

THE SARCEE SUN DANCE

The features of the Sun Dance called “making braves” had not come off up to last evening. The Sarcees had been beating their tom-toms, blowing whistles and indulging in a variety of noises for several days and nights, and yesterday a runner was sent out to announce that the big event was coming off in the afternoon. He came into town and executed his commission, receiving sundry plugs of tobacco for his trouble. A number of persons went out during the afternoon to take in the situation, but the number being limited and their contributions of cash, tobacco or tea being equally so, no braves were made. A quartette of ladies from the Alberta were among the visitors and onlookers of the dance, which was vigorously kept up, and they bought a number of Sarcee effects, such as whips, bracelets, etc. They could not but admire the painted savages, with their fine variety of color, the gorgeous suits in which they were arrayed, the stateliness of the dance, the harmony of the music, the natural way in which males and females were grouped on the ground within the tent, the gorgeous head dress of the medicine man, and the persistency worthy of a better cause with which the half-dressed youngsters begged for even “a chew of tobacco.” The ladies were bound to see all that was going on, and the younger Sarcees, following their example, inspected the ladies’ carriage and finally took possession of it, for a brief period only, as they were soon hustled out. The writer, accompanied by the doctor who is best known to all the Sarcee tribe, had the honor of an introduction to big chief Bull Head who squatted on the ground near the centre of the lodge with as much dignity as was attainable under the circumstances. The doctor introduced the editor, with the assistance of Joe Spence, and Bull Head was good enough to say that he liked the doctor, and that the doctor’s newspaper friend was his friend, and that the two honored visitors could have the run of the camp, especially as one had brought a present of tobacco and the other had placed a small sum in cash in Bull Head’s palm, but as for some other fellows that were coming around, nosing everywhere without bringing presents, they were an annoyance to him and a nuisance, and he found nothing enjoyable in their society. They couldn’t have the courtesies of the camp. The chief wanted to know of his visitors whether they wished to see braves made, and expressed a desire to accommodate them, but as the favor might cost the visitors more than it was worth, and having before their eyes the policy of the government to discourage such exhibitions, the diplomatic reply was given that the visitors desired only to take in what was going and desired no special

display on their own account. The impression received from contact with the savage mind was that unless the whites turned out in larger numbers and contributed more freely than they have done so far this week, there will be no “braves made.” There will, however, be some handsome Indian suits for sale in a few days.

The Sarcees are camped on the portion of their reserve lying on the north bank of the Elbow adjoining the Chipman ranche, and the scene, embracing their tepees arranged in an extended circle, with mounted Indians passing to and fro, a host of ponies grazing in all directions—aided by the drum beating, the everlasting shouting, whistling and dancing—is a striking novelty to those who witness it for the first time.

Source: *Calgary Daily Herald*, July 10, 1890.