



Blackfoot Redemption: A Blood Indian's Story of Murder, Confinement, and Imperfect Justice

William E. Farr

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In 1879, a Canadian Blackfoot known as Spopee, or Turtle, shot and killed a white man. Captured as a fugitive, Spopee narrowly escaped execution, instead landing in an insane asylum in Washington, D.C., where he fell silent. Spopee thus “disappeared” for more than thirty years, until a delegation of American Blackfeet discovered him and, aided by the Commissioner of Indian Affairs, exacted a pardon from President Woodrow Wilson. After re-emerging into society like a modern-day Rip Van Winkle, Spopee spent the final year of his life on the Blackfeet Reservation in Montana, in a world that had changed irrevocably from the one he had known before his confinement.

Blackfoot Redemption is the riveting account of Spopee's unusual and haunting story. To reconstruct the events of Spopee's life—at first traceable only through bits and pieces of information—William E. Farr conducted exhaustive archival research, digging deeply into government documents and institutional reports to build a coherent and accurate narrative and, through this reconstruction, win back one Indian's life and identity.

In revealing both certainties and ambiguities in Spopee's story, Farr relates a larger story about racial dynamics and prejudice, while poignantly evoking the turbulent final days of the buffalo-hunting Indians before their confinement, loss of freedom, and confusion that came with the wrenching transition to reservation life.

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