

Hi. I've got a puzzle to put together. Perhaps you can help me figure him out. The first time I met Mr. Sitting Eagle Chaske, I was 10 years old, visiting neighbour kids near Sourisford. We'd finished our meal when a tall man with braids down his chest, tied off with red string, walked in – was greeted warmly.

I'd never met an Indigenous person close up. He turned - asking my name. I was all eyes and stammering. "MMMMurrill ... TTTThompson" - I told him.



**Sitting Eagle in Melita ca. 1935**

Our farm was just to the west – on the old trail between Turtle and Moose Mountains. Every summer Indigenous families travelled by horse and wagon through our farm. They'd camp just above Sourisford. Likely a well-used place over the generations. I heard much later, they were Dakota. Just like Mr. Sitting Eagle.

'Sitting Eagle' is a title, I learned. Like Pastor, or Doctor. But, here lies the puzzle. What is his

purpose? He covers a lot of territory as he moves between Turtle Mountain and Pipestone – Canupawakpa Reserves. Always alone - on foot. Carrying his needs for the day. On Fair Day, he shows up in Deloraine, in full ceremonial dress. Farm families offer food and a bed when the timing's right. It seems normal, as he's kind and relaxed. He makes miniature bows and arrows for the children.

There are theories. In the early 1900s, when the feds were disbanding Turtle Mountain Reserve, it's said he and his grandfather held their ground – wouldn't leave. Some say he's at odds with Canupawakpa Nation. Others think he's just a loner. Perhaps closer to the truth, is that he watches over special places. I don't know what a sacred site is for a Dakota person. But I'm pretty certain there're everywhere, like our churches and cemeteries.

We met again last summer, 1927. I was trapping beaver and got walking back home when I saw Sitting Eagle's distinct stature, his confident gate. We sat for a time and chatted like old friends. He surprised me by greeting me by name. It'd been 15 years!

We spoke of world affairs. He mentioned the treaty signed to end WW1, and his fascination with the League of Nations. He asked my opinion as to the possibility of lasting peace between nations. I offered what I had. He seemed to know much more than I. I look forward to another time. Someday, I hope the stories grandmothers at Canupawakpa tell of Sitting Eagle will be merged with the stories I've heard. There's something for us all in the stories we'd together tell - of this beguiling man.

David Neufeld adapted 'Sitting Eagle' from a story written for Vantage Points 4.