

(Radio Broadcast : Drama)

Justice on Trial

*Based on the book "[Killing the Shamen](#)"
by Chief Thomas Fiddler & James R. Stevens.*



Steve Glickman

Windigo by hanging.

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1. SOUND SCRATCHES GENERATED FROM OLD TIME RECORDING DEVICES (THESE EFFECTS SHOULD PLAY OVER THE ENTIRE OF THIS SCRIPT)
2. SOUND WIND BLOWING - FADE OUT INTO DIALOG
3. NAR Hello and good afternoon, my fellow Canadians. This is Les Learson coming to you via the fantastic cylinder phonograph, a brand new invention from the wonderful mind of Thomas Edison. Today we are talking to you from Norway House, Manitoba; just north of Lake Winnipeg and west of the Hudson Bay. The date is October seventh, nineteen hundred and seven; winter's chill is in the air.
4. MUSIC BRIDGE: FIDDLES PLAYING (PERHAPS CREE FIDDLE SONGS CAN BE FOUND IN THE ARCHIVES)
5. NAR The odd, deeply superstitious, simple Indians live here by trading pelts with the Hudson Bay Company for guns, pots and pans, cotton, steel pins, tobacco, and alcohol. Yet in these hard times and with the frequent failure of the fur bearing stocks, things have become quite grim. William “Big Bill Campbell, HBC Island Lake Postmaster:
 1. CAMPBELL I am “giving out” very little debts. Some men are not even supplied with necessaries for hunting, as their hunts last winter did not come to more than a few find skins. Some of the Indians started out today as they are starving.
 2. NAR They have been known to try to survive winters with nothing to eat but such things as the hard bits off the pine trees, bark and lichen scraped from rocks.

3. SOUND BRIDGE: CREE CHILDREN

4. NAR In the west, rebellions by Big Bear, Crowfoot, Poundmaker, and the half-breeds Riel and Dumont have all been crushed by the forces of the Royal Canadian North West Mounted Police. Now the government’s attention has been brought to bear on our dark neighbors to the north, the Sucker Clan. Inspector E.A. Pelletier:

5. PELLETIER The Suckers are the worst band in the district. They are murderers, liars and very crooked.

6. NAR Today they decide the fate of Joseph Fiddler, chief of the Sucker Indian tribe, and his brother Jack; who are both charged with the brutal murder of one of their own kind. Why? Was it for love? Was it for money? No!

1. SOUND BACKGROUND ICE CRUNCHING

It was for something that harkens back to the dark days of mankind, when people behaved without reason, community, or justice – for these two claim to have somehow accidentally murdered a man while trying to cure them from a dreaded cannibal spirit. Sergeant Daisy Smith:

3. SMITH These people are in the habit of killing one another whenever one gets delirious through fever or other causes. They are very superstitious and kill through superstitious belief not through malice.

4. NAR Are these Fiddler brothers either witch doctors, or ruthless dictators using the guise of medicine to achieve dubious ends?

(Quote inserted pertaining to the history of mercy killings performed by the brothers ~”dozens”)

Here is the transcripts between Crown Prosecutor D.W. McKerchar and Angus Rae, witness to the event:

1. ANGUS RAE Jack Fiddler said that when anyone was sick like that and is so miserable they might as well put them to an end.
2. MCKERCHAR Did you object to their putting her to death?
3. ANGUS RAE No.
4. MCKERCHAR Would you be punished if you objected to anything that the chief suggested?
5. ANGUS RAE I do not know. (Beat) They might.
6. SOUND END BACKGROUND ICE CRUNCHING
7. NAR Here is more testimony, this time from Norman Rae:
8. NORMAN RAE I saw the woman, the sick woman in my wigwam; she had very little life left in her; she could not speak; she yelled with pain.
9. SOUND WOMAN SCREAMING HYSTERICALLY
10. NORMAN RAE They had spread the cotton on the ground and laid the woman on it. Of the cotton she was lying on, they pulled up the end of it, and put it around her neck, and they got the string in one knot or noose, and strangled her.
11. NAR There are the facts, dear Canadians. The question put to the court is how informed the accused were that they were in violations of the law of the land:
12. SOUND COURT GRAVEL POUNDING ON A BLOCK OF WOOD

1. MCKERCHAR Do you know anything about the white man’s law?

2. NORMAN RAE No.

3. MCKERCHAR Have you ever been taught to distinguish between what is right and wrong?

14. NORMAN RAE No. The only thing we ever heard about the white man was that he sent the Indians off to hunt furs.

15. SOUND WIND BLOWING

16. NAR Initially, the wily Jack Fiddler pleaded for mercy during the preliminary hearings:

17. JACK FIDDLER Do not punish me too hard because I did not know I was doing wrong and that if I had known I would not have done the deed. I was told to do it – that’s all about that - I know now that I made a big mistake. That’s all I want to say.

1. NAR But then, with the realization of the determination of the Canadian government, Mr. Fiddler turned and made warlike threats against the white man:

2. JACK FIDDLER What has your Great Father to do with the Sucker people? This is the country of the Anishinapek who do as they please in their own hunting grounds. The soldiers wish to take me away and put us in their stone house but I have twenty young men who do not wish that I should go... What is to stop them killing you?

3. NAR Before the trial could commence, On September 30th, after one hundred and one days of captivity, and under the close watch of Constable Arthur Wilkins: Jack Fiddler

somehow managed to sneak away and hang himself with his belt. Perhaps one less rebellion to worry about, and probably an indication of how he would fare in court, for as the remaining brother Joseph went on trial for his life, Commissioner A.B. Perry:

4. PERRY

You cannot find anything but that Joseph Fiddler killed this woman. If you find that the accused is justified in killing because of his pagan belief, where will it land us if we accept such a belief? For as to his ignorance of the law that is a matter for executive clemency.

1. SOUND

COURT GRAVEL POUNDING ON A BLOCK OF WOOD

2. NAR

And so the remaining brother, Joseph Fiddler was found guilty of murder in the first degree. He was confined to the Manitoba penal system to await out his death sentence.

3. SOUND

INDIAN SINGING

4. NAR

It is now 1907. In approximately two years, on August 12, 1909, with the spine of the Sucker Clan broken; they will agree to a treaty and relinquish their ancestral ground for life on a reservation and a down payment of \$970. The discussion for this treaty will last for exactly one hour. The amount of forest they will cede will be approximately 12,000 square miles. By then, Chief Joseph Fiddler will have become very ill and have spent 18 months seriously ill in the penitentiary hospital. On September 4th, he'll be granted a full pardon. Apparently it will come too late. The Warden of the Manitoba Penitentiary will telegraph his reply stating that Chief Fiddler will have already been dead for four days, from natural causes. In 93 years from now, the only

measure of evil, sickness, justice, and punishment will be that of the European Christian Corporate Crown. The scandalous trial of Joseph and Jack Fiddler, and the grave injustice against the Sucker people, will have become a “thing of the past”.

1. MUSIC & SOUND FADE INTO FIDDLING MUSIC WITH WIND BLOWING