



Mistocene

Photo by Miss Mabel Miller, Moose Jaw

MISTOCENE

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There is a massive four-hundred-ton boulder in this province which may be ear-marked for oblivion because it lies about a mile on the wrong side of the secondary (Summit) dam near Elbow, ninety miles south of Saskatoon. It may soon disappear under fifty feet of water—a casualty of the vast lake spawned by the main dam in the federal-provincial South Saskatchewan River Dam project nearing completion.

The rock, which squats like a giant buffalo facing west, is twenty-six feet across and stands fourteen feet high. In official language it is known as Aiktow Erratic, named for nearby Aiktow Creek (Kupsch, 1963). An erratic is a glacially deposited stone or boulder of unknown origin; this one is unusually large, although it is not the largest recorded in Saskatchewan.

To the Indians of this province, the rock is not of archeological interest but is of religious significance; in former years it was a Plains Cree shrine. Their story of the rock is as follows:

“Once a band of Indians were hunting buffalo when they saw an eagle approach from the north. It appeared to drop something that looked like a shiny buffalo. When they came closer to the strange buffalo, they discovered that it was this big rock. They could not find the huge eagle anywhere, and de-

cidling that this strange stone must have magical powers, they worshipped it.”

Similar objects of veneration are found throughout the province, stretching from Kamsack through Young to Cudworth, at Outlook and at Elbow as well as at Rockhaven near Battleford where the boulder is still used as a shrine. The one near Elbow is among the biggest and most centrally located in this entire ceremonial complex.

“Mistocene”, the name under which the Elbow boulder has received its recent publicity, is the Indian equivalent of “big rock”. The rock has always had several names; in order to standardize reference to it, it was decided to choose the Indian translation of one of these which could be easily pronounced by an English tongue—“Mistocene”, the “big rock”, was the obvious choice.

Provincial and local support for preserving Mistocene by moving it to higher ground has been obtained. The federal government, which has 75% of the financial responsibility for the project which is endangering the rock, has been approached to assume a similar share (75%) of the cost of moving it. The question has been debated in Ottawa; the fate of Mistocene is still to be decided.

LITERATURE CITED

- Kupsch, W. O. 1963. Largest Erratic in Saskatchewan? *Blue Jay* 21:1. pp. 2-4.
 Pohorecky, Z. S. 1965. Saskatchewan Stonehenge. *Saskatchewan Archaeology Newsletter*, No. 12. pp. 5-7.