

# BONE CHINA

Sun bleached bones. The railway cuts through in Regina and Saskatoon. The arterial artery of nation building. Risen monuments to the great disappearance shimmer in the heat. The northern plains bison herds have vanished.

1886 ~ Saskatoon a rail worker poses along stacked cubes of bison bones, holding a stick to measure or reveal the depth of the shipment.

1878 ~ Regina, the bones, stacked in a pyramid, have been surmounted by one man who strikes a dramatic pose, like a conqueror, at the summit while another stands at the base.

Pile of bones.

Queen's city.

The world of the plains tribes has shattered. There is only emptiness. The ground no longer shakes. *paskwâwimostos* is gone as are the prairie wolves and grizzlies. It is starvation time now. It is smallpox season. It is desolation. The great clearing. Roundup time. The corralling of the last of the *wild* onto reserves. The national dream speaks in silent screams. Its posters entice newcomers from far away with promises of free land, agriculture, homestead and bountiful progress.

The bones are being loaded in boxcars now and following the track east. Back to the port of Montreal and onto ships bound for the land of the Great White Mother. There, millions upon millions of bone fragments and skulls are being crushed into bone china. They emerge as prized tea sets, adorning the tables of the finest tea houses of London. *paskwâwimostos* is now a fragile utensil held by index finger and thumb in the service of Pax Britannica. Tea from far away colonies of Ceylon and India are seeped into the bison bones.

They kiss the lips of Lords and Ladies and in the Palace itself.

*paskwâwimostos* is a serving set of delicate white bone china with purple violets and gold trim.

The colonial tea party is to be marked by the picking up of a napkin.