

## The Sad Legacy of Moose Dung and Red Robe

by David Thorstad

In 1904, the Ojibwe village at Thief River Falls, in northwest Minnesota, was removed to the Red Lake Indian Reservation to the east, much diminished after the tribe's cession of the land between the reservation and Thief River Falls (known as the eleven western townships—256,152 acres). The Indian cemetery at the village, on a piece of land known as "Squaw Point," where the Red Lake and Thief rivers meet, was dug up and around 115 remains were taken by barge up the Red Lake River where they were to be "buried at a suitable point on the banks of the Red Lake river just across the reservation line."<sup>1</sup>

(Some twenty of the supposedly Catholic remains were reburied at the Catholic cemetery at the Red Lake Agency.) Red Laker Wub-e-ke-niew, in his book *We Have the Right to Exist*, says that the remains were "dumped": "The Métis told us that our dead were dumped near where the old Frogs' Bridge was, but I went and looked, and found no evidence of this."<sup>2</sup> Two issues were involved in the removal, he says: "one of them was the plundering of the graves of my people for 'artifacts,' the second was the removal of all physical evidence that the *Ahnishinahbæó'jibway* had ever lived in the area."<sup>3</sup>



Squaw Point today (photo by David Thorstad)



Silent City (photo by David Thorstad)

This site is known at Red Lake as Silent City. It is entirely swamp or marshland, and in 1904, before the river had been dredged, presumably it was even more marshy than it is today. It is hard to imagine that anything could have been reburied in this terrain, even as it is today. It is possible that the barge could not proceed any farther than Frogs' Bridge, so

had to leave the dead there. Another version from Red Lake has tribal elders stopping the barge out of disagreement with the village band, whose chief, Red Robe, had accepted allotment, whereas Red Lake had rejected allotment in favor of keeping all land to be owned in common by the tribe as a whole. This scenario seems unlikely because the village Indians “said they were willing to remove at any time, but would not sign any paper until their head men up at the lake approved of the matter.”<sup>4</sup> It is said that moaning can sometimes be heard in the area, but I heard nothing on two occasions. The story of Silent City remains sensitive for Red Lake, and may be fraught with superstition as well. When I mentioned my research to one tribal official, he replied: “Some things should not be written about.”<sup>5</sup>

Bidding was taken for the removal of the cemetery, and the contract was awarded to Joseph Duchamp, who got \$14.50 per body (it is possible that bones were not always kept together, so that more remains could be claimed to have been dug up). The remains were transported on a barge towed by the gas boat the *Dan Patch*. The translator for the operation was Rudolph Berg, a young Norwegian who left his family at age thirteen to live with the Red Lake Indians in the late nineteenth century.

The removal was the result of a 1902 agreement between the government and the Red Lake Indians, during which the whites pressured Red Lake to cede the land on grounds that so many white people were coming that they could not be stopped, that the Indians weren’t using good land for farming as the whites would, and that few Indians were living on the tract in any case. On June 20, 1904, sales of the land began, most going for four to five dollars an acre. (The highest price paid was \$46.50, and that was for “Squaw Point,” where the two rivers meet and possibly the site of the former cemetery.) Less than 40 percent of the land was sold, and the average price was \$6.27 per acre. Some eleven thousand dollars of the proceeds that were allotted to Red Lake (expected to be around two hundred thousand dollars) were deducted for the removal of the dead and “improvements,” with each Red Laker to receive approximately \$225.<sup>6</sup>

The Ojibwe village, known as Negiddahmitigwayyung, “Where the Two Rivers Meet,” was located across the river from a tract of 640 acres that Red Robe had inherited when his father Mons-o-moh (Moose Dung) died in 1872. Whites had given Moose Dung the tract, known as the “Chief’s Section,” in gratitude for his help in persuading his fellow Red Lakers to sign the 1863 Old Crossing Treaty ceding 11 million acres of the most fertile land in the country along the valley of the Red River of the North.<sup>7</sup>

## Moose Dung's Role at Old Crossing

Of the Red Lake delegation to the negotiations at Old Crossing in October 1863, only one chief refused to sign the treaty: May-dwa-gun-on-ind. He left the negotiations after several days and later hiked the hundred or so miles from Red Lake to White Earth to beseech Episcopal Bishop Henry Whipple to intercede on behalf of the Indians with Washington. Whipple had described this leading chief from Red Lake as "six feet and four inches in height, straight as an arrow, with flashing eyes, frank, open countenance, and as dignified in bearing as one of a kingly race."<sup>8</sup> The government's negotiator, former Minnesota governor Alexander Ramsey, described this chief and Moose Dung in his report to William P. Dole, Commissioner of Indian



Moozomo (Moose Dung), possibly Red Robe's father; photo taken "before 1877"

Affairs: "It here should be explained that *Moose Dung*, who was really the most influential of all the chiefs, stood at the head of a party embracing the large majority of all the bands who were favorable to and even anxious for a treaty, while May-dwa-gun-on-ind led a small and surly minority, who were determined, for reasons of their own, that no treaty should be made." Once May-dwa-gun-on-ind had left, Moose Dung's role in the negotiations increased, ultimately helping to persuade the delegation to sign the treaty. For that he was rewarded with the 640 acres. It is easy to see why if his comments as recorded by Ramsey are correct, for they come across as more ingratiating than a mere negotiating stance might have called for. Here are a few excerpts:

We were very glad to hear you make so good an offer over and above what you offered for the country east of the line we had fixed. As to the country west, he [May-dwa-gun-on-ind] expected another offer. That was all he had to say to that. Now I want . . . to speak of another thing. I do not mention the name of any chief that I see around me. The idea that I had, and that I always have, is this, and this is the reason that my thoughts run in this way. I have taken the mouth of Thieving river as my inheritance. I do not ask the chiefs here where I shall go. I make my home there. I wanted it for a reservation for myself, but I see you are ahead of me. You want to take these too. [Ramsey claimed he wanted the land at the mouth of the Thief River for road building.] I should have been very much gratified to have had one employé there to work for me. Whether the old man acts with me on this matter I do not know. I used to think that that was the

proper place for me to settle; that it would be an inheritance for my children; where all my children could have enough to live on in the future.

Moose Dung kept insisting that he wanted the tract of land including the mouth of the Thief River, but Ramsey replied: "Tell him I don't care anything about the mouth of Thieving river. He can have it if he wants it." This in itself showed Ramsey's arrogance. He acts as if he is giving land to an Indian whose land it already is! The land was neither Ramsey's nor the U.S. government's to give.

One by one, the Red Lake chiefs were won over to Moose Dung's more conciliatory position. Ramsey made his final offer, including annuity payments, money for building houses for the chiefs, various goods, and so on, as well as a ban on liquor in the ceded land, to which Moose Dung responded:

Father, you have hit my heart in the right spot, in speaking of the liquor as you did. That is what I don't want in my land, because it is the source of trouble and poverty. Father, I accept of the propositions, because I see that I am going to be raised from want to riches, to be raised to the level of the white man. Father, I hope you will do what is right with me, and my young men. I have always found that in holding in, I sometimes get more from my traders. You and the government have used every exertion for a great many years to bring about a treaty; I do not want you to exert yourself in vain; I now give up the tract of country; I hope you will have pity on me, and see that these terms are carried out to the letter, so as not to lead to trouble hereafter.<sup>9</sup>

After an hour of deliberating over each provision of the treaty, Moose Dung "touched the pen." There was "great rejoicing in the Indian camp."

By 1891, Red Robe had begun to lease out or sell parcels of the land he had inherited, mostly to lumbermen, and by 1901 he had lost all of it, so many whites saw no need for Indians to be living there and were glad to see them go in 1904—a sad, even ignominious, end to the brief history of the only parcel of Red Lake land taken as an allotment by a leading member of the tribe.

The entire treaty period was a land grab, and the whites used various stratagems to get their hands on Indian land, including naming pliable men "chiefs" who then became professional treaty signers. As happened with other tribes, the Ojibwe were browbeaten, threatened, lied to, cajoled, and hoodwinked out of most of their land. (Ramsey even threatened the Indians at Old Crossing by reminding them of the mass hanging of Dakota men in Mankato barely ten months earlier.) As the main Red River Valley daily observed about the Old Crossing Treaty:

When this treaty was negotiated, the Chippewa Indian leaders were conned into turning over 11 million acres of prime real estate in Northwestern Minnesota and Northeastern North Dakota for about half a million dollars. As far as real estate deals go, the ceding of the Red River Valley ranks up there with the Manhattan deal, the Louisiana Purchase, and the Alaska deal. It has been characterized as one of the most dishonest and fraudulent deals ever made.<sup>10</sup>

With the policy of allotment in the late 1880s, Red Robe in effect had to agree to allotment in order to retain his ancestral home. The allotment policy resulted in a reduction of Ojibwe land from 138 million acres to 48 million acres in 1934. The 640-acre Chief's Section that Red Robe inherited from his father eventually met the same fate and was taken by whites. Although Moose Dung's private parcel was adjacent to the Red Lake reservation, once his son inherited it and whites began to move into what would become Thief River Falls, it stood in the way of their moneymaking schemes. How could Red Robe, as someone who spoke only his native language, and whose culture had a very different notion of land ownership, be expected to have the skills and knowledge necessary to fend off whites who coveted his desirable parcel? It was they who wrote the laws and were able to use the white court system to validate their theft.<sup>11</sup>

This brings me to what originally piqued my curiosity: the story of the statue to Red Robe that now overlooks the site of the former Ojibwe village in Thief River Falls.

### **A Generic Indian**

Moose Dung (Mons-o-mo) and his son Red Robe (Mis-co-co-noy-a) both signed the Old Crossing Treaty, the former as a chief, the latter as a warrior. When Moose Dung died in 1872, Red Robe took his father's name, and became known as both Red Robe and Moose Dung the Younger. This practice was not uncommon among the Ojibwe.<sup>12</sup>

For the U.S. Bicentennial in 1976, the Thief River Falls authorities decided to have a statue built of an Indian chief overlooking the site of the original Ojibwe village. A commemorative button went on sale to help finance the observances. It depicted not the chief but the sawmill of Patrick and James Meehan, the first to lease part of the Chief's Section in 1891. The fifteen-foot statue was delivered on July 8 and was dedicated on July 10, with Red Lakers in attendance. Following a parade, the program included speeches by cochairs of the Bicentennial commission (Avis Odegaard and Rick Contos), Mayor Bob Carlson, Roger Jourdain, chairman of the Red Lake Tribal Council, and Dan Needham, former tribal treasurer. "Representatives of the Red Lake band of Chippewa Indians added color and pageantry to the program by performing several dances near the statue," the local paper observed.<sup>13</sup> The chief the statue portrayed was identified as Moose Dung in the plaque, which read as follows:

At the Old Crossing Treaty of 1863 Provision was made for 640 acres of land near the mouth of the Thief River to be given to the Chief of the Red Lake Band of the Chippewa Indians.

The Chief's Section, on which a big part of Thief River Falls is located was inherited by Chief Mon-si-moh (also known as Chief Red Robe). In 1879 following a government survey, Mon-si-moh decided the land was too valuable to lie idle and for several years dealt with lumbermen leasing land to them. In 1895 the first sale was made from the Chief's Section. By 1901 he had sold the last of his holdings.<sup>14</sup>

This failed to make clear that the parcel of land that became known as the Chief's Section was originally given to Red Robe's father, Moose Dung, and makes no mention of the son's original Indian name, Mis-co-co-noy-a. It also elides aspects of the story that would not make city officials, especially local lumbermen, look very good, since, as soon as whites began to move into the area and it was platted, lumbermen sought to acquire it, which they did, piece by piece, in the 1890s. Several court cases, going all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, including one by Red Robe's offspring, upheld the ownership of the land as belonging to him as a personal allotment (even though the policy of allotments was not yet in force at the time of the Old Crossing Treaty when the land was given to his father, Moose Dung), instead of being a reservation (thus it was not considered part of the Red Lake reservation). This meant that Red Robe was entitled to lease or sell his land—which he did—but it also meant that he was obliged to pay taxes on it—which he did not. All this resulted in his ultimately losing the land to whites. By the time the courts had resolved this question there was no land left to pass on to his offspring. It should be noted that the Thief River Falls newspaper at the time was owned by Patrick and James Meehan, who built their lumber mill in the young town in 1892 and who were also among those who ultimately gained possession of Red Robe's land, so newspaper coverage was biased in favor of the lumber interests.<sup>15</sup>

The most confusing—and surprising—thing about the statue is that it doesn't look at all like Red Robe. That led me to wonder at first if perhaps it had been meant to represent his father, Moose Dung, especially since the original plaque identified the man as Moose Dung, without specifying that it was Moose Dung the Younger. Moreover, the Chief's Section (even if unplatted) had originally belonged to Moose Dung, not Red Robe, and, arguably, Moose Dung was the more significant figure from a historical point of view. Yet the statue had clearly been patterned on a photograph of Red Robe from 1885 because the statue's clothing is identical to what the chief was wearing in the photograph, including his bandolier bag, the club he is holding, and the two eagle feathers in his hair. And it did not resemble the only photograph of a Moose Dung (Moozomo) I have seen, on the Red Lake Web site. The photo was taken "before

1877,” and since Moose Dung the Elder died in 1872, it seems likely—even if impossible to confirm—that it is of Red Robe’s father. One might reasonably have expected the statue to have been of Moose Dung the Elder, since he was the original grantee, but perhaps city officials decided on Red Robe instead because by the time Thief River Falls was being settled, the father had died, so the son became most closely identified with the tract in the eyes of whites. Still, one can wonder whether either chief really merited having a statue built in his honor, in view of their having taken allotment instead of following the Red Lake policy of holding land in common.

In any case, the statue, which stands in Red Robe Park overlooking the confluence of the Red Lake and Thief rivers, is not an accurate representation of Red Robe himself, but only of his clothes.<sup>16</sup>



Red Robe statue in Red Robe Park, Thief River Falls (photo by David Thorstad)



Red Robe (left) and Albert Stately, 1885 (photo from Minnesota Historical Society)

This article presents what I learned in my quest to try to resolve some of the questions surrounding this statue.

The statue was built by Creative Display, Inc., of Sparta, Wisconsin (later, the FAST Corporation). The craftsman who designed it was Jerry Vettrus. Thief River Falls

businessman L. B. Hartz headed a committee on the statue and paid for its construction as part of the city's commemoration of the Bicentennial. Vettrus confirms that he worked from the photograph of Red Robe taken in 1885, but says that it would have cost around a thousand dollars extra to have made the face look like the chief.<sup>17</sup> Rick Contos, cochair of the Bicentennial commission, recalls: "I did not have any input after we had (we thought) the proper photo/I.D. for the statue's appearance; L. B. and his committee members took it from there, the financing, etc. was entirely the prerogative of the Statue/Park committee." Contos says that when the commission was dissolved, "we were literally broke financially."<sup>18</sup> For some reason, Hartz or others did not wish to spend the extra money to make the statue authentic, so instead Vettrus designed one that kept only the clothing Red Robe was wearing in the photograph. The result was a generic Indian. (The L. B. Hartz Foundation has no records in its files of anything pertaining to the statue.)

Vettrus carved the statue in foam, with fiberglass applied to the carving. (Later, beginning in 1983, the technique changed: a model would be made of plaster, foam, and clay, and a fiberglass casting made and the foam thrown away.) He says that no particular face was specified when he was commissioned to design the statue. He estimates the price for the project at seven to ten thousand dollars. (Today, it would be twenty-five to thirty thousand dollars.) Creative Display was sold in 1982 and the company was moved to Florida.<sup>19</sup>

It seems odd that Thief River Falls would go to the trouble of having a statue built but not make it look like the figure it is supposed to represent. Can one imagine a generic statue of an important white figure—say, George Washington—that doesn't even vaguely look like him? Couldn't another thousand dollars have been raised to make it a true portrait? Why wasn't authenticity considered essential to the portrayal of Red Robe? Instead, his true likeness was erased. This slight has resulted in the fact—which city officials could not have foreseen—that today there are at least five other statues made from the same mold in other parts of the United States: at the Loretta Lynn Dude Ranch in Hurricane Mills, Tennessee; a Big Indian Statue at the Dixie Discount in Franklin, Kentucky; a "Southern Plains Indian" at the Cherokee Inn in Geary, Oklahoma; a "Chippewa Indian" at the Thunderbird Motel in Bloomington, Minnesota (removed in 2006); and another at the Navajo Travel Lodge in Gallup, New Mexico. All of these statues have the exact same face as the Red Robe statue in Thief River Falls, are holding a "tomahawk" in the same position as he does, and have a similar bandolier bag, though other details, such as feathers and designs on the bandolier bag, differ in minor ways.<sup>20</sup>

The Red Lakers who were involved in the creation of the statue in 1976 (Al Thunder, Dan Needham, tribal chairman Roger Jourdain, as well as Red Robe's

grandson, Joe Sumner, who was interviewed about it at the time by the *Thief River Falls Times*) are all dead, and there is no record of anyone from Red Lake addressing the fact that the statue was not an actual representation of Red Robe, nor of any objection that instead of portraying the Red Lake chief, it was generic (any old Indian, so to say). Nobody I interviewed (whether Red Lakers or Thief River Falls officials) seemed to find this oddity particularly surprising or peculiar, but I found it bizarre.

Sumner (whose Ojibwe name was Min-ni-wi-gwon-yay-aush, or Good Sounding Feather) did, however, tell the *Times* in 1976—after the statue had been erected—that he would prefer to have his grandfather remembered as Red Robe rather than as Moose Dung, which he said was a nickname given him as a boy.<sup>21</sup> Dan Needham too told the crowd at the statue’s dedication that Moose Dung “was a nick-name given the chief by other Indians.”<sup>22</sup> That, however, is not accurate, since Moose Dung was the name Sumner’s great-grandfather had used in signing the Old Crossing Treaty, and when he died, Red Robe assumed his father’s name, becoming known as both Red Robe and Moose Dung the Younger. Mons-o-moh might have been a nickname, but it was not given to Red Robe, but to his father. In the same article in 1976, Dan Needham’s praise for the statue suggests that he and others were either unaware of the fact that the statue did not look like Red Robe (although his photo had been published in the *Thief River Falls Times* in the serialization of Mosbeck’s article in April 1975) but was instead a generic Indian, or they didn’t consider this important enough to make an issue of:

After all, our chiefs had the foresight to preserve our lands for our children and our children’s children. . . . I am sure that the good people of Thief River Falls will want to go along with us in preserving the memory of Chief Red Robe with dignity, and we hope that the name of Mon-si-moh can be changed to Mays-co-co-nay-yay on the fine statue erected to his memory.<sup>23</sup>

### **The Statue Gets Renamed**

It took more than twenty years to implement Dan Needham’s and Joe Sumner’s suggestion that the statue be renamed. By 1997, the statue needed a new coat of paint and the plaque was worn, so the Parks and Recreation Board decided to revise the plaque as well, in deference to the wishes of Red Lakers who argued that the plaque was inaccurate by identifying Red Robe as Moose Dung.<sup>24</sup> During plans to revise the plaque in 1997, city Community Development Director Stewart noted that he had edited a new text submitted by the “Red Lake Band of Chippewa Historian” (Jody Beaulieu, the archivist), and added: “I do find it interesting that no mention was made of the fact that Meskokonaye [Red Robe] was supposed to have shared the 640 acres with the members of his Band, which he never did, and was, apparently, despised for

this." He gives the source of this information as Bill Hallet, the late Economic Development Director of the Red Lake Band.<sup>25</sup>

There had been discussion of holding a powwow to inaugurate the refurbished statue, but by the time that happened in August 1997, frustrations on both sides were so great that no powwow took place and not even a report on the event appeared in the *Thief River Falls Times*.<sup>26</sup> The new plaque text removed any mention of Moose Dung and asserted that both father and son were named Red Robe:

At the Old Crossing Treaty of 1863, a provision was made for the retention of 640 acres of land near the mouth of the Thief River by a chief of the Red Lake Band of Chippewa. The Chief Meskokonaye (Red Robe) section, on which a large part of Thief River Falls is located, was inherited by his son, who was also known as Meskokonaye.

In 1879, following a government survey, the chief's son was coerced into leasing land to lumbermen. In 1895, the first sale of land was made from the chief's section.

By 1901, Meskokonaye had been forced to part with the last of his holdings.<sup>27</sup>

There are several inaccuracies and possible errors in this text. There is no documentary evidence that Moose Dung the Elder was ever known as Red Robe. He signed the Old Crossing Treaty (with an X, like all fourteen signatories) using the name Moose Dung, and his son signed as Red Robe. When Red Robe took his father's name after his father died in 1872, he became known by both names. Red Robe was a warrior, not a chief, when his father, who was a chief, was given the parcel. And although the government survey was in 1879, Red Robe did not make the first lease on his land until 1891. But despite the apparent confusion over names, the wording is an improvement over the formulation in the original plaque claiming that he "decided the land was too valuable to lie idle," so chose to lease and sell it. That formulation had been taken from an article in the local paper in 1895:

Mon-si-moh Jr., evidently decided to not let this valuable tract of land lie idle, and that the inheritance from his father should be made to yield him some of the white mans money. This decision formed, he set about to seek investment for his landed estate.<sup>28</sup>

The precise boundaries of the Chief's Section were determined only with the 1879 government survey, and at that point the land was handed over to Red Robe. Whites increasingly began to move into the area. The first lease of Red Robe's land in 1891 to James and Patrick Meehan was for a ten-foot strip of land off the west bank of the Red

Lake and Thief rivers and stretching the length of the Chief's Section. In 1894, the same piece of land was leased to another lumberman, Ray W. Jones. The Meehans filed suit against Jones, and Red Robe was caught in the crossfire. Whether Red Robe was coerced, as the plaque states, or duped into leasing the land, he certainly lacked an adequate understanding of the whiteman's laws pertaining to land ownership, including payment of taxes, leasing, and selling, and so was taken advantage of by men who weren't about to let ethics and morality stand in their way. This is the case that went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled in favor of the Meehans.

Red Robe's own testimony as to how Jones obtained his 1894 lease suggests that he was taken advantage of:

My name is Mon-si-moh. I do not know how old I am, I did not have anything to do with making a lease of a part of a section of land to Ray W. Jones of Minneapolis, Mr. Kellogg [*sic*] used his own words, and read it to me, he asked me if I wanted to lease my land to build a sawmill on, for twenty years he told me he would give me \$200.00 a year, I just listened to him and never said a word back.

I did not consent to that proposition. The paper was read to me several times, I just listened to it, and never said a word. I looked to the overseer Mr. Lawler to look after my interests. I told Mr. Kellogg to wait until I went to the lake [Red Lake] to see the overseer up there Captain Lawler the overseer said "if you sign the lease it would not be approved." The overseer told him if Kellogg wanted to give him anything in advance to sign the lease, fifty dollars was offered to him and he signed the lease, I did not expect that the lease would be approved, if I had thought so, I would have made another kind of lease, I did not think anything about the lease after I signed it as I thought it would not be approved as I was told, I went down to White Earth after I learned this lease was for twenty-five years. I did not want this lease approved, I would not have signed of my own will, the lease—the Jones lease—if it was not for the overseer, he told me it would not be approved, I did not have any say about how the lease would be made up and that is the reason, I made the protest against it, the lease was made up by Mr. Kellogg and I did not have anything to do with making up the lease and that is the reason I did not want it.

Q. You went down to White Earth to make a paper protesting against the Jones lease; did you make any other paper?

A. Yes! I went down and made a lease for Mr. Meehan and I used my will making the lease, I did not use my will in the making of the Jones lease, I do not want anything that I did not have a say in.<sup>29</sup>

But were both father and son named Red Robe, as the revised 1997 plaque on the statue asserts? This assertion is also made on the Thief River Falls Parks and Recreation Board's Web site:

After the death of Chief Meskokonaye, Meskokonaye Jr. became Chief and assumed control of the land retained by his father. Chief Meskokonaye Jr. was coerced into leasing a portion of their land to the Crookston Lumber Co. as a landing but unbeknownst to Chief Meskokonaye Jr. the Department of War later known as the Bureau of Indian Affairs assumed control of all Indian land held in Trust and they had written a lease for this same land for the same time period to another white businessman. These two white men asserted their rights under lease agreements and challenged each other in court. This case eventually made its way to the Supreme Court where it was ruled that Chief Meskokonaye Jr. was indeed the heir to this land and this land was intended to be an allotment rather than a reservation. With this land being declared an allotment, Chief Meskokonaye was declared competent and a fee patent was issued for this land so the Chief could lease, sell or do whatever he pleased with his own land. The Chief was not familiar with the ways of the white world and did not realize that with a fee patent came annual land taxes. He leased the land to the Crookston Lumber Company his original lessor and collected the rent for a number of years. In the meantime, Chief Meskokonaye and his band moved to Red Lake. He continued to collect the rent but his land continued to accumulate taxes against it, finally it was declared tax delinquent and tax forfeiture proceedings were initiated. The Crookston Lumber Company paid the delinquent taxes and took ownership of the land thus the reservation was lost.

In 1976, in time for the Bicentennial, a statue of Chief Mon-si-moh was dedicated. . . .<sup>30</sup>

The mention of "Chief Mon-si-moh" at the end does nothing to clarify the identification here of both men as being named Red Robe. Quite the contrary.

### **Was Moose Dung Really Red Robe?**

The origin of the notion that both Moose Dung and Red Robe were known as Red Robe appears to go back to the book Mary Croteau wrote for the seventy-fifth anniversary of Thief River Falls in 1971: *Where Two Rivers Meet: A Diamond Jubilee History of Thief River Falls*. Unfortunately, her account is inaccurate, garbled, and lacks any sources, and she is now dead. The book was republished for the city's centennial in 1996, and Croteau's errors were compounded. Here is what she wrote in 1971:

In 1863 the Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa and the federal government concluded a Treaty that opened up a large tract of land to homesteaders. This treaty was amended in 1864 when Chief Moose Dung, the elder (Mis-co-co-noy) and Chief Red Bear (Mis-co-muk-wa) of the Pembina Chippewa sent a delegation to Washington. . . . As a reward from the government for his work in arranging the treaty Chief Moose Dung, at his request, was given the site at the headwaters of the Thief River for his Indians.<sup>31</sup>

There are two glaring errors in this passage: first, she confuses Moose Dung with his son by giving Red Robe's Ojibwe name ("Mis-co-co-noy") as that of his father (the elder man was Mon-si-moh, not Mis-co-co-noy); second, the land Moose Dung was given was not at the headwaters of the Thief River, but at its mouth, the point where the Thief River and the Red Lake River meet.

The same passage in the 1996 version of the book compounds the first error and reads as follows:

In 1863 the Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa and the Federal Government concluded a Treaty that opened up a large tract of land to homesteaders. This treaty was amended in 1864 when Chief Miscoconoy, the elder and chief Red Bear (Mis-co-muk-wa) of the Pembina Chippewa sent a delegation to Washington. . . . As a reward from the government for his work in arranging the treaty Chief Miscoconoy, at his request, was given the site at the headwaters of the Thief River for his Indians. (2)

Here, Moose Dung has been erased altogether and history altered so that it was Red Robe who was given what became known as the Chief's Section. As already noted, the gift was to Moose Dung, the father, and at the time of the Old Crossing Treaty, Red Robe was a warrior, not a chief.

The confusion has persisted on the present-day plaque on the Red Robe statue, where both father and son are named Meskokonaye (Red Robe). Some Red Lakers assert that both were named Red Robe. "I've always heard that," Red Lake archivist Gary Fuller told me.<sup>32</sup> "Red Robe is Red Robe (Sr. Jr.)," said Jody Beaulieu.<sup>33</sup> So, there appears to be some oral or family tradition to that effect. But could that tradition be based on a misunderstanding or a confusion about the name of Red Robe's father, or is all the documented evidence indicating that his name was Monsomoh (Moose Dung) incorrect? Is it possible that the identification of the two as Red Robe came from the garbled account by Mary Croteau and the later revision of her text, or even confusion over the names at Red Lake? I was unable to resolve this discrepancy, so can do no more than point out that both views exist. All the documentary evidence, however,

suggests that the text on the statue's plaque is incorrect in identifying both men as Red Robe.

The fact that Red Robe assumed his father's name, Monsomoh, when his father died would alone appear to argue against identifying both men as Red Robe. But there are other considerations that help to put the subject in perspective.

#### *Ojibwe Naming Traditions and Objections to "Moose Dung"*

Names in Ojibwe tradition were not a simple matter of being given one at birth and retaining it for life. There were different kinds of names, and they could be bestowed on either an infant or an adult. Frances Densmore, in *Chippewa Customs*, lists six types: a dream name given by a "namer"; a dream name taken by an individual; a "namesake name" given by a parent; a common name or "nickname"; name of gens; and "euphonious name without any significance."<sup>34</sup> A person might also use a particular name to ward off bad medicine. Sometimes children were not named until they fell sick, whereupon a namer would be summoned in the belief that his naming power could save the child's life.

Densmore's description of the nickname would appear to apply to Moose Dung the Elder:

The common name or nickname was that by which a Chippewa was known throughout his life. It was short and frequently contained an element of humor. A child might be given a name derived from some circumstance at the time of its birth, or it might be named from the first person or animal that entered the lodge after its birth. Children were sometimes named from a fancied resemblance to something. . . . The element of humor is shown in the fact that a child who was a long time in teething received the name Without Teeth, and a child who was short in stature was named Stump, both names being carried by men who lived to an advanced age.<sup>35</sup>

Red Lake elder Tom Lussier explained the importance of having an Indian name:

I've got an Indian name. Most of the family has their Indian names. There's a lot of belief in that, too. That if you don't have your Indian name when you go to the happy hunting ground, then you'll be like in a limbo or a purgatory. The white heaven don't recognize you, and you can't get into the Indian place because you don't have your name. You can't tell them who you are, when you get there. If you don't have your Indian name, you'll be floating in the never-never land forever.<sup>36</sup>

Mac Auginash in the same vein:

My Indian name is Mis-ko-binesii, Red Thunderbird. The thunderbird comes from those directions [east, south, west, north]. Naming is very important. That's why we have the naming ceremony. If you don't have an Indian name—when you die, the Great Spirit calls you by your Indian name. If I don't have an Indian name, where am I going to go?<sup>37</sup>

Some people think that Moose Dung is a pejorative name: Why would anyone want to be named for animal droppings? (Curiously, an online search for “Moose Dung” turns up several sites for moose dung jewelry!) “I was always under the assumption that the statue was renamed as the name Moose Dung may have been termed derogatory and that is why it was changed,” says former Red Lake Tribal Chairman Bobby Whitefeather.<sup>38</sup> That is a common, but ill-informed, assumption made by many non-Indians as well. RoadsideAmerica.com (“Your Online Guide to Offbeat Tourist Attractions”) has an entry on the “Chief Moose Dung Statue” that reflects this notion: “The city would rather you call him Chief Red Robe. His statue is clad in red, he has a grave expression on his face, and two feathers that look like big bunny ears.” One commentator on the site seems to believe the statue is of the father (as I too had once assumed) and that the statue's name was changed to help promote tourism: “Statue of a Chippewa chief who made a treaty for the land in Northwestern Minnesota (note: the city of TRF calls him Chief Red Robe, but his real name is Chief Moose Dung. Hey, if you were promoting tourism, you'd probably call him Chief Red Robe too!).” Of course, the opposite argument could be made, namely, that keeping the name Moose Dung would be a better way to promote tourism.

The notion that Moose Dung was a pejorative name can be discounted. The name could have come in a dream, or been conferred by a spiritual leader or some other elder. Whatever its origin, it was used by both father and son. Being lovely was not a criterion for Ojibwe names. One chief's name is rendered as Sour Spittle, which hardly seems flattering. An Ojibwe scholar told me of a spiritual leader whose Ojibwe name means “yellow foam” — “like puke,” the spiritual leader explained.

Moreover, more than one Ojibwe chief was named Moose Dung. As late as the 1930s, the last chief of the Winnibigoshish band of Ojibwe was named Bob Mosomo.<sup>39</sup> The Red Lake Chief Moose Dung (Mon-so-mo) is listed by that name (and his son as Mays-ko-ko-noy-ay) in the list of Ojibwa Personal Names in the Minnesota Historical Society's 1911 *Aborigines of Minnesota* based on figures who had signed treaties.<sup>40</sup> And Monsomoh is named in numerous other documents.

Further indication that the identification of both men as Red Robe is erroneous can be seen in *To Walk the Red Road: Memories of the Red Lake Ojibwe People*, a book published at Red Lake in 1989. Compiled by students at the Red Lake High School, it is

a collection of oral histories and quotations from historical documents pertaining to Red Lake history. Strikingly, the first portrait of these histories is a photo of Red Robe (the same one used in the creation of the statue), but he is identified as “Moose Dung, Chief, Red Lake.” While technically correct (he was known as both Red Robe and Moose Dung *the Younger*), on the same page there is a quote from Moose Dung *the Elder* at the Old Crossing Treaty: “You have hit my heart in the right spot, in speaking of the liquor as you did. That is what I don’t want in my land, because it is the source of trouble and poverty.” This is identified as a statement by “Moose Dung, Red Lake Chief addressing the government representatives during negotiations for the Treaty of 1863.”<sup>41</sup> But these were two different people, conflated here into one! Although this does not explain where the idea came from that both men were named Red Robe, it suggests a confusion at Red Lake itself about the names.

In the same book, Peter Graves, Red Lake leader from 1918 to 1957, refers to his grandfather as Moose Dung (in this case, clearly the father of Red Robe): “My mother migrated from Leech Lake and was married to a son of the old chief, Moose Dung. Moose Dung was one of the chiefs who made the first concession of land at the Old Crossings in 1863.”<sup>42</sup>

The name Moose Dung or Monsomo occurs repeatedly in many documents, both historical and legal. Some might object that those were all written by non-Indians, as if that alone should make them suspect. But in the absence of clear evidence that this usage is incorrect, as well as the fact that Moose Dung has been used by Red Lake elders themselves in reference to the father, the scales seem weighted in favor of the name the chief used in signing the Old Crossing Treaty.

We’ve seen that Red Robe took his father’s name when the old man died, and even referred to himself as Monsimoh in court documents. That was also the case of news accounts from the period. Throughout its detailed 1899 ruling in *Jones v. Meehan*, the U.S. Supreme Court maintains the distinction between the two men, referring to “the elder Moose Dung,” “Moose Dung the younger,” and begins by quoting from Moose Dung’s statements during the Old Crossing Treaty negotiations. Here are a few excerpts:

Moose Dung selected as his reservation, under the ninth article of the treaty, six hundred and forty acres, a part of which was lot 1 in section 34, including the strip now in controversy; and he lived on that land at the mouth of Thief river, and made it his home, and had a log house, a garden, and a fish trap there. He died in 1872, before the lands were surveyed, and was succeeded as chief by his eldest son, who had been born at Red Lake in 1828, and who was known to the whites by the same name of Moose Dung or Monsimoh, and to the Indians as

Mayskokonoyay, meaning "The one that wears the red robes;" and, ever since the making of the treaty, his father and himself, in succession, sustained tribal relations with the Red Lake band of Chippewa Indians, and that band continued to be recognized as an Indian tribe by the government of the United States. . . .

On September 30, 1879, after the land had been surveyed and "the heirs of Moose Dung" had selected their land, it was "set apart accordingly" and "designated on all government maps as 'Moose Dung's reservation.'"

On November 7, 1891, "Moose Dung the younger, describing himself as 'Moose Dung, of Thief River Falls, Polk county, Minnesota,'" made his first lease of his land, to the Meehans. There were only about fifty non-Indian inhabitants in Thief River Falls at that time.<sup>43</sup> But the next year, after the Meehans had built their sawmill and the Great Northern Railway Company built a railroad to the village, it quickly grew into a large settlement and the land increased in value. Nearly three years later, on July 20, 1894, "Moose Dung the younger, describing himself as 'Monsimoh (commonly called Moose Dung), heir and successor of his father Monsimoh (also commonly called Moose Dung),'" leased the same parcel of land to Ray W. Jones, giving rise to the case that wound its way to the Supreme Court.

These are just a few of the many references to these names, but it is worth noting that none of them identify both men as having the name Red Robe. On the contrary, the Court specifies that after Moose Dung the Elder died, his son was "known to the whites by the same name of Moose Dung or Monsimoh, and to the Indians as Mayskokonoyay, meaning 'The one that wears the red robes.'"

In the Minnesota Historical Society notes for March 1929, there is a further intriguing reference to both men:

What appears to be one of the issues of the famous medal struck off by the United States in honor of the Seneca chief Red Jacket in 1792 has been presented to the society by Mr. Charles A. Boalt of St. Paul. This medal, which is larger than most of the medals issued for presentation to the Indians, is oval in shape and is characterized by a design on the reverse side showing an American eagle with awkward outspread legs. The specimen received is much worn but it proves upon careful examination to bear this design and on the obverse side are faint traces of an Indian with a pipe raised to his lips and of a second figure, presumably that of President Washington. Mr. Boalt purchased the medal some twenty-five years ago from the post trader at the Red Lake Indian agency, who received it about twenty years earlier from Maescocuneeeya, the son of the Red Lake Chippewa chief, Moose Dung. It was said to have been given to the chief at

the treaty of Red Lake [Old Crossing] in 1863, which both he and his son signed. It seems doubtful, however, that such can be the case, for the medal in use at that time was the round peace and friendship medal of President Lincoln.<sup>44</sup>

## **Conclusion**

The identification of both Moose Dung and Red Robe as having the name Red Robe appears to rest on a confusion in Mary Croteau's account of the Chief's Section in the book published to commemorate the seventy-fifth anniversary of the founding of Thief River Falls, and on an oral tradition among some Red Lakers. All the considerable written documentation, beginning with the Old Crossing Treaty and continuing into the 1980s consistently distinguishes between the two men, with the father being named Monsomoh (Moose Dung), the son Red Robe (Mayscoconayay), and the son taking the father's name after the old man died. I cannot resolve this issue definitively, but find the case for the father's name being Monsomoh (and not Red Robe) compelling and more consistent with the evidence.

More problematic is the fact that the statue to Red Robe does not resemble him. The statue faithfully represents his clothing, club, bandolier bag, and eagle feathers true to the photograph on which it was modeled, but it makes no effort to capture his distinctive round facial features. This raises several questions: Is omission of his likeness an appropriate way to pay homage to the man whose land was taken to build the city and whose village's removal to Red Lake was welcomed by white citizens? Did the committee responsible regard accuracy as an unimportant detail? Why did it choose to accurately portray Red Robe's clothing but not his face? Isn't this an erasure of his identity—something that would be inconceivable if he had been a white man? Did it even occur to city officials that this might be perceived by Red Lakers and the chief's descendants as faint praise, or even an affront? Was it worth saving a thousand dollars to turn Red Robe into a generic Indian—now replicated elsewhere in the country—rather than a true representation of himself? Should the city commission a new statue that truly represents the chief?

Instead, the focus by all concerned—city officials and Red Lakers alike—has been on which name to use to identify the chief, even though he himself used both names. It might make more sense to change the plaque to identify the statue as Moose Dung the Elder. That way the generic countenance could stay as it is—at no additional cost—since there is no confirmed likeness or photograph of him. If it weren't for him, after all, the Chief's Section would never have existed, and it could be argued that, from a historical point of view, it was Moose Dung, not his son, whose role was the more important.

One lasting legacy of both chiefs is genealogical: many prominent family names at Red Lake today are linked to their progeny.<sup>45</sup>



Rudolph Berg (left) with John Strong (a son of Red Robe) and grandson (photo by Smith). Berg was the interpreter when the Ojibwe cemetery at Squaw Point was moved to the Red Lake reservation in 1904.

Jody Beaulieu, asked if Red Lakers had ever objected to this misportrayal of the chief, cast the issue in a different light (though implicitly acknowledging that the issue had not been raised): “It’s called liberation of the mind of the oppressed who are struggling to survive, but in spite of the oppression and poverty still have a sense of great pride and rightfully so!”<sup>46</sup> Joe Sumner’s daughter-in-law said she had not noticed that the statue’s face was not that of its subject.<sup>47</sup> I conclude that since the idea of a statue originated with the whites, and Red Lake was not given final say-so over details about the statue, Indian reticence—or politeness—prevailed over what would seem to have been justifiable irritation at the misrepresentation of the chief. Coming after a series of ripoffs, slights, and oppression at the hands of white people—including the grabbing of millions of acres of the most fertile land in the United States in 1863, the finagling to

take Red Robe's land away from him in the 1890s, the threats to pressure Red Lake into ceding the eleven western townships, the removal of the Ojibwe village and the digging up of the Indian cemetery in 1904, and the outright theft of the northern third of Upper Red Lake by U.S. Commissioner Henry M. Rice following the Treaty of 1889<sup>48</sup>—perhaps they chose to hold their tongue about the flawed homage to their ancestor rather than raise objections after the fact when they might not have been heeded.

Many whites still do not fully appreciate the pain caused by racist U.S. government policies toward Indians (theft of their land, stripping them of their language by beating children caught speaking it in boarding schools, outlawing the practice of Native religions, reducing proud nations to wards of the federal government). Indians have not forgotten the cruelty of these policies. In that context, the Red Robe statue could be seen as a partial—if flawed—attempt to right past wrongs.

By the time the American Indian Movement came on the scene in the 1970s, Indians were demonstrating new militancy about their issues, including sovereignty. AIM placed a sign at the entrance to the Red Lake reservation on Highway 1 east of Thief River Falls, on the eastern border of what was Indian land prior to the cession of the eleven western townships: "Warning! You are now entering Indian territory!" The sign expressed both the mistrust of white society and the renewed pride and self-consciousness of young Native Americans. They had learned the hard lessons of the past. But the way Thief River Falls chose to acknowledge the past injustice by erecting a statue to one of their chiefs, coming as it did as part of a Bicentennial celebration that could itself be read as the triumph of the white society over the Indians, seems in some ways to have been a clumsy, if well-intentioned, attempt to right past wrongs.

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## Notes

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<sup>1</sup> "Removal of the Dead Indians," *Thief River Falls News*, June 2, 1904, 1.

<sup>2</sup> Wub-e-ke-niew, *We Have the Right to Exist* (New York: Black Thistle Press, 1995), 146.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* Wub-e-ke-niew notes that the land on which Thief River Falls now sits had long been a meeting place and crossroads of indigenous trade, long before the whiteman arrived, and asserts that "the dead in question were not the ancestors of the Indians who agreed to dig them up," and that thousands of Ojibwe burial mounds were on the land Red Lake ceded (*ibid.*).

<sup>4</sup> "Looks Like an Early Opening," *Thief River Falls News-Press*, April 7, 1904, 1.

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<sup>5</sup> The site of Silent City is indicated on a hand-drawn map on the inside cover of *We Choose to Remember: More Memories of the Red Lake Ojibwe People*, a book of reminiscences of Red Lake elders compiled by the students of Project Preserve (no date, but after 1989, when an earlier volume of memories appeared).

<sup>6</sup> “Reds Want Their Money,” *Thief River Falls News*, July 21, 1904, 1. Although the Indians were supposed to receive payment within ninety days, the first payment did not arrive until February 1905 (see “Red Lake History 1900–1949,” <http://www.rlnn.org/MajorSponsors/HistoryProject1900s.html>). See also Erwin F. Mittelholtz, *Historical Review of the Red Lake Indian Reservation* (Bemidji: Beltrami County Historical Society, 1957); excerpted as “Chronological History of Red Lake and Vicinity,” <http://uts.ccutexas.edu/~woss/redlake2/chrono1.html>. A curious item appeared in the *Thief River Falls News* right after the land sale began, titled “Petrified Indians”: “The Minneapolis papers have long strings about the work of Joe Duchamp, of this city in regard to the removal of the dead Indians. According to the articles Joe has all kinds of petrified Indians which he found on the reservation and is selling them for cigar signs and hitching posts” (*Thief River Falls News*, June 23, 1904, 1). Apparently, Duchamp either diverted some of the remains for sale elsewhere or he was engaging in creative fraud. The “Minutes of councils held by James McLaughlin, United States Indian Inspector, with the Indians of Red Lake Agency, Minnesota, from March 4th to March 10th, 1902,” for the cession of the eleven western townships are available at [www.maquah.net](http://www.maquah.net). A summary of the sale of the eleven western townships was published in the *Thief River Falls Times* Centennial Edition, by Juana Eurek, “The Auction of 1904” (November 17, 2010, 16A).

<sup>7</sup> The Ojibwe village at Crow Wing in south-central Minnesota, located at the confluence of the Crow Wing and Mississippi rivers, was also known as “Where the Two Rivers Meet,” though the Anglicized spelling differs: Neen-gi-tah-witi-gway-yang.

<sup>8</sup> Ella A. Hawkinson, “The Old Crossing Chippewa Treaty and Its Sequel,” a paper read at the 85<sup>th</sup> meeting of the Minnesota Historical Society, January 8, 1934 (<http://collections.mnhs.org/mnhistorymagazine/articles/15/v15i03p282-300.pdf>, 294).

<sup>9</sup> *Articles of a Treaty Made and Concluded at the Old Crossing of Red Lake River* (October 2, 1863), 38<sup>th</sup> Congress, United States Congressional Archives, 40–45. See also Hawkinson, “The Old Crossing Chippewa Treaty and Its Sequel.”

<sup>10</sup> *Grand Forks Herald*, September 25, 1988; quoted in “Red Lake History – The Beginning” (<http://www.rlnn.org/MajorSponsors/HistoryProjectBeginning.html>) and in a memo to Madelyn Vigen, Director, Thief River Falls Parks and Recreation Board, from city Community Development Director Don Stewart (July 1997) about the revised text for the plaque on the Red Robe statue.

<sup>11</sup> The strategies of the whites, particularly former governor Alexander Ramsey during negotiations for the Old Crossing Treaty with the Red Lake and Pembina Ojibwe bands, are discussed in my articles “Thief River Falls: The Indian Connection” (available at [http://williamapercy.com/wiki/index.php?title=Thief\\_River\\_Falls](http://williamapercy.com/wiki/index.php?title=Thief_River_Falls)) and “Land Grab: Ramsey vs. the Indians” (available at [http://williamapercy.com/wiki/images/Land\\_Grab\\_with\\_references.doc](http://williamapercy.com/wiki/images/Land_Grab_with_references.doc)). The former was published as two articles in the Centennial Edition of the *Thief River Falls Times*, November 17, 2010 (“Thief River Falls: How Did It Get Its Name?” and “Moose Dung and the Old Crossing Treaty,” 13B–16B), the latter in *Treaty at Old Crossing: To Invite Enlightened Understanding: Reflections, Writings and Responses to the 1863 Treaty, Notes and Dialogue* (Red Lake Falls, Minn.: Association of the French of the North, 2008), section II, 11–15.

<sup>12</sup> Other examples include Bagone-giizhig (Hole in the Day the Younger, previously known as Gwiiwizens, Boy) and John Beargrease.

<sup>13</sup> “Bicentennial Observance Is Held in TRF Saturday,” *Thief River Falls Times*, July 12, 1976, 4.

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<sup>14</sup> Copy of text in files of the Thief River Falls Parks and Recreation Board. The text does not seem ever to have been published (at least not in the local newspaper). A revised plaque text appears on the statue today (text below).

<sup>15</sup> As part of its Bicentennial coverage, the *Thief River Falls Times* published three articles by Jane Achenbach on the role of the lumber industry in the development of the town: "Sawmill Caused Early Growth of T. R. Falls" (May 26, 1976), "Controversy Flared in Lumber Industry" (May 31, 1976), "Meehans Sold Mill, Timber and Rights" (June 2, 1976). A thorough examination of Red Robe's dealings with lumbermen seeking his land, as well as court cases involving issues like title to the land and disputes between whites seeking to lease the land, is provided in Steven Mosbeck's monograph "The History of Moose Dung's Section and How the Section Influenced the Settlement of Thief River Falls" (March 27, 1975). The cases involved determining whether Red Robe owned the Chief's Section or if it was part of Red Lake, a result of a lease for the same small strip of land being granted to both Patrick and James Meehan in 1891 and Ray W. Jones three years later. Jones claimed that the original lease was invalid on grounds that the land belonged to the tribe, not to Red Robe. The Meehans already had a sawmill on the river, and Jones wanted to build a competing one. The dispute went all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court, which ruled on October 30, 1899, that since the tract was given to Moose Dung the Elder at the Old Crossing Treaty, it was his and his descendants' land, not that of the tribe as a whole. Thus, the 1891 lease to the Meehans was upheld as legal. "From the evidence," Mosbeck observes, "it appears that Moose Dung had been either coerced, or had intentionally signed leases to two different people for the same plot of land and was now caught in the crossfire between the two warring lumber tycoons" (6). He concludes: "Thus, ten short years after the Meehans began dealing with Moose Dung for the right to lease a ten foot strip of his land, Moose Dung had lost the legacy to his entire section" (12). Mosbeck's article was serialized, without the many notes and maps, but with an 1885 photo of Red Robe and Albert Stately, in the *Thief River Falls Times*, April 21, 23, 28, and 30, 1975. His article is the most comprehensive and best-documented history of the Chief's Section. It is based on documents in the recorder's office in the Pennington County Court House and was a senior high-school English composition project.

<sup>16</sup> There are three photographs of Red Robe, as well as one of Rudolph Berg (not identified) with John Strong (presumably his adoptive father) and many other Ojibwe figures at <http://www.ar15armory.com/forums/lofiversion/index.php?t24749.html>.

<sup>17</sup> The photograph of Red Robe with Albert Stately was taken by a photographer named Smith and is in the photograph collection of the Minnesota Historical Society. Also available on the Red Lake Web site.

<sup>18</sup> E-mails to the author, November 21 and November 24, 2011.

<sup>19</sup> Phone conversation with Jerry Vettrus, May 13, 2011.

<sup>20</sup> Photographs of these and other Indian statues can be seen at <http://agilitynut.com/giants/indians.html>.

<sup>21</sup> Marvin Lundin, "Grandson of Indian Chief Would Like Proper Name: Mon-si-moh Was Really Mays-co-co-nah-yay," *Thief River Falls Times*, July 19, 1976, 1.

<sup>22</sup> *Thief River Falls Times*, July 14, 1976, 8 (photo caption).

<sup>23</sup> Dan Needham, quoted in Lundin, "Grandson of Indian Chief Would Like Proper Name," 3.

<sup>24</sup> Don Stewart, interview with the author, February 23, 2011.

<sup>25</sup> Don Stewart, memo to Madelyn Vigen, August 20, 1997.

<sup>26</sup> Rick Contos of the Bicentennial commission commented on his frustration over the question of the proper name on the plaque: "I thru a hissy fit when they redid the statue . . . when questions arose [about the name] so I have no idea what happened to the plaque, it may be in the river for all I know. I was so mad I just washed my hands of it" (e-mail to the author, February 26, 2011). He noted that the original plaque used the name Moose Dung because it was "the name that was on all the deeds of lots East of the River." The area east of the Red Lake River was originally called Red Lake Rapids, but at the behest of the

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U.S. Postal Service and Red Lake Falls (the original county seat), the area was annexed to Thief River Falls when the city was incorporated in 1896.

<sup>27</sup> It should be noted that the varying spellings of Ojibwe names when transliterated into English are the result, in some cases, of confusion in hearing whether consonant sounds are sibilant or aspirated, and differing ways of expressing long vowels (e.g., “e,” “a,” “ah,” “ay” for long “e”; “ee,” “i,” “ii” for long “i”; “o” or “oo” for long “o”; “i” or “o” for short “o”; and so on). Sometimes a hyphen separates vowel groups in Ojibwe names, sometimes not. Because names used in this article appeared with different spelling conventions, I am using various spellings. Red Robe is sometimes translated as Red Robed, Red Blanket, or “the one that wears the red robes.”

<sup>28</sup> “Restrained from Ousting,” *Thief River Falls News*, January 3, 1895, 1.

<sup>29</sup> “The Jones Lease,” *Thief River Falls News*, June 6, 1895, 1. This and the preceding quote are both cited in Mosbeck, “The History of Moose Dung’s Section and How the Section Influenced the Settlement of Thief River Falls.” The U.S. Supreme Court ruling in this case in 1899 states that Moose Dung’s eldest son, Red Robe, was born in 1828. That would have made him thirty-five at the time of the signing of the Old Crossing Treaty and sixty-seven in 1895.

<sup>30</sup> <http://www.citytrf.net/parktour.htm>. This text was written by Red Lake tribal realtor Harlan Beaulieu. It is misleading insofar as it fails to point out that by the time of the Supreme Court ruling, in 1899, Red Robe had already lost his land and could no longer lease or sell any of it. Also, it is not clear that his band moved to Red Lake until 1904, with the removal of the Indian village. It is also odd in using the word “Jr.” to refer to the son, which was not the Ojibwe custom. Red Robe was never known as Red Robe Jr., but as Moose Dung the Younger. Attempts to contact Harlan Beaulieu to discuss these questions were unsuccessful.

<sup>31</sup> Mary Croteau, *Where Two Rivers Meet: A Diamond Jubilee History of Thief River Falls* (no publisher, 1971), 2; 2d ed., co-ed. Bonnie K. Swantek, published by the *Thief River Falls Times*, 1996.

<sup>32</sup> Phone conversation with Gary Fuller, August 19, 2011.

<sup>33</sup> E-mail to the author, March 1, 2011.

<sup>34</sup> Frances Densmore, *Chippewa Customs* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979), 52.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 53. Densmore’s discussion of naming is on pages 52–58. Humor is ingrained in Ojibwe culture, and the Ojibwe language—highly inflected and complex—lends itself to punning.

<sup>36</sup> Tom Lussier, in *To Walk the Red Road: Memories of the Red Lake Ojibwe People*, Project Preserve, Dr. Kent Nerburn, director, published by the Red Lake Board of Education (1989), 89.

<sup>37</sup> Mac Auginash, in *ibid.*, 38–39.

<sup>38</sup> E-mail to the author, March 2, 2011. Whitefeather was tribal chairman in 1976 when the statue was erected.

<sup>39</sup> Bob Mosomo would have been born around 1850. In 1934, when he was eighty-five years old, he related the story of Turtle Mound (actually, an intaglio) northeast of Bena, on the Leech Lake reservation, believed to have been created by the Dakota following a battle with the Ojibwe, with the head pointing north in the direction of the retreating Ojibwe. The Ojibwe returned later and massacred the Dakota, and turned the head of the turtle around to face the Dakota enemy. See <http://www.co.itasca.mn.us/Home/Departments/Land/Documents/LMPDocs/III.%20C.%20Historical%20Resources%20Inventory.pdf>. Thanks to Donna Snyder for this information about her ancestor Bob Mosomo.

<sup>40</sup> *The Aborigines of Minnesota: A Report Based on the Collections of Jacob V. Brower, and on the Field Surveys and Notes of Alfred J. Jill and Theodore H. Lewis* (St. Paul: The Pioneer Company, 1911), 2:717, 718. This massive two-volume work includes detailed information on the history, anthropology, treaties, religion, artifacts,

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art, and other aspects of Dakota and Ojibwe life in the state, as well as dozens of plates, folded inserts, and hundreds of photographs.

<sup>41</sup> *To Walk the Red Road*, 2.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>43</sup> According to Croteau, in 1889, when the newspaper *The News* was first published, there were two hundred people in the settlement (*Where Two Rivers Meet*, 30).

<sup>44</sup> "Historical Society Notes, Accessions," *Minnesota History Magazine* (March 1929): 79–80 (<http://collections.mnhs.org/MNHHistoryMagazine/articles/10/v10i01p061-103.pdf>).

<sup>45</sup> See genealogies that Wub-e-ke-niew's widow Clara NiiSka says "Wub-e-ke-niew and I (and quite a few other people at Red Lake) worked on in the 1980s and early- to mid-1980s":

<http://www.ojibwe.info/RedLake/HTML/people/p000003t.htm#I110>;

<http://www.ojibwe.info/RedLake/HTML/notes/n000003t.htm#I110>;

<http://www.ojibwe.info/Ojibwe/HTML/people/p000020t.htm#I469>;

<http://www.ojibwe.info/Ojibwe/HTML/notes/n000020t.htm#I469> (e-mail to the author, October 29, 2011).

These genealogies indicate that Moose Dung the Elder's father was a white man (unidentified). Joe Sumner's daughter-in-law Donna Sumner believes that Moose Dung's clan was eagle (phone conversation with the author, December 7, 2011). Ojibwe scholar Anton Treuer explains that, for the Ojibwe, "clans defined the core of one's spiritual essence. Just as *ode'* was the heart of one's physical being, *doodem* was the heart of one's metaphysical being. Originally, only Ojibwe people from certain families of the *maang doodem* (loon clan) and *ajijaak doodem* (crane clan) could be chiefs" (Anton Treuer, *The Assassination of Hole in the Day* [St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2011], 15). Neither clan was among the original clans at Red Lake, as represented on the Red Lake flag (bear, turtle, bullhead, otter, eagle, marten, kingfisher), so chiefs were selected from other clans. If a child's father was nonnative, the child was "automatically adopted into an existing clan, although this practice varied somewhat by region. The *migizi doodem* (eagle clan) was the adopting clan for many of the communities along the western edge of Ojibwe territory, including most of Minnesota. It is still the dominant practice today in White Earth, Leech Lake, Red Lake, Mille Lacs, St. Croix, Fond du Lac, Bad River, Red Cliff, Lac Courte Oreilles, and Lac du Flambeau" (*ibid.*, 16).

<sup>46</sup> E-mail to the author, November 18, 2011.

<sup>47</sup> Phone conversation with Donna Sumner, December 7, 2011.

<sup>48</sup> Red Lake chiefs drew the lines of the reservation and Rice redrew them to slice off the northern and eastern edge of Upper Red Lake, making Waskish part of white land and getting the stolen land incorporated into the agreement and accepted by Congress. Red Lake didn't learn about this swindle until a year later. See "The Treaty and Agreement of 1889 with the Red Lake Band of Chippewa Indians," minutes from Erwin F. Mittelholtz, *Historical Review of the Red Lake Indian Reservation* (<http://uts.cc.utexas.edu/~woss/redlake2/redlkmin.html>). See also Dan Needham's description of this theft in *To Walk the Red Road*, 5–6. This theft opened up Upper Red Lake to fishing by whites, with access at Waskish. Waskish is a corruption of the Ojibwe vocative *Waashkesh!*, meaning "Look, a deer!" (still pronounced in English by locals with the missing "h").