MANITO STONE: NATIVE CREE BELIEFS OF THE IRON CREEK ALBERTA, CANADA IRON METEORITE, A. A. Mardon. Antarctic Institute of Canada. PO Box 1223, MPO, Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. E-mail: aamardon@yahoo.ca

Introduction: Meteorites were held in special reverence in many pre-industrial societies. This abstract outlines the contemporary record of the instance of the worship of this meteorite and the legend of how it was tied to the destruction of the Cree people of Western Canada. It is currently located in the Royal Alberta Provincial Museum and originally fell and was located near Edmonton, Alberta very near the small community of Sedgwick.

Historical Account from 1872: “In the farmyard of the mission house lay a curious block of metal it was of immense weight; It was rugged deeply indented, and polished on the outer edges of the indentations by the wear and friction of many years. Its history was a curious one. Longer than any man could say, it had lain on the summit of a hill far out in the Southern prairies. It had been a medicine-stone of surpassing virtue among the Indians over a vast territory. No tribe or portion of a tribe would pass in the vicinity without paying a visit to this great medicine: it was said to be increasing yearly in weight. Old men remembered having heard old men say that they had once lifted it easily from the ground. Now, no single man could carry it. And it was no wonder that this metallic stone should be a Manito-stone and an object of intense veneration to the Indian: it had come down from heaven; it did not belong to the earth, but had descended out of the sky: it was, in fact, an aerolite. Not very long before my visit this curious stone had been removed from the hill upon which it had so long rested and brought to the Mission of Victoria by some person from that place. When the Indians found that it had been taken away, they were loud in the expression of their regret. The old medicine-men declared that its removal would lead to great misfortunes, and that war, disease, and dearth of buffalo would afflict the tribes of the Saskatchewan. This was not a prophecy made after the occurrence of the plague of smallpox, for in a magazine published by the Wesleyan Society in Canada there appears a letter from the missionary, setting forth the predictions of the medicine-men a year prior to my visit. The letter concludes with an expression of thanks that their evil prognostications had not been attended with success. But a few months later brought all the three evils upon the Indians, and never, probably, since the first trader had reached the country had so many afflictions of war, famine and plague fallen upon the Crees and the Blackfeet as during the year which succeeded the useless removal of their Manito-stone from the lone hill-top upon which the skies had cast it.” [1]

Conclusion: Many different societies without contact with each other held meteorites in special reverence even in some cases worship the meteorites. Other native American societies held meteorites in special reverence including the special place it was held by the Inuit. It being until contact with the Europeans their only source of Iron. The legend of its removal is also similar to the worship of Kaaba in Mecca. Many pre-industrial societies knew that meteorites came from the skies and were unique and not of this world. Its place in the sacra emphasizes the importance they were held with.