was very

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3"Firms Find Indian Reservation is Good Place to Locate Plant," *Industry Week*, (October 18, 1971), p. 14.

4Sorkin, *American Indians and Federal Aid*. 
explicit but made no attempt to concentrate on specific reservations.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA) produced a study called the "Missouri River Basin Investigations" which reported on some aspects of the Crow Reservation in Montana. The content of this research encompassed many areas ranging from age distribution of Montana Indians to a description of a budgetary program used in the allocation of Federal funds. That study did touch upon the subject of industrial development. It described the social and economic effects of industrial employment. However, the results of the investigations focused on post-industrialization. Moreover, Cliff Conaway, Industrial Development Specialist at the BIA Billings Area Office, describes this research as being out of date.

Sorkin's book makes reference to the need for more accurate information concerning industrial development on Indian reservations. In this respect it is paramount for a potential industrial developer to have information regarding the characteristics of the costs of, and the availability of, labor, public services and transportation. Further, it is


7Sorkin, American Indians and Federal Aid, p. 86.
necessary for an industrialist to understand the Crow Indians and their culture. These facts and others are used as a basis for decisions concerning the location of a manufacturing plant.

The present study provided the above facts and was written specifically for potential industrial developers. It is hoped that this may ultimately lead to a solution to the chronic unemployment rate (28 per cent)\(^8\) at the Crow Indian Reservation. Information derived from this research will aid in decisions faced by potential industrial developers considering the Crow Indian Reservation as a possible site for plant location.

In addition to answering the basic questions common to any possible plant site, this study presents information regarding peculiar procedural matters involving the BIA, the Crow Tribe, and the potential industrial developer in conglomerating their interests for the purpose of decision making.

With the foundation of identifying, describing and analyzing the inherent problems involved in the feasibility of industrial development of the Crow Reservation, a statement has been provided concerning future industrial growth at the location concerned. It may very well be that the industrial climate at the reservation is not presently suited for

\(^{8}\)U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet: Crow Indian Reservation, Crow Agency, Montana, April, 1972, p. 5.
industrial growth and by the same token the reverse may be true. With a foundation of facts accumulated in this study an opinion has been given regarding the potentiality of industrial development at the Crow Indian Reservation. No attempt was made to prescribe a particular industry if in fact industrialization is suggested. A few industries were mentioned for their intrinsic advantages of locating at the reservation, however, no decree of one specific industry was recommended.

Design of the Project

It was the general approach of this research to collect pertinent data by tape-recorded conversations from a variety of sources. There were basically four sources of information.

First, a recorded conversation was initiated with personnel from the BIA who are particularly knowledgeable in the area of industrial development on Indian reservations. This involved E. M. Peterson, a member of the BIA Billings Area Office for fifteen years, and Cliff Conaway, the Industrial Development Specialist for the States of Montana and Wyoming. Another discussion engaged Richard Jaramillo, Program Officer of the BIA for the Crow Indian Reservation.

The second source of information involved Stan Stevens, Executive Director of the Big Horn Economic Development Corporation (an agency associated with the Economic Development Administration).
The third interview source was Bill Nicholas, President of the Big Horn Carpet Mills. This carpet manufacturing plant is located on the Crow Indian Reservation and 90 percent of the employees are Crow Indians. Mr. Nicholas' discussion may be viewed as a testimonial to the subject at hand.

The final source of information involving a recorded conversation concerned influential Indian leaders such as David Stewart, the Crow Tribal Chairman.

The basic assumption underlining all of these proposed taped conversations was that these gentlemen have been directly associated with the objectives involved in this research and have developed a wide range of expertise. Thus, they were resourceful and practical sounding boards for the cause of this research.

In addition to the aforementioned sources of information, credible information concerning industrial development on Indian reservations was received from the following agencies: U.S. Department of Interior (Washington Office of the Bureau of Indian Affairs), Superintendent of Documents (U.S. Government Printing Office), and Congressman John Melcher.

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9Richard Jaramillo, Bureau of Indian Affairs, personal letter.
CHAPTER II

CROW RESERVATION LAND

Size, Ownership, Climate and Natural Resources of the Crow Indian Reservation

The Crow Indian Reservation consists of 2,282,000 acres of land. Over 50 per cent is owned by individual Crow Indians and less than 356,000 acres is owned by the Crow Tribe. The remaining acreage has passed into other hands.¹

The terrain ranges from high mountains to semi-arid rolling plains. The Bureau of Indian Affairs² has categorized the land as follows:

- **Open Grazing**: 1,218,600 acres
- **Commercial Timberlands**: 30,535 acres
- **Noncommercial Timberlands**: 78,000 acres
- **Other Wild Lands**: 9,732 acres
- **Dry Farmlands**: 288,587 acres
- **Irrigated**: 39,800 acres

The average annual rainfall on the reservation is estimated at 14 inches³ and the severity of the winters is "moderate."⁴

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¹U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet, p. 1.
²Ibid.
This is important because of the possibility of transportation problems into and out of the reservation. However, the Big Horn Carpet Mills has not experienced any of these problems during their four years of operation and it serves the national market west of the Mississippi River and transports approximately $3 million worth of finished goods out of the reservation annually.\(^5\)

Natural resources on the reservation include over 100,000 acres of timberland and a prodigious deposit of low-sulphur coal.\(^6\) It has been estimated that over 2 billion tons of low-sulphur coal is available. The recoverable portion is between 20 per cent to 25 per cent.\(^7\)

The recent cognizance of the nation's energy crisis coupled with the presence of enormous deposits of coal (which can be burned to generate electricity without violating Federal air pollution limits on sulphur dioxide emissions) focuses attention on the possibilities of exploitation. In this regard, attention has recently been drawn to the problem of permitting the coal industry to strip-mine Indian land and to the problem of impeding upon Indian culture. A prominent

\(^5\)Ibid.


\(^7\)U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Crow Pictorial Highlights 1971, p. 19.
Cheyenne Indian described the above situation in depth:

We see prosperity from the coal but we also see many thousands of white people—perhaps 30,000 miners and technicians and the people to serve them, when we are only a few thousand.

We see a population explosion with bars, beer taverns and discrimination against our people. My people are not competitive in the white man's sense and we'll be left out, swept aside. So it is not only some coal we would lose, and the damage to our lands, for a few million dollars. It is our life... a question of the white man's extinction of our way of life.  

This perplexity was presented to Richard Jaramillo, the BIA Programs Officer of the Crow Indian Reservation who is particularly knowledgeable of the industrial development problem and of the sentiment of the Crows regarding coal exploitation on the reservation. When asked if the Crows had the same sentiments as the spokesman for the Northern Cheyenne Reservation, his response was quite the contrary.

No. Definitely not. And they don't look at it as a way of an extinction to their way of life. This population explosion idea where these so called experts get 30,000 people coming in, is beyond me. We've got a call out right now from the coal industry, for example, for 75 Crow welders. We've got to get 75 because they build those huge strip mining machines from the ground up. Eventually we'll have a call for mechanics. In the contract we have with the coal companies, all job offers give preference to Crow Indians.

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9Jaramillo.
Furthermore when asked about the damage of land by strip mining, Jaramillo replied that the coal deposits are located where it is unpopulated and where the land is unsuitable for grazing and/or farming.  

Transportation Facilities

Transportation facilities pertinent to an industrial developer are good.

A highway and a railroad spur pass through Crow Agency, the center of activity as well as the most populated town on the reservation. While rail freight rates are relatively high compared to other locations of the nation, trucking rates are slightly lower.  

Access to Potential Market

One of the most important disadvantages of locating a manufacturing plant on an Indian reservation is the fact that most reservations are not located near a potential market. With transportation costs a significant portion of the final cost of a product, potential industrial developers are quite concerned with this thought. The Crow Reservation near Billings, however, is close to a potential market. A total of 29 miles separates Crow Agency and Billings. Moreover, the population of the Billings urban area is growing rapidly and

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10 Ibid.
11 Nicholas.
this area has a projected 1985 population of more than 116,000. In addition, the city of Billings is a major air transport center for the Northwest region.

**Industrial Park, Public Utilities and Present Industry**

The Crow Tribe has funded the construction of an industrial park covering 60 acres which includes "black top streets, sewer, water, natural gas, electricity, a railroad spur and easy access to Interstate 90." In addition the park has two buildings covering a total of 62,000 square feet. The two buildings are presently leased to the Big Horn Carpet Mills.

The necessary cost of public utilities are described as being equal in rates to "any small town in Montana." With the exception of the water supply, all public utilities are adequate enough to serve the future industrial expansion of the park. Plans are presently being initiated for the

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13 U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, *Fact Sheet*, p. 4.


15 Conaway.

16 Stan Stevens, private interview with the Executive Director of the Big Horn Economic Development Corporation (an agency associated with the Economic Development Administration), Hardin, Montana, February, 1973.
construction of another 750,000 gallon water storage tank at the park for future industrial development.\footnote{\footnotetext{17}Nicholas.}

There are three main business firms established on the reservation. The largest of the three is the Big Horn Carpet Mills located on the industrial park at Crow Agency and employing 95 workers of which 85 are Crow Indians. Guild Arts and Crafts, Inc. is located at Lodgegrass and employs 67 members of the Tribe. The third business concern is Central Feeds, approximately four miles south of Hardin, and 4 of its 14 employees are members of the Crow Tribe.\footnote{\footnotetext{18}U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, \textit{Fact Sheet}, p. 4.}

\textbf{Land Use}

Historically, the Crow Tribe has developed a strong diplomacy with the United States Government. This diplomacy has resulted in special Federal legislation which designated the majority of Crow Indians "as competent to contract independent leases for individually owned land."\footnote{\footnotetext{19}Ibid., p. 1.}

The sixty acres owned by the Tribe designated as the industrial park is the most advantageous section of the reservation on which to locate an industrial plant. With proper investigation and approval of the Crow Industrial Development Commission a plant may be built to the developers' specifications. The building and grounds would then be leased to the
developer. Due to legal ramifications, Indian trust property cannot be sold to a non-Indian.²⁰ The significance of leasing is that the industrial developer would be exempt from property tax.

Another legal aspect which is most pertinent to a potential industrial developer is the classification of Indian reservations as a "nation within a nation" or a "sovereignty within a sovereignty."²¹ An application of this notion is the exemption for the Crow Indian Reservation of the recent strict strip mining laws for the State of Montana. At present only the Bureau of Indian Affairs regulates the environmental controls on strip mining.²²

Tribal sovereignty in regards to land use is certainly an important consideration for a potential industrial developer and in most cases it is a definite asset to industrial development possibilities.

²⁰Sorkin, American Indians and Federal Aid, p. 94.
²¹Stevens.
²²Franklin, "Tribal Coal Riches," p. 7.
CHAPTER III

LABOR FORCE ON THE CROW RESERVATION

The Crow Reservation is an economically depressed area. The average per capita income of the Crow Indians for 1971 was $3,179\(^1\) and the national average was $4,140\(^2\) for the same year. The average annual unemployment rate is approximately 28 per cent,\(^3\) more than five times the national average. During the winter months, it is not uncommon to see this unemployment rate more than double due to termination of farming, ranching and construction jobs.

An industrialist considering the Crow Reservation as a possible site for plant location would inquire about the prospects of attracting a permanent labor force. He would also be interested in wage rates, educational levels, cultural aspects, Federal assistance and other matters relating specifically to the Crow worker.

\(^1\)Stevens.


\(^3\)U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet, p. 5.
Population and Unemployment on the Reservation

An industrialist on the reservation would have no problem in attracting a permanent labor force. Population and unemployment data are given in Table 1. The chart shows that a total of 334 men and women were unemployed as of March, 1972. This is more than enough personnel to sustain a manufacturing plant of average size. In fact, 88 per cent of all manufacturing companies in the United States have less than 100 employees. 4

Approximately 670 Crows live off the reservation in near-by Hardin and Billings. 5 It is conceivable that some of these Crows would return to the reservation if there was the possibility of a permanent industrial job.

Selected Characteristics of the Crow Indian Worker

One important labor consideration concerns the amount of industrial experience of the Crow worker. This is important because an industrialist has two basic options in structuring his production function. A producer has the option of a) using many unskilled and semi-skilled workers with a high

5U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet, p. 1.
**TABLE 1**

**POPULATION AND UNEMPLOYMENT DATA**

**FOR THE CROW INDIAN RESERVATION**

**AS OF MARCH, 1972**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crows living on reservation</td>
<td>4,208</td>
<td>2,078</td>
<td>2,130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows under 16 years of age</td>
<td>1,827</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>917</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows over 16 years of age</td>
<td>2,381</td>
<td>1,168</td>
<td>1,213</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows 16-24 years old</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>437</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows 25-44 years old</td>
<td>958</td>
<td>482</td>
<td>476</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows 45-64 years old and over</td>
<td>148</td>
<td>73</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows 16 years and over not in labor force</td>
<td>1,130</td>
<td>358</td>
<td>772</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows 16 years and over in labor force</td>
<td>1,251</td>
<td>810</td>
<td>441</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows employed permanently</td>
<td>624</td>
<td>425</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows employed temporarily</td>
<td>293</td>
<td>144</td>
<td>149</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Crows unemployed</td>
<td>334</td>
<td>241</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Note:**
Crows 16 years and over who are not considered in the labor force include students, men and women physically or mentally disabled, retired, institutionalized, etc., and women for whom no child-care substitutes are available.

investment in machinery, or b) he may hire a small group of
highly skilled workers and use less machinery.

For the most part, the reservation represents a large
body of unskilled workers with little or no industrial experi­
ence. There exist, however, on-the-job training programs
sponsored by the BIA and the U.S. Department of Labor which
pay for a percentage of the trainee's wage. 6 Federal assis­
tance in OJT programs could prove to be economically advanta­
geous for the industrialist choosing option b. This program
and other Federal assistance is discussed in the chapter
on capital.

Even though the Crows are basically inexperienced at
industrial jobs, this also means that they have developed no
bad work habits. Crow workers who have some industrial experi­
ence have been found to be very adaptable to industrial jobs
calling for skilled to semi-skilled positions. 7

Another characteristic of the Crow worker is the fact
that they "can work to very close tolerances with their hands." 8
The superior trait of manual dexterity is common among most
Indians throughout the United States. Fairchild Camera dis­
covered this trait among Indian workers in New Mexico. The
manufacturing firm has benefited from this characteristic as
the complex integrated circuit designs of cameras require
superior and delicate hand work. 9

6 Jaramillo. 7 Nicholas. 8 Jaramillo.
The Indian heritage relating to Indian craftwork suggests that they enjoy working with their hands and would consequently make excellent industrial workers. This working trait is a permanent part of Indian culture and is a strong selling point to the potential industrial developer.

Proponents of industrial development on Indian reservations list low labor costs as a definite advantage. With the high level of unemployment on the reservation, it is true that the average wage of the Crow worker is relatively low. Guild Arts and Crafts hires unskilled laborers at the average wage of $1.60 per hour.\(^{10}\) The Big Horn Carpet Mills employs skilled as well as semi-skilled workers at an average wage of $2.35 per hour.\(^{11}\) One of the factors contributing to the decision of Big Horn Carpet Mills to locate their plant on the reservation was low wages.\(^{12}\)

Bill Cooley, general manager of Guild Arts and Crafts suggested that an industrialist can expect a high turnover of employees because of extremely low wages. On the other hand, Nicholas at the carpet factory has had good results in maintaining a permanent labor force. The idea of locating an industrial plant on the reservation merely to take advantage of low wages seems to border on the thought of exploitation. Such contemplation is not encouraged.

\(^{10}\) Bill Cooley, private interview with the manager of Guild Arts and Crafts, Lodgegrass, Montana, February, 1973.

\(^{11}\) Nicholas. \(^{12}\) Ibid.
Another aspect related to employment concerns the prospects of little or no unionization. The Crows, as well as most Indians on reservations, are only "vaguely aware of union tactics and they wouldn't like to see $5 to $10 a month taken out of their pay check for union dues." For some industries this would be a strong point.

**Social Overhead Capital**

The Economic Development Administration has identified the lack of social overhead capital as a strong barrier to industrial development on Indian reservations. Social overhead capital concerns health, education, housing, sewage and other community projects to raise the standard of living.

Hospital facilities are excellent. A new dispensary was constructed and is being operated by the U.S. Department of Health, Education and Welfare at the Crow Agency. A drug and alcohol rehabilitation center is currently under construction at Crow Agency. Excellent health facilities enhance the prospects of Crow workers being in a healthy physical condition and thus be productive members of an industrial firm.

There is approximately 650 high school students on the reservation and the dropout rate is about 20 per cent. For those students going to college, a $200,000 scholarship program

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13 Jaramillo.

has been established by the Crow Tribe. A total of 369 students have used the program since 1962. \(^{15}\) Industrial demands for increased educational levels are becoming more prominent. Most adult Crow Indians, however, have not completed high school. The average educational level is 8.8 grades while for the entire State of Montana it is 11.7 grades. \(^{16}\) The Crow Tribe is aware of this and is taking action for educational improvement.

The Tribe has initiated a Community Action Program (See Appendix A) which includes a Head Start Program and a Remedial Language Arts Program. Special students who have a "low level of academic achievement are given special assistance under the Remedial Language Arts Program." \(^{17}\)

Social overhead capital also lends itself to housing care. There is inadequate housing on most Indian reservations, and the Crow reservation is no exception.

The Provisional Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) of the Crow Reservation was prepared by the Stanford Research Institute and published in 1962. It states "about 70% of the families living on the Crow Reservation are still in substandard housing, for example, with insufficient space for the number of occupants; inadequate sanitary facilities or ineffective heating or weather proffing." \(^{18}\)

\(^{15}\) U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet, p. 4.

\(^{16}\) Stevens.

\(^{17}\) U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet, p. 4.

\(^{18}\) Ibid., p. 5.
Since 1962 there has been considerable improvement in housing. A need still exists, however, for acceptable housing standards. Numerous homes are inhabited by two or more families.

Over $300,000 is presently allocated for the construction of forty houses at Crow Agency. In addition, an average of $600,000 per year is spent for the improvement of homes in need of new bathrooms, septic tanks, wells and adequate plumbing.\(^1^9\)

In the event of industrial expansion at Crow Agency, an increase in demand will emerge for housing nearby. Without adequate housing, maintaining a permanent labor force could be a problem. Housing is high on the priority list of the Crow Tribe and the BIA.

Long ranging strides are now being made in the field of social overhead capital. This, in turn, may have favorable psychological affects on the Crow worker and should lead to an increase in his productivity.

The Crow Indian Culture

Cultural assimilation (bringing Indians closer to the mainstream of American life) has been attempted by many politicians. For instance, President Eisenhower introduced a policy of forced termination of Federal responsibility to Indians and tried unsuccessfully to force American Indians off

\(^1^9\)Ibid., p. 3.
Few Indians abandoned their reservation and its culture and those that did found themselves in urban Indian ghettos. An overwhelming majority of Indians regard their individual tribal culture as a necessary way of life and termination of this culture would be catastrophic. It is therefore pertinent for a potential industrial developer to learn the culture of the Crows.

Indians lean heavily on their heritage. To some extent, this predisposition has restrained Indians from participating in American capitalistic values. Anthropologists subscribe to the notion that "Indians generally have an orientation to the present and not to the future." This orientation submits to the proposition of grasping enjoyment when the opportunity exists and lays waste to the proposition of planning for this enjoyment. This is partly true among the Crow Tribe. For example, occasionally a Crow worker will quit his job abruptly to fight a forest fire and return after two or three weeks with a thousand dollars in his pocket. Upon returning, he will find to his surprise, that his job has been terminated. However, this predisposition is getting less prominent on the Crow Reservation. Jaramillo observes:


21"American Indians Come Nearer Mainstream," *Business Week*, June 7, 1969, p. 120.

I think it was true . . . particularly because there was no industry big enough to support the labor market over a period of time. And if you can get more money fighting forest fires, then he [Crow] would go. I think times have changed. More stable industries have been established on the reservation.23

The focal point of Crow culture is the Crow Fair, held for two weeks during the month of August. The Fair hosts Indians from many tribes. During the period of the Fair an industrialist located on the reservation would be wise to shut down the operations of the firm or at least limit it to administrative work. In the first year of operation, Nicholas of the Big Horn Carpet Mills decided to keep operations intact during the Crow Fair. The decision resulted in rampant absenteeism. Subsequently, vacation periods were set up so that every worker is on vacation during the Fair. Guild Arts and Crafts also shuts down during this period.24

Another cultural aspect which differs from the mainstream of American life is the Indian's concept of work.

The concept of work as understood by Indian people was that one worked when there was work to be done, and when there was not work to be done one was at leisure. The attitude toward work by the dominant [American] culture is based upon generations of conditioning that one must work every day and that a person's value in this system is based upon his ability to work. The role of the Indian man was primarily that of a hunter and warrior, and once this role was removed from him he became a socially disoriented individual. The concept of work has not

23Jaramillo.

24Ibid.
been entirely accepted as a substitute for the cultural role of the Indian man.  

Managers of the Big Horn Carpet Mills did not find this concept of work to be prevalent among the Crow workers. Nicholas suggested that when responsibilities are clearly set down and when monthly production goals are vividly announced, this conceptual problem is held in check.

Another aspect of Indian culture is related to clan loyalty which may interfere with the promotion of Indians to a managerial or supervisory position. The rationale behind this is "since a promotion would make an employee superior in status to those he regards as his peers, and in some cases would subject him to ridicule, he is understandably reluctant to accept the position." This attitude is inherent in the Crow Tribe to a certain extent. Even in school, a few of the potential "A" students "will not achieve that A-status for fear of ridicule." The Crow people are slowly getting away from this attitude, though. An example of the change in attitude is the fact that most of the foremen at the Big Horn Carpet Mills are Crows and there is no apparent ridicule.

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25 Robert L. Bennett, "Indian Problems: Educational Implications," address by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs before the Northern California Teachers Association, Squaw Valley, California, September 16, 1967.

26 Nicholas.

27 Sorkin, American Indians and Federal Aid, p. 96.

A final cultural aspect of the Crows is their concept of saving. As previously mentioned, Indians have an orientation to the present and not the future. With this relaxed orientation of time, it is not surprising to see a Crow spend an entire weekly pay check in a couple of days. While personal finances may not apparently affect the operation of a firm, it is nevertheless a characteristic of the Crows that managers should understand.

**Language Barrier**

Some industrial firms located on Indian reservations in other parts of the nation have experienced a language barrier between the supervisor and the Indian worker. One plant manager found that "the Navajo language had no direct equivalent for many words used in industry." To correct this problem the manager substituted English words for Navajo words, for example, "aluminum" to "shiny metal" and "oscillator" to "tunnel." While this may be a serious problem among other Indian tribes, the Crows are beginning to master the English language. A language barrier could develop, though, if Crows are employed by a firm dealing with a high degree of technology.

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29 Nicholas.
31 Nicholas.
32 Ibid.
Government

The Crow Tribe has adopted a written constitution which establishes a general council. The operation of the general council is described in depth in the "Fact Sheet: Crow Indian Reservation" prepared by the BIA (See Appendix A.)

Crows assemble for council meetings on a quarterly basis and this general council, "has the authority to represent, act, and speak for the Tribe and its members."³³

The council has created many committees one of which is the Industrial Development Commission. This Commission is presently seeking Federal funds to investigate future industrial expansion.³⁴

Indian Militancy

An industrialist considering locating on the reservation may be concerned with the recent militancy of a small group of Indian activists. The group, called the American Indian Movement (AIM), claims to "build red pride rather than red power."³⁵ Their activities include the BIA takeover in Washington, D.C. and the proclamation of a sovereign nation at Wounded Knee, South Dakota.

³³U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet, p. 2.
³⁵"American Indians Come Nearer Mainstream," Business Week, p. 120.
The tactics of AIM are certainly not representative of most Indians. The majority of the Crow Indians regard the tactics of AIM as deplorable.\textsuperscript{36}

\textbf{Other Aspects}

Joe Medicine Crow, a member of the Crow Tribe, has authored a general information manuscript concerning the Tribe. The manuscript (See Appendix B) presents information regarding early and recent history, social, military, religious, and economic organization, language, physical appearance, and manner of dress of the Crow people.

\textsuperscript{36} Jaramillo.
CHAPTER IV
CAPITAL REQUIREMENTS AND RELATED MATTERS

An industrialist who has made the decision to locate his plant on the Crow Reservation is faced with a peculiar procedure before initiating business operations. He is also subject to unconventional capital requirements.

As mentioned earlier, due to legal technicalities, Indian trust property cannot be sold to a non-Indian. Moreover, Indian trust property (which includes the industrial park at Crow Agency) is under the legal guardianship of the BIA.\(^1\) Therefore BIA approval of industrial development on the reservation is a mandatory requirement.

The Crow Tribe also must grant its approval of industrial prospects. The Crow Tribe, with the advice of the Industrial Development Commission, has the authority to accept or reject any industrial proposition.\(^2\)

With the approval of the BIA and the Crow Tribe, an industrialist presents specifications for the proposed plant. The Crow Tribe will then assume the responsibility of getting

\(^1\)Sorkin, American Indians and Federal Aid, p. 141.
\(^2\)Jaramillo.
the plant constructed to meet the specifications of the industrialist. The responsibility of the Tribe also includes financial arrangements in the construction of the plant. The Tribe may finance by guaranteed government loans, through the use of Tribal trust funds or a combination thereof.

The industrialist will find the financial responsibilities of the Crow Tribe significant. A positive indication of good financial responsibility is exemplified by the use of approximately 9.5 million dollars awarded to the Crow Tribe by the U.S. Government. The money was granted to the Tribe in 1962 for land surrendered to the Government in prior years. Federal funds of this nature are usually distributed by most Indian Tribes on a per capita basis. The Crow Tribal Council, recognizing the need for a competent budget, established the "Crow Family Plan." Under this financial plan $1 million was appropriated to industrial development. The Industrial Development Commission was created for the purpose of regulating this appropriation.³ Sound financial planning and organization is characteristic of the Crow Tribe. An industrialist can expect a smooth operation of the Crow Tribe (with the guidance of the BIA) in meeting the specifications requested by the industrial developer.

Leasing rate of the newly constructed industrial plant is negotiated by the firm and the Crow Tribe. It is approved

³U.S. Department of Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Fact Sheet, p. 2.
by the BIA. The leasing rates will be relatively lower on the reservation as opposed to an urban area where land is more expensive.

**Federal Assistance**

Federal assistance to Indians comes from two main agencies: the Economic Development Administration (EDA) which was created in 1965 by the U.S. Department of Commerce and the BIA. Both of these agencies provide capital for economic development.

The EDA has declared the Crow Indian Reservation as a redevelopment area. Because of this classification many programs have been initiated and completed which enhance industrial expansion prospects. One of these programs could provide the capital for a new 750,000 gallon water storage tank for future manufacturing plants on the industrial park at Crow Agency. Presently, there are various grants and low interest guaranteed loans available for economic expansion on Indian reservations. However, due to President Nixon's governmental reorganization plans and Federal spending controls, the EDA is expected to be either abolished totally or partially absorbed in another Federal agency.

The BIA also provides capital for the cause of economic development. Of particular interest to a manufacturing

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4 Jaramillo. 5 Stevens.
firm is the Indian Vocational Training Act which authorized the Secretary of the Interior to negotiate with private industry for the purpose of a subsidized OJT program. This program concerns Indians between 18 and 35 years of age. The training program must not exceed 24 months and must be designed to develop the worker leading to skilled employment. The subsidized percentage of the wage rate is based upon the difficulty of the training program. It varies from job to job. It must not, however, exceed one-half of the established minimum wage set by the Fair Labor Standards Act. Presently the minimum wage is $1.60 per hour. Therefore, the BIA could pay up to $.80 per hour of the trainee's beginning wage which equals or exceeds the minimum wage. If, however, the beginning wage of the trainee is below the minimum wage, the BIA could pay for a maximum of 50 per cent of the starting wage. The BIA can only subsidize 40 hours a week. The Bureau also pays for the Indian's transportation cost to the training facility. The employee who undertakes the training program will retain the trainee for permanent employment upon satisfactory completion of the program.6

This program has proved to be successful at the Big Horn Carpet Mills. It is obviously an attractive incentive for industry to locate on Indian reservations.

Taxes

Industry located on the reservation is subject to both Federal and Montana corporate income tax. Unlike industries located in a big city, there are no local or city corporate taxes on the reservation. This is clearly another advantage to locate on the Crow Reservation.  

Fear of Termination

Indian fear of the termination of Federal financial responsibility has been described by Sorkin as a "powerful barrier to industrial development." Indian tribes could be hesitant in engaging in financing an industrial plant on the assumption that Federal responsibilities would be terminated in the future. Jaramillo observed that the Crow Indians are not presently ready for termination of Federal responsibility and consequently have some degree of fear concerning this possible reality. An industrialist would be concerned with this because without the availability of easily acquired capital the Crow Tribe would be hard pressed in financing future plant improvement and expansion.

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7 Jaramillo.
9 Jaramillo.
It is the opinion of the author that the industrial environment of the Crow Reservation (with few exceptions) is presently well suited for additional industrial development. There are some important advantages for an industrialist who is locating on the reservation. Likewise there are certain disadvantages. These advantages and disadvantages can be grouped into the three elements of production (i.e., land, labor and capital).

Land

Abundant natural resources, moderate weather and excellent transportation facilities present obvious advantages for the industrialist who is considering a possible location on the reservation. The fact that a large potential market exists near to the reservation is also pertinent. Another advantage is the excellent industrial park located at Crow Agency.

The possibility of a water shortage on the industrial park could be a disadvantage. This depends on how much water is needed for the potential industrial developer. Another
disadvantage is the legal technicalities involved with tribal-ly owned land.

Labor

The ease of attracting an adequate labor force from the Crow Reservation is a definite plus for a manufacturing firm. This labor force has proven to be very adaptable to industrial surroundings and to various training programs. Another advantage of Indian workers is their superior trait of manual dexterity. Two further advantages are relatively low wages and little or no prospects of unionization.

The most important disadvantage of industrial location on the reservation is the cultural characteristics foreign to the mainstream of American society. For instance, the two weeks of the Crow Fair will degrade the production cycle of the firm. Another disadvantage is the lack of industrial experience. The magnitude of this aspect is reduced by the ability of the Crow worker to adapt to industrial needs. Low educational levels and marginal housing facilities must also be considered disadvantages for reservation location. In addition, highly technical manufacturing firms may also face the possibility of a language barrier.

Capital

Relatively low leasing rates are positive aspects for locating at the reservation. Leasing would exempt the firm
from property tax. An industrialist would also be happy to note that there are no local corporate taxes. Probably the most important advantage for the industry to locate on the reservation is the Federally subsidized OJT program. The fear of termination of Federal responsibility is a disadvantage concerning the resource of capital.

Additional Remarks

The list of advantages and disadvantages above is not intended to be all inclusive. There may be certain aspects of the subject that are important only to a particular industry. The author, however, has intentionally presented the subject in a broad manner in order that any potential industrial developer may gain insight into the pertinent characteristics of the Crow Indian Reservation which relate to industrial expansion.

The fact remains that American industry is just recently understanding the Indian people and the advantages of locating an industrial plant on Indian reservations. This research is intended to intensify this understanding. It presents credible information that can be used as a basis for an industrial decision to locate on the Crow Reservation. It is hoped that American industry will seriously consider the Crow Indian Reservation as a possible site for plant location.

Industrial expansion is needed at the Crow Indian Reservation and industrial jobs on the reservation will produce
an opportunity for the Crow Indian to achieve a satisfactory standard of living. It will also enable him to remain where the tribal culture is most prevalent.
APPENDIX A

FACT SHEET

CROW INDIAN RESERVATION

Prepared by the Bureau of Indian Affairs, Crow Agency, Montana, April 1972

History
The Crow Indians are of Siouan origin but broke away from their ancestral group (Hidatsa) and settled along the valleys of the Yellowstone and Big Horn Rivers in south central Montana and northern Wyoming long before the coming of the white man. This Tribe was originally called the "Absarokee" Indian Tribes in referring to them in sign language would simulate the flapping of a bird's wings in flight. White men interpreted this to mean the bird "crow" and thus called the Tribe the "Crows". As the Tribe migrated westward into Montana and Wyoming, they changed from an agricultural people to a nomadic tribe of hunters and warriors.

The Tribe signed their first peace treaty with the U.S. Government in 1825. Later peace treaties which established the reservation were signed in 1851 and 1868.

Land Use
Because of their long friendship with the Government, more authority for the leasing of their land without supervision has been extended to the Crow Indians than to any other tribe. Special legislation in 1920 followed by modifications in 1926, 1948 and 1949 resulted in the designation of most Crow Indians as competent to contract independent leases for individually owned land.

Land cessions to the United States, the Northern Pacific Railroad, and the State of Montana reduced the reservation to approximately 2,282,000 acres. Of this amount, 1,229,628 acres are owned by individual members of the Tribe. The Tribe owns 335,952 acres and the remainder, about 700,000 acres, has passed into other ownership. The land of the reservation is categorized as follows:

- Open Grazing: 1,228,600 acres
- Commercial Timberlands: 30,965 acres
- Noncommercial Timberlands: 78,000 acres
- Other Wild Lands: 9,732 acres
- Dry Farmlands: 294,537 acres
- Irrigated: 39,800 acres

Population
As of December 1, 1972, there were 5,457 enrolled members of the Crow Tribe of these, 4,213 were on the reservation. The city of Hardin on the northern boundary of the reservation is home to 363 tribal members while St. Xavier, Lodge Grass, Pryor, St. Xavier, Wyola, and Crow Agency which is the location of the Tribe's headquarters and the Bureau of Indian Affairs Office, Ft. Smith, one mile east of Yellowtail Dam, has a small Indian population.
The population of the Tribe is increasing about 3% per year which is much faster than average national population increase. About 60% of the Crows on the reservation live on their own allotment but few are farmers or ranchers. They prefer to lease their land.

**Government**

The Crow Tribe organized itself formally and adopted a written constitution on June 24, 1948. This constitution was amended on December 13, 1961. Under this constitution the Tribe has a general council form of government in which every adult enrolled member is allowed to vote if they are present during the meeting of the general council. One hundred or more tribal members constitute a quorum of the general council. This council has the authority to represent, act, and speak for the Tribe in any and all matters and to promote the general welfare of the Tribe and its members. General council meetings are usually held on a quarterly basis or more frequently if tribal business is pressing.

Every two years the tribal council elects a Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, and Vice-Secretary. The Tribal council has provided for the election of committees in the fields of credit, education and health, enrollment, oil and gas, industrial development, land purchase, recreation, and an executive committee.

The reservation is divided into six districts, each district is represented on each committee. They only qualification necessary is attaining legal age.

The expenses of operating the tribal government and tribal programs are paid out of tribal income received for land leases, oil and gas royalties and bonuses, and interest on funds deposited with the U.S. Government.

**Judgment Fund Programs**

In 1962 the U.S. Government awarded the Crow Tribe approximately 10 million dollars for land ceded to the Government in prior years. This award was programmed by the general council as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Amount</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Three dividend payments (two $100 payments and one for $50 to each enrolled member of the Tribe)</td>
<td>$1,687,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family Plan Program</td>
<td>4,350,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Land Purchase Program</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Credit Program</td>
<td>275,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Competent lease Relief</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Development</td>
<td>1,000,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education and Scholarships</td>
<td>200,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Law and Order Activity</td>
<td>100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tribal Headquarters &amp; Multipurpose building</td>
<td>120,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of the above programs, the Family Plan Program has had the greatest impact on the Crow people. Under this program, $1,000 was allotted to each enrolled member to be used for his permanent economic and/or social improvement. It was apparent the greatest concern of most of the people was their poor housing. Using Family Plan funds, and in cases where the funds were not sufficient supplementing it with a loan or a land sale, 281 new homes were constructed, 245 homes were completely remodeled or had major repairs, and 70 homes were purchased. Here is what has been accomplished since 1962 in the field of housing.
New Homes constructed........................................400
Homes completely remodeled or had major repairs........330
Homes purchased....................................................110
Homes in process of construction or major remodeling....80

Other permissible use for Family Plan funds were for the purchase of
furniture, appliances, wells and pumps, education, to enlarge or start a
livestock or farming operation, purchase or enlarge a business, and for
special needs such as glasses, dentures and other medical repair work.
They could also invest their money in "Series E" Bonds or in a savings
account.

Housing
Adequate housing is a major problem on nearly every reservation. The
Provisional Overall Economic Development Program (OEDP) of the Crow
Reservation was prepared by the Stanford Research Institute and published
in 1962. It states, "about 70% of the families living on the Crow
Reservation are still in substandard housing, for example, with insufficient
space for the number of occupants, inadequate sanitary facilities or
ineffective heating or weather proofing."

The Family Plan and other programs such as current Housing Improvement
Program have changed this picture considerably but there is still a great
deal to be done to bring housing on the reservation up to acceptable levels.
In a number of cases the house may be sound but two or more families may be
living in it under crowded conditions.

In 1969 a loan from the Housing and Urban Development Administration of
$316,000 and approximately $250,000 of their own funds and funds from the
BIA, the Tribe has constructed 40 houses at Crow Agency. The occupants helped
construct these houses as their down payment equity.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has a new Housing Improvement Program under
which houses in need of repair and where the home owner cannot afford to
make the repairs the Bureau does. In many cases the homeowner pays what
they can. The Indian Public Health Service cooperates by constructing
inside bathrooms, installing septic tanks and repairing or replacing old
and inadequate wells and plumbing. The criteria for participating in this
program is the family income is below the poverty level, or the people are
old, or ill and cannot do the job themselves. As much of the work as
possible is contracted out to members of the Tribe who are experienced in
certain crafts such as carpentry and electrical work. The home owners are
required to do as much of the work as they can. A qualified member of the
Superintendent's staff makes frequent inspections to assure the contractors
are doing a good job. The maximum which can be spent on any house is
$2,500. The average amount spent is $2,000 per house. 100,00 thousand
dollars (100,00) per year is spent on this program.

The Tribe has established the Crow Tribe Housing Authority to negotiate a
loan from HUD and is building 75 houses. This program started in Fiscal
Year 1971. In 1972, 120 new homes were build and a request for 120
additional has been sent to HUD Denver Office.
Industrial Development
The Tribal Council allocated $1,000,000 of its Judgment Funds to seek, assist, and establish industry on the reservation which would provide long term employment to tribal members. An Industrial Development Commission of six members has been set up to administer the program.

An Industrial Park has been constructed at Crow Agency. This park covers 60 acres, has black top streets, sewer, water, natural gas, electricity, a railroad spur and easy access to Interstate 90. In the park are two buildings. One covers 52,000 square feet and the second, 10,000 square feet. Both are owned by the Tribe and are leased to Big Horn Carpet Company. Of the 95 employees of Big Horn Carpet Company, 85 are Crow Indians.

In addition to the Big Horn Carpet Company, there are two other manufacturing plants on the reservation. Guild Arts and Crafts of Lodge Grass manufactures plastic novelties. They employ 70 people, 67 are members of the Tribe. Central Feeds, about 4 miles south of Hardin employs 14, of these employees, 4 are members of the Tribe.

Education
For some years many members of the Tribe have been cognizant of the importance of education. Poverty prevented many Crow Indians from completing high school or going to college.

The general council programmed $200,000 of their Judgment Funds for a college scholarship program. Since the inception of the program in February 1962, three hundred sixty-nine (369) individuals have used this scholarship program. In 1962 there were 28 high school graduates. Since then there has been a steady increase. In 1971 the number of Crow students graduating from high school had increased to 70. Below is presented the current education situation.

Public Schools have 1,232 students in the elementary grades and 650 students in high school. 85 students attended boarding schools located off the reservation and 83 students attend private or Mission schools. At the beginning of this school year, 180 students were in college. Of this number, 55 were Freshman.

The dropout rate for high school students is approximately 20% and for college students about 40-50%. The dropout rate is gradually being reduced.

Labor Force
The economy of the Crow Reservation is based upon agriculture - farming and ranching. The trend towards larger farms and ranches and the mechanization of these farms and ranches has greatly reduced the number of agriculture jobs. This has greatly increased the unemployment on the reservation.

The Bureau of Indian Affairs has a branch of Employment Assistance at Crow Agency. This branch develops jobs for members of the Tribe in the local community.
The Bureau of Indian Affairs also offers Adult Vocational Training, On-The-Job Training, job referral and counseling. The cost of transportation, subsistence enroute to the training site and subsistence during the period of training are also offered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs. When the trainee completes his course a job is his field is always available if the applicant chooses to stay at the training site.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>An of March 1, 1972</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total in labor force: 1,251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employed full time: 624</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total employed part time: 293</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed: 334</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the winter the unemployment rate may soar as high as 65%. This high rate of unemployment continues to about April when farming, ranching and construction jobs open. The average annual rate of unemployment is about 28%.

**Tribal Participation in Various Federal Economic Improvement Acts**

The Crow Indian Reservation has been declared a redevelopment area by the Economic Development Administration because of the high rate of unemployment and low median family income on the reservation.

The Tribe has a Head Start Program in each of the six districts on the reservation. Under the Head Start Program, two hundred fifty preschool children are attending half-day classes.

Students in all of the public schools and one of the Mission schools on the reservation who are found to have low levels of academic achievement are given special assistance under the Remedial Language Arts program. All of these programs come under the Economic Opportunity Act.

**Coal Reserves**

Vast deposits of sub-bituminous deposits of coal have been discovered on the Reservation. It is estimated there may be as much as 100 billion tons on these deposits. Several grant corporations have leased the land over lying the coal deposits. They will build huge plants which will convert the coal to electricity. At this time Dec. 1973, many ecologists and environmentalist and citizens are demanding these plants not be built unless the companies will guarantee these will be no air, ground or water pollution.

The Crow Tribe which owns all of minerals on the Reservation will be paid for each ton of coal mined. It has been estimated this could amount to as much as $3,000,000 per year.

**Federal Services Provided**

The Bureau of Indian Affairs is one of the oldest Agencies in our Federal Government. Our origins go back to the colonial period and we have been in continuous existence for 145 years. Over this period of more than 14 decades, Congress has from time to time redefined and expanded the work of
the Bureau until today our organization bears little resemblance to the purely diplomatic and trade regulating Agency that was originally established, in 1824.

The responsibilities that we have with respect to the Crow Indian people are essentially twofold. On the one hand, we provide them with a variety of services where these services are not available from the usual state and local agencies serving non-Indian citizens. Secondly, we serve as trustees for 1,585,700 acres of land that belong to the Indian people or to the Crow Tribe. As trustees, we are responsible not only for protecting the Indian landowners from improvident disposition or leasing of the property, we also assist them to achieve the highest possible income from their lands and their related resources that is consistent with sound conservation principles. And this gets us into a second group of programs mainly technical in nature in such fields as education, forestry, range management, irrigation, credit, and leasing for mineral development or for surface uses such as agriculture, grazing or commercial and industrial development.

In the last dozen years or so the Bureau has launched a number of new programs aimed at quickening the pace of economic advancement for the Indian people and helping them to higher standards of living. Among these programs are Employment Assistance, Industrial Development and Reservation programs.

All of the activities of the Bureau are orientated towards three main goals, (1) maximum Indian economic self-sufficiency, (2) full participation of Indians in American life, and (3) equal citizenship privileges and responsibilities for Indians. To accomplish these goals, the Bureau will "contract out" to the Tribe programs and projects which it believes it can successfully operate and manage. It is attempting to get the Crow Indians more involved in managing their own affairs so that eventually they can take over all of the activities now provided them by the BIA.

Qualified Indians are given preference when job vacancies occur in the Bureau of Indian Affairs. Over 75% of the Agency's employees are Indians.

The Division of Indian Health, Public Health Service, maintains and operates a 34 bed hospital located at Crow Agency for the benefit of Crow and Northern Cheyenne Indian people.

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APPENDIX B

THE CROW INDIANS

A brief outline of history and general information prepared by Mr. Joe Medicine Crow, a member of the Crow Tribe.

EARLY HISTORY

Most of the northwest plains Indians originally came from northeastern North America. They were forced out of their forest and woodland habitat by more numerous and powerful tribes, perhaps the Mohawk and Iroquois. The ancestors of the Crow Indians came from a "land of many lakes", probably in the headwaters of the Mississippi or further north in the Winnepa Lake region. They eventually settled along the Missouri River in what is now the states of North and South Dakotas. These people lived in semi-permanent villages of lodges covered with earth. They became known as the "people who lived in earthen lodges".

Nearly 400 years ago these people divided into two factions. One group eventually claimed most of what is now eastern Montana and northern Wyoming as their homeland. At the time of the breakup, this group numbered about 500. Its population reached about 8,000 before the smallpox epidemic of the middle 1300's. At that time the ABSAROICEE or Crow Tribe traveled in 2 or 3 groups or bands.

In the Hidatsa language, this group was called ABSAROICEE which literally means "Children of the large-beaked bird", (ABSA meaning "large-beaked bird" and ROKEE meaning "children" or offspring). Other Indian tribes called these people the "Sharp People" meaning that they were as crafty and alert as the bird ABSA (probably the raven) for which they were named. In referring to them in the hand sign language they would simulate the flapping of bird's wings in flight. The early white men interpreted this sign to mean the bird "crow" and thus called the tribe the "Crow Indians".

RECENT HISTORY

Prior to the Lewis and Clark expedition through the Crow Country in 1804-1806, very few white men had ever seen the Absarokee or Crow Indians. In 1743, the Verendryes Brothers ventured out of their Canadian frontier and visited the Crow Country naming the inhabitants the "handsome men" (beaux hommes). Following the Lewis and Clark expedition, various fur companies and their trappers moved into the Crow Country. Trading posts were built at the junction of Yellowstone and Big Horn Rivers (Fort Liza) in 1807, Fort Cass further up the Big Horn River and others.

By 1864, the Bozeman Trail, a well traveled emigrant trail was blazed right through the Crow Country. Shortly thereafter three military posts (Fort Reno, Fort Phil Kearny, and Fort C. F. Smith) were constructed along this trail to protect the emigrants on their way to the gold mines of western Montana. The Sioux Indians who were forced out of their Black Hills Country came to this area to continue their resistance against the white invasion and forced the Government to abandon these forts. Fort C. F. Smith was considered the most dangerous frontier outpost. It was abandoned by the Army in 1867.
Relations with the United States.

In 1825 the Crow Tribe and the United States signed a treaty of friendship. In 1851 the so-called Fort Laramie Treaty established the boundaries of the "Indian Country" for several tribes, including an area of 33,531,147 acres designated for the Crow Indians. This was followed by another Fort Laramie Treaty in 1868 which reduced the Crow Country to 8,000,409.20 acres.

An Act of Congress in 1882 resulted in further reduction of the land and as compensation, the Government was to build houses for the Crow and to buy livestock for them. By this time the Tribe had been settled within the boundaries of the reservation for about 10 years. In 1909 more land was ceded to the Government for which they received $946,000.00. In 1905 the last large land cession was made leaving about 3 million acres of land for the Tribe.

The Crow Indians always felt the Government failed to give adequate compensation for the land it acquired. The estimated value received was less than 5 cents per acre. In 1904, the Crow Tribe first initiated legal proceedings (suing the Government) for just compensation for lands taken. In 1962 the Court of Indian Claims finally awarded $10,242,984.70 to the Crow Indians.

Since 1905, further attempts were made to reduce the Crow Reservation. Senator Dixon in 1910, Senator Meyers in 1915, and Senator Walsh in 1919, all sponsored legislation in the national Congress to open the balance of the Crow Reservation for settlement by the public but all attempts failed. An Act of Congress passed on June 4, 1920, sponsored by the Tribe itself, divided the remainder to the reservation into tracts which were allotted to every enrolled member of the Tribe. The rough mountain areas were withheld from such allotment and remain in tribal ownership. The titles to these lands are held in trust by the Federal Government and allottees may not dispose of their lands without the consent and approval of the Government.

PATTERN OF ABSAROKEE CULTURE — Past, Transitional, and Present

The Absarokee Tribe evolved through several stages of cultural development. The early ancestors who lived in the eastern forests practiced agriculture and achieved a fairly high level of civilization. As they were pushed and forced westward into the wilderness, they gradually became more and more dependent upon the hunt. By the time of their settlement in the west, their agricultural pursuits were limited to the planting of corn and squash.

Soon after their separation from the main Tribe, the Absarokee abandoned agricultural ways and became a nomadic people. They were always on the move after game and in constant warfare with other tribes of the plains and mountains. This manner of living came to an end in 1878 when reservation life began.

Social Organization.

The family was the primary unit of social organization and what may be regarded as a secondary unit was the clan. A clan is composed of distantly related families with membership determined through the mother.
A person belongs to his or her mother's clan and not the father's clan. As the Tribe increased in population, it was divided into sub-tribes or bands for convenience of government and travel.

The Tribe and bands were governed by a body of chieftains. They managed the affairs of the Tribe in matters of hunting, warfare with other tribes, the enactment of important ceremonials, maintenance of law and order, etc. The tribe consisted of two main bands, the River Crows who lived along the Missouri, Milk, and Yellowstone Rivers, and the Mountain Crows who enjoyed life along the high mountains of northern Wyoming and southern Montana. A third group known as the Kicked-in-the-Bellies were closely related to the Mountain Crows. Both large groups had the same clans, there being about twelve, such as the Whistling Waters, Newly Made Lodge Owners, Greasy Mouths, Filth Eaters, and Large Lodges.

Today, the family is still the primary unit of the modern Crow society while the clan system is becoming more and more obsolete. The wife's position in the family has become more important than the husband's, whereas in the old days, the husband's position was very strong and enjoyed a strong "double standard" to the point where he could have several wives if he wanted to do so.

The affairs of the Tribe is now largely administered by the Bureau of Indian Affairs of the Federal Government. The Tribe has a council which meets on a "town hall" meeting basis. Administrative functions and major undertakings must be approved by officials of the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

As citizens of the country, the Crow Indians, like all Indian tribes, are subject to both state and federal laws with the same rights and responsibilities as other citizens. The Tribe also maintains its own law and order system within the reservation designed to deal with problems and situations peculiar to Indian customs and ways which are not covered by state or federal laws. The enforcement of these reservation laws is in the hands of a modern police and court system.

**Military Organization.**

In the old days, the many tribes of the northwest plains were constantly at war. The cultural pattern of the Crow Tribe was therefore definitely militaristic. The search for military prowess lead to religious experiences and dedications. Military activities were the sports; a man's social prestige depended on his military record. A warrior was required to complete four difficult war deeds, at the risk of his life, in order to become a chief.

To the Absarokee, war was not waged for conquest and gain of property or territory but was truly a game of wits, chivalry, bravery, and honor between tribes. In the Crow Tribe, there were many military clubs and societies which aspiring young warriors sought to join. The Tribe and the bands were ruled by retired war chiefs with the assistance of these military societies. Of course, these societies, and their functions, have long ceased to exist. During the World War II years some of them were revived with membership made up of service men and veterans who received military names and war songs in accordance with the old customs of these societies.
Religious Organization.

The old time Crow Indians recognized a supreme god or being whom they called "First Maker" but did not worship it directly. They sought its benevolence and favor through the worship and devotion to various animals and objects of nature which were regarded as possessing supernatural powers given them by the "First Maker".

Medicine men, both healers and visionaries, were well versed in the secrets of nature through their intensive study and worship of their respective "gods". They were quite capable of curing various ailments and of coping with unusual situations. People depended on these men for their spiritual guidance and welfare and often joined various religious organizations founded by the medicine men.

However, there was no singular prescribed form or method of worship for the entire population. People worshipped their own respective "gods" individually or in small groups as members and participants of a particular ritual or ceremony, such as the Sun Dance, the Sacred Pipe Dance, the Wound Curing Ceremony, and many others.

Today some of the native religious beliefs and systems of ceremonials have become nearly obsolete and only a few old people half-heartedly observe them as a matter of habit and form. The Sun Dance and Tobacco Society ceremonials are still quite strong. A fairly large segment of the Tribe belongs to the Native American Church which prescribes the use of Peyote, an herb of the cactus family, as its sacrament similar in meaning of the Christians use of bread. In fact, this "church" is a hybrid organization with its doctrines and observances based on a combination of Christian ethics and native beliefs.

It can be said that with the exception of comparatively few individuals, nearly all members of the Tribe now profess membership in some modern Christian denomination. Since 1886, the Catholics have established and maintained churches and schools in the reservation as have the Baptists. There are presently four Catholic churches and two Baptist missions on the reservation. In recent years, the Pentecostal and other Full Gospel type of denominations have been quite active on the Crow and other reservations.

Economic Organization.

Prior to reservation life, the Crow economy was based simply on the availability of game and edible plants and their ability to secure them. Both game and plant foods abound in the Crow Country. Men were responsible only for the hunting of game while women cured the meats and also gathered roots and berries and prepared them into supplies. Women also manufactured clothes, household equipment and prepared buffalo skins into tepees.

Of course, all this has changed and today the Crow Indian lives in the same economic system as anybody else. The basis of Crow economy and income is his reservation land which he uses directly as a farmer or livestock operator and also as a landlord or lessee.
Occasionally, tribal funds derived from timber, grazing land rentals and mineral leases are distributed on a per capita basis. Such payments are not outright payments of money to Indians by the Government as some people believe. During the summer months, some men find employment on ranches, but as a rule, there are limited employment opportunities on the Crow Reservation; a few find regular employment off the reservation.

The Crow Indian Reservation is located southeast of Billings, Montana. Nearly three million acres of mountains, foothills, and rolling plains lie within the exterior boundaries as defined in 1885. As of January 1, 1969, the Crow people retained ownership of 1,567,189 acres of the reservation land. The remainder was sold to non-Indians by the allottees between 1922 and 1962.

Since that time the Crow Tribe has purchased all of the land sold by the individual tribal members.

MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION

Language.

Indian languages, like all other languages of the world, have been studied and classified into various types of linguistic stocks. The Absarokee language has been classified as a member of the Siouan stock. It is comparable in style and form to the languages of the Sioux and Hidatsa but very different to the languages of the Flathead and Shoshone, each representing a different linguistic stock.

In the old days, the tribes of the northwest plains, while speaking different languages and dialects, were able to communicate with one another through the use of a common style of hand signs. Contrary to general opinion, not all Indian tribes were able to use this method of communication.

Many Indian languages have been studied and recorded but no exhaustive study of the Crow language has been made. Dr. Robert H. Lowie, formerly of the University of California, made a limited study in 1912 and has published a brief pamphlet on this language. The Wycliff Institute of Bible Translation is now making a complete study of the language. The purpose is to translate the Bible into a written Crow language.

Physical Appearance.

The old time plains Indians always on the hunt and warpath, first on foot and later on horseback, were athletic in build, generally lean and tall. The Crow Indian is of this type and was distinguished from other tribes by the style of his hair dressing. He wore long braids and high pompadours.

In 1825, a scholarly white man measured many Crow men and found the average height to be around six feet. The women were quite short and stockily built. The present Crows appear to be heavier built, but still tall.
Manner of Dress.

The Crow Indians, prior to contact with white men, wore clothes of tanned deer, elk, antelope, and buffalo skins both for everyday and dress wear. Dress clothes, worn in dances and ceremonials, were decorated with various ornaments of feathers, seeds, skins of small animals, and shells. Brightly dyed porcupine quills were embroidered into the buckskin clothes.

During the hot summer weather men generally wore only breech-cloths and moccasins while women and girls wore full dresses at all times. The exposure of any part of the body, excepting hands and face, was considered indecent.

Today, the Crow Indians wear old style costumes only at dances and ceremonials and special appearances for the general public. For everyday clothes, they wear typical non-Indian clothes. Very few old men wear moccasins and long braids. Most of the older women still wear their hair in long braids, wear moccasins, and use shawls or blankets (Pendleton) and bright mufflers on their heads. The school girls never wear "Indian" clothes, except on special occasions.

Camp Activities-Recreation, Sports, Socials.

During periods of respite from the demands of hunt and warfare, the old time Absarokee camp was full of festivities such as dances, ceremonials, feasts, games for all ages, and athletic sports and events for all. The rigors of nomadic life made these people naturally athletic and they enjoyed sports and games. The boys, however, were subjected to vigorous training in running, swimming, wrestling, archery, tracking, hunting, riding, and other skills. The girls received training in "home economics".

The Crow children, of course, now attend the public schools for their training and education with their tuition paid the school districts by the Federal Government in accordance with old treaty stipulations. There are three public high schools which Crow children attend, at Hardin, Lodge Grass, and Edgar, Montana. The Indian boys are generally good athletes and take active parts in the athletic programs of these schools.

Population Trends.

The small pox scourges of mid 1800's decimated the population from nearly 8,000 to less than 2,000 by 1870. The sudden change from their accustomed life in the open to sedentary life on the reservation proved unhealthy. Tuberculosis and other modern and foreign diseases for which they had little natural resistance kept the population static. Only in the last 30 years has the population increased. The population has steadily increased from 2,828 in 1938 to 2,424 in 1943 to 3,235 in 1953 to 5,127 in December, 1970.

The many and frequent instances of Indian women marrying trappers, traders, and settlers in the early years reduced the full blood strain of the Tribe to about 25 per cent of the population by the time of the first World War. In recent years the number of "full bloods" has increased rapidly.
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INTERVIEWS


