THE UNCOVERED PAST:
Roots of Northern Alberta Societies

Patricia A. McCormack
and R. Geoffrey Ironside
Editors

CIRCUMPOLAR RESEARCH SERIES NUMBER 3
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Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta
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Contributors

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Dr. Robert J. Carney is a Professor in the Department of Educational Foundations at the University of Alberta. He served as Chief Superintendent of Schools in the Northwest Territories from 1969 to 1971. From 1973 to 1975, he was Executive Director of the Northern Development Council of Alberta. He has strong research interests in the history of education in the North, multicultural education, and the history of Canadian education.

Theresa A. Ferguson completed her M.A. degree in anthropology at the University of Alberta on the traditional Aboriginal use of fire in the Fort Vermilion region. Her research interests include Aboriginal environmental management systems and social history in northern Alberta. She has published elsewhere on the bison in Wood Buffalo National Park. She is an independent research consultant.

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Dr. John W. Ives joined the Archaeological Survey of Alberta in 1979 as the Northeastern Archaeologist and has done extensive archaeological study in that region. He became the Director of the Survey in 1985. He is now the Assistant Director, Archaeology and Ethnology Section, Provincial Museum of Alberta.

Dr. Patricia A. McCormack is the Curator of Ethnology at the Provincial Museum of Alberta. She first went to Fort Chipewyan in 1968, and for the past 25 years she has visited the community and undertaken ethnohistoric studies of the region. She was heavily involved in the organization of the 1988 Bicentennial Conference and, at the same time, developed *Northwind Dreaming*, a major exhibit and catalogue about Fort Chipewyan at the Provincial Museum of Alberta to commemorate its bicentennial anniversary.

Patrick Moore has M.A. degrees in linguistics and education. He spent five years in the Chateh and Rainbow Lake communities in northwestern Alberta, teaching school, learning Slavey, and conducting linguistic research. He now lives in Whitehorse, Yukon, where he works for the Yukon Native Languages Centre.
Dr. Heinz Pyszczyk joined the Archaeological Survey of Alberta in 1983 and has conducted fieldwork in the Fort Vermilion region since 1987, surveying both prehistoric and historic sites. He is now an Historic Sites Development Archaeologist with the Archaeology and Ethnology Section, Provincial Museum of Alberta, and he is currently excavating another well-known historic fur trade site, Fort Edmonton.

Richard T. Price began his work in the area of land claims and Indian treaties in 1972, when he went to work for the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research Group of the Indian Association of Alberta. He became its Director in 1973 and subsequently worked for the Department of Indian Affairs. In 1986 he became the first Director and Associate Professor of the School of Native Studies at the University of Alberta.

Shirleen Smith holds an M.A. degree in anthropology from the Department of Anthropology at the University of Alberta and is currently a Ph.D. candidate in the same department. She is conducting research into constitutional issues relating to Mackenzie Valley Dene peoples.
DEDICATION
James McPherson Parker
1934-1990

This volume is dedicated to the memory of Jim Parker, former University Archivist and Director of University Archives and Collections and, at the time of his death, the Northern Area Manager for the Alberta Historic Sites Service, based at Fort McMurray. He was devoted to northern history in its broadest sense, and to northern Alberta in particular. He and his wife June spent one year in Fort Chipewyan, where he taught school and was an active member of the Anglican parish. He then completed a Master’s thesis in the early fur trade history of Fort Chipewyan, subsequently published in 1987 as Emporium of the North by Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism and the Canadian Plains Research Center. Fort Chipewyan residents considered him as one of their historians. In his work at the University Archives, he actively developed a fine collection of northern documents and photographs, especially related to staff and student scholarly activities.

Jim contributed to the development of the bicentennial conference, where he was a speaker, and indirectly to this volume, through early discussions with Pat McCormack about the idea for such a conference. While his formal academic publications were relatively few, he was instrumental in encouraging scholars at all levels in their northern research. In particular, he was a mentor to younger scholars and gave freely of his resources and assistance. He was an active historian, not in the armchair sense. When Fort Chipewyan opened its own interpretive center and museum, Jim Parker was invited as one of the speakers. He wished to preserve the heritage of people through personal fieldwork to record oral histories and traditions. He strongly believed that they were as important as the documents to our understanding of northern history.

Jim’s death is a loss of a friend to northern historical scholarship, and indeed to all northern scholarship. It is also a personal loss to those of us fortunate enough to have had the opportunity to know and work with him.
Introduction

Northern Alberta is an integral part of the mid-northern boreal forest. It has been a homeland for Aboriginal peoples for thousands of years, in a historical sequence of occupation only partially understood. It represented a wilderness and commercial frontier to Europeans, who first entered the region in 1778, when fur trader Peter Pond crossed the Methye Portage and found the lakes and rivers draining to the north. It might be surprising to many that the two of the earliest European settlements in western Canada were founded in northern Alberta: Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion, established over two centuries ago.

The region lies astride major exploration and trading routes, for both Aboriginal and European peoples. The post-contact history of this region exemplifies themes common in traditional Canadian history: the advent of the fur trade, the arrival of European missionaries, the expansion of the Canadian state and of agricultural land development, and the development of modern transportation and communication systems. Yet it is clear that underlying the fabric of this apparently Euro-Canadian dominated and structured northern realm is the persistence of distinct Aboriginal societies, though greatly altered from their pre-contact cultural forms. Aboriginal peoples of northern Alberta are currently experiencing a new era of cultural revival and assertion that parallels similar developments elsewhere in North America.

This book brings together papers on all these topics. It is a state-of-the-art compilation of scholarly papers about northern Alberta. While the immediate reason for the preparation of this book was a contractual agreement to publish a volume of research papers, funded by the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies at the University of Alberta (now the Canadian Circumpolar Institute) and Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism (now Community Development), the real reason it is valuable and necessary is the dearth of detailed social sciences research on human history and communities in mid-northern Canada.

The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies is a companion volume to the Proceedings of the Fort Chipewyan-Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference. This conference was held in Edmonton and Fort Chipewyan in 1988, and speakers were invited from both communities and the region. Sessions were organized so that there were speakers representing the community, the public or private sector, and the academic perspective. Consequently, this structure guaranteed representation from the local communities, Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian peoples, business and government representatives, as well as scholars from universities, colleges, and government departments, including the Provincial Museum of Alberta and the Archaeological Survey of Alberta.

Financing was obtained from the main sponsors to fund six research projects on northern Alberta. At the time of the conference, this research was only half-complete, and only preliminary papers were presented. With finalization of the research, five of the papers are published here. In addition, six more papers were submitted for inclusion. All conference participants had been invited to submit papers for this volume. It should be noted that all papers were sent out by the editors to independent referees, following normal refereed journal procedures, namely, two anonymous referees per paper.

Unlike the Proceedings, this volume does not include any contributions by northerners or Aboriginal peoples, although some of the authors have spent much of their professional and personal lives in the northern communities. It has been typical of northern research that it has been southerners who set the research agendas, conduct the research, and write the professional papers, which represent and define northern research. The lack of northern voice contributes to the fact that little additional original research is being conducted in this fascinating region.

The Uncovered Past is divided into two broad sections: "The Archaeological and Fur Trade Record" and "Economy, State, and Culture," framed by the
“Introduction” and the “Conclusion.” There is overlap in some of the papers assigned to each half.

When the book was initially conceived, it was anticipated that there would be additional sections. The final arrangement was dictated by the papers that were received and accepted. Essentially, the structure reflects the chronology of the subjects of the papers. Careful thought has also been given by the editors to the sequencing of the papers, so that they follow the record of human presence in northern Alberta.

The first section begins with a broad paper by John Ives, on the 10,000 years of human occupation of northern Alberta prior to the arrival of Europeans. He addresses the sequence of human presence as indicated by the archaeological remains that have been uncovered and considers how the archaeologist can maximize interpretation from often-limited archaeological data.

The papers by Heinz Pyszczyk and Michael Forsman interpret dimensions of the region’s historic fur trade archaeology on a local scale. Both papers provide insight into how archival and archaeological evidence can be interwoven. They are also products of the long-standing commitment by the Archaeological Survey of Alberta to research into the European fur trade culture.

Pyszczyk’s paper is an examination of archaeological finds of fur trade posts along the Peace River in the Fort Vermilion area, with a focus on the Boyer River site. It is this temporary post, built in 1788, that is considered the forerunner to Fort Vermilion and the basis of its bicentennial celebration in 1988. Forsman provides a detailed account of one dwelling — the Bourgeois’ House — from Fort Chipewyan III, built after 1870 when the post was redeveloped. It is a contribution to studies of fur trade architecture, concluding that this structure is the earliest known use of dove-tailed construction in the context of Hudson’s Bay Company posts, as well as the only excavated example.

Theresa Ferguson has written a paper about the fur trade from a different point of view, namely the problems that the posts in the Peace River and Lake Athabasca region experienced in obtaining sufficient food provisions for daily needs and for the fur brigades. She relies heavily on fur trade documents to reconstruct the decline in the northern bison popula-

tion before 1840, a period that overlaps with that of Pyszczyk’s study. This is a substantially new interpretation and challenges still-common notions about the inability of Aboriginal peoples to manage their natural resources.

The first section concludes with Jennifer Brown’s insightful analysis of conventional interpretations of what is now deemed to be the “fur trade era” of Canadian history. It is a subject still plagued by misplaced emphases on the fur trade as the primary concern of Aboriginal peoples. This echoes the traditional southern-dominated face of northern scholarship and reinforces the need for historical imagery and interpretations developed by northerners, to tell other versions of the northern story. The fur trade, while often perceived as an economic endeavor that ceased to be of great importance following Confederation, in fact has persisted to the present and still is part of today’s northern economy.

The second section addresses questions of state, economy, and culture. The themes are defined broadly by the presence in northern Alberta of Canadian and provincial governments, which provided a new legislative and policy arena for history subsequent to 1870.

The paper that focuses on the state and its role most explicitly is that of Patricia McCormack, who writes on the expansion of the state into northern Alberta and its representation by scholars. This paper provides a broad context for the remaining papers of the section. There is also a concern similar to that of Brown, of how northern history is written — constructed as narrative — and how it can be reconstructed along radically different lines if different premises are employed. McCormack is concerned with how the process of expansion is interpreted in traditional historical scholarship and how the “facts,” once reinterpreted, can tell a very different story about Aboriginal resistance and challenge to the actions of the state and its agents.

Robert Carney’s analysis of Holy Angels, the residential school operated at Fort Chipewyan by the Grey Nuns, is based on archival documents and extensive interviews with nuns, priests, and former students of the mission. This paper is particularly timely, given recent public concerns about the treatment of Aboriginal children in residential schools.
operated by missionary orders in Canada. He contends that the residential school experience was far from homogeneous, and that in Fort Chipewyan the archival record and oral traditions indicate that the school played a positive role overall in the lives of the children and the community. The school provided a home for children who were orphaned and basic education and domestic skills for all children resident in the mission, whose parents were mostly Aboriginal hunters, trappers, and fishermen living in settlements in the bush.

The subject of Richard Price’s paper is a clause of Treaty 8, signed in 1899 by the Indians of northern Alberta and the Government of Canada. While the treaty promised to provide a reserve for every Indian band, a reserve was never established for the Cree of Fort Chipewyan. The process of creating new reserves in Alberta became more complex after 1930, because of the appearance of a new player, the Province of Alberta, which in that year gained control over its natural resources through the Natural Resources Transfer Act. The Cree had asked that a reserve be created as early as the 1920s, but the federal government was reluctant to consider this claim until the more receptive climate of the 1970s, following court judgments in favor of Aboriginal claims elsewhere in Canada. Price examines in considerable detail the background to the negotiation process for the Fort Chipewyan Cree, the process itself, and the nature of the final settlement. He draws some conclusions that might facilitate the settlement of pending claims by other bands. It is a unique opportunity to follow the tortuous path of one complex negotiated settlement between the state and an Aboriginal community.

Michael Asch and Shirleen Smith focus on the future of hunting, trapping, and fishing as a sector of the northern economy. They have persisted to this day as activities that provide major proportions of northern income and food. Downturns in the fur market after World War II, combined with inflated commodity prices, led the federal government to encourage northerners to pursue other economic strategies, especially wage labor. Little or no support was provided to the trapping and hunting sector. Asch and Smith challenge the conventional wisdom that these traditional activities have been surpassed by agriculture and manufacturing, and that hunting and trapping, therefore, represents an evolutionary economic backwater that is now a relic of the past, not part of a modern economy. The state accepted this stereotype and accordingly did not provide the public support that has traditionally been extended to farmers and manufacturers. Asch and Smith address the inequities involved in a comparative manner. They argue that hunting and trapping are, in fact, eminently rational ways to exploit renewable northern resources, and they offer some suggestions as to how the government might constructively support these forms of livelihood.

Andrew Haden examined the expansion of agricultural activities in the Fort Vermilion area, which are governed on one level by provincial regulations controlling access to new lands. His interest, however, is with the influence of culture on land-acquisition strategies, specifically the difference between the acquisition of land by Mennonite farmers and by non-Mennonite farmers. His analysis addresses the prevailing perception in the Peace River region that because of cultural values, Mennonite farmers, with their larger families and positive values about farming and the land, were developing more Crown land than non-Mennonite farmers. It represents one of the few studies of farming and culture on the Canadian agricultural frontier.

The final paper, by Patrick Moore, is a study of a different kind of cultural persistence than livelihood: the tea dance of northern Alberta Aboriginal peoples. Moore reviews some of the historical literature about the structure and function of Aboriginal dances in this and neighboring regions. Himself a drum maker and singer of Slavey songs, he worked closely with contemporary singers to document their songs and their recollections about changes in dance form. His paper demonstrates the variety of dance forms among northern Indian groups, as well as the replacement of earlier Dene dance styles by Cree-type circle dances.

Acknowledgments

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The Ten Thousand Years Before the Fur Trade in Northeastern Alberta

John W. Ives

Introduction

This volume marks the founding of permanent settlements in northeastern Alberta, 200 years ago. Although this is a significant span of time, it pales in contrast with the immensity of time during which Native peoples have lived in northern Alberta before contact with fur traders took place. The 10,000 years of human prehistory in this region represent a few hundred human generations—an antiquity of life in the boreal forest that is truly difficult to comprehend. This vast stretch of time set the context for the events of the historic period that followed.

To apprehend this ancient context more fully, I will discuss environments and human adaptations in northeastern Alberta, the culture history or chronological framework of events and processes in the human prehistory of the region, and results of archaeological projects that give us specific insights into ways of life in the prehistoric past. The greater region considered in this review encompasses the lower Peace River and adjacent Caribou Mountains, the Peace-Athabasca Delta and Lake Athabasca, and the lower Athabasca River and adjacent Birch Mountains (Fig. 1). Although the communities of Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion are historically fixed spots for settlement, the seasonal activities of prehistoric peoples would have routinely taken them throughout much of the region outlined above.

Environments and Human Adaptations

During the last glaciation of the Pleistocene, the Late Wisconsinan, all of northern Alberta and most of the entire province was completely covered by thick Laurentide ice masses. These great ice sheets expanded outward from their central region over Hudson Bay not long after 25,000 years ago; they persisted until 12,000 to 13,000 years ago, after which rapid glacial retreat took place. The last vestiges of glacial ice had receded from the northeastern corner of Alberta by 10,000 years ago (Dyke and Prest 1987a; 1987b; 1987c). Consequently, northeastern Alberta could not have been inhabited by people during the Late Wisconsinan advance.

A variety of palaeoenvironmental studies have given us a preliminary understanding of the Holocene environments that emerged in northeastern Alberta. Sediment cores from uplands in the Caribou and Birch Mountains reveal that ice-free conditions began between 11,000 and 12,000 years ago. Pollen analyses for Eaglenest Lake in the Birch Mountains by Vance (1986) and for Wild Spear Lake in the Caribou Mountains by MacDonald (1987) have revealed that a relatively open vegetation, comprising sage (Artemisia), grasses (Gramineae), sedges (Cyperaceae), willow (Salix) and a variety of herbs, existed until approximately 11,000 years ago. Only one tree taxon, Populus, is represented. Pollen influxes were low, and depositional data suggest that significant areas of mineral soil surface were still exposed (MacDonald 1987:252).

Between 10,000 and 11,000 years B.P., spruce migrated rapidly into northeastern Alberta. Both Vance and MacDonald believe that white spruce (Picea glauca) was initially dominant, with increasing abundance of black spruce (Picea mariana) by about 8,000 years ago. Birch pollen also increased in this time period, although it is less certain if it is tree (Betula papyrifera) or shrub birch (B. glandulosa) that is represented (Vance 1986:17; MacDonald 1987:247,252-255; Ives 1977).

Thus, by 10,000 years ago, an early version of boreal forest existed in northeastern Alberta. It differed from today’s boreal forest in several re-
Figure 1. Archaeological sites in northeastern Alberta.
spects, and it lacked typical boreal forest species that had yet to migrate into the area. After 8,000 years ago, the floristic composition of the region changed as pine (either lodgepole pine, *Pinus contorta*, or jack pine, *Pinus banksiana*) and alder (*Alnus*) moved into northern Alberta (MacDonald and Cwynar 1985). Between 6,000 and 8,000 years ago, significant peat accumulations began, laying the basis for one of the most familiar plant communities in the boreal forest — muskeg dominated by black spruce, ericads, and Sphagnum mosses. An essentially modern distribution of bogs, fens and muskeg had been reached between 2,000 and 3,500 years ago (MacDonald 1987:257; Zoltai and Vitt 1990).

In summary, a short-lived, nearly treeless vegetation prevailed on uplands in northeastern Alberta as these emerged from receding ice and proglacial lakes dwindled. This was followed by an early spruce dominated forest that gradually diversified in floristic composition as new species migrated into northern Alberta from glacial refugia. Apart from disjunct grasslands along the middle and lower Peace River, an essentially modern, mixedwood boreal forest vegetation predominated in northeastern Alberta by about 6,000 years ago (cf. Ritchie 1989:510-511).

The boreal forest has some salient ecological characteristics with respect to the capacity for human life within the region (Ives 1990:55-61; Winterhalder 1977). On one scale, despite some regional trends in plant communities, there is an extraordinary degree of homogeneity in this biome. Literally hundreds of square kilometres may be dominated by just four tree species: white spruce, black spruce, aspen and birch. At a finer scale, there is considerable heterogeneity of plant communities created as a consequence of edaphic conditions and episodes of forest fire. This leads to a patchwork of plant communities, at different stages of ecological succession, and offering different food and shelter opportunities for boreal forest animals.

Unlike the Plains to the south or the Barren Grounds (tundra) to the north, game species in the boreal forest are widely dispersed and are generally solitary. This is most true of an animal like the moose, but it is also a tendency for wood bison and woodland caribou. Both of the latter occur in much smaller groups than their relatives of the Barren Grounds and Plains, respectively. Moreover, many game species are significantly affected by either irregular or regular population fluctuations. Although explanations vary for the phenomenon of regular cycles in the abundance of species such as the snowshoe hare and its chief predator, the lynx, and its chief predator, the lynx, the relative simplicity of food chains (rather than food webs) in the boreal forest is certainly implicated in these processes. There are few plant foods available in the boreal forest (berries being a seasonal exception) for general human consumption, or with which humans can buffer occasional food shortages. In many respects, such a dietary role is replaced by fish, with whitefish, northern pike, walleye and lake trout the most important species for people.

There have been three characteristic responses to these conditions from Athapaskan and Algonquian speaking peoples living in the Subarctic. First, the region features some of the lowest hunter-gatherer population densities in the world. The local groups within larger regional marriage isolates in the Subarctic make use of correspondingly huge ranges in their economic practices. Second, extensive mobility is imperative in traversing these ranges and in dealing with fluctuating food resources. Finally, the already large scale of local and regional group ranges is further enhanced by networks of social ties — especially those of kinship — which permit realignment of people from temporarily resource-poor regions to regions richer in resources. These general responses have shaped the archaeological record in northern Alberta throughout the last several millenia.

**The Prehistoric Sequence in Northeastern Alberta**

When archaeological research in northern Alberta was last reviewed (Ives 1981a), only pioneering work had taken place, making it difficult to lay out a chronological framework for human prehistory in the boreal forest. Limited research led to many gaps and uncertainties in the archaeological record. Regrettably, this situation has changed little in the intervening years. Only a handful of archaeologists have ever taken an interest in the region. Moreover, a significant proportion of the archaeological work that took place was driven by the impact assessment
and mitigation provisions of the Historical Resources Act of Alberta. With the sharp downturn in activities associated with the development of the oil sands industry on the lower Athabasca River in the 1980s, archaeological resource management work in northeastern Alberta diminished considerably.

Thus, several factors have conspired to limit our understanding of the culture history of northeastern Alberta. The pioneering character of archaeological research has meant that much basic investigation is still required. Beyond this, the physical conditions of the boreal forest limit access and provide ground cover that obscures archaeological sites. The soils that form under the needle and leaf litter from trees are acidic, destroying organic remains including bone, leather and wood. This usually confines the archaeological record to stone tools and stone tool manufacturing by-products. Finally, the very nature of socio-economic organization for boreal forest peoples, involving small, dispersed, and highly mobile groups of people, led to the creation of an archaeological record in which deeply stratified camp and kill site deposits, quite common in the Plains region, occur much more rarely.

Figure 2. Early Prehistoric Period bifaces from northern Alberta: a) Agate Basin style point, Gardiner Lake Narrows site (HjPd-1), of Tertiary Hills welded tuff; b) Agate Basin style point, Beaver River Quarry (HgOv-29), of Beaver River Sandstone; c) base of Hell Gap style point from HhOu-1, of Beaver River Sandstone; d) probable Alberta or Scottisbluff point from Fort MacKay area, of Beaver River Sandstone; e,f) oblongolate gray quartzite specimens from Gardiner Lake Narrows; g) oblongolate gray quartzite specimen from Eaglenest Portage site (HkPa-4)
The Early Prehistoric Period

No fluted points have yet been discovered in the greater Fort Chipewyan-Fort Vermilion region, and consequently, it remains to be demonstrated if the earliest postglacial landscape was used by fluted point makers some 10,000 to 11,000 years ago. The best evidence for early use of the region comes from a series of lanceolate to near lanceolate bifaces (either projectile points or knives) shown in Figure 2. One of the lessons from the excavation of the Karpinsky Site (GkQn-1) in northwestern Alberta was that large stemmed and lanceolate points in northern Alberta may occur late in prehistory (Bryan and Conaty 1975). Even so, I would venture that the specimens illustrated in Figure 2 represent perhaps the earliest Paleo-Indian use of northeastern Alberta.

Clark (1974) has argued that oblanceolate specimens from the Yukon and Alaska could be of Paleo-Indian age. The three specimens (Fig. 2e,f,g) from the Gardiner Lake Narrows (HjPd-1) and Eaglenest Portage (HkPa-4) sites in the Birch Mountains bear a striking resemblance not only to a specimen illustrated by Clark (1974:35,46), but also to a spatulate knife from the Denali Complex found in Component II at Dry Creek, Alaska (see Powers and Hoffecker 1989:275, Fig. 6c). The Dry Creek Component II assemblage produced a radiocarbon date of 10,690 ± 250 years B.P. (ibid.:272). None of the Birch Mountains specimens can be radiometrically dated, but they may relate to an initial human penetration (ultimately deriving from Alaska and the Yukon) of the early spruce-dominated boreal forest in northeastern Alberta.

The oblanceolate specimen from the Eaglenest Portage site is of additional interest because it was part of a cluster of artifacts that was defined by spatial analytical methods (see Ives 1985). The cluster of artifacts, parts of which are shown in Plate 1, included a hammerstone, a retouched flake, an exhausted discoidal core, and a variety of flakes and fragments. The artifacts are known to be associated not simply because of their proximity, but because of an impurity in the raw stone material. The vitreous gray quartzite involved in this case has small pockets of a white impurity seen only rarely in this raw material. This “tool kit” and associated debitage from an ancient period can therefore be segregated from other nearby clusters of artifacts, including a concentration a few metres away, in which Late Prehistoric side-notched points were being fashioned to replace broken arrow or dart tips.

Other specimens suggest connections with the Plains region to the south. Two artifacts from the Gardiner Lake Narrows and Beaver River Quarry (HgOv-29) (Fig. 2 a,b) fit within the range of variability for Agate Basin materials. Whether these are contemporaneous with Plains Agate Basin materials, which can be as old as 10,500 years of age, or whether they might be contemporaneous with more northerly Agate Basin/Acasta Lake occurrences, which may be as recent as 7,000 years of age, cannot be determined presently (Frison 1991:57; Noble 1981:97-98). Similarly, Sims and Losey (Anonymous n.d.) compared the base of a projectile point (Fig. 2c), with the Hell Gap style found on the Plains between roughly 10,000 and 9,500 years ago (cf. Frison 1991:59-60). Figure 2d shows what is likely an Alberta or Scottsbluff projectile point recovered during a highways impact assessment near Fort MacKay; this could also be as old as 10,000 years of age, although it is more likely to be younger.

The Middle Prehistoric Period

After these indications of Early Prehistoric activity in northeastern Alberta, we enter a time period, from roughly 8,000 to 5,500 years ago, for which no archaeological sites are radiometrically dated. The diagnostic artifacts from surrounding regions for this time range have formal qualities similar to the existing sample of undated projectile points from the lower Peace and Athabasca Rivers. Fairly large and variably side to corner-notched points occur in both the Shield Archaic and the early part of the Middle Prehistoric Period of Plains at this time (see Wright 1972; Vickers 1986). Although it is quite likely that archaeologists have recovered material remains from this time range in northeastern Alberta, at present they have no means by which to confirm their age.

There are scattered but more tangible traces for the remainder of the Middle Prehistoric time range in northeastern Alberta. These begin with the earliest levels of the Wentzel Lake site (IfPo-1) in the Caribou Mountains. There artifacts were found in strati-
fied beach deposits that produced radiocarbon dates ranging from 5,220 ± 140 B.P. (RL 532) to 1,440 ± 110 B.P. (RL 529) (Donahue 1976:35-37; Conaty 1977:65-67). Only a sparse collection of stone tools and debitage could be recovered from excavations at this site.

The next indication of activity comes with the Bezya site (HhOv-73), situated on the former Alsands lease east of Fort MacKay (Le Blanc and Ives 1986). This site revealed a concentration of microcores and microblades around what seemed to be a disturbed hearth, situated on a remote knoll. Artifacts recovered from this location included five microcores, 27 ridge flakes, three core tablets, and 103 microblades, as well as a notched burin and burin spalls, scrapers and large amounts of debitage. Of 25 pieces of calcined mammal bone, only the middle phalanx from the front foot of a beaver could be identified (ibid.:81). Charcoal fragments collected from throughout the suspected hearth were radiocarbon dated at 3,990 ± 170 B.P. (Beta-7839) (ibid.).

Through comprehensive study of the manner in which small chert pebbles were prepared for use as microcores, Le Blanc was able to reconstruct the technology used in microblade production. This involved reconstructing original pebbles by refitting flakes and fragments detached during the manufacturing process (Fig. 3b). Although there is no such indication at Bezya, other archaeological finds from circumpolar regions indicate that microblades were used as insets to create sharp edges along bone and antler tools.

The significance of this rare but detectable technology in the prehistory of northeastern Alberta remains enigmatic. Sims (1977) had earlier discovered a notched or Donelly style burin at nearby HhOv-3 (Fig. 3a); recently, Pyszczyk (1991) described another microcore from near Fort Vermilion. These specimens best resemble Northwest Microblade tradition artifacts found in the Pointed Mountain Complex from Fisherman Lake in the Northwest Territories and the Little Arm Phase of the southwest-
ern Yukon (Millar 1981; Workman 1978; LeBlanc and Ives 1986:88-89). Whether they indicate movement of people into northeastern Alberta from the northwest is not known, but the very location of the Bezya site certainly suggests long term familiarity with boreal forest conditions.

There is also a mud pit from the Satsi site, another rich but thinly stratified site (HKPb-1) on Eagle Nest Lake in the Birch Mountains (Ives 1986). A small, circular pit 30 to 40 cm in diameter was filled with charred organic materials, particularly immature green spruce cones. It closely resembles ethnographic descriptions of mud pits that could be used either in hide treatment or to disperse insects. Four endscrapers were found nearby, but it is difficult to know if they are associated with the feature. Radiocarbon dating revealed that the mud pit was relatively ancient: 2,795 ± 85 years B.P. (S-2174) (ibid.).

Diagnostic items from adjacent regions may shed additional light on the Middle Prehistoric Period of northeastern Alberta. Along the southern fringe of Alberta’s boreal forest, running from the Peace River Country to Cold Lake, Middle Prehistoric Period points characteristic of the Plains region are quite common. McCullough (1982:153-155) illustrated several McKean Complex specimens from Lac La Biche. The best evidence for a Plains influence in northeastern Alberta comes with projectile points of the distinctive Oxbow style. Six specimens of this readily identifiable form from North Wabasca Lake, the Birch Mountains and the lower Athabasca River valley are shown in Figure 4. Oxbow Complex sites in interior northwestern North America span the period of 5,500 to 2,500 years ago, but there are no firm indications as to the age of the Oxbow points from northeastern Alberta. Again, there is insufficient information to speculate upon whether or not an idea for a point style is diffusing northward, if trade might be involved, or if actual movements of people took place.

Looking to the northeast, Wright (1975:131) noted the occasional Arctic Small Tool tradition (ASTt) artifact from sites on the eastern half of Lake Athabasca. The ASTt features distinctive, finely made microlithic stone tools, found in sites from Alaska to Greenland. After 3,500 years ago, ASTt peoples apparently expanded into the Barren Grounds of the Northwest Territories (NWT), with intensified hunting of caribou, where they remained until approximately 2,650 years ago (Gordon 1977a:78-79). Two specimens from the Gardiner Lake Narrows Site

Figure 3. a) Two views of a notched or Donelly style burin from HEOv-3. Arrows above the specimen indicate the direction of burin blows; b) three views of a reconstructed microblade core from the Bezya site, showing the remnant core within the pebble from which it came. In the view to the left, the fluted face of the core is visible in the centre of the reconstruction. The upper arrow indicates the direction of the blow that detached a core tablet (here refitted to the core). The lower arrow shows the direction of a burin blow on a notched burin (here refitted to the microblade core). The fluted face of the core faces outward in the centre view; the view to right shows more of the original pebble surface.
and the Satsi Site (Fig. 5) extend the sporadic distribution of such materials beyond Lake Athabasca into the Birch Mountains. Both specimens compare favourably with AST1 materials illustrated by Gordon (1975:490-495, especially Plates 16A, 16B, and 17A) from sites in the Thelon Game Sanctuary, NWT.

At this juncture, we again confront the paramount problem in laying out the cultural history of northeastern Alberta. Figure 6 illustrates a series of stemmed and side to corner-notched projectile points from the Eaglenest Portage and Gardiner Lake Narrows sites. These two sites have yielded the largest combined sample of projectile points excavated in northern Alberta. A fair proportion of the specimens illustrated will, I believe, turn out to be Middle Prehistoric in age.

Yet, they come from sites that present grave problems in formulating the culture history of a region. The sites are rich and have probably been occupied repeatedly over the last 10,000 years. Despite this, there is little stratigraphic development, and all artifacts come from 20-40 centimetres of deposit. In light of forces like tree throw, animal activities (from squirrels’ nests to bears’ dens) and frost heave, depth of burial for these artifacts cannot be taken as a reliable guide for their relative age. Casual assumptions about associations between artifacts found close together can lead to serious errors in interpreting archaeological evidence.

In my opinion, there is no more favourable comparison for the assemblage of specimens discussed above than with the Pointed Mountain Complex described by Millar (1981) for artifacts from the Fisherman Lake area of the Northwest Territories (see also Morrison 1987). Morrison (1987) refers to all of the Pointed Mountain Complex specimens he illustrates as Middle Prehistoric, but the radiocarbon dates for this Complex are spread quite evenly over the interval $3,990 \pm 120$ B.P. through $380 \pm 100$ B.P.; this incorporates virtually all of the Late Prehistoric Period as well. In fact, Millar (1968:325-337) originally indicated that Pointed Mountain Complex artifacts came from a shallow colluvial layer below the

Figure 4. Oxbow projectile points from Wabasca Lake (the Alook site, HaPl-1, a-d), the lower Athabasca River (HhOv-7, e), and the Birch Mountains (HjPc-14, f)

Figure 5. Two grey quartzite specimens (from the Gardiner Lake Narrows [a] and Eaglenest Portage [b] sites) very similar to Arctic Small Tool tradition artifacts from the central Northwest Territories. The specimen on the left is thin and particularly finely made.
Figure 6. Stemmed, side and corner-notched projectile points from the Eaglenest Portage Site (HkPa-4, top row) and the Gardiner Lake Narrows Site (HjPd-1, center and bottom rows)
modern humus, with subsequent complexes occurring in similar stratigraphic position, or in the humus itself. We simply do not know the extent to which the projectile point styles, which undoubtedly are sensitive to change through time, are truly associated with the radiometric age determinations.

Difficulties of just this sort arose with artifact collections from another region to which the same northeastern Alberta specimens compare quite favorably. Noble (1971) provided an extensive summary of sites in the eastern Great Slave Lake region of the NWT. He fashioned a chronology based on radiocarbon age determinations and on the relative ages of raised strandlines. He then defined a series of archaeological complexes. Many of the sites he used were thinly stratified and subject to repeated occupations. Among other things, he concluded that a local version of the ASTt, termed the "Canadian Tundra tradition," developed into the completely different Taltheilei tradition.

Gordon (1977a; 1977b; 1981), working with a series of well-stratified sites in the same region, reached markedly different conclusions. ASTT artifacts were found in strata physically separated from later Taltheilei tradition artifacts, with a hiatus of about 200 radiocarbon years. He also defined phases of the Taltheilei tradition with far less admixture of diagnostic forms than had Noble. Gordon described Earliest (between 2,500 and 2,650 years ago), Early (between 2,500 and 1,850 years ago), Middle (between 1,850 and 1,400 years ago) and Late (about 1,200 years ago to the historic period) periods for the Taltheilei tradition. Large lanceolate and stemmed projectile points are important throughout the Early and Middle periods, but are replaced by bone, antler, native copper and smaller corner and side-notched points in Late Taltheilei components.

There are few specimens in northeastern Alberta that merit comparison with Early and Middle period Taltheilei forms. The best example is a stemmed point fragment surface collected from a beach at Eaglenest Lake (cf. Ivos 1981b:137, Fig. 57, upper left hand corner). Otherwise, it is the better represented corner and side-notched specimens in northeast Alberta that best resemble point types in Late Taltheilei assemblages.

Similarities in projectile point styles are also evident to the west, on the upper Peace River. Both the Charlie Lake Cave (HbRF-39) and Farrell Creek (HaRk-1) sites in northeastern British Columbia have produced quite comparable stemmed, side and corner-notched points from deposits dated to the last 5,000-6,000 years B.P. (Fladmark et al. 1984; Spurling 1980). Both sites are stratified, but sample sizes are small enough to be prohibitive in forming conclusions about point styles. Side to corner-notched points occur from 1,500 to 5,800 years B.P. in these sites. At roughly 2,500 to 2,900 B.P. both small stemmed and Oxbow style points are present. After 1,500 B.P., small side-notched points are present.

**The Late Prehistoric Period**

One Late Prehistoric site in northern Alberta has produced a fine stratigraphic record for just over the last 2,000 years: Peace Point (IgPc-2) in Wood Buffalo National Park. It extends for more than 500 m along the Peace River. Excavations revealed that the two metres of sediment lying above the limestone bedrock of the site contained 18 separate occupation surfaces (Stevenson 1985; 1986). The earliest of these formed about 2,200 years ago, so that occupation surfaces used by people were being created on an average of approximately every 125 years. Stone tools and especially debitage are abundant at Peace Point; in fact, it is quite likely that banded and mottled chert raw materials were being recovered as nodules in the limestone bedrock at or near the site (Stevenson 1985:69). Stevenson therefore described the site as both a stone workshop and campsite. Unfortunately, Stevenson's three by four metre excavation unit had but one temporally diagnostic artifact, a side-notched point from level 13, radiocarbon dated at 1,040 ± 75 years B.P. (S-2157), yielding little evidence on the culture history of the region.

Stevenson's excavation nevertheless provided valuable information for a variety of analyses. Preservation of faunal remains was excellent. The species represented in different occupations included bison, moose, elk, caribou, black and grizzly bear, beaver, muskrat, and waterfowl. Fish bones, and, in more recent deposits, even fish scales were recovered. Stevenson (1985) undertook a detailed analysis of each occupation surface. At least seven of these
yielded high densities of artifacts and suggested concentrated occupation of some duration. He extended his analysis to an interesting correlation between the diversity of stone material and faunal remains as represented on each occupation surface (Stevenson 1986:89-98).

The greatest beauty of the Peace Point site lies in the high fidelity of the archaeological record there. Hearths and artifact distributions were well preserved. There is even one instance in which a concentration of stone tools anddebitage seems to have traced the outline of a kneeling person who was knapping stone tools (Stevenson 1985:70,73). So fine a record encouraged Stevenson to use Peace Point in constructing an even more general model for patterns in human occupation, use and abandonment of archaeological sites. He focussed on the structural use of space around hearths, where there was a tendency toward concentric zones in which artifacts were simply dropped (near hearths), were swept or otherwise displaced with continued use (farther from hearths), or were deliberately tossed so that the immediate hearth area would not be cluttered with large items.

Other sites in the region — like the Wentzel Lake site in the Caribou Mountains, the Pelican Beach site (Hkp-14) in the Birch Mountains, or the Big Bay site (IgOo-1) on Lake Athabasca — have yielded remains known to be Late Prehistoric in age, although relatively small or potentially mixed assemblages are involved (Conaty 1977:65-67; Ives 1981b:136; Wright 1972:10-11). The Eaglenest Portage site (Hkp-4) produced the only other diagnostics fixed as Late Prehistoric in age by radiocarbon dating. Charcoal collected from the surface of a palaeosol at that site was radiocarbon dated at 1,030 ± 110 years B.P. (DIC 720) (Ives 1985:32-33). Two side-notched specimens (Fig. 7 a,b) were also excavated from this surface, and are presumably of similar age.

The archaeological record is otherwise rather silent regarding what is one of the most intriguing issues for the Late Prehistoric Period in northern Alberta: the appearance and subsequent spread of Athapaskan-speaking peoples. There is little question that the terminal part of the archaeological record for much of northern Alberta was created by Athapaskans. In 1792, Alexander Mackenzie wrote:

When this country was formerly invaded by the Knistineaux [Cree], they found the Beaver Indians inhabiting the land about Portage La Loche [Methy Portage]; and the adjoining tribe were those whom they called Slaves. They drove both these tribes before them; when the latter proceeded down the river from the Lake of the Hills [Lake Athabasca], in consequence of which that part of it obtained the name of the Slave River. The former proceeded up the river; and when the Knistineaux made peace with them, this place [Peace Point] was settled to be the boundary [Mackenzie 1971:123].

His influential account suggests that Beaver and Slavey (or perhaps other related Athapaskan-speakers denoted by the term Slave) inhabited the lower Peace River, the Slave River, the lower Athabasca River, and the Clearwater River at an unspecified time still within traditional memory in the 1790s. Wentzel (1889:85) and Keith (1890:68), both contemporaries and firsthand observers, made similar observations from the perspective of the Fort Simpson and Fort Liard regions.
The historical documents leave some uncertainty as to if or when Cree might have displaced Athapaskan speakers from the lower Athabasca River and Lake Athabasca. It is clear that Cree were familiar with the region by the early 17th century. Captain James Knight of York Factory charged the Cree trading captain Swan with the mission of establishing a peace between Athapaskan and Cree peoples. Swan was active in the region between 1715 and 1721, bringing samples of tar sands back to Hudson Bay. Russell (1991:166) has suggested that Swan is the most likely individual to have mediated at Peace Point. Russell (1991:160-161) also indicates that Cree “Athupscaw Indians” are first named in Fort Churchill documents in 1755; they were apparently already well known at Hudson Bay.

The earliest daily journals kept by traders within the region come with the Northwest Company “Journal of Athabasca,” from April 1 to May 31, 1786 (Hudson Bay Company Archives [HBCA] F 2/1). Likely authored by Cuthbert Grant, at Pond’s “Old Establishment” on the lower Athabasca River, this journal provides accounts of Cree, Beaver and Chipewyan arriving to trade. Pond’s map for the same period (Davidson 1918:40-43, Fig. 2) shows the Beaver Indians along the lower Peace River and “Araubaska Indians” (Cree) along the lower Athabasca River.5

Current information on Athapaskan prehistory suggests that Athapaskan speakers moved into northern Alberta several centuries earlier in the Late Prehistoric Period (see Ives 1990). For many years, linguists have believed that the Athapaskan homeland must have been in northwestern North America (Sapir 1915; 1936; Krauss 1973; Dyen and Aberle 1974; Krauss and Golla 1981). It is there that we find the greatest diversity of Athapaskan languages, and it is there that we find the only other language in the world demonstrably connected with Athapaskan, this being Eyak, formerly spoken on the lower reaches of the Copper River in southern coastal Alaska (Krauss 1973:932).

Krauss and Golla (1981:68) have suggested that Pacific Coast Athapaskan-speakers, who would ultimately end up in Washington, Oregon and northern California, departed from a homeland somewhere in southern Alaska, the southern Yukon and perhaps northern British Columbia sometime prior to 1,500 years ago. Approximately 1,200 years ago, Canadian and Apachean Athapaskan speakers left this homeland, providing ancestral populations for groups including the Mackenzie Basin Dene and the Navajo and Apache of the American Southwest and southern Plains (see also Hale and Harris 1979:171-172).

There is an intriguing correlation between these linguistic estimates of divergence and two episodes of vulcanism within the Athapaskan homeland. Workman (1979) and Derry (1975) thought the latter phase of Athapaskan expansion was brought about by the massive eruption that led to the formation of the east lobe of White River Ash, which extends across the southern Yukon and far into the Northwest Territories (Lerbekea et al. 1975). It was deposited about 1,250 radiocarbon years ago. The north lobe of the White River Ash, which runs along the Alaska-Yukon border, was formed about 1,900 radiocarbon years ago, at roughly the same time the Pacific Coast Athapaskans are thought to have departed the homeland. There is no conclusive archaeological evidence that either event might have triggered Athapaskan population movements, but it is likely that ash falls of several centimetres in depth and spread over hundreds of square kilometres had devastating ecological consequences in the general vicinity of the Athapaskan homeland (cf. Ives 1990:42-45).

There are grounds to suspect, therefore, that a series of population movements beginning about 1,200 years ago brought Athapaskan speaking peoples into northern Alberta. From there, it is very likely that ancestral populations for the Navajo and Apache moved southward on the Plains or along the eastern slopes of the Rockies.6 Despite these indications, archaeologists have tended to seek such evidence at the very beginning of the Late Prehistoric Period, some 1,800 years ago, or in even earlier time ranges. Gordon (1981:10-11) argued that the shift from the ALT to the Tlaltehei tradition 2,650 years ago in the Northwest Territories marked the arrival of Athapaskans from northern Alberta and northeastern British Columbia. There is negligible archaeological evidence for this, with very few large stemmed or lanceolate Tlaltehei projectile points in northern Alberta from appropriately dated (or any other) contexts. There is a detectable shift in Late Tlaltehei
time, when smaller side and corner-notched projectile points appear with increasing frequency after 1,200 years ago. In the reasoning applied by Gordon, one would have to ask why this shift might not mark a new, Athapaskan presence in the region.

Following Kehoe (1973:74-78), Wilcox (1981; 1988) has been a strong advocate of the proposition that Avonlea assemblages on the northwestern Plains represent the arrival of Athapaskans from the north. Avonlea assemblages date from 1,800 to 1,000 years B.P. and are characterized by Saskatchewan Basin Complex ceramics and exquisitely flaked side-notched projectile points. Wilcox (1988:275) has argued that Avonlea origins are to be found in Talthei’le tradition materials to the north; but this argument is seriously flawed. Avonlea origins are not well understood, but they are centuries earlier than is necessary to allow for Apachean Athapaskan movement onto the Plains. It is also clear that Avonlea did not emerge in northeastern Alberta. Outside of isolated finds at Calling Lake, Cold Lake, and Lac La Biche, ceramics of any type are unknown in northern Alberta (Gruhn 1981; Pollock 1979; Learn 1986). Stevenson (1986:32-33) described a single Avonlea point from the Lake One Dune site (IgPc-9) in Wood Buffalo National Park, but it is the only demonstrable case for northeastern Alberta. Archaeological Survey of Alberta staff (Marten Magne, pers. commun. 1990; Milt Wright, pers. commun. 1990; personal observation) have also examined hundreds of projectile points in amateur collections from agricultural land in the greater Grande Prairie region of northwestern Alberta, but only a handful of specimens resemble the distinctive Avonlea style at all. Similar problems afflict Perry’s (1980) suggestion that the first Athapaskan presence on the Plains is marked by the Besant Phase.

Thus, it is somewhat simpler at this time to indicate what is not true of Athapaskan presence during the Late Prehistoric period of northern Alberta. There is significant doubt as to whether the nature of the archaeological record in northern Alberta will allow precise reckoning of cultural identities in the past. This would also be true for ancestral Navajo and Apache populations moving onto the Plains, because they ought to have left behind generalized lithic assemblages, with fairly crude, side-notched points. These specimens would in many cases be difficult to distinguish from coeval Old Women’s Phase or Prairie side-notched specimens in Plains contexts. Despite these problems, the balance of the evidence suggests that we should look most carefully at the interval between roughly 500 and 1,500 years ago in trying to detect the archaeological presence and movement of Athapaskan speakers in Alberta.

Such a perspective may also be useful in resolving the rather sharp ethnohistorical debate concerning northeastern Alberta (cf. Gillespie 1981; Ives 1990; Russell 1991; Smith 1981; and Yerbury 1976; 1981). The later prehistory of northern Alberta is quite different from adjacent northern Saskatchewan. There, Laurel and Blackduck ceramics were predecessors to Selkirk Composite wares, which appeared after 800 years ago. Meyer and Russell (1987) have argued that ancestral Cree populations are to be identified with Selkirk ceramics and associated assemblages, which first appear in northern Manitoba. More generally, the proto-Algonquian homeland itself is widely believed to have been centred in eastern North America, near the Great Lakes (e.g., Goddard 1978; Proulx 1984).

Ceramics are absent in northern Alberta (save for the rare instances mentioned earlier), as they are in other areas known to have been occupied by Northern Athapaskans. Since the Athapaskan homeland lay to the northwest, we can surmise that earlier parts of the Late Prehistoric Period saw an expansion of Athapaskan speakers south and east into northern Alberta, and a westward expansion of Algonquian speakers from northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan. There must have been a zone of prehistoric contact between these speech communities during the last millenium (see Ives 1990:133).

This zone may have shifted through time, but its protohistoric and historic configuration lay in the lower Athabasca River -Lake Athabasca-Clearwater River region. It involved the Beaver, Slavey and Chipewyan on the one hand and the Cree on the other. If Meyer and Russell (1987) are correct in their correlation of the Selkirk Composite with early Cree populations, then the prehistoric configuration of this zone would have been only slightly different. I would prefer to phrase this more cautiously by saying that
Algonquian-speaking populations including Cree (but not necessarily excluding others such as Blackfoot) were established as far as the upper reaches of the Churchill drainage, with Athapaskan speakers beyond this in the Athabasca River and Peace River drainages. In any case, it is fair to say that the eastern edge of the greater region of concern here was, in later prehistory, within or near a cultural interface between Athapaskan and Algonquian speakers.

In closing this section, I wish to point out that establishing a sound chronological framework for northern Alberta must remain a key objective in archaeological research. In part this can and should be accomplished by discovering and excavating more well-stratified sites like Peace Point. We have also seen, however, that a rich part of the archaeological record in this region is tied up in poorly stratified sites that are nevertheless productive of artifacts. I believe it is equally important for archaeologists to become increasingly adept at extracting more information from such sites through rigorous analytical programmes. As we have seen, spatial analytical statistics can be used in defining clusters of artifacts (cf. Ives 1985). Close attention to microstratigraphy and depth of burial for artifacts can be helpful adjuncts to these studies, which become quite powerful with the addition of “refitting” techniques. LeBlanc (LeBlanc and Ives 1986:63–64) made good use of the latter technique, which involves joining together pieces of flaked or broken artifacts, at the Bezya site. The “net” of refitted pieces there helped to outline horizontal clustering of specimens in the microblade technology as much as two metres apart. It also revealed vertical dispersion of artifacts to 40 cm in depth in the sandy soil of the knoll at the site (likely the consequence of tree throw). I am convinced that better information on the culture history of the region would emerge with the more frequent application of these analytical methods. So too would increasingly powerful methods of wide applicability in archaeological studies be developed.8

Prehistoric Aboriginal Use of the Landscape

Studies of Raw Stone Materials

My remarks in the last section often involved the use of radiometric dates and comparison of temporally diagnostic artifacts to reveal the sequence of events in the past. A review of the culture history of a region is but one way of thinking about the prehistoric past. In this section, I will turn to other approaches applied to archaeological information from northeastern Alberta. In these approaches, I am interested in exploring the archaeological record for information about the ways in which precontact peoples organized their social and economic use of the landscape. This involves asking some fundamentally different questions about the distribution of artifacts and archaeological sites across the study region.

Analysis of the raw materials used in the manufacture of stone tools has provided another class of information about the prehistoric period in northeastern Alberta. There are two instances of raw materials in the study area that originated much farther afield. Donahue (1976:viii) reported the source of a flake of obsidian from site IgPq-4 on Pitchimi Lake in the Caribou Mountains to be the Mount Edziza volcanic complex in northwestern British Columbia. Ives and Hardie (1983) described two specimens from northeastern Alberta, a large lanceolate projectile point from the Gardiner Lake Narrows Site (HjPd-1) (Fig. 2a) and a flake from the Eaglenest Portage Site (HkPa-4), both of which were made of Tertiary Hills welded tuff. Cinq-Mars (1973) has suggested that this raw material has a unique source north of the Keele River, in the NWT (see also Yorath and Cook 1981). In both cases, the raw material sources are more than 1,000 km distant. One must suspect that prehistoric groups in northeastern Alberta received such items through long distance trade.

Raw stone materials can also be studied at a more restricted geographic scale. In this approach, we can ask how raw stone materials flowed through prehistoric technological systems within the regional marriage isolates (assuming that regional groups averaged about 500 persons, within which most marriage and social interaction took place) of Subarctic hunter-gatherers, from their geological source to different kinds of archaeological sites (such as campsites, kill sites, and lookout) (Ives 1990:61-65; Lee and Devore 1968:11). It was this perspective that was adopted in geoarchaeological studies of Beaver River Sandstone undertaken by Fenton and Ives along the lower Athabasca River (see Fenton and Ives 1990 and Ives and Fenton 1985 for the information in this
Beaver River Sandstone is a light gray, silica-cemented quartz sandstone. Low quality Beaver River Sandstone is of moderate use as a raw material, but high quality Beaver River Sandstone is almost chert-like in appearance and attributes. It provides an excellent raw material for knapping.

A variety of sources had been proposed for Beaver River Sandstone since the first report of a large quarry/workshop site (HgOv-29) involving this raw material on the Syncrude lease near Fort MacKay (Anonymous 1974). More detailed investigation revealed that Beaver River Sandstone occurs naturally as a bedrock unit situated near the top of the lower member of the Cretaceous-aged McMurray Formation. Fenton and Ives (1990) prepared an outcrop potential map for this raw material by combining subcrop maps of the Devonian-aged Waterways Formation and the McMurray Formation, together with an overburden-thickness map. From this and field inspections, it is apparent that Beaver River Sandstone outcrops only in a narrow corridor on either side of the Athabasca River, in a relatively small area centering on Fort MacKay. Beyond this portion of the Athabasca River valley, deposits containing Beaver River Sandstone simply do not occur, or the requisite deposits are so deeply buried that the McMurray Formation is not exposed.

This geological information provides a baseline against which we can compare cultural distribution of artifacts. Judging from the variety of projectile point styles for which there are Beaver River Sandstone examples, this raw material was important throughout the 10,000 years of the region’s prehistory. Beaver River Sandstone is completely dominant in most artifact assemblages in the Athabasca River valley around Fort MacKay, where it frequently comprises 95 percent or more of the artifacts at over 300 sites within a 30 km radius of the centre of the known source locale. At 30 km, assemblage composition shifts abruptly away from Beaver River Sandstone, in favor of other raw materials. Beaver River Sandstone is nevertheless present in low but consistent quantities (two to five percent) at larger and more complex sites 70-75 km away in the Birch Mountains.

Debitage to tool ratios are also distinctly patterned. In the Athabasca River valley, hundreds or even thousands of items commonly occur for every formed tool that is found. In the Birch Mountains, debitage to tool ratios are decidedly low (averaging 6.5:1). A fair proportion of these Beaver River Sandstone specimens represent tools that were either broken or at the end of their use life. Study of cumulative frequency graphs for weight classes within assemblages revealed that the entire breadth of the reduction strategy (from very large to small flakes and fragments left over from shaping stone tools) typically occurred in the Athabasca River valley. Some of these curves have a “gourmet” quality in that raw material was used extravagantly. Large flakes and fragments of Beaver River Sandstone were left behind. The situation for the Birch Mountain sites was quite different: all specimens are 60 grams or less in weight. This suggests that only the terminal phases of tool manufacture and maintenance for Beaver River Sandstone are represented there.

These findings are consistent with an archaeological record created by dispersed, small bands of highly mobile hunter-gatherers who foraged widely through the boreal forest environment and gathered seasonally as regional groups along the Athabasca River and at large lakes in the Birch Mountains uplands. More specifically, we can infer that the entire range of lithic reduction activities typically took place in the Athabasca River valley, but that only the final stages of the reduction trajectory are found at more distant locations such as the Birch Mountains. As prehistoric bands operated within 30 km of the source area, hunting and other activities routinely provided opportunities to replenish raw material stocks with Beaver River Sandstone. Outside this 30 km zone, other raw materials were easier to obtain. Finally, the limited quantity of Beaver River Sandstone in the Birch Mountains is evidence of typically indirect seasonal movement between the Athabasca River valley and the Birch Mountains. By this I mean that groups moving out of close proximity to the source would progressively deplete tool kits made from Beaver River Sandstone. They would incorporate raw materials from other sources so that upon arriving in the Birch Mountains, relatively little Beaver River Sandstone remained to enter the archaeological record.
Sources for other common raw materials, like the ubiquitous vitreous gray quartzite in northern Alberta, are apt to be diffuse and difficult to study in the fashion described here. There is nevertheless at least one other intriguing prospect for study of this sort. Mottled and banded gray and brown cherts are common in Devonian bedrock on the lower Peace River, especially around Peace Point. It would seem quite likely that these raw materials would be available only at sources along the Peace and perhaps the Slave River lowlands. The proportion of these cherts in Birch Mountains sites is similar to that for Beaver River Sandstone. Quite another pattern is reflected in Caribou Mountain assemblages, where the proportion of this kind of raw chert material can approach 40-50 percent of assemblages. This suggests a somewhat different pattern of land use—perhaps one that reflects some of the ecological differences between the Birch and Caribou Mountains (see remarks below). Lakes in the Caribou Mountains may have served principally as emergency winter fish lakes, to which there was direct travel from lowland locations. More study of this topic would certainly be welcome for what it might reveal of patterns of socio-economic organization in prehistory.

Additional study of Beaver River Sandstone sources might also provide insights regarding culture history. Beaver River Sandstone can be common in assemblages from archaeological sites along the Clearwater River, where as much as 40 to 50 percent of the artifacts may be of this raw material. David Meyer (pers. commun., 1983) has confirmed its presence as far away as Lac La Loche in northwestern Saskatchewan. Assuming there are no sources of Beaver River Sandstone along the Clearwater River (an assumption likely but not proven to be true), the raw material distribution would suggest an axis of interaction extending westward into the Athabasca River valley. Such a finding would be somewhat more consistent with a Late Prehistoric Athapaskan rather than an Algonquian presence.

Looking farther afield, I had entertained some hope that the string of Beaver River Sandstone finds through the Parklands and onto the Alberta Plains might help in tracing southward movement of Athapascons. This is still conceivable, but the presence of very similar raw materials in Montana and the Dakotas (Brumley 1990 and pers. commun., 1992; see note 5) enjoins a much greater degree of caution in considering this possibility. Extensive physical and chemical characterizations of the raw materials and sources in question are mandatory.

Inferences About Site Positioning Strategies

Study of site distribution and location characteristics has considerable potential to reveal even more details about how raw materials like Beaver River Sandstone actually entered the archaeological record. Donahue (1976:131-133), for instance, concluded that the much lower density and more limited archaeological productivity of sites in the Caribou Mountains could be attributed to a relative lack of food resources in contrast to the Birch Mountains, where sites were both much more abundant and productive. These early surveys were tied largely to traditional modes of transportation in the field (like canoe travel), and they focussed on waterbodies and watercourses. Initial work on the Syncrude Canada lease tended to reinforce the notion that sites were simply concentrated along streams and rivers (Anonymous 1973). There, sites showed a clear association with better-drained locations supporting spruce and aspen or pine and aspen communities along Beaver River. These sites tended to be located within 500 m of at least four different vegetative communities, a finding that promoted the idea that site locations were commonly found near slightly more diverse ecotonal settings associated with riparian habitats.

Such a finding nevertheless opened the way for a self-fulfilling prophecy in field surveys designed to locate undiscovered sites. High potential locales for site discovery occurred near important hydrographic features; low potential locales existed elsewhere. When levels of effort were allocated for field survey, high potential settings always received more intensive coverage.

Archaeological studies associated with oil sands development eventually provided a corrective to this bias. Sims (Anonymous n.d.) applied the principles outlined in the last paragraph to areas around Muskie River and Hartley Creek, east of the Athabasca River. He found that sites were indeed concentrated near riparian settings. Portions of this area were to be subsumed under the planning for the Alsands lease in
the late 1970s, however, and impact assessment provisions for that development called for widespread survey over both the proposed plant and mine sites. Conaty (1980) undertook a probabilistic sampling design, with extensive subsurface testing under all terrain conditions, including frequent testing of muskeg.

The results of this effort were largely negative, but two small sites were discovered (HhOv-70 and HhOv-71). They both occurred on small, better drained knolls in areas that were otherwise decidedly remote from "high potential" locations for sites. The area in question (see Fig. 8) is over ten kilometres from the Athabasca River, and is typically one to

Figure 8. Distribution of prehistoric sites on the former Alsands lease. Triangles in the lower inset represent moose sightings from census aircraft during a two day period in 1978 on the Alberta Oil Sands Environmental Research Project area.
several kilometres from the Muskeg River. Ronaghan (1981) followed upon Conaty’s results by making a helicopter assisted survey of just the knolls and ridges in this remote setting, and not the intervening bog and muskeg. Dozens more sites were discovered in this way.

It was at this point that a relatively unusual set of circumstances came into play. The Alsands consortium had proceeded with development to the point of clearing and draining 13 km² of forest for the plant and mine site. Collapse of the project was imminent, however, in the wake of the changing economic climate in the early 1980s. At this time, I was able to undertake another survey of the massive cleared area which, to all intents and purposes, had been transformed into prairie-like conditions with slight disturbances that allowed simple surface inspection for sites (Ives 1982; 1988a). As seen in Figure 8, known site densities in this remote location approach ten to fifteen sites per square kilometre, and sites quite literally “dot” the raised terrain features of this landscape. Since we knew that not all sites had been discovered, it seemed quite likely that real site densities could easily be twice the figures given above.

Neither these sites nor a much larger sample of sites from the greater Fort MacKay region bore out the pattern of ecological association suggested by the earlier work on the Syncrude lease. Graphs for the number of plant communities within a kilometre are presented for three situations in Figure 9: first, for archaeological sites in the central Birch Mountains depression; second, for a population of 283 archaeological sites in the lower Athabasca River valley (principally from oil sands lease or related resource management work); and third, for a series of 296 randomly distributed map points across the same region of the lower Athabasca River valley.

The Birch Mountains sites show a noticeably higher average number of plant communities within a kilometre, but they were also discovered by pedestrian and canoe survey methods that deliberately concentrated along lakeshores and rivers. In the case of oil sands archaeological sites, a wider variety of survey methods was applied to a greater diversity of physical settings. Note that the difference between the site population and the randomly distributed map points is negligible, and it is not statistically signifi-

cant. The cumulative pattern for the archaeological sites suggests that they too are almost randomly distributed across the landscape, save for the fact that they are concentrated on slightly raised features of the terrain. Here was a striking empirical confirmation of the land use patterns expected for the boreal forest based on ethnographic and ecological information.

At 21 of the 33 sites discovered in the cleared plant and mine areas, fewer than 30 artifacts were recovered. All of these artifacts were less than ten grams in weight, indicative that only the later stages of lithic reduction went on. Of the remaining assemblages, one site (HlOu-27) produced what appeared to be a cache of large (up to 12 cm in length) Beaver River Sandstone flakes with faceted platforms. Other sites yielded a greater diversity of raw materials, a larger size range for stone artifacts, and a few tools or

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Figure 9. Graphs showing the number of vegetation communities within one kilometre of archaeological sites in the Birch Mountains, archaeological sites in the lower Athabasca River valley, and a series of randomly distributed map points in the lower Athabasca River valley.

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tool fragments (not unlike the nearby Bezya site, HhOv-73). Apparently, many of these sites represent extraordinarily “thin slices” of prehistoric time, such as the sharpening of a stone knife.

Little about the stone artifacts recovered could be used to suggest that they were particularly important in woodworkign or harvesting berries, two minor resources available on the raised terrain features. The better drained knolls are a far superior source of deadfall trees for firewood when compared with open muskeg. Additionally, at least a third of the sites occur in microtopographical settings that provide shelter from westerly and northwesterly winds. Because terrain comprised of up to 90 percent bog and muskeg would be difficult to traverse in summer, and because a fair number of sites were sheltered rather than exposed (the opposite of what one would expect for the insects in summer), it is a fair supposition that a majority of the sites were created during winter occupation.

Apart from this sort of inference, however, the artifact assemblages and sites tell us relatively little else about the activities that were taking place. To explore this topic more fully requires information about materials that almost never are found at such sites: faunal remains from animals that people hunted and trapped. Fortunately, there is a literature on the habitat use of many game species in the oil sands region that we can put to use in fashioning other inferences.

For the 25,000 km² Alberta Oil Sands Environmental Research Project (AOSERP) area including the Birch Mountains and lower Athabasca River, Hauge and Keith (1980:9-11, 17-18) found that moose had an average density of 0.18 animals per km².9 Apart from seasonal occurrences of bull-cow and cow-calf pairs, aerial census work revealed that moose were usually alone. The inset in Figure 8 shows moose distribution as determined from an aerial census in February 1978 over the AOSERP study area—a graphic portrayal of how differently structured are food resources in the boreal forest when compared with the Plains to the south and the Barren Grounds to the north.

Moose are browsers; they feed in early seral or riparian vegetation patches, where aspen, birch, willow and saskatoon are found, especially in fall and winter. During spring and summer moose shift to aquatic habitats. Nowlin’s (1978) radiotelemetry relocation study revealed that during fall and winter, moose have a distinct preference for upland habitat out of all proportion to its natural occurrence. Feeding, bedding, rutting and simple presence almost always (66-92 percent of the time) took place on the very same terrain features at which the archaeological finds were made.

These terrain features and associated plant communities are equally important to wood bison and black bears; beaver too will travel hundreds of metres from water to such communities (Fuller and Keith 1980a; Searing 1979). Woodland caribou, snowshoe hare, and mink each make more intensive use of lowland communities (Fuller and Keith 1980b; Green 1980). Despite this, these other species also spend some time on the raised terrain features associated with archaeological sites.

Thus, I am inclined to see the terrain features upon which the sites themselves occur as productive “islands” in a “sea” of rather barren muskeg. They offered shelter and firewood; they may have also provided minor points of observation along game trails and near smaller bodies of water. Most importantly of all, the ecological productivity of the earlier seral stages of these terrain features attracted a variety of large and small game animals, including both food and fur-bearing species.

Wentzel (1889:81,89) and Keith (1890:66-69,116) described Fort Liard and Fort Simpson Slavey economies in their letters of 1807. Hare, beaver, moose and caribou were dietary mainstays. Pursuit of moose and caribou on snowshoes with dogs, especially over the crusted snows of spring, was common. In winter, fatigued animals were speared, whereas snares were used in summer. Wentzel wrote:

Their entire economy consists in hoarding up as much provisions as possible for the winter and in obtaining a great quantity of original [moose] snares. He who is the best hunter and who has the best number of snares is the greatest and richest man [1889:89].

In all likelihood, many small sites like those on the Alands lease were formed when a hunter sharpened the stone knife and related tools he used in butchering animals like the moose after a successful
hunt, or when a snare captured an animal. In other cases, where there are more diverse artifacts, it takes little imagination to suspect that small bands camped on these knolls and ridges in the course of their seasonal round, making use of the shelter and firewood present in the greater locality that hunters were using.

Conclusion

To close this review of the prehistoric period, it is interesting to consider patterning in site distribution at a regional scale. Although more data would be welcome, there appear to be "nodes" along the Peace and Athabasca Rivers, at which concentrations of sites occur (Ives 1988b). Donahue (1976) found a high density of sites in the vicinity of modern day Fort Vermilion. A search for additional sites downstream of this region, in geographically strategic locations, gave unexpectedly negative results (Ives 1981c). I thought that the mouth of the Wabasca, the vicinity of the Vermilion Chutes, and the mouth of the Mikkwa River should yield a similarly high density of sites. A modest testing programme for many promising locations yielded only a few sites, none of which were archaeologically productive. Yet, moving farther downstream again, to the Peace Point vicinity, Stevenson (1986:33-41) detected an increasing density of sites, a number of which were quite productive.

Shifting to the lower Athabasca River, there is clearly a major concentration of sites around Fort MacKay, centered on the massive Cree Burn Lake site complex (HhOv-16). Thousands of artifacts have been recovered from this locality, which occurs above a small Oxbow lake just off the right bank of the Athabasca River. More than 300 sites are currently known in the general vicinity, but site density drops noticeably moving both upstream and downstream on the Athabasca River.

This regional level of patterning, should it continue to be borne out with further study, is likely a reflection of persistent land use decisions in the last 10,000 years of prehistory. Although there are no ethnographic accounts from which to reconstruct a subsistence settlement system for the lower Peace and Athabasca Rivers, there remains sufficient complementarity in resources between river lowlands and adjacent uplands that seasonally triggered movements of people can be projected. In the fall, for instance, moose are known to move out of the Birch Mountains, leaving what is today a low density woodland caribou population as the sole big game resource (Fuller and Keith 1980b:3; Hauge and Keith 1980). Moose concentrate along tributaries of the Peace and Athabasca that rise in the Birch Mountains (see Fig. 9). In the past, it is quite likely that wood bison moved seasonally between the Birch Mountains and the Peace-Athabasca delta. Also in the fall, a massive run of whitefish (numbering in the hundreds of thousands) moves up the lower Athabasca to spawn (Tripp and McCart 1980:9-14).

Large seasonal gatherings of bands at locations like Cree Burn Lake in the Athabasca River valley would be predicted. Both small groups of hunters and local bands themselves would be expected subsequently to move out of such seasonal gatherings and into the surrounding countryside. Many of the sites in the oil sands region might therefore be considered as outlying "satellites" that arose from repeated "overlays" of activities involving high logistical mobility for small task groups (e.g., in hunting, trapping, and recovery of raw materials for making stone tools) as well as high residential mobility (movement of entire local band encampments). In the spring, there are fish runs in the lakes and rivers of the Birch Mountains, and large game animals return for summer foraging. Large sites like Eagle nest Portage between Eaglenest and Clear Lakes, the Satsi Site on Eaglenest Lake, and the Gardiner Lake Narrows are likely to reflect seasonal gatherings during spring and summer. Analogous patterns could be inferred for the lower Peace River and adjacent uplands.

The scale of area to which I refer corresponds well with segments of drainage systems documented generally for Subarctic Athapaskan and Algonquian regional marriage isolates. Regional marriage isolates number about 500 persons, and are made up of a smaller series of local bands numbering 20-100 persons (e.g., Ives 1990:61-65). Wobst (1974;1976) has shown that regional marriage isolates are of sufficient size to solve a key demographic problem for hunter-gatherers. They are large enough to withstand stochastic variations in natality and mortality that tend to cause the disappearance of groups smaller
than 400-500 people within a few generations. Smaller local bands solve an economic problem by dispersing people effectively across the landscape for food resources. Larger social gatherings can only be sustained for shorter periods of time, when and where resources are more abundant.

Subarctic regional marriage isolates are spaced over the landscape and oriented to principal geographic features, including major segments of drainages and associated uplands. I believe that the large sites along the lower Athabasca and Peace Rivers and on the lakes of the Birch and Caribou Mountains, together with the dense concentrations of smaller sites in these locales, are the archaeological residue of such patterning in Alberta. Meyer et al. (1992) remark upon a similar phenomenon for large and ancient archaeological sites at traditional Cree gathering spots along the Saskatchewan River. These tend to occur about every 80 km.

The large site concentrations along the Peace and Athabasca Rivers pretty much coincide with the locations and Native groups we learn of at the outset of the fur trade, places such as Peace Point, and groups such as the Athabasca Cree. The traders were of course highly dependent on country foods and Native fort hunters for their provisions. Many factors affected the location of any given fur trade post, but it is in no way surprising to see a corresponding tendency for fur trade posts to cluster near these larger concentrations of prehistoric sites. For example, Pierre au Calumet Post of the Northwest Company, situated on the east bank of the Athabasca River below the mouth of MacKay River, was built "...chiefly for the purpose of securing provisions for their canoes going to and from the Interior" (Simpson 1938:362-363, 413-414, 423). Berens House, the Hudson’s Bay Company competitor, was built across the Athabasca river in 1819. Similarly, Fort Vermilion I and II, Boyer’s Post, Mansfield House, Fort Liard and Aspin House are all found in the greater modern day Fort Vermilion area, another locus of prehistoric site concentration. In this way, we see that the very existence of the fur trade was inextricably tied to an ancient history of land use that took shape over the last ten thousand years.

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Notes

1. In this respect, the prehistory of northeastern Alberta is somewhat different from that of northwestern Alberta. The western edge of the province includes parts of an "ice free" or western corridor, one of the potential routes by which ancestral populations for New World Natives might have first entered North America south of the ice sheets. See Ives et al. (1989) for a review of this topic from an Alberta perspective.

2. The term "prehistoric" is commonly used by archaeologists to denote the period in a region for which written records do not exist. Since written records first appeared with the fur traders, the term simply refers to the precontact period in northeastern Alberta.

3. For ease of reference, I will use the terms Early, Middle and Late Prehistoric Periods in the following sections much as they are used for the Plains region of Alberta (see Vickers 1986 for an example). These terms are quite neutral in the fashion in which they denote larger segments of prehistory. Following Vickers (1986:12-13), the Early Prehistoric Period covers the interval 11,500 to 7,500 years B.P., the Middle Prehistoric Period covers the interval from 7,500 to 1,750 B.P., and the Late Prehistoric Period covers the interval from 1,750 to 250 B.P.

4. The nearest comparison would lie with the small fluted point from the Duckett site, near Cold Lake (Anonymous 1981). This specimen was manufactured from a raw material very like the Beaver River Sandstone material described in this essay. Typologically similar specimens from Charlie Lake Cave in northeastern British Columbia have been radiocarbon dated between 10,380 ± 160 B.P. (SFU 378) and 10,770 ± 120 B.P. (SFU 454) (Fladmack et al. 1988). The Duckett specimen might be taken as indirect evidence for Early Prehistoric Period use of the
Clearwater or lower Athabasca River regions by fluted point makers. A similar conclusion might also be reached for the later Paleo-Indian Eden point from the Barrhead area in north central Alberta (see Fig. 2d). John Brumley (1990) has recently reported a raw material from sources in Montana and the Dakotas. These are referred to as Tongue River silicified sediments, and the samples I have seen cannot be distinguished macroscopically from Beaver River Sandstone originating in the Fort MacKay area. The Barrhead specimen occurs with other Cody Complex material of Knife River Flint, from South Dakota. Accordingly, it would be imprudent to insist that isolated examples of Paleo-Indian point styles made from raw materials like Beaver River Sandstone have any necessary connection with the lower Athabasca River valley.

5. This spelling may be one indication of an “r” dialect of Cree, as suggested by Pentland (1978:106-107) and Smith (1981:256). The historical evidence for such a dialect is sparse, however (Russell 1991:163).

6. The Sarsi give us a glimpse of what this might have been like. In the historic period, they lived a fully Plains way of life as a tribe within the Blackfoot Confederacy. Yet, the Sarsi and Beaver do share a story of their separation, which surely cannot belong to the too distant past (Goddard 1916:209). Jenness (1938:3) felt that the Sarsi entered the Plains from the vicinity of the headwaters of the Athabasca and North Saskatchewan Rivers toward the end of the 17th century. Oral traditions indicate that they first had some ties to the Cree but were otherwise strongly independent. Eventually, with the proliferation of guns and horses on the Plains, they allied themselves with the Pikuni, Kanai and Siksika against Cree and Assiniboine foes.

7. Of these instances, the Black Fox Island (GPa-32) sample from Lac La Biche is by far the most important; the Calling Lake (GPh-107) and Cold Lake materials (GeOm-7) consist of very small fragments. Lehm (1986) reconstructed the Lac La Biche materials to reveal the better part of the rim and some shoulder from a pot. McCullough (1982:35) regarded these materials as Clearwater Lake Punctate of the Selkirk Composite; Lehm acknowledged the similarities, but drew a closer connection with Saskatchewan Basin ceramics to the south. The thermoluminescence date for the Black Fox Island materials is only 430 ± 20% years B.P., making it too late to have a bearing on Avonlea origins (Lehm 1986:29, Alpha-561).

8. Binford’s (1982) observations on modern day Nunamiut hunters in Alaska showed that sites can be visited for different purposes at different times of the year—a campsite for an entire band in one season may become a lookout for a small group of hunters in another season. Artifacts functioning in two quite different contexts would be deposited together. Although archaeologists who work outside the boreal forest are often smug about the calibre of archaeological record they have by comparison, Binford’s observation could be true for virtually any site where all but the most regular deposition takes place. Artifacts significantly separated in time, and even from culturally different groups, could be deposited essentially together. The problem is heightened in the boreal forest, but is far more common elsewhere than is usually granted. Any lessons in analytical rigour we can learn from “disentangling” artifact distributions from poorly stratified boreal forest sites will be useful in many other settings. In any case, we are well past the stage at which casual assumptions about the association of artifacts in thin deposits or “laterally stratified” sites can reasonably be made without firm supporting evidence.

9. The point I am making can be best illustrated by using moose as an example. I believe moose were one of the most important game animals in the Subarctic throughout much of the Holocene. In the study area, moose remains were present in the earliest levels at Peace Point, and moose is often the most frequently mentioned game animal in the earliest historic documents (e.g., HBCA F 2/1). Spalding (1990) has also shown that moose were present historically over large areas of British Columbia, despite a persistent belief that they are somehow recent migrants to that area. Other big game animals, notably wood bison and woodland caribou, were undoubtedly important in the past. They are certainly more gregarious animals, but they do not occur in groups as large as their Plains and Barren Ground relatives. Fuller and Keith (1980b:18-19) found that Birch Mountains woodland caribou group sizes ranged from 1.2 to 5.4 animals for sightings throughout the year. Wood bison are observed in groups of 100-300 animals, but often occur in groups as small as six to 20 animals (Allison 1973:M22; Carbyn et al.1981:7).

10. Inspector A.M. Jarvis believed the last wood bison in the Birch Mountains were apparently killed in 1896 (Canada 1897:160). The number of animals had been small since about 30 years earlier, when about 200 bison moving towards the Birch Mountains broke through the ice of Lake Claire and drowned (ibid:171).

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A “Parchment Skin” is All: The Archaeology of the Boyer River Site, Fort Vermilion, Alberta

Heinz W. Pyszczyk

On December 31, 1802, while in charge of the little post of Mansfield House, located near the juncture of the Boyer and Peace Rivers, Thomas Swain of the Hudsons Bay Company wrote in his journal:

Friday gave the men a parchment Skin to eat - a Canadian that came home from the Hunting Tent informed me that the Hunters was all starving as they could kill no cattle [bison] [Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA) B.224/a/2].

The phrase “Parchment Skin” is All, used in the title of this chapter, is a stark reminder that fur trade life was often unpredictable and hard. Mere survival, not trade, was foremost on everyone’s mind. For the local Indians, however, the inability of Whites to secure their provisions, like the trade in furs, was a boon: “hired Indians to hunt as we have nothing to eat” (HBCA B.224/a/1).

This chapter examines the archaeological record of the Boyer River fur trade site and evidence from the local fur trade journals to expand our knowledge of the early (c.1788-1802) history of Fort Vermilion (Fig. 1). In particular, this chapter describes the architectural remains, artifacts and faunal remains, and compares them to other northern fur trade assemblages. The analysis should provide a more thorough understanding of the history of the Fort Vermilion Region. But, before examining the ar-

Figure 1. The location of known fur trade posts in the Fort Vermilion Region, c.1788 - 1830
chaeological remains, some key events and conditions of the Athabasca fur trade are introduced.

Fort Vermilion and the Athabasca Fur Trade

The Regional Trade

The quest for furs by European traders began in northern Alberta in 1778. Peter Pond, an independent pedlar, established a small fur trade post along the Athabasca River, near Lake Athabasca (Parker 1971:16). The North West Company (NWC), Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC), and to a lesser extent, the short-lived (1802-1805) XY Company, repeated Pond’s endeavors. The HBC and the NWC competed with one another for the next quarter century for the rich fur resources in northern Alberta. However, it was primarily the NWC which dominated the northern trade until 1818, when the HBC again began constructing posts further up the Peace River (Fig. 1). The rival fur trade companies established a series of fur trade posts, starting at Lake Athabasca and continuing west along the Peace River into the Rocky Mountains of British Columbia. The competition increased the operating costs of the companies, and as a consequence their profits fell. Finally, in 1821, after reaching near bankruptcy, the NWC and HBC joined and formed the new Hudson’s Bay Company.

The Early Fort Vermilion Posts

The Fort Vermilion region has been continually occupied by fur traders from 1788 to the present day (Smythe 1968: 241-277). Between c.1788 and 1802, six fur trade posts were constructed along the banks of the Peace River, from the mouth of the Boyer River to west of La Crete (Fig. 1). It is apparent from Thomas Swain’s remarks in 1803 that the NWC dominated the regional trade:

In short the NW Company has done all that lay in there power to stop us from Building here and they do not scruple to tell us we have no business in this part off the Country [HBCA B.224/a/1].

At least four fur trade forts were constructed on the left bank of the Peace River near the mouth of the Boyer River (Smythe 1968). In 1788, Charles Boyer of the NWC constructed Boyer’s Post. The post was abandoned in 1792 and replaced by Aspin House, which was constructed further upriver.

On October 4,1802, Thomas Swain was ordered by Peter Fidler to build near the abandoned Boyer’s Post (HBCA B.224/a/1). Swain constructed Mansfield House, either very near or possibly on the same spot as the abandoned Boyer’s Post. Unfortunately, the journals do not describe the construction, size or layout of these posts. The NWC built Fort Liard to counter the HBC’s presence in the area. Not to be outdone by its rivals, the XY Company established a post approximately 100 yards away from these posts (HBCA B.224/a/1). By January, 1803, however, Swain abandoned Mansfield House: “We are obliged to leave this place for want of a good hunter and Provisions” (HBCA B.224/a/2). Shortly after that, the NWC abandoned Fort Liard because there was no longer a threat to its trading monopoly in the region. The Boyer River archaeological site represents at least one, if not all, of these fur trade establishments.

Trade and Survival

The fur traders depended on the Indians for furs and provisions. But, according to Thomas Swain, the Fort Vermilion Beaver Indians were very independent, bringing in neither furs or provisions, and often becoming troublesome:

The Beaver Indians do not imitate the Mountaineers or Chipewyans in the least, as the former is a brave bold Nation....they are very troublesome at the Houses when in liquor and wish to have every thing they ask given to them for nothing. If denied they are affronted, and wish to take things wright or wrong....but when they are Sober they are very quiet and behave very well to the white people, but will not allow any white man take their Furs or Provisions from them by force, but will give it to any one they please [HBCA B.224/a/1].

Starvation often ensued when the Indians refused to hunt for the traders. In 1802, Thomas Swain wrote:

Indian hunter deserts to NW (we have almost no provisions and no hunter) - may have to go back to Fidler,...cant hire an Indian to hunt - all engaged by the NW... [HBCA B.224/a/2].

Swain’s inexperience with the Indians and the constant harassment of HBC employees by the NWC finally forced him to abandon Mansfield House:

....in the Fall when I arrived here, the Indians was all Strangers to me, & I did knot know a good Hunter by a bad one... [HBCA B.224/a/1].
It seems, therefore, that the Indians affected the rate of fur trade expansion and the livelihood of the traders. Before 1800, few posts were constructed along the Peace River. The HBC found the trade difficult because the Indians refused to provision them or prevented them from moving further inland. Swain describes how the Indians treated the XY Company traders in the Fort Vermilion region in 1802:

Mr. Leith & his five Canoes was obliged to return down the River again as the Natives this Morning told them if they offered to go up the River they would kill them, there reason was owing to some Disorder that came amongst there Country people this Summer which killed 10 of them, and they said it was the New Co. that brought bad Medicines amongst them which was the occasion of the Deaths [HBCA B.224/a/1].

A few days later the Beaver Indians also threatened Swain and his men:

...then one of them took out his Bayonet & attempted to stab Thomas Goucher, but happened to see him, and took the Knife from him, they then asked us what we came to there Country for and ordered us to go away immediately. I then asked them why they did not tell me so before the Ice was in the River, for at present it was not possible to return, and at last put them to peace and they went to sleep [HBCA B.224/a/1].

After 1800, despite continued tensions between Indians and Whites, the NWC managed to penetrate further west and established Fort D’Epinette near the Beatton River (Fig. 1).

Archaeological Investigations: Boyer River

Scope

Archaeological investigations were intended to find and test the early fur trade sites in the Fort Vermilion Region. Only the Boyer River fur trade site and the NWC Aspin House were found. For further details regarding the results of the survey, readers are referred to Pyszczyk (1990: 48-51). The remainder of this chapter discusses the archaeological remains recovered from the Boyer River site.

The Boyer River site was discovered on the west bank of the Peace River, near the mouth of the Boyer River. All visible stone chimney piles, cellar depressions and shallow palisade trenches were mapped and photographed (Fig. 2). In 1987, the site was tested to determine its age and identity (Pyszczyk 1990: 49-51). The archaeological remains dated to the late 18th century. They may represent more than one fur trade post, although the artifact assemblage, while very small, was more indicative of a NWC site. In 1988, more extensive excavations were undertaken near one of the buildings. Although limited, these excavations yielded information about fort architecture, trade goods, personal possessions, and diet, discussed below.

Post Layout and Architecture

The Boyer River post was constructed on a low, flat floodplain near the edge of the Peace River.

Figure 2. Map of surface features and location of excavation units at the Boyer River site
It lies behind a large island in the river, as do other Peace River forts (e.g., Aspin House, Fort Vermilion II and perhaps Fort Vermilion I). These locations may have been preferred for post construction because they were protected better from the elements and have low terraces near the river edge.

At the Boyer River site, a series of cellar depressions, garbage pits, and stone chimney piles are spread over an area approximately 70 by 25 m (Fig. 2). Two shallow linear depressions run roughly parallel to the river bank and may be former palisade trenches. The peculiar layout of the post and the presence of buildings so close to the river's edge suggests that parts of the site have already eroded into the river.

Alternatively, buildings associated with different posts, constructed at the same location inde-

<p>| Table 1. A Comparison of Fur Trade Post Size and Number of Buildings, Athabasca Region, 1792 - 1820. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mean Fort Size (m²)</th>
<th>Mean No. of Bldgs.</th>
<th>Boyer River Fort Size (m²)</th>
<th>No. of Bldgs.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1,960.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1,760.4</td>
<td>4-5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Swerved. The total size of the post, however, falls within the expected size range of other fur trade posts. In Table 1, the mean area and the number of buildings were estimated for Athabasca fur trade posts. The Boyer River site approaches the estimated mean area (1760.4 m²) and number of buildings (approximately four—five buildings, based on the number of cellar depressions).

In 1988, excavation units were oriented to intersect the building at a right angle (Fig. 2). Mud chinking and burned wood debris was uncovered in units 9, 11, 15 and 16. A burned wooden building sill, made from coniferous wood, was found 30 - 40 cm below the surface in unit 9 (Fig. 3). The sill is approximately 10 - 11 cm thick and roughly 20 cm wide; it was trimmed on the top and along the sides. The sill was placed in a shallow trench that cuts through a dark humic horizon upon which the building floor remains were found.

A 10 cm thick vertical upright post, approximately 15 cm wide, was positioned between two lengths of sill (Fig. 3). The post was placed in a 30 cm wide by 40 cm long shallow pit. These remains represent a post-in-ground building construction method of French-Canadian origin (Pysczczyk 1990: 49-50). In this method, vertical posts were placed in pits along the walls and corners; horizontal wall timbers were then morticed into the vertical posts.

The post-in-ground building construction technique at the Boyer River site is similar to remains found at other pre-1821 western Canadian fur trade posts. It was definitely used by the NWC and the HBC prior to that date; little is known about the construction methods used by the XY Company. The only difference with this construction style that might have existed between the two companies was in the consistency of vertical wall support posts. The NWC consistently used vertical posts in the ground at the corners, along the walls, and down the centers of their buildings. The HBC used vertical posts along the walls, but only sometimes at the corners of their buildings. More detailed examination of the Boyer

Figure 3. Scale plan drawing of the building sill and vertical post in ground, Boyer River site

*NOTE: Wood remains occur between 31-44cm below the surface of the ground.*

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River building remains may shed more light on which company occupied this site.

Wood floor remains were found immediately west of the building sill (Fig. 4). Pit sawn boards, located approximately 30 - 40 cm below the surface of the ground, rested parallel to one another and on the building sill. They were oriented in a north-south direction. The boards were approximately 15 - 20 cm wide and roughly five to ten centimeters thick. They rested directly on the ground surface and may have been tied together by wooden ribbons running across them (Fig. 4). Both the dimensions of the floor boards and the use of ribbons to tie them together resembled flooring found at the 1802 - 1806 HBC Nottingham House (Karklins 1983: 28-29).

Both the floor remains and the building sill lined up well with a large stone pile located south of the excavation units (Fig. 2). The entire building, then, was oriented to Magnetic North. An abundance of fired mud chinking lay on top of the wooden flooring and showed that the walls had been mudded for insulation. In addition, sheet refuse consisting of personal artifacts and faunal remains was deposited on the east side of the building against the wall. This evidence suggests that the building was a dwelling with a fireplace, wooden floors, and walls that were insulated with mud.

**Trade and Personal Possessions**

A total of 123 artifacts, representing five major industries and 13 functional types, were recovered from the Boyer River excavations (Table 2). While some of the artifacts, such as the patent medicine glass bottle fragment (Plate 1A), are remnants of everyday life at the site, many other artifacts represent some of the earliest known interactions between White and Native peoples in the Athabasca region. Historically, the strength and balance of power of

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Artifact Type</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Household and Personal</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal Container Rim?</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glass Patent Medicine Bottle</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Red Tubular Seed Beads</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amber Tubular Seed Beads</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blue Tubular Seed Beads</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Tubular Seed Beads</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White Tubular Beads</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Tubular Beads</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Wound Barrel Beads</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clam Shell Pendant</td>
<td>1(7 fragments)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Tinking Cone</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Triangular Pendant</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mudstone Tobacco Pipes</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Architecture</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hand-forged Square Nails</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wire Nails</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Clear Flat Glass</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Subsistence</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Shot</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lead Balls</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metal Trade Points</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Miscellaneous</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Copper Sheet Metal Fragment</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iron Fragments</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Native Industries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartzite Core</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quartzite Flake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Silicified Mudstone Flake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siltstone Flake</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chert Flake</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>123</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
those relations varied and affected the flow and form of fur trade goods. In the remainder of this chapter, this relationship is examined with the historic artifacts. First, however, some common artifacts are described.

Beads

Glass trade beads comprise the majority (63%) of the artifact assemblage and come in a variety of colors (Table 2). Drawn beads occur in the highest frequencies and are either the tubular or circular monochrome variety (Plate 1D). Only one wound oval black glass bead is represented in the assemblage. Blue (40%) and white (48%) are the most frequent colors of beads in the assemblage.

Although small, the Boyer River bead sample does complement the bead assemblages of other western Canadian fur trade posts. Very high percentages of blue and white beads are present in most of the assemblages (Hamilton 1987; Karklins 1983; Kidd 1970; Smith 1988). These results coincide with the ethnographic accounts about bead color preferences. It has been noted that the Plains and Pacific Northwest tribes preferred blue and white beads (Davis 1973: 12; Maximilian in Wied-Nieuwied 1843: 103; Ross 1976: 674). Furthermore, this color preference for blue and white beads was directly reflected in the Fort Vancouver archaeological record (Ross 1976: 674). At Fort Pelly, eastern Saskatchewan, white and blue beads were the most common in the archaeological assemblage and historically noted to be in demand by the Indians who traded there (Klimko 1983: 99).

Tinkling Cones and Pendants

Copper tinkling cones were cut from sheets of copper and then rolled into a cone (Plate 1B). A triangular-shaped copper pendant was also cut from sheet metal. These articles were often made from discarded metal containers or other scrap metal. Both artifacts were attached to personal garments or worn around the neck. They were common trade articles during the early fur trade period, and occur at other northern fur trade sites.

A circular clam shell pendant/brooch, with scalloped edges, is slightly concave-convex shaped in cross-section (Plate 1C). The object is approximately three centimeters in diameter and has a hole in the center and series of dots and lines that radiate out from the center. Some perforations occur around the edge of the object. This object resembles the silver brooches that occur at other early fur trade posts (Kidd 1970; Steer and Rogers 1978).

Plate 1. Major historic artifact types recovered at the Boyer River site: A. Melted pharmaceutical bottle, B. Brass tinkling cones, C. Clam shell pendant/brooch, D. Tubular glass trade beads

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Mudstone Tobacco Pipe

A recovered mudstone pipe bowl fragment was part of a platform pipe (West 1970). The specimen is approximately 22 cm wide and 27 cm high (Plate 2d). Thin, evenly spaced longitudinal lines were incised around the circumference of the bowl. The pipe was used, because the inside of the bowl was charred.

Platform pipes, apparently of eastern Canadian origin, appear in other early western Canadian fur trade assemblages (Hamilton 1987; Karklins 1981: 246; Kidd 1970; Klimko 1983; Losey et al. 1978, 1979; Steer and Rogers 1978). Fur trade sites often contain detritis, left over from carving the pipes; many pipe bowls are also charred (e.g., Fort Pelly, Fort George, Rocky Mountain House, Rocky Mountain Fort, Nottingham House). Evidently, then, these pipes were both made and used at the fur trade posts. Platform pipes rarely occur at historic Indian sites in western Canada (Baldwin 1978; Wallace, Forbes and Brown 1963) and, after 1821, they were less frequent in fur trade assemblages (Pyseczyk 1989: 20-21).

It is still uncertain, however, who made and used stone platform pipes. While the form of the pipe is of Indian origin, it occurs primarily at European fur trade sites in western Canada. Kidd (1970: 153) believes that Europeans carved the pipes at the posts to trade with the Indians. But the data do not support Kidd's inference, since the pipes were used at the posts and occur in low frequencies at historic Native sites. Alternatively, Hamilton (1987: 1123-4) thinks that French Canadian voyageurs brought the platform pipe template with them from eastern Canada, then made and used stone pipes. One account in the fur trade journals stated that NWC personnel made stone pipes (Nicks, cited in Baldwin 1978: 40 as pers. commun.), which may account for their greater frequency at NWC sites (Pyseczyk 1989; 1990).

Despite the problem of who made and used platform pipes at these forts, they are of Indian, not White, origin. They were copied probably from eastern Canadian Indian pipe styles and brought west by Whites or Indians, such as Iroquois working for the NWC in the west; there are no known prehistoric counterparts in northwestern Canada. The high frequency of platform pipes at NWC sites and their decline after 1821 coincides with: 1) the somewhat

---

Plate 2. Major historic artifact types recovered at the Boyer River site: A - C. Metal trade points, D. Mudstone tobacco pipe bowl fragment
Table 3. Measurement of Northern and Southern Metal Point Attributes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Stem Length (mm)</th>
<th>Blade Length (mm)</th>
<th>Total Length (mm)</th>
<th>Stem:Blade Ratio</th>
<th>Blade:Shoulder Angle</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Northern Alberta</td>
<td>13.7</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>65</td>
<td>0.4</td>
<td>140°</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Southern Alberta</td>
<td>6.5</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>44.7</td>
<td>0.26</td>
<td>110°</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

higher degree of White-Indian alliances in the NWC than in the HBC because of the larger number of marriages with Native women (Brown 1980: 51-81) and 2) the decrease in White-Indian alliances after 1821, when traders begin to marry mixed-blood women (Brown 1980: 132; Innis 1975: 288).

Metal Trade Points

Three iron trade points between 64 - 71 cm long were recovered (Plate 2A - C). Metal trade points also occur frequently at other late eighteenth and early nineteenth century fur trade posts in western Canada (Kidd 1970; Nicks 1969; Noble 1973: 148-150; Steer and Rogers 1978; Hopwood 1971: 92). These points were apparently made by Europeans from available scrap metal at the forts (Kidd 1970; Noble 1973: 150; Steer and Rogers 1978: 252-53). However, trade points are listed in the 1792 HBC Buckingham House fur trade inventories; thus, they were also made elsewhere and shipped inland.

All known northern metal trade points, including those recovered from Boyer River, were compared to southern Alberta trade points (data are from Brink 1978; Elliot 1978; Heitzmann 1978; Kidd 1970; Landals 1990; Lifeways of Canada Ltd. 1980; Van Dyke et al. 1990). Attributes were selected to measure variability in the shape or the size of the points (Table 3). Next, the mean point length, stem and blade length, stem to blade ratio, and point shoulder angles were calculated for the northern and southern samples. Then, the means of each of the attributes were compared for the northern and southern samples using a Students T-Test. Although this sample is somewhat small (n=14), the following differences in trade points are noteworthy:

1) The northern points are longer than southern points; individual stems and blades are also longer in the north than in the south. In these three measurements, the differences were statistically significant at a 95 percent level of confidence.
2) The stem/blade length ratio is greater in northern points, compared to the southern points, but the results were not statistically significant.
3) The blade to shoulder angle of the northern points is larger than that of the southern points, but the results were not statistically significant.
4) Straight blades are more common in the southern than northern metal point assemblage.

Differences in the size of the southern and northern projectile points, if verified with a larger sample, present some interesting questions. For example, were northern and southern arrow technologies different enough to require different sizes of projectile points? Or, were other factors at work? Aboriginal peoples possessed bow and arrow technology for thousands of years. Attributes such as point size have a very narrow range of variation because of restrictions imposed by materials, function, and technology. This fact also should apply to metal fur trade projectile points, regardless of who made them (Wiessner 1983: 270). For example, small points were made from brass or iron in both samples, but the larger points were made only from iron (Fig. 5). Both metals were available throughout Alberta, thus negating the possibility that metal was a factor in point size. Could function or technology then be factors for point size differences regionally? Further research will undoubtedly help answer these questions.

Diet and Subsistence

A total of 2,295 pieces of bone, shell, or fish scale, were recovered from the Boyer River site (Table 4). Mammal remains occur in high numbers (86.7%). Bird remains (4.6%) and fish remains (0.7%) both occur in relatively low frequencies.

A total of seven mammal and six bird species or genera are represented in the faunal assemblage (Table 4). Beaver (n = 172) is the most common animal, followed by hare (n = 87) and mallard duck (n = 8). The abundant number of small mammals and
mals, birds and fish than the Boyer River sample. By comparison the Fort George assemblage is dominated by large ungulate remains, with fewer fish and birds (Fig. 6).

During the early fur trade period in central Alberta, large game animals were abundant, and their remains occur in relatively higher percentages than small mammals, birds, or fish remains in the archaeological record. Fur trade diets were composed primarily of meat. For example, in 1818, at Colville House, Peace River Region, the employees complained bitterly when each man received only eight pounds of fresh meat per day (HBCA B.44/a/1). It would take

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Animal</th>
<th>NISP (Number of Identifiable Specimens)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mammal</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beaver</td>
<td>172</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hare</td>
<td>87</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bear</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Muskrat</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marmot</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wapiti</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carnivore</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rodent</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ungulate</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Ungulate</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Small Mammal</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Medium Mammal</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Mammal</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mammal</td>
<td>1582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mallard</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canada Goose</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goose</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goose or Swan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swan</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grouse or Ptarmigan</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teal sp.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anas sp.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duck</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Large Bird</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bird</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shell</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Bones</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish Scales</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>2095</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Table 4. Summary of Faunal Remains, Boyer River Site.**

Figure 5. Trade point total length and metal type selection

birds stands in direct contrast to the low numbers of large ungulates. Only moose and elk are present in the assemblage. Other large ungulates, such as bison and deer, would likely occur if sample size increased. But, their relative importance in the archaeological record would remain low.

The fur trade journal entries allude to the hard times in the region. Often, large game entered the post as dried meat or pemmican traded from the Indians. Post hunters brought in dried meat on October 4, 1803, and four Indians brought in “a little one-half dried meat” on October 17, 1803, to Mansfield House (HBCA B.224/a/1). Often, the dried meat was buffalo meat. Occasionally, the men did not get any fresh meat for days on end (HBCA 224/a/1). Regardless of how meat was acquired, subsistence was difficult, especially when the hired hunter deserted the post.

The meat shortage is even more obvious when the Boyer River faunal assemblage is compared to other assemblages in the Athabasca region (e.g., Nottingham House, HBC) and the Saskatchewan region (e.g., Fort George, NWC). Comparison of these faunal assemblages, according to the different animal categories shown in Figure 6, indicates that Nottingham House has somewhat more large mamm
more than small mammals to provide this much fresh meat daily. Therefore, at the Boyer River site, a very meager diet of fresh meat was supplemented by dried meat.

Discussion and Conclusions

The location and construction of the Boyer River fur trade site represent the competition between various fur trade companies and first prolonged contact between Indians and Whites in the region. The archaeological remains of this site, together with the documentary record, tell a story of the life and times of the early fur traders. It is the physical record of how Europeans fared and how they interacted with the indigenous northern Indian groups.

Many artifacts recovered at the Boyer River post are an indication of the interaction between the local Indians and Europeans. Many articles were made from European materials but were modelled after traditional Native artifacts: metal projectile points resemble stone projectile points, silver brooches resemble clam shell ornaments, copper tinkling cones resemble dentalium, and stone platform pipes resemble eastern Canadian forms. While it is not always certain who made and used these articles, clearly Whites and Indians constantly interacted to understand one another's needs and to form relatively close economic and social bonds. The artifacts, which combine Native form and function with White materials and manufacturing methods, demonstrate the two-way direction of that interaction before 1821. After 1821, the terms of the trade were dictated in greater measure by Europeans, and many of these artifacts decrease in frequency or disappear altogether.

The documentary and archaeological data are complementary with regard to trade relations and subsistence in northern Alberta. The early Fort Vermilion journal entries give one the impression that sometimes White - Indian relations were tense and hostile. The documents suggest that the Indians often "called the shots" and dominated the early trade. They had a direct impact on where posts were constructed and whether the traders were well fed or left abandoned to starve through the long winter. The faunal remains recovered from the Boyer River site attest to the difficult conditions that Europeans faced in this region during the initial stages of the fur trade. Large game animals were scarce. Employees relied heavily on a large variety of small game animals, predominantly beaver and hare. Unlike the posts located along Lake Athabasca, fish and wild fowl were not as abundant. During periods of extreme hardships, the men fared on flour and oatmeal and when there was nothing else to eat, a parchment skin had to suffice.

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The Last Bourgeois’ House at Fort Chipewyan

Michael R.A. Forsman

Introduction

Historical and archaeological study of the fur trade in the Athabasca district has resulted in the identification of important sites. Several of these are located near the modern community of Fort Chipewyan (Fig. 1). The longest-lived of the fur trade establishments was the site of Fort Chipewyan III, c.1803 to 1964 (Borden number IeOs 3). Archaeological survey of the site was carried out in the late 1970s (Heitzmann 1979; Heitzmann, Priegert, and Smith 1980) and again in the 1980s (Forsman 1986; n. d.) to determine site extent and condition as factors relating to its archaeological significance. Based on the information recovered, the site was designated a Provincial Historic Resource in 1986.

The westwards and northwards movement of Canadian and European fur trading ventures was connected with an architectural tradition of timber construction. Improvements in transportation, including the use of steamboats and the advent of sawmills in the later 19th century, were factors in the replacement of timber buildings by structures of frame construction. Architectural studies of the fur trade have focussed on a variety of topics (Barbeau 1945; Garth 1947; Wade 1967; Richardson 1973; Rempel 1980, Pyszczyn 1986). The paucity of architectural studies, however, has generally limited their usefulness to little more than simplistic generalizations (for example, see Pannekoek 1987:15; Forsman 1990).

The subject of this paper is the last timbered Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) officer’s house, the Bourgeois’ House, constructed at Fort Chipewyan III. The purpose of the paper is to present and integrate historical and archaeological information about this squared log house built with dove-tailed corners and set on a stone foundation. The site is important, and this paper continues the necessary process of data accumulation and analysis prior to undertaking the still broader syntheses yet to be expected from scholarly studies of fur trade architecture.

Historical Background

The rich economic potential of the Athabasca fur resources was first indicated by the fur returns of Natives associated with that region. More direct and larger scale harvesting of those furs was achieved when trading posts were established within the district (Duckworth 1990; Parker 1987). The first of these was founded in 1778 by Peter Pond on the Athabasca River where it debouches into an extensive delta, approximately 45 km south of the lake. Pond’s Post formed the Athabasca hub from which still other adventurers undertook further explorations and built new posts. These early endeavours in the region were all by independent traders and small partnerships that, together with those operating in other districts, coalesced to form the North West Company (NWC).

In 1787 Alexander Mackenzie succeeded Pond in directing activities of the NWC in the Athabasca. Based at Pond’s old fort on the Athabasca, Mackenzie noted that it failed to attract the trade of the Chipewyan (Lamb 1970: 435, 437). Under his direction, in 1788 Roderick Mackenzie constructed the first Fort Chipewyan on a low peninsula, now known as Old Fort Point, on the south shore of the lake. Fort Chipewyan became a major redistribution depot, with responsibility over subsidiary establishments and control of the fur trade over a large area. However, the site was not ideal. Spring break-up occurred later here than on the north shore and near the outlet of the lake. A new Fort Chipewyan, Fort Chipewyan II, was erected soon after 1791, near the Rivière des Rochers outlet. Peter Fidler, of the HBC, referred to it in his Nottingham House (1802-1806) journals as about three-quarters of a mile distant (Hudson’s Bay Company Archives [HBCA] B.39/a/1). Since the
location of Nottingham House has been confirmed archaeologically (Karklins 1983), the location of Fort Chipewyan II can be proposed as lying between Little Island and Mission Point. In 1800 James MacKenzie complained that Fort Chipewyan was not only poorly arranged in comparison to later sites, such as McLeod’s fort on the Peace River, but also that the structures were deteriorating (Masson 1890: 386,387). Another rival, the X.Y. Company, constructed an opposition post on the nearby “Little Island” (Masson 1890: 389).

On a sandy and exposed gneiss bedrock knoll east of Fort Chipewyan II, Fort Chipewyan III was built, the remnants of which can still be seen. The fort at this site dates from 1803, based on a reference in Fidler’s journal (HBCA B.39/a/3). Following the merger of the X.Y. Company and NWC in 1805, competitive pressures increased against the HBC and contributed to the abandonment of Nottingham House in 1806. The HBC did not return to Athabasca until 1815, when its next post was established on Potato (then called Coal) Island. From this site, Fort Wedderburn, George Simpson viewed Fort Chipewyan as a “magnificent Establishment compared with this” (Rich 1938: 361). After amalgamation of the two companies in 1821, the HBC abandoned Fort Wedderburn in favor of Fort Chipewyan.

Several historic plans of Fort Chipewyan III exist, not all to scale. Together with post journals and other references, they indicate that new construction, building modification, and site alteration were fairly common during the next century and a half. In 1871, Chief Trader Roderick MacFarlane began the last of the major rebuilding phases, replacing all extant structures on the site. Many of the new buildings were durable. The post manager’s residence stood for 93 years, after which it was salvaged for timber, and the remainder burned, according to local reports (Howard Wylie, pers. commun. 1987; Frank Ladouceur, pers. commun. 1987). Although a variety of construction projects were begun in the spring of 1871, the “new officer’s dwelling house” was not started until the fall (HBCA B.39/a/49). The same building was also referred to as the “Bourgeois New Dwelling house,” “McFarlane’s New House,” the “Officer’s Dwelling,” the “Factor’s House” (MacFarlane was promoted to Factor in 1872), the “boss’ house,” and after MacFarlane was succeeded, as “Mr. [James] McDougall’s house” (HBCA B.39/a/48–56). While the term “Factor’s House” might be applied retrospectively to this structure, as it was for the still standing officer’s dwelling at Dunvegan (Babcock 1985: 12), this designation rarely occurred in the historical literature. The post manager’s dwelling was most frequently referred to by the name of its occupant, such as “McFarlane’s house,” or “McDougall’s house.” Use of the term “Officer’s House” was frequent but problematical because it was sometimes applied, confusingly, to the “Clerk’s house.” The term “Bourgeois’ House” is favoured because it occurred regularly in the post journals with MacFarlane even being referred to as “the Bourgeois” as late as 1875 (HBCA B.39/a/50). The name Bourgeois derived from the Canadian fur trade, referring to a NWC Wintering Partner or officer in charge of a district or important post. Not formally a part of the HBC corporate vocabulary, its continued use reflects the large number of NWC personnel who joined the HBC ranks, and the survival of a lexical tradition.

There was no blueprint for the building program undertaken by MacFarlane. Journal entries to the construction and maintenance of the Bourgeois’ House were sometimes made in unclear handwriting; the information was generally superficial, inconsistent, and sometimes confusing. A reference, for example, to arranging a “platform” in front of the “officer’s house” in 1873 (HBCA B.39/a/49) did not distinguish between the Bourgeois’ House or the Clerk’s House, which was under construction by this date, and the construction of a “verandah” in 1876 (HBCA B.39/a/50) did not indicate whether this was either in front of a different building or marked a change to the earlier “platform.” This example also demonstrates that descriptive references were neither numerous nor detailed.

The general construction sequence began with the foundation, followed by the shell and cellar. Work had hardly commenced on the foundation before it was shifted “10 feet farther from the Provision store.” In 1872 there are references to erecting the log walls, “carting clay” fill, and “putting in” windows (probably rough framing). Journal entries for 1873 noted constructing windows, shingling the roof, rais-
ing interior beams, grooving cellar posts and laying cellar flooring and "side work." Interior work followed with the laying of the main flooring and upper flooring, installing wall partitions and windows, lathing and plastering, installing stoves, and constructing a stairway. Caulking the spaces between the logs and whitewashing the building proceeded while other interior work was ongoing. The house was not actually finished before MacFarlane occupied it, on 13 September 1873. More windows had to be installed, doors and shutters made and hung, and furniture built (HBCA B.39/a/48 to 50).

No single individual was identified as the foreman or master carpenter responsible for the construction of the Bourgeois' House. No men were identified as utilizing trade-specific skills. Five different men constructed and installed the windows during the two-year period. It seems that almost anyone could be assigned caulking and plastering jobs. Altogether, 19 men were employed in erecting and completing the house.

It might be wrong to interpret the long period of construction as an indication of time invested in quality workmanship. Progress on the Bourgeois' House was sporadic and characterized by long periods of inactivity. Work on the house was often undertaken by men working in pairs, or even singly. Many of the same men attended to other duties during the same interval. Concurrent with the construction of the Bourgeois' House, other structures were being erected, old ones dismantled, the business of the fur trade carried out and attention paid to subsistence activities (HBCA B.39/a/48 to 50).

The later HBC Inspection Reports provided information on the spatial relations of the Bourgeois' House and its general size. In the 1889 inspection report, compiled by Richard Hardisty, the Officer's House (Bourgeois' House) was given a position occupying a fairly symmetrical relationship together

Plate 1. Part of George Bayne's 1898 map of Hudson's Bay Company structures at Fort Chipewyan. The last Bourgeois' House is indicated by the arrow (Alberta Land Titles Office, Edmonton).
with the Clerk’s House, the Equipment Shop, Depot, and the Store & Trade Shop. The north wall of the Bourgeois’ House was illustrated as in alignment with the front (south) wall of the Clerk’s House, and also in alignment with the rear (north) wall of the Equipment Shop. The size of the Officer’s House is listed as a two storey structure measuring 32 feet by 26 feet (HBCA B.39/e/16).

The 1892 inspection report prepared by J. McDougall was only slightly more descriptive. The ground plan showed the same general relationship of the buildings. The north wall of the Bourgeois’ House, however, was definitely not in alignment with the south wall of the Clerk’s House. The size of the Bourgeois’ House was given as 31 feet by 26 feet, one foot shorter than in 1889. It was further described as “1-1/2 stories, log building on stone foundation, lathed and plastered, and shingled roof” (HBCA B.39/e/22).

The Hudson’s Bay property at Fort Chipewyan was surveyed in 1898 by George Bayne, Dominion Land Surveyor. On his plan of the site, the placement of buildings and alignments of walls were found once again to be different from those of the inspection reports (Plate 1).

The photographic record for Fort Chipewyan offered yet another source of information on the Bourgeois’ House. Dating from about 1891-1892, these photographs showed the placement of major elements such as windows and doors, and a number of structural modifications through time (Plates 2-4). They also pictured the house as constructed with dove-tailed corners. The Bourgeois’ House appears as a one and one-half storey house, well-plastered and white-washed. The verandah and stair railings were supported first by turned balusters, later by squared ones. An enclosed vestibule under the porch roof leading across the verandah to the house is seen in later photographs. Possibly it was installed only dur-
Plate 3. View of altered railings of Bourgeois’ House, 1903, Dr. McKay and family (E. Brown Collection, B. 6988 Provincial Archives of Alberta)
ing the winter seasons. There were two sheet metal stove pipe chimneys, one at each end of the house.

Before 1927 the round sheet metal stove pipe chimneys were replaced by square, brick chimneys. The enclosed vestibule at the top of the stairs leading to the front door had been removed. The verandah and stair railings had been replaced with simple square balusters. Much of the plastering and white-wash were in need of maintenance, the state of disrepair revealing the dove-tailed log structure and stone masonry foundation. Thereafter, decay was even more progressive until August, 1964, when the house was razed.

The interior layout has been recorded on the basis of interviews with local informants who recall the structure (Horace Wylie, pers. commun. 1987; Frank Ladouceur, pers. commun. 1987). The main floor of the house had an asymmetrical plan, with a central hallway extending across the house from the front door to the back door. The living room was in the northwest quadrant and a parlor in the southwest quadrant; to the east of the hallway were a bedroom in the southeast quadrant and a dining room in the northeast quadrant. The upper half storey appeared to have been open attic space.

Remains of the Bourgeois’ House

Archaeological excavations of the Bourgeois’ House have contributed new information on its construction. Portions of the foundation structure had been destroyed during site abandonment. This was most evident along the south side of the structure where much of the verandah construction had been removed, and at the southeast and southwest corners of the house foundation. When viewed by Roderick Heitzmann in 1978, the Bourgeois’ House appeared as a mounded rectangular outline with traces of stone

Plate 4. View to northwest of Bourgeois’ House, 1927 (National Archives of Canada Collection, No. 20220)
Plate 5. Aerial view to north-north west of excavation of Bourgeois' House foundations, 1987
Figure 2. Plan view of archaeological remains of Bourgeois' House
Figure 3. Elevation views of excavated remains of Bourgeois' House
retaining walls or foundations visible along the south side. The central depression was 1.37 m deep, and contained recently deposited garbage (Heitzmann 1979: 28-31). Between then and 1985, when excavations were commenced, the site had not changed visibly.

**Excavation Methods**

Mapping and artifact provenience control was based on a 1.0 m grid encompassing the Bourgeois’ House mound. Surface vegetation was easily removed as it mostly consisted of grasses with shallow root systems. Excavation was carried out by shovel and trowel, and the matrix was screened through 6.5 mm mesh. The earthen deposits were removed with difficulty. Compacted clay quickly hardened, and loose sand and gravel would not hold a vertical profile. Sections of the covering mound were excavated in turn so that profiles could be drawn at various locations. Although the wood remains uncovered were fragile, those that had been charred tended to maintain shape during the course of excavation. The stone foundation wall was the most stable of the architectural features, permitting burial under a protective earth covering in 1985 and re-exposure in the 1987 field season. Given the architectural emphasis of this paper, only the structural remains of the Bourgeois’ House are reported here.

**Stone Foundations**

Excavation of the Bourgeois’ House began with exposure of the stone foundations along the south side and the excavation of southwest and southeast corners (Plate 5). This was followed by excavation of a north-south trench across the house, exposure of the northeast and northwest corners, and finally by successive contiguous excavations until all of the foundation was uncovered (Figs. 2, 3).

There was no clear evidence for any special preparation of the ground surface prior to laying the foundation. In plan view, the Bourgeois’ House measured 9.80 m (32.15 feet) by 8.00 m (26.25 feet). These dimensions approximated those given in the 1889 inspection report.

The stone foundation consisted of beach cobbles and broken stone rubble of various sizes. The southeast and southwest corners had several large stones in the construction which formed a unified connection to east and west walls. All of the stones appeared mortared with a clay joint filler, although some sand and soil were also present in the spaces between the rocks.

All of the south wall and the southern portions of the east and west walls had an average thickness of 0.50 m. The thickness of the foundation wall was created by generally using a double row of stones and, infrequently, a single large rock. The south wall was highest at about 0.65 m above the adjacent ground surface, an elevation attained by using four to seven courses of stones. Due to the sloping ground surface, the height of the stonework decreased to the northwards. The north wall foundation was rarely more than 0.15 m high, consisting of a single row of stones. As well as being lower in height, the north wall foundation and adjoining portions of the east and west walls averaged approximately 0.20 m in thickness, or barely wider than the base log or sill they were intended to support.

The exterior facade of the south wall was well-plastered and white-washed. Plastering was much less evident on the east and west walls, and absent on the north wall. White-wash was present on all four stone foundation walls.

There had once been a verandah fronting the south wall of the house, apparently the structure referenced in post journals for 1873 and 1876 (HBCA B.39/a/49, 50). Two major stone features were uncovered that related to the front access and verandah. Central to the south wall there were remains of a stone stairway. The stones had been piled to form a range of four steps leading to the south door. The part of the south wall immediately behind the steps was not plastered and white-washed, suggesting that they had been constructed after the main foundation wall was built but before it was plastered. Perhaps these steps were covered by the “platform” added in 1873.

The verandah along the south side of the house was supported by a stone wall along its entire length. The inference that it was a later addition, possibly that noted in either the 1873 or the 1876 journal entries, was based on the following fact. The foundation, which was plastered, whitewashed, and had stone steps, was hidden by a second stone wall constructed
in front, and the intermediate space was filled with earth. The east and west ends of this southernmost stone wall were also not “keyed” into the main wall foundation.

Walls, Flooring and Doorway

Remaining portions of the basal wall logs had a maximum width of 24 cm. All of the construction logs had been well-squared with no curved surfaces or bark remaining. The building’s better preserved north wall timbers revealed several details of wall and corner construction. The west and east basal logs were laid before the north base log, and presumably also the south base log, as indicated by the corner notching. For the second course of logs, those laid next were for the north and south walls, followed by the logs for the east and west walls.

The north doorway location was represented by wooden remains of the door frame, which was set into a rough opening left for this purpose. The base log had been left intact, but the second course of logs had been cut to accommodate the door frame. The door frame materials were 2 cm thick and had been fastened using wire nails. The wire nails indicate that the original door frame was replaced at a later date.

![Diagram of structural remains](image)

Figure 4. Perspective view of structural remains, interior of northeast corner
The upper or second course of logs was 16 to 18 cm thick, with the exterior surfaces laid flush with those of the lower, thicker base logs. The vertical dimension of the wall logs tapered throughout their length, indicating an effort to make maximum use of tree diameter in raising the walls. That is, the logs were hewn to attain a consistent wall thickness, but in the vertical dimension they were hewn only sufficient to provide flat adjoining surfaces.

There were several historical references to "lathing" and "plastering" (HBCA B.39/a/49), presumably to the interior of the house. Archaeologically, 2 cm thick wood fragments with a vertical orientation were found nailed to the interior face of the second course of logs. Only one, incomplete, corroded square nail could be discerned, but two 100 mm wire nails and one 80 mm wire nail were present. There was no evidence of plaster adhering. At some time in the building's structural history, then, the plaster and lathing had been removed and a matchboard lining installed, at least in this portion of the house. The board lining was probably similar to that used in the cellar flooring (see below).

The base logs were 6 to 7 cm thicker than the overlying second course of logs, providing a flat "landing" which then played a role in supporting installation of the floor. The only in situ fragments of the main floor were located in the northeast corner (Fig. 4). The boards had been pit-sawn, as indicated by the nearly parallel lines on the under surface. The upper face had been planed smooth. The boards were 15.2 cm wide and 3.5 cm thick, with tongue-and-groove edges. The long axis of the flooring lay in an east-west direction, parallel to the long axis of the house. The flooring had been installed from north to south, because the board grooves were on the north edges and the tongues on the south edges. Of the four board fragments extant, none had been top-nailed. All had been nailed on a diagonal with the nails placed in the crease formed by the tongue. Wrought nails were used as flooring fasteners and occurred in lengths of 62 mm and 77 mm.

Floor joist fragments were poorly preserved and widely scattered. The floorboards at the northeast corner had been fastened into a lightweight joist measuring 12 cm wide and 3 cm thick. This joist and the overlying flooring were supported by an underlying sandy fill deposit. Elsewhere, floor joist fragments consisted of heavier, squared timbers. The largest joist fragment had a maximum thickness of 20 cm and a height of 17 cm. Its upper surface was heavily charred and the bottom side rounded with no bark remaining. A few cut nail fragments were found laying on the surface of the joist, but only one nail, wrought and 77 mm long, was found embedded in the wood. Another large joist fragment had three nails embedded into the top surface: a wire nail 68 mm long, and two wrought nails of 77 mm and 79 mm length.

The southern ends of two large joist fragments were supported by the inside edge of the stone foundation. Interior to the stone foundation the joists rested on fill material. Assuming the locations of several joist fragments were undisturbed, the joist spacing was about 1.6 m, centre to centre. Accordingly, six joists would have been required to support the main floor.

Fill material had been deposited inside the stone foundation of the Bourgeois' House. This deposition extended from the 1872 grade line up to the underside and side surfaces of the floor joists. Even the flooring found in the northeast corner rested on this fill deposit. The fill material was not homogeneous in nature and quality. It consisted of sands, gravels, some large cobbles, mottled soils, silts and clays. Although the material was clearly not naturally deposited, few artifacts were found within it. Beneath this deposit, and also underlying portions of the stone foundation, other architectural features and artificial deposits were found pre-dating construction of the Bourgeois' House. The nearly sterile intermediate fill deposits sloped downwards and inwards towards the edges of the central cellar. Some of the fill deposits may be attributed to the period of cellar construction.

Cellar

The cellar was nearly square in plan. The four walls were of dry-laid masonry construction using both field stone and broken rubble (Fig. 5). The corner construction was not interlocked, so the walls were probably built one at a time. The east wall was erected first, followed by the north, west and south walls. It is not known how high the walls were built.
Figure 5. Interior views of cellar masonry construction
originally because of collapse of the upper walls into the cellar and the possibility that some of the stones might also have been removed.

The wooden cellar floor was extensively burned. In overall plan the flooring construction appeared in a skewed, oblique formation (Fig. 6). It is not known if this was due to procedures followed during its construction, or if the configuration resulted from occupational disturbance, site razing or burning.

The oldest wooden components of cellar construction were four squared corner posts into which were embedded a number of cut nail fasteners. Hand-wrought nails were forged in the Blacksmith’s Shop at Fort Chipewyan. The last references in the post journals to nail making date to 1880 (HBCA B/39/a/52, 53). Cut nails possibly post-dating 1880 were found in all four corner posts. Fragments of “base boards” had been nailed to the posts, and may have
been part of a much higher retaining wall or wall lining.

The flooring, constructed interior to the stone walls and independent of the corner posts containing the cut nails, dates later than all of the other construction. This was not the original cellar floor. The cellar area can be considered in three sections: an interpreted stairway location in the northwest quadrant, the stairway landing in the southwest corner, and the remaining portion which can be referred to as the main cellar storage area.

The stairway area was defined by an absence of wooden flooring materials, and by the presence of a small number of artifacts resting directly on and in the open area of sand underlying the stairway location. The overall width of the stairway was 0.90 m. The stairs were interpreted as having sloped down towards the south, and at the foot of the stairs was the landing.

The floor of the landing constituted a fairly square area, but of different construction than the rest of the floor. At the north edge of the landing was a cross-piece of wood which had been fastened to the floor boards by nailing from the underside and bending the nails over. There was no joist under the north end of the floor boards, but there was a cross-piece on top of the flooring and fastened by nails from the down side. As such, the pieces had been pre-assembled and slid under the foot of an already existing stairway. The floor boards of the landing were square-edged, 15 cm wide and 3 cm thick. Along the south side of the landing, the boards had been nailed to a narrow joist 4 cm wide by using wire nails 75 mm long.

Across the rest of the cellar tongue-and-groove, beaded matchboards were laid as flooring. These had been laid starting from the east wall. The boards were toe-nailed to three joists with a single wire nail 63 mm long at each joist location. The floor boards were about 13 cm in width and 3.2 cm in thickness. The use of beaded matchboards as flooring appeared to be an alternate use of material normally applied as wall lining.

There was a slight indication for post support to overhead main floor joists with the presence of a floor block, possibly a shim, along the east side of the cellar. There was also a post remnant on the west side of the cellar. Both of these elements were 10 cm by 10 cm in size. Their functional interpretation as support post elements was based on their projected alignment with two of the major floor joist fragments. The cellar floor to ceiling height (underside of main floor) was 1.8 m.

Discussion and Conclusions

Architectural information on the last Bourgeois’ House at Fort Chipewyan was obtained from documentary and photographic records, from informant interviews and from archaeology. Each source has its advantages and shortcomings. Post journal references provide general information on the dates of construction, the sequencing of its various components and the personnel involved. The documents frequently do not contain specific data. For example, “collecting stones for new dwelling house” (HBCA B.39/a/48) does not indicate construction of a stone wall foundation, as opposed to their possible use as shims, fill or fireplace material. The photographs illustrate south side views predominantly; the appearance of the north facade through time is problematical. Some of the photographs provide structural details, such as the overall size and changing shape of the verandah railing and balusters, information not obtainable from any other source. Local informants provided information on room layout but were doubtful about architectural detailing and finishes. Although archaeological excavation retrieved data on the foundation, flooring and cellar, it provided no new information on the superstructure above the second course of logs.

At Fort Chipewyan, it is apparent that stone foundations were used under the sills of other buildings constructed at about the same time and later, but not from a period pre-dating McFarlane’s tenure. In the rebuilding of Fort Dunvegan commenced in 1877-1878 under Chief Trader James McDougall, the buildings there also had complete stone foundations (HBCA B.56/e/4; Babcock 1985: 21; Pyszczyk 1986: 43, 47). Stone foundations, however, did not become widely accepted within the fur trade architectural tradition.

Similarly, there is no indication from the journal sources as to the use of dove-tailed corner construction. This type of construction has been de-
scribed as a typically Canadian method, pièce sur pièce a queue d'aronde, dating to the 17th century (Richardson 1973), but its advent in the western fur trade is almost unknown. Its first demonstrated use is at Fort Chipewyan in the Bourgeois' House. All but one or two of the other structures built at Fort Chipewyan at the same time or afterwards were constructed in the more traditional post-on-sill style. A structure erected at the boat landing in 1879 is the only one referenced in the post journals as built with "dovetailing" (HBCA B.39/a/52). A 1927 photograph illustrates a building constructed with dovetailed corners. This building (moved from the boat landing?) appears as a detached kitchen close to the Bourgeois' House. The last Bourgeois' House at Fort Chipewyan is, thus far, the earliest known use of dove-tailed construction in the context of HBC fur trade posts and also the only excavated example.

Elsewhere, dove-tailed corners were employed about six years later in the construction of the Factor's House at Fort Dunvegan (Babcock 1985: 18, 21; Pyszczyk 1986: 43, 47). The Dunvegan Factor's House was also set on a stone foundation, had a hipped roof and similar ground floor plan. By the mid-1880s, dove-tailed corners became more widespread, appearing in the construction of residential and commercial structures in many northern communities.

There have been no standing structures on the site of Fort Chipewyan III for more than a quarter of a century. In recent years the site has served a variety of informal community purposes, including party, picnic and campground functions. Notwithstanding impact from these activities, the abandoned site with its many cellar depressions, mounds, surface artifact scatters and buried remains constitutes a significant Provincial Historic Resource. It is hoped that the site's exceptional historic and archaeological values, of which the Bourgeois' House is but one example, will continue to serve not only researchers but also the community's inhabitants with a physical link to a receding past.

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Wood Bison and the Early Fur Trade

Theresa A. Ferguson

Introduction

The intent of this paper is to present data from fur trade records documenting the depletion of the northern Alberta wood bison, or buffalo, as perceived by fur traders prior to 1840 and to consider the implications of these data for contemporary game management strategies, especially involving Aboriginal harvesters. The paper briefly reviews different analyses of the causes of historical game depletions and outlines Raup's 1933 reconstruction of the wood bison depletion. It then expands upon and modifies Raup's analysis, using data from the pre-1840 fur trade records of northern Alberta. Finally, it discusses the implications of these data.

Studying Historical Game Depletions

The past decade has produced ample literature on the debate over the rights of Aboriginal people to make decisions about local wildlife management. Reconstructions of historical game depletions have played a role in this debate. In fact, one article by Macpherson (1981) asserts that historical game depletions are evidence that no Aboriginal system of resource management could have existed. The explanation provided for this conclusion has two components. First, the general principle behind Hardin's (1968) "tragedy of the commons" argues that communally owned property is prone to be abused as individual users attempt to maximize their own gain without regard for the common good. Second, access to more efficient technology through the fur trade is identified as the critical factor that allowed Aboriginal individuals to over-harvest. This interpretation of the past is used to argue that a centralized approach to wildlife management was and is the only effective means of conserving the resource.

Fur trade historians (e.g., Brightman 1989; Krech 1981; Martin 1978; Ray 1978) have also analyzed historical game depletions but have identified a much broader range of relevant socio-economic factors, including territorial shifts of Aboriginal groups, the interrelationship between introduced diseases and Aboriginal belief systems, and competition between trading companies. The introduction of new technology is not irrelevant, but it is linked with these other factors in a network of complex causality. Indeed, some feel that traditional Aboriginal technology would have been sufficient to overhunt animal resources (e.g., Bishop 1981; Martin 1978).

Such analyses also accept that Aboriginal motivation differed greatly from the "profit motive" essential to Hardin's thesis (Ray 1974, 1978). Debate over the precise nature of the motivations of specific groups has produced an extensive literature, particularly on the relationship among Aboriginal beliefs, hunting practices and conservation (e.g., Brightman 1989; Krech 1981; Martin 1978). This discussion is constrained by our extremely limited knowledge of aspects of Aboriginal life other than those directly involved in the fur trade (Brown 1990).

Historical game depletions are also of interest to common property resource management theory and practice (Berkes et al. 1989; McCay and Acheson 1987; National Research Council 1986). This research examines the conditions under which communally-based management, both past and present, of renewable resources has either succeeded or failed. Taking issue with the idea that only a central government agency can effectively manage these resources, this approach stresses the specification of type of access to resources as critical to success or failure. In fact, Hardin's (1968) thesis of the loss of the commons has been challenged precisely on this point. Essentially, Hardin's case study examined only one kind of access, in which anyone could use the resources and individual users were not subject to communal regulation. Under such conditions re-
sources might well be depleted. However, there are case studies that attest to instances of effective and efficient management of communally owned resources by an identifiable community of users, where access to the resource is secure from trespass (in Berkes et al. 1989; McCay and Acheson 1987; National Research Council 1986).

This connection between access to the resource and resource depletion is reflected in many of the findings of fur trade historians who have commented on the intensity of demand for resources in the Canadian interior (e.g., Brightman 1989; Spry 1983). Periods of competition among trading companies resulted in a tremendous drain. Companies brought extra personnel into the contested areas, and sometimes competitors employed explicit scorched earth policies (Hudson’s Bay Company Archives [HBCA] D.4/90 opp. p. 89). Some Aboriginal groups relocated to different territories in pursuit of their own economic and political goals. Bishop and Ray (1976) have even suggested that the 1763-1821 period of competition in the Canadian north so decimated game and fur bearer populations that it laid the basis for the Aboriginal economic dependency of today.

These varying approaches to historical game depletions present a strong contrast. Macpherson’s (1981) explanation ignores the trespass integral to the European fur trade and instead depends on a bridging concept of “new technology” to show why game depletions are associated with the fur trade. This explanation thrusts the responsibility for depletions back on the local Aboriginal peoples. It implies that indigenous conservationist values were either absent or were “swamped” by the impact of the new technology. As the following discussion will show, the connections between norms and behavior are much more complex. The behavior of the local fur traders themselves presents a strong argument for the connection between trespass and resource depletion.

Raup’s (1933) Reconstruction of the Wood Bison Depletion

With these contrasting perspectives on historical game depletions in mind, I turn to one reconstruction of the near-extinction of wood bison in northern Alberta. In 1933, biologist Hugh Raup, published a major study on the bison of Wood Buffalo National Park, including an interpretation of the decline in bison numbers. This account has been cited and briefly commented on by other biologists and wildlife managers (e.g., Soper 1941; Payne 1983; Wood Bison Recovery Team 1987) but not substantially critiqued. It remains the seminal work in this particular literary tradition. Common to Raup’s discussion and to subsequent citations/commentaries is the focus on rifles and consequent overhunting as a causal factor in the decline of wood bison. No instances are adduced to support this interpretation: the idea merely recurs, undeveloped and vague. Associated with this idea is the assertion that the demands of the fur trade itself could not have been sufficient to motivate this overhunting. Although there is no attempt in these works to prove the point argued by Macpherson (1981), that new technology was instrumental in game depletions, the juxtaposition of ideas leaves the way open for such an inference.

Raup’s 1933 review of the bison decline entailed a detailed and comprehensive discussion of the accounts of people who were mainly transients; that is, travellers and land and resource surveyors. These accounts derived primarily, but not entirely, from the second half of the 1800s and frequently were secondhand reports from unspecified sources. Raup drew conclusions about temporal and geographical aspects of the decline as well as about causes.

Early reports from the late 1830s and early 1840s indicated some abundance of animals on the Salt Plains to the west of Slave River and on the Birch Mountains, as well as heavy mortality among bison on the central and upper Peace River due to severe winters with deep snows (Fig. 1). There was a gap in the records used by Raup until the 1860-1870s, when they reported the near-extinction of bison in the upper Peace and Clearwater River regions. Raup conjectured that the 1840s may have marked the very beginning of the bison decline, with the most rapid period of decline occurring after 1860 or 1870. Subsequent discussions (Soper 1941; Payne 1985) accepted these dates.

Raup characterized the process of the decline as involving a general reduction in numbers and elimination of the wood bison first in the periphery of their distribution, until by 1890 there were only small
Figure 1. Fur trade posts in the Peace-Athabasca region (After L.H. Thomas n.d.)
scattered bands in isolated areas and the larger herd on the west side of the Slave River. He argued that the persistence of this latter herd, despite hunting pressure, indicated that this area was the original center of abundance of wood bison. Soper (1941: 362) disputed this point, arguing that the bison were probably preserved in this area by the absence of early agricultural settlement.

As to the causes of the decline, Raup (1933: 20-21) cited two main possibilities: increased snowfall and the introduction of the rifle and consequent overhunting. To support the snowfall theory in which he appears to be most interested, Raup made reference to stories documented by various travellers in the late 1800s. The stories referred to specific instances, some apparently as early as the 1820s, when deep snows with or without a hard crust had occasioned the deaths of many bison. Raup suggested that the northern bison were already at their northern environmental limit in this respect and that population losses resulting from a series of winters with deep snows could well have contributed to a decline. While Raup posited overhunting consequent to the introduction of the rifle, he did not examine this factor in detail. However, he did claim that "no systematic hide or meat hunts were ever made" in this area. As this paper will demonstrate, his assumption was erroneous.

Evidence from the Fur Trade Records: A New Reconstruction of Wood Bison Depletion

Unfortunately, in 1933 Raup did not have access to the region's fur trade records. These consist of some North West Company (NWC) and especially Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) documents, including journals, accounts, correspondence, and district reports. Produced by persons who were resident rather than transient in the area, these materials provide information on the trade's impact on bison. However, these individuals did not necessarily have identical perceptions of the process of bison depletion, and their interpretations must be read critically.

Observ-ers used terms such as "numerous," "plentiful," "scarce" and "exhausted" to describe bison populations. Their use of these terms was colored by their experience and expectations, their needs for the production of bison meat or hides, or perhaps by "public relations" needs, such as promoting a particular image of game abundance. These records are also limited by their lack of Aboriginal perspectives and voices. They focus on trading post activities, concerns and personnel. Despite the importance of provisioning the past, game species were secondary to fur-bearers in the written record. There are no descriptions of bison management practices nor bison hunting techniques. Thus, the following discussion will not be able to provide a depiction of specific bison conservation measures that the fur trade rendered ineffective. It is possible only to outline the traders' perceptions of the process and causes of the depletion of the wood bison.

Provisioning the Post: Requirements and Organization

It is beyond the scope of this paper to present a quantitative analysis of the fur trade's consumption of provisions in the Peace-Athabasca area. Indeed, the records of the Peace River forts contain very little quantitative information on harvests at all. However, since this paper contends that the demand of the trade for provisions has been underestimated in some reconstructions of historical game depletions, it will provide an outline of what these demands comprised. More general discussions of the provisioning requirements of the western fur trade can be found in Ray (1974; 1984).

The provisioning requirements of the trade posts can be roughly categorized into internal and external purposes. Internally, provisions were required to feed the personnel at the posts, including officers and employees, their wives and children and dogs. Externally, provisions were required to feed the transport brigades and to supply provisions to other areas.

The amount of meat expended in the feeding of a trade post could be considerable. At Fort Chipewyan, Factor James Keith noted in 1823 that the standard daily food rations comprised four to five fish or eight to ten pounds of meat for a man, half as much for a woman or a dog and a quarter as much for a child (HBCA B.39/a/22, Oct. 11, 1823). This standard does not appear in any way unusual for the trade in the early 1800s, and it is accepted here as broadly repre-
sentative as a rationing standard for the Peace-Athabasca posts.

Since Fort Chipewyan was a "fish" post, meat was served only about twice a week to the personnel and not at all to the dogs, unless absolutely necessary. In contrast, the "buffalo" posts of the upper and central Peace fed their residents almost solely on large game. The forts of the Peace River had planted gardens since 1788 (Lamb 1970: 242), but these were not always a dependable source of food.

The amount of provisions required internally by the posts can be estimated by multiplying the rationing standard by the number of people the trade supported. These numbers could fluctuate considerably. One major factor in this fluctuation was whether a monopoly or a competitive trade situation prevailed. For example, there is a clear contrast in the number of posts on the Peace River between the 1806 NWC monopoly when the NWC operated four posts (J. Wallace 1928: 74-75), and the 1804 competitive period, when the NWC had five posts and the XY Company, four posts (HBCA B.39/a/3, May 20, 1804). A second example is provided by the contrast in the number of personnel at Lake Athabasca between the 1820 competitive period and the 1823 monopoly, following amalgamation. In 1820, each company had its own post. The NWC post was occupied by 76 men, 31 women, and 49 children. At the HBC post, there were 50 men and an unknown number of women and children. By 1823 there was only one post, with 57 men, 24 women, and 37 children (HBCA D.4/87, Report of Simpson to the Committee, Aug. 10, 1824; see Rich 1938: 121).

The second aspect of provisioning was the need to accumulate processed meats for the feeding of the brigades and the supplying of other areas. This processed meat consisted of pemmican, dried and pounded meat, and bags of grease. In the early post-merger period, the Peace River posts were usually requested to furnish 100-120 bags of pemmican, weighing 80-90 pounds each. Additional provisions were requested for the support of the 1825 Franklin Land Arctic Expedition and New Caledonia (e.g., HBCA B.39/b/3, June 12, 1825; HBCA B.39/b/2, McIntosh to Smith and Dease, Dec. 15, 1822). While these figures may not appear to represent huge quantities, the posts had difficulty in meeting the requirements. Data on these requirements are absent for the pre-merger period, but the larger brigades typical of that period would have required more provisions.

The provisioning of the post with meat depended not only on the supply of big game, but also on the availability of people with the skills to harvest big game and the commitment to do so for the post. The Fort Chipewyan records show how this activity was organized in the post-merger period. In the fall, local individuals with a reputation as skilled hunters would be hired and outfitted to hunt big game for the fort for the October-March period. They were commonly referred to as Fort Hunters (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/23, Oct. 19, 1824). These individuals appear to have been aided by members of their extended family. As animals were killed, the carcasses were cached and runners sent to inform the Fort. Fort employees were then dispatched to haul the fresh meat back to the post by dog sled. Other Native people would occasionally bring in both processed and fresh meat or ask that employees be sent to haul cached carcasses to the fort. The fresh meat would be used as needed. The processed meats would be used for trips by the meat haulers and would be stored for the spring brigade (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/22, April 13, 1923). It was a mark of dire necessity if post personnel had to be fed on seasoned provisions (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/25, entries of late October 1826).

The winter hunting season generally came to an end by mid-March. By this time the fort expected to have sufficient supplies of fresh meat to survive the difficult spring season and sufficient seasoned supplies to provision the brigades. If necessary, fresh meat was processed for brigade use (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/24, April 12, 1826). Even if supplies were inadequate, factors associated with the advancing season meant that large game provisioning had to slow down: trappers were returning to the fort area, the increased hunting pressure made it more difficult to harvest animals, the melting of ice and snow impeded the transportation of the meat, the Fort Hunters were eager to be off for the productive spring waterfowl and muskrat hunt, and the animals themselves were in poorer condition April through June (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/24, Mar. 31, 1826; HBCA B.39/a/29, Mar. 10, 1833). Over the April-June period, the fort supported itself with the northward migrating
flocks of waterfowl and stored food (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/22, April 23, 1823).

The summer hunt lasted from July through September. Fewer Fort Hunters were needed in the summer than in the winter, as the summer establishment of the fort was smaller. Most of the men and some family members left with the brigades in May or June. Game permitting, the Fort Hunters usually hunted within a short distance of the Fort, providing mainly fresh meat. Other local people, travelling more widely, were encouraged to make good provision hunts, process the meat so that it would not spoil, and bring these provisions back to the fort in August and September (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/29, entries of Sept. 1832). Unlike fresh kills, which were often recorded in the post journal by species and poundage, seasoned provisions were simply inventoried by poundage, so we have little idea what proportion was bison. These provisions were stored at the fort to feed the brigades or the fort personnel during periods of the winter when the harvest was unproductive.

In the pre-merger period, the relationship between local people and the fur trading companies, particularly the newcomer HBC, was more tenuous. For the HBC, gaining the confidence of local people was a major hurdle. Local people were reluctant to commit to or even to interact with a company whose future was uncertain. Their rationale is well expressed in the case discussed by Halcro in the 1818-1819 journal of Colville House (HBCA B.44/a/1, Oct. 5, 1818). Halcro used liquor to try to bribe a Beaver Indian into acting as Fort Hunter, but the man refused. His argument was that it would be too risky to link himself in this way with Colville House, because if the HBC did not return the following year, he would be at the mercy of a vengeful NWC. The forced withdrawal of the HBC in 1803 and 1815 from the Peace lent authenticity to the image of the Company as a “bird of passage” and was a powerful weapon in the NWC’s arsenal to bind the Native people to them.

With no reliable access to local Fort Hunters, the HBC developed other strategies to secure provisions. In 1804, for instance, Peter Fidler at Nottingham House on Lake Athabasca could not convince anyone to act as Fort Hunter, so he and his employees lived on a few provisions traded by various Native individuals at a high rate of pay, in addition to the fish, rabbits and partridges harvested directly by HBC employees in the vicinity of the post (HBCA B.39/a/4, various entries, Nov. and Dec., 1804). The practice of sending post employees to winter with Native groups provided food for those men, as well as increased the possibility of provisions being made for the post. By 1817, the HBC had built up a relationship with “freemen,” former NWC employees, and was able to employ them as Fort Hunters (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/13, Decoigne to Jonas Bird, Dec. 6, 1817).

**Documenting Wood Bison Decline in the Pre-1840 Trade Records**

The pre-1840 records provide information about bison depletion that can be grouped into the following sequence. For the pre-1800 period, bison were represented as abundant in certain areas and less abundant elsewhere in northern Alberta. From 1800 to 1820, documentation is scarce, and the focus of the records was on the fierce competition between rival trading companies. Persistent references to bison depletion were made for the period 1820-1830, but there was disagreement as to whether this situation was a localized or general problem. Finally, for the period 1830 to 1840, it was evident to all that the problem of game depletion generally and bison depletion specifically was a widespread one in the Peace-Athabasca area. Different causal factors were debated.

**Pre-1800: the “Buffalo Hunting Grounds”**

In this earliest fur trade period, comments about the regional distribution of bison and the use of bison by the fur trade are most clearly provided by Ross, Turnor and Fidler, the members of a HBC reconnaissance team which wintered at Lake Athabasca in 1791-92. The provisioning of future HBC posts and brigades in the area was a major concern. Based on information they received from NWC men, their reports identified the central and upper Peace River as the major buffalo hunting ground. The Beaver Indians at the NWC post of Boyer River (Fig. 1) supplied seasoned provisions, “Buffalo flesh both fresh and cured such as beat meat and rendered fatt” (Tyrrell 1934: 452). Ross commented that without the provisions from Boyer River, the NWC would
never have been able to transport out their furs (HBCA B.9/a/1, Aug. 29, 1791). In 1792, Turner noted that a canoe travelled between Boyer River and Lake Athabasca, bringing down two tons of seasoned provisions at a time (Tyrrell 1934: 452). Although most of the NWC provisions appear to have been taken from the Boyer River area, buffalo were recorded to be just as abundant at the post above Boyer River, located somewhere around the Whitemud River. These comments on the abundance of game in the Peace were supported and amplified in the same year by Mackenzie who referred to “vast herds” of elk and bison (Lamb 1970: 259).

Turnor identified the mixed prairie-woodland of the Salt Plains on the west side of the Slave River as a second buffalo hunting ground. He recommended that any post on Lake Athabasca should establish a provisioning post at the rapids on the Slave River to procure and season buffalo meat (Tyrrell 1934: 456). Mackenzie (Lamb 1970: 167-168) and subsequent authors also described this area as abounding in game, including bison, moose, beaver and waterfowl.

A third area noted in these records as “famous for Buffaloe and Red Deer” (Tyrrell 1934: 461) was the Clearwater River and its confluence with the Athabasca River. This area was heavily exploited, because the brigades used this route to the Methye Portage. Early provisioning posts of the Athabasca District were located at the Forks of the Athabasca and the Clearwater and further down the Athabasca River (Tyrrell 1934: 460; Lamb 1970: 129). The upper reaches of the Clearwater River were exploited by hunters from the Île à la Crosse district.

Notably absent from these early reports on bison hunting grounds was the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Today this delta is the home year-round for Wood Buffalo National Park’s largest bison herds. In the early 1800s, however, it was evidently not considered a major bison hunting ground, although some bison wintered in the delta near Lake Claire and were used on occasion by the Lake Athabasca posts. For instance, in the 1802-04 period of intensive competition in the Athabasca area, both the NWC and the XY Company located winter provisioning posts there, which relied mainly on bison (HBCA B.39/a/3, Sept. 23, 1803; B.39/a/4, Sept. 25, 1804). This intensity of use does not necessarily derive from great abundance of the resource. The failure of the XY Company to establish a post on the Peace meant that provisions had to be secured in the Lake Athabasca area. The NWC post was established as part of a policy of setting up posts wherever its competition did, in order to choke off competing trade.

1800-1820: Competitive Stress in the Peace-Athabasca region

Periods of intensified competition among trading companies characterize these two decades. From 1802 to 1804, both the XY Company and the HBC made unsuccessful attempts to oppose the NWC in the Peace, associated with a sharp increased in the number of traders in the region. Not only were there now XY Company and HBC employees, but the NWC brought in additional personnel to meet the challenge. Some of the new personnel were eastern Aboriginal peoples, Iroquois and Ojibway. Some Iroquois had arrived in the West as early as the 1790s, either independently or under contract to the NWC (Lamb 1970: 411; HBCA B.39/e/4). Many others were brought out under contract to the NWC in the 1800-04 period (Nicks 1979). In 1804, there were apparently 110 Iroquois in the upper Peace region alone. This group provided about a quarter of the NWC’s returns for the entire Peace-Athabasca district and over half of the XY Company’s returns for the district (HBCA B.39/a/3, May 20, 1804). After the main period of competition ended in 1804 with the merger of the NWC and XY Company, many of the Iroquois returned east, but a substantial group remained and settled in the West, as did other former employees or “freemen.” It was among the “free-men” that the fur traders found their skilled and committed workers.

In 1815 the HBC made another, even more disastrous, bid for the Peace. Again, starvation was the result, as the NWC cut the trading party off from all provisions. In the second half of this decade, there are a number of references to a marked decline in beaver (Masson 1960: 109, 113) and a scarcity of provisions on the Peace (HBCA B.39/a/13, Dec. 9, 1817). Both Wentzel (Masson 1960: 109) and Harmon (1920: 193) attributed much of the decline in beaver to the hunting practices of the Iroquois. Perhaps the
scarcity of provisions was due to the same cause. Harmon (1920: 193) commented on the Iroquois attitude towards resources:

> As they are mere rovers, they do not feel the same interest, as those who permanently reside here, in keeping the stock of animals good, and therefore they make great havoc among the game, destroying alike the animals which are young & old.

In 1817 the HBC made its third and eventually successful move into the Peace. Ironically for the NWC, this time the HBC was able to secure provisions successfully by employing Iroquois freemen from the Lac la Biche area. Decoigne, the HBC Factor at Lake Athabasca and a former “Norwester,” was quite explicit about this strategy. He intended to employ “Cardinall and Glaudus [sic] with all the Iroquouis [sic]” (HBCA B.39/a/13, Decoigne to Lewis, Dec. 6, 1817) in making provisions at the forks of the Athabasca and Clearwater for the HBC brigade. He further recommended that freemen be hired as Fort Hunters and interpreters “Particularly till such time as we acquire a footing among the Indians” (HBCA B.39/a/13, Decoigne to Bird, Dec. 6, 1817).

As a result, both the Colville House and Fort St. Mary contingents of the HBC brought Iroquois employees with them to harvest game and to act as liaison in procuring provisions from the local Beaver Indian population. Fort St. Mary also relied on both an Iroquois group already resident in the Smoky River area and a French-Cree freeman, Baptiste Bisson. Hiring Bisson as Fort Hunter and interpreter was seen as a coup because he was “the best without exception in the North” (Rich 1938: 64), as well as connected by marriage with a Saulteaux family which had a good reputation as fur hunters. Even after the HBC posts were relatively well-established on the Peace, Simpson stressed the advantages of hiring freemen, “as we depend on them in a great measure for provisions” (Rich 1938: 278).

While we can only speculate on the quantitative impact of these years of fur trade competition on bison numbers, the condition necessary for a “tragedy of the commons” is evident: an influx of outsiders interested in local resources. There is evidence that the immigrant specialist hunters and trappers over-exploited the beaver resource. As their activities were also considered vital for the provisions trade, declines in bison, the major provisioning species, are equally likely. Indeed, this is supported by the records for the following decade.

1821-1830 Varying Perceptions of the Bison Decline

With the establishment of the HBC monopoly in 1821 comes the most extensive documentation of conditions in the Peace-Athabasca region and the earliest clear evidence of the decline of bison in the central and upper Peace. Before turning to the Peace River material, some comments are due on the other buffalo hunting grounds.

As mentioned previously, the Peace-Athabasca Delta area was not considered to be a major hunting ground, but its proximity to the Lake Athabasca forts did mean that its small bison population was exploited from time to time. Although there is no overt reference to bison diminishing in the delta, bison were no longer harvested there after the late 1820s. Instead, Fort Chipewyan journal references to bison harvests locate them on the north shore of the Peace River or, more rarely, up the Athabasca River. One period of heavy exploitation is well-documented, which may have been instrumental in the bison decline. After an unsuccessful autumn hunt in 1820, Simpson directed the Fort Wedderburne Fort Hunters to Lake Clair, “where there are generally a number of Buffalo at this season of the year” (Rich 1938: 182, Dec. 5, 1820). In February, the lake fisheries failed, and buffalo meat became the mainstay of the HBC post, Fort Wedderburne. Apparently, most of this meat was harvested around Lake Clair. The NWC post, Fort Chipewyan, was undoubtedly also affected by the failure of the fisheries. Its harvest of large game over that winter was estimated by Brown of the HBC at 300 animals (HBCA B.39/e/3). If many of these were bison from the Lake Clair herds, it is not surprising that references to bison harvests in the delta diminish in subsequent years.

The buffalo hunting ground on the west side of the Slave River seems to have been preserved from this kind of overhunting, probably due to factors of location and access to labor. This hunting ground was abutted by trade posts which were located on good fishing lakes. The forts’ requirements for game were accordingly lower. Also, this area was far
enough from either post that only its margins were easily accessed by the Fort Hunters. To overcome this, a provisioning post could have been established in the area, as Turner suggested in 1792, but the Chipewyan occupants were at that time notoriously reluctant to part with their provisions (Tyrrell 1934: 414; Gillespie 1975).

Data on bison in the Clearwater-Athabasca forks area are scanty. In 1820, Simpson’s Athabasca Report (Rich 1938) predictably characterized the area as abounding in bison and deer. The subsequent withdrawal of a regular post there as part of his post-merger austerity program resulted in few references to the game situation in the 1820-1830s. Existing reports are contradictory (W.S. Wallace 1968: 136), so this area will not be discussed further.

As noted above, the records from the Peace River provide the clearest evidence of the bison decline. Yet, even in these records, different perceptions of this decline existed. The Peace River Chief Traders, William MacIntosh of Fort Dunvegan and Colin Campbell of Fort Vermilion stressed that the upper and central Peace were depleted of game from the very first of the post-merger records of 1822. The Fort Vermilion District Report for 1822 noted, for instance, “the exausted [sic] state of the country in large animals” (HBCA B.224/e/1), and Fort Dunvegan was characterized as “formerly a plentiful place .... Buffalo has been very scarce their [sic] some years past” (HBCA B.39/e/4, fo. 7d).

MacIntosh and Campbell continued to correspond with the Chief Factors of the District about this problem throughout the 1820s and into the 1830s (HBCA B.39/b/2 to B.39/b/5). These two Chief Traders were former NWC traders and had both lived in the Peace for some years, MacIntosh since about 1805 and Campbell since 1811 (W.S. Wallace 1934: 431, 473). Their comments on game depletion appear to have been made in comparison to the harvests of earlier years. Their remarks suggested a regional, not just a local, depletion.

At least one of their superiors agreed with them. Edward Smith, Chief Factor at Fort Chipewyan, was vehement in his analysis of the problem of game decline:

Witness, Hay River and Fort Vermilion: had never Iroquois been introduced you would have still handsome Returns from these Places. Now they are dwindled away to nothing. The Poor Beaver Indians with all their industry scrape only a miserable livelihood —, their Country exhausted of Beaver and large Animals, and by who? — by the Wild, ambitious policy of the Whites Who study their own interest first and then that of the Natives [HBCA B.39/b/2; Smith to MacIntosh, May 1823].

A different view of the game situation in the Peace was presented by George Simpson in 1820 (Rich 1938). Simpson characterized the two HBC posts there as having suffered in past winters from starvation due to local depletion, despite being situated in the midst of general or regional abundance. Perhaps he considered this local depletion through overhunting inevitable, because he emphasized that the real problem was the lack of transportation, recommending that horses be imported to provide the necessary access to the more distant hunting grounds.

Similarly, when Fort Vermilion experienced a crisis in provisioning in the winter of 1822-23, Simpson disagreed with Factor Campbell’s suggestion that the post be moved nearer to the Caribou Mountain fishery. He counter-proposed that an out-post should be provided to the Hay River Chipewyans, presumably to encourage and facilitate the provisions trade (HBCA B.39/b/2, Simpson to Smith, Feb. 8, 1823). Again, this solution depended on an abundance of game elsewhere in the region and focused on how to gain access to it.

In fact, Simpson’s sole reference to conservation of game in the Peace River region in this decade emerged as a post hoc evaluation of the 1826-28 closure of Fort Dunvegan. Simpson noted that game was recovering in the Dunvegan area and surmised that once Dunvegan re-opened and the Beaver Indians of the upper Peace returned from the Fort Vermilion area, Fort Vermilion’s resources would recover as well (HBCA D.4/90, Simpson’s Report to the Governor and Committee, York Factory, July 25, 1827).

In summary, beginning in the early 1820s, observations about a regional bison decline were made by the Factors of the Peace River posts. Given their long experience in the area, their arguments have, to my mind, great credibility. Simpson seriously underrated the threat to game and specifically to bison.
populations in the region. By viewing depletion as a localized phenomenon, he deferred, and on one occasion, stifled the development of alternate strategies for provisioning. While Simpson commented on the value of conservation strategies for dealing with localized depletion in the case of Fort Vermilion (1826-28), his regional policies to address other issues had variable impacts on the provisioning issue. The reduction of personnel and posts had the beneficial impact of reducing the demand on food resources. On the other hand, once the summer beaver hunt was banned to conserve beaver, Aboriginal people were doubly encouraged to make provisions during the summer (HBCA D.4/87, Report of Simpson to the Governor and Committee, Aug. 10, 1824). Essentially, it appears that the many other issues that the HBC faced after the 1821 merger - furbearer populations, expenditures, and trader-Aboriginal relations - took precedence. As long as provisions were forthcoming from the Peace, the problem of game decline assumed a low priority.

1830-1840: Consensus on Decline of Bison; Discussion of the Causes

Simpson’s optimism continued until at least 1829 (HBCA D.4/93, letter of Mar. 1, 1829), but by 1832, his opinion about the resources of the Peace suffered a sharp reverse. Simpson now characterized the entire Athabasca District as having been “over-wrought during a series of violent oppositions but even now does not recover as it should” (HBCA D.4/99, Report to the Governor and Committee, Aug. 10, 1832, point 63). In response, John Charles, the Chief Factor for the Peace-Athabasca District reported that beaver populations had recovered (HBCA B.39/b/5, Charles to Simpson, June 1, 1833), but the same could not be said for big game. By this period, the regional decline in game appears to have been generally acknowledged, even if not decisively addressed. Nonetheless, the Peace River posts were still pressured to supply provisions (HBCA B.39/b/11, Fisher to Shaw, Sept. 2, 1840).

In 1833, MacIntosh of Fort Dunvegan and Charles of Fort Chipewyan corresponded extensively on this topic. MacIntosh emphasized the part played in the decline of the harvest at Fort Dunvegan by the loss of the area of the upper Smoky River to an Iroquois/freeman group. He described this area as once highly prized and carefully conserved by the Beaver Indians with respect to both fur-bearers and game animals, “but the Cattle are now destroyed in that Valuable portion of their Lands by the people on whom it was bestowed” (HBCA B.39/b/5, MacIntosh to Charles, Oct. 22, 1833).

In December 1833, Charles summarized the situation for the Governor and Committee, presumably on the basis of this correspondence:

Peace River in Respect of Large Animals, is not the same Country it was in Days long Since gone by, there is no Buffalo in that Quarter now, And the Exertion of the Beaver Indians ... on their Circumscribed Grounds with the encouragement held out by us for Provisions and Leather has I believe thinned the Moose Deer considerably [HBCA B.39/b/5, Charles to Governor and Committee, Dec. 1833].

However, the last existing letter in this correspondence between Charles and MacIntosh states the bottom line:

Our Object however at present is to obtain all the Provisions we can and however we may Wish to preserve the Cattle in our own District ... We must defer the Commencement of any Measure to this Effect, till after Autumn, 34 When in all probability some other Arrangement will be made Connected with Supplying Caledonia [HBCA B.39/b/5, Charles to MacIntosh, Dec. 1, 1833].

As Charles reminded MacIntosh, Dunvegan was still able to produce its quota of seasoned provisions for the brigade and Caledonia.

The role of experience in channelling expectations is made quite clear in this correspondence. Charles, a relative newcomer, viewed the current harvest from Dunvegan as adequate for the current trade demand and, to a certain extent, advantageous with respect to the supply from Fort Vermilion. MacIntosh, the “old-timer,” compared Dunvegan’s current supply unfavorably to Dunvegan’s former harvest, and he indicated that the game populations were not equal to the current Aboriginal demand (HBCA B.39/b/5, MacIntosh to Charles, Oct. 7, 1833, Oct. 22, 1833).

Outside groups continued to exert pressure on the resources of the Peace in this period. In the late 1820s and the 1830s, the Fort Dunvegan area in
particular and the Fort Vermilion area to a lesser degree experienced a series of incursions of Aboriginal groups from the Saskatchewan District. In part, these appear to have been motivated by the Peace's continuing, if increasingly illusory, reputation for resource abundance. The famine of the mid-1830s in the Saskatchewan District was certainly also a motivating factor at that time (HBCA B.56, Feb. 1, 1837). Each of these incursions was viewed with great distrust by the Beaver people, and each was followed by assertions that the invading group had exhausted resources, as documented below.

Correspondence from 1833 indicates that the intrusion of the Fort Saskatchewan freemen was probably a yearly event since the 1828 re-establishment of Fort Dunvegan. The continuation of the freeman group's "exterminating system of destroying whatsoever comes in the way at all seasons of the year" was deplored (HBCA B.39/b/5, Charles to MacIntosh, Feb. 28, 1833). References in the post journals in 1829 specifically pinpoint the Fort Assiniboine Iroquois as devastating the beaver (Provincial Archives of Alberta (PAA) 74.1 box 4, item 120, entries of Feb. 26 and Nov. 1, 1829). Subsequent invading groups included the Assiniboine of Fort Assiniboine in 1835 (HBCA B.56/a/4, Aug. 23, 1835); the Plains Cree in 1836, who were accused of "having exhausted the best part of the country for larger animals" (HBCA B.56/a/5, Nov. 2, 1836); and in 1837 the Saskatchewan freemen from Jasper House, who were accused of having hunted out the beaver (HBCA B.56/a/6, May 25, 1837, Jan. 20, 1838).

By 1831, Fort Vermilion had moved downriver to its current location, but the bison herds did not recover. In the post records of the mid-1830s, it is clear that moose was the main game animal in the vicinity of the fort, although there are indications that game, including bison, was more abundant in the hinterland areas of the Hay and Loon Rivers (HBCA B.224/a/4, Oct. 17, 1834, Mar. 25, 1835). By the early 1840s, bison was no longer ranked as either first or second in availability around the fort. In February, 1842, for instance, when moose was unusually scarce, the only alternative discussed for provisioning was that of woodland caribou on the Caribou Mountains (HBCA B.224/a/8, Feb. 23, 1842). The last journal reference to the Fort Hunters hunting bison appeared in January, 1842 (HBCA B.224/a/8, Jan. 13, 1842).

The Chief Traders at Fort Dunvegan continued to comment on the difficulty with which provisions were procured (HBCA B.39/b/5, MacIntosh to Charles, Aug. 29, 1834; B.39/b/8, Campbell to Smith, Apr. 30, 1837). The post records from the mid-1830s on, although scanty, appear to indicate an increased dependence on moose and "cabri." Campbell noted in 1840 that since the large game had disappeared the Fort Dunvegan Indians were forced to depend on rabbits, and, with the rabbit cycle at a low point, the people were expected to starve (HBCA B.39/b/11, Campbell to Fisher, Oct. 9, 1840). Stories of starvation continued into the 1840s (e.g., HBCA B.56/a/11, Apr. 10, 1843). By 1860, the Fort Chipewyan District Report referred to the wild meat requirements of Fort Dunvegan as being met through moose and black bear. Bison were not mentioned at all (HBCA B.39/e/10).

There were, however, observations from the late 1800s of small bands of bison in the upper Peace between Fort Dunvegan and Fort St. John (Ogilvie 1893: 39). It may be that bison never disappeared entirely from the area until after that time, although we should not dismiss the possibility that the upper Peace was occasionally re-entered by migrant bands of bison from the foothills.

The Salt Plains apparently continued abundant in bison. In later years, Salt River settlement was established on this hunting ground and served as a source of provisions to the HBC. Over the decades, hunting pressure from these provisioning activities may have been partly responsible for a decrease of bison. Disease may have also played a role. According to local tradition, bison were plentiful in the Salt Plains area until the 1850s or 1860s, but many died one summer due to disease. This mortality and others noted for the area in the fur trade reports are documented in Ferguson and Laviolette (1992).

As noted above, Governor George Simpson had recognized the scarcity of the game in the Peace-Athabasca area by the early 1830s and on at least one occasion ascribed this to the violence of the competition for that area. However, a new theme emerges in the administrative reports about this time, that of Native peoples killing large numbers of game during
winters of heavy snowfall. Reports from both the Mackenzie and the Plains noted that great numbers of game animals had been run to exhaustion and killed in extremely deep snows in the winter of 1830-1831. Game scarcity in subsequent months in these areas was attributed to these events (HBCA D.4/125, Colin Robertson, Fort Pelly, to Simpson, Feb. 13, 1831; Edward Smith, Fort Simpson, to Chief Traders and Factors, Nov. 28, 1830). The Fort Dunvegan post journal recorded a similar incident in the winter of 1829-30. The trader, MacIntosh noted that this "wanton" killing by the Fort Hunters provided more than twice the number of bison actually required by the post, but that since the animals were so lean, the meat was of little use (PAA 74.1, box 4, item 120, Feb. 16, 1830).

Such an event could be interpreted in a number of ways. It might represent a continuation of the traditional practice of running down game in deep snow, but at a time when game was sufficiently reduced that the practice was maladaptive. It could also have been an over-reaction to an easy harvest after a number of years of scraping out "a miserable livelihood." There is also the possibility of a mercy killing of starving animals. Finally, it could have been a reaction to intrusion on their resources. Just a few months previously, the local Beaver people and freemen were "working the Beaver without incitement and say for their reasons ... that if they do not kill it, the Iroquois etc. of Fort Assiniboine will be before them" (PAA 74.1, box 4, item 120, Nov. 1, 1829). A similar rationale could have been applied to the bison harvest.

The occurrence of such events appears to have been discussed among the fur trade administrators and gained some currency as an explanation for game declines in the Canadian interior. At least, Maclean attacked this reasoning in his 1849 memoirs (W.S. Wallace 1968: 354). After asserting that the HBC had never passed any regulations to conserve large game, but instead had encouraged the collection of provisions, he noted:

That the natives wantonly destroy the game in years of deep snow is true enough; but the snow fell to as great a depth before the advent of the whites as after, and the Indians were as prone to slaughter the animals then as now; yet game of every de-

scription abounded and want was unknown. To what cause then are we to ascribe the present scarcity? There can be but one answer - to the destruction of the animals which the prosecution of the fur-trade involves.

In summary, while the records of this decade 1830-1840 document general agreement on the depletion of bison in the Peace River area, the causes to which this depletion are ascribed vary. Factors discussed in earlier decades are mentioned again, especially the pressure for provisions by the trade, exacerbated by strategies employed in the early competitive period. By the end of the 1830s, however, a new cause is proposed: the lack of good game management practices by Aboriginal groups. Ironically, the correspondence and reports of this decade parallel aspects of the contemporary debate over wildlife management.

Discussion

The data discussed above offer a new perspective on Raup's (1933) reconstruction of wood bison depletion. They inform the argument that historical game depletions are evidence that Aboriginal people could not manage their resources, by providing evidence about a set of conditions under which one game population was depleted. The following discussion will consider these salient points.

Raup concluded that the decline in bison occurred gradually between 1840 and 1860 and quite rapidly thereafter. In contrast, these early fur trade records make it clear that bison populations were in marked decline before 1840. Given the observations on game depletion in the first consistent records from the early 1820s, we can suggest with some confidence that the depletion began in the earlier period of 1800-1820.

Raup also concluded that the decline first affected wood bison in peripheral areas and only later in the core of their range, which he assumed was just west of the Slave River. The fur trade journals and correspondence indicate the opposite, that the initial depletion occurred in the core area, which was located in the region of the upper and central Peace River.

The other buffalo hunting grounds in northern Alberta, including the Peace-Athabasca Delta, were
subject to hunting pressures which were largely dependent on their specific locations with respect to fur trade posts. For the Peace-Athabasca Delta area, the evidence for bison decline before 1840 is clear. However, there is little definite evidence on the relative state of the bison population in the hunting grounds on the west side of the Slave River and in the Clearwater River at this time.

Finally, Raup concluded that the bison near-extinction was caused by increased snowfalls and by overhunting consequent upon the introduction of the rifle. In contrast, the long-time Peace-Athabasca traders firmly placed the responsibility for game depletion on the demands of the fur trade for provisions. These demands were satisfied through the introduction of immigrant specialist hunter-trappers who serviced the trade, initially under contract and then as “freemen.” New technology was not the cause.

The emphasis in these records on overhunting as a cause of bison depletion does not constitute a refutation of Raup’s hypothesis concerning the role of increasing snowfall. On the contrary, some of the events mentioned above could be used to bolster such a hypothesis. Other sources (e.g., Goddard 1916) also repeat stories of deep snowfall causing heavy mortality among the northern bison. John Maclean may not have been entirely correct in his argument that the snowfalls of the sort experienced in the 1830s and 1840s were always common occurrences. The final cold period of the “Little Ice Age” is usually dated to the mid-1800s, and an increase in snowfall may well have been a feature of this climatic oscillation. The pre-1840 records are too early to reflect a trend of increasing snowfall. The post-1840 records may be more useful in this respect. Presumably, the balance among bison, snowfall, and Aboriginal hunting had survived earlier similar oscillations. That the bison population barely survived the 1800s indicates the operation of at least one additional factor. We would have to conclude from the documentary record that this factor was the fur trade’s demands for provisions.

The literature about common property resource management is concerned with the conditions under which communally-based institutions of resource management succeed or fail. It highlights the need to consider the context of any resource management activities. Instances of overhunting are not proof that no cultural value is placed on the sustainable use of resources. The relationship between cultural value and action is more complex. Particular social, economic and ecological circumstances operating at any one time can have a profound effect on which values are selected for expression in specific adaptive strategies (Stuchlik 1976: 7-45).

For instance, communities which practice effective resource management but which cannot repel intruders may eventually decide to exhaust the resource themselves in order to realize a benefit. One example may be the Beaver Indians and freemen, who trapped beaver intensively possibly because of repeated intrusions from the south. It does not follow that the Beaver Indians no longer had respect for a norm of sustainable use, nor does it follow that they never had respect for such a norm. The social context was simply not conducive to the expression of that traditional value. This perspective can be applied as well to the European fur-traders. Short-term adaptation by fur traders to competitive circumstances can be identified as one factor leading to resource depletion. A broader analysis of socio-economic and ecological conditions, although beyond the scope of this paper, could be performed, perhaps in the vein of Margolis’ 1977 study of frontier cultivation.

With respect to defining such conditions, a complicating factor in the Peace-Athabasca case is the number of intruding groups. In the early period of competition there were two and on occasion three competing European fur trade companies in the Peace-Athabasca area, as well as the specialist Iroquois/Saulteaux group of trappers. In addition, the Lake Athabasca-lower Peace distribution of the Chipewyan represented a shift south and west from their traditional territory. This shift began in the 1770s (Gillespie 1975: 374), and by 1830 there was a stable population of Chipewyans in this area. The history of Cree movement is more controversial, but certainly both the Cree and Chipewyan had expanded into Beaver territory and from time to time continued to impinge on Beaver Indian lands. In subsequent years, the trespassers came from the south and included Saskatchewan River and Fort Assiniboine peoples.
Part of the significance of multiple alien groups is that each one may have had different goals and strategies of resource exploitation. The Fort Assiniboine-Saskatchewan River intruders of the late 1820s-early 1830s, for instance, engaged in “raids” on the resources of the upper Peace, perhaps as a short-term alternative to resource exploitation in their own country. The Plains Cree used the strategy of burning the country as they passed through, in order to drive away the large game, according to MacIntosh (HBCA B.56/a/5, Oct. 24, 1836). The use of fire to favor certain game species by altering the vegetation appears to have been commonplace in northern Alberta (Ferguson 1979; Lewis 1982), but its use to affect the subsistence of other groups adversely was more characteristic of the Plains (Loscheider 1977).

The other groups cited above appear to have had longer-term commitments to the area, but this did not necessarily translate into actions which were consistently conservationist in nature. The fur trading companies presumably anticipated long term residence in the country, a goal consistent with good resource management, but since access to provisions was the crucial point on which the initial contest rested, short-term remedies to the competition problem involved resource abuse. Similarly, the Chipewyan were described as managing their own beaver resource well but at the same time over-exploiting that of neighboring lands (HBCA D.4/93, Simpson to Committee, Mar. 1, 1829).

A second part of the significance of this multiplicity of trespassers has to do with the specific relationships among the various intruders and local groups. The ability or the inclination of the resident peoples to repel invaders was important. From Turnor’s observations in 1792, we might conclude that the Beaver Indians were fully committed at that time to meeting the NWC’s relatively low subsistence needs. In view of this, the NWC decision to bring in additional labor to deal with competitors could reflect a number of different factors: First, there may have been insufficient Beaver Indian hunters to provision and trap for an increased number of NWC posts, possibly due to epidemic diseases (HBCA B.41/a/2, Oct. 5, 1802). Second, the Beaver Indians might have decided to play the competing companies against each other rather than working solely for the NWC. Indeed, the Fort St. Mary journals comment on La Flux, the trading chief, who divided his harvests between the NWC and the HBC so that they would vie for his products and both would remain in the country (Rich 1939: 113). Third, the NWC may have recognized the benefit from introducing a competitor for the Beaver Indian role of providing furs and meat. Promoting competition among Fort Hunters of different ethno-cultural backgrounds was certainly a feature of post-1821 provisioning (HBCA B.39/a/22, Oct. 15, 1823). Finally, a transfer of labor to the Peace-Athabasca region may have partly resolved issues of resource depletion and of relationships with Aboriginal groups in eastern Canada.

Although there are references to hostilities between the Beaver and the Chipewyan (e.g., HBCA B.39/a/24, Feb. 10, 1826), there is no reference to hostilities with the Iroquois, despite the latter’s role in depleting the resources of the upper Peace. Their role as employees of the companies may have provided some protection. Yerbury (1986: 85) suggested that such tensions may have been reduced by Beaver-freemen intermarriage, which would have served to equalize access to trade goods. This suggestion is somewhat spoiled by his use of the example of Baptiste Bisson and his sisters, who married members of a Saulteaux family. Bisson is characterized by Yerbury as a Beaver Indian chief, but he was a Métis freeman (Rich 1938: 64, footnote). This particular set of marriages is support for Nicks’ (1979) observation that the freemen tended to marry among themselves. However, if we wanted to find a contrary example, Bisson’s brother, Bastonais would serve. Some of his descendants are living today in the Assumption-Fort Vermilion area as part of the Beaver/Slave population (Ferguson n.d.).

The absence of hostilities between the Iroquois and the Beaver may have been aided by the Iroquois’ final selection of territory. MacIntosh (HBCA B.39/b/5, MacIntosh to Charles, Oct. 22, 1833) commented on their occupation of the upper Smoky River, an area apparently not intensively used by the Beaver but kept as a seed area. These foothills may have served also as a buffer area between the Beaver and other Aboriginal groups. Occupying intertribal buffer zones rich in game resources would have been a likely strategy for intrusive groups which intended
to settle. The Chipewyan occupation of the Hay River, an area intermediate between Beaver and Slave peoples, may have represented a similar phenomenon.

A final point that may be significant is the role played in this resource depletion by informational lag. Simpson, despite extensive travel in the Peace-Athabasca region, took almost eight years to arrive at the same conclusion about resource depletion as the local Peace River traders, that the Aboriginal groups from the Fort Assiniboine and Saskatchewan River were raiding an area that was already seriously depleted. In part, this lag was a product of relative abundance of resources. The Peace River probably was resource-rich in comparison to other areas and yielded a return which yet justified the effort. Nonetheless, this continued exploitation was instrumental in pushing the bison towards extinction.

In conclusion, then, this case study contributes to a refutation of the way in which historical game depletions have been depicted and used, as illustrated in Macpherson (1981). Perhaps such a case study of single big-game species can make its way more easily across disciplinary boundaries into the wildlife management literature. Yet, given the recent initiatives in co-management of northern wildlife resources, this concern over the representation of historical game depletion or management is almost passe. Certainly, Macpherson (1986) appears to be advocating a revised approach. Current negotiations do not overtly depend on this line of argument - and rightly so, because it is significant only if one assumes that what people did or did not do in the distant past is directly related to what their descendants can or cannot do in the present - and this is palpably false.

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**Notes**

1. The wood bison were a northern bison population, represented as a distinct subspecies, *Bison bison athabascae*. That designation is now questioned (Geist 1991). They are commonly referred to as “buffalo.”

2. The omission of the upper Peace in what is now British Columbia is a direct result of the extreme paucity of early post journals for that area.

3. But see Goddard (1916) for oral tradition concerning communal techniques of bison hunting among the Beaver people.

4. Now called Wabasca River.

5. The term “cabri” is generally used in the historical literature to refer to pronghorn antelope. It is a term which appears in the Fort Dunvegan journals, but not in those from Fort Vermilion. Banfield (1974: 402) does not consider the historical distribution of the pronghorn to extend to the Upper Peace. Either Banfield was mistaken or the term was used by some people to refer to another species, such as a deer.

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Wood Bison Recovery Team

Yerbury, Colin
Fur Trade History as Text and Drama

Jennifer S.H. Brown

Beginning in about 1930, Harold A. Innis made the fur trade a permanent fixture in Canadian economic history, giving it a visibility in academic circles that it has since maintained. Not many people know his first book on the subject, *The Fur-Trade of Canada*, which appeared in 1927 as a contemporary study of that industry sponsored by the Department of Political Science at the University of Toronto. It was rather his second, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (1930), which, despite its unoriginal title and rather muddy prose, served strongly to inscribe the fur trade into university courses and texts. Innis uncovered in his subject a scope and analytical potential that delved far deeper than George Bryce’s *Remarkable History of the Hudson’s Bay Company* (1900) or William Schooling’s celebratory historical overview (1920) marking the Hudson’s Bay Company’s 250th anniversary.

Six decades after Innis, fur trade social history has come of age, rather overshadowing the older economic and company-oriented histories. The 1970s and 1980s produced dozens of writings on women, Indians, and families in the fur trade and on related topics (see, for example, the listings in Krench 1992). The subject is safely entrenched in our historical consciousness. Yet, as a fur trade historian myself, I have a few misgivings about that entrenchment and about the ways that “the fur trade,” “fur trade society,” or “the fur trade era” have become standard units of study in Canadian history. In defining such entities we also reify them, treat them as real, often without looking critically at what we have created, or at the alternatives. And having created them, we then textualize the fur trade into our larger accounts of the Canadian past as an integral part of the history (or rise) of the nation of Canada. In this essay, I shall briefly explore two aspects of fur trade history as narrative: first, the fur trade story as it has become woven into the larger text of Canadian history; and then, fur trade history as its own self-sustaining text and drama, feeding upon and recirculating some remarkably persistent themes of adventure, emergence, and progress.

**Writing the Fur Trade into Canadian History**

The fur trade now occupies a chapter or subsection of any Canadian history textbook that comes on the market. It appeals to publishers not only as an established field of study, but probably also because it kills two other birds with one stone. First, it remains interesting and dramatic in itself, resonating with elements of popular culture to which many students are already exposed — adventure, explorers, frontiers. Second, recent trends in its historiography have promoted the inclusion of women and Indians, and these are groups every text is supposed to mention, even if the women remain largely incidental and the Indians vanish after Confederation (except when they sign treaties or have conflicts with government).

If the fur trade has been given a new pride of place, however, it has also been co-opted, in a sense, into the national story of Canada, neatly packaged into the free books that publishers distribute hopefully every year for class adoption among teachers of Canadian survey courses. A professor's choice of a text has implications beyond content or subject coverage; it involves selecting a particular framing and structuring of the past. Writers of texts may make their assumptions and rationales for choosing a certain narrative structure explicit, or more often, they may leave them implicit or only partially articulated. But any text has its organizing principles. Besides the substantive treatment that it may give to the fur trade (and every other topic that it covers), it also assigns to those topics whatever roles may best serve its overall narrative plan.
“Text” itself is an interesting term; its Latin etymology refers us back concretely to weaving, as of fabric, cloth, or tapestry. Historians are always weaving texts of words, an inventive, creative process which is in need of more analysis than it usually receives. Anthropologists, for whatever reasons, are farther along than historians with their re-examinations of their own textual creations (see, for example, Marcus and Fischer 1986; Geertz 1988). Our national history texts (which have proliferated since Innis’s time) could use some similarly reflexive study. A glance at some of them reveals their use of certain recurring frameworks which provide the contexts within which they situate the fur trade.

Entitlement

The titles of such texts provide clues about how they subsume the fur trade (and other subjects) into a broader structure. They commonly confer upon Canadian history a certain dynamic relating to power and upward progress. In 1944, Donald G. Creighton produced his *Dominion of the North: A History of Canada*. The concept of “dominion” is itself of interest; for one recent analysis of the term, see William Westfall’s parsing of its material and spiritual dimensions in his study of Protestant Ontario (1989: 3-4). In 1953, J.M.S. Careless published *Canada: A Story of Challenge*. Challenge is a theme also evoked in a more recent text whose popularity is attested by its three editions. J.L. Finlay and D.N. Sprague call their book *The Structure of Canadian History*, and the structure they refer to is “the story of power; who held it, how, and for what purposes” (1989: preface). Their title raises some instant questions: whose structure? Is there only one? Why not structures? In this framework, as in Creighton and Careless, the fur trade appears as a phase which, like others, helps to buttress a line of argument about certain overarching themes of Canadian national and political history.

A strong competitor to Finlay and Sprague is the two-volume set, *Origins and Destinies*, by Francis, Jones, and Smith (1988a; 1988b). Its teleological structure, reflecting the title, focuses on “how this immense country (the second largest in the world) came to be... how its regions developed, and... the common history of its diverse population.” *Destinies* more specifically shows “how Canada came to take the transcontinental form it did [again the concept of dominion], and how the various groups within its boundaries came together to form one country” (1988b: iii). These volumes all echo the nation-centred perspectives whose roots are so incisively critiqued in Eric Hobsbawm’s recent essays on nationalism (1990).

Periodization and Evolutionism

Although the newer texts work at citing recent fur trade scholarship, they, like the older ones, still subsume the fur trade into the national saga as part of a rather highly conventionalized chronological narrative. The regional complexities, variability, and indeterminacy of the fur trade, its antiquity and persistence into the present, and its intertwinings with other spheres external to themes of national progress (e.g., with Native histories) cannot be brought forward in such a context. The fur trade, in sum, gets confined to a niche or “era” both temporal and evolutionary or developmental.

In chronology, even though Indians were trading furs and countless other goods among themselves long before the Europeans came (and using routes that Europeans later “discovered”), the fur trade is boxed in as a European-Indian interaction that begins after Norsemen and codfish and first explorers. It then vanishes with the Indians around Confederation (that great historical divide), despite the reality of its continued existence in and importance to a geographically immense area of Canada.

In the survey texts and in a lot of other writing, the fur trade (along with codfishing, whaling, and timbering) is also categorized in evolutionary terms as an early intermediate phase of economic development. Economic historians have typically classified it as a staples trade, involving the export of raw resources from northern wilderness. By implication or explicitly, it is accordingly on the primitive side, pre-industrial, bound to yield to agriculture, progress, and modern capitalism. This clustering of associations is reinforced in the reprinting of chapter 6 from Innis’s fur trade classic (1930), a discussion of staples, in a recent reader on pre-industrial Canada (Cross and Kealey 1982). It is also of interest that the title of A.J. Ray’s book, *The Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (1990), while emphasizing how the trade
persisted, plays, perhaps deliberately, on what most readers probably see as an element of contradiction if they assume the fur trade and the industrial age to be mutually exclusive.

**Dichotomies and Triads**

There are some problems, however, with our images of such resources, whether furs, fish, or lumber, as “raw” extracts straight from the wilderness (itself a problematic concept), and with the assumption that their harvesting is a “pre-industrial” activity. The pervasive dichotomizing of pre-industrial and industrial sets up an opposition whose terms are seldom defined. Linguistically, it also marks “industrial” as the category to be taken seriously (“pre-industrial” being assumed to lack workers, capital, specialized manufacturing centres, etc.), just as “history” is privileged over “prehistory.” Such a duality tends to overlook or trivialize the labour, time, skills, and organization that actually went into these resource activities (industries).

In fact, furs, fish, and wood were all subject to extensive processing before they were shipped. The “value added” was considerable, as were the investments of labor and capital equipment. No one shipped whole trees, raw fish, or dead whales to Europe. In harvesting wood, the organization of labor, necessary skills, work sites, tools, and transport that were required to prepare squared timbers for export was impressive, even though the Finlay and Sprague text dismisses such activities as “primitive technology” while describing their intricacy (1989: 90-91). Codfish were dried and cured onshore, using coastal work sites and resources on a scale that distressed the Beothuk (Upton 1977). Selma Barkham has documented the scale of Basque whale-oil processing along the Straits of Belle Isle in Labrador in the mid-1500s for up to six months of every year (Barkham 1984; see also Tuck 1985). It all certainly sounds like industrial activity in terms of the labor, skill, and equipment required, and probably also in respect to the pollution it produced.

Similarly, we need to re-evaluate fur trade skills and processing; they involved more than accumulating dead beavers. Historians have had minimal understanding of the skills, experience, time, energy, and organization that went into the harvesting, processing, and sorting of furs before they were exported. Partly, this has to do with furs being subsumed with the other staples or raw resources just mentioned. But another factor enters in with the fur trade: all this labor and processing except (usually) the final grading of the product and its shipping to Europe was accomplished by Native people who have remained largely invisible to economic historians. And further, most processing was carried on by Native women, who have been the least visible of all despite our recent resurrections of their conjugal and domestic roles in the fur trade.

June Helm’s vivid description of the processing of skins by subarctic Athapaskan women and of the skills and standards they brought to that work for their own communities and for the trade helps to redress the balance (Helm 1989). We may extrapolate from what she says to reconsider the Native leather and fur processing industry all across the north, as it has existed for centuries. Without it there would have been no fur trade for the Europeans or for their historians. The production of leather and furs is only part of the story. Add canoe, toboggan, and snowshoe design and construction, Native food processing such as making pemmican (itself virtually an industry on the Plains in the 1800s), and other means of preserving meats, fish, and berries; taken together, they reveal an infrastructure of considerable complexity, with a fundamental significance for the existence of the fur trade and the survival of the Europeans who came into it. Given the fundamental role of women’s skills and labor in supporting the enterprise, there are reasons for setting a feminist cat among the historians’ pigeons and describing the fur trade as initiating (for better and for worse) a women’s industrial revolution.

Old dichotomies and triads also linger on in the social history of the Canadian North and West, taken more broadly. The fur trade’s deep association with Indians and Métis (who are too universally represented as the children of the fur trade — some were, some were not) has tended to reinforce its portrayal as an archaic phase of our national history. Marcel Giraud and W.L. Morton (see Morton 1950 for his review of Giraud’s work) were among the most explicit about situating the fur trade and the Métis of the West at the mid-point of a tripartite developmen-
tal scale from primitive to civilized, with the Métis as a blend of Indian and white in "blood," culture, character, morals, etc. There is a good deal of old-style social evolutionism here, echoing Lewis Henry Morgan's triad of savagery, barbarism, and civilization (Bieder 1986: chapter 6).

These economic and social evolutionary schemata, culturally embedded in so much Euro-Canadian thinking, are easily reinforced as organizing principles because they dovetail so neatly with a venerable tripartite paradigm pervasive in European historiography. Canada's prehistory and Native peoples appear in the opening chapters of our national histories as "ancient," if not primitive (most recent writers have learned enough caution about that word to seek substitutes). In turn, the fur trade in the hands of Agnes Laut, Peter C. Newman, and others often becomes a Canadian Middle Ages with its Lords of the North, Galahads of the Pacific, knights of the forest, or Nor'Westers building capricious castles in Montreal (e.g., Newman 1987: 3, 7). There are reasons why such language has resonated among readers and has passed without question. The fur traders and their activities are seen as archaic and quaint, adventurous like the knights of old, feudal in organization yet harbingers of modern capitalism and industry, heralding the rise of the British empire, or translated into Canadian terms, Confederation and an emerging dominion and national government.

Of course some of the fur traders themselves (authors as heroes) helped to create these images and these textualizations. We need not review here the traders' own contributions to travel and exploration literature from the 1700s onward (see Warkentin 1983); the writings of Alexander Mackenzie and others certainly helped to place their enterprise into the great Canadian narrative. Later, George Bryce's Hudson's Bay Company history (1900) surely helped. Less widely known, however, is the role that the Hudson's Bay Company itself played in that process in the first decades of this century. The years after 1900 were times when numerous Canadian writers and organizations began to weave new narratives of both their nation and their institutions, typically with an emphasis on evolutionary progress (e.g., Laut 1909). The Hudson's Bay Company was no exception. In 1920 in Winnipeg, it undertook a grand celebration of its 250th anniversary, cultivating a powerful imagery of empire, of its contributions to Canada's development, and of its benevolence towards and good relations with the Indians. Sir William Schooling's history of the company in that year (an elegant 129-page "anniversary brochure") beautifully exemplifies the self-constructed history that began to be circulated. The Beaver magazine, founded in the enthusiastic company spirit of 1920, soon became an effective vehicle for elaborating such texts and images. In the 1920s and 1930s, the magazine became a major means of promoting vivid portrayals of company history and of a carefully cultivated heroic tradition (Geller 1990). Correspondingly, the directors began to see that the facilitating of academic history could be good for public relations and knowledge of the company. Although that development came too late for Harold Innis's book, other scholars benefitted from the opening of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in London for historical research and from the documentary publishing program begun by the Hudson's Bay Record Society in 1938. Although World War II temporarily ended such research as the records had to be moved to safe storage, the fur trade by that time was increasingly being discovered by academics, to be inscribed in the nation's history.

Fur Trade History as Drama

Just as the fur trade has become woven into our national history and creatively reconstructed by its corporate heirs, so too it has become drama and part of a larger drama. This development occasions some puzzlement to those serious-minded researchers who have sat for weeks reading journals in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in London or, since 1974, in their current location in the Provincial Archives of Manitoba in Winnipeg. Such people know that for countless fur traders over countless months and years, not much happened. They stayed largely in one place, or they slogged around on local trips through snow or swamp, mud and mosquitoes. They got sick or drunk, lost or drowned or injured, and often they got bored or bushed.

Archival readers recognize, then, as others may not, that it takes a highly selective perception and
presentation to set forth the fur trade as high drama. Only a tiny proportion of traders crossed continents, had heroic adventures, got their names on maps, made fortunes, or became company governors; and to my mind, these men are often the least interesting. More fascinating are the ordinary human beings who stayed put and sometimes dispelled their boredom by writing endlessly, who got to know certain Indians and regions extremely well, who lacked Scottish Highland clan patrons and connections to give them a boost upward, and who in some instances became too attached to their native families and relatives to head home for a rich wife. These have often turned out to be the best and most thorough observers and writers, and the least rewarded by their companies or by historians’ recognition. George Nelson (Brown and Brightman 1988) and Peter Fidler come to mind in this category, and other such men are waiting to be discovered.

In the popular media, however, drama wins the day, reinforcing the old stereotypes of great white heroes. An occasional Indian gets attention in the current political climate if he too can be cast in the individualistic hero mould; Samuel Hearne’s guide, Matonabbee, for example, recently got a postage stamp in his honor, and a plaque in Churchill, Manitoba. But popular perceptions still resonate in Peter C. Newman’s CBC radio quote of 1987, describing Hearne as crossing the Barrens “all by himself with a band of Indians.”

The fur trade gets popular attention in other ways too, some good, some silly, from various government agencies and businesses. Drive around Lake Superior and notice the signs that tell you this quite recent highway is the Route of the Voyageurs; or stop at a Voyageur restaurant for genuine Voyageur hamburgers and French fries. (A counting fantasy comes to mind: what if we stopped all the summer motorists at Thunder Bay and put them in canoes bound for Nipigon, with bannock, fish, and pemmican for provender?) Come to Winnipeg’s winter Festival du Voyageur with its good fun, music, and theatrics, sometimes educational, sometimes kitschy, and full of inventions of tradition that play up drama, color, and sport among the dog sleds, axe throwers, and ice sculptures. See the new Forks National Park in Winnipeg where the Red and Assiniboine Rivers meet, and where an old railway yard strategically has been discovered to be the West’s gateway to multiculturalism as well as a significant fur trade archaeological site. (Everyone, it now seems, met everyone else more or less happily for thousands of years at The Forks.) Or better, visit Old Fort William, where a lot of hard work has gone into some of the best reconstructions and dramatizations of fur trade life around. Be advised, however, that Ontario’s Ministry of Tourism and Recreation is ultimately in charge and may resort to weiner roasts on the canoe docks or whatever else it takes to get more paid admissions. (For several scholars’ discussions of current issues and problems in fur trade public history, see Payne 1991.)

(Re)constructing Fur Trade Histories

Many might say that fur trade historians should be delighted at all the publishing and media attention the fur trade receives. To be sure, we are pleased, to a point. But when called on to advise popular writers and the media, we also continually face three major sorts of difficulties in dealing with their treatments of the fur trade as text and drama (as if our own texts did not present problems enough).

The first difficulty, and perhaps the easiest for journalists, script-writers, and the public to grasp, is the question of accuracy, getting the facts, names, and dates right in accord with common notions that this is what history is all about. This is the technical, tinkering level on which we are often asked to help, and it can be handled pretty well if the money and the will are there. It often happens, though, that a media enterprise hits time or budget constraints part way through, or does not do the groundwork to find the right advisors in the first place. Or having found them, it suddenly cuts them off. Or, historian professors or graduate students who get paid or flattered into helping such an enterprise may find that their input ends abruptly for other than monetary reasons; producers may have their own agenda to which the consultants are a threat or a nuisance, or the script writers may insist on doing the show their way. In the end, the historians’ names sometimes end up in the credits (at times without their permission) to legitimize a product they had little to do with or might even prefer to disown.
Second and more serious is the problem of coping with the broad-brush treatments of the subject, simplistic and even damaging in their implications, which the purveyors of popular culture usually crave, and about which they may not even think to seek advice. Most of them are greatly tempted to exoticize the fur trade (along with the Indians), to make it into something Other, off in the mysterious wilderness among unintelligible Natives who rove or wander and are still all “marauding,” “warlike,” or “wild” even if the p-word and the s-word (primitive, savage) are tabooed. Or, if the latest version of the Noble Native syndrome prevails, the Indians in the fur trade become People of Myth, Calvin Martin-style (1987: 195-197), close to the land, who because of the European fur trade have lost their spirituality and sense of relationship to the animals (tell that to the James Bay Cree and others), to end up hopelessly alien from and overcome by the People of History who will never understand them (unless they happen to be Calvin Martin). With this approach comes the assumption, usually, that all the Indians were deeply immersed in the fur trade, caught up in the Empire of the Bay, rapidly becoming dependent (the conclusion to which E.E. Rich leaped in his slender effort to grasp the Indian dimension of the fur trade — e.g., Rich 1967: 102-103, in contrast to Morantz 1983: 157-158, 167). Such representations leave little room or recognition for all those Indians who ignored or intermittently harvested the intruding fur traders (a resource which could be hunted and gathered by both men and women) or who, like the Dene, really preferred the caribou hunt. And yet one fascinating aspect of Native history is the extent to which it is not an aspect of fur trade history, but distinct from it. As A.J. Ray noted some years ago (1978), a reverse proposition also needs to be explored more seriously: fur trade history as an aspect of Native history.

A third representational difficulty is shared both by historians and by the writers and media who consult them on fur trade and Native history. Our textual constructions and our dramas share some fundamental patterns in that they have both a temporal structure and a structure of setting or place. To take the temporal framework first, both our historical texts and our plays typically have plots in three acts: a beginning, middle, and climax or denouement to which the earlier acts have led. Our histories move from ancient to medieval to modern or analogues thereof; similarly, a clear beginning, middle, and end are conferred on the fur trade despite its ancient roots and the persistencies mentioned earlier. In that sense, history mirrors drama, and vice versa, both of them exhibiting embedded structural principles which seem hard for us to escape. To counter them, it may help to consider explicitly the extent to which our views of the fur trade, Canadian history, or the past in general are influenced by our dramatic and narrative conventions about appropriate linear temporal progressions.

Besides having the temporal structuring of a narrative past, our texts and dramas are lodged, mentally at least, in some sort of structured space. The most appropriate image seems that of a theatre or stage which we enter when we approach the past, finding it already textualized or dramatized for us. We cannot avoid being ushered into the show and placed in certain seats which reveal it from certain angles but not from others. Our viewpoints are already provided, fixed in advance, and the program is handed to us, with the actors already defined.

But what if we decline to take those seats and sit, instead, off to the side where we can see backstage? Or what if we go backstage and watch the performance from behind the scenes that are already so neatly set? Why not ask the actors and extras who lack any speaking parts what they have to say for themselves? Or what if we retrieve some of the scenes and acts that got cut out along the way, and salvage them for use in a different script with some different players?

To cultivate this sense of history as constructed text or theatre is not a lapse into nihilism, but rather, in a positive sense, to cultivate an awareness of history itself as both message and medium; and we can build on that perspective as a kind of empowerment. We still can and must pursue knowledge about real people and about past conditions, events, and contexts, and must seek verifiability. But the metaphors of drama and the stage draw attention to all the forces that select or even predetermine our angles of vision, our perspectives, and our blind spots, even when, blinded by hopes of the historian’s heaven, we think we know the truth (Dorris 1987). The heroes of the fur trade have said their pieces a great many times, and may go on singing and having their praises sung.
But other voices are there for the listening. They may or may not speak the lines that others wrote for them, and they may not sing in the same key or even approach the stage, having other texts and dramas of their own.

Acknowledgments

A number of the ideas in this essay first came together in my plenary talk at the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference (Brown 1990). Presentations at Old Fort William in Thunder Bay and at the Universities of British Columbia and Toronto in 1989-90, and in 1991 at the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference on Mackinac Island afforded other opportunities to develop them, and I am grateful to the organizers of those occasions, and to listeners at each for useful questions and comments. My thanks also to Patricia McCormack and Geoffrey Ironside for their editorial encouragement and patience as this manuscript took shape.

Notes

1. These volumes all have something else in common: all the authors are male. Indeed, the only woman author of an overview of Canadian history in my admittedly impressionistic sample was Agnes C. Laut (1909), an expatriate Manitoban who wrote in an unabashedly popularizing vein. Lately, some women historians have surveyed more specific domains of Canadian history which hold, however, revisionist potentialities for the whole field; see, for example, Strong-Boag and Fellman 1986, Dickason 1992.

2. The tradition continues to be influential, to judge by Peter Newman's heavy citing of old Beaver articles in the endnotes to his popular history of the Hudson’s Bay Company (1987ff).

3. Some consulting experiences, however, are gratifying. I think of two in particular. First, there was my work with Norma Bailey on the National Film Board historical drama series, Daughters of the Country. The first film in that series, Ikwé, for which Wendy Lill wrote the script, deserves particular attention for its skilled dramatization of European-Indian relations in the fur trade. Second, I worked with Maureen Matthews' "Isinamowin: The White Man's Indian," a two-hour Ideas program on CBC Radio, broadcast on 11-12 December 1991 and produced by Havoc Franklin. The popular media can be immensely effective for the better, as well as otherwise.

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Romancing the Northwest as Prescriptive History: Fort Chipewyan and the Northern Expansion of the Canadian State

Patricia A. McCormack

Introduction

Approaches to northern Canadian history derive from broader historical perspectives that characterize the Canadian Northwest (and other Native or Aboriginal regions) as an ever receding frontier, in which “primitive customs” are replaced by the institutions of a “civilized world.” Traditional mainstream treatments are epitomized by the writings of Morris Zaslow, who is considered to have established northern history as a field of study (Coates and Morrison 1989: 1). In The Opening of the Canadian North 1870-1914 (1971) and The Northward Expansion of Canada 1914-1967 (1988), he documents and celebrates the establishment of British and then Canadian hegemony over subarctic and arctic Canada. Throughout Canadian history, says Zaslow, “...Canadians accepted without question that developing the natural wealth of the country was the surest most proper path to national greatness” (1990: 20). He identifies a series of specific events with which he demonstrates the unfolding of an inevitable process of northern “development” following the same process of development in the west after Confederation. With some pique, he complains about Native lack of appreciation for this history: their “...unrelenting propaganda often makes it difficult for many Canadians to appreciate the vital role that resources have played in the making of this country” (1990:20) and in the alleviating of primitive “Stone Age” conditions of Aboriginal peoples (ibid.). Zaslow’s point of view is shared by many other academic historians and by popular historians such as James MacGregor, whose Paddlweheels to Bucketwheels (1974) is a romance of progress set in northeastern Alberta.

Zaslow’s writing now seems outmoded by its interpretive rigidity and a reluctance to consider how his analyses legitimate the actions of governments and industries in Canada’s north. He follows a modernist paradigm, in which modernity is linked with the development of global capitalist systems and modern nation-states and presumes western superiority over other lands and other peoples (Featherstone 1988: 197-8; Bauman 1988: 220). Events of the past have been selected and interpreted by western (European-derived) historians to accord with western interests. However, these histories have been presented as analysis ascribing to “...the principles of an allegedly universal rationality” (Coome 1991: 189). That is, they are presumed to derive from a broader positivist paradigm in which theorists have believed it possible to identify objective realities and which has therefore been considered scientifically superior (cf. Nagel 1968: 277).

Yet Zaslow’s history is not the only way in which northern history can be recounted. His is a personal construction of a narrative imbuing northern history with his own values, lent authority by his recognized status and abilities as a professional historian and intellectual. To the extent to which it reflects the values of many of his readers and colleagues, it is part of the historian’s monologue. It reinforces Canadian historical identity as a country with a northern destiny and legitimizes the status quo of government and industrial dominance in the north (cf. Lowenthal 1985:40-7,214-129,235,263). Moreover, Zaslow’s prescriptive history presents a sense of a history that sets itself up as a policy for future internal Canadian hegemony. From his comments in his most recent publication (1990), it is evident that Zaslow has resisted rethinking his interpretations, despite the increasing number of new voices telling different versions. It is somewhat perplexing that he
persists in advancing an analysis so blatantly supportive of Canadian state hegemony even as he acknowledges the troubling treatment of Native peoples throughout this period. The traditional conception of Canadian expansionism and development offered by Zaslow is challenged by new interpretations that can be grouped into two camps: the first is that of people who consider the north to be their homeland, not someone else’s frontier (e.g., Berger 1977; Rees 1987). The second is that of those theorists (e.g., Watkins 1977) who do not consider internal Canadian expansion to be the inevitable unfolding of Canadian destiny in its northern regions, but instead the realization of particular political and economic agendas related to capitalist expansion, what Eric Wolf calls “a complex orchestration of antagonistic forces” (1982: 5).

These recent interpretations challenge Canadian historians and the modernist paradigm. Modernism was related to the expansion of early and classic capitalism, which in northern Canada occurred as processes of internal colonialism and neo-colonialism. Configurations of late capitalism, especially after World War II, are related to a new postmodernist paradigm (cf. Kellner 1988). Postmodernism dismisses notions of progress, inevitable development, and cultural and linguistic homogenization. Instead, the world is characterized by a condition of dynamic cultural pluralism (Featherstone 1988:213; Bauman 1988:225), which is reflected in new forms of social analysis. These are concerned with how knowledge and culture are fabricated by competing interests engaged in power struggles, not with empirical realities waiting to be discovered. There is a direct relationship between positions of power and the versions of reality that are recognized as adequate or proper interpretation. In the past, many of these voices have not been heard from, or have been ignored. Today, they enter into the debates about the nature of the past and the construction of history. How northern history, including cultural history, will be represented depends upon the outcome of a conflict among discourses that represent the diverse values and concerns of those who hold them (Coombe 1991; Clifford and Marcus 1986; Folch-Serra 1989; Bauman 1988).

This paper explores the use of a postmodernist critique to reassess the history of the Fort Chipewyan region since 1870, when the Dominion of Canada acquired formal title to the Hudson’s Bay Company territories. Of particular concern is the process by which the Dominion of Canada expanded into the region, asserting its sovereignty over land and people and establishing a structure of power relationships that persists today in economic, political, and social realms. A brief discussion - or deconstruction - of some historical conceptions of the past 120 years of northern history and related conceptions of Native cultural history will provide the context for this analysis. It will be shown that Native residents of the Fort Chipewyan region resisted the regulatory and restrictive activities of the state. Their actions may be interpreted from a postmodernist stance as a local critique of and challenge to the hegemonic understanding of the state and its legitimacy, and which simultaneously empowered Natives historically. It provided also the basis for contemporary political activism.

Northern History and Native Culture History

Canadian historians have conceived of northern history as dominated by the fur trade until World War II, with a few other temporary highpoints, such as the Klondike gold rush, but little of permanent consequence until after the war, when a period of rapid change and modernization began. It was only then that new and persistent efforts were made to integrate the north fully into Canada’s political economy (cf. Zaslow 1971; 1988; Phillips 1967).

The earlier period coincided in part with Canada’s nation-building activities in the west. Western development was integral to Canada’s vision of itself as a new nation. It occurred through a two-part process whereby the fur trade economy and social order were denigrated and eroded and eventually replaced by a British-type agrarian society predicated on private ownership of land and resources (cf. Asad 1991: 317; Van Kirk 1980: chp. 10; Brody 1981; Owram 1980; Zaslow 1971: 3, 6, 7, 14; 1988: 69). The subordination and dislocation of Native peoples were referred to by Zaslow as “stabilizing” them (1971: 23). He considers their treatment as unfortunate but necessary to allow the land to be settled and developed.
Once this process was well underway, the north replaced the west in the collective imagination of the nation. Zaslow (1971; 1988) has documented the means by which Canadian federal and provincial governments expanded their activities into northern regions, establishing a carefully controlled framework for subsequent government and entrepreneurial activities. The Northwest Mounted Police was the most critical agency in this process. He singles out agriculture, forestry and hydro development, and especially mining as contributing in a positive way to northern development. For instance, he says about mining that it “...helped diversify regional economies, producing better-rounded, more prosperous, secure settlements and societies” (1988: 117–8). He does not reconcile such positive interpretations with his recognition, discussed elsewhere in his book, that these same, new economic activities competed with and displaced Native hunters and trappers (cf. Brody 1981).

After World War II, the federal government and some provincial governments, including Alberta, focused their attention directly on northern Canada. Their approach was symbolized most clearly by Diefenbaker’s “northern vision” (cf. Newman 1963: 79–70). It was a period of extensive government investment in northern transportation and communication infrastructure, expanding the infrastructure installed for strategic reasons during World War II. Governments encouraged new entrepreneurial activity and also invested in industry directly (Zaslow 1988; Phillips 1967). It was widely believed that these initiatives would benefit Native peoples (cf. Worssley 1984: 285). Zaslow claims that Natives who could find employment “gladly abandoned the hard, uncertain life on the land for the more secure, comfortable life of the wage-earning settler” (1988: 148), in line with his understanding that Natives led primitive lifestyles which they were glad to change (cf. Stabler 1978). Collectively, these developments were conceived as incorporating northern lands and their resident peoples into mainstream Canada.

In short, traditional conceptions of northern history have revolved around the notion of a lengthy static period, in which little happened slowly, and a recent post-war period in which much happened quickly. Added to that is the notion of a relatively smooth and inevitable chain of events in the north. This understanding is reflected in and supported by analyses of Native cultures by boreal forest anthropologists, who devised a chronology of culture change that divided the past 170 years into two broad periods. The first, the “contact-traditional” era, or “stabilized fur and mission” stage, extended from 1821 until 1945. 1821 was the year in which the Hudson’s Bay Company achieved a monopoly position in the fur trade; 1945, the end of World War II. The second era, or “modern” era, or “government-industrial age,” began c.1945 and continues to the present (Helm and Leacock 1971; Helm, Rogers, and Smith 1981).

This chronology has been challenged, though somewhat ineffectively, by both Shephard Krech and Arthur Ray. Krech contends that the attempt to devise a chronology with “...a limited number of major periods encompassing major stages of postcontact events...” may itself have contributed “...to the notion that little change or involvement prior to the most recent period(s) has occurred...” (1980: 88). He points out the lack of attention by ethnohistorians to significant sources of changes for Native peoples, such as epidemics and the fur trade. However, he does not himself consider as sources of change the expansion of Canadian state institutions and competing land uses into the region.

From the vantage point of his fur trade studies, Ray (1984) has concluded that the inability of the fur trade economy to provide Natives with adequate income produced a “welfare-commercial” orientation by the turn of the 20th century, far earlier than the chronology provides. His conception is limited in that he looks only to the structures of the fur trade itself, whose authority and importance were undermined by the imposition in the north of the institutions of the Canadian state and its agents. In other words, neither Krech nor Ray have incorporated in their analyses the historical issues considered by Zaslow.

The Expansion of the State

From another perspective, the past 120 years in northern Canadian history represent two episodes in nation-building, the first extending from 1870 until c.1945–50, and the second from 1945–50 until the
present. Donald Creighton (1972:316) refers casually to Rupert’s Land and the North-west Territories being “united” with Canada, as if formal union were sufficient to incorporate the new lands into Canada. In fact, much of western and northern history consists of the devices and conflicts by which Canada imposed its rule on often-reluctant peoples, thereby establishing new frameworks for political, economic, and social processes. It is therefore ironic that Zaslow considers sovereignty only in terms of Canada’s efforts to define sovereignty vis-à-vis other nations, or external sovereignty (1988). He considers the advance of the frontier to be the “penetration” of the north through the agency of government agents, legislation and regulations, in fact, a vehicle for the imposition and enforcement of internal sovereignty.

The concept of the state and its functions is not a new one, but it has been curiously ignored by “northernists.” In 1916 Bertrand Russell wrote somewhat naively that “the essence of the State is that it is the repository of the collective force of its citizens” (1980: 34), as if all its citizens shared the same interests, concerns, and values; Zaslow may share this modernist conception. For Morton Fried, the state is a collectivity of institutions that jointly maintain social order and a system of societal stratification (1960; 1967). Ralph Miliband has focused explicitly on the state in capitalist society, pointing out that “a theory of the state is also a theory of society and of the distribution of power in that society” (1973: 4). Following Marx, he contends that the state is a coercive instrument to maintain the status quo of socio-economic stratification and to support those classes or sectors of society that control and benefit from the exploitation of resources. From this perspective, the expansion of the state, conceived as “nation-building,” is a form of internal colonialism or neo-colonialism in which one region appropriates the resources of another region for its own benefit.

To maintain and reproduce itself, a state must establish and enforce sovereignty, “...the identification and monopoly of paramount control over a population and an area” (Fried 1967: 237). A state must be able to distinguish between members (subjects) and non-members. It operates agencies of control and is able to deal with “trouble cases.” It establishes mechanisms for transforming basic resources into wealth that is differentially distributed among levels of the society. Finally, it legitimates the status quo in such a way that its members believe in and support the state structure.

Modern states comprise several elements that fulfill these functions (Miliband 1973: 46-51 and passim). One is the political executive of the state, the government. It often appears to be synonymous with the state, speaks on its behalf, and claims a monopoly on the legitimate use of physical force to enforce sovereignty and control. Secondly, the bureaucracy of the state, its administrative sector, manages the business in which the state is engaged. Third, military forces, which may be divided into internal and external bodies, enforce internal and external sovereignty. Fourth, there is a judiciary that serves as an adjudication body. Each of these elements may be structured to operate at several levels. For instance, in Canada there is a national government, provincial and territorial governments, and various regional and local governments, each with its own administrative structure. Finally, there are elements that mystify these relations of production and legitimate the structure, so that it will be considered acceptable and even desirable by the citizens of the state.

In this paper, the expansion of Canada into the Northwest is not considered an inevitable unfolding of Canadian destiny. It involved, instead, the systematic expansion of the Canadian state, accomplished through the imposition in the Northwest of these respective elements. Its goal was to reproduce in the new territories the societal stratification and related capitalist system that characterized “developed” Canada. These goals were mostly achieved, but at the expense of those individuals who were relegated to lower class or other marginal positions and whose voices have been silenced or ignored.

The Expansion of the State in Fort Chipewyan

An earlier paper (McCormack 1990) named the years after 1870 as the “government era,” in that the Canadian and provincial governments expanded into the Fort Chipewyan region, replaced the previously dominant fur trade, and created powerful new frameworks that subsequently restricted Native access to the land and its resources and thereby governed
Indian and Métis economies. This process occurred in two stages, over many decades. First, the Canadian government assumed formal sovereignty over northern Alberta. Second, it then imposed real control over the region and its inhabitants by developing a local administrative regime to enforce its legislation and regulations. The result was some measure of societal stratification and a reasonable facsimile of southern institutions. The process of the expansion of the state, in its most classic form, may not yet be complete, due to local constraints hindering expansion — difficulties in replacing the bush sector of the economy — and to increased political power by local residents in the past two decades.

The federal government, based in Ottawa, assumed power on a formal basis through three steps. First, in 1870 the Canadian government purchased the territories granted to the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) by the British Crown and acquired in the course of its 19th century trading activities. While HBC ownership of these lands may be disputed, in practice ownership was affirmed through the sale. Canada’s activities in the Northwest were legitimized legally by provisions of the British North America Act.

Second, in 1899 the Canadian government followed precedents originating in both common law and the Royal Proclamation of 1763 when its representatives negotiated Treaty 8 with Indians in northern Alberta and adjacent regions to obtain unobstructed title to the land and its resources. The terms of the treaty state clearly that the Indians gave up the land to Her Majesty the Queen (Government of Canada 1966). A parallel Métis commission paid scrip to Métis to extinguish their claims to the land (Mair 1908).

Third, the federal government, and, after 1905, the new Province of Alberta, asserted its internal sovereignty by enacting legislation that provided for a “Canadian” or southern-style structure of state-mediated individual ownership and control over northern lands and resources (cf. Merry 1991). The first act, the Unorganized Territories Game Act of 1894, was actually passed before Treaty 8 had been signed. Later critical legislation included provincial wildlife legislation and the federal orders-in-council that created Wood Buffalo Park (McCormack 1984b).

Underlying federal and provincial legislation was a European moral order predicated on a principle of individual private property (cf. Asad 1991: 317), a principle so fundamental to the Canadian state that it is doubtful that its logic and primacy were ever questioned. Group or communal ownership, at least of natural resources, was considered ultimately unworkable (cf. Hardin 1968; Ferguson 1993). Establishing this fundamental principle in legislation for northern regions by providing for private ownership and “occupied land” (Government of Canada 1966) also provided the structure for “freeing up” northern land for new purposes by allowing for the removal of what might be termed its “human overburden” (G. Dacks, pers. commun. 1992). While game regulations were enacted on one level for conservation reasons, regulating human access to land and resources was the prerequisite for new northern capitalist ventures.

Real assumption of power was a process that took many years and is still contested in some arenas by Fort Chipewyan residents. It occurred primarily through the simple device of stationing government agents locally, where they could enforce legislation and regulations.

The foremost agents of the state were the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), Canada’s paramilitary force created specifically to support state expansion. NWMP officers first visited Fort Chipewyan in 1897 (Jarvis 1898), and a permanent outpost was created in 1898 (NWMP 1899:42). Their contemporary descendants, the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, are still stationed in Fort Chipewyan. The NWMP used the joint sanctions of fines and imprisonment to compel obedience to Canadian legislation and regulations. In the 20th century they were joined by other agents who were responsible for enforcing land-use legislation and regulations. These included provincial game and fire wardens and federal buffalo rangers, later the wardens of Wood Buffalo Park. While their enforcement abilities were hampered by their lack of effective transportation and communication devices, they nevertheless established an ever-strengthening federal and provincial state presence in the region. Their presence increasingly eroded Native freedom to access critical resources, alienating Natives from the land in a real way that was one step
in incorporating them into the national system of class capitalism.

The Indian Agent was another agent of the state. His role complemented those of the other agents. On a formal level, he administered the provisions of the *Indian Act*. His real role was broader, intended to integrate the Indians under his charge into the national system by looking after their welfare and implementing programs to foster assimilation. That is, once Indians had been alienated from the land, it was the Indian Agent’s task to assist them in making new lives for themselves along a Canadian model — or as much of one as could be practiced in their area. However, in Fort Chipewyan Indians did not live in a central community, but in scattered and often-shifting bush settlements. There was no possibility of an agricultural economy. An Indian Agent there had different duties than on a reserve community in the south, where people were settled in more bounded locations and were engaged in agricultural or ranching pursuits, which were presumed to require the Agent’s close supervision. It is probably not surprising that a permanent Indian Agent was not stationed in Fort Chipewyan until 1932, when Dr. H.W. Lewis was appointed to be the Indian Agent and doctor (Hunter 1936; Crawley 1939). The Indian Agent’s sources of influence and power in Fort Chipewyan lay in his joint roles of broker or middleman between the Indians and outside government agencies and of patron to the Indians. He became a community leader, at the expense of traditional band leaders, missionar- ies, and fur traders, and established new patterns of authority, providing another context for the local acceptance of state control.

Over time, local Natives accepted their inclusion within the Canadian state, in an incremental process that today can only be surmised. As a community leader, the Indian Agent’s role was seductive. The extent to which Indians supported him and his activities may signify some acceptance of the legitimacy of the state, as they understood it through Treaty 8, though without accepting the appropriateness of all or even many local operations of state systems. This is not to deny the fact that cooperation with the Indian Agent and other agents was also a prudent local strategy.

There were other measures that encouraged Native support for — or at least reduced Native resistance to — this new structure, by legitimized further the new arrangements instituted by state agents. This occurred primarily through support given to the emerging structure by the highly influential missionaries, to their congregations directly and through the education systems they administered. The Anglican Church was closely linked to the government establishment, and the residential school operated by the Roman Catholic Church enjoyed some government financial support. At least one Indian Agent (Jack Stewart) worked closely with an Oblate priest (Father Emile Picard) in the 1940s; there was likely cooperation between other agents and priests, given the extent of Oblate influence with local Natives, most of whom were Roman Catholic.

As well, the increasing number of non-Native newcomers present in the region after World War I may have lent additional support to the agents and encouraged more widespread acceptance of their regulatory activities, especially as Natives affiliated with them through marriage, work, and co-residence. These newcomers included a large number of White trappers active in the region between the two World Wars and a growing number of non-Native entrepreneurs pursuing various commercial endeavors, especially commercial fishing and mining. They accepted the legitimacy of the agents of the state, whose programs and personal efforts promoted the creation of the individual ownership of means of production on which their own endeavors were predicated.

The expansion of the state in the region was a slow process, as measured by the incompleteness of the imposition of southern-style institutions and the partial socialization of labor. As late as the 1950s and into the 1960s, at a time when the fur trade experienced serious declines, Natives still pursued bush-related, communal productive activities centering on hunting, fishing, and trapping. At the same time, they turned with greater urgency to wage labor when it was available. However, wage labor and industrial pursuits never lived up to their promise. Work was available only sporadically, and it was typically poorly paid, unable to provide adequate livelihoods. Natives lacked the formal education that would have equipped them for better jobs, had these been available. There
is no evidence that local people wanted to abandon the bush life, and considerable evidence that they would have persisted in a hunting and trapping lifestyle had it been possible economically. Natives were still able to violate many regulations with impunity, including those governing hunting and trapping. Even today, the situation is not dissimilar, although the emphasis on bush activities has declined markedly.

**Local Resistance to the Expansion of the State**

What has appeared to be a natural unfolding of the state in the north, accompanied by an acceptance — if not an appreciation — of related activities by Native residents, appears in a new light when one examines how Natives actually behaved during this period. Incidents recorded in government records and stories told by Natives show that Natives persistently opposed agents in their enforcement and regulatory functions, especially those designed to control and restrict Native access to fur and game resources critical for livelihood and survival. Opposition took two forms. There were direct challenges to government agents and regulations, sometimes couched as advice or requests. Natives also resorted to more subversive tactics, what Merry (1991: 896) calls the “secret worlds of noncompliance,” using stealth to circumvent regulations and avoid scrutiny by enforcement agents. Their behaviors were intended to minimize the harmful affects of government policies and to affirm traditional cultures and practices. This story has been told in part by Fumoleau (1975), and a detailed discussion is contained in my own study of the region (McCormack 1984b). Some key events are summarized here.

It is useful to bear in mind that Fort Chipewyan’s appearance of physical isolation is illusory. The community was located on the main travel route between southern and northwestern Canada, and there was always heavy traffic through the area, especially after 1870. As well, local residents travelled “outside,” including winter trips by dog team to Edmonton. It can be assumed that Fort Chipewyan Natives were familiar with events to the south, especially the Canadian war with Indians and Métis in 1885 and the subsequent repression of prairie and parkland Natives. This knowledge surely conditioned the reactions of the region’s inhabitants to the NWMP officers, who arrived on patrol in 1897 and 1898. While their reports suggest that they were offered traditional northern hospitality as they travelled through northern Alberta in the middle of winter, Routledge observed that by 1898 the Indians “...have a wholesome dread of the police” (1899: 96) and would not present major law enforcement problems.

The first marked opposition to state activities occurred in 1899, when Natives at Fort Chipewyan, as elsewhere, were reluctant to sign Treaty 8: “they believed that the making of a treaty would lead to interference with their hunting upon which they must depend for a living” (Daniel 1979: 89). King Beaulieu challenged the treaty party about the prohibition on hunting bison, asking how they were supposed to live if bison continued to be closed (Mair 1908: 97). One treaty commissioner believed that had they realized that the prohibition on hunting bison had been extended, the Indians would never have signed Treaty 8. Indians signed the treaty because the commissioners reassured them about their freedom to continue their economies and lifeways unhindered in the future. As Felix Gibot of Fort Chipewyan recalled, Indians were told that “No land will be restricted for you. You can make your living the way it suits you best” (Gibot 1979:157; cf. Morrow 1973: 45). However, such statements were never written into the treaty document; they remained only verbal commitments remembered by the Indians and others present at the time (cf. Breynat 1948: 208; Fumoleau 1975: 79). Indians would later view the imposition of game regulations as violations of promises made to them by the Queen’s representatives.

The circumstances that elicited Native resistance heightened after World War I, when the north was invaded by White trappers and other non-Native entrepreneurs. Their presence both encouraged and pressured the government to create a political and economic climate in the north supportive of their initiatives. Of immediate concern to Fort Chipewyan residents was the uncontrolled competition by White trappers, who trapped intensively the same fur bearers and hunted the same game animals as the Native residents. Native livelihood was threatened. Some newcomers even threatened Natives directly. Natives responded with three strategies.
The first was an expression of their considerable antagonism to the White trappers; they set fire to the cabins of some White trappers and, more seriously, to the surrounding countryside (Rourke n.d.: 283-4; memo from H. J. Bury, Supervisor Indian Timber Lands, to Dep. Supt.-Gen., 7 July 1926, PAC RG 10 v. 6731 file 420-1). Louise Rourke described the situation around Fort Chipewyan in 1924-26, from her conversations with the Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP):

Much valuable timber and fur is lost each year through the action of the Indians, who, because of their jealousy of the white trapper who invades what the Indians consider to be their own territory, do all in their power to discourage or drive the "pale-face" out of the bush by setting large tracts of the country-side on fire.... The Indians...prefer to ruin the trapping ground completely rather than share it [n.d.: 283-4; cf. Bill Russell 1981: 13].

Natives knew that if they continued to retaliate in this manner they would eventually be charged and fined or jailed. A safer strategy was to increase their own fur production, which would simultaneously hinder White trappers. Kitto reported in 1920 that when the White trappers began killing all the animals they could find and slashing open muskrat houses, so did the Indians (report, PAC RG 10 v. 4085 file 496,658 1A). Their actions, or "fur wars," were not seen as a form of protest by Constable Phillips of the Alberta Provincial Police, but simply as foolishness: the Indians "have no more sense than to eliminate the game that keeps them alive" (ibid.). Both strategies must have resulted in considerable destruction of game habitats and populations.

Their third strategy was to request that the government provide them with protection from this competition. Through Indian Agent Gerald Card, the Chipewyan and Cree bands asked that a 4,000 square mile hunting and trapping preserve or Chipewyan and Cree reserves be created to include the land around Lake Claire and Lake Mamawi (Bill Russell 1981:10; Fumoleau 1975:251-2). They preferred a preserve, because they were afraid of being restricted to reserves, as were Indians in the south. It was Card who recommended they apply for reserves, promised them by Treaty 8. While this strategy may have originated with Card, it was acceptable to the Indians — although one suspects they saw it as a stopgap, inferior to the protection they believed they were entitled to as a result of having allied themselves to Canada by signing the treaty. In later years, efforts to acquire reserves became their major strategy, as one of the few real options available to them.

Neither preserves nor reserves were established. Instead, the federal government created Wood Buffalo Park in 1922, bordered on the south by the Peace River (Fig. 1). Only Treaty 8 Indians were allowed into the park to hunt and trap. In 1926, additional

![Figure 1. Wood Buffalo National Park. (Adapted from a map prepared by Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, WBNP files.)](image)

lands south of the Peace River, including much of the Peace-Athabasca Delta, were annexed to the park. A new rule provided that anyone — Indians, Métis, non-Natives — who was present in that area at that time could continue to hunt, trap, and trade in the annex. In short, the government "managed" the first local crisis engendered by state expansion by imposing familiar regulatory structures, constraints on access to land and resources, designed primarily to protect the animals, not Native livelihood. These constraints and the regulatory systems that were
subsequently developed to administer the park became targets for opposition by Fort Chipewyan Natives in the decades that followed.

Natives feared that the government would disallow all Native access to the park. By 1925, the park administration regretted having allowed Indians access to the park and began considering how they might best be removed. There were negotiations with Indian Affairs (memo to R. A. Gibson, 9 Dec. 1925, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 1). Shortly after, a “Statement as to the Need for Eliminating Indians as well as other Hunters and Trappers from the Wood Buffalo Park” was issued (25 Jan. 1926, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 1). In a revealing example of self-serving logic, a letter from O. S. Finnie of the Department of the Interior to Duncan Cameron Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, claimed that excluding the Indians from the park would actually benefit them, by making the park a wonderful game sanctuary (letter from Finnie to Scott, 30 April 1926, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 1; also in Fumoleau 1975: 257). Scott refused, saying that “the vital interests of the Indians should be paramount and should have precedence even over the protection of the wild life” (memo from Scott to Hon. Charles Stewart, 29 Dec. 1925, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 1). He was being advised by Indian Agent Card, who had infuriated the wardens by telling them (and the Indians) that Indians were not subject to game regulations, except with respect to bison (“Statement as to the Need for Eliminating Indians...,” 25 Jan. 1926, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 1). Scott may also have been concerned about probable increased demands for welfare assistance if Indians were dispossessed from their hunting and trapping lands, a theme that emerges from other correspondence.

The park enforced its regulations through sanctions of increasing severity: warnings, fines, imprisonment, and eviction. The latter was the most serious of all and was envisioned as early as 1925, though it may not have been enacted until 1928 (memo from O. S. Finnie to Maxwell Graham, 30 Nov. 1925, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 1). There are instances now and later of high status individuals who appear to have violated game regulations deliberately. In 1928, there were two recorded violations. The first was by a Chipewyan, Pierre Ratfat, who lost his permit temporarily for having in his possession two beaver that he had killed in closed season; he and his family were forced to leave the park (telegram from Mc Dougual to Finnie, 3 Jan. 1928; telegram from Finnie to Mc Dougual, 4 Jan. 1928, both in PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 1A). Later in the year, Cree leader Joseph Martin was arrested for the same offense (crime report re Joseph Martin, 6 July 1928, PAC RG 10 v. 6731 file 420-1-4; cf. also diary of Warden Arden, June 1928, PAC RG 85 v. 792 file 6276). Their illegal hunting was supported by the Indian Agent. Natives continued to violate hunting and trapping regulations in later years, in defiance of often severe sanctions. Sometimes they refused to cooperate with wardens. These actions can be interpreted as a form of protest and assertion of their Aboriginal rights as they understood them to be guaranteed by Treaty 8, as well as a measure of their occasional desperation in the food quest.

Natives asserted themselves in other areas. Through formal meetings, they requested or suggested changes to the game regulations, or that exceptions be made in response to local circumstances (e.g., diary extract, J. Melling, treaty trip, 2 July 1942, PAC RG 85 v. 1214 file 400-2-3 pt. 3). The administrative process was unable to fine-tune itself to this extent, and it was not unusual for provincial or park restrictions to be at odds with animal population dynamics in the Fort Chipewyan region, where a restricted animal might be plentiful, or an unrestricted animal, scarce. It is evident from correspondence in park records that the park’s administration never engaged in meaningful dialogue with the Indians about how its animals might best be managed. Indians were commonly viewed as irrational, childish, irresponsible exploiters who had to be carefully watched and managed, as one did other species in the park.

Natives who had not been allowed into the park persisted in trying to gain access, since the relative protection afforded animals in the park meant that its residents were economically better off than Natives who faced unrestricted competition in adjacent regions of the province. Jonas Laviolette, Chief of the Chipewyan band, applied twice (1928, 1932) for a park permit (letter from M. J. Dempsey to J. Milner,
1 March 1933, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 2), and so did many other Chipewyans forced after 1926 to trap only in Alberta and cut off from their Chipewyan kin who enjoyed park access. The numerous applications for permits and related correspondence in Wood Buffalo Park files suggest that Native families wanted the same freedom to define their own social groups that they had enjoyed in the past, and which they may have seen as an Aboriginal or treaty right. The Chipewyans also continued to work with the Indian Agent to obtain the reserve promised them in Treaty 8.

In earlier years some Natives subverted restrictions on their interaction and movement, by refusing to report Indians who had entered the park illegally (letter from S. H. Clark, Game Comm., to J. Lorne Turner, 18 March 1935, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 2; letter from M. J. Dempsey to M. Meikle, 20 Feb. 1937, PAC RG 85 v. 845 file 7744 pt. 1). By 1940, this situation had changed. At least some park permittees reported outsiders to the warden staff, though other permittees were still occasionally willing to bring in outsiders, possibly kinsmen (memo from M. Meikle to Cumming, 28 Oct. 1940; memo from A. L. Cumming to Mr. Gibson, 29 Nov. 1940; letter from J. A. Urquhart to Wardens, 23 Feb. 1940, all in PAC RG 85 v. 1214 file 400-2-3 pt. 3).

This development points out other aspects of Native responses. First, there was lack of Native uniformity in resistance. Natives perceived their interests according to their personal and family circumstances and acted accordingly. Second, initial resistance to a government initiative at one time was sometimes later transformed into support for a now-established institution, as it became perceived as beneficial. This would be the case for the registered tralines and group trapping areas, discussed below. Third, when possible, Natives used regulations for their own benefit.

The 1940s was a new period of crisis for the local economy. World War II led to national prosperity, and in the post-war years Canada’s future was touted as never looking better, thanks to the bright promise of its north. But, northern residents faced economic decline, even disaster, mitigated only temporarily by the Canol boom. The ability of people to support themselves in traditional fashion was greatly diminished. These difficulties resulted from the joint operation of several factors. First and most important was the continuing decline of animal populations, largely the result of decades of the competitive trapping environment prevailing since World War I. This problem was greatest in the lands outside the park, although some park animal populations also suffered serious declines, leading to new restrictions in the 1940s on hunting moose, as well as the usual limitations on fur trapping. However, reduced fur prices meant that trappers needed to increase production to maintain their levels of income. Compounding these difficulties were the restrictions imposed on personal movement by the park access rules and the introduction of registered tralines. In earlier times, people would have relocated to regions of animal abundance. Finally, northern peoples were confronted by the failure of new economic initiatives to provide adequate jobs and income. The government’s overall economic strategy for the north was the creation of northern industrialism, with Natives as a resident labor force, but its plans were poorly conceived and could not resolve Native economic difficulties.

While neither federal nor provincial governments supported the bush economy with any enthusiasm or investment (cf. Clancy 1991), they treated it as a sector that could be enhanced and incorporated into the newly developing northern industrial economy. They altered their regulation of animal resources to conform with their regulation of other natural resources. That is, in a capitalist economy natural resources, which comprise part of the means of production, are “owned” individually (in fee simple or through lease arrangements) and managed by persons licenced by the government. Wild animal populations were to be parcelled out through a system of registered tralines, in theory ensuring that the animals would be conserved and made available for on-going exploitation, or “harvesting.” It is somewhat surprising that individual tralines were not introduced earlier, as they had been in British Columbia (Brodie 1981), since White trappers had requested them, and local government agents supported the idea. It was the obvious depletion of game by the mid 1930s that led to their implementation in the 1940s. However, the treatment of registered tralines as simply a conservation measure obscures their linkage
to the more fundamental capitalist principle of individual ownership.

The Province introduced registered trappings in 1940 (letter to Dr. H. W. McGill, IAB, 18 Jan. 1940; letter from D. B. Mullen to Archbishop Breynat, 1 Feb. 1940; letter from Wallace to Breynat, 24 April 1940, all in Archives of the Oblats de Marie Immaculée). While Natives registered for these trappings, they also subverted their intent by cooperating informally in trapping. For instance, a pair of brothers might trap together for one winter on the line belonging to only one of them, but register the furs as coming from their respective lines. This pragmatic use of the land, which persists today, provides greater flexibility than allowed for by the regulations.

In 1949, the park formalized a system of group trapping areas for Indians and individual trappings for Métis and White trappers that it had introduced a few years earlier. Indians in the park responded with apprehension, resentment, and resistance, fearing that their access to resources would be further eroded. A delegation of chiefs and subchiefs had in 1935 protested the changes, when they met with Austin L. Cumming, District Agent and Park Superintendent (letter from A. L. Cumming to J. Lorne Turner, 13 Aug. 1935, PAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 2A). Cumming’s reassurances were not believed. The Indians wanted a reserve in the park because they were afraid that the government was still trying to evict them all from the park (letter from H. Halcrow, The Pas, to T. A. Crerar, Min. of Mines and Resources, 26 Oct. 1940, PAC RG 85 v. 1214 file 400-2-3 pt. 3).

For the federal and provincial governments, wildlife regulation, of great importance to Natives, was a minor issue. Northern (and Canadian) futures, they believed, were predicated on the establishment and growth of northern industries. They expected that Natives would want to abandon the bush economy, considered to be primitive and unproductive, and become a new northern labor force. They encouraged industrial growth in the region, often justifying it by the local jobs it would provide. Commercial fishing, which had occurred on Lake Athabasca since the 1920s, expanded into the park. Forestry and commercial production of bison meat were introduced in the park; these were new enterprises in the region. Mining continued to be a key industry at the east end of Lake Athabasca.

Fort Chipewyan Natives rarely supported these ventures, but they recognized their apparent inevitability. They tried to participate in and even gain control over new enterprises, in order to be part of the new economy on equal terms. However, their employment skills and education levels meant that they tended to be hired only for poorly paid, laboring positions, when they could find work at all. More traditional bush activities persisted as important components of their economy, in part because people still relied on bush foods, but also because they were culturally significant. It was, therefore, still important to them to maintain as much control as possible over their access to bush resources.

Their solutions were rooted in their traditional culture, their history of political and economic activism, and their understanding of the contemporary situation. They came to see that the northern political economy fostered by government and controlled by “outsiders” was unjust and contributed to local poverty and a condition of underdevelopment. In 1963, all the residents of the region joined forces to write a letter to Premier Manning of Alberta, in which they outlined their analysis of the situation and their suggestions for improvements (letter from Fort Chipewyan leaders and residents to Premier Manning, 30 May 1963, Fort Chipewyan economic problems 1963-65). They were worried about high levels of unemployment, poor returns from the fur trade, and high costs of merchandise. They wanted control over fishing and other resource enterprises, jobs, reduction in freight costs, and protection for their hunting, fishing, and trapping. They were painfully aware that they did not know how to achieve these goals. They asked Manning to send them an advisor who could help them learn how to organize themselves to overcome their problems. The particular form of this petition — the fact that they asked for someone to help them learn how to organize — probably resulted from an earlier visit to the community by Benny Baitch, a pioneer in community development work. But the sentiments were their own. The two chiefs followed this letter with one to the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, with a similar analysis (letter from Fred Marcel, Chief for Chipewyan

The government responded by introducing a program of community development in Fort Chipewyan. However, the basic structural conditions which contributed to the powerlessness and marginality of the Fort Chipewyan people were not altered. Although local people had not created the problems they faced, the community development process asked them to solve these problems using highly limited resources. Primarily, they were encouraged to organize into cooperative movements in order to improve their situations. At the same time, the outside agencies which were responsible for the problems were not involved in the process of community change and in some instances undermined the new organizations. The failure of community development to resolve local economic difficulties was blamed on perceived local inadequacies, not on the structural contradictions of the program.

Conclusion

For most of the 20th century, both mainstream academics and popular writers contributed to a paradigmatic portrayal of northern history, of a natural unfolding of events in the north that would inevitably lead to new northern industries and a new northern society. These writers contended that this unfolding would help Natives overcome a “primitive” and “unproductive” existence. It was the modernist pedagogy articulated by Zaslow, who brought northern history into the broader modernist paradigm.

The modernist paradigm has been challenged by the insistance of northerners that their voices must be heard, that they have a right to be represented in history, and to represent history. They have their own historical monologue(s), the tribal narratives of the “Other” (cf. Vizenor 1990). The modernist paradigm has been challenged also by the failure of its vision for northern regions and their occupants, who rarely benefited from any northern initiatives, but were rather left impoverished and underdeveloped. Native societies were fragmented, and their communities, often dysfunctional. Many Natives became dependent upon social assistance programs controlled and administered by non-Natives.

A different version of 20th century history is that the expansion of the state created the basis for underdevelopment and impoverishment of the Fort Chipewyan and other northern regions. The effect of the expansion of the state combined with a pedagogy that promotes a view of history that reads more like policy than history has left the Canadian Northwest and its people marginalized to this very day. “Nation-building” was the mystification of an internal kind of neo-colonialism. Northern Canadian history became a prescription or a scenario for activities labelled “development” that allowed Canada to colonize its northern regions as if they were a third world country. Regulatory regimes were imposed that supported the capitalist mode of production and undermined the fur trade mode of production. This required that Natives be removed, if necessary, from the resource base on which they relied for livelihood, so that northern resources could be made available to entrepreneurs for other enterprises; the authority to do so came from Treaty 8 (Government of Canada 1966). Accordingly, access to and use of the resource base was regulated by government agents unwilling to involve the traditional Native users in writing land-use regulations or to support traditional Native land-use activities. Instead, regulations were devised that supported industrial enterprises, even when they competed with Native economies. From this point of view, expansion of the Canadian state entailed the unequal appropriation of northern Canadian resources to capitalize other regions of Canada. Northern capital formation did not occur, and northern regional resources along with regional economies deteriorated. The net effect is that Canada’s Northwest was plundered by the very policy that was sent to develop it. This irony is not just a loss to northerners but poses a threat to long term Canadian welfare as well, since it has sown the seeds of a welfare state in the north (cf. Brody 1981).

This paper has shown that Natives consistently rejected the ways in which they were defined by others, and the plans made for them by others. This resistance should come as no surprise in light of recent fur trade studies revealing Natives to have been powerful actors in the fur trade economy, shaping the nature of the trade through their consumption patterns and resistance to being governed by the fur
traders. It has taken longer to see Natives in a similarly assertive way during the period of state expansion, in part because their power to effect the development of local situations was genuinely diminished — which is partly what state control means. It has not been assisted by the writings of subarctic ethnographers, who ignored the impact of the state until the post World War II period and whose analyses were typically ahistorical and apolitical. Nevertheless, the discussion in this paper has outlined a history of Native political and economic activism that persists to today. Natives creatively defined the local situations and a range of alternative possibilities, which they then pursued through a number of often highly creative strategies. They rarely relied on single solutions, but usually had several options they were trying. This is a very different history than has been written — prescribed — by Zaslow.

In sum, Natives consistently sought to empower themselves. Through an array of strategies, Natives tried to thwart state expansionary activities that operated in colonial and neo-colonial fashion. Contemporary economic, political, and social activism of Fort Chipewyan residents is rooted in this history. Today, they are contributing to their own monologue about northern futures, with some success. They are insisting on the right to tell their own versions of northern history and to teach these versions to their children. These efforts are entrenching a new cultural pluralism in Fort Chipewyan, which is in line with a postmodernist understanding that multiple voices must be listened to, and in equal ways. Sensitive historians will not ignore these voices, but rather be inspired by them to participate in and foster a dialogue about Canadian history, to end their intellectual hegemony, to acknowledge the political implications of their theoretical and analytical enterprise, and to reconsider the real impact of Canadian “nation-building” activities on the local level. The explanatory bounds set by the modernist paradigm produce the logic of “prescriptive histories.” Prescriptive histories are dangerous not just because they construct a view of a past that never existed, but because future writers of economic and political policy will model preferred futures on these false analyses.

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Notes

1. In this paper, “Native” and “Aboriginal” refer to all peoples indigenous to the region, both Indians and Métis.

2. Ironically, a review of his first book opined that Zaslow had written a history “from the north, and not simply for or of the north” (Coates and Morrison 1989: 3).

3. Colonization refers to the direct seizure of political power of one region over another and consequent economic exploitation (Balandier 1966:37; Worsley 1984:3). It results in a type of plural society characterized by antagonistic groups that are defined racially and live very different lives within one political framework imposed by the colonizer (Balandier 1966:45, 54-55). It was European colonization that facilitated global capitalist expansion, in the process transforming the cultures and societies of colonized regions. Neo-colonialism entails a shift from direct to indirect methods of domination, in which “...political independence was combined with continuing economic dependence ...” (Worsley 1984:297, cf. p. 300). The same phenomenon is sometimes referred to as “imperialism” (Mandel 1968:480).

There is considerable variation in the literature on colonialism in the use of the terms “internal colonialist,” “neo-colonialism,” and “imperialism.” It is beyond the scope of this paper to critique this literature or its specialized terminology. However, most of the theory on colonialism and its permutations was developed in reference to societies quite different from those occupying northern Canada.
It can be argued that prior to 1870, northern Canada was not technically a colony, in that the fur traders were unable (and uninterested?) in seizing political power; they used other methods to produce their profits (McCormack 1984a). Colonial relations developed after 1870 in the form of "internal colonialism," which were replaced after World War II by a type of internal neo-colonialism, as Aboriginal peoples became citizens and acquired the franchise.

4. Colonial relations have typically been justified by the creation of explanations and mythologies justifying the actions of the colonizer (Worsley 1984: 54; Balandier 1966: 55). As Worsley points out, "ruling classes have the power to disseminate their ideas to those they dominate" (1984: 58).

5. The two Fort Chipewyan bands have established an Educational Authority, whose job includes providing greater information about the community in the local curriculum. The community has also built and staffed a heritage center cum museum, which portrays selected aspects of local history.

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This study examines the educational role of the Sisters of Charity of Montreal, the Grey Nuns, who staffed Holy Angels Indian residential school in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, and the related experiences of pupils who attended the institution from 1874 to 1924. Included in it are references to the educational activities of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, a Roman Catholic missionary order, and to other groups involved in formal educational programs in northeastern Alberta in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.  

Indian residential schools played an important role in the care and formal education of Indian, Métis, and some Euro-Canadian children in Canada from the 1870s to the 1960s. Most Euro-Canadians, church authorities and officials of the Department of Indian Affairs especially, viewed the residential schools favorably until the 1950s, when the department decided to integrate Indian pupils into the territorial and provincial systems of public education. Indian criticisms of residential schools and the government’s policy of integrated schooling combined to put an end to these church-run institutions by the late 1960s. Whatever resentments former students had about them, however, did not receive much public attention until two decades later, when disturbing allegations of physical and sexual abuse in these schools surfaced in news and documentary reports and in criminal charges against some former school employees (Canadian Broadcasting Corporation [CBC], Jan. 10 and 17, 1989; Jan. 9, 1991; Globe and Mail Nov. 15 and 16, Dec. 11, 1990). Although interviews for this study offered no evidence of such abuse, one must be cautious in concluding that none occurred.

Many Fine Books

In reconstructing the experiences of children and others at Holy Angels, certain research criteria were followed. The inner dynamics of schools in the recent past can only be determined from information gathered from a variety of sources including oral accounts and written materials, as well as whatever physical evidence may be available (Carney 1984). To understand, for example, the activities of an Indian residential school without thoroughly examining church and government records, or to base one’s information mainly on the recollections of former pupils would be to give a very incomplete account (Carney 1989). Similar problems would result if family, staff, and community perspectives or situational factors such as the local economy were ignored. But it is also realized that gathering data from as many sources as possible is not enough, and that care must be taken in interpreting what has been collected. For example, one must resist applying conclusions which may be valid for one institution to institutions as a whole or vice versa. The same caution is needed about holding to preconceptions if one is to avoid bias in selecting data or in seeking to explain what happened. These considerations are hopefully adhered to in what follows, not only because they are fundamental to historical analysis, but also because they should provide a basis for ongoing studies of Holy Angels, especially in the post 1924 period.

Most references in the literature to formal education in Fort Chipewyan during the latter part of the 19th century and the early 20th century can be found in trade, travel and missionary accounts. Following the establishment of the first Fort Chipewyan on the south shore of Lake Athabasca in 1788, Roderick Mackenzie began a library which, some sixty years later, was deemed to contain “many fine books” (Parker 1987: 78). Neither Mackenzie nor the post managers who followed him were inclined, however, to make it possible for the children of the settlement
to use this resource by arranging for reading skills to be taught. As regulations issued in the 1820s indicate, the Hudson’s Bay Company assumed no responsibility for schooling the children of its employees. Parents were encouraged to teach their children the “A.B.C. Catechism” and to have them attend “divine service” (Chalmers 1972: 78-79). Thus, until Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries opened schools in Chipewyan in the 1870s, schooling was entirely a private affair.

That most children in the Fort Chipewyan area were not taught to read and write did not mean that they were uneducated or without training or instruction. The area’s original inhabitants – Beaver, Chipewyan and Cree Indians – had developed intricate and life-long systems of education that were closely related to the material and non-material aspects of their cultures. The impact of the fur trade and the coming of French-speaking voyageurs, Scots and Orcadians to the settlement had only a minimal effect on traditional forms of Native enculturation. As the newcomers were largely dependent on the Indians for their well-being, most were given to learning the customs of the country and to accepting a way of life in which schooling was not significant. Understandably, such attitudes did not end with the advent of formal schooling in the community.

Missionary records are important sources of information on formal educational arrangements in Fort Chipewyan and on traditional educational practices of the area’s Native people. The archives and publications of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, such as the episcopal perspectives provided by Henri Faraud (1866), Emil Grouard (1922) and Gabriel Breynat (1947), contain considerable information on Oblate educational and missionary efforts in the north. A series of popular works by Father Pierre Duchaussois, including *The Grey Nuns in the Far North* (1919), make it plain that the missionaries were the first to bring schooling to the area. The Grey Nuns, on the other hand, have published very little on their work in northern Canada. Their contributions to the Oblate missions and their service to the community as teachers, nurses and child care workers have often been acknowledged by others, but except for some accounts of the congregation’s Mother Generals, such as Sister Estelle Mitchell’s *Mère Jane Slocome* (1959), the sisters themselves have not been given to recording their accomplishments. According to a Grey Nun archivist, even the *Chroniques* (convent diaries) and the outgoing letters from convents like Fort Chipewyan were carefully edited so as not to extoll the work of individual sisters (Sr. F. Champagne, pers. commun. March 18, 1991).

Until the 1960s little mention was made in academic literature or in government publications about the state of formal education in the north. The involvement of federal, provincial and territorial governments in schooling programs in isolated communities like Fort Chipewyan had been minimal. Most government officials expected the churches to play a central role in the provision of schooling and to contribute to such ventures accordingly, an arrangement involving financial ramifications which had neither been sought nor accepted by the churches. When Fort Chipewyan became part of the Province of Alberta in 1905, petitions were sent to the government in Edmonton on behalf of Holy Angels for funds to help pay the cost of educating non-status children. As will be shown later, the response was discouraging. The school was more successful in obtaining pupil grants from the Department of Indian Affairs, especially after the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899, but the level of federal support was far less than what was needed to provide the Indian children of the area with basic reading, writing and arithmetic skills.

Much of the extensive literature on Native and northern education published in the last 20 years has been critical of the care arrangements and academic programs of mission residential schools. Students who attended Indian residential schools in places like Joussard, Kamloops, Aklavik and Spanish, such as Harold Cardinal (1969), George Manuel (1974), Anthony Thrasher (1976) and Basil Johnston (1988), had very little good to say about their residential school experiences. Other observers of mission schooling, such as Jacqueline Kennedy (1970), Dianne Persson (1980) and Celia Haig-Brown (1988) who studied the Indian boarding schools at Qu’Appelle, Blue Quills and Kamloops respectively, have been equally critical. Assessments of the educational work of missionaries in general studies of Native-White relations, such as those by Harry Hawthorn (1967), J.S. Frideres (1974), E. Brian Titley (1986),
and Geoffrey York (1989), also tend to be disapproving. However, not all comments by those who went to residential schools have been negative.

The recollections of students who attended such institutions in the late 19th or early 20th century are given to praising the educational work of the missionaries. John Tetsó’s (1964) and Ted Trindell’s (1986) reminiscences concerning Fort Providence, James Gladstone’s (1967) account of St. Paul’s in southern Alberta, and Joseph Dion’s (1979) description of Onion Lake residential school contrast markedly with the negative observations of students like Manuel, Cardinal, Thrasher and Johnston who attended similar schools in the 1930s and 1950s.

One need not conclude that residential schools became less responsive to student needs as the decades passed. Rather it would appear that for many the meaning of the residential school experience has become more a matter of present-day insights than of understanding earlier circumstances. The danger is that past residential school practices and outcomes may be misinterpreted or exaggerated by those seeking to identify the causes of current problems within the Native community. A current example of how this has occurred can be found in recent comments by Peter Enerk, a former member of the Northwest Territories (NWT) legislative assembly and a graduate of the Grey Nuns residential school at Chesterfield Inlet. In stating that “the much vilified residential schools of the 1950s and the 1960s groomed native children for success in a way that today’s [educational] system does not,” Enerk mistakenly applies his own success, which he affirms was achieved through “endurance, commitment and discipline” (Edmonton Journal, June 26, 1988: B-3) to Native students generally.

Although Enerk’s evaluation refers to a later period and a different form of residential schooling than the one discussed in this paper, it raises questions about the general applicability of comments concerning the value of such schooling by individual graduates and by other commentators. It is worth noting, for example, that Enerk’s positive comments and those of Brian Lewis (1987: 45-49), a long-time northern educator, and of Colin Irwin (1989: 2-12), who laud the educational programs provided by federal authorities in the North during the 1950s and 1960s, do not take into account the differences between classroom instruction and residential care programs at this time. It has been argued elsewhere (Carney 1983) that the instructional programs of this period and their academic outcomes were woefully inadequate and that they did not, as Lewis has stated, provide a “sure-footed transition from camp life to industrial society” (1987: 45).

In this study of the life and times of the Sisters and pupils of Holy Angels, the following topics are considered: the Oblates, Grey Nuns and the Fort Chipewyan mission; linguistic backgrounds of the children and their mentors; religious instruction and socialization programs; the care of orphans and other children; teaching basic skills and managing classrooms; life in the convent (eating, playing and working); and the Native-wilderness equation, preparing for life outside the mission.

An Example of True Charity

Because Fort Chipewyan was one of the first Roman Catholic missions established west of St. Boniface, Bishop Alexander Taché, who had visited the post as a young Oblate in 1847, gave it priority as a place for a school (Taché 1866: 111). However, a proposal by Taché’s coadjutor, Vital Grandin, to have Fort Providence become the seat of a new vicariate because of its centrality to other Oblate missions in the Mackenzie, as well as his expressed concerns over Anglican missionary activities in the region prompted a change in plans (McCarthy 1990). Writing to Mother Julie Hainault-Deschamps (Superior General of the Grey Nuns) in 1862, Grandin reported on conditions in the district: “A minister [Kirkby] was established at the principal fort [Simpson]” and “was receiving aid from officers of the Company.” He was giving the Indians “presents” with the result that some of them “had sold their souls for some sugar and tea. At present there were only two Protestant ministers to oppose, but serious consequences could be expected if their numbers increased and if their gospel reached more tribes.” What was needed was the presence of “three or four sisters” who would teach, nurse, provide care for orphans, and who by their very lives would give the Indians “an example of true charity.” Grandin ended
his appeal by asking that sisters be sent to both Fort Providence and Fort Chipewyan, but if this was not possible at least one community of sisters should be sent to Fort Providence, where the need was greatest (Archives Srs. Grises de Montréal [ASGM], Grandin to Hainault-Deschamps, May 3, 1862).

The Congregation of the Sisters of Charity was founded in Montreal in 1737 by Madame Marie D’Youville. Known for their work with orphans, the sick and elderly, the Grey Nuns were not involved in operating schools until coming to St. Boniface in 1844. Subsequently, they opened mission schools at Lac St. Anne in 1859, at Ile-à-la-Crosse in 1860 and Lac La Biche in 1862. There are indications that the congregation found it difficult to find enough teachers in its ranks. There is no evidence, however, of the sisters making any substantial changes to their recruitment or formation activities to take into account their new role as generalist teachers. In this regard, the sisters had some guidance in their rule and in publications like the Manuel de Piété (Soeurs Grises 1872) and the Manuel Abrégé de Pédagogie à l’Usage des Soeurs de la Charité (Soeurs Grises 1916). Yet even in these the emphasis is on Christian formation, religion and morality, not on teaching skills. Another example of this orientation can be found in a 1924 manual, entitled Programme de l’Éducation Chrétienne, written by Père Chiron (1924) for the Grey Nuns, which devotes only a few paragraphs to the modes and content of non-religious instruction. It would also appear that those assigned classroom duties were destined to remain permanently in such work. This often meant that the principals of the schools were either non-teaching sisters, or what was more likely given the male-dominated nature of the church, Oblate priests who had neither teacher training nor classroom experience. Even though the Oblates played a major role in northern and Native schooling, the network of Catholic residential schools would not have been possible without the commitment of religious women like the Grey Nuns.

Grandin’s appeal was finally answered when Henri Faraud, who had been named bishop of the newly-formed Mackenzie vicariate in 1862, was advised that five sisters would be leaving for Fort Providence in the fall of 1866. When the nuns reached Providence a year later, they immediately took in eight orphans. Why these children were not looked after by relatives is not clear, but it is known that large numbers of pupils in places like Fort Providence were classified as orphaned, destitute or neglected children. Unfortunately, convent life did not necessarily protect them from want. From the beginning the sisters and the orphans suffered from a serious lack of food, and when reports of this were received in Montreal, Mother Jane Slocombe allowed the sisters a longer period of rest, hoping that this relaxation of the rule of rising at 5:00 a.m. and retiring at 9:00 p.m. might alleviate some of their distress. So common were reports of “les maladies, les privations croissants ... et un certain malaise entre les Pères et les Soeurs” at Providence that Mother Hainault-Deschamps decided to have the foundation abandoned not later than 1881 and to send the nuns to convents in the south (ASGM, Clut to Hainault-Deschamps, Aug. 17, 1879). Taché viewed the removal as “un grand malheur” and was impatient with the Mother General’s concern for the sisters at Providence: “Pas une seule est morte” (ASGM, Taché to Hainault-Deschamps, Sept. 28, 1881 and Nov. 30, 1881). Faraud found the sisters’ condition to be “ni mieux ni pire qu’elles ont toujours été.” He further argued that their state was much better than that of the Oblate fathers: “Je suis convaincu qu’il n’y pas un seul père dans nos pauvres missions qui n’ait eu vingt fois plus à souffrir que les soeurs” (ASGM, Faraud to Hainault-Deschamps, May 19, 1881). In the face of such opposition the Mother General capitulated, and the news reached the North in February 1882 “that the sisters at Providence will remain” (ASGM, Camsell to Hainault-Deschamps, Feb. 15, 1882).

The creation of the Anglican diocese of Athabasca in 1874 prompted an Oblate to observe that “a school had to be provided [at Fort Chipewyan] immediately and at all costs” (Potyondi 1979: 50). Negotiations were underway to obtain sisters from Montreal, but in the meantime the foundation’s establishment was so pressing that the Grey Nuns at Fort Providence agreed to send two sisters and a laywoman to Fort Chipewyan without first obtaining approval from the Mother House. Sister Adeline Lapointe, Sister Michel-des-Saints and Mademoiselle Domitilde Letendre arrived in Fort Chipewyan
in July 1874 to take up temporary residence in a small shed. That the sisters willingly made do with a frequent lack of food in Providence and with inadequate housing in Chipewyan reveals, if nothing else, a commitment to their vows of poverty and obedience. Given their accommodating ways, however, the danger was that they could be exploited or overburdened by groups within the church and by others including government officials. It could be expected that some of these accommodations would have a detrimental effect not only on the sisters’ well being, but also on that of the children placed in their care. This situation would apply particularly during the period of this study, when a common justification advanced by federal politicians for the church-state entente in Indian education was that it was a cooperative venture in which “... the churches loyally made up the deficiency out of their own revenues ...” (House of Commons Debates 1922: 4027).

Within a month of arriving in Chipewyan, the sisters had opened a school, known as the Couvent des Saints Anges, for 15 orphans including some “Caribou Eaters from far off Fond du Lac” (Archives des Srs. Grises, Edmonton [ASGE], Lavoie to Neary, July 8, 1949). Most of the children were Métis. One Oblate noted that Indians were reluctant to send their children to Holy Angels because “ils ... ne voyant aucunement les avantages de l’instruction (Archives of the Diocese of the Mackenzie [ADM], Mousseau n.d.: 4). Another missionary explained the presence of the Caribou Eater children in the school as an act of desperation by their kin. In the Chipewyan language, they were “tsinaye” (children eaten by lice), orphans whose lives might be spared by a spell in the convent (J. Porte, pers. commun., June 19, 1990). The designation “tsinaye” apparently became a synonym among the Chipewyan for those who went to boarding school. Accounts differ as to how many of the orphans were under the sisters’ full time care; for example, one source indicates that only two of the fifteen children of the school’s first class were interns or boarders (ASGE, 1982a). It is not known what physical arrangements were made for teaching and accommodating the children prior to the building of a combined school and residence in 1881. The building was enlarged in 1898, and by 1907 the facility had been expanded further to include a chapel (Plate 1), two classrooms and four dormitories. No other additions were made to the largely mission-financed facility until 1942. Other areas of

Plate 1. Holy Angels school chapel, Fort Chipewyan. University of Alberta Archives, 86-106-12. This photograph was taken sometime between 1907, when the school was built, and 1942.
intensive pupil socialization surrounded the school, including the church which was located next to Holy Angels and the garden and other work areas which were scattered about and enclosed within the mission compound.

Several pictures of Fort Chipewyan taken in 1899 reflect the relative power of competing interests in the settlement (Potyondi 1979: 47, 51, 57). The imposing row of structures of the Catholic mission of the Nativity equals the extent of the Hudson’s Bay establishment and all but dwarfs the Anglican mission of St. Paul. Essentially, there were two groups in the settlement: one headed by Catholic missionaries with most of their supporters in subordinate positions in the fur trade and nearly all of them Métis or French and French-speaking, the other composed of Protestant clergy and senior employees of the Company, Presbyterians and Anglicans, Scots, English, and English-speaking Half-Breeds. According to Bishop Grouard (1922: 306), Indians categorized these groups as follows: “... la religion catholique c’est la religion des Français, la religion Protestant, celle des Anglais,” and were given to judging each group’s relative power in concrete terms. For instance, the Company’s status was demonstrated in its Mackenzie steamer, the Wrigley, whereas the Catholic missionaries travelled by canoe. When the mission launched its own steamer, the St. Alphonse, in 1895, it not only provided the church with much needed transportation between Fort Smith and Peel’s River, but also, according to Grouard, did much to enhance the status of the Oblates:

Les Indiens étaient aussi enchantés de voir que les Anglais ne pouvaient plus se vanter d’être les seuls en possession de canots à feu et que les Français pouvaient leur tenir tête [Grouard 1922: 306].

La Perte de la Langue

The linguistic and religious orientations referred to above largely determined the mode of instruction and the content of the curriculum adopted by Sister Lapointe and her successors. French was the sole language of instruction at Holy Angels until the 1890s, when a course in English was introduced. By 1907 English had become the language of instruction on alternate days (Interview, Y-1). This bilin-
gual schooling arrangement apparently did not reflect language use in Fort Chipewyan. Madeline Bird, who was born in 1899 and who went to Holy Angels when she was nine or ten, recalls:

We spoke mostly French [and Cree] at home, too, with my parents. The Laviolettes, Mercredis, Beaulieus and Tourangeaus and more of the old timers came from Manitoba and spoke good French all the time. Nobody wanted to speak English [Bird 1991: 13].

According to a Chipewyan-speaking informant who went to Holy Angels in 1924, French continued to be the principal language of the settlement:

They [the sisters] really try hard us to talk in French because they want us to learn fast what we aim for. They want to talk French, because it was only French, even the town was mostly all French at that time, Fort Chip. Every place you go people talk French [Interview, T-7].

Catholic missionaries in Fort Chipewyan and elsewhere in the North, concerned for the survival of the French language, strongly supported its use as a language of instruction in mission residential schools. Indeed, for many Oblates like Sylvio Lesage, who was Superior of the Fort Providence mission, the issue was more than a matter of language maintenance: “La perte de la langue [Française] ... amène fatalement la perte de la foi catholique” (Archives of the MacKenzie Vicariate [AMV] Lesage to Deschâtelets, March 19, 1941).

Twenty-two of the 44 graduates interviewed stated that French was their maternal language and that they had also, in many instances, acquired Cree or Chipewyan at an early age. Ten said that either Cree, Chipewyan or Slavey was their mother language. Five said English, and the responses from the remainder were unclear or were not obtained (Interviews, Y-1 to Y-43 and T-7). About half of those interviewed said they were reasonably fluent in four languages: Chipewyan or Slavey, Cree, English and French. None of the respondents expressed concern about English as a language of instruction, but some Chipewyan speakers such as this former student recalled the difficulties she had with French in the 1920s.

Not one of them [my parents] went to school. I talk Cree, Chipewyan and English, but can’t talk French.
anymore. I was thirteen years old when I went to the mission. I can’t learn nothing because French is very hard for me. A year and a half, I guess, I was in the mission; no more I go back, and my friends, the girls, used to talk to me in English. I learned a little bit school, we used English always to write a little bit. Long time ago the sisters [didn’t] give you a book to take home, nothing. Since I get off the school never see the book, always in the bush [Interview, Y-17].

As the excerpts from interviews of the following two women informants indicate, those who spoke French and Cree before going to Holy Angels appeared content with the school’s French and English instructional programs. Both respondents attended in the 1920s; one was a day pupil, the other a boarder.

My first language was French and Cree. Both my parents went to school, the same place, Holy Angels [where] I learned what I know today. The subjects in them days was just about the same as now, different subjects, geography, arithmetic, religion, everything. [School] used to be from 9 to 12 and 1 to 3. My schoolwork was helpful to me after I left school. I had to bring my kids up in the bush, so I had to teach my kids [by correspondence] and now they have good jobs over it. The sisters, Sister Champoux, used to be a nice sister. The only thing is that I used to chew [spruce] gum. She used to be mean to me, stick gum in my hair sometimes, but we made it through, we went nine years, ninth grade. The sisters were good, that’s the only teachers we had. I liked going to school because I had to, I guess, I couldn’t stay home my dad wouldn’t let me [Interview, Y-13].

There was only six of us [children] in the family. We used to speak French and Cree at home, I learned my prayers by heart, but I don’t know reading and writing. I was going on ten years when I went to school, and stayed for five and half years, only grade 5 when I quit school I didn’t finish my English grammar or French grammar. I liked it [the school] very much, fond memories of staying the convent. We were lucky to be there, because now I can read a little French and English.

[The Chipewyan pupils] had little interpreters like that amongst them, some kids that learn already and that speak the same language. Cree we didn’t get too much like that, but the Chipewyan it must have been hard for them, especially from Fond-du-Lac. I don’t think they speak French at all. I think they were just Chipewyan [Interview, Y-28].

**Prayer and Helping the Father**

Instruction in religious practice, articles of faith and rules of conduct occurred in and out of the classroom at Holy Angels. The use of Latin in mass, benediction and other liturgies did not seem to concern the pupils. In fact, one Chipewyan speaker who stubbornly refused “to learn to read and write in French” said his fondest memory of three years in the convent goes back to when he became an altar boy:

What I was really after was when the Father make Mass. I liked to help him, finally I helped the Father in Latin. I remember the Latin. It was pretty good. I tried hard that one, every morning I used to help the Father, six o’clock in the morning. It’s not really hard job to learn how to pray, but Latin that one was pretty hard job, but when you got in your mind, it didn’t take too long. That’s what I got from the sisters when I stay in the mission, prayer and helping the Father [Interview, Y-2].

Although Father Lacombe’s pictorial catechism was highly regarded by the Oblates as a means of teaching Catholicism, particularly “pour l’instruction prompte et facile des sauvages, des enfants et des personnes ne sachent pas lire” (l’Institut de Missiologie n.d.), none of the former students mentioned seeing it while at Holy Angels. What they often remembered were the religious exercises that began with morning prayer, followed by mass in the chapel or the nearby church. A Chipewyan woman found that the religious practices she encountered in the convent were the same as those she was used to at home in Fond-du-Lac.

When we was small too, our family used to pray, then [my parents] used to send us, 6 o’clock in the morning, to church, every morning, “get up, you kids, go on, go to church.” We had to get up and go the church, every morning, as soon as you hear that bell, hear that bell at 6 o’clock in the morning. Sunday take off in the morning at 6 o’clock, 10 o’clock, again 2 o’clock. We used to go to church 3 times a day. When maybe no priest, we went to pray beads all together. My mum and dad and all the kids, same as in the mission.

[In the convent] we get up around 6 o’clock in the morning, go to church first thing in the morning, 6 o’clock in the morning. I learned how to pray and to go to the school from the sisters. It was O.K. In
the daytime we pray all together, maybe the rosary .... 6 o’clock in the morning, we had to go to church, but now, who is going to go 6 o’clock in the church in the morning? Nobody do that [Interview, Y-15].

Among the other religiously-oriented activities experienced by pupils at Holy Angels were visits to the Marian shrine located on the hill behind the mission (Interview, Y-15), membership in “La Congrégation des Enfants de Marie,” an organization reserved for senior girls of exemplary character, and participation in religious pageants, such as those enacted during the celebration of the school’s Golden Jubilee in August 1924 (ADM 1924: 1-16). One informant remembered his catechism classes, which were conducted in Cree and Chipewyan and which included instruction in writing syllabics. “They teach us Cree too. Father Jaslier ... used to talk good Cree and used to teach us to read and write in Cree. And Chipewyan, Father Coudert taught us Chipewyan. They used to teach us that as part of religion” (Interview, Y-40). Except in such classes and in the church, where there were syllabic inscriptions on panels above the altar and windows and where the congregation had access to Cree and Chipewyan hymnals and prayer books, pupils were discouraged from using Native script or languages in the convent and schoolroom.

Religious socialization occurred in other ways as well. Bible stories and the lives of saints and missionaries were used in the convent to inspire Christian steadfastness among the children. Many of those interviewed, however, appeared to have been most impressed with accounts of young girls whose pious lives had been ended by misadventure. One such story was graphically told by two informants. It concerned Geneviève Duquette, an orphan girl, who was sent by the sisters at Chipewyan to the convent at Lac La Biche in February 1875. She travelled in the company of Louis Lafrance, an Iroquois hunter, and Alexis Reynard, an Oblate brother, but did not reach her destination (Interviews, Y-29 and Y-30). According to testimony of the time, Lafrance murdered and cannibalized Reynard when the Oblate tried to protect the girl from Louis’ improper advances. And while the partially eaten remains of Reynard were found, the whereabouts of Louis and Geneviève were never determined (Philippot 1934: 157-184). The young girl’s innocence became the stuff of legend. Some children at Holy Angels remembered her as “une fille du paradis,” and mission school graduates reported hearing her mournful cries years later in the place where she was taken captive (Maccagno 1986: n.p.).

As this religiously-oriented form of schooling only touched the lives of small numbers of Native children, the Oblates did not view it as a critical aspect of their mission, nor did many of them see Holy Angels as being much more than a temporary refuge for orphans. As a result, they continued to devote much of their effort at religious socialization among the people of the camps outside the settlement. In this regard, they were seldom challenged by their Anglican rivals, such as the Rev. Arthur Shaw, who after arriving in Fort Chipewyan in 1874 made it known that he would not leave the settlement “to work in the Indian camps” (McCrum 1976: 18). It is not surprising, therefore, to find statements by the Cree and Chipewyan chiefs at the signing of Treaty 8 at Fort Chipewyan in 1899 that they and their people were Roman Catholic (AMV 1899: 56-58). Nor is it unreasonable to attribute these affirmations of the Oblates’ success to their willingness to go among the people and their readiness to use indigenous languages and non-formal teaching methods.

The Only Home I Knew

Contrary to Diamond Jenness’ assertion that northern mission schools were “religious kindergartens” (1964: 421), an argument could be made that these schools provided child care and secular instruction in addition to religion. Judgments of the worth of what was made available in institutions like Holy Angels have varied widely, but the focus of such assessments, albeit indistinct at times, has nearly always been on how various physical, intellectual and spiritual elements were brought together in a residential context. Over the period 1874 to 1923, 552 children, 318 females and 234 males were registered at Holy Angels as interns or pupils in residence (Table 1). As has been noted, the school began as a refuge for orphans and continued to be a place for them as well as for other children, including “non-
treaty boarders” who were “French, not Indian” (Coudert to Brownlee, Feb. 25, 1930, in McCormack 1984: 360). The testimony of former students reveals much about the school’s clientele. A majority of respondents said they were placed in the convent because they were orphans, and many of the remainder said it was because they were sick (Interview, Y-1) or because their parents wanted them to accompany a younger sibling who was incapacitated (Interview, Y-14). Another reason for going to Chipewyan was that their parents lived “in the bush” and that they wanted their children to “learn something” (Interview, Y-15). One informant who gave this response was questioned further when it was determined that her parents had perished while in the barren land, leaving her, an infant, and an older sister. She explained that she was placed in the convent at a young age and never liked it. She considered her older married sister, who left Holy Angels before her, as her mother, since she did not remember her mother at all. She didn’t know how her mother died, but said she died very young (Interview, Y-31).

The following interview excerpts (including one from a woman who attended the Grey Nuns’ convent in Fort Resolution) show how the loss of a parent led to the children being placed with the sisters.

Then my mother died. I was only about 8 years old. She got very sick and they took her in a flat sleigh about four o’clock in the morning and my mother came in the house to say goodbye to us. I was the only one up because my other little brothers and sisters were sleeping. So I was scratching the window to get the snow off to see my mother leave.

It was in May ... when the nuns came and told my dad that he should put us in the convent. So my dad decided. Two sisters came and took us down to a place called Fort Resolution. I stayed with the nuns the first 9 years [Interview, Y-6].

My mother died. My dad had no place to put the kids, so the bishop told him take all the kids in the convent. So I was raised in the convent from one and a half till I was 13. It was the only home I knew. I would never say a bad word, I don’t care who hear me, against the nuns because I was helpless when they took me in there. A sister was there, I can’t remember her name, and that’s the one took me and looked after me for 2 years. I was about... 3 going on 4, I didn’t see that sister. I look around and went in the parlour. One of the sisters seen me ‘what you doing’ she told me. ‘I’m looking for my mother.’ ‘Oh, she’s going’ they told me and I started crying [Interview, Y-16].

Somewhere between 20 and 25 percent of the boarders registered between 1874 and 1924 were five or younger (ASGE n.d.c.:1-68). They had time before beginning school, provided of course that death or a return to the community did not occur beforehand. Some pre-schoolers were taught such skills as making snowshoes (Interview, Y-39); while others upon reaching school age, who were deemed not to be in a condition to start school, were given less arduous assignments.

When I went to the convent, I had very bad eyes, so the sister had to keep me out of the light. When my eyes were a little better, the sister was afraid I would get bad eyes again so she kept me out of the school all the time and I helped her to take care of a little orphan boy. So I never had good schooling all my life [Interview, Y-35].

As a small, relatively self-sufficient institution, Holy Angels appears to have avoided the impersonal and regimented character of the larger, more structured residential schools of a later period. Between 1874 and 1923 the annual enrollment including day pupils was never more than 80. Five years after the school opened there were 25 pupils, 18 in 1891 and 35 in 1912. By 1924, the year of the school’s Golden Jubilee, the enrollment was in the mid-70s. The number of staff grew proportionally. Three new sisters were sent from Montreal to join Sister Michel-des-Saints a year after the school opened. By the mid-1890s there were 14 sisters and the number remained more or less the same until the 1920s (ASGE n.d.b.: 1-2). Oblate brothers assisted in the school program by teaching the boys basic skills such as woodcutting, by arranging school outings to places like Goose Island, and by ensuring the convent’s icehouses were stocked with fish. The children also had frequent contact with the Oblate priests and were regularly visited by the Bishop and by lay dignitaries who passed through the settlement. Accounts by former pupils indicate that many of the sisters and other religious were viewed as models and that their presence was particularly appreciated because they were “always very happy” and because they were willing.
"to do without many things...and to suffer many hardships" (Mercredi 1962; Interview, Y-1). Visitors to the convent, in addition to expressing these sentiments, were also given to praising the nuns for the way in which they dealt with their penurious condition. In this regard, the following observation of Agnes Deans Cameron, a journalist who visited the convent in 1908, is typical:

In the long winter evenings [the sisters] do all their reading and sewing before six o'clock. The midwinter sun sinks at four, and two hours of candle-light is all that the frugal exchequer can afford. "What in the world do you do after six?" I ventured; for well we know those busy fingers are not content to rest in idle laps. "Oh! We knit, opening the stove doors to give us light" [1988: 79].

Table I. Holy Angels Residential School Boarding Pupils Summary (1874-1923)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of pupils registered</td>
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<td>Number of readmissions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of males</td>
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<td>Number of females</td>
<td>318</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of desertions</td>
<td>3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Number of deaths in school</td>
<td>59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following averages have been obtained by taking into consideration only valid records. (birthdate, date of admission, date of departure):

- Number of boys with valid birthdate record is 196
- Average age of entry for boys is 6 years 10 months.
- Number of girls with valid birthdate record is 286
- Average age of entry for girls is 7 years 2 months.
- Total number of students with valid birthdate record is 482
- Average age of entry for students is 7 years 0 month.
- Number of boys with valid date of departure is 189
- Average age of departure for boys is 10 years 11 months.
- Number of girls with valid date of departure is 268
- Average age of departure for girls is 12 years 3 months.
- Total number of students with a valid date of departure is 457
- Average age of departure for students is 11 years 9 months.
- Number of boys with complete records is 189
- Average time the boys spent in school is 4 years 5 months.
- Number of females with complete records is 268
- Average time the girls spent in school is 4 years 10 months.
- Total number of students with valid complete records is 457
- Average time the students spent in school is 4 years 8 months.

TABLE 2. Holy Angels School: Indian Pupils in Residence

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Year</th>
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<th>Female</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Average Attendance</th>
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<th>III</th>
<th>IV</th>
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Source: Department of Indian Affairs 1899-1924. Annual Reports.

who knew one of the teaching languages and who began school on arriving had very little time to become proficient in the basic skills. And as the following informant’s testimony indicates, the task was even more daunting for children whose first language was neither French nor English.

[When I went] I didn’t understand nothing, just Chipewyan. Since I was in the convent, I talk a little bit French, and English and Cree. It was good in the convent. I stay there 3 years until Grade 2, and just start Grade 3 when my dad come get me, and I went out, I didn’t learn nothing. Still today like that, I read lots but can’t write anything. It’s not my fault, I didn’t go to school. Can’t say no to your mother and dad long ago [Interview, Y-14].

Former students frequently referred to the lack of books and classroom materials and to the effort to use sparingly what was available. When slates began to be replaced in the 1910s by pencils and paper, cutting pencils in half and erasing and reusing pupils’ papers became a common practice. Discipline was strict. Prizes were distributed to recognize accomplishments, and punishments, including such “penances” as kneeling out, standing in the corner covered by one’s apron, and withdrawal of yard privileges were used to correct offenders. These measures apparently maintained order and all but did away with corporal punishment, at least in the classroom. Those who stayed in school, the older French and Métis girls especially, spoke fondly of their teachers and affirmed that although the sisters “didn’t always prepare their lessons” and were not “real teachers,” they “worked hard ... 24 hours a day ... and did their best (Interview, Y-1). Senior class informants also
said that when they began raising families in the bush, the academic skills gained in the convent greatly benefitted them, their children and others who had not been to school (Interview, Y-1, Y-13, Y-16, Y-29 and Y-39).

Some residential pupils remained in touch with members of their extended families even though many lived considerable distances from the school. As most boarders stayed in the convent for short periods, the missionaries encouraged them to gain a basic knowledge of English or French or both, and to use these languages as much as possible. There is no evidence that pupils were physically punished for using Native languages, but there is information that Indian elders and other Native leaders expected the children to leave school with some facility in one or more non-Native languages (That is the Way We Lived 1987; Thom and Blondin-Townsend 1987). As illustrated by the following excerpt from a composition by Alice Poitras, who attended the school from 1915 to 1921, pupils were encouraged to express themselves in written as well as spoken language:

The first three months of autumn are September, October and November. In the first month we gather cranberries and blue berries. They are very ripe and big. We [go] to gather the potatoes and other vegetables ______. In autumn the leaves are of bright colours. They fade and fall. The birds fly south to their warm climes. We prepare for crisp winter [ASGE n.d.a.: 2A].

Raised in a Convent

Recollections of what happened outside the classroom range from the very negative to the very positive, with most assessments by the school’s graduates, the older ones especially, leaning toward the latter view. Some said the dormitories were cold, others complained about the diet of porridge, molasses and fish and about the sisters eating better, and a few reported that water and the occasional dose of castor oil were the only forms of liquid nourishment (Interview, Y-19). Such criticisms were either not voiced or were contradicted by other informants; yet there is no question, from a present perspective, that living conditions were spartan and that the food was plain and monotonous.

During the period under study (1874 - 1924), 59 children died in residence; and there is evidence that others died from diseases such as tuberculosis after being sent home. Many of the deaths of boarding children occurred during such events as the famine of 1887 and the influenza epidemic of 1920 (ASGE n.d.c.: 1-68). By today’s standards, a death rate of ten percent (see Table 1) among the boarders is very high, but it was much lower than estimates about death rates in Indian residential schools, such as that affirmed by Duncan Campbell Scott (Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs) in 1914: “It is quite within the mark to say that fifty percent of the children who passed through these schools did not live to benefit from the education which they had received therein” (1914: 615). It should also be noted that some children were ill when they were sent to school and that many Native children are believed to have had very low resistance to diseases like measles and tuberculosis. As indicated in Table 1, the number of deserters or runaways at Holy Angels was very low, only three, which contrasts markedly with the number of runaways reported for some southern Indian schools, such as those mentioned in Brian Titley’s study of the Dunbow Indian industrial school (1991).

Relief from the demands of school work and the structured life of the convent came about in excursions to outlying fish camps, in forays for wild fruit and other edibles, in entertainments for visitors and in pageants and holy days which often involved dressing up, special treats and meals. Some parents and other members of the community complained about the loss of school time occasioned by these events. Former pupils, on the other hand, were virtually unanimous in affirming the worth of these activities and the novelty of meeting people who lived outside the mission compound (Interviews, Y-10 and Y-11).

Among the other non-classroom diversions were sewing for girls and carpentry for boys. Pupils who received instruction in these areas regarded it highly. Subsequent non-classroom training experiences, which were reserved for senior interns, tended to be thought of less favorably. Older girls were expected to help the mission by attending to a number of laundry, kitchen and household chores. The “big” boys not only assumed a major responsibility for the
convent's woodpile, but were sometimes hired out to cut wood for the Hudson's Bay Company (Louie Mercredi 1974: 110). Despite an injunction in the congregation's *Coutumier-Directoire* that "la punition corporelle est absolument interdite," it was applied "dans les cas extraordinaires" (Soeurs Griseses 1920: 191) at Holy Angels, including on occasion to those who slackened in their work. Although the application of the ruler to the hands or buttocks was not a public exercise, it appeared to be more a source of embarrassment than of hurt, and one that the victims preferred to keep to themselves:

We had each a room to clean and we would go for a walk. The sister says the three of you do not listen, you should not go for a walk today. So I was busy working, I thought I could hear somebody yelling "Help, ow, ow, I'll be good sister!" She was crying. Not long after I was laughing. I was with the other girls to that's where she was cleaning, her turn she was yelling and that's when turn to me "It's your turn after!" "No, not me!"

I heard the sister was coming, she unlock the door she took a ruler and I was cleaning the little porch there, she says "Kneel down!" I knelt down, she grab my dress and she hit me on my bare bum with the ruler.

I was yelling. I was crawling away and she was holding my dress. At dinner time we met the three of us. We said "Nobody will ever know our secret." So we never told anybody. got sick and she died, before she died she said "I'm dying with our secret" [Interview, Y-1].

Most of the older orphan boys and the children who had parents or relatives left the convent either before or not long after being given full-time chores. The older orphan girls either stayed to await visits of prospective marriage partners or obtained employment in carefully selected places. Having received no information on sex or marriage from the sisters (Interview, Y-1) and having largely forgotten the skills and knowledge of living in the bush, these young women set out with remarkable faith and equanimity:

[After leaving the convent] when I was 17, I went to work in the hospital. Then I got married and went to the bush. When we got quite a way out we met some other people who were travelling too. There were quite a few families that were portaging there. It's something I never forgot, I learned lots during that few days travelling with these women, like I watched them change their babies then they had moss bags ... I never forget that nice time I had with these people over that portage, that was a really a learning experience for me, cause raised in a convent all my life and then right out of the Grey Nuns to the hospital I didn't know much about the world [Interview, Y-6].

*Survive in a Good Way*

The instruction at Holy Angels was about another world, but it was based on the assumption that most Indian and Métis children would take up a life of hunting, trapping and fishing, and that the 3Rs, while not essential to such a mode of living, would nonetheless give them certain advantages. The absence of any major federal or provincial interest in the fortunes of the area's Native people until the 1950s meant that the missionaries and fur traders continued to assume extraordinary responsibilities for their clients' welfare. Despite their differences, both missionary and trader saw the wilderness - where traditional beliefs had been tempered by the promise of the gospel, and the vagaries of the hunt had been lessened by the benefits of trade - as the best, if not the only, environment for the area's aboriginal population. Catholic missionaries were particularly given to fostering this wilderness archetype, the Christian trapper, who was free to follow his traditional ways, subject of course, to certain not-incompatible trade and religious expectations. Given that what has been termed the Native-wilderness equation was generally held by government officials and others during the period of study (Carney 1981), it followed that if one was religious, law-abiding and a good trapper, "one would survive in a good way" whether one was schooled or not (Marcel 1988).

The ramifications of this view upon such matters as school attendance, programs and staffing were considerable. For example, following the signing of Treaty 8 the Department of Indian Affairs agreed to subsidize the residential schooling costs at Holy Angels for up to 40 Indian children at approximately 25 cents per pupil day. The subsidy was increased in the 1920s, but the number of subsidized places remained the same until the 1950s. As a consequence there was only accommodation for about 15 percent
of the children of the two bands registered at Fort Chipewyan at the end of the period under study (Glencow Archives 1931). Indian boarding places were usually filled by orphans, a term that was not only used for children who were bereft of one or both parents, but also for sick, destitute or neglected children of living parents. Despite frequent appeals by the missionaries that it help with the cost of educating Métis and white pupils, the Alberta government refused to pay any per pupil grants for them (ADM, Brownlee to Breynat, May 21, 1929). It would appear, however, that Alberta continued a $400 annual subsidy which the school had obtained from the territorial government prior to 1905. Some of the residential pupils and most of the day pupils were non-orphans, but there is no evidence to suggest that they were treated any differently from orphans. There are also indications that the pupils, whatever their ethnicity, had similar experiences while at Holy Angels; that the school generally respected who they were, and that allowances were made in keeping with their backgrounds and resources. One such accommodation was not appreciated by the children of the more affluent families, who understandably complained about the school's practice of taking food and treats brought to them by their parents and distributing these gifts equally among all the children.

Even though Holy Angels enrolled significant numbers of non-status children, it was not visited by a territorial or provincial school inspector at any time between 1874 and 1924. This matter was addressed, at least indirectly, in 1920 when the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs wrote the Minister of the Interior to advise that "in the Western Provinces ... the inspection of the schools is made by our Departmental Inspectors who ... have no pedagogical qualifications, and whose examination of the classroom work is, of necessity very perfunctory" (Public Archives of Canada [PAC], Scott to Meighen, June 1, 1920). Agreement was subsequently reached between the two levels of government to have provincial school inspectors provide regular reports on all Indian schools in Alberta. The inspection program was in place by the early 1920s except for Fort Chipewyan, which evidently was deemed to be too remote and too expensive to visit (PAC, Sutherland to Scott, March 23, 1921).

Although not particularly informative, reports by Indian Affairs officials on the program at Holy Angels were given to praising what was being done. One former pupil recalled her class being told to ensure their written compositions were neat because of the pending visit of H.A. Conroy, an Indian Affairs Inspector, and her disappointment when he came because he did not look at the pupils' work (Interview, Y-1). As the following excerpt from Conroy's report of his visit to Holy Angels in December 1911 indicates, he appeared to be more familiar with and supportive of the school's work activities than its academic program:

The class follows pretty closely the regulations of the Department. The girls are taught sewing and cooking, and the boys are taught elementary carpentering [sic] and farming. The boys help in the general work around the Mission... The girls take turns in the kitchen and are given enough practical experience to stand them in good stead when they leave school [Department of Indian Affairs 1912: 380].

It is not clear what Conroy meant by the regulations of the Department. If he was referring to the Program of Studies of Indian Schools, issued by the Department of Indian Affairs in 1910 (AMV 1910), there is nothing in this Standard I to VI, twelve-subject curriculum about the vocational and work experiences that were carried out at Holy Angels after school hours — 9 to 12 and 1 to 3 — and on Saturday (Y-28). What is evident, however, is that Conroy believed in the efficacy of the training provided outside the classroom even though some of the tasks given the children, such as looking after dairy cattle, would be hard to relate to life in the camps (Plate 2).

As indicated in the following excerpt from a 1935 report by M. Christianson, Inspector of Indian Agencies, the Department of Indian Affairs continued to favor the tenets of the Native-wilderness equation for their wards in Fort Chipewyan well after the period under study:

The training carried on there [Holy Angels] is more or less along the requirements of the North: The girls learn to make moccasins, to do silk work on leather, to knit and make their own clothes, & c. They are also taught cooking and learn how to make bread and bannock; and in every way they are taught things that will be useful to them when they
Plate 2. Les soeurs avec ses vaches. Marie Agnes Villebrun was six years old when she enrolled at Holy Angels on March 14, 1913 and remained until August 20, 1928. The three sisters accompanying her in the photograph are, from left to right, Sister Laura Perrault, who came to Holy Angels in September 1926 and remained until August 1935; Sister Marie Louise Champoux, who arrived on May 27, 1926 and remained until June 15, 1935; and Sister Anna Montpetit-St. Omer, who arrived on Sept. 16, 1907 and remained until August 1, 1930. The photograph was taken between September 1926 and August 1928. University of Alberta Archives. 86-106-169.

leave the school. The main thing is not to keep any of the children in school too long [some of the children had gone as high as Grade VI], as the boys have no avocation to go to when they are discharged other than that of their fathers and forefathers, viz., to make a living off the land by hunting, trapping and fishing [PAC, Christianson to McGill, February 27, 1935].

The Inspector’s contention that a range of Native skills was taught in the school stands in stark contrast with what missionaries and former students stated about the school’s programs. As has been shown, the programs of religion, basic skills and child care not only constituted most of what happened at Holy Angels, but also were deemed to be worthwhile by many of its graduates.

There are also indications that those attending Holy Angels during the period of study had, in addition to a trapping life, at least two other vocational options open to them on leaving school: one involved taking a job in commerce, transportation or government; and the other involved a commitment to religious life as a sister, priest or brother. A review of the known careers of the first class of 15 pupils at Holy Angels shows that at least two took one of these alternate paths. After starting out at Holy Angels, Pierre Mercredi went to the sisters’ school in Providence where he was awarded a prize for his proficiency in the French language (Ward 1878). He then came under the tutelage of Roderick McFarlane, Chief Factor of the Athabasca District, and at 18 he joined the Hudson’s Bay Company to begin 52 years
of service (A. Mercredi 1962: 1). Sophie Tourangeau was the other pupil in the class of 1874 who chose not to return to the land. She was the first of eight graduates of the school to become a member of the Grey Nuns congregation. Two other former students, Napoleon Laferté (Plate 3) and Patrice Mercredi, who attended the school later in the period under study, joined the Oblates and were ordained priests in 1923 and 1934 respectively (Brady 1984: 63-80).

Conclusion

In many ways Holy Angels was in the tradition of the first mission schools established in the West by Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries. With the opening of day and residential schools in Red River in the 1820s, the Hudson’s Bay Company ended a practice of assigning schoolmasters to its posts. Company employees were henceforth expected to make their own arrangements for the schooling of their children with one of the schools in Red River or with educational institutions in eastern Canada or Britain. Two principles were implicit in the Bay’s new educational policy as it applied to its territories outside Red River. First, the Company was not obliged to pay any of the costs of elementary schooling provided by the missions or to hire any mission school graduates. Second, such schooling would normally occur in camp (moving) or residential schools, rather than day schools, so as not to interfere with the activities of trappers and others engaged in the fur trade. As shown in the discussion on the Native-wilderness equation, the Company’s limited schooling expectations for Native children were largely accepted by the missionaries, including the Grey Nuns, and subsequently by federal, territorial and provincial authorities. The sisters also found the Company’s preference for residential schooling to be reasonable in terms of the constraints of their own regulations. Their rule would not have allowed a sister to live alone in the camps or to
conducted a day school in a settlement unless there was a local community of the congregation.

The Hudson’s Bay monopoly was over by the time the sisters arrived in Fort Chipewyan in 1874, but the Company’s Native schooling policies were still generally held in the North because they seemed appropriate for settlements like Fort Chipewyan. Although officials in the Department of Indian Affairs also favored residential schools, they viewed them primarily as agricultural training institutions for the reserve system. The Department’s schooling policies were therefore of little benefit to the non-reserve, non-agricultural areas of the North. As Alberta’s schooling policies were based on a system of school boards elected by local rate payers, they were similarly unhelpful in places like Fort Chipewyan. The positive side to this state-of-affairs was that the missionaries and their clients were able to work out a reasonably effective schooling arrangement pretty much on their own.

As has been shown, the religious, basic skill and child care programs at Holy Angels were largely compatible with the religious, cultural and economic preferences of the Native people of the area who sought the institution’s services. While the staff of the convent were considered to be strict and the discipline harsh at times, there is no evidence during the period under study that the children were physically or sexually abused or that they went to or were kept in the school without the consent of their parents or relatives. The average time spent in school for most Holy Angels’ pupils was short and hardly supports the contention that they were socially transformed by this experience. Death and desertion rates at Holy Angels were also low, especially when compared to statements about these matters in many observations concerning Indian residential schools. Given the tripartite nature of the school’s program, one can disagree with those who suggest the Grey Nuns were solely given to teaching “European domesticity” (Fisher 1981: 38; cf. McCormack 1984: 361). Another way of summarizing what was attempted at Holy Angels would be to view it as an institution that was compatible with the preferences of a majority of the Métis-Indian people who were Catholic in faith and French and Indian in language. This community was deeply rooted in the Canadian frontier and reached its apogee during the latter half of the 19th and early part of the 20th century. It may well be, as Arthur Ray (1990) has argued, that changes in the fur trade in the 1920s led the Native people of the Chipewyan area into a status of dependency. What seems reasonably clear from this study, however, is that contemporary theoretical preoccupations will not explain what happened at Holy Angels from 1874 to 1924. Nor does it seem reasonable to view the school as an agency which promoted the decline of the community it served.

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Notes

1. The study is based on interviews of former students, archival records, physical aspects of the school such as textbooks and religious objects, and relevant historical literature, including recent reports in the media on the nature and consequences of Indian residential schooling. Information on Holy Angels was obtained in interviews with 44 former students and ten other informants who provided first-hand accounts of the early years of the school. Material relating to missionary schooling in northeastern Alberta and the upper Mackenzie region was collected in Fort Chipewyan, Fort Smith, Fort Resolution and Hay River, from Calgary’s Glenbow Museum and Church House in Toronto, and from the Archives Deschâtelets and the Public Archives of Canada in Ottawa.
Archival research was also carried out in Oblate and Grey Nun collections in Yellowknife, Edmonton and Montreal. Because of undertakings of confidentiality by the writer, the identities of the interviewees are not given in the text unless transcripts of the material were already published or have been authorized for publication. Code designations, such as Y-3, have been used, therefore, to ensure the informant’s privacy. The names of interviewees who have been cited by code in the text together with the name of the interviewer(s) and date of interview will be cited in the interview section of the references; e.g., Smith, M. (R. Carney), September 9, 1990. Interview materials, including audio and video tapes, along with a cross-reference list of code designations and names of interviewees will be placed in the Archives of the Diocese of the Mackenzie, Yellowknife, N.W.T.

2. Although Scott’s percentage reference is not substantiated, it has become part of the lore of residential schooling. See, for example, Verna Kirkness’ discussion on Indian education where Scott’s figure is used without citation (1987: 20).

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Contemporary Land Claims Negotiations and Settlement: The Political Leadership Challenge of Alberta’s Fort Chipewyan Cree

Richard T. Price

Our children are our future, and we are the stewards of their trust.
(Commemorative plaque, Athabasca Community School, Fort Chipewyan, 1980)

Are you willing to give means to instruct children as long as the sun shines and waters flow, so that our children will grow up ever increasing in knowledge?
(Cree Chief Kinoosayo’s speech to Canada’s Commissioner, David Laird, Treaty No. 8 Negotiations of 1899 [Mair 1908: 62])

Introduction

The Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, established a precedent in 1986 in the settlement of its outstanding treaty land entitlement claim with the governments of Alberta and Canada. The Cree Band’s settlement broke a log jam in Alberta, and more settlements (Sturgeon Lake, Whitefish Lake and Woodland Cree Bands) followed in the next five years, with a similar mix of ingredients, namely: Indian reserve lands, a large trust fund of cash in lieu of land and resources, and certain rights to continue traditional vocations.

The Fort Chipewyan Cree Band’s settlement was the first modern treaty land entitlement agreement on the prairies that involved a large component of cash in lieu of land and resources. The Fort Chipewyan Crees, concerned about the well-being of future generations, viewed this cash as an instrument to ensure a viable, independent economic, educational and housing base for the community. In effect, the Cree Band established its own heritage trust fund for the future with a cash portion of the settlement, as this fund totalled some $22 million at the date of final land claims settlement in 1986.

A reserve land base continued to hold importance for the Crees at Fort Chipewyan, but they handled this matter simply by negotiating for both the necessary land bases for community settlements and land for other forms of economic development, such as tourism. They also sought continuance of their traditional trapping and harvesting rights within Wood Buffalo National Park (WBNP), as well as a co-management role on a joint Cree Band/Parks Canada wildlife advisory board for managing hunting and trapping within certain traditional areas of the park. The locally-elected Cree Indian Chiefs and Band Councils in concert with community members and band lawyers hammered out this agreement in complex sets of difficult negotiations with the provincial and federal politicians and officials over a period of many years.

The focus of this paper will be on the leadership of the Cree Band and its strategies to develop a vision of the land claims settlement and its components, to negotiate this settlement with governments, and to find ways of articulating this vision of the future in dialogue with community members and families. This study makes a unique contribution to the academic literature by presenting a community case study and its relation to the wider policy environment. Moreover, this study of the contemporary leadership challenges of the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan clarifies the relationship of the necessary intra-community dialogue with the external inter-governmental negotiations, in order to settle a contemporary specific claim to an outstanding treaty land entitlement.
Academic Literature and this Study's Contribution

The academic research and literature that is pertinent to this case study of the Cree Band is drawn from areas of ethnohistory, public policy, and Aboriginal governance and leadership. I will examine each of these three areas to provide the context for my own research.

Ethnohistorians and anthropologists have noted the scarcity of source material on the Western Woods Cree, but the literature has been enhanced recently by the work of James Smith (1981) and Paul Thistle (1986). Smith places the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan within a Western Woods Cree grouping, which he refers to as Strongwoods Cree of northern and northeastern Alberta (Smith 1981: 257). Smith describes the 18th century Western Woods Cree traditional social structures as “Local bands, which usually constituted the hunting group of the autumn, winter and spring. It was led by a leader (okima’w) whose authority was based on his experience, ability as a hunter and organizer, and the possession of spiritual powers.... There were no formal political institutions. The chief lacked coercive power; leaders could influence, but not control, individual behavior (1981: 259-260). Thistle emphasizes the persistence of Western Cree traditions and customs in the 19th century fur trade, in spite of attempts to alter those customs by European traders. For example, Cree leadership patterns are described as being “...temporary, situational task-oriented and dependent on competence and prestige rather than being based on the European model of power and authority” (Thistle 1986: 40).

June Helm, Edward Rogers and James Smith note the following changes with the coming of the 20th century:

With the signing of treaties, the Canadian government required that Indian groups be represented by “chiefs” and subsidiary “headmen” or “councilors.” Initially, these men were usually already traditional band leaders or trading chiefs. In areas where the native consensual selection of chiefs and headmen was replaced by a formal elective system, traditional band affiliations and leadership patterns were often cross-cut (1981: 156).

They conclude their regional and cultural study with the statement:

Occupational and leadership roles remained grounded in life lived on the land and sustained by it. The greatest threat to traditional Indian outlook and values has emerged only since World War II, in the form of unparalleled pressure and inducements toward urbanized standards and styles of living [1981: 157].

Although these ethnohistorical studies provide an important backdrop to this examination of 20th century leadership of one Western Woods Cree community in northeastern Alberta, they do not deal with the contemporary patterns of Indian leadership at the community level except generally. Nevertheless, these studies do raise implicitly an underlying question about the persistence of these Cree traditional patterns of limited authority leadership in a younger generation of Indian leaders. The parents of these young leaders were traditional hunters and trappers. This older generation only moved more permanently into Fort Chipewyan in the 1950s so that their children could take up new forms of education in the residential schools there.

The Indian public policy literature with special reference to land claims policies of governments in Canada (federal and provincial) has primarily been linked to the major federal Indian land claims policy change in 1973. This was precipitated by the Supreme Court of Canada’s favorable decision regarding the Aboriginal title claims of the Nishga Indians of British Columbia (Weaver 1981: 198; Asch 1984: 64). In this new policy, the federal government agreed to consider outstanding land claims, including Aboriginal claims where no Indian treaties had been signed (comprehensive claims) and unfulfilled promises of existing treaties (specific claims). The Cree Band’s claim fell within the mandate of this new specific claims policy. The historical context of land claims processes is developed by Rick Daniel (1980). An overview of the resolution of land claims in Canada, United States and Australia is provided by Brad Morse (1985: 617-683). The recent land claims policies of the provincial governments of Manitoba, Alberta and Quebec are the subject of articles by Leon Mitchell and Jim O’Reilly in Long and Boldt (1988: 129-147). This literature deals primarily with the evolution of government policies in regards to Indian land claims and presents many of the obstacles
faced by Indian communities in the successful negotiations of claims.

Scholars from social science disciplines and Native leaders have contributed to a developing academic literature in the area of Aboriginal governance and leadership. One study has been conducted at the national level, involving a broad cross section of Indian leaders. Menno Boldt conducted interviews with 69 Canadian Indian leaders in the late 1970s and concluded:

Being refused entry into the mainstream of Canadian society and being denied equality of treatment and opportunity in that society, many enlightened and romanticist Indian leaders are seeking to establish a basically new and separate political status with an expanded concept of an autonomous national "Indian society" [Boldt 1981: 561].

Boldt and Long have highlighted the difficulties of contemporary Indian political leaders across Canada in advocating European-influenced definitions of sovereignty, which may well be in contradiction with the traditional and cultural concepts of Indian governance and the exercise of leadership functions (Boldt and Long 1984: 539, 544). The former president of the Indian Association of Alberta, Harold Cardinal, speaks from his own experience within native organizations:

One of the messages of our elders is that conflict and power are not the course for leadership to take, at least not the leadership of Indian organizations.

... If we go to the government and tell them that they are doing something wrong, then we have a responsibility to offer a solution. The onus is on us to make certain that the government can live with that solution, that the government can see the value and benefit of that solution, and that it is just as beneficial for them as it is for us [1977: 166-167].

Other studies have focused more on community or regional-level experiences of governance and leadership. To date, there are still very few studies in this area, although Cassidy and Bish’s recent work on Indian government (1989) provides a helpful overview of recent experiences of Aboriginal communities in Canada. In the United States, a recent study by Stephen Cornell and Joseph Kalt demonstrates the primacy of policial institutions in relation to the effective implementation of economic development on 15 Indian reservations (1990: 106, 107, 119). In a thorough study of Métis settlements in Alberta, political philosopher Tom Pocklington notes the vital importance of “political and administrative skills” of indigenous leadership (1991: 129). Richard Salisbury has demonstrated the remarkable changes in one decade (1971-81) in developing effective regional forms of governance and leadership among the James Bay Cree of Quebec (1986: 73-75, 145-150). Recently, Paul Tennant (1991) has completed a very solid account of the struggles of Aboriginal peoples in British Columbia to gain recognition of the outstanding Aboriginal rights, especially their difficulties of bringing the British Columbia government to the bargaining table. In the context of this literature, this Fort Chipewyan Cree Band study is the only account of a community-based specific (as opposed to comprehensive) treaty land entitlement claim settlement.

In a recent survey of the Aboriginal government literature in Canada, Frank Cassidy (1990: 74) asserts, “The initiatives of aboriginal peoples and their governments are the real basis of the energy for change.” Of particular importance for our purpose is Cassidy’s conceptual framework for understanding Aboriginal governments. It “revolves around three clusters of subject matter: aboriginal communities and their governments, the components of governance and the wider policy environment. These clusters need to be related in a systematic fashion. As each changes, the others change” (1990: 86-87). Cassidy’s framework and his emphasis on the inter-relationship of the subject area clusters — as each changes, the others change — is of real importance for the present study. A focus will be made on the first and third clusters — Aboriginal communities and their government, and the wider policy environment; that is, the relationship between the challenge of political leadership within the Cree community at Fort Chipewyan and the changes regarding land claims policies of Alberta and Canada.

In particular, this case study focuses on two questions: was there a vision for the future among the Cree leadership cadre at Fort Chipewyan that was effectively articulated within the political decision-making processes of the Cree community? Did the Cree Chiefs display the necessary intra-community
and inter-governmental negotiation skills required by the changing situation in the 1970s and 1980s? These questions will be examined as they relate to the role of a political elite, namely, the contemporary Chiefs: Lawrence Courtioreille, Archie Waquan, and Rita Marten. These individuals were principal participants in inter-governmental negotiations leading to a final settlement of the claim from the mid-1970s to the mid-1980s, as well as key players in the necessary negotiations and dialogue within the Cree Band community itself at Fort Chipewyan to achieve the final agreement. Thus, the unique contribution of this study of the Cree leadership at Fort Chipewyan is that it draws together and inter-relates the diverse fields of Indian specific claims policy and modern Aboriginal leadership challenges.

Historical Background

The first set of negotiations related to land between the Cree leadership at Fort Chipewyan and the Government of Canada began in 1899 with the (Canada-Cree-Chipewyan) Treaty 8 adhesion. On July 13, 1899, Cree Chief Justin Martin (Mekitin) acknowledged the government’s offer of Treaty 8 terms, which had been agreed upon a few months earlier at Lesser Slave Lake, Alberta. However, he only agreed to the treaty when the following conditions were met: complete freedom to hunt, fish and trap, and to have their children educated in Catholic schools (Fumoleau 1975: 77). Land use was perceived primarily in relation to the exercise of traditional vocations of hunting, fishing, and trapping. Resource utilization, not ownership, was the key factor for most, if not all, northern bands. After Chipewyan Chief Alexandre Laviolette put forward the same concerns, the government commissioners agreed, and the treaty was affirmed. In their report on Treaty 8, the commissioners acknowledged the necessity of providing strong assurances to protect Indian hunting, fishing and trapping rights in order to secure the treaty (Government of Canada 1966: 6-7).

Treaty 8 contained the following provision for band reserve land entitlement: “...reserves for such bands as desire reserves, the same not to exceed in all one square mile for each family of five for such number of families as may elect to reside on reserves...” (Government of Canada 1966: 12). Bishop Breynat, an observer to the negotiations for the Catholic Church, summarized the underlying northern Aboriginal position about reserves: “Crees and Chipewyans refused to be treated like Prairie Indians, and to be parked on reserves. . . . It was essential to them to retain their freedom to move around” (Fumoleau 1975: 78).

However, within 20 years the situation had changed, and the pursuit of the traditional vocations of both Crees and Chipewyans was threatened by increasing encroachments and regulations on their traditional lands. These encroachments included: individual White trappers (from the south), who had no regard for Indian pre-existing rights; central government plans for a national park to protect the wood bison west of Fort Chipewyan, and a court ruling in Rex vs. Stoney Joe, which stipulated that Treaty Indians in Alberta were subject to the Alberta Game Act (McCardle 1976: 53-61).

In 1922, Chief Deadman, the new Cree chief, and Chief Laviolette of the Chipewyans took action to protect their bands by requesting exclusive hunting preserves. Indeed they petitioned, through their Indian agent, for a large amount of land (Government of Alberta 1986: 1). The Cree request for land west and south of Fort Chipewyan was stated as follows in a telegram to Ottawa: “Cree Chief Deadman and Indians in Council ask for a survey of reserve in the Birch Mountains and Lake Claire district” (Government of Alberta 1986: 1; Fig. 1).

This request did not receive a favorable hearing, and Ottawa went ahead with its intentions to establish WBNP (the Lake Claire area south of the Peace River was added several years later). However, the point raised by the Indian petitions seems to have hit home, and special provisions were made by Ottawa for the treaty Indians who had traditionally hunted and trapped in areas now included in the park to obtain hunting and trapping rights within the park, provided they respected regulations on closed seasons (Public Archives of Canada RG 10 V.4049 file 361, 714; Order in Council 2498, 1922). The actual implementation of these rights within the park was, however, sometimes subject to stringent regulations by parks officials.

The renewed efforts to obtain a reserve within the park began in 1942 when newly elected Cree Band Chief John Cowie and his Council made a request for a reserve at Peace Point (McCormack 1984: 278). Anthropologist McCormack’s research indicates that in 1944 many Chipewyan members, who had traditional vocational interests within the park, had transferred over to Cree Band membership with the consent of both Chipewyan and Cree Chiefs and the Indian Affairs agent because Chipewyans saw the proposed new Cree reserve as a way to protect their interests (McCormack 1984: 277-279). The results of requests for a new reserve were disappointing, however, because the federal parks department turned down the Indian Affairs request on behalf of the band, once in 1945 and again in 1949 after a second request was made (McCormack 1984: 280-281). Nevertheless, the Cree leadership continued a concerted but unsuccessful effort to press for a reserve within the park in the 1950s and 1960s. For example, in 1959 the Cree Band presented a brief to the Joint Senate and House of Commons Committee, which stated:

“It seems to us that if we could have a Reserve, a place of our own, where we would feel and be at home, this would give us an element of stability and of security for the present and also an opportunity to plan and organize the future for our children” [cited in McCormack 1984: 510].

Land Claims Negotiations in the Modern Period

It was only in the modern period that Cree requests and negotiations bore fruit. This period of negotiations can be divided into the following phases:

1. 1968-1975 Early negotiations, in which a settlement was almost reached
2. 1976-1981 Conflict, impasse and negotiations breakdown
3. 1982-1986 Final negotiations, characterized by comprehensive proposals and negotiating flexibility

Each period will be briefly sketched, emphasizing the final, successful, negotiation period.

1968-1975 Early Negotiations

In 1968, the Cree Band made a request for reserve lands within the national park. Chief Ernest Courtorielle presented the claim to a provincial Minister, A.O. Fimrite, and sent copies to the federal government. The claim involved four tracts of land at Peace Point, Embarass Portage, and two other sites within the Park (Government of Alberta 1986: 3).

By 1970, Cree Chief Albert Gladue had requested assistance from Harold Cardinal of the Indian Association of Alberta (IAA) to help negotiate the claim. Cardinal was able to arrange a meeting in December, 1970, with Minister of Indian Affairs Jean Chretien and Alberta Premier Harry Strom. The premier indicated that “Alberta had no objection to the transfer of land from Wood Buffalo National Park to meet the Cree entitlement” (Government of Alberta 1986: 3). Strom was referring to clause 14 of the 1930 Alberta Natural Resources Act, which required that when land ceases to be used for a national park, the land and minerals revert back to the province (Ollivier 1962: 364). The Band had established a building block for the future agreement, but negotiations had only just begun.

The pivotal clause ten of the Alberta Natural Resources Act (now referred to as the Constitution Act, 1930) in relation to treaty land entitlement states in part:

...and the province will from time to time, upon request of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, set aside, out of the unoccupied Crown lands hereby transferred to its administration, such further areas as the said Superintendent General may, in agreement with the appropriate Minister of the Province, select as necessary to enable Canada to fulfil its obligations under the treaties with the Indians of the Province, and such areas shall thereafter be administered by Canada in the same way in all respects as if they had never passed to the Province under the provisions hereof [Ollivier 1962: 364].
However, when Peter Lougheed (1971-1985) and Pierre Trudeau (1968-1984) led their respective governments in Alberta and Canada, and the question of resource ownership dominated much of the federal provincial agenda, it was not surprising that the ripple effect of their oil and gas confrontations also influenced land claims negotiations. In 1975 (after the price of oil had skyrocketed in 1974), the Syncrude Oil Sands development was the subject of tense negotiations among Syncrude, Alberta, Ontario, and Canada. That same year, an Indian land claims caveat over much of northern Alberta was filed by the IAA and the isolated communities north of Slave Lake (Price 1977: 169-183). The Fort Chipewyan Cree Band did not participate in this legal action, although the Cree Band seems to have considered the possibility of reserve land in the tar sands area near Fort McMurray. In February, 1975, the Federal and Inter-governmental Minister for Alberta, Don Getty, wrote to the Indian Affairs Minister stating that Alberta was prepared “to co-operate fully in the implementing of the establishment of reserves at Peace Point and Embarass Portage,” but this proposed transfer of land did not take place (Price 1977: 217).

1976-1981 Conflict, impasse and negotiations breakdown

With the filing of the 1975 land claims caveat in Edmonton, attitudes within the provincial government hardened. The tentative agreement-in-principle over the Peace Point and Embarass sites (only a partial fulfillment of the full land entitlement) was soon to fall by the wayside, as Aboriginal attention focused instead on the caveat battle (Price 1977: 177-192, 212-220).

In 1976 and 1977, both the federal and provincial governments developed new, widely different policies and legal formulas for addressing treaty land claims. The Alberta Government had established a new policy position in early 1977. It stipulated that only populations at the time of the treaty be considered (1899 for the Treaty 8 area), that there would be no transfer of mines, minerals, and that only government-to-government negotiations would be followed to resolve Indian land entitlement claims (Price 1977: 212-230). This “minimalist” policy was a product of Alberta Native Affairs Minister Bob Bogle and officials from the Attorney General’s office and of the tense times between Canada and Alberta. The Fort Chipewyan Cree and other Indian bands were caught in the middle. Meanwhile, Canada, Saskatchewan, and the Saskatchewan bands negotiated the so-called “Saskatchewan land entitlement formula,” based on a transfer of mineral rights and current population figures (with a 1976 cut-off date) (Price 1977: 209-212).

The Cree Band withdrew from negotiations in 1977 to review its position. The band was able to read the pitfalls of being too closely associated with the legal actions of the IAA and supporting its caveat for the isolated communities of northern Alberta. Alberta’s policy on land claims changed, and the provincial government introduced retroactive legislation to eliminate the Indian caveat that had been filed two years earlier.

The Cree Band believed that its own interests would best be served by a more independent form of negotiations. It therefore decided to take control of its own claims negotiations by distancing itself somewhat from the IAA, which had a different political and economic agenda. By negotiating directly with the federal government for its own funding for claims negotiations, the Cree Band was able to place the band’s legal advisor and other consultants under more effective day-to-day control of the Cree Band Chief and Council. This change took place under Chief Lawrence Couriorielle, who was first elected in 1976. He was subsequently re-elected for three successive two-year terms, serving until 1984, when he did not seek re-election.

In this middle phase of negotiations, the negotiation process was stalled for nearly five years. In 1979 Alberta indicated to the Cree Band that it was prepared to grant the band some 23,808 acres based on its 1899 population, and that this land could be taken within the park (Government of Alberta 1986: 8). The band rejected this position and went back to the drawing board to devise a new strategy.

A dynamic, flexible process of developing new strategies had been the internal Cree Band pattern of dealing with land claims negotiations since the early 1870s. Members of the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan had an opportunity for input at band meetings and in a community survey of land claims concerns. Over
several years, experts from the University of Alberta and the band's own consultants were involved in a wide range of studies, including such matters as land and resource potential for particular sites, land appraisals, and problems with agreement implementation. Hence, band negotiators often had better quality information than government negotiators, who were accustomed to having this advantage themselves. After an extensive review, including new consultants' studies and more consultations within the band, a new Cree Band claims strategy emerged.

1982-1986 Final negotiations

The final phase of negotiations began with a strong set of principles and components of the proposed agreement devised by the Cree Band (D. Waquan 1982). The band had done its homework and was ready to reopen negotiations. Chief Lawrence Courtorielle outlined to both Alberta and Canada in 1982 the new broad lines of a comprehensive settlement proposal that would guarantee a land base, hunting and trapping rights in WBNP, and economic self-sufficiency (Government of Canada 1988: 1). The new proposal provided a solid basis for further discussion, in that the band sought to accommodate the differing land entitlement policy positions of Canada and Alberta, while at the same time seeking to maximize benefits to the band.

Specifically, the band, through a series of clarification sessions over a period of time, refined and elaborated a vision of the final settlement so that it would include the following components:

1. Reserve lands consisting of 24,888 acres of Crown Land outside WBNP from Alberta, and 103,192 acres of land within the park, for a total of 128,000 acres,
2. Both entitlements to include mines and minerals,
3. A cash compensation package for economic development to compensate the band for the loss of use and benefit of reserve land since 1922, and
4. Guaranteed hunting and trapping rights in the park outside the reserve land.

This proposal represented a significant shift towards an economic development model. It was based on both a band consultation process and the band leadership's new strategic approach. The criteria for Cree land selection (with the exception of the traditional land request in the park) was linked primarily to future economic or residential housing potential rather than simply acquiring more acres of "moose pasture." Also, younger band members were no longer trying to earn a livelihood strictly through traditional vocations, but were searching for employment and economic opportunities in the Fort Smith, Fort Chipewyan, Fort McMurray, and Edmonton areas. This emerging economic reality and changing pattern of community behavior led Chief Courtorielle and subsequently Chief Archie Waquan (1984-86) to believe that new approaches were needed. A settlement had to be negotiated which would also benefit the band members living elsewhere, more than one-third of the total band.

From 1982 to 1984, Chief Lawrence Courtorielle worked full-time on the band's claim. This land claims negotiations work took him away from the community for such extended periods of time that he had to establish a residence in Edmonton. With the support of lawyer Bob Young, Courtorielle was able to establish direct, open, ongoing relationships with Cabinet Ministers and civil servants at the provincial and federal levels. This was essential to the eventual outcome. In fact, a key aspect of Chief Courtorielle's leadership style and strategic thinking was his ability to develop personal relationships with Cabinet Ministers, especially Indian Affairs Minister John Munro (Canada) and Alberta's Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dick Johnston (Price 1988b). These relationships contributed to the political will to find a settlement.

One important policy breakthrough happened in 1982, after Alberta's Federal and Intergovernmental Affairs Minister Dick Johnston and Native Affairs Minister McCrimmon returned from a Fort Chipewyan meeting with Chief Courtorielle. Johnston (the senior minister responsible for land claims) proposed that the Cree Band land settlement should include mines and minerals, a significant policy shift. Johnston's colleagues were skeptical, but a more flexible land claims policy process within the Alberta government had begun (Government of Alberta 1986: 9).

There is a general agreement among the representatives of all three parties that the most significant turning point in the tripartite negotiations occurred in March of 1984. The event was a tripartite meeting in
the Alberta Legislature Building, when Indian Affairs Minister John Munro agreed to proceed with negotiations along the lines outlined by the Cree Band. Munro’s strategy was to find a way of breaking the federal-provincial “logjam” and getting the Province of Alberta “on side.” However, he put the province on notice that because the federal side was agreeing to shoulder the lion’s share of the burden for the claim (land and resources), the federal government took a “without prejudice” stance; that is, Canada reserved the right to litigate (or negotiate) within ten years to determine Alberta’s fair share under the 1930 Alberta Resource Transfer Act. In effect, Munro was saying to Alberta, “I’ll give in to you this time, but my government may come back and take your government to court at a later time.”

Munro’s stance indicates that he was willing to exercise flexibility in relation to substantive policy areas and thereby take political risks. Flexibility was a key dimension for other parties at different times in the negotiations and a key ingredient in the eventual success. The new negotiating package put forward by the Cree Band in 1982 was a similar example of flexibility, in that it gave the two other parties some room to respond. Similarly, Alberta was prepared to be flexible by acquiescing to a large settlement for the band within WBNP. More importantly, however, in 1984 Alberta announced that it would agree to having mineral rights included in treaty land entitlement settlements (Government of Alberta 1984). This important change in policy by the Alberta government, which was made in response to the Cree Band’s request in 1982, eliminated the last major policy stumbling block and cleared the way for a settlement (Price 1990: 7). In this regard, we can observe the importance of Cassidy’s framework, discussed earlier, which links the policy environment to the Aboriginal community and its aspirations.

For their part, the Cree Chiefs normally took an extremely low profile in the media and refrained from publicly criticizing federal or provincial ministers, despite obvious frustrations from time to time. This approach had definite advantages for the Cree Band at the negotiating table, because it contributed to building a basis of trust with the other parties.

Another pivotal point in the negotiation process was the meeting between the federal government and the Cree Band in May, 1984 (Price 1988b). During this meeting, the band members at times supported the leadership of Chief Courtorielle and his council, but also provided clear recommendations to move in a somewhat different direction. This meeting proved to be the vital decision-making meeting from the perspective of internal band discussions and negotiations. All exchanges of communication between Council and the band members were held in the Cree language, in order to effect better communication among the band’s leaders and members and to exclude the nearby federal officials from the discussions. The Cree Band Council was concerned that band members might settle for too small an amount, while band members cautioned the Chief and Council and band lawyer not to be excessive in their demands on their federal treaty partner (Price 1988a; 1988b).

One elder lamented later that he “felt sorry for the land at Peace Point but I guess Parks won’t let too much go” (Price 1988a). This point illustrates not only a traditional value about the land, but also the realism within even the older generation of the Cree Band, that life must go on and that the achievement of a settlement was necessary for the whole community, old and young. For their part, the leaders, especially Chief Courtorielle, also had a sense of the time being right to strike a deal. There had been ongoing concerns and inter-generational tension on the relative mix of land and cash, with some of the older generation being “very discouraged about ever achieving a settlement” and some wishing even to return to the tentative agreement of the early 1970s, which involved larger amounts of land at Peace Point and Embarass Portage (Price 1991). There was also a problem of communication breakdown because the Chief had not been resident in the community for a couple of years (in order to press the claim actively), and some band members felt out of touch with the status of the band’s negotiations with the governments (Price 1991). In the end, however, a community consensus was achieved, and the Cree band struck a deal with the federal government.

The Cree Band and the federal government were both satisfied with what amounted to an agreement-in-principle between them. The negotiated results were a final cash compensation amount of $24 million, a Peace Point reserve of 1,280 acres (a
smaller amount than had previously been discussed), a wildlife management agreement in WBNP, and a total land entitlement based on 1982 population figures.

Shortly thereafter, Courtorielle decided not to run for re-election, and Archie Waquan was elected chief. Waquan emphasized a community-based approach to claim negotiations even more than had his predecessor. Assisted by consultant Jerome Slavik, Waquan commissioned several new studies for reserve site selection on provincial land outside the park and for implementation of the agreement.

More importantly, he began an intensive series of band meetings to ensure that members were comfortable with the terms of the Cree Band/Canada agreement and to obtain the input of band members. While earlier chiefs had also utilized local consultations to develop the negotiating positions of the Cree Band, this approach was now developed in a more systematic way through a structured process involving twelve key family groups. Moreover, Chief Waquan, a successful local businessman, seldom left the community and was in constant contact with local members. Waquan was a "no-nonsense" type of leader who wanted to see action from both governments, so that the few remaining issues could finally be settled.

Waquan pushed the economic development thrust of the claim to its logical conclusion. Hence, when provincial land (outside the park) was found to have no economic potential, Waquan and the council decided to take the cash in lieu of land and resources. This approach proved to be somewhat controversial because some members wanted a larger reserve land component, and one family even opted out of the settlement proposal and sought federal approval for its own family reserve through the land in severalty clause of Treaty No. 8 (Price 1988a). The value of the land for the band's claim was determined by appraisals done by both parties (as had been the case in the federal-band negotiations). In negotiations with Alberta, the band acquired an additional $2,600,000 in lieu of 13,000 acres of land. Once these negotiations were concluded, in May, 1985, all the main elements of the agreement were in place between the Cree Band and Alberta. Thus, by May of 1985 the Cree Band and the Alberta government had come to an agreement-in-principle.

The Cree Band held a series of workshops and simultaneous referenda at Fort Chipewyan, Fort McMurray, and Edmonton in the spring of 1986, to ascertain the views of the band members about the claim. The workshops on the various sections of the agreement were conducted in both Cree and English. Off-reserve band members who were employed or taking further training and education tended to prefer the per capita distribution provisions of the proposed settlement to enhance their own current position. Fort Chipewyan residents, with more of a stake in the future of the community, were especially concerned about reserve lands and provisions for harvesting and co-management in the park. However, they also had their eye on cash, per capita distributions. With this wide variety of interests, the required referendum by band members to ratify the agreement would be the test of whether or not Chief Waquan and his council had struck the right mix of components to satisfy the membership. The end result was an overwhelmingly positive response from the community, over 90 percent in favor (Government of Canada 1988: 3).

The key roles played by Chiefs Courtorielle and Waquan were followed up by Chief Rita Marten (1986-1988), who signed the final agreement in December, 1986. Chief Marten's most important leadership role was in consulting with band members to develop procedures to implement the agreement, including the controversial aspects of issuing per capita payments and establishing the Machetak Foundation for economic and educational assistance. Chief Rita Marten had to work out with band members the amount of the per capita payments that would be made when the agreement was signed and the first monies from the settlement became available. She also negotiated with Indian Affairs so that the first per capita payments, spent on furniture and other capital goods, did not reduce social assistance payments to band members.

An improved climate of federal/provincial relations under the Mulroney Government was important in overcoming a last hurdle to a signed agreement between the two governments, namely the issue of cost sharing. The federal cabinet was to have approved the agreement in June, 1986, but this approval was delayed pending further negotiations with Alberta over the $24,000,000 federal cash component.
Department of Indian Affairs Deputy Minister Rawson met with Deputy Attorney General Perris and Minister Horsman of Alberta to try to persuade the provincial government to increase its share. In the end, Rawson was successful in negotiating an agreement. Alberta agreed to contribute $15 million of the total, apparently recognizing that it was in its long-term interest to have the Cree claim resolved. As a result of these negotiations new clauses were inserted into the Canada/Alberta portion of the agreement, including the following compromise clause:

As Alberta's obligation to Canada, as provided in section 10 of the schedule to the Constitution Act, 1930, is not clear in every respect, Canada and Alberta are unable to arrive at a mutually satisfactory interpretation of Alberta's obligation. Accordingly, in this case it is agreed that,

a) for the sole purpose of reconciling the difference of opinion,
b) on the express understanding that Alberta neither accepts nor acknowledges Canada's position with regard to the date of population count, the validity of that count nor any other facts on which Canada has based the calculation of the $24,000,000.00; and
c) without prejudice to any further position which Alberta or Canada may adopt with regard to treaty entitlement claims.

Alberta shall pay on behalf of Canada the sum of $15,000,000.00 of the $24,000,000.00 referred to in the agreement between Canada and the Cree Band directly to the Cree Band... [Government of Canada 1986: Schedule 4].

Canada also agreed to obtain a release from the Cree Band, so that no future claims could be made against Alberta, and to drop an earlier clause giving Canada the right (if exercised within ten years) to litigate or negotiate the amount of land (or cash in lieu of land) that Canada considered to be Alberta's obligation.

The broad lines of the final agreement (Plate 1) signed by the Cree Band, Canada, and Alberta in December 1986, utilizing a 1982 population count (1,000 band members at 128 acres/person), include:

1. Financial Compensation: $26,600,000 ($17,600,000 cash in lieu of land and $9,000,000 compensation to be used for socio-economic development). A total of $22,000,000 was to be "locked in" so that it would remain for the benefit of future generations. Interest from the investment can be used only for purposes benefitting the band, and only 50 percent of the interest revenue can be distributed on a per capita basis.

2. Hunting and Trapping Rights: Access to 3,000,000 acres of traditional hunting and trapping land in WBNP south of the Peace River and a majority of positions on a wildlife advisory board (Fig. 1). For some reason, a portion of park land north of the Peace River where Cree Band members had trapped over many years was left out of the final agreement. This matter may yet be the subject of further negotiations, if the federal government is prepared to entertain a Cree Band request in that regard.

3. Land: 12,280 acres at various locations (Figs. 2-9) (Government of Canada 1986: Schedule 1).

Cree Political Leadership Negotiating Strategies

The following assessment of the key points of the Cree Band's political leadership experience may be worthy of consideration as a strategy for treaty land entitlement negotiations of other Indian bands on the prairies and elsewhere.

1. Cree Political Realism in the Struggle to Find a Middle Ground Among Competing Parties and Interests

It was crucial for the Cree Band Chief and Council to exercise a tough negotiating and leadership style that was in harmony with the community. Both Chiefs Courtiere and Waquan were able to articulate the deepest aspirations and goals of the people, as well as to understand the crucial importance of negotiating with a high degree of political realism and balance (see point three below). That is, they could recognize that governments often have policy, resource, and legal limitations to overcome in order to achieve a settlement, and that governments also have diverse interests which differ from focused Indian band interests. The lesson for other chiefs and councils is that political realism may well involve remaining flexible enough to develop new ways of maximizing band interests within the evolving context of governmental responses, so that a middle ground can be found that is acceptable to all three parties. Each band must decide for itself where the
June 21, 1987

Fort Chipewyan Cree Band Treaty Land Entitlement Claim

Dedication

We, the undersigned, gave effect on December 23, 1986 to agreements to settle the Fort Chipewyan Cree Band Treaty Land Entitlement Claim, in recognition of the following:

The Cree Band and Her Majesty the Queen in the Right of Canada are parties to a Treaty known as Treaty No. 8 signed on their behalf in 1899.

In the articles of Treaty No. 8, the Cree Band relinquished its rights, titles and privileges to certain lands and Her Majesty the Queen in the Right of Canada made certain undertakings to the Band including the laying aside of reserve lands.

Canada requested Alberta, pursuant to the Constitution Act, 1930, to set aside certain areas out of Alberta's unoccupied Crown lands to assist Canada in fulfilling her obligations to Treaty Indians in Alberta.

The Cree Band and Canada have negotiated a Treaty Land Entitlement Claim Agreement.

The Cree Band, Canada and Alberta have agreed upon and selected those land areas necessary to enable Canada to fulfill her obligations to the Cree Band under Treaty No. 8.

The areas set aside as reserve lands will be for the present and future use by members of the Cree Band.

The agreements are hereby dedicated to the past, present and future members of the Fort Chipewyan Cree Band.

Plate I. Fort Chipewyan Cree Band Treaty Land Entitlement Claim Agreement
Figure 1. Schedule 2, Traditional Lands (area granted for the exercise of traditional hunting, fishing and trapping rights)
Figure 2. Schedule 3, Peace Point Reserve Lands (reserve land)

Figure 3. Schedule A, Charles Lakes Land Claim Area (reserve land)

Figure 4. Schedule B, Cornwall Lake Land Claim Area (reserve land)

Figure 5. Schedule C, Colin Lake Land Claim (reserve land)
Figure 6. Schedule D, Sand Point Land Claim Area (reserve land)

Figure 7. Schedule E, Allison Bay Land Claim Area (reserve land)

Figure 8. Schedule F, Devil's Gate Land Claim Area (reserve land)

Figure 9. Schedule 9, Old Fort Land Claim Area (reserve land)
middle ground lies and whether or not it is prepared to accept a middle ground, or pursue some other course(s) of action.

The Cree Band also elected to use a low-profile negotiating approach, which worked because it tended to generate trust and ultimately the political will among the other levels of government to reach a settlement. From time to time, however, confrontational actions seemed to be necessary to catch the attention of other parties and the general public. For example, in the late 1970s Chief Courtorielle instructed a band member to drive a caterpillar to Peace Point to start clearing trees for a settlement. This brought an immediate response from Indian Affairs Minister Hugh Faulkner, and he reached an interim agreement with the Cree Band that allowed the start of a small community at Peace Point. In most instances, confrontations were avoided in favour of more conciliatory strategies.

2. The Importance of Cree-Initiated Negotiation Strategies in Overcoming Governmental Inertia

The experience of the Cree Band indicates a need for strategies initiated and driven by Indian bands to overcome governmental inertia and tendencies to ignore often festering land claims grievances. Cree Chief Courtorielle was very adept at taking the initiative (for example, he invited provincial Ministers and federal negotiators to visit Fort Chipewyan) and strongly inserting Cree concerns into the agendas of the meetings with governments. Eventually, the Cree leadership influenced an Alberta government policy change on mineral rights.

By maintaining the initiative and momentum, bands can remain at the centre of the negotiating process rather than be on the edge. Governments will attempt to make decisions for bands unless the bands protect their vital rights and interests. In the case of the Cree Band, the band used a variety of separate bilateral negotiations with each party (and tripartite meetings only when absolutely necessary) to keep on top of the current state of negotiations. In this regard it was also very important for the Cree Chiefs to maintain informal channels in order to allow a flow of information on governmental attitudes and actions, to avoid problems in community perceptions.

3. The Vital Component - Internal Dialogue and Negotiations Between the Political Leadership and the Community Members

Community information-sharing and decision-making processes were key components of the successful achievement of the Cree Band's claims settlement. For Cree political leadership to be effective, there had to be a strong flow of communication within the Cree Band itself and, correspondingly, effective community support for the Cree Chiefs, to enable them to maintain initiative and momentum in the long, tiring negotiating process. Former Chief Robert Smallboy of Hobbema comments: "As Indian leaders, we must be willing to stand side by side with our own people at their own level, and to fight for them in order to win their respect and confidence" (Smallboy 1969: 115).

One component of this multi-faceted process was that Chiefs Courtorielle, Waquan and Marten worked hard both to maintain close contact with band members and to think through their own negotiating strategies, in order not to let outside advisors or lawyers unduly influence negotiating decisions that were rightfully the responsibility of the Cree Band itself. After all, it is the Cree Band that must live with the consequences of the negotiating decisions in a direct and long term way. Their experience suggests the ethical requirements to which lawyers and advisors must remain sensitive, so that band goals and decision-making processes will remain paramount. While the lawyers and consultants for the Cree Band were sensitive to these matters, this appears to be a problem from time to time in other comparable situations.

It became necessary for the Cree Band leaders to develop a dynamic, adaptive, ongoing process of communication regarding band negotiation decisions. For example, consultant studies provided new information on resource development and tourist potential of sites being considered for reserve lands. These studies were completed prior to negotiations with governments, and the time was taken to discuss and interpret this information in meetings with band members before making major decisions. While those band members pursuing traditional vocations such as trapping or fishing might be less favorably inclined to
what appeared to be a modern economic development option in the proposed agreement, others in the community might see the potential for new employment careers (for example, working with heavy equipment in a granite quarry) or new adaptations of traditional careers (for example, guiding, outfitting, fishing camps).

Another component of the internal processes was the difficulty of achieving a community consensus on matters where there were legitimate and differing concerns between those community members with different vocational aspirations and interests. For example, those trappers who had always earned their living off the land could be expected to see the world quite differently than band members working as heavy equipment operators or maintenance crews at the Suncor or Syncrude oil sands extraction plants near Fort McMurray. While a key value — respect — for the older generation and the common heritage of traditional livelihoods could be a unifying factor, differing material interests, particularly on the issue of cash versus land, could also lead to differing views on the nature of the final settlement with the off-reserve band members likely to favor cash over land. In the end, Cree Band community consensus required decisions which made for difficult choices and tradeoffs.

By entering into a dialogue with their band members, the Cree Chiefs were able to enable a community consensus and achieve the difficult balance which is symbolized in the agreement. However, the need to find a substantive balance within the agreement itself of both traditional and modern concerns requires more analysis; this is the subject of the next section.

The Political Leadership Challenges of Courtorielle, Waquan and Marten

One of the challenges which every Indian political leader and Indian community faces in negotiations towards settlement of an outstanding land claim is the matter of balancing present needs and those of future generations. This challenge also faced the chiefs and headmen who negotiated the Indian treaties with the Government of Canada in the 19th century. Thus, this type of modern land claims agreement might be described as a “mini treaty” because it is an extension and updating of the original Treaty 8 as far as reserve lands are concerned.

Often Indian political leaders and community members have turned to Indian elders for advice. Some of those knowledgeable and wise elders have been able to provide an interpretation of Indian history in such a way that it serves as the guiding principles for a younger generation. Such was the advice which Plains Cree Elder, Louis Crier, provided a young group of Indian leaders in 1972:

In order to survive in the twentieth century, we must really come to grips with the White man’s culture and with White man’s ways. We must stop lamenting the past. The White man has many good things. Borrow, Master and apply his technology. Discover and define the harmonies between the two general Cultures, between the basic values of the Indian Way and those of Western Civilization — and, thereby forge a new and stronger sense of identity. To be fully Indian today, we must become bilingual and bicultural. We have never had to do this before. But, in so doing, we will survive as Indian People, true to our past. We have always survived. Our history tells us so [Couture 1987: 178-179].

Some Northern Cree political leaders and youth workers were part of the groups influenced by elders such as Crier and others who were regularly consulted by the IAA. These included Harold Cardinal, its president, and a youthful researcher and worker of the Association’s Indian Education Centre, Lawrence Courtorielle. When these young leaders and leaders-to-be drew strength from the inspiration and advice of the Indian elders, they became a force to be reckoned with in negotiations with governments. In the early 1970s, Courtorielle worked in northern Alberta with Elders Dan McLean and Dave Kappo, taping and interviewing Indian elders about their understanding of Treaty No. 8. From there Courtorielle returned to Fort Chipewyan and worked on his band’s land claim, first as a community development worker consulting with band members about land selection preferences, then as Band Manager, and finally as chief of the Cree Band for eight years (1976-1984).

Courtorielle was succeeded as chief by Archie Waquan (June 1984 to June 1986), who was followed by Rita Martin (June 1986-June 1988). Each of these
young political leaders had a notable common denominator in their experiences, namely, a significant portion of their work experience and education took place outside their own home community of Fort Chipewyan (Price 1991). Courtiere took some of his high school and worked in Edmonton with the IAA for several years. Waquan also took his high school in Edmonton and started his apprenticeship as a plumber there; in the 1980s he acquired his plumbing credentials in Fort McMurray, Alberta. Marten studied in Edmonton at the University of Alberta in the Education Faculty and then did student teaching. Immediately prior to her election as chief, she studied in Vancouver at the Indian Education Centre and completed its Native Public Administration Program.

Marten expressed her own political philosophy in a presentation titled “Being a Modern Chief” at the Fort Chipewyan/Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference of 1986 (Marten 1990: 153). I guess the main thing that I am trying to say is that a modern chief has to have the best of both worlds. First of all, you have to be well-educated, you have to have a good understanding of what the European people and regulations were about. On the other hand, you have to be a traditional Indian. You have to be able to speak your language, you have to be able to understand how you were raised in your Native community and be proud of who you are, and then amalgamate those two. Those two go hand in hand. In order to be able to succeed in today’s society, I think Indians need the best of both worlds. The future politicians have to have the best of both worlds. They have to understand how the treaties came about, and they have to understand how their forefathers were and how they dealt on government issues. At the same time, they have to be able to rationalize the changes. They have to be able to adapt to the changes of today’s society.

In reviewing these words, one is reminded of Elder Crier’s admonition to find the best of both cultures, “the basic values of the Indian Way and those of western civilization” (Couture 1987: 178).

The actual terms of the final settlement agreement between the Fort Chipewyan Cree Band and Canada and Alberta can be interpreted as an attempt to protect traditional concerns and vocations and to find a bridge to the contemporary world. Traditional values in terms of a relationship to the land are perhaps best represented by the reserve lands to be used for community settlement and other related purposes such as traditional vocations (see Figs. 1-9). Yet these sites can have other purposes, such as tourism and resource extraction. These multiple purposes are reflected in the land selected next to Lake Athabasca (Figs. 6, 7, 8), and sites adjacent to lakes north of Fort Chipewyan (Figs. 3, 4, 5). Also, Peace Point (Fig. 2) is situated in the centre of WBNP, a United Nations heritage site, and an excellent location for future tourist facilities. At present, Peace Point provides an ideal location for a few families — a small community — of Cree Band members to live close to their trap lines in winter and to raise vegetables in the summer. The lake sites north and east of Fort Chipewyan afford outlets for sport fishing and the potential for the guiding and out-fitting of tourists for future generations. Other sites have different economic potential such as mining and forestry.

Interest monies from the Cree Band’s huge $22 million trust fund are channelled both to meet current needs and to allow future educational and small business dreams to come to fruition. In terms of the former, there continues to be pressure to make per capita distributions of this interest revenue. In 1990, under newly elected Chief Waquan’s leadership, the band council reduced by half the per capita amount (from trust fund interest monies) and reinvested the balance in the Machetak Foundation (Price 1991). However, there was opposition within the Cree community to this action, as some band members tended to think of only short term benefits. At the same time, there are encouraging signs of some appreciation for longer term perspectives among the more active band members in Fort Chipewyan, as evidenced by the support for a number of recent (by 1991) purchases of viable businesses, including a bulk fuel oil supply company, half ownership in a small airline, and part ownership in a hotel.

The Machetak Foundation, established for educational and economic purposes, is administered through a comprehensive set of policies and procedures developed in the post-1986 period. These provide guidelines for a wide expenditure of funds to meet band members' requests for assistance for housing and small businesses. In addition, there are now built-in incentives for higher education and training
for band members. Traditional vocations are not forgotten; trappers and fishermen can apply for loans (to be repaid within one year) to provide equipment and supply needs. These policies and procedures are continually being updated and revised as the foundation and its independent board make recommendations to the band council for changes based on their experiences with the administration of the fund. For example, new policies were approved in October, 1991, which included a stricter set of criteria for trapper’s loans in order to screen those applicants for loans who were simply weekend trappers and had not made a concrete effort to “make their living off the land” (Price 1991).

On another matter, both WBNP officials and the Cree leadership see the advantages of co-management of harvesting and resource utilization within the park (A. Waquan 1986; East 1986). Chief Archie Waquan, although enthusiastic about the collaborative co-management approach, underscores the need to recognize the importance of traditional vocations:

> Throughout our history we have depended upon the fish and wildlife resources for our sustenance and economic income. Trapping was once one of the most important industries in terms of employment and generated an estimated $1,000,000 annually for Fort Chipewyan residents. Resource harvesting was and still remains a part of the Park’s and our historic and cultural tradition [Waquan 1986: 82].

As the implementation of the co-management agreement proceeds, there are still matters that require greater efforts at communication. For example, a trapper who attended a joint meeting with park officials was concerned that views expressed at the meeting were not recorded in the minutes and that parks managers were unduly restrictive in their interpretation of the settlement agreement (Price 1991).

In my assessment, the Cree Band was fortunate to have elected Chiefs Lawrence Courtorielle, Archie Waquan and Rita Marten, because each individual brought certain strengths that seemed to be required by the circumstances. Courtorielle (1976-1984) had the political instincts, vision, and savvy to negotiate the big picture — the broad parameters of the agreement. Chief Waquan (1984-1986) was more adept at economic development, for example, by thinking through the full implications of the agreement for local band members and their needs as they left traditional vocations and sought employment in Fort Chipewyan. Rita Marten (1986-88) had a strong educational and administrative background and was instrumental in setting up the Machetak Foundation after the settlement was achieved. This foundation is mandated to provide educational, housing and economic development assistance to band members and required a series of detailed policies and procedures. It is of interest to note that by the fall of 1991, five years after the signing of the agreement, Courtorielle had just finished a term as western Canadian Vice-Chief of the national Assembly of First Nations and is band manager of the Fort McKay Indian Band. Waquan had been re-elected Chief of the Cree Band (1990-92), and Marten had enrolled in the Bachelor of Education program at the University of Alberta.

As this chapter of the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan draws to a close, one can speculate about the key political leadership challenges within the community for the post-claim settlement period. While there will be inevitable controversy surrounding the size of per capita payments to band members, recent research has indicated that there is emerging a certain consensus towards the need to broaden the base of educated and trained leadership within the Cree community itself at Fort Chipewyan, if the Cree Band is to continue its growth towards real control of its own destiny (Price 1991). In part, this may involve finding ways to attract educated, off-reserve band members back to the community. This might be accomplished through a program of increased scholarship bonuses (through the educational portion of Machetak Foundation) for graduates agreeing to return and work in the community.

For the longer term, however, the Cree Band must find ways and means to encourage a higher percentage of its members to assume community leadership roles in political, economic, educational and social areas in Fort Chipewyan, which will require them to go beyond high school and acquire the education and training necessary for the community to take the next steps forward in self-determination. The role models of Courtorielle, Waquan, Marten and others are already there for the younger members of the Cree Band. At least some of the resources are
at hand in the Machetak Foundation, and government funding for Indian university students can also be tapped.

Evidence from elsewhere supports the absolutely critical role of education and training in the overall effort to achieve self-sufficiency and self-determination (Cornell and Kalt 1990: 95, Table 2; Salisbury 1986: 117-131). For example, Salisbury in a study of the James Bay Cree states:

> Education has been the key to the emergence of Cree regionalism. Without the education that provided Cree leaders at a crucial time, there would have been no movement to set up the organization that has become the Cree Regional Authority. Without the expansion of the school system in the late sixties and early seventies, there would not have been the trained personnel to staff the new regional bodies. The schools now absorb a major part of the energies of each community, and are a focus for Cree concern [Salisbury 1986: 131].

Salisbury goes on to point out the importance for the James Bay Cree Bands of maintaining the educational balance between Cree cultural identity and the demands of a modern technological society. The Cree Band of Fort Chipewyan faces a comparable challenge.

In stressing the importance of education as a basic building block of Fort Chipewyan Cree self-sufficiency and self-determination, education must also be viewed in a wider context of the overall physical, social and emotional health requirements of the community. For example, Indian bands, which are already demonstrating leadership in the educational areas, are continually confronted with the basic health and healing needs of their communities (Price 1991). It would seem that self-determination is a complex process, which each individual, family and community must struggle to determine for themselves.

**Conclusion**

In the many concrete ways noted above, the Cree Band land claim agreement represents an historic settlement of a legitimate treaty right to land and resources flowing from Treaty No. 8. The Cree leadership demonstrated both the vision and attendant intra-community and inter-governmental communi-
cation and negotiation skills necessary to achieve this agreement. Changes to government policies and within the community itself can be traced at least in part to the strong leadership roles of the recent Chiefs of the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan. The success of the Cree Band’s political leadership merits consideration in terms of its broader implications for claims negotiations and settlements elsewhere, both in terms of their negotiating approaches and the final agreement components.

Perhaps the clearest challenge facing the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, in the 1990s is to broaden the base of educated and trained band members. In a real as well as a symbolic sense, the children and the youth do represent the future, if the Cree Band is to build on its current potential for self-determination.

It is appropriate to close this chapter in the history of the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan with the following statement of common vision for the community decided at a band meeting in October, 1990:

> By the Year 2000, our people will be independent, proud professionals working cooperatively in a clean environment in such a way that we preserve our treaty rights and cultural spiritual values to enhance our self-esteem so that competent band members will be conducting all band business in all fields in Fort Chipewyan as evaluated by having no band members on welfare.

The Cree Band Members of Fort Chipewyan see the future as being self-sufficient, working together, good planning (culture and education), reserve development and keeping Indian Rights [Acimowen Newsletter 1990: 3].

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Some Facts and Myths About the Future of the Hunting and Trapping Economy in Alberta’s North

Michael Asch and Shirileen Smith

Introduction

There is a commonly held view that the hunting-trapping economy of Native people in Canada’s north is dead or dying — that history has passed it by. The discovery and development of deposits of oil, gold, uranium, and other resources in the Canadian north over the past 80 years was accompanied by the belief that this region was at last “entering the 20th century.” Underlying this perception are some persistent assumptions about the natural and inevitable course of economic development, the process of the “opening up” of the Canadian hinterland, and the role of Native hunting and trapping economies. This paper will examine these views from an anthropological perspective and look at how they apply to the hunting and trapping economy of Native people of northern Alberta. We will conclude by suggesting ways that the Native economy can be sustained, rather than swept aside by the “inevitable” tide of industrial development.

Evolutionary Theory, Inevitability, and Hunting and Trapping

Anthropology offers two perspectives for the study of the economy(ies) of northern Canada. One is its focus on the underlying assumptions of western/European society through comparison with those of other, non-western peoples. The second is its long-term interest in the institutions of Aboriginal societies and familiarity with economies that are not readily described by western economic theory. We believe that these perspectives can be of great value to point out the assumptions that prevail about northern development, and to present the actual role of Native hunting and trapping.

The Doctrine of Inevitability

While it is true that the trapping industry has been subjected to adverse pressures since World War II, there is a prevalent view that this is somehow to be expected — that it is the inevitable course of development. This perception has been voiced by a number of representatives of both industry and government, particularly in discussions of competing land use in northern and remote areas where Aboriginal hunting and trapping have continued to be important. Indeed, it has been argued that the view that hunting and trapping will inevitably decline influenced government policy against supporting this economic sector. For example, in the late 1950s, with fur prices in decline, the Chief of the Economics Division of the Indian Affairs Department rejected various forms of pricing and income support:

“The question arises whether any measure designed to make trapping in any way more attractive — and presumably unemployment insurance would make such a contribution — should be implemented. In the long run it would seem to be more desirable from both the economic and social points of view to encourage a substantial number of people to leave trapping.... Much the same argument can be used against extending unemployment assistance to trappers as had been used against providing price support to them; namely that these measures do not give promise of a long-term solution” [Herbert in Clancy 1992: 207-208].

The government view was also shared by industry. In the 1970s, the conflict over mining in the Baker Lake area prompted the following commentary in the Northern Miner of 16 August 1979:

“Preliminary exploration has indicated that this area is rich in uranium and many other minerals and it is unthinkable that development should be stopped to preserve such a rudimentary way of life
as to require hunting for one’s next meal. Surely, we have all progressed beyond that, especially in Canada. All too often we have the southern do-gooders and environmentalists wanting to keep these people in their basic lifestyles as a sort of quaint museum-piece rather than encouraging them to become part of the 20th century” [Hrchmer 1980: 3].

The perception of the natural decline of hunting and trapping is reflected in court judgments as well. For example, we believe it is this viewpoint which underlies the opinion rendered by the Honourable Mr. Justice Forsyth regarding the temporary injunction filed by the Lubicon Lake Cree to halt exploration on their traditional lands. The band filed the injunction primarily because of a fear that continued exploration would completely destroy its traditional hunting-trapping economy. In rejecting this position, the judge said:

One thing is clear however. This is not a case of an isolated band in the remote north where access is only available by air on rare occasions and whose way of life is dependent to a great extent on living off the land itself. The 20th Century for better or for worse has been part of the applicants’ lives for a considerable period of time [Forsyth 1983].

Later in this paper we will discuss the evidence that exists to support or refute the assertion that the Native hunting and trapping economy is in a natural and inevitable state of decline. At this point, we will look at the roots of this “doctrine of inevitability” because we see it as a powerful viewpoint not necessarily linked to evidence: many people seem to hold to the curious proposition that such economic sectors, despite clear evidence of their success in the modern world, must be dead or dying simply because they are based on hunting and trapping. As those of us who have worked, for example, in the Northwest Territories (NWT), northern Quebec, British Columbia and the Yukon have discovered, evidence alone will not necessarily convince those who would see hunting-trapping as a dying way of life (Asch 1982; Brody 1981; Feit 1982; Tanner 1979; Salisbury 1986).

As the previous quotations have indicated, the “doctrine of inevitability” applied to the Aboriginal hunting and trapping economy is a powerful idea held by a number of people in positions of influence, such as judges, politicians, and economic planners. It is clear that those who hold to this view will believe that supporting and sustaining the hunting-trapping economy is a futile exercise. Thus, it is a very real matter with which Native hunter-trappers must contend if their economy is to thrive and, given the strength of the anti-trapping lobby,1 even survive. We, therefore, wish briefly to identify a central proposition underlying this viewpoint and one way it can be countered.

Hunting-Trapping and Evolutionary Models

The central proposition we wish to identify is a myth, or, as anthropologists would put it, an ethnocentric assumption (Asch 1982). The central theme of this myth is that of technological and economic evolution. This assumption has had some antiquity in anthropology, in its interest in understanding other cultures, but one that has received considerable criticism in modern times for its underlying racist assumptions2 (e.g., for a recent critical work, see Stocking 1991). The basic story line is that the human race has progressed by stages from hunting-gathering, to nomadic pastoralism, and then to horticulture and agriculture, and finally to industrial society. It is a plot with which we are so familiar that we take it as “common sense”; hence, it is a basic cultural theme which biases how those who hold it view the world. The trend from simpler to more complex is equated with the notion of progress, which is seen as inevitable.

Let us consider the supposed stage of evolution from agriculture to industrial society. Obviously, agriculture has not itself been superseded in this process. Rather, it exists as a sector within industrial society. Otherwise, there would be no food produced. What has happened is that farming has become, at least in the minds of some, more efficient and better organized through time. In short, merely because some adaptation like hunting or even farming began thousands or millions of years ago does not mean it is a relic of the past — as our ability to speak, which must have been among our first human achievements — amply attests.

Following from this myth, it is clear that hunting-trapping cannot be taken seriously because it is seen as an economic form that has been historically superseded. As “proof,” some will point to it as a self-
described “harsh” lifeway and hence one that no rational person would want to continue in the 20th century. Therefore, economic planners, for example, will seek alternatives, for they will wish to enable Native people, perceived to be trapped in this evolutionary backwater, to move into the more progressive, modern way of life— to move, as it were, “from the Stone Age to the Space Age” — or, if you will, into the 20th century. And, since it is an evolutionary backwater, evidence to show that it is successful in contemporary times is often viewed either as an aberration or as an indication that the economy of the region is “backward” (as, for example, in the Herchmer and Forsyth passages quoted above).

Nor can the proposition that the hunting and trapping way of life is inherently so harsh as not to merit preservation stand close examination. Hunters and trappers do often expound on the harshness of their work and, in that, they talk very much as farmers often do. However, unlike farming, little thought is given by the larger society to how to make what is an important economic component less burdensome. Indeed, we do not consider it hyperbole to state that were farmers disadvantaged in terms of taxation provisions and special benefits, among other things, to the extent that northern Native hunters are, there would be no food on the table for want of producers. In short, given the disadvantages hunter-trappers face, it is a “harsh” adaptation, but it is so primarily in relationship to the obvious advantages given to other similar ones.

In developing this myth, the use of modern technology is used as an indicator that hunting-trapping is now dead or dying. But again this does not stand up to the evidence. Like farmers and the rest of us, people who hunt and trap have needs that derive from the industrial system. The use of modern capital goods merely helps to make the work of hunting and trapping more efficient and enjoyable (D. Smith 1975). To use the farming analogy again: one would not argue that farming is dying out because the plow replaced the digging stick. Thus, it is inappropriate to argue that merely because hunter-trappers use rifles now rather than relying exclusively on dead-falls, they have abandoned their economic mode.

The people in these regions, then, are faced with a real choice: either continue to hunt, fish and trap or rely solely on imported food from the south. There are at least two problems with the second option. First, the people live in rural areas where the animals they wish to harvest are in ready supply, and hence they would be required to ignore the obvious source of food in order to fulfill the objectives of a myth. Second, generally Native northerners live in low density areas, far removed from major transportation routes. Therefore, adoption of the second option would mean ignoring low-cost, locally produced food in return for high cost imports. Under these conditions, it is only rational to devote labor to hunting and trapping in order to secure low cost subsistence and some cash income from the local region, and thus it is rational for them to desire the development of hunting-trapping economic activities, rather than their reduction.

One way to counter this myth is to demand that it be subjected to careful and rigorous examination. Let us consider the proposition that farming must supersede hunting (and now trapping). The fact is that farming cannot replace hunting as the food producing sector in many parts of the Canadian north. Indeed, it could be well argued that agriculture is not necessarily the most secure primary food industry even in northern Alberta. In short, agriculture in these areas has not replaced hunting, but not because the regions are “backward.” Rather, it is because hunting is the more reliable adaptation. Farming, then, probably does not represent the most appropriate solution to satisfy the needs of Native northerners.

In sum, we believe that it is in basing underlying assumptions on pure ideology rather than on an examination of the relationship between these ideas and real world experiences that leads to the false conclusion that the hunting-trapping economy is inevitably going to pass away. Thus, by looking at the suppositions carefully against experience, one may find a means to counter the argument.

**Hunting and Trapping in the Canadian North**

The viewpoint that the Aboriginal hunting and trapping economy of the Canadian north will inevitably be replaced by an industrial economy has been countered in recent years in some regions. For example, in the NWT, until the mid 1970s, it was possible
to hear government and industry personnel remark on the imminent death of this economic adaptation. Since that time, due in no small measure to the findings of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Commission (Berger 1977), the results of various land claims negotiations in the NWT, statements of Native MLAs (who make up a majority in the Legislative Assembly of the NWT) and the research of scholars such as Freeman (1981), Rushforth (1977), Usher (1977) and Asch (1988), the evidence has made it transparent that this belief is erroneous. And, except for occasional archaic commentaries, it has all but disappeared from discourse in the NWT.

The new orientation is reflected in the following two statements made by government and industry in recent years. The first is from the Honorable Dennis Patterson, then Minister for Aboriginal Rights in the NWT and later Government Leader. He said at the 1984 First Ministers’ Conference on Aboriginal Issues that:

The aboriginal peoples of the NWT have to this day an economy which centres largely on the wildlife of land and sea. Visitors to our small communities are always surprised by the extent to which this ancient livelihood is intact, albeit modernized in many particulars through the use of new equipment, transportation means, etc. Dependent on ranging widely over large areas, and on species migrating far and wide, it is easy to see why the renewable resource economy clashes with other industrial uses and processes from shipping to road-building, aircraft noise to chemical wastes (Patterson 1984).

The second is from an industry-sponsored study undertaken for Interprovincial Pipe Lines Ltd. in respect to the latter’s submission to the National Energy Board hearings into the Norman Wells pipeline. It said:

What is certain is that southern analysts have often underestimated the economic significance of native renewable resource use and too easily have jumped to the conclusion that it was dead or dying as a means of livelihood. A number of intangible and unquantifiable factors such as taste preferences, traditional food preparation and eating practices, the esteem in which a successful hunter is held in a native community, and the simple satisfaction of being in control of one’s means of livelihood, combine to make any dollar estimate of the value of the native renewable resource harvest totally inadequate from a native person’s perspective. Its loss or diminishment cannot be compensated for because there are no real substitutes. This only serves to make it harder for southerners and non-natives to understand and appreciate its value. (Resource Management Consultants 1980).

While there are few hard statistical means to measure the economic value of this sector even in the NWT, some measures have been made. Research from such sources as the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Commission (Berger 1977) indicate that the hunting-trapping sector in the 1970s accounted for approximately 35–40 percent of total income. According to Bodden (1981), who undertook a study in Fort Resolution in 1975–76, income from country food alone provided an imputed value (based on replacement cost) of almost 37 percent of total income. This amount was higher than that obtained through wage employment (33%) or social assistance payments (13%). Recent research also indicates a high seasonal participation rate in activities associated with hunting and trapping (S. Smith 1986). In short, the existing evidence indicates that hunting-trapping is a viable sector of the NWT economy and is very significant in the economy of the Native people who live there.

According to Mathewson (1974), in 1970 trapping provided over 65 percent of the total employment in Fort Chipewyan and accounted for approximately 20 percent of total cash income. Unfortunately, her statistics do not include hunting. Still, her data provide clear indication that hunting-trapping has represented an important sector of the local economy in the recent past. More recent data for the hunting and trapping sector in northern Alberta is difficult to acquire, for a variety of reasons. The Department of Forestry, Lands and Wildlife of the Alberta government does not collect information specific to Native hunting and trapping, but instead uses a geographically-based category of “northern Alberta.” Additionally, licenses are not required by Natives hunting on unoccupied Crown lands, so license data on participation and harvest from which to determine its economic benefit to the northern Alberta Native community are unavailable. Other information is collected on fur returns, from industry
sales, but no comparable data are available for hunting returns, because the products of hunting have been for subsistence use only; until recently, selling hunted meat was illegal (Cernetig 1991). However, the task of determining the health of an economic sector is more complex than this, and additional information is necessary: data on the population in question, the degree to which those other than the licensed hunter/trapper benefit (i.e., family/extended family), the way that hunting/trapping fits with other economic activities in the area, long-term trends in participation, and cultural and other non-economic values that may encourage participation in hunting and trapping. Taken together, this research is essential for providing a complete picture of the role of hunting and trapping in the northern Alberta economy, but lies beyond the scope of this paper.

One thing is clear, although unsupportable with “hard data” without considerable research: hunting and trapping continues to be an important economic activity for many Native people in northern Alberta. As such, it constitutes an important economic sector in an area with few other stable economic alternatives. Their accompanying desire for cash employment has at times been misinterpreted to mean that Native people wish to replace hunting with wage income (Stabler and Howe 1990). However, modern hunting and trapping requires cash, and today trapping is insufficient alone to supply the total cash needs of a family. It still provides a substantial supplementary income to many and is an activity compatible with (and often associated with) subsistence food production. Recent research by nutritionists supports this conclusion, finding that “Country food continues to play an important role in the diets of Native Canadians in the Wood Buffalo Park region today. The frequency of country food use is high” (Wein and Sabry 1990: 188). The degree to which Native northerners rely upon and wish this sector to continue is not some sort of inverse ratio to their interest in acquiring other employment: what is needed is a thorough look at the northern Alberta economy, including hunting and trapping, and the aspirations and strategies of the people involved.

Given this finding, an obvious question to address in the context of northern Alberta is how to maintain and strengthen this viable economic sector. Below, we intend to outline some suggestions based on work undertaken in the NWT and in other northern locales.

Sustaining the Native Hunting and Trapping Economy

Now let us turn to the second question: how to support this demonstrably viable economic sector in a manner that will maintain and sustain it? There have been many over the past few years who have addressed this issue, especially in the context of the NWT, Yukon and northern Quebec, and a number of ideas have emerged. Here is a sample:

1) An Income Security Program has been developed with the Cree of James Bay, Quebec. Through this program, government pays Crees an income based on the time they spend in hunting-trapping activities. While small, this income is secure and thus helps these people to plan their economic round. It has resulted in a massive increase in the participation rate of Crees in the hunting-trapping sector (see Feit 1982; Salisbury 1986).

2) Government and industry have introduced work-rotation programs. These programs ensure that hunter-trappers who seek wage employment are not required to spend eight hours a day, five days a week at their jobs, but rather work for a period such as three weeks in a wage-labor setting and then for a similar period on the land. This provision seems to have resulted in higher participation and satisfaction rates among Native workers.

3) The Berger Commission, which examined the socio-economic and environmental impact of the proposed Mackenzie Valley Pipeline, recommended, among other possibilities, increased processing of raw materials in the north itself, so as to add wage-labor components related to primary production into the economic mix of the region.

4) A number of people, including Peter Usher, Nigel Bankes, and Asch, have recommended various changes in the current legal definition of ownership in what is known as “wildlife” so that Native hunter-trappers would have rights to these ani-
mals prior to capture. One consequence of such a change of importance, for example, to the Lubicon Lake people and many other Native people living in northern Alberta would be that the impact of proposed developments upon their ability to succeed in hunting and trapping would need to be taken into account in the planning process even where no reserve or land claim settlement was now in place (see Asch 1992; Usher and Bankes 1986). The ownership issue would also have direct implications for wildlife co-management practices being developed both within Native claims and independently.

To these, we would like to add some thoughts based on the agricultural analogy we have used above. This analogy, in our view, is apt both because, like hunting-trapping, farming is a significant primary production sector and because in some ways the economic adaptation of hunter-trappers resembles that of small family farms based on mixed agriculture. In particular, we see that in both economic adaptations there is production for subsistence matched with the commoditization of certain produce for the purpose of generating cash income.

1) Were hunting and trapping considered to be a sector equivalent in importance to the agriculture sector for people living in northern Alberta, it would follow first of all that there would be no thought of easing all people out of it and into "mainstream" life. That in itself would be a benefit.

2) It would be a positive step if hunting-trapping were considered an economic activity which, like agriculture, was to be organized for the benefit of that economy and not as part of an "environmental" regime. For example, imagine how agriculture would be hobbled if, for the purposes of planning, every species we now call a weed were defined as having an equal right to exist with the grains we eat?

3) Were hunting and trapping considered like agriculture, one could argue that special benefits that have been available to farmers in the area of taxation such as, for example, the use of untaxed gas, should be extended to hunter-trappers. Provisions such as these would reduce the costs of production.

4) Stability in income obtained by trapping could be enhanced perhaps by extending to this sector schemes now developed for marketing certain farm products.

5) Funding similar to that now provided to agricultural research stations, universities and agricultural colleges might be provided to ensure that the latest and best techniques for hunting and trapping are developed.

6) Planning by government, as in agriculture, would clearly differentiate between primary producers and those who pursue the activity as a "hobby" and develop policies to advantage the one over the other.

Conclusions

In the NWT, where Native people form a majority and where the lobby in favor of unbridled development is less powerful, they are just beginning to test and implement some of these suggestions. We fear it will be a long time before the same stage is reached in northern Alberta. Meanwhile, despite some successes, such as the terms in the Fort Chipewyan Cree claim settlement with respect to security of supply of bush resources and the management of wildlife, the circumstance now confronted by the Lubicon remains a prospect likely to extend to others as the push for rapid development continues.

Certainly, grass material interest drives this development orientation in northern Alberta, but it is reinforced by the self-serving belief in the inevitability of the decline of hunting and trapping and its replacement by an industrial economy discussed here. It is this theme that provides a comforting balm for those who oversee the destruction of the landscape and the economy that depends upon healthy wildlife resources.

Of course, it is not true, as the myth suggests, that hunting-trapping can only continue until modern development takes place. Nor is it true that all development is incompatible with it, that to maintain hunting-trapping will require the creation of a "museum." What is true is that unbridled, uninformed and rapid resource development will destroy hunting-trapping, just as it would farming or any other activity that depends on a fertile landscape. The future of
hunting-trapping in northern Alberta, then, depends very crucially on the ability to halt wild development. In this paper, we have explored one possible step on this path. The myth that gives comfort to such development with its own internal inconsistencies is countered using an analogy to farming, which provides a framework for understanding facts within which the hunting-trapping sector is seen not as an evolutionary backwater to be steam rolled in favor of progress, but as an economic sector to be respected as an integral part of the 20th century.

Notes

1. It can be argued that the anti-trapping movement promotes an idea similar to the "doctrine of inevitability," although in a more subtle form (see Herskovici 1985).

2. Theories of cultural evolution have a history in anthropology which goes back to Lewis Henry Morgan and the publication of Ancient Society in 1877. More recently, Julian Steward wrote in 1955: "Detailed study of native populations discloses processes which made the development of these features [cash commodities, purchase of manufactured goods, private property, nuclear family based kin groups, middle class, nationalism] inevitable, even in the absence of sustained, face-to-face contacts between the native populations and Europeans which could introduce new practices and a new ethic" (Steward in Manners and Kaplan 1968: 249). This theoretical perspective has been criticized on a number of levels, not the least being its justification of the removal of hunting peoples from their lands, curtailment of their political (and human) rights, and the promotion of assimilationist government policies.

3. Modern technology is also necessitated by people living in centralized communities, often distant from the areas where they hunt and trap. Although centralization was originally promoted by governments for ease in administering services, now many choose to maintain residences close to where their children attend school, and where medical and other services, as well as cash employment, are readily available (Asch 1984).

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Farmers’ Attitudes and Agricultural Land Expansion in Improvement District 23, Alberta

Andrew Haden

Introduction

Across most of western Canada, the expanding agricultural frontier is a distant memory. Most agricultural settlement occurred late in the last century and during the early years of this century. In the Peace River region of northwest Alberta, agricultural settlement started later and continued well after it was completed elsewhere in western Canada. Most recently, much of this settlement occurred in Improvement District No. 23 (I.D. 23), a rural municipality in northwest Alberta (Fig. 1). While geographers have studied this frontier in the past (Robinson 1954; Ironside et al. 1974; Vanderhill 1971; 1982), there has been little recent research to explain its continued growth. In 1982, Vanderhill surveyed the northern agricultural frontier in western Canada and concluded that new agricultural settlement was at an end. Referring specifically to Alberta’s Peace River region (including I.D. 23), Vanderhill (1982: 209) observed:

Although the agricultural frontier in the Peace River country remains open, no major advances are anticipated. It is assumed that much of the demand for arable Crown land will be associated with farm enlargements and that growth at the margins will involve a few scattered quarter sections.

Contrary to Vanderhill’s conclusions, this paper will show that there was a significant advance of the agricultural frontier in I.D. 23 in recent years — one associated with two distinct groups of farmers, Mennonites and non-Mennonites. Mennonite acquisitions of land for agricultural expansion were apparently greater than those of non-Mennonite farmers. This apparent difference in the land acquisition behaviors of the two groups suggested a behavioral approach was appropriate in order to analyze and explain the difference. The attitudes of Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers in I.D. 23 were examined in relation to land acquisition behaviors. This paper presents evidence suggesting an association between different attitudes toward farming, and different land acquisition behaviors, between Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers. The result has been a measurable increase in the size of this agricultural region.

History and People of the Region

Native settlement in the region was widespread before the coming of the fur trade. In 1788, the Hudson’s Bay Company built the first of several trading posts near present-day Fort Vermilion. The traders began small crop plots on the fertile soils along the banks of the Peace River. Missionaries who came to the region through the 1800s continued and expanded this practice. After the turn of the century, despite its relative isolation, the region’s agricultural potential was sufficiently well-known to attract Ukrainian farmers who settled lands north of the Peace River near what is now Rocky Lane. They were followed by Mennonite settlers in the 1930s, who began farms at Bluemenort and Buffalo Head Prairie south of the Peace. Much of the other land north of the Peace River, between Fort Vermilion and High Level, was not settled until after the Second World War. No one ethnic group was responsible for this settlement. Many of those who settled these lands had been initially attracted to the area by the prospect of jobs in the oil and gas and forestry industries. Completion of the Great Slave Lake railway to the Northwest Territories in 1964 also attracted people to the region, as grain shipments were made easier.

Agricultural settlement was affected by the region’s topography and by transportation routes. Early
settlers farmed along or near the Peace River because the land was fertile and because the river was the main transportation route into and through the region. After the Second World War, roads and the railway became the predominant transportation modes, resulting in the expansion of agricultural settlement between High Level and Fort Vermilion. More recently, settlement has expanded away from the major roads in the region but has been restricted by the Caribou Mountains northeast of Fort Vermilion and by the Buffalo Head Hills south of La Crete.

The present day farm population of I.D. 23 can be divided into two groups: Mennonite and non-Mennonite. The Mennonite farmers are either the descendants of the original Mennonite settlers or are more recent arrivals in the region from other parts of western Canada, Mexico, or Bolivia. They comprise one of the largest Mennonite farming communities in western Canada, with La Crete as the centre of this community. Non-Mennonite farmers are descendants of a wide range of ethnic groups, including the Ukrainians mentioned earlier, and French Canadians who remained in the region after the fur trade declined in importance. Fort Vermilion and High Level are the centres for the non-Mennonite community. The non-Mennonite community is predominant around Fort Vermilion and north of the Peace, while the Mennonite community is predominant from Blumenort south (Fig. 1).

Agricultural Characteristics of the Region

While there are similarities between farming practices in I.D. 23 and the rest of Alberta, there are also differences. For example, 53 percent of Alberta farms emphasize wheat or small grain production, compared to 85 percent of the farms in I.D. 23. Thirty-eight percent of Alberta farms emphasize cat-
tle production, compared to less than three percent in I.D. 23 (Alberta Agriculture 1987).

There are various reasons for these differences. First, the agricultural region of I.D. 23 is conducive to grain production; the short growing season is offset by longer growing days because of the region’s northern location. Second, the region is distant from major livestock markets, making cattle shipments less economically viable. Third, and perhaps most importantly, grain farming has historically allowed I.D. 23 farmers to pursue off-farm employment in the winter months. For many farmers, winter earnings were crucial to the success of their farms. Unlike grain farms, livestock farms are year-round operations which restrict a farmer’s ability to work off the farm during the winter.

An additional difference is that farmers in I.D. 23 tend to be younger. Close to twice as many farmers in I.D. 23 (16%) are 30 years of age or younger, compared to less than nine percent (8.7%) in the rest of Alberta.

**Recent Agricultural Growth**

Agricultural land expansion is a process involving the acquisition of bush-covered land by farmers.

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**Figure 2. Farm Development Lease Dispositions in Improvement District 23, 1984-1988.**

*Sources: Data — Crown Land Data Services, General Services Division, Alberta Energy. Map — Strategic Planning, Planning & Development Division, Alberta Transportation.*
Table 1. Public Land dispositions under Farm Development leases in Improvement District 23 to Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers: 1984-1988

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Disposed leases</th>
<th>Amount of public land (in hectares)</th>
<th>Cancelled leases</th>
<th>Amount of public land (in hectares)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mennonite</td>
<td>Non-Mennonite</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1984</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>1,638.9</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,026.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5,338.0</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1,386.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1986</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>3,213.2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>708.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1987</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4,483.8</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>1,327.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>1,495.1</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Totals</td>
<td>122</td>
<td>16,619.3</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4,448.1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Farmer then clear and cultivate the land, thereby creating a change in land use.

Farmers acquiring land in I.D. 23 do so through an office of the Public Lands Division of Alberta Forestry, Lands and Wildlife in High Level. The agricultural land expansion activity which occurred in I.D. 23 between 1984 and 1988 is summarized in Table 1. The location of this activity is shown in Figure 2. The data show that Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers actively acquired new land for farming. The data also suggest that the land acquisition behaviours of the two groups differed, in two ways.

First, Mennonite farmers were more active in acquiring new land. Forty-eight percent of the population of 312 Mennonite farmers in I.D. 23 (150 farmers) acquired new land. Only 33 percent of the non-Mennonite population of 278 (92 farmers) acquired new land. Second, non-Mennonite farmers acquired larger amounts of land per acquisition than Mennonite farmers: an average of 168.8 hectares per Farm Development Lease for non-Mennonite farmers, compared to an average of 137.4 hectares for Mennonite farmers (Table 1).

Given these differences in land acquisition behaviours, we can turn to the rationale for the research to discover whether an association existed between the attitudes of the two groups of farmers and their different behaviours.

**Conceptual Framework**

The purpose of this research was to try to establish an association between the attitudes of farmers in I.D. 23 and their economic behavior (i.e., acquiring new land for farming). This approach was suggested in Brown’s (1971) research on farming in I.D. 23. Her research focussed on the completion of the first rail link (the Great Slave Lake Railway) into the region in the 1960s. This represented a significant
improvement over long-distance truck hauling for farmers moving grain to market. Brown adopted the notion that farmers in I.D. 23 would adjust their farming practices (their economic behavior) because of the introduction of the railway. This notion was based on classical agricultural location theory, derived from Von Thunen (Broek and Webb 1978), which held that farmers would alter their economic behavior because, as rational economic men, they would take advantage of every economic opportunity from which they might benefit. However, Brown found that farmers in the region did not adjust their behavior to maximize the benefit from the railway. Long-standing traditions exerted a greater influence on their economic behavior. Brown concluded “an approach to land use analysis which takes cognizance of farmer’s attitudes may be more appropriate than an approach which assumes rational, economic man” (Brown 1971: 105).

Gasson (1973) was not satisfied with assumptions of rational economic man, either. She developed a conceptual framework in which her primary goal was “to discover what farmers really want from their occupation” (Gasson 1973: 521). Gasson first measured the values of farmers in England. She then examined her results to see if variation in values was associated with different types of farming. Gasson suggested four value orientations to which farmers might adhere (Gasson 1973: 527):

An instrumental orientation implies that farming is viewed as a means of obtaining income and security with pleasant working conditions. Farmers with a predominantly social orientation are farming for the sake of interpersonal relationships in work. Expressive values suggest that farming is a means of self-expression or personal fulfillment, while an intrinsic orientation means that farming is valued as an activity in its own right.

Her results showed that farmers with large farms tended to espouse values suggesting an instrumental orientation toward farming. Farmers with smaller farms tended to have non-instrumental values.

The results of Gasson’s work, and that of Ilbery (1983), suggested that values held by farmers could differ according to a variable such as farm size. From this, the author assumed that attitudes could differ also between farmers with different cultural and religious backgrounds. This assumption lies at the heart of this comparative study of the Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers of I.D. 23 and their different land acquisition behaviors.

An attitude is defined as “a predisposition towards some object; includes one’s beliefs, feelings, and behaviour tendencies concerning the object” (Myers 1983: 35). According to Pennington (1986), social psychologists generally agree that an attitude consists of three components: the cognitive, affective, and conative (or behavioral). Individuals learn of objects through cognition. Individuals analyze and evaluate objects and develop affect, or feeling, toward them. Given the direction of the affect, or feeling (positive or negative), and its intensity, individuals are predisposed to behave in certain ways toward objects.

The agreement in the social psychology literature on an association between attitudes and behavior was crucial to this research. It led to the decision to see if an association existed between the attitudes of Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers in I.D. 23 and their different land acquisition behaviors. It was reasonable to assume that their attitudes could differ. Social psychologists agree that social environment influences the development of the individual’s attitudes, which suggests that different social environments can lead to the development of different attitudes.

The social environments of the Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers are different. Non-Mennonite farmers, for example, live and work within a diverse community. Non-Mennonite farmers often turn to farming for personal and individual reasons, such as the desire for an independent livelihood. For them, there is more freedom to behave according to individual norms when farming or acquiring new land. The common factor among the Mennonite farmers is their faith and sense of community. The Mennonite search for an isolated, agrarian-based way of life is part of the history of western Canada because farming as a way of life was considered appropriate by the Mennonites. Even now, after decades of increased exposure to the world beyond I.D. 23, the notion persists within the region that a young Mennonite man “should stay on the land and earn an honest living” (Wiebe, pers. commun. August 27, 1988).
Hypotheses

Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers were involved in two activities: farming and agricultural land expansion. Given the above conceptual framework, in which social environment is held to influence the development of an individual's attitudes, the different social environments in which Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers lived and worked suggested that their attitudes toward farming and agricultural land expansion would differ. It was from this conclusion that a number of hypotheses were developed.

Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers could be expected to have positive attitudes toward farming; otherwise, they would not be farming. However, the special regard for farming in the Mennonite community suggested that Mennonite farmers would have more reason to hold more positive attitudes toward farming. The first general hypothesis was:

The attitudes of Mennonite farmers toward farming are more positive than the attitudes of non-Mennonite farmers.

Additional hypotheses were drawn from the conceptual framework developed by Gasson. For example, she had argued that farmers with an instrumental orientation toward farming saw farming "as means of obtaining income and security with pleasant working conditions" (Gasson 1973: 527). Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers undoubtedly think of farming as a way to make a living. However, given the social, non-monetary importance of farming as a way of life in the Mennonite community, Mennonite farmers were expected to be less concerned about making money from farming, compared with non-Mennonite farmers. The second hypothesis was:

The Instrumental attitudes of non-Mennonite farmers toward farming are more positive than the Instrumental attitudes of Mennonite farmers.

As part of the conceptual framework for this paper, it was argued that the behavior of non-Mennonite farmers was more likely to be directed by individual, not communal norms. Given this individual orientation, non-Mennonite farmers were expected to have stronger Expressive orientations: "a means of self-expression or fulfilment" (Gasson 1973: 527). The third hypothesis tested was:

The Expressive attitudes of non-Mennonite farmers toward farming are more positive than the Expressive attitudes of Mennonite farmers.

In her conceptual framework, Gasson argued that farmers with an Intrinsic orientation toward farming were those for whom "farming is valued as an activity in its own right" (Gasson 1973: 527). In other words, farming might be a means to an end, rather than simply the end itself. Given the importance of farming as a means to an end (i.e., attainment of a sanctioned way of life) in the Mennonite community, the fourth hypothesis said:

The Intrinsic attitudes of Mennonite farmers toward farming are more positive than the Intrinsic attitudes of non-Mennonite farmers.

Gasson proposed that farmers with a Social orientation were "farming for the sake of interpersonal relationships in work" (Gasson 1973: 527). Within the Mennonite farming community "interpersonal relations in work" are emphasized, in the form of family involvement in farming and assisting neighbours on their farms when required. The lifestyle of the Mennonites in I.D. 23 remains tied to farming and the family-oriented lifestyle which can be pursued through farming. These factors suggested the fifth hypothesis to be tested:

The Social attitudes of Mennonite farmers are more positive than the Social attitudes of non-Mennonite farmers.

The presence of the Mennonite farmers in I.D. 23 suggested adding an extra orientation category to the conceptual framework - a category based on ethno-cultural differences. The different ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the two groups of farmers suggested that their attitudes could differ in ways not envisioned by Gasson's framework. Therefore, the sixth hypothesis tested was:

The Cultural attitudes of Mennonite farmers toward farming are more positive than the Cultural attitudes of non-Mennonite farmers.

These specific hypotheses represent the way in which the hypothesized association between the attitudes of Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers toward farming and their land acquisition behaviors was to be
investigated. Taken together, they represent a more general assumption: that “community-oriented” Mennonite farmers differ from “individually-oriented” non-Mennonite farmers.

Mennonite farmers were expected to be more inclined to behave according to the norms of the Mennonite community when farming and acquiring new land. Mennonite farmers were encouraged to acquire land to start new farms but were also expected to moderate demand for land in the interests of sharing the supply of available arable land.

Non-Mennonite farmers were more likely to be influenced by individual norms and expectations when farming and acquiring new land. Although a non-Mennonite farmer might feel less pressure to acquire land, a decision to do so would be based on more purely personal factors. Furthermore, non-Mennonite farmers acquiring new land would be less likely to moderate demand because they would be less constrained by the expectations of the non-Mennonite farming community.

**Methods**

A questionnaire was prepared to measure the attitudes of Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers toward farming, as well as acquire information on such non-attitudinal variables as age, family size, farm size, farmland holdings and acquisitions of farmland. The questionnaire was designed to generate primary data which would be used to determine if attitudinal and non-attitudinal differences existed between the two groups.

Attitudinal variables were based on Gasson’s (1973) framework, in which an array of statements was used to examine the values of farmers. In adapting these statements to an attitudinal survey, every effort was made to maintain the content of the statements as written by Gasson. Cultural attitudinal statements were written by the author.

Public land and its continued availability in I.D. 23 were an issue, particularly within the Mennonite community. For this reason, additional attitudinal statements were written to test the attitudes of farmers toward public land. Ten statements were written by the author for this purpose. Following Gasson’s (1973) example, each statement was assigned to one of three orientation categories: Resource, Economic, and Community. Statements in the Economic category reflected economic considerations related to the availability of public land. Resource category statements dealt with public land as a resource. Community category statements emphasized the relationship between public land and the farming community of I.D. 23.

Field work in I.D. 23 was carried out in two stages in 1988. During the first stage, a pilot test of the questionnaire was carried out, and a sampling frame was obtained. For the pilot test, 32 farmers were randomly selected to complete the questionnaire. Twenty-one farmers did so. The sampling frame was created by combining a list of livestock producers in I.D. 23, which was obtained from the Alberta Agriculture office in Fort Vermilion, with an I.D. 23 membership list obtained from the Alberta Wheat Pool in Calgary.

Agricultural land disposition data for I.D. 23, from 1984 to 1988, was obtained from Crown Land Data Services, Alberta Energy. This data provided a record for each disposition, including the name of the farmer involved, the date of the acquisition, the amount of land involved, and a legal description for the land obtained. To differentiate Mennonite and non-Mennonite dispositions, the data were sent to two farmers in I.D. 23, with a request that they separate Mennonite dispositions from non-Mennonite dispositions. It was then possible to determine how much land had been acquired by the two groups, and to map the acquired land (Fig.2).

The final questionnaire was prepared following analysis of the data from the pilot test. The sampling frame yielded a total of 468 farmers, from which 125 farmers (25%) were randomly selected for the full survey. Questionnaires were to be hand-delivered so that farmers could be personally asked to complete the questionnaire and return it by mail.

During the second stage, 78 surveys were successfully delivered in this way. Thirteen questionnaires were not delivered because the farmer had moved away, was no longer farming, or had died. The remaining 26 questionnaires were sent by mail. By November, an inadequate number (46) of questionnaires had been returned. Previously sampled farmers were dropped from the sampling frame, leaving

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337 farmers. All 337 farmers were sent a question-naire and a return-mail envelope.

Response rates were generally good. Of 104 questionnaires initially delivered or mailed to farmers, 46 were returned for a response rate of 44 percent. Seventy-nine of 337 questionnaires mailed in November were returned for a response rate of 23 percent. The overall response rate was 33 percent. A total of 125 questionnaires were returned: 74 by Mennonite farmers and 51 by non-Mennonite farmers.

Analysis of the sample revealed two flaws. First, the survey measured the age of farmers and the size of their farms. Since regional data were available, the sample was compared to the population. The sample was representative of the population on the age variable, but not on the farm size variable. Farmers with large farms were over-represented in the sample, while small farms were under-represented. Second, farmers acquiring land under Farm Development Leases were also under-represented in the sample. The review of agricultural land disposition data showed that there were 242 Farm Development Leases between 1984 and 1988. Since no farmer acquired more than one Lease, this meant that 42 percent of the population (242 of 590) acquired a Lease. However, analysis of the sample found only 18 percent (23 of 125) of the farmers surveyed had acquired Farm Development Leases.

Questionnaire data were analyzed with the SPSS computing program. Non-attitudinal variables had been measured at either nominal or interval measurement levels, so descriptive tests (e.g., measures of central tendency) and elementary inferential tests (e.g., chi-square goodness-of-fit and independence) were used to analyze these variables. Attitudinal variables were analyzed using the Student-\( t \) test of independent means.

Three different levels of explanation were used to analyze the responses to the attitude statements: the specific, intermediate and general levels. At the specific level, results for each statement were examined for Mennonite/non-Mennonite differences. At the intermediate level, statement means were combined according to the orientation categories in the conceptual framework to see whether the orientations of the two groups differed. Results at this level also provided the evidence against which the hypotheses would be reviewed. At the general level, all statement means were combined for comparison of two group means.

Analysis and Results

For most non-attitudinal variables, there were no differences between Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers. Differences that did emerge were of interest. Evidence suggested that non-Mennonite farmers acquired larger amounts of land. Non-Mennonite farmers apparently had significantly larger farms, 624 hectares on average compared with 381 hectares for Mennonites. Mennonite farmers had larger families, 5.1 children on average compared with 3.1 children for non-Mennonite farmers. Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers expressed different reasons for farming. Analysis of an open-ended question which had asked farmers why they farmed yielded a wide range of responses. When these responses were classified into eight categories, Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers differed significantly on two of the eight categories. More Mennonite farmers said they farmed for the sake of their family and their children and because they believed farming to be part of their religion or culture.

Analysis of the attitudinal variables showed no difference between Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers at the general level of investigation (mean scale scores were 72.4 for Mennonites and 73.1 for non-Mennonites). However, at the specific level, there were significant differences for eight of twenty statements (Table 2), and at the intermediate level there were significant differences for three of the five categories (Table 3).

At the intermediate level, the responses of Mennonite farmers to Cultural statements were more positive, suggesting a greater willingness to accept community norms as an influence on their farming behaviour. Conversely, the responses of non-Mennonite farmers to Instrumental and Expressive statements were more positive. At the specific level, the three statements on which Mennonite farmers had more positive responses dealt with the role of either religion or family in farming. The five statements on which non-Mennonite farmers had more positive
Table 2. Attitudes toward farming (individual statements): Mennonite (M) and non-Mennonite (NM) farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale items</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>NM</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>&lt;p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Farmers should take pride in owning a farm</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>4.10</td>
<td>4.50</td>
<td>1.40</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A successful farmer should not expect to be recognized for his farming achievements</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>2.09</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Farmers should be involved in their local farming community</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Farm families are at a disadvantage when they live so far from towns and cities</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2.93</td>
<td>3.01</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Farmers should work off-farm to make money to re-invest in the farm</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>2.76</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Saving money for retirement should not be a major concern for farmers</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>3.17</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>1.29</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Farming should be continued as a family tradition</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There is little value in doing farm work</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>1.95</td>
<td>1.88</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Farming allows farmers to be their own boss</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>3.75</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Farmers do not need special skills to farm</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.43</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Farming decisions should be made according to farmer’s religious beliefs</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>3.15</td>
<td>2.29</td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Farm family members should not work on the farm along with the farmer</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Farmers should make as much money from farming as they can</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>3.96</td>
<td>1.19</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Farmers do not enjoy the farm work they do</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Farming is a healthy outdoor occupation</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>3.47</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Farmers should not run their farms according to the standards of a religious farming community</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The challenge of farming makes the farmer a more capable person</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Farmers should not always try to make their farms more profitable</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>2.31</td>
<td>2.13</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Farm families benefit from living apart from many of the problems of today’s society</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.42</td>
<td>1.24</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Farmers do not get self-respect from farming</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>2.15</td>
<td>1.92</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses dealt with individual characteristics and farming, such as pride, recognition and personal skills. These results suggest support for the hypothesized difference between Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers outlined in the conceptual framework, that of community versus individually-oriented farmers.

In summary, there was support for three of the six hypotheses. Mennonite and non-Mennonite attitudes toward farming did not differ. Second, the Instrumental and Expressive attitudes of non-Mennonite farmers were more positive than those of Mennonite farmers. Third, the Cultural attitudes of Mennonite farmers were more positive than those of non-Mennonite farmers. Fourth, the Intrinsic and Social attitudes of Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers did not differ.

Analysis of attitudes toward public land turned up three significant differences between the two groups at the specific level of investigation (Table 4), a significant difference between the two groups for one of the three categories at the intermediate level (Table 5), and no difference at the general level (mean scale scores were 35.7 for Mennonites and 33.4 for non-Mennonites). Mennonite farmers’ responses were more positive on two statements which referred to the availability of public land, either for young people or for the sons of local farmers. By contrast, non-Mennonite farmers’ responses were more positive toward making public land available to
and, mindful of their beginnings, were apparently more inclined to allow outsiders the same opportunity to acquire land.

Two conclusions emerge from these results. First, they support the hypothesized “community” versus “individual” differentiation of Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers. Second, analysis of the agricultural land acquisition and questionnaire data showed that non-Mennonite farmers, though less active in acquiring new land, did acquire greater amounts. This, however, begs the question: why? The questionnaire comment of one Mennonite farmer suggests an answer: “I would like to comment on why this area is increasing in developing farmland. We have and hope to teach our children the value of farming and a life of farm satisfaction and the love for land.” This comment suggests that Mennonite farmers had a powerful reason for acquiring land for farming: land, farming and their way of life were

Table 3. Attitudes toward farming (orientation categories): Mennonite (M) and non-Mennonite (NM) farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation categories</th>
<th>M Mean</th>
<th>NM Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>&lt; p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>3.25</td>
<td>2.75</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>1.30</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>1.25</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

farmers from outside the region. At the intermediate level, Mennonite farmers had more positive responses toward public land as a resource. These results suggested differences in how the two groups valued public land. For the Mennonites, public land appeared to be a resource to be protected for the sake of their own farming community. Conversely, many non-Mennonite farmers were from outside I.D. 23

Table 4. Attitudes toward Public Land disposition (individual statements): Mennonite (M) and non-Mennonite (NM) farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>M Mean</th>
<th>NM Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>&lt; p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Public land should not be made available to farmers when the agricultural economy is depressed</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>2.17</td>
<td>2.26</td>
<td>1.87</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Public land should be made available to farmers, even if the land is needed for the forest industry</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>2.94</td>
<td>2.87</td>
<td>1.37</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Public land should be made available to the sons of local farmers whenever they want to start their own arms</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.36</td>
<td>1.39</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Public land should not be made available for farming because of the high cost to the provincial government of providing services to new farming areas</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Public land should be made available to farmers to provide an economic benefit to I.D. 23</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>3.91</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Public land should not be made available to beginning farmers until the cost of borrowing money to buy and clear land comes down</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>2.45</td>
<td>2.48</td>
<td>1.52</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Public land should be made available to beginning farmers to start their own farm because farming is a good occupation for young people</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>3.50</td>
<td>1.69</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Public land should not be made available to beginning farmers who live outside I.D. 23</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.16</td>
<td>2.11</td>
<td>1.02</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Public land should be made available for farming even though good farmland may be up for sale elsewhere in Alberta</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>3.94</td>
<td>3.77</td>
<td>1.71</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Public land should not be available for farming if the land is needed to protect wildlife populations</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>3.19</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 5. Attitudes toward Public Land disposition (orientation categories): Mennonite (M) and non-Mennonite (NM) farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation categories</th>
<th>M Mean</th>
<th>NM Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>&lt;p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>2.95</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>1.08</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.69</td>
<td>2.85</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.55</td>
<td>3.35</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

inextricably linked. For many, acquisition of land for farming was a necessity, not an option. Notwithstanding this imperative, Mennonite farmers were also constrained by community expectations and probably moderated demand for land in order to share this important resource with others in the community. One Mennonite farmer told the author that he had not acquired as much land as he might have to avoid appearing “greedy.”

In the non-Mennonite community, fewer farmers and smaller families meant fewer children seeking to start their own farms. The non-Mennonite community placed a different emphasis on farming as a way of life. Other employment options were equally as acceptable as farming, if not more so. These factors suggest reasons for non-Mennonites being less active in acquiring new land. Perhaps the best explanation for the larger acquisitions by non-Mennonites was that they were less likely to moderate their demand because they were under less pressure to share this particular resource.

A New Insight

While working on the questionnaire data, the author found that separating respondents into Mennonite and non-Mennonite respondents was not the only way to split the sample. The questionnaire had asked farmers about public, private and other land acquisitions between 1984 and 1988. Sixty-five farmers had acquired land, while 60 farmers had acquired no land at all. Given a region in which land acquisition for farming was assumed to be of ongoing importance to farmers, this was an unexpected finding. It led to the designation of two additional groups of farmers - acquirers and non-acquirers - and to additional hypotheses.

Non-acquiring farmers were hypothesized to be older and, therefore, in less need of additional land compared to acquiring farmers. Given this hypothesis based on age, it was proposed that non-acquiring farmers would have larger farms and correspondingly higher incomes, hence the following three hypotheses:

1. Non-acquiring farmers have larger farms than acquiring farmers.
2. Non-acquiring farmers are older than acquiring farmers.
3. Non-acquiring farmers have larger incomes than acquiring farmers.

Gasson's (1973) framework was again used in this analysis. Analysis of the data showed that Mennonite and non-Mennonite were generally equally represented in the acquiring and non-acquiring groups. Given this equal representation, it was believed that Cultural differences would be cancelled out. The fourth hypothesis predicted that:

The Cultural attitudes of acquiring and non-acquiring farmers toward farming are similar.

Non-acquiring farmers were hypothesized to be older, and in the latter stages of their farming careers. This suggested that they would be in a better position to spend time with their families and the rest of the farming community. The fifth hypothesis predicted that:

The Social attitudes of non-acquiring farmers toward farming are more positive than the Social attitudes of acquiring farmers toward farming.

It seemed reasonable to assume that acquiring farmers would require more time to develop their farms, and were probably more involved with the various challenges associated with farm development. The sixth hypothesis predicted:

The Expressive attitudes of acquiring farmers toward farming are more positive than the Expressive attitudes of non-acquiring farmers toward farming.

If acquiring farmers were hypothesized to be more closely involved with the task of farm development, it followed that they would be likely to gain more...
personal fulfilment from their work. The seventh hypothesis predicted:

The Intrinsic attitudes of acquiring farmers are more positive toward farming than the Intrinsic attitudes of non-acquiring farmers toward farming.

Since farm development is expensive, acquiring farmers were expected to have a stronger orientation toward earning an income. The eighth hypothesis was that:

The Instrumental attitudes of acquiring farmers toward farming are more positive than the Instrumental attitudes of non-acquiring farmers toward farming.

These hypotheses suggest that farming was a more intense experience for acquiring farmers. The ninth hypothesis predicted:

The attitudes of acquiring farmers toward farming are more positive than the attitudes of non-acquiring farmers toward farming.

### Analysis and Results

Three significant findings emerged from the analysis of non-attitudinal variables. Acquiring farmers were younger, on average, than non-acquiring farmers, 40.7 years compared with 46.2 years. Average farm size was significantly different, 609.1 hectares for acquiring farmers compared with 335.5 hectares for non-acquiring farmers. Acquiring farmers had higher incomes; 70 percent of acquiring farmers had incomes greater than $50,000, compared with 40 percent for non-acquiring farmers.

There were few significant differences among the attitudinal variables. At the specific level, atti-

### Table 6. Attitudes toward farming (individual statements): acquiring (A) and non-acquiring (NA) farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale items</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>A Mean</th>
<th>NA Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Farmers should take pride in owning a farm</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>4.29</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. A successful farmer should not expect to be recognized for his farming</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>2.46</td>
<td>2.41</td>
<td>1.10</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>achievements</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Farmers should be involved in their local farming community</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>4.15</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Farm families are at a disadvantage when they live so farm from</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2.81</td>
<td>3.08</td>
<td>1.01</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>towns and cities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Farmers should work off-farm to make money to re-invest in the farm</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>2.34</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.26</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Saving money for retirement should not be a major concern for farmers</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>2.67</td>
<td>3.03</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Farming should be continued as a family tradition</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>3.73</td>
<td>3.56</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. There is little value in doing farm work</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>1.78</td>
<td>2.06</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Farming allows farmers to be their own boss</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.31</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Farmers do not need special skills to farm</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>1.80</td>
<td>2.08</td>
<td>1.28</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Farming decisions should be made according to farmer’s religious</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>2.79</td>
<td>1.15</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>beliefs</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Farm family members should not work on the farm along with the</td>
<td>Social</td>
<td>1.58</td>
<td>1.53</td>
<td>1.64</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>farmer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. Farmers should make as much money from farming as they can</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>3.83</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. Farmers do not enjoy the farm work they do</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>1.84</td>
<td>1.68</td>
<td>1.93</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. Farming is a healthy outdoor occupation</td>
<td>Intrinsic</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. Farmers should not run their farms according to the standards</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>3.07</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>1.03</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>of a religious farming community</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. The challenge of farming makes the farmer a more capable person</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>4.13</td>
<td>3.81</td>
<td>1.81</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. Farmers should not always try to make their farms more profitable</td>
<td>Instrumental</td>
<td>2.27</td>
<td>2.16</td>
<td>1.09</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19. Farm families benefit from living apart from many of the problems of</td>
<td>Cultural</td>
<td>3.85</td>
<td>3.54</td>
<td>1.34</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>today's society</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. Farmers do not get self-respect from farming</td>
<td>Expressive</td>
<td>2.10</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>1.90</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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Table 7. Attitudes toward Public land disposition (individual statements): acquiring (A) and non-acquiring (NA) farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statements</th>
<th>Category</th>
<th>A Mean</th>
<th>NA Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>&lt; p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Public land should not be made available to farmers when the agricultural economy is depressed</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>2.04</td>
<td>2.28</td>
<td>1.27</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Public land should be made to farmers, even if the land is needed for the forest industry</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>3.11</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.07</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Public land should be made available to the sons of local farmers whenever they want to start their own farms</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>1.21</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Public land should not be made available for farming because of the high cost to the provincial government of providing services to new farming areas</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>1.70</td>
<td>1.85</td>
<td>1.62</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Public land should be made available to farmers to provide an economic benefit to I.D. 23</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>3.90</td>
<td>3.89</td>
<td>1.42</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Public land should not be made available to beginning farmers until the cost of borrowing money to buy and clear land comes down</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>2.24</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>1.91</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Public land should be made available to beginning farmers to start their own farm because farming is a good occupation for young people</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.67</td>
<td>4.01</td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Public land should not be available to beginning farmers who live outside I.D. 23</td>
<td>Community</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1.04</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Public land should be made available for farming even though good farmland may be up for sale elsewhere in Alberta</td>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>3.93</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>1.13</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Public land should not be made available for farming if the land is needed to protect wildlife populations</td>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>3.09</td>
<td>3.05</td>
<td>1.35</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

tudes differed for only two of twenty statements (Table 6). There were no differences at the intermediate and general levels. Significant differences did emerge from the examination of attitudes toward public land. At the specific level, attitudes differed on three of ten statements (Table 7). At the intermediate level (Table 8), there was a significant difference on one of three categories, and a significant difference at the general level (mean scale scores were 35.9 for acquiring and 33.5 for non-acquiring). These findings suggested that acquiring farmers had more positive attitudes toward the continuation of the public land disposition process. This difference may be explained by the economics of farming which now require farmers to acquire land to develop larger farms which will generate the necessary cash flows to sustain a farming operation.

In summary, support was found for one of nine hypotheses. Non-acquiring farmers were older than acquiring farmers. However, non-attitudinal evidence and acquirers' attitudes toward public land suggested that farm economics are an explanatory factor for the two groups. Non-acquiring farmers appear to have reached the point in their farming careers where it is no longer essential to acquire land. Acquiring farmers, by contrast, are at earlier points in their farming careers and have to acquire land as much from necessity as from personal desire.

Table 8. Attitudes toward Public Land disposition (orientation categories): acquiring (A) and non-acquiring (NA) farmers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Orientation categories</th>
<th>A Mean</th>
<th>NA Mean</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>&lt; p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Resource</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>2.65</td>
<td>1.12</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic</td>
<td>3.98</td>
<td>3.63</td>
<td>1.57</td>
<td>.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community</td>
<td>3.52</td>
<td>3.41</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Conclusions

Four principal conclusions can be drawn from this research. First, it dispels the notion that Mennonite farmers were primarily responsible for acquiring new land and for causing increased regional growth in I.D. 23 in the 1980s. This is a common perception among farmers and agricultural professionals in I.D. 23. This perception may have developed, in part, because the Mennonite farming community acted in a more coordinated, visible manner in acquiring new land. The research shows that non-Mennonite farmers made a considerable contribution to the expansion of this agricultural region. Nonetheless, the land acquisition behaviors were different, since Mennonite farmers were more active in acquiring land, while non-Mennonite farmers, although less active, acquired more land on average when they did so.

Second, the research adds to the literature on western Canada’s agricultural frontier. On the frontier’s future in I.D. 23, Vanderhill (1982) predicted no major advances, that demand for land would be limited to farm enlargement, and that growth at the margins of agricultural regions would be limited to quarter-sections. The evidence corrects this prediction on all three points with respect to I.D. 23. First, the agricultural disposition data showed that the total amount of new land acquired represented a 15 percent increase in the size of the agricultural region. Second, with so much land acquired under Farm Development Leases, demand was associated as much with new farm starts as with farm enlargement. Third, much of the land acquired was at the margins of the region (Fig.2).

Third, a number of the hypothesized differences between Mennonite and non-Mennonite farmers and acquiring and non-acquiring farmers did emerge. It was possible to suggest an association between attitudinal and non-attitudinal differences and between different land acquisition behaviors.

Fourth, the research adds to the literature on agricultural geography, by complementing and extending the work of Gasson (1973) and Ilbery (1983; 1986; 1988). Overall, Expressive, Social and Intrinsic orientations were strongest among farmers in I.D. 23. Conversely, Ilbery (1986) concluded, based on Gasson’s (1973) work and his own study of 1983, that “intrinsic values were emphasized above expressive and instrumental values, with social values having the lowest priority of all”. In a narrow sense, this research differs from theirs. In a general sense, however, the finding which is common to all of these studies is that there are meaningful reasons why farmers farm, beyond the need simply to earn a living as so-called rational economic men. This research, therefore, provides additional answers to Gasson’s (1973) question: what do “farmers really want from their occupation?”

This study should also provide useful insights for farmers and agricultural professionals in I.D. 23 and for the local and provincial politicians whose decisions will affect farmers in the region. The supply of arable land in I.D. 23 is finite, and dispositions for Farm Development Leases may end in the future. Politicians will ultimately make this decision. Given the findings of the study, which speak to the reasons why farmers farm in I.D. 23, it is hoped that this study will help politicians make informed decisions which will be sensitive to the needs of the farming community in I.D. 23.

Acknowledgments

The author gratefully acknowledges a research grant received from a fund established jointly by Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism and the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies at the University of Alberta in order to commemorate the bicentennials of Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion through scholarly research.

Notes

1. Improvement District 23 is a rural municipality with a land mass of more than 10 million hectares. The settled, agricultural portion of the I.D. covers slightly more than 200,000 hectares, or approximately two percent of the total land mass of the I.D. For clarification, in this paper I.D. 23 refers to the agricultural region, not the municipality.

2. Population figures were determined from enumeration area data for I.D. 23 drawn from the 1986 Census of Canada. The population of farmers in I.D. 23 was determined to be 590.

3. For an explanation of the decision to select attitudes as the research variable, rather than goals and values, see Haden (1990).

4. Jordan and Rowntree (1976: 5) define culture as a total way of life held in common by a group of people. Broek
and Webb (1973: 27) support this definition and go on to argue that individuals, by being a member of a given society, acquire standardized forms of behavior which are historically derived. This paper holds that Mennonites and non-Mennonites are distinct cultural groups in I.D. 23. It follows that the standardized forms of behavior of the two groups should differ. Since behavior is derived, in part, from attitudes, this suggested the last hypothesis with respect to different cultural attitudes.

5. Farmers were questioned about their “public,” “private,” and “other” land acquisitions. Public land was obtained under Farm Development Leases granted by the Public Lands Division of Alberta Forestry, Lands & Wildlife, a department of the provincial government. Private land was obtained from private sales. Other land was obtained by leasing cleared land, or by further clearing of land already owned by the farmer.

6. Mr. Pete Chomiak of Rocky Lane and Mr. Jake L. Peters of La Crete were selected because of their extensive knowledge of the farmers, and the farming community, in I.D. 23.

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Wiebe, H.

Native Dance in Northern Alberta

Patrick Moore

When only two people are left on earth—one to sing and another to dance for him—this song will not become old, but will remain fresh.

The prophet Nógha
(From Moore and Wheelock 1989: 79)

Introduction

Traditional Native drum dances in northern Alberta are known as tea dances. The English name derives from the custom of serving buckets of tea at these ceremonies to stimulate active dancing. Tea dances are currently held in the communities of Assumption, Meander River, Eleske, Jean D’or Prairie, Fox Lake, and Fort Chipewyan, Alberta and other communities further south (Fig. 1). These communities include Dene Dhála (Alberta Slavey), Beaver, Chipewyan, and Cree populations. The dances themselves are strikingly similar in each community, reflecting both shared traditional beliefs and common historical influences. The tea dances of northern Alberta also closely resemble drum dances or prophet dances performed in British Columbia, the Northwest Territories (NWT), and the Yukon. The dances and ceremonies in all these areas have changed considerably over the last 200 years. Dances which were performed using stylized movements of the arms while dancing in place and those performed with singing alone have been largely replaced by circle dances performed with drumming.

Tea dances are conducted by Native religious leaders who are referred to in English as prophets or singers. The ceremonial aspects of the event may include prayers, addresses by religious leaders, offerings of meat, fat, and tobacco which are placed in a central fire, communal meals, and dances. Tea dances may be held for a special purpose, such as a memorial dance, or for a social occasion, such as treaty payment by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs. In either case the event becomes an occasion for Native religious leaders to share their dreams and religious understanding with the rest of the community. In some communities, such as Fort Chipewyan, tea dances have become primarily social gatherings as Native religious leaders have become less active.

Anthropological Research

Recent Research

Recent anthropological research on dances in the NWT and British Columbia has concentrated on either the social interpretation of the dance as event (Asch 1988) or the syncretic religious beliefs of the Native prophets (Ridington 1978; 1990). These divergent approaches reflect both the personal interests of these anthropologists and the status of the dances and religious ceremonies in the communities they studied.

In Kinship and the Drum Dance in a Northern Dene Community (1988), Michael Asch depicts many details of the drum dances held at Wrigley, NWT. He describes both the drum dance songs and types of dances in some detail and shows how the singers structure the event. Many of the ceremonial aspects of the dances which are present in northern Alberta appear to be lacking in the dances recorded by Asch in the NWT. These include the extensive addresses by the religious leaders or prophets, and the offering of food and tobacco on a fire. I believe these differences reflect a number of factors, although further investigation in the NWT would be required to confirm these impressions. First, the community of Wrigley where Asch did his initial fieldwork in 1969 had only recently been established as a Native residential community, and the Native religious leaders may not have completely established their roles in the new community. Secondly, many groups in the NWT appear never to have used offerings of food and
tobacco in the context of drum dances or tea dances. Finally, it is possible that the religious significance of drum dances was reduced in response to pressure from the Catholic and Anglican churches. Many Native religious leaders in the NWT were and are active members of these churches. Wilson Pellisey, who was one of the leading singers in Wrigley at the time of Asch’s study, was the son of James Pellisey, a Native lay reader in the Anglican church. Among the Gwich’in of Fort McPherson, NWT, and Old Crow, Yukon, drum dances were completely suppressed by Anglican missionaries. In Wrigley, Asch was able to observe how the drum dance mediates the roles of individuals and larger social groups, serving as an expression of community identity and cooperation. He was not able to observe, however, how the drum dance serves as an expression of the religious views of Dene, since the dances in Wrigley lacked many of the overtly religious aspects of dances in Alberta and elsewhere.

Robin Ridington (1978; 1990) has concentrated on the world view of Beaver religious leaders near Fort Saint John, British Columbia. Ridington has shown how Beaver prophets integrated Christian beliefs and symbols with established Beaver beliefs in reincarnation, spirits, and the use of visions and dreams. His work is complementary to the descriptive work of Asch, reflecting both his personal interests and the nature of the community where he conducted the majority of his fieldwork. In the communities in British Columbia where Ridington lived, what he calls prophet dances are no longer held. Although he was able to observe some dances early in his fieldwork experience, the bulk of his work was with the surviving Beaver prophets and hence reflects their interests. It is not always easy to separate Ridington’s interpretation from the actual statements of these Beaver prophets, but it is clear that they viewed the prophet dance as a religious event which was intimately connected with the spiritual life of the participants. Beaver prophet dances included orations by the prophets, as well as ceremonial offerings of food and tobacco. Participation in the prophet dance as a dancer or singer was seen as a way of maintaining spiritual harmony in daily life and progressing spiritually toward heaven.

In the communities studied in northern Alberta it is possible both to observe actual performances of tea dances and to discuss the history and significance of the dances with knowledgeable Native religious leaders. I will concentrate rather narrowly on the actual styles of dancing, rather than attempt to describe the entire tea dance ceremony as practiced in northern Alberta. Following Asch, I will concentrate on details which would be apparent to any careful observer of the dances in this area. Four types of dancing will be described, three of which are currently practiced in this region, and one which was practiced historically, according to both Native and non-Native accounts. Like Ridington, I will use the statements of Native religious leaders and early historical sources to explore the religious beliefs of Native people and suggest how they may have been reshaped historically.

Areal Studies of Dance

The dance styles of northern Alberta have been influenced by the diffusion of dances from other areas. Less common dance styles, such as the line dance and dances performed without drumming, have come from British Columbia and the NWT. Changes in the main dance styles, from dances featuring interpretive gestures to dances performed to singing alone to the modern circle dance, may be associated with changes in beliefs which accompanied the introduction of Christianity.

It is useful, therefore, to examine the general distribution of these dance types in North America. The distribution of Native dance styles in North America has been described by Kurath (1953), who established regional patterns in styles of Native dancing as indicated in Figure 2.

Kurath’s discussion makes only passing mention of dance styles in northern Canada and Alaska, in part because there were limited descriptions of this area available to her at the time of her study. Many of her remarks appear to apply more to the Northwest Coast and Alaska than to northern Alberta and the NWT. She classified the dance style of this region as “individual performance” and remarked:

As we progress northwest to the region of hunters and fishermen who built their culture around a cult of the dead and animal totemism, group formations
History of Native Dances in Northern Alberta

Descriptions by Early Explorers

According to the earliest European explorers, dances performed by the Chipewyan and Cree, and possibly Dogrib and Slave, were characterized by stylized movements. In some cases these movements may have represented various activities of people or animals. These types of interpretive dances, if that is what they were, are no longer practiced in northern Alberta. It appears that the dances which mimicked human and animal behaviour were abandoned as expressions of Native beliefs in spirits, especially animal spirits, declined or were modified. The interpretive dances of 200 years ago have been replaced by circle dances.

The early written descriptions of Native dances in this general region are sufficient to establish the presence of certain styles of dance, among at least some Chipewyan and Cree. In many cases, however, the exact location at which the Native dances were observed is not recorded. While these observations were made incidentally in the course of exploring northwestern Canada and expanding fur trade operations, they are nonetheless revealing in many details. Unfortunately, there are no early accounts of dances in northwestern Alberta among the Dene Dháá (Alberta Slavey), where tea dances are particularly common today. The Fort Chipewyan region becomes especially important for the study of dance in this area, because most of the earliest historical sources are for Chipewyan and Cree, and because these same two groups show the strongest oral historical evidence of interpretive dancing.

Samuel Hearne described the dancing he observed while living with Chipewyan, between 1769 and 1772 (1911:318):

They always endeavor to imitate either the Dogribbed or Southern Indians, but more commonly the former. The Dogribbed method is not very difficult to learn, as it only consists in lifting the feet alternately from the ground, and as high as possible, without moving the body, which should be kept quite still and motionless; the hands at the same time being closed, and held close to the breast, and the head inclining forward.

The dances which Hearne described appear to have been performed by dancing in place. He does not
mention any attempt by the dancers to mimic the actions of animals in their dancing.

Alexander Mackenzie described dances he observed along the Mackenzie River in 1789, possibly by Slave or Dogrib Indians. His description alludes to the interpretive themes of some of the dances, as dancers imitate animals or assume various positions. The dances Mackenzie observed were apparently performed without drumming, with vocal music only, as was often the case among Dene in the NWT until recently (MacKenzie 1966:51-52):

During our short stay with those People they amused us with Dancing to their own Vocal music, in neither of which there is no great variety, at least as far as we could perceive—They form a Ring, Men & women promiscuously, the former have a Bone Dagger or a piece of Stick between the fingers of the Right Hand which they keep extended above the head & in continual motion, the left they seldom raise so high but keep working backward and forward to keep time to their Music. They jump & put themselves into different Antic Shapes, keeping their Heels close together, at every pause they make the Men give a howl in Imitation of the Wolf, or some other Animal & those that hold out the longest at this strong exercise seem to pass for the best Performers.

David Thompson commented on the religious themes of Cree dances. He presented a delightful account of a Cree interpretive dance which he observed during his explorations between 1792 and 1806 (1916:92):

All their dances have a religious tendency, they are not, as with us, dances of mere pleasure, of the joyous countenance: they are grave, each dancer considers it a religious rite for some purpose; their motions are slow and graceful; yet I have sometimes seen occasional dances of a gay character; I was at their Tents on business, when the Women came and told me they wanted Beads and ribbons, to which I replied I wanted Marten Skins; early the next morning, five young women set off to make Marten Traps; and did not return until evening. They were rallied by their husbands and brothers; who proposed they should dance to the Manitou of the Martens, to this they willingly consented, it was a fine, calm, moonlight night, the young men came with the Rattle and the Tambour, about nine women formed the dance, to which they sung with their fine voices, and lively they danced hand in hand in a half circle for a long hour.

The Cree women Thompson observed clearly performed the marten dance to help them trap martens; the dance he described had ceremonial importance.

In 1819 Sir John Franklin (1924:322) recorded a Dogrib dance: “They immediately ranged themselves in a circle, and keeping their legs widely separated, began to jump simultaneously sideways; their bodies were bent, their hands placed on their hips, and they uttered forcibly the interjection tsa at each jump.” Franklin seems to be describing a dance performed without drums.

Between the earliest records of explorers such as Mackenzie, Hearne, Thompson, and Franklin and recent accounts by anthropologists, there are few published accounts of actual dances. There may be additional anecdotal accounts in the records of the Catholic and Anglican missionaries, or in the records of the Hudson’s Bay Company, but these sources have yet to be carefully examined. These archival sources may eventually be important in showing how dances in specific localities changed historically. At present we must depend upon contemporary descriptions by anthropologists and accounts of historical dances by Native people.

Ethnographic Accounts

Pliny Earle Goddard visited the Beaver Indians of Fort Vermilion in 1913, and his description mentions their dances. He said that the dancers circled a central fire clockwise. His informants indicated that the form of the dance which he observed had only been practiced by the Beaver in Fort Vermilion for the last eight or ten years (1916:230), but they did not describe the style of dancing used prior to that time.

Other ethnographic accounts from north and south of this region are of interest in tracing patterns of diffusion. Osgood (1933:68,87) indicated that drum dances only became common at Fort Franklin, NWT, in 1925, when they were introduced as part of a new religious movement by the Dogrib of Fort Rae and Marten Lake. Joseph Dion (1972) described Cree dances from Cold Lake, Alberta, in which dancers imitate prairie chickens, owls, elk, and bear. Dion indicated that dancers in Cree tea dances formerly danced in place, and that the circle dances were introduced more recently.

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These ethnographic accounts indicate that changes were occurring in the types of dances practiced in all these areas in this century. Circle dances performed to the beat of drums replaced earlier forms of dance in all three areas.

Native Accounts

The Chipewyan in Fort Chipewyan continued to dance in place until they assumed the Cree style of circle dancing about 1940. Elders in Fort Chipewyan including Charles (Shall) Marten, Solomon Sepp, and Boniface Trippe de Roche recalled that Chipewyan danced in place, moving their arms, prior to World War II. Charles Marten, a Cree, observed this type of stationary dancing (Marten 1988:7):

The Chipewyan used to dance differently before they came together with the Cree in Fort Chipewyan. I saw them dancing; they danced in the same place. They moved their arms in different ways. It was not a circle dance. That was before they joined the Cree.

Cree in Fort Chipewyan recalled only circle dances being performed there by Cree within their memory; only Chipewyan danced in place at their separate dances.

Individual Dene Dháá (Alberta Slavey) in northwestern Alberta continued dancing in place long after circle dances had become the dominant style for Dene Dháá tea dances. Louison Ahkimatchie, watched older men dance in place at Habay near Assumption, Alberta, when he was younger (Ahkimatchie 1989):

Yaht’ unhinmo’s father was called Edúht’e. As he danced he would say, “This side [left] is the cow moose and this side [right] is the bull moose.” Endahseh [Ahnassay], Mitá’s father, was also a good dancer. He raised his feet high, dancing in place. He really danced!

This account is also interesting in that it shows symbolic associations with the left and right sides. A few Dene Dháá women continued to occasionally practice a more subdued form of this dance style until the 1980s. Several women would dance together to their own singing, moving their arms while dancing in place.

These accounts provide further evidence that dance styles have changed within the living memory of Natives in northern Alberta. The accounts of Chipewyan dancing in place before the 1940s is especially significant and provides a link with the early historical accounts.

Native Categories of Dance

Alberta Slavey Categories

The terms which Chipewyan, Slave and related groups use to describe dances indicate what types of dances were practiced historically and what categories are distinguished today. At the present time the greatest variety of dance styles is found in the tea dances held in Assumption. In Alberta Slavey three dance styles are named, all of which are still practiced. The most common form of dance, accounting for more than 90 percent of all dances at any Assumption tea dance, is the circle dance. The terms describing both the act of dancing and the dance itself are based on verbs in Slave and other Athabaskan languages. The term for “he/she is dancing” is dætëlh. The singular stem of this verb is -leh, and the plural stem for the verb “dance” is -the. The name for “tea dance” in Alberta Slavey is dawots’ethe which can be analyzed as follows: da- thematic prefix for “dance,” wo- “areal, general conditions,” ts’e- “indefinite subject,” -the “plural stem for dance.” The basic type of dance described by dawots’ethe in Alberta Slavey is one where dancers two-step rapidly forward, moving in one or more circles between the drummers/singers and a central fire.

Two other types of dance were introduced to the Assumption area in the last century. While there might be 20 or 30 ordinary circle dances performed at a single tea dance, it would be unusual to see more than one or two of the other dances performed. The terms for these dances in Alberta Slavey are based on the simple words for “dance.” In the line dance, two lines of dancers of opposite sexes approach and then move apart. The dance is always performed to the same song, and the drummers and dancers move to one side so that the fire is no longer in the centre of the dance. This dance is called inhəh dawots’ethe in South Slavey, literally, “reciprocally-together dancing.” The Beaver and Slavey of British Columbia are most often mentioned as the source of this dance by Natives in Assumption.
In North Slavey, particularly in the Mountain and Hare dialects, the verb for “dance” is based on another stem. In Mountain Slavey eli or eł means “he/she is dancing” and eł va refers to a tea dance (without drumming) (Peter 1992). The term eł va indicates that this was the most common, established form of dance prior to the recent rise in popularity of drum dances in the region since va means “common, ordinary, regular.” The stem of the Mountain Slavey verb eł is -li which is cognate with Kaska -lī “dance,” and Southern and Northern Tutchone -li “dance.” In Gwich’in this stem is the same as the stem for “sing,” -lī, -lī (Ritter 1993). This indicates the associations of this stem which describes a form of dance where the dancers are also singers. In the NWT this form of dance is supported only by singing; there is no drumming.

In the North Slavey region, including the communities of Wrigley, Fort Franklin, Fort Norman, and Fort Good Hope, both drum dances and dances without drumming are performed. In North Slavey, as in Alberta Slavey, drum dances are described with the -tle stem for “motion on foot.” Drum dances in the area have steadily become more popular in the North Slavey communities over the last 50 years and have nearly replaced the -li form of singing/dancing. Both forms of dance have likely been practiced in the area for over a hundred years since Petitot (1876:109) records both ellery “he/she is dancing” and ta-ételë “he/she is dancing” for Mountain Slavey.

The linguistic record indicates that Chipewyan dancers emphasized expressive movement of the hands and arms, while Alberta and South Slavey dancers moved along on foot and North Slavey dancers danced to their own singing. These categories fit well with Native and historical accounts of the types of dances performed in various regions over the last century. It would be interesting to explore the details of the linguistic record to fully describe these patterns. There is more that could be done to utilize the historical records of these languages and to study contemporary categories of dance. It would also be useful to record the terms used to describe dances in Cree communities. The historical development of dance styles for Mackenzie Athabaskans is summarized in Table 1. This table is based on historical
descriptions, ethnographic descriptions, Native accounts, and the linguistic evidence.

**Reasons for Changes in Dance Styles**

*Chipewyan Dances*

The Native and historical accounts as well as the linguistic evidence indicate that in the past, the Chipewyan performed dances with expressive gestures of the hands and arms. They abandoned this form of dance in favour of circle dances as part of the tea dance complex following World War II. In recent years tea dances have become more infrequent and increasingly secular. Older Chipewyan lived through a period in which Christian concepts gradually modified many traditional beliefs. Victorine Mercredi, a Chipewyan who is active in the Catholic church in Fort Chipewyan, commented on the spiritual nature of traditional tea dances (1988):

> It’s amazing the way people used to be. But now it’s changing because the old people are going. People used to get help from there, from long ago. The drum is like a living thing. They lived by the drum. They lived by those things they were marking [symbols of power]. It’s their life. When they lost their parents or relatives, that’s when they started to dance. That’s for the spirits. We Chipewyan people didn’t live in this world alone. We were not alone. The spirits were telling us what we were going to do. “If you do this it will be

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Chipewyan</th>
<th>North Slavey and Dogrib</th>
<th>Alberta Slavey and Beaver</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1990</td>
<td>Circle dance only</td>
<td>Circle dance predominant</td>
<td>Circle dance predominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>Circle dance only</td>
<td>Circle dance with drumming (drum dance) predominant</td>
<td>Women dance occasionally, using expressive movements of hands and arms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>Circle dance predominant</td>
<td></td>
<td>Dance with singing only introduced from NWT</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1920</td>
<td>Dancing in place with expressive movement of hands and arms</td>
<td></td>
<td>Circle dance with drumming predominant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1890</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Line dance introduced?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1850</td>
<td>Dancing sideways to their own singing dominant, drum dance also present</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1810</td>
<td>Dancing sideways to their own singing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1790</td>
<td>Dancing in place with expressive movement of hands and arms</td>
<td>Dancing sideways to their own singing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
good.” Even if bad things were coming, the spirits would tell them how to go through. Part of their lives belonged to the spiritual ways.

More research would be necessary to establish the meaning of specific dances, and whether these were dropped under the influence of Christian beliefs. It is clear that continuing changes in the world view of Native people in Fort Chipewyan have changed the tea dances there into more of a social than a religious event.

_Dances in the NWT_

Historical and Native sources indicate that two types of dances have been practiced by Slave and Dogrib in the NWT in recent times, one using drums and one performed to singing alone. The dance without drums has generally been replaced by drum dances in the last 50 years, and dances in the NWT have become more social events in recent years. As with Chipewyan dances, some changes may have occurred under the influence of Christianity.

It is possible that the drum dance and the dances without drums had separate functions a century ago. Kaska to the west, for instance, used drums only for memorial potlatches early in this century; the other dances were all performed without drumming (John 1993). Willie Denechoan, an Alberta Slavey prophet from Assumption, commenting on Dogrib dances without drumming at Fort Rae (1992), stated that they were held for the spirits (animal spirits, plant spirits, natural forces, etc.) and that women and children might be excluded from some of the dances in the past. Maurice Mendo, a Mountain Slavey from Fort Norman, talking about the two types of dances (1991), said, “There are two kinds of powers, the medicine power (animal spirits, plant spirits, natural forces, etc.) and the holy power, and the holy power is stronger.” The concept of “holy power” seems similar to Christian concepts of the power of God or of Jesus Christ. The increasing popularity of drum dances in the NWT in this century seems to be related to an association with “holy power” which roughly parallels Christian beliefs. The decline in the dances performed to singing alone can be related to decreased emphasis on “medicine power.” It would be interesting to know more about the nature of traditional Slavey and Dogrib dances in the last century. It might be possible to learn more about the dances without drums both from Native sources and from the written records of observers such as Emile Petitot. The history of Native dances in the NWT is somewhat different than for Chipewyan. Among Chipewyan, the transition to circle dances appears to have taken place rapidly, while in the NWT, two forms of dance with somewhat different functions developed and co-existed for over a century.

_Alberta Slavey and Beaver_

The linguistic evidence and Native accounts indicate that circle dances have predominated among Alberta Slavey in this century. Unfortunately there are no very early sources for this area to indicate what type of dances were performed in the last century. Circle dances were well established among Alberta Slavey and Beaver early in this century, according to the accounts of Seniantha (1989). It is still possible the dance styles of these groups also changed radically at some point, but this may have occurred long ago.

The women’s dances in Assumption may have represented the last remnants of some earlier dance style, since they show similarities to both Chipewyan gesture-dances and NWT song-dances. Again, belief may have played a role in restructuring the type of dance which is performed. Until the 1980s, Alberta Slavey women would occasionally perform their own dances at tea dances. These dances were accompanied by arm movements, similar to those described for Chipewyan. There was no drumming; the women sang while they danced. According to Marie Denechoan (1992), who was one of the dancers, one of the male prophets made them stop dancing by shouting, “Who are these women? What do they know?” (implying that they lacked direct spiritual knowledge such as that possessed by the male prophets). It would be very useful to record the women’s songs and dances while the dancers are all living, since they seem to represent survivals of older forms of dance.

_Diffusion_

Diffusion between groups has been an important factor in the spread of new types of dance in this region. Chipewyan adopted the circle dance after
joining Cree tea dances. Alberta Slavey borrowed from the NWT dances performed without drumming. The drum dance has now virtually replaced dances without drums in the NWT. Diffusion alone, however, does not provide a complete explanation for why circle dances have displaced all other forms of dance in this region. The adoption of the circle dance may be associated with changes in the religious beliefs of Native people in the area, although there is some difference in the way this transition has occurred in different regions. Those who are interested in the history of the native prophet movements may wish to consult Leslie Spier's study, *The Prophet Dance of the Northwest and Its Derivatives* (1935). His study mentions accounts from Fort Chipewyan, but it is clear that he did not have sufficient information confidently to integrate the tea dance religion of northern Alberta with other prophet movements. There is still a great deal to be learned about the associations between dance styles and Native beliefs and how changes in belief may have affected the dances.

**Conclusion**

The interplay of Native and Christian elements in a ceremony such as the tea dance can be understood only through careful consideration of both early written sources and the oral history provided by Native elders. In the case of dances, the limited understanding of many early observers concerning the purpose of the dances and the dances they witnessed poses a serious limitation. To appreciate fully the ways in which Christianity changed tea dances, it would be necessary to know more about the religious significance of dance in early tea dances. Fortunately, some of the major changes in both dances and beliefs have occurred within the lifetime of Native people. This study has established some of the questions that need to be addressed in further research.

Some of the findings of this survey may be of interest to Native people who are learning more about their own traditions. Tea dances in northern Alberta are based on a complex system of belief combining traditional and Christian concepts. There is a rich history behind the songs and dances which non-Natives are only now beginning to appreciate.

**Acknowledgment**

My research on tea dance in northern Alberta was aided by a grant from a fund established jointly by Alberta Culture and Multiculturalism and the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies at the University of Alberta in order to commemorate the bicentennials of Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion through scholarly research. I would also like to express my gratitude to Ernestine Gibot, a former resident of Fort Chipewyan, who collaborated in the interviews in Fort Chipewyan, introducing me to the singers and translating in both Cree and Chipewyan.

**Notes**

1. The people who are called Slave or Slavey in English are called Dene Dháa [dene da] “Regular People” in their language. The local band writes the name Dene Tha. Although the English terms Slave and Slavey are used interchangeably to refer both to the people and their language in Alberta and the NWT, I will use a convention introduced by Keren Rice and use Slave when referring to a dialect or subgroup, as in South Slavey, Alberta Slavey, Mountain Slavey, etc. I will use Slave only in reference to the language as a whole and to the Slave people as a whole.

2. He was dancing in place, as indicated by the speaker's actions.

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CONCLUSION

Northern Canada, "the North," has always held the deepest of fascination for Canadians of the south. It is Canada's frontier. This image belies the fact that it is simultaneously a homeland for northerners, especially Aboriginal northerners and, within the 20th century, an increasing number of non-Aboriginal northerners. To Aboriginal peoples, homeland is a sense of place that encompasses their personal and cultural identities, their histories, and their religions. The differences between frontier and homeland are often referred to, but rarely discussed, yet understandings of the frontier have continued to inform academic studies of the north, including northern Alberta.

What is especially interesting about many of the papers in this volume is that the authors have challenged the conventional southern-based analyses of northern research, which is leading to a paradigm shift in the study of the north. For example, Brown has contended that the European fur trade was far from central to the existence of Indians, rather than the key influence that determined all other aspects of their lives. From the viewpoint of Aboriginal peoples, Asch and Smith would argue that the traditional activities of hunting, trapping, and fishing are as important to northerners as agriculture is to the southern farmer, and that Canada would do better to find ways to support this economic sector rather than to seek to replace it. McCormack rejects the notion that Aboriginal people acquiesced to the actions of the state in the north and argues the opposite, that they resisted the state's regulatory impositions. This interpretation challenges the conventional wisdom about Aboriginal resistance as being instigated by outsiders. Price continues this argument when he shows Aboriginal people to be sophisticated negotiators who are quite knowledgeable about their own interests and capable of directing their own legal concerns. Finally, Ferguson has overturned the notion that in this region Aboriginal people were irresponsible exploiters of game, at least with respect to bison. The reason for the near-disappearance of the northern bison was fur trade requirements for provisions, not Aboriginal over-hunting consequent upon the acquisition of firearms.

Perhaps one reason why these authors have begun to explore new analytical directions is that they have begun to listen to Aboriginal voices. This is a divergence from the past, in which historical investigations typically were document-based, with little or no use of oral traditions and Aboriginal viewpoints. Five of the authors cited above are, in fact, not trained as historians, but as anthropologists, a discipline that traditionally seeks to understand events from the viewpoints of the actors involved. A common thread to this research is that the voice of Aboriginal people is starting to be heard, but still interpreted by others. As an independent voice, it is still lacking. The Aboriginal voice was clearly heard in the conference and published in the conference Proceedings, but it is sadly lacking here. The reasons are that until recently, few northern Aboriginal people have pursued the advanced educational studies that provide the ability to research and write the sorts of papers published in this book.

There is immense scope for basic and applied research about the human condition in northern Alberta. Some obvious opportunities can be seen from the papers in this volume. For instance, there are papers on fur trade post archaeology, but no papers on Aboriginal settlement during the historic period. Pre-contact archaeological research is still in its infancy, relative to work done in the south. There are no papers on population geography and demography, industrial resource development, Aboriginal wage employment, the relation between livelihood in all its forms and the environment, or contemporary community problems.

These topics and more were raised by northern speakers in the 1988 conference and published in the conference Proceedings. What northerners want in terms of the creation of knowledge about their own communities — the purpose of the academic endeavor — is lacking from this volume. They want their own
knowledge and approaches to be understood and respected, and brought into a dialogue with southern decision-makers. They want to become the decision-makers about those things that affect their own lands and lives. Yet much of the information that they would require to do so is still lacking. For instance, there is little or no research conducted into behavioral topics, such as their attitudes towards resources, "wilderness," legal rights and Aboriginal rights. Much more needs to be understood about their sense of place, their environment. Further, there has been little educational preparation that would give them the tools to convey their interpretations in these areas in ways that will allow them to be listened to. In particular, they have been poorly prepared by the education system to assume the complex responsi-

bilities engendered by recent devolution of power by government departments to bands and communities and by land claims settlements.

Typically, today’s conferences on the North held by different organizations feature both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal speakers and address a broad range of northern issues. These are finding their way into the scholarly literature through conference proceedings and related publications. However, these often brief, observational presentations do not address northern issues in sufficient research detail. It is hoped that future volumes of research about the North will do so and include analyses by scholars from the Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, and northern communities.