

THE FUR TRADE AT NORWAY HOUSE 1796-1875:
PRELIMINARY CONSIDERATIONS IN THE DISCUSSION OF TREATY 5

A Thesis
Presented to
the Faculty of Graduate Studies
The University of Manitoba

In Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Master of Arts

by

© Richard A. Enns

November 1988

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BY

RICHARD A. ENNS

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements
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MASTER OF ARTS

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Preface

In 1875 Alexander Morris negotiated the terms of Treaty 5 with the Indians at Berens River, Norway House and Grand Rapids, in the territory adjacent to Lake Winnipeg. In contrast to the general pattern of earlier treaties the negotiations of Treaty 5 were concluded quickly and with little deliberation. These negotiations must be considered within the pattern of political, social and economic relations which prevailed throughout the region prior to 1875. My thesis will consider the decision of the Indian community at Norway House to enter into treaty relations in 1875.

I will examine the commercial fur trade at Norway House between 1796 and 1875 to determine the expectations and understandings which governed the treaty process at Norway House in 1875. My research indicates that the decision of the Indians at Norway House to enter into treaty relations is consistent with their history of involvement within the commercial fur trade. Their activities within the fur trade were intended to enhance their own level of security and they considered the treaty to be a formal agreement towards that end.

Early letters and correspondence from the Hudson's Bay Company during the early years of the Company's operations provide some ethnographic details about the Indian populations who lived near the coast of Hudson Bay and those who journeyed to the coast to trade. The letters of Company travellers and other correspondence from the interior

throughout the 1700s provide additional details regarding the Indian populations in the early years of contact.

The Hudson's Bay Company account books, annual reports and the minutes of the Council for the Northern Department, describe the operations and the impact of the Company as it expanded its operations throughout the interior. The journals, reports and correspondence, from Jack River and Norway House, beginning in 1796 and extending beyond 1875, detail the development of the fur trade in this region and the significance of the post at Norway House. The mission papers of James Evans describe the work of the Methodist Church among the Indians at Norway House and provide information regarding the Indian village adjacent to the Company post at Norway House.

The Alexander Morris papers contain correspondence relating to the negotiations of Treaty 5 in 1875. Further information regarding Treaty 5 is available from the Department of Indian Affairs and the annual reports of the Department of the Interior.

The secondary literature on Norway House and Treaty 5 is limited. General discussions of the treaty process in western Canada characteristically dismiss Treaty 5, mentioning only the poor terms and the quick resolution of the negotiations. There is no detailed examination of the treaty which considers the preceding years of fur trade activity as a context for the negotiations of 1875.

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Jean Friesen. Her patience and enthusiasm inspired me throughout my research and her knowledge of the material helped to make this a meaningful and rewarding task.

I would also like to thank the members of my examining committee, Professors D.Wayne Moodie, George A. Schultz, William H. Brooks, and the chair, Professor Jack Bumstead, for their suggestions and encouragement. Professor Gerry Friesen also provided his encouragement at various points along the way and Professor Richard Swanson, through his example, taught me how to approach history with enthusiasm and with care. The University of Manitoba provided financial assistance and the Department of History offered research and teaching assistantships. The staff of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, and the Provincial Archives of Manitoba, were always cooperative and they assisted me at many times during my research.

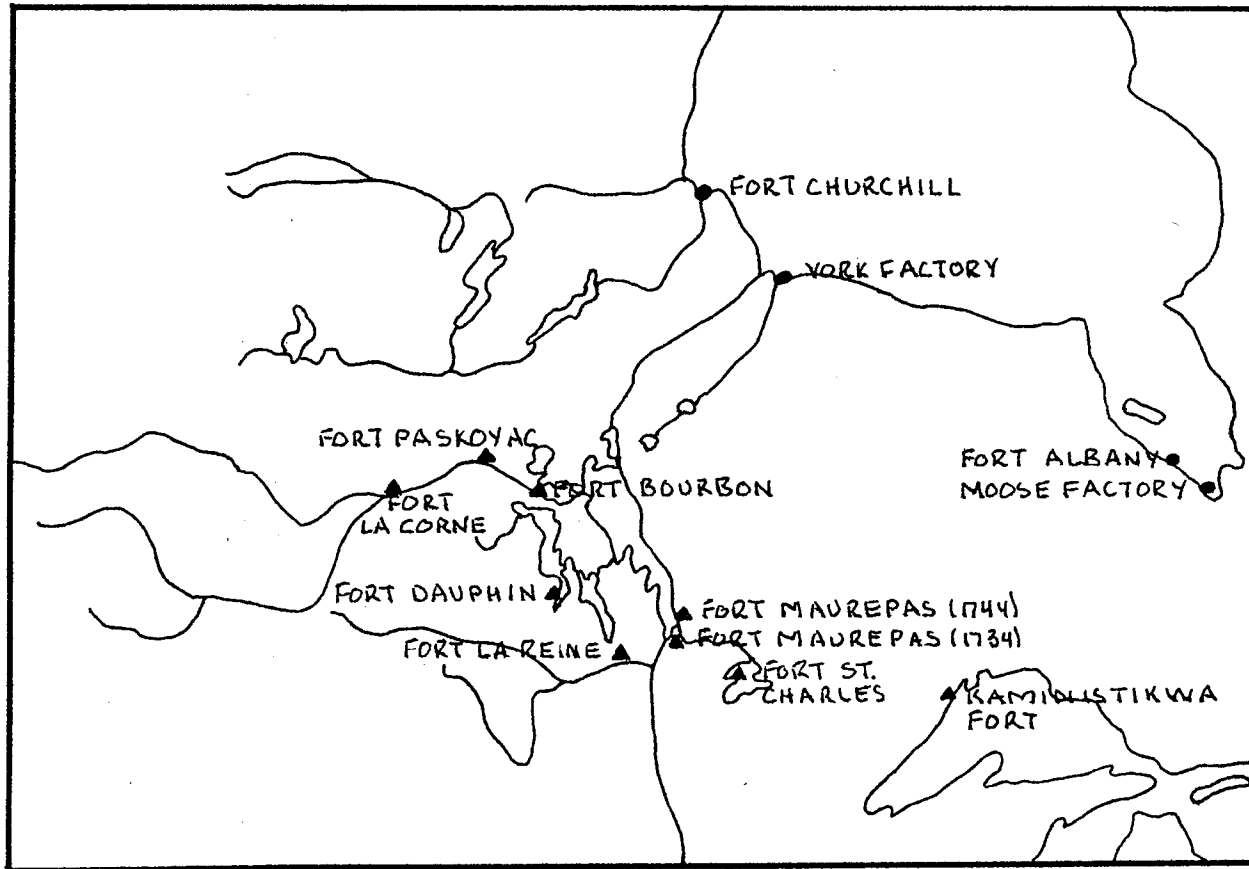
Finally, I would like to thank my wife Bev, who has offered her support throughout my studies, and our son Stefen, who inspired and encouraged both of us in his own special way.

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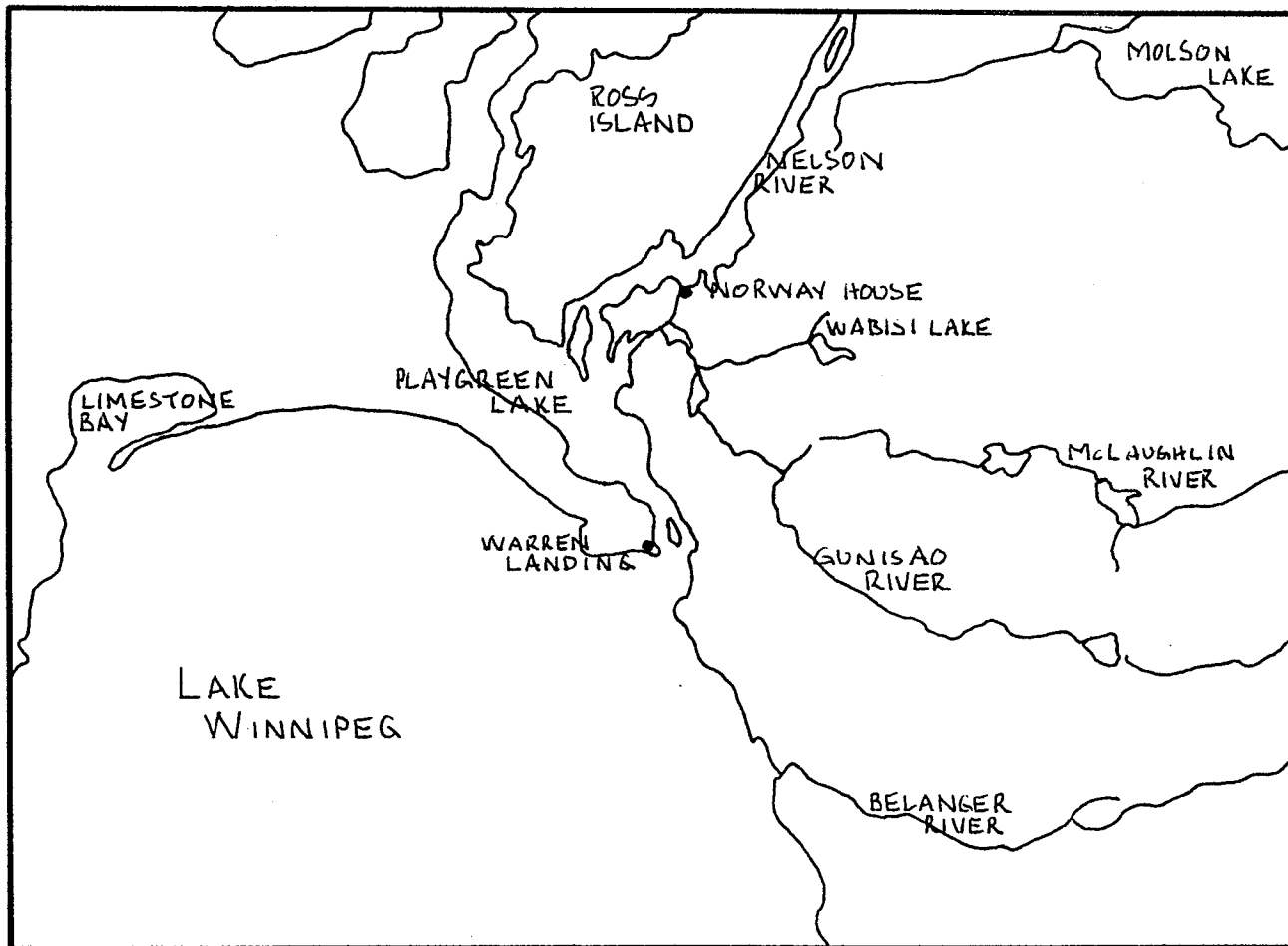
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THE WESTERN FUR TRADE
CA. 1750

- HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY POSTS
- ▲ FRENCH POSTS

ADAPTED FROM ARTHUR RAY, INDIANS IN THE FUR TRADE...
(TORONTO: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, 1974), P. 56.



NORWAY HOUSE
AND VICINITY

HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY'S ESTABLISHMENT.

NORWAY HOUSE

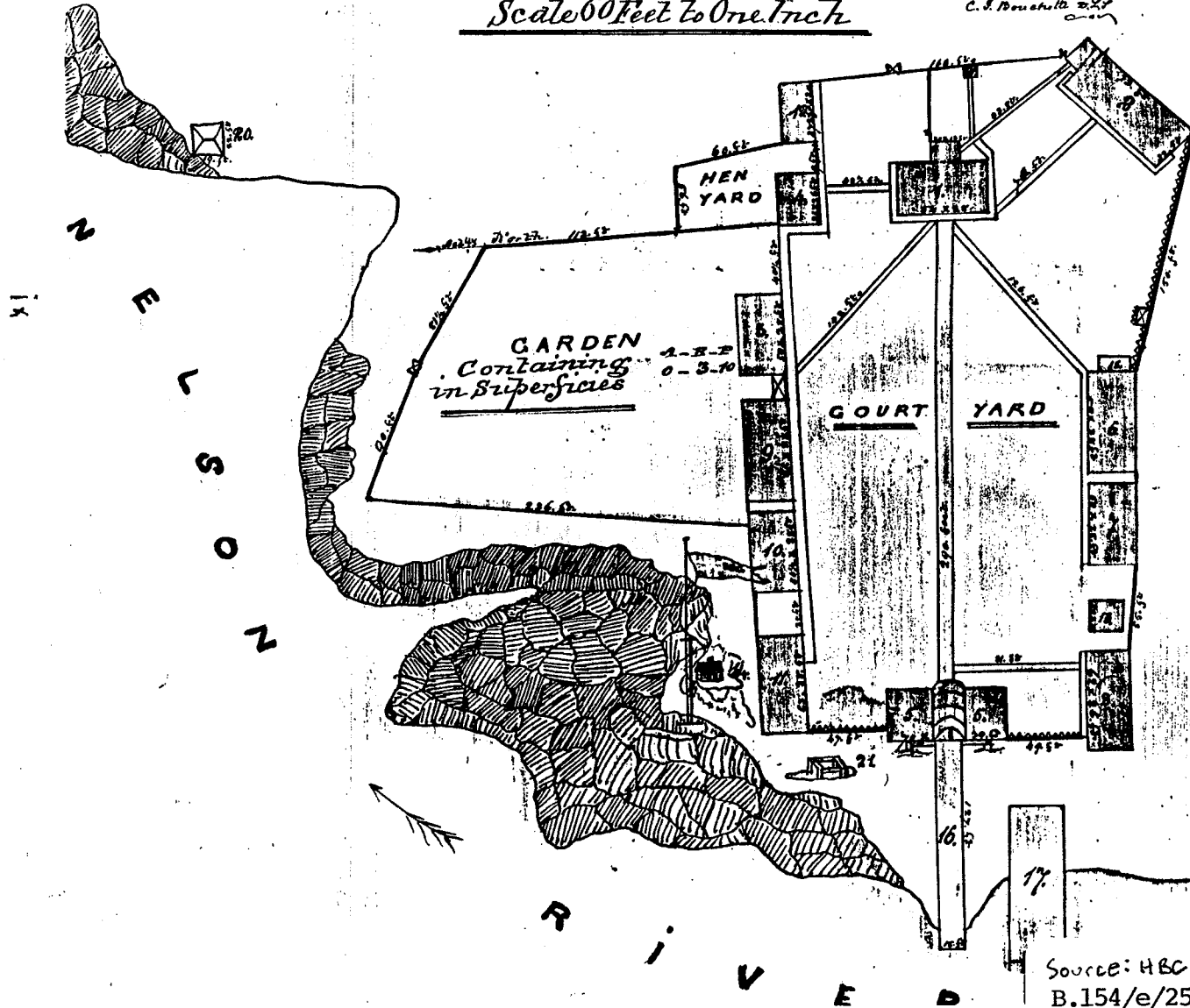
LAKE WINNIPEG

KEEWATIN

2nd Nov^r 1889.

C. S. Bonchuk 22/7

Scale 60 Feet to One Inch



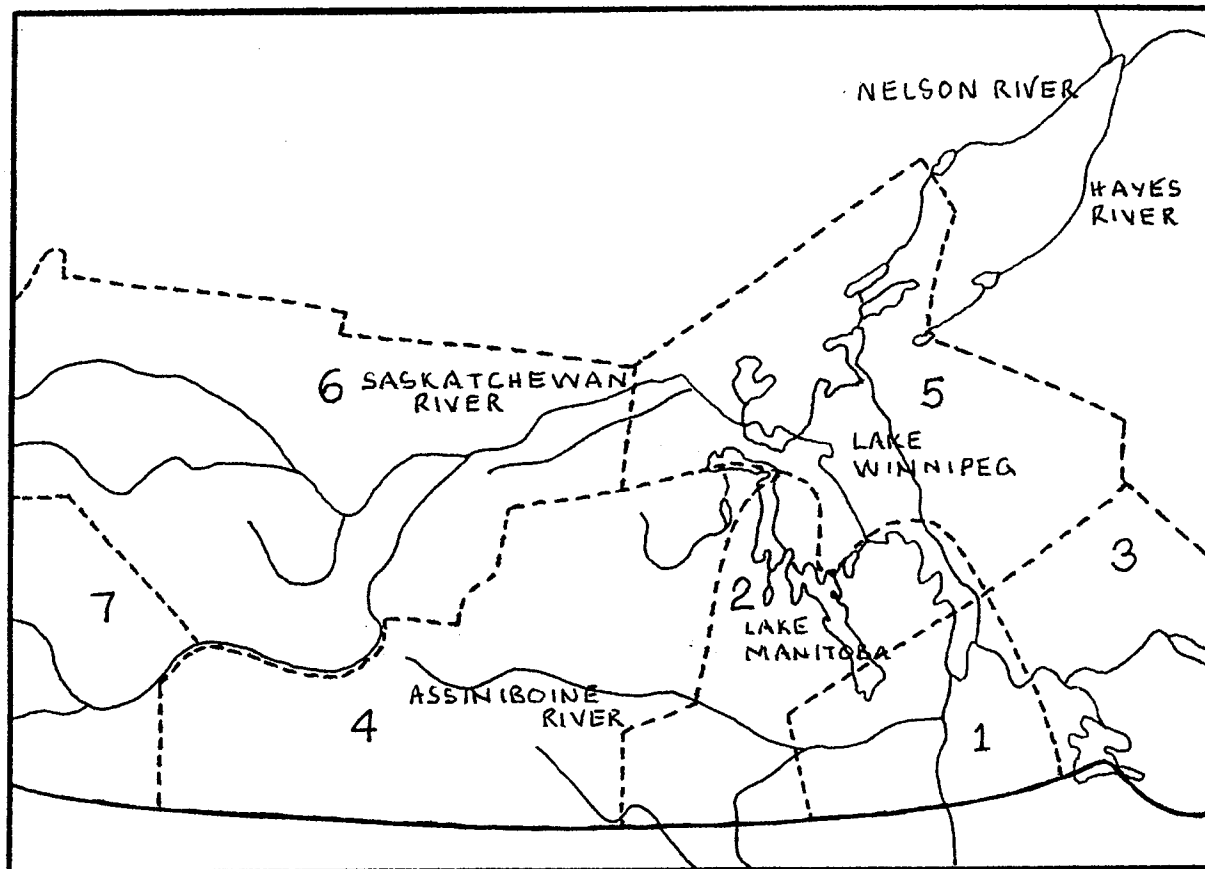
KEY TO BUILDINGS.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <p>N^o 1. Head Quarters Building
 2. Private Residence
 3. Old Council House
 4. Bachelor's Hall
 5. Forwarding & Boat Agent Store
 6. Trading & Fur Packing Store
 7. Depot Store
 8. Provision Store
 9. Out Post Store
 10. Mission & Private Property Store
 11. Boat Building House</p> | <p>12. Ice House
 13. Stone Building, Prison
 14. Blacksmith's Shop
 15. Fish House
 16. Steam Boat Launch
 17. York Boat Launch
 18. Garden 0. 8. 10.
 19. Hen Yard 11 1/2 x 56 Ft.
 20. Stone Building, Magazine
 21. Saw Pit.</p> |
|--|--|

Source: HBCA.

B.154/e/25 fo. 8

N7088/5519



INDIAN LAND CESSIONS
1871-1877

1. STONE FORT TREATY (1871)
2. MANITOBA POST TREATY (1871)
3. NORTH-WEST ANGLE TREATY (1873)
4. QU'APPELLE TREATY (1874)
5. WINNIPEG TREATY (1875)
6. FORTS CARLTON AND
PITT TREATIES (1876)
7. BLACKFEET TREATY (1877)

ADAPTED FROM ARTHUR RAY, INDIANS IN THE FUR TRADE...
(TORONTO: UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO PRESS, 1974), P. 229.

Chapter 1: Introduction

Throughout western Canada the negotiation of the numbered treaties during the 1870s marked the beginning of direct involvement by the Dominion government in an arena previously dominated by the commercial fur trade.¹ This decade is often seen as the nadir of Indian development and the actions of the government are often viewed as a benevolent attempt to intervene within a historical process of tragedy and decline. Conventional scholarship has portrayed treaty policy as the application of well founded principles designed to extinguish Indian title to the land and to placate the Indian population in order to prepare for agricultural settlement.² Within this process Indians have often been viewed as passive recipients, aware of their situation, but unable to influence the treaty process in a significant way.

Recent studies have suggested that the commercial fur trade relationships played a significant role in the treaty process in western Canada.³ John Foster examines the fur trade exchange process and suggests that the understandings and expectations which governed the exchange process throughout this region also influenced the treaty negotiations significantly. Foster argues that a compact between the Indians and the European traders emerged during the years of fur trade activity and he suggests that the fur trade exchange process functioned to define and maintain the political, economic and social dimensions of this relationship. Foster suggests that the Indians desired to continue "significant aspects of this relationship" when they entered into treaty

negotiations in the 1870s and he traces the current "sense of betrayal" among Indians to the violation of this special relationship.⁴

Foster emphasizes the political and social significance of trade and exchange in Indian society. He indicates that trade between Indians and with Europeans was motivated by the search for political, economic and social security and he rejects any attempt to consider the exchange process as a purely economic transaction governed solely by formal economic considerations. Foster suggests that the desire for stable and secure alliances characterized the treaty negotiations which he considers. Although Foster suggests that his thesis applies to the treaty process throughout western Canada he examines only Treaties 6 and 7 in detail. Currently there is no consideration of the treaty process at Norway House which considers the preceding years of fur trade involvement.

Foster draws upon the earlier writings of Abraham Rotstein to develop his thesis. Rotstein examines the writings of early European travellers to North America to determine the patterns of trade and contact which prevailed among the Indians at the time of contact.⁵ He argues that current notions of the market system and trade do not offer adequate explanations of Indian trading practices. Rotstein argues that trade helped to mediate intertribal relations in a hostile and "warlike" environment. Trade "functioned within the context of political relations and institutions and was subordinated to the overriding requirements of society".⁶ He suggests that Indian trade retained this fundamental characteristic throughout the years of the European fur trade.

Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman have recently challenged the findings of Abraham Rotstein. Their challenge to Rotstein's analysis necessarily threatens Foster's attempt to relate the fur trade exchange process to the treaty negotiations of western Canada. Ray and Freeman consider fur trade relationships before 1763. While they consider the possibility that the fur trade exchange process held a political and social significance at some point in time they suggest that this dimension of the trading relationship "diminished in importance at an early point in the development of the exchange." They conclude that the exchange process evolved to reflect the "increasing dominance of economic considerations".⁷

Ray supports these conclusions in another work where he describes the Indians as discriminating consumers who continually demanded goods of high quality.⁸ Ray suggests that the Indians successfully exploited their relationship with rival companies to their full advantage and were able to obtain favourable rates of exchange. He challenges the belief that any political or social significance was attached to these relationships and he argues that the exchange process was considered to be a purely economic transaction, by the Indians and the European traders, even during the earliest years of commercial fur trade activity. When he considers the treaty process Ray suggests that the treaties were principally economic agreements intended to support the Indian populations as they adjusted to changing economic circumstances.⁹

The discussion introduced above reflects the terms of the larger debate between formal and substantive economic theory. Rotstein's emphasis upon the social and political components of the fur trade

exchange process provides a basis for Foster's discussion of the treaty negotiations which he considers. Ray and Freeman dismiss the political and social significance of the fur trade exchange and emphasize the economic dimensions of trade.

Rotstein accepts Karl Polanyi's distinction between formal and substantive economic theory. Polanyi suggests that the "formal meaning of economic derives from the logical character of the means-end relationship....It refers to a definite situation of choice, namely, that between the different uses of means induced by an insufficiency of those means".¹⁰ In this situation the economy is paramount. It orders and dominates all aspects of society. It requires that land and labour be treated as commodities to be exchanged in the market place while the individual is motivated to participate in the economic process by the fear of starvation or the desire for profit.

In sharp contrast to the formal understanding of economic the substantive meaning of economic

derives from man's dependence for living upon nature and his fellows. It refers to the interchange with his natural and social environment, in so far as this results in supplying him with the means of material want satisfaction....The substantive meaning implies neither choice nor insufficiency of means.¹¹

Here the economy is submerged in a complex of political and social relationships which is designed to ensure the security of the individual as it promotes the material well being of the entire community. Polanyi states that the dominance of the market system is a "recent" development and he resists any attempt to explain noncapitalist economies from this perspective.

Polanyi formally defines the economy as "a process of material supply channeled through definite institutions. The process consists of movement of things, the movement being caused by persons acting in situations created by those institutions".¹² While all societies are concerned with the "process of material supply" the place and significance of the economy, and economic institutions, within each society varies. Capitalist societies are characterized by the dominance of economic institutions and the distribution of goods and services according to the rules of the market system. Noncapitalist societies subordinate economic institutions in a web of political and social relationships of greater significance which determine the production and allocation of goods in society.¹³

Polanyi considers three different forms or patterns of integration which organize the economy and determine its place and significance within society. He suggests that each pattern of integration is sustained by specific institutional supports.¹⁴ The institutional supports organize the production and allocation of goods and services within society and overcome the difficulties of supply imposed by space and time.

Noncapitalist economies are integrated through reciprocal or redistributive relations. Reciprocal relations commonly apply between symmetrical groups within society, such as friendship or kinship groups, and are characterized by the exchange of gifts, or other items, to indicate the direction and extent of responsibilities. These obligations may bind members of two groups to one another or they may incorporate other groups within society so that goods and services may be obtained

from one group and passed to another. Redistribution involves the collection, storage and subsequent redistribution of goods in society.¹⁵ Polanyi suggests that redistribution often occurs on a tribal level as among members of a hunting tribe who redistribute the bounty of the hunt to insure an adequate and equitable portion for all. It may also suggest a more complicated arrangement of political and economic forces which ensures the distribution of a wider range of goods and services which may not be available in a given area. Redistribution requires the presence of central institutions which assume political, religious or social significance.

Polanyi also considers exchange as a form of integration. He states that price-making markets must be present in order for exchange to integrate the economy and he suggests that this is the dominant feature of capitalist economies. Such markets, since they withhold essential commodities from the public domain, are divisive and are not to be found in "primitive" or "archaic" societies.

The forms of integration introduced by Polanyi are also intended to refer to the production of goods within society.¹⁶ Polanyi suggests that the prominence of any one form of integration is in fact determined by the degree to which it organizes land and labour, the productive process, within society. For example, the "rise of the market to a ruling force in the economy can be traced by noting the extent to which land and food were mobilized through (market) exchange, and labor was turned into a commodity free to be purchased in the market".¹⁷ Where reciprocity prevails the status of land and labour is determined by ties

of kinship. Ties of "fealty determine the fate of land and labor" where redistribution dominates.¹⁶

Polanyi states that reciprocity, redistribution and exchange do not represent stages of development. Either one can dominate while "subordinate forms" of the others may be present, depending upon the specific characteristics of society.¹⁷

Rotstein's analysis of trade and politics in Indian society draws heavily upon the economic theory considered above. However his application of Polanyi's thesis is problematic for a number of reasons. Rotstein draws his model of trade and diplomacy from the writings of early European travellers to North America. He considers the importance of administered or treaty trade between tribal groups, and he applies this model to Indian-European relations throughout the years of fur trade activity.²⁰ Ray and Freeman are right to suggest that Rotstein does not adequately consider spatial and temporal elements of fur trade development in his analysis.²¹

Ray and Freeman also suggest that the smaller Indian bands, and the individual Indian traders, which the Hudson's Bay Company encountered throughout the interior lacked "the heirarchical organization necessary for administered trade to operate".²² With reference to Rotstein's description of administered or treaty trade Ray and Freeman suggest that the subarctic level of social organization was unable to sustain the binding alliances commonly associated with treaty trade. They argue that the Indian traders throughout the interior were guided by economic considerations in their choice of trading partners, even when

hostilities between the English and the French would have compelled a choice based upon political or military considerations if the obligations of treaty trade had been in place. Ray and Freeman conclude that there is no evidence to suggest that "alliances were a dominant feature of the Hudson Bay trade" although they may have figured in the earlier trade in Huronia and along the St. Lawrence.²³

Finally, Ray and Freeman argue that Rotstein's emphasis upon administered trade leads him to characterize all trade as long-distance trade, trade between tribal units which was designed to secure goods which were not available in the immediate area. They suggest that Rotstein fails to consider the local trade and exchange within and among bands, and between individuals, which dominated the exchange relations with the Hudson's Bay Company.

Rotstein's thesis does suffer because of this failure to consider the specific, and often unique, characteristics of the commercial fur trade. His suggestion that all trade resembled the administered or treaty trade of the St. Lawrence valley, and his failure to consider trade and exchange among bands and between individuals invites the criticism offered by Ray and Freeman. However this criticism points to a fundamental problem in Rotstein's method and analysis, rather than a significant shortcoming in the substantive theory of Karl Polanyi. Polanyi does consider trade and exchange on the level described by Ray and Freeman. In his discussion of reciprocal trade relations Polanyi suggests that the local exchange of goods and services between smaller kinship and friendship groups indicates the direction and extent of the

mutual obligations and responsibilities which organize society at this level. Unfortunately Rotstein generally does not consider gift trade and reciprocal relationships in his analysis while Ray and Freeman imply that the most significant feature of reciprocal trade was its tendency to foster 'deviant' behaviour among the Indians at the trading posts.²⁴ They suggest that the notion of reciprocal trade was quickly abandoned in favour of a "negative reciprocity" which emphasized only material and economic gain.²⁵

Foster's analysis of the treaty negotiations and fur trade exchange is marked by a similar error. When Foster describes the disappearance of trading bands, and the emergence of homeguard Indians adjacent to the Company posts he assumes that the earlier perceptions of a political and social compact, inherent in the terms of the previous trading relationships, continued to prevail, despite his own suggestion that the Indian populations were becoming more "dependent" upon the European traders and the ceremonial process was changing in significant ways. ²⁶ Foster appears to dismiss important changes in the political and economic relationship between the traders and the Indians in order to apply his thesis to the treaty process throughout western Canada, regardless of the time or place.

Despite these problems Rotstein and Foster have contributed to treaty scholarship in a significant way. Rotstein suggests that Polanyi's substantive theory helps to explain the political and social significance of trade and exchange in noncapitalist society. Rotstein's analysis is most relevant when considering the early fur trade of Huronia. However, Polanyi's work can be applied to the Hudson Bay trade

even though Rotstein's analysis fails at this point and Ray and Freeman dismiss the attempt altogether. Foster expands the discussion of the treaty negotiations of western Canada to include the fur trade exchange process. Again, with proper regard to the developments over time and place, Foster's work suggests that the treaty negotiations of western Canada must be considered within the context of the understandings and expectations which dominated the preceding years of fur trade activity.

Rotstein and Foster argue for the persistence of substantive notions of trade, largely on the basis of the ceremonies and speeches which accompanied the exchange of goods. It is important to note that Polanyi suggests two ways to move beyond this evidence to determine whether substantive or formal notions of trade dominated social relations and the exchange process.

Polanyi insists that the forms of integration which he considers are not merely individual patterns of behaviour writ large. Rather, each form of integration is sustained by specific, and identifiable, structures which organize individual behaviours along certain lines. For example, Polanyi suggests that reciprocity between individuals will integrate the economy "only if symmetrically organized structures, such as a symmetrical system of kinship groups are given".²⁷ I have already considered the institutional structures which are necessary for redistribution and exchange to integrate the economy.²⁸ Here Polanyi indicates that certain social and political configurations are necessary in order to sustain reciprocal and redistributive relations and promote substantive notions of society and the economy.

Marshall Sahlins has elaborated on Polanyi's discussion of reciprocal trade. He distinguishes between generalized, balanced and negative reciprocity. Generalized reciprocity "refers to transactions that are putatively altruistic, transactions on the line of assistance given and, if possible and necessary, assistance received".²⁹ Generalized reciprocity is commonly found among members of a family, or among those people who are considered to be close kin, and typically involves the exchange of food. Any accounting is implicit and involves a counter offer of similar assistance when tradition suggests or necessity demands it. Balanced reciprocity occurs when an 'equivalent' gift is offered in exchange for one which has just been received. These gifts are often exchanged outside of the immediate family or closest kin. These exchanges often signify important political, social and moral relationships and their equivalence is usually determined by past practice and present social and political conventions. Negative reciprocity is characterized by hard bargaining and intense negotiations. In this situation the parties are not bound together by political, social or moral obligations and each party attempts to maximize its own gain and profits.

Sahlins suggests that generalized, balanced and negative reciprocity correspond roughly to the social and kinship distance between the trading partners, and all three types of trade may exist together. For our purposes it is important to note that the presence of hard bargaining, and the desire for personal advantage, may not indicate the dominance of capitalist notions of trade and commerce. The presence, and relative importance, of generalized and balanced reciprocity must

also be considered. Sahlins suggests that capitalist notions of trade and commerce will apply only in those societies where the exchange process lies outside of the range of political, social and moral commitments. In other words, when negative reciprocity dominates all forms of exchange.

Polanyi also suggests that the necessary social and political configurations can be located within the historical process. He states that land and labour must be exchanged, as commodities in the market place, before capitalist notions and formal economic theory can be applied. He suggests that this is a crucial step in the development of the market system and it is unique to capitalist economies where exchange dominates the production and distribution of goods. In those cases where symmetrical groupings are paramount, or where social institutions direct the collection and allocation of goods, and in those cases where land and labour are not treated as commodities to be evaluated and exchanged in the market place, substantive notions of trade and obligation will dominate the social process.

The records of the commercial fur trade at Norway House do not support the view, offered by Ray and Freeman, that the political and social significance of trade diminished at an early point nor do they support their belief that the fur trade exchange process was merely, or primarily, an economic transaction. The evidence from Norway House demonstrates that substantive notions of society and trade persisted, as Rotstein suggests, even after the European traders began to move inland and goods and services were exchanged on a more frequent and personal

basis.³⁰ The evidence from this region also supports Foster's belief that substantive notions of trade influenced the treaty process.

Footnotes

¹ The "commercial fur trade" refers to the fur trade between the Indians of western Canada and English and French traders and, later, Canadian traders from Montreal and "free traders" throughout western Canada.

² John Leonard Taylor, "Canada's Northwest Indian Policy in the 1870s: Traditional Premises and Necessary Innovations," in The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties, ed. by Richard Price (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980), pp. 3-7. Taylor considers the "conventional" scholarship, and offers his own thesis, regarding the origins of the government's Indian policy in the Canadian Northwest. John Tobias, in "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree, 1879-1885," Canadian Historical Review, LXIV (1983), states that "the fact remains that in 1871 Canada had no plan on how to deal with the Indians ..." p. 520.

³ John Foster, "Indian-White Relations in the Prairie West during the Fur Trade Period - A Compact?" in The Spirit of the Alberta Indian Treaties, ed. by Richard Price (Montreal: Institute for Research on Public Policy, 1980), pp. 181-200. Jean Friesen, in "My Birthright and My Land: The Making of Treaty 3," (unpublished paper, Winnipeg, 1982). Friesen suggests that Foster's interpretation takes "us closer to an Indian point of view" and attempts to "look not at the consequences of the treaties but at how the participating Indians saw their interests," p.2. See also Jean Friesen, "Magnificent Gifts: The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of the North West 1869-76," Royal Society of Canada, Transactions, Series V, 1 (1986), pp. 41-51.

⁴ Foster, op. cit., p. 184.

⁵ Abraham Rotstein, "Trade and Politics : An Institutional Approach," Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, III (1972), pp. 1-28; also "Fur Trade and Empire: An Institutional Analysis" (unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, University of Toronto, 1967).

⁶ Rotstein, 1972, op. cit., p. 1.

⁷ Arthur J. 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: University of Toronto Press, 1978), p. 236. Ray and Freeman consider the account books of the Hudson's Bay Company extensively, throughout their study. In another work Ray has considered the historical value of these records in detail, see Ray, "The Hudson's Bay Company Account Books as Sources for Comparative Economic Analyses of the Fur Trade: An Examination of Exchange Rate Data," Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, VI (1976), pp. 30-51. Although I have not examined the Norway House account books at length (HBCA, B.154/d) it would be helpful to consider these documents in greater detail to

determine how they relate to the conclusions which emerge from the journals, reports and correspondence of the Company.

⁸ Arthur J. Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference, ed. by C.M. Judd and Arthur J. Ray (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp. 255-71.

⁹ Arthur J. Ray, "Periodic Shortages, Native Welfare, and the Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1930," in The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations, ed. by Shepard Krech III (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), pp. 1-20.

¹⁰ Karl Polanyi, The Economy as Instituted Process, in Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi, ed. by George Dalton (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1968), p. 140.

¹¹ Ibid., p. 139.

¹² Karl Polanyi, "Carl Menger's Two Meanings of 'Economic'," in Studies in Economic Anthropology, ed. by George Dalton (Washington: American Anthropological Association, 1971), pp. 16-24.

¹³ Ibid., p. 19.

¹⁴ Polanyi, 1968, The Economy as Instituted Process, op. cit., p. 150. Polanyi refers to institutional supports or "preconditions".

¹⁵ Karl Polanyi, Societies and Economic Systems in Primitive, Archaic, and Modern Economies: Essays of Karl Polanyi, ed. by George Dalton (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Co. Inc., 1968), pp. 7-11.

¹⁶ Rhoda H. Halperin, "Polanyi, Marx, and the Institutional Paradigm in Economic Anthropology," in Research in Economic Anthropology, ed. by Barry L. Isaac (Greenwich, CT: JAI Press, 1984), pp. 245-72. Some writers suggest that Polanyi's approach is primarily concerned with the distribution of goods and does not consider the production of goods adequately, see for example Michael Asch, "The Ecological-Evolutionary Model and the Concept of the Mode of Production," in Challenging Anthropology: A Critical Introduction to Social and Cultural Anthropology, ed. by David H. Turner and Gavin A. Smith (Toronto: McGraw-Hill Ryerson Ltd., 1979), p. 87-88. Rhoda H. Halperin rejects this suggestion and argues that "the concepts of reciprocity and redistribution were originally intended by Polanyi to describe patterns of production and redistribution," see Halperin, op. cit., p. 262. She notes Polanyi's statement that the "Dominance of a form of integration is here identified with the degree to which it comprises land and labor in society ..." see Polanyi, op. cit., 1968, pp. 155-56, emphasis mine. Halperin also refers to Polanyi's concern for discovering "order in production and distribution processes in pre-industrial societies," Polanyi quoted in Halperin, op. cit., p. 262. Halperin concludes that

"Polanyi's very explicit analytical separation of production, distribution, and consumption did not ... erase the importance of production in Polanyi's framework," Ibid., p. 262.

¹⁷ Polanyi, 1968, The Economy as Instituted Process, op. cit., (brackets in original), pp. 155-56.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 155.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 156.

²⁰ Rotstein, 1967, op. cit., p. 23; also see "Karl Polanyi's Concept of Non-Market Trade," The Journal of Economic History, III (March, 1970), pp. 117-26.

²¹ Ray and Freeman, op. cit., p. 8.

²² Ibid., p. 234.

²³ Ibid., p. 233.

²⁴ Ibid., p. 58; p. 244.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 244.

²⁶ Foster, op. cit., p. 191.

²⁷ Polanyi, The Economy as Instituted Process, op. cit., p. 150.

²⁸ see pp. 6-7 above.

²⁹ Marshall D. Sahlins, "On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange," in The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology, ed. by Michael Banton (London: Tavistock, 1965), p. 147.

³⁰ My study is concerned with determining the Indians' understandings and expectations of the fur trade exchange and the treaty process. I do not intend to suggest that these understandings were shared, as well, by the Hudsons Bay Company or the Company's employees. The Hudson's Bay Company was clearly concerned with making a profit and competing in the contemporary markets and it ordered its affairs according to these priorities. Company policy clearly reflected this concern. However I intend to demonstrate that the Company was forced to respond, in many cases, to the Indians' expectations in order to conduct its trade and its formal policies also reflect this fact. The evidence suggests that some individual traders were also concerned with the personal welfare of the Indians and that they implemented and extended the Company's policy of support and assistance for moral, as well as commercial, reasons.

Chapter 2: Indian Occupation and Movement within the
Interior: 1670-1796

In 1796 Robert Longmoor was sent inland from York Factory by Joseph Colen to establish a post in the vicinity of Jack River and Playgreen Lake at the northern end of Lake Winnipeg. Reports of Canadian involvement in the area prompted the action as the Hudson's Bay Company sought to ensure access to Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River and to maintain control of the York Factory hinterland. On 10 August 1796 a contingent of large canoes "loaded with Trading Goods upon their passage to the Upper Settlement" arrived at Jack River.¹ The following day eleven canoes departed and a few days later Robert Longmoor, in charge of three more canoes, left for Red Deer River, leaving Henry Hallet in charge at Jack River.

The Company journals from 1796 to 1799 describe the involvement of the Canadian traders in this region and indicate that the Company attempted to generate its own trade in order to counter the Canadian presence. Writing on 3 September 1796 Hallet stated that a group of Indians had arrived to await the arrival of William McKay, a Canadian trader.² McKay arrived on 15 September "with 2 large canoes loaded with Trading Goods with 6 men in each canoe".³ On the following day McKay and the Indians left Jack River in order to pursue their trade. The pattern was repeated with significant regularity in subsequent years as McKay journeyed south to Grand Portage in the early summer and returned to the interior in the fall. In 1797 McKay arrived at Jack River on 21 September and in 1798 he is reported to have arrived on 16 September.⁴

Henry Hallet showed little inclination to challenge the Canadian presence in the area. However Charles Thomas Isham, posted at Jack River from 1797 to 1799, appears to have challenged the Canadian rivalry more vigorously. Upon hearing of Canadian intentions to settle downstream Isham instructed Hugh Sabbeston to follow the Canadian contingent when McKay left the post on 18 September 1798. Sabbeston was to "Watch his motions and send the Natives out of his way".⁵ Sabbeston returned to Jack River on 23 September and informed Isham that the Canadian traders had settled in the vicinity of Cross Lake. The following day Isham instructed Sabbeston and five other men to "Settle a house towards the Sea River Lake" in order to trade with the Indians.⁶ Isham's plans can only be judged a partial success. The men were discontented and complained about scarce provisions and Isham commented on the lack of furs obtained through trade.⁷ In 1799 William Tomison ordered the post at Jack River to be closed.

The Company's initial experience at Jack River did not diminish the region's subsequent importance within the fur trade. By 1812 the Company post was once again in operation, presumably at the site of the original post. In 1814 the Company began construction of Norway House near the present site of Warren's Landing, and the post was in operation by 1817 at which time the facility at Jack River House was abandoned. Norway House was destroyed by fire on 19 November 1824 and was subsequently rebuilt. In 1826, after heavy flooding, the post was moved to the east bank of the Jack River, approximately twenty miles above the original location.

The Company's post at Norway House was located in the Precambrian shield which covers much of Manitoba east of Lake Winnipeg and north of the Saskatchewan River. Much of the shield is covered by a thin layer of topsoil and is dominated by boreal forest which supports coniferous and broad leaved trees including birch, aspen and poplar. The region is characterized "by a low, rolling relief, with a few major hills, and a vast number of lakes, rivers, and streams".⁶ In northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan, and in the lowlands of Hudson Bay, spruce and tamarack prevail as the boreal forest gives way to open tundra. South of the Saskatchewan River the forest begins to recede and aspen groves dominate the parkland transition to the prairies of the south.⁷

Fish figured prominently in the Indian diet and the lakes and rivers of the shield provided whitefish, pickerel, pike, sturgeon and trout. Migratory waterfowl were plentiful in the spring and the fall and large game, including bear, moose, caribou and deer were harvested for food, clothing and shelter. Smaller mammals such as beavers, rabbits and muskrats were also used. Berries and eggs were gathered to supplement the diet in the summertime.

The earliest reports from Norway House indicate that the Hudson's Bay Company's traders were struck by the forests and the water which dominate the region. In 1815 James Sutherland reported that the area around Norway House was

very rugged, and a fourth of it is covered with water by the Lakes, Rivers and Creeks that intersect it. As far as I have had an opportunity for observation the land between the lakes is formed alternately of ridges of rocks, swamps, and a kind of Morasses, partially dry, and covered with yellow Moss to the depth of two or three feet, this latter occupies the greatest extent. The whole

country may be called a continued forest as it is all covered more or less with Wood ... ¹⁰

Joseph McGillivray did not support the Company's decision to establish a post at Norway House and he suggested that the region's features would actually hinder the Company's trade in this region. In 1823 he reported that

the first impression which naturally strikes a stranger who views this part of the Country is its barrenness and desolation, surrounded with rocks, and an impenetrable swamp, and in whatever direction you may attempt to move, these barriers obstruct your progress ... ¹¹

The Company was not prepared to accept McGillivray's advice and it clearly did not accept his opinion that the region threatened the progress and the plans of the Company and should be abandoned.

The Company's commitment to the post at Norway House was reflected in the physical changes recorded after the post was relocated in 1826. In his journal for 1827 John MacLeod described the construction of the new post and the hardships associated with the Company's decision to relocate the post.¹² Seven years later Donald Ross reported that none of the buildings constructed by MacLeod were still in use. In a letter to James Hargrave in 1834 Ross reported that

We are now preparing Timber for new buildings, and next spring will find Norway House - without a single House or store which was up when I came here - indeed of all the original buildings there is now only one store remaining and it will be taken down in spring. - Wood however is getting very scarce and we have to go a great distance for it - ¹³

The Company decided that large buildings, such as the depot warehouse at York Factory, were not required for its operations within the interior.

Consequently a number of smaller buildings were constructed at Norway House, as they were needed, in order to receive the goods which were shipped to Norway House and the furs which were stored at the post before they were transported to York Factory.

The buildings at Norway House formed a rectangle which was divided by a raised walkway connecting the archway warehouse adjacent to the river with the principal residences at the eastern end. The boat building and carpentry shop, as well as two warehouses, were situated on the northern boundary, next to the warehouse. A guest house and the clerk's quarters completed the northern line on the eastern end. The provision store, the jail, a depot, and a sale-shop were located along the southern border. A powder magazine was located at some distance from the other buildings.¹⁴

The powder magazine, completed in 1838, and the jail which was finished in 1856, were both constructed from stone quarried in the area. The other buildings were built from local timber which was prepared at Norway House. These buildings were more durable than the buildings constructed by MacLeod after 1826 and their design demonstrates that the Hudson's Bay Company was willing to devote considerable resources to the post since it had decided that the post would play a significant role in its inland operations.

The Company's decision to expand its post at Norway House was consistent with its own experiences in this region and it demonstrated the earlier and continued significance of this territory for the local Indian populations. It is clear, from the available record, that Indians travelled extensively throughout this region along an existing network

of routes which facilitated trade and diplomacy before and after the advent of European trade. The evidence also suggests that the European traders relied on the existing networks of trade and diplomacy to establish and expand their trade throughout this region.

In 1690 Henry Kelsey journeyed inland from the Hudson's Bay Company post at York Factory. Although the exact route of Kelsey's inland journey is not known, his writings do indicate that he arrived at a location subsequently referred to as deerings point (Dering's Point) in July.¹⁵ Kelsey spent the following two winters travelling with Indians throughout this region. He returned to Dering's Point each summer and to York Factory in 1692.

Scholars have not agreed on the precise location of Dering's Point. In 1928 Arthur G. Doughty and Chester Martin suggested that it was situated near the present location of The Pas, Manitoba. In that same year Charles Bell concluded that Cedar Lake was the proper location. In their introduction to Kelsey's papers, published the following year, Arthur G. Doughty and Chester Martin again argued that Dering's Point was situated near the present location of The Pas.¹⁶ Recent scholarship has not resolved the issue. E.E. Rich and Arthur Ray both suggest that Dering's Point was located at The Pas while Paul Thistle supports Bell's conclusions.¹⁷

Kelsey's journal indicates that Dering's Point was an important stop along the route which had been established by those Indians who travelled from the interior to trade at York Factory. In 1690 Kelsey had been escorted to Dering's Point by Indians who had come down to trade at

York Factory and who were subsequently returning to the interior for the winter. The following summer Kelsey arranged to meet a group of Indians who were returning from York Factory at Dering's Point. Although he was late, and the Indians continued their inland journey before he arrived, Kelsey did receive the packet with instructions from York Factory which they left for him at Dering's Point. While the precise location of Dering's Point may not be known the evidence suggests that Indians were regularly passing through this region, at an early date, as they travelled down the Saskatchewan River to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company at York Factory.

The route employed by the Indians from Dering's Point to York Factory is also hard to determine. Kelsey did not keep a record of this portion of his journey in 1690 and there are a number of possible routes to York Factory, regardless of the location which we assign to Dering's Point. From the Saskatchewan River the Indians could travel across Moose Lake to the Minago River, down to Cross Lake and to the coast down the Nelson River. An alternative route ran through Cedar Lake, to the mouth of the Saskatchewan River, across the northern tip of Lake Winnipeg and down the Nelson River. From this point the Indians could continue down the Nelson River via Cross Lake and Split Lake, or they could choose to descend the Hayes River via the Echimamish River.¹⁰

In 1697, under the terms of the Treaty of Ryswick, the French gained control of the post and trade at York Factory. They remained in charge until the English regained possession of all bayside posts when the Treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713. The evidence suggests that the struggle between the English and French for control of the bayside posts

did not alter the primary orientation of trade and diplomacy. In fact, the record of French involvement in this region during the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries demonstrates the importance of Lake Winnipeg and the Hayes-Nelson corridor for the Indians who came to trade at York Factory.

Antoine Silvy, who sailed with La Martiniere to Hudson Bay in 1684-85, identified Assiniboine and Cree traders at York Factory. He located the Assiniboine "beyond the great lake of the Assiniboines, of which Port Nelson is the outlet, according to what we hear".¹⁹ Gabriel Marest, who served as chaplain to Iberville's expedition against the English in 1694-95, identified "seven or eight different nations who have dealings with the fort...The most numerous, and the most important are the Assiniboines and the Crees, or as they are otherwise known, the Kiristinons...".²⁰ According to Marest, the territory of the Cree, the larger of the two nations, extended south to Lake Superior. On the north their territory was bounded by the Bourbon River (Nelson River). This river "goes as far as the lake of the Crees, which is twenty or twenty-five days' journey from the fort".²¹ The Assiniboine lived beyond this lake.

Nicolas Jérémie, who served at Fort Bourbon (York Factory) during the period of French occupation, indicates that the Indians who were trading at the fort travelled down the Nelson River from its source at Lake Michinipi, the Great Water.²² He described Lake Michinipi as "the greatest and the deepest Lake" and stated that the Assiniboine lived on the western side of the lake while the Cree occupied the territory to

the east.²³ La Potherie also suggested that the Indians who were coming to the coast to trade descended the River Bourbon (Nelson River) from its source in Lake Michinipi.²⁴ He referred to Lake Michinipi as the homeland of the Cree and he stated that the Cree were in communication with the Assiniboine throughout this region.²⁵

These sources indicate that the French were aware, at an early date, of a large, inland body of water which drained into Hudson Bay and which served to indicate the approximate limits of Cree and Assiniboine occupation within the interior. It is likely that Lake Michinipi, and the great, inland body of water referred to by Silvy and Marest, was actually Lake Winnipeg and the Nelson River, from its source in the lake, appeared to be a favoured route of access for the Indians who were trading at York Factory.²⁶ It is not clear whether the Indians travelled the full course of the Nelson downstream, or whether they crossed over onto the Hayes River before continuing to York Factory. Both Jeremie and La Potherie believed that the Nelson and Hayes were actually one river which divided into two branches before it emptied into Hudson Bay. Fort Bourbon was located on the southern branch of the river, variously called River St. Theresa.

By 1713 the Cree and Assiniboine dominated the York Factory hinterland and were able to control much of the trade which was generated at that post. The expeditions of Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Verendrye, beginning in 1731, provide additional information regarding the patterns of Indian occupation and movement within the interior. His correspondence demonstrates that the Assiniboine and Cree

who traded with the English at York Factory also travelled extensively throughout southern Manitoba and northwestern Ontario and were eager to engage in trade with the French throughout this region. On 15 February 1734 La Vérendrye received a party of Cree "sent by one of the Lake Winnipeg chiefs....asking me as a favour to send some Frenchmen to establish themselves on their lands on the shore of the great Lake Winnipeg".²⁷ It is likely that these Indians were from the southern region of Lake Winnipeg and La Vérendrye, who was also eager to trade with the Indians, obliged their request when he established Fort Maurepas that following summer.

La Vérendrye received additional requests to establish a post at the northern end of Lake Winnipeg. On 15 October 1736 a delegation of Cree and Assiniboine Indians arrived at Fort St. Charles, on the Lake of the Woods, and asked him to establish a fort "at the end of Lake Winnipeg as you promised us, so as to enable us to supply our needs and those of our families".²⁸ La Vérendrye promised to consider their request and agreed to meet again on this matter during the coming winter at Fort Maurepas. At the subsequent council, convened on 4 March 1737, the Cree delegation repeated their request and suggested a location which appears to consider the strategic significance of the territory adjacent to the eventual site of the Hudson's Bay Company post at Norway House. La Vérendrye states that

A Cree chief rose and asked me to keep my word and to take measures for establishing a fort at the end of Lake Winnipeg, at the entrance of the great English river, saying that at that place there was an abundance of game and fish, and that as it was the only exit from the lake and the Blanche River, there would be a

very large trade in lynx, marten, and above all fat beaver, which the English do not take.²⁹

Although La Vérendrye did not respond to these requests immediately he did send his son, the Chevalier de la Vérendrye, to explore the rivers and territory adjacent to Lake Winnipeg. In 1741 Fort Bourbon was established at Cedar Lake.³⁰ Although this was not the site which was recommended by the Cree Indians who approached La Vérendrye in 1737, the fort did occupy a strategic position on the Saskatchewan River. From this point La Vérendrye could intercept the Indian traders as they descended the Saskatchewan on their way to York Factory. He could also use the fort to promote trade and exploration above the forks of the Saskatchewan River.

By 1730 the European fur trade had become an important component in the diplomatic and economic relations of the Indian populations throughout the interior. The Cree and Assiniboine who travelled to the Bay continued to trade their furs at York Factory while the efforts of La Vérendrye provided an additional market for the furs which they traded and an alternative source for the goods which they desired. Throughout this time the Cree and Assiniboine, who dominated the trade of the York Factory hinterland, were able to exploit their mobility, and their willingness to trade with the English or the French, to establish favourable conditions and terms of trade.

However the European trade did not reorient the existing networks of trade and diplomacy within the interior and it is clear that the Indians continued to pursue their own diplomatic and political goals even as they sought the benefits of trade with the Europeans. It is

significant that the Cree and Assiniboine who approached La Verendrye at Fort St. Charles in 1736 also expressed their sorrow over the death of La Vérendrye's son and a group of Frenchmen who had been killed in an ambush by the Sioux at Lake of the Woods in June of that year. The Cree chief who spoke on their behalf declared their intention "to take vengeance for the deed" and announced that 800 Cree and Assiniboine had already assembled at Pointe du Bois, their "usual rendezvous", to march against the Sioux.³¹

This was not the first time La Vérendrye was approached by the Indians on the matter. He reported that the Indians began to enquire about the massacre shortly after he had received news about it on 22 June 1736. Throughout the summer delegations of Cree, Monsoni and Assiniboine encouraged La Vérendrye to lead and supply a raid against the Sioux.³² La Vérendrye, worried that such an expedition would interrupt the fall hunt and the wild rice harvest, argued that a raid was not advisable at that time, and he urged the Indians to comply with his wishes.³³ La Vérendrye did arrange for Indian convoys to accompany and protect French traders in the interior in exchange for annual gratuities of tobacco and ammunition. On 2 January 1737 La Vérendrye received word that the Indians who had gathered at Pointe du Bois had complied with his request, in spite of the fact that many of them had appropriated La Vérendrye's loss as their own.³⁴

The attack by the Sioux in 1736 had represented a significant threat to the Indians who were trading with the French and it is likely that many of the Indians who assembled at Pointe du Bois felt that it was in their own interests to respond with force. At the very least, the

actions of the Sioux provided an opportunity to organize a raid against a longstanding enemy. More significantly, the deaths of the French traders represented a potential threat to the movement of the French within the interior, and it jeopardized the expansion of the trade which the Cree and Assiniboine were encouraging at the time.

The events of 1736 formed a pattern that was repeated many times throughout the interior. In this case the Assiniboine, Cree and Monsoni were eager to marshal their alliance against the Sioux, and they attempted to elicit French support for their cause. La Vérendrye discouraged open conflict for commercial reasons but he was eager to use the strength of the existing alliance to protect his traders.

The French and English traders relied on the existing networks of trade and diplomacy to conduct their trade throughout the interior. La Vérendrye followed these routes inland from Lake Superior. His eventual interest in Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River, and his desire to explore to the river's source, reflected the political and economic significance of these waterways to the Assiniboine and Cree Indians of the interior. This approach to the interior remained in place as the French trade was reorganized and eventually absorbed by British entrepreneurs from Montreal following the Treaty of Paris in 1763.

During the 1750s the Hudson's Bay Company resumed its exploration of the York Factory hinterland. In 1754 James Isham sent Anthony Henday inland from York Factory. Henday travelled as far as Alberta before returning to York Factory in 1755. However he did not follow the Nelson inland to Lake Winnipeg at this time. Two years later Joseph Smith and

Joseph Waggoner travelled inland, apparently up the Hayes River, to Cross Lake, then up the Nelson to Lake Winnipeg. From here Smith and Waggoner travelled west to Cedar lake and south to the Assiniboine. They returned to York Factory in 1757 and were sent back into the interior shortly after their arrival at the post. On their return to the interior they again travelled up the Hayes River to Lake Winnipeg and eventually south to the Assiniboine.

The expeditions of Smith and Waggoner highlighted the significance of the Nelson-Hayes corridor and northern Lake Winnipeg. Indians who travelled down the Saskatchewan could continue their journey to the coast by crossing the northern tip of Lake Winnipeg and descending the Nelson or the Hayes. Or, they could travel south on Lake Winnipeg towards the Winnipeg and Red Rivers. From southern Manitoba they could travel in many directions to pursue trade, establish alliances, or wage war in order to pursue their political and economic interests. After the Company established Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River in 1774 the route from York Factory up the Hayes River, through Lake Winnipeg, and west along the Saskatchewan River into the interior emerged as a major artery in the Company's scheme of trade and provision. The decision to establish a post at Jack River, and then at Norway House, followed naturally from the Company's recent experience in the interior and the Indians' longstanding use of these waterways to pursue their diplomatic and trade initiatives.³⁵

Footnotes

¹ Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter cited as HBCA), B.154/a/1, Norway House journal, 1796-97, 10 August 1796.

² HBCA, B.154/a/1, Norway House journal, 1796-97, 3 September, 1796.

³ HBCA, B.154/a/1, Norway House journal, 1796-97, 15 September, 1796.

⁴ HBCA, B.154/a/2, Norway House journal, 1797-98, 21 September, 1797; HBCA, B.154/a/3, Norway House Journal, 1798-99, 16 September, 1798.

⁵ HBCA, B.154/a/3, Norway House journal, 1798-99, 18 September, 1798.

⁶ HBCA, B.154/a/3, Norway House journal, 1798-99, 24 September, 1798. Sabbeston's destination appears to have been Cross Lake.

⁷ HBCA, B.154/a/3, Norway House journal, 1798-99, 14 February 1799; 4 March 1799 and 3 June 1799.

⁸ James G.E. Smith, "Western Woods Cree", in Subarctic, ed. by June Helm, Vol. 6. of Handbook of North American Indians, ed. by William Sturtevant (20 vols.; Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), pp. 257.

⁹ Ibid., pp. 256-57.

¹⁰ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 2d.

¹¹ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 3d.

¹² HBCA, B.154/a/15, Norway House journal, 1826-28. In the journal MacLeod complains of the poor living conditions during the winter of 1826-27, and he reports that the men were busy constructing new living quarters and the other buildings which were necessary to conduct the trade.

¹³ James Hargrave, The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-43, ed. by G.P. de T. Glazebrook, Vol. 24 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), p. 170, Donald Ross to James Hargrave, 23 December 1834.

¹⁴ Government of Manitoba, Historic Resources Branch of Culture, Heritage and Recreation, Archway Warehouse, Jail and Powder Magazine, Norway House, (Winnipeg: Government of Manitoba, 1985), my description follows the description given in this booklet.

¹⁵ Henry Kelsey, The Kelsey Papers, ed. by A.G. Doughty and Chester Martin (Ottawa: King's Printer, 1929), p. 2.

¹⁶ Ibid., pp. xxxvi-xxxix.

¹⁷ E.E. Rich, The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1967), p. 73; Arthur Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: their role as hunters, trappers and middlemen in the lands southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), p. 39; Paul C. Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1986), p. 15; Allen Ronaghan, "Kelsey's Journal of 1691 Reconsidered," Saskatchewan History, XXXVII (Winter, 1984), pp. 25-31.

¹⁸ The Echimamish River basin joins the Hayes and Nelson River systems. From the Painted Stone portage, the highest elevation along its course, the river flows east to the Hayes River and west towards the Nelson. Sheldon L. McLeod, in The Evolution of the Echimamish River: Northern Manitoba (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1976), pp. 82 ff., suggests that Indians travelling to the Bay from the region west of Lake Winnipeg travelled across the lake to the Echimamish and Hayes Rivers. Indians travelling from the Bay and up the Saskatchewan River to the interior would choose the Fox or Carrot Rivers and the Minago River.

¹⁹ Joseph B. Tyrrell, ed., Documents Relating to the Early History of Hudson's Bay (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1931), p. 68.

²⁰ Ibid., pp. xiii and 123.

²¹ Ibid., p. 124.

²² Jérémie cited in Arthur Dobbs, An Account of the Countries Adjoining to Hudson's Bay in the North-west Part of America (New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1967), p. 20-21.

²³ Doughty and Martin in Kelsey, op. cit., pp. xxxvi-xxxvii; also Dobbs, op. cit., p. 20-21.

²⁴ Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 259.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 259.

²⁶ Doughty and Martin in Kelsey, op. cit., suggest that Lake Michinipi is a reference to Lake Winnipeg, p. xxxvii; Tyrrell favours this suggestion although he does indicate that it may be a reference to Oxford Lake, Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 259.

²⁷ Lawrence J. Burpee, ed., Journals and Letters of La Vérendrye and His Sons (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1927), p. 172.

²⁸ Ibid., pp. 228-29.

²⁹ Ibid., p. 250.

³⁰ E.E. Rich, The History of the Hudson's Bay Company: 1670-1870, (2 Vols.: London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958), pp. 522; Burpee, op. cit., pp. 448 and 486.

³¹ La Vérendrye in Burpee, op. cit., pp. 219-223. Burpee notes that La Vérendrye located Pointe du Bois on the Red river above its junction with the Assiniboine. Burpee suggests that it is not known if this referred to an actual post constructed by La Vérendrye, or an Indian rendezvous designated by this name.

³² Burpee, op. cit., p. 62, states that the Monsoni were of "Algonquian stock, and closely related to the Cree. Their home has been in the country south-west of Hudson Bay, but Dobbs mentions a band on the west side of Rainy River, near Rainy Lake, a few years after the date of this journal (1730). They are frequently mentioned in the Jesuit Relations." La Vérendrye refers to the Cree, the Assiniboine and the Monsoni when he discusses this incident. Adolph Greenberg and James Morrison refer to the "confusing variety of terms" which appears in the historical record and they argue that the Monsoni were among the group of Indians which came to be known as the Northern Ojibwas. See Greenberg and Morrison, "Group Identities in the Boreal Forest: The Origin of the Northern Ojibwa," Ethnohistory, 29 (1982), pp. 75-102.

³³ Ibid., pp. 223-33.

³⁴ Eric Wolf, Europe and the People Without History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), suggests that the conflict with the Sioux was a "North American manifestation of the global conflict between France and England" and the alliances within the interior reflected this conflict, see pp. 173-77. Wolf states that the Cree and Assiniboine, equipped with English guns, displaced the Sioux in order to protect their position as middlemen while the French equipped the Sioux so the Sioux could resist the Cree and Assiniboine, help the French consolidate their position within the interior, and oppose the expansion of the English and their allies. This incident, however, is more properly seen as an example of how the Cree and Assiniboine used the English and the French to pursue their own diplomatic and political initiatives. Neither the Cree or Assiniboine traded or treated exclusively with the French or English and in this case the Cree and Assiniboine clearly allied themselves with the French in order to consolidate their political and economic standing in the boundary waters west of the Great Lakes.

³⁵ McLeod, op. cit., pp. 82-84. David Thompson surveyed the Echimamish for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1790.

Chapter 3: Indian trade and exchange within the
Interior: 1670-1796

When Father Antoine Silvy confronted the Indians who had come to trade at York Factory in 1685 he characterized them as "wanderers" and concluded that it was "morally impossible to christianize them".¹ Father Gabriel Marest was equally disenchanted ten years later when he considered the possibility of converting the trading Indians to the Roman Catholic faith.² Both men agreed that the Cree and Assiniboine Indians offered the best, and perhaps the only, chance for a successful mission because they gathered annually in large numbers for three or four months. Silvy suggested that some gains could be made by missionaries who remained with the Assiniboine "for a long time, and in their village, which is beyond the great lake of the Assiniboines...".³ Marest believed that a mission could be established "with the Crees and Assiniboines. These Indians...are at least sedentary for three or four months, so that a mission can be more easily formed in their country".⁴ The evidence of subsequent years indicates that Silvy and Marest were referring to annual gatherings which played a significant role in the political, social and economic life of the Cree and Assiniboine Indians who came to trade at York Factory.

La Potherie also described these annual gatherings. In 1698 he reported that the Assiniboine and Cree who traded with the French at Fort Bourbon (York Factory) began to prepare for their journey each year in May. At that time, when "the ice in the lakes and rivers begins to break up, they assemble, sometimes twelve to fifteen hundred, on the

shore of a lake which is the meeting place, where they make all preparations for their journey".⁵

Joseph La France, who travelled from the Great Lakes to Lake Winnipeg and on to Hudson Bay between 1739 and 1742, described a similar gathering. La France, as retold by Arthur Dobbs, described a lake

where all the Indians assemble in the latter end of March every Year, to cut the Birch Trees and make their Canoes of Bark....in order to pass down the River to York Fort on Nelson River with their Furs; it is divided so as to make almost two Lakes....The River De vieux Hommes runs from the West for about 200 Leagues, and falls into this Lake....it has a strong Current and is always muddy....⁶

Although Dobbs states that La France was referring to Lake Pachegoia (probably Cedar Lake), it appears that he, and La Potherie, were referring to an annual gathering which took place on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, perhaps at the present site of Grand Rapids, on the western shore at the mouth of the Saskatchewan.⁷ This accords more closely with the details of La France's narrative and Dobbs' attempts to highlight the strategic significance of Lake Winnipeg and his belief that English traders needed to intervene at this point in order to prevent the Indians from trading with the French.⁸

La Potherie characterized these gatherings as a pleasant time when "Joy, pleasure, and good cheer" prevailed.⁹ During this time matters of public interest were discussed and "alliances" were made and renewed. Canoes and arrangements were also made for the trading expedition to York Factory. La Potherie suggested that the canoes were capable of "extraordinary speed" and were able to travel "more than thirty leagues a day on the rivers." These canoes were also capable of navigating sea

waters, presumably similar to those encountered along the northern shores of Lake Winnipeg. The Indians delegated certain individuals from among the hunters to act as "chiefs to take charge of the trading for the tribe." La Potherie estimated that the trading expeditions "ordinarily" consisted of approximately 600 canoes and 1000 Indians although he noted that these expeditions were abandoned some years when the Indians were at war.¹⁰

The Trading Ceremony

La Potherie also described the scene at York Factory when these Indians arrived to trade with the French. He stated that it was their custom to wait until a spot had been assigned to them before they set up their tents and established their camp. After this was done the "chief" of the "tribe", accompanied by one or two Indians, entered the post to receive presents of a pipe and tobacco from the ranking official of the post. The chief would reply with a short speech which urged the official to look favourably upon his tribe and the official would respond with assurances that this would be done. After the chief smoked the pipe he returned to his camp and briefed his people on the reception which he had received. Upon returning to the post the chief gave the official a present of furs and once again solicited assurances for favourable treatment and terms of trade. The official would again offer his assurances and extend another present of pipes and tobacco. Following this ceremony the Indians were allowed to trade their furs through a

small "grating" in a window of the post, but were not allowed to enter the post as the chief and his two attendants had done.¹¹

La Potherie stated that the French traders prepared a feast immediately outside of the fort when it was the chief's turn to trade. When the Indians were assembled the food was offered and a representative of the post official would encourage the Indians to maintain their "alliance" and would offer the "calumet" to all of those who were assembled. The Indians were also given tobacco to offer to other Indians which they encountered in the interior in order to encourage them to trade at the post.¹²

The basic elements of the trading ceremony remained in place after the French abandoned York Factory and left the English in control of the bayside post. Andrew Graham provided a detailed account of the trading ceremony which took place at York Factory, when the Indians came to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company over fifty years later. Graham also stated that the ceremony which he described was reenacted at all of the Company's posts at that time.

The Indians would notify the Company of their arrival by firing several shots into the air as they approached the post. The Company would respond with a salute of their own and the Indians would then land their canoes and begin to establish their camp. The Indian trading "captain", marked off by a "small St. George or Union Jack" in the stern of his vessel, and his "lieutenants", were summoned to the fort where they were introduced to the Governor and were offered a pipe to smoke.¹³ The trading captain would then tell the Governor how many canoes he brought with him, the state of their hunts and conditions within the

interior. The Governor, after receiving this information, welcomed the Indians to the post and assured them that they would continue to receive his support and goods of high quality. Following this exchange the pipe was again offered and gifts of clothing were given to the trading captain and his lieutenants.

Following this ceremony the Company presented the trading captain with a gift of bread and prunes. Brandy, tobacco and pipes were also offered. The Governor and the captain left the fort in a formal procession and presented these gifts to all the Indians who had accompanied the trading captain to trade at the post. These presents were distributed to the people by the captain's lieutenants following a speech delivered by the trading captain.

General trading was then permitted and might, according to Graham, last for several weeks. At the start of trading the Indians were invited into the post to smoke the "Grand Calumet", the "Pipe of Peace and Friendship", and to view the goods which the English offered for trade.¹⁴ Only the captain was allowed to remain in the trading room once the trading began, and this privilege was extended only during the time that his Indians were trading. Also, during this period the trading captain often dined with the Governor and Company officials and was allowed special access to those parts of the post which were clearly off limits to the majority of those Indians who had come to trade. When the trading was finished, and the Indians were preparing to leave, the Company presented the trading captain with "a part of every commodity we have for trade, for encouragement to visit us again next summer".¹⁵ If the captain was satisfied with the treatment accorded to him and his

party he would leave his calumet at the post to indicate that he planned to return the following year.

Both Graham and La Potherie described the formalities which marked the arrival of the Indians at the post and the ceremonies which accompanied the exchange of gifts and goods. A prominent feature of these ceremonies involved the formal greeting between the Indian chief and the ranking French official, or the trading captain and the Governor, at the post. The subsequent exchange of gifts and speeches, the offering of food, and the sharing of the calumet, were designed to express and extend the terms of the relationship between the Indians and the European traders. The Indians asked for fair treatment, favourable terms of trade and, significantly, goods of high quality. The French and the English assured the Indians of their good intentions and attempted to gain a commitment that the Indians would return to the post to trade again next year.

The evidence suggests that tobacco and bread were offered, and "pipes" were smoked, prior to the exchange of furs and supplies, even when small groups of Indians came in to trade. James Isham described the situation, at Churchill during the 1740s, when two Indians came in to trade and Graham recounted the situation when a solitary Indian arrived to trade for goods and supplies at York Factory.¹⁶

Joseph McGillivray, writing from Norway House in 1823, reported that the Indians, upon arriving at the post, expected to receive rum, as a "present", and would only then trade for gunpowder and other necessities. He also indicated that the Company's efforts to

restrict the distribution of alcohol jeopardized the trade at Norway House.¹⁷

Abraham Rotstein suggests that this protocol dominated the fur trade exchange throughout the interior, until the end of the nineteenth century. Rotstein quotes Frank Russell's account of 1898. Russell stated that

the Indians had to be given a little tobacco, flour, tea and sugar before furs were mentioned. Then the whole story would be repeated - how the Company had always looked after its red children and fed them when the fishery failed, how they had brought them goods when others could not, and goods of a quality far superior to those of the opposition¹⁸

John Foster agrees with Rotstein. Foster quotes an anonymous trader who suggested that

It is unnecessary telling in the journal that every Indian who arrives, whether good, bad, or indifferent, gets a bit of tobacco and a dram; it suffices to tell, once, that it is the custom of the place, and anyone who reads of an Indian's arrival may suppose that this custom is followed¹⁹

It appears that the ceremony described in detail by La Potherie and Graham, in the early days of the European fur trade, persisted, in some fashion, after the European traders began to establish posts throughout the interior, and smaller groups, or solitary individuals, arrived to trade their furs.

Reciprocity and Trade

A number of scholars have considered the origins, and the political significance, of the fur trade ceremony. E.E. Rich suggests that the

Indians were dependent upon intertribal trade prior to European contact and the European trade was incorporated into the existing trade networks. He argues that Indian notions of trade and exchange dominated the fur trade, and the fur trade ceremony, as European traders accepted the "habits" and the "function" of the Indian trade.²⁰ Unfortunately, Rich does not consider the "function" of Indian trade beyond its capacity to provide and distribute essential goods. He does not examine how trade functioned to mediate political relations between tribes, nor does he consider how the trading ceremony preserved the cohesion and commitment which was necessary to maintain the trading network.

Abraham Rotstein states that Indian society was motivated by the search for collective security and the specific components of the fur trade ceremony were intended to confirm the strength of an alliance or the provisions of an existing treaty. Rotstein considers "the exchange of gifts, the use of the calumet and the wampum belt".²¹ Each of these figured prominently in the annual councils which were convened by the Indians and their inclusion in the fur trade points to the strategic significance of the fur trade ceremony.

Edward Umfreville recognized this when he described a calumet ceremony at York Factory in the eighteenth century.

Though the above ceremony made use of by the Indians, in smoking the calimut (sic), may appear extremely ridiculous and incomprehensible, yet when we are made acquainted with their ideas in this respect, the apparent absurdity of the custom will vanish. By this ceremony they mean to signify to all persons concerned, that whilst the sun shall visit the different parts of the world, and make day and night; peace, firm friendship, and brotherly love, shall be established between the English and their country, and the same on their part. By twirling the pipe over the head, they further intend to imply, that all personal (sic) of the two

wheresoever they may be, shall be included in the friendship and brotherhood, now concluded or renewed.²²

John Foster notes that European "practices and symbolic actions" were also included in the fur trade ceremony. He suggests that these practices were "derived from relations between friendly nations in Europe" and he concludes that their inclusion points to the political and social significance of the fur trade ceremony.²³

It is clear that the exchange of furs for supplies could only occur if an alliance between the Indians and the European traders had been established and confirmed through the exchange of gifts, according to the established protocol. In fact, the subsequent exchange of furs for supplies represented an extension of, and commitment to, the understandings established during the gift exchange.

This emphasis on the political and strategic dimensions of the fur trade ceremony accords with Marcel Mauss' analysis of gift exchange in "primitive" society. Mauss suggests that the exchange of gifts between groups was deliberate and interested because of the gift's importance in mediating relationships within a hostile environment. Intrinsic properties of the gift demanded that the gift be accepted, and when accepted, repaid. The obligation of the gift

is expressed in myth and imagery, symbolically and collectively; it takes the form of interest in the objects exchanged; the objects are never completely separated from the men who exchange them; the communion and alliance they establish are well-nigh indissoluble. The lasting influence of the objects exchanged is a direct expression of the manner in which sub-groups within segmentary societies of an archaic type are constantly embroiled with and feel themselves in debt to each other.²⁴

Mauss states that a gift "necessarily implies the notion of credit" since the gift was not repaid immediately.²⁵ Typically, weeks or months, would pass before a gift was offered in response. Mauss' analysis offers an alternative view of the seasonal exchange of furs and supplies which dominated relations between the Indians and the European traders. Mauss suggests that barter evolved from this earlier practice of giving and receiving gifts. It emerged when the gifts, given or received on credit, were simultaneously exchanged.²⁶

Marshall Sahlins, commenting on Mauss' analysis, suggests that the gift was "the primitive way of achieving the peace that in civil society is secured by the State".²⁷ However, the gift did not dissolve prevailing social and political identities within a corporate state. It did not demand common assent to "authority, or even to unity".²⁸ Rather, it perpetuated these distinctions by organizing relationships around the understandings and obligations which were inherent in the gift exchange. The gift exchange ultimately represented the triumph of reason over emotion. It substituted "alliance, gift and commerce for war, isolation and stagnation".²⁹

Bruce White suggests that the Ojibwa of Lake Superior exchanged gifts in order to extend the kinship relation to people who were outside of the kin group. The "family or kin group" was the basic unit of production and distribution among the Ojibwa and material relations were extended laterally from the immediate kin group to more distant relatives, and beyond the kin group to trading partners and allies.³⁰ In these "nonfamilial circumstances the bond would be invented or inherited. The power and extent of these new relationships were based on

the degree in which they could be made to resemble the social and economic relations that existed among family members".³¹

Diplomatic and trade relations were dominated by the "idiom of kinship" and they carried the rights and responsibilities of kinship relations. Gifts, including clothing, food, tobacco and hospitality were exchanged initially, when two groups met, to establish a level of trust and understanding, and subsequently, to reaffirm the special rights and responsibilities which inhered from these extended relationships. The gift exchange also demonstrated whether the appropriate conditions for trade and diplomacy were present. Either party could refuse the gift, or fail to reciprocate, if they were not interested in initiating or maintaining diplomatic or economic ties.

White states that different kinship metaphors pertained in different situations, and he suggests that this confused the relationship between the Ojibwa and the Europeans at times since each metaphor also characterized the nature and direction of material assistance and exchange. He states that diplomatic relations with the Europeans were usually described as a relationship between parents and children where the father or the mother, the European government, assumed the responsibility to provide for, and encourage, the material support of the children, the Ojibwa people. White suggests that the trading relationship was generally more equitable, with goods and services passing in both directions. This relationship was often, although not always, characterized as a relationship between brothers. White suggests that this had implications for the treaty process since the image of a parent providing for children was commonly used by all

parties although, perhaps, with different understandings of the significance and responsibilities involved.

Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman also consider the origins and the political significance of the fur trade ceremony. They acknowledge the link between trade and politics in "aboriginal Indian society" and consider the significance of the gift exchange to the alliances which dominated Indian society. They also suggest that the French and the English were obliged to participate in these ceremonies in order to exchange their goods for the furs which they desired.³² However Ray and Freeman conclude that "the trading ceremony - while retaining many of the trappings of the political institution it had once been - increasingly served purely economic ends...".³³

Ray and Freeman also distinguish between the "pre-trade gift exchange" and the subsequent "barter exchange" of furs and goods.³⁴ However, they suggest that the earlier political significance of the gift exchange receded as the factors and trading captains attempted to use this opportunity to "orchestrate" the subsequent exchange of furs and supplies for their particular economic advantage. The factors attempted to exceed the official standard in order to generate an overplus while the trading captains wanted to negotiate a favourable exchange rate and maintain their followings and their influence. In order to maintain his standing the captain redistributed the "gratuities" which he received from the factor, and "settled his accounts" with his followers, before they went their separate ways for the winter.³⁵ In a classic confrontation between substantive and formal

economic theory, Abraham Rotstein sees an "encounter of two political groups or their representatives ...(which)... followed established political patterns", where Ray and Freeman see the determined efforts of individual producers and consumers to maximize their own profits and advantage.³⁶

Ray and Freeman speak of the "redistribution of goods" and "gratuities" as if this was done merely to ensure the standing of the trading captain. They do not consider the historical and political conventions which influenced the distribution of goods within Indian society, nor do they consider the continued influence of these conventions during this period of the fur trade. Rather, they dismiss the possibility by invoking their elusive point "in time" after which the political significance of the fur trade exchange receded and the economic significance of the exchange took over.³⁷ Their suggestion that the factor and the trading captain "orchestrated the complex trading ceremony", seemingly at will and for their own purposes, shows a similar disregard for the continued significance of accumulated tradition and practice.³⁸

It is a major thesis of this paper that the fur trade exchange ceremony represented a successful attempt by the trading Indians to incorporate existing diplomatic, political and economic conventions within the European fur trade. The Indians confronted, dealt with, and treated with, the French and European traders in much the same way as they had confronted, dealt with, and treated with the other Indian nations in their existing trade networks.

The large annual gatherings, and the trading expeditions to York Factory, punctuated the seasonal round of activity. The small hunting groups, which characterized Assiniboine and Cree organization at the time of contact, continued to dominate the political and social life of the Indians.

Toby Morantz has examined the trading captain system which was initiated by the Hudson's Bay Company in the 1700s. She describes the system as a European innovation designed to rationalize the fur trade and stimulate production during a period of competition. However, she concludes that the "trading captains' gangs did not necessarily correspond to social groupings that existed away from the post and trading activities".³⁹ Rather

... the formation of trading captains was a process that went on outside the social structure as a means of organizing men and resources for a specific task unrelated to their subsistence activities. Once away from the post, probably, trading gangs ceased to function as groups until the following spring.⁴⁰

Andrew Graham's account of the trade at York Factory suggests that this was the case. He states that the trading group often met in a specified place away from the post, after the trade was concluded. At this time a final feast was held and arrangements for next years' trade were made before the group dispersed.⁴¹

The early records for Norway House indicate that the Cree spent much of the year in small subsistence groups throughout the interior. These records also indicate that the Cree continued to move across a wide range of territories as circumstances required. The following chapter considers the Cree at Norway House as they are described in the

early records of the Hudson's Bay Company. These records consider the Cree at Norway House before the Company's attempt to establish an extended network of inland posts. Although the Company constructed a post at Cumberland House in 1774, and it built a number of temporary posts further west in the following years, it did not establish another permanent post within the interior until it established Norway House in the early 1800s.⁴²

Footnotes

- ¹ Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 68.
- ² Ibid., pp. 123-27.
- ³ Ibid., p. 68.
- ⁴ Ibid., p. 125.
- ⁵ Ibid., p. 265.
- ⁶ Kelsey, op. cit., (emphasis in original), p. xxxvii. The River De vieux Hommes refers to the Saskatchewan River.
- ⁷ Paul Lukens, "Description and Analyses of Vertebrate Faunal Material from the Tailrace Bay Site," in Archaeological Investigations in the Grand Rapids, Manitoba, Reservoir 1961-62, ed. by Wm. Mayer Oakes (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1970), p. 307. See also Martha McCarthy, "Thundering Waters Stilled: The Grand Rapids of the Saskatchewan," Manitoba History, (Spring, 1988), pp. 17-26.
- ⁸ Doughty and Martin argue that La France's narrative clearly refers to Lake Winnipeg and they suggest that Dobbs confused Lake Pachegoia with Lake Winnipeg when he recorded La France's narrative. See Doughty and Martin in Kelsey, op. cit., p. xxxvii.
- ⁹ Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 265.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., p. 265-66.
- ¹¹ Andrew Graham, Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson Bay 1767-1791, ed. by Glyndwr Williams (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), p. 319.
- ¹² Tyrrell, op. cit., pp. 266-67.
- ¹³ See Toby Morantz, "James Bay Trading Captains of the Eighteenth Century: New Perspectives on Algonquian Social Organization," in Actes du Huitieme Congres Des Algonquinistes, ed. by William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University Press, 1977), pp. 77-89, for a discussion of trading captains.
- ¹⁴ Graham, op. cit., p. 318.
- ¹⁵ Ibid., p. 318.
- ¹⁶ James Isham, James Isham's Observations on Hudson Bay, 1743, and Notes and Observations on a Book entitled "A Voyage to Hudson's Bay in the Dobbs Galley, 1749", ed. by E.E. Rich (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1949), pp. 63-64; also Graham, op. cit., p. 153.

- ¹⁷ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f.16-18. McGillivray is referring here to the 97th Resolve of the Council of the Company held at York Factory on 8 July 1822 which instructed Company officials "to give Indians no more than one half of the quantity of Spirits they have been accustomed to receive in the way of presents, and that no furs be traded for that article", (emphasis my own), see Hudson's Bay Company, Minutes of Council of the Northern Department 1821-31, ed. by R. Harvey Fleming (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1940), p. 24.
- ¹⁸ Frank Russell, Explorations in the Far North, (Iowa City: University of Iowa, 1898), p. 58.
- ¹⁹ Foster, op. cit., p. 191.
- ²⁰ E.E. Rich, "Trade Habits and Economic Motivation among the Indians of North America," Canadian Journal of Economics and Political Science, 27 (1960), p. 42.
- ²¹ Rotstein, op. cit., 1972, p. 9.
- ²² Umphreville quoted in Rotstein, op. cit., 1972, p. 19.
- ²³ Foster, op. cit., p. 188.
- ²⁴ Marcel Mauss, The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies (Translated by Ian Cunnison; London: Cohen and West Ltd., 1969) p. 31.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 35.
- ²⁶ Ibid., pp. 34-35.
- ²⁷ Marshall Sahlins, Stone Age Economics (Chicago: Aldine-Atherton, 1972), p. 169.
- ²⁸ Ibid., p. 136.
- ²⁹ Mauss, op. cit., p. 80.
- ³⁰ Bruce White, "'Give Us a Little Milk': The Social and Cultural Meanings of Gift Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade," Minnesota History, 48 (Summer, 1982), p. 61.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 62.
- ³² Ray and Freeman, op. cit., p. 55.
- ³³ Ibid., p. 62.
- ³⁴ Ibid., p. 55.

³⁵ Ibid., pp. 63 ff.

³⁶ Rotstein, op. cit., 1972, p. 1, brackets mine.

³⁷ Ray and Freeman, op. cit., p. 63.

³⁸ Ibid., p. 73.

³⁹ Morantz, op. cit., 1977, p. 84.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 87.

⁴¹ Graham, op. cit., pp. 322 and 324.

⁴² see Glyndwr Williams, "The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870," Beaver, Special Issue, (Autumn, 1983), pp. 4-86. Williams refers to William Tomison's activities along the North Saskatchewan River. Tomison was at Manchester House in 1786, Buckingham House in 1792 and Edmonton House in 1795. Williams also refers to Bedford House which was operating in 1796 and Acton House which was built in 1799. He notes that some of the posts "were little more than temporary shelters ... other posts were situated close to North Wester establishments," and he refers to Thompson's statement that Bedford House was built to "pass the winter," (p. 38).

Chapter 4: Indian Kinship and Subsistence at Norway
House: 1796-1821

In 1815 James Sutherland reported that the Indians who came to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company at Norway House travelled the district in small groups of one or two families "as their capricious fancy lead (sic) them". He observed that there were "no chiefs here that has any influence over the rest, further than age may entitle them to" and he noted that the "hunting ground was common to the whole" although "strangers" were permitted access to the hunting territory. Sutherland suggested that marriages were arranged in advance and he observed that the man resided with his wife's family after marriage.¹

Joseph McGillivray, writing from Norway House in 1823, concluded that the Indians moved about the territory in small groups of two or three families. He also reported that their

political union is destitute of concert or association - no distinction can arise from inequality of possessions - all are freemen, and assert with firmness the rights belonging to that Condition. They are unacquainted with control, and do not willingly submit to correction, under this view they may be considered as individuals not members of a Society. No Chief is acknowledged among them.²

While Sutherland and McGillivray concluded that the small family groups were the only significant forms of political association, McGillivray did indicate that it was difficult for him to make observations of Indian life in the interior. He suggested that only someone "possessed of impartiality and penetration" would be able to draw accurate conclusions regarding the social organization of the Indians whom he observed at Norway House.³

The Political and Social Organization of the Cree

The scholarly debate concerning the social organization of the subarctic Cree, including the Cree of northern Manitoba, has demonstrated how difficult it is to achieve the clarity which McGillivray sought. Some scholars have concluded that the subarctic Cree were organized along patrilocal and patrilineal principles while others suggest that bilateral and bilocal principles determined descent and residence. Finally, others conclude that the empirical evidence supports the application of matrilocal and matrilineal principles.⁴

Much of the recent discussion has centred upon the documentary evidence which suggests that matrilocal and matrilineal principles were in fact significant at the time of European contact. La Potherie, referring to the Indians who traded at Fort Nelson during the period of French occupation, believed that the "greatest consolation that the father of a family can have is a number of daughters. They are the support of the house, whereas a father who has sons only may look forward to being abandoned by them when they have grown up ...".⁵ La Potherie noted that the best husband was a proven hunter with many relatives. In this case the parents of the bride would have access to the relatives of their son-in-law if their own hunts failed.

Joseph Robson, referring to the Hudson Bay Cree between 1730-1750, observed that it

is customary for the man upon his marriage to leave his own friends, and live with his wife's father, to whose defence and subsistence he devotes himself for the remainder of his life, which makes the having daughters a much more desirable part of their possessions than sons.⁶

Andrew Graham, writing in the late 1700s, noted that there were exceptions to this pattern of residence. He observed that, upon marrying, a man "quits his father's tent and lives with his father-in-law, or sets up a tent of his own". Graham also suggested that these marriages were often arranged in advance, by the parents, and they were intended to foster good relations and promote security.⁷

Eleanor Leacock, in an article published in 1955, considers this evidence to argue against the predominance of patrilineal formulations at the time of European contact. According to Leacock, the documentary evidence demonstrates that matrilocal residence was at least preferred at contact although references from this period to patrilocal residence and patrilineal descent are also available. She concludes that the Indians were in fact bilocal, even at this time, and she suggests that the significant finding is "the indication of a shift from matrilocality to patrilocality at least as the ideal pattern"⁸. Leacock argues that the emphasis on patrilocality was encouraged by the emergence of the trapping economy and the significance attached to the male contribution within this economy.⁹

In a more recent article Charles Bishop and Shepard Krech III, suggest that matrilocal and matrilineal principles were not only ideals, as Leacock argues, but they predominated throughout the Canadian subarctic, even after European contact.¹⁰ The authors suggest that Leacock dismisses the evidence for the continuation of matriorganization since she does not develop a theoretical understanding to explain its persistence under specific ecological conditions. Bishop and Krech argue that

matriorganization is highly adaptive both in fostering internal political cohesion at the level of the macroband ... and the microband ... and in aiding mobile, alternately aggregating and fissioning bands to exploit resources that vary by region, season and year.¹¹

Bishop and Krech also consider the post-contact factors which contributed to the decline of matriorganization and the subsequent prominence of bilateral and bilocal relations in the 19th and 20th centuries. They suggest that resource depletion, epidemics, a shift away from hunting big game animals to trapping furbearers and the migration of Indian populations to more productive hunting territories or to Hudson's Bay Company posts affected the earlier patterns of matrilocal residence and matrilineal descent.¹²

Paul Wertman suggests that it may not be possible, or necessary, to resolve the debate in these terms. He suggests that

the interesting questions about Indian social organization during the fur trade have to do fundamentally not so much with territoriality, descent modes, or ecological variables but rather with the nature of intergroup alliances. It is the nature of the alliances in a fur trade context which produced the phenomena about which there has been such strenuous debate.¹³

Although the Cree kinship system is generally characterized as a bilateral cross-cousin system with patrilocal and patrilineal tendencies Wertman argues that the critical, and determining, factor was the need to establish and maintain favourable alliances in response to changing historical, ecological and economic circumstances.

Wertman suggests that before contact the Cree of northern Manitoba were organized in

non-linear local groups, and arranged in loosely defined territories, and the basic mode of organization functioned so as to

provide any particular productive group with the possibility of creating new productive units with other similar groups.¹⁴

After contact a typical productive unit consisted of a father and mother, along with their children, and variously, the father's brothers and their families, or the mother's sisters and their families. Children were associated with their same sex parent and siblings in order to learn the necessary skills for survival. Marriage within this unit was not permitted. Rather, individuals married someone outside of this unit in order to establish new productive and reproductive ties. Once a favourable alliance outside the productive unit had been determined the men were permitted to refer to each other as cross-cousins and they were able to exchange sisters for marriage.

After marriage the couple typically resided with the woman's parents for a period of one or two years, or until their first child was born. After this period the couple joined the husband's group and assumed residence there. The period of "bride service" immediately following the marriage provided the husband with the opportunity to establish productive relationships with his father-in-law and his brothers-in-law. It also gave him an opportunity to become familiar with a territory which he would have access to in the future. Since the wife's skills did not depend upon knowledge of specific territories they could be transferred to the husband's group and applied to subsistence pursuits in the new setting. Wertman suggests that this process was critical since it provided the husband with access to territories and working relationships which were designed to protect against future contingencies.

Larger gatherings typically occurred during the summer months.¹⁵ At this time local groups would gather on the shores of a river or lake to fish, to gather food and to hunt. In fall, this group dispersed throughout the interior in the small productive units considered above. The composition of these units varied from year to year according to the opportunities and requirements facing each family and the possible affiliations established through marriage.¹⁶

This system exhibited the characteristics of a bilateral cross-cousin system since it disqualified women who were in the father's brothers', and the mother's sisters', family as marriage partners. It also provided for the exchange of marriage partners between two men who were, or considered themselves to be, cross-cousins. However, it extended the range of eligible partners far beyond those people considered to be cross-cousins in the current sense of the word since it encouraged alliances according to the need to ensure access to resources rather than the need to adhere to strict principles of residence and descent.

Wertman suggests that the extension of kinship terms to individuals in other productive groups was significant since it provided a model for social relations which stressed a high degree of reciprocity between productive groups and it encouraged the egalitarian and cooperative values ideally associated with kinship relations. In effect, this system extended a model of family relations, similar to but not identical with a bilateral cross-cousin system, to the political and social life of the Cree in northern Manitoba. According to Polanyi, reciprocal relations,

and substantive notions of society and the economy, will apply under these circumstances.¹⁷

Although Sutherland and McGillivray were unable to determine any political structure beyond the family units which arrived to trade at Norway House it is likely, and it will be assumed in this thesis, that the Cree of northern Manitoba were in fact organized according to the principles described by Wertman in order to ensure access to the resources which were critical to their survival.

The Subsistence Economy

James Sutherland, reporting from Norway House in 1815, painted a bleak picture of Indian life in the interior. Although Sutherland described the summer as a time of leisure he suggested that life was particularly difficult during the winter months and he concluded that the local Indians were ill prepared to face the hardships of their environment.

It's true in the summer season they think themselves happy, in being able to indulge themselves in their ruling passion of Sloth and Idleness then little clothing serves them, and they can with little labour paddle about collect eggs, kill young game & spear or angle fish in every Lake ... They never think of winter until its approach then it is frightful to them ... they get dispirited and nothing rouses them to exertion ... Their principal dependence for food in the winter is fish & when this fails them they are often reduced to the Horrors of famine, and obliged to fly to the nearest fishing place where they can angle a fish to preserve life.¹⁸

Joseph McGillivray offered a different assessment when he reported from Norway House in 1823. He suggested that the winter months were a time of companionship and distraction.

The winter is the Season devoted to pleasure, and the few enjoyments possessed are gratified without restraint. An immoderate love of play predominates and they have several games of hazard ... Their games are invariably followed with a Song in which every individual joins, and the drum is incessantly beating as an accompaniment to their voices ... Action and boisterous exclamations, well suited to their occupations form a prominent feature.¹⁹

These descriptions actually support recent views which suggest that subsistence economies were able to take advantage of the seasonal surplus and adapt to shortages when times or circumstances required them to.²⁰ The Indians who traded at Norway House exploited a variety of local resources effectively throughout the warmer months and reoriented their levels of consumption and activity during the winter when local resources were not as plentiful.

It is clear that local fisheries were critical to the Indian populations throughout the territory adjacent to Lake Winnipeg. The local fish runs were predictable and reliable and the Indians were able to exploit a wide variety of fish species throughout the year. Sturgeon were harvested during their early summer spawning runs while whitefish were exploited, and preserved, during the fall season.

In his report from Norway House in 1823, Joseph McGillivray, stated that the Indians

neither sow nor plant, and are entirely unacquainted with any species of cultivation. The prolific quality of the Rivers and Lakes where fish is so abundant is their chief subsistence, and they exclusively depend upon what the Waters supply. Hunting animals appears not to be their employment, and as the former occupation requires so little exertion or activity ... indolence is rather encouraged.²¹

The Indians at Norway House continued to exploit the local fisheries throughout the 1800s. Frank Tough describes the "fishing cycle" at Norway House in the 1870s. He notes that jackfish

were sought in the early spring; in the early summer the focus shifted to sturgeon; more fishing went on in the late summer; the crucial fall fishery centered on the whitefish and again the whitefish were intensively exploited after freeze up. In addition, posts also purchased sizeable quantities of sturgeon from Indians in the late winter.²²

Tough argues that the local fisheries were an "indispensable resource" for the Indians of northern Manitoba and he suggests that their importance has generally been overlooked.²³ He suggests that fisheries remained a common property resource among the Indians throughout this time and were exploited for subsistence and local needs.²⁴

Tough indicates that the Indians were able to exchange fish for necessary provisions at Norway House. The records for Norway House support this conclusion and they indicate that the Indians, in fact, traded fish and a wide variety of foodstuffs, in addition to furs, at the post throughout the year.²⁵

The records of the Hudson's Bay Company for Norway House suggest that the local fisheries were critical to Company operations as well. In fact, the Company believed that the local fisheries could support its operations at Norway House and throughout the interior. Charles Thomas Isham, reporting from Jack River in 1797, reported that Company men were engaged at the fishery throughout October and November. His records indicate that in excess of 10,000 fish were caught during those months.²⁶

James Sutherland, reporting from the same location in 1815, described the process followed in laying up the winter supply of fish.

In this district the principal dependence for food is fish ... We depend on the Titameg for winter support about the middle of October those fish begin to spawn and collect in great schools on the shallow muddy banks in the Lakes; At that time we begin to lay up our Winters stock, and direct our whole attention to fishing until the middle of December ... ²⁷

Sutherland suggested that "with attention to the proper fishing seasons, with a number of nets and active fishermen a great number of people might be maintained at this place, and in many other parts of the district".²⁸ He thought that a well placed net could catch 1200 fish and a capable fisherman could tend 4 nets at one time. He concluded that "any quantity of fish can be caught".²⁹

Despite his gloomy assessment of local resources in 1823, and his own difficulties in procuring a supply that year, McGillivray also believed that the local fisheries could support Company operations in the region. He reported that local stocks

are so abundant as to yield a sufficient number to meet the exorbitant demands of Spring and Summer, and which is no trifling quantity as the people of the whole Northern District remain some days at this place - previously either to their departure for Canada or York Factory.³⁰

Later that same year Colin Robertson reported that he had traded for 12,000 fish from local "free-men" and Company personnel obtained 9,000 more.³¹ Sutherland estimated the average weight of the whitefish caught here at 3.5 lbs., while Robertson estimated their weight at 2 to 2.5 lbs. each.³²

The continued importance of the local fish stocks can be inferred from the establishment of commercial fisheries, on Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba, in the 1880s. However the advent of commercial fishing, for the American market, stretched the capacity of the local fish stocks and serious shortages were reported south of Beren's River by the end of the decade. Northern stocks were still reported to be healthy at this time and the commercial activity moved north to compensate for the shortfall in the southern regions. The commercial harvest, centred at Grand Rapids and Norway House, subsequently threatened the health of the northern fish stocks which had supported the Indian population in this territory for centuries.³³

The annual reports for 1815 and 1823 indicate that the Indians at Norway House continued to exploit the full range of local resources. Eggs, and a wide variety of berries, were gathered during the summer months. In 1815 Sutherland identified raspberries, strawberries, gooseberries and cranberries as well as red and black currants.³⁴ Geese and ducks were also available in the spring and fall.

Game was also available although the Hudson's Bay Company records indicate that local hunts were not always productive and game was used primarily to supplement the Indian's dependence on fish. Sutherland reported that

Flesh cannot be relied on at any season, altho' in some years a good quantity of it is got, yet in others there is scarcely any provided. The greatest number of animals is killed by the natives in the month of August, but from the difficulty of carriage and preserving the meat only a small part of each animal is brought to the house in a dry state. What little we get in the winter is usually fresh.³⁵

Although McGillivray concluded that "an exclusive diet on flesh is unattainable" he recognized its place in the local diet.³⁶ McGillivray reported that it was common for a family to remain on the edge of a river or lake and continue fishing "Whilst the men from a desire of Eating Flesh, will sleep out five or six nights, and probably succeed in killing an Animal".³⁷ Colin Robertson's journal of 1823 indicates that families temporarily abandoned their winter cache of fish in order to hunt for deer and other game.³⁸

The early records for Norway House indicate that the Indians were also able to trade these items for goods at the post. The Company, as indicated, relied upon local fish stocks to sustain its operations at Norway House and throughout the interior. Although Company men were engaged in this task the Company also relied upon the fish which it obtained through trade with the Indians. The records also demonstrate that the Company obtained waterfowl from the Indians during the migration periods and fresh meat, especially venison, throughout the winter. Furs were also traded, although it is clear that they did not constitute the only, or the principle, items of exchange during this period.

Conclusion

Wertman argues that the Cree kinship system supported the wide variety of subsistence activities and he suggests that this system "could continue to function for some time in a colonial contact situation without requiring a great many formal changes in the kinship

system or social organization".³⁹ However he argues that formal changes did occur as the Cree became dependent upon European trade goods and began to devote more time to trapping furs for trade and less to longstanding subsistence pursuits.⁴⁰ Wertman suggests that the Hudson Bay coastal Cree were dependent upon the European traders by 1720 and he implies that the inland Cree were dependent by the time the Hudson's Bay and North West Companies merged in 1821.

Wertman's conclusions regarding the impact of the commercial fur trade are supported by other scholars. E.E. Rich suggests that the coastal Indians were dependent upon European technology and trade shortly after the commercial trade began in 1670 and Indians further inland were reliant by 1750.⁴¹ Charles Bishop argues that European trade goods had become necessities for the coastal Cree by 1720.⁴² Russell Rothney agrees with Bishop and suggests that for some of the Indians along the coast "this dependency occurred even earlier".⁴³ Rothney suggests that it "quickly became evident that commercial intercourse with the foreign merchants threatened the whole established way of tribal life ...".⁴⁴ Frank Tough has recently supported these conclusions. He refers to Rothney's work to challenge the suggestion that the commercial fur trade did not, in fact, alter the Indians' way of life in significant and substantive ways, at an early date.⁴⁵

Other scholars argue that the Indians' reliance on European goods, and trade, has been overstated. Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, in their discussion of the fur trade in the eastern James Bay region to 1870, suggest that previous interpretations have not always considered the "variety and complexity of Indian responses to European traders" nor

the traders' reliance on the Indians.⁴⁶ They note that the Indians supplied most of the traders' food and performed many of the tasks which were essential to the commercial trade. They conclude that the Indians' dependence was "neither as rapid nor as complete as Rich implies. The nature of the subsistence economy and the distance from a trading post were both factors which affected the degree to which different Indian groups came to rely on the white man's trade goods".⁴⁷

Paul Thistle, examining trade relations along the lower Saskatchewan River to 1840, concludes that the Western Woods Cree

were able to maintain a significant degree of independence from the fur trade throughout the nearly two hundred years from the protohistoric contact to 1840. Even under monopoly conditions they were not so completely dominated, nor so deeply incorporated into the mercantilist trade system as to have no choice concerning their participation in trapping, hunting, tripping and wage labour for the HBC. Indeed, the Cree continued to control their own labour by withholding their services or withdrawing from the exchange altogether when it best suited their purposes.⁴⁸

The evidence for Norway House supports the conclusion that the Indians' dependence upon European goods and trade has been overstated and the emphasis upon Indian dependence has distorted our understanding of the relationships throughout the interior during this time. The English and French relied on the existing Indian networks of trade and diplomacy to conduct their trade in the western interior after contact and throughout the eighteenth century.⁴⁹ During this time the Indians continued to pursue their own diplomatic and political initiatives and they were able to impose their expectations and understandings as a critical feature of their trade with the Europeans.⁵⁰ There is little evidence to indicate a

dramatic shift in political or economic circumstances after the Hudson's Bay Company established their post at Norway House.

The following chapter will examine the operations of the Hudson's Bay Company at Norway House after the coalition of 1821, and the Indians' response to the commercial fur trade throughout this region, and it will challenge the notion of Indian dependence in three areas. First, the local fisheries were critical to Indian subsistence throughout this region and it appears that they continued to flourish throughout this time. Second, the Hudson's Bay Company required a diversified work force to maintain its operations at this post and the local Indian populations were engaged in the commercial fur trade in a number of ways. These activities supplemented the Indian economy and provided the Indians with additional opportunities to obtain European goods. Finally, the Indians at Norway House, and around Lake Winnipeg, were able to benefit from the competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the free traders throughout this region.

Contrary to Wertman's conclusion that the commercial fur trade contributed to the decline of "communal pursuits and the disintegration of communal institutions" the evidence for Norway House demonstrates that the material conditions were in place to allow the Cree kinship system, with its notions of reciprocity, equality and cooperation, to function throughout the period leading up to the signing of Treaty 5.⁵¹ It is clear that the communal pursuits and communal institutions which Wertman describes continued to play a prominent role in the lives of the Indians at Norway House.

Footnotes

- ¹ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 5d, 6. The journals and reports from Norway House between 1796 and 1835 state that Indians came from the immediate vicinity to trade at Norway House and from Cross Lake to the north, Moose Lake and Limestone Lake to the west, Poplar River, Jack River, Jack Lake and Indian Lake to the south and the east of Norway House.
- ² HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 16d.
- ³ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 14d.
- ⁴ Charles A. Bishop and Shepard Krech III, "Matriorganization: The Basis of Aboriginal Subarctic Social Organization," Arctic Anthropology, 17 (1980), pp. 34-45.
- ⁵ Tyrrell, op. cit., p. 229-30.
- ⁶ Joseph Robson, An Account of Six Years' Residence in Hudson's Bay, from 1733 to 1736, and 1744 to 1747 (Reprinted; New York: Johnson Reprint Corporation, 1965), p. 52.
- ⁷ Graham, op. cit., p. 175-76.
- ⁸ Eleanor Leacock, "Matrilocality in a Simple Hunting Economy (Montagnais-Naskapi)," Southwestern Journal of Anthropology, 11 (1955), p. 33.
- ⁹ Leacock, Ibid., p. 43, states that the "patrilineal-patrilocal configuration is strengthened by the growing relative importance of the man's economic contribution to the group."
- ¹⁰ Bishop and Krech, op. cit., p. 35-36.
- ¹¹ Ibid., p.39.
- ¹² Ibid., pp. 36ff.
- ¹³ Paul Wertman, "Toward an Alternative Interpretation of Cree Kinship and Social Organization," (Master of Arts thesis, University of Manitoba, 1976), p. 96.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 101.
- ¹⁵ Antoine Silvy and Gabriel Marest described these gatherings in the 17th century, see Tyrrell, op. cit., pp. 68 and 123-27; and chapter 3 above.
- ¹⁶ Wertman, op. cit., pp. 29-30.

- ¹⁷ Polanyi, op. cit., 1968, p. 150.
- ¹⁸ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 5d.
- ¹⁹ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 15d.
- ²⁰ Marshall Sahlins refers to the "Zen road to affluence" when he describes "stone age" economies. In this situation "human material wants are finite and few, and technical means unchanging but on the whole adequate ... people can enjoy an unparalleled material plenty - with a low standard of living," see Sahlins, op. cit., pp. 1-2.
- ²¹ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 14d.
- ²² Frank Tough, "Native People and the Regional Economy of Northern Manitoba: 1870-1930s," (Ph.D. dissertation, York University, 1987), p. 231; see also Sutherland in HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 3d, for a similar description of this cycle in 1815.
- ²³ Tough, op. cit., p. 229.
- ²⁴ Irene Spry argues that the concept of common property can be applied to western Canada where "recognized tribal boundaries protected and preserved resources within them for the use of each tribe, but the exclusion of outsiders ... was by no means absolute. Friendly tribes on occasion hunted in each others' territories, and friendly travellers and traders were allowed to move about the country using space, wood, water, forage, game and fish as need arose," see "The Tragedy of the Loss of the Commons in Western Canada," in As Long as the Sun Shines and the Water Flows, ed. by Ian A.L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), p. 204. Tough, op. cit., uses this concept of common property and he considers the passing of the common property resource pp. 11-16.
- ²⁵ I will consider this in further detail in the following chapter.
- ²⁶ HBCA, B.154/a/2, Norway House journal, 1797-98, .
- ²⁷ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 3d, Titameg, commonly called whitefish.
- ²⁸ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 4.
- ²⁹ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 4.
- ³⁰ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 8.
- ³¹ HBCA, B.154/e/3, Norway House report, 1823-24, f. 1d. McGillivray indicates that the daily rations for a Company servant were 2 whitefish, .5 pints barley and 1 lbs potatoes, HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 8d.

- ³² Sutherland in HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 3d; Robertson in HBCA, B.154/e/3, Norway House report, 1823-24, f. 2.
- ³³ Frank Tough, "The Establishment of a Commercial Fishing Industry and the Demise of Native Fisheries in Northern Manitoba," Canadian Journal of Native Studies/Revue Canadienne Des Etudes Autochtones, IV (1984), pp. 303-19.
- ³⁴ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 3d.
- ³⁵ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 4.
- ³⁶ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 4d.
- ³⁷ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 15d.
- ³⁸ HBCA, B.154/e/3, Norway House report, 1823-24 f. 2-2d.
- ³⁹ Wertman, op. cit., p. 27, (emphasis in original).
- ⁴⁰ Ibid., pp. 101-07.
- ⁴¹ Rich, op. cit., 1960, pp. 35-36.
- ⁴² Charles Bishop, "Demography, Ecology and Trade Among the Northern Ojibwa and Swampy Cree," Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology, III (1972), p. 63.
- ⁴³ Russel Rothney, "Mercantile Capital and the Livelihood of Residents of the Hudson Bay Basin: a Marxist Interpretation," (Master of Arts thesis, University of Manitoba, 1975) p. 62.
- ⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 63.
- ⁴⁵ Tough, op. cit., 1987, pp. 23-24.
- ⁴⁶ Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay 1600-1870 (Montreal: McGill-Queens University Press, 1983), p. 168.
- ⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 168.
- ⁴⁸ Thistle, op. cit., 1986, p. 94.
- ⁴⁹ see chapter 2 above.
- ⁵⁰ see chapter 3 above.
- ⁵¹ Wertman, op. cit., p. 107.

Chapter 5: Indian Subsistence and the Commercial
Fur Trade at Norway House: 1821-1875

Although James Sutherland emphasized the abundance of local fish stocks in his report from Norway House in 1815 he suggested that the Hudson's Bay Company would be unable to generate a significant trade in furs at this location. He reported that "the productions of this district fit for trade have failed greatly of late years ... Beaver is nearly annihilated ... Martin are still numerous ... The other animals are to be found but not in great numbers".¹ He also noted that the Canadian traders abandoned the district eight years earlier "as they considered it a ruined country, having made considerable losses for the last years they occupied it".² Joseph McGillivray agreed with Sutherland's assessment. When he reported to the Company in 1823 he suggested that the post should be abandoned since it was unable to generate enough trade to cover its own expenses.³

Throughout the 1820s Norway House contributed, on average, less than 1% of the beaver furs for trade registered for the Northern department at York Factory. Similarly the post registered diminishing contributions in the total number of fox, muskrat and otter registered at York Factory and by 1827 the Norway House total hovered at, or below, 1% of the production of the Northern department.⁴ Hudson's Bay Company records indicate that the local trade in furs did increase during the 1830s and favourable reports were not uncommon in subsequent years.

However it was clearly the Company's priority to engage the local Indians to provide their labour and provisions and there is no evidence to suggest that Norway House was ever considered to be a prominent fur trading center.

Despite this obvious disadvantage Norway House grew to assume an important role in the developing fur trade of northern and western Canada. Its prominence derived from geographic and strategic considerations rather than its ability to generate a valuable trade in furs. Initially the existing Indian network of trade and diplomacy had drawn the traders through this region as they followed the Indians into the western interior. Subsequently the Hudson's Bay Company journeyed up the Hayes River to Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River in order to maintain a growing network of inland posts. The Company's need to maintain its supply lines inland and its attempts to rationalize operations influenced the course of development at Norway House and the nature of relations between the Company and the Indians throughout this region.

Hudson's Bay Company operations at Norway House

After the establishment of Cumberland House in 1774 the Hayes River system emerged as the favoured route of access into the interior for the Hudson's Bay Company. Henry Hallet's journal for 1796 indicates that the first post established at the mouth of Jack River was intended to augment the existing transportation network of the Company. Subsequent entries confirm the importance of this route of access for the Company's

inland supply. Goods moving inland from York Factory were transported by boat to the Rock Store House situated approximately 120 miles upstream on the banks of the Hayes River.⁵ From this point goods were taken by canoe up the Hayes River through Oxford Lake and across the Painted Stone Portage to Jack River House on Playgreen Lake via the Echimamish River. The transport of goods to points west of Jack River House was facilitated by relatively good access up the Saskatchewan River and could, in most cases, be accomplished with the use of larger boats. Furs followed this route downstream to York Factory and eventually to England. The Company hoped that this route would facilitate its expansion into the interior by insuring a reliable line of communication and supply to the boundaries of an expanding trade network.

James Sutherland's report for 1815 confirms that this route formed the primary line of communication between York Factory and the interior. He noted the problems caused by the changing water levels of the Eta Wee Mamis (Echimamish) River and stated that if the Company failed to maintain this passage "the communication from Lake Winepeg to York Factory by Hays River will be impracticable". He suggested that the

labour of a few men for a short space of time would greatly improve the navigation of this river, it has so little descent that six or seven well built dams five or six feet high, at regular distances would keep a sufficient depth of water in every part of the river, these dams could have gateways with sliding doors, that would take but little time in making, and the crafts would pass through with facility and in much less time than it takes at present.⁶

Norway House reports and journals indicate that the Company did maintain this passage on a regular basis.⁷

Joseph McGillivray confirmed the continued significance of Norway House after the coalition of 1821. In 1823 he reported that Company officials gathered at Norway House each year to deliberate Company affairs and Company employees passed through Norway House on their way to, or from, York Factory and Montreal. However, McGillivray believed that the Company incurred unnecessary expenses since many traders remained at the post longer than he believed was necessary. McGillivray argued that the post had become a liability and he maintained that it should be abandoned. He also challenged the use of the Hayes River as the Company's inland route of supply and he suggested that the Nelson River was better suited for this purpose.

For my part I can see no obstruction, why the whole of the Athabasca Canoes, Lesser Slave Lake, English River, and the Columbians cannot pass by this track (Nelson River) therefore doing away with the necessity of a depot altogether - In adopting this line of transport, the advantages in the savings of Provisions are incalculable, and which is certainly one object of some consequence.⁹

The Company did consider alternate ways of supplying its inland operations as it reorganized after the coalition. The Council of the Northern department which was held at York Factory on 5 July 1823 instructed John Stuart, of New Caledonia, to send his returns to Split Lake on the Nelson River system where an outfit would be held for him.⁹ The Company changed this decision in 1825 when it instructed William Connolly to "take out the New Caledonia Returns to Fort Vancouver (Columbia River) next spring, from whence he is to receive the ensuing Outfit for 1826".¹⁰ By this time Company ships travelled from England,

around Cape Horn, to the Columbia River in order to deliver goods and receive furs at Fort Vancouver.¹¹

The Company's decision to supply New Caledonia through Split Lake appears to reflect indecision within the Company over the most effective way of supplying the Pacific region rather than an acknowledgement of McGillivray's counsel to abandon Norway House and restructure its inland network of supply and transport. The difficulties of navigating the Nelson River were well known and the Company continued to use the Hayes River route and the depot at Norway House to supply the remaining districts in the western interior. The deliberations of the Company throughout the 1820s and 1830s ensured the prominence of this route from the coast.

In 1831 George Simpson, the Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company, noted that Norway House,

being situated at the junction of the two principal roads or lines of communication between the Factory and the Interior, is a place of much resort and bustle during the Summer and is used as an entrepot for the Athabasca and Mackenzie River Districts, where their returns are received and their outfits delivered ... as the business is now conducted it answers all the purposes of a depot ...¹²

As Simpson noted, the outfits for Athabasca and Mackenzie River were transported from York Factory to Norway House where they were received by the appropriate brigades and taken inland for distribution. The furs of each district were carried by these brigades as they travelled to Norway House each year. The furs and supplies for both districts were transported between York Factory and Norway House by local brigades recruited from among the Indians at Norway House. The post also received

the brigades of the other districts within the interior as they passed down to York Factory with their furs and returned to their districts with supplies for the coming year.

As the Company expanded its inland supply network it began to ship country produce from the prairie regions further south to Norway House for use and distribution. These supplies were intended to supplement the local fish stocks which the Company exploited at Norway House and to reduce the costs of operations throughout the interior. In 1822 the Company instructed Roderick Mackenzie Jr., in the Winnipeg River district, to "grind all the wheat he may raise, which together with all the Indian Rice and Corn he may collect be brought to Norway House and York Factory and that he extends the Farm as much as possible without requiring any extra summer men".¹³

The Company also hoped that the colony at Red River would be able to supply provisions for the trade to be stored at Norway House and distributed where needed. In 1824 McKenzie was instructed to purchase flour, barley, peas and corn from the Colony for Company use, as required, at Norway House¹⁴. Pemican and other produce was shipped to Norway House from the Saskatchewan district for use in Company operations.¹⁵ In subsequent years the Company attempted to reduce the quantity of goods obtained from England by providing additional country produce.

Eventually the Company turned south, to St. Paul and the Mississippi, for additional supplies, as it attempted to further reduce the cost of its operations. By 1850 Red River carts carried goods from

St. Paul to Fort Garry and ten years later supplies were delivered, by steamer, down the Red River. From Fort Garry the Company's supplies were transported to Norway House and Grand Rapids or overland, across the prairies, to the Saskatchewan department.

By 1875 the entire scheme of inland supply had changed dramatically. Goods for the Northern department were now received at Fort Garry and transported by steamer to Grand Rapids at the mouth of the Saskatchewan River. From there they were taken inland up the Saskatchewan aboard the Company's new steamer the S.S. Northcote. The construction of a tramway at Grand Rapids in 1877 improved the movement of goods along the portage at this point and facilitated their transport inland. The geographic advantage which had insured the earlier prominence of Norway House passed to Grand Rapids and the post at Grand Rapids became a major terminus along this route until the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the south. Norway House received its outfit from Fort Garry to the south and distributed goods downstream to Island Lake and York Factory.

The Village Indians: Transitions

When discussing the inland trading network of the Hudson's Bay Company before 1763 Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman describe a "zonal pattern of trade" divided into three spheres.¹⁶ A local trading zone, centered around bayside posts, emerged in the coastal lowlands adjacent to Hudson Bay. Further inland a middleman trading zone emerged and beyond this lay the indirect trading area. The system was based on

Company occupation of, and trade from, their bayside posts and it was stabilized by geographic, demographic and cultural factors which operated within the interior.¹⁷

As middlemen within the fur trade the Cree had expanded to the northwest and had come to occupy much of the central and northern portions of Manitoba and Saskatchewan including the territory adjacent to Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba. Ray suggests that by 1720 "the bulk of that expansion appears to have been completed and a somewhat more peaceful period began as inter-tribal patterns became well established."¹⁸

The Indian middlemen throughout this region were bypassed as the Hudson's Bay Company moved inland to establish direct contact with the trapping bands and challenge the presence of Canadian traders. In order to ensure access to European goods the Indian middlemen had to find other commodities for trade. Generally the demands of the Company facilitated this transition as the Indians began to supply the expanding fur trade network with the provisions and labour which were essential to the Company's survival. In many cases the middlemen began to function as had those Indians living within the local trading zone before the Company's inland penetration. This latter group "visited the trading houses several times during the year, bringing in most of the 'country produce' that was consumed at the forts".¹⁹ The Company also engaged Indians to accompany the Hudson's Bay men along the brigade routes throughout the interior. The Indians acted as boatmen and guides and, when necessary, they were dispatched alone to deliver furs, goods and correspondence between posts.

The transition described above occurred throughout the territory adjacent to the northern shores of Lake Winnipeg. The establishment of Cumberland House in 1774 placed the Company firmly within the inland arena of trade and conflict and eliminated the Company's dependence upon the middlemen who had previously transported furs to York Factory. The journals for Norway House from 1818 to 1821 describe the role of local Indians in supplying provisions for the post at Norway House. These provisions were intended to supplement the supply of fish which the Company put in store for its operations. Indians were engaged to supply the post with venison, geese and ducks, as conditions permitted, and to augment the provisions of the post during peak periods of activity while canoes were enroute from York Factory or the interior.²⁰

Henry Hallet employed local Indians to transport furs from Jack River to York Factory in 1797 and this pattern of involvement expanded in subsequent years.²¹ The minutes of Council for the Northern Department held at Norway House in 1836 instructed that four servants, assisted by 20 Indians, were to "be employed in making one trip between York and Norway House, with 3 boats carrying 80 pieces each pr. trip upward or 240 pcs in all".²² Three years later two servants and 30 Indians were "employed to make one trip between York and Norway House with 4 Boats carrying 80 pieces each per trip upwards or 320 pieces in all".²³ This pattern of involvement continued and the minutes of Council for 1870 indicate that 48 Indians were engaged as tripmen to make 2 voyages in 6 boats between Norway House and York Factory for general transport.²⁴ Roderick Ross, writing from Norway House in 1875, indicated that the Indians who were employed in summer transport could earn "from

£15 to £20 during the season".²⁵ These wages were paid in made beaver to insure that the Indians remained attached to the post at Norway House.

By 1831 Donald Ross, writing from Norway House, felt that the Company's operations were jeopardized by the small number of Indians residing in the adjacent territory. He noted that only "four or five" Indian families remained "attached" to the post and he recommended that "as they are in other respects found very serviceable, in Tripping, going with Packets, and acting as Guides, I do not think that it would be in the interests of the service to reduce their numbers lower than at present".²⁶ Three years later Ross again argued "the necessity of some speedy and effectual measures being adopted, to prevent the general emigration of Indians from the Trading Districts to Red River".²⁷ The situation showed few signs of change and in 1836 Ross predicted that "a very few years hence, will find this section of the country entirely depopulated".²⁸

Ross' concerns about the population of the region in the 1830s were well founded considering the role of the post within Company operations. However as the Company expanded its operations at Norway House, and the opportunities for employment along the inland supply network increased, Ross began to express concern over the growing size of the Indian population gathered at Norway House. In response to the Council's resolution in 1840 to establish a Methodist Mission in the Indian village adjacent to Norway House Ross warned that the "greatest caution will be necessary, to prevent too many Indians collecting and establishing themselves around the mission, otherwise the most melancholy consequences may be apprehended".²⁹ Although Ross believed

that the Company needed to ensure an adequate labour force for its own requirements, he believed that a large Indian settlement would tax local resources and jeopardize the welfare of the Indians and the Company.

The Indian village at Norway House did continue to grow in subsequent years. In 1843 James Evans, the Methodist missionary at the village, estimated that 200 Indians lived in the village and by 1875 this number had grown to 800 people.³⁰ However, despite Ross' concerns, both the Company and the Indians prospered throughout this period. The Company obtained provisions and labour from the local Indians while the Indians were able to integrate their Company involvement with their existing patterns of economy and subsistence. There is no evidence to suggest that the Indians at Norway House became dependent or suffered materially as a result of their participation in the commercial fur trade at Norway House before 1875. Nor is there any indication that their political or social institutions were undermined during this period.

The Village Indians: Subsistence

The records for Norway House indicate that the "village Indians" continued to exploit the full range of local resources on a seasonal basis. The local fisheries continued to play a critical role in the Indian economy. Jackfish and sturgeon were exploited in the spring and early summer. Whitefish were obtained in the fall and preserved for use in the winter. Migratory waterfowl supplemented the Indian diet in the spring and fall while the warm summer months provided eggs and berries.

Game was also added to the diet in late summer and throughout the colder winter months. Woodland caribou, mule deer, black and brown bears and moose inhabited these territories and beaver, muskrat and marten were also common.

During the 1800s the annual cycle was supplemented by employment with the Company and gardening. The greatest number of Indians were engaged after the sturgeon run in the spring and early summer and before the fall fisheries commenced around the beginning of October³¹ During this period most were engaged to transport furs, provisions and correspondence from Norway House to Red River and York Factory. Indians were also employed around the post in a variety of jobs. The journals throughout this period report that, among other jobs, Indians were engaged to haul and cut wood, repair dams on the Echimamish River, retrieve furs and make hay.³²

The records for Norway House indicate that the local Indians also missed or declined opportunities to engage with the summer brigades. In 1843 Donald Ross reported that the Indians were not always available for brigade service, even after the Company introduced a conservation policy and curtailed the trade in beaver furs.³³ He also suggested that they were not ideally suited for this demanding work. Ross told Simpson that the Indians

give us a good deal of trouble and annoyance, for we cannot always depend on their promise to perform any particular service, and the majority of them are so weak in body and possess so little stamina, that the same number of them, as of Europeans, are utterly incapable of managing a heavily loaded boat in the Rapids ...³⁴

In 1846 Ross suggested that he would not be able to recruit an Indian brigade, from Norway House, to help in the transport from Lac La Pluie to Red River.³⁵ The following year Ross advised Simpson that it had been necessary to offer the local Indians "a small modicum of Liquor" in order to recruit a brigade for a journey to York Factory. He also indicated that the Indians were often reluctant to make two trips to the coast in one season since this often interfered with their hunting and fishing.³⁶

George Barnston, writing from Norway House in 1852, suggested that the Company was at a clear disadvantage when it came to recruiting the summer brigades. He reported that

Half Breeds and Indian engaging in the Service dislike signing Contracts for more than one or two years duration, yet scarcely nothing causes more difficulty & trouble to a District than these short Contracts ... Tis a perfect plague having every Year a lot of men giving notice of retirement, and a ceremony of talk and palaver with them annually, knowing that they have it in their power to distress You, by their having been permitted to act in a Body, by a system of short terms of Engagement.³⁷

A year later Barnston reported that he had encountered some problems in recruiting Indian crews for the last trip of the season.³⁸ The evidence for Norway House indicates that a significant number of Indians were involved with the summer brigades each year. However, the Indians were able to engage with the Company when it suited their own interests and inclinations and they did not forsake their longstanding strategies of survival and subsistence.

Gardening assumed greater importance as the Indian village expanded. In an undated letter from the mission James Evans reported

that the "school children cultivated a small field of potatoes & gathered 42 Bushels - with Sixty bushels of barley, thirty of which I have reserved for seed & they will add two acres to their potatoe field this spring if all be well".³⁹ In 1846 Donald Ross suggested that

the tenth of June is the very earliest date at which the Brigade can be started from this place, every Indian has his little field to cultivate before his departure, and no consideration will induce them to neglect that which is now become to them a necessary of life nor will the nature of the climate ... permit them to perform their little farming operations, before the very last days of May and beginning of June.⁴⁰

The village Indians continued to maintain gardens, and keep cattle, throughout the period before 1875. The Indians were encouraged by the missionaries who generally believed that an agricultural economy was more conducive to Christianity than a hunting and fishing economy, and by the Hudson's Bay Company which provided the ploughs and oxen to work the land. Although the Company maintained its own gardens it was able to draw upon the Indians' produce if the circumstances required it to do so.

It is important to note that both these activities, employment with the Company and gardening, occupied the summer months after the early summer fisheries were completed and before the fall hunts and fisheries began. The annual subsistence cycle was not disrupted and the greatest number of village Indians continued to exploit local resources. Only a small number of Indians forsook the local Indian economy and relied on the Hudson's Bay Company for employment throughout the year.

Although the village Indians continued to exploit the customary range of local resources there were significant changes in the way this

was done. After completing the fall fisheries in late October or November the Indians would prepare for their winter hunts and leave the village. They returned to the village in late December in time for the Christmas and New Years festivities. Many resumed their winter hunts early in January, while others, presumably according to their own circumstances and inclination, remained in the village until late January or February. By March and April the Indians were again returning to the village where they prepared for the spring hunts and fisheries, and their period of engagement with the Company. The journals for Norway House indicate that this cycle prevailed in the years leading up to 1875.

The routine of village life complemented the annual cycle of subsistence and it promoted a level of security and stability unknown in earlier times. According to Donald Ross the Indians were able to store fish, and eventually their garden produce, at the village for consumption during the winter. Here it was available to the women and children as well as "the sick and the aged" who remained in the village, in the customary fashion, when the men went off on their winter hunts.⁴¹

The village also provided a safe haven for the Indians when their hunts failed or were uncertain. George Barnston suggested that the hunting parties remained close to the village in lean years, in order to return to the village for food if their hunts failed, and they travelled further afield when they anticipated productive hunts. In 1854 Barnston noted that the muskrat hunt had failed and he reported that the trade was poor. The following year he was more optimistic as he reported that many "of our Indians who last winter hunted from the Village, and in our

vicinity, are passing the whole of this season in the woods at a distance, and their Hunts we expect will be proportionately large ...".⁴² The following year Barnston reported that the returns for Norway House district for the year ending on 31 May 1856 were in fact larger than any others he could recall.⁴³

If the usual "means of living" failed altogether, the Company extended relief to all of the Indians in the district, including those who resided at the village. In 1849 Ross reported that

the usual means of living as regards the poor natives have so utterly failed and disappeared that with them it has been one continued struggle for existence during the whole season - and without the assistance afforded by the Establishment many would have unquestionably perished...⁴⁴

Although it was Company policy to extend relief to all Indians in these situations the village Indians benefited because of their location. They were able to receive provisions quickly or to remain close to the post if they believed the fisheries or the hunt were inadequate.⁴⁵

Although shortages and periods of scarcity still occurred, the village Indians prospered in ways which surprised and pleased the traders and missionaries. In 1842 Evans boasted that the village Indians

are doing well in both religious & temporal matters. Brother Peter Jacobs has been most indefatigable in his labors during my absence and the Indians have worked hard, our village now presents eleven substantial houses, well framed, all their own labour, several of the children read the English nicely, and as to the Cree, the men & women & children nearly all understand sufficient to take their degree.⁴⁶

Ross, defending the Company's treatment of the Indians at Norway House, suggested that the village Indians were "the best clothed, most

abundantly, and comfortably fed and lodged of any Indians in North America".⁴⁷ George Barnston, upon assuming command of Norway House in 1851, reported that

A better position could not have been chosen than this for a fixed & settled native Community. I find the villagers particularly quiet and peaceable. The men are tractable, and show evident marks of a softened temper and disposition, and of well regulated lives. Teaching does not seem to have been lost upon them - and in no part of the Country either have I found the Crees more Comfortable & happy.⁴⁸

Barnston tempered his early impressions in subsequent years as he attempted to gain control of the Indians and the fur trade at Norway House. However it is clear that the village enhanced the level of material security for its members. Some benefits derived from the opportunity to manage resources and organize subsistence in a new way while other benefits derived from policies which the Company implemented in order to increase production and to ensure its own position in the region.

The Village Indians: Competition

The Hudson's Bay Company faced intense opposition from Canadian traders when it established its post at Jack River in 1796.⁴⁹ The records for Norway House indicate that the Company continued to face opposition in this region and was unable to protect its trade monopoly in this territory. In 1845 Donald Ross informed Simpson that the Company faced serious competition from "interlopers" operating out of the settlement at Red River. He reported that

the minds of the Indians not only here, but all around are completely unhinged on the subject of Trade and opposition. Visions of unlimited indulgence in their favorite "Fire water" and prices before unheard of, for their Furs are always before their thoughts and the constant theme of their conversation...⁵⁰

Ross predicted that the fur trade would become worthless if the monopoly was not protected but he feared there was no force in the country capable of enforcing the Company's privilege.⁵¹

The following year Ross advised that the Norway House brigade should receive the Lac La Pluie transport at Bas de la Riviere. He suggested that

This Brigade if it can be avoided should not go at all to the Settlement, mischief to the interests of the Trade will certainly arise from them doing so, not only will take Furs clandestinely with them to trade but their minds will get poisoned with new and hostile ideas towards us, indeed too much of that will get among them by other means...⁵²

Ross believed that the Catholic Church supported this challenge to the Company's monopoly and he predicted that opposition to the Company would be encouraged by the spread of Catholic missions throughout the interior.

Ross also believed that James Evans, the Methodist missionary at the Indian village, was responsible for many of the Company's problems at Norway House. Evans first confronted the Company when he challenged its use of Indian labour on Sundays. Although the Company attempted to observe a weekly day of rest Ross, and other Company officials, believed it was necessary for brigades to travel on Sundays in short seasons in order to avoid unnecessary delays in the transfer of Company goods and communication. Within two years of Evans' arrival Ross reported that

Mr. Evans seems to view the subject as by far the most important object of his Mission, and preaches openly to our Servants, that they are not bound to work for us either on the voyages or otherwise, during the Sabbath days, and that if required to do so it will be meritorious on their part to disobey their orders ...⁵³

Evans used his position among the Indians to orchestrate a "strike" in the spring of 1845.⁵⁴ By this time Ross was convinced that Evans actually intended to disrupt the trade and secure a portion of the business for himself. Ross advised Simpson that

if Mr. Evans career be not speedily checked the trade of this valuable section of the country will soon be lost to the Company - a number of the best Beaver Skins, have during the winter been cut up for Caps and other purposes by the Indians, most of which are as a matter course intended for Sales to passants and presents to friends in the Settlement, and in all probability some Clandestine trade in whole Skins will also be going on in the course of this Summer ...⁵⁵

Ross was openly pleased when Evans was recalled to England and he was relieved that his successor, William Mason, accepted the Company's monopoly and its position on Sunday travel.⁵⁶

Ross eventually recommended that the Company should abandon its monopoly in favour of a reasonable settlement with the British government. In 1848 he suggested to George Simpson that

it would be more beneficial to the interests of the Hudson's Bay Company and those connected with their Service, to give up at once all their territories, privileges and exclusive rights into the hands of Government, on receiving some reasonable equivalent for the same, than to continue holding them on their present rather precarious and not very profitable footing ... The trade of course to be thrown open to all British subjects whether of England or Canada ...⁵⁷

Ross predicted that British public opinion also threatened the Company's monopoly and he suggested that history would look kindly on Simpson if he undertook such an initiative.⁵⁸

The trial of Pierre-Guillaume Sayer at Red River in 1849 demonstrated the Company's inability to enforce its monopoly. Although Sayer was convicted of violating the Company's monopoly by trading liquor for furs he was not punished and the authority of the Company was openly ridiculed. Free trade flourished throughout the interior in subsequent years and the Company was clearly on the defensive throughout the region adjacent to Norway House.

The level of competition throughout this region forced the Company to pursue the Indians in order to retrieve their furs. Initially the Company responded to the Indians' requests to provide supplies and retrieve the furs from their winter camps in order to encourage production and this was considered to be a common and appropriate practice by the 1830s. A decade later this had become a matter of necessity and the Company began to pursue the Indians in order to collect their furs. In a letter to Simpson in 1846 Ross described the situation at the Berens River outpost. He reported that Cummings had been

indefatigable in his exertions to save the trade of his Post, permanent Guard Houses were established in the hunting grounds, and he himself with a greatly increased complement of men, have been constantly going about among the Indians during the winter and Spring.⁵⁹

Similar measures were eventually required at Norway House, and throughout the district, as the Company attempted to preserve its monopoly.

In 1857 George Barnston reported that his men at Norway House were actively pursuing the Indians throughout the winter. He also noted

that the problem was particularly acute among the village Indians where friends and relatives from Red River were determined to challenge the Company's monopoly. Barnston reported that

All my people who could tread the Woods have been continually on the move, running to the Lodges in order to secure the Debts, and everywhere as yet, I may say my men have been successful. At the Village however where the Temptations are always present we have sustained Losses. Exhortations and all other means have been tried to Keep our Christian Debtors true & faithful, but I am sorry to say that with many of these all our efforts have failed and they have traded away a portion of their furs, without regarding the amount of Debt they owe us.⁶⁰

The Company continued to struggle in the following years. Free traders operated openly out of the Indian village and the Company pursued them throughout the district in order to determine their locations and intercept the movement of furs.⁶¹

Generous measures were also required in order to oppose the free traders. In 1845 Ross advised Cummings to "look well" after the Indians at Berens River and the reports for 1874 and 1885 demonstrate that gratuities continued to play an important part in the trade throughout this region.⁶² The report for 1885 notes that the trade at Norway House

is carried on in the old style of Made Beaver. The Indians are advanced in Autumn or beginning of Winter to a certain extent and receive gratuities then, as well as at all times when they bring in skins ... The trade at this Post is not a profitable one, on account of opposition, goods have to be sold at a low Tariff and furs fetch high prices, and with gratuities and bad debts the margin for profit is but doubtful.⁶³

The standing orders of the Company did call for generous measures to encourage the production of furs for trade if the hunts failed and the Indians were unable to trade for the supplies and ammunition which they required. However the Company was forced to extend these measures

throughout the Lake Winnipeg region during this period in order to match the favourable terms of trade offered by the free traders.

Gratuities were also extended in a formal manner which resembled the earlier ceremonies at York Factory, before the Company's inland penetration. Initially the Company offered the village Indians a feast and gratuities, each year, at Christmas. William Mason, in a letter to Ross after the celebrations in 1847, conveyed the "unanimous thanks of the Christian Indians of this Village for the very handsome presents and for the uniform kindness which you at all times manifest towards them".⁶⁴

The annual feast offered an opportunity to confirm and extend relations in a formal manner which was consistent with the Indians' tradition and fur trade precedents. The correspondence between Mason and Ross the following year suggests that both men recognized the diplomatic significance of the annual feasts. Mason again thanked Ross for his generosity, and this time he included the testimony of several grateful villagers. Mason also apologized, on behalf of the village Indians, who had apparently failed to bring in as many furs as Ross, or the Company, would have liked.⁶⁵ Ross accepted the apology and he took the opportunity to assure Mason that he appreciated this expression of good will by the Indians and he hoped such relations would continue in the future.⁶⁶

By the 1860s the year end festivities included celebrations at the post and the village. The Indians spent Christmas day at the post where they customarily received "a cake, a small piece of Pemican and a Pipe & plug of Tobacco ...".⁶⁷ The Company men journeyed to the village for a

New Year's feast where they were given a meal which included beaver and rabbit meat.⁶⁸ The journal for 1872 suggests that these feasts were "one of the Great events of the year" for the village Indians and they were observed throughout the 1870s and beyond.⁶⁹

Each year these feasts took place after the Indians returned from the hunt, with furs for the Company, and before they received their supplies and returned to their winter hunting grounds in January. It is reasonable to suggest that the feasts were also associated with the trade which occurred at this time and they reinforced the political and social conditions which were, for the Indians, essential for trade to continue. Although the Company was responding to economic conditions within the interior, the formal year end feasts, along with the standing orders of the Company which called for generous measures and the frequent distribution of gratuities, reinforced the Indians' perception that the fur trade was not only, or primarily, an economic activity.

The Company also competed with the free traders for a share of the treaty annuities which were paid out annually beginning in 1875. The Company extended debts on the basis of the payments which were scheduled each summer and each year the Company established a shop in the village, a few days before the payments were made, in order to recover these debts. The Company journal for 1877 reports that "We had a place filled up at the Village with Goods & had large Sales & also collected most of our Debts".⁷⁰ The journal for 1879 indicates that "Out of the \$3000 odd paid out, We secured \$2800 and there is still some out which will come in during the week".⁷¹ The Company also accompanied the treaty

commissioner to Cross Lake in order to recover debts which it had extended in that region.⁷²

Despite the favourable conditions for trade at Norway House extra efforts were continually required in order to encourage the production of furs. In 1844 Donald Ross notified the village Indians that "no Indian will be employed, by the Company, for the voyages or otherwise, next summer, who do not bring to the Company's trading Shop at this place, in the Course of the hunting season, Furs to the amount of at least, Twenty skins in Made Beaver".⁷³ Ross believed the Indians were able to procure the goods and supplies they required from their summer engagements and he feared that many were reluctant to "leave their fire sides" in order to hunt for furs to trade.⁷⁴

Ross also defended the import of "fineries" and he believed this was the only way the Company could encourage the Indians to trade beyond their immediate needs. In 1847 Ross told Simpson that fineries

do not altogether deserve the ill name they have got; an Indian of course requires a certain quantity of heavy articles annually for himself and family; all that his Hunts or his labour amounts to beyond these articles of absolute necessity his greatest pride and pleasure is to expend in ornaments, shewy fabrics and luxuries...
.75

Ross believed the Company's trade would suffer if it suspended the import of fineries to North America. He also hoped the missionaries would encourage consumption, and hence production, by their example and their precept.⁷⁶

In his annual report for 1864 J.A. Graham suggested that the Company's need to encourage production was as significant as its need to

oppose the free traders throughout the region. He predicted that Norway House would record favourable returns for the year since "every encouragement" had been extended to the Indians to "exert themselves".⁷⁷ Two months later he reported that the trade was not as productive as he had expected and he suggested that the animals were scarce or the Indians were "too lazy to hunt".⁷⁸

The Company was often frustrated by the Indians' apparent lack of commitment to its enterprise and its welfare. However, the evidence for Norway House indicates that the Indians refused to abandon existing strategies of resource exploitation and subsistence to engage in the commercial fur trade economy. While many Indians engaged with the Company on a seasonal basis, and many provided furs and provisions for the Company's operations, the existing pattern of resource use remained paramount and determined the nature and extent of Indian involvement in the commercial fur trade.

Conclusion

Recent studies have suggested that the the Hudson's Bay Company was able to consolidate its power after 1821 and the commercial fur trade subsequently challenged the position of many Indians throughout the interior. Arthur Ray characterizes the period from 1821 to 1870 as a period of

declining opportunities for the Indians in the fur trade. The Woodland Indians were the first to feel the effects of these changes. Declining resources and a growing economic dependency

placed them in a weak position vis-@-vis the traders and they were forced to accept most of the economic reforms which the Company initiated. Within the fur trade they functioned mainly as trappers although some found employment in the transport brigades.⁷⁹

Ray suggests that the Parkland-Grassland Indians fared better since they supplied the Company with provisions and were able to exploit the competition between the Company and American traders to the south. However, according to Ray, these Indians were also reduced to a state of economic dependency by the 1870s.⁸⁰

In a more recent work Ray states that the fur trade affected the Indian economy in two ways. He suggests that it increased the "risk of serious resource shortages for native groups" and, since it encouraged economic specialization, the commercial trade undermined the Indians' ability to deal with these shortages.⁸¹ Again, Ray concludes that the Indians became increasingly dependent throughout the 1800s as the commercial fur trade overwhelmed longstanding patterns of resource use and exploitation. He suggests that the Company, and eventually the Canadian government, supported the Indians during these periods of crisis.

Frank Tough states that by the late 1800s the Indians of northern Manitoba had been involved in the commercial fur trade for two centuries and he rejects any attempt to draw a sharp distinction between the Indian economy and the economy of the commercial fur trade. Tough refers to the balance between subsistence and commercial efforts, but suggests that the commercial fur trade, in fact, dominated, since the "income" generated by the commercial hunt "was used to purchase equipment or the means of production, used by both the subsistence and commercial

sectors".⁸² Tough suggests that the commercial fur trade also dominated the economy of northern Manitoba since it required an elaborate transportation system in order to operate and the Company's decision to restructure its inland approach had "ominous effects" on the Indian labour force which was so closely tied to the structure of the commercial economy.

The evidence for Norway House suggests that these views need to be reconsidered. While Ray's analysis may apply to certain regions within the interior it does not apply to the territories adjacent to Lake Winnipeg. The Company struggled to encourage production throughout this region and it was constantly on the defensive in order to protect its monopoly, and collect the furs which were produced, from the incursions of free traders throughout the territory. The evidence does not support the view that local resources were threatened or that the Indians were dependent upon the Company at this time.

Tough suggests that the commercial fur trade dominated the Indian economy since it provided access to the means of production which were necessary for both subsistence and commercial pursuits. Although the commercial fur trade was clearly important for this reason it is not necessary to assume that it dominated, or determined, the course of the Indian economy as Tough suggests. The Indians who traded at Norway House continued to pursue longstanding strategies of resource use and exploitation and they were able to obtain trade goods without destroying their own economy.

Tough's conclusions may apply in a situation where the subsistence economy was no longer able to support the population in an acceptable fashion and the greatest priority was given to engaging the commercial economy for sustenance. However this was certainly not the case at Norway House before 1870 as Tough suggests. The existing patterns of resource use and exploitation held the confidence of the village Indians and the distinction between the subsistence economy and the commercial fur trade economy was an important one for the Indians who continued to exploit their environment, and make their decisions, with reference to their own subsistence economy, and not in terms of their place, or their needs, within the commercial fur trade economy.

The material security offered by the local resources, and supplemented by the commercial fur trade, supported the existing patterns of social and political organization and there is no evidence of significant political or social disruptions among the village Indians during this time. The Indian village began to emerge in the 1820s, well before the Methodist missionaries arrived, and it was consistent with the existing patterns of resource use and exploitation. The local fisheries supported the Indian population at this location and the Indians were able to depart from the village, in their customary winter hunting groups, much as they departed from their winter camps in earlier times.

The evidence actually suggests that the village Indians were able to strengthen their position, in relation to the Hudson's Bay Company, as the commercial fur trade developed in this area. The Indians were

able to exploit the competition between the Company and the free traders throughout this region and they were able to engage with the Company when it suited their purposes and inclinations.

George Simpson appears to have recognized the growing power of the village Indians when he suggested that the village posed a formidable threat to the operations of the Company at Norway House and throughout the region, and questioned whether it should be removed.⁸³ Ross' constant concern with the growing size of the village can also reasonably be interpreted as a concern with the village's impact on local politics as well as local resources. Throughout the period before 1875 the Company attempted to pursue its concerns and its requirements while the village Indians asserted their rights and their priorities.

The Company's decision to restructure its inland network of supply and transport, particularly its decision in the 1870s to introduce steam navigation on the Saskatchewan River and to use Grand Rapids as the supply depot for the Northern department, affected the village Indians in a significant way. However, even these events were not critical for those village Indians who continued to rely on longstanding subsistence strategies. Critical changes began to occur after the signing of Treaty 5 when the resources of the north, initially used to support the Indians of the region, and subsequently the operations of the commercial fur trade as well, were opened up to capital development and large scale export.

Footnotes

- ¹ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 3d.
- ² HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 6.
- ³ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 19d
- ⁴ Compiled from HBCA, B.239/h/1,2,3, York Factory District fur returns.
- ⁵ also known as the Rock Depot and Gordon House.
- ⁶ HBCA, B.154/e/1, Norway House report, 1814-15, f. 2.
- ⁷ See for example HBCA, B.154/a/26, Norway House journal, 1835-36, 29 July 1835; HBCA, B.154/a/37, Norway House journal, 1841-42, 7 June 1841; HBCA, B.154/a/68, Norway House journal, 1868-70, 15 June 1868.
- ⁸ HBCA, B.154/e/2, Norway House report, 1822-23, f. 20.
- ⁹ Hudson's Bay Company, Minutes of Council of the Northern Department 1821-31. ed. by R. Harvey Fleming, (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), p. 42, resolution 38.
- ¹⁰ Ibid., 1940, p. 106, resolution 20.
- ¹¹ Harold A. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada (Revised Edition; Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), p. 297.
- ¹² Simpson quoted in Robert Watson, "The Story of Norway House," Canadian Geographical Journal, I (August, 1930), pp. 299-300.
- ¹³ Fleming, op. cit., p. 22, resolution 75.
- ¹⁴ Ibid., p. 80, resolution 37.
- ¹⁵ E.H. Oliver, ed., The Canadian Northwest: Its Early Development and Legislative Records, Minutes of the Council of the Red River Colony and the Northern Department of Rupert's Land (2 Volumes; Ottawa: Government Printing Bureau, 1914), p. 678, resolution 35; p. 778, resolution 25.
- ¹⁶ Ray and Freeman, op. cit., p. 49.
- ¹⁷ Ibid., p. 39-51.
- ¹⁸ Ray, op. cit., 1974, p.23.
- ¹⁹ Ray and Freeman, op. cit., p. 49.
- ²⁰ HBCA, B.154/a/7,8,9, Norway House journals, 1818-21.

- ²¹ HBCA, B.154/a/1, Norway House journals, 1796-97, 8 June 1797.
- ²² Oliver, op. cit., p. 733, resolution 55.
- ²³ Ibid., p. 782, resolution 48.
- ²⁴ HBCA, B.239/k/1, Minutes of Council for the Northern Department, resolution 51.
- ²⁵ HBCA, B.154/e/13, Norway House report, 1875, f. 13d.
- ²⁶ HBCA, B.154/e/4, Norway House report, 1831, f. 1d.
- ²⁷ HBCA, B.154/e/7, Norway House report, 1834, f.2.
- ²⁸ HBCA, B.154/e/10, Norway House report, 1835-36, f. 1d.
- ²⁹ HBCA, B.154/b/1, Norway House correspondence books, 1840-45, Ross to Simpson, 3 August 1840.
- ³⁰ The estimate of 200 people comes from the University of Western Ontario (hereafter cited as UWO), Evans papers, letter 249. This letter is not dated but it was written prior to Mason's appointment to Rossville. The estimate of 800 is taken from RG 10, V. 3613, Black Series, F. 4060, David Rundel, Rossville, to "Editor of the Free Press," 27 February 1875.
- ³¹ The Hudson's Bay Company preferred to engage the Indians during the summer since it did not want to take the Indians away from their winter hunts. See PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 175, Donald Ross to Alexander Christie, 1 December 1833. Ross states that "Indians are the cheapest hands we can employ in Summer but certainly the very dearest we employ in winter, not from what we pay them but from the loss of their hunts while so employed," (emphasis in original). See also Ray, op. cit., 1984, p. 10. Ray states that "Indians were generally employed during the summer when they were hired to man boat brigades and carry on unskilled maintenance work around the posts or to serve as hunters and fishermen."
- ³² See for example HBCA, B.154/a/37, Norway House journals, 1841-42, 11 October 1841; HBCA, B.154/a/50, Norway House journal, 1849-50, 18 June 1849, September 1849, 5 December 1849; HBCA, B.154/a/58, Norway House journal, 1853-54, 1 August 1853; HBCA, B.154/a/59, Norway House journal, 1854-55, 31 July 1854.
- ³³ Oliver, op. cit., p. 832, resolution 92.
- ³⁴ HBCA, D.5/8, Simpson correspondence, ff. 441-44, Ross to Simpson, 16 August 1843.

- ³⁵ Provincial Archives of Manitoba (hereafter cited as PAM), MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 176, Donald Ross to Alexander Christie, 9 April 1846.
- ³⁶ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 177, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 10 August 1847; see also Oliver, op. cit., p. 822, resolution 42..
- ³⁷ HBCA, D.5/34, Simpson correspondence, ff. 297-300, George Barnston to George Simpson, 24 August 1852.
- ³⁸ HBCA, D.5/38, Simpson correspondence, ff. 364-65, George Barnston to Governor, Chief Factors and Chief Traders of Northern Department, 16 December 1853.
- ³⁹ UWO, Evans papers, letter 249, undated but prior to Mason's appointment to Rossville.
- ⁴⁰ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 176, Donald Ross to Alexander Christie, 9 April 1846.
- ⁴¹ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 176, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 7 December 1846.
- ⁴² HBCA, D.5/40, Simpson correspondence, f. 595b-96, George Barnston to the Governor, Chief Factors, and Chief Traders of the Northern District, 18 December 1855.
- ⁴³ HBCA, D.5/42, Simpson correspondence, f. 478-79, George Barnston to the Governor, Chief Factors and Chief Traders of the Northern District, 20 December 1856.
- ⁴⁴ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 179, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 19 March 1849.
- ⁴⁵ See Fleming, op. cit., resolution 97; Oliver, op. cit., p. 754, resolution 39; also HBCA, B.154/b/5, Norway House correspondence, George Barnston to John Bell, 20 Feb 1852; HBCA, B.154/a/71, Norway House journal, 1875, 5 March 1875.
- ⁴⁶ UWO, Evans papers, James Evans to Ephraim Evans, 30 June 1842.
- ⁴⁷ HBCA, D.5/14, Simpson correspondence, f. 49-50, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 21 May 1845.
- ⁴⁸ HBCA, D.5/32, Simpson correspondence, f. 408-09, George Barnston to George Simpson, 26 December 1851.
- ⁴⁹ see HBCA, B.154/a/1,2,3, Norway House journals, 1796-99.

⁵⁰ HBCA, D.5/14, Simpson correspondence, f. 224-28, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 5 August 1845.

⁵¹ as above, Ross states that "... if the Red River Settlers are permitted to become Traders - the Fur Trade will soon become worthless to the Company, and it is equally certain that no force or power can ever be organized in this country capable of maintaining the peace of the Settlement and enforcing the due execution of the laws ..."

⁵² PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 176, Donald Ross to Alexander Christie, 9 April 1846.

⁵³ HBCA, D.5/7, Simpson correspondence, f. 197-202, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 15 August 1842.

⁵⁴ During the "strike" of 1845 James Evans convinced a number of Village Indians, who had been engaged to accompany Donald Ross to Red River, to withdraw their services if they were required to travel on Sunday. Ross suggested that Evans threatened to "turn them out of the Village, out of their Class meetings, and out of the Church, if they went in my Boat ...", see HBCA, Simpson Correspondence, D.5/14, f. 32-35, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 21 May 1845. Evans suggested that the Company would not engage the Indians again if they refused to accompany Ross to the settlement at Red River. For references to Evans' accusation see HBCA, D.5/14, Simpson Correspondence, f. 236-37, Statements recorded by George Gladman, 20 May 1845. Ross also believed that Evans actually intended to challenge the Company's monopoly and gain "a share in the proceeds of the trade," see HBCA, D.5/14, Simpson Correspondence, f. 49-50, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 21 May 1845, emphasis in original.

⁵⁵ HBCA, D5/14, Simpson correspondence, f.49-50, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 21 May 1845.

⁵⁶ Regarding Mason, Ross notes that "Mr. Mason seems to conduct his mission very quietly and economically and to impress upon the minds of the Indians the propriety and necessity of industry, honesty and good conduct, and not withstanding the evil seeds sown by his predecessor, his exertions so far do not appear to be in vain." HBCA, D.5/19, Simpson correspondence, f. 322, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 8 March 1847. William Brooks considers the work of the Methodist Church at Norway House and examines the relationship between Evans and the Company, as well as the reasons behind Evans' dismissal, and the Company's involvement in this process, at length. See Brooks, "From Connexion to Social Gospel: The Evolution of Methodism in the Canadian West, 1840-1925," (Ph.D. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1972.

⁵⁷ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 178, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 21 August 1848.

- ⁵⁸ as above, Ross states "We can no longer hide from ... the fact that free trade notions and the course of events are making such rapid progress, that the day is suddenly not far distant, when our ... important British Monopoly will necessarily be swept like all others away by the force of public opinion ... it would certainly be the most important and most popular act of your public career in connection with the Hudsons Bay Company, and it might well be deemed the crowning glory of your active life - that it would immortalize your name in Canada is I think unquestionable"
- ⁵⁹ HBCA, D.5/16, Simpson correspondence, f. 343-44, Donald Ross to the Governor, Chief Factors and Chief Traders of the Northern Department, 17 December 1846.
- ⁶⁰ HBCA, D.5/43, Simpson correspondence, f.275-76, George Barnston to George Simpson, 7 March 1857.
- ⁶¹ HBCA, B.154/e/15, Norway House report, 1885.
- ⁶² HBCA, B.154/b/1, Norway House correspondence, 1840-45, Donald Ross to Cummings, 23 January 1845; HBCA, B.154/e/11, Norway House report, 1874, f.2d, notes that the "debt system" was still in place and occasional, small gratuities of provisions were given out; HBCA, B.154/e/15, Norway House journal, 1885; and B.154/a/67, Norway House journal, 1869-72, 19 March 1872, refers to New Years gratuities.
- ⁶³ HBCA, B.154/e/15, Norway House report, 1885, emphasis mine.
- ⁶⁴ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 124, William Mason to Donald Ross, 29 December 1847.
- ⁶⁵ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 125, William Mason to Donald Ross, 25 December, 1848.
- ⁶⁶ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 178, Donald Ross to William Mason, 3 Jan 1849.
- ⁶⁷ HBCA, B.154/a/69, Norway House journal, 1869-72, 25 December 1871.
- ⁶⁸ The journal for the year describes this as "the usual fare", HBCA, B.154/a/66, Norway House journal, 1863-68, 1 January 1867.
- ⁶⁹ HBCA, B.154/a/70, Norway House journal, 1870-72, 25 December 1872.
- ⁷⁰ HBCA, B.154/a/71, Norway House journal, 1874-77, 24 August 1877
- ⁷¹ HBCA, B.154/a/72, Norway House journal, 1877-80, 3 August 1879
- ⁷² as above.

⁷³ UWO, Evans Papers, letter 184, Donald Ross to James Evans, 17 July 1844.

⁷⁴ as above.

⁷⁵ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 177, Donald Ross to George Simpson, 17 August 1847.

⁷⁶ as above.

⁷⁷ HBCA, B.154/b/10, Norway House correspondence, 1864-75. J.A. Graham to the Governor, Chief Factors and Chief Traders, 21 December 1864.

⁷⁸ HBCA, B.154/b/10, Norway House correspondence, 1864-75, J.A. Graham to Roderick Mackenzie, 15 Feb 1865.

⁷⁹ Ray, op. cit., 1974, 213.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 213.

⁸¹ Ray, op. cit., 1984, p. 3.

⁸² Tough, op. cit., 1987, p. 127; see also pp. 125 ff.

⁸³ PAM, MG1, D20, Donald Ross papers, file 80, George Simpson to Donald Ross, 15 July 1846. In his letter Simpson discusses the Indian village adjacent to Norway House and suggests that "it will be absolutely necessary to break up the Indian settlement, as it is becoming a very serious drain upon our provisions & resources and so numerous and formidable that unless soon broken up that settlement may become dangerous, to the peace of the country when they hear that military are coming into Red River who will be more or less under the influence of the Company, it may deter them from coming hither in opposition to our wishes."

Chapter 6: The Negotiation of Treaty 5: 1875

On 2 July 1875 the Dominion government approved a proposal to treaty with the Indians of central Manitoba. The treaty was to include the territory

lying North of the Territories included in Treaties Nos. 3, 2 and 4 and South of a line running from the North West point of Treaty No. 3 North Easterly to Jack Lake, then following the Jack River and including the Play Green Lake, thence, Westerly, to Moose Lake; thence Southerly to Red Deer Lake, it being understood that in all cases where Lakes form the Treaty limits, ten miles from the shore of the Lake should be included in the Treaty and that the Treaty shall expressly cover all the Islands either in Lake Winnipeg or in any other Lake included in the Territory.¹

Alexander Morris left Fort Garry on 17 September 1875 to negotiate the terms of the treaty with the Indians in this region.

Morris was instructed to offer each Indian an annuity of \$5 while the headmen and the chiefs were to receive \$15 and \$25 respectively. The headmen and chiefs were also to be given clothing every three years and each chief was to receive a medal and a flag to commemorate the treaty signing. Each family of five was to be given 160 acres of land, subject to various considerations, and the government promised to establish and maintain schools on the reserves. The government also promised \$500 annually to provide ammunition for hunting and twine for fishing. It also guaranteed the right to hunt, fish and trap on treaty lands, subject to the various and unspecified regulations imposed, from time to time, by the Dominion government. Finally, the government offered a one

time payment of farm stock, implements and tools, in order to encourage the pursuit of agriculture.²

Morris arrived at Berens River on board the Colville, a Hudson's Bay Company steamer, on 20 September 1875. The Indians at Berens River greeted the party with a "volley of firearms" and assembled to discuss and consider the terms offered by Morris.³ The negotiations, which began late that afternoon, were completed by eleven o'clock in the evening and the treaty payments were quickly administered. Morris left for Norway House, on board the Company steamer, the following day.

Morris arrived at Norway House on 23 September 1875. Once again he was welcomed by the Indians, who fired a salute, to welcome the treaty party. Here Morris encountered two groups of Indians, "the Christian Indians of Norway House, and the Wood or Pagan Indians of Cross Lake".⁴ Each group was represented by a chief, and a group of head men, who presented their concerns to the government and relayed the government's terms to the people. During the negotiations

the Christian Chief stated that as they could no longer count on employment in boating for the Hudson's Bay Company, owing to the introduction of steam navigation, he and a portion of his band wishes to migrate to Lake Winnipeg, where they could obtain a livelihood by farming and fishing The Chief of the Pagan band, who has however recently been baptized, stated that the Wood Indians wished to remain at Cross Lake, and we agreed that a reserve should be allotted them there.⁵

The village Indians who wished to leave Norway House requested a reserve at the Grassy Narrows on Lake Winnipeg. Morris would not accept this request since this land had already been set aside for Icelandic settlers, but his offer of a reserve at Fisher River was accepted.⁶ Reserves were also established at Norway House and Cross Lake. Despite

any complications which may have arisen from these considerations Morris stated that the negotiations, which began in the morning on the 24th, were completed later that day, and the treaty presents and payments were then distributed.⁷

Morris left for Grand Rapids on the Saskatchewan River on the 25th of September and he arrived the following day. At Grand Rapids the negotiations considered the location of the reserve at the mouth of the Saskatchewan River. The Indians requested a reserve on the north side of the river, near the eastern end of the portage which skirted the rapids. Morris rejected this request, since the land had been promised to the Hudson's Bay Company, and he convinced the Indians to accept a reserve on the opposite side of the river.⁸ Again, Morris was able to act quickly. The negotiations began in the morning on the 27th and by the afternoon Morris was back on board the Colville bound for Fort Garry.

The fast pace of the negotiations, and the poor terms offered by the government, should not obscure the importance of the treaty negotiations in this region. The treaty should be viewed as a document which attempted to deal with the changing circumstances within the interior. The government believed the treaty would open the region for exploitation and settlement and the Hudson's Bay Company felt the treaty would insure its position within the interior as new opportunities emerged. The Indians believed the treaty would enhance the political and economic security they had enjoyed throughout much of this territory during the years of the commercial fur trade.

The Dominion Government and Treaty 5

The correspondence for Treaty 5 suggests that Morris was interested in extinguishing Indian title throughout this region in order to facilitate passage for settlers travelling inland along the Saskatchewan River and to encourage the exploitation of natural resources. On 31 May 1875 Morris informed David Laird, the Minister of the Interior, that the

progress of navigation by steam on Lake Winnipeg, the establishment of Missions and of saw milling enterprises the discovery of minerals on the shores and vicinity of the Lake as well as migration of the Norway House Indians, all point to the necessity of the Treaty being made without delay.⁹

Morris had clearly reversed his earlier decision regarding the utility of a treaty extending to Norway House and he suggested that such a treaty was, in fact, necessary and urgent.¹⁰

The government accepted this view and instructed Morris to begin the treaty negotiations. However Laird emphasized the government's belief that the Indians in this region were not entitled to the same terms extended to the Indians of the plains. He told Morris that

in view of the comparatively small area of the Territory proposed to be ceded and of the fact that it is not required by the Dominion Government for immediate use either for railroad or other public purposes, it is hoped that it will not be found necessary to give the Indians either as present or as annuity a larger amount than five dollars, the amount secured to the Indians of Treaties Nos. 1 and 2 under the recent arrangements.¹¹

The correspondence suggests that the Dominion government did believe that portions of the ceded territory would be used for immediate settlement. In October 1875 E.A. Meredith, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, commended Morris on the success of the treaty negotiations and

he indicated that a significant portion of the ceded land west of Lake Winnipeg would be opened for settlement in the near future.¹²

The government appears to have recognized the economic potential of the area and apparently shared Morris' view that a treaty was necessary. However it urged restraint and understated its own position regarding the value of the territory in order to impose a less generous settlement. It is reasonable to suggest that the Indians throughout this region were aware of the more favourable terms extended in Treaties 3 and 4 and the government publicly dismissed the need for an immediate treaty in this area in order to strengthen its position and discourage the Indians from seeking a similar settlement.¹³

The Hudson's Bay Company and Treaty 5

The Hudson's Bay Company also thought that it would benefit from a treaty in this region.¹⁴ In the short term it was confident that it could appropriate the annuities paid out each summer. Shortly after the treaty was signed the Company began to extend credit on the basis of future annuities and it developed an aggressive campaign to ensure its position against free traders with similar intentions.

The Company also believed the government would assume those commitments which the Company had accepted as a condition of the fur trade in this region. The treaty required the government to supply farm stock and implements, something which the Company had earlier provided for the Indians. In the years following the signing of the treaty the

Government also assumed the Company's role and extended medical and material aid as required.¹⁵

The Company hoped the treaty would ensure its long term survival and prosperity as the economy of the surrendered territory began to change. Morris had considered the Company's interests at Grand Rapids in 1875 when he refused to establish a reserve on land which had been promised to the Company. In a very clear way the interests of the Company had been given priority over the interests of the Indians who signed the treaty. It is reasonable to assume that the Company hoped this special relationship would help it prosper as the economy, and the issues of access and title, became more complex throughout this region.¹⁶

The Indians and Treaty 5

Although Morris had considered the extension of an existing treaty, or the establishment of a new one, to include the Indians at Berens River, the evidence for Treaty 5 indicates that the Indians at Norway House approached the government and requested a treaty before the government decided that such a measure was necessary. On 25 June 1874 the Christian Indians of the village petitioned Morris to determine whether the government intended to treat with them as it had with other Indians throughout the interior. They explained that

the Tripping to York Factory which has been carried on by the Honourable Hudson Bay Company for many years, will cease after this summer and by this measure nearly two-hundred of our people are thrown out of employment, and we have no way of our own, in this country, to procure the clothing and food which was thus earned by

us and received from the Honourable Hudsons Bay Company during the past; this makes us feel that we must do something ourselves and if possible to obtain help from Her Majestie's Government at this time to meet the necessities of the future.¹⁷

These Indians inquired whether they would be allowed to move up the Saskatchewan, or elsewhere, in order to establish an agricultural settlement.

The Hudson's Bay Company was also concerned about the impact of steam navigation, and the restructuring of its inland supply network, upon the Indians and the local economy around Norway House. Roderick Ross, in his report of 1874, stated that

In view of the early discontinuance of the summer tripping to York Factory and other places, the question of the manner by which the Indians of this section are to procure a livelihood becomes a serious one. - In view of the great misery that is likely to be the result, I consider the matter of sufficient importance to bring it thus early to the notice of the Chief Commissioner. - It is clear that help must come from some quarter.¹⁸

Both the Company, and the Indians, were aware of the treaty signings in other parts of western Canada, and both believed that the necessary assistance could be provided by the Dominion government.

The evidence suggests that Treaty 5 had both immediate and long term benefits for the Indians at Norway House and throughout the region. In the short term the treaty annuities allowed the Indians to obtain goods, or receive goods on credit, regardless of whether or not they engaged with the Company or were successful in their hunts. Families were often able to obtain their entire outfit if their total annuities were used for this purpose.¹⁹ This advantage would not have been lost on the village Indians who petitioned Morris in 1874. The Norway House

journal for that year indicates that, unlike other years, the winter hunts had not been successful and the spring fisheries had produced few fish. Annuities could be used by the Indians for support in these circumstances.

The correspondence suggests that the Indians also believed the treaty would enhance, and protect, their position as the economy of the region changed over the long term. It committed the government to supply ammunition and twine in order to support hunting and fishing. It also promised agricultural support and schools since the government believed that the future prosperity of the Indians depended on their ability to farm and their opportunity to be taught in government or church schools. The treaty committed the government to provide the goods and services previously supplied by the Hudson's Bay Company and the Methodist Church in this region and the Indians frequently reminded the government of its commitment to their welfare.

In 1876 Thomas Howard and J. Lestock Reed were commissioned to administer the treaty and to secure the adhesions of those Indians adjacent to Lake Winnipeg who had not been involved in the earlier negotiations. Morris instructed them to distribute twine and ammunition as well as implements and tools. He also advised Howard and Reed not to deliver any of the promised cattle to the Indians until the government was confident that the cattle would survive. The government's decision to withhold treaty commitments, at its discretion, emerged as one of the most troublesome issues throughout the region after 1875.

Shortly after the treaty was signed the Indians at Norway House petitioned the government for more assistance. On 10 August 1878 J.F.

Graham, the acting Indian Superintendent, wrote to the Minister of the Interior to enquire whether the Indians who remained at Norway House were to be recognized as a separate band so they could be given "cattle and tools independent of the Fishers River portion of the Band where the chief now resides".²⁰ On 30 October 1878 the Deputy Minister of the Interior informed Graham that

the Reserve at Fisher River was set apart at the request of the Norway House Band, for such of the members thereof as might prefer living there to remaining at Norway House, but there is nothing in the treaty to show that there was any intention to allow that section of the Band a paid Chief and Councillors, or to allow them more than their proportion of the Implements etc, agreed to be given to the Norway House Band proper.²¹

The Indians at Norway House continued to pressure the government to recognize them as a separate band and to extend the provisions due to each band under the treaty.²² The government eventually relented and in January 1881 Lawrence Vankoughnet accepted the Indians' request and advised Graham that a separate chief and councillors could be selected at Norway House but these positions would not be paid by the government.²³

The government's reluctance to recognize the Indians at Norway House as a separate band was consistent with its policy at this time. While this helped to reduce the costs of administering the treaty it also challenged the Indians' political affiliations, and political power, throughout the region. The correspondence for Treaty 5 demonstrates that the government intended to control band structures throughout the region despite the protests of the Indians.

In 1876 J.A.N. Provencher, the acting Indian Superintendent at Winnipeg, wrote to David Laird and stated that "I have reason to believe that many small bands are scattered on the shores of Lake Winnipeg, and claim the right of forming separate Reserves." Provencher concluded that it "will be for you to decide at what number of population this division must be stopped and which bands may be allowed a distinct organization".²⁴ E.A. Meredith, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, responded to Provencher's letter. He discouraged the recognition of small bands throughout the region but suggested that this decision needed to be made at the local level. Meredith stated that it "is not desirable of course that the Indians should be encouraged to break up into too many small bands, but the extent to which this should be allowed must be determined by the circumstances of each case".²⁵ The government, in fact, was not willing to recognize the requests of the Indians, or the decisions of its agents, at the local level.

In August 1878 Willoughby Clarke, the Indian Agent at Grand Rapids, informed Graham that the Indians at Norway House had selected their own chief and two councillors. Clarke recognized these elections and he suggested that the Indians at Norway House and Fisher River should be treated as separate bands.²⁶ Graham forwarded these recommendations to Ottawa for consideration. W. Buckingham, the Deputy Minister of the Interior, rejected Clarke's recommendations and he suggested that whatever "Mr. Agent Clarke's opinion on these points may have been, he had no right to act upon it without the authority of the Superintendent General of Indian Affairs You will please inform him to that effect".²⁷ The government clearly intended to control its officials at

the local level. In this case it was reluctant to consider the request of the Indians at Norway House for political recognition and, in general terms, the government was not willing to recognize the political autonomy of the many small bands which were scattered throughout the treaty region.²⁸

The correspondence for Treaty 5 indicates that other Indians also pressured the government to provide the items which it had promised during the treaty negotiations. In January 1877 Chief John Constant of The Pas wrote Morris to request that three schools be established.²⁹ He suggested that one should be located at the mission and another one should be established about four miles away. He noted that the Indians at Birch River were also ready for a school and he requested that separate facilities be established there. Chief Constant concluded that the Indians at Birch River and The Pas were "quite ready for everything that was promised at the Treaty".³⁰ Willoughby Clarke, the Indian Agent at Grand Rapids, endorsed Constant's request but he recommended that only two schools should be built, one at The Pas and the other at Birch River.

The Indians at The Pas continued to pressure the government for those items guaranteed under the terms of Treaty 5.³¹ On 18 August 1879 Lawrence Vankoughnet, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, responded to their complaint that they had not received "their fair allowance of cattle and agricultural implements". Vankoughnet advised Graham "that any cattle due those Indians as well as other Indian Bands of Treaty No. 5 who are prepared to receive and take care

of the same should be furnished to them this season".³² Despite Vankoughnet's attempts to deal with this issue the Indians again referred to the matter when the Governor General toured The Pas in 1881. Robert Sinclair, representing the Department of Indian Affairs, subsequently ordered Graham to release an additional number of implements as well as more seed and a horse. He also advised Graham to monitor the use, and the results, of this disbursement.³³

On at least one occasion Alexander Morris, reflecting on the spirit of the treaties, suggested that the Indians throughout western Canada were entitled to significant levels of support in exchange for their title to the land. Morris also suggested that the government should exceed the specific terms of the treaty if this was necessary. After he negotiated Treaty 6 Morris explained that

We were seeking to acquire their country, to make way for Settlement, and thus deprive them of their hunting grounds and their means of livelihood. The Indians represented that it would be impossible for them to cultivate the soil, extensively as they intended doing, with so few implements, and the Commissioners co-inciding with them, enlarged the grant I may say further , that I have been convinced for some time, that if we are to succeed in inducing the Indians to cultivate the soil, the provisions of the former treaties are not sufficiently liberal with regard to implements and cattle to accomplish the desired end.³⁴

Despite the advice offered by Morris the government, in many cases, continued to withhold treaty commitments at its discretion.

The issue of protection was a critical one for the Indians in this region and kinship terms were often used to describe the nature and the extent of the treaty commitments. On 9 March 1882 the Chief and

Councillors of the Island bands and Jack Head River wrote to J.F. Graham, the Indian Superintendent in Winnipeg. They noted that

you are aware that at the time of our Treaty about nine years ago, this portion of the country was reserved to us as a Reservation, we therefore your children have built fifteen houses & have improved farms to some extent & we have also built a School House with logs ready for your further assistance to complete the building for education. We therefore your petitioners beg to inform you that a surveying party have arrived at this spot with the purpose of laying down limits for to build a saw mill near our Reserve. We therefore request that the boundary of our Reservation should be laid down to mark the extent of our Reserve on each side of the Reserve on Jack Head River, very much good timber lies on each side of us which will answer there purpose, and it will only be fair for your government to protect our timber by the boundary line laid on behalf of our Reservation we all unite in shaking your hand Father, and we believe that you are watching over our interests.³⁵

The Indians were aware that conditions were changing throughout the region and they realized they would require some measure of protection from the government in order to respond to these changes. They believed that the government, as a condition of the treaty relationship, was committed to their political and economic security over the long term, and they believed that the government would protect their interests in the same spirit as parents were expected to consider and protect the interests of their children.³⁶

The Indians also believed the reserves guaranteed by the treaty would protect their interests as the economy of the region changed. In 1875 Morris was instructed to select the location of the various reserves following the treaty negotiations. This differed from the earlier treaties where the discussion of the reserves was generally postponed but the government intended to act quickly in order to assure the Indians that land was being set aside for them and their interests

were being considered and protected. In fact, the government was not able to move as quickly as it had hoped to. Some Indians questioned the selected reserves and requested different sites, others did not want to move from land which they had already improved and others objected to the political alignments implicit in the establishment of various reserves. In the end the government was not able to move quickly and some Indians believed their welfare was jeopardized by the government's failure to establish and survey appropriate boundaries.

On at least one occasion the government rejected a commercial petition since it believed the request jeopardized the welfare of the Indians on the reserve. When the firm of Drake and Rutherford from Stonewall requested to build a saw mill on the Fisher River reserve the government denied permission and stated that "the risk of the Reserve being stripped of timber - were a Saw Mill erected thereon - would be too great".³⁷ However the government's earlier decision to reserve certain parcels of land for the Hudson's Bay Company, or for settlement, had complicated the selection of reserves and compromised the welfare of the Indians who were forced to select other, sometimes less desirable, land.

Conclusion

Historians often suggest that the Indians of western Canada were reduced to a state of despair and were forced to sign the numbered treaties because of the economic distress caused by the decline of the commercial fur trade.³⁸ While this may be true in some cases the

evidence for the village Indians at Norway House suggests that the treaty was seen primarily, as a document which was designed to deal with future needs and future contingencies. Although the village Indians referred to the immediate disruptions within the local economy when they petitioned Morris for a treaty in 1874 they were anxious to determine their place, and their rights, within the emerging order. They asked Morris if they had the same privilege

as any other of her Majesties subjects, of going to any other part of the country within Manitoba - up the Saskatchewan or wherever we may find a good farming country, to form a settlement, in order to keep our children from suffering hunger and the better to provide for our necessities.³⁹

It is significant that the Indians asked Morris where they would be allowed to live in the future. By this time the first of the numbered treaties in western Canada had already been negotiated and the Indians clearly understood that their own position was being undermined by developments throughout the interior. They also realized that the treaty was the only way of establishing where their rights, and their lands, would lie in the future.

The Indians at Norway House, and throughout the treaty area, believed the treaty established a new and reciprocal relationship between themselves and the Dominion government. In exchange for title, and a commitment to honour the terms of the treaty, the government promised significant levels of support for the existing economy and it encouraged the establishment of farms and schools to create new opportunities. It also promised to protect the reserves from unwanted intruders and it guaranteed the Indians freedom of movement throughout

the ceded territories subject only to provisions which appeared insignificant at the time but which became more onerous as the years passed.⁴⁰

The terms of reciprocity were defined by the references to kinship which appear in the treaty correspondence and which specified certain rights and responsibilities. The Queen, and the Dominion government on her behalf, assumed the role of the benevolent and concerned parent, dispensing justice and providing support. The Indians, cast as obedient and respectful children, promised to comply with the terms of the treaty and they expected the government to honour both the letter and the spirit of the treaty agreement.

The treaty negotiations were characterized by the protocol which had dominated trade and diplomacy before the arrival of the European fur traders and which persisted throughout the commercial fur trade era. The Indians at Berens River and Norway House greeted Morris with firearms and the chiefs and the headmen returned to consult with their bands after meeting with Morris and the treaty party. Presents and annuities were distributed after the negotiations were completed and an agreement was reached.⁴¹ Although the Indians were not able to influence the actual terms of the treaty in a significant way they were able to influence the timing of the negotiations and the ceremony and circumstance which attended the negotiations confirmed the political, social and economic significance of the treaty process in this region.

The political dialogue and the mutual consent which characterized the treaty process quickly evaporated as the Dominion government

introduced new legislation to govern Indian affairs. The Indian Act which was proclaimed in 1876 extended the government's powers to control band structures and to regulate many aspects of Indian life which were not considered during the treaty negotiations. The government claimed the right to determine the time, the place and the method of Indian elections and it extended the power of the elected band council in order to challenge the existing lines of power and authority.⁴² Elected officials also served at the pleasure of the Dominion government.⁴³

The legislation of 1876, and the subsequent amendments, also

contained provisions which attacked traditional Indian sexual, marriage, and divorce mores and furthered the Christian-European values. Into this category fall the sections relating to illegitimate children, non-band members on the reserve after sundown, non-Indians on reserves and cohabiting with Indians, and Indian women in public houses.⁴⁴

The government also banned Indian religious ceremonies since it believed they discouraged the accumulation and appreciation of private property. In 1890 the government introduced an amendment to the Indian Act which stated that the game laws of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories also applied to the Indians who lived there. The government adopted this measure since it believed that hunting and fishing discouraged the pursuit of agriculture and disrupted the education of Indian children.⁴⁵

The Indians believed that the treaty constituted a bilateral agreement which required their consent, and the consent of the Dominion government, and they believed that the treaty defined the terms of this new relationship.⁴⁶ The Indians resisted the government's attempts to interpret and implement the treaty in a unilateral fashion and they did not expect restrictive legislation which limited their freedoms and

undermined the spirit and the terms of the treaty agreement. The correspondence for Treaty 5 from 1875 to 1885 demonstrates that the Indians were compelled to lobby the government, and to rely on the government's good will, to secure the political, economic and social security which they believed was negotiated during, and assured by, the treaty process.

Footnotes

¹ Kenneth Coates and Bill Morrison, "Treaty Five," (unpublished paper; Brandon, Manitoba, 1986). David Laird to the Privy Council, 2 July 1875, quoted in Coates and Morrison, p. 14.

² Of the treaties negotiated in the 1870s Treaties 1, 2 and 5 guaranteed 160 acres for each family of five. Treaties 3, 4, 6 and 7 provided for 640 acres of reserve land for each family of five. Treaties 1 and 2 provided a one time cash payment of \$3 for each Indian at the time of the treaty signing. Treaty 5 granted \$5, and Treaties 3, 4, 6 and 7 authorized a payment of \$12 to each Indian when the treaties were signed. Treaty 4 also provided a \$25 payment to each chief, and \$15 to each headman, at the time of signing. Each treaty provided an annuity of \$5 per person and \$25 per chief. Treaties 3 through 7 also provided annuities of \$15 to each headman. Each treaty provided an initial disbursement of farm stock, tools and implements and each called for the establishment of a school on the reserve. Beyond this, many of the specific provisions varied from treaty to treaty. A notable example of this is the provision, in Treaty 6, of a medicine chest to be maintained by the government, for the benefit of the Indian people. See G. Brown and R. Maguire, Indian Treaties in Historical Perspective, (Ottawa: Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1979), p. xxv.

³ Alexander Morris, The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-west Territories, (reprinted; Toronto: Coles Publishing Co., 1979), p. 147.

⁴ Ibid., p. 148.

⁵ Ibid., p. 148.

⁶ PAM, MG12, B2, Morris TB2, David Laird to Alexander Morris, 15 September 1875. Laird instructed Morris that "In dealing with Norway House Indians Must not promise them reserve at Grassy Narrows as Icelanders propose settling there."

⁷ Morris, op. cit., p. 148.

⁸ McCarthy, op. cit., p. 21.

⁹ PAM, MG12, B1, Morris LB/J, Alexander Morris to the Minister of the Interior.

¹⁰ Tough, op. cit., 1988, p. 4, quotes Morris. In 1873 Morris believed that "the country lying adjacent to Norway House is not adapted to agricultural purposes ... there is therefore no present necessity for the negotiation of any treaty." Morris, op. cit., p. 143; see also PAM, MG12, B1, Morris LB/J, Alexander Morris to Minister of the Interior 11 October 1875. Morris refers to the value of the hay lands, timber and fish in the region and the region's importance for settlement.

- ¹¹ David Laird to Alexander Morris, 10 August 1875, quoted in Coates and Morrison, op. cit., p. 15.
- ¹² PAM, MG12, B1, Morris LG, Meredith to Alexander Morris, 26 October 1875.
- ¹³ It is reasonable to suggest that the Indians were aware of the terms of the various treaties which were negotiated in the region before 1875. During the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries the Indians of western Canada travelled great distances to pursue their political and diplomatic initiatives. Annual councils promoted communication as the Indians met to negotiate alliances and consider developments throughout the region. The Indians continued to travel throughout the region, for their own purposes, and in their capacity as runners, guides and tripmen, as the commercial fur trade expanded. The records for Norway House refer to the kinship and economic ties between the Indians at Red River and the Indians at Norway House, see chapter 5 above.
- ¹⁴ see chapter 5 above.
- ¹⁵ McColl quoted in Tough, 1987, op. cit., p. 103, also chapter five.
- ¹⁶ See Bowsfield, Hartwell, ed. The Letters of Charles John Brydges 1879-1882. Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1977. In the introduction Alan Wilson considers the concerns and the problems of the Hudson's Bay Company during the 1860s and 1870s, pp. xi-lxxiv.
- ¹⁷ PAM, MG12, B1, Morris Papers, Rossville Indians to Alexander Morris, 25 June 1874.
- ¹⁸ HBCA, B.154/e/11, Norway House report 1874.
- ¹⁹ Tough, op. cit., 1987, pp. 102ff.
- ²⁰ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Graham to Minister of Interior, 10 Aug 1878.
- ²¹ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Buckingham to Graham, 30 October 1878.
- ²² RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Balfour, Budd and Poker to McKay, Indian Agent, 1 June 1880.
- ²³ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Vankoughnet to James Graham, 22 January 1881.
- ²⁴ Both taken from RG10, V.3635, F.6645, Indian Affairs Black Series J.A.N. Provencher to David Laird, 19 June 1876.
- ²⁵ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Meredith to J.A.N. Provencher, 6 July 1876.

- ²⁶ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Willoughby Clarke to James Graham, 19 August 1878.
- ²⁷ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Buckingham to James Graham, 30 October 1878.
- ²⁸ The Pas Indian Band, Information Package, The Pas Indian Band: Treaty Land Entitlement (The Pas, Manitoba: The Pas Indian Band, 1988), pp. 7-8, notes that there are at least five examples of artificially created "Treaty" bands, they were the Island band, including Jackhead, Bloodvein, Hollow Water and Loon Straits; Berens River including Berens River and Little Grand Rapids; Norway House and Fisher Branch; Moose Lake including Moose Lake and Chemawawin; and the Pas including The Pas, Birch River and Pas Mountain).
- ²⁹ See Morris, op. cit., pp. 152-67, 350-51.
- ³⁰ PAM, MG12, B1, Morris LG, Chief Constant to Alexander Morris, 2 January 1877.
- ³¹ as above, Chief Constant complained to J.A. Macdonald that they had been "ill treated & neglected & have received very little distribution in anything whatsoever", Henry Prince, et. al., to J.A.M., 6 June 1879, RG10, V.3693, F.14421, quoted in Coates and Morrison).
- ³² Both quotes from RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Lawrence Vankoughnet to James Graham, 18 August 1879.
- ³³ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Sinclair to James Graham, 22 Nov. 1881.
- ³⁴ PAM, MG12, B2, Morris, Ketcheson Collection, Alexander Morris to Minister of Interior, 27 March 1877.
- ³⁵ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Indians to James Graham, 9 March 1882.
- ³⁶ See also Albert Flett regarding the Cumberland House Indians, RG10, V3677, F11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, 31 December 1878; and Chief Constant of the Pas to Alexander Morris, PAM, MG12, B1, Morris LG, 2 Jan, 1877. Jean Friesen notes that the treaty commissioners often adopted this language but they generally did not appreciate the full extent of "implied moral responsibility" conveyed by these terms. See Friesen, op. cit., 1986, p. 47.
- ³⁷ RG10, V.3677, F.11528, Indian Affairs Black Series, Lawrence Vankoughnet to James Graham, 8 May 1882.
- ³⁸ See Ray, op. cit., 1974, pp. 217-29 for an example of this approach.
- ³⁹ PAM, MG12, B1, Indians to Alexander Morris, 25 June 1874.

⁴⁰ See John L. Tobias, "Protection, Civilization, Assimilation: An Outline History of Canada's Indian Policy," in As Long as the Sun Shines and Water Flows: A Reader in Canadian Native Studies, ed. by Ian A.L. Getty and Antoine S. Lussier (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1985), 39-55; and John S. Milloy, "The Early Indian Acts: Developmental Strategy and Constitutional Change," in Getty and Lussier, op. cit., pp. 56-64. Tobias and Milloy consider the government's strategy and legislative initiatives following the negotiation of the numbered treaties in the 1870s. See footnote 45 below.

⁴¹ See John Leonard Taylor, op. cit., pp. 16ff. Taylor considers the negotiation of Treaty 6 in 1876 and the scene which greeted Morris at Fort Carlton. Taylor concludes that the pipe-stem ceremony which Morris described established the context for the negotiations, from the Indians' point of view. Only the truth could be spoken in the presence of the pipe and all commitments made during that time had to be honoured. Taylor suggests that the government officials did not appreciate the significance of the Indians' ceremonies and they believed they were bound only by the promises and commitments recorded on the signed documents.

⁴² Tobias, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴³ Milloy, op. cit., p. 62.

⁴⁴ Tobias, op. cit., p. 45

⁴⁵ Ibid., pp. 47-48. Tobias provides a good discussion of the evolution and intention of the government's Indian policy and the Indian Act after it was passed in 1876. He describes the government's policy as a "programme of directed and aggressive civilization" (48) and he suggests that this specific amendment was introduced to support the government's policy of assimilation. The text of Treaty 5 confirmed the Indians' right to pursue "their avocations of hunting and fishing throughout the tract surrendered" subject to the regulations imposed, from time to time, by the Dominion government. The text suggests that such regulations would be introduced for economic reasons and there is no indication in the text that these amendments would be used to coerce or promote a certain lifestyle. See Morris, op. cit., pp. 342-48 for text of Treaty 5.

⁴⁶ Jean Friesen argues that the Indian treaties are "one of the primary means of defining the relationship of thousands of aboriginals to the Canadian state" and she suggests that the treaties provided the "framework for a continuing diplomatic and economic relationship with the European ... " (emphasis mine). Friesen notes that the Indians have never consented to the Indian Act. See Friesen, op. cit., 1986, pp. 41 and 51.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

John Foster, in his discussion of the treaty process in western Canada, accepts the substantive interpretation that Indian trade was motivated by a collective search for political, social and economic security and he believes that trade retained this significance throughout the commercial fur trade era. Foster argues that a compact emerged between the Indians and the European traders and he suggests that the Indians wished to continue "significant aspects of this relationship" when they entered into treaty negotiations in the 1870s.¹

Foster notes that historians and politicians have accepted, and acted upon, the idea of a compact between the French and English communities in Canada. This compact

denotes reciprocal rights and responsibilities of each collectivity. While confrontation seems to be the order of the day in debate on specific issues ... the existence of the compact usually elicits a recognition of the other's rights and thus an implied responsibility The criterion for a solution is a fair and equitable result embodying the interests of all parties to the compact.²

Although the evidence indicates that the white community has not recognized a compact in their relations with the Indians of Canada, Foster suggests that the protests of the Indian community demonstrate their belief that such a compact does in fact exist. He argues that this compact requires a generous interpretation of both the terms and the spirit of the Indian treaties.

Arthur Ray and Donald Freeman reject Foster's emphasis on the political and social significance of trade. They suggest that the commercial fur trade was dominated by the activities of private property owners and entrepreneurs and they dismiss the importance of Indian tradition and custom altogether.³ When they consider the fur trade exchange ceremony they argue that the Company factor, and the Indian trading captain, manipulated the trading ceremony, at will, and for their own advantage. They do not consider the historical and political conventions which governed this ceremony and they suggest that capitalist notions of trade and exchange prevailed from an early date. Their analysis suggests that the basic structures and institutions of Indian society were destroyed by the commercial fur trade.⁴

Since Ray and Freeman dismiss the importance of reciprocal trade and kinship obligations within the commercial fur trade, there is little evidence to suggest, according to their analysis, that the Indians expected anything more than the government's commitment to comply with the terms of the treaty in the narrowest sense. When Ray considers the treaty process he suggests that the treaties were primarily economic documents which were intended to deal, in very specific terms, with the material distress which he describes throughout western Canada in the 1870s.⁵ Ray's analysis suggests that the Indians were not able to enter into a reciprocal agreement with the Dominion government since the notion of reciprocity held little meaning for the Indians when the treaties were negotiated and the commercial fur trade had compromised the political power and the economic independence of the Indian people.

The evidence for Norway House, and the correspondence for Treaty 5, supports Foster's interpretation of trade, and the treaty process in this region. The commercial fur trade did not disrupt local patterns of trade and diplomacy, or the local economy, as Ray and Freeman suggest, and substantive notions of trade and diplomacy remained in place throughout the 18th and 19th centuries.

The earliest records of the commercial fur trade demonstrate that the French and English traders relied on Indian routes throughout the interior to establish and expand their trade. La Vérendrye followed these routes inland from Lake Superior and his interest in Lake Winnipeg and the Saskatchewan River system reflected the political and economic significance of these waterways to the Cree and Assiniboine of the western interior. The Hudson's Bay Company followed the Cree and Assiniboine up the Hayes River route to Lake Winnipeg and west up the Saskatchewan River when they began to establish posts inland. The Company's decision to establish a post at Norway House, at the northern end of Lake Winnipeg, demonstrated the significance of this region for the Indians of the interior before and after the arrival of the European traders.

During the first century of the commercial trade large Indian delegations travelled from the interior to trade with the English at the Bay, or with the French in the south. The search for security dominated the political and diplomatic initiatives of the Indians throughout the interior and these trading expeditions were intended to establish and maintain important alliances. The exchange of gifts, the extension of

kinship terms and the protocol which dominated the trading ceremonies, emphasized the reciprocal nature of the trading alliances and the political, social and moral obligations of these commitments.

The trading expeditions to the Bay, and to the French in the south, occurred during the summer months, when the Indians were assembled in large groups to renew friendships and to discuss matters of public concern. For much of the year the Indians travelled in smaller hunting groups of a few families. Marriage within the hunting group was not permitted and marriage outside of the group was intended to promote productive alliances. These alliances promoted the security of the group since they maintained reciprocal relations and encouraged cooperation and egalitarian values.

The search for security and the emphasis on reciprocity continued even after the European traders began to move inland and the specific nature of the commercial fur trade began to change. There is no evidence of significant political or social disruptions in this region before the negotiation of Treaty 5 in 1875 and the records of the Hudson's Bay Company for Norway House demonstrate that the Indians were able to strengthen their position, in relation to the Company, throughout much of the nineteenth century. The Indians continued to exploit the full range of local resources in the customary fashion and they participated in the commercial fur trade when it suited their purposes and their inclinations. The Hudson's Bay Company struggled to encourage the production of furs for the commercial trade and the competition of free traders throughout this region forced the Company to adopt generous measures in order to obtain the furs which were produced.

In 1875, more than two centuries after the English began their trade from the shores of Hudson Bay, substantive notions of Indian society, and the economy, remained in place. The search for security dominated Indian politics and trading relationships were used to promote the political, social and economic welfare of the Indian people. The Indians believed that the negotiation of Treaty 5 would guarantee, in a formal manner, the security which they had enjoyed throughout the commercial fur trade era.

The treaty ceremonies incorporated the existing protocol of trade and diplomacy and they emphasized the bilateral nature of the treaty agreement. The Indians protested whenever the government acted in a unilateral fashion and they did not accept subsequent legislation which proscribed their freedoms and violated the terms, and the spirit, of the treaty agreement. The correspondence for Treaty 5, from 1875 to 1885, demonstrates that the unilateral actions of the Dominion government forced the Indians to petition and lobby for those benefits which they believed they were entitled to under the treaty.

Although the Indians adjacent to Lake Winnipeg believed that Treaty 5 would ensure their security as the economy of the region changed, they were not able to anticipate the speed, or the scale, of these changes, nor did they predict the effect of the treaty in promoting these changes. The treaty opened the region to intensive commercial development and the local fisheries, which had sustained the Indians and the commercial fur trade for centuries, felt the immediate impact as commercial fishing companies began to sell their product in Canada and

the United States.⁶ New technologies also threatened this resource as companies began to fish offshore when the shoreline fisheries were exhausted. By 1890 the Indian economy throughout the region was seriously threatened by the collapse of the local fisheries while the capital requirements of the industry precluded Indian control of the means of production and established the Indians as labourers in the production process. This pattern was repeated throughout the twentieth century as new resource industries emerged throughout the territory which was ceded to the Dominion government in 1875, and in subsequent years, through adhesions to the treaty.⁷

Footnotes

¹ Foster, op. cit., p. 184.

² Ibid., p. 182.

³ Ray and Freeman, op. cit., p. 231.

⁴ Ibid., pp. 63-75.

⁵ Ray, op. cit., 1974, p. 228; Ray, op. cit., 1984.

⁶ Tough, op. cit., 1987, pp. 304 ff.

⁷ Coates and Morrison, op. cit., consider the northern adhesions to Treaty 5, see pp. 40-61.

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