

CONTACT AND ENLIGHTENED CO-OPERATION

A HISTORY OF THE FUR TRADE IN THE ARCTIC DRAINAGE  
LOWLANDS 1717-1821

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## ABSTRACT

This manuscript re-examines the history of the fur trade in the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands from 1717 when the first post was established to serve the Indians in the region to the confirmation of the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. The assumption that the Indians have provided "the 'background' for Canadian History" rather than the central focus has typified the histories of the fur trade in the Mackenzie region. The Indians were active participants and at the very least, partners in the fur trade. Policies of the trading companies in the Mackenzie region were assessed and accommodated or rejected according to the advantage of the Indians. They were a vital agent in influencing the policies, practices, and the eventual corporation shape which evolved in the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands after 1821.

Changes which were more than merely locational began to occur early in the fur trade as the Indians adapted from a nomadic band centered and mainly caribou hunting based to a trapping or specialized hunting way of life. Participation in the fur trade led to changes in the society of the Athapaskans as customs which had been adapted to a migra-

tory existence were discarded and bands followed new seasonal cyclical patterns which were adapted to the fur trade. Changes were hurried by an epidemic and population dislocation. The North West Company attempted deployment of bands, turned to intimidation of those Indians who were recalcitrant and bullied opposition traders. Indians resisted the pressure by seeking out the opposition, by retaliating, and by returning to traditional hunting pursuits. By 1820 the combination of Indian resistance to their methods and the need for conservative resource policy led the North West Company to seek union with the Hudsons Bay Company.

To develop these ideas focus has been placed on a range of themes. The disciplines of history, archaeology, ethnography and linguistics have been studied and supplemented by nutritional and wildlife studies of the region to seek out native relationships with their environment, changing behavioural and cyclical movements, policies and manner of operation of the fur companies, and social change within the band.

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## ABBREVIATIONS

HBC Archives	Hudson's Bay Co. Archives
PWF	Prince of Wales' Fort
PAC	Public Archives of Canada
CHJ	Cumberland House Journals
FCPJ	Fort Churchill Post Journal
PWFPJ	Prince of Wales' Fort Post Journal
McGill Mss.	McGill Univ. Manuscript Collection
BHPJ	Buckingham House Post Journal
NHPJ	Nottingham House Post Journal
MHPJ	Mansfield House Post Journal
GBLJ	Great Bear Lake Journal
FSPJ	Fort Simpson Post Journal



## THESIS

### CONTACT AND CO-OPERATION: A HISTORY OF THE FUR TRADE IN THE MACKENZIE LOWLANDS 1717-1821 (SUMMARY)

This manuscript will re-examine the history of the fur trade in the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands between the establishment of the first post to serve some of the Indians in the region in 1717 to the establishment of the monopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. The assumption that the Indians have provided "the 'background' for Canadian history"\* rather than the central focus has typified the histories of the fur trade in the Mackenzie region. Like the findings of Robin Fisher in his history of Indian-European relations on the Northwest Coast in the early contact period, the Indians of the eastern subarctic were active participants and at the very least, partners in the fur trade. Policies of the trading companies in the Mackenzie region were assessed and accommodated, or rejected according to the advantage of the Indians. They were a vital agent in influencing the policies, practices and the eventual corporate shape which evolved in the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands after 1821.

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\*See Robin Fisher's preface which describes the place of the Indian in the writing of Canadian history. Contact and Conflict, Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890 (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1977), p. xi, and Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1956), p. 386.

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Writing the history of the early contact period provides unique problems. Specialists in other disciplines have been well aware of this "gap in our knowledge between the prehistoric periods, studied by the archeologist, and the recent period covered by the ethnologist."<sup>1</sup> As more light is thrown on this period it becomes clear that the missing bridge can be provided by the historian; "the more ethnohistorians work with European sources the more it is apparent that much of what we formerly regarded as Indian culture is a culture of the contact situation."<sup>2</sup>

Because of the nature of the available sources, the history of Indian-European relations in this early period must be based on selected themes.<sup>3</sup> Post journals are available from Hudson's Bay Company records but not for all North West Company posts. Some Hudson's Bay Company posts in the North were moved or closed, thus giving us a limited perspective in those areas. Ethnographies were not collected before the 1870's and while valuable for understanding many aspects of social life, toolmaking and yearly cycles, they are often of little use for understanding when, to

what extent, and why particular changes occurred. Available sources will therefore be re-examined in an effort to reconstruct the early contact history. The findings of the archaeology of the region will be woven into the documentary history. Ideas developed by linguists regarding the culture and origins of northeastern Athapaskans will be incorporated. Studies on wildlife, epidemic disease, nutrition and scientific research on Athapaskan foods, as well as research in cultural ecology will be examined as they relate to the northeastern Athapaskans. To develop these ideas focus has been placed on selected themes. The natives' relationship with their environment, changing behaviour and cyclical movements, policies of operation of the fur companies, and social change within the band are the themes examined.

Northeastern Athapaskan society has been dynamic and adaptive from the prehistoric period throughout the time of contact. It has already been established that there is only a difference of opinion with regard to timing.<sup>4</sup> These adaptations required a competency in the use of tools and techniques, and an adaptive social organization, responsive to the different demands of their tasks.<sup>5</sup> For other regions William Fenton has established that this process of adaptation by the natives extended into prehistoric times and that it is romantic fallacy to suggest that Indian cul-

tures changed little before the coming of the whites. This view, held by many anthropologists and historians, that Indian society had been essentially static until the arrival of new technologies from Europe has been dispelled by the study of archaeology. Fenton summarized wide ranging works to show that the Iroquois had a long history of adaptability to accommodate change.<sup>6</sup>

In a similar vein Arthur Ray has demonstrated that the Cree and Assiniboiné Indians, early in the contact period, had been able to make a series of "adaptive responses" to the environmental and cultural transformations brought on by the fur trade.<sup>7</sup> Economic specialization<sup>8</sup> occurred among the Indians who progressively adapted their roles to the changing character of the fur trade.<sup>9</sup> Ray provided a picture of how the "barter economy" of the Indians was integrated with the market oriented enterprise of the Europeans. The English adopted certain trading conventions such as the ceremonial gift exchange, then modified and manipulated these institutions to serve their own ends.<sup>10</sup> Indian middlemen in their strong position at times dictated terms of the trade, insisted upon elaborate and expensive trading rituals, and demanded high prices. In a later book written with Donald Freeman, Ray also accepts the premise that native trade although inelastic, yet in the European sense was still governed by some economic considerations.<sup>11</sup> He

demonstrated that this inelasticity was due in part to the expedients of travelling long distances in an environment which allowed for carrying only the most essential items.<sup>12</sup> It is implicit in his work that after the age of middleman trade, Indians were more accomodating to "normal" price mechanizing. Another study of the early contact Tlingit during the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries, indicates that considerable change in social and political organization occurred among the Indians of the Northwest Coast, and it in fact succeeds in questioning much of the previous literature of the Northwest.<sup>13</sup>

Historians have generally treated the Indian peoples of the Athabasca region with only passing references and the changes occurring to them have been largely ignored. Although the region was generally considered to be the richest in all of the fur trade, and became the location for a protracted and vital struggle between the fur trading giants in the Nineteenth Century, little detailed study and certainly little serious consideration by historians of the role of the Indians in that struggle has been undertaken. The classic study of the fur trade is that of Harold Innis. His interest was in the "effects of a vast new land on European civilization,"<sup>14</sup> and not so much in the details of Indian response to the trade. His work touches on the Athabasca and provides one of the central ideas for this thes-

is when he argues that "the North West Company [was] adapted to expanding trade over wider areas" but that this same organizational approach became a handicap when new territories were unavailable.<sup>15</sup>

The few historical studies which address the European-Indian relationship in the region have in general concluded that amicable relations existed between the peoples. An early and detailed history of the fur trade by A.S. Morton one-half century ago asserted of white impact on the Indians: "their horses, their guns and their small-pox came before and wrought drastic change."<sup>16</sup> However the "changes wrought" are not discussed. In the North he saw the most marked effects of the fur trade as "a great displacement ...at the beginning of the Eighteenth Century when the Crees...had become the happy possessors of guns."<sup>17</sup> Change was seen as limited to population relocations. Morton sums up their relationships with his assertion that "the relations of the Northwesters high and low, with the Indians were of the best," although he did concede the negative effects of excessive liquor trade.<sup>18</sup> Gordon Davidson in his History of the North West Company maintains that the partnership of Northwesters and Indians was favourable to both. He argues that the destruction of animals and overuse of liquor occurred in times of competition although again little detail about the Indians is provided.<sup>19</sup> W.L. Morton



pointed out that North West Company trade before 1821 was an extraordinarily successful union of European and "primitive."<sup>20</sup> "It was this ability of the North West Company to use the manpower and skills of primitive culture that made it at its height the greatest of all Canadian--perhaps of all--fur trading companies."<sup>21</sup> Cornelius Jaenen has carried the analysis of the Indian role further and treats the topic of English and French relationships with the Indian. He concluded that "French attitudes towards native society were generally more positive than were the English attitudes of the same period."<sup>22</sup> Although Jaenen's research was based on the St. Lawrence during an earlier period it has relevance because many of the North West Company servants in the Athabasca were of French origin. Jaenen has also emphasized that "the fur trade encouraged the sexual laxity that missionaries greatly deplored"<sup>23</sup> and in addition that "economic contact...undermined native self-sufficiency and self-reliance."<sup>24</sup>

A few recent papers treat general fur trade themes which have application to the Mackenzie Basin. E.E. Rich has demonstrated how the trading middlemen dictated to a great extent the pattern of European expansion reaching across North America.<sup>25</sup> Their control upset greatly the traders who worked so hard to displace them.<sup>26</sup> It was this constant urge of Europeans to cut costs by reaching past

the middlemen that caused "the trading Indians...to dictate....the pattern of trade, and reaction against the monopoly of the trading Indians had dictated the expansion of the trade from the earliest days."<sup>27</sup> Rich found "that much that was formal and social rather than primarily economic found a proper place in such interchanges, and trade at the Bay-side posts soon developed the formal and public character of a great social occasion."<sup>28</sup>

The Athapaskans valued highly their excursions to the Coast. In the Athabasca after 1780 the Chipewyan middlemen seemed to be displaced by the arrival of the North West Company. But when the North West Company traders took advantage of their monopoly and oppressed the Chipewyans, the treks to Churchill were periodically revived. The middlemen thus maintained competition and helped to change the trading practices of the North West Company and their successors between 1785-1802, and 1805-16.

The ideas of E.E. Rich have been helpful in indicating how traditional social practices were adapted as Indians adjusted to changes brought by the Europeans. Rich asserted that "in trade with Indians the price mechanism did not work."<sup>29</sup> He drew on the experience of Alexander Graham, a trader who reflected that the annual needs of the Indian were satisfied by approximately 70-100 MB. In Graham's time an Indian could easily obtain 100 MB. Thirty MB were

then left to spend on "waste and dissipation."<sup>30</sup> Rich concludes that those furs held in excess of what was considered optimum needs were traded for liquor. It was pointed out that "there was only one commodity of which they wanted unlimited quantities, spirits."<sup>31</sup> He has also provided a penetrating analysis as to why invigorated and lengthened transportation routes led to a change in the character of the trade.

The invigoration of the transport system led to emphasis on pemmican and on canoe building by both North Westers and the Hudson's Bay Company, and when goods and liquor could be got by these means Indians hunted less for furs. Those who kept to the hunt did so more ruthlessly, however.<sup>32</sup>

He also suggests that as the trade became more complex with specialized transport the beaver were given no respite in summer and their numbers rapidly declined. The above analysis may have been adequate elsewhere but in the Athabasca many of the Indian provisioners prior to 1821 were not addicted to liquor. With the exception of the Beaver Indians of the Peace River, acknowledged by many observers to be addicted to alcohol, the Yellowknife food hunters around Great Slave Lake, and the Caribou-eater Chipewyan trading into Fort Resolution were not excessively regaled with liquor. Other means appear to have been used with some native groups to extract furs. Abduction of Indian women was one method used by North West Company servants in the

Athabasca which later would lead to animosity and conflict.

Rich's conclusion that liquor was the ultimate enticement to obtain furs and especially food from the Indians is shared by many observers of other regions;<sup>33</sup> European observers and Indians alike conclude that the Indians bore no responsibility for the problem of alcohol abuse. Edwin Lemert asserted "that drinking even today bears closely upon the older patterns of competition and rivalry that characterized Northwest Coast culture of the past."<sup>34</sup> Charles Bishop suggests that the Ojibway of the boreal forest drank "to promote solidarity" but that it often led to "socially disruptive behaviour."<sup>35</sup> Social controls, both native and European, were escaped by giving over to the "spirit" of drink in the St. Lawrence region.<sup>36</sup> Drinking was also seen as a means to protect against oppressive European behaviour.<sup>37</sup> It was viewed as a symbol whereby some tribesmen could gain a measure of respect and solidarity.<sup>38</sup> Others have seen alcohol use among natives as a mechanism for release of tensions.<sup>39</sup> Most commentators agree that natives from their earliest contact "refused to accept the blame for their drunken behavior"; they blamed "the spirit of the bottle" which was "responsible for any destruction or loss of life which ensued."<sup>40</sup>

However, alcohol use in the Mackenzie lowlands was a practice well within the control of the Indians. The open-

ing of Fort Churchill to serve Athapaskan needs in 1717 apparently did not lead to a binge of drinking; quite the opposite was the case. The long journey to the Coast led to paring of excess baggage such as liquor. In the 1770's after the transport of liquor into the region the first Athapaskan group to be contacted and to live in easy proximity to the posts as provisioners was the Beaver. Most observers agree that these people suffered from alcohol abuse first and most seriously.

In time and with increased competition liquor was made available to other Athapaskans. But the natives who were periodic or regular hunters of the barren-ground caribou herds were slow to imbibe. To the end of the period under study, the Chipewyans were disinclined to excessive dependence on liquor.

At least until 1821 it would appear that the Indians actively chose not to indulge in excessive alcohol use. Although liquor was pushed on them, particularly in periods of competition, it was accepted or refused according to the circumstance. At least until the end of the early contact period under study most natives in the Athabasca region, except the Beaver Indians, chose not to overindulge.

Other studies which indicate active involvement of natives in accommodating new practices suggest that the fur trade was primarily an institutional extension of the Indi-

an alliance. Karl Polyani has proposed the theory that the forms of exchange in trade had evolved from precontact social systems.<sup>41</sup> Abraham Rotstein continued this theme when he asserted that the Indians bartered for European commodities to satisfy their immediate needs following socially embedded practices.<sup>42</sup> Competition "centered on gift-giving, free dispensation of liquor, violence and strong-arm tactics and the manipulation of the alliance system."<sup>43</sup> Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman have taken issue with this idea of treaty, or administered trade. They suggest that "the consciously political aspects of the trade, both on the European and Indian sides, diminished in importance at an early point in the development of the exchange."<sup>44</sup> The 'socially embedded' exchanges of traditional Indian society "were modified to reflect increasing dominance of economic considerations."<sup>45</sup> Ray and Freeman found that by "redistribution" the Indian middlemen were able to disperse the surplus goods for which they had bargained in a profit conscious manner.<sup>46</sup> They call for a return by social scientists to using the concept of market trade, but by reassessing nonmarket concepts of the gift trade, and administered or treaty trade. They suggest the link for understanding how Indians used market principles for traditional social purposes lies in the concept of "reciprocity," and "redistribution."<sup>47</sup> The former usually

"involve[d] virtually simultaneous giving and receiving of goods whose values are equivalent."<sup>48</sup> Redistribution

can be interpreted as a means of gaining status and approbation in a basically egalitarian society in which no political or social hierarchy existed to confer such status, where leaders were obeyed voluntarily or as a result of inducements rather than by command, and where wealth accumulation (hoarding) was almost impossible and was considered anti-social behaviour.<sup>49</sup>

Yet during the period of the middleman trade in the Athabasca a few leaders gained in power and material wealth; redistribution of their wealth did not always occur upon return to the band.

A recent detailed study by an anthropologist, Jennifer Brown, questioned much of the historical literature which has addressed the North West Company. She added insight to the relationship between Company and native which is confirmed in the fur trade history of the Mackenzie region. She viewed the fur trade society as a "semi-autonomous social field"<sup>50</sup> and carried this model further by stating that the "Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company constitute[d] two major sub-fields."<sup>51</sup> Brown cast doubt on the seriousness with which Hudson's Bay Company servants observed directives forbidding liaisons with Indian women; permanent relationships increasingly occurred. The greater mobility of the North West Company men meant that their domestic unions were often more tenuous than those of the Hudson's Bay Company.

Another study indicated that Indian social convention was forcefully pursued. Sylvia Van Kirk examined the role of women, Indian and mixed blood, in the development of fur trade society. Like Jennifer Brown, Van Kirk saw the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company as two distinct entities with different social practices. She contended that "the Indians themselves played an important role in ensuring that the usual patterns for sexual relations between their women and the white traders took the form of sanctioned marital unions."<sup>52</sup> Conflicts often resulted from the whites' failure to respect their arrangements. Changing concerns on the part of both Indian and white, and in particular, increasing native hostility to the practice of taking Indian wives are seen by Van Kirk as leading to the decline in these marital unions.<sup>53</sup>

Active involvement by Indians in accomodating to newly introduced fur trade practices indicated the dynamic qualities of Athapaskan society. But much of the generalization from the archaeological and anthropological literature of the Athapaskans concludes that there was little fundamental change during the eighteenth century, and basic change did not occur until the nineteenth century. Recent archaeological studies have tended to see a low level of disruption to native lifeways until as late as the early nineteenth century. The fur trade by that time was seen as reducing



migratory ways among the Beaver Indians and encouraging winter settlements.<sup>54</sup> M.W. Morris in a recent historical, ecological and demographic study of the Great Bear Lake Indians in the nineteenth century, saw the fur trade as having an effect on the depletion of animals due to the congregation of large groups of Indians around the posts.<sup>55</sup> Another recent work by Jacques Cinq-Mars suggested that there was a shift from inland settlements and the seasonal migration cycle of the nineteenth century to a more settled riverine existence near established trading posts in winter.<sup>56</sup> However, the concurrent study by J.F.V. Millar and G.J. Fedirchuk does suggest that earliest significant changes may have "occurred with the trading posts from 1790 to 1810 when Euro-Canadian foods became available, initiating a change in basic adaptation as well as economics."<sup>57</sup>

Others see nineteenth century settlement changes as either insignificant, or when evident, easily absorbed within the existing framework thus controlled by the native hosts. Cornelius Osgood has inferred that only very limited change had occurred to northern Athapaskans by the late nineteenth century; maintaining that "there has been a tremendous upheaval, but at the same time there remains a whole psychological outlook which is intensely native."<sup>58</sup> Honigsmann saw that changes to the Slave Indians occurring earlier than the mid-twentieth century "were not abrupt and

appear to have been accompanied by little catastrophic disorganization."<sup>59</sup> Similarly changes noted by Slobodin among the Peel River Kutchin, were not disruptive.<sup>60</sup> Likewise, the Athapaskans of the Snowdrift region according to J. Van Stone were "not...affected by rapid or drastic change." Their "residence patterns...[had shifted] to a more centralized and settled type, a process that...[had] been going on more or less steadily since the time of initial contact."<sup>61</sup> Helm and Leacock too, suggested that the period 1820-1940 saw cultural contact in the Mackenzie Basin which was not disruptive and "lack[ed] the dramatic upheavals that characterize the preceding and following eras."<sup>62</sup> Robert Janes in his study Nucleation and Dispersion developed the thesis that Athapaskan Indians did not congregate around fur trading posts in the Nineteenth Century. The demands of trapping and the need to supply foods on a regular basis to posts led to wider dispersal of native groups. "In essence the modifications introduced by Euro-Canadians in the nineteenth century added some new dimensions to established native settlement and subsistence activities, but not qualitative change per se."<sup>63</sup> In a study of the Fort Resolution area, David Smith asserted that "the Chipewyan were not greatly committed to the fur trade, and politically they were quite independent of white personnel and institutions"<sup>64</sup> until the twentieth century.

Other surveys of Athapaskan history suggest with qualifications that change began with the earliest fur trade. Van Stone has established that the Athapaskan spiritual world was disrupted by the shift of emphasis from exploitation of the total environment to that of select fur-bearing species and that "knowledge of the habits of fur-bearing animals and their environment was now of greater importance than similar knowledge of large game animals and fish."<sup>65</sup> Yet Van Stone qualifies these remarks when he suggests that until well into the twentieth century Europeans "to a large extent, [were involved in] sharing their way of life."<sup>66</sup> "Only in the past few decades have Canadian and American economic activities intruded."<sup>67</sup>

Implicit in all of the above interpretations was that marked or continuous changes did not occur in the eighteenth century. Few anthropologists, historians, or ethnohistorians subjected the eighteenth century to intensive research and they made the most general of assumptions. However, one ethnohistorian who based part of her research in the eighteenth century does see some significant changes; Beryl Gillespie has shown the disruptive effect that establishment of trading posts and the smallpox epidemic of 1781-84 had on these inhabitants.<sup>68</sup> Gillespie saw the Chipewyans as the aggressors against the Cree as they moved south and west into the lands emptied by the epidemic.<sup>69</sup>

Little analysis has been undertaken of the Beaver and Slavey Athapaskan bands who were more likely the prehistoric inhabitants of Lake Athabasca, Athabasca River, upper Churchill and lower Peace River areas.<sup>70</sup> Like Gillespie, J.C. Yerbury has also posited considerable change for the Eighteenth Century. But he disagrees with Gillespie in that he believes that the Cree, rather than occupying traditional lands, had expanded into the upper Churchill and the Athabasca and Peace River areas at the expense of Athapaskan bands.<sup>71</sup> Both of these scholars see the changes, however, as largely demographic and locational. Little evidence is provided to reveal vital changes in subsistence and yearly cycle, social structure, or culture. Gillespie suggested that "after Mackenzie the emphasis changes on which groups are in a dominant trading position; the Crees [for example] lose their position over the Chipewyan and the Chipewyan [in her view] stop pillaging the Dogrib and Yellowknife tribes."<sup>72</sup> However it will be argued that the Cree had begun to lose their position of dominance much earlier. The rise of the powerful Chipewyan trading captains, along with the peace established between Beaver Indians and Cree, signalled the end of Cree dominance over the Chipewyan. The Chipewyan predominated after 1780 and for the 1790's continued to dominate the Yellowknife and almost certainly the Dogrib.<sup>73</sup> This thesis will therefore

address the central problem of the extent of Indian control of changes taking place among the northeastern Athapaskans between 1720-1821 and begins with a description of the vital elements of their culture in prehistoric times.

The caribou was the main resource around which the material and social life of most northeastern Athapaskans of the Mackenzie lowlands and eastern subarctic shaped their life. Fish and moose, bison, woodland caribou and elk supplied the basis for other bands even on the south and west margins of the region. Social conventions, religion, and the yearly cycle reflected the imperatives of a subsistence hunting based and band organized culture.

The earliest variation from the traditional cycle gave rise to the northern trading bands moving along a nontraditional east to west pattern to and from the Hudson's Bay Company post at Fort Churchill. These groups adopted the usual trading conventions, stopped hunting for part of the year, gave increased authority and power to their trading leaders, became more dependent on European goods, adopted the use of the dog as a pack animal and exploited their own women more vigorously in the caring for and packing of furs. Other Athapaskan bands shifted from a hunting based existence into a trapping lifestyle which threatened their independence, led to increased use of liquor and caused in

creased conflict with earlier occupants of these trapping lands. Those who became known as the Beaver Indians adopted aggressive traits from other bands who had earlier obtained European trade items, particularly guns, to pressure the less fortunate or passive Sekani and Slavey on their margins. These same aggressive tactics were eventually employed to stop the pillaging and expansion by the Cree middlemen in the 1760's. These adopted traits tended to further distinguish the Beaver Indians from their close cousins the Chipewyans and Slaveys.

Epidemic disease and the arrival of European posts in the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands in the late 1770's led to widespread dislocation and adjustment. The Northern trading bands were devastated by the smallpox epidemic of 1781-83 as were the Athapaskan Cree. This killed off the most dependent of the Indian peoples in the Athabasca-Mackenzie to that time, particularly the male populace. When the newly organized North West Company arrived after the epidemic, employment of native trappers and hunters took on new patterns. The remnants of Athabasca Cree and Beaver Indians were employed as provisioners supplying pemmican obtained from the bison, elk and caribou herds of the Peace and Athabasca River areas. The remnants of the northern trading band, known as Montagners after their traditional hilly habitat on the north shore of Lake Athabas-

ca, were encouraged to move south and west into good trapping lands devoid of its Cree inhabitants who had been decimated by smallpox. Yellowknife and a few Chipewyan traders were encouraged to establish trade with Athapaskans to the north and west.

By the late 1790's the North West Company had a trading organization projecting as far north as the mouth of the Mackenzie River. Food supplies were systematically organized and appeared sufficient, particularly when supplemented by bountiful fish stocks from Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake. Indians in the region were adopting woollen clothing, European tools and utensils, and were apparently discarding some of their more "objectionable" in European eyes practices such as female infanticide. Population was therefore on the increase. Chipewyans had continued to move south and west into the Athabasca, upper Churchill and Beaver River areas to trap. Beaver Indians had extended into the upper Liard area at the expense of the Slaveys, and into the upper Peace River country in the face of Sekani opposition. The Yellowknives had set up around the posts on Great Bear Lake to charge a tariff on all incoming Indian peoples.

The first signs of an impending crisis for the fur trade and all of those dependent on it in the region was the opening of opposition by the XY Company in 1799.

Already heavily taxed country food supplies of the Peace River were overextended with the arrival of the XY in 1799 and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1802. Company hunting parties competed with one another and with natives for rapidly depleting large mammal stocks. The practice of the regale, granting free liquor in return for food and as a ceremonial exchange, was indulged to excess by Europeans and Indians alike, as attempts were made to maintain loyalties. The Athapaskan practice of polygamy which had been adopted particularly by "Canadiens" and Metis employees of the North West Company, was abused in attempts to exploit kin ties, and extend production, processing and transport of furs. This practice was resented and openly resisted in the first decade of the nineteenth century. Indians rebelled at attempts to deploy them in fur trapping regions and resisted female hostage taking while being increasingly regaled with liquor. A crisis was imminent as more natives died from starvation.

In the heart of the Peace River country where provisions were obtained the Beaver Indians were "regaled" with liquor. When attempts were made to pressure them to relocate or to encourage them to hunt by abducting their women they reacted violently. The Chipewyan response to this abuse of their women led to destruction of North West Company outpost. In this period the Indian peoples of the



Athabasca region were starving as a result of fur trade practices and united in their resistance to them, and by 1814 had stopped hunting and trapping furs for trade with the North West Company. Later in 1816 when the Hudson's Bay Company arrived in force, many returned, but traded with the Honourable company with its less coercive practices.

Restoration of monopoly under the combined Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 led to much more conscious rationalization of the role of Indian peoples in the fur trade. The years of competition and plunder demanded conservation in some quarters, redeployment of bands in others. Bands were henceforth attached to particular posts. Caribou rather than bison or fish was seen by Indian and Europeans alike as the most likely source for provisioning the trade. Fort Resolution rather than Peace River became the center for provisioning and this was to be supplied only by bands specializing in the hunting of that animal, the caribou-eater Chipewyans. Indians from trapped-out areas were relocated by closure of posts thus inducing them to move to new establishments. The imperatives of the fur trade had transformed the yearly cycle, led to a change in or altered the degree of dependence on hunting any one specie, caused changes in certain important social practices, and brought dependence on new animal species. Indian people of the

eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowland region as well as Europeans had accepted the efficacy of these changes and actively cooperated in bringing them about.

I  
N O T E S

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<sup>2</sup>William Fenton, "Huronian: An Essay in Proper Ethno-history," American Anthropologist, 80 (1978), p. 926.

<sup>3</sup>Robin Fisher discusses the problem of dealing with the history of one group on the basis of the writings of another. See p. xiii, in Contact and Conflict, Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890 (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1977).

<sup>4</sup>James Van Stone, Athapaskan Adaptations, Hunters and Fishermen of the Subarctic Forests (Arlington Heights: Aldine, 1974), pp. 3-6.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., pp. 39-41.

<sup>6</sup>Fenton, pp. 923-35.

<sup>7</sup>Arthur Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson's Bay, 1660-1870 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 46-48.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 89.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 228.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., pp. 61-68, 137-43.

<sup>11</sup>Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman, Give Us Good Measure, an Economic Analysis of Relations between the Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 232-33.

<sup>12</sup>Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p. 68.

<sup>13</sup>William L. Ostenstad, "The Impact of the Fur Trade on the Tlingit during the late Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," M.A. Diss., Univ. of Manitoba, 1976.

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<sup>15</sup>Innis, *ibid.*, p. 262.

<sup>16</sup>A.S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (1939; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), p. 16.

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<sup>18</sup>A.S. Morton, The Journal of Duncan M'Gillivray of the North West Company at Fort George on the Saskatchewan 1794-95 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), pp. lxxi and 47.

<sup>19</sup>G.C. Davidson, The North West Company (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1918), p. 168.

<sup>20</sup>W.L. Morton, "The North West Company: Pedlars Extraordinary" in Aspects of the Fur Trade, ed. Russell W. Fridley, St. Paul: Minnesota, Historical Society, 1967, p. 9.

<sup>21</sup>Ibid., p. 14.

<sup>22</sup>Cornelius Jaenen, "French Attitudes toward Native

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<sup>23</sup>Cornelius Jaenen, Friend and Foe, Aspects of French-Amerindian Cultural Contact in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1976), p. 108.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., p. 92.

<sup>25</sup>E.E. Rich, "Trade Habits and Economic Motivation among the Indians of North America," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 26 (1960), 35-53.

<sup>26</sup>E.E. Rich, "The Indian Traders," The Beaver, Outfit 301 (winter 1970), 4-20.

<sup>27</sup>Rich, "Trade Habits," p. 42.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid.

<sup>29</sup>Rich, "Indian Traders," p. 17.

<sup>30</sup>Made Beaver, the value of a prime beaver skin.

<sup>31</sup>Ibid., p. 18.

<sup>32</sup>E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, II (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958), p. 189.

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<sup>35</sup>Charles Bishop, Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade, "Ethnohistoric Research in the Central Subarctic: Some Conceptual and Methodological Problems." Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, 6, No. 1 (1976), 116-44, p. 41.

<sup>36</sup>Jaenen, Friend and Foe, p. 114.

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<sup>37</sup>Nancy O. Lurie, "The World's Oldest On-Going Protest Demonstration: North American Indian Drinking Patterns," Pacific Historical Review, 40 (Aug. 1971), 311-32.

<sup>38</sup>Craig McAndrew and Robert B. Edgerton, Drunken Compartment: A Social Explanation. (Chicago: Aldine, 1969), p. 111.

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<sup>42</sup>Abraham Rotstein, "The Fur Trade and Empire, an Institutional Analysis," Diss. Univ. of Toronto, 1967, pp. 13-16.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., see summary, p. 1.

<sup>44</sup>Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman, Give Us Good Measure, an Economic Analysis of Relations between the Indians and Hudson's Bay Company before 1763 (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 236.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>Ibid.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., p. 243.

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<sup>50</sup>Jennifer Brown, "Company Men and Native Families: Fur Trade Society and Domestic Relations in Canada's Old Northwest." Diss. Univ. of Chicago, 1976. The idea that the fur trade has given rise to a unique culture and society is a major contention of John E. Foster, "The Country-Born in the Red River Settlement: 1820-50," Diss. Univ. of Alberta, 1972. Fritz Pannekoek, "The Churches and the Social Structure in the Red River Area, 1818-70," Diss. Queen's University, 1973 and Sylvia Van Kirk, "The Role of Women in the Fur Trade Society of the Canadian West, 1700-1850," Diss. Univ. of London, 1975.

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<sup>73</sup>Gillespie says that the Yellowknives were dominated until sometime in the period 1795-1805 when they began acting as middlemen to the Slavey. Ibid., pp. 212-14. J.C. Yerbury, "The Social Organization of Subarctic Athapaskan Indians: an Ethnohistorical Reconstruction," Diss. Simon Fraser Univ., 1980, pp. 206-08.

## CHAPTER II

### ATHAPASKAN LIFEWAYS

The Athapaskan people of the Arctic lowlands occupied a region dominated by the basin of the Mackenzie River, lived in a climate where winters were long and severe and summers were short and hot. Vegetation was predominantly wooded; conifers were found throughout the Mackenzie Basin while in the northeastern borders of the region trees were limited to sheltered valleys and glacial eskers projecting into the barrens. Berries were plentiful in summer and the variety of fauna were of economic significance to the Indians.<sup>1</sup>

The vast region inhabited by the people of the Athapaskan languages stretched from Alaska to Hudson Bay and from the mouth of the Mackenzie River to the edge of the plains with a fragment of Athapaskan-speaking people along the southern Rocky Mountain states. The divergence of the main Athapaskan culture into two or more segments occurred sixteen hundred to two thousand years ago.<sup>2</sup> Salmon was the natural resource most vitally associated with the western Athapaskans of interior Alaska, parts of the Yukon, and northern British Columbia. The Athapaskans of the eastern

subarctic, boreal forest, and Mackenzie River lowlands were distinguished by their migratory hunting existence following the large mammals, - importantly the barren ground caribou.<sup>3</sup>

Northeastern Athapaskans of the barrens and Mackenzie lowlands have been accepted by ethnographers as being divided into seven groups: Chipewyan, Yellowknives, Beaver, Slavey, Dogrib, Hare, and the Loucheux or Kutchin. June MacNeish defines Athapaskan bands as:

a set of peoples living in physical contiguity (but not together) speaking a mutually intelligible tongue (though often with regional dialectical variations), sharing a common culture (though not necessarily one distinct in essentials from neighbouring tribes), and having at least a vague sense of common identity which may be based in whole or in part on the foregoing conditions.<sup>4</sup>

From this definition and the opinions of some Athapaskan specialists a sense of eastern Athapaskan cultural continuity is discernable. Van Stone saw that "many aspects of Athapaskan social life...extended across the entire range of environmental zones....The same is also true for virtually all subsistence techniques."<sup>5</sup> His major work, Athapaskan Adaptations "emphasizes the essential cultural homogeneity throughout the area."<sup>6</sup> Cycles of abundance and scarcity in this relatively simple ecosystem have been seen as leading to a high degree of mobility and hence fluidity of culture.<sup>7</sup> Catherine McClellan has suggested that the

eastern Athapaskans may be considered analogous with the Eskimo in that dialect and culture in the prehistoric period were more fluid and uniform than unique.<sup>8</sup>

Some eastern Athapaskans, notably the Chipewyans and Yellowknives were distinguished only by their geographic range. Dialects differ considerably although the Chipewyan, Beaver, Kutchin and Slave are not so linguistically dissimilar as once thought.<sup>9</sup> Hare and Dogrib comprise part of another group which reflect "ancient" though "loose groupings."<sup>10</sup> Even the Kutchin whom Osgood and others suggested "stood out"<sup>11</sup> from normal alignment have been found in recent studies to have a high percentage of shared cognates with Beaver, Slave and Chipewyan languages.<sup>12</sup>

The common quest for the major and most bountiful big game resource, the caribou, led to the sharing of traits between northeastern Athapaskans and also led to trade links between Kutchins, Yellowknives, Hare, Dogribs and Eskimos who met at the west end of Great Bear Lake.<sup>13</sup> Chipewyans met Yellowknives and sometimes Eskimos in the summer on the Thelon and Dubawnt Rivers.<sup>14</sup> In winter Chipewyans, Beavers, and Slaveys met at Lake Athabasca.<sup>15</sup> Kutchins alternatively fought and traded with the Eskimos.<sup>16</sup> Other logical meeting places were the confluences of major rivers: the confluence of the Athabasca-Peace, the outlet of the Slave, and the juncture of the Liard, Keele, and

Great Bear Rivers with the Mackenzie.<sup>17</sup> Caribou migration constrictions such as those at the east end of Great Slave Lake, at each end of Lake Athabasca, near the headwaters of the Coppermine River and around Point Lake provided favourite places for fall meetings.<sup>18</sup> Thomas Simpson relates in 1836:

From some of the Chipewyans I learned that they had, in the course of the preceding [sic] summer ...met with a party of Esquimaux at the confluence of the noble Thelew or Thelon River with the Doobawnt of Hearne...This meeting was of the most amicable character, and they spent the great part of the summer together....They also informed me that, in 1832, some of the Athabasca Chipewyans accompanied the Churchill branch of their tribe on their annual meeting with other Esquimaux at Yath Kyed, or White Snow Lake of Hearne.<sup>19</sup>

Birket-Smith relates that the Chipewyans bartered dogs and soapstone with the Eskimo in return for moccasins and snowshoes.<sup>20</sup> Osgood suggests that canoe routes were "good" and saw regular use between the north arm of Great Slave Lake and McTavish Bay.<sup>21</sup>

The barren-ground caribou dictated the Athapaskan seasonal cycle, "determined the hunting and territorial organization of the group, was central to their material culture and became the focus of their religious belief and oral literature."<sup>22</sup> Many Athapaskans came in contact with other hunting bands as they congregated at seasonal hunting locations in wait for the caribou migration. The Bathurst

and Bluenose Herds regularly wintered near each other on the north and east shores of Great Bear Lake and between the latter and Great Slave Lake. The Yellowknife and Hare Indians, possibly also the Loucheux regularly hunted those herds. The eastern range of the Beverley Herd lay close to the western range of the Kaminuriak Herd leading them to winter close to each other. Calving grounds of the Beverley Herd were not far removed from the wintering grounds of the Bathurst Herd and bands of hunters conceivably exploited both herds without following the full migratory range of either.<sup>23</sup>

The caribou usually migrated in late winter or early spring from winter ranges on the edge of the forest to the tundra where calving occurred in early to mid-June. Travelling in large groups on the barrens in July and August, foraging on their main source of food, the lichens, the caribou reversed direction by late August. In early September they approached the woodlands. By early fall their winter coat was replenished and free from warble holes thus suitable for making winter clothing.<sup>24</sup>

The fat of the large mammals was essential to northern survival.<sup>25</sup> Caribou, very high in protein but low in fat, would leave those who had feasted on their lean frame starving from a lack of calories for much of the year. "The grease of the back fat," later called "depouillez" by the

Canadians which was found between the ribs and the skin was prized for its flavour and especially for its fat content.<sup>26</sup> It was collected and rendered in the fall, becoming vital to the diet in times of want. An important use was to preserve meat; it was poured over the dried pounded meat thus keeping it through damp periods. "In times of scarcity they lose nothing of the animal, even the blood is brought home and is boiled with grease."<sup>27</sup> Fat was a vital trade item in the pre-contact and early contact periods which was traded from the Beaver and Cree Indians. They often had a surplus of depouillees from the many buffalo and elk who fattened in the upper Athabasca and Peace River areas.<sup>28</sup>

Caribou meat was sun dried or suspended over a "cold" or "slow" flame, especially in winter. Fresh meat and in particular marrow and fish were eaten raw.<sup>29</sup> Meat and fish were sometimes roasted fresh over an open fire although most often were boiled using hot stones placed in bark receptacles or in a tied-off animal stomach.<sup>30</sup> Some Athapaskans depended on large mammals other than caribou: Beaver Indians in the southwest on bison, elk and moose and the Slave and Hare on moose.<sup>31</sup> But all turned to fish as a secondary food staple.<sup>32</sup>

Meat supplies were normally supplemented in the early winter and spring by fish. The Athapaskans preferred to



make their fishing nets of woven willow bark, but sometimes used rawhide. Nets were dyed various colours: red, yellow and bronze.<sup>33</sup> Those made "of the fine bark of the willow, [were] twisted and plaited about the size [of] Holland twine; it is stronger and preferable to net thread, particularly when prepared in winter."<sup>34</sup> Hooks were made from a "knot of the pine tree inverted,"<sup>35</sup> "bones...and sometimes birds claws." Set under the ice and baited with red carp, they were visited each morning. In winter "the stomach of the whitefish [was used] for bait which must be kept very clean."<sup>36</sup> An early North West Company partner observed that

the great Lakes of their country yield the finest fish, and when the Deer fail they readily take to angling, altho' it affords them no clothing. They are in possession of many secrets of making baits for taking the different kinds of fish; which they would not impart to me; but being in their company something was seen. The bait for the Trout, the largest fish of the Lakes, was the head half of the White Fish, well rubbed with Eagles fat, for want of it, other raw fat; but not grease that had been melted by the fire: The Pike and Pickerel take almost anything, even a red rag; but the pride of these people is to angle the White Fish, an art known to only a few of the men; they would not inform me of its composition, the few baits I examined appeared to be all the same, and the castoreum of the Beaver, worked into a thick paste, was the principal item; around were the fine red feathers of the Woodpecker, a grain of Eagles fat was on top of the bait, and the hook was well hid in it; the bait had a neat appearance. The art of angling White Fish is to them of such importance, a young man offered a gun for the secret and was refused.<sup>37</sup>

Prepared in "wattap kettles"<sup>38</sup> or roasted over the fire for immediate use, the fish were also dried and stored for winter consumption. "Whether fish or meat, whatever is not required is carefully put by for the next meal."<sup>39</sup> "They are in general very industrious and excellent economists."<sup>40</sup>

Those peoples who had fish as their main protein source were neither poor in their nutritional state nor in their food supply. Their general health was observed in later years as being better than that of the meat eaters.<sup>41</sup> In most seasons fish were available and for the many proficient Athapaskans fishing was seasonally bountiful. In late fall to late spring the lakes were prolific and through the summer months streams were successfully fished.

Fowl also was a protein source and was available for short periods from spring to fall. Ducks, loons, swans, and geese were hunted in the spring when fish were fewer; "ducks...[were] by far the most important."<sup>42</sup> Minor birds included snipes, semi-palmated plovers, spruce hens, prairie chickens, ptarmigan and owls. Gulls were "said to be thrown to the old women."<sup>43</sup> Birds' eggs were much sought and eaten in spring.

Fruits and berries were also available for short periods.

The fruits of this solitary region are the poire

[service berry, *Amelanchier canadensis*], gooseberry, raspberry [sic], strawberry, moose berry, rose buttons, red and black currants, thimbleberry, huckleberry, bearberry, choakberry and another berry, the name of which I do not know except in the Indian language, which they call ouh-kachwa. They bud about the latter end of May, flower about the 15th of June and ripen near the 20th August, when they are deemed wholesome to the body and delicious to the taste.<sup>44</sup>

Berries and fruits were consumed fresh in season and large amounts were dried and added to the dry meat.

The shape and manner of construction of their shelters were dictated by the availability of food. Most northern Athapaskans lived in temporary shelters. For those who had access to plentiful supplies of large mammals for hides, shelters consisted of "circular lodges or tents, covered around about with dressed animal skins to screen them from the inclemencies of the weather, the fire...[was] in the middle."<sup>45</sup> Other peoples, often more sedentary and unable to obtain hides since they subsisted on fish or small mammals lived in brush shelters, or, in the one case of the Loucheux, semi-subterranean pit houses which were probably copied from the Inuit.<sup>46</sup>

A so-called cabin lodge was common along the Mackenzie River, among the Mackenzie Mountain people as well as south and west on the Liard. It was rectangular in shape like a cabin with the sides sloped slightly inward, and a roof constructed of poles covered with sod. A square hole was left in the roof as a chimney.<sup>47</sup> These cabins apparently

were seldom used by people who were dependent on caribou. They were situated near reliable fall fishing places.<sup>48</sup>

Hunting methods demonstrated the considerable manual dexterity and inventiveness of the Athapaskans. Early white observers were particularly observant of their sophisticated methods of taking beaver:

by setting nets under the ice made of line cut from the skin of the caribou [sic] in its green state about the thickness of Sturgeon twine: it extends quite across the river: one man attends while the others proceed to beat through its house, vaults etc., so as to drive him out whereby he may run [swim] and entangle himself in the net which is immediately drawn out otherwise he would soon cut his way with his teeth. Another method is by cutting a hole in the ice of 4-1/2 feet long by 3-1/2 broad; when this [is] done they proceed to drive stakes of dry wood around the hole in an oval form excepting a place for the door which slides up and down it being finely smoothed so that the Beaver cannot get-hold of it with his teeth; it is drawn up for some days to let him go out and a large weight is put above the door which fixes it down as soon as he... [triggers it]. A piece of poplar branch which is put through at a little distance from the door which no sooner falls down than he is almost dead by the shock and is shortly drowned as the ice is too thick above him whereby he might force his way through.<sup>49</sup>

Large mammal hunting techniques were similarly ingenious. The months of greatest success

for the chase are those of April, August and the beginning of September, the former on account of the quantity of snow upon the ground which enables the Natives to fatigue them by pursuit; the latter being the month in which the horsefly is most prevalent, droves of reindeer are forced to take shelter in the lakes in order to avoid that annoying insect.<sup>50</sup>

In other seasons in the wooded parts of the country, game was chased into enclosures with openings<sup>51</sup> in which snares were placed.<sup>52</sup>

In summer and winter, they pursue them with dogs into snares; these are ropes about three fathoms long made of large babiche well twisted with a spring knot at each end. These they tie upon a small tree on the tracks of the animals which, when taken, carry off the sling until the little tree to which it is fastened happens to catch against or between two large trees. The animal finding itself stopped, makes such efforts as to put an end to its life. The flesh is then very bad being overheated and full of blood.

Fall hunting also required care in taking the animals without tainting the meat. In the rutting season, which always happens in autumn, the natives rub the shoulder blade of an elk against a tree, at the same time imitating the cry of an elk; this brings the animal quite close, when they are easily killed with bows and arrows; The chase [sic] of the caribou in rutting season is quite different. When a man kills a female, he raises the skin off the head from the thickest part of the neck to the extremity of the nose, this is stuffed with straw or rather with hay and put to dry. When perfectly dry they fix the horns, which had [sic] been severed from the head, in their proper place and then go hunting. They run their arm in this skin which is so well arranged that it perfectly imitates the animal itself. When they see a drove of caribous in the distance they wave this skin and imitate the cries and tricks of the animal and bring males close to them.<sup>53</sup>

Tools were simple though expertly used. "The men... [were] possessed of great patience" and perseverance. Principal "tools...[were] the axe, the file, and the crooked knife. With these they...[made items so neatly fabricated] as might make one believe that they had been

made by the hands of a professed mechanic."<sup>54</sup> Tools and utensils were "varnish[ed] with a substance composed of castoreum and grease which...[gave] them a deep, glossy colour."<sup>55</sup> An early observer asserted that "the whole bent of their genius seemed to be centered in that art...of mechanical powers and causes."<sup>56</sup> After contact "their anvil...[was] a stone and the hammer of the same substance; with these alone they...reduce[d] both old axes and chisels into thin plates of iron which they convert[ed] into various uses."<sup>57</sup> Other weapons included axes, daggers, spears, bows and arrows.

Their axes were of stone shaped in the form of a pickaxe, the middle of which was scalloped in order to fit to the end of a stick, which when well fastened answered the purpose of a handle; thus arranged they could hew or rather hack down the largest tree. A pole of about nine feet long with a bone blade at one end, furnished with a row of barbs, composed their spears; these bones are arranged and polished with beaver teeth, of which they also make use in making their bows and arrows. Their bows are made of dried willow at the end of which is fixed a small pointed bone furnished also with a barb on each side, as also at the extremity of their arrows, which inflict a mortal wound, being something similar to chewed ball. With these they are dextrous, being able to shoot an elk almost as far as with a gun.<sup>58</sup>

Stone tips were obtained in numerous locations, but a favourite was about a days travel west of Fort Liard on "the Bis-Kag-ha river or Sharp Edge River,...so called from the flint stones very common in that place, and which the

inhabitants the Na ha ne tribe, made use of as knives and axes."<sup>59</sup>

Tools were adapted in a manner unique to the forest or tundra in which they were to be used. Chipewyan snowshoes were straight down one side, long, with an upturned end;<sup>60</sup> "the design shows a greater dexterity than the Crees or Beaver Indians and the women also perform the part of matting them in a neat manner."<sup>61</sup> Sleds were "about eight feet long, one in breadth, made of birch or pine boards of half an inch in thickness made with the axe and croaked [sic] knife." Very sturdy in construction, "they...[could] bring good loads as it...[slid] pretty well over the snow."<sup>62</sup> Northern Athapaskans had an unique manner of using the bow. "All the Natives of North America...hold the Bow in a vertical, or upright position,...but the 'Dinnae', or Chipewyans,...[hold] the Bow in a contrary, or horizontal position...."<sup>63</sup>

The material culture of the northeastern Athapaskans had developed in sensitive response to their environment. Commentaries that they were poverty stricken centered upon their lack of material possessions. Little or no consideration was given to the great range of travel necessary to obtain food supplies and that consequent material possessions were confined to those indispensable items which were light, easily packed thus transportable.

In their band society the eastern Athapaskans possessed a loose social organization. Lines of authority were not rigidly defined outside the family of the fundamental unit.<sup>64</sup> Hunting and trapping relationships were generally based on family affinity.<sup>65</sup>

Athapaskans were concerned that the spirits of the hunted animals were not offended. The bones of the caribou were never allowed to lay where dogs could devour them.<sup>66</sup> The remains of other animals, in particular the wolf and the bear, were treated with a special kind of reverence. In precontact times wolves were not hunted. Although bears were hunted they were accorded great respect not only because of their ferocity but because their spirit was considered to have close affinity with the Dene.<sup>67</sup> After the kill certain parts of the animal were eaten first, some because of their gourmet appeal, and others to satisfy religious spirits. Athapaskans believed that the "man and animal world are linked together in some mysterious way, and that animals possess special powers which they may grant to man if he seeks them in the proper manner."<sup>68</sup> The supernatural relationship of man and animal was usually sought in boyhood when the animal realm sent power or medicine in the form of dreams<sup>69</sup> and was maintained through observance of certain eating taboos which could not be revealed.<sup>70</sup> "Every man stood in special relationship to



some animal."<sup>71</sup> Emile Petitot found the medicine-animal relationship among the Mackenzie lowland tribes had three characteristics:

first a relic animal which has been revealed in a dream, is carried on the person; secondly the man performs some secret practice that is meant to please the medicine animal which has shown in a dream that it wishes to possess the individual; thirdly, there is a taboo against injuring, killing, and particularly eating, the medicine animal.<sup>72</sup>

Animals gave medicine to people who were fish-eaters while those who lived by the chase received hunting medicine.<sup>73</sup> "To reveal the details of the 'hunting medicine', or to use it often, destroyed the force."<sup>74</sup>

Though formal lines of authority were not rigidly defined among the Athapaskans, major discussions relating to hunting, trade, and war were resolved in lengthy council sessions usually dominated by the male elders. "They have no regular government, as every man is lord in his own family, they are influenced more or less, by certain principles which conduce to their general benefit."<sup>75</sup> These general principles involved a loosely constructed process of governing which did include all members of the tribe. When crises or "affairs of consequence" presented themselves, "the Old Men of the whole camp [would] assemble, and deliberate on the subjects which...[had] caused their meeting."<sup>76</sup> When consensus was imminent after hours and

sometimes days of deliberation, a ceremonial pipe was brought out and passed around. A general discussion to which the young men, women and children were party then took place. The decision was made in a fashion which "resembles that of the Patriarchs of old, each family making a distinct community, and their Elders have only the right of advising but not dictating."<sup>77</sup> In these final discussions

the Sage Councils of these old Patriarchs would act as a Counterpoise to the impetuosity of youth. Some of them are great Orators...particularly [when] they apply their speeches more to the passions than to the understanding....they make a fixed point of never interrupting one another while speaking.<sup>78</sup>

Respect for rules of conduct outlined by the male elders was the norm. "In general [the] young respect the aged."<sup>79</sup>

Deference came to those who had acquired the respect of others. "The leader was not elected but assumed leadership by virtue of general ability and knowledge plus strength of character and supernatural power."<sup>80</sup> The two categories of leaders were known as the "bekabanthdeli," and the "inkonze."<sup>81</sup> In secular matters leadership was provided by the "bekabanthdeli," the bossman or best hunter.<sup>82</sup> It has been suggested that refractory men were kept in order by the chief claiming the wife of a miscreant who usually came to the conclusion that submission was the best

policy.<sup>83</sup>

The elders of the Athapaskan tribes who filled the primary role in their people's religious life, and in the spiritual education of the young were referred to as "ink-onze".<sup>84</sup> A respected Chipewyan chief who was also their medicine man, explained to Roderic McKenzie, who lived seventeen years among them at Fort Chipewyan, the commonly held Athapaskan view of the creation. For him first animals and then man emerged from the ocean: "from Dogs came Chipeweans [sic]." This, he asserted, was "the reason we never eat the flesh of that animal."<sup>85</sup> The creator was "a great bird" who came from the sky "all on fire, eyes like lightning, its wings sounded like thunder, -- it touched the ocean and the earth [as it] emerged from the deep, it touched the earth and [thus] appeared animals."<sup>86</sup> The great bird then made an arrow, which was not to be used. The Chipewyans disobeyed and the great bird was lost as the eternal friend. The old man explained the belief that prior to their migration to their northern homeland the Athapaskans had troubled times. "In ancient times their ancestors lived until their feet were worn out with walking and their throats with eating."<sup>87</sup>

They speak of the Deluge, by which they saved themselves by ascending to the summits of the

highest Mountains and add that they originally came from another continent which was inhabited by wicked people-that they traversed the great Lake the same as the Rein Deer, where it was narrow and shallow, full of [rocks] and Islands--.<sup>88</sup>

They underwent great hardships, experienced "no summer, and the snow which was perpetual, overtopped the tallest trees," and "when they first came to the Copper Mine Country they found the Copper on rocks above the surface -- but now through length of time, it has sunk a man's length into the ground."<sup>89</sup>

"Inkonze" dispensed spiritual solace, and were the guardians of both religious life and physical well being. "Ornamented with loon necks, stripes of mink and otter skins, and claws of the Eagle, and a variety of rare and elegant birds Feathers & c," the medicine men undertook "singing, sucking & c, and performing mystical gestures, mixing a little reprimand in song at the conclusion of each avowed offence against moral rectitude."<sup>90</sup> To guard against evil

each man has a small leather bag in which he deposits some things for which he has regard, and ever afterwards it is looked upon as sacred.... The women must not touch it; for were they to touch it, they think that it would immediately lose all its virtue.<sup>91</sup>

The Athapaskan people believed in an afterlife, and in the concept of good and evil.

After death...there is a state of rewards and

punishments....The ideas they annex to good are activity and dexterity at hunting, a charitable disposition in regard to worldly effects, and not destroying of any of their nation. Those that possess those qualifications are accounted righteous, and after death they believe them conveyed across a River in a Canoe made of stone into a fine country.<sup>92</sup>

If possessed by good the individual stayed on this island of happiness; if by evil the stone canoe sank with its occupant and eternal struggling took place. Exaggerated displays of emotion and self-mutilation by Athapaskans were a means to "recommend the deceased to the Otter and Loon, huard [osprey], to conduct him over the Great Lake that leads to the other world."<sup>93</sup> When a death occurred, close relatives, particularly

the female sex related to the deceased will bewail and howl [for] him for more than a year every morning at dawn, and again as the sun goes down. The Relations cut, bite and scarify the flesh of the body in a shocking manner, and destroy all the occasional, [sic] property [in a] ...parade of sorrow.<sup>94</sup>

All personal property accompanied the deceased to the grave. The dead were placed on scaffolding, or were buried in shallow graves.

Laws were not formally set down though patterns of conduct indicated a means of resolving conflict and ability to maintain a form of stability. Though seldom known to steal from fellow tribesman, they would readily steal anything from the Europeans and would pillage from other

tribes.<sup>95</sup> Moral stricture against the spillage of the blood of a tribesman checked murder and aided in resolving differences. Yet the Athapaskans would cruelly kill those from outside their tribal circle.<sup>96</sup> When murder did occur vengeance was sometimes staved off by wrestling or by buying off the victim's relatives. Pride and saving-of-face dictated that some form of penalty be exacted. Wrestling served as an effective means of resolving potential conflict. The Athapaskan was observed as "always preferring to have his body beaten black and blue, rather than have his face marked."<sup>97</sup>

Individual tribes varied in the degree to which they were concerned with their physical appearance. The distinctive mark of all Athapaskan tribes was three black or blue bands tattooed on each cheek, more often occurring on the men than on the women or children. "They are tattooed when young as a lasting mark to distinguish and recognize them among strangers, should they by accident go astray."<sup>98</sup> Some "pluck their beards" for the sake of appearance; others "cut their hair" not for appearance but "to hear better when they hunt."<sup>99</sup> The following description of a Beaver Indian by an early fur trader gives an impression of Athapaskan peoples.

The men are commonly of the middle size, have well proportioned limbs, regular features and are

fairer in complexion than any other Indian nation I have seen. They wear their hair long behind, and short before like the Canadians; those who desire to appear greater bucks than the rest; tie their hair, wear ornaments such as feathers, beads in their ears, and paint or tatoo their faces....Around their head they wear a piece of beaver, otter or martin skin decorated with a bunch of feathers before and behind. The rest of their dress consists of a beaver robe, a capot, a brayet, and leggings of dressed moose deer skin. Their robes and capots are ornamented with several bunches of leather strings garnished with porcupine quills of different colours, the ends of which are hung with beaver claws. About their neck they have a well polished piece of caribou [sic] horn, which is white and bent around the neck; on their arms and wrists they tie bracelets and arm bands made also of porcupine quills; around their waist they have also a porcupine quill belt curiously wrought and variegated with quills of different colours.<sup>100</sup>

A common item of clothing among northeastern Athapaskans was a traditional one-piece lower garment with footwear attached and was "characteristic of the Alaska-Yukon Athapaskan area."<sup>101</sup> Usually the summer shirt was made of caribou skin, sometimes tanned "beautifully white," secured to a waistband around the middle.<sup>102</sup> The Kutchin shirts were pointed in front.<sup>103</sup> Shirts worn by women were longer, and their skirts, reaching from waist almost to the knee, often were decorated.<sup>104</sup> In winter hooded caribou skin coats tanned with the hair inside were worn.<sup>105</sup> Wolverine fur may have been used as trim on the hood.<sup>106</sup> Winter moccasins were similar to summer ones, but "larger, to permit the insertion of the duffel, which was commonly the whole skin of

the rabbit turned inside out."<sup>107</sup> Mitts were made of tanned moose hide, without the hair and trimmed with beaver or other furs.<sup>108</sup>

The women are in general of a lower stature than the men, wear their hair and ornaments like them, and are reckoned handsome. Their dress in winter is a cotillon, woven like a mat, of thongs of hare skin and a robe of the same...; on their heads they have a cap shaped...of the same stuff. Their leggings are long and made like trousers except in the front where an apperture [sic] is left to attend the calls of nature. Their summer dress consists of a leather cotillon, leather robe, leggings, & c, as in winter.<sup>109</sup>

Beaver Indians were not unlike other Athapaskans in general appearance.<sup>110</sup> Their use of the beaver for clothing distinguished them from other Athapaskans and indicated their southerly and westerly range. When in relatively dire straits the Hares used the skin of that animal for clothing.<sup>111</sup> But the Chipewyans, Yellowknives, Dogribs and Loucheux dressed primarily in caribou skins.<sup>112</sup> The Slaveys, more distant from the barren-ground caribou, dressed in moose or woodland caribou skin.<sup>113</sup> Dressing skins and making and decorating clothing were the domains of the women.

The skin they scrape and dress into leather; they take the brains of the animal and rub it upon the skin to make it pliable and soft; afterwards they smoke it well and then soak it in warm water for a night in order to render it easy to work with a piece of iron made for that purpose. This laborious process is done usually by the women.<sup>114</sup>

Some of the Athapaskan women had developed decorative work



to a high level. Because of this skill the Dogrib,<sup>115</sup> Loucheux,<sup>116</sup> and to a lesser extent, the Slavey and Beaver<sup>117</sup> women were considered by early European observers to be very attractive. The designs they worked into the clothing were intricate and colourful.

The dyes made use of by the Indians to stain porcupine quills and feathers, which are the only things they stain, are the roots of a plant which the Canadians call Savoyan; its colour is of an orange cast. This root, boiled with cranberry, dyes a beautiful light red; the dyes for yellow are another small root which they gather in marshy plains.<sup>118</sup>

Life of Athapaskan women varied with the manner of subsistence and extent of band nomadism. Especially difficult was the life of a Chipewyan woman who did all of the campwork, packing and preparation of food and clothing. A moralizing fur trade observer related.

The women are very heavily loaded; the men with little else than their gun and their fishing tackle, even a girl of eight years will have her share to carry; while the Boys have some trifle, or only their Bows and Arrows....By the time a girl is twelve years of age, she is given as a Wife to a man of twice her age.<sup>119</sup>

This division of labour arose from a life of continuous migratory pursuit of the barren-ground caribou. Men ranged alongside the route while women proceeded directly to the next campsite.<sup>120</sup> Women of the more sedentary Kutchin, Dogrib, Beaver, and Slavey bands had an easier lot.<sup>121</sup> Other aspects of Athapaskan culture showed a clear tendency to

male supremacy.

The women...are very often upon lean and short allowance. Bear's flesh is scarce and consequently reckoned delicate. The women dare not touch this, otherwise as they are told they would die. Other kinds of meat such as the nose of a moose Deer & c. are forbidden.<sup>122</sup>

Women in all Athapaskan communities were considered a burden in difficult times; "in times of scarcity it is frequently their lot to be left without a single morsel."<sup>123</sup> They were the first to starve and the last to eat in times of plenty.<sup>124</sup> A number of taboos about menstruation and parturition made life extremely difficult for women. They were not allowed to break new trails or tread on paths in camp for fear of offending the animal spirits.<sup>125</sup> They lived apart in specially built huts during menstruation and parturition.<sup>126</sup>

Marriage for the northeastern Athapaskans was based on very practical grounds. "The Northern Indian considered in marriage only the material characteristics of the woman, her aptitude for work and potentiality for bearing children,<sup>127</sup> competence, and endurance." Wives were dragged away after being won<sup>128</sup> by the stronger males in wrestling contests.<sup>129</sup> Polygamy was readily accepted, and possession of many wives was considered a measure of a man's success as a hunter.<sup>130</sup> Polyandry was rare 'though' a few instances were noted among the Beaver,<sup>131</sup> Kutchin,<sup>132</sup> and Slave<sup>133</sup>

where brothers were known to share a wife.

Marvin Harris argues that the practice of infanticide was a favourite means of birth control among hunting peoples;<sup>134</sup> the custom found widespread practice among the northeastern Athapaskans<sup>135</sup> and mainly concerned female children. This was an effective means of population control and of ensuring the requisite number of males for warfare and hunting.<sup>136</sup> Accordingly, the Beaver Indians

often destroyed the female children when just born. The only reason they give is that it is a great deal of trouble to bring up girls, and that women are only an encumbrance, useless in time of war and exceedingly voracious in time of want.<sup>137</sup>

Among the Hare and Dogrib, children were not given nourishment for the first four days, a practice designed to make them hardy. No doubt the weak died in this interval<sup>138</sup> and thus ensuring a more hardy populace as well as helping to check overpopulation.

Northeastern Athapaskan social life was based in the family. They lived in small groups for much of the year which were composed of a man, one or more wives depending upon his hunting ability and perhaps his immediate relatives. Larger groups of families would congregate at key hunting places in the autumn or sometimes bands would gather at fishing spots in the spring. At these times different bands sometimes met to share resources, trade and

intermarry. Leadership was loose although usually responsibility fell on the best hunter or the male elder who possessed religious knowledge or "powers." Population was controlled mainly by infanticide of female children, and to a lesser extent, of the elderly. Warfare also worked to limit population. Labour of male and female was sharply divided and reflected the imperatives of a band society.

In summary, northeastern Athapaskan life was rooted in their migratory hunting existence and heavily influenced by its family based social organization. They lived in small groups much of the year, performing their hunting and gathering tasks. At selected times of the year they would expand their primary groups in response to certain external needs such as sharing of resources, trade, and intermarriage. Leadership, religion, population control, and division of labor reflected the patterns of a band society and its complex of activities.

The seasonal cycles of activities of the prehistoric Athapaskans of the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands was dictated by the vagaries of the hunt. Activities were closely regulated by the migratory patterns of game and fish. Variations in these patterns occurred because of weather irregularities and other natural conditions such as animal migrations, and cycles of scarcity and abundance. Subsistence on caribou, bison, moose, elk, migratory fish,

birds, and other game in some years was unpredictable due to these seasonal, annual, or geographic changes.

Spring was the season of considerable mobility among Athapaskans. As days grew longer the family or groups of families packed their gear on toboggans and left the sites near to the winter hunt or the late winter caribou migration. After the beginning of the fur trade this phase involved the widespread practice of the killing and skinning of muskrats. In prehistoric times only a few were taken. The meat was boiled or roasted and eaten and the sinew from the tail was used for making clothing. Bark was collected from the birch tree in the Peace, Athabasca, Slave, and Liard Rivers. Used in canoes, baskets, house construction or fish drying sheds, it was also produced for trading with people living along the edge of the barrens, beyond available birch trees. Spruce and cottonwood bark was collected by the Slave Indians.

Spring fishing camps were next attended where assembly of temporary shelters, fish traps and ongoing activities such as preparation of caribou hides for clothing took place. Whitefish were available in abundance at this time of year. Fish were filleted leaving the heads and tails attached, hung on drying racks, then either bundled for moving, stored in birch bark containers or placed in raised caches for the lean months. It was also in this season

that men and women particularly in regions along the Mackenzie, and probably the Peace and Liard built canoes from spruce, cottonwood or birch bark. At this time the canoes were used along leads in the ice and open lake shore for hunting the migratory water fowl on their return flights. Bears were taken at this time soon after hibernation when the meat was particularly palatable.

The summer seasonal round of activity began about mid-June when camps were moved to the vicinity of larger lakes or rivers. Several households were likely to meet at commonly frequented junctures to exchange gossip, trade goods, and feasting. Summer fishing camps were either established at these congregation points or at favourite rivers, lakes or streams. These were the sites of the more permanent eastern Athapaskan habitations, particularly those of the Kutchin, Slavey, Dogrib, and some Beaver people. Chipewyan, Yellowknife and some Beaver people tended to prefer more mobile skin dwellings for flexibility of movement after large mammal populations. Fish storage caches were refilled or built, willow bark or rawhide gill nets were made, and fish traps were manufactured and set in preferred locations. Sinew nets were assembled and used to obtain water fowl during their moult and employed in late summer rabbit drives. Men not employed in these tasks hunted locally or made a variety of new weapons or implements.

Women aided in drying and storing fish and were employed throughout the summer in the preparation and decoration of clothing for both sexes, making babiche for snares, and utilitarian objects such as quivers, game bags, dog packs, tumplines and baby carriers. Near the end of summer and with the first frosts the sweetened and ripened berries were picked and eaten or dried for storage.

In autumn the eastern Athapaskans moved to hunting or fishing sites close to large mammal passageways. Women often tended fish traps or nets while the men hunted. Caribou were hunted while on their autumn migration at or near fording areas, at geographic constrictions, or along dry, drained upland ridges or eskers. Most often caribou and also moose were caught in special fences or surrounds. In late autumn as the caribou began their southward migration families moved to fences or good hunting locations and filled their meat and hide requirements. This pattern was repeated just before spring. In some areas west of the Mackenzie and southwest of Great Slave Lake, eastern Athapaskans exploited small herds of the less gregarious woodland caribou, or moose, elk and bison.

The winter season began with the end of the fall migratory hunt. Men continued to hunt large game: moose, caribou, and bears which were killed while in hibernation. Smaller mammals and ptarmigans were taken by all family

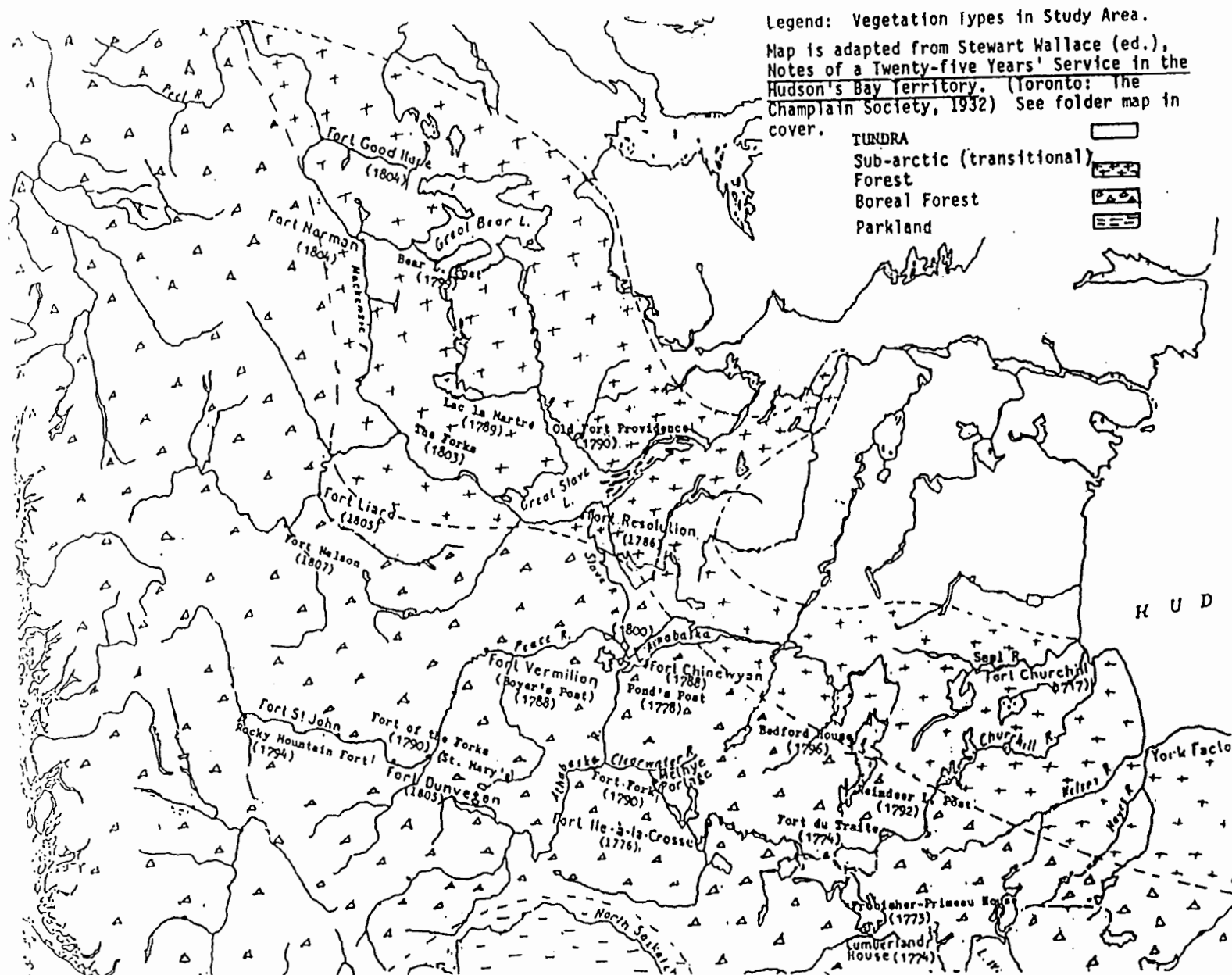
members in snares, deadfalls and nets. Fishing was undertaken through the ice using spears, lures, traps, and when the ice grew thick an ingenious jig was used which linked a net through two holes under the ice. Semi-permanent habitations including log-pole lodges, brush and skin shelters were employed near good fishing or hunting sites. Others driven by necessity to be more mobile used double walled tents.<sup>139</sup>

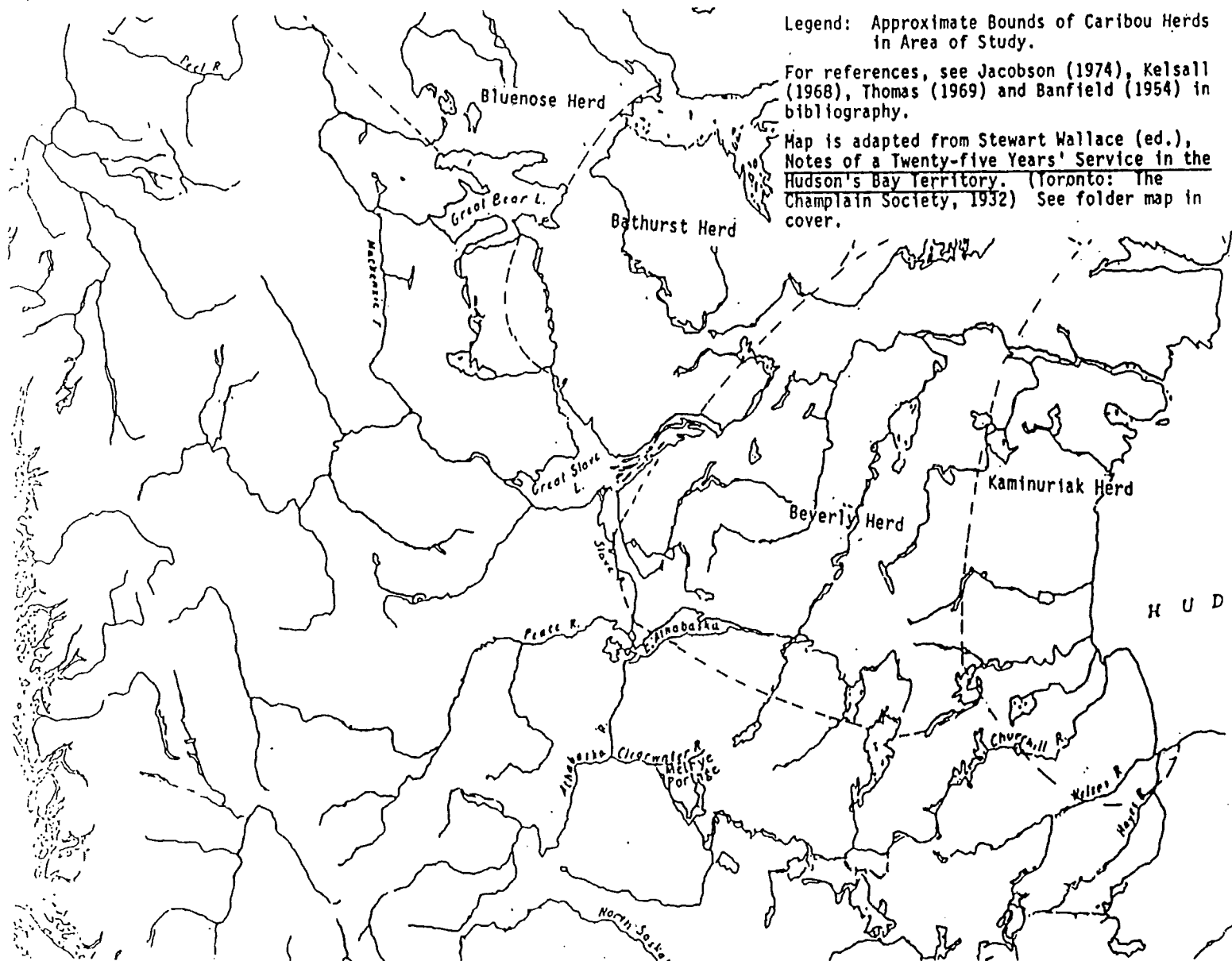
Athapaskans of the barrens and Mackenzie lowlands were exclusively hunters and gatherers, although there were differences in emphasis on the use made of various natural resources by people in different regions. Basically these natural resources involved hunting or fishing. The caribou was the chief resource for Chipewyans, Yellowknives, Dogribs and possibly the Hares. Moose, bison or elk were of primary importance to the Slave, Beaver and Loucheux or Kutchin, although the latter also took many woodland and barren-ground caribou. Fishing and hunting small game were always important to the Athapaskans and provided support especially in periods of scarcity when principal food supplies declined.

In the Mackenzie Basin and Arctic lowlands success in hunting and fishing depended on detailed specialized knowledge of the land and its resources. This range of ecological adaptations was achieved through familiarity with a



complex of variations in topography, season, animal habits and climate. These adaptations involved a high degree of community mobility so material culture was therefore simple and highly portable. The yearly cycle in quest of food emphasizes how dependent the location and concentration of population was upon its availability.





## II NOTES

<sup>1</sup>W.E.D. Halliday, "A Forest Classification for Canada," Forest Service Bulletin No. 89 (Ottawa: Canada Department of Mines and Resources, 1937), p. 13 gives a summary of the region's flora. See also Eleanor B. Leacock and Nancy O. Lurie, eds., North American Indians in Historical Perspective (New York: Random House, 1971), pp. 343-44.

<sup>2</sup>It has been variously estimated by linguists and archaeologists that the Athapaskans split fifteen hundred to two thousand years ago. A.M. Clark "Northern Athapaskan Prehistory," The Athapaskans: Strangers of the North (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, 1974), p. 18. Southern Athapaskans diverged from Northern Athapaskans less than one thousand years ago and as recent as six hundred years ago. Ibid., p. 18. See also D.W. Clark, "Summary of Northern Athapaskan Prehistory," Ibid., pp. 19-20. See also J. Van Stone, Athapaskan Adaptations, Hunters and Fishermen on the Subarctic Forests (Chicago: Aldene Publishing, 1974), pp. 5, 7, 40, 133.

Cornelius Osgood, one of the few ethnographers to study both Eastern and Western Athapaskans provided the two-fold cultural division: western people of the Pacific drainage culture, and eastern ones of the Arctic drainage culture. He went on to say: "There is generally among the groups of the Pacific drainage a dependence on salmon, which is entirely lacking among those of the Arctic drainage. With salmon fishing goes an elaborate complex of traits connected with the catching and use of this fish." The same attachment to large game could be said of the culture of the Arctic drainage. See The Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indians, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 7 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1936), p. 31.

<sup>3</sup>Caribou "the staff of life of the region" was vitally important in aboriginal times for food and just as important

as a source of clothing and shelter. See J. Alden Mason, Notes on the Indians of the Great Slave Lake Area, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 34 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1946), pp. 11-12, 15 and Kaj Birket-Smith, Contributions to Chipewyan Ethnology (Copenhagen: Glydendal, 1930), pp. 14, 17-19, 26-29. See also Cornelius Osgood, Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kutchin, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 14 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 33-34 and "Ethnography of the Great Bear Lake Indian," Bulletin No. 70 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1931), pp. 38, 40, 41, 44, 47. Also Beryl C. Gillespie, "An Ethnohistory of the Yellowknives," Contributions to Chipewyan Ethnology, ed., D.B. Carlisle, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 31 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), p. 193, J.G.E. Smith, "The Ecological Basis of Chipewyan Socio-territorial Organization," Proceedings, Northern Athapaskan Conference, ed., A.M. Clark, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 27 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971), p. 589 and D.W. Clark, "Northern Athapaskan Prehistory," pp. 20. Shiela J. Minni, "The Prehistoric Occupations of Black Lake, Northern Saskatchewan," Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 53 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1977) shows Black Lake was occupied discontinuously since 6000 B.C. by a series of cultures dependent on the barren-ground caribou herds. Extensive study of the barren-ground caribou has led to the naming of four populations after areas traditionally used for calving. Banfield identified sixteen mainland populations in 1954, many of which were found to be segments of four populations; the Bluenose, Bathurst, Beverley and Kaminuriak. See A.W.F. Banfield, Preliminary Investigation of the Barren-Ground Caribou, Canadian Wildlife Service Wildlife Management Bulletin, Series 1, No. 10A (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1954), and G.C. Thomas, Population Estimates of the Barren-Ground Caribou March to May, 1967, Canadian Wildlife Service Report Series No. 9 (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1969).

<sup>4</sup>See June Helm MacNeish, "Leadership among the Northeastern Athapaskans," Anthropologica, 2 (1956), 133. See also June Helm and Eleanor Leacock, "The Hunting Tribes of Subarctic Canada," in Leacock and Lurie, pp. 343-44.

<sup>5</sup>Van Stone, Athapaskan Adaptations, p. 123.

<sup>6</sup>Ibid.

<sup>7</sup>For a picture of the linkages between a simple ecosystem, cycles of abundance and scarcity of various subarctic animals, and cultural mobility, see Eugene P. Odum, Fundamentals of Ecology (Philadelphia: W.B. Saunders, 1971), p. 194. See also Helm and Leacock, "Hunting Tribes of Subarctic Canada," p. 347.

<sup>8</sup>"The linguistic and tribal classifications of the northern Athapaskans are due for a new look....If widespread continuity of dialects is distinctive of northern Athapaskans, their situation becomes in some respects more analogous to that of the Eskimos." Catherine McClellan, "Culture Contacts in the Early Historic Period in Northwestern North America," Arctic Anthropology, 12, No. 2 (1964), 6. Osgood also points out that "the Athapaskans do not consider themselves as composing neat political or cultural units." Northern Athapaskan Distribution, p. 3 and pp. 221-22. A recent article reiterates "boundaries among Northern Athapaskan groups are indistinct in many ways, and cultural differences are not nearly as marked as Osgood's map of group territories might suggest (1936b). Differences in status of women, then, cannot be attributed to underlying differences in traditional culture and must instead have arisen from most recent conditions associated with the historic experiences of the groups involved." Richard J. Perry, "The Fur Trade and the Status of Women," Ethnohistory, 26, No. 4 (Fall 1979), 365. Joel S. Savishinsky points out that prior to European contact Indian groups lacked the kind of unity that is implied by the tribal names such as "Hare". See Trail of the Hares: Life and Stress in an Arctic Community (New York: Gordon and Brach, 1974), pp. 46-47.

<sup>9</sup>W.R. Fowler Jr., "Linguistic Evidence for Athapaskan Prehistory," The Athapaskan Question, eds., J.W. Helmer, S. Van Dyke and F.J. Kense (Calgary: Univ. of Calgary Press, 1977), pp. 103-04 draws on Harry Hoiijer's "The Chronology of the Athapaskan Languages," International Journal of American Linguistics, 22 (1956), 219-32; his "Linguistic Sub-groupings by Glottochronology and the Comparative Method," Lingua, 22 (1962), 192-98 and "The Athapaskan Languages," Studies in the Athapaskan Languages, eds., Hoiijer et al., University of California Publications in Linguistics, No. 29 (Berkeley: Univ. of California, 1963), pp. 1-29 as well as I. Dyen and D.F. Aberle, Lexical Construction: The Case of the Proto-Athapaskan Kinship System (London: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1974), p. 12.

<sup>10</sup>Fowler, "Linguistic Evidence," p. 103.

<sup>11</sup>Osgood, "Northern Athapaskan Distributions," pp. 21-22 and Kutchin Ethnography, p. 13. See also Edwin S. Hall, "Speculations on the late Prehistory of the Kutchin Athapaskans," Ethnohistory, 16, No. 4 (1969), 318.

<sup>12</sup>Fowler, pp. 103-04.

<sup>13</sup>Osgood, Kutchin Ethnography, pp. 47-48, 60-61 and A.M. Clark, "Traditional Northern Athapaskan Lifeways," Strangers of the North, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup>K. Birket-Smith, p. 36. See R.R. Janes, "Indian and Eskimo Contact in Southern Keewatin: an Ethnohistorical Approach," Ethnohistory, 20 (Winter 1973), 39, 48-9, 50, 53.

<sup>15</sup>Richard Glover, ed., Samuel Hearne: Journey to the Northern Ocean...(Toronto: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 58, 85, 91, 121, 201.

<sup>16</sup>Diamond Jenness, "The Indians of Canada," Bulletin No. 65 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1932), p. 399.

<sup>17</sup>R.R. Janes, "The Athapaskans and the Fur Trade," Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, 5, No. 3-4 (1975), 179.

<sup>18</sup>On the way to the Coppermine Hearne and Matonabbee "followed a route directly west following a well beaten path through the 'stony Hills'." This was not as Hearne thought a route to the "mines" but a route followed by Indians around Great Bear Lake to and from hunting and trade. Glover, Hearne, p. 126, see also p. 85. For another example of how the caribou hunt led diverse peoples see Birket Smith, p. 30. He also suggests that collective hunts at caribou crossings were of greater importance than individual hunting. Glover, Hearne, p. 3.

<sup>19</sup>Thomas Simpson, Narrative of the Discoveries on the North Coast of America (London: R. Bentley, 1843), p. 71.

<sup>20</sup>Birket-Smith, p. 36.

<sup>21</sup>Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 33.

<sup>22</sup>Douglas Leonard "A Bibliography on Bilaterality in Band Society for the Northeastern Sub-arctic Region of Canada, North America," The Chipewyan, Section II (Ottawa: National Museum of Man, Xerox, n.d.), p. 2. For an excellent description of Eastern Athapaskan band groups and their links with seasonal caribou movements see A.M. Clark, pp. 20-29. See also Birket Smith, p. 29.

<sup>23</sup>Ernest Burch Jr. asserts that because of erratic caribou migration and movement of up to 800 kilometers in six weeks the hunters were unable to keep up, thus caribou were unreliable sources of food and were intercepted only at the most dependable crossing places. "The Caribou/Wild Reindeer as a Human Resource," American Antiquity No. 3, (1972), 339-68. A recent study illustrates how close the winter range and summer calving of Bathurst and Beverley herds were. See Roy Jacobson, Wildlife and Wildlife Habitat in the Great Slave and Great Bear Lake Regions 1974-77, Environmental Studies No. 10 (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1979), Figures 7-10, 11-14.

<sup>24</sup>Kaj Birket-Smith, p. 29 and J.P. Kelsall. The Migratory Barren-ground Caribou of Canada, monograph No. 3 (Ottawa: Canadian Wildlife Service, 1968), pp. 106-07.

<sup>25</sup>"When the Deer fail they readily take to angling, altho' it affords them no clothing." Richard Glover, ed., David Thompson's Narrative (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), p. 128.

<sup>26</sup>"An entirely protein diet is nutritionally inadequate. This the eskimo recognizes and the rule of a mouthful of fat for a mouthful of lean meat prevails...." A.H. Lawrie, "A Barren Ground Caribou Survey," Canadian Wildlife Service Report, C8'73 (1948), cited in Kelsall, p. 209. See also Birket-Smith, p. 32 and C.A. Heller and E.M. Scott, The Alaska Dietary Survey, 1956-61, Public Health Service Publication, No. 999-AH-Z (Anchorage, Alaska: Alaska Public Health Service, 1967), pp. 2, 182-83 and Otto Schaefer and Jean Steckle, Dietary Habits and Nutritional Base of Native Popu-



lations of the Northwest Territories (Yellowknife, N.W.T.: Science Advisory Board of the Northwest Territories, 1980), pp. 15-16.

27An Account of the Athabasca Indians by a Partner of the Northwest Company, 1795, attributed to John McDonnell but probably from writings of Alexander Mackenzie, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 55, p. 22.

28"The Peace River Indians are as fond of liquor as any tribe and part with their provision as freely, it consists of Buffalo fresh and cured such as beat meat and rendered fatt." Philip Turnor in J.B. Tyrrell, ed., Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 451.

29Birket-Smith, p. 31. See also Richard Glover, David Thompson, p. 113.

30David Merrill Smith, "Fort Resolution People: An Historical Study of Ecological Change," Diss., Univ. of Minnesota, 1975, p. 47. Hearne called the dish "beeatee", "certainly the most delicious...that can be prepared from a deer only." See Glover, Hearne, p. 92.

31John J. Honigman, Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 33 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1946), p. 38. See also J.V. Wright, The Prehistory of Lake Athabasca: An Initial Statement, Mercury Series, Archaeological Survey of Canada Paper No. 29 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), p. 137.

32Some suggest that due to decline of the caribou numbers, fish had become the most important staple protein source by the 20th century. See Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 39 and E.S. Rogers, "Subsistence Areas of the Cree-Ojibwa, the Eastern Subarctic: A Preliminary Study," Contributions to Anthropology 1963-64, Bulletin 204, Part 2 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1967), p. 87.

33Lake Athabasca, An Account of the Chipewyans...in 1793, attributed to John Macdonnell who appears to have com-

pleted it from the writings of Alexander Mackenzie. Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 38.

<sup>34</sup>George Keith, Letter to Roderic McKenzie; The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 7 Jan. 1807, ed., L.R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, II (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), p. 67.

<sup>35</sup>Macdonnell; Origin, Manners and Customs of the Athabasca Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH22, S58. See also Franz Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807 in Masson, I, p. 84.

<sup>36</sup>J. Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, pp. 38-39.

<sup>37</sup>Macdonnell, *ibid.*, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, 2352, p. 1.

<sup>38</sup>"Wattap" were the roots of the young white spruce trees. See Alexander Mackenzie, *Voyages from Montreal through the continent of North America* (1801; rpt. Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig, 1971), p. 313.

<sup>39</sup>Glover, David Thompson, p. 106.

<sup>40</sup>Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH23, S59, 2414, p. 77. Fish taken at the Forks of Mackenzie River were "the large and the salmon trout, inconnu, white fish, white and red carp, pickerel, pike, bluefish, tolliby, and Loche." F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, in Masson, I, p. 84.

<sup>41</sup>"It is remarkable...that the Canadians who...live altogether on venison, have a less healthy appearance than those whose sustenance is obtained from the waters. At the same time scurvy is wholly unknown among them." W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Cambridge: Hakluyt Society, 1970); p. 131.

42Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 42.

43Ibid.

44F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, Masson, I, p. 80. See also ibid., p. 43 and Sir. John Richardson, Arctic Searching Expedition..., (1852; rpt. London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1951), p. 135; Sir John Franklin, Narrative of a Second Expedition to the Shores of the Polar Sea... (1828; rpt. Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig, 1970), p. 19.

45G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 19 Nov. 1812, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH23, S59, 2414, p. 78. Also see Birket-Smith, p. 45.

46Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 47.

47Wentzel, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, Masson, I. p. 90. See also G. Keith, Bear Lake, 19 Nov. 1812, ibid., II, pp. 116 & 121.

48Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 48.

49Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 51-52.

50G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 22 Nov. 1812, Masson, II, p. 117-18.

51Ibid.

52Birket-Smith, p. 21; Glover, Hearne, pp. 49-50; Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 41.

53F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, Masson, I, pp. 81-82. See also Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 41, Simpson, p. 208, Emile Petitot, Exploration de la Region du Grand Lac

des Ours (Paris: Tequi, Libraire Editeur, 1893), p. 283 and John Richardson in Franklin, Second Expedition, p. 275.

<sup>54</sup>Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 15.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 16.

<sup>56</sup>Macdonnell, Athabasca Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, No. 4.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, Masson, I, p. 91.

<sup>59</sup>G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, 7 Jan. 1807, Masson, II, p. 66.

<sup>60</sup>Birket-Smith, p 36-38. See also eds., E.E. Rich and A.M. Johnson, James Isham's Observations and Notes, 1743-49 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949), pp. 311-12.

<sup>61</sup>Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 17. See also ed., W. Kaye Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 154, see also Birket Smith, pp. 36-37, and Sir John Franklin, Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea (1823; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1964), p. 134.

<sup>62</sup>Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 22. Also see Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales' Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Great Bear Lake Indians (1795; rpt. New York: De Capo Press, 1968), p. 324, Birket-Smith, p. 38 and Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 54.

<sup>63</sup>Glover, Thompson, p. 129.

<sup>64</sup>Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 70.

<sup>65</sup>Ibid.

<sup>66</sup>Athapaskans believed man was descended from a dog. Others that man originated from beaver, otter or muskrat. Petitot, Grand Lac des Ours, p. 405. Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," pp. 83 and 88. French voyageurs who later came among the Chipewyans were feared and despised for their liking of dogmeat, Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 27. Birds and animals of prey were not eaten because they scavenged on the dead, e.g., foxes, wolves, ravens. Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," pp. 79-80.

<sup>67</sup>Great Bear Lake people would not eat wolf. Ibid., p. 82. Dogribs would not eat the bear. See Richard King, Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Arctic Ocean ... (London: Richard Bentley, 1836), p. 168. Also see Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 83.

<sup>68</sup>Jenness, "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," Bulletin No. 84 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1937), pp. 67-68; see also Honigman, pp. 76-77, Osgood, Kutchin Ethnography, p. 158 and "Great Bear Lake Indians," pp. 82-85 as well as Petitot, Grand Lac des Ours, p. 353 and Warburton Pike, The Barren-Ground of Northern Canada (London: Macmillan, 1892), p. 104.

<sup>69</sup>Jenness, "Sekani Indians," p. 68, and Honigman, p. 77.

<sup>70</sup>Honigman, p. 77.

<sup>71</sup>Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," pp. 83-84.

<sup>72</sup>E. Petitot, Monographie des Dene - Dindjie (Paris: E. Leroux, 1876), p. 36 cited in Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 84.

<sup>73</sup>Jenness, "Sekani Indians," p. 68.

<sup>74</sup>Ibid.

75Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 154.

76Macdonnell, Athabasca Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, No.7, no. pag. Osgood was informed at Good Hope of 2 types of chiefs among the Hare. "The first was the 'Oldest Man' and it was unlucky not to obey him. The second was the 'Best Hunter' of moose and caribou. When the 'Oldest Man' gave inadequate advice, then the 'Best Hunter' was turned to, but the latter never equalled the first chief in power." "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 74. Wentzel describes the chiefs of the Beaver or Slave similarly. Wentzel, in Masson, I, p. 92.

77Macdonnell, Athabaska Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, No. 7, no. pag.

78Ibid.

79Ibid.

80Honigman, p. 65.

81Smith, p. 73.

82Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," pp. 40 & 74.

83Smith, p. 75 and Franklin, Second Expedition, p. 258.

84Honigman, p. 77, Petitot, Etude, 1868, p. 168 and Smith, pp. 73-74.

85Roderic McKenzie, An Account of the Athabasca Indians by a Partner of the North West Company, 1795, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH23, S59, 2352, p. 8.

86Ibid.

87Ibid., CH23, S59, 2355, No. 4, p. 13.

88Ibid.

89Ibid.

90G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 15 Jan. 1814, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH23, S59; 2431, No. 29, p. 114.

91Macdonnell, Athabasca Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, No. 2.

92Ibid.

93G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 28 Feb. 1810 in Masson, II, p. 89.

94G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 19 Nov. 1812, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH23, S59, 2415, p. 80. See also Glover, Hearne, p. 213.

95Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, No. 8.

96Glover, Hearne, pp. 98-108 and Vital Thomas, June Helm, "Tales from the Dogribs," The Beaver, Outfit - 297 (Autumn 1966), p. 19. Also see ed., W. Kaye, Lamb, Journals and Letter of Sir Alexander Mackenzie (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 153.

97Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, No. 8. Hearne remarked that "murder is seldom heard of among Chipewyans." Glover, Hearne, p. 69.

98R. Glover, ed., Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1767-91 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), p. 195. Also see Rich and Johnson, Isham's Observations, p. 312.

99R. McKenzie, Athabasca Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss,

CH23, S59, 2355, No. 4, p. 13.

100F. Wentzel, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, Masson, I, p. 86.

101Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 43. See G. Keith in Masson, II, pp. 109 and 121.

102Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 44 and Richardson, p. 248.

103Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 44.

104Ibid., Richardson, p. 249 and Keith in Masson, II, pp. 109 and 121.

105Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 44.

106Ibid.

107Ibid., p. 45.

108Ibid.

109F. Wentzel, in Masson, I, p. 87.

110See R. McKenzie, Athabasca Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH23, S59, 2352, p. 7.

111Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," pp. 43-45 and A. Mackenzie, Great Bear Lake Journal, 16 June 1806, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH180, S162, No. no.

112Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," pp. 43-44, Richardson, pp. 211 and 248 and Keith, in Masson, I, pp. 109 and 121.



113F. Wentzel, in Masson, I, p. 87.

114Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH22, S58, No. 5.

115Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 64 and Russell, 1898, p. 168. Frank Explorations in the Far North. Being a report of an expedition under the auspices of the University of Iowa during the years 1892, '93 and '94 ([Iowa City?]: The University, 1898), p. 168.

116Osgood, Kutchin Ethnography, pp. 40-41.

117F. Wentzel in Masson, I, p. 79.

118F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, in *ibid.*, p. 80.

119Glover, Thompson's Narrative, pp. 105-06.

120Osgood found among the Great Bear Lake Indians that while women bore the camp, men had seldom more than a rifle. "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 49.

121See Osgood, Kutchin Ethnography, p. 132, Richardson, p. 226 and Michael H. Mason, The Arctic Forests (London: Potter and Stoughton, 1924), p. 66.

122G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 19 Nov. 1812, in Masson, II, p. 106.

123Glover, Hearne, p. 57.

124Ibid., p. 35.

125Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 77 and Smith, pp. 38-39, 69-70.

<sup>126</sup>Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 77. See also Sir George Back, Narrative of the Arctic Land Expedition to the mouth of the Great Fish River and along the Shores of the Arctic Ocean...(1836; rpt. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1970), p. 214; Petitot, Grand Lac des Ours, p. 378 and Russell, p. 163.

<sup>127</sup>Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 78 and Petitot, Dene-Dinje, p. 32.

<sup>128</sup>See Matonabee's comments to Hearne in Glover, Hearne, pp. 35 and 57.

<sup>129</sup>Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 78; Keith in Masson, II, p. 107 and Richardson, p. 256.

<sup>130</sup>"Polygamy is permitted amongst them, and is intended as a means of satiating their passions, and to serve convenience more than to propagate the species." G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 19 Nov. 1812 in Masson, II, p. 107. See also Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 79, Kutchin Ethnography, p. 143 and Macdonnell, Athabasca Indians, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 24.

<sup>131</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, in Masson, I, p. 86.

<sup>132</sup>Osgood, Kutchin Ethnography, p. 143.

<sup>133</sup>F. Wentzel, in Masson, I, p. 86; G. Keith, *ibid.*, II, p. 69 and Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 79.

<sup>134</sup>Marvin Harris, Cannibals and Kings (New York: Vintage Books, 1977), pp. 18-23, 59-60.

<sup>135</sup>See Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 76; Keith in Masson, II, pp. 107, 119; Franklin, p. 64; Simpson, pp. 187, 202, 323; Lt. W.H. Hooper, "Ten Months in the Tents of the Tuski, Etc" (London: n.p., 1853), p. 319; Petitot; Grand Lac des Ours, p. 110; F. Wentzel in Masson, I, p. 86 and William L. Hardisty, "Notes on the Tinneh," p. 312.

<sup>136</sup>Harris, pp. 55, 58, 59-60. "Both infanticide and warfare, as well as the sexual hierarchy that went with these scourges, were caused by the need to disperse populations and depress their rates of growth." Ibid., p. 64.

<sup>137</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, in Masson, I, p. 86.

<sup>138</sup>B.R. Ross, "The Eastern Tinnah," in Hardesty, p. 305 as cited in Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 75.

<sup>139</sup>See A.M. Clark, "Northern Athapaskan Prehistory," in Strangers of the North, pp. 25-27, and J.F.V. Millar and G. J. Fedirchuk, Report on Investigations: Mackenzie River Archaeological Survey. Report of the Environmental-Social Committee, Northern Pipelines, Task Force on Northern Oil Development No. 74-77 (Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975), p. 33 for a review of the seasonal cycle of the eastern Athapaskans.



### CHAPTER III

#### ADAPTATIONS TO EARLIEST FUR TRADE

The first Athapaskans to come into extended contact with the Europeans were those people commonly referred to by their Cree neighbours as Chipewyans.<sup>1</sup> Their territory encompassed an area from the mouth of the Churchill and followed a great arc around the treeline to the valley of the Coppermine. Chipewyan influence extended as far west as a line drawn south from the headwaters of the Thelon past the east end of Great Slave Lake to the northwest end of Lake Athabasca.<sup>2</sup> The culturally related but geographically distinct Yellowknives occupied the area from the east end of Great Slave Lake west to the mouth of the Yellowknife River and north to the eastern tip of Great Bear Lake.<sup>3</sup> Chipewyan influence predominated over lands as far south as the northern tip of Reindeer Lake, east through Sandspit and the Seal River to the Coast. Access to the Coast for Chipewyans had been opened with the establishment of Fort Churchill in 1717. By 1721 the Eskimos had been driven north from the mouth of the Churchill by the Chipewyans with their newly acquired European firearms.<sup>4</sup> The Cree, who historically occupied the middle and upper

Churchill<sup>5</sup> were persuaded by Hudson's Bay Company men to allow the Chipewyans access to the mouth of the Churchill.<sup>6</sup>

By the 1720's the Chipewyans were making regular trading expeditions to Churchill,<sup>7</sup> overcoming with extraordinary effort the distance and the resistance of the Cree to their admission to the post. By the mid 1720's several Chipewyans had taken wives from among the Cree in order to cement relationships.<sup>8</sup> There was grudging acceptance by the Cree of the Chipewyan presence at the mouth of the Churchill yet war raged on against the Athapaskans inland.<sup>9</sup> By 1760 the Athapaskans, very likely the Beaver tribe<sup>10</sup>, had been driven from the height of land between the Churchill and the Athabasca Rivers. They were pressed over into the Athabasca drainage, in turn pushing back the Slavey, and possibly the Sekani and Dogrib peoples. Sometime in the early 1760's, due in part to counterattack by the Beaver Indians a shaky truce was made between Cree and Athapaskans at Peace Point on the Peace River.<sup>11</sup>

The Chipewyan people at that time were oriented toward the patterns of the barren-ground caribou herds. The only exceptions were a few bands of Chipewyans who lived close to the Bayside post, ranging along the edge of the barren lands trapping areas northwest of the mouth of the Churchill River. Inland from the Coast more traditional patterns were followed. "Specific links between Chipewyan

territorial and band groupings and the migratory and nomadic habits of the caribou" can be made.<sup>12</sup> The Chipewyan Indians who later became known as Caribou-eaters had occupied the region between Hudson's Bay, west to the headwaters of Seal River, and north to the valleys of the Dubawnt, Kazan and the Thlew-a-dezza or Thelon Rivers. Archaeological surveys at Little, Shethanei, Egenwolf and Nueltin Lakes indicate Chipewyan or a related cultural occupation reaching back to 1000 A.D.<sup>13</sup> At the time of the first visit by a European, Samuel Hearne, as many as six hundred Indians were living seasonally on or near the Dubawnt Lakes, and another two hundred on the Kazan River.<sup>14</sup> These people lived in the center of the range of the Kamiñuriak Herd, and were close to the calving grounds of the Beverly Herd at Beverly Lake. Hearne also encountered a small band of Indians further west on the eastern edge of Great Slave Lake<sup>15</sup> and another southeast of the lake. They probably hunted the Beverly Herd as it passed by a short distance to the east on its yearly migration.<sup>16</sup>

At the time of Hearne, several bands were encountered near or among the large herds of caribou at the east end of Lake Athabaska.<sup>17</sup> These Chipewyans, who eventually were labelled by the North West Company men as "Les Montagnais" because they spent their winters in the hills north and east of Lake Athabasca, hunted caribou seasonally at pass-

ageways near the north end of Wollaston and Reindeer Lakes.<sup>18</sup> They were excellent fishermen, particularly adept at taking the whitefish from Lake Athabasca and a variety of fish from the other waters in the area.<sup>19</sup> This trait was important in the early years of the fur trade as these Chipewyans supplied fish in winter to the Europeans.

In the taiga tundra lands between Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes lived the Tatsanottine or Yellowknife bands. Though similar in dialect, appearance and customs, they were distinguishable from other Chipewyans mainly by their separate territory. Their center of population was on the Yellowknife River, which was an excellent fishing place, close to the caribou hunting that seasonally took place near Point Lake. Other Yellowknife people congregated seasonally to hunt the caribou that moved past the east side of the Lockhart River. Caribou hunting in the passageway near Point Lake and Contwoyto Lake was shared with the Dogribs.<sup>20</sup> The Yellowknives, much more adept at living and travelling on the barrens than the Dogribs or the Bear Lake Indians to the north, ranged north across the barrens to the headwaters of the Bear Lake River - Coppermine divide. Some of them hunted the Bluenose Herd which ranged into this region for calving<sup>21</sup>.

Seasonal congregations of Chipewyan people at caribou crossing places were an important means of social contact



and of facilitating trade with other peoples. For those immediately to the west of Hudson Bay, the upper Seal River, Nejanilini, Nueltin and Dubawnt lakes areas were favourite places.<sup>22</sup> An excellent fishing place and caribou hunting ground made Dubawnt Lake especially attractive for Chipewyans.<sup>23</sup> Occasionally they "met with a party of Esquimaux at the confluence of the noble Thelew or Thelon River with Dubawnt."<sup>24</sup> At other times they met "with other Esquimaux at Yathkyed or White Snow Lake."<sup>25</sup> Dogs and sometimes soapstone were bartered in exchange for moccasins and snowshoes.<sup>26</sup> Considerable contact with the Eskimo occurred in prehistoric times in this region. "More than half of the culture elements of the Chipewyan (about 54%) are common to the Caribou Eskimo."<sup>27</sup> At a small unidentified lake near the northeast end of Lake Athabasca a permanent pound and canoe building place was located. As many as two hundred families congregated there.<sup>28</sup> "Depouillez" or back fat was traded, likely from the Peace and Athabasca Rivers, possibly moose hide and snowshoes as well.<sup>29</sup> Trade was conducted between Yellowknives, Chipewyans, Bear Lake Indians and occasionally the Eskimos on the headwaters of the Coppermine. Copper was the principal item of barter in exchange for flint from the Liard River area.<sup>30</sup> Another center for hunting and trade was on the Burnside River, east of the Coppermine.<sup>31</sup> A major congregation point for

the fall caribou hunt was between Point and Contwoyto Lakes. Copper, moose hides and tools of various kinds were potential items of trade.<sup>32</sup>

Chipewyan people were able to maintain familiarity with expansive areas, and contact with diverse and wide ranging band groups. This "can be explained in terms of the winter and summer ranges of the major herds of barren-ground caribou."<sup>33</sup> This contact resulted in far-reaching exogamous relationships which bound the disparate groups with blood ties. By 1750 the majority of Chipewyan people were still living mainly along the edge of the barrens following the caribou. They hunted the migrating animals as they moved through the transitional zone about mid-June when winter range in the boreal forest was abandoned for the tundra where lichens flourished and spring calving occurred away from the flies of the forest.<sup>34</sup> Again in late August the caribou were intercepted as they moved back to the forest shelter. Thus centers of population were located within easy access of major caribou passageways.<sup>35</sup>

Techniques for hunting and preservation of caribou meat were critical to Chipewyan survival. First mention of a process for making a specially prepared dry meat, a vital element in Nineteenth Century wilderness travel in northwest Canada, came from Chipewyan experience. Prepared by cutting into long thin strips, the pemmican as it came to

be known was dried by the sun over a "cold" fire and pounded in mortars to a powder. Rendered fat was then poured over the powdered dry meat in a paunch and berries were often added for taste. In this form the meat would last a year or more. Pemmican was made in the northern regions during periods of low humidity. Rendered fat or depouille, was a rare commodity in caribou country thus in high demand.<sup>36</sup>

Chipewyans made the principal part of their clothing from the caribou. The hides were taken in the early fall when nature was restoring the winter coat and there were no warble fly holes which riddle the skins in spring and early summer.<sup>37</sup>

The Chipewyans were excellent fishermen and used their skills to augment their protein rations. "These people though subject to great vicissitudes yet suffer less from extreme hunger"<sup>38</sup> than their Cree neighbours. Unlike the Cree who looked down upon fish eaters as inferior, the Chipewyans "prided themselves on being excellent anglers, and have made it their study; the great lakes of their country yield the finest fish, and when the Deer fail they readily take to angling, altho' it affords them no clothing."<sup>39</sup> Survival was dependent on access to caribou for primary supplies of food and clothing, and to fish as a supplementary food source.

Ease of travel was also vital to Chipewyan survival. Arctic travel, as some Europeans were slow to recognize, could only be undertaken with relative ease in certain seasons of the year.<sup>40</sup> The most efficient way to move heavy packs over long distances by land was by sledge on the snow. But the severe cold, long periods of darkness and departure of the caribou into the forests reduced considerably the prime time for travel. The optimum period is from late March when the days begin to lengthen and warm, until early May, after which the warm sun turns what had been firmly packed snow into a sea of slush. It was in this spring period that the Chipewyans would undertake their lengthy treks with loaded sledges.<sup>41</sup>

After the establishment of Fort Churchill some of the Chipewyans began making regular trading expeditions down to the post. Those who came furthest began their journeys between Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca, passed along the height of land between the Black and Taltson Rivers, treked by the north end of Reindeer Lake, and then paralleled the Seal River system down to the Coast.<sup>42</sup> This route roughly paralleled the migratory path of two major herds of barren-ground caribou - the Beverly Herd which wintered to the east of Lake Athabasca, and the Kaminuriak Herd which once extended as far south as York Fort in winter and summered in the Dubawnt-Kazan-Baker Lake triangle.<sup>43</sup> This region

also corresponded with the homeland of the Chipewyan peoples who came to be known as Caribou-eaters and Les Montagnais. When en route to trade, these Indians travelled almost entirely by land, synchronizing their east-west trips with seasonal migrations of the caribou and favourable snow conditions. These expeditions would continue and gradually increase until the late 1770's when European trading posts were established in the Athabasca and Mackenzie drainages.

The geography of the land through which the trading band ranged made it possible for them to travel east to west, rather than pursue their traditional pattern of following the north-south migrations of the caribou. To the north of a rough line drawn from the headwaters of the Talton River to the height of land just north of the North Seal River, huge bodies of water blocked land travel. To the south of that line a passage east and west is apparent along the Churchill River. However, it was dominated by the Cree in the prehistoric and early contact periods,<sup>44</sup> as well as being blocked by many rapids, particularly on its lower reaches.<sup>45</sup> Even the Cree avoided it when possible for the Hayes-Nelson, or Burntwood route, which also lay in Cree-dominated territory.<sup>46</sup>

In between the great northern water bodies and the Churchill River is a height of land formed by a series of

glacial moraines and glacial rivers called eskers. These eskers angle to the northeast while forming an east to west height of land providing easy routes of travel, natural game trails, and viewpoints to reconnoitre the country. They are banded by clumps of birch, larch, black spruce and a few pines which are used for shelter, tool-making, and fuel.<sup>47</sup>

The usual route for Chipewyans to come down to the Coast was by land. Canoes were of little or no use. They were used in a few instances to cross a stream in freshet, or in cases where caribou were followed into a landlocked area. "These Natives has not the conveniency of canoes, coming chiefly by land and making floats to cross the Creeks and Rivers."<sup>48</sup> Chipewyans were not only uneasy in a canoe but lived in a land poorly adapted to providing materials for canoe building. When the Cree appeared by canoe with their women and children "you depend upon their having few goods;"<sup>49</sup> whereas on Chipewyan land expeditions the women packed the great proportion of the furs which freed the men to provide food.

Women played a vital role in the trading journeys of the Chipewyan. Camp was broken and sledges with loads "weighing more than 150 lbs. [were hauled] through [the] ...snows."<sup>50</sup> The men and older boys ranged along the route in search of food. Since the sledges were loaded with furs

for trade, along with tent and poles they brought provisions only "sufficient to serve them a day or two."<sup>51</sup> This contributed to the hardships of the journey when food was unavailable.

The life of women in Athapaskan society was much more arduous among the Chipewyans who traded with the Bay post. Women, "well shap'd when young," were "for the most part short and thick" at maturity, and were chosen by the trading "captains" for their size and strength.<sup>52</sup> The custom of trading or dealing in women became more pronounced among trading Chipewyans than among other Athapaskans. "To the strongest [went] the lovely prize."<sup>53</sup> Trading leaders took many wives and although they treated them with severity were jealous when their women were interfered with by others.

Dogs, which were venerated by most Athapaskans,<sup>54</sup> and not generally used as beasts of burden were used in the carrying trade by the 1760's. With the growing importance of the carrying trade, dogs were employed to pull loaded travois made of tent poles, or were fitted out with packs.<sup>55</sup> The traditional Indian dog, rather emaciated, physically resembling the coyote, was bred whenever possible with the Eskimo sled dogs.<sup>56</sup> It is presumed that with the growing exploitation of the dog by the trading bands increased breeding of Indian dogs with the wolf was experi-

mented with. This more utilitarian use of the dog would last until establishment of European posts in the Athabasca Mackenzie region. Only the Chipewyans adapted dogs as carrying animals in this period.<sup>57</sup>

For the Northern Indians who traded at Churchill many of the traditional means of livelihood were at least temporarily discarded. Flint, stone and antler were quickly abandoned for iron tools. Trade muskets replaced the bow. European clothing replaced skins. These changes were in fact the cosmetic reflections of vital practices which were to affect their ability to survive.<sup>58</sup> The caribou hunt traditionally undertaken as a primary activity in season was reduced to secondary importance because of the imperatives of the lengthy trek.<sup>59</sup> Prehistoric movements had been timed in rhythm with the caribou migration, usually on a north to south basis; yearly excursions east and west rendered the hunts less successful. If weather was favourable and the caribou accurately located, food supplies were assured and a rapid trip realized. But the caribou were not always predictable. The Beverly or Kaminuriak Herds were sometimes missed.<sup>60</sup> Hundreds of miles then had to be traversed with nothing but ptarmigan or hare for food.

The post traders also were a factor in the changes affecting the trading band. The rewards at the end of the long journey were especially important for the leaders.



Outfitted in European-style clothing and allowed access inside the fort, they were treated royally. "Trade at the Bayside posts soon developed the formal and public character of a great social occasion."<sup>61</sup> First encounters involved an exchange of presents which included a dram and a ceremonial pipe.

The political organization of the Chipewyans was changed in accordance with the demands of European trade. In 1770 Hearne realized that the Indians were bestowing rank very astutely on one of their numbers in order to obtain an impressive reaction among the Europeans, thus obtaining greater remuneration. Fidler noticed at Lake Athabasca in 1791-92 that the North West Company was doling out copious quantities of liquor to "chiefs" in order to lure in their "followers."<sup>62</sup> Thomas Stayner stopped treating many of the Chipewyans as chiefs at Fort Churchill when he found there were more "chiefs" than "followers."<sup>63</sup> The trading people became particularly adept at exploiting the European preference for rank. Upon returning to the wilderness it would appear that the Chipewyans reverted to indigenous practice. Leadership devolved to the elderly who were eloquent and had achieved widespread respect. In times of war or on the hunt individuals of competence arose to take leadership roles.<sup>64</sup> The strongest men, those who were good wrestlers, obtained the most sought-after women, those

being the strong packers, talented clothes-makers, and camp providers.<sup>65</sup> Good hunters and warriors were respected and gained a following.

But only among the trading Indians did there develop a relatively consistent and respected leadership.<sup>66</sup> Matonabee was the most famous trading leader. Other Chipewyans who surfaced as a result of the trade in the period were the English Chief, or "Ageenah,"<sup>67</sup> Captain Mist-a-poose,<sup>68</sup> Black Meat, and Captain Too-Toose, a trading leader who was also known as a war chief of some reknown. Akaitcho was a Yellowknife trading chief well known at the North West Company posts.

In many other ways the Hudson's Bay Company was bent to the ways of the Indian. Rules designed to protect the monopoly over trade and to inhibit relationships between Indian women and white traders were ineffective at best.<sup>69</sup> The ultimate compliment for Northern Indian peoples was to cement a partnership or bond by offering the favours of their wives, thus implying a blood tie. When the compliment was offered and rejected, it was interpreted as a gross insult.<sup>70</sup> Attempts to eliminate liquor from the trade also had little impact on the Chipewyans. They drank little though participated in the regale as an expression of friendship, a demonstration not only of a trade bond, but of a lasting alliance and commitment.<sup>71</sup>

In the period of the Northern middleman trade the Hudson's Bay Company was able to convince the Chipewyans to carry only a bare minimum of trade items. In the interior the "wants of these people are few, and easily supplied, a hatchet, an ice-chissel, a file, and a knife, are all that is required to enable them, with a little industry, to procure a comfortable livelihood."<sup>72</sup> Distances were great for the trading band and items of marginal utility had no place in treks of up to seven hundred miles. Interior Chipewyans obtained all of their clothes from the caribou. Their main desire was for iron-edged tools. Liquor had little attraction for them,<sup>73</sup> again because of the requirements of such lengthy treks. For the same reason decorative beads and trifles were not a major part of the trade:

always drest in Dee'r Skins, drink no manner of Spiritous Liquors, and barter their skin only for necessaries such as Ammunition, Iron and Cutlery wares, never purchasing much Cloth, Bead, or any other superfluous Articles.<sup>74</sup>

Environmental limitation was the critical factor in shaping Chipewyan trading practice which "seldom traded any finery for such uses, but what they traffic for is chiefly necessary's for life, such as powder [and] shot guns."<sup>75</sup>

The musket was not an essential tool for food hunting among the interior Indians. Of the many methods of obtaining their food supplies the caribou "surround" or pound was

most important. Firearms were seldom used to dispatch the caribou trapped within the enclosure.<sup>76</sup> Bow and arrow, spears, and snares were more silent and less likely to stampede the caribou into breaking the pound, or excite them and ruin the meat by engorgement with blood.<sup>77</sup>

Although iron was an important item of trade from the 1720's and was much sought after by interior people, it by itself did not give the trading "captain" a lever for gaining pre-eminence. The item which did was the musket. Traditional lack of deference accorded the Chipewyan trading leaders evolved into an attitude of grudging respect as power, in the form of the musket became available to trade captains.<sup>78</sup>

Muskets were used by both Cree and Chipewyan trading middlemen to extend their influence throughout the region of western Athapaskans. Cree middlemen had prevented the Chipewyans from coming in to York Fort to trade throughout most of 1680-1717.<sup>79</sup> The Chipewyans in turn had ended trading journeys by the Dogribs and Yellowknives to Prince of Wales' Fort by 1725. The few Yellowknife Indians who did manage to gain access to the Bay fort to trade were plundered by the Chipewyans "soon after they left."<sup>80</sup> Others were killed en masse by those with arms.

Control over the trade in firearms gave the tribes first contacted and particularly those who arose to domin-

ate it, unprecedented power in "general bullying of their defenceless Athapaskan neighbours."<sup>81</sup> In addition to his own guide Matonabbee, Hearne mentions those Indians who were obviously happy to trade and act in the arduous role of carriers to the rest. It has been suggested that "a strong motive prompting Indian leaders to make these trading journeys between the forts on the coast and their fellow natives up country was vanity."<sup>82</sup> Certainly vanity was important, particularly in the early years of the trade. But by the early 1760's, after an agreement was made by the Chipewyan to transport furs and arms to the Athabasca Cree, the trading band of Matonabbee assumed unprecedented influence among the Athapaskans.

Matonabbee was the most influential of the Chipewyan leaders because of his unique relationship with the post traders, and of his domination of the carrying trade. Seen by Hearne and observed by later writers as a "remarkable Indian"<sup>83</sup> who had the capacity for "benevolence and universal humanity to all the human race,"<sup>84</sup> Matonabbee was able to impress favourably Europeans and Indians alike because of the unparalleled power he commanded in the interior. Impressions of this powerful trader are mainly dependent on the not always balanced perception of Hearne. These compliments were in part a result of comparison to the personal

treatment accorded him by his previous guides and in part as a result of the high level of respect Matonabee was able to command from the Athapaskan Indians. He was referred to as "the greatest man in the country."<sup>85</sup> It is significant that this most "humane" Indian in Hearne's eyes was also responsible for beating one of his "wives," or female packers, to death after she questioned his ability to provide for more than seven women.<sup>86</sup> He also attempted to murder the husband of a woman he wanted as one of his packers.<sup>87</sup> This behaviour occurred in a community which traditionally had reprobated murder of one's own band.<sup>88</sup> He was able to silence demands of visiting Indians for the customary dram or tobacco regale in return for passage through their country.<sup>89</sup> In previous attempts to cross the barrens Hearne had been fortunate to escape with his life, in great part due to the relative lack of influence of his guide. Matonabee was able to "dictate the course of the expedition, even to dictate [to Hearne] its conduct in some matters which were repugnant" to the trader.<sup>90</sup>

The only people who were not intimidated by Matonabee were the Athabasca Cree. From their location on the south shore of Lake Athabasca and the Athabasca, Lesser Slave, Lac la Biche and Pembina River areas they travelled the lengthy journey to the coast either by the Churchill or by the Hayes River.<sup>91</sup> With arms from the Hudson's Bay Company

they had driven the Beaver Indians from the headwaters of the Athabasca, and had plundered and pressed the Slavey Indians from the Slave River to the south shore of Great Slave Lake onto the Mackenzie River.<sup>92</sup> Through the connivance of the Hudson's Bay Company and the initiative of Matonabee, an agreement was reached whereby the Chipewyan traders would carry the Cree party peltry overland to Churchill. In return the Cree would not wage war against the Chipewyans.<sup>93</sup> Crucial for the Cree in any such peace treaty or trade arrangement, and unique to the Chipewyan middlemen practice, was the continued access to arms. Because of fierce resistance Cree warring against the Beaver Indians ended at this time.<sup>94</sup> It may have also been at this time that the more passive Slavey and Sekani were separated from the closely affiliated Beaver. The Cree, however, would continue to plunder the Slaveys on the Mackenzie River and the Sekani Indians whom they would reach via their "lake Indian road" from Lesser Slave Lake to the Peace River.<sup>95</sup>

It was within this short period beginning with their treaty around 1763 and ending with Pond's arrival on the Athabasca in 1779 that the influence of the trading bands was greatest. Thus Hearne's observations while he was with Matonabee's trading band take on special significance regarding their routes and methods of travel, peoples

contacted, means of food support and changes in their traditional practices.

For the Indians who regularly habituated the Bay-side posts, access to European goods led to the delusion of a higher standard of living. The exigencies of travelling vast distances without concern for the cycles of caribou migrations led to frequent starvation.<sup>96</sup> Even when caribou were found, time was at a premium and seldom did this band stop to prepare adequate amounts of dry meat or pemmican. Trading Indians thus became dependent on upcountry Indians and the Bay post for food. Even the Indians who were employed as fort hunters found themselves adversely affected by specialization. "Those Indians that hunts at Seasons for the forts, can not do without the assistance of the English, any more than the English without them."<sup>97</sup> This fact was lost upon the Europeans who for several decades after arriving in the Mackenzie area attempted to foster a lifestyle for the Indians centered around particular posts, which led to severe hardships among the people. This is not to suggest that the demands of the trade led to clustering in large groups. Numbers congregating to hunt caribou in the barrens in aboriginal times were much larger than the groups of post hunters.

During the period of the increasing influence over the lives of Chipewyans by middlemen, harvest of merchantable



fur animals was encouraged. The traditional Chipewyan land along the edge of the tundra was limited in its ability to support fur-bearing animals.<sup>98</sup> As the trade goods took on more importance interior Chipewyans moved south and west into the full boreal forest where beaver, marten and lynx were common.<sup>99</sup> Somewhat later, after the smallpox epidemic of 1781-83 decimated the Athabasca Cree population, this movement for some took the form of a migration.<sup>100</sup> In the earlier period "what furs the Northern Natives brought was bears, cubs, wolves, wolverines, and about 150 martens with some cats and a small quantity of beaver."<sup>101</sup> By 1774 trade at Churchill "amounted to 15,846 beaver mainly the result of visits by large parties of 'Northern Indians' who came down to the post every two or three years."<sup>102</sup> In 1776 when three hundred Chipewyans arrived at Prince of Wales' Fort the reorientation of their trade was complete and had shifted to woodland animals.<sup>103</sup> An even greater return in beaver pelts was realized in 1777.

While Matonabbee was extending Chipewyan influence into the Athabasca beaver country, the wintering partners opened trade with the Indians of the Athabasca on the portage between the Churchill and the Saskatchewan Rivers.<sup>104</sup> In 1770, William Pink, a Hudson's Bay Company trader, met some Beaver Indians who were going down the Churchill to

trade with the "pedlars" at Pine Island Lake portage.<sup>105</sup> By 1775 Moses Norton was aware that "our trade is also intercepted by the inland pedlars, who is making their encroachment more and more at the back of this place."<sup>106</sup> In order to prevent the Athabasca Cree from trading with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1774 Louis Primeau "and 17 others... called the Atha-pus-cow Indians."<sup>109</sup> In 1776 the Assiniboine Indians, allies of the Cree were at war with the Beaver Indians, presumably to prevent direct trade with the pedlars, thus attempting to safeguard the role of the middlemen.<sup>110</sup> Robert Longmore was informed in 1776 that the greater part of the Athabasca Cree would be trading with the pedlars at Pine Island.<sup>111</sup>

Arrival of the pedlars on the portage between the Saskatchewan and the Churchill Rivers provoked a rapid decline in the trade of the middlemen to Fort Churchill just when it appeared to be reaching a zenith. By 1777 the trade had peaked at 12,682 made beaver<sup>112</sup> at Prince of Wales' Fort. In 1779 only thirty Indians accompanied Matonabbee,<sup>113</sup> and in 1780 there were fewer.<sup>114</sup> As the Chipewyans moved south to hunt fur bearers and to trade with the pedlars at Cumberland House which had been established in 1774, the returns in "venison [caribou meat] is the scarcest...[Hearne] ever knew at Churchill only 250 lb. traded this winter."<sup>115</sup> Overall trade at Prince of Wales' Fort was "much worse than

last year."<sup>116</sup> Matonabbee's gang brought in a sizeable return in 1779, but Hearne suggested that "the pedlars have already intercepted and traded many of our Northern Indians." He added that "I now fear that Churchill will very shortly be reduced."<sup>117</sup> Peter Pond had returned from wintering on the Athabasca River in 1779 and reported to William Walker at Cumberland House that he had traded "with the Northward Indians that Mr. Samuel Hearne was [with,] along with Mit'tee'na pew and his gang." Pond had traded "upwards of 8400 made Beaver. He had traded the Cloaths on his back the Indians are so distressed and eager for European Goods."<sup>118</sup> Arrival of Pond on the Athabasca hastened the decline of the carrying trade to Fort Churchill. By 1781 smallpox had finished the process.

Matonabbee and most of the principle [sic] Northern Indians are all dead, together with that valuable tribe of Southern Indians called the Athapascow Indians, for though they seldom of late have come to any of the company's forts themselves yet they procured the greatest part of the furs that the northern Indians used formerly to bring to this place and for more than 10 years past, at least 7/8 of the whole trade.<sup>119</sup>

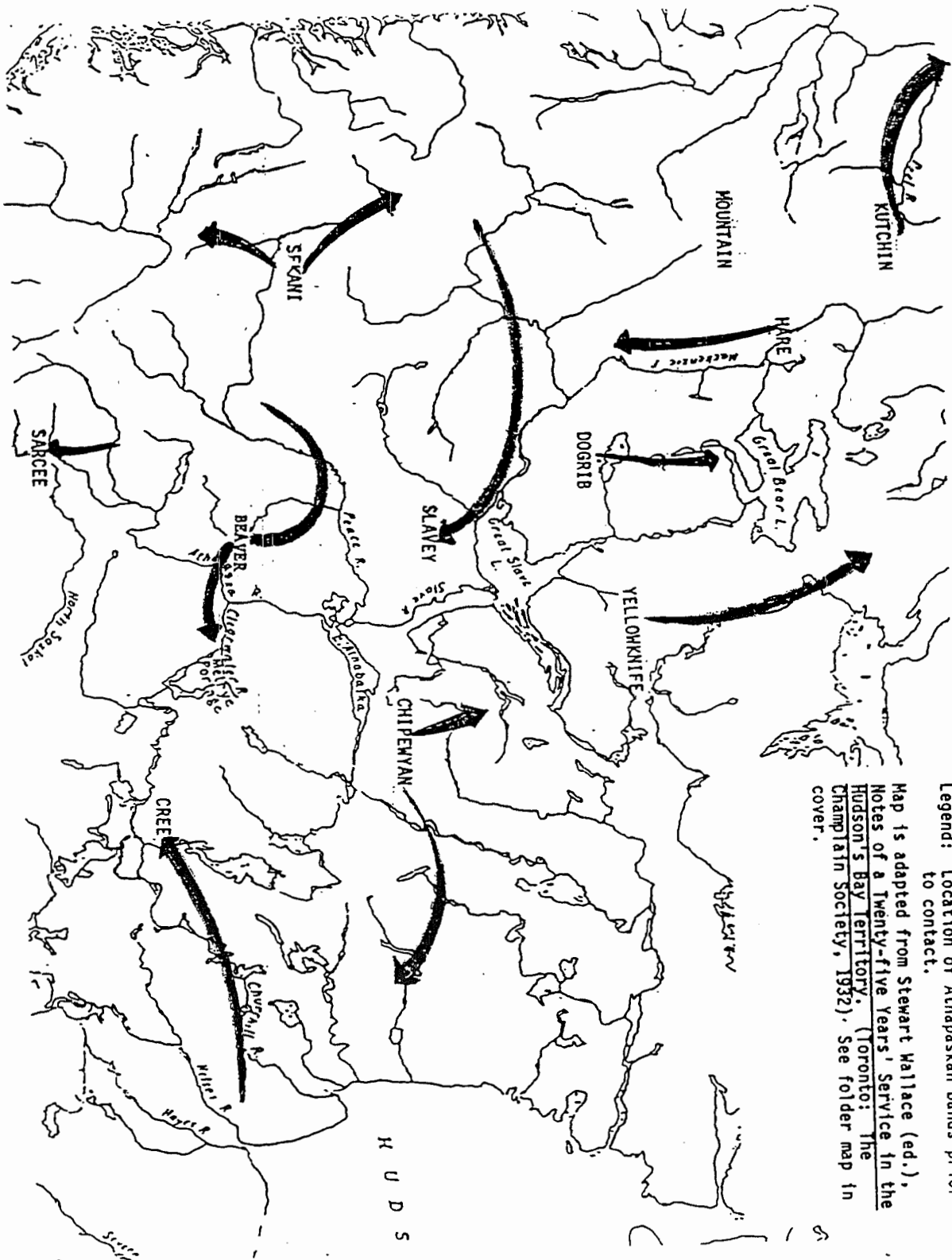
Traditionally Chipewyans had lived in a sensitive relationship with their environment; the central sustaining factor had been the barren-ground caribou. Seasonal movements of population were planned to coincide with the migratory patterns of the animals and the fish stocks which

were a secondary food source for the Chipewyans. Aboriginal life was not one of unremitting toil and those people who lived on the barrens and followed a subsistence pattern of existence were relatively well off when compared to the people who trapped or traded for a living.<sup>120</sup>

Chipewyans who traded to Churchill attempted to adapt the traditional caribou dependency to their lengthy traverse across the barrens. Sleds which were loaded with furs left little room for reserve food supplies. Lengthy east to west forays to the Coast reduced the likelihood of contacting the caribou. Metal-edged tools and European clothing replaced traditional ones. Traditional roles of women as charges were expanded and trading captains employed a number of "wives" as packers which led to weakened family and social relationships. Traditional veneration for dogs was ignored and they were used for packing. Trading captains who had been only figureheads while at the Bay post were attracted by the powers to be realized by monopolizing and dominating interior Indians with their trade markets.<sup>121</sup> Trading captains influenced changes in intertribal politics. This led to pressure exerted by interior Indians to restore the imbalance of power by seeking muskets.

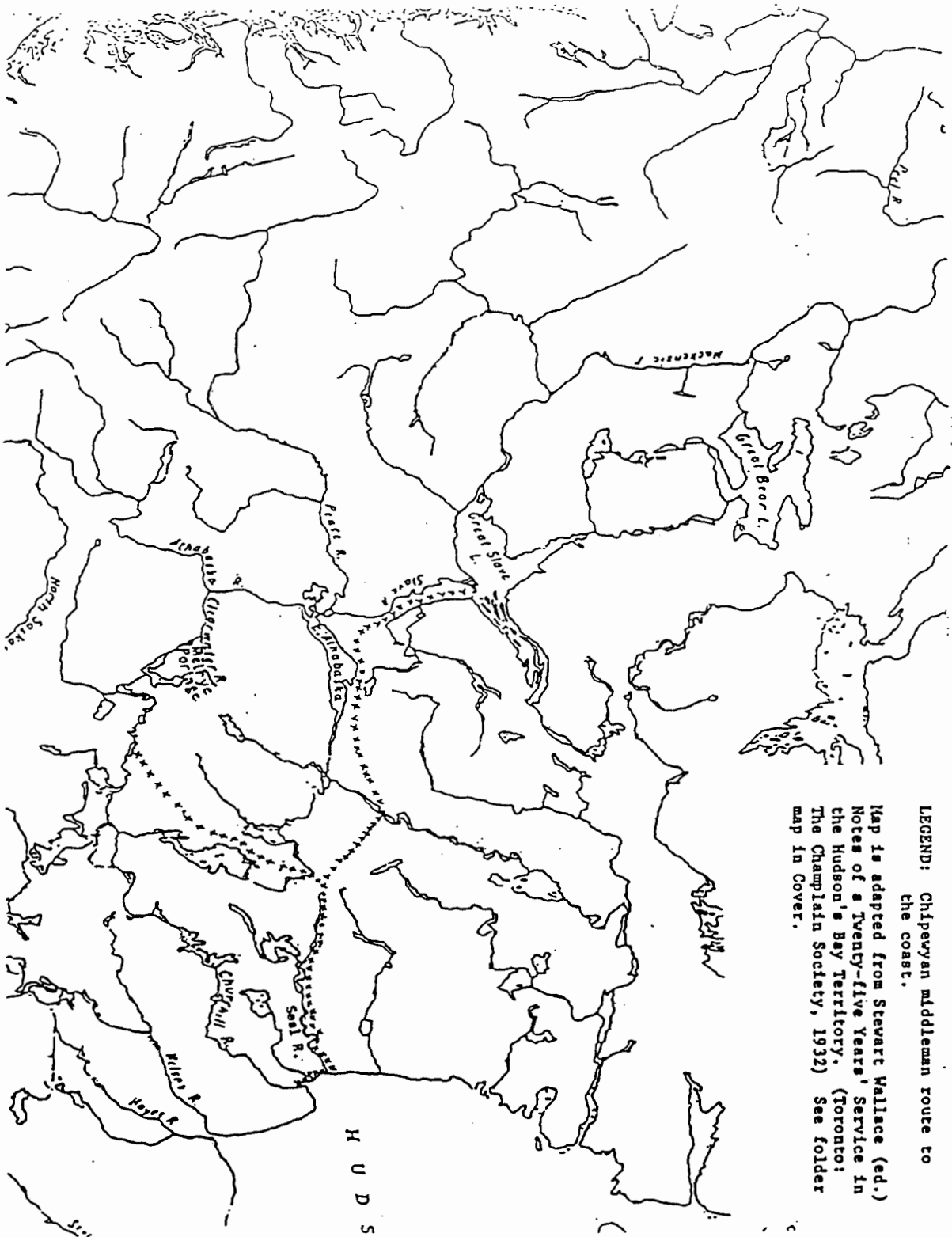
The traditional Chipewyan lands along the edge of the tundra although bountiful in a subsistence economy, were<sup>122</sup> deficient in furs valued by that trade and some Chipewyans

began a movement to the south and west toward the boreal forest where beaver, martin and lynx were common. After the arrival of the Montreal based pedlars on the middle Churchill in 1770, the establishment of Cumberland House by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1774, and the smallpox epidemic of 1781-82 which obliterated the Athabasca Cree population, this movement became a migration. The Eighteenth Century Chipewyans, both trading bands and later the interior Indians had moved a considerable distance from the environment which they traditionally inhabited.<sup>123</sup> The move from a lifestyle in which their primary concern was following the food supply to one where the primary concern was with the fur trade had begun.<sup>124</sup>



Legend: Location of Athapaskan bands prior to contact.  
Map is adapted from Stewart Wallace (ed.), 'Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory,' (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1932). See folder map in cover.

Map 4



LEGEND: Chipewyan middleman route to the coast.  
Map is adapted from Stewart Wallace (ed.) Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1932) See folder map in cover.

### III NOTES

<sup>1</sup>"Chipewyan" was a Cree word meaning "pointed skins." See Diamond Jenness, The Indians of Canada (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 385.

<sup>2</sup>One summary of archaeological investigations indicates that the western end of Lake Athabasca was a transitional zone, "with influences from the plains, the boreal forest, and the north." J.G.E. Smith, "The Ecological Basis of Chipewyan Socio-territorial Organization," Proceedings: Northern Athapaskan Conference, ed., A.M. Clark, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 27 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971), p. 396. J.C. Yerbury, "The Post-Contact Chipewyan: Trade Rivalries and Changing Territorial Boundaries," Ethnohistory, 23, No. 3 (Summer 1976), 251, asserts that "the area adjacent to Fort Chipewyan, including Lesser Slave Lake, Lake Athabasca, Slave River, Peace River, and the shores of Great Slave Lake, was originally the habitat of the Slave, Dogrib, and Hare." J.V. Wright's recent archaeological investigations of the Lake Athabasca area would seem to support Yerbury's contention that northern cultural influences predominated on the western end of the lake. See The Pre-History of Lake Athabasca, Mercury Series, Archaeological Survey of Canada Paper No. 29 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975).

<sup>3</sup>Beryl C. Gillespie, "An Ethnohistory of the Yellowknives," Contributions to Chipewyan Ethnology, ed., D.B. Carlisle, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 31 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), p. 195.

<sup>4</sup>"So that a tract of land of more than three hundred miles extent from north to south was cleared." Joseph Robson, An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's Bay (Edinburgh: Pater - Nofton-Row, 1752), pp. 175-76. Eskimo had lived on the coast as far south as Churchill. R.



Nash, "The Prehistory of Northern Manitoba," ed., W. Hlady, Ten Thousand Years (Altona, Man.: Manitoba Historical Society, 1970), p. 90.

<sup>5</sup>The Churchill drainage in late prehistoric times must be viewed as an area of Cree occupation, rather than as Chipewyan." J.G.E. Smith, "Preliminary Notes on the Rocky Cree of Reindeer Lake," Migration and Anthropology, American Ethnological Society (Ottawa: Univ. of Ottawa, 1970), p. 175. See also J.V. Wright, "Cree Culture History in the Southern Indian Lake Region," Contributions to Anthropology VII: Archaeology, Bulletin No. 232 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1968).

<sup>6</sup>Approximately six thousand Indians were estimated to have been killed along the border between Cree and Chipewyan. The excessive killing prompted the Hudson's Bay Company to make several efforts to establish peaceful relations between the parties. York Factory, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B239/a/2, fo. 28 and B239/a/3, fo. 16d. See also J.B. Tyrrell, ed., Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson Bay (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), pp. 265-66.

<sup>7</sup>The more distant Chipewyans came down to Prince of Wales' Fort to trade every two, or sometimes three years. The trip took "3 months" to go to Lake Athabasca under good circumstances. See John Macdonnell, An Account of the Chipewyan Indians..., Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 17. See fn. 33, chap. II for note re authorship.

<sup>8</sup>Thomas McCliesh, Letter to Governor and Committee, Albany Fort, 16 July 1716, Letters from Hudson's Bay, 1703-40, ed., K.G. Davies (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1965), p. 75.

<sup>9</sup>Periodic plunder and murder of the Chipewyans occurred inland. In 1725 while at the Coast to trade, the families of the Chipewyans were killed. Richard Norton, Letter to Governor, PWF, 1725, in Davies, pp. 111-12. See also Anthony Beale, Letter to Governor, Churchill River, 26 July 1729, *ibid.*, p. 139. War again occurred in 1738 which inhibited the Chipewyans. E.E. Rich and A.M. Johnson, eds., James Isham's Observations and Notes, 1743-49 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949), p. 5<sub>n</sub>, and Arthur Ray,

Indians in the Fur Trade (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), pp. 3-23.

<sup>10</sup>In 1770 the Beaver Indians were travelling from the Upper Churchill to Pine Island Lake on the portage to the Saskatchewan to trade. J.B. Tyrrell, ed., Journals of Hearne and Turnor (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), p. 11. Joseph Hansom saw a "House in the Great River [Churchill] where Indians passes from all parts of the Country." This fort on the Churchill River was frequented by Beavers, Crees, and Chipewyans, as well as Blackfeet. Joseph Hansom, Letter to Governor and Committee, PWF, 23 Aug. 1774, *ibid*, pp. 240<sub>n</sub>-41<sub>n</sub>. Beaver Indians were bordering the Piegan Blackfoot and arrived with them in 1776. Mathew Cocking, Letter to Governor, 13 May 1776, E.E. Rich and A.M. Johnson, eds., Cumberland House Journal and Inland Journal, 1775-79, I (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1951), p. 45. War had occurred in that year between the Beaver and Cree/Assiniboiné. *Ibid*, p. 46. They would not be mentioned as trading in either the post of the pedlars or the Bay men until after the establishment of a post in Athabasca River in 1779. W. Kaye Lamb, ed., The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 125. See also Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal...to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans (1801; rpt. Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig, 1971), pp. lxxxi-lxxxii, A.S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (1939; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 11-12, and Yerbury, "Post-Contact Chipewyan," pp. 251-52.

<sup>11</sup>Richard Glover, ed., Samuel Hearne: A Journey to the Northern Ocean... (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 225-27. Also Morton, pp. 294-95.

<sup>12</sup>Smith, Ecological Basis, p. 396.

<sup>13</sup>W. Noble, "Archaeological Survey and Sequences in Central District of Mackenzie, N.W.T.," Arctic Anthropology, 8, No. 1 (1971), 102-35. Also Ronald Nash, "Archaeology in Northern Manitoba," Hlady, *passim*.

<sup>14</sup>Glover, Hearne, p. 23, and E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, II (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), p. 51.

<sup>15</sup>Since the trading band of Matonabee did not know them (i.e., they were not linked by consanguineal ties), they were plundered. Glover, Hearne, pp. 176-78.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>17</sup>Ibid., p. 177.

<sup>18</sup>See L.A. Prud'homme, Les Montagnais ou Tchippewayan (Montreal: Revue Canadienne, 1909), passim.

<sup>19</sup>Macdonnell, Chipewyan Indians, Lake Athabasca, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, p. 38. See also R. Glover, ed., David Thompson Narrative (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), pp. 123-24, 128.

<sup>20</sup>Gillespie, "Ethnohistory of the Yellowknives," pp. 201-02.

<sup>21</sup>Glover, Hearne, pp. 76-77. The characteristic ability of the Chipewyans and Yellowknives to live and roam on the barrens for extended periods distinguished them from the other eastern Athapaskan bands.

Dialect was also an important distinguishing factor. Slave, Beaver, Dogribs, Hare and possibly the Sekani and Sarcee spoke a similar dialect. The aforementioned differed from the Chipewyan and Yellowknife dialects. Catherine McClellan suggests that in light of the above "the linguistic and tribal classifications of northern Athapascans are due for a new look...if widespread continuity of dialects is distinctive of the northern Athabaskans, their situation becomes in some respects more analogous to that of the Eskimos." "Culture Contacts in the Early Historic Period in Northwestern North America," Arctic Anthropology, 12, No. 2 (1964), 6.

<sup>22</sup>Smith, "Ecological Basis," p. 424.

<sup>23</sup>Smith suggested Hearne spent the winter with six hundred Indians hunting near Nueltin. Since they had just

moved northwest of Yathkyed Lake they were probably at or near Dubawnt Lake. Ibid.

<sup>24</sup>Thomas Simpson's comments as cited in Kaj Birket-Smith, Contributions to Chipewyan Ethnology (Copenhagen: Gyldendal, 1930), pp. 35-36.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid., p. 108. See also pp. 102-03.

<sup>28</sup>Glover, Hearne, pp. 54, 62-63, 180.

<sup>29</sup>Smith, "Ecological Basis," p. 425.

<sup>30</sup>George Keith related that about a day's travel west of Fort Liard was "the Bis-kag-ha River or Sharp Edge River, not far distant from the Fort, and so called from the flint stones very common in that place, and which the inhabitants, the Na ha ne tribe, made use of as knives and axes." George Keith, Letter to Roderic McKenzie, Liard River, 7 Jan. 1807, L.F.R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, II (1889-90; rpt. New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), p. 66.

<sup>31</sup>Glover, Hearne, pp. 85, 91.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., pp. 104, 113, 114, 131.

<sup>33</sup>Smith, "Ecological Basis," p. 416.

<sup>34</sup>John P. Kelsall, The Migratory Barren-Ground Caribou of Canada, Monograph No. 3 (Ottawa: Canadian Wildlife Service, 1968), p. 177. "During the second week of June, the births in that week making up approximately three quarters of the entire calf crop." Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Caribou used well recognized migration routes. "Concentration points, mostly well known to natives and used in hunting, occur where unfrozen rivers or lakes divert the animals and funnel them to crossing points." Ibid., p. 114. Favourite areas for regular caribou travel are "high and lightly forested country" and "along tops of eskers and glacial ridges." Ibid., also pp. 106-07. See Birket-Smith, p. 29.

<sup>36</sup>Peter Pond, cited by Alexander Henry in "Memorandum on an Overland Route to the Pacific," to Joseph Banks, Montreal, 18 Oct. 1781, in L.J. Burpee, The Search for the Western Sea (Toronto: Macmillan, 1935), p. 592. See also A. Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America (1801; rpt. Edmonton, Alta.: Hurtig, 1971), pp. cxxxi<sub>n</sub>-cxxii<sub>n</sub>, and Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 152<sub>n</sub>.

<sup>37</sup>It was estimated that 250 caribou per year were needed to feed a family of four and their dogs. See A.H. Lawrie, "Barren-Ground Caribou Survey," Canadian Wildlife Service Report, C873, 1948, cited in Kelsall, pp. 207-09, 211.

<sup>38</sup>Glover, Thompson, p. 128. Also Lawrie in Kelsall, p. 209, and Birket-Smith, pp. 19-23, 26-28.

<sup>39</sup>Glover, Thompson, p. 128.

<sup>40</sup>McClintock is considered to be the first European to recognize and exploit in a systematic manner native knowledge of arctic travel. He developed a relay system which allowed his men to cover hundreds of miles on early spring snows, solve the riddle of the lost Franklin party, and travel to the north pole. See Francis McClintock, A Narrative of the Discovery of the Fate of Sir John Franklin and His Companions (1859; rpt. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972), pp. 217-34, 278, 282-83.

<sup>41</sup>Glover suggests that the Chipewyans came in to trade at any time. Upon examination, this does not appear to be the case. Between 1725 and 1738, of the nine bands recorded as arriving from the interior, seven arrived in spring or early summer and two in August. Since the jour-

ney from Lake Athabasca took a minimum of three months, this would place the major part of their journey in the early spring. See Glover in Davies, p. xxxvi. See also pp. 111, 117, 119, 155, 186, 201 and 249.

<sup>42</sup>Thomas Stayner, FCPJ, 1 May 1794, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/119, fo. 19. "Those from the Athapiscow or thereabouts never can visit York for they are obliged for the sake of subsistence to keep to the North Side of Seal River and do not cross it until they come near the mouth of the River, from thence they have other two Rivers to cross and then walk along the bayside to this Factory." On 9 July 1794, Thomas Stayner while exploring the Seal River records: "Seal River was formerly known to the Sn Indians and Athapescow Indians but the introduction of Canadians to their Country, the great havock made by the smallpox among the natives 12 years ago and the destruction of the old Factory occasioned the track to be forgotten." Ibid., 9 July 1794, fos. 27-28. Fidler also mentions meeting some Athapaskans who remembered passing above Lake Wollaston and down the Seal River to the mouth of the Churchill. Peter Fidler, Journal, 19 June 1807, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, E3/5, fo. 16.

<sup>43</sup>Kelsall, Map No. 22.

<sup>44</sup>See n. 5.

<sup>45</sup>"The Rivers & c. to and from Churchill are excessive and particularly this River occasioned by the number of Falls which is in it; which greatly obstructs the passage for Canoes: and are obliged to carry their Canoes over twenty carrying places and track them past the edges of several other Falls in this river." J. Hansom, Letter to Governor and Committee, PWF, 23 Aug. 1774, in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, pp. 240<sub>n</sub>-41<sub>n</sub>.

<sup>46</sup>Rich, Hudson's Bay Company II, pp. 418-19.

<sup>47</sup>Mackenzie, Voyages through North America, p. lxxix and P. Turnor in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turner, pp. 477-78.

<sup>48</sup>Rich and Johnson, Isham's Observations, p. 319.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 208.

<sup>50</sup>John Macdonnell, .An Account of the Athabasca Indians; Origin, Manners, & Customs, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH22, S58, No. 9. See n. 33, chap. II re authorship.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid.

<sup>52</sup>Rich and Johnson, Isham's Observations, pp. 79-80.

<sup>53</sup>Macdonnell, Athabasca Indians, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH22, S58, No. 7.

<sup>54</sup>Athapaskan peoples believed that they were descended from a dog. C. Osgood, "Ethnography of the Great Bear Lake Indians," Annual Report of National Museums of Canada, 1931, Bulletin No. 70 (Ottawa: Department of Mines, 1932), p. 83. See also E. Petitot, Exploration de la Region du Grand Lac des Ours (Paris: Tequi, Libraire Editeur, 1893), p. 405, and Glover, Hearne, pp. 219-20.

<sup>55</sup>"The tents made use of by those Indians, both in Summer and Winter, are generally composed of deer-skins in the hair; and for convenience of carriage, are always made in small pieces, seldom exceeding five buckskins in one piece. These tents, as also their kettles, are always carried by dogs, which are trained to that service, and are very docile and tractable. Those dogs are of various sizes and colours, but all of the fox or wolf breed, with sharp noses, full brushy tails and sharp ears standing erect... These dogs are equally willing to haul in a sledge, but as few of the men will be at the trouble of making sledges for them, the poor women are obliged to content themselves with lessening the bulk of their load, more than the weight by making the dogs carry these articles only, which are always lashed on their backs, much after the same manner as packs are, or used formerly to be, on pack horses." Samuel Hearne, A Journey from Prince of Wales' Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean (1795; rpt. New York: De Capo Press, 1968), pp. 322-23.

<sup>56</sup>Birket-Smith noted that "very often the Chipewyan buy Eskimo dogs," p. 90.

<sup>57</sup>In 1819 Franklin wrote that five years previously a "superstitious fanatic [among the Chipewyans] so strongly pressed upon their minds the impropriety of employing these animals, to which they were related, for purposes of labour, that they universally resolved against using them any more, and, strange as it may seem destroyed them." Sir John Franklin, Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea (1823; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 160. Anomalies still exist in the Athapaskan attitude to dogs. See June Helm, "The Lynx Point People," Bulletin No. 176 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1961), p. 119. See also Joel Savishinsky, The Trail of the Hare (New York: Gordon and Breach, 1974), pp. 188-89.

<sup>58</sup>Glover in Davies, pp. xxvi-xxvii.

<sup>59</sup>Some Chipewyans became increasingly dependent on the posts for food supplies. See Malcolm Ross, Lake Athabasca Journal, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B9/a/1, fos. 16 and 36. In 1738 the trading band brought food three hundred miles to feed the traders at Churchill. George Spurrell and Others, Letter to the Governor and Committee, PWF, 1 Aug. 1738, Davies, p. 248. By the time of Hearne the trading band regularly experienced hunger. Glover, Hearne, p. 190. Marshall Sahlins has demonstrated that in many instances hunters and gatherers worked less, with more leisure than those in more abundant and highly organized societies. See Stone Age Economics (Chicago: Aldine/Atherton, 1972), p. 14.

<sup>60</sup>Ernest Burch Jr. suggests that the high level of mobility of the caribou made it humanly impossible to keep pace with the herds. While it was not impossible, the concern with carrying trade made it so. "The Caribou Wild Reindeer as a Human Resource," American Antiquity, 37, No. 3 (1972), 339-68.

<sup>61</sup>E.E. Rich, "The Indian Traders," The Beaver, Outfit 301 (Winter 1970), 4-20. See also Rich, "Trade Habits, and Economic Motivation among the Indians of North America," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 26 (1960), 50-51, and Abraham Rotstein, "Fur Trade and Empire," Diss., Univ. of Toronto, 1967, p. 2.

<sup>62</sup>Fidler in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, 3 May 1792, p. 453.



<sup>63</sup>T. Stayner, FCPJ, 27 Apr. 1794, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/119, fo. 17.

<sup>64</sup>The glamorized leadership of the individual trading captains was temporary at first. See Glover in Davies, pp. xxix-xxx and Fidler in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, 1 Mar. 1792, p. 543.

<sup>65</sup>Osgood, "Great Bear Lake Indians," p. 78 and E. Petitot, Monographie des Dine-Dindjie (Paris: E. Leroux, 1876), p. 32, as cited in Osgood, "Bear Lake Indians," p. 77-79. Also see Matonabee's comments to Hearne in Glover, Hearne, pp. 35 and 57.

<sup>66</sup>Tyrrell, 2 Mar. 1792, Hearne and Turnor, p. 499.

<sup>67</sup>3 Feb. 1792, *ibid.*, p. 541.

<sup>68</sup>2 Mar. 1792, *ibid.*, p. 449.

<sup>69</sup>Rich, "Trade Habits," pp. 42-43, and Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980), pp. 37-73.

<sup>70</sup>Van Kirk, pp. 78-79. Philip Turnor wrote in 1779 "the Masters of most of your Honors Inland settlements particularly those belonging to York Fort would labour under many difficulties was they not to keep a Woman as above half the Indians that came to the House would offer the Master their Wife the refusal of which would give great offence to both the man and his Wife though he was to make the Indian a present for his offer the Women would think her self slighted and if the Master was to accept the offer he would be expected to Cloath her and by keeping a Woman it makes one short ready answer (that he has a Woman of his own and she would be offered) and very few Indians make that offer when they know the Master keeps a Woman and those Women are useful as men upon the Journeys." Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 593.

<sup>71</sup>Rotstein asserts that the trade was not distant impersonal function as in Europe, but "a highly personal

activity." Rotstein, "Fur Trade," p. 47. See also *ibid.*, pp. 2, 33.

<sup>72</sup>Glover, Hearne, p. 51.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 75.

<sup>74</sup>Andrew Graham, "Observations on Hudson's Bay," 1775, cited by Rich and Johnson, Isham's Observations, Appendix B, p. 312.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 177.

<sup>76</sup>Hunting within a surround mainly involved use of bows and arrows "if any gun-men attended on those occasions, they are always placed behind the other Indians, in order to pick up the deer that escape the bow-men." Glover, Hearne, p. 207. Hearne suggested that the Chipewyans were already losing their independence by a decline in their hunting skills. "They have so far lost the art of shooting with bows and arrows; that I never knew any of them who could take those weapons only, and kill either deer [caribou], moose, or buffalo, in the common, wandering, and promiscuous method of hunting." *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>See Cornelius Osgood, Contributions to the Ethnography of the Kutchin, Yale University Publications in Anthropology, No. 14 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1970), pp. 24-25, 36. A ready supply of arms did not immediately lead to an "orgy of destruction" as postulated by Peter Farb, Man's Rise to Civilization (New York: Dutton, 1968), pp. 82-83. Chipewyan technology and more importantly, sensitive proximity to their major food supply was the reason for greater success at the hunt in aboriginal times.

<sup>78</sup>Hearne's journal reflects the unmatched power attained by Matonabbee who as a trading Indian, plundered several parties en route to the Copper Mine. At no time was he seriously challenged by either interior Indians or other trading "captains". Glover, Hearne, pp. 74, 79, 176.

<sup>79</sup>See Davies, p. 1.

<sup>80</sup>Hearne cites the incident of "Captain" Keelshies; plunder and abandonment of several Yellowknife Indians on an island where they were left to die. Glover, Hearne, pp. 116-18. See also R. Norton, Letter to Governor and Committee, PWF, 1725, in Davies, pp. 111-12. "Several attempts to induce Copper and Dogrib Indians to visit the Company's Fort...yet the Northern Indians have always plundered them of the whole soon after they left the Fort." Rich and Johnson, Isham's Observations, p. 115.

<sup>81</sup>June Helm et al, "The Contact History of the Subarctic Athapaskans," Proceedings: Northern Athapaskan Conference, ed., A.M. Clark, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 27 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971), p. 303.

<sup>82</sup>Glover in Davies, p. xxviii.

<sup>83</sup>Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, p. 53.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>Glover, Hearne, p. 66

<sup>86</sup>Ibid., p. 170 and Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, p. 53.

<sup>87</sup>Glover, Hearne, p. 66.

<sup>88</sup>See Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 154 and Macdonnell, Chipe-  
wyan Indians, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 52, fos. 35-36.

<sup>89</sup>Glover, Hearne, p. 64.

<sup>90</sup>Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, p. 53. Andrew Graham "honoured Matannappee the great Northern leader with a farewell salute of three-pounders, and Mr. Wills and myself conveyed him a little distance from the Fort." FCPJ, 29 June 1774, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/88, fo. 22d. In a few instances Matonabbee was challenged. These

affronts were tolerated only in the light of traditional Chipewyan practice of wrestling competitions for possession of additional women. See Glover, Hearne, p. 71.

<sup>91</sup>R. Norton, Letter to Hearne, 5 May 1770, *ibid.*, p. 72.

<sup>92</sup>Yerbury, "Post-Contact Chipewyan," p. 3. See also Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 174.

<sup>93</sup>Glover, Hearne, pp. 225-27. To see the extent of influence by Matonabee at Prince of Wales' Fort see Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman, Give Us Good Measure (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1978), pp. 199-200.

<sup>94</sup>Lamb, Mackenzie, pp. 249-53.

<sup>95</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 249 and 279. Also see n. 10.

<sup>96</sup>In 1738 Richard Norton commented on the trading people: "The whole trade is brought in by two or three bodies of Indians, and those are obliged to get their trade and be gone as soon as possible they can in order to provide food for themselves, they never bringing with them provisions than is sufficient to serve them a day or two." R. Norton, Letter to Governor and Committee, PWF, 17 Aug. 1738, in Davies, p. 255. Isham mentions in the 1740's "its to be observed that those Indians that hunts at Seasons for the forts, can not do without them, for the Chief of our Living is this Country's product & c. & c." *Ibid.*, p. 78. Hearne describes how the Indians who remained inland lived much better. Glover, Hearne, p. 51.

<sup>97</sup>Rich and Johnson, Isham's Observations, p. 78.

<sup>98</sup>Hearne observed that marten, fox, otter, wolverine, and wolf could be had in Chipewyan country. Glover, Hearne, pp. 135-36.

<sup>99</sup>Hearne met the Chipewyan leader Thlew-sa-nell-ie returning from a trading trip south and west of Lake Atha-

basca. Ibid., p. 175.

<sup>100</sup>Beryl C. Gillespie, "Territorial Expansion of the Chipewyan in the 18th Century," Proceedings: Northern Athapaskan Conference, ed., A.M. Clark, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 27 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971), pp. 368-75.

<sup>101</sup>R. Norton, Letters to Governor and Committee, PWF, 6 Aug. 1728 [1727], in Davies, p. 120. Similar returns were obtained in 1733; see pp. 184 and 201.

<sup>102</sup>Glyndwr Williams, ed., Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1767-91 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), p. 348.

<sup>103</sup>S. Hearne, Letter to Humphrey Martin, PWF, 30 Nov. 1776, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/94 and 26 Jan. 1777, *ibid.*

<sup>104</sup>26 Jan. 1777, and 2 Aug. 1777, *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup>Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, 28 May 1770, p. 11.

<sup>106</sup>Moses Norton, Letter to A. Graham, Fort Churchill 1773 in Williams, p. 249<sub>n</sub> and Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, A11/15, fo. 1.

<sup>107</sup>Tyrrell, 5 Aug. 1774, Hearne and Turnor, p. 106.

<sup>108</sup>S. Hearne, Letter to Governor and Committee, PWF, 23 Aug. 1774, *ibid.*, pp. 240<sub>n</sub>-41<sub>n</sub>.

<sup>109</sup>23 June 1775, *ibid.*, p. 158.

<sup>110</sup>M. Cocking in Rich and Johnson, CHJ, I, pp. 36 & 45.

111R. Longmoor quoted by Cocking in *ibid.*, 2 July 1776, pp. 66-67.

112S. Hearne, Letter to H. Martin, PWF, 2 Aug. 1777, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/94, n. fo.

11310 July 1779, *ibid.*, B42/a/96, n. fo.

11426 June 1780, *ibid.*, B42/a/97, n. fo.

115S. Hearne, Letter to Governor, PWF, 18 Jan. 1778, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/23, fo. 4.

11615 Aug. 1778, *ibid.*, fo. 11.

117S. Hearne, Letter to H. Martin, 16 July 1779, *ibid.*, B42/b/23, fo. 4.

118Rich and Johnson, CHJ, I, pp. 5-6. See Williams, p. 1.

119H. Martin, Remarks and Observations on the Inland Journals, York Factory, 4 Aug. 1780, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B239/a/78, n. fo.

120S. Hearne, Letter to H. Martin, PWF, 10 July 1779, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/96 and B42/a/97, n. fo.

121FCPJ, 2 May 1784, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/103, fo. 25.

122Calvin Martin, following up on the ideas of Marshall Sahlins (see n. 59), suggests that the idea of "primitive aboriginal technology" needs reassessment. He uses examples from E.S. Rogers' work The Quest for Food and Furs: The Mistassini Cree, 1953-54, Publications in Ethnology No. 5 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1973), p. 80, to illustrate his point that traditional big game hunters were successful, hence had considerable leisure time. See Mar-

tin, Keepers of the Game (Berkeley and Los Angeles: Univ. of California Press, 1978), p. 13.

<sup>123</sup>Ray and Freeman show in their economic analysis of the fur trade out of Hudson's Bay before 1763, how "the Company was seen as a valuable trading partner from the point of view of power politics because the Company was a reliable source of firearms and ammunition." See p. 41.

<sup>124</sup>Glover, Hearne, pp. 135-36.





## CHAPTER IV

### CONTACT AND DISLOCATION

Changes in the living patterns of the Indians in the Mackenzie Basin continued in the late 1770's with the arrival of the Europeans. As early as 1773 Joseph Frobisher, a trader from Montreal, had been intercepting Indians bound for Prince of Wales' Fort, near Frog Portage on the Churchill River. By the mid 1770's, other "pedlars" arrived to intercept the Indians of the Athabasca region "which by account they did with great success, so that few of that valuable tribe of Indians are gone down to Churchill this year".<sup>1</sup> In 1778, Peter Pond passed over the height of land from the Churchill River into Athabasca basin and cut further into the Hudson's Bay Company trade. The trading band of Chipewyans continued their treks to the Bay, but with reduced packs obtained mostly from the poorer fur-producing regions further down the Mackenzie Basin.

The arrival of Pond and his men on the Athabasca and Mackenzie Rivers brought about the most dramatic changes in the fur trade with the Indians of that region since the arrival of the Chipewyans at Fort Churchill

after 1717. Disease arrived with the Europeans which within three years devastated the Cree and Chipewyans, and led to the destruction of whole segments of their society, especially those most acculturated. As a result European traders were forced to pull back and reorganize their food supply and transportation systems, which led some Indian bands to relocate. Previously restricted European trade goods, particularly arms and ammunition, were made available to the Indians throughout the region which led to changes in tribal relations and hunting patterns. The yearly treks of the Chipewyan trading bands to the Bay were virtually ended. As the number of trading posts expanded, some bands adopted a more sedentary lifestyle in proximity to the posts both to control the trade to more distant peoples and to gain employment as provisioners.

As the North West Company expanded their trade northwest into the boreal forest the problem of food supply had become crucial. Previously in 1775, Pond and Alexander Henry with one hundred men and twenty canoes, forced to fish en route, took twenty-eight days to cross Lake Winnipeg and just reached their wintering place before freeze-up.<sup>2</sup> In the next two years Thomas Frobisher, depending mainly on fish, was able to reach Ile-a-la-Crosse but no further. Pond reached the Athabasca River only by working in concert with the Frobishers who gave him their

extra winter supplies of food and equipment so that he would not have to return to Grand Portage.<sup>3</sup> Thus freed to winter among the Indians of the Athabasca River, he discovered a key to the problem of food supply from the Athabasca Cree, who had probably acquired the method of making pemmican from the Beaver or Chipewyan. By the time Pond was able to arrive in Athabasca

the season...[was] advanced, it will be necessary to prepare for winter,...employ the natives to hunt, for the subsistence of the men which is mostly flesh, dry'd buffaloe meat, and mousedeer, it is not only the provisions for the winter season, but, for the course of next summer, must be provided which is dry'ed meat, pounded to a powder and mixed up with buffaloes grease, which, preserves it in the warm seasons here every information must be procured from the savages.<sup>4</sup>

From the time of the first arrival of the traders the Athabasca Cree were heavily involved in the provisioning trade.<sup>5</sup> These Cree apparently did little trapping and when not provisioning reverted to a middleman role of charging tariffs on what other Indians brought to the fort. "The few Crees that are here have done little or nothing these three years. They are always in the same place close by the fort and they have ruined it."<sup>6</sup>

Some of the Cree had moved west from York Fort as middlemen in the trade since its establishment in the 1680's. By 1715-20 they had expanded from the muskrat country into the boreal forest and had moved along the

edge of the barrens in the northwest to the edge of the plains in the southwest. Between 1715 and the establishment of Prince of Wales' Fort on Athapaskan land the Cree plundered the furs and warred with the Chipewyans and other Athapaskans. After 1720 the Cree continued to move into the upper Churchill and by the 1750's were pressing on the edge of the Athabasca River. The Beaver Indians and possibly the Slave, prehistoric residents of the Athabasca area, were eventually driven north or were pillaged of their furs, women and children.<sup>7</sup>

By 1760 the Cree were also being pressed by the Chipewyan who moved slowly into the boreal forest region to trap and to gain access to the pedlars' posts. This would further displace the traditional inhabitants of the upper Churchill, the Beaver Indians, who had traded regularly with the Europeans as recently as the mid 1770's. After that time the Assiniboine and Cree periodically blocked their way over the Methye Portage to traders at Pine Island Lake. As late as May of 1770 a party of Beaver had left William Pink to go down the Churchill presumably to Prince of Wales' Fort.<sup>8</sup> Robert Longmoor and Charles Isham wintered with Beaver and Piegan Indians at the headwaters of the Beaver River in Alberta in 1775-76.<sup>9</sup> In the winter of 1776 the Beaver Indians were blocked from going to Cumberland House, probably as a result of war

with the Assiniboine and possibly their allies, the Cree.<sup>10</sup> It was in the decade of the 1770's that the Cree completed the displacement of the Beaver Indians and probably their close kin, the Slaves from the Athabasca River region. Cree expansion in the region had been partially checked by the peace treaty negotiated between the Chipewyan trading leader, Matonabee and the Cree. This freed the Cree from the lengthy journey via the Churchill and the Saskatchewan Rivers to Prince of Wales' Fort. It is apparent that the Beaver Indians were not allowed the liberty of crossing Cree land to the pedlars' post on the Churchill.<sup>11</sup>

At the same time the Chipewyans desired access to the rich furs of the boreal region; after approximately 1766 they were able to infiltrate peacefully the land newly acquired from the Beaver Indians by the Cree. In turn the Cree had hesitated to venture beyond the Peace River probably as much due to the fierce actions of the Beaver Indians, with their newly acquired arms as to the peace established. Although the Chipewyan would later succeed the Cree and their prehistoric occupants, the Beaver, in many areas of the upper Churchill and the Athabasca after the smallpox epidemic of the early 1780's,<sup>12</sup> it would appear that the precedent for Chipewyan movement south and west began earlier and gathered momentum with the equilibrium

established in the mid 1760's to early 1770's.

From the time of the Peace, the Chipewyans regularly frequented the Cree camps where they obtained furs in return for a full complement of trade goods. Guns and ammunition which the Chipewyans denied to other Athapaskans were available to the Cree as part of the agreement. Light prime furs were traded since the distance overland dictated that only those of high value in relation to bulk be considered.

Some of the Cree continued to engage in frequent marauding and looting expeditions on their frontiers.<sup>13</sup> The Cree of the Saskatchewan and upper Churchill Rivers moved over their trail from Lesser Slave Lake to the Peace River where the Sekani and Beaver were pillaged.<sup>14</sup> Only where the trading partner was of sufficient strength was anything bordering on fair trade undertaken. This route was referred to as their "war road". Expeditions down the Slave River, over Great Slave Lake and down the Mackenzie River as far as Fort Norman were undertaken.<sup>15</sup> These parties engaged and most often pillaged the Slave Indians, Dogribs, and possibly a few Yellowknives or Beaver Indians of the Liard River.

The nature of the fur trade in the Athabasca Mackenzie region had been greatly altered by a series of events in the first two years of the 1780's. A post on the Sask-

atchewan-Churchill River portage built in 1770 by the pedlars, soon to become the North West Company, established a beachhead in the area. Incursion by the pedlars from Montreal seriously reduced the numbers and quality of furs available from the northern trading bands to the middleman Chipewyans. This induced the Hudson's Bay Company to counter the pedlars by establishing their own post at Cumberland House in 1774 on the Rat River near Pine Island Lake, which drew the Chipewyans from the upper Churchill around Ile-a-la-Crosse and from the Reindeer Lake area.<sup>16</sup> The presence of these posts as well as one on Maligne River south of the outlet of Reindeer Lake precipitated the change in the Chipewyan's role from middleman to trapper which in turn secured their dependence upon European trade goods.

No Athapaskans were more adept than Chipewyans<sup>17</sup> at adjusting to their changing world. For a very few, the end of their role as trading middlemen was disruptive and they were unable to adapt to the new tools and techniques. But for others, the shift to mainly a trapping existence came relatively easily. Some of them moved south and west,<sup>18</sup> increasingly occupying the boreal forest lands near the newly built posts and spent less time following their prehistoric and major provider, the caribou.

The Chipewyans trapped on the tributaries of the

upper Churchill as far south as the Beaver River draining present-day northern Alberta, which drew them miles away from the caribou. Only lengthy trips to the caribou wintering grounds around Reindeer Lake allowed them to obtain supplies of meat. This resulted in caribou being replaced as a source of clothing by European duffle. Tools which were fashioned from caribou horn or bone were also gradually supplanted. In the early years after this migration began the supplies of woodland caribou, moose, elk, and buffalo encountered in the parkland country were bountiful. But the Chipewyans were not traditional hunters of these large mammals. They were not able to adapt their expertise in the use of the snare and caribou pound to these animals. They possessed guns but in general the Chipewyans were not effective in their use.<sup>19</sup> Animals of the newly adopted regions when procured did provide for nutritional wants. As the stocks of large mammals declined, fish were obtained in quantity.

Another in the series of events altering the shape of the fur trade and the nature of the Indians' living patterns occurred between 1781-84. Along with guns, ammunition, and small trinkets came an unseen passenger - the European communicable disease. The most devastating one was smallpox but others such as measles took their toll. Most of the Cree were killed by smallpox and although



Chipewyans in contact with the posts were severely reduced, many more from the Athabasca-Black Lake area were unaffected and moved south to trap in Cree lands.

A few traders witnessed the smallpox epidemic but the main accounts are provided by the Indians<sup>20</sup> and almost all are by hearsay. The smallpox apparently passed north to the Cree and then was contacted by the Chipewyans.<sup>21</sup> Hearne's estimate of ninety percent of the population being struck down has been assessed as too high.<sup>22</sup> No Athapaskan groups are believed to have disappeared as a result, and considering that the Chipewyan population was conspicuous and dynamic in the ensuing period, it would seem that Hearne's estimates were based on observation of its effects on particular groups. One such group had lived north and east of Lake Athabasca<sup>23</sup> and had moved south in 1778-81. Since the disease would strike them first, and next be spread to the Indians of the Lake Athabasca region, the effect on these people was relatively severe. The estimate by David Thompson that one-half of the Cree population died in the epidemic, may be a fair judgement of its overall effects.<sup>24</sup>

It has been pointed out by Beryl Gillespie that the disease as it extended to the Mackenzie region was largely contained within the Cree and Chipewyan population.<sup>25</sup> The "obvious, primary reason is that the Cree and Chipewyan

were in far greater contact with traders and trading posts and, therefore, their losses were reported and visible."<sup>26</sup> She further points out "trading posts were localization spots [congregation points] for Indians which increased the likelihood of their acquiring contagious diseases."<sup>27</sup> By 1780, due to the power politics of the fur trade no other Athapaskan group came to the posts to trade. News of the disease would heighten that avoidance. In fact the Yellowknives harried often by the Chipewyans to this time, begin to gain ground after the smallpox epidemic, eventually to become important middlemen in the fur trade.

The Indians most frequently contacted at trading posts were devastated by the epidemic. Apparently, those who remained at a distance from the posts avoided contact with the disease. A year after the disease had first swept by Cumberland House

five men and three women arrived from the northland with furs and provisions to trade, these inform that they have heard nothing of the disorder that is raging in this quarter for which reason. I had a tent pitched in the yard to keep them from six invalids. Women and children that has got over the smallpox now laying on the plantation Starving.<sup>28</sup>

The disease was passed through the posts and the traders did attempt a primitive form of quarantine to restrict spread of the disease. Despite precautions, the smallpox apparently victimized the older male population much more

than the younger men or the women and children. David Thompson observed that "more men died in proportion than women and children."<sup>29</sup> William Walker remarked of the northern plains that, "the most part that has recovered is women and children these are still more wretched, they being all women but one, and he is very bad,"<sup>30</sup> William Tomison replied that at Cumberland House there was "hardly an Indian man alive."<sup>31</sup> Because of the division of labour in the native society women were ill-equipped to take over the role of hunters. As a result, in extreme instances at Fort Churchill "6 or 7 men were left to provide for upwards of 30 women and children."<sup>32</sup> It was also at Churchill that "some of the Indian women came to the house for a little oatmeal and ammunition for the support of themselves and families."<sup>33</sup> One result of the additional burden on the male hunters<sup>34</sup> was that in ensuing years the fur companies were unwilling to hire them.

Though they were formerly employed as Goose Hunters but there [sic] families at present are so great that it will be impossible for me to employ many of them on that service tho they came here on that view.<sup>35</sup>

The natives on the northern plains had exacerbated the problems of food supply by burning the plains in the fall to drive the buffalo from the trading posts. This increased their value as hunters but had, ironically, lessened their chances of survival.<sup>36</sup> Weakened by illness,

many were unable to travel the extra distance to hunt the game.

The low morale also contributed to widespread starvation. William Walker suggested that this was true of the Assiniboinés, but it was equally true of the Chipewyans: "they fancy themselves ailing and so have no heart to hunt anything."<sup>37</sup> Mitchell Oman in a back-handed complement to the Indians' dexterity at the hunt documents the poor morale. "They say there is no beasts about, but that's false, for I know when us Englishmen can murder a Chance One, if they was to hunt with dexterity, they might keep themselves and us too."<sup>38</sup>

Some fur traders who observed widespread starvation in this period attributed it to a decline in the game resources. David Thompson comments on how the wolves became diseased by feeding on human remains. He also remarks on the extent of the decline in animals of all species including the caribou, a condition which appeared to last for a number of years.<sup>39</sup> But the Europeans with only a few exceptions were not noted for their hunting abilities. Neither did they have the experience nor inclination to accurately measure the game resources. With the exception of the example of the wolves which were obviously diseased, there appears to be no biological reason for passage of the disease to large game. Far more likely an ex-

planation for the starvation was that most of the male population including many excellent hunters had died. The dearth of hunters placed great responsibility on the few remaining able men to reconnoitre as well as to supply food for the many.

The smallpox epidemic of 1781-84 affected the Cree Indians of the Athabasca country most severely of all which opened the way for Chipewyan penetration of Cree land in following years<sup>40</sup> and this was confirmed by an account in 1809.

The countries thro which it [Churchill] runs from the head of the Beaver River and including all its other head branches to its mouth, are inhabited by the Knisteneaux [Cree]...Within these thirty years however, the Chipewyan tribes have immigrated in considerable numbers from Athabasca and the barren land...to the banks of the Missinippi [Churchill River], finding the country more suited to their purposes....It is not so easy to ascertain the number of this tribe who reside on the banks of the Missinippi as they are continually changing their ground between this and their own country.<sup>41</sup>

Pond's map of 1785 based on his experiences at Pond's Post 1778-84 indicates that the Chipewyan were well north of Lake Athabasca.<sup>42</sup> His map shows Chipewyans north and east of Lake Athabasca while Philip Turnor's map of 1790 shows them having moved permanently to the south and east of that lake. A map which David Thompson incorporated into the Arrowsmith map of 1795 shows the Chipewyan as having extended to the west of Lake Athabasca on the Peace River,

and south to the Ile-a-la-Crosse area.<sup>43</sup> Gillespie contends that "the depopulation of this area probably made Chipewyan movement southward easier and faster."<sup>44</sup>

The Cree of the upper Churchill and the Athabasca River region had been regular visitors to the trading posts consequently almost all had been exposed to the disease. The most extreme estimates of mortality would thus apply mainly to the Cree who were reduced to a shadow of their former strength. The remaining few congregated around Pond's Old Establishment on the south edge of the Athabasca delta exacted a middleman price from any Indians who ventured to that post. This eventually forced the North West Company to relocate,<sup>45</sup> first onto the south shore of Lake Athabasca, and then to the north shore in a strategic spot close to the extant tribal boundaries between Chipewyan, Beaver, Slave and Cree Indians. After 1784, the few Cree remaining were mainly employed as trappers or provisioners. The Athabasca River and particularly the Peace River areas dominated mainly by Beaver Indians were the main sources of dry meat and pemmican which was used to fuel the fur brigades and supply the posts. This food trade was carried on at Ile-a-la-Crosse and increasingly towards the end of the 1780's at Fort Chipewyan on the north shore of Lake Athabasca.<sup>46</sup>

There is little doubt that those people in sustained

contact with Europeans had been highly dependent on that relationship and therefore suffered tremendous hardship when contact was disrupted. The French, by capturing Prince of Wales' Fort contributed to this trauma and were informed by the captives Hearne and Marten and by the Indians themselves that the latter "were utterly dependent on their annual trade with the Europeans. It had become an absolute necessity to them, they had lost the art of hunting with bow and arrow."<sup>47</sup> The French leaders Laperouse and the Marquis de la Jaille appreciated and were concerned about the negative impact their raid would have on the natives. "At York Fort the French left a cache of lead and of powder just outside the post to help the Indians through their troubles."<sup>48</sup> An English captain en route to Churchill was informed by Hearne, with permission of the French, that he should give powder and shot to the Churchill Indians, thus allowing them to hunt their way.<sup>49</sup>

The Indians who had frequented Churchill and York Factory as well as the upper Churchill River posts and who were dependent on Europeans for most necessities, were selectively eliminated by the smallpox epidemic. Arrival of the Europeans with trade goods in more variety and volume than ever before had given sustained access to a number of new bands. The advantage of this contact had mixed blessings as the Europeans appeared to be the vehicle for

the transport of the virulent smallpox into the region. Smallpox struck and reduced with unrelenting severity the natives who traded at European posts. Reduction of the older population, consequently the decline of certain ceremonial practices, as well as disruption of affairs of state and trade have been mentioned elsewhere as due in part to smallpox epidemics.<sup>50</sup>

The suggestion by Calvin Martin that the ravages of devastating epidemics such as that of 1781-83 was responsible for a re-evaluation of their relationship with nature was not a factor with the Indians of the Athabasca.<sup>51</sup> By 1700 the Cree had moved from a subsistence cycle to one dominated by trading concerns.<sup>52</sup> Many Chipewyans between 1717 and 1750 were also drawn into fur trading, directly as in the case of the trading band, or indirectly by dependence on the new tools made available by trade. No epidemics of significance are on record as having occurred in the late prehistoric or early historic period. At the same time both the Cree and Chipewyan displayed little reserve in plundering their own or associated bands, or in stripping marketable fur resources from the Bayside. The Cree and their allies the Assiniboine shortly moved into the plains away from the Bay, and into the Athabasca River country.<sup>53</sup> Chipewyans moved south and west into fur country to trade, sometimes to plunder and generally to ex-



exploit the richer fur lands.<sup>54</sup> The extent and intensity of their quest for furs changed little after the subsidence of the vicious epidemics.

It is apparent that the epidemic devastated the male population of the hunting Indians close to the forts. There also appeared to be a heavy mortality among older males of the trading band in general. But since these people were by then in closest contact, the epidemic may have temporarily slowed that process of change. More conservative Indians, often subjugated by those who had access to trade and especially to a supply of guns, surfaced once again in positions of influence. This is confirmed by movement to the south and west which accelerated after the epidemic.<sup>55</sup> Rather than the disease devastating traditional beliefs and thus speeding change it may, at least in the short term, have had the opposite effect.

Much has been said, deservedly so, of the drastic impact of the smallpox epidemic of 1781, but it is apparent that at least the northern Athapaskans in direct contact with Europeans periodically were ill from shortly before this time through the 1820's. A Chipewyan trading leader, Idosliazer and twenty-five of his people died in October 1768.<sup>56</sup> By January of that year thirty were dead and many more were sick.<sup>57</sup> In the spring of 1769 Churchill post was supporting some ninety-one Chipewyans<sup>58</sup> and a year later

many were still sickly.<sup>59</sup> In 1792 the Chipewyans were found destroying their property in lamentation of the many dead among them.<sup>60</sup> Influenza broke out in 1798<sup>61</sup> and again in 1800 disease struck.<sup>62</sup> In 1807 at the Forks of the Liard, "disease rage[d] with astonishing fury among them - of which several die[d]."<sup>63</sup> A year later many Beaver hunters died.<sup>64</sup> In 1810 "not less than 8 of...[the] best hunters" died during the winter of disease.<sup>65</sup> Another smallpox epidemic struck the Beaver and Chipewyan in 1820.<sup>66</sup>

The disruption which the smallpox caused to Indians in the early 1780's brought on by the arrival of the Europeans had unsettling effects on the fur traders as well. The pedlars led by Pond into the Athabasca region at Old Establishment had not moved beyond there by 1785. Indeed through most of that seven year period they barely averted starvation. Implementation of the knowledge that Pond had accumulated about overcoming the problems of provisioning had to be postponed because of the smallpox epidemic and the dislocation in its aftermath. The Cree Indians, who prior to the epidemic had been dominant over all other Indian people except possibly Matonabee's trading band congregated around Old Establishment and extracted a middle-man share from all Indian trade. The Beaver of the Peace and Liard drainages, the Yellowknives, the Slaves and the Dogribs of the lower Mackenzie all avoided the trek to the

Old Establishment and the pillaging of middlemen.

The English at the mouth of the Churchill were also in difficulty in the early 1780's. The increased share of fur returns taken by the pedlars in the previous ten years was suddenly rendered insignificant when the French captured Prince of Wales' Fort in 1782.<sup>67</sup> The smallpox finished what the French had begun and the returns from the Athabasca were virtually nonexistent until 1785.<sup>68</sup> By that time the Canadians had returned to the Athabasca and the Indians traditionally tied to Churchill were trading many of their prime furs to the pedlars.<sup>69</sup> Provisioning was also a problem,<sup>70</sup> in considerable part due to the scarcity of good hunters, but also due to the apparent scarcity of caribou in proximity to the trading post.<sup>71</sup> The Indians were still experiencing hardships in 1787.

Several of the Northern Indian goose hunters came to the Factory with their guns and feather bags as no geese are to be got and their wives and children half starving.<sup>72</sup>

But by that summer the Northern trading Indians in considerable numbers began to renew contact with Churchill.

Four Northern Indian men and their wives came to the Factory with a few furs. Traded with them and give them some presents to carry to some principal leaders of the Northern Indians who are now begining [sic] to dran [drain] out from the Athapuscow Country in order to renew their trade with this Factory.<sup>73</sup>

The spring of 1788 saw the beginning of a return to the

prosperity that had not been evident since the late 1770's.<sup>74</sup> It was observed at Fort Churchill that the Chipewyans were very prompt at paying the accumulated debts when beaver were available.<sup>75</sup> Some of the Indians had not been in to Churchill for five years.<sup>76</sup> At Fort Chipewyan the English Chief was attempting to endear himself to the North West Company by promising that he would "stop all his people from going to Churchill."<sup>77</sup>

Peter Pond enroute from the Athabasca in 1786 communicated to the young Alexander Mackenzie the principal message he intended to relay to the partners. He believed the posts should be placed away from any particular tribal influence, within access to adequate food supplies. At a post on the Peace River established by Charles Boyer in 1786 an abundance of bison in spring and fall had been followed by scarcity as the animals moved into the woodlands during extremes of weather. By mid-winter the Canadians who were unwilling to eat fish except in emergencies faced starvation when the fish proved impossible to catch. Pond then ordered the post temporarily closed and sent Boyer and A.N. Macleod up the Peace River to locate meat and organize food supplies for winter reserve and summer brigades. He then attempted to encourage as provisioners<sup>78</sup> some strategically located Indian people particularly the Cree on the Athabasca<sup>79</sup> and the Beaver Indians on

the Peace River. Buffalo and moose were particularly plentiful in both areas as well as considerable numbers of elk in the Peace area. Pond recommended that meat be dried and pounded into pemmican in the fall, both to serve as a winter food supply and for the summer voyage to Grand Portage.

Despite heeding his advice the brigade of 1787 was unable to reach the Athabasca<sup>80</sup>. The post established in 1786 by Laurent Leroux was abandoned temporarily.<sup>81</sup> Pond also recommended that the Old Establishment be abandoned and a new post be established on the south shore of Lake Athabasca near to Cree, Chipewyan and Beaver Indian lands to prevent domination of the trade by any one band.<sup>82</sup> The Cree were preventing Beaver, Slavey and Chipewyans from coming into the post and trading directly with Pond's men. Similar problems were encountered at Great Slave Lake where the Chipewyans were dominating all Indians who came to trade.<sup>83</sup>

As Pond began to succeed in solving the problem of food supply and attempted to reduce the middleman restriction on trade, trapping activity expanded once more. Reports indicated Chipewyans living in their traditional lands along the edge of the barrens were moving to the Lake Athabasca area, the Ile-a-la-Crosse region, and north to the Great Slave Lakes post. By 1788 the Chipewyans so

surrounded Ile-a-la-Crosse that other bands were discouraged from trading.<sup>84</sup> The post at Big Island near the outlet of the Mackenzie River from Great Slave Lake was attracting Chipewyans. Beaver Indians brought in much fur - as much as two thirds of all the goods at the Athabasca post.<sup>85</sup> Chipewyans were also still going down to the Bay, probably from the region between Reindeer Lake and the Seal River drainage. The North West Company was disappointed that it was unable to attract these people to Fort Chipewyan.<sup>86</sup> In an attempt to entice their trade the North West Company built the Rat River post up the Maligne River at the south end of Reindeer Lake. This post was expected to draw the Chipewyans (Caribou-eaters) south and wean them away from their treks to the Hudson's Bay Company post at Churchill, but it was unsuccessful.

About one half had been to Hudsons Bay in the summer and took credits there which, I am afraid they will wish to go and pay in the spring. However if they do, it will [not be] because I could not help it, as I shall use promises and menaces if first fail to deter them from their purpose. I have seen 40 men of different ages including 3 Chipewyans/one of whom is the Chief who wanted the canoes to Lac du Caribou last spring at the Riviere Maligne.<sup>87</sup>

In all of the foregoing attempts to garner the bulk of the trade the essential Indians were the Chipewyans. In the aftermath of the smallpox epidemic's devastation of their trading partners, the Cree, the pedlars appeared to

be establishing posts to reflect the reality of a new Chipewyan predominance. The Old Establishment was abandoned in favour of Slave Lake Fort and Fort Chipewyan on the south shore of Lake Athabasca; Fort Resolution was established on the mouth of the Slave River at the northern edge of Chipewyan lands. Another move of Fort Chipewyan to the north shore of Lake Athabasca further into Chipewyan influence was contemplated. A Chipewyan, the English Chief, was cultivated to lead the Yellowknives since they indicated a considerable inclination to act as carriers.<sup>88</sup> He was also sent to the north arm of Great Slave Lake to take trade from the Yellowknives, and the Dogribs.

Powerfully seated after reorganization of their Athabasca operation and not yet faced with opposition, the pedlars were still suffering in their relations with the Indians from the precedents established by Pond, his partners and the Canadians in their first contacts with the Athapaskans. As the trade began to improve towards the end of the 1780's some Chipewyans revived their treks to the Bay. The North West Company responded by use of threats. When the treks continued, the practice of hostage taking began. Their example was a source of concern to their own leaders.<sup>89</sup> Even one of the responsible partners resorted to "promises and menaces if [I] first fail

to deter them from their purpose."<sup>90</sup> With the increased pressure and use of threats from the North West Company Chipewyan middlemen journeyed in greater numbers to Churchill. "None of the above Indians have been here for many year past. Three are old leaders that used to come with Mittanappy [Matonabbee]."<sup>91</sup> Of the Indians who traded with William McGillivray at Rat River Fort south of Reindeer Lake, "about one half had been to Hudson's Bay in the summer."<sup>92</sup> To offset the limited success of their endeavours among the Chipewyans, the pedlars expanded their influence across the lake to the Yellowknives and Dogribs. The "English Chief" had been established as a trading leader among the Yellowknives and a rendezvous was established near the site of what would become old Fort Providence on the Yellowknife River.<sup>93</sup>

Peter Pond's organizational genius had succeeded in solving the problem of food supply but his manner of treating the Indians did not bear fruit. In 1786, an early example of the pedlar's arrogance was his remarks after reprimanding an Indian by striking him with the flat of his sword. "Pond told him that the Country and the Indians belonged to him and he could do with them as he pleased and no other person should meddle with them."<sup>94</sup> Many of the Canadians took Indian wives, some of them by force. Forced seizure of Chipewyan women began a pattern



which led further to resentment and distrust of the North West Company in this first decade of contact and would become increasingly important as a cause of conflict between Europeans and Indians of the Athabasca country.

When the Montreal traders dropped prices, offered to take only the most valuable prime furs, then used intimidation to obtain them, the Athapaskans revived their lengthy treks to Churchill. Had the natives of the Mackenzie region been governed by a desire to satisfy immediate needs, it would have been most easy to trade in the Mackenzie basin. At the same time, had they been governed by the desire to preserve desirable political alliances, the treks to Churchill would have been annual rather than intermittent. Indians were attempting to make adjustments to difficult circumstances.<sup>94</sup>

The decade of the 1780's was a period of disruption and adjustments for the Indians of the Athabasca and upper Mackenzie River regions. Arrival of the Europeans on the Athabasca in 1778 had confirmed to the Chipewyan middlemen and especially to their partners, the Hudson's Bay Company, that their trade was in jeopardy. Chipewyan Indians of the Lake Athabasca and Reindeer Lake regions moved south into forest lands to trap and trade. The smallpox epidemic of late 1781 afflicted and killed a great proportion, at least one half of these trading Indians, and pos-

sibly 90 percent of the males. Most of the Cree and Chipewyan middlemen and trappers were among those who died. The epidemic left the Europeans with few hunters and any plans for further expansion were postponed. Indian women and children experienced widespread starvation since most of the good hunters had died. Some of the Indians were so demoralized that they lost their initiatives to seek food. A modicum of stability would eventually return by 1788 and a few Indians returned to trapping. Many Chipewyans uninvolved in the fur trade prior to the epidemic replaced those killed by smallpox, and began to congregate around the posts south of Reindeer Lake, the Ile-a-la-Crosse and Lake Athabasca regions. By the late 1780's the pedlars had returned, relocated posts, organized a food supply, and moved to serve the newly involved Chipewyans by expanding north to Great Slave Lake. They also moved to involve the Yellowknives and to a lesser extent the Dogribs in the trade.

For some Chipewyans at least the European arrival had temporarily ended the trading middlemen role. For others, treks to Churchill were revived to obtain better terms for their furs.

IV  
N O T E S

<sup>1</sup>Samuel Hearne, 5 Aug. 1774, in J.B. Tyrrell Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 106.

<sup>2</sup>A.S. Morton, A History of the Canadian West to 1870-1871 (1939; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1973), pp. 310-11.

<sup>3</sup>Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Henry recounted Pond's observations in a letter to Joseph Banks, Montreal, 18 Oct. 1781, in H.A. Innis, ed., Peter Pond (Toronto: Irwin and Gordon, 1930), p. 87n.

<sup>5</sup>Cuthbert Grant was quoted on 22 Apr. 1786: "One of the Crees arrived with a train load of Caribou meat which he traded." Old Establishment Journal, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, F2/1, fo. 5.

<sup>6</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to Agents of the North West Company, Athabasca, 22 May 1789, in W. Kaye Lamb, ed., The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 438.

<sup>7</sup>See chapter III, note 91.

<sup>8</sup>See entry for 28 May 1770 in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 11.

<sup>9</sup>M. Cocking, Letter, Cumberland House, Oct.-May

1775-76, *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>10</sup>M. Cocking, Letter, Cumberland House, 22 Jan. 1776, *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup>See Richard Glover, ed., Samuel Hearne, A Journey to the Northern Ocean... (Toronto: Macmillan, 1958), pp. 226-27. See also Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal through the Continent of North America (1801; rpt. Edmonton: Hurtig, 1971), p. 123.

<sup>12</sup>Arthur Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1974), p. 98.

<sup>13</sup>Alexander Mackenzie found evidence of Cree marauding far down the Mackenzie River. See entries for 7-9 June 1789, in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 174, 1 July 1789, p. 179 and 3 July 1789, *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>14</sup>1 Jan. 1793, *ibid.*, p. 249; see also 5 Apr. 1793, p. 253. Mackenzie warily passed by a recent Cree encampment near Rocky Mountain Portage. 18 May 1793, *ibid.*, p. 26, 1 June 1793, *ibid.*, p. 279.

<sup>15</sup>3 July 1789, *ibid.*, p. 181.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. xxxi - xxxii.

<sup>17</sup>James Van Stone shows the ability of the Athapaskans to adapt to change. Athapaskan Adaptations: Hunters and Fishermen of the Subarctic Forests (Chicago: Aldine, 1974), Chap. 8, *passim*.

<sup>18</sup>Beryl Gillespie, "Territorial Expansion of the Chipewyan in the 18th Century," A.M. Clark, ed., Proceedings: Northern Athapaskan Conference, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 27 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971), pp. 350-78.

<sup>19</sup>See Chapter V, note 82. See also G. Simpson, in

E.E. Rich, ed., Simpson's Athabasca Journal (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), p. 75.

<sup>20</sup>Ibid., p. 374.

<sup>21</sup>David Thompson was informed by Mitchell Oman that it was contacted from the Sioux and Ojibway. See Richard Glover, ed., David Thompson: Narrative (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1962), pp. 49, 92, 236-38.

<sup>22</sup>Gillespie, "Expansion of the Chipewyan," p. 374. Also see J.C. Yerbury, "The Post-contact Chipewyan: Trade Rivalries and Changing Territorial Boundaries," Ethnohistory, 23, No. 3 (Summer 1976), p. 250 and E. Petitot's comment: "There were as many as 1200 Redskins settled on the lake. But the white man brought with him the horrible disease of smallpox, till then unknown to the Americans, which made great ravages among the Tinney, and more than decimated the Crees, driven to the southern part of the lake by the warlike attitude of the Chipewyans. Influenza, the epidemic catarrhal infection attacking the tribes at regular intervals of about seven years, completed the work of the smallpox. Reduced to a very small number, the Crees ceased all hostile action against the Chipewyan...." "On the Athabasca District of the Canadian North West Territory," Proceedings of the Royal Geographical Society, XL (Nov. 1883), 651.

<sup>23</sup>The term "Montagners" has little meaning until after 1821 when an era of population and commercial stability was established in the region.

<sup>24</sup>J.B. Tyrrell, ed., David Thompson's Narrative of his Exploration in North America (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1916), p. 109. Macdonnell estimated that "owing to their wars with their neighbours, the smallpox of 1780-81 and other misfortunes, the third of the nation does not now remain." John Macdonnell, "Some Account of Red River about 1797," in L.F.R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, I (1889-90; rpt. New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), p. 277.

Heidenrich arrives at a similar estimate of population loss due to smallpox among Huron agriculturalists. C.E. Heidenrich, Huron: A History and Geography of the Huron

Indians 1600-50 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1971), pp. 98-99, and pp. 100-06.

<sup>25</sup>Beryl Gillespie, "Ethnohistory of the Yellowknives: Northern Athapaskan Tribe," Contributions to Chipewyan Ethnology, ed., D.B. Carlisle, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 31 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1975), p. 208.

<sup>26</sup>Ibid.

<sup>27</sup>Ibid.

<sup>28</sup>William Tomison, 1 Mar. 1782 in E.E. Rich and A.M. Johnson, eds., Cumberland House Journals and Inland Journal, 1775-79, II (1779-82; rpt. London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1952), p. 240.

<sup>29</sup>David Thompson in Glover, Thompson, p. 236.

<sup>30</sup>William Walker, Letter to W. Tomison, Hudson House, 14 May 1782, in ibid., p. 254.

<sup>31</sup>"At noon five more arrived from above, these are still more wretched, they being all Women but one, he is very bad." W. Tomison, in Rich and Johnson, CHJ, II, 24 Jan. 1782, p. 239.

<sup>34</sup>Hearne noted: "Sickness and famine has made such havock amongst my home Indians during my absence that out of 69 that I left all well only 32 is around here safe, amongst whom there is but 6 men and boys that can lift a gun, the Remainder being all women and Children." Dec. 1783, ibid., B42/b/26, n. fo.

<sup>35</sup>28 Apr. 1785, ibid., B42/a/104, fo. 19.

<sup>36</sup>W. Walker, Hudson House, 17 Oct. 1781 in CHJ, II, p. 262. Walker said, "the Barren Ground is all burnt nigh hand so that there is no beasts resting."

<sup>37</sup>W. Walker, 10 Jan. 1782, *ibid.*, p. 275. See also entries for 29 Oct. 1781, *ibid.*, p. 264 and 23 Oct. 1781, p. 263.

<sup>38</sup>Mitchell Oman, 10 Jan. 1782 in *ibid.*, p. 275.

<sup>39</sup>Glover, Thompson, p. 237. "About 70 half Starved Northern Indians came in for trust but had Nothing for Trade. Except 50 hares a few lbs. of Venison." S. Hearne, FCPJ, 14 Oct. 1785, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/106, fo. 7.

<sup>40</sup>"The surrounding country abounds with Buffaloe and Deer Beaver and other Animals valuable for their furs are also numerous in its vicinity. Some years ago it was numerously inhabited by Crees, but the Small Pox, Measles and other contagious diseases have made ravages among them nearly tantament [sic] to extermination." George Simpson, 18 May 1821, in Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 362.

<sup>41</sup>William McGillivray, Trading Expedition to the English River, 22 Jan.-14 June 1809, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, No. 5, pp. 5-16.

<sup>42</sup>See Pond's map in Gillespie, "Territorial Expansion of Chipewyan," fig. 2, p. 376.

<sup>43</sup>*Ibid.*, pp. 378-80.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, p. 375.

<sup>45</sup>Despite being good provisioners the Cree were avoided in the placement of the post because they tended to dominate the middleman trade.

<sup>46</sup>See Alexander Henry, Letter to J. Banks, Montreal, 18 Oct. 1781 in L.J. Burpee, Search for the Western Sea (Toronto: Masson, 1908), pp. 578-87. See R. McKenzie, Letter to A. Mackenzie, Athabasca, 2 Dec. 1787, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 32, No. 15, n. pag.

<sup>47</sup>E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, II (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), p. 87.

<sup>48</sup>Ibid., p. 88.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid., p. 87.

<sup>50</sup>Bruce Trigger asserted that smallpox swept away 50 percent of the Huron population in six years. The Children of Aataentsic: a History of the Huron People to 1660 (Montreal: McGill-Queens, 1976), Chap. 8.

<sup>51</sup>Epidemic disease is asserted to be the cause of a dramatic reversal in native belief structures leading to the destruction of game resources. Calvin Martin, Keepers of the Game (Berkeley: Univ. of California Press, 1978), pp. 19-21.

<sup>52</sup>Ray, pp. 3-23.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 23.

<sup>55</sup>Gillespie, "Territorial Expansion of Chipewyan," *passim*.

<sup>56</sup>PWFPJ, Oct. 1768, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/74, fo. 13.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., B42/b/15, fo. 3; see also, fo. 10 and B42/a/74, fo. 36.

<sup>58</sup>13 Apr. 1769, *ibid*.

<sup>59</sup>In part, an attempt to revive the trade (interrupted by the sickness) was a motive for Hearne's journey to the



Coppermine. Ibid., B42/a/77, fo. 7.

<sup>60</sup>P. Fidler, in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, 1 Feb. 1812, p. 541.

<sup>61</sup>See FCPJ, 2 Mar. 1798, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/124, fo. 11d.

<sup>62</sup>James Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 17 Jan. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157, n. no.

<sup>63</sup>F. Wentzel, Journal, the Forks of the Mackenzie River, 9 Feb. 1807, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 24, p. 9301.

<sup>64</sup>G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Biskaga River Post, 1 Dec. 1808, *ibid.*, Vol. 51, p. 18.

<sup>65</sup>FCPJ, 8 Mar. 1810, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/135, fo. 6d.

<sup>66</sup>For a view of the 1820 epidemic see George Simpson's account in Rich, Simpson's Journal, 13 Oct. 1820, pp. 80-81.

<sup>67</sup>The French capture of Prince of Wales' Fort corresponds exactly with the smallpox epidemic.

<sup>68</sup>The pedlars pulled back to Fort Chipewyan and closed the Fort Resolution and Peace River Posts.

<sup>69</sup>"Traded with the Remainder of the Northern Indians found them to be very poorly Gooded, owing as some of them say to not having the necessary iron work for taking Beaver 8c." Fort Churchill Journal, 29 Apr. 1785, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/104, fo. 19.

<sup>70</sup>"17 Canoes of Nelson Indians came to the factory with some Furs, but like the others seem to be very poor,

having before traded all the prime of their Furs with the Canadians." Ibid., 3 July 1785, fo. 28.

<sup>71</sup>Hearne, 30 Oct. 1785, *ibid.*, B42/a/106, fo. 9. See also a comment of significance: "I have not received 20 Skins as yet nor do I expect any more till the Northern Indians can hear of our arrival which must be the next summer at least." S. Hearne, Letter to H. Marten, PWF PJ, 19 Jan. 1784, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/b/26, fo. 10.

<sup>72</sup>See FCPJ, 26 May 1787, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/108, fo. 9.

<sup>73</sup>Hearne, *ibid.*, 14 July 1787, fo. 25.

<sup>74</sup>"Six Northern Indians brought 601 Beaver - another small group brought 400." *Ibid.*, 3-4 May 1788, B42/a/110, fo. 22. "On May 7, 2 more bring 701 Beaver." *Ibid.*, fo. 22; "14 brought 700 beaver," *ibid.*, 10 June 1788, fo. 25.

<sup>75</sup>*Ibid.*, 5 June 1788, fo. 25.

<sup>76</sup>"Twenty Northern Indians that has been here before, since we last arrived [1783] brought an account that a leader and his followers will be here in a few months." *Ibid.*, 6 July 1788, fo. 28. "The Wechepowack [Chipewyan] Indians...arrived at the head of whom where [sic] two Old Leaders who said they came with a view to reinstate the former friendship between your Chief and them" and brought 614 beaver. *Ibid.*, 24 July 1788, and 31 July 1788, fo. 31. "An old Northern Indian leader and his tribe that has not been here before since we last arrived brought 219 in Beaver." *Ibid.*

<sup>77</sup>See A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. McKenzie, Athabasca Fort, 8 Oct. 1788 in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 435. The English Chief was apparently successful. "There came a number of Indians to the Lake who say they were at Hudson's Bay and from what I could learn there went upwards of twenty five packs there last Summer from this country - these Indians were seven months in their journey - they were well received and seem to think that they were well rewarded for their extra trouble - which I am afraid will entice many others

to try their fortune that way next summer." A. Mackenzie, Letter to Agents of the North West Company, Athabasca Fort, 15 Feb. 1789, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 32, No. 1, n. pag.

<sup>78</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. MacKenzie, Lac des Serpents, June 1787, in Masson, I, p. 19.

<sup>79</sup>Fort of the Forks, or Pond's Post, was built close to the Cree provisioners. Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 129. In 1786 Cuthbert Grant commented that "one of the Crees arrived with a train load of Caribean meat which he traded." Athabasca Journal, 8 Apr. 1786, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, Misc. papers, F2/1, fo. 3.

<sup>80</sup>Pond's ideas are written up in a letter from Alexander Henry to Joseph Banks, Montreal, 18 Oct. 1781 in Burpee, pp. 578-87. See also A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. McKenzie, Ile-a-la-Crosse, 1 Feb. 1788 in Masson, I, pp. 19-20.

<sup>81</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. McKenzie, Athabasca, 2 Dec. 1787, *ibid.*, p. 21.

<sup>82</sup>Roderic McKenzie chose the site of Fort Chipewyan on the south shore where "we were to make a new establishment and depend on our industry in fishing for a living." *Ibid.*, p. 27. Masson suggested that it "was so called because it was intended more particularly for the trade of that nation." *Ibid.*, p. 27n. But Pond's assertion, restated by Alexander Mackenzie, that the Cree were exacting tribute from all who came into the Old Establishment, and his desire for a less partisan positioning of the post were the key reasons for its removal. See *ibid.*, p. 22.

<sup>83</sup>On Great Slave Lake "as far as can be judged from present appearances, there will be no possibility of establishing a fort there to advantage, nor could the produce come out the same year. I am certain if the Chipewyans could be drawn away from there, the other nations would draw near, and if a rendez-vous could be established, an advantageous trade would be carried on every summer." A. Mackenzie, Letter to the Agents of the North West Company, Grand Portage, 1 Feb. 1788, Ile-a-la-Crosse, *ibid.*, p. 24.

<sup>84</sup>Ibid.

<sup>85</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. McKenzie, Athabasca, 18 Mar. 1788, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 32, No. 2, n. pag.

<sup>86</sup>See A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. McKenzie, Athabasca, 22 May 1789 in Masson, I, p. 30, where he makes the comment "The Chippewans are in the habit of trading in Hudson's Bay."

<sup>87</sup>W. McGillivray, Rat River Fort Journal, near Riviere Maligne, 9 Sept. 1789, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 5, p. 1. See also A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. McKenzie, the Forks of the Peace River, 8 May 1793, Masson, I, p. 42.

<sup>88</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to R. McKenzie, Fort Chipewyan, 2 Mar. 1791, *ibid.*, p. 36.

<sup>89</sup>"The men who had remained with the Indians last Summer were and still are of great injury to the interest, by their bad example and influence." A. Mackenzie, Letter to the Agents at Grand Portage, Athabasca Fort, 15 Feb. 1789, in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 437.

<sup>90</sup>W. McGillivray, Rat River Fort Journal, near Riviere Maligne, 9 Sept. 1789, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 5, p. 1.

<sup>91</sup>William Jefferson, Letter to Governor and Committee, FCPJ, 18 July 1789, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/112, fo. 25.

<sup>92</sup>W. McGillivray, Rat River Portage Journal, near Riviere Maligne, 9 Sept. 1789, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 5, p. 1.

<sup>93</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to Agents of the North West Company, Athabasca, 22 May 1789, *ibid.*, Vol. 32, No. 6, n. pag.

94C. Grant, Athabasca Journal, 5 Apr. 1786, Misc. Papers, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, F2/1, fo. 3.

Arthur Ray shows how this was especially true during the period of middlemen trade. See Indians in the Fur Trade, p. 70. Indians were not particularly concerned about political alliances, and often exploited their own people. See *ibid.*, p. 200, fig. 42-45, for increases in gift giving expenses during periods of competition. Also see E.E. Rich, "The Indian Traders," The Beaver, Outfit 301 (Winter 1970), 15.



## CHAPTER V

### COMPETITION AND ENLIGHTENED RESPONSE

Trade goods which had been actively sought by middlemen seven hundred to one thousand miles to the east at the Hudson's Bay coast during the previous seventy-five years should have been favourably received by Indians at newly established trade centers in the Athabasca region.<sup>1</sup> However circumstances developed in the fur trade of the region which raised apprehensions among the Indians. The most critical time was between 1799 and 1804 when competition exaggerated problems which had earlier begun to form. Increasing use of alcohol among the Beaver Indians, intimidation of the Chipewyans and abduction of their women and children by traders, as well as the tendency of Indians from many bands to congregate around posts to obtain trade goods became issues of concern to Indians and Europeans alike.

Since the smallpox epidemic of 1781-83 and the capture of Prince of Wales' Fort by the French a year later, the Indians of the Athabasca-Mackenzie region made few efforts to journey to Churchill. Proximity of the North West Company posts on Lake Athabasca, and after 1786, at Fort

Resolution and on the Peace River, had made access to European trade goods easier. By the end of the decade however, the prices of those goods and especially the manner of the pedlars' treatment led a few Indians to consider returning to the Hudson's Bay Company post at the Bay.

For some this meant passing over Methye Portage and down the Churchill River to Cumberland House. Others headed east on the long trek to Fort Churchill. The increasing tendency of the Indians to seek out the Bay traders in the early 1790's led the Hudson's Bay Company to consider developing an inland post up the Chipewyans' favourite route, the Seal River.<sup>2</sup> Exploration of the Seal River route to Reindeer Lake into the east end of Athabasca Lake<sup>3</sup> was undertaken. The North West Company responded by attempting to attract the Chipewyans south via Reindeer Lake. "I wish him to undertake the discovery of the Route by Lac des Carriboufs - It will be of more advantage."<sup>4</sup> Much of the energy of Hudson's Bay Company in the 1790's was directed toward defying the geography of the lengthy trek to the Bay trading centers. Efforts to explore a direct route into the Athabasca country were thus undertaken by Philip Turnor, Peter Fidler and Malcolm Ross in 1790-92.

The Chipewyans met by Fidler, Turnor and Ross were



hard bargainers who brought forth derogatory comments from the Europeans; "what they Brings is always in scrapes and handfuls and if they are not Paid as much for that as if it were twice the value they call him immediately ungenerous and say other Traders are much more charretable [sic]."5 The usual fare traded for provisions was rum,<sup>6</sup> but liquor was not an effective exchange for food from the Chipewyans.<sup>7</sup> Turnor observed that "the Chepawyan tribe will not trade Liquor consequently are not fond of parting with their provision, but powder and shot will draw it from them."<sup>8</sup>

Chipewyans and Yellowknives both had some perspective on the prices since they had travelled to Fort Churchill where furs received higher prices. Peter Fidler observed that "The red Knife Indians did not come to our House but I heard [what] they receive from the Canadians for their skins is not worth their notice."<sup>9</sup> The Chipewyans consented to trade but they were never satisfied and "ha[d]a custom of asking for everything, they see and tho'...[they were given] a great deal indeed, some of them were not altogether contented."<sup>10</sup> Fidler remarked on the Chipewyan acumen. "The Indians burnt the greater part of their Canoes as they said no person should receive any benefit from them & that they would not be here next year to use them."<sup>11</sup> While Fidler and the other Hudson's Bay Company

people were in competition with the pedlars the Chipewyans withheld furs to capitalize on future high prices. A Chipewyan in speaking to Fidler "said he had not brought all his furs but had laid part of them up as does most of their tribe in hopes of a better market in their own country or to carry them to Churchill when they can form a party."<sup>12</sup> With their knowledge of the Churchill market some of the Chipewyans felt they were not able to obtain the commodities they desired: "they say it is not worth troubling themselves with hunting furs for they cannot buy Cloth with them unless they go to Churchill."<sup>13</sup>

The Hudson's Bay Company decided not to contest the trade in the Athabasca area which led to a request for a post for the Chipewyans on the Seal River. "Northern Indians [have]...represented it [Seal River] as a proper place to build a house at, saying many of their countrymen would resort their [sic] rather than trade with Canadians."<sup>14</sup> This historic path was passable down to the Coast. "Indians...importuned me to have a House at Seal River by the Bayside, they told me that great Numbers of their Countrymen would come from Athapiscow Lake and trade there...." But from the mouth of the Seal south to Fort Churchill the Chipewyans experienced great difficulty from late spring to fall.

They acknowledged that the distance was not great but that the road was excessive bad and no provision to be got on the way exclusive of three pretty large rivers. They had [to] cross in Canoes which often endangered the Lives of their Families and many times they lost their goods after trading them at this Factory.<sup>15</sup>

The Hudson's Bay Company proceeded to set up a post near the mouth of Seal River. The Canadians countered by adding to their already existing posts around Reindeer Lake near to the Chipewyan overland route to the Bay.<sup>17</sup> To counter the pedlars' efforts another attempt was made by the Hudson's Bay Company to reach Reindeer Lake via the Churchill River with boats but it was found to be too hazardous.<sup>18</sup> Later that summer on Chipewyan advice, Thomas Stayner went up the Seal and the South Seal Rivers and arrived at Big Sand Lake just to the east of Reindeer Lake.<sup>19</sup> From this point he returned by portaging over to South Indian Lake and then through its outlet and back via the Churchill.<sup>20</sup> A later journey in the fall was less successful.<sup>21</sup> Competition with York Factory<sup>22</sup> over the allegiance of the Indians, the geographic advantage of competing pedlars from Reindeer Lake<sup>23</sup> and the difficulty of navigation to the region led to marginal trade with the Bay.<sup>24</sup> Pedlars from the Rat River post south of Reindeer Lake boasted that they got their furs "from the door of Churchill."<sup>25</sup> Hudson's Bay Company factors then returned to a policy of increased

credit in an attempt to draw the natives to the Bayside posts.

North West Company methods for obtaining furs from the Chipewyans though usually successful had been resented. The Indians were incensed at the use of intimidation to obtain furs. The increasing share of the fur trade in North West Company hands early in the decade began to fall off. Hard bargaining by the Indians infuriated the North West Company and since liquor was not an inducement to ply furs from the sober Chipewyans their women were held as hostages. William McGillvray had early realized that threats alone would not work to prevent trade with the Hudson's Bay Company.

About one half had been to Hudsons Bay in the summer and took credits there which, I am afraid they will wish to go and pay in the spring. However if they do, it will be...because I could not help it, as I shall use promises and menaces if first I fail to deter them from their purpose.<sup>26</sup>

Force had become a key part of North West Company attempts to shape trade relations with the Chipewyans.

The Canadians' practice of treating Chipewyan women as chattels was no doubt borrowed from historic Athapaskan practice.

It has ever been the custom among those people for the men to wrestle for any woman to whom they

are attached; and of course the strongest party always carries off the prize. A weak man, unless he be a good hunter and well beloved, is seldom permitted to keep a wife that a stronger man thinks worth his notice: for at any time when the wives of those strong wrestlers are heavy-laden either with furs or provisions, they make no scruple of tearing any other man's wife from his bosom, and making her bear a part of his luggage. This custom prevails throughout all their tribes, and causes a great deal of emulation among their youth, who are upon all occasions, from their childhood, trying their strength and skill in wrestling. This enables them to protect their property, and particularly their wives, from the hands of those powerful ravishers.<sup>27</sup>

To be taken as partner of a fur trader offered some advantages to Indian women. Certainly their lot was made easier by the amenities of the trading posts and the greater assistance provided by the European males. In return the Indian women provided their many indigenous skills and kinship links with the Indian trappers and traders. Since the arrival of the Europeans in the Athabasca, conjugal ties with key Indian people had been used to cement trading networks. Post women often went out to trap with their Indian relatives and were expected to guarantee loyalty and ensure that credits would be repaid.<sup>28</sup>

Philip Turnor had been informed in 1792 of the pedlars' methods of obtaining Chipewyan women:

The method by which they get most of the Che-pa-wy-an Women is by the Masters seizin them for their Husbands or Fathers debts and then selling them to their men from five hundred to

two thousand Livres and if the father or Husband or any of them resist the only satisfaction they get is a beating and they [are] frequently not satisfied with taking the woman but their Gun and Tent likewise.<sup>29</sup>

Another Hudson's Bay Company observer was told "The Jepawyan Indians complains very much of the injustice done them by the Canadians in taking their women from them by force; some of the Canadians keeps no less than 3 women and several 2."<sup>30</sup>

Chipewyans were less compliant when competition was present in the Athabasca. "The Che-pa-wy-ans never behaved so insolent to them before."<sup>31</sup> As early as 1792 trading leaders "threaten[ed] vengeance against the Canadians."

Their [sic] seems a settled dislike to the Canadians amongst the whole of them which would most likely manifest it self in once the Hon'ble Company had good settlements amongst them. Some few of the Chepawyans begin to love liquor.<sup>32</sup>

Turnor, though less than objective, felt that the Hudson's Bay Company represented more than an alternative market.

Increased interest in Hudson's Bay Company trade led to greater efforts to intimidate the Indians: "they said Mr. McGilvery had informed them that Mr. Small was gone to England for a Medicine to kill all the Englishmen and that we were all lost." They went on to say that "the Medicine is likewise to kill all the Chepawyans that go to the English."<sup>33</sup> Another Indian who contacted smallpox was told by a pedlar that it was because he went from one company

to another.<sup>34</sup>

The use of alcohol as an inducement to obtain furs from the Indians had mixed benefits in the Athabasca. Arthur S. Morton used the famous quote of Duncan McGillvray to illustrate the value of liquor in the trade:

The love of Rum is their first inducement to industry. They undergo every hardship and fatigue to procure a Skinful of this delicious beverage, and when a Nation becomes addicted to drinking, it affords a strong presumption that they will soon become excellent hunters.<sup>35</sup>

Morton concluded that "rum was the cornerstone on which the fortunes of the fur magnates were built."<sup>36</sup> But use of rum to trade with the Chipewyans did not result in immediate returns. They would trade mainly for shot and powder in return for provisions. Long inured to lengthy journeys to Churchill and to treks in search of the caribou, the Chipewyan's had little room for nonessentials such as liquor. However, in the Peace River region where European traders focused efforts to obtain provisions, liquor was increasingly poured.

The Beaver Indians of the Peace River country in contrast with the Chipewyans would trade for liquor. "The Peace River Indians are as fond of liquor as any tribe and part with their provisions as freely."<sup>37</sup> The Beaver and Cree around Lake Athabasca had not journeyed the long distances to trade at the Bay since the Chipewyan middlemen

began acting as carriers in the 1760's and the arrival in their locale of the North West Company traders after 1778. The Beavers had adopted many practices from the Cree, including imbibing. In contrast to the Chipewyans who at that time acted as middlemen or trappers, the Beaver Indians were mainly employed as provisioners. North West Company policy then was to trade rum or provisions.

The Beaver Indians were the buffer between the aggressive Cree and other Athapaskan bands in the period of the middleman trade. By the peace established between the Beaver Indians and the Cree in the late 1760's the Peace River became a Beaver preserve.<sup>38</sup> But the Cree were apparently accorded the privilege of passing over their "war-road", a trail from Lesser Slave Lake to the junction of the Peace and Smoky Rivers, whence they raided the Indians of the Rocky Mountains for furs. This trail was apparently an historic Beaver Indian linkage between the Peace River and their pre-contact lands on Lesser Slave Lake.<sup>39</sup> Alexander Mackenzie believed that the Cree of the Saskatchewan and Churchill Rivers were not part of the peace treaty and ranged freely through the area.<sup>40</sup> It is certain that the Cree retained considerable influence<sup>41</sup> over the Beaver Indians until after the smallpox epidemic devastated them in 1781-83, and possibly as late as 1790.

The origins of the Beaver Indians has been a subject



of debate. The idea that the Beaver Indians of Peace River<sup>42</sup> and the people known as Slave Indians by their neighbours were of the same aboriginal group has not been given much credence by anthropologists. Emile Petitot, sometimes cited as the first modern anthropologist to live among the Athapaskans, believed that the three linguistic groups, the Beaver, the Slave and the Sarsi should be classed together on the basis of linguistic similarity.<sup>43</sup> Diamond Jenness believed that the Sarcees drifted to the Saskatchewan from the north "towards the end of the seventeenth century" probably separating from the Beaver since "their speech differs very little from that of the Beaver Indians."<sup>44</sup> He also noted that both bands recounted the same legend for their common origin.<sup>45</sup> Early explorers perpetuated confusion. Mackenzie referred to the western Beavers as Rocky Mountain Indians, a name usually reserved for the Sekani. Daniel Harmon who was in contact with the Rocky Mountain Indians commented:

They call themselves Sicannies [Sekani] but it is supposed that formerly they belonged and were a part of the Beaver Indian Tribe - who on some quarrel separated themselves from their Countrymen by leaving their lands to come higher up the [Peace] River.<sup>46</sup>

But Mackenzie also placed the Slave Indians in the Lesser Slave Lake area along with the Beaver prior to Cree expansion.<sup>47</sup> The name Slave was a designation obtained from the

Cree.<sup>48</sup> Petitot refers to at least two groups of Slave, the "Etcha-Ottine" who lived between the Liard River on the north and the drainages of the Black and Beaver Rivers on the southwest and east. He also situated a band of Slaves west of the Mackenzie, the "Ettcheriedie-Gotti-ne," who lived in the upper reaches of the Liard.<sup>49</sup> Honigmann believed that these were the Beaver Indians of Wentzel<sup>50</sup> and Keith.<sup>51</sup> He concludes that the Fort Nelson-Liard was a transitional area<sup>52</sup> and the Fort Nelson Slave were a transitional people. Jenness also saw the Beaver and Slave as having affinity and has dealt with the distribution and subdivisions of the Beaver Indians.<sup>53</sup> The linguists Aberle, Hoijer et al., have recently lent credence to the idea by classifying the Chipewyan, Beaver, Slave, Sarsi and Sekani as one group.

Yet the natives at Liard River informed Wentzel that they "pretend[ed] to be a branch of the tribe of the Beaver Indians of Peace River, from whom they had been formerly separated and the[n] driven this way by their inveterate enemies the Crees."<sup>54</sup> The natives' own testimony had been discarded because of Wentzel's further comment that the customs of the Liard people were different; "for these Indians are very effeminate and never wage war."<sup>55</sup> It is not unlikely that such minor differences were a part of a self-selecting process which separated the meek from the

more aggressive during the long period of war with the Cree. During that conflict those most accessible to their attackers who became known as Beaver Indians fiercely resisted and adopted traits of the Cree in order to survive.<sup>56</sup>

By the 1790's the Beaver Indians of the Peace River had become to observers an amalgam of traits. To linguists and prehistorians the Beavers differed little from the Slaves. Many of the traits which have come to be recognized as distinguishing the two peoples may have been the result of direct or indirect Beaver Indian contact with European culture in the earliest period of trade in the region. By 1792 the Beaver Indians of the Peace River spoke Cree; "they speak their language, as well as cut their hair, paint, and dress like them, and possess their immoderate fondness for liquor and tobacco."<sup>57</sup> The Beaver Indians by the 1790's were also known for their fierce pride and nasty disposition when abused and on liquor.<sup>58</sup> These were all traits assumed to have been acquired as a result of contact although protectiveness toward their women was considered unique in the region.<sup>59</sup> "They differ very much from the Chepawyans and Knisteneaux, in the abhorrence they profess of any carnal communication between their women and the white people."<sup>60</sup>

The Beaver Indians were affected most by the events of

the late 1780's and early 1790's in the Athabasca country. Well-organized proposals by Peter Pond to use the Peace River region as the principal trapping and provisioning ground were in operation by 1790. The Beaver Indians were the key people in supplying the labour for hunting and drying meat in summer and trapping in winter.<sup>61</sup> Food supplied from Peace River was transported to Fort Chipewyan from the "two settlements which...[were] the support of this country[.] its there they get all their dried provisions for their journeys and without a settlement in this river they would not be able to get their furs out."<sup>62</sup> Almost all essentials were available from the Indians of the Peace River, much of it in trade for liquor.

The Peace River Indians are as fond of liquor as any tribe and part with their provisions as freely it consists of Buffalo flesh both fresh and cured such as beat [sic] meat and rendered fat its from that River that the Canadians procure all dried provisions for their different purposes [sic] its at the first settlement up the Peace River where they procure the provision. I am informed that they go to it in fourteen days from the Athapescou Settlement and from that Settlement to the next in twelve days at which place Buffalo is full as at the other....the Slave Lake, Peace River and Athapescou River Canoes are supplied [with provision from the Athabasca Settlement] in the fall of the year and reserve a stock of provision for the Spring and they have a two years stock of the most material trading Goods, Birch rind fitt for building large Canoes is very plentiful both in the Athapiscow and Peace Rivers and the finest Pine that I have seen in the Country grows near the Lower part of the Athapiscow River. Nothing is wanting in these parts but Cedar for building Canoes/the Canadians

build of the largest size used in the North out of Pine but they never bring them in again.... they always have occasion for more Canoes to come down that River [Peace] than what they take up.<sup>63</sup>

The Peace River was the source of essential food and wood for the fur trade in the Athabasca and Beaver Indians were vital to its supply.

The picture developing of Indian involvement in the fur trade of the Peace River in the 1790's does not indicate "a secondary commitment to the trade."<sup>64</sup> The Beaver Indians of the Peace River were spending most of the year congregating around the posts in order to partake in the endless supply of liquor dispensed by the competing European traders. Subsistence hunting was not of primary importance although hunting to provide dry meat for the fur trade in exchange for liquor did take up much of the Beaver Indians' time. The tendency to cluster temporarily around the fur trade posts in the Peace River in the 1790's led to depletion of game resources, forced relocation of the posts and reallocation of Indian hunters.

Inter-tribal relations became more hostile as an accelerated trade in arms encouraged the Beavers, Dogribs, and Yellowknives to exploit more remote tribes with their new-found power. In 1797 the Beaver Indians moved up the Peace River and attacked and looted the Sekani.<sup>65</sup> Two years later the Beaver Indians attacked and killed a small band of Ojibways near Lesser Slave Lake in retaliation for

their being pillaged of goods the year before.<sup>66</sup> The Beaver Indians of the Forks were also blamed by James Porter for killing Duncan Livingston in 1799: "the Red Knives who Past [sic] the Last winter and summer among the Beaver Indians of Mckenzie's River had seen the Place where the deceased Mr. Livingston and his People had been killed and they found a great deal of Powder Shot & Ball."<sup>67</sup>

Toward the end of the decade some of the reticence developing in the Beaver Indians to enter freely into a role the fur trade determined for them was exacerbated by conflict with other Indians moving into the Peace River to trap. In 1798 "a war party...kill'd and wounded several of the Beaver Indians."<sup>68</sup> The Beavers were in conflict with the advancing Chipewyans.<sup>69</sup> As competition increased the use of alcohol increased. "He is going...for rum As there is no possibility of keeping the B[eaver] Indians without it."<sup>70</sup> Conflict resulted. The "Peace River Indians were at war and killed some of the people of the Rocky Mountain which has shortened the summer return of that Country in Furs and Provisions."<sup>71</sup>

But force was used regularly to extract furs from other sub-arctic Athapaskans.<sup>72</sup> When the Indians refused to trade provisions for reasons of scarcity or concern for the future, the goods were taken.<sup>73</sup> A native who sent word that he would not be bringing furs into trade was threaten-

ed by a North West Company trader who offered to "send a Canadian to take away his woman who was said to have been taken away from another Chipewyan the previous year."<sup>74</sup> The only people who apparently still did not respond to threats were the Beaver. Like the Cree from whom they had absorbed many traits, the Beaver were much more protective of their women, and when the Canadian Labrie attempted to use force against one of them he was killed.

The Beaver Indians do not imitate the mountainers or Chipewyans in the least, as the former is a brave bold Nation, although not above two hundred men in number from the age of 15 years to 70 - which scattered from the entrance of Peace River to the Rocky Mountains in which space the North West Company has 5 settlements they are very troublesome at the Houses when in liquor and wish to have everything they ask given to them for nothing if denied they are affronted, and wish to take things wright or wrong, they are always armed Drunk or sober as it is a Custom among them to go with a large Bayonet in there [sic] hand, a knife hid under there Stockings and sometimes two - but when they are sober they are very quiet and behave very well to the white people, but will not allow any white man to take there furs or Provisions from them by force, but will give it to any one they please.<sup>75</sup>

By 1800 the effects of competition were being felt throughout the Athabasca country. The Chipewyans found their needs for European goods easily met. "Last year they worked worse than the preceding one and this year it is visible already that they will work less than last year - It will soon be beyond the power of any Man either reason or compel them into any good."<sup>76</sup> Many Chipewyans were

inclined to return to their lands immediately to hunt caribou.<sup>77</sup> European traders were exasperated but were compelled to give credits to attempt to hold onto their allegiance.<sup>78</sup>

Gave Pouces the value of 164 skins not consideration of his past behaviour which deserves no reward but on condition of his behaviour while here this summer in every respect becoming a broken chief who wished to be restored to his former Dignities.<sup>79</sup>

Others "wintered where there is a great deal of Beaver - but did not work through fear of the Crees."<sup>80</sup> To the few Chipewyans coming from the land east of Athabasca and known to frequent Churchill, enticements were given to attract them south to the pedlars' posts.<sup>81</sup>

Although trade goods were available in abundance the more sedentary existence around the fur trading post had brought the Chipewyans close to starvation. The process of Chipewyan movement to lands suitable for trapping had developed over two decades. Observers commented that they were not as adept at hunting in the boreal forest as they had been on the barrens.<sup>82</sup> Concentration of population in a more limited area further complicated their subsistence.<sup>83</sup>

Fur returns also declined as basic needs were met by the competing companies preferring goods on the Indians. Ojibways, Ottawas,<sup>84</sup> and Iroquois were brought into the Athabasca and Peace River areas to trap. The Ojibways were



reputed to be better trappers and were able to secure furs on land abandoned by other bands.<sup>85</sup> But the Beaver Indians of Peace River responded in 1799 by attacking them: "2 men, 2 women and 3 children (Bungees) were killed."<sup>86</sup> At the height of competition between the XY and North West Companies the Beaver refused to allow the "New Company" access to the Peace River. They were concerned lest any more trappers invade their lands where Iroquois had previously been brought in by the North West Company.<sup>87</sup>

An abundance of trade goods, especially arms had encouraged some bands to take on the new role of middlemen. The Beaver Indians had begun to pressure the Indians of the Upper Liard for furs.<sup>88</sup> The Yellowknives and Dogribs around Lac la Martre and Fort Providence with their newly acquired supplies of arms were travelling down the Mackenzie to obtain furs from the Slaveys and Hares.<sup>89</sup> Some passed overland the short distance from Lac la Martre to a trading rendez-vous with the Hare and Loucheux on the southwest shore of Great Bear Lake. The North West Company moved to maximize their advantage by building Bear Lake Post near this rendez-vous in 1799. The new power of the middlemen trade dominated the Slaveys and Dogribs.

The Red Knives, ...very generally make free booty of any little property collected for the purpose of traffic, in order to procure a few necessities. If the aggressors are resisted, they will force or carry off their women, and it is natural

to conclude that, the first being the least of the two evils, the property is sacrificed with the best grace possible. In consequence of this vexation, those most exposed generally sequester themselves in less danger ...Exiled in a way from their country, they often seek refuge in barren recesses, where the want of necessaries, combined with other causes exposes them to much hardship.<sup>90</sup>

These latter comments reflect the often mistaken attitude taken by European observers that natives always suffered when removed from proximity to the ports.

Entry of new faces in the middleman trade was taking place. The Slaves and Dogribs when able to obtain arms "caught a slight tincture of the same propensities, for it is certain that they act upon the same principles in their dealings with the Big or Long Arrowed Indians."<sup>91</sup> The Beaver Indians were moved to kill Duncan Livingston near the present site of Fort Norman when he was preparing to establish a post for the Slave, Loucheux and Hare Indians.<sup>92</sup>

Attempts were made by the North West Company to disperse the Indians who had clustered around the posts in the time of intense competition. "Everything which any of the young Men kill while near the fort belonged to the trader but that whatever they would kill inland was his Due."<sup>93</sup> By this means the traders induced the Indians to spread out to new trapping areas and to deploy the Indians more effectively. Trading chiefs were also actively involved in

rationalizing the placement of bands:

Our lately created Chief Marlin, has undertaken not only the reformation of the Chipewyan grievances at his own post but also that of the Grievances of Chipiweans [sic] at other posts - The present Complaint is that the Montagners of Slave Lake are too numerous for the quantity of Goods sent there every Fall Then Marlin's question was whether it would not be better to bring all the Montagnards to winter between this post and Grand Marrais [on the Peace River] and to leave the Slave Lake for the Red Knives.<sup>94</sup>

Native leaders recognized the problems which resulted from overhunting and had a comprehensive knowledge of the region.

In the period of the greatest competition from 1799 to 1804 apparently some of the natives, particularly of the Chipewyan tribe, quit the fur trade. When asked to exploit fur bearing lands, many Chipewyans apparently refused. They

arrive here two months before they should and the very best season for working Beaver - The Montagners - last year they worked worse than the preceding one and this year it is visible already that they will work less than last year - It will soon be beyond the power of any man either to reason or compel them to any good - I have been haranguing them all this day not to return any more to their lands....<sup>95</sup>

As fur returns diminished the traders increased pressure to trap.<sup>96</sup> Conflict often resulted.<sup>97</sup> James Mackenzie at Fort Chipewyan "explained" in unrestrained terms the reasons for the increased trade in women and the response of the Indians to that trade.<sup>98</sup>

It will assist to discharge the debts of a man unable to do it by any other means...the second is that it may be the means of thickling some lecherous miser to part with some of his hoard. I therefore kept the woman to be disposed of in the season when the Peace River bucks look out for women, in the month of May...They desired that we should trade no more women on any account. I told them that we would do as we thought proper, for it was not their business to prescribe rules to us....<sup>99</sup>

When Indians resisted the will of the traders or hesitated to trade their furs they were beaten<sup>100</sup> and their women were seized.<sup>101</sup> In retaliation the Chipewyan killed a 'Canadien'. Relations were exceedingly tense;

The Montagners, being much afraid, come all into the house to enquire whether we intended to revenge Lafrance's death upon them, or not. In order to keep them hereabout all summer. I thought it necessary to assure them that none of those who were here now should suffer the least injury on that account while they behave themselves as they ought, but that if any d\_\_\_\_nd rascal of them deserted this summer with any of the Frenchmen's women he and she would both lose their heads.<sup>102</sup>

Attempts to hold the native allegiance had led to excesses which were to have deep seated consequences.

The effect of the intense competition was soon felt by the trading companies. Their returns fell off,<sup>103</sup> their expenses mounted<sup>104</sup> and the Indians refused or were unable to bring in provisions.<sup>105</sup> The North West Company increased their incentives:

Several Indians went to the Old Company - and they rigged 7 Chiefs, from whom it is said they did not get 15 MB each - What a contrast betwixt now and 4 years ago when they made the Indians pay a beaver for 1 Gun flint, or 5 ball and 2

Beaver for a Knife - and the greatest Chief of the Chipewyans used only to get 10 1/2 pints of mixed rum for nothing...they preferred such before they would undertake the long & hazardous journey to Churchill, altho they got at least 10 times more for their skins; now every one that gets a Chiefs Coat gets an 8 Galoon Keg also of him for nothing - they will not be able to go this way 3 years, to a moral certainty as the things the Indians gets for nothing is extravagantly great.<sup>106</sup>

Despite the wealth of incentives thrust on the Indians few provisions were forthcoming. By 1802 "all our men came from Peace River starving."<sup>107</sup> This not only applied to Hudson's Bay Company men; "both old and new Company are near starving up Peace river, & that the Beaver Indians are doing very little, so that they as well as ourselves will go out with little in the canoes next Spring."<sup>108</sup> In 1803 the Peace River was abandoned by the Hudson's Bay Company "as the Indians there is such very great drinkers and they are so liberally supplied by both old and new Company that they will kill few furs."<sup>109</sup> Fidler observed that "the profits of each share of the Old Co. which was generally 1000 P. year before this New Co. came in was for these 2 years decreased to only 150 which was not so much as many of their clerks has p. year."<sup>110</sup>

An outbreak of infectious disease afflicted hunters in the Athabasca region in 1803. The Chipewyans from across Lake Athabasca were ill; "the great mortality amongst them this Summer has damaged their spirits so much, that little

may be expected from the survivors this winter."<sup>111</sup> This "great mortality" which killed thirty-seven was not, at least not directly, connected with the trade competition, although "some Japawyans have fallen victims thro' hunger."<sup>112</sup> It would appear that idleness, an indirect result of competition, led to some deaths.<sup>113</sup> Many hunters on the upper Athabasca were not ill, but neither were they trapping. By the summer many more would die of influenza.<sup>114</sup> "Indeed all the Indians both Northern & Southern as well as the Beaver Indians are killing few furs this winter - that all sides will go out lightly loaded in the spring."<sup>115</sup>

Many more of the Chipewyans returned to the barrens. They "did not kill one Beaver." This was in part due to a quest for food and also their attitude of despair "as a great number of their Relations Died in the fall, and the rest is doing nothing."<sup>116</sup> Most of their necessities were available from the competing companies yet frustration drove many to return to the barrens. Dependence on tools, weapons and in a few instances, on clothes, brought them back to the posts.

Eight Chipewyans came to the old Co's last night, they have come from their lands, and brought nothing with them, they never bring furs from that quarter. They go there in Summer and very seldom return before this Month to supply there wants in Cloathing which they make from the Deer Skins.<sup>117</sup>

Their return was governed in part by despair at the failure of the hunt but also by the ease of obtaining goods in a period of competition. "They have very little occasion to work as they are liberally supplied."<sup>118</sup>

The one exception was on the upper Peace River where the 110 Iroquois brought by the North West Company packed in over one-third of all furs for the Athabasca department. Another band of Iroquois were responsible for trading forty-six of a total eighty-four packs received out of the region by the XY Company.<sup>119</sup>

As the Indians returned to the barren lands the North West Company partners attempted to influence the yearly pattern of movement by resorting to all forms of dissuasion.

The usual excuse of those people who went to their lands was that there was no Beaver of their lands that therefore there is no use giving Credits....that if any...would Content himself with going to his Lands with only one of his sons he would get a few Credits but that one Old Fool was worse than ten young ones for each of them has no less than 4 or 5 Sons, 5 or 6 Guides - 9 or 10 nephews who must all follow him.<sup>120</sup>

At Slave Lake the same occurred "the most of them [Chipewyans] goes to the Carribou Country but they have all promised to return in Canoes & to be here at our arrival in the Fall in order to return to the Beaver Country."<sup>121</sup> James Porter, Factor at Slave Lake, went on to bemoan that, "the Carriboeuf is so numbrous [sic] this year that it will

no doubt induce a great many of them to Stay there all winter."<sup>122</sup>

Rather than follow their usual pattern of waiting until summer, they left for the barren lands in the early spring of 1804. They went "directly for their Lands to the Eastward and will not be in before next November."<sup>123</sup> They were apparently making an attempt to return to the older more reliable pattern after the trade attachment had failed them.<sup>124</sup>

Some were not content with mere passive withdrawal. On Lake Athabasca, where hard drinking, unpredictable James Mackenzie was in charge, the usually quiet Northern Indians attacked the seasonal post at the east end of the lake in the summer of 1804, killing four of the Canadians and destroying the settlement.<sup>125</sup>

Not a single Japawyan has been here since the beginning of June, and I doubt whether or not any will come of that notion this winter - they killed 4 of the Old Co. Man & all the Goods, they burnt it down. This they are doing in retaliation for the numerous insults and very bad useage they receive from the Old Co. who pillage everything from them either furs or Provisions whenever they happen to meet them - and as they are so numerous very few escape their grasp. This usuage the Old Co. has well verited ever since we have been here, & perhaps before. They will not suffer a single Indian to go and trade at any other House - should they do that privately and afterwards be known - They was always sure of getting a very severe drubbing at least. This kind of conduct of the Old Co. has drove these Indians to the above mentioned autrocities [sic] in vindication of their own rights.<sup>126</sup>



Fidler's view that the problem was caused by bullying explained in part renewed treks to Churchill in 1804.

But some Chipewyans were so dependent on the European goods that they immediately renewed the historic trek to Churchill.<sup>127</sup> "The N<sup>n</sup> Indians of the 23d arrived with a considerable quantity of fine furs. They are chiefly strangers...from the vicinity of Athapuscaow Lake."<sup>128</sup> The Chipewyans were met by Fidler on his last trip out from the Athabasca; they promised "to lay up their winters hunts for us next summer,"<sup>129</sup> which would probably have been at Reindeer Lake. An unusually large trading party arrived at Fort Churchill in August where William Auld realized "far better trade here this Year than has ever been since the place was settled in 1783."<sup>130</sup> Another large party arrived in the spring of 1808, and it was clearly stated as to why they went to such sacrifice: "irritated against the Canadians they promise me I shall never be ashamed at the smallness of my trade."<sup>131</sup>

Others began to withdraw from the southwest regions: "Part of them belong to the Country about Isle a la Crosse, but said they had flung that part away on account of the ill usage they received from the Canadians."<sup>132</sup> When Pouce Coupe, an excellent hunter, quit W.R. Wentzel after having his wife taken, the trader offered his analysis of the problem:

This is the consequence of letting men have their will with Indians...such men ought to be punished severely for their disobedience - for it not only breeds quarrels with the Indians - but Peoples lives are in danger of falling a sacrifice to the rascallity of one single man...an example of which...the misfortune that befel 4 men at Athabasca last summer all through the means of two discontented Indians & for the same thing with this difference those above had their women pillaged & were Scoundrels.<sup>133</sup>

In an earlier chapter, the inelasticity of fur trade demand was seen to be a result of limited transport capability. By the first decade of the 1800's other factors perpetuated a static demand for European goods. Most significant was the excessive number of European traders in the Athabasca contesting over a limited fur supply. This "trade war" for dominion of the Athabasca led to a glut of trade goods, an overabundance of liquor as an incentive to ply furs from the Indians, a depletion of game supply, and very low prices for European commodities in exchange for furs. Often in this period the Indians of the Athabasca-Mackenzie area were able to obtain all perceived necessities from European traders for little or no effort leaving them much free. A few idled but many returned to their traditional and familiar ground.

The trading system with its devices for linking the barter system of the Indians with the market-oriented economy of the Europeans was breaking down in this period of competition. The relatively fixed standard of barter, the

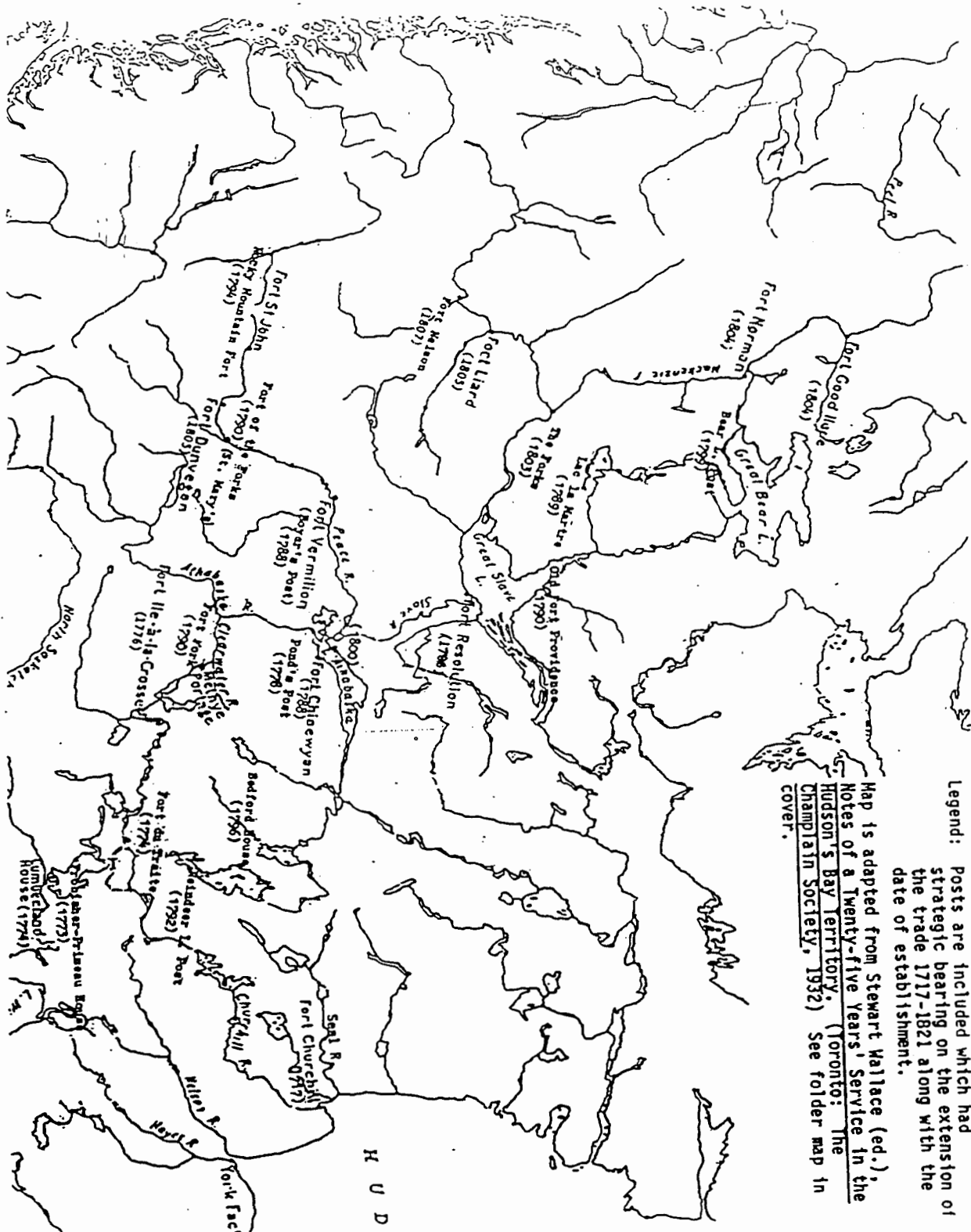
Made Beaver, meant little in a time of intense competition. Prices were repeatedly cut. The regale or gift exchange, an accepted ceremonial and ritualized part of the meeting of the two cultures was rendered meaningless as liquor was poured out in attempts to buy the Indians' allegiance in one direction or the other.<sup>134</sup>

Inter-marriage in the period gave an appearance of compatibility. A close look at the nature of these linkages however reveals that abduction, intimidation, and force were often the means of obtaining the women. Because women were vital in maintaining ties with their Indian kin, there was an air of expediency to many of the marriages.

Indians of the Athabasca-Mackenzie were committed to the trade connection by the time of the European arrival. Chipewyans and to a lesser extent, the Beaver and Yellowknives, having been previously exposed to European trading practice at the Hudson's Bay Company post of Fort Churchill knew the relative value of furs and had become used to the decorum of that Company. Those depended on most by the North West Company drew on past experience of Bayside trade to compare with their treatment by the pedlars. When the pedlars adopted an approach to the Indians which assumed native passivity, acceptance of aggressive treatment, and the rule of monopoly trade, the perspectives gained by earlier experience came into play. Natives of the Athabasca-

Mackenzie refused to accept trade practice, prices, or unilateral decisions by the fur trading companies with which they did not agree.

Map 5



Legend: posts are included which had strategic bearing on the extension of the trade 1717-1821 along with the date of establishment.

Map is adapted from Stewart Wallace (ed.), Notes of a Twenty-five Years' Service in the Hudson's Bay Territory. (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1932) See folder map in cover.

V  
NOTES

<sup>1</sup>The Indians received many times the price for their goods in the Athabasca. Philip Turnor traded 317 lbs. of meat "which cost more than 6 times the quantity would have done in any part of the country I ever saw before." Turnor, 13 Apr. 1791 in J.B. Tyrrell, ed., Journals of Hearne and Turnor (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 363n.

<sup>2</sup>Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, pp. 86-87.

<sup>3</sup>Europeans first learned of the Back River known to the Athapaskans as Thlew-a-dezza or Great Fish River, as a result of these inquiries. Ibid., 3 Mar. 1791, p. 362. See also the entry for 25 July 1791 on p. 418. "An old Indian informed me that he had heard that there is a passage out of the Slave Lake on the East side which leads to the Sea, that he was once at the Slave Lake to have accompanied the Chipewyan and Red Knife or Copper Indians to War against the Esquimays but did not proceed farther with them. He said they informed him that they were going down a River on the East side to the Sea but he was not certain that the River run out of the Lake." Ibid., 23 May 1791, p. 365. A man known as Peche (reputed to have killed John Ross in 1787) also mentioned "a very large river which runs to the Eastward...I suppose to be a branch of the Wager." Ibid., 22 July 1791, p. 417.

<sup>4</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to Roderic McKenzie, The Forks of the Peace River, 8 May 1793, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 32, n. pag. See also the letter of 8 May 1793 in W. Kaye Lamb, ed., The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), p. 451.

<sup>5</sup>James Porter, Slave Lake Post Journal, 1 July 1800, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 6, n. pag.

<sup>6</sup>Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 125. Malcom Ross relates: "2 Indians accompanied the Canadians tells as the ground is all burnt upon the other side of the Theen't nelly not neth or (Methye carrying place) where any provisions was to be got, the Indians used to be there is all gone down to the Athapescow as they could [not] live upon their own ground." Lake Athabaska Journal, 2 June 1791, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B9/a/1, fos. 17-27.

<sup>7</sup>Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 125.

<sup>8</sup>Turnor, 2 May 1792 in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 451.

<sup>9</sup>P. Fidler, Slave Lake, 12 Mar. 1792, in *ibid.*, p. 447.

<sup>10</sup>W. McGillivray, Trade of the Posts on the English River, Rat River Fort Journal, Sept. 1789, Ottawa, PAC, MG 19, C1, Vol. 4, p. 3.

<sup>11</sup>Fidler, 2 Oct. 1791, in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 514.

<sup>12</sup>*Ibid.*, 4 May 1792, p. 453.

<sup>13</sup>Turnor, *ibid.*, 2 May 1792, p. 451.

<sup>14</sup>FCPJ, 1792, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/116, n. fo.

<sup>15</sup>T. Stayner, *ibid.*, 29 July 1793, B42/a/118, fo. 23.

<sup>16</sup>*Ibid.*, 18 Sept. 1793, fo. 3.

<sup>17</sup>*Ibid.*, 23 May 1794, B42/a/119, fo. 15 and 22, Apr. 1794, fo. 16.

<sup>18</sup>George Charles, Journal, 8 July 1794, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B83/a/1, fo. 1d.

<sup>19</sup>Ibid.

<sup>20</sup>T. Stayner, FCPJ, 9 July 1794, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/119, fos. 27-28.

<sup>21</sup>William Auld, *ibid.*, 10-13 Sept. 1794, B42/a/121a, fo. 1.

<sup>22</sup>Stayner, *ibid.*, 30 Dec. 1794.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 11 May 1795, fo. 15.

<sup>24</sup>E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, Vol. II (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), p. 171.

<sup>25</sup>T. Stayner, FCPJ, 19 Aug. 1796, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/121a, fo. 15d.

<sup>26</sup>W. McGillivray, English River Posts, Rat River Fort Journal, near Riviere Maligne, 9 Sept. 1789, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 5, p. 1.

<sup>27</sup>Richard Glover, ed., Samuel Hearne: A Journey from Prince of Wales' Fort in Hudson's Bay to the Northern Ocean (1958; rpt. Toronto: Macmillan, 1972), p. 67.

<sup>28</sup>J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 20 Aug. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157, n. pag. See also entry for 13 Aug. 1800.

<sup>29</sup>Turnor, 2 Mar. 1792, in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 449.

<sup>30</sup>M. Ross, 28 Apr. 1792, *ibid.*, p. 446n.



<sup>31</sup>Turnor, 2 May 1792, *ibid.*, p. 449.

<sup>32</sup>*Ibid.*, 3 May 1792, p. 479.

<sup>33</sup>*Ibid.*, 17 June 1792, p. 479.

<sup>34</sup>John Thompson, *Journal, Riviere Rouge on Peace River*, 14 Aug. 1798, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 15, p. 24.

<sup>35</sup>A.S. Morton, ed., The Journal of Duncan M'Gillivray of the North West Company at Fort George on the Saskatchewan, 1794-95 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929), p. ixxi. "Spirits, as the Hudson's Bay man had long realized, were the one known means of turning the tables on the Indian," in *Rich, Hudson's Bay Company*, II, p. 228.

<sup>36</sup>A.S. Morton, pp. ix-xi.

<sup>37</sup>Turnor, 29 June 1791 in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 398.

<sup>38</sup>A. Mackenzie, 13 Oct. 1792 in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 238.

<sup>39</sup>"The high banks of the Slave Indian Lake - or more properly Beaver Indian Lake can be plainly seen...and appears about 30 miles off." James Bird, Letter to P. Fidler, 31 Aug. 1799, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B104/a/1, fo. 38d. Fidler corrected Bird by suggesting the distance was perhaps "50 to 60 miles betwixt the Northern shores of this Lake & the South Branch or Forks of the Peace River." Fidler Journal, 27 Jan. 1800, Miscellaneous Papers, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, E3/2, fo. 59.

<sup>40</sup>"They proceeded West by Slave Lake...on their war excursions which they often repeated, even till the Beaver Indians had procured arms, which was in the year 1782. If it so happened that they missed them, they proceeded Westward till they were certain of wreaking their vengeance on those of the Rocky Mountain[s], who being without arms, became an easy prey to their blind and savage fury. All the

European articles they possessed, previous to the year 1780, were obtained from the Knisteneaux and Chipewyans, who brought them from Fort Churchill, and for which they were made to pay an extravagant price." A. Mackenzie, 5 Apr. 1793 in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 253. See also *ibid.*, 1 Jan. 1793, p. 249; 24 May 1793, pp. 275-76; 1 June 1793, p. 279.

<sup>41</sup>*Ibid.*, 5 Apr. 1793, p. 253. Peter Fidler said that the Beaver were one half civilized. "They are more ferocious than any other Indians in these parts, but half civilized." P. Fidler, NHPJ, 14 Oct. 1802, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/1, fo. 9.

<sup>42</sup>"Natives of this Establishment call themselves Beaver Indians a name which they claim, on account of their origin, which they affirm to proceed from the Beaver Indians in Peace River from whom they were separated some ages ago when attacked by enemies; the terror of such a sudden attack induced them to fly for safety to the northwestward; another reason that they give for this name is that they generally were and still are clothed in winter with the fur of that animal." G. Keith, An Account of the MacKenzie's River Department to R. McKenzie, 7 Jan. 1807, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 51, p. 6. Keith mentions that though ignorant of their language he did not believe it was the same as the Beaver language of Peace River. *Ibid.*

<sup>43</sup>E. Petitot, Etude Sur la Nation Montagnaise ou Tchippewayne (Lyon: Les Missions catholiques, 1868), Vol. I, pp. 79-80 and 136.

<sup>44</sup>Diamond Jenness, "The Sarcee Indians of Alberta," Anthropological Series No. 23, Bulletin No. 90 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, n.d.), p. 3.

<sup>45</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>46</sup>Daniel Harmon, 21 Oct. 1810 in W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: the Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon 1800-16 (Toronto: Macmillan, 1957), p. 131.

<sup>47</sup>Sir Alexander Mackenzie, Voyages from Montreal

...to the Frozen and Pacific Oceans...(1801; rpt. Edmonton, Alta: Hurtig, 1971), p. 123.

<sup>48</sup>John J. Honigmann, *Ethnography and Acculturation of the Fort Nelson Slave*, Yale University Publication in Anthropology No. 33 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1946), p. 23.

<sup>49</sup>Emile Petitot, *Autour du Grand Lac des Esclaves* (Paris: Savine, Editeur, 1891), pp. 318, 363, 344-58 and *Exploration de la Region du Grand Lac des Ours* (Paris: Tequi, Libraire-Editeur, 1893), p. 312.

<sup>50</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807 in L.R. Masson, *Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest*, Vol. II (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), p. 85.

<sup>51</sup>G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Mackenzie's River Department, 7 Jan. 1807, *ibid.*, pp. 66-68.

<sup>52</sup>Honigmann, p. 25 and pp. 129-31.

<sup>53</sup>Diamond Jenness, *The Indians of Canada* (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 384 and "The Sekani Indians of British Columbia," *Bulletin No. 84* (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1937). See also C. Osgood, *The Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indians*, Yale University Publications in Anthropology No. 7 (New Haven: Yale Univ. Press, 1936), p. 8.

<sup>54</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807 in Masson, II, p. 85.

<sup>55</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>56</sup>Catherine McClellan is of the belief that too much is made of the differences between Eastern Athapaskans. See "Culture Contacts in the Early Historic Period in Northwestern North America," *Arctic Anthropology*, 12, No. 2 (1964), 3-15.

<sup>57</sup>A. Mackenzie, 19 Oct. 1792 in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 240.

<sup>58</sup>"They are more vicious and warlike than the Chipe-wyans." Ibid., 5 Apr. 1793, p. 253.

<sup>59</sup>Ibid., pp. 252-53.

<sup>60</sup>Ibid., p. 255.

<sup>61</sup>Alexander Mackenzie informed Turnor that he obtained sixty packs of beaver from the Indians of Peace River. See Turnor, 1 June 1791 in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 369 and *ibid.*, 29 June 1791, p. 398n.

<sup>62</sup>Ibid., 5 July 1791, p. 401.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid., 2 May 1792, p. 451.

<sup>64</sup>Robert Janes suggests that visits were irregular until about 1900. "Dispersion and Nucleation among Nineteenth Century Mackenzie Basin Athapaskans," Diss., Univ. of Calgary, 1975, p. 182.

<sup>65</sup>"The Peace River Indians were at war and killed some of the people of the Rocky Mountain which has shortened the summer return of that Country in Furs and Provisions." A. Mackenzie, Letter to Messrs. McTavish, Frobisher & Co., Mackinac, 4 June 1799 in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 475.

<sup>66</sup>P. Fidler, 27 Jan. 1800, Miscellaneous Papers Journal, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, E3/2, fo. 57.

<sup>67</sup>J. Porter, Slave Lake Post Journal, 15 Dec. 1800, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 6, pp. 70-71.

<sup>68</sup>J. Thompson, Journal, Riviere Rouge or Grand Marais, 4 Nov. 1798, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 7, p. 17.

<sup>69</sup>Ibid., 10 Feb. 1799, p. 30.

<sup>70</sup>Ibid., 22 July, 1799, Vol. 15, p. 12.

<sup>71</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to Messrs. McTavish, Frobisher & Co., Mackinac, 4 June 1799 in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 475.

<sup>72</sup>"8 Canoes of Ottaways & Bungees arrived at the French House from the Athapescow river - but as soon as they came near the shore - all the Canadians ran into the water & took everything from the Indians by force & would not let them give us a single skin or even a bit of meat.. .." P. Fidler, Journal of a Journey from Cumberland House to Red Deer's Lake, 30 Sept. 1799, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B104/a/1, fo. 14.

<sup>73</sup>"Chennele arrive from the Indians...he Me[t] Morn-eau along the way who struck him & threw him into a fire in an Indian Lodge then Pillaged him of a Considerable Quantity of Dry-d & pounded meat[;] one of the poor fellows hands is very much burnt." P. Fidler, 4 Feb. 1803, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/1, fo. 16.

<sup>74</sup>J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 23 Mar. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157, n. pag.

<sup>75</sup>Thomas Swain, 10 Jan. 1803, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B224/a/1, fo. 19.

<sup>76</sup>J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 22 Feb. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157.

<sup>77</sup>"I have been haranguing them all this day not to return any more to their Lands." Ibid.

<sup>78</sup>Ibid.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid., 23 Feb. 1800.

<sup>80</sup>Ibid., 28 Feb. 1800.

<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 31 Mar. 1800.

<sup>82</sup>p. Fidler, 30 Oct. 1791 in Tyrrell, Hearne and Turnor, p. 517.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 4 May 1792, pp. 455-56.

<sup>84</sup>Fidler said that "5 canoes of Ottaways went away to winter in the Athapiscow river." Journal of a Journey from Cumberland House to Red Deer's Lake, 29 Jan. 1800, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B104/a/1, fo. 24d. See also *ibid.*, 7 Oct. 1799, fo. 615d.

<sup>85</sup>Arthur Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 102.

<sup>86</sup>p. Fidler, Journal from Greenwich House to Lesser Slave Lake, 27 Jan. 1800, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, E3/2, fo. 57.

<sup>87</sup>T. Swain, MHPJ, 4 Oct. 1802, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B41/a/2, fo. 1. See also *ibid.*, 6 Oct. 1802.

<sup>88</sup>Refer to n. 65.

<sup>89</sup>A. Mackenzie, Letter to Messrs. McTavish, Frobisher & Co., Mackinac, 4 June 1799 in Lamb, Mackenzie, p. 475.

<sup>90</sup>G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 19 Nov. 1812 in Masson, II, p. 112.

<sup>91</sup>Ibid.

<sup>92</sup>Refer to n. 45.

<sup>93</sup>J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 6 Apr. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157, n. pag.

<sup>94</sup>Ibid., 9 Apr. 1800.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid., 22 Feb. 1800.

<sup>96</sup>For analysis of the effects of competition in the fur trade on Europeans and on Indians, see F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807 in Masson, II. pp. 95-96. The 648 packs carried out of the Athabasca by the North West Company in 1799 were reduced to 182 in 1803. P. Fidler, NHPJ, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/1, fo. 23.

<sup>97</sup>In 1799 the Chipewyans killed LaFrance when he tried to stop them from taking an Indian woman away from another Canadian. J. Mackenzie, Athabasca District Journal, 17 Apr. 1800 in Masson, II, p. 387.

<sup>98</sup>Ibid.

<sup>99</sup>Ibid., 9 Apr. 1800, p. 385.

<sup>100</sup>J. Porter, Journal, 18 Feb. 1800-14 Feb. 1801, Slave Lake, 8 Mar. 1800, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 6, p. 4.

<sup>101</sup>J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 23 Mar. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157, no. pag. In another incident Swain relates "The Old Company took him [an Indian trapper] away, and threatens to take his wife from [him] if he hunts for us." MHPJ, 27 June 1803, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B41/a/1, fo. 3. See also *ibid.*, 30 June 1803.

<sup>102</sup>J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 17 Apr. 1800 in Masson, II, p. 387-88.

<sup>103</sup>See n. 96.

104J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 13 Aug. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157, no. pag.

105Ibid.

106P. Fidler, NHPJ, 31 Mar. 1803, B39/a/1, fo. 19.

107Ibid., 23 Jan. 1803, fo. 15.

109Ibid., 12 Sept. 1803, fo. 4.

110T. Swain, Chiswick House Post Journal, Slave Lake, 6 May 1805, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/4, fo. 17.

111P. Fidler, NHPJ, 22 Sept. 1803, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/3, fo. 6.

112Ibid., 24 Jan. 1803, B39/a/1, fo. 15.

113F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, 27 Mar. 1807 in Masson, I, p. 95.

114Many more died of influenza in the summer. P. Fidler, NHPJ, 3 Sept. 1803, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/3, fo. 6d.

115Ibid., 28 Mar. 1804, fo. 14.

116T. Swain, MHPJ, 20 Dec. 1803, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B41/a/1, fo. 11d.

117Ibid., 11 Dec. 1803, fo. 11.

118P. Fidler, NHPJ, 23 Jan. 1804, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/3, fo. 11n and 9 Aug. 1804, B39/a/4, fo. 1.

119Ibid., 20 May 1804, fo. 21.



120J. Mackenzie, Fort Chipewyan Journal, 31 Mar. 1800, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH175, S157, no. pag.

121J. Porter, Slave Lake Journal, 3 Apr. 1800, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 6, p. 11.

122Ibid., 30 Nov. 1800, p. 65.

123P. Fidler, NHPJ, 19 Mar. 1804, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/4, fo. 15.

124The Chipewyans of Great Slave Lake departed: "all those Indians are now set off direct for their own Lands - & speak of going to war against the Esquimaux - & that they will not return here before the middle of next winter." Ibid.

125Ibid., 22 Aug. 1804, fo. 2. The Chipewyans told Fidler "they all go to Churchill to trade there." Ibid., 7 Sept. 1804, fo. 3.

126Ibid., 11 Sept. 1804, B39/a/41, fo.4.

127Ibid.

128W. Auld, FCPJ, 25 Apr. 1807, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/132, fo. 14.

129P. Fidler, 7 July 1807, Miscellaneous Papers Journal, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, E3/3, fo. 17.

130Ibid., 4 Aug. 1807, fo. 20.

131W. Auld, FCPJ, 17 Mar. 1808, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/133, fo. 4.

<sup>132</sup>P. Fidler, *ibid.*, Nov. 1804, B42/a/129, fo. 3d.

<sup>133</sup>F. Wentzel, *Grand River Journal*, 13 Jan. 1805, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 8, p. 42.

<sup>134</sup>Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, p. 68.

## CHAPTER VI

### POLICY AND ENLIGHTENED RESPONSE

Unopposed between 1805 and 1815, the North West Company's domination of the fur trade in the Mackenzie lowlands would prove to be illusive. Methods adapted to exploitation of untapped fur supplies revealed serious weaknesses in this period of depleting resources. Fur resources were rapidly reduced without concern for conservation and with limited concern for the welfare of the Indian trappers of the region. Conditions in international trade, in Red River and in Canada combined with the depleted resources to weaken the North West Company position in Athabasca and encouraged the Hudson's Bay Company to embark on a more forceful, concerted, and ultimately successful entry into the Mackenzie lowland region.

North West Company methods in the Athabasca did not alter markedly in the first two decades of the nineteenth century. They were observed to be "'proceed[ing] upon a systematic plan of violence, to prevent the Indians from trading with us.'"<sup>1</sup> Men who may have behaved differently in conventional society were moved to comment:

Could I have considered myself as a private man, divested of any other employment or duty than that of an independent man, then I would not do what I have done, but being a clerk in the North West Company, bound to forward their interest in every respect to the utmost of my power, I could not in consequence, think it consistent with my duty or their interest to make them lose a pack or two by ill-treating these Indians for the sake of a man who never gained them one farthing in his life, and whom we could not revive.<sup>2</sup>

Colin Robertson, an ex-North Wester was convinced that the Athabasca was both the strong and weak link in their trade system.

Failure there would throw the whole of their pretentious economy out of gear; the 'ostentatious display of wealth' which gave them so much consequence...was based upon a concept of dominating the whole country, and Robertson was convinced that 'the Company are far too advanced to retreat. They must push on. No other alternative is left them. As to arrangements on the basis of a line of boundary, that may be adhered to until our opponents recover their strength, but not one hour longer.'<sup>3</sup>

By 1810 the North West Company were extended to the furthest reaches of the Athabasca-MacKenzie region. No unexploited fur sources remained to be trapped in the North West.

In comparison, the Hudson's Bay Company had been retrenching and keeping overhead costs down while maintaining a frugal operation. In the first decade of the nineteenth century it was under the influence of the economy and the conservative policy of Andrew Wedderburn, Lord Selkirk's brother-in-law. Ideas of bringing

in more men, or embarking on more aggressive policies were doomed to failure; "in the present state of the Company's finances it would be madness."<sup>4</sup>

Wedderburn's policy also involved a change in approach to the Indians; he took on responsibility for the Red River Settlement, a haven for retired servants and their country-born offspring. The education of children was encouraged. "This change in approach to the Indian marked a reversal of policy, but in itself it was not so important as the care for the servant's families which plainly entailed support for settlement."<sup>5</sup>

These changes in policy represented a dual threat to the North West Company. Location of a major settlement close to the path of the fur brigades represented an obvious and ominous problem. Other related changes which recognized mixed bloods as a separate people were put in place between 1800 and 1810, and had sweeping effects.

The services of...Native Youths are becoming every year more and more conspicuous...they are almost our sole dependance [sic] both for supplying and supporting the Inland Stations, as well as otherwise opposing the Canadians.<sup>6</sup>

Increased employment of native servants strengthened the Hudson's Bay Company's influence among Athapaskans just as it did in other regions among other Indian peoples.

The old Hudson's Bay Company policy of maintaining

the quality of goods had been continued. "At heart they nursed their old conviction that the goods 'either of the Old or the New Canadian Company' were inferior to those which they supplied their traders, and even during the Napoleonic War they were as careful as ever in securing first quality trade goods."<sup>7</sup> In the first decade during periods of extreme competition the combination of expensive goods and limited sales had alarming consequences for dividends; profits fell and prices for goods held or rose. The annual dividend was reduced from six to four percent in 1801 and by 1809 no dividend was paid.<sup>8</sup> To counteract declining profits, a new system of incentives was introduced<sup>9</sup> which would encourage more aggressive approaches to the Indians with quality English goods.

It had also been basic to Hudson's Bay Company policy to refrain from retaliating against the North West Company. It was "'not the intention or the interest of the Company to create Contentions either with the Natives or the Canadians, which may produce the most serious and mischevious consequences.'"<sup>10</sup> In a few instances harassed servants did react against North West Company bullying, but in general the "insistence on avoiding incidents,...the wish to evade direct legal challenge, and the willingness to talk"<sup>11</sup> with the opposition was fol-

lowed. Their belief, held for one and a half centuries was that the geographic advantage of sitting on the Bay while supplying high quality goods would maintain high profits. This was coupled with their quiet and tolerant policy toward the Indians. It was not until the second decade of the nineteenth century that this policy began to pay dividends in the Athabasca country. The last untapped supplies of furs were reached in the first decade of the nineteenth century. During the time of competition the pedlars had extended regular trade down the Mackenzie River to Fort Norman and to Great Bear Lake. Fort Norman was frequented mainly by Slave Indians although some Mountain Indians, Hare, and Loucheux ventured to it. The pedlars moved near to the mouth of the Mackenzie River where they met a number of Loucheux whom they offered a post if they would trap beaver. "They said they were not able to hunt for a fort[,] that they often wanted themselves."<sup>12</sup> However the North West Company pushed on to establish Fort Good Hope at the mouth of the Blue Fish River in 1805.

Attempts to establish trade north of Great Slave Lake were unsuccessful until about 1805. A post at Old Fort Providence had been temporarily established in 1789 for the Dogribs and Yellowknives, only to be abandoned the following year.<sup>13</sup> In 1793 a post was built at Lac

la Martre by Duncan Livingston but was abandoned in three years for a more central establishment at Old Post, eighty miles below the Great Slave Lake.<sup>14</sup> Three years later one was established on Bear Lake for Yellowknife, Hare, Slave and Loucheux Indians.<sup>15</sup> By 1804 two major posts had been built on the Mackenzie River, one at the Forks of the Liard,<sup>16</sup> and one on Bear Lake. In 1805 the post on Blue Fish River was followed about the same year by a post established at Fort Liard near the mouth of the Nahanni.<sup>17</sup> Initially low, "after 1804 the returns increased rapidly"<sup>18</sup> with the amalgamation of the North West and X Y Companies. But the posts were makeshift, located to maximize short-term returns and then were relocated as beaver supplies dropped or middlemen closed off direct access.

The Bear Lake Post catered mostly to the trade of the Yellowknives. Not numerous, the Yellowknives had a long history of involvement in the trade, were familiar with its methods, and had become adequate trappers and excellent provisioners.<sup>19</sup> In their knowledge of the trade mainly acquired at the hands of the Chipewyans, they were active trappers but acted also as middlemen to associated tribes.<sup>20</sup> As a result they hovered around Bear Lake Post charging a tariff to the Indians who came in. At Nahanni River, George Keith related that "had



not the Yellowknife robbed them [the Beaver Indians] of a part of their Hunt by working the Beaver Lodges it would have been much better than it is."<sup>27</sup> Further up the Liard, the mere mention of the Yellowknives threw the Beaver or Slaves into a state of terror.<sup>22</sup>

The red knives with mauvais Loup at their head had pillaged them of all the furs they had & besides had taken 3 of their women from them - This is the old Custom of the red knives they wish to revive former times - if they should unfortunately meet with my Indians above the Old Fort...Adieu all hopes of returns for next year.<sup>23</sup>

Methods used by the Yellowknife middlemen differed little from the North West Company's manner of conducting trade.

The Yellowknives not only were dominating Bear Lake Post but spread to the south side of Great Slave Lake, down the Mackenzie and up the Liard Rivers. In 1807 George Keith reported from Nahanni River that "the Red Knives of Slave Lake have overrun the whole of the upper department in quest of Beaver and that they have greatly hurt the Trade with [local] Natives."<sup>24</sup> They were using methods similar to those imposed on them by Chipewyan middlemen in early years of the trade and practised by the pedlars since.

It was in these recesses of the Athabasca and Mackenzie lowland region that the primary sources of rich

furs were obtained in these years. The North West Company "returns in Furs from their Settlements to the North of the Methy carrying place had been this winter the greatest by far ever known amounting to 850 Packs."<sup>25</sup> These returns were deceptive since it took two years for a catch to be removed; It was also approximately two years earlier that the X Y and North West returns were combined, then supplemented by the furs extracted from the Hudson's Bay Company men.

Blatant signs of a growing Indian reluctance to trade were becoming evident. A North West Company rule to forbid marriages to Indian women<sup>26</sup> and not to allow families into the posts was largely resisted and ignored by the Canadians.<sup>27</sup> The Indian wives had served to cement trading relationships. Often they were sent alone or with their Canadian husbands to trap for the winter with the Indians. To many of the pedlars, the women were key to the trade. In 1808 at Bear Lake Post three Indian women deserted their trader husbands "with a great and valuable Booty"<sup>28</sup> and made their way up the River to the Peace de Lievres lands. Wentzel lamented that an Indian "woman Clerk has not long ago been...extolled as one of the best Tools that could be employed in charge of a Post for the Summer,"<sup>29</sup> but that situation was changing.

The Peace River region was overhunted in the period of competition. The Beaver Indians were most adversely affected by overhunting and declining returns; three Indians came into Pine River Post and the master "told them everything...[that] would make them ashamed of their behaviour, and threatened them of abandoning the Fort in the Spring as well as beating, and using them like dogs if they did not work better for the future."<sup>30</sup>

At Beaver River Fort, A.N. McLeod gave his hunters "a very severe reprimand;...he took hold of one of them by the hair and tossed the other from one side of the room to the other."<sup>31</sup> The Indians, although intimidated began taking exception to the treatment. In another incident at Pine River Post:

L'Homme Seul's band arrived...I began to harangue them, and told them everything I thought could make them ashamed of the scandalous hunt they have made since they were here last. After abusing them as much as I possibly could with words, I stepped to L'Homme Seul in order to pull his ears, but he rising suddenly took hold of one of my hands whilst his Son and several others surrounding me held the other, without however attempting to do me any harm or injury.<sup>32</sup>

The post master went on to verbally abuse the L'Homme Seul's band telling them if they did not hunt, "they shall be abused, beaten and have their Ears cut."<sup>33</sup> These practices culminated in the killing of traders by the Beaver Indians which occurred near Pine River Post

in 1823.

In the older fur-producing areas where competition and its effects had been greatest, a few of North West Company traders contemplated the problem. F. Wentzel underscored the effect of competition on the traders by noting the benefits which were realized but he also bemoaned the personalities who gained influence in times of competition.

From competition arises a variety of circumstances which, for a moment, promote the interest of many, in augmenting wages and unfurling capacities which, without this, would perhaps never have been demonstrated, tho' it is often prejudicial to morals and equally injurious to the character of many. Besides this, several people who are roguish in private and dissemblers in public...are the most noticed.<sup>34</sup>

He further suggested that the period of competition though bringing short-term benefits in higher prices for furs and lower costs for goods was ultimately destructive to the Indian for whom there were few long-term benefits.

With respect to the Indians, the care and attention that is paid...to them for the sake of their skins renders them much more civilized and cunning. By this, they take a footing which, with time, induces them to commit actions which otherwise they would not have dared to mention. Indolence, robbery and murder are the consequences of an opposition in trade: people would suppose it would rouse their attention to industry, having goods at a lower price, but far to the contrary; drunkenness, idleness and vice are preferred....Thus no good can be derived from the turbulent struggles of

opposition in this country; it destroys trade, creates vice, and renders people crafty, ruins good morals, and almost totally abolishes every humane sentiment in both Christian and Indian breast.<sup>35</sup>

Much of the violence occurred in attempts to maintain the loyalty of the Indians. The use of force though initially successful, was not tolerated in the long run.

The most telling evidence indicating dissatisfaction with the North West Company in the Athabasca were the persistent treks by Indians to the Bay. In 1807 "the Northern Indians...arrived with a considerable quantity of fine furs. They...[were] chiefly strangers from the vicinity of the Athapuscow Lake."<sup>36</sup> At the newly established post on Hay River the North West Company master, Edward Smith, was told that the Chipewyan leader Grand Blanc and many of his relations "intended to leave the River and go to there [sic] Lands."<sup>37</sup> Another leader at that post "the Three Thumbs...[and his band have] plans laid down to go to Churchill Factory next Season with his hunt."<sup>38</sup> Word of Fidler's trip to Black Lake must have filtered northwest for many of the Indians expectantly waited for the English traders to come to the Athabasca region.<sup>39</sup> At Fort Churchill, in part due to Chipewyan trade "Mr. Auld has got a far better trade here this Year than has ever been since the place was settled in 1783."<sup>40</sup> The Hudson's Bay Company

moved to capitalize on Indian reluctance to trade with the North West Company by travelling west to Wollaston Lake. Peter Fidler followed an old route "the tracks over the Portages being very little used....Before the Canadians settled in the Athapescow, and some Beaver and Northern Indians used annually to pass this way in great numbers on their way down to Churchill to trade."<sup>41</sup> Fidler passed "thro' the Deer's [Reindeer] Lake & c. which leads into the Eastern part of the Athapuscow Lake."<sup>42</sup> He chose to establish a post at "Black Lake [which] is the place preferred about 1 days walk from the Athapuscow Lake."<sup>43</sup> He met several Chipewyans en route who promised to "lay up there [sic] winters hunts for us next summer."<sup>44</sup> Fidler's pilot "after we parted" was given "a very severe Drubbing and had even broke two of his ribs"<sup>45</sup> by the North West Company master at Reindeer Lake. Although Fidler's efforts were not followed up, the interest shown by the Hudson's Bay Company and the contacts made with Indians en route served to entice them down to the Bay in ensuing years.

By 1808 a few Indian bands were relocating in an effort to ensure food stocks rather than good trapping grounds. Yellowknife Indians in particular were hunting the regions of the Upper Liard<sup>46</sup> and west of Great Bear Lake.<sup>47</sup> Chipewyans were hunting in the Peace River area

as far as Pine River Fort. Beaver Indians were hunting in the Liard area and had moved over to Hay River post to trade.<sup>48</sup> Traders were attempting to align particular bands in defined regions centering on a particular post.<sup>49</sup> The ability of the pedlars to deploy Indians in particular areas was only successful with a few middleman bands from the Chipewyan and the Yellowknife tribes. They had regular access to arms and ammunition and were familiar with all aspects of the trade.

Locational changes and seasonal cycles, combined with periodic extremes of climate had led to considerable hardship which could possibly be relieved only by attempting to retain some flexibility of movement. This occurred to the Indians around the Forks of the Liard in 1807. "The removal of the Indians to the Great Willow and Porcupine Lakes for subsistence [recently took place] - they being unable to find food elsewhere, the-[se] sad disasters it is to be feared will little contribute to [our benefit]."<sup>50</sup> The Indians of the lower Liard region were starving<sup>51</sup> until some "young men from Rock Mountain...or [Upper] Liard brought sixteen skins and some food."<sup>52</sup> A favourite hunter "Capet Rouge" arrived in the fall saying "that he feared that he would not be able to find subsistence for the Fort."<sup>53</sup> He vowed to move off to lands more familiar. The North

West Company trader disagreed with this plan:

I desired them to abandon hunting any more Animals this spring to apply themselves to the Hunt of Peltries until the Animals gets Fat....They think that I am very hard upon them for Beaver[;] great complaints are made for which I do not care a curse.<sup>54</sup>

A continuing problem of food supply on the Liard led Wentzel to attempt growing a vegetable garden.<sup>55</sup> His efforts were of limited success as they were apparently still in dire need of provisions. It was necessary to send a Canadian off

with orders to come as soon as possible with what Provisions he could possible make the Indians bring to the Fort as they may perhaps otherwise eat the whole themselves without remembering that we are equally in want of them.<sup>56</sup>

Some Indians traded what little provisions they had in order to get ammunition. But game resources were dwindling, particularly the large mammals - buffalo, elk and moose. Time which had previously been spent in trapping beaver was spent in attempts to replenish food supplies.

The problems of the Beaver Indian were increased in 1808 when a conflict with the Mountain or "Goat" Indians occurred. The Mountain Indians were attempting to come in to trade from a remote region. They had been most often excluded from the trading posts by Beaver and Yellowknife middlemen from whom they traded or in some instances were plundered of their furs. The specter of Mountain Indians trading directly with Europeans, and



particularly the possibility of their trading in arms was fiercely resisted by the Beaver Indians.

There were numbers of beaver filtering down through the middlemen. Chipewyans in particular were intercepting these furs and opting to take them out to Hudson Bay rather than receive prices and possible abuse from the pedlars.

The stresses of maintaining the level of fur returns and of obtaining a basic food supply increased and were channelled into intense pressure on the Indians.<sup>57</sup> By the fall of 1807 Wentzel issued a threat suggesting that traders on the Lower Mackenzie placed a prohibition

[on]...all kinds of Peltries except Beaver - they promised to work that Animal - as soon as the Ice is taken over the Grand River they say they will go above to the Red Knife River - I also told them that if they did not stand to this pledge of their Faith - I had orders from all the Chiefs of Athabasca to shut up my shop and Trade no more but send the goods in the Spring to the Loucheux who would give us Beaver in exchange.<sup>58</sup>

This threat was issued at a time when these same "Indians...were so poor that they Traded Moose Deer Sinews...for Beaver - For Making Hare Snares."<sup>59</sup>

Depleted resources of the region pushed Indians to the limit. On the Peace River the North West Company pedlars abused the Beaver Indians when they did not bring in the desired amount of provisions and furs.

The trader at Dunvegan post ill treated them both for not having worked better than they have this winter and assured them that they will be severely punished if they do not act better for the future and that they might not doubt of the truth of what I told them I pulled their ears and gave each a few slaps.<sup>60</sup>

At Hay River in 1807 some of the Chipewyans threatened to ignore their credits and go to the barren lands.<sup>61</sup> When three Canadians were sent out to return their Indian women who had deserted from Bear Lake Post they were killed.<sup>62</sup> A Chipewyan trapper was killed by the Slaves and Beaver of the Liard in the same spring.<sup>63</sup> Trouble on the Liard reached a peak that same year when the Beaver quarreled with the Mountain Indians "or Gens d'Orignal and twenty-two of the latter including men, women, [and] children were barbarously slaughtered."<sup>64</sup>

In March of 1808 some Indians from the Athabasca brought considerable amounts of furs out to Churchill. William Auld declared that "let nothing be undone to secure the approbation of these people. I strive to please them, their gratitude is clear and unequivocal."<sup>65</sup> He was told that the natives were "wonderfully irritated against the Canadians they promise me I shall never be ashamed at the smallness of my trade."<sup>66</sup> No doubt there was exaggeration in the promise to trade all with the Hudson's Bay Company in that they were telling Auld what he wished to hear. But there is little doubt

in the accuracy of the perception of their irritation. They had just travelled seven hundred miles or more to avoid the Canadians. By 1810 Auld had received more Chipewyans from the Athabasca and welcomed

the arrival of many Northern Indians from great distances in the fall of the year and over whom I am anxious to exert my influence in fixing their regard towards at this critical time while the Canadians are by their hard dealings barely enabling the poor wretches to exist.<sup>67</sup>

Auld decided "to give a bounty to the natives who bring the more valuable furs exclusive of the usual price for them." He believed this would act "as a new motive to draw down the Beaver hunters from the Athapuscow and Slave Lakes."<sup>68</sup> Apparently the Chipewyans were bringing prime beaver for "at no former year [did Auld]...remember seeing such a quantity of fine furs...so early in the Season." He gave a bonus of ammunition and tobacco for every ten Beaver Skins.<sup>69</sup>

The Indians of the Mackenzie lowlands increasingly displayed behaviour which reflected their disenchantment with the fur trade as practiced by the North West Company. The not always sympathetic George Keith observed at Nahanni Forks on the Liard.

The natives of this Establishment entertain very just ideas betwixt right and wrong and decide matters of this nature as coolly and impartially as could be expected from a set of people who are much attached to the most distant relations and have no determinate principal

or principal person for settling such matters.<sup>70</sup>

Disenchantment with the trading practice of the North West Company was augmented by a downturn in trade caused by widespread starvation in 1811. This negative turn of events was experienced from the Mackenzie Mountains to the Hudson Bay Coast. At the Bay, William Auld was

completely mortified and depressed at the thoughts of the shocking situation of our affairs in almost every quarter but what is still more afflicting we hear that our Indians have one and all much less success in killing furs this year than ever known before and in the latter end of that month and the beginning of May several came in, in a state even worse than our fears had led us to expect.<sup>71</sup>

Yet Indians still trickled in<sup>72</sup> from the Athabasca and Slave Lake areas<sup>73</sup> despite being "in a very starving condition [due to the] scarcity of Deer [caribou]."<sup>74</sup>

The distress which had been periodically afflicting the Indians struck the pedlars of the Athabasca in 1811. Franz Wentzel was the only European man to survive at the Forks of the Liard. "From...[Dec. 13] to the 11th of March, we lived upon nothing else but dried beaver skins....upward of three hundred...besides a few lynx and otter skins."<sup>75</sup> Three men and a child died.<sup>76</sup> The reasons given were the failure to contact the migrating caribou combined with a "die-off of hares" and a lack of fish. In addition there were "poor returns all over the country."<sup>77</sup>

Between 1812 and 1814 the fortunes of the North West Company in the Athabasca declined further. The destruction of a principal establishment by the Indians went by without penalty. "Athabasca itself is in fact dwindling down to nothing. The Indians complain of the want of beaver, (the Iroquois having ruined the country)."78 The pedlars' continued use of Iroquois trappers in the Athabasca had long been resented. As a result of starvation, continued abuse from the traders, and competition from the Iroquois the natives

formed a conspiracy last Spring to massacre all the whites of Fort Chipewean and Big Island, in the Peace River, as well as Moose Deer Island Establishment at Slave Lake. The Chipewean tribe appears to have been the first instigators, and altho' the affair seems to have been laid aside and forgotten, still we are alive to the most painful apprehensions for the safety of our lives.79

Although there were generally unsettled conditions among the natives of the region at least some of the North West Company men still believed it grew out of an immediate and temporary problem. Fort Chipewyan resident traders believed that the Indians

intended...to destroy the house and all its inhabitants. They had been instigated to this rash design by the delusive stories of one among them, who had acquired great influence over his companions by his supposed skill in necromancy. This fellow had prophesied that there would soon be a complete change in the face of their country that fertility and plenty would succeed to the present sterility; and that the present race of white inhabitants, un-

less they became subservient to the Indians, would be removed, and their place be filled by other traders, who would supply their wants in every possible manner....None of these menaces, however, were put in execution. They were probably deterred from the attempt by perceiving that a most vigilant guard was kept over them.<sup>80</sup>

From a relationship of trust in the earliest years the people of the Athabasca-Mackenzie region found themselves in a relationship of great insecurity.

On the lower Mackenzie the relationship was equally unstable. In 1813 the Loucheux arrived at Bear Lake Post with a supply of pelts to trade. When they discovered a meagre supply of trade goods, particularly decorative beads, they tried to withdraw with their furs. An attempt was made to stop them and a massacre nearly resulted.<sup>81</sup> Wentzel was of the opinion that the North West Company were finished as a trading concern in the North.

One thing kept pace with another in the decline of once famed Athabasca, formerly the delight and school of the North. The Canadians, who were ever fond of the place and thought seldom or ever of their native country, are now disgusted at the treatment they receive and gather their money as fast as the squaws gather berries, in order to get rid of the 'S.....pays maudit.'<sup>82</sup>

George Keith was of a similar opinion and a year later he commented that "the returns these years have unfortunately sunk to such a degree that one has no pleasure in mentioning them. I hope, however, that they have now

reached their lowest ebb."<sup>83</sup>

One of the pedlars openly stated that the plight of the North West Company was as much due to deteriorating relationships with the natives as to dwindling fur stocks.

I cannot account for it, but, by some fatality or other, the Natives have taken a dislike to the Whites, and the reductions of the returns may perhaps be as much attributed to this unfortunate circumstance as it may be to the pretended ruined state of the country.<sup>84</sup>

Yet he went on to say that the partners believed that a lack of beaver was their justification for shutting down the Mackenzie River Department in that year. Apparently the partners were unable or unwilling to recognize the extent of hostility to their methods.

A year later the North West Company evacuated the Mackenzie River posts. All personnel left "in the summer [of] 1815 to the great hazard of...[their] lives, for the natives having obtained a knowledge of our intentions had formed the design of destroying us on our way out."<sup>85</sup> Wentzel did return the following year with only one large canoe and was received with "extravagant demonstrations of joy."<sup>86</sup>

The years 1812-14 had been critical years for the fur trade of the Athabasca. The end of the Napoleonic Wars was in sight and the markets of Europe were to open

up to the Hudson's Bay Company. In North America the War of 1812 began and the Americans captured Detroit and disrupted North West Company transport and supply.

By 1814 the Hudson's Bay Company resolved to oppose the North West Company in the Athabasca. In that year a study and inventory of returns had indicated that interior posts where North West Company opposition was experienced had produced better returns than posts by the Bay where opposition was negligible. This seemed to indicate that lethargy was more to be feared than opposition, and a plan to extend incentives and link salaries to productivity was introduced. "Appeasement of the Northwesters should be replaced by active opposition, even in Athabasca."<sup>87</sup> The results of this study set the stage for the last phases of activity of the Hudson's Bay Company in the Athabasca. A more active opposition took place. Aggressive tactics would be countered. Opposition to all North West Company posts was to be encouraged.



VI  
N O T E S

<sup>1</sup>E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870, II (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), p. 273.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

<sup>3</sup>Colin Robertson, as cited in *ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., p. 291.

<sup>5</sup>Ibid., p. 295. Jennifer Brown postulates that prior to approximately 1790 the offspring of native mothers were brought up as "English" or "Indian". After that date the need for educated servants led the Bay to encourage the mixed bloods advancement as a separate people. See J. Brown, Strangers in Blood, Fur Trade Families in the Indian Country (Vancouver: Univ. of British Columbia Press, 1980), pp. 157-58.

<sup>6</sup>John Thomas, "Moose Servants Requests and Resolves, 1803," Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B135/f/1.

<sup>7</sup>Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, p. 256.

<sup>8</sup>Ibid., p. 264.

<sup>9</sup>Ibid., p. 270.

<sup>10</sup>Ibid., p. 257.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid., p. 221.

<sup>12</sup>A. Mackenzie, Great Bear Lake Journal, 2 July 1806, Montreal, McGill Mss, CH180, S162, n. pag. This was Sir Alexander Mackenzie's nephew.

<sup>13</sup>A. Mackenzie in L.F.R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord Ouest, I (1889; rpt. New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), pp. 292-93. The Dogribs were not very successful as middlemen in these years.

<sup>14</sup>F. Wentzel to R. McKenzie, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 23 Mar. 1807, *ibid.*, p. 95.

<sup>15</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup>F. Wentzel, Fort Enterprise, Winter Lake, 26 Feb. 1826, cited in H.A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada (1930; rpt. Toronto: Univ. of Toronto, 1964), p. 201.

<sup>17</sup>This was located near Fort Good Hope. A. Mackenzie, Great Bear Lake Post Journal, 26 Oct. 1805, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH180, S162, n. pag.

<sup>18</sup>Innis, Fur Trade, p. 202. See fragments of G. Keith's Biskaga [Nahanni] River Journal, 4 June 1807, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9338.

<sup>19</sup>"Mr. Rochblave has been pleased to inform me that the Red Knives will probably possess the Beaver Country again the ensuing summer and winter." F. Wentzel, Journal, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 1807, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH176, S158, n. pag.

<sup>20</sup>The Slave Indians near Wentzel could not be reassured that the Yellowknives would leave them alone. "This however will not be enough to satisfy the timorous minds of my Indians." *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup>G. Keith, Biskaga River Journal, 13 May 1807,

Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9337.

<sup>22</sup>F. Wentzel, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 15 Mar. 1808, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH176, S158, n. pag.

<sup>23</sup>Ibid., 19 June 1808.

<sup>24</sup>Ibid., 25 Sept. 1807.

<sup>25</sup>p. Fidler, 6 June 1807, Miscellaneous Papers Journal, 1807, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, E3/5, fo. 2. Fidler goes on to say "whereas the other year 1799 when the greatest returns came out only [there] was then 648 packs."

<sup>26</sup>Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980), p. 92.

<sup>27</sup>Simon Fraser, Letter to James McDougall, Makasteh, 21 Dec. 1806, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, A9, Vol. 2, n. pag.

<sup>28</sup>Wentzel, Journal, The Forks of the Mackenzie River, 6 Mar. 1808, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH176, S158.

<sup>29</sup>Ibid.

<sup>30</sup>Pine River Post Journal, [Fort St. John], 26 Jan. 1808, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9375.

<sup>31</sup>Alexander N. McLeod, Beaver River Fort, 1 Mar. 1807, ibid., p. 9380.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 12 Apr. 1807, p. 9384.

<sup>33</sup>Ibid., 13 Apr. 1807, p. 9385.

<sup>34</sup>F. Wentzel to R. McKenzie, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 27 Mar. 1807, in Masson, pp. 95-96.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., p. 96.

<sup>36</sup>FCPJ, 25 Apr. 1807, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/132, fo. 14.

<sup>37</sup>Edward Smith, Hay River Post Journal, 21 May 1807, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9341.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid., 23 May 1807, p. 9341.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 12 Oct. 1807, p. 9345.

<sup>40</sup>P. Fidler, 4 Aug. 1807, Miscellaneous Papers Journal, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, E3/5, fo. 20. See also ibid., 29 July, 1807, fo. 17.

<sup>41</sup>Ibid., 19 June 1807, fo. 6 and ibid., E3/3, fo. 8.

<sup>42</sup>W. Auld, FCPJ, 16 Nov. 1806, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/132, fos. 5 and 5d.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid., 2 Aug. 1807, fo. 21d. Fidler commented: "This way we have come is very short in comparison by passing the Isle a la Crosse and Methy Portage - but the water is much shoaler."

<sup>44</sup>Fidler, 7 July 1807, Miscellaneous Papers Journal, ibid., E3/3, fo. 17.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid., 15 July 1807, fo. 13.

<sup>46</sup>G. Keith, Biskaga River Journal, 13 May 1807, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9337.

<sup>47</sup>Wentzel, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 1807, Montreal, McGill, Mss., CH176, S158, n. pag.

<sup>48</sup>E. Smith, Hay River Post, 15 Oct. 1807, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9346.

<sup>49</sup>Ibid.

<sup>50</sup>F. Wentzel, Journal, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 5 Aug. 1807, Montreal, McGill Mss., CH176, S158, n. pag.

<sup>51</sup>Ibid., 16 Aug. 1807.

<sup>52</sup>Ibid., 17 Aug. 1807.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., 17 Sept. 1807.

<sup>54</sup>F. Wentzel, Journal, Forks of the Mackenzie River, 6 Apr. 1806, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9303.

<sup>55</sup>"Everything in the garden comes up pretty well." ibid., Sept. 1806, p. 9298.

<sup>56</sup>F. Wentzel, Journal, 9 Sept. 1807, Forks of the Mackenzie River, Montreal McGill Mss., CH176, S158, n. pag.

<sup>57</sup>Wentzel told the Indians only to hunt beaver. "Several of the Indians had thrown away great numbers of Martin, Pichoux, and Carcajoux skins - on account of what I had told them in the Fall." Ibid., 8 Nov. 1807.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., 15 Oct. 1807.

<sup>59</sup>"The scarcity of animals never appeared among these people more severely than this year. Some of them are greatly in danger of starving this winter from want of sinews to make hare snares." Ibid.

<sup>60</sup>Dunvegan Post Journal, 5 Feb. 1808, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9279.

<sup>61</sup>E. Smith, Hay River Post Journal, 17 Oct. 1807, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, E1, Vol. 24, p. 9348.

<sup>62</sup>Wentzel, *ibid.*, 19 June 1808.

<sup>63</sup>*Ibid.*, 28 June 1808.

<sup>64</sup>G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Biskaga River Post, 1 Dec. 1808, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 51, p. 19.

<sup>65</sup>W. Auld, FCPJ, 17 Mar. 1808, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B42/a/133, fo. 5d.

<sup>66</sup>*Ibid.* See also *ibid.*, B42/a/134, 26 Apr. 1809, fo. 7d. and 22 May 1809, fo. 8d.

<sup>67</sup>*Ibid.*, 16 Aug. 1810, B42/a/136a, fo. 1.

<sup>68</sup>*Ibid.*, 15 Sept. 1810, fo. 10.

<sup>69</sup>*Ibid.*, Oct. - Nov. 1810, fo. 12.

<sup>70</sup>Keith goes on to relate two specific instances of this sense of justice in action. G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Biskaga River Post, 28 Feb. 1810, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 51, pp. 3839.

<sup>71</sup>W. Auld, FCPJ, May 1811, B42/a/136a, fo. 21.

<sup>72</sup>FCPJ, 25 Oct. 1811, B42/a/137, fo. 2d.

<sup>73</sup>*Ibid.*, 29 Oct. 1811, fo. 3.

<sup>74</sup>*Ibid.*, 19 May 1812, fo. 10.

<sup>75</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Forks of the

Mackenzie River, 30 Apr. 1811, in Masson, I, p. 106-07.

<sup>76</sup>"Poudrie, Pillon and Wm. Henry, all Canadians, and the child of Poudrie," G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Great Bear Lake Post, 5 Jan. 1812, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 51, p. 48.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., p. 49.

<sup>78</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 28 Feb. 1814, in Masson, I, p. 109.

<sup>79</sup>Ibid.

<sup>80</sup>Sir John Franklin, Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea (1823; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 152.

<sup>81</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 28 Feb. 1814, in Masson, I, p. 109.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid.

<sup>83</sup>G. Keith, Letter to R. McKenzie, Mackenzie's River, 4 Feb. 1815, Ottawa, PAC, MG19, C1, Vol. 51, n. pag.

<sup>84</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Bear Lake Post, 6 Mar. 1815, in Masson, I, p. 114.

<sup>85</sup>Ibid., pp. 114-15.

<sup>86</sup>Ibid.

<sup>87</sup>Ibid., p. 312.





## CHAPTER VII

### RESTORED MONOPOLY: REORGANIZATION, DEPLOYMENT AND CONSERVATION

Arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company after 1815 exaggerated the critical problems which were plaguing the Mackenzie lowland region. Most severe were in the Peace River country where the implications of the exploitation of the previous twenty-five years was most evident. This region, once the storehouse of food support for traders down the Mackenzie River and the source of pemmican to fuel fur brigades to Fort William, was in disarray. Large mammals had almost disappeared and fur returns were marginal. During the winter of 1815-16 at least sixteen employees starved to death on the Peace River.

Most Indians realized from the earliest days of the fur trade the value of competition in enhancing the worth of their furs and in keeping the price of trade goods down.<sup>1</sup> Alternative marketing of furs at Prince of Wales' and Churchill Forts had periodically been exercised to realize higher returns or escape the predatory practice of the North West Company. The period of

competition between 1799-1805 had for the first time impressed upon the Indians the mixed benefits resulting and some were actively looking with favour on the stability which might be derived from a return to monopoly.

Competition had led to extremes of treatment and excesses which had come to be identified with the inter-ludes when competing markets were available. A typical incident occurred upon the arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1815, "One of the Indians came up to Mr. Clark saying the North West had armed them...and was Endeavouring To Prevail on them to destroy us all."<sup>2</sup> At Fort Resolution it was observed that

the North West are following up their usual custom of running after the poor Indians in all directions with armed men and drives them before them like a flock of sheep to their fort and treats them as they think proper.<sup>3</sup>

In the first year of revived competition after 1815 the Indians were mainly concerned that the Hudson's Bay Company had the resolve to stay and the power to protect those who traded with it. "They said it was hard to join us as afterwards we could protect them from the North West but if we had an equal [strength] with the North West they would soon join us."<sup>4</sup> As the Bay strength increased between 1816 and 1819 the natives became more calculating in the event of a change of corporate direction.

As George Simpson observed all their measures are regulated by political views, they know the value of Opposition and dread the termination of it, therefore in order to encourage both parties, knowing that it must very soon cease to exist, if they attached themselves altogether to either side; they settle among themselves who are to join the French and who the English: the head of a numerous Family almost invariably attaches so many to one side and so many to the other, and individuals frequently take credit at each Fort and divide their hunts.<sup>5</sup>

But the Indians were also applying pressure by choosing to carry greater proportions of their furs to the Bay than ever before. North West Company returns were reduced to ninety packs by 1818.<sup>6</sup> Some were fearful and by 1819 were placing their stocks in hidden caches. They "desire...[their stocks] might be sent for: the Indians having declined bringing either furs or meat themselves, since the opposition between the Companies commenced."<sup>7</sup> By 1819 the Indians of the Peace River area, "nearly 3/4 of the total" were trading with the Hudson's Bay Company.

The fur trade had been in disarray in great part due to the disillusionment of the natives with the trade. "In fact the Natives are so much disorganized in Athabasca, that if they are in the same train of living in other parts of the North West, it will not be too much to say that the fur trade [is] ruined for some years to come."<sup>8</sup>

As late as 1819 the Indians were still contemplat-

ing the attempt to rid the Mackenzie region of all whites. "An old Cree communicated to Mr. Prudens, that the Indians spoke of killing all the white people in that vicinity this year." The same individual was moved to remark "'A pretty state we shall be in, without the goods you bring us.'"<sup>9</sup> The North West Company had been well aware of the intent of some Indians as early as 1811. In that year a tower had been built "for the purposes of watching the motions of the Indians, who intended...to destroy the house and all its inhabitants."<sup>10</sup> The native leader at that time had forecast that "there would be a complete change in the face of their country."<sup>11</sup>

Native threats appear to have had little impact on the behaviour of the North West Company because as late as 1820 when "a North West Chief (Whiskey Jack) came over this morning with the intention of joining us [the Hudson's Bay Company]...Keith detained his wife and sent two Halfbreeds after him."<sup>12</sup> F.W. Wentzel in 1812 repeated his contention that "the whites at present possess but a faint resemblance of that influence which they formerly turned so well to their own emolument and thereby also to the benefit of their country."<sup>13</sup> Natives were starving who "for some years past [had] been considered...the best hunters of the[ir] tribe."<sup>14</sup> With

their fort hunters starving, the residents of Fort Chipewyan were reduced to the shortest provisions in years.<sup>15</sup> Athapaskans became depressed in such circumstances and stopped hunting, thus contributing to the malaise.<sup>16</sup>

To further the dislocation, smallpox struck the native people of the North West in 1820. Fully "1/5 of the population between Rainy Lake and Athabasca was [estimated to be] destroyed."<sup>17</sup> At Fort Resolution many of the survivors according to their custom "destroyed their property and stopped hunting - the consequence of which was they have not procured a single skin, and have starved ever since."<sup>18</sup> George Simpson commented at Lake Athabasca that the disease "carried away whole bands, and they are now dispersing in all directions, hoping that a change of residence may arrest the progress of the contagion."<sup>19</sup> On the Peace River many became sickly as they "are naturally of a delicate constitution, and so much addicted to spiritous liquors, that nine out of ten dies of a rapid decline."<sup>20</sup> "Many Beaver Indians," an Iroquois, and three North West Company servants died.<sup>21</sup>

The decline<sup>22</sup> of the once formidable resources of the Peace River was complete.<sup>23</sup> In 1823 when the Hudson's Bay Company attempted to close the posts and with-

draw their personnel they were attacked by the Beaver Indians. Four men were killed at Fort St. John. Another was killed at Dunvegan in 1824 when it was closed.<sup>24</sup> The Iroquois freemen were convinced to leave and take up residence at Lesser Slave Lake and remnants of the Beaver bands relocated near the post at Fort Vermilion.<sup>25</sup>

Further dislocation of the natives occurred when the Yellowknife dominance as middlemen was ended by the Dogribs. They had been subjugated by the Yellowknives since the 1790's.<sup>26</sup>

We suffered our Wives, our Daughters and our Brothers to be taken from us with their Children. Our Furs also, this we considered of little importance, they were only skins of Animals, but even our Nets upon which our existence depended, were likewise taken from us, and frequently our Axes, Guns and whatever was most useful or necessary to our maintenance.<sup>27</sup>

Arrival of the Hudson's Bay Company with their need for provisions from the Dogrib country led to trade in arms and a much stronger and prosperous native presence. The Yellowknives, led by Akaitcho were dispersed. They eventually abandoned their locale on the Yellowknife River and moved to the east end of Great Slave Lake or southeast of Fort Resolution.<sup>28</sup>

The predominance of Dogrib over Yellowknife was evidence of the depleted food stocks on the Peace River and the consequent turn to bountiful caribou herds on

the edge of Dogrib lands. The Peace River had been depleted of large mammals and the Athabasca did not supply adequate amounts of meat. Traditional provisioners, the Cree and Beaver Indians, were periodically starving. "There is more danger to be apprehended from Starvation here than in any part of North America, and unless the greatest precaution is taken the people must inevitably perish."<sup>29</sup> Although the Slave, Hare, and Loucheux desired restoration of trade, there were no attempts "to penetrate further on account of the danger of famine."<sup>30</sup>

In 1819 the fur traders and many native trappers switched their main dependence to caribou meat. John Franklin found in that year that Old Fort Providence was mainly a provisioning depot "for the convenience of the Copper and Dogrib Indians, who generally bring such a quantity of rein-deer meat that the residents are enabled, out of their superabundance, to send annually some provision to the Fort at Moose - Deer Island."<sup>31</sup> The Dogribs became vital to the reorganized trade, although at Fort Resolution on the south shore of Great Slave Lake, remnants of the Yellowknives and Chipewyans traded in caribou meat.<sup>32</sup>

Necessity had turned the fur traders and Indians of the region to hunt the large caribou herds. A division

of labour leading the native people to adopt further specialized roles was encouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company, and George Simpson in particular, was responsible for the labelling of the Chipewyan bands which we know today.<sup>33</sup> He was the first Euro-Canadian to use the term "caribou eater."

The Carribeau Eaters are those who confine themselves to their own barren lands and so called from the circumstance of their devoting the whole of their attention to hunting the Carribeau or Rein Deer.<sup>34</sup>

Simpson related that the caribou-eaters and Yellowknives mainly traded at Fort Resolution. "The Post at Montagne Island is the provision depot of Mckenzie River...provisions is...the main object, which they obtain on moderate terms in great abundance so that they seldom feel the miseries of Famine."<sup>35</sup> The Yellowknives also traded there after they were driven from the vicinity of the Yellowknife River by Dogribs; there they "exchange provisions and the few furs they collect."<sup>36</sup>

The third group of Chipewyans noted by Simpson were the Montagners. "The Mountaineers are those who have been in the habit for many years past of Trading with the North West principal Establishments, are chiefly Fur hunters, and previous to the opposition were tolerably industrious."<sup>37</sup> This group was termed by Simpson as "'homeguards' [and] devoted their attention exclusively to Fur Hunting except when in search of immediate suste-



nance."<sup>38</sup> They were "expert Beaver hunters" and had in earlier years indulged in lengthy journeys "in search of that valuable animal into the Cree and Beaver Indian hunting Grounds....[They made] a circuit easterly by Carribeau Lake; to the South by Isle a la Crosse; and Westerly to the Banks of the Peace River."<sup>39</sup> Their extensive range led to conflict with other bands since the Chipewyans were paid a higher price than any others, saving often as much as five skins for a gun. "They can afford to barter their property with the Slaves and have handsome profits." "If not timely stoped [this] may be followed up with some disagreeable consequence...it being for the benefit of the Concern in general to keep the Indians at this River distinct and separate from mixing with Chipewyans."<sup>40</sup> These conflicts provided an additional incentive for division of labour and organization of bands around particular posts.

Attempts were made to regularize relationships with the natives. Certainly the Hudson's Bay Company led by George Simpson was firm, even sometimes harsh; but it attempted to induce a relationship based on more fair treatment. Women and children were no longer abducted and held hostage in exchange for furs. "Simpson was emphatic that the use of spirits ranked alongside improper familiarity with Indian women as a cause of serious

differences with the Indians."<sup>41</sup> He worked to end the scenes of debauchery which had formerly marked post life and by 1825 remarked that "we are now thank God merely distressed by the recollection of such scenes, as from one end of the country there is not a single skin purchased by liquor."<sup>42</sup> Simpson was speaking in reference to the Athabasca-Mackenzie region only, yet by 1821 Simpson had succeeded in cutting "the quantity of spirits taken into the country...to less than 1/12 part of that which the two companies had taken in during opposition."<sup>43</sup> He believed that the liquor traffic was one of the critical elements of the problem of contact. "In nine out of ten where serious differences arise between the natives and the people of the Establishments I am of opinion that the cause may be traced to ourselves."<sup>44</sup> This was certainly an oversimplification of the problems associated with fur trade in previous years but an end to the liquor trade would lead to a reduction in tensions brought on by drunkenness, particularly in the Peace River country.

The decision to cut back on the liquor trade was in part the cause of a serious confrontation at Fort St. John in 1823. The Beaver Indians who had since contact been under the influence of the liquor trade were distressed at the cutback in supply and struck out when

they also discovered their post was to be closed in favour of Rocky Mountain Portage.<sup>45</sup> When this post and Fort Dunvegan were later closed to allow the fur and food stocks of that section of the Peace River area to recover, the Beaver Indians were forced to move down to Fort Vermilion. The freemen from the region were removed to Lesser Slave Lake and the Peace River country quickly recuperated.<sup>46</sup>

Native people had a long history of exposure to attempted organization of the trade. Specialization had been encouraged since the time of the earliest North West Company establishments in the Athabasca region. Cree Indians had been encouraged to be provisioners and were limited to that role after the smallpox epidemic in 1781-84.<sup>47</sup> Beaver Indians had been encouraged to hunt primarily the buffalo, moose, and elk in the Peace River area.<sup>48</sup> Yellowknife Indians took the role of middlemen in the peripheral areas and began provisioning Bear Lake Post and Fort Resolution with caribou meat.<sup>49</sup> The Montagner band of Chipewyans originally from the Lake Athabasca area were encouraged to range over the Upper Churchill, the Athabasca and Peace River drainages to trap furs.<sup>50</sup>

Acute problems of depletion by 1821 revealed these earlier attempts to encourage specialized roles as hap-

hazard and in need of revision and strict observance. By 1821 the depletion of food stocks caused Indians to consider alternative hunting regions. Specialization when it had succeeded in the early period was hampered by the speed and extent of changes occurring in the region and was due, not to a policy of long-term planning, but in no small part to the rapacious policies followed in the early fur trade period. Indians were periodically faced with major dislocation due to the rapid depletion of resources.

By 1819 the extent of disorganization of the fur trade in the region was recognized by natives and European alike. George Simpson placed in the Company record his growing awareness of the problem from the fur trader's perspective: "when they have both duties to perform, it frequently happens that they are compelled to devote the whole of their attention to the support of themselves and Families and in the spring are unable to liquidate any part of their Debts."<sup>51</sup> But European and Indian alike were aware of the need for a more conservative policy in the Athabasca. Natives had in many instances gravitated to new regions to relieve hardship. Other groups were actively involved in recommending changes for redeployment of bands. Changes which reflected attempts to relieve hardship brought on by prof-

ligate practices were well underway by the time of the arrival of George Simpson in 1819. As Chief Factor for the Mackenzie region, Simpson was responsible for carrying out the reorganizations already underway and recorded the changing realities of the fur trade of the period.

Simpson methodically examined the potential for each of the trading regions. Some areas he preferred not to re-establish and allow to recruit.<sup>52</sup> Other areas, particularly the rivers draining into the southside of Great Slave Lake, were rich in fur and food resources and trade was encouraged by establishing posts at Hay River and on the Liard.<sup>53</sup> Simpson was aware of the potential for agriculture in the area of Fort Vermilion and recommended "extensive gardens...." "Crops of Grain, Potatoes, and other Vegetables and its contiguity to the Buffalo hunting grounds renders it the most desirable abode in this part of the Country."<sup>54</sup> Gardens were also recommended for Fort Dunvegan and St. Mary's Post.<sup>55</sup> Freeman, Iroquois and discharged servants who were "more expert in hunting the Buffalo and Deer than the Natives"<sup>56</sup> were encouraged to locate in regions where returns were poor.

In areas where native confidence in the fur trade had reached a low ebb the hunters were given encourage-

ment. "In order to regain the confidence of the Beaver Indians and Free Iroquois about Peace River and the Rocky Mountain"<sup>57</sup> an attempt was made to restore stability. Food supplies in the Lake Athabasca area were reassessed and reorganized; it was believed that they "ha[d] never yet been sufficiently attended to."<sup>58</sup> Simpson's confidence did not lead to immediate changes since in 1821 "many of the Beaver Indians...[,] one of ...[the Bay's] Iroquois, and three belonging to the North West Company"<sup>59</sup> starved to death. As late as 1824, he concluded the Chipewyans "can never be rendered dependant [sic] much less become stationary...."<sup>60</sup> Still the deployment went on. Some Chipewyans were encouraged to go down the Mackenzie River in 1825.<sup>61</sup> Others were encouraged to move out onto the barrens to subsist by hunting 'reindeer,'<sup>62</sup> especially those of Peace River. Simpson linked the problems of conservation and the need to help rehabilitate the Beaver Indians with the murders on the Peace River in 1823.<sup>63</sup> The Peace River was effectively closed and "the freemen were ordered to be removed, by compulsion if necessary, to Canada or Red River, and the Company's servants...[to] use their influence to persuade the Chipewyans to return to the Barren Lands and live off deer."<sup>64</sup>

Large mammal food stocks in the Mackenzie lowland

region were subject to rapid depletion in selected areas after approximately 1790. Regions in proximity to the historic path to Churchill were subjected to hunting pressure in the earlier middleman period of trade. But as the Montagner Chipewyans moved south and west into the rich trapping grounds after the 1750's, there was a decline in pressure on caribou herds, particularly the Beverley and Kaminuriak. Further easing of pressure on these herds occurred after the smallpox epidemic of 1781-84 reduced the Chipewyan population. It was after 1788 with the establishment of Fort Chipewyan as the main provisioning depot for the Athabasca on the edge of the rich Athabasca Delta near the Peace River, that these areas were subject to intense hunting pressures. Food stocks in the Peace River, Athabasca, and Upper Churchill Rivers, which were so plentiful at the time of European arrival, were quickly reduced. Bountiful stocks of Buffalo, moose, elk and woodland caribou which were referred to as the "grand magazin" of the Athabasca in the 1790's were no longer available in sufficient numbers to support the additional population after 1805.

Native trappers after 1805 returned in considerable numbers in proximity to bountiful food stocks. A few moved to the south shore of Great Slave Lake where fish were available. Many returned to the edge of the barren

grounds where caribou were available. Since the latter regions were scarce in beaver and marten the natives provided few marketable furs, the fur trade suffered, and the Indians obtained a minimum of trade goods. By 1821 the bands were willing to trust in the organization of the Hudson's Bay Company. The desire to continue obtaining the benefits of the fur trade and at the same time have some assurance of food stocks led a number of them to accommodate to specialized trapping or hunting.



VII  
N O T E S

<sup>1</sup>Fort Wedderburne Journal, Athabasca Lake, 18 Sept. 1815, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B39/a/6, fo. 18.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid., 28 Sept. 1815, fos. 17d-18.

<sup>3</sup>Fort Resolution Journal, 1 Nov. 1818, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B181/a/1, fo. 14.

<sup>4</sup>Ibid., 6 Oct. 1816, fo. 14d.

<sup>5</sup>G. Simpson, Letter to Governor and Committee, 18 May 1821 in E.E. Rich, ed. Simpson's Athabasca Journal (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), p. 358.

<sup>6</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Great Slave Lake, 15 Apr. 1819 in L.F.R. Masson, ed., Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest, I (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960), p. 122.

<sup>7</sup>Sir John Franklin, Narrative of a Journey to the Shores of the Polar Sea (1823; rpt. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969), p. 126.

St. Mary's Post Journal, 1819, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B190/a/2, fos. 8 and 17.

<sup>8</sup>F. Wentzel, Letter to R. McKenzie, Mountain Island, 23 May 1820 in Masson, I, p. 127.

<sup>9</sup>Franklin, p. 117.

<sup>10</sup>Franklin, p. 152.

<sup>11</sup>Ibid.

<sup>12</sup>Fort Wedderburne, 5 Oct. 1820 in Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 74.

<sup>13</sup>Ibid.

<sup>14</sup>G. Simpson, Fort Wedderburne, 9 Dec. 1820 in Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 197.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid., 20 Dec. 1820, p. 202.

<sup>16</sup>Ibid., 11 Jan. 1821, p. 223. See also 9 Dec. 1820, p. 197.

<sup>17</sup>F. Wentzel, 23 May 1820 in Masson, I, p. 130.

<sup>18</sup>William Brown, Fort Resolution Journal, 12 Jan. 1820, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B181/a/2, fo. 61.

<sup>19</sup>G. Simpson, Fort Wedderburne, 13 Oct. 1820 in Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 81.

<sup>20</sup>John Clark, St. Mary's Post Journal, 24 Apr. 1820, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B190/a/2, fo. 92.

<sup>21</sup>G. Simpson, Fort Wedderburne, May 1821 in Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 338.

<sup>22</sup>"There has been a great mortality amongst the Beaver Indians" and "we have lost many valuable hunters." G. Simpson, Letter to Duncan Finlayson, Fort Wedderburne, Sept. 1820, *ibid.*, p. 61.

<sup>23</sup>The post, Pierre au Calumet had been abandoned in

Dec. 1818 "on account of the residents not being able to procure provisions from their hunters, having been disabled by the epidemic sickness which has carried-off one-third of the Indians in these parts." Franklin, p. 137. Ibid., May 1821, p. 338.

<sup>24</sup>E.E. Rich, ed., The History of the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870, II (London: Hudson Bay Record Society, 1959), pp. 474-75.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid.

<sup>26</sup>Dogrib Chief Kanoohaw speaking to F. Wentzel, Letter to John McLeod, Fort Simpson Journal, 8 Apr. 1824, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B200/a/4, fos. 4-6.

<sup>27</sup>George Back, Arctic Land Expedition to the South of the Great Fish River (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1970), pp. 456-57. See also Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 252n.

<sup>28</sup>Back, p. 457.

<sup>29</sup>G. Simpson, Fort Wedderburne, 18 May 1821 in Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 392.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., p. 395.

<sup>31</sup>Franklin, p. 208-09.

<sup>32</sup>Only twelve packs of furs were traded. Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 32.

<sup>33</sup>G. Simpson, Fort Wedderburne, 16 May 1821, *ibid.*, p. 369.

<sup>34</sup>Ibid.

<sup>35</sup>Ibid., 18 May 1821, p. 371.

<sup>36</sup>Ibid.

<sup>37</sup>Ibid., 16 May 1821, p. 369.

<sup>38</sup>Ibid.

<sup>39</sup>Ibid., 18 May 1821, p. 355.

<sup>40</sup>Edward Smith, Fort Simpson Post Journal, 10 Apr. 1825, Winnipeg, Man., HBC Archives, B200/a/6, fos. 3-4.

<sup>41</sup>Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, p. 477.

<sup>42</sup>Ibid.

<sup>43</sup>Ibid.

<sup>44</sup>After 1826 "no liquor of any description should be taken to any post north of Cumberland." Ibid., p. 478. George Simpson quoted in *ibid.*, p. 475.

<sup>45</sup>Ibid.

<sup>46</sup>"The freemen were ordered to be removed, by compulsion if necessary, to Canada or Red River." Ibid., pp. 474-75.

<sup>47</sup>See chapter IX, n. 5, n. 45, n. 46, and n. 79.

<sup>48</sup>See chapter V, n. 63.

<sup>49</sup>Beryl Gillespie, "An Ethnohistory of the Yellowknives," in Contributions to Chipewyan Ethnology, ed., D.B. Carlisle, Mercury Series, Canadian Ethnology Service Paper No. 27 (Ottawa: National Museums of Canada, 1971), p. 213.

<sup>50</sup>Ibid.

<sup>51</sup>Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, p. 47.

<sup>52</sup>G. Simpson to Governor and Committee, 18 May 1821  
in Rich, Simpson's Journal, p. 392.

<sup>53</sup>Ibid., p. 386.

<sup>54</sup>Ibid., p. 379.

<sup>55</sup>Ibid., p. 380.

<sup>56</sup>Ibid., p. 381.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid., p. 378.

<sup>58</sup>Ibid., p. 355.

<sup>59</sup>Duncan Finlayson to G. Simpson, *ibid.*, p. 338.

<sup>60</sup>Fort Chipewyan, Report on District, 1824-25, *ibid.*,  
p. 356.

<sup>61</sup>Edward Smith, FSPJ, 10 Apr. 1825, Winnipeg, Man.,  
HBC Archives, B200/a/6, fos. 3-4.

<sup>62</sup>G. Simpson in Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, II, p.  
474.

<sup>63</sup>Ibid.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.



## CHAPTER VIII

### CONCLUSION

The Indians of the Eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands underwent considerable change by 1821 as they adapted from a nomadic band centered and mainly caribou hunting based to a trapping or specialized hunting way of life.

Changes which were more than merely locational began to occur early in the fur trade. This thesis argues that the first years of contact saw the rise of middlemen trading bands among the Athapaskans; individual Indian chiefs experienced a rising status as they were outfitted and treated by Europeans and by virtue of their skill and influence with newly acquired guns. The specialized trading bands also experienced other social changes as a culture adapted to migratory subsistence was modified and women were employed in a more intense way to pack furs and supplies. Bands also underwent seasonal cyclical variations from their traditional pattern. The Beaver Indians developed unique characteristics as a result of contact, thus becoming more distinct from the Slavey, Sekani, and possibly Chipewyan and

Sarcee.

Other Athapaskan people began to devote more and more energy to trapping in this period. An emphasis on valuable furbearing animals such as beaver, marten and lynx began to take precedence over large mammals which previously were more efficiently hunted for food or clothing. Certain bands who lived on the edge of the barrens distant from supplies of marketable furbearers chose to move in these years to the south and west. This process was hurried in the 1780's when smallpox devastated those in close contact with European posts and goods; many more bands moved to fill the void left by those killed in the epidemic. Population dislocation was considerable in the 1780's.

The 1790's began with a period of attempted deployment of Indian bands to resolve food supply problems and later the decade was marked by unrestrained competition. Early in the decade the Peace River became recognized as the provisioning center for the fur trade in the Athabasca. Buffalo and elk supplemented by other large mammals were killed mainly by bands of Beaver Indians and some Cree and were processed into pemmican. Canoe loads were then transported to Fort Chipewyan for use as winter food stocks, or to supply canoe brigades leaving for Grand Portage in the spring. Toward the end



of the decade arrival of the competing XY Company and the Hudson's Bay Company traders as well as specialized Iroquois trappers in the Peace River, led to rapid reduction of food stocks there. By the time of the end to competition in 1805 some Indian bands were starving, others were giving up a specialized trapping existence, and a few were decimated by the excesses of liquor used in the attempts to extract food.

Between 1805 and 1821 the Athabasca region was the scene of considerable disruption and realignment of native and European groups in the fur trade. North West Company methods which included stripping of fur stocks from some regions, intimidation of recalcitrant Indian people and vicious threats against and bullying of the opposition traders were openly resisted by Indians. A few Indian people resisted the bullying with a violent response. Others responded by taking their furs on the long trek to the Bay. A few withdrew to regions with more reliable food supplies, mainly to the vicinity of the barren-ground caribou herds. By 1814-15 the North West Company were unable to continue trading on the lower Mackenzie River so closed their posts and withdrew to Fort Chipewyan. The return in force of the Hudson's Bay Company to the Athabasca-Mackenzie in 1816 marked the beginning of the end for the Northwesters. Indians pre-

viously subdued and bullied began to turn to the more restrained and by 1816 more forceful Hudson's Bay traders.

The last year or two of competition and the first years of a renewed monopoly witnessed changes brought about by concerned Indian trappers and European traders. Indian groups who were unable to ensure a stable food supply opted to move to areas where food was assured; either a stable fishery which they could exploit, or near to other caribou hunting bands, who would serve as suppliers. The Bay traders encouraged other bands to concentrate on food production which by this time was the barren-ground caribou. These bands were centered near the Beverly Herd which ranged northeast and south of Fort Resolution. Other bands emphasized caribou hunting from Old Fort Providence and hunted the Bathurst Herd which wintered to the north of Great Slave Lake. People of the Peace River were encouraged and in at least one instance pressured by the closure of posts to move away from the beleaguered upper Peace River and closer to the rich trapping grounds of the Athabasca Delta. Indians in the vicinity of Isle a La Crosse were encouraged to prepare pemmican from the buffalo of the plains for the brigades passing by.

The object of this thesis has been to elevate the

Indian peoples of the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowlands region to their rightful place at the center stage in the history of the fur trade between 1717 and 1821.

In that period the Eastern Athapaskans were at the very least partners with the companies in the fur trade. Policies in the region were assessed, accommodated, or rejected according to Indian advantage. To revise the history of this region sources not consulted previously had to be perused to obtain a picture of eastern Athapaskan lifeways at the beginning of the study; wildlife behaviour and the nutritional needs and food habits of the peoples were linked with the observed social changes as recorded in ethnographies and the documentary record. The disciplines of history, archaeology, ethnography, and linguistics have been examined for their approaches to the problem.

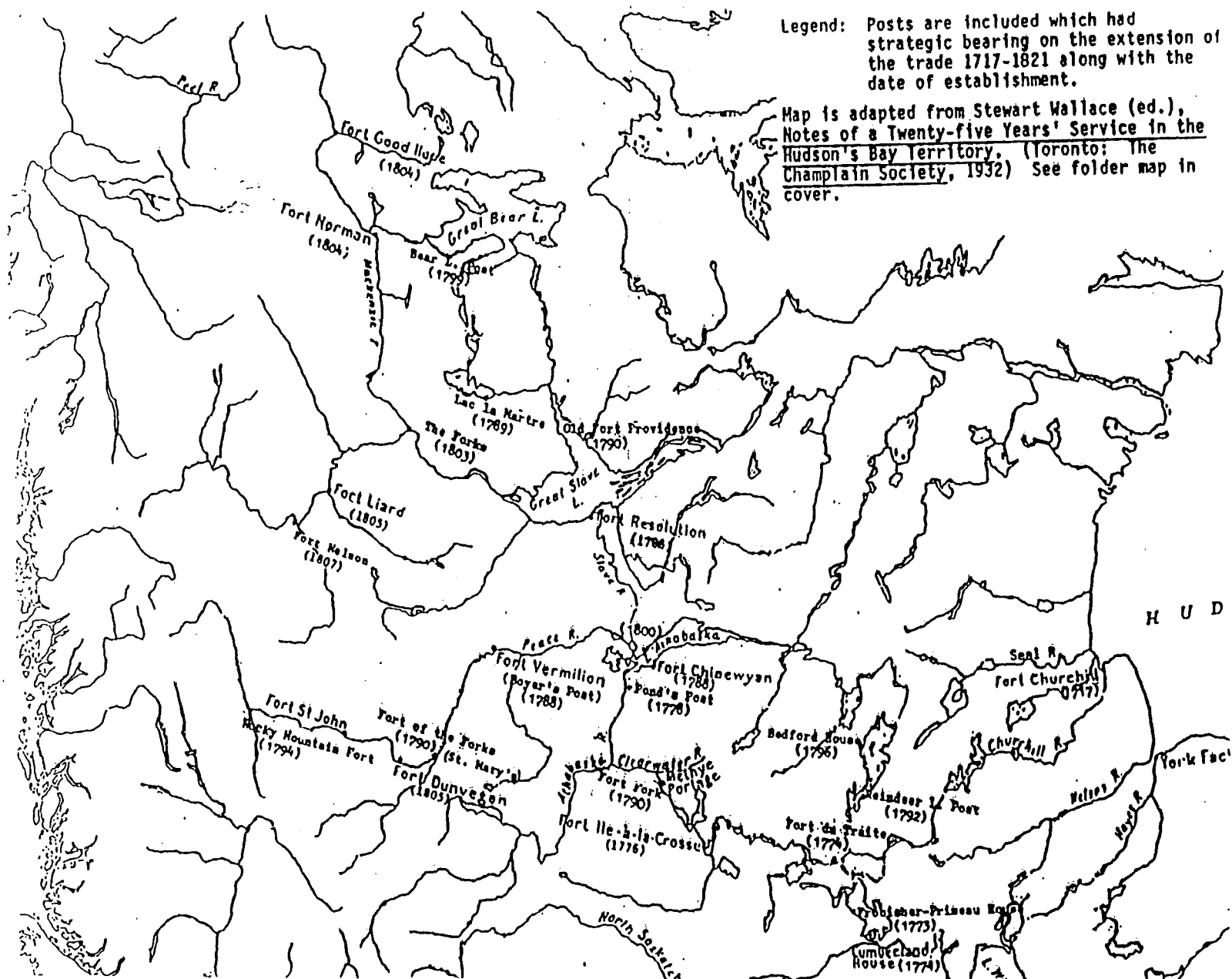
The impact of this thesis for later studies of the eastern Athapaskans indicates that the baselines for Athapaskan existence by 1821 were adapted to fur trade needs. The patterns of change, rapid in pace prior to 1821, were slowed by the imposition of monopoly in that year. Native bands had by 1821 deployed themselves, or were encouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company to adopt a specialized hunting or trapping existence, some of which

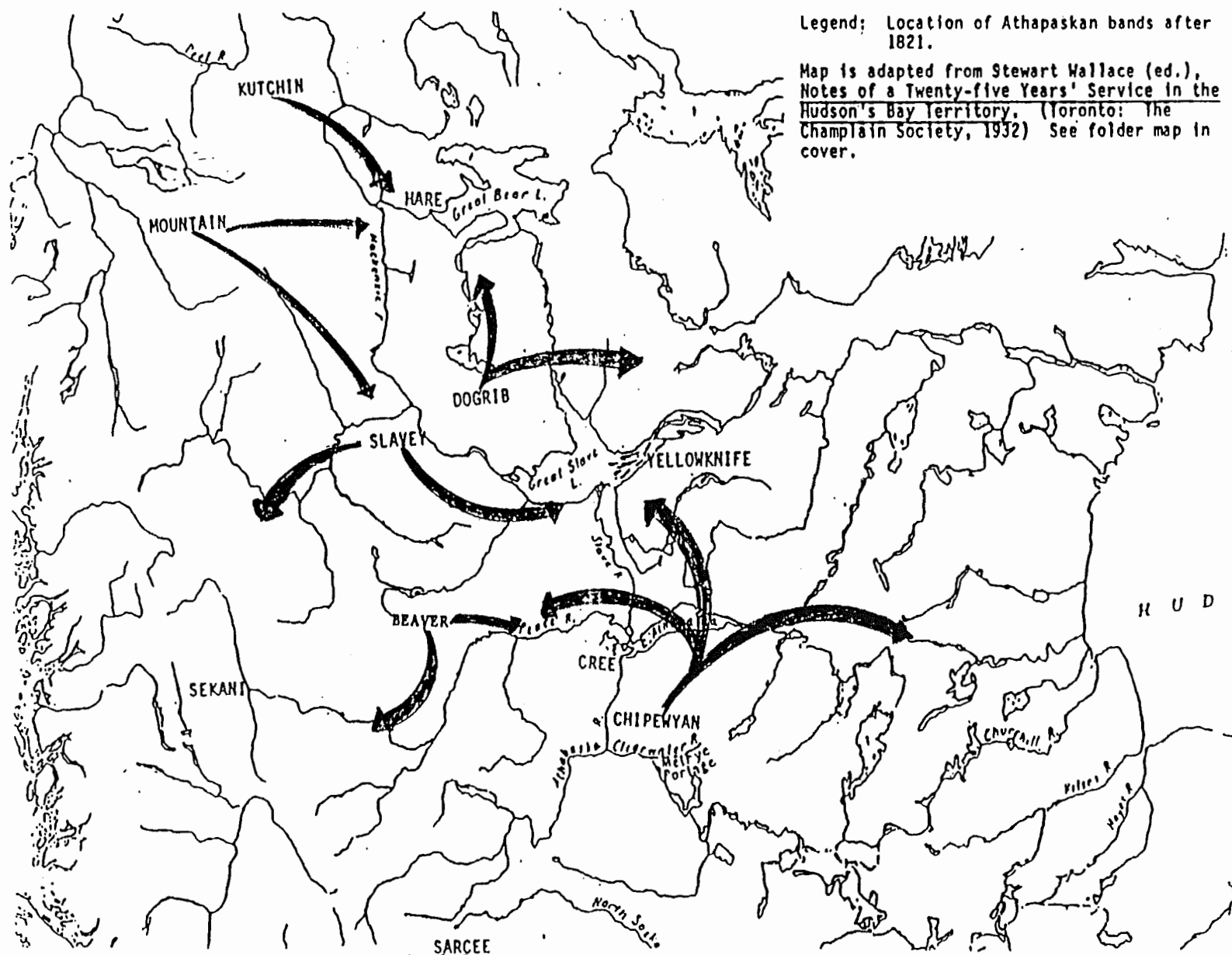
were far removed from their prehistoric lands. Social changes adapted to fur trade needs had also been put in place. Because the eastern subarctic and Mackenzie lowland region was so important to the fortunes of the fur companies, the active involvement of the eastern Athapaskans in trade dynamics led to influence over the policies, practices and the eventual corporate shape which the combined Hudson's Bay Company assumed in the Canadian West after 1821.

This work also has implications for further revisionist history in the early contact period. Research design for these studies should be applied to the environmental base of the native people to be examined. Appropriate regions for this form of research application would include the history of early contact change among the western Athapaskans of the Yukon basin; study of the same period which would focus on the people of the north Central plains; and the history of changes occurring to the people of the Interior Plateau and Columbia River regions.

Information obtained in the study of this period also has some bearing on the ensuing patterns which developed in the region. In large part the location of the Indians was fixed by 1821 and for most of the larger bands their relative geographical locations would be

maintained as long as the fur trade was the economic base. Social changes which were accelerated in the period under study may have slowed in the period of monopoly fur trade, at least until arrival of the missionaries. It would also appear that the large mammal populations of certain regions, in particular, parts of the Peace River valley, after being reduced by 1821, would not return to the levels known in the early stages of the period under study.









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