

NATIVE SONS OF RUPERT'S LAND 1760 TO THE 1860s

By

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A Thesis

**Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of**

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

**Department of History
University of Manitoba
Winnipeg, Manitoba**

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Denise Fuchs

**A Thesis/Practicum submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of The University
of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the degree
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ABSTRACT

In the period from 1760 to the 1860s, native sons of the fur trade of Rupert's Land were distinctly shaped by the disparate traditions of both their European fathers and aboriginal mothers. The success of the fur trade depended on the economic interdependence and mutual cooperation of these two sets of strangers. Their progeny, like their fathers and mothers, aided the British-oriented companies in whose employ they served. The examination of the attitudes which informed the manner in which native sons were depicted in the records and their educational achievements and careers within the fur trade revealed that cultural and racial biases affected their lives, in both subtle and direct ways. These cultural and racial biases became more obvious from 1820 onward. Social, economic and political changes and the concomitant shifts in attitudes toward the native sons shed light on the particular circumstances which characterized their lives.

From the 1790s onwards, native sons began to contribute their labour to the economy of the posts in significant ways. Fathers became more cognizant of the need to prepare their sons for larger roles in the fur trade and began acculturating them further to the European side of their heritage. A British-based education was sought for them. Towards the end of the eighteenth century and in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, some native sons could obtain clerkships and become managers of small posts.

The attention to race and class, heightened by the arrival of white women in the 1820s, resulted in the imposition of social barriers dependent on rank and education that excluded some of the native sons and their aboriginal or mixed-descent relatives from circles that had formerly included them. Additionally, the newly amalgamated company's adoption of a more rigid hierarchy and the increased emphasis on upward mobility posed

difficulties and challenges for the native sons in the three decades following the 1821 merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, when limits were imposed on their movement within the company. In the 1850s and 60s a shift in attitude occurred and restrictions began to be eased allowing some native sons to advance in the company.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

A project of this duration does not come together without the assistance of many people. I owe a huge debt to my thesis advisor, Jennifer Brown, for exposing me (and countless others) to the endlessly fascinating area of fur trade social history and for allowing me access to her research materials in this area. In addition, I would like to thank her for her patience, understanding and expert editorial advice.

I also wish to thank Emma LaRocque, Jean Friesen and John Kandle whose expertise in native-white relations, aboriginal history and British imperialism, respectively, not only influenced my thinking but also greatly increased my understanding and knowledge of fur trade social history.

Both neighbourhood friends and relatives from afar have frequently indulged me with open arms and ears. Many friends from the St. Ignatius community have been unfailingly inspiring and supportive. Fellow students, Paul Hackett and Lacey Sanders, have provided encouragement and empathy when I needed it most, as well as technological expertise. I am particularly indebted as well to Christine Butterill and all my colleagues and friends at St. Paul's College who provided wisdom and good cheer.

Most important, I wish to thank my parents and my immediate family, Don, Jessica and Francis for their abundant and unconditional love throughout this entire process. The latter trio provided frequent technological assistance—something I seemed to need a lot! Thanks, too, to my brother, Greg, who packed up his Packard Bell and delivered it to our house at a very opportune time.

This project would not have been possible without the financial assistance of two University of Manitoba fellowships and the Kavanagh-La Verendrye fellowship from St. Paul's College. In addition, I would like to thank the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba, for permission to use their sources. Archivists Anne Morton, Shirlee Anne Smith, Judith Beattie, and Chris Kotecki, and all other staff members have been most helpful over the years.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CMS	Church Missionary Society
DCB	Dictionary of Canadian Biography
HBC	Hudson's Bay Company
HBCA	Hudson's Bay Company Archives
NWC	North West Company
PAC	Public Archives of Canada
PAM	Provincial Archives of Manitoba
PRL	Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land

CHAPTER ONE--INTRODUCTION

'Born in the Service'¹

Native sons of fur trade company officers and their aboriginal or mixed-descent wives played a significant role in the northern North American fur trade during the period 1760-1860. These young men, stationed at posts scattered throughout Rupert's Land or the 'Indian Country', served either the North West Company (1779-1821) or other Montreal concerns, or the Hudson's Bay Company under circumstances which were uncertain, difficult and dangerous. Their positions spanned the various ranks of company service, ranging from provisioners, guides, interpreters, postmasters and clerks, to chief traders and chief factors. The native sons, so called here because of the way they were referred to in the primary records, were individuals of mixed descent skilled in the ways of life of the Northwest. Their careers within the confines of two British-oriented hierarchical companies that demanded both respect for authority and strict obedience to it, were often praiseworthy and sometimes highly successful. Yet, their work, and they themselves, were judged by their fathers and superiors often in racial terms rather than on the basis of merit, and attitudes towards race created difficulties for the native sons. These attitudes informed the fathers' and other officials' perceptions of the native sons' abilities and needs, and in turn, had an impact upon the sons' education and their experience as fur trade employees. This thesis demonstrates that the fur trade native sons in company ranks were increasingly identified racially in the records by company officials after about 1820. It delineates the reasons behind these denotations and the

¹In 1831 Chief Factor John Stuart urged George Simpson to hire William Sinclair II because he was 'born in the service'. Irene M. Spry, 'William Sinclair II', DCB vol. 9, p. 722.

implications that it had for the native sons' lives. Company officials' use of race to place strictures on the native sons' careers not only had an impact at the time, but it has affected the way in which the sons have been perceived historically. It has denied the native sons the recognition that they deserve as mixed-descent individuals. This thesis examines the nature of this problem.

In the official records of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), the native sons' surnames place them in an ethnic category which reflects their fathers' nationalities. Their mixed ancestry was often not made clear. In fact, in an initial probing of the HBC records, I found few indications that they were native sons at all. Thus, unless one knew their maternal parentage, one would assume them to be British-born. Further investigation, however, revealed that in the Lists of Servants and in the Servants' Contracts they are referred to as 'natives of Hudson Bay' or 'natives of Rupert's Land' starting in about 1775.² Prior to this, the parish of origin that was listed was the same as that of their fathers.³ More significantly, when native sons' performance was evaluated by company officials particularly in the period after 1821, their mixed ancestry came to the fore, often in derogatory terms. In fact, a closer reading revealed that their success in life—their education, employment and material culture—was being measured according to European standards and they were expected to conform to European models of morality and culture. Those who did meet the expectations of the British elite were alienated from

²Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), Hudson's Bay Company Archives (HBCA), A.32/7, fo.26, Servants' Contracts, 1775.

³HBCA A.30/3, fos. 88-89, Servants' Lists, 1774-1787.

their aboriginal ancestry. The purpose of this study is to raise the profile of the native sons of the fur trade in the historical record. This mixed-descent group contributed in a significant measure to one of Canada's first business enterprises. Succeeding generations of mixed-descent families and all Canadians can look back on these men with pride.

The fate of Rupert's Land both before and during the period of this study, lay in the hands of Great Britain. The changes within and the new directions of the 'mother country' resonated deeply on this side of the Atlantic and elsewhere around the globe. In the half century prior to 1750, Britain's place as an increasingly powerful force on the world stage was becoming more and more evident. In fact, before the beginning of the eighteenth century Britain possessed an empire in the Caribbean and in North America and her trade was spreading along the coast of West Africa and into Maritime Asia.⁴ By 1800, her dominance of the globe appeared to be a matter of time. The signs of nineteenth-century British claims to supremacy in commerce, naval power and missionary zeal were present.⁵ These visions of supremacy, which included not only physical domination but also claims of moral and religious superiority, were to have far-reaching consequences for the native sons of the fur trade in North America.

Britain's trade in Rupert's Land or in 'Indian Country' as it was called at the time, began in 1670 with the inception of the Hudson's Bay Company. Over the next century and a half, the charter which granted the Company sole proprietorship of all the lands that

⁴P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1982), p. 2.

⁵Ibid., p. 3.

drained into Hudson Bay was challenged several times by the French and later by Montreal-based 'pedlars', principally in the North West Company, in the race to obtain the rich bounty of furs in the region.

After 1713, the Hudson's Bay Company regained its bayside posts from the French in the Treaty of Utrecht which ended the War of Spanish Succession. However, the French did not retreat completely. They declared the same year that garrisoned posts throughout the West were to be maintained.⁶ The French/English competition for furs continued from 1732 to 1753 with the establishment of La Verendrye's posts which stretched from Lake of the Woods to the forks of the Saskatchewan River in present-day Alberta. These posts were designed specifically to intercept furs which were to be traded to the English on Hudson Bay. At about the same time a second assault was being launched against the Hudson's Bay Company in Britain. In 1744, Arthur Dobbs, an Irish member of Parliament, published an account criticizing the company for its lack of aggression and innovation in the trade. This attack was followed in 1752 by Joseph Robson's accusation that the company had slept at the edge of a frozen sea for the previous eighty years.⁷ In addition, James Isham, the chief at York Factory, expressed concerns about French competition inland, stating that it was wrong to 'sitt quiet and unconcern'd while the french...not only Beats the Bush but run's away with the Hair

⁶W. J. Eccles, The Canadian Frontier 1534-1760 (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1992), p. 145.

⁷Joseph Robson, An Account of Six Years Residence in Hudson's Bay: from 1733 to 1736 and 1744 to 1747 (London, printed for J. Payne and J. Bouquet in Pater-Noster-Row, 1752.)

[Hare] also'.⁸ In response to these criticisms, the company sent Anthony Henday, a trusted servant, inland in 1754 to explore territories west of the Bay and to attempt to persuade the Blackfoot of the Plains to bring their furs down to the Bay to trade.⁹

These mid-century crises in the fur trade which forced the Hudson's Bay Company to consider moving inland present a natural starting point for this study. In the half-century that followed, the London directors of the Hudson's Bay Company abandoned their policy of restricting liaisons between fur traders and aboriginal women and began to accept the existence of fur trade families in Rupert's Land. By the 1790s they explicitly considered the possibilities of employing the children of these families around the posts and eventually preparing them for service in the Company.

The thrust toward inland expansion, coupled with increasing competition from a number of Montreal-based traders who amalgamated in 1783 to form the North West Company (NWC), created demands for more personnel which opened up possibilities for hiring native sons rather than recruiting apprentices from Britain. For example, Charles Isham, son of James Isham and a Cree woman, was hired in 1766. George Atkinson Jr, another native son, entered the service of the company in 1792. In addition, in 1794, the London officials began to respond to the needs for schooling either by allowing a few traders' children to travel to Britain in company ships to attend school in Britain or by sending out school books for use at the posts. In 1798, the London Committee decided

⁸E. E. Rich, James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1949, p.lxx).

⁹Glyndwr Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870', The Beaver, Autumn, 1983, provides a useful overview of the HBC's history.

not to engage any more servants in Britain under the age of eighteen.¹⁰ And in the early 1800s, they began recruiting schoolmasters.

In the period 1790 to 1820 the HBC trade changed dramatically. The old pattern of relying upon native people's seasonal trips down to trade at a small number of permanent posts was no longer feasible. But the change to trading with larger numbers of small groups at hastily built, often temporary inland posts, made the former customs of giving and collecting debts more difficult. The North West Company which was better organized, and had stronger leadership and a much larger complement of men, had a considerable edge over the Hudson's Bay Company. For example, in 1800 its fur returns were quadruple those of the Hudson's Bay Company.¹¹

The first decade of the nineteenth century was fraught with escalating competition and violence between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. The latter company had further strengthened its forces in 1804 by absorbing the XY Company, a group of trading partnerships formed in 1798. The battle focused primarily upon control of the shorter route to Europe through Hudson Bay but it was also played out in areas like Athabasca which was particularly rich in furs. The Hudson's Bay Company's dwindling fortunes were affected additionally by the continued wars in Europe. In 1810, however, the Hudson's Bay Company, under the supervision of a new London director, Andrew (Wedderburn) Colvile, attempted to restructure its organization. Colvile's 'retrenching system' loosened London's strict control of the standard of trade, allowing

¹⁰Ibid., p. 71.

¹¹Ibid., p. 42.

chiefs of posts some degree of discretion in the trade and a share in its profits. These measures proved to be successful as the Company was able to record a profit in 1812.¹²

In 1811, the Hudson's Bay Company made a land grant of 300,000 square kilometers to Lord Selkirk to build an agricultural colony in the Red River Valley. This action increased the rivalry between the London and Montreal firms. The North West Company was incensed by this development as the presence of the colony posed a threat to the sources of vital supplies for its inland posts. When, in 1814, Miles Macdonell, governor of the colony, issued his 'Pemmican Proclamation' forbidding the export of pemmican and other provisions from the colony, the two rivals came into direct conflict. The North West Company burned crops and buildings in the settlement. Hostilities ignited in the Battle of Seven Oaks in 1816, in which NWC native sons, notably Cuthbert Grant Jr., played an especially important role.

The Hudson's Bay Company's move inland, its competition with the North West Company and the loss of potential British recruits to the Napoleonic wars in Europe opened the doors for the engagement of native sons. Some native sons hired during this competitive period held administrative as well as labouring positions.¹³ After the restructuring of 1810, new recruits were channeled into one of two groups--profit sharers or wage earners. And while the merger of the warring companies in 1821 put an end to the destructive violence, it opened a less favourable era for native sons employed in the

¹²Ibid., p. 44.

¹³Carol M. Judd, 'Native Labour and Social Stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department 1770-1870', The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 17 (1), 1980, p. 305.

amalgamated company.

Along with the necessary changes of fur harvest conservation and reduction of redundant posts and personnel instituted by George Simpson, the newly appointed Governor of the Northern Department, came an increased awareness of race. Governor Simpson, who became head of the Southern and Montreal Departments in 1826 and Overseas Governor of all Rupert's Land in 1839, was the embodiment of nineteenth century racist thinking in the company. His attitudes towards non-European peoples influenced the development of a trend, based on race, that prevented native sons from rising through the ranks, an opportunity that had previously been open to them. Just as the hierarchy of the company became more strict and rigid, the racial attitudes of some members of the officer class hardened. Native sons who entered the servant class had little chance of being promoted during this period. Though Simpson did soften his approach toward mixed-race employees in the latter part of his career, the unwavering attitudes of his earlier days continued to have an impact on the native sons throughout his tenure with the company. In the late 1830s and throughout the 1840s, a few native sons left company ranks and turned to private trade as a means of escaping from company strictures placed upon their advancement. However, even outside the company, they faced difficulties because the company attempted to control certain aspects of the private trade such as the freighting between Red River and York Factory. Two native sons, James Sinclair and A. K. Isbister, questioned the company's monopoly and asserted their rights as natives of the country to engage in private trade. The fight ended with the Sayer trial (1849) and Hudson's Bay Company's forfeiture of control of the trade. Governor

Simpson's death in 1860 and the changes in the structure and organization of the fur trade towards the end of that decade, coupled with increased white immigration into the West provide a logical ending point for this study.

This study consists of an investigation of ninety-five native sons whose fathers were employees of either the Hudson's Bay Company or the North West Company. Approximately thirty sons had NWC connections before 1821. The other sixty-five were HBC based. Two basic criteria were used to generate the sample of sons for this study. First, they had to be children born to European fathers and aboriginal or mixed-descent mothers. Secondly, they had to have served in either the North West Company or the Hudson's Bay Company. These criteria were chosen to create a sample of sons with similar backgrounds and work experience. Sons of officers were not deliberately chosen. Officers sons' surfaced in the data much more often, however, and with a richness and variety of information that could not be obtained about the sons of lower ranking employees. Contrary to what some observers might expect, the fathers' position in the trade was not necessarily an advantage for the sons. Indeed, the race consciousness which began in the 1820s and continued throughout most of the Simpson era, resulted in a loss of status for some sons of officers. Several sons waited for extended periods of time to receive promotion. Others were not promoted at all.

This thesis was inspired and influenced by the revolution in the writing of fur trade social history which began in the 1970s. Earlier business and company-oriented histories began to be supplanted by an abundance of social histories which have taken into account the aboriginal peoples' response to the invasion of Europeans into North

America and their role in fur trade economy and social life. A. J. Ray's germinal work Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870 (1974) led the way in reshaping and redefining the field.¹⁴ The studies which followed can be divided loosely into the categories of native history and aboriginal/white relations. This thesis stems directly from the works in the latter category. It is indebted particularly to the pioneering works of Jennifer Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk. Jennifer Brown's book, Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country, and her subsequent works on mixed-descent families inspired the need for further research into the native sons of fur trade families.¹⁵ This thesis shares Brown's intent to bring balance to the historical record by addressing the contribution of mixed- descent families to the fur trade. And like her work, it draws on the sons of fur trade company officers for its analysis. However, in contrast, it focuses primarily on the role that race and racial attitudes played in the native sons' education and employment. In addition, whereas Brown contrasts the social norms and the role of kinship in the two companies, this work points out the similarities between the NWC and HBC officers in their attitudes toward the native sons and in the educational and career choices they recommended for them. In this thesis, differences between HBC and NWC officials in these areas were not discernible. In addition to her book, Brown's article, 'A

¹⁴A. J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

¹⁵Jennifer S. H. Brown, Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country (Vancouver: University of British Columbia, 1980).

Colony of Very Useful Hands' assisted in shaping this thesis.¹⁶ The article traces in HBC post journals, the gradual recognition of fur trade families during the period 1750s to the early 1800s. By detailing the activities of children around the posts and the beginning of formal education, it provided a useful example of how to obtain information from specific archival sources on family-related themes. Another article entitled 'Half-breeds: the Entrenchment of a Racial Category in the Canadian Northwest Fur Trade' provided an example of how to categorize and analyze opinions and attitudes over a period of time.¹⁷

Sylvia Van Kirk's book, "Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870, brought to light the role of Indian wives of fur traders by illustrating how they bridged the gap between Indians and Europeans.¹⁸ Like Brown's work, Van Kirk's analysis sheds light on the complexity of fur trade social relations and the cross-cultural exchange. Van Kirk's revelation of the gradual shift in preferences from Indian wives to mixed-descent wives and later to white wives assisted in understanding the shifting ethnic identity of the mothers of the sons of this study. In addition, two of Van Kirk's articles have shed light on the plight of the mixed-descent sons. First, the article entitled, 'What if Mama is an Indian?' studies the biracial family of Alexander Ross, a retired Scottish fur trader and his Okanagan wife Sally, and their struggles fitting into the increasingly

¹⁶Jennifer S. H. Brown, 'A Colony of Very Useful Hands', The Beaver, Spring 1977.

¹⁷Jennifer S. H. Brown, 'Half-breeds: the Entrenchment of a Racial Category in the Canadian Northwest Fur Trade', paper presented Spring, 1973, Central States Anthropological Society Meetings, St. Louis, Missouri.

¹⁸Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870 (Winnipeg, Watson and Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980.)

fur trader and his Okanagan wife Sally, and their struggles fitting into the increasingly British-dominated society of nineteenth century Red River.¹⁹ Second, her recent article, entitled 'Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria', written in response to a history which emphasizes the importance of the culture and accomplishments of the conquering nation, notes that five of the founding families of Victoria were of mixed-race unions.²⁰ Most significant for this thesis is the analysis of the struggles that the sons of these unions faced.

In the same year as Brown and Van Kirk's books were published, Carol Judd's first article, 'Mixt Bands of Many Nations' appeared.²¹ It continued the investigation into fur trade social relations by focusing on the ethnicity of men recruited by the Hudson's Bay Company. Two subsequent articles, 'Native Labour and Social Stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department' (1980) and 'Mixed-Bloods of Moose Factory 1730-1981: A Social Economic Study' (1982) examined the hiring and promotion practices of the Hudson's Bay Company with regard to aboriginal

¹⁹Sylvia Van Kirk, 'What if Mama is an Indian?': The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family, The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America, Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds. (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985).

²⁰Sylvia Van Kirk, 'Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria', BC Studies, Autumn/Winter, 1997/1998, pp. 148-179.

²¹Carol M. Judd, 'Mixt Bands of Many Nations: 1821-1870', Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference C. M. Judd and A. J. Ray, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), pp.127-146.

and mixed-descent employees.²² Her articles contributed a great deal to the understanding of the employment policies and practices regarding aboriginal and biracial groups in the labour pools of the Hudson's Bay Company. Similarly, Philip Goldring's three-volume work, Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company provides considerable insight into the HBC's engagement of native employees in the Northern Department.²³ Goldring's and Judd's analyses have been used in this dissertation to test observations about the treatment of the native sons in the company context.

In addition, Irene Spry's essay entitled, 'Private Adventurers of Rupert's Land' provided important insight into reasons why biracial individuals moved into private enterprises in the 1830s and 1840s instead of working for the Hudson's Bay Company.²⁴ In a later article entitled, 'The Metis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870', she demonstrated links between Metis groups of different ethnic and linguistic backgrounds that parallel the findings of this thesis.²⁵ In addition, Spry's biographies of

²²Carol M. Judd, 'Native Labour and Social Stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, 1770-1870', The Canadian Review of Sociology and Anthropology, 17 (1), 1980, pp. 305-314; 'Mixed Bloods of Moose Factory, 1730-1981: A Socio-Economic Study', American Indian Culture and Research Journal, 6 (2), 1982, pp. 65-88.

²³Philip Goldring, Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, vols. I, II, III (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1979, 1980, 1982).

²⁴Irene M. Spry, 'The "Private Adventurers" of Rupert's Land', The Developing West, John Foster, ed. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1983).

²⁵Irene M. Spry, 'The Metis and Mixed-Bloods of Rupert's Land before 1870', The New Peoples, Peterson and Brown, eds., pp. 95-118.

biracial individuals, particularly those of William Sinclair II and James Sinclair, have been most helpful.²⁶

This thesis also builds upon the work of John Foster²⁷ and Jacqueline Peterson.²⁸ Studying respectively the English speaking mixed-bloods of the Hudson Bay tradition and the French-speaking metis of the St. Lawrence tradition, these two scholars have provided an insight into the ways of life of the peoples of mixed descent in the fur trade. Their extensive studies of the diversity of metis origins and their insight into the role of the metis as intercultural brokers between aboriginal and British, French and Canadian groups, assisted in the understanding of the native sons' roles in this study.

More recent works that have influenced this thesis are those of Edith Burley and Gerhard Ens. Burley's thesis, entitled 'Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1870', examines the daily life of the HBC labourers and voyageurs.²⁹

²⁶Irene M. Spry, 'William Sinclair II', Dictionary of Canadian Biography (DCB), vol. 9; 'James Sinclair', DCB vol. 8, pp. 819-820.

²⁷John E. Foster, 'The Country Born in the Red River Settlement: 1826-1850,' Ph.D. dissertation, University of Alberta, 1973; 'The Origins of the Mixed-Bloods in the Canadian West,' Essays on Western History, L. H. Thomas ed. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976); 'The Metis: The People and the Term', Prairie Forum 3, no. 1 (1978), pp.79-90.

²⁸Jacqueline Peterson, 'Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Metis,' Ethnohistory, 25 (1), 1978, pp.41-67; 'Many Roads to Red River: Metis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815', The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America, Peterson and Brown, eds., pp. 37-72.

²⁹Edith Burley, 'Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1870', Ph.D. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1993. Burley's dissertation has been published as Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997).

Its goal, Burley states, quoting E. P. Thompson, is to rescue these Orkneymen and voyageurs from the 'enormous condescension of posterity'.³⁰ Burley's study is an important contribution to the labour history of the fur trade. It adds to the knowledge of the interaction between labour and management. But more importantly, it studies labourers and their concerns through their own eyes as well as through the eyes of management. Management perspectives, Burley claims, have too often been accepted by fur trade historians, allowing them to overlook the 'racism inherent in the characterizations of the Scots as not adventurous, the French Canadians as drunks and the Metis as untrustworthy'.³¹ In contrast, this study, relying heavily on the officers' view of native sons, analyzes the racism of the officers and the problems that it created for the native sons.

Gerhard Ens' book, Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century studies the two primary groups of Red River Metis; namely, the largely English Protestant Metis based at St. Andrews and the French Catholic Metis of St. Francois Xavier.³² Ens, like John Foster, believes that Metis identity is based on social or economic factors rather than on religious or biological ones.³³ This thesis examines the racial denotations employed to define the mixed-

³⁰Ibid., p. 44.

³¹Ibid., p. 37.

³²Gerhard J. Ens, Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996).

³³Ibid., p. 4.

descent sons in the Company context. Both Ens and Burley assert that the HBC labourers and Red River Metis were active agents in the changing circumstances around them, able and willing to effect change in conditions which might alter their lives. The native sons of this study, who were bounded by the often remote geographical locations of the fur trade, and the hierarchical structure and the paternalistic nature of its mercantile enterprise faced considerable obstacles for self-assertion blocking their efforts to effect change that might alter their circumstances. Their paths in life and their identities were for the most part determined by others.

Robert Brightman's Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human/Animal Relationships and Laura Peers' The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780-1870 furnished valuable information about Cree and Ojibwa history and ethnography which aided in the comprehension of the groups who were both ancestral to the native sons of this study and related to them as contemporaries.³⁴ Mary Black-Rogers' article entitled "Starving" and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade: A Case for Contextual Semantics³⁵ and Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman's 'The Orders of the Dreamed': George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823,³⁶ assisted in understanding Europeans' images of

³⁴Robert Brightman, Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human/Animal Relationships (Los Angeles, California: University of California Press, 1993); Laura Peers, The Ojibwa of Western Canada, 1780-1870 (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994).

³⁵Mary Black-Rogers, "Starving" and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade: A Case for Contextual Semantics, Le Castor Fait Tout: Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, Bruce G. Trigger, Toby Morantz and Louise Dechene, eds. (Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1985), pp. 618-649.

³⁶Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, eds., 'The Orders of the Dreamed': George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823 (Winnipeg:

aboriginal and mixed-descent people from the perspective of Cree and Ojibwa culture and context.

Two recent MA theses have had an impact upon this dissertation. The first, by Alvina Block, entitled 'George Flett, Native Presbyterian Missionary: Old Philosopher/Reverend Gentleman', is important because as a case study of a native son of the fur trade, it demonstrates the complexities of George Flett's bicultural background and the implications that these had for his career.³⁷ The second thesis, Margaret Clarke's study of the fur trade community in the Assiniboine Basin in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century, is most useful for its reconstruction of the community of the area and for its investigation of the nature of the connections between French and English-speaking Metis groups within that community.³⁸

In a broader sense this study is about aboriginal/white relations. The cross-cultural encounter between Europeans and indigenous groups was not a static encounter but was a shifting, fluid, and multi-faceted process of human interactions. Roles of both Europeans and indigenous peoples were defined and redefined in response to changing social, economic and political forces. These roles may have been influenced by nineteenth century notions of race. P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr William's book, The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment,

University of Manitoba Press, 1988).

³⁷Alvina Block, 'George Flett, Native Presbyterian Missionary: Old Philosopher/Rev'd. Gentlemen', MA thesis, University of Winnipeg/Manitoba, 1997.

³⁸Margaret L. Clarke, 'Reconstituting the Fur Trade Community of the Assiniboine Basin, 1793 to 1812, MA thesis, University of Winnipeg/Manitoba, 1997.

illuminated reasons for and the antecedents of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century attitudes towards race.³⁹ In addition, both their work and Robert F. Berkhofer Jr.'s book, The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present, provided a base for understanding how and why various images of North American Indians developed.⁴⁰ Berkhofer noted that mid and late nineteenth scholars believed that humankind had evolved into a hierarchy with Europeans on top and aboriginals on the bottom. Mixed-races were placed lower than aboriginals because it was believed that they inherited the vices of both races.⁴¹ George W. Stocking Jr.'s Victorian Anthropology provided insight into anthropological theories regarding the origins of man in the pre-Darwinian era. Stocking's work also aided in the understanding of nineteenth-century notions of 'civilization', 'savages', 'progress', and 'respectability'. When missionaries entered the picture, Stocking explained that the need for church-sanctioned marriages, in addition to adhering to Christian religious beliefs, was a means of controlling sexuality.⁴²

Several broader conceptual and theoretical analyses facilitated a clearer understanding of aboriginal/white relations and race, class and gender in colonial settings.

³⁹P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of Enlightenment (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1982).

⁴⁰Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978).

⁴¹Ibid., pp. 50-61.

⁴²George W. Stocking, Jr., Victorian Anthropology (New York: The Free Press, 1987).

In David Theo Goldberg's collection of essays entitled The Anatomy of Racism, nineteen scholars from a variety of academic disciplines, discuss numerous aspects of racist discourse and its implications for social relations and questions of identity.⁴³ This volume aided in comprehending Europeans' shifting, inconsistent and sometimes contradictory attitudes to race by noting that racism is not singular or monolithic but rather has a variety of historical and contemporary forms.

Mary Douglas' book, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo, helps decipher the cross-cultural encounters in this study by pointing out that mixed categories are often tabooed, feared, and seen as polluting 'pure' categories.⁴⁴ Therefore, native sons and their mixed-descent relatives, as the product of two 'pure' categories, must be spurious, unclean and difficult to label.

In Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race, Robert J. C. Young discusses nineteenth century theories of race noting that they are embedded in notions of culture and inextricably tied to class, race and gender.⁴⁵ Young argues that English identity developed a firmness because it was continually being contested in colonial space. When challenged, it became obsessed with 'colonial desire'-- for inter-racial sex, hybridity and miscegenation.

⁴³David Theo Goldberg, ed. The Anatomy of Racism (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

⁴⁴Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger: An Analysis of the Concepts of Pollution and Taboo (London: Routledge, 1966).

⁴⁵Robert J. C. Young, Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race (London: Routledge, 1995).

Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall's, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850, argue that gender and class always operate together and that consciousness of class always takes a gendered form.⁴⁶ Hall and Davidoff's book and Jean Barman's article, 'Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900'⁴⁷ point out the need for an awareness of the male bias of the primary sources and the inherent cultural biases that these sources might contain. Additionally, they offer insight into the role of marriages between Europeans and aboriginal women and the impact that this had on their mixed progeny. Another article of Barman's entitled, 'Invisible Women: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural Pioneer British Columbia', suggests that mixed-descent daughters married to non-aboriginal men could become invisible in the domestic sphere if they chose as a means to escape racial denigration. Mixed-descent sons, however, were more exposed to non-aboriginal scrutiny because they had to exist in the public sphere and thus tended to be marginalized and lead less successful lives.⁴⁸ The daughters of aboriginal women and European traders have not been included in this study except when they are identified as mothers of native sons. Both Jennifer Brown and Sylvia Kirk have studied aboriginal

⁴⁶Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850 (London: Hutchinson, 1987).

⁴⁷Jean Barman, 'Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900', BC Studies, Autumn/Winter, 1997/1998, pp.181-237.

⁴⁸Jean Barman, 'Invisible Women: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural Pioneer British Columbia', Ruth W. Sandwell, ed. Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1999).

wives and mixed-descent daughters extensively. However, since sons have not been studied in detail, particularly as a group of company-based fur trade employees, this study sought to determine what patterns of similarity might be found among company sons' experiences.

The initial task in my research was to generate a sample of mixed-descent sons who were employed with either the North West Company or the Hudson's Bay Company. This sample was created by consulting a variety of sources. First, the birth and marriage registers of the parishes of St. John's, St. Andrew's, St. Francois Xavier and Red River were examined for the period under study.⁴⁹ The marriage registers identified aboriginal or mixed descent wives of fur traders and mothers of native sons by the designations of 'Indian woman', 'native of the country' and 'half-caste woman'. Second, as children born to these unions were baptized often on the same day that the church sanctioned the marriage, their names were listed in the corresponding baptismal records of the parish. The officers' and servants' wills (A.36) in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives acted both as a complement and a valuable cross-reference for information gleaned from the marriage and baptismal records. Other sources helped in the initial creation of the sample of sons with North West Company connections. For example, mixed-descent sons were sometimes mentioned in biographies of their fathers or of themselves in Joseph Tassé's two volume work, Les Canadiens de L'Ouest, and in W. S. Wallace's Documents

⁴⁹PAM, Parish Registers (St. Andrew's and St. Francois Xavier MG 7); HBCA, Parish Register (Red River, E.4/1).

Relating to the North West Company.⁵⁰ In addition, L. R. Masson's Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord Ouest: Recits de voyages, lettres et rapports inedits relatifs au Nord-Ouest canadien contained information on early North West Company employees.⁵¹

The next step was to determine whether the sons had worked for the North West Company or the Hudson's Bay Company. This was established by checking lists of servants (A.30) and Servants' Contracts (A.32) in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives. In addition, the Servants' Ledgers (A.16) and the Abstracts of Servants' Accounts (B.239/g) provided details about employment contracts. Careful attention to dates of entry into the service was necessary as several sons had the same names as their fathers or other employees. Following the fathers' careers in the fur trade often yielded fruitful information regarding plans for sons' education and employment or comments on sons' potential for or progress in particular positions.

Numerous records containing correspondence supplied useful information on many aspects of the lives of fur trade company native sons. For example, the HBC's official correspondence to its officers from London, the A.6 series, contains information regarding hiring policies, expectations of employees and qualifications required and a myriad of related instructions. The A.5 series or the more general correspondence from London was useful also. The inward correspondence (HBCA A.10 and A.11)

⁵⁰Joseph Tassé, Les Canadiens De L'Ouest, Montreal: Cie D'Imprimerie Canadienne 222 Rue Notre-Dame, 1878, 2 vols.; W. S. Wallace, Documents Relating to the North West Company (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934).

⁵¹L. R. Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest: Recits de voyages, lettres et rapports inedits relatifs au Nord-Ouest canadienne, 2 vols. (New York: Antiquarian Press, 1960, first published in 1889).

consisting of letters from the company's posts proved useful, particularly for comments on the need for the education of children at the posts. Second, the Governors' Correspondence in the D.4 and D.5 series, especially George Simpson's Official Reports, contains information regarding Governor Simpson's view of various aspects of the trade and his assessments of native sons' abilities within the trade. This collection contained correspondence from fathers about their sons' needs or current progress in educational and career pursuits. In addition, the Characters and Staff Servants' Records (A.34/1, 2) provided information on servants of the company such as job title, district of employment, length of current contract, wages and whether their contracts were renewed.

The post journals, the B./a series, provided a daily account of the complement and activities of the men, the state of the trade with the Indians, and the people who arrived and departed. In addition, letters sent to each post from other posts were recorded in the post correspondence books (B./b and c series) or in the journals themselves. In these letters, men in charge of the posts recorded information regarding employees' interaction with the Indians and sometimes information regarding children's attendance at post schools. The district reports contained information regarding the specific area, the nature of the trade, and the aboriginal population. One such report was written at Norway House in 1823 by native son Joseph McGillivray.⁵²

Collections of private papers containing correspondence between family members and friends provided a candid and refreshingly 'unofficial' perspective on personal matters and the state of affairs in 'Indian Country'. For example, the E.61 and E.69 series

⁵²HBCA B.154/e/2, Norway House District Report, 1822-1823.

of the McGowan collection in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives comprise important information about the McMurray and Hardisty families respectively.⁵³ In addition, in the Public Archives of Canada, the private papers of Edward Ermatinger, a banker who settled in St. Thomas, in what is now Ontario, provided valuable source material. Ermatinger, who served in the Hudson's Bay Company from 1818 to 1830, corresponded with many friends and former colleagues and offered assistance and advice to them.⁵⁴ He was known for his friendliness and trustworthiness. He and his wife often took the children of HBC traders into his care for a time so that they could attend schools in or near St. Thomas. In the same archives, the private papers of James Anderson,⁵⁵ the Charles McKenzie family correspondence⁵⁶ and James Hargrave Papers⁵⁷ furnished useful information. Material on the educational achievements of some native sons was found in the special collections sections of the University of Edinburgh Library, at Kings College in Aberdeen, in the Church Missionary Society Records at the University of Birmingham and at the College of Physicians and Surgeons in Edinburgh. Lastly, the primary accounts

⁵³HBCA E.61/1,2, McGowan Collection, William McMurray Correspondence 1845-1855; E.69/1, 2, McGowan Collection, Richard Hardisty Correspondence, 1853-1860.

⁵⁴Public Archives of Canada, MG19, A2, Series 2, Vol. 1, Edward Ermatinger Papers, 1843-1855.

⁵⁵Public Archives of Canada, MG19, A29, Vol. 1, James Anderson Papers, 1846.

⁵⁶Public Archives of Canada, MG19, A44, Vol. 1., Charles and Hector Aeneas McKenzie Correspondence, 1821-1888.

⁵⁷Public Archives of Canada, MG19, A21, James Hargrave Papers, 1821-1861.

of participant observers such as James Isham,⁵⁸ Daniel Harmon,⁵⁹ Andrew Graham⁶⁰ and Alexander Ross⁶¹ add factual and contextual dimensions to this study.

The geographical scope of this study includes the areas of all four departments of the Hudson's Bay Company as they were defined in the post-1821 era. These included the Northern Department or the three modern prairie provinces of Alberta, Saskatchewan and Manitoba, northwestern Ontario, and the Yukon and Northwest Territories; the Southern Department or the Great Lakes and James Bay drainage; the Columbia Department west of the Rocky Mountains; and the Montreal Department which included the area from the upper Ottawa River to Labrador. In the period 1760-1800, most native sons of this study worked in the areas around the major fur trade posts of Rupert's Land, namely, York, Churchill, Moose, Albany and Eastmain. As the Company expanded its geographical boundaries, native sons were employed in the Athabasca, Yukon, and Columbia district areas. The latter included Fort Vancouver in Washington State, the Willamette Valley in Oregon and after 1843, Fort Victoria in what is now British Columbia. Native sons also worked in the Montreal department. The majority of the sons, however, were employed in the 'original' area of the northwest trade, namely the

⁵⁸E. E. Rich, James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743 (Toronto: The Champlain Society 1949).

⁵⁹Daniel Harmon, Sixteen Years in Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon 1800-1816 (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada, Ltd., 1957).

⁶⁰Glyndwr Williams, Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay 1767-91 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969).

⁶¹Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement: Its Rise, Progress, and Present State (Edmonton: Hurtig, 1972, first edition, 1856).

Rupert's Land areas. As the majority of the native sons came from and worked in the areas west of Hudson Bay, their mothers were descended primarily from the Cree and Ojibwa who traditionally inhabited these areas. Often native sons who worked in farther flung areas of the fur trade had mothers of Cree or Ojibwa ancestry as well because their fathers had married women in the Northwest before moving farther afield. Thus, for example, Dr. John McLoughlin's wife was of Cree descent even though he and his son, Joseph, spent most of their careers in the Columbia Department.⁶²

This dissertation is organized into three principal areas which reflect its major themes. Chapter two examines the discourse and images used to portray the native sons in the primary records and the impact that they had on their lives as fur trade company children and adults. Chapter three examines the fathers' and officers' rationale for the education of native sons. It outlines the options that were available for educating them and the experiences of the sons in the pursuit of this education. Chapter four looks at various sons' experiences as employees of the fur trade companies. Each chapter is organized chronologically and case studies of native sons illuminate each theme. Subheadings assist in organizing the rather lengthy chapters. A final chapter draws conclusions to the whole work based on the findings outlined in the core chapters.

The manner in which European fur traders and aboriginal peoples perceived each other and dealt with the differences that they found is a theme that is common throughout this study. The ethnocentric biases of the traders played a crucial role in the lives of their

⁶²T.C. Elliott, 'Marguerite Wadin McKay McLoughlin', Oregon Historical Quarterly, March 1936, p. 345.

fur trade wives and children. The nineteenth century preoccupation with race and class brought into sharper focus the biases of the traders and other newcomers. Race, in the nineteenth century, was defined as 'denoting a class of people even a family'.⁶³ It was often confused with culture and later in the century was connected to a hierarchy of humankind based on physical and mental characteristics. These theories prompted some Europeans to view aboriginal people as lesser than themselves based on their different biological characteristics and cultural beliefs. At best, they were placed in a category similar to those of the lower classes in the 'civilized world'.

The broader categories used to define groups of people in this thesis require a brief explanation. First, the term 'European' is used to refer to both English and Scottish fur traders and other white newcomers. More specific terms are used for them when they are spoken of individually. The broader term European has been chosen for general use because it is the term that the English and Scottish company men most often used to refer to themselves as a group and to distinguish themselves from all North American inhabitants. European was also used to describe parishes of origin, trade goods, education and other cultural trappings. By about 1840 the non-European population often referred to newcomers in that manner as well. Similarly, the sons of this study are called 'native' sons because by about 1775 they began to be referred to as such in the records as has been mentioned. But more important, some referred to themselves as 'natives of this country'. For example, James Sinclair used the term in a petition to Alexander Christie,

⁶³Christine Bolt, Victorian Attitudes to Race (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1971), p. 18.

Governor of Assiniboia in 1845. And Pierre Pambrun referred to himself as a 'native of this country' in 1858 in a letter to Edward Ermatinger. Additionally, several sons, like their fathers, referred to their families as 'native'. The native sons used the term 'native' to convey 'place of birth' and as a racial or cultural designation. The term 'aboriginal' has been used instead of Indian to refer to all First Nations' peoples except in contexts reflecting historical documentary usage. 'Mixed-descent' refers to all those who are biracial. It replaces the construct 'mixed-blood' used by fur trade scholars in the 1980s. Mixed-descent people are at times also included in the broader term aboriginal.

CHAPTER TWO

'Natives of Hudson's Bay'

It is impossible to fully understand or to analyze the ways in which the native sons were portrayed in the records without first examining the images that Europeans developed to describe and illustrate the peoples of North America whom they called Indians. These images of the 'other' changed over the centuries. They varied according to the prevailing currents in intellectual circles and to developments in science and religion. They included a range of attitudes towards aboriginal North Americans which were at times dismissive, philanthropic, paternalistic, romantic, contemptuous and racist. Unfortunately, from the time of the initial European invasion to the present day, these images have remained both inaccurate and incredibly powerful in their influence upon the lives of the peoples they depict.

Curiosity about North American peoples whom Europeans were encountering for the first time led some of the early traders and explorers to write down their observations. Their reminiscences, besides providing a wealth of historical, anthropological and zoological data, supply researchers with some knowledge of how these participant observers felt about aboriginal peoples and how they perceived their ways of life and belief systems compared to those of their own.

This chapter will examine how aboriginal and mixed-descent peoples were perceived by the Europeans who interacted with them in the fur trade. In order to gain some insight into the patterns of European understanding of aboriginal peoples, it will

analyze Isham, Harmon and Graham's images and those of fur trade officers and fathers of native sons, in the light of the ideas and assumptions from their own backgrounds and experiences. As Elizabeth Vibert points out, these non-aboriginal traders were Scots and Englishmen and in Harmon's case, Americans, recruited often in adolescence to an apprenticeship in the Hudson's Bay Company or a clerkship in the North West Company. The fur trade offered adventure and opportunities not available at home. It afforded them the possibility of achieving a higher social rank than they would have in their own country.¹ They had some formal education which varied from basic literacy, to grammar school, to training in navigation, surveying and accounts.² They desired to become gentlemen and to achieve a respectable station in life and had similar aspirations for their children. This chapter will examine Europeans' images of mixed-descent sons in reports, evaluations, and comments of employers, family members and colleagues recorded in Hudson's Bay Company and related primary source material. And finally, it will demonstrate how the portrayal of mixed-descent sons in the primary documents was informed by the attitudes to the 'other' contained in the images and how these attitudes impacted upon the lives of the native sons.

¹Elizabeth Vibert, Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau 1807-1846 (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997), p.40.

²Ibid., p. 43.

Isham, Graham and Harmon: Perceptions of Aboriginal and Mixed-Descent Peoples

The observations of fur traders James Isham,³ Andrew Graham⁴ and Daniel Harmon⁵ provide a starting point to evaluate traders' attitudes to the 'other'. James Isham, the earliest of these three observers, wrote his narrative in 1743. He was employed at York Factory at the time. He had been in the Bay since 1732 when he arrived at the age of sixteen.⁶ He established a good rapport with the Cree who lived in the vicinity of York Factory. He had seasonal contact with other groups such as the Assiniboine who came from farther afield to trade. One of his colleagues, Humphrey Marten, wrote on Isham's death in 1761 that he was 'the Idol of the Indians...whose name will be dear to them as long as one is alive that knew him'.⁷ Isham's observations pertain primarily to the Cree, with whom he was most familiar, as he did not travel any distance from York Factory.

Andrew Graham, who had come to Churchill in 1749 as a servant to sloopmaster

³E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743, and Notes and Observations on a Book Entitled A Voyage to Hudsons Bay in the Dobbs Galley, 1749, vol.,12 Hudson's Bay Record Society (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1949).

⁴Glyndwr Williams, ed., Andrew Graham's Observations on Hudson's Bay 1767-1791 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969).

⁵W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon 1800-1816 (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1957).

⁶E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations on Hudsons Bay, 1743, p. xxxiii.

⁷Ibid., p. 325.

James Walker, went to York Factory in 1753 to be a clerk and accountant for James Isham.⁸ When Isham died in 1761, Graham took over the post temporarily. In 1766, Graham went to Severn for three years. He took Isham's native son, Charles, who had just arrived back from England with him.⁹ Graham's observations were written over the years 1767 to 1791. They contain information about the Cree, Sioux, Chipewyan, Blackfoot and Ojibwa nations. Both Isham and Graham wrote 'official' accounts that they planned to submit to the committee in London. Isham's account was sent to London in 1744. Graham's work made its way into the hands of company officials at different times. The last of his work was sent to the Company by 1793.¹⁰

Daniel Harmon's reminiscences differ from those of Isham and Graham in that they were a private and personal journal-like record rather than a business or scientific document. His account is almost confessional at times. Harmon was born in Vermont in 1778. He began his fur trade career as a clerk with the North West Company in 1800.¹¹ He worked in the fur trade districts of Saskatchewan, Athabasca, New Caledonia and briefly in Rainy Lake. He retired in 1819 but returned after the amalgamation in 1821

⁸Glyndwr Williams, ed., Andrew Graham's Observations, p. xiv.

⁹Ibid., p. 338.

¹⁰Glyndwr Williams, 'Andrew Graham and Thomas Hutchins: Collaboration and Plagiarism in 18th Century Natural History', The Beaver, Spring, 1978, p.14. In addition to this article, Richard Glover's introduction to Graham's Observations and C. S. Houston and Mary I. Houston's article, 'Thomas Hutchins, 1742(?) - 1790', Picoides, Spring, 1991, vol.5, no.1, discuss Graham's cooperation and collaboration with HBC surgeon Thomas Hutchins regarding the natural history data collection and the authorship of some of both men's writings.

¹¹George Woodcock, 'Daniel Williams Harmon', DCB, vol. vii, pp. 385-386.

only to resign shortly afterwards and return to his native Vermont where he had arranged for his narrative to be published the previous year.¹²

Isham, Graham and Harmon had liaisons with aboriginal or mixed-descent women and had children from these unions. Isham had a native son Charles, mentioned above. Graham had a native son, Joseph, and a daughter whose name was not recorded.¹³

In August 1775 he received permission from the Hudson's Bay Company to take his daughter who was six years old at the time to England on the assurance that he would provide for her care and that she would not be a financial drain on the company.¹⁴ In 1778 the London Committee gave permission for Graham's son Joseph to be sent to England but he was 'too young and sickly' to make the journey.¹⁵ Both men wrote positively about children of mixed parentage. Isham described these children as follows: 'as fine Children as one wou'd Desire to behold,-streight Lim'd, Lively active, and Indeed fair exceeds the true born Indians in all things'.¹⁶ Similarly, Graham wrote, 'the Englishmen's children by Indian women are far more sprightly and active than the true born natives; their complexion fairer, light hair and most of them fine blue eyes. These esteem themselves superior to the others, and are always looked upon at the Factories as

¹²Ibid.

¹³G. Williams, ed., Graham's Observations, pp. 344, 351.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 348.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 349.

¹⁶E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 79.

descendants of our countrymen'.¹⁷

In addition to their native families, both Isham and Graham had wives in Britain and daughters from these marriages. Harmon, on the other hand, married Lisette Duval, a woman of Snare Indian and French descent, according to the custom of the country and they had about nine children.¹⁸ Those born in the Indian country included a son, George, a daughter, Polly and twin sons who died in infancy.

All three narratives provide descriptions of the way of life in Rupert's Land at the time. The aboriginal peoples that these men observed were in a transitional stage materially. They were integrating European methods of technology with indigenous ones. Their belief systems remained intact during the time that Isham, Graham and Harmon made their observations. It was not until the second decade of the nineteenth century with the arrival of Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries that the process of proselytization began.

Isham's, Graham's, and Harmon's characterizations of aboriginal peoples are typical of eighteenth and nineteenth century views of peoples perceived as 'uncivilized' according to European standards. Thus, similar stereotypes exist in all three narratives. The writers' interpretations of certain behavior and practices are either negative or positive with very little neutral or middle ground. This dichotomy is expressed in terms of behaviour which reflects the 'savage' and 'barbarous' nature of the aboriginal peoples and stands in direct contrast to the European ideal which is perceived as 'civilized'.

¹⁷G. Williams, ed., Graham's Observations, p. 145.

¹⁸G. Woodcock, DCB, 'Daniel Williams Harmon', p. 385.

Isham, Graham and Harmon maintain this dichotomy throughout their narratives but Harmon mentioned at one point when he was describing aboriginals' hospitality to strangers, that he believed they were wrongfully called 'savages'.¹⁹

Each had positive comments to make about Indian behaviour. For example, Harmon singled out generosity as a virtue. He wrote that aboriginals are 'more ready, in proportion to their means, to assist a neighbour who may be in want, than the inhabitants, generally, of civilized countries'.²⁰ Both Isham and Harmon mentioned the physical strength of the natives and the fact that they could recover from a great deal of physical hardship.²¹ All three men were impressed by the physical strength of aboriginal women, especially in childbirth. It was unladylike in European terms, for women to be strong. Isham noted that some Indian women 'that has been Brought to bed upon the Bare ground, with the Heav'ns for a Canope, and in an hour afterwards has took the Child upon their back's, and has gone to the woods two Long miles, Brought a Stout Load of wood, which wou'd make a stout man to flinch, and be nothing atall Consern'd or Disconsolate about itt...'.²² Similarly, Harmon wrote as follows:

Indian women appear to suffer less pain in child birth, than women in civilized countries. They rarely ever take any medicine, at the time of delivery, though they do, at times, drink water, in which the rattle of a rattle-snake has been boiled. In the season of labour, they place their knees upon the floor or ground, and lean

¹⁹W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon 1800-1816, p. 43.

²⁰Ibid., pp. 219-220.

²¹E. E. Rich, James Isham's Observations, p. 96.

²²Ibid., p. 104.

forward over something, raised about two feet high. It is seldom, more than a quarter or a half an hour, before the child is born; and, in a few days the mother is as active and vigorous as ever. The Indian women rarely ever die, at this critical period.²³

In another instance, Harmon noted that a 'woman belonging to one of our Men...who has walked all Day in the Snow and water...this evening brought forth a Son!' This woman then continued her march the next day with her newborn son on her shoulders 'as tho' nothing uncommon had occur[r]ed'.²⁴ Similarly, Isham and Graham wrote of the unrestrained affection that parents had for their children. Graham described this affection as greater than that among 'civilized nations'.²⁵

All three observers found the same traits to be undesirable in the aboriginal peoples that they encountered. Each of them made several references to these traits and gave vivid examples to illustrate them. Negative traits were mentioned usually in regard to specific incidents but often a number were described as if they were permanent and universal characteristics. For example, Isham made the general statement that Indians were a 'crafty sort of people, cheating, Stealing, and Lying they glory in and Lud' from their cradle, being prone to all manner of Vices'.²⁶

'Improvvidence' was one negative characteristic that was mentioned frequently. Isham noted of the Cree, 'they observe no sett times for meals, Eating Continually if they

²³W. Kaye Lamb, Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, p. 218.

²⁴Ibid., pp. 79-80.

²⁵G. Williams, Graham's Observations, p. 150.

²⁶E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 80.

can any way procure itt. they provide for to Day & tomorrow may provide for itt Self'.²⁷ Similarly, Graham stated that 'for while they have a sufficiency or abundance, they never have any thought to provide for the future'.²⁸ Graham realized though, that transporting provisions posed a difficulty for migratory peoples. Harmon remarked that 'the Indians...appear cheerful and contented...for they take little thought for the things of the morrow'.²⁹ Robert Brightman's recent scholarship on Cree human-animal relationships provides an explanation for these observations. 'Eating continually' may be a reference to Cree eat-all feasts that could be initiated in a prominent winter hunter's dream in which the hunter is instructed, for example, to kill an entire beaver colony and prepare a huge feast for his people. None of the food must be left. Partaking in this ritual is a means of giving thanks for the bountiful gift of the animals that were provided.³⁰ The fur traders' inability to comprehend the religious significance of these feasts led them to believe that aboriginal peoples 'gluttonous' habits and lack of planning for the next day or even the next meal were indications of serious flaws.

Additionally, 'indolence or laziness' was perceived as a negative trait. For example, in 1818, Harmon found one aboriginal group in the Rainy Lake area 'too lazy to

²⁷Ibid., p. 78.

²⁸G. Williams, Graham's Observations, p. 154.

²⁹W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, p. 226.

³⁰Robert A. Brightman, Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human-Animal Relationships (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1993), pp. 217-224.

cultivate the ground'.³¹ However, he showed more insight into this trait among a group west of the Rockies (probably the Carriers) whom he described as indolent 'but...more from habit than from nature' because they were able to 'procure a livelihood, with but little labour'.³² Mary Black-Rogers points out that laziness sometimes was ascribed when traders felt that aboriginals were not engaged in a productive activity such as hunting.³³ Ray and Freeman note that aboriginal demand for durable goods was usually quite static. If fur prices increased, aboriginals hunted and traded less and spent time in other pursuits.³⁴

The Cree were perceived as dirty in their eating habits and personal hygiene. Isham observed while eating some broth they made that, 'itt was full of hair's & Dirt, Like themselves, for you must Know they are none of the clenliest in their Victuals or cloathing'.³⁵ He was repulsed by the manner in which they ate as he wrote 'to see them tear the flesh of [f] with their teeth, with grease up to their Eyes, & hands as black as any

³¹Ibid., p. 193.

³²Ibid., p. 242.

³³Mary Black-Rogers, "Starving" and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade: A Case for Contextual Semantics, Le Castor Fait Tout: Selected Papers of the Fifth North American Fur Trade Conference, Bruce G. Trigger, Toby Morantz and Louise Dechene, eds.(Lake St. Louis Historical Society, 1985), p. 648.

³⁴Arthur J. Ray and Donald B. 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), pp. 218-228.

³⁵E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 76.

Chimnly Sweepers, Spitting upon one another Cloath's'.³⁶ Harmon noted that unlike most Europeans, the Carriers did not change their clothes on Sundays and that even though they washed their clothes frequently, they did not use soap.³⁷ He described them as 'negligent and slovenly, in regard to their persons; and...filthy in their cookery'.³⁸

Drunkenness was another undesirable trait that the traders often linked causally to a host of other vices such as lying, theft, treachery, and seeking revenge. Isham described the Crees' drinking as excessive which, he noted, did not seem to prevent them from living a long life, but which was, in his opinion, the cause of their 'Ludness and bad way's'. He also felt that it would be very difficult to get them to stop drinking without damaging the trade.³⁹ In addition, Isham observed that liquor led to quarreling, on the one hand, and a passiveness, on the other, which prevented them from being able to defend themselves from physical aggression.⁴⁰ Graham noted, too, the severity of the aboriginals' addiction to alcohol and the fighting that it caused.⁴¹ Harmon related an incident in which a drunken woman stabbed her husband to death and then attempted to pour alcohol down his throat.⁴² In another incident he blamed alcohol for the misbehavior

³⁶Ibid., p. 77.

³⁷W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, pp. 21, 204.

³⁸Ibid., p. 242.

³⁹E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, pp. 103-104.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 92.

⁴¹G. Williams, Graham's Observations, p. 152.

⁴²W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, p. 22.

of a colleague, Mr. Joseph Pangman, a native son. He stated that 'as his mother was a squaw (and it is in the blood of the Savages to be fond of Spiritous Liquor) I can place but little confidence or dependence in his promises or resolutions'.⁴³ He noted, too, that to witness the quarrelling, crying, vomiting and 'brutal noise' that came from a 'House full of Drunken Indians' was 'truly an unpleasant sight'.⁴⁴ However, Harmon found that drunken Canadians were much more difficult to deal with than drunken Indians. During Christmas Day celebrations at Swan River in 1803, he noted that he would 'rather have fifty drunken Indians in the fort, than five drunken Canadians'.⁴⁵

According to Isham, lying was one of the worst traits of aboriginal people. He stated:

The worst property that attends these Natives is their false information, for if you put a Question to them, as I have Done oft'n, they will answer to what I Desir'd, at the same time neither her'd see, or new any thing of the matter, so by severall other casses, by which they are not to be Really'd on unless all points upon the same Subject, as the proverb is, what all say's is true, but I found the Contrary by these Natives.⁴⁶

From a native perspective, lying might have signified the inability to correctly predict a future event or condition or to keep a promise rather than deliberately falsifying information.⁴⁷ Graham noted, too, that aboriginals who came in to trade in the spring could be quite manipulative. For example, a person would imply that he had not had

⁴³Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 65.

⁴⁶E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 92.

⁴⁷Mary Black-Rogers, "Starving", p. 649.

sufficient food all winter as a means of procuring more provisions from the fort. Graham stated, 'in short there is no believing the reports of the natives'.⁴⁸ In an article analyzing the use of the term 'starving', Mary Black-Rogers provides profound insight into fur traders' implications that aboriginal peoples were frequently suffering from extreme hunger. She explains that 'starving' from the traders' perspective had multiple meanings which ranged from various degrees of food-related and other deprivations such as lacking snowshoes or clothing.⁴⁹ She noted that aboriginals often used this term as part of a ritual of humbly presenting themselves to those of greater power.

Harmon found that the relationship between the aboriginals and the traders was usually limited to the exchange of furs for goods. While stationed in the Swan River Department in 1802, he wrote that the friendship between 'civilized People and Savages...seldom goes farther than their fondness for our property and our eagerness to obtain their Furs'...⁵⁰ In addition, Harmon found them treacherous. He wrote in New Caledonia in 1815 that 'treachery...is in the hearts of most Savages, which makes it necessary for those who are among them always to be upon their guard'.⁵¹ He mentioned this in connection with aboriginals seeking revenge for the deaths of some of their people. He commented further, 'all Savages who have had a relation killed are never quiet till

⁴⁸G. Williams, ed., Graham's Observations, p. 153.

⁴⁹Mary Black-Rogers, "Starving", p. 643.

⁵⁰W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, p. 55.

⁵¹*Ibid.*, p. 177.

they have revenged the death by killing the murderer or some of his nigh relations'.⁵²

Graham observed that they were 'extremely vindictive, seldom forgiving or forgetting an injury or affront offered at any time'.⁵³ He believed that 'gratitude is utterly unknown amongst them: they receive favours and beg all they can, but never think themselves under obligation to the donor'.⁵⁴ He was referring to the Homeguard Cree who lived for most of the year on the grounds of York Factory and received 'food and clothes gratis, yet if desired to do the least service immediately ask, what am I to have for it'?⁵⁵

Theft was another trait that was singled out as a problem. Graham noted 'thieving amongst their vices'.⁵⁶ Harmon found the Assiniboines, Blackfoot and Mandans to be 'the greatest horse thieves, perhaps upon the face of the earth'.⁵⁷ However, in 1809 when he was among the Beaver of the Athabasca region, he observed that 'a thief among them is but seldom to be met with, and when a person is known to be of that description, he is...looked upon in much the same light as a Robber in the Civilized part of the World'.⁵⁸ Graham described aboriginals as 'sly and crafty to a great degree', and he found that they 'employ these qualities to cheat and circumvent both

⁵²Ibid., p. 160.

⁵³G. Williams, ed., Graham's Observations, p. 152.

⁵⁴Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁵Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁶Ibid., p. 153.

⁵⁷W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, pp. 212-213.

⁵⁸Ibid., p. 123.

themselves and the Europeans'. But he added that while some 'hoard up all they can lay hold of', these supplies are later distributed to others who are in need.⁵⁹ Harmon used the words 'blood thirsty' on two occasions. First he noted while at Swan River in 1805 that the 'Indians threatened to massacre all the White People' in the fort 'and those blood thirsty Savages had the boldness to throw Balls [shot] over the Palisades'.⁶⁰ Later the same year while at South Branch House, Harmon described an incident that had happened fifteen years previously in which 'the blood thirsty Savages soon returned the shot' in a short-lived skirmish.⁶¹

The narratives pointed out the differences in sexual mores between aboriginal and European cultures. Isham commented on the early age of the loss of virginity of Cree girls, usually at age thirteen or fourteen.⁶² He, observed, in addition, that marital unions were often polygamous. Some men had six or seven wives at one time.⁶³ Graham commented that fornication and adultery were common and not considered harmful by the aboriginals in his opinion.⁶⁴

Differences in religious practices were also noted. The initial discrepancy

⁵⁹G. Williams, ed. Andrew Graham's Observations, p. 152-153.

⁶⁰W. Kaye Lamb, Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, pp. 87-88.

⁶¹*Ibid.*, p. 97.

⁶²E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 80.

⁶³*Ibid.*, p. 95.

⁶⁴G. Williams, ed., Andrew Graham's Observations, p. 153.

mentioned was that aboriginals did not observe the Sabbath.⁶⁵ This observation contributed to stereotyping them as heathens. Harmon described religious practices at some length. He commented that aboriginals were confident in their own medicines, but they believed that in some cases European remedies were 'more efficacious than their own'. Harmon considered them 'credulous and superstitious' rather than realizing that they were being inclusive in their religious practices.⁶⁶ He was most uncomfortable with the practice of cremation among the Sekani or Carrier Indians in what is now the northern interior of British Columbia, which he described as 'that disgusting Savage ceremony'.⁶⁷ In the Swan River area, he thought that singing in a native ceremony commemorating the return of spring 'made a terrible Savage noise'.⁶⁸

Isham and Graham referred to the practice of cannibalism in relation to starvation. Isham mentioned a family who had no provisions and were at a great distance from the York Factory and thus killed their children and ate them.⁶⁹ Graham referred to a man who had eaten all his skins and then ate his wife and children.⁷⁰ Fur trade clerk George Nelson recorded detailed observations in his 1823 journal about cannibalism as a feared

⁶⁵E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 75; W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, pp. 21, 60.

⁶⁶W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, pp. 229-234.

⁶⁷Ibid., p. 149.

⁶⁸Ibid., pp. 55-56.

⁶⁹E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 100.

⁷⁰G. Williams, ed., Graham's Observations, pp. 154-155.

manifestation of the windigo complex, as it is called in Cree and Ojibwa culture. Nelson noted that people who had lived for prolonged periods of time on only 'bits of leather, moss and bark' would 'kill a fellow' to live on.⁷¹ Jennifer Brown and Robert Brightman, editors of Nelson's journal, note that this type of cannibal or windigo retained its human characteristics, for the most part, and became a famine cannibal. Others compelled by powerful messages received in dreams, might be transformed into these giant spiritual monsters.⁷²

Isham, Harmon and Graham's perceptions of aboriginal character and conventions reflect European cultural biases. Their images can be situated in the frameworks of eighteenth century philosophical concepts of the aboriginal as a 'savage' who as such was 'uncivilized'. Isham, Harmon and Graham's views fit squarely into European ethnocentric stereotypes derived from the notions of the noble/ignoble savage and the good Indian/bad Indian images. Isham and Graham in particular were influenced by the writing of early priests and explorers in North America whose views reflected a strong ethnocentric bias. Isham, for example, was familiar with the writing of Louis Armand de Lom d'Arce, baron de Lahontan (1666-1715), a soldier who served in a campaign against the Senecas in 1687.⁷³ He mentioned Lahontan in conjunction with his descriptions of

⁷¹Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, eds., 'The Orders of the Dreamed': George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth. 1823, p. 89.

⁷²*Ibid.*, pp. 159-171.

⁷³Bruce G. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers: Canada's 'Heroic Age' Reconsidered (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985), p. 22.

the canoes of the Indians.⁷⁴ Lahontan wrote about a mythical Huron, Adario, who resembled Jean-Jacques Rousseau's noble savage.⁷⁵ Isham was also aware of the writing of the seventeenth-century Recollect monk, Louis Hennepin, who believed the aboriginals were savages who had no hope of conversion until they were civilized.⁷⁶ Graham referred to the writing of Pierre-Francois-Xavier de Charlevoix (1682-1671) a Jesuit priest who taught at the Quebec seminary from 1705-1709.⁷⁷ Charlevoix's work was a chief source of early Canadian history. Graham used Charlevoix in his descriptions of the habits of the beaver, the musk ox and the seal hunt.⁷⁸ Charlevoix believed that reason and education would lead aboriginals out of their primitive state.⁷⁹

In his analysis of the noble savage/good Indian, Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. states that this image depicted the Indian as friendly, courteous, handsome, calm, dignified.⁸⁰ The Indian was brave in combat and tender in his love for his family. He lived a life of liberty, simplicity and innocence. This 'good Indian' image was juxtaposed to the 'bad Indian' image which dates back to the time of the first arrival of Europeans in North

⁷⁴E. E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations, p. 65.

⁷⁵Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present, p. 75.

⁷⁶P. J. Marshall and Glyndwr Williams, The Great Map of Mankind: British Perceptions of the World in the Age of the Enlightenment, p. 199.

⁷⁷Bruce G. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers, p. 23.

⁷⁸Ibid., pp. 10, 36, 329.

⁷⁹Ibid., p. 23.

⁸⁰Robert F. Berkhofer Jr., 'White Conceptions of Indians', Handbook of North American Indians vol. 4, 1988, p. 528.

America. Olive P. Dickason notes that for the French perpetrators of this myth, the Indian was likened to an animal, a beast of the field. He was a devil worshiper, and was lazy, melancholic, cowardly and improvident.⁸¹ He was indolent, sexually promiscuous, cruel in warfare, a thief and a drunk. He was, in fact, the direct opposite of the 'noble savage/good Indian'. The two themes of innocence and bestiality developed side by side - opposite aspects of the same concept.⁸² Both these images were equally harmful to the aboriginal. Both were based on comparisons to the 'ideal' European society and culture and on false assumptions which ultimately consigned aboriginals to a status lower than whites.

The native sons were depicted in images similar to those mentioned by Isham, Graham and Harmon which were rooted in the Noble Savage/good Indian/bad Indian genre mentioned above. Emma LaRoque points out that the civilization/savagery dichotomy is a traditional interpretation of Indian and Metis history, though a mistaken one.⁸³ This interpretation is essential to the understanding of the images used to portray native sons. More important, these images of native sons were inextricably tied to changes in fur trade social life and to fluctuations in the relationships between aboriginals and Europeans.

⁸¹Olive P. Dickason, The Myth of the Savage and the Beginnings of French Colonialism in the Americas (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1984), p. 34.

⁸²Ibid., p. 51.

⁸³E. LaRoque, 'The Metis in English Canadian Literature', The Canadian Journal of Native Studies, vol. 3, no. 1, 1983, p. 86.

Images of Native Sons 1790-1820

In the period 1790-1820, a shift in attitude occurred toward mixed-descent peoples which corresponded to larger changes in the social, economic and political atmosphere of the Northwest.⁸⁴ During the course of the eighteenth century, European fathers, aboriginal mothers, and their children participated in multiple close-knit communities bound together by economic, social, and kin ties. Families in the fur trade were characterized by mutual bonds of dependency which, for the Europeans, meant considerable adaptation to Indian ways. In the second half of the eighteenth century, the nature of the trade changed as more Hudson's Bay Company and Montreal-based entrepreneurs penetrated into the interior reducing the need for Indian middlemen required earlier because of the relatively few inland posts.⁸⁵ Towards the close of the eighteenth century and in the first two decades of the nineteenth century, the Hudson's Bay Company and the powerful, newly-founded North West Company competed vigorously for furs inland. Mixed-descent daughters of European traders, some of whom were mothers and sisters of the sons in this study, supplanted Indian women as fur traders' wives in greater numbers than before.⁸⁶ This was due in part to the decreased need for alliances with Indian women as the trade became established in a wider

⁸⁴Jennifer Brown's Strangers In Blood and Sylvia Van Kirk's "Many Tender Ties" identify roughly similar attitudinal shifts during this period. They document changes which occurred in the Simpson era as well.

⁸⁵A.J. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay 1660-1870, p. 102.

⁸⁶Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties", pp. 95-122.

geographical area. A North West Company ruling of 1806 (observed imperfectly) forbade traders of that company from taking Indian women as wives for economic reasons.⁸⁷ Some of the growing number of mixed-descent children began to play a part in the economic life of the posts.⁸⁸ Some fathers of these children began to feel a need to separate their children from Indian ways and to instill in them the habits of what they considered 'civilized life'. They became more and more anxious to educate their children according to British standards and find suitable employment for them. The London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company, who had been slow to recognize the existence of traders' families, began to make provisions for them. They sent out school supplies and teachers and provided more local apprenticeships for native sons. Small schools were set up at some of the Bayside posts from the mid-1790s to 1811. The establishment of Red River colony as a home for retired servants and their families facilitated further the creation of institutions for British educational and Christian religious instruction. As their fathers pursued these goals, they often perceived the native sons' aboriginal heritage as the root of any shortcomings in their personalities and behaviour. This period witnessed a gradual shift away from Indian influences and a move toward the adoption of more European practices.

As noted earlier, native sons of the early period were difficult to identify, as employment records of the Hudson's Bay Company listed them by their fathers' British

⁸⁷Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, p. 97; North West Company traders Robert Logan and George Nelson were granted permission in 1809 to take Indian wives.

⁸⁸*Ibid.*, p. 72.

or French surnames. The only indication in the 'Lists of Servants' of their biracial heritage appeared under the column 'Parish' where they were designated as 'natives of Rupert's Land or Hudson's Bay'. Thus, unless one paid close attention to the 'Parish' column or knew a particular employee's parentage, one would assume that employees with names such as John Richards, Charles Thomas or George Taylor, were English-born. Furthermore, if a native son received some education abroad, his parish of origin was sometimes thereafter listed as the same as that of his father's, making it even more difficult to identify him as a native son. Such a change happened in the case of Charles Bird, son of James Bird.⁸⁹

Among the sons of this particular study, there were two exceptions to the pattern of naming native sons solely by European names in the records. In the Eastmain Journal, Bartholomew Nelson, master of the post, referred to two brothers, George and Jacob Atkinson, by their Cree names of Sneppy and Shesheep.⁹⁰ They were the sons of George Atkinson Sr. and his Cree wife Necushin.⁹¹ They both began working for the company in the late 1790s in transport and provisioning. After a very brief period, however, they were known as George and Jacob Atkinson and were listed among the 'English' servants except with the occasional qualification recorded as late as 1820, that George was 'known to the Indians as Snappie'.⁹²

⁸⁹HBCA B.239/d/175, fos.3-4.

⁹⁰HBCA B.59/a/69, fo. 3d., Eastmain Journal, 22 September, 1792.

⁹¹Glyndwr Williams, 'George Atkinson', DCB, pp. 15-16.

⁹²HBCA B.143/a/21, James Clouston, 28 June, 1820.

The use of English names identified the sons with their fathers. In addition, several first-born sons had the same given name as their father. Though not an uncommon practice, it served the purpose of helping a native son gain employment if the father was a reputable employee but at the same time it appeared to distance the sons from their maternal relatives. However, many may have had aboriginal names or nicknames among their maternal relatives.

Although the native sons were given their fathers' English surnames and were sometimes employed alongside other English-born employees, they were not, as a rule, to be taken to England. In 1784, a letter from the Governor and Committee in London made this very clear. The company had hired two native sons, Thomas and John Richards, in order to have enough labourers for the complement of men needed in the Albany district. Upon approval of their engagement the London dispatch read as follows: 'in thus employing them as Englishmen, We do not however intend that they should ever be brought to England: We expect that their abilities be applied to the best Purposes of our Interest and that they behave well'.⁹³ It is not clear whether the London Committee meant this declaration to be applied only in the specific case of John and Thomas Richards or intended a broader application. However, we do know that John Richards accompanied his father to England in 1795 with the London Committee's permission and that he returned to Albany and was re-engaged by the company the following summer.⁹⁴

⁹³HBCA A.6/13, fo.95. London 19 May, 1784 to Messrs. Edward Jarvis and Council at Albany Fort.

⁹⁴Jennifer Brown, 'William Richards', DCB, vol. 5, p. 711-712, 1983.

Graham commented on the matter of children being sent back to England in an earlier version of his observations:

several children of both sexes hath been carried home to England, although against the Company's orders. The Captains of their ships were severely reprimanded, and threatened to be dismissed....The reason is this; several factors' children has been thrown back upon the Company in London, their fathers dying, and leaving them quite destitute of money or friends.⁹⁵

The practice of giving the sons English names, though undoubtedly based on the custom of British patriliney may also have been part of the fathers' desires to have their children appear English knowing that their chances of future employment within the Company would likely be greater. Parallel with that process, another pattern emerged which revealed fickleness and contradiction on the part of the company in their depiction of native sons. This pattern was marked by the increased use of stereotypical images particularly the 'bad Indian' image. The Hudson's Bay Company's evaluations of John Richards provide examples of this pattern. Richards was the son of HBC surgeon William Richards of Neath, Wales.⁹⁶ His mother was probably of Cree descent and lived in the vicinity of Moose Factory. John referred to her as 'old mother'.⁹⁷ He was described as 'of Henley House' probably indicating that he was born when his father

⁹⁵G. Williams, ed., Graham's Observations, p.145n.

⁹⁶ Jennifer S.H. Brown, 'William Richards', DCB, vol. 5, p. 711.

⁹⁷Alice M. Johnson, 'James Bay Artist William Richards', The Beaver, Summer 1967, p. 9

was surgeon and master there from 1765-1769.⁹⁸ He began his career in the company as a labourer at Albany in about 1783.⁹⁹ He also served as an interpreter at Gloucester House and in the 1790s as a trader in the Red River area.¹⁰⁰ Alice M. Johnson pointed out that the company's character reports described him in the early 1790s as 'beloved by the Indians' but 'at times irregular'.¹⁰¹ His company supervisors, one of whom was George Gladman Sr., saw him as different from the Indians yet beloved by them which was a valuable asset as far as the trade was concerned. It is not known what the company meant by 'irregular' but it could be a reference, as Johnson suggests, to his ambitious nature and his need for recognition for his influence with the Indians.¹⁰² By June 1797, John Best, master at Osnaburgh House, characterized him as being 'more turbulent than any other Indian' belonging to the place.¹⁰³ He left the Hudson's Bay Company at this point and joined the North West Company for the 1798-99 season where he worked in opposition to Peter Fidler at Cumberland House. But the following season, he was once again working as an interpreter for the Hudson's Bay Company and was influential in gaining the trade

⁹⁸Alice M. Johnson, ed., Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence: Edmonton House 1795-1800; Chesterfield House 1800-1802 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1967), p. 200n.

⁹⁹Alice M. Johnson, 'James Bay Artist William Richards', The Beaver, Spring 1976, p. 6.

¹⁰⁰*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰¹*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰²*Ibid.*, p. 6.

¹⁰³Alice M. Johnson, ed., Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence, p. 200n.

of the Bungi or Saulteux Indians. In this capacity he was referred to as 'Mr. Richards'.¹⁰⁴ Thus, over the course of a few years, he had fallen in and out of favour with the company several times. Even more significant, his behavior was seen as worse than that of other 'Indians' when he fell out of favour and when he had done well in the Company's opinion, he was given the title of 'Mr.' normally reserved for men who were clerks, the lowest rank in the officer class. In effect, he was defined racially when his actions were perceived as undesirable.

Similarly, George Atkinson Jr.'s values and background were referred to in a negative manner and regarded as the reason for perceived shortcomings. The first instance occurred on 1 January 1795. James Fogget, in charge at Neoskweskau Lake wrote to William Bolland, Chief at Eastmain as follows: 'I have been upon the best terms with him yet, but I think he will never be of any service upon the account that he is sent for, for he delights always in the company of the Indians and not in the company of the Englishmen's'.¹⁰⁵ While the implication of this statement may not be directly racial, it does juxtapose the 'English' and the 'Indians' and it is clear that Foggett believed that the ways of the English were better than those of the Indians and that they were preferred by the Company. On the second occasion, Thomas Thomas, Governor of the Northern Department, wrote to Thomas Vincent, Chief Factor at Albany, in June of 1814 regarding George's ability to continue the management of the whale fishery which he had done for

¹⁰⁴Alice M. Johnson, 'James Bay Artist William Richards', p. 6.

¹⁰⁵HBCA B.59/b/14, Eastmain Correspondence Book, James Fogget to William Bolland, 1 January, 1795, fos. 3-4.

the previous three years. Governor Thomas was responding to comments made by Thomas Alder, the officer in charge of Whale River who no longer wished to work with George. Thomas wrote to Vincent regarding this situation stating that George Atkinson had 'never...seen business managed with a view to profit, cannot be expected to manage the fishery in a manner conformable to our present views...'.¹⁰⁶ Furthermore, he wrote, 'I am positive that George Atkinson would always be adverse to the [whaling] business, he cannot (as an Indian) countenance it.'¹⁰⁷ This is one of the earliest examples in this study of the company's pattern of labelling a native son as Indian once he was seen as antagonistic in some area. Even though Thomas may not have known that profit was a foreign concept among the Cree, he made a judgement about Atkinson based on race. Third, in the spring of 1815, the Company approached George Atkinson to survey the Whale River areas. Regarding this task, Alder reported that George and his brother Jacob 'had not really been concerned with the Company's business, but had spent their time hunting for their families which, at Whale River, they would have been unable to support'.¹⁰⁸ At about the same time an entry beside George Atkinson's name in the 'Lists of Servants' read as follows: 'Might be very useful, but is away with the Indians the greatest part of the year, and is too much possessed of Indian ideas'.¹⁰⁹ Although this

¹⁰⁶HBCA B.3/b/50a, p.26, Extract from 'Copy of Notes delivered to Thomas Vincent' by Thomas Thomas, Osnaburgh House, 18 June, 1814.

¹⁰⁷Ibid., p. 29.

¹⁰⁸K. G. Davies ed., Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals and Correspondence 1819-35 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1963), p.337-8.

¹⁰⁹HBCA A.30/14, fo. 40, List of Servants, 1814-1815.

comment refers to values and not explicitly to race, it does imply that Indian ways are inferior to those of the English and Atkinson's potential as an employee is clearly evaluated on that fact.

The officers' opinions of John Richards and George Atkinson are too isolated to indicate a wider pattern but they do demonstrate that attitudes similar to those expressed by Isham, Harmon and Graham were held by other company personnel in this period and that they were applied to John Richards and George Atkinson in an unflattering way.

In the journals of the Whale River where the Atkinsons were employed, the word 'European' was often used to describe ethnicity and provisions and as a generic opposite to 'Indian'. However, sometimes, more specific ethnic designations were made. For example, on 23 April 1821, Thomas Alder wrote, 'the remainder of the day was allowed them to fire at Target, and celebrate the anniversary of the titular Count of England; tho I am the only Englishman of the whole, all the others are either from Scotland, Orkney, Norway or Natives.'¹¹⁰

Images of Native Sons in the Simpson Era

The period 1820-1850 was most difficult for mixed-descent families.¹¹¹ The racist and class-based attitudes of George Simpson and other officers and their determination to make Red River into an idyllic oasis of British gentility created tensions within some fur trade families and between them and company officials. In

¹¹⁰HBCA B.77/a/8, fo. 15, Whale River Journal, 1820-1821.

¹¹¹Jennifer S. H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 204.

correspondence between Simpson and Thomas Thomas, retired Governor of the Northern Department, Simpson's interpretation of the Company's vision of Red River comes to light. On 13 May 1822, Simpson wrote Thomas: 'In establishing this settlement I do not understand that the Co. had it in view to Colonize it with Natives, on the contrary I imagine their object was to have a white population in this part of their Territory distinct from the Aborigines altogether and that the latter should not be diverted from their hunting occupations...'¹¹² Simpson was, in part, referring to a specific Cree hunter from Norway House who was employed by Governor Thomas on his farm at Red River and who had debts with the company. Thomas' reply informed Simpson that this Norway house hunter was a nephew of his wife's, and that he had provided food for the Thomas family at a time when everyone was ill and unable to fend for themselves and that neither he [Mr. Thomas] nor his nephew had acted against the Company's interests. Furthermore, Thomas pointed out that he was invited by the company to retire in Red River with his family. He continued, 'if there I seem to you by introducing this Family here (I cannot otherwise have done it) to have counteracted their [the company's] Intentions of Settling this Colony with a white population only, it has not been done without their Sanction'.¹¹³

Doubtless part of Simpson's concern was that the aboriginal peoples continue to support the fur trade through the hunt. However, as a relative neophyte in the company's

¹¹²HBCA D.4/1/fo.38, Simpson's Inward Correspondence, George Simpson to Thomas Thomas, Red River, 13 May, 1822.

¹¹³HBCA D.4/116/fo. 67, letter no. 32, Thomas Thomas to George Simpson, Red River Settlement, 13 May, 1822.

service at this time, Simpson appeared unwilling to accept the plural society of Rupert's Land and the social realities of fur trade family life.

When numerous Roman Catholic and Protestant missionaries and white women arrived in Rupert's Land in the 1820s and 1830s, some members of the social elite that these newcomers became part of, failed to accept native wives as social equals. This failure exacerbated growing class and racial tensions. Simpson, while urging his traders to form connections with principal families in newer areas of the trade like the Columbia, was making known his preference for white women as officers' wives in the older more established areas of the trade. For example, when his own wife, Frances, arrived in Red River, very few mixed-descent wives of officers were allowed to associate with her. News of this kind of treatment upset native sons George and Joseph Gladman very much as they had, until then, been part of the elite. Simpson, however, quickly put them in what he considered to be their place. He wrote to Chief Factor John George McTavish where the Gladmans were stationed, 'I...understand that the other Ladies at Moose are violent and indignant at being kept at such a distance, likewise their husbands, the young Gladmans particularly....The greater the distance at which they are kept the better'.¹¹⁴ Simpson also was becoming increasingly negative toward native sons in his reports.

The newly merged company not only had a monopoly over a vast territory but it became stronger in its capacity as a colonial government and consequently all those who lived within the company's jurisdiction, were placed in a more dependent position.¹¹⁵

¹¹⁴Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties", p. 205.

¹¹⁵Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Strangers in Blood", p. 199.

Instructions from the London Committee to the Northern Department and Council in July 1823 urged the implementation of regulations that governed moral and civil behaviour. For example, fathers were told to read prayers to their children and teach them the catechism and to obey the Sabbath. They were instructed to converse with their wives and children in either English or French rather than in aboriginal languages.¹¹⁶ Beginning in 1824, as part of Simpson's overall plan to cut back on expenses, officers and servants had to pay for their wives and children's clothing and provisions.¹¹⁷ The rigid hierarchy that was enforced within the company after the merger had ramifications for all employees at all levels. In the quest for upward mobility, native sons and others were increasingly blocked from advancement into the higher ranks. By 1841, native sons who wished to enter the company's employ could only do so at the level of apprentice labourer, and once received into the service, were prohibited from living with their parents.¹¹⁸ Families were discouraged from accumulating around the posts.

As a group, mixed-descent families began to be categorized racially during this time. Images of native sons became more negative as attitudes hardened along racial lines. The word 'race' began to be used increasingly, in the nineteenth century, to distinguish the divisions of mankind.¹¹⁹ The findings of 'scientific racism' such as

¹¹⁶R. Harvey Fleming, Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land 1821-1831, p. 60.

¹¹⁷Jennifer S. H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 203.

¹¹⁸*Ibid.*, p. 204.

¹¹⁹Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr., The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present (New York: Vintage Books, 1979), pp. 55-56.

phrenology, the practice begun by nineteenth-century physical anthropologists of measuring skulls as a means of determining mental faculties, lent a certain credibility to racial attitudes and discriminatory behaviour. For example, some phrenologists believed that 'not only were some Indian crania found to be smaller, but Indians did not seem to possess the ability to reason, think abstractly, or accept change'.¹²⁰

Much of the fate of the native sons in the Company during this time rested upon the generosity or ill-will of George Simpson. In 1820, Andrew (Wedderburn) Colville hired Simpson to assist the Hudson's Bay Company to deal with heavy competition from the North West Company in the Athabasca Region. Following the coalition of the two companies in 1821, Simpson became Governor of the Northern Department and the dominant figure in the Hudson's Bay Company for the next forty years. His achievements in administrative, financial and other areas of the business are well known and need not be repeated here. However, it is essential to look at changes he instituted which affected native sons directly. Initially, his ruthless dismissal of surplus personnel, while beneficial to the company, created unemployment for a number of native sons. More importantly, and in the longer term, his attitudes towards 'halfbreeds' as they were increasingly called, prevented many capable young men from rising through the ranks in the company—a possibility that earlier had been open to them.

Simpson's public and private remarks about Company personnel marked the beginning of a negative period in the portrayal of the Company's native sons. The

¹²⁰Robert E. Bieder, Science Encounters the Indian 1820-1850: The Early Years of American Ethnology (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986), p. 59.

observations that he made in journals and letters during his 1820-21 term of service in the Athabasca region were haughty and censorious.¹²¹ At this time he instituted a system of formal reporting on the clerks and other employees.¹²² He began this process by adding brief comments in his own handwriting to a list entitled, 'Hudson's Bay Company Clerks Northern Department 1821/22'.¹²³ These observations formed the basis of the Character Book 1822-30 which contains Simpson's remarks for 1822 primarily, and additional comments for the years 1823 to 1827 inclusive, and 1830.

Simpson's assertions mark the beginning of a trend largely initiated and dominated by Simpson himself, which reflected an increasing tension between the racial elements in the fur trade community. Glyndwr Williams, the editor of Hudson's Bay Miscellany, advises that Simpson's remarks in the Character Book written at Red River, be used with caution and that they be placed in the context of a time that was marked by personal difficulty for Simpson, namely, the death of his young son in the spring of 1832.¹²⁴ Yet, Simpson was not thinking, writing, or acting in a vacuum in this era. He was in a leadership position of a British-owned territory at a time when British imperialism was on the rise in the northwest and racial and cultural superiority were beginning to flourish. Though Simpson's assessments of the native sons may have been

¹²¹Glyndwr Williams, ed., Hudson's Bay Miscellany 1670-1870 (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975) p. 154.

¹²²*Ibid.*, p. 155.

¹²³*Ibid.*

¹²⁴*Ibid.*, pp. 156-157.

conditioned by his personal circumstances, they must also be seen in the light of these other influences which had been a force in Simpson's life. They reveal as much about Simpson himself as they do about the native sons of whom he was writing.

Simpson was a most prolific source of information regarding many aspects of the trade. Emphasis on his influence is not intended to be biased but rather to indicate clearly, as Vibert does, that he 'had the greatest impact on the defining of the social hierarchy in the nineteenth century'.¹²⁵ Not only was he exacting in his expectations of himself but he required similar dedication to the job from his men.

A consistent pattern emerged in Simpson's accounts. Initially, they were fairly objective and positive. They then became progressively negative over the nine-year period. At first, Simpson often portrayed the native sons who were clerks, traders, interpreters as 'tolerable' at what they did. By 1827, he began to see them often as 'tolerable for a halfbreed'. Thirdly, he often recommended that their salaries be reduced. And lastly, he frequently stated that they had no possibility of advancement. Jennifer Brown indicates that during this time period 'halfbreeds' were reported more frequently as being less successful in the service. The expectation was that 'halfbreed' failures were predictable. Further, Brown notes that they were characterized as a group whose members were variously portrayed as 'conceited, unsteady, untruthful, and lacking in propriety'.¹²⁶

¹²⁵Elizabeth Vibert, Traders' Tales, p.41.

¹²⁶Jennifer S. H. Brown, 'Half-breeds: the Entrenchment of a Racial Category in the Canadian Northwest Fur Trade', paper presented at Central States Anthropological Society Meetings, St. Louis, Missouri, Spring, 1973, pp. 10-11.

There are many examples of this pattern. One native son, William McKay had entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1811. In 1823, when McKay was at Albany, Simpson wrote: 'excellent young man, active sober, extremely willing. Regular [illegible] Indian trader--Honorable fair education'.¹²⁷ In 1825, Simpson wrote, 'Very anxious in the performance of his duty, understands the Indian language well whole conduct and management gives satisfaction'.¹²⁸ By 1827, Simpson's remarks became quite negative in tone. He wrote: 'Steady sober man altho' a halfbreed, but deficient in education merely fit for the charge of a small post and in the capacity of clerk when services of a clerk may be required. Reduce salary to £50'. In 1830, Simpson's entry read, 'Indolent & deficient in Education, a tolerable trader but not generally useful'.¹²⁹

The last sentence of this entry is indicative of the stereotypes attached to the fact that William McKay was a native son. Simpson found him 'indolent' which along with 'improvident' were adjectives often used to describe native sons. By pointing out that these young men were halfbreeds and by using the term in a derogatory sense, Simpson was virtually predicting that the native sons would prove inadequate or troublesome.

Simpson was adamant about not allowing most native sons to advance beyond the level of postmaster. Although this issue will be dealt with at greater length in a subsequent chapter on employment, examples of this pattern appeared often in these depictions. For example, in the case of Roderick McKenzie Jr., Simpson wrote in 1830,

¹²⁷HBCA A.34/1, fo. 130, *Servant Characters and Staff Records, 1822-1830.*

¹²⁸*Ibid.*

¹²⁹*Ibid.*

'Tolerably steady for a Halfbreed can manage a small post, but has no right to look higher'.¹³⁰ In 1832, he was again very negative about McKay and native sons in general:

Nothing respectable about him [McKay] either in conduct of [sic] character, and neither active or useful but retained in the Service to prevent his being troublesome to us...Nine out of Ten of those half breeds are little better than Interpreters, deficient in Education—bearing indifferent Characters and having no claim to a prospect of advancement.¹³¹

This quote, in addition to illustrating Simpson's determination to block native sons' advancement in the trade, reveals his perceptions of the limited abilities of the native sons, simply because of their mixed heritage. Another example of Simpson's generalizations about native sons is evident in his statement in 1830 regarding Henry Sayer, son of John Sayer, a former NWC employee, whom he described as 'A good trader but mullish and unsteady like most of his countrymen'.¹³²

Although it had been the custom to mention ethnicity in the servants' lists of the Hudson's Bay Company records for some time prior to Simpson's arrival, Simpson singled out the native sons and often assessed their performance in the context of that ethnicity. For Simpson, being a 'halfbreed' was detrimental in and of itself. But he took his judgements further in some instances. For example, if a 'halfbreed' employee was perceived as particularly incompetent, then he might be described as an 'Indian', and as such embodied all the stereotypical characteristics of the 'bad Indian' image outlined

¹³⁰HBCA A.34/1/fo. 155, Servants Characters and Staff Records, 1822-1830.

¹³¹Ibid., fo. 76.

¹³²Ibid., fo. 142; Henry was brother of Pierre Guillaume Sayer who was involved in the fight for free trade in Red River in 1849.

earlier. Simpson saw William McGillivray in this light. In 1827 his comments were 'active tolerable clerk & trader for a halfbreed very steady & correct. By 1832, McGillivray was seen as 'of a sour sullen disposition, a perfect Indian in nature & character'.¹³³

Other native sons were painted with the same brush. Simon McGillivray, first cousin of William, mentioned above, and son of the Honourable William McGillivray and his Cree wife Susan, was described by Simpson as having 'a good deal of the Indian in disposition as well as in blood and appearance'.¹³⁴ If promoted, according to Simpson, he 'would be likely to ride on the top of his commission and assume more than it is either fit or proper he should have an opportunity of doing; in short I think he would make a bad use of the influence he would acquire by promotion and be a very troublesome man'.¹³⁵ Simpson wrote these remarks in 1835. Simon McGillivray may have been expecting to be promoted to a chief factor at that time as he had been a North West Company partner and became a chief trader at the time of the 1821 merger.¹³⁶ However, he remained at that rank until his death in 1840.¹³⁷

Simpson, by his example and as a man of great power and influence, sanctioned

¹³³Ibid., fo. 71.

¹³⁴Glyndwr Williams, Miscellany, p. 190

¹³⁵Ibid. p. 190.

¹³⁶W. S. Wallace, Documents Relating to the North West Company (Toronto, The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 471.

¹³⁷W. S. Wallace, Documents Relating to the North West Company, p. 471.

the practice of judging and often discrediting a person's abilities and the nature of his character on the basis of mixed parentage alone. Most other commissioned officers with influence and position in the company had positive comments regarding native sons, but the influence of Simpson's example can be seen in their reports, too. For example, in April 1851, John Rae wrote to Simpson regarding William McMurray, a native son: 'Mr. McMurray is a very efficient post master and otherwise an intelligent man; I hope his claims, when his services have been of sufficiently long duration to entitle him to promotion, may meet with the attention they deserve. He is a half-breed it is true, but he is also a very interested servant for the Company'.¹³⁸

Other references to the Indian heritage of the native sons were evident in the frequent claims that the native sons were trifling, lazy, untruthful, and useless. Such allegations made by George Simpson, John Rae and others are clearly rooted in the negative stereotypes about them. For example, in 1850, Rae reported about Hector Aeneas McKenzie as follows: 'McKenzie makes himself useful and manages the Indians very well...Like most of his countrymen [natives of Rupert's Land] he is somewhat thoughtless and careless about provisions, but as a check I make him keep regular account of receipts and expenditure'.¹³⁹

Letitia Hargrave, Scottish wife of Chief Factor James Hargrave, resembled George Simpson in her evaluations of some native sons. In the case of Dr. John Bunn,

¹³⁸E.E. Rich, ed., Rae's Arctic Correspondence (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1953), vol. xvi, pp. 169-170.

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 365.

Mrs. Hargrave's comments were based on racial background as well as age. For example, in April 1843, she wrote to her mother Mrs. Dugald McTavish, 'I don't think they [Red River residents] have a Dr. of any pretensions, as he is a half-breed, & pretty old'.¹⁴⁰ In September of the same year she disapproved of the medication that Dr. Bunn, 'the half-breed Dr at RR', gave a friend.¹⁴¹

In the post 1820 era, skin colour emerged as part of the description of the differences between 'the other' and Europeans. The skin colour of two fur trade employees of African descent was described in a derogatory manner. Thomas McMurray, a Chief Trader and father of William McMurray of this study, complained to James Hargrave in 1830 that the American Fur Company had placed 'a Negro alias Stephen Bonga' to oppose him in the Rainy Lake area. McMurray stated 'they must not be scrupulous, in their choice of clerks, when such scamps, have charge of Posts'.¹⁴² He went on to boast that 'Blackleg' has not had any Indians at his post; whereas he himself was doing much better business.

An earlier incident involving skin color occurred in the Athabasca region in 1820.

Simpson wrote of it in his Athabasca Journal:

Mr.[Simon] McGillivray complained that Glasgow our Cook was in habit of chastising his children and had this afternoon thrown down and kicked his little girl; it appears however, that there is no ground for the charge; the man happens to

¹⁴⁰Margaret Arnett Macleod, ed., The Letters of Letitia Hargrave (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), p. 144.

¹⁴¹Ibid., p. 170.

¹⁴²G.P. De T. Glazebrook, ed., The Hargrave Correspondence (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938) pp. 53-54.

be a Negro and the children have taken umbrage at his complexion, it being a shade darker than their own.¹⁴³

This incident refers to Simon McGillivray Jr. who was himself of mixed race. Simon was a partner in the North West Company and he was being held prisoner by the Hudson's Bay Company authorities. Simpson implied that the McGillivray children, one of whom was only three years old at the time, had been kicked by Glasgow because they remarked on the colour of his skin. Simpson was interpreting the children's behaviour in racial terms.

Letitia Hargrave mentioned colour in a June 1840 letter to her mother. She described Thomas Thomas Jr. as 'a very black young gent' who visited York Factory briefly.¹⁴⁴ The same year, in a letter to her father, she referred to the mother of Peter Warren Dease Jr., a native son, as 'a very black squaw & will be a curious lady'.¹⁴⁵ In 1841 Letitia described a dance at York Factory:

It was a humbling affair. 40 squaws old and young with their hair plaited in long tails, nothing on their heads but their everlasting blankets smelling of smoke and everything obnoxious. Babies almost newly born & in their cradles were with their mothers & all nursing them in the face of everyone. I turned in horror from a row of black necks...¹⁴⁶

In the late 1840s, circumstances began to improve for some mixed-descent

¹⁴³E.E. Rich, ed., Simpson's Athabasca Journal (Toronto: The Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1938), p. 112.

¹⁴⁴Margaret Arnett Macleod, ed., The Letters of Letitia Hargrave (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), p. 45.

¹⁴⁵*Ibid.*, p. 78.

¹⁴⁶*Ibid.*, p. 94.

peoples. Simpson's attitude changed toward some of them a little. He realized, for instance, after the failure of several white wives to remain in Rupert's Land, that native wives were suited much better to the life of the fur trade. By the 1850s and 1860s some native sons began to receive promotions into the officer ranks. In the period 1851 to 1869, twenty-six men were promoted to chief factor. Four of these were native sons. They were William Joseph Christie (1860), Joseph Gladman (1864) William McMurray (1866) and William Lucas Hardisty (1868).¹⁴⁷ Promotions of native sons to chief trader, which also occurred at this time, are outlined in chapter four. Some of the racial restrictions placed on mixed-descent peoples in the previous three decades, began to be lifted, owing in part to the fact that, in Red River, they formed the majority of the population and that several had made considerable contributions to the fur trade and to the life of the colony.¹⁴⁸

Fathers' Images of Native Sons

The fathers of these native sons, like Simpson, often applied stereotypes to their own children. They were very much products of their times. However, in most cases, their family ties were very strong and their concern about their children's well-being and their efforts to help them succeed far outweighed any disparaging comments that they made. In addition, most fathers were acutely aware of the difficulties that their biracial sons faced in an increasingly British dominated society that was becoming less and less

¹⁴⁷HBCA A.31/9, fo. 34, List of Commissioned Officers 1821-1870.

¹⁴⁸Jennifer S. H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, pp. 209-210.

tolerant of racial differences as it attempted to replicate the old world on North American soil. It is through the fathers' accounts of their children that a clearer picture emerges of fur trade social life and of the vital role that their sons played in it.

Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie Sr. and his Ojibwa wife, Angelique, provide one of the best examples of the constant turmoil which some families must have faced. Roderick and Angelique had seven sons, all of whom became employees of the Hudson's Bay Company. Six of the seven received some formal education. One of them, Samuel, did not learn to read and write until he was about twenty-four years old but he did well despite that fact. Roderick Sr. regarded his son Roderick Jr. to be the 'most reliable and evenest in temper'.¹⁴⁹ Several of the younger sons; namely, Patrick, Ferdinand and Samuel were frequently dismissed for one reason or another from service and then reinstated at their father's request. One particular comment made by their father, in a letter to Simpson regarding these difficulties, stands out. It demonstrates his frustration with his sons and their peers and the difficulties they encountered fitting in. He wrote: 'none of these unfortunate half-breeds will ever give satisfaction in any country but their own, and even in their own very seldom'.¹⁵⁰

Other fathers' portrayals of their sons clearly indicate concerns about their sons' abilities based on race. Chief Factor Archibald McDonald's native son, Ranald, was known for his rebellious and restless nature and eventually ran away and travelled to

¹⁴⁹Elizabeth Arthur, 'Angelique and Her Children', Canadian Historical Review, vol. 6, 1978, p. 35.

¹⁵⁰HBCA D.5/6/fo.181, Governors' Correspondence, McKenzie to Simpson, 30 July, 1841.

Europe, Japan and Australia.¹⁵¹ On 1 April 1836, long before Ranald began his travels, Archibald, frustrated by his son's restlessness, voiced his concerns in a letter to his friend

Edward Ermatinger:

Much better to dream of less [for them]...and to endeavor to bring them up on habits of industry, economy and morality than to aspire to all this visionary greatness for them. All the wealth of Rupert's Land will not make a *half-breed* either a good person, a shining lawyer, or an able physician, if left to his own direction while young.¹⁵²

This latter statement reflected a common belief among the British that these mixed race children had to be taught English morals, manners and customs at a young age.

Similarly, John Tod, an HBC officer and friend of Archibald McDonald, spoke of his concern for Archibald McDonald's son and others in a letter to Edward Ermatinger:

I was sorry to learn that Mr. McDonalds Son had conducted himself so badly, truly Mrs. Ermatinger and yourself have had your hands full with the bois brules...Well have you observed that all attempts to make gentlemen of them, have hitherto proved a failure. The fact is there is something radically wrong about them all as is evidently shown from Mental Science alone I mean Phrenology, the truths of which I have lately convinced myself from extensive personal observation.¹⁵³

All these concerns indicated a strong desire on the part of the fathers to raise their children to become English gentlemen. This task they felt was their duty, and their failure to achieve that goal meant not only uncertainty for their sons' futures, but their

¹⁵¹Joel E. Ferris, 'Ranald MacDonald: The Sailor Boy who Visited Japan', Pacific North West Quarterly vol. 48, no. 1, January, 1957, pp. 13-16.

¹⁵²John W. Hakola, ed., Frontier Omnibus (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1962), pp. 33-34.

¹⁵³Public Archives of Canada, MG19, A2, Series 2, Vol. 1, Edward Ermatinger Papers, John Tod, Thomsons River, 20 March, 1843 to Edward Ermatinger, pp. 96-102.

own inadequacy as guardians of these children. Unfortunately, when they were not successful, they often pointed to the mixed heritage of their sons as the principal reason. For example, in 1843, Francis Ermatinger commented to his brother, Edward, regarding Edward's son, Lawrence: 'To try to make a gentleman of him would be folly indeed for nothing gentlemanly can come of the tribe. But if they can be made useful something will be accomplished'.¹⁵⁴

William Mc Gillivray, too, wanted his son, Simon, to be a gentleman and to leave his mother's Cree heritage behind. He wrote from London to John George McTavish voicing his concerns:

Simon left us last week and is gone with the March Packet for New York--his trip to this Country [England] I have no doubt has done him much good. The unfortunately [sic] self-sufficiency that a young man (who has no previous character formed) acquires in the North West, plays much against himself and is troublesome to those who wish him well--of all countries this [England] is assuredly the best for a man to find his level both his Uncle [Duncan McGillivray] and myself have had serious talk with him regarding his quarrel with Mr. [George] Sim[p]son & we had some trouble to drive Savage Ideas out of him--but he has promised to think no more of it- and from the footing on which his Uncle stands with my Brother & also a favorable opinion he entertains of Simson, I rather think Mr. Sim[p]son will feel inclined to make things pleasant to him.¹⁵⁵

Simon was about thirty-two years old at the time. He had been a partner in North West Company and was made a Chief Trader at the time of the merger in 1821. His father was anxious to assure his success.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., p. 267.

¹⁵⁵HBCA B.239/c/1, fos. 65-67, Minutes of Council, York Factory, William McGillivray, London, to J. G. McTavish, 5 March 1822.

Cultural Identifications of Native Sons

Few of the sons of this study remarked about their own bicultural roots and identity. Rather, they were portrayed by others, who characterized them according to their own limited frame of reference. However, the few native sons who did voice their opinions about their identity and how it impacted upon their role in the company, can be placed roughly into three groups. The first group identified primarily and officially, at least, with their father's heritage but at the same time were frustrated by the prejudices against them, particularly within the company. This group included officers such as William Sinclair Jr., George and Joseph Gladman, William McMurray, William Joseph and Alexander Christie, John Rowand Jr., and Richard, Joseph and William Lucas Hardisty. One other son, Joseph Cook, identified himself uniquely as a 'half-Englishman'. Although he served the company for twenty years, his subsequent work as a native catechist brought his biracial heritage to the fore forcing him to point out that he was as capable as the European catechists.

A second group included employees firmly rooted and completely comfortable in their dual heritage. The most notable of these were Cuthbert Grant and James Sinclair, both of whom became politically involved in the 'new nation' or the group of both French and English-speaking mixed-descent people who were beginning to forge an identity and define their rights. A third group of native sons were members of the labouring classes of the company. Some of these men like Thomas McKay, former Nor'wester Jacco Finlay, John Richards, Jemmy Jock Bird, and George and Jacob Atkinson, were most comfortable in the aboriginal cultures of their mothers and spouses. Some of the

members of this group provided invaluable services for the company by preventing warfare with hostile tribes, increasing trade and negotiating treaties. They kept company operations viable in some locations much longer than otherwise would have been possible because they were very influential with the Indians.

The first group appeared virtually non-aboriginal at times. Most of them had received a few years of education in England, Scotland, Red River or Upper or Lower Canada. Some had spent their youth living in the trading posts and thus had become enculturated to a fair degree to the British or French-Canadian side of their heritage. These sons exhibited fluency in English or French and they consciously adopted the attitudes of their European superiors in the trade in order to conform to company expectations. But a sense of anomie and alienation was evident sometimes in both the company and private correspondence of these sons, demonstrating an awareness of the fact that the prevailing values of the increasingly British-dominated mainstream had little personal relevance to their family situation.

For example, George Gladman II, in his deliberations about seeking employment outside Rupert's Land realized that he would feel a stranger in Upper Canada. However, he felt that Canada would suit the needs of his large native family better than England, a possibility he had also considered. On 27 July 1840, he wrote to Edward Ermatinger expressing these concerns:

I was so well convinced of the serious disadvantage under which I should labour as a Stranger in a Strange Land, that I assure you I felt most happy to avail myself of our friend Tod's introduction in order that I might acquire some knowledge of the real state of affairs in Canada before undertaking a move which to a man of

my numerous Family is a serious consideration.¹⁵⁶

Gladman went on to express his concern for his own future career and his family: 'I have...been making enquiries in England and on the whole have arrived at the conclusion that Canada affords not only the best prospect of an opening in business but is at the same time a Climate best suited to the constitution and habits of natives of these northern regions'.¹⁵⁷ Thus, even though Gladman was reasonably accustomed to the European side of his heritage, he felt that 'Canada' was a more suitable place than England to relocate his family.

John Bunn, another native son, clearly expressed a sense of distance from Rupert's Land. Near the end of his second year studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh, his grandfather, John McNab beckoned him to return to Rupert's Land and accept the position of surgeon at Moose Factory.¹⁵⁸ On 29 April 1819, he recorded his reaction to leaving Edinburgh on the blank pages of a physics textbook later found in the possession of his grandson, Thomas Bunn Jr.:

today I leave the University for my native country, Hudson's Bay. What is before me God knows but I think I am going to the Devil in a cold country. Farewell happiness, farewell my intellectual pleasures, farewell my Jolly Blues; in three months I shall be among a parcel of hairy frozen devils and thinking of days never

¹⁵⁶Public Archives of Canada, MG 19, A2, Series 2, Vol. 1, p.94, Edward Ermatinger Papers.

¹⁵⁷Ibid., pp. 94-96.

¹⁵⁸H. C. Klassen, 'John Bunn', DCB, p. 102.

to return.¹⁵⁹

On 1 September after his arrival in Hudson Bay, he wrote in the same text:

Well here I am at Moose Factory as wet as a drowned rat—very little pleased with my berth. A strange pack of uncivilized souls I have got among to be sure—they speak English some of them—but I very much wish I were either hung or back at 'Auld Reekie' among my Jolly Blues. Goodbye to happiness—where it will end I know not...¹⁶⁰

After working as a surgeon for the company for four years at various northern posts, John Bunn moved to Red River where he was employed for the rest of his life as the colony's doctor. He was highly respected, and sources on that period of his life indicate that he was quite British in culture. He returned to his beloved Edinburgh only once, in the 1831-1832 academic term, to earn a licentiate from the Royal College of Surgeons.¹⁶¹

Joseph McGillivray, twin brother of Simon Jr. and son of William McGillivray, a former partner in the North West Company and Susan, a Cree woman, also saw himself as a stranger and distant from the Indians at Norway House where he worked. His account is not personal like those of Gladman and Bunn, but rather appears in the district report for Norway House 1822-23. McGillivray's report included detailed descriptions of the geography and climate of the area, its natural resources, its potential for fur

¹⁵⁹Ross Mitchell, 'Doctor John Bunn', The Beaver, 1938, p. 51. The physics text, Mitchell notes was Natural Philosophy by John Playfair. Personal communication, April 15, 1998 with archivists at the University of Edinburgh who were unable to find any record of the Jolly Blues suggested that the name probably referred to a fraternity or a sports team at the university.

¹⁶⁰Ross Mitchell, 'Doctor John Bunn', The Beaver, 1938, p. 51.

¹⁶¹Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, Minute Book, 'Records of College Surgeons' 1832-1838, p. 22.

production, a list of the officers and men at the post and comments on their conduct and characters, and the number of families of Indians in the area and their habits and customs. It indicated that he had disputes with some of the men and that he was aware that the men had a low opinion of him. This may have been due in part to the fact that he was a former Nor'Wester or that they were unaccustomed to a native son in a position of authority. In his account of the Indians, he referred to himself as a stranger to that particular part of the country, who as such, tried to develop a good rapport with the natives as he called them. He noted also that his attempts 'as a stranger' to make changes in the trade with the Indians resulted in a loss of trade rather than an increase.¹⁶² His account of the Indians included several of the negative stereotypic adjectives used by Isham, Graham and Harmon. For example, he viewed them as 'indolent' and 'improvident' in their manner of subsistence. He stated that 'indolence is rather encouraged-and ... accordingly the Provision for subsistence from habits of supineness often reduces them to general distress'. In his opinion they were 'improvident to an excess' and 'blindly infatuated and improvident [in] their attachment to Spiritous liquors'.¹⁶³ And he noted their vengefulness.¹⁶⁴ These attitudes indicate that McGillivray, though a son of mixed descent saw himself as different from these aboriginal groups.

William McMurray, a native son who was educated in Red River and became a

¹⁶²HBCA B.154/e/2, fos.17-18., District Report, Norway House, June 1823.

¹⁶³Ibid., fo. 15.

¹⁶⁴Ibid., fo. 16d.

Chief Factor in 1866 provides another example of a native son who appeared from his employment to be more culturally European than native. However, besides being fluent in English, his fluency in Saulteaux was an attribute most often applauded by colleagues. In addition, he was an excellent shot and winter traveller, skills often stereotypically attributed to the aboriginal side of his heritage.¹⁶⁵

Similarly, William Lucas Hardisty was another native son who appeared virtually non-native in the records and whose attitudes towards Indians reflected those of his European counterparts. He and his three brothers, Joseph, Richard Jr., and Thomas, all held positions in the officer class. They were the children of Richard Hardisty Sr. and his mixed descent wife, Margaret Sutherland.¹⁶⁶ When William Lucas was the clerk in charge of Fort Youcon [Yukon] in the 1850s, he wrote to his superior James Anderson at Fort Simpson regarding rumours that two neighbouring bands, the Chilcots and Ahyunais might attack Ft. Youcon because they thought he killed one of their people with 'medicine of the whites'.¹⁶⁷ He added that he did 'not attach more importance to the report than Indian tales generally deserve' and that 'no doubt they are apt to attribute their misfortunes to the whites because [of] their ignorant and superstitious minds'...¹⁶⁸

In another more personal statement Hardisty commented on the length of time that he had

¹⁶⁵Irene M. Spry, ed., The Papers of the Palliser Expedition 1857-1860 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1968), p. 602.

¹⁶⁶Sylvia Van Kirk, 'Many Tender Ties': Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870 pp. 232-233.

¹⁶⁷HBCA B.200/b/32, p. 24, Ft. Youcon, 15 October 1853.

¹⁶⁸Ibid.

been familiar with them. He stated, 'I have been now upwards of 30 Years—all my life in fact—among Indians, and should know something of their character and disposition'.¹⁶⁹

When William Lucas announced his marriage to Mary Allen, a woman of mixed descent, his attitudes were again very British.¹⁷⁰ He wrote to George Simpson that he was more comfortable and happier since his marriage than at any time in the past ten or twelve years. But he noted that his wife must be sent to Canada for schooling for three or four years by which time, he continued, 'I trust she will have improved sufficiently both in mind and person to enable her to mix in decent society, and to do credit to my rank in the Service.'¹⁷¹ Although this quote says as much about men's attitudes to women in general in the nineteenth century, it also shows that conformity to a particular concept of an officer and family was important to Hardisty.

Joseph Cook, the son of Chief Factor William Hemmings Cook and his Cree wife, Kahnawpawama entered the Hudson's Bay Company as an apprentice at York Factory in about 1801.¹⁷² He worked as a trader, an assistant trader and as a writer at York Factory and Cumberland House. He served the company for about twenty years before retiring and moving to Red River.¹⁷³ By 1846, he had been working for at least fifteen years as a

¹⁶⁹Ibid.

¹⁷⁰HBCA D.5/45, fos. 262-264, Simpson Inward Correspondence, William Lucas Hardisty to Sir George Simpson, Fort Youcon, 10 November, 1857.

¹⁷¹Ibid.

¹⁷²Information obtained from the file of William Hemmings Cook in possession of Jennifer S. H. Brown.

¹⁷³Jennifer S.H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 170.

'school teacher, clerk and interpreter' in Red River for the Church Missionary Society with Reverend William Cockran and Reverend John Smithurst.¹⁷⁴ That same year he wrote to the CMS to protest about the distinction made between European and native catechists both in terms of workload and pay:

I am positively sure there will never be that union and love between the C. Missionaries and the Native Catechists as it ought to be, nor can the propagation of the Word of God can be carried on with that degree of success and quietness, if this great distinction which has been made between the European Catechists and Native Catechists which is so glaring if it is not abolished.¹⁷⁵

He explained that he had worked for fifteen years holding the three offices of teacher, clerk and interpreter for £50 while European catechists received £100 for only holding the two offices of clerk and teacher. It was only after Reverend John Smithurst arrived in September 1839 that he received £10 for interpreting. He asked, 'what right and reason has the CMS to impose on me this post of duty to perform, more than the European Catechist? I suppose they will say, because I am only a half an Englishman. This is very true, but my good Sir, I can eat as good a plum pudding as any Englishman'. Cook felt that he was looked upon as a common labourer. He suggested that the CMS send out written agreements containing their conditions of employment and rate of pay and based on that, a native catechist could decide whether to enter their employ or not. He thought this would avoid ill feelings and disagreements. Finally, he warned the lay secretary of the CMS not to be surprised if they had difficulty engaging native catechists because, 'we are rather beginning to get disgusted with our situation and the treatment and the

¹⁷⁴CMS cc1/08/7, Joseph Cook to the Church Missionary Society, 29 July 1846.

¹⁷⁵Ibid.

distinction which has been made between us and the European catechist...and the too much Lordship being exercised over us'.¹⁷⁶

Though Cook was no longer in the Company's service, he was subject to the same prejudices as were the native sons mentioned above. Cook's skills at interpreting were vital to the missionaries who wished to convert aboriginal peoples, yet he was not considered to be on the same footing as the European catechists.

Of the group of politically active mixed-blood sons, Cuthbert Grant Jr. is the best known. Grant was born of a Scottish NWC partner and a Cree or Assiniboine mother in 1793 at River Tremblante (Aspen Creek) near present-day Kamsack, Saskatchewan.¹⁷⁷ As a young boy he was sent to Scotland to be educated and when he returned to Montreal he began training for work with the North West Company. In 1812, he returned to the West as a North West Company clerk and was placed in charge of a post at Qu'Appelle.¹⁷⁸ It was at this time that he became influential among the mixed-descent buffalo hunters or 'halfbreeds' as they referred to themselves, who began to form the 'new nation' upholding their rights to the country. Grant and his followers became involved in fierce competition with the Hudson's Bay Company. Several skirmishes ensued which led to the Battle of Seven Oaks in June, 1816. Though Grant was jailed in Montreal for his apparent misdeeds in this battle, he never came to trial and returned to

¹⁷⁶Ibid.

¹⁷⁷Margaret MacLeod and W. L. Morton, Cuthbert Grant of Grantown: Warden of the Plains of Red River (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), pp. 1-2.

¹⁷⁸Margaret Arnett MacLeod, 'Cuthbert Grant of Grantown', Canadian Historical Review, vol. xxi, 1940, p. 26.

the West in 1820. He did not receive an appointment in the newly merged company in 1821. However, when George Simpson met him in that year, he remarked to Eden Colvile that Grant was

most anxious to be admitted again into the Service and I am satisfied that it would be highly gratifying to all the North West party in this country... as he is a general favorite and they feel that he has been badly used by those whose business it was to protect him. The young Man I believe has no inclination to be troublesome but with his means he could be very much so...the half-breeds and Indians...look up to him with great respect; indeed there is not a man in the country possesses half the influence over them.¹⁷⁹

Shortly thereafter Grant was enlisted and served as a clerk at Fort Garry. This appointment caused considerable tension between Grant and his co-workers because they had formerly been opponents. In 1824, Simpson therefore decided to retire him from service and make him a permanent settler granting him land at White Horse Plain.¹⁸⁰ Simpson recognized that Grant was either 'related to or connected with the principal freemen or half-breeds and that they considered him their chief and great man'.¹⁸¹ From his home in White Horse Plain, Grant contributed to the permanent settlement of the area and convinced his followers to become settlers and to farm. From this vantage point the residents of the area were able to protect the Red River colony in case of attacks by the warring Sioux.

Simpson recognized Grant's ability to work well in both worlds and realized that this trait made him a valuable asset to the company. On 27 July 1827, Simpson

¹⁷⁹Ibid., p. 30.

¹⁸⁰Ibid., pp. 31-32.

¹⁸¹Ibid., p. 32.

commented that the company had authorized Grant to trade in the Qu'Appelle area noting that Grant had 'a number of Indian and half breed relations' and was 'acquainted and connected with all the different Tribes in that quarter'. He added that Grant and his followers had it 'more in their power to harass our opponents than we could with a formidable Establishment'. Further, he commented that Grant was 'prudent firm and efficient either among whites or Indians and will act up to the letter of any instructions he may receive'.¹⁸² However, in July 1828, Simpson began to doubt Grant's loyalty and as a preventive measure he appointed Grant 'Warden of the Plains of Red River'. Simpson noted that the 'appointment prevents him from interfering with the Trade on his own account, which he would otherwise do in all probability'.¹⁸³ He noted further that it was a 'Sinecure offered him intirely from political motives and not from any feeling of liberality or partiality'.¹⁸⁴ Evidence demonstrates that Grant took his job as warden very seriously.¹⁸⁵

In 1832, Simpson wrote of Grant in his Character Book in the same way he wrote of other native sons among the clerks. He pointed out that he was a half-breed, with a propensity to liquor, that he was 'under the influence of the Catholic Mission and quite a Bigot' and finally that he had 'no prospect of advancement'.¹⁸⁶ Simpson was astute

¹⁸²Ibid., pp. 34-35.

¹⁸³Glyndwr Williams, ed., Hudson's Bay Miscellany, p. 210.

¹⁸⁴Ibid.

¹⁸⁵Margaret Arnett MacLeod, 'Cuthbert Grant of Grantown', p. 37.

¹⁸⁶Glyndwr Williams, ed., Hudson's Bay Miscellany 1670-1870, p. 209-211.

enough to see Grant's capabilities and he manipulated those to the Company's advantage while at the same time keeping a close eye on him because as a 'halfbreed' and as a leader of 'halfbreeds' he could not always be trusted to act in a manner which would benefit the Company. While Simpson's strategy served the interests of the Company, his attitude helped to perpetuate myths about mixed-descent people that were inaccurate and often harmful.

Like Cuthbert Grant, James Sinclair became a spokesperson for his people. He became politically involved in determining, upholding and preserving their rights. Sinclair, though an English-speaking native son, represented both the English and French-speaking biracial groups in Red River. He was born about 1811 to William Sinclair and Nahoway, a Cree woman.¹⁸⁷ He was educated at Stromness in the Orkneys and studied law at the University of Edinburgh.¹⁸⁸ He entered the employ of the HBC in 1826 at the age of twenty-one as an apprentice.¹⁸⁹

The sequence of events which compelled him to petition for the rights of the 'new nation' are complex and span the years from 1841 to 1850. They are tied inextricably to the changing economic needs of the growing Metis population in the Red River valley and the battle for free trade. Detailed accounts of these events can be found in Peter

¹⁸⁷Irene M. Spry, 'James Sinclair', DCB vol. 8, 1985, pp. 819-820.

¹⁸⁸D. Geneva Lent, West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1963), p.45; Alexander Logan, Matriculation Roll of the University of Edinburgh vol.3, 1819-1829 (no publication place or date), pp. 922, 940, 946.

¹⁸⁹Irene M. Spry, 'James Sinclair', pp. 819.

Garrioch's Red River Journal,¹⁹⁰ in W.L. Morton's introduction to Eden Colvile's Letters¹⁹¹ and in D. Geneva Lent's book, West of the Mountains.¹⁹² In short, James Sinclair and his friend Andrew McDermot, an Irish-born trader and merchant, were both involved in the private freighting business. They had carried their own goods and those of the HBC on contract in the transport brigades between the Red River Settlement and York Factory. The Company became increasingly uneasy with this arrangement. Their biggest fear was that Sinclair and McDermot would outfit the Metis with goods to trade with the Indians and that they would then sell the furs they obtained from the Indians to a former employee, Norman Kittson, who had set up a trading post at Pembina for the American Fur Company only one hundred kilometers from Red River. The Company would thus suffer a double loss. They would lose both the Indians' debts and the furs to Kittson. The company, therefore, placed severe restrictions on importers of goods with the intent of putting a stop to private trade. They suspended Sinclair's contract, suspecting him of trafficking in furs. In addition, Simpson had Adam Thom, Red River's Chief Magistrate, redraft the terms of land tenure in order to sharpen the clauses which made trading in furs grounds for revocation of land titles of such traffickers.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰Public Archives of Manitoba, PAM MG 9 A78-3, George H. Gunn, ed., Journal of Peter Garrioch, 1838-1847.

¹⁹¹E.E. Rich, ed., London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile 1849-1852 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956) pp. xiii-cxv.

¹⁹²D. Geneva Lent, West of the Mountains: James Sinclair and the Hudson's Bay Company .

¹⁹³E.E. Rich, ed., Eden Colvile's Letters, p. lix.

Sinclair tried to establish his right to export and he refused to sell the Company furs which he and McDermot had taken in during the winter.¹⁹⁴ However, on 29 August, 1845, in an attempt to clarify matters with the company, he presented a petition to Alexander Christie, Governor of Assiniboia, inquiring about hunting, trapping and trading rights of the native sons in relationship to the company and to the settlement. In addition, he wanted to compare those rights with the rights of British subjects. For example, he wrote, 'having at the present moment a very strong belief that we, as natives of this country, and as Halfbreeds have the right to hunt furs in the Hudson's Bay Company's Territory whenever we think proper, and again sell those furs to the highest bidders, likewise having a doubt that natives of this country can be prevented from trading and trafficking with one another, we would wish to have your opinion on the subject.'¹⁹⁵ Unfortunately, Governor Christie chose not to deal with Sinclair's questions in a very clear and direct manner. His reasons were that all Sinclair's queries were addressed in the HBC charter and that Sinclair and his friends had access to it and were familiar with it. Sinclair therefore wrote the Governor, Deputy Governor and Committee on 6 September 1845. He explained, 'Mr Christie has refused to settle my a/c in any manner and their being no other course left to pursue, than to lay the case before yourselves, knowing well that you would not allow the slightest stain to rest on an

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. lxii.

¹⁹⁵HBCA D.5/15, fo. 139A Governors' Correspondence, James Sinclair to Alexander Christie, 29 August 1845.

Escutcheon, which has for a century and a half remained unsullied'.¹⁹⁶ Two years later on 14 April 1847 the HBC Governor John Henry Pelly and Committee replied from London instructing Simpson to pay Sinclair one hundred pounds and discharge him.¹⁹⁷ They chose to deal with only the private matter of Sinclair's account rather than the much larger issues that he had raised.

Sinclair and his followers then framed a petition to the Congress of the United States asking to be admitted to the rights of American citizens upon settlement in American territory.¹⁹⁸ John McLaughlin, a nephew of Andrew McDermot and opponent of the Company, took the request to Washington but Congress refused to accept the petition.¹⁹⁹ In addition, Sinclair and the Roman Catholic priest at Pembina, Father Georges Antoine Belcourt, drafted two petitions, one in English and one in French, to the Colonial Secretary in London asking for free trade and representative government. In 1848, as a result of these petitions the Company and government of the colony were separated as far as possible in an attempt to ensure the impartiality of the local government and the maintenance of the legal rights of the company.²⁰⁰

Sinclair then travelled to London where he joined forces with Alexander Kennedy

¹⁹⁶HBCA D.5/15, fo. 125, *Governors' Correspondence, James Sinclair to Governor and Deputy Governor and Committee of the Hudson's Bay Committee.*

¹⁹⁷HBCA D.5/15, fo. 488, *Governors' Correspondence, Governor and Committee Hudson Bay House to Simpson 14 April 1847.*

¹⁹⁸E. E. Rich, ed., *Eden Colvile's Letters*, p. lxvi.

¹⁹⁹*Ibid.*, p. lxx.

²⁰⁰*Ibid.*, pp. xlvi-xlvii; lxx-lxxii.

Isbister, Orkney-Cree grandson of Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy, and a graduate of Edinburgh University.²⁰¹ After Sinclair left London, Isbister published a series of pamphlets in the London Times of 19 August 1848, claiming that the HBC charter was void. In 1849, at the trial of Pierre Guillaume Sayer, a native son accused of illegal trafficking in furs, Adam Thom confirmed the rights of the Company to exclusive trade under the Charter. Sinclair used Isbister's articles to demonstrate that the Charter had been challenged and in the discussion that ensued, he was allowed to act as counsel for Sayer and managed to have his sentence stayed. He achieved his goal of having the 'new nation's' concerns heard by the court.

Sinclair left Red River in 1849 and became a citizen of the United States.²⁰² Ironically he was re-engaged by the Company in 1853 as a clerk to take charge of Fort Walla Walla and the Snake River Country. In May 1854 he guided the second group of emigrants to the Columbia and he and his family established themselves there near Fort Walla Walla.²⁰³ Throughout all these troubles Sinclair remained a reserved and able man determined not to waste away as a local merchant or to passively accept inferior status. He was a confident leader dedicated to defending the claims of his people.

In 1855, Simpson commented favorably on Sinclair's work at Walla Walla:

Mr James Sinclair, who is in charge...states that the trade in the district has been seriously injured by the dishonesty and mismanagement of the persons who have been in charge of late years, who it would appear have carried on a wholesale

²⁰¹Ibid., p. lxxviii.

²⁰²Irene M. Spry, 'James Sinclair', DCB, vol. 8, p. 819.

²⁰³Ibid., p. 820.

system of plunder on a large scale....I anticipate an immediate change for the better under Mr Sinclair's able management and I shall request him to make a formal report.²⁰⁴

Sinclair was shot and killed less than one year later while he was engaged in HBC business in the Cascades.²⁰⁵

Of the group of native sons who identified most with their aboriginal roots, Jemmy Jock Bird was perhaps the most colourful. Born to HBC officer James Bird and his Cree wife Mary, Jemmy Jock began work for the company as an apprentice in 1809.²⁰⁶ He performed many important duties over the course of his career, the most valuable of which were his skills as a linguist and interpreter. Bird spoke Blackfeet, Gros Ventre, Stony, Cree, Sarsi, English and French.²⁰⁷ In the 1820s, he became the official 'unofficial' agent of the HBC among the Blackfoot tribes.²⁰⁸ He acted as an interpreter for the Americans in the Blackfoot Treaty of 1855.²⁰⁹ In 1877, he assisted in the negotiations of Treaty Seven at Blackfoot Crossing.²¹⁰ However, throughout his long career he was not treated very well by the company. Simpson's attitude toward him and

²⁰⁴HBCA D.4/75, fo. 395, Governor Simpson's Correspondence Book Outward 1854-1856.

²⁰⁵Irene M. Spry, 'James Sinclair', DCB, vol. 8, p. 819.

²⁰⁶David Smyth, 'James Bird', DCB (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), vol. 12, p. 110.

²⁰⁷Ibid.

²⁰⁸Ibid.

²⁰⁹Ibid.

²¹⁰Ibid.

other native sons who like Bird were culturally more comfortable among aboriginal groups, testifies to Simpson's dismissal of native lifestyles and, at the same time, indicates how he took advantage of their unique skills. In his annual report of 25 July, 1827 to the Governor and Committee in London, Simpson described Bird's situation and spelled out the company's plans for him as follows:

Two of the Honble. Company's late Clerks, James Bird and Hugh Munro...became so much attached to the roving life of plain Indians that these last few years they have withdrawn themselves from the Establishments, assumed the Indian costume, accompanying them in all their wars and hunting excursions and by their bravery and activity have obtained great influence with the Piegan Tribes; this influence Mr.[John] Rowand [Chief Factor of the Saskatchewan District] turns to profitable account and by good management these thoughtless young men may be made exceedingly useful to us not only in the way of Trade but as means of offence or defence should the posture of affairs with America render it necessary hereafter to avail ourselves of the services of the plain Indian Tribes. ²¹¹

Soon afterward Bird became upset with the company over money that they owed him. He was paid a salary of £20 that Simpson had agreed upon but he also was to receive a gratuity that was not recorded on the company's books. When he did not receive this gratuity in the summer of 1831, he wrote to Chief Factor John Rowand of Fort Edmonton requesting it. Having still not received it or any satisfactory explanation, Bird wrote once again in October as follows:

I take the pleasure. of. Writing you these few lines to let you ...that I am well, I am gone to join the American Company. Its what I wished for this long time to have revenge on the Hudson's Bay Company, which I will have. You thought money was too good for my. and goods, and for you being so bad woman and Children you was afraid to give them any thing Good to eat, and myself, you cant say that I was in debt to you for three Years wages. I got no pay, and for my

²¹¹HBCA D.4/90/fos. 48-48d, Governors' Correspondence, York Factory, Simpson to Governor and Committee.

Horses, that I sold.²¹²

Bird may have forgotten or been unaware that the company did not give gratuities for horses or for furs and that, in 1824, it had ceased to pay allowances of food and clothing of officers' and servants' wives and children.²¹³ Additionally, it is difficult to determine if he is referring to women and children whose husbands or fathers were with the company. However, it was because of these kinds of misunderstandings that he left the company on several occasions, to be a freeman, to work for the American Fur Company and to be a guide and interpreter independent of the Hudson's Bay Company. Simpson kept repeatedly engaging him though, because he was able to secure the Blackfoot trade for the company.

This chapter has illustrated how the aboriginal heritage of the native sons was depicted in the records. It has demonstrated the attitudes of European traders towards them in light of this heritage and the actions that the traders took based on their attitudes. When ethnic and racial tensions increased in Rupert's Land, the native sons' aboriginal heritage was increasingly represented in negative terms and viewed by Company authorities as an innate flaw or impediment. Only in the last few years of the Simpson era did some native sons experience a reprieve from the difficulties which they and other mixed-descent peoples encountered in the period 1820-1850.

²¹²HBCA B.60/c/1, fo.2., 31 October, 1831, Bears River (Marias River), Bird to Rowand.

²¹³Jennifer Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 203.

CHAPTER THREE--Education

'To shake off a little of the Indian'¹

Attempting to assess and analyze education in fur trade society is a daunting task. To set up a sharp contrast between formal European 'schooling' in an institutional setting, and traditional learning from the aboriginal side of the family, is to oversimplify. Much European education in this time period occurred outside an institutional setting. Children learned from parents, older siblings, other family members, and from masters or mistresses of the apprenticed trades. Furthermore, this less formal type of education continued alongside the learning obtained in school rooms. Much of the early education acquired by the native sons was learned through a combination of these less formal avenues. However, the education that the fathers of native sons expressed concern about was primarily the formal schooling that occurred in an institutional setting. It was this type of education that they hoped would best equip their sons for the life that they envisioned unfolding for their children. Its acquisition in varying degrees was what made possible their later employment in the fur trade. As it had a formative role for these native sons and is much better documented than the aboriginal components of their upbringing, it is a major focus of this chapter.

Education in eighteenth-century Europe where the fathers of these sons had

¹K. G. Davies, ed., Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals and Correspondence 1819-35 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1963), p. 329. George Atkinson Sr.'s reason for taking his son 'Sneppy' or George II back to England with him for some education.

themselves been taught was not uniform or universal at all. It was not regulated or controlled by the state but rather was run by a variety of religious orders and private individuals who set up schools. However, despite the lack of standardization, what was taught at the elementary level was much the same everywhere. The curriculum consisted of four basic subjects; namely, reading, writing, arithmetic and religion.

Sometimes instruction in the manual trades or domestic arts was added in some schools to ensure that youngsters were not a burden on society and that they would not fall into habits of idleness and immorality.² In the wealthier European schools and eventually starting in about 1835 at Red River Academy, boys were taught some Latin and Greek in addition to the basics.³ The social and moral agenda of education was clearly evident. Indeed, the moral, social and economic functions of the schools were tied to, and as important as, the religious and intellectual ones.⁴ In eighteenth century England, schools became the favorite objects of charity. By the nineteenth century schooling was being promoted in a way that it had never been before. Like a plethora of other reforms, children's education became uppermost in the eyes of most parents in this 'age of improvement', an oft used phrase in the prescriptive literature of the day.⁵

²Roger Magnusson, Education in Seventeenth Century New France (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992.), p. 11.

³Thomas F. Bredin, 'The Reverend David Jones: Missionary at Red River 1823-38', The Beaver, Autumn, 1981, pp. 47-52.

⁴Ibid., p. 11.

⁵Asa Briggs, The Age of Improvement (London: Longmans, Green and Company, 1959), p. 1-7.

Sending a child to school became a means of both countering and preventing idleness and poverty and of promoting honesty, godliness and personal improvement. British fathers took the responsibility for educating their children very seriously. Kenneth Charlton points out that fathers were 'to be careful in the education of their children...for it was much better they were unborn than untaught'.⁶ Like the grammar schools of Renaissance England, the voluntary elementary schools of the nineteenth century were, to their various denominational sponsors, instruments for bringing about social change, reform and improvement. In most schools the consensus was that the children must be taught to live 'good industrious lives in that station of life to which God had called them ... and education, it was commonly thought would be the means of subduing any vice, irreligion and subversive tendencies which might be prevalent'.⁷ Thus, social control was an important element in educating children.

The underlying agenda of those fur trade fathers who took their role seriously, was to ensure that their children became gentlemen and ladies and achieved a respectable station in life. The achievement of respectability was a means of overcoming what these fathers perceived as their children's disadvantageous cultural and racial characteristics which threatened to set them apart and to lead them to an uncertain future. Respectability, as Trygve Tholfsen pointed out, originated in pre-Victorian times as a device for validating in moral terms the social superiority of the middle-class to the

⁶Kenneth Charlton, Education in Renaissance England (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p. 202.

⁷ HBCA E.328/25/p. 5, Richard Ruggles Collection.

mass of the population.⁸ It embodied the notions of individualism, self-improvement and self-sufficiency.⁹ It could be achieved through hard work, sobriety and sexual continence.¹⁰ Education became one means by which fathers could equip their children with the respectability that they felt life in the emerging colonial society of Rupert's Land would require.

Philippe Ariès (1962) claimed that there was no concept of childhood before about the seventeenth century.¹¹ Rather, as soon as the child could live without the constant solicitude of his mother, his nanny or his cradle rocker, he belonged to adult society.¹² Thus, in the world Ariès reconstructs, children were seen as little adults. Similarly, Pinchbeck and Hewitt (1969, 1973) stated that children were expected to accept the hardships of life at a very tender age and at the earliest opportunity to accept the responsibilities of the adult. In industry, children of the poor worked the same long hours as their parents. Children were legally the property of their parents and were used by them as personal or family assets.¹³ Linda Pollock, however, has disputed the analyses

⁸Trygve R. Tholfsen, Working Class Radicalism in Mid-Victorian England (New York: Columbia University Press, 1977) p. 11.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Peter Bailey, personal communication, November, 1997.

¹¹ Philippe Ariès, Centuries of Childhood: A Social History of Family Life translated from the French by Robert Baldick (New York, Vintage Books 1962) p. 128.

¹² Ibid.

¹³ Ivy Pinchbeck and Margaret Hewitt, Children in English Society Vol.II From the Eighteenth Century to the Children's Act 1948 (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1973), p. 348.

of Ariès, Pinchbeck and Hewitt.¹⁴ She claims from evidence based on diaries, memoirs, autobiographies and account books that most parents in England, Scotland and America in the period from 1600 to 1900 'were acutely aware of and concerned for their children. They tended them when sick, lamented their deaths, fretted over appropriate ways to deal with disciplinary problems, pondered how to ensure for them the best possible education and worried about their future'.¹⁵ Pollock also highlights the differences in the upbringing of sons and daughters, differences which appeared to intensify in the nineteenth century as girls were more and more secluded in the home. In addition, she unveils the attention that middle-class fathers paid to their children and the active part they took in looking after them.¹⁶ The evidence gathered in this study would support Pollock's findings. Towards the end of the eighteenth century, when the Hudson's Bay Company began to recognize the existence of fur trade families, some officers began to mention their family members, particularly children. Though both sons and daughters were written about with affection and concern, mention of sons appeared more frequently, particularly with regard to their education and career possibilities. Fathers expressed their feelings about these concerns for their children quite openly in both private and official correspondence.

Education of the native sons took several forms in the period 1760-1860s.

¹⁴Linda Pollock, *A Lasting Relationship: Parents and Children Over Three Centuries* (London, Fourth Estate, 1987) p. 12.

¹⁵*Ibid.*, p. 13

¹⁶*Ibid.*, p. 13

Doubtless, it began informally at birth when parents influenced their children's development by teaching them to feed themselves, to begin to talk and to develop their basic motor skills. But by the 1790s, the records show an increasing concern on the part of the fathers and directors of the Hudson's Bay Company for the education of their children. Until this time there were no formal schools in fur trade country for children of fur trade families. A few children of officers were taken "home" to England or Scotland when their fathers were on furlough and educated for one or two years before returning once again to life in the fur trade. It was expected that this span of one or two years was sufficient time for children to learn to read and write. The sons who did receive all or a portion of their education in England or Scotland through the 1850s experienced opportunities and conditions similar to those of their fathers, since significant changes did not occur in Britain until later in the nineteenth century when the state became involved in education.

This chapter examines briefly the education that some fathers had received at London charity schools and in the Orkneys. It then provides an insight into some of the fathers' attitudes toward and influence upon the education of their children. Third, it looks at the forms of education that were available to these children, beginning with the sons who were sent to England and Scotland. Next, it outlines the development of educational facilities for fur trade children at the post schools and in Red River and the nature of education received at these institutions. Fourth, it assesses the applicability of the sons' education to their careers as HBC employees. And finally, it looks briefly at the role, much more poorly documented, that aboriginal education played in some of their

lives.

Most of the fathers of the sons in this study were officers of the North West Company (until 1821) or the Hudson's Bay Company and received some formal schooling themselves. During the period 1680 to 1717, the Hudson's Bay Company recruited nine apprentices from Christ's or Blue Coat Hospital, a London charity school.¹⁷ Between 1766 and 1799 twelve apprentices were recruited from the Grey Coat Hospital of the Royal Foundation of Queen Anne in Westminster.¹⁸ The founders of the Grey Coat school set it up to 'educate poor children in the principles of piety and virtue and thereby lay a foundation for a sober and Christian life'.¹⁹ Richard Ruggles notes that both schools were of singular significance to the Hudson's Bay Company because they had established mathematical 'schools' or programs in which mathematics, navigation, surveying and cartography were offered.²⁰ The London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company considered that regular schooling in reading, writing, and arithmetic and in special topics basic to a career in maritime service or in surveying, drafting and mapping could be put to good use in their employ.²¹ The practical knowledge that the Grey Coat

¹⁷Richard Ruggles, 'The Contribution of Charity Hospital Apprentices to Hudson's Bay Company Mapping', paper presented at the Canadian Cartographic Association meetings, Toronto, November, 1987, p. 1.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Victor G. Hopwood, ed., David Thompson: Travels in Western North America, 1784-1812 (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1971), p. 2.

²⁰Richard Ruggles, 'The Contribution of Charity Hospital Apprentices', p. 2

²¹Ibid.

Hospital school offered, in particular, became especially important to the Hudson's Bay Company in the latter third of the eighteenth century when the company continued to set up posts inland to offset competition from Montreal-based Canadian and British traders.

Philip Turnor, hired in 1778 as the Hudson's Bay Company's first full-time surveyor, played an important role in furthering the training and the practical experience of a number of the 'hospital boys' as they were called, who were assigned to the various factories in the Bay.²² Two of these 'hospital boys' who made names for themselves in the fur trade were Captain Henry Hanwell who served the company for fifty years from 1766 to 1816 approximately and David Thompson who began his career with the Hudson's Bay Company in 1784 and in 1797 joined the the North West Company.²³ Other former Grey Coat boys included John Hodgson and John Charles, whose sons James and Thomas Hodgson and John Jr. and Thomas Charles appear in this study.²⁴

John Hodgson first landed at Albany Fort in the autumn of 1774 and Chief Factor Thomas Hutchins, who had been instructed to 'take great Care to cultivate the Minds of the Youths under his Command' proceeded to put both his mind and body to work.²⁵ After keeping him at writing and warehouse duty all winter, Hutchins sent him out with the sloopmaster in 1775 to survey and to measure the Albany River estuary and record

²²Ibid., p. 2

²³HBCA E.328/2, Richard Ruggles Collection.

²⁴Ibid.

²⁵Richard Ruggles, 'The Contribution of Charity Hospital Apprentices', p. 29.

his findings. The next month he mapped the river from Albany Fort upstream to Henley House. His work was the basis for a second map which was sent to London. He continued surveying and mapping until 1780 at which time he became assistant to Philip Turnor, Chief Inland Surveyor.²⁶

Three major maps completed by Hodgson as a result of his journeys with Turnor received commendations from London.²⁷ The Hudson's Bay Company showed its pleasure by re-engaging Hodgson after the end of his apprenticeship in 1781 for a salary above the norm for his age and experience. Although there is little tangible evidence, Hodgson undoubtedly taught some of these valuable skills to his sons, James and Thomas, who later joined company ranks.

John Charles arrived at Churchill in the late summer of 1799. The Committee reminded Governor Thomas Stayner of Churchill that the new boy was 'well versed in Mathematics and having his new set of surveying instruments with him ...he may prove useful in Travelling Inland.'²⁸ Charles was inland on trading duty from 1801 to 1811 and 1816 to 1825, and quickly proved capable enough to be put in charge of posts. He advanced to be Chief of Churchill District, Ile a la Crosse District, Athabasca, and finally, Rainy Lake. He retired in 1843 to Red River Colony where he became a long term member of the Council of Assiniboia. In all his forty-four years with the company he did not do any mapping although he became very knowledgeable about the

²⁶Ibid., p. 29

²⁷Ibid., p. 30

²⁸Ibid., p. 20

immense Churchill and Athabasca regions.²⁹ His sons, John Jr. and Thomas, later served the company. Although none of the sons of the Grey Coat or Blue Coat schools were themselves sent to these schools, they probably benefitted from the knowledge gained by their fathers there.

Many Hudson's Bay Company men were recruited from the Orkneys and would have received some education there. In the eighteenth century and until the 1870s, most schools in Scotland were parish schools. James A. Troup of the Stromness Archives notes that in that period, anyone could set up a school and take pupils.³⁰ Subjects and quality could be highly variable. Checks on school standards were provided by the parish minister and the annual oral examination of pupils that took place after Sunday services. The church's interest was above all with reading and religious knowledge. Adults, as well as children, were regularly examined orally on their knowledge of the shorter Catechism. Older boys might learn some navigation besides the basic reading, writing and arithmetic.³¹ In addition to the parish schools, private schools were set up by the Scottish Society for the Propagation of Christian Knowledge.³² The parish schools taught primarily arithmetic and writing. The grammar schools, which were mostly privately run, taught Latin and Greek. Some parish and grammar schools eventually

²⁹Ibid., p. 31

³⁰James A. Troup, personal communication, 17 March, 1998.

³¹Ibid.

³²G. A. W. Lamb, 'Education in Orkney before 1800' Orcadian, 1962 p. 4.

merged and taught Latin, Greek, French, mathematics and navigation.³³ For the most part, conditions in the parish schools were wretched. The buildings had damp mud floors, low ceilings, chimneys that would not vent, windows that would not open, and oozy thatched roofs. Few had toilets. In short, they were small, damp, cramped and unhealthy. Each pupil had to bring peat to school daily for warmth, to sit on, and to cover one's head if one misbehaved. It was not until 1872 when the Education Act was passed and the state assumed responsibility for education that conditions began to improve.³⁴

While on furlough in 1790, William Tomison, an Orkneyman who entered the Hudson's Bay Company's service about 1770, began construction of a school in South Ronaldsay.³⁵ Tomison was keenly interested in education and may have built the school with the future education of his nephew in mind, who was born in Orkney about that time. The school was open to all children. According to Barbara Huck and Peter St. John, it was not erected solely with the intention of serving mixed-descent children who returned to Orkney for schooling as they were usually placed with relatives or friends and sent to the local school nearest to where they lived.³⁶ After his death, Tomison left a considerable bequest for the continued maintenance of the school.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Ibid.

³⁵Personal communication, Peter St. John, March 3, 2000 and Barbara Huck, March 14, 2000. Ms. Huck et al., are writing a book entitled, A TimeTraveller's Guide: Exploring the Fur Trade Routes of North America which will be published in April, 2000, and have done considerable research on the Tomison Academy.

³⁶Ibid.

The fathers' interest in the education of their children and their determination to make them into respectable gentlemen is a dominant theme in their writings. This interest in and dedication to education was shared by North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company officers alike. Education was a priority that was uppermost in fathers' minds. It was not only a concern for fathers of native families. For example, Simon McTavish, a Scottish founding member of the North West Company (whose children were not biracial), insisted in his will in 1804, that all four of his children were to 'be removed to England for their education'.³⁷ Other fathers stated very specific reasons for educating their children. George Atkinson took his son George II or Sneppy to England with him in 1790 to 'shake off a little of the Indian,' in the hope that upon their return to Eastmain, young George could 'exert himself like a man' and become a useful employee of the company.³⁸ Nor'Wester Donald McIntosh, too, had a definite goal in mind for his son, John, who was under the care of his sister, Christy, in Cornwall. McIntosh's primary goal was to make him employable. In 1816, he instructed his sister to send his son to 'a good school this ensuing winter, and to get him to learn the rules and principles of Book Keeping'.³⁹ By so doing, McIntosh hoped that by the following spring his son would qualify to be a clerk. He noted further that if his son did not qualify after that time that he

³⁷W. Stewart Wallace, Documents Relating to the North West Company, pp. 135-136.

³⁸K. G. Davies, ed., Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals and Correspondence (London: HBRS 1963), p. 329.

³⁹Ontario Archives NWC, Box 2, Item 1, Michipicoten August 17, 1816, transcribed from Donald McIntosh file in the possession of Jennifer S.H. Brown.

must remain another year in school and then try once again to gain employment as a clerk.⁴⁰ Alexander Stewart, Chief Factor at York, was not impressed with the opportunities for educating his sons. In 1829, he wrote to Robert McVicar stating, 'next summer I have thought it best to send my two Boys to Scotland, concerning Canada a bad school both for morals and education'.⁴¹ On the other hand, Archibald McDonald was pleased with his son Ranald's progress at Red River Academy in the fall of 1835. Ranald had received a good report from his teacher, Reverend David Jones, and his father wrote to Edward Ermatinger from Fort Colville on 25 January 1836, Ranald 'may turn out a rare exception to the race'.⁴² Though Ranald did not enter the service of the Hudson's Bay Company, his father's concern for his son's education as a child of Scottish and Chinook descent is typical of the care and consternation that other fathers in this study expressed. Like his father, Ranald was an adventurer and explorer. After several years as a wandering sailor, he eventually entered Japan where he was imprisoned by authorities who then made use of him to teach English.⁴³

Fathers often expressed gratitude for the education that their sons received. For example, Chief Trader Thomas McMurray wrote to George Simpson in 1826 to thank Simpson for enabling him to keep his son, William, at school stating that this privilege 'is

⁴⁰Ibid.

⁴¹McCord Museum, Montreal, Robert McVicar Papers.

⁴²J. W. Hakola, ed., Frontier Omnibus (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1962), p. 33.

⁴³Joel E. Ferris, 'Ranald MacDonald: The Sailor Boy Who Visited Japan', Pacific North West Quarterly, vol. 48, no.1, January 1957, pp. 13-16.

duly appreciated & will not be forgotten by me'.⁴⁴ Similarly, Roderick McKenzie rejoiced at his son Samuel's relatively late achievement of literacy. In a private letter to George Simpson, McKenzie noted that his son was '24 years of age before he ever took a pen or Book in his Hands'.⁴⁵ Donald Ross, writing to John McLeod from Norway House in 1832, stated that it was 'pleasing to get one's children educated even at any expense'.⁴⁶

Some fathers took on the task of educating their children themselves in the absence of other alternatives. For example, John Work wrote to Edward Ermatinger on 11 October 1841 from Fort Simpson stating that he wanted very much to educate his children.⁴⁷ Three years later, in February 1844, he wrote to say that he was teaching his children himself. He continued that 'the five eldest read the Scriptures pretty well and are making some progress in writing and arithmetic'.⁴⁸ In January 1846 in a third letter to Ermatinger he wrote, 'we are in awful want of a school. I am instructing them the best I can'.⁴⁹ Earlier he had told Ermatinger, speaking of his five daughters at the time, 'had I them a little brushed up with education, and a little knowledge of the world, they would

⁴⁴HBCA D.4/119, fo.75, Governor's Correspondence, Thomas McMurray to George Simpson.

⁴⁵HBCA D.5/8, fo.352, Governor's Correspondence, Roderick McKenzie to George Simpson, Norway House, July 8, 1843.

⁴⁶PAC MG 19 Series A 23, pp. 310-311, John McLeod Papers.

⁴⁷J. W. Hakola, ed., Frontier Omnibus p. 38.

⁴⁸Ibid., p. 38.

⁴⁹Ibid., p. 39.

be scarcely known to be Indians'.⁵⁰

Although James Hargrave, Chief Factor at York Factory, had no mixed-descent children, his comments express the degree of responsibility that European fathers felt regarding the education of their children. He wanted his and his wife Letitia's children to receive a 'good moral and religious education' which he considered they had a 'natural claim to from me & will require for some years the lions share of my independent income'.⁵¹

One father, Chief Trader Donald Manson, gave up his position with the Hudson's Bay Company to relocate in an area where education was available. In April 1858, he wrote to George Simpson stating that he had 'tho still a very poor man, made up my mind to resign my C[hief] Tradership, and to settle down in the Willamette [Oregon Territory], where I can secure a tolerable education for my children'. He continued, 'I have taken this decisive step not in any pet or huff...but entirely in consideration of procuring an education for my family'.⁵² Others like James Bissett, officer-in-charge at Honolulu, wanted to be relocated within the company in order to attain a better education for their children. Bissett mentioned in a letter to his friend, Joseph Hardisty, that he wished that he might be 'appointed to the Montreal Department again, on account of the education of

⁵⁰Ibid., pp. 32-33 Columbia River, 13 December 1834.

⁵¹PAC MG 19 Series A, Vol. 1, p. 43, Edward Ermatinger Papers, James Hargrave to Edward Ermatinger, 1853.

⁵²E.E. Rich, ed., Black's Rocky Mountain Journal 1824, (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1955), vol.18, p. 228.

my children'.⁵³

Chief Factor Robert Miles stated to Edward Ermatinger in 1859 regarding his children's education, that he could not do 'less than endeavour to make them competent to pass through life altho I do not wish to give them too high a taste of refinement and if I did not so I should consider myself blameable & they might consider themselves neglected'.⁵⁴ In a rare comment regarding their part-Cree mother Betsey Sinclair's role in their upbringing, he added that 'under their mother they have been taught to work tolerably well & should a reverse of fortune happen I hope will not be at a loss to provide for themselves'.⁵⁵

Sons Sent to England or Scotland for Education

Charles Thomas Isham was the first native son in this study to be sent to England. In 1763, he left York Factory, returning in the spring of 1766 as an apprentice for the Company.⁵⁶ Jennifer Brown points out that this was a rare privilege for children in this century.⁵⁷ In fact, this study has identified only four other HBC native sons who were sent to England for education in the eighteenth century. Two of them, Ferdinand

⁵³HBCA E. 69/2, fo.19, McGowan Collection, Hardisty Papers, 1859.

⁵⁴PAC MG 19 Series A, vol.1, p. 257, Edward Ermatinger Papers.

⁵⁵Ibid. p. 257; Betsey Sinclair was the daughter of Chief Factor William Sinclair and his Cree wife Nahoway.

⁵⁶Jennifer Brown, 'Charles Thomas Isham', DCB, vol. 5, p. 450.

⁵⁷Ibid.

Jacobs' son, Samuel and Humphrey Marten's son, John America are not included in this study because they were not employed by the company.⁵⁸ The other two, George and Jacob Atkinson, were the sons of George Atkinson Sr. and his Cree wife, Necushin. George Atkinson II or 'Sneppy' was sent to England in 1790 in the company's ship, the Queen Charlotte.⁵⁹ He returned one year later in the King George.⁶⁰ His younger brother, Jacob, or 'Shesheep' (a Cree name meaning duck) accompanied his father to England while on furlough due to ill health the following year.⁶¹ Young George was about thirteen years old at the time. He returned to James Bay in 1791 in the King George but went back a few months later with his father and younger brother Jacob, returning in August 1792. It is not known where George and Jacob attended school in England or whether, in fact, their father arranged for a private tutor but young George's career in the company, which began in 1792 when he was fifteen and continued until 1828, a total of thirty-six years, was undoubtedly enhanced by what he did learn. The details of his career with the Hudson's Bay Company will be discussed in a subsequent chapter. Suffice it to say that whatever formal European education he did receive combined with his wealth of knowledge of aboriginal ways made him a most valuable and sometimes challenging employee. Jacob was hired by the company for a

⁵⁸Shirlee Anne Smith, 'Ferdinand Jacobs', DCB, vol. 4, pp. 383-384; F. Pannekoek, 'Humphrey Marten', DCB, vol. 4, pp. 517-519.

⁵⁹K. G. Davies, ed., Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals and Correspondence 1819-35 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1963), p. 329.

⁶⁰Ibid.

⁶¹Ibid.

number of years on a seasonal contract basis. He assisted George often in many of his tasks and the two brothers and their Cree families appear to always have lived in close proximity.⁶²

Joseph Cook, the son of Chief Factor William Hemmings Cook and his first wife Kahnawpawama, a Cree woman, entered the Hudson's Bay Company as an apprentice at York Factory in about 1801.⁶³ He went to England with his father on 30 August 1806 and was listed as a trader at that time.⁶⁴ It is not known for sure if he attended school in England but that is a distinct possibility because when he returned in 1808, he was engaged as a writer at York Factory indicating that he may have acquired skills in writing English.⁶⁵ Chief Factor John McDonald felt that Joseph's experience in England did not benefit him a great deal because he went to relatives, which in McDonald's opinion was not necessarily conducive to learning and in some instances had had detrimental effects.⁶⁶

More sons were educated in this manner in the nineteenth century. John Hodgson's sons, James and Thomas, received schooling in London in 1800 and 1808

⁶²HBCA B.77/a/4, fo. 31d, *Big River Journal*, June 1818; B.77/a/7, fos. 2-12, *Journal of Occurrences at Whale River District*, 1819-20.

⁶³Information obtained from the file of William Hemmings Cook in possession of Jennifer S. H. Brown. Cook later married Aggathas, the English-Cree daughter of Matthew Cocking.

⁶⁴HBCA C.1/417, fo. 3, *Ships' Logs*.

⁶⁵HBCA C.1/420, fo. 2, *Ships' Logs*.

⁶⁶Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, pp. 180-181.

respectively.⁶⁷ On his return to Albany, James Hodgson began to work for the Hudson's Bay Company as an assistant writer.⁶⁸ When John Hodgson left Albany Post for England with Thomas in 1807, the London Committee informed him in May that they were 'ready to facilitate your views in educating and qualifying your Son for the Company's service'.⁶⁹

Unlike the Atkinsons and the Hodgsons, John Bunn spent several years in Scotland being educated. He was born in about 1802 to Thomas Bunn and Sarah McNab, of Cree-Scottish parentage.⁷⁰ He spent his early childhood with his family at York Factory. His mother died in 1806 when John was still very young and he was looked after by his father and maternal grandfather John McNab, a surgeon and chief factor at York Factory at the time.⁷¹ John Bunn was formally educated in Edinburgh at 'a good school' from 1809 to 1819.⁷² In 1819 young John returned having spent his final two years in Scotland studying medicine at the University of Edinburgh.⁷³ He then worked as a clerk and surgeon for the Hudson's Bay Company at a number of posts. In 1824 he

⁶⁷HBCA A.6/17, fo.115, London Outward Correspondence, 31 May, 1808.

⁶⁸HBCA A.6/6, fo.111, London Outward Correspondence, 28 May, 1800.

⁶⁹Jennifer S. H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 169.

⁷⁰H. C. Klassen, 'John Bunn', DCB (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1976), vol. 9, p.102.

⁷¹Ibid

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³Medical Matriculation compiled in Moore's Modern Method's Ltd., 12 St. Bride St. London, not paginated.

moved to Red River where he spent the rest of his life working as the colony's medical doctor except for 1831-1832 when he returned to Edinburgh.⁷⁴

Similarly, George and Joseph Gladman, the sons of George Gladman Sr. and his part-Cree wife, Mary Moore, spent several years in England being educated.⁷⁵ The records indicate that they left for England in 1804 on board the Prince of Wales and returned in 1814 in the Eddystone.⁷⁶ Both sons had long careers in the company.

John Richards McKay, the son of John McKay and Mary Favell, a woman of Cree descent, was sent to England from Albany for education in 1800 and returned in 1808.⁷⁷ Upon his return he began work for the Hudson's Bay Company at Albany as a writer. After a brief period of time, he was engaged at Brandon House where his father was stationed. He was there in 1810 when his father died.⁷⁸

James Sinclair, the son of Chief Factor William Sinclair and Nahoway, a Cree woman, was sent to Scotland in 1819 to be educated at the age of eight.⁷⁹ He received four years of education at Stromness and then studied law and literature at the University

⁷⁴Royal College of Surgeons, Edinburgh, Minute Book, 'Records of College Surgeons 1832-1838', p. 22.

⁷⁵Jennifer S. H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 75.

⁷⁶HBCA C.1/759, 298; Ships' Logs, 1804, 1814.

⁷⁷T. R. McCloy, 'John Richards McKay', DCB vol. 8, p. 475; R. Harvey Fleming, ed., Minutes of Council, Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-1831, pp. 446-447.

⁷⁸T. R. McCloy, 'John Richards McKay', DCB vol. 8, p. 475.

⁷⁹Irene M. Spry, 'James Sinclair', DCB vol.8, pp. 819-820.

of Edinburgh from 1822 to 1826.⁸⁰ He returned to Rupert's Land that year and spent the winter working at Albany.⁸¹

Similarly, William Joseph and Alexander Christie, sons of Alexander Christie and Ann Thomas, daughter of HBC officer Thomas Thomas Sr., were educated in Scotland at Marischal College, University of Aberdeen where their father had also studied.⁸²

Alexander Jr. graduated from Arts in 1834. And William Joseph, who Isaac Cowie claimed was 'educated splendidly in Aberdeen' studied there for a year in 1838.⁸³

William Joseph returned to North America in 1841 to enter the service of the Hudson's Bay Company. He had a long and successful career in Rupert's Land. His bicultural roots served him well as, among many other jobs, he served on the commission for Treaty Six negotiations in 1876.⁸⁴ Colin Robertson's son, Colin Jr., was educated in a private school in Aberdeen for nine years from 1825 to 1834. He had a brief career with the

⁸⁰Dr. Alexander Logan, ed., Matriculation Roll of the University of Edinburgh 1819-1829, vol. 3, no date, pp. 922, 940, 962.

⁸¹Irene M. Spry, 'James Sinclair', DCB, vol. 8, p. 819.

⁸²Hartwell Bowsfield, 'Alexander Christie', DCB vol. 10, p. 167; Peter John Anderson, ed., 'Alumni and Graduates in Arts 1834', Records of the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen, vol. 2, printed for the New Spalding Club, 1898, pp. 415, 491, 506.

⁸³I. Cowie, The Company of Adventurers (Toronto: William Briggs, 1913) p. 164-165; Peter John Anderson, ed., Records of the Marischal College and University of Aberdeen, pp.491, 506.

⁸⁴Irene M. Spry, 'William Joseph Christie', DCB vol. 8, p. 195.

Company as a writer.⁸⁵

Other children like John Charles Jr., the son of Chief Factor John Charles and Jane Auld a 'half caste Native', received some education in Great Britain and some in Red River.⁸⁶ His father indicated this fact to the Governor and Committee when he asked for permission for his youngest son to be engaged as an apprentice clerk and listed his educational qualifications: 'from his Early Youth was at School at Red River Colony and since his Arrival in the Country [Scotland] now nearly two Years, he has been attending his Studies in England and Aberdeen and from the latter Place, I have a certificate from the Gentleman he was with'.⁸⁷ He continued, the 'Progress he has made...would enable him to perform his duties with Credit to himself and Satisfaction to his Employees'.⁸⁸

Similarly, Alexander Kennedy Isbister, the son of Thomas Isbister and Mary Kennedy and grandson of Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy, and his Cree wife, was sent initially to St. Margaret's Hope in the Orkney Islands for four years to be educated.⁸⁹ He returned to Rupert's Land and attended Red River Academy from 1833 to 1837.⁹⁰ He

⁸⁵E. E. Rich, ed., Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), pp. cxxi-cxxv.

⁸⁶St. John's Baptismal Registry, no. 261, April 3, 1831 transcribed from the John Charles file in possession of Jennifer S. H. Brown.

⁸⁷HBCA A.10/23, fo.660, Inward Correspondence, John Charles to Governor and Committee, Edinburgh, 1 September 1847.

⁸⁸Ibid.

⁸⁹Sylvia Van Kirk, 'Alexander Kennedy Isbister', DCB, 11, p. 445.

⁹⁰Ibid.

later attended King's College at the University of Aberdeen from 1842 to 1844 where he won prizes for his achievements in chemistry and mathematics.⁹¹ J. Tulloch, his mathematics professor, reported that he 'conducted himself on all occasions with the greatest propriety'. He attended lectures on natural history at Marischal College in the summer of 1844 and pursued his studies with zeal according to Professor W. McGillivray. He spent the following year at the University of Edinburgh studying Latin, Greek, logic and metaphysics and in 1858 received a Master of Arts from that university.⁹² After a brief period of assisting a surgeon in Edinburgh, he moved to London where he began his career as a teacher in 1849 and as a trainer of teachers at the College of Perceptors. At the same time he managed to further his own education, obtaining an LLB from the University of London in 1866.⁹³ He wrote a total of twenty-one text books for use in a variety of subjects ranging from geometry, arithmetic and grammar. His dedication to education was further expressed by his endowment of a scholarship for scholars in Red River schools and a munificent bequest to the University of Manitoba.⁹⁴

Education at Post Schools

Although the practice of sending children abroad for schooling continued in a few

⁹¹PAM MG 9 A73 fo.2, Harold Knox Collection, 'A. K. Isbister'.

⁹²Ibid.; H. C. Knox, 'Alexander Kennedy Isbister', *Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Papers*, 3rd series, no.12 (1957), p. 20.

⁹³Ibid.

⁹⁴Ibid., p. 25.

cases as late as the 1850s, by the end of the eighteenth century, a brief immersion in a British school was no longer seen as the only option to educate the growing number of fur trade children. Jennifer Brown and Carol Judd point out the company's concern in the 1790s over the growing number of employees' children at the posts and its initiative to press these children into service doing various tasks.⁹⁵ The Moose Fort journals in 1798 and 1799 make frequent mention of children who helped to bring home firewood or cut fishing holes in the ice so the women could fish.⁹⁶ In December 1798, John Thomas noted that older boys 'are sent round the Fox Guns, rabbit snarring &c, Gills' [the shipwright's] Son is now framing a Boat, they likewise attend on Chief's Table—lead the hauling Cattle, & in short are employ'd in any little offices they are Capable of.⁹⁷

However, it soon became apparent to company directors that the young growing force of native born children could be put to use systematically as workers for the company and thus some provisions should be made for educating them. In 1806, in an oft cited quote, the Hudson's Bay Company directors sent the following instructions to its factors: 'we have thought it would be advisable to instruct the Children belonging to the Servants in the principles of Religion and teach them from their youth reading writing & Arithmetic also Accounts which we should hope would attach them to our Service & in a few Years

⁹⁵Jennifer Brown, 'A Colony of Very Useful Hands', *Beaver* Spring 1977 pp. 39-40 and Carol M. Judd, 'Mixed Bloods of Moose Factory 1730-1981: A Socio-Economic Study' *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 6:2 (1982) pp. 71-73

⁹⁶HBCA B.135/a/85, fo.6, Moose Fort Journal.

⁹⁷B.135/a/86, fo.10d, December13, 1798, Moose Fort Journal.

become a small Colony of very useful hands'.⁹⁸ Therefore, a few post schools began to be set up.

Indeed, education began at the posts before the London Committee was aware of it. The first indications that the Committee had of the need to establish post schools were the requests for notebooks and other schools supplies to be sent out. Previously, the London Committee had for some time supplied posts with religious books and the chief officers had been encouraged to hold Sunday services and to promote 'Virtue, Diligence and Sobriety'.⁹⁹ One of the first posts to begin this process was Moose Factory. In the summer of 1793, John Thomas, Chief Factor at Moose, wrote to the Committee in London requesting fifty primers or spellers to use for teaching the children at the factory.¹⁰⁰ On 16 April 1794 it was resolved at the Committee meeting of the directors of the Hudson's Bay Company in London that 'Spelling Books for the Use of the Children at Hudson's Bay be sent in the following proportions to all the Factories: A[bany] R[iver] 100, M[oose] R[iver] 50, E[ast] M[ain] 50, Y[ork] F[actory] 100 and C[hurchill] R[iver]50.¹⁰¹ In addition, in a letter to William Hemmings Cook, Chief at York Factory from the Governor and Committee in London dated 29 May 1794, the Committee stated: 'We have sent you one Hundred Primers or Spelling Books, for the use of the Children at

⁹⁸Carol M. Judd, 'Mixed Bloods of Moose Factory', pp. 72-73.

⁹⁹Jennifer S. H. Brown, 'A Colony of Very Useful Hands', p. 40.

¹⁰⁰HBCA B.135/a/fo.79, Moose Fort Journal; A.6/15/fo.103f, pgh.19. London Outward Correspondence, 1793.

¹⁰¹HBCA A.1/47, fo.33d, London Minute Book.

York Factory, and hope, much good will be the result of your care and attention to their Improvement'.¹⁰²

By 13 December 1798, John Thomas recorded in the Moose Factory journal that the children were 'kept at their Books except when their Services are required out Doors'.¹⁰³ The children at Albany had been taught by William Spence, a company employee of the post until the summer of 1808 when William Harper, their first official schoolmaster arrived. Over the course of the winter of 1807-1808, Spence had taught eleven children 'the Alphabets, some of them monosyllables and dissyllables and John Hodgson Jr. and brother George had been writing text hand in their Copy Books'.¹⁰⁴ Finally, on 3 June 1807, a list of 'School Instructions' appeared in the London correspondence to Hudson's Bay, 1804-1809. The instructions noted that children from the age five should be admitted, that they should be retained in school until they completed their education or for a maximum of seven years from the time of admission unless their father quit the service before that time was up. Children who were abandoned because their parents had died in the service should be considered for admission. They should be taught 'Reading, Writing, Arithmetic & the fundamental Principles of Religion'. These schools should be open to children of 'Chiefs of Trading

¹⁰²HBCA A.6/15, fo.109, Governor and Committee, London to W.H. Cook, York Factory, 29 May, 1794.

¹⁰³HBCA B.135/a/86, fo.9d, Moose Fort Journal.

¹⁰⁴HBCA B.3/a, fo.112, Albany Post Journal.

Tribes friendly to the Company' who expressed a wish to have children attend.¹⁰⁵ The children must be christened 'by the Chief or other person acting in that Capacity'. A school journal was to be kept of each school's occurrences. The London Committee recommended 'early instruction as the most useful and best means of implanting in the minds of the Children habits of Industry, duty and utility'. It also recommended 'that Children should not be taught to Read out of the Bible or new Testament'. These books were not to be given them until they could 'read easily and understand them'.¹⁰⁶

William Hemmings Cook, Chief at York Factory, was eager to set up a school and to have direction from the London Committee in this regard. In 1806, he wrote to the Committee stating that the York Factory officers would act upon its concerns for education and at the same time he added some suggestions about what type of schoolmasters might be sought. He wrote, a 'Schoolmaster ought to be steady & if of advanced age his success might be greater, [for] the sending of Children to the Factory will depend upon the compliance of the Parents'.¹⁰⁷ The committee, however, felt that the surgeons of the posts could do the job. They responded in a letter to George Gladman at Eastmain Factory from Hudson Bay House:

we now send a parcel of books which are necessary & we hope that the Surgeons at the different factories, who must have much leisure time, will cheerfully engage in this useful service, they must not suppose that it requires any very particular qualifications or study, to engage in this service- while his pupils are learning,

¹⁰⁵HBCA A.6/17, fos. 119-120, 3 June, 1807, London Correspondence Book Outwards, 1804-1809.

¹⁰⁶Ibid., fo.121.

¹⁰⁷HBCA, B.239/b/79, fos.,50-51, York Factory Letterbook, 30 August, 1806.

with a very little attention, he will always find himself sufficiently prepar'd for their progressive improvement.¹⁰⁸

In the years 1807-1808 four schoolmasters were sent out to the Bay. William Garrioch was the first one to come. He was recruited by Orkney agent David Geddes.¹⁰⁹ The Governor and Committee told Geddes to engage Garrioch as a writer for £15 per annum for five years and that if he 'officiates as a schoolmaster when he arrives in the Bay he will be allowed the same pay as the others.'¹¹⁰ Garrioch arrived at York Factory in the autumn of 1807 and was employed in various duties including that of schoolmaster. An entry in the York Factory post journal for that year described him as follows: 'Mr. Garr[i]och who is attentive to the Guns and traps brings a fox at times and grou[s] a good partridge hunter and continues a diligent Schoolmaster (his old employ)'.¹¹¹ On 5 September 1808, Garrioch wrote to William Watt of Breckness, Skail about his arrival in Rupert's Land:

on the third day after my Arrival the children was Collected & put under my Tuition, which in all only Amounts to Eleven, besides three Lads, that came out as Writers, but could not officiate in that Station, & therefore was sent to School. The Chief has shown me particular favour, both during the passage & much more since coming Onshore, & he has also assured me that he will do all in his power to make my situation Comfortable.¹¹²

¹⁰⁸HBCA B.239/b/78, fo.62, York Factory Letterbook, 31 May 1807.

¹⁰⁹HBCA Geddes Family search file indicates that David Geddes was appointed HBC agent in Stromness in 1791. He acted in this capacity until September, 1811. His son George continued in the position until 1819.

¹¹⁰HBCA A.5/4, fo. 171, London Correspondence Outward.

¹¹¹HBCA B.239/a/114, York Factory Journal, 1807.

¹¹²HBCA Red River Churches and Schools Search File.

Garrioch left York Factory in 1812 and began work in Swan River. He retired from the company in 1822. However, his interest in teaching continued. In August 1825, he took charge of the Mission School at Red River.¹¹³ In 1829 he and his family moved to Middlechurch or St. Paul's parish and set up a permanent residence there. William lived there until his death in 1844.¹¹⁴ His son James later became a schoolmaster, as well, and taught Peter Erasmus, one of the sons included in this study.

A second schoolmaster, George Geddes, was sent to York Factory about the same time as Garrioch. He was the son of David Geddes. In 1808, George Geddes had five students at the school, two of whom are included in this study: namely, John Bunn and Joseph Cook. The York Factory journal indicated that Joseph Cook attended 'at times' possibly because he was also engaged as a writer for the company at that time.¹¹⁵ The other three students were John Bunn's sister, Mary, Harriet Ballandine and Catherine Sinclair. By August 1809, a total of eleven students were enrolled.¹¹⁶ The surgeon, Mr. John McNab, grandfather of John and Mary Bunn, also taught at the York Factory school.

By 1808, the instructions from the London Committee were becoming decidedly moral in tone and their view of the qualifications of schoolmasters had changed. For example, at a committee meeting in London on 30 March of that year

¹¹³HBCA E.4/1, Red River Parish Records.

¹¹⁴PAM MG 2- C38, The Journal of Peter Garrioch, 1843-1847, p. 14.

¹¹⁵HBCA B.239/a/115, fo. 2, 9 September 1808 York Factory Journal.

¹¹⁶HBCA B.239/a/115, fo. 2, 9 September 1808 York Factory Journal; *Ibid.*, fo. 17, 2 June 1809; *Ibid.*, B.239/a/116, fo. 23, 28 August, 1809.

Mr. David Geddes, HBC recruiting officer in the Orkneys was instructed:

to provide Schoolmasters to instruct the Children of the Servants and also the Children of such native Families as may be desirous of reaping the benefit of Civilization and religious Instruction at each of the Company's Factories at a Salary of £30 p. Ann. To be increas'd according to merit.¹¹⁷

That same year a third schoolmaster, James Clouston, was hired for five years at a salary of £30 per annum and sent out from the Orkney Islands to Eastmain Factory.¹¹⁸ He was twenty-one years old at the time. The list of pupils shows that there were fifteen children in attendance at the Eastmain school.¹¹⁹ Clouston taught until 1811 when he set off from Eastmain for Neokweskaw Lake to begin his career as a trader. The only record of Clouston's teaching that has survived is a signed 'List of the Children at EM School August 29th 1810' and a list of the books he indented for.¹²⁰ These books were listed and priced in the invoice of goods sent from London to Eastmain in 1811.¹²¹ The list included the following:

Dictionary pronouncing (Scott Edin.)
 Good effects of prayer exemplified in Dobson's Family
 History sacred Mrs Trimmer
 Hymns Watt's
 Moral sketches for young minds
 Murray's exercises
 Murray's grammar

¹¹⁷HBCA A.1/49, fo. 62-62d, London Minute Books.

¹¹⁸Ibid., HBCA A.1/49, fo. 70.

¹¹⁹K.G. Davies, ed., Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals, pp. 342.

¹²⁰Ibid., pp. 342-343.

¹²¹Ibid.

Scriptures abridged Revd. Mr. Sellon
Spelling books New London

Daily devotions and Bibles and alphabets were also requested. In the same letter, Clouston asked the Governor and Committee for a reflecting telescope, a brass sextant and a case of instruments, indicating that he was already making other plans for his future.¹²²

The fourth schoolmaster hired was William Harper from Stromness. He was posted to Albany from 1808 to 1813. He began earning £30 per annum but his wage was increased in 1813 to £50 per annum. William Clouston of Stromness wrote to David Geddes that as a 'Schoolmaster for Children in Hudson's Bay', Harper was 'well qualified for the Office'.¹²³ This statement raises questions regarding the qualifications that the Hudson's Bay Company was looking for in a schoolmaster. Answers to this question are difficult to ascertain. We do know, as noted above, that initially the London committee was not too concerned about the quality of schoolmasters. They felt that the post surgeons could do the job. But shortly afterwards, they became more cognizant of the need for good schoolmasters. In addition, we know that schoolmasters were proposed because the committee thought it unlikely that any clergymen could be found willing to go to the Bay.¹²⁴ In 1807, some of the chief factors offered to pay part of the expenses if clergymen were sent, but the Committee resolved the following year, to send

¹²²Ibid., p. 343.

¹²³HBCA A.1/49, fo. 70, London Minute Books.

¹²⁴K. G. Davies, ed. Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals, p. 342n.

schoolmasters 'to instruct the children of servants in actual employ and also children of Indian chiefs entrusted to the Co's care'.¹²⁵ We also know from Harper, Clouston and Garrioch's journals and correspondence that they were all able to write and express themselves well. Second, these schoolmasters felt that the children they taught seemed to make good progress. For example, in the only extant school journal, William Harper noted that his scholars 'improve very well in spelling, reading and writing'. However, he stated further that he found his 'arithmeticians advancing very slowly.' Indeed, Harper noted, 'I find Arithmetic the hardest to make them understand of anything that I have made trial of as yet,' although he hoped 'to surmount that difficulty by constant perseverance.'¹²⁶

John Hodgson Jr. was an exception in the field of arithmetic. Harper made several entries in his school journal noting Hodgson's advances in this subject. Hodgson progressed through addition, multiplication, reduction and rules of three direct in quick succession.¹²⁷ This may be owing to the fact that at age sixteen he was one of the oldest children in the school at that time and perhaps also that his father had been trained in mathematics at a London charity school as was mentioned earlier.

¹²⁵HBCA A.6/17, pp. 123-4, 173-4, 209-212, 239, London Correspondence Outward, 1807.

¹²⁶HBCA B.3/a/112, fo.4, Albany Post School Journal.

¹²⁷John Herbert Sangster, National Arithmetic in Theory and Practice designed for the use of Canadian Schools (Montreal: Printed and Published by John Lovell, 1866), p. 208 explains what the 'rule of three' is. This rule is still used today and was clarified for me by the kindness of Professor Roy Dowling, Department of Mathematics, University of Manitoba.

From William Harper's Albany school journal, we learn about the curriculum that he taught. For example, he started his youngest new admissions with the alphabet and let them advance at their own pace. Then he taught them to read from Trimmer's Sacred History or from the New Testament. Next, they learned to write the small hand and text hand.¹²⁸ They committed a small portion to memory each day of the Church of England catechism or of Dr. Watt's Divine Songs for Children and learned to spell and do various arithmetic calculations. They also wrote in copy books to be sent back to England so that the London Committee could 'judge their progress'.¹²⁹ Samples of school work were sent from York Factory to London in 1809.¹³⁰

The children at the Albany School began at different times of the year and at varying ages. William Harper's weekly entries in the school journal note fairly regular attendance of most of the children. But there were times when children were taken out of school to accompany their fathers or mothers in some task which was part of fur trade seasonal activities. Both schoolmaster and children were often required in these tasks.

¹²⁸The Oxford English Dictionary indicates that text-hand is a fine large hand in writing. It originally meant one of the more formal hands in which the text of a book was often written. Now it is usually applied to a school-hand written in lines about half an inch wide. Small hand was a more conventional, smaller or cursive hand used in copy books.

¹²⁹Hudson's Bay Company archivist, Anne Morton, informed me that none of the children's copy books exist in the collection.

¹³⁰Jennifer S.H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 166; Michael Payne, The Most Respectable Place in the Territory: Everyday Life in Hudson's Bay Company Service: York Factory 1788 to 1870 (National Historic Parks and Sites, 1989), p. 111.

For example, in July, gardening, fishing and packing of furs had to be done.¹³¹ In the fall the vegetable crops had to be harvested and stored for the winter. Hunting was an ongoing activity. All these tasks resulted in many interruptions of the formal classroom education. William Harper recorded in his school journal on 15 April 1809 that 'John Hodgson Junr. left school' and is 'employed working with the Cooper'.¹³² Another father took his youngest girl to the goose tent.¹³³ In addition, in June 1809 Mr. Hodgson, the current chief at Albany took two of his children from school to go to Martins Falls with him. They were gone for about a month. Harper noted too, that 'Mr. Sanderson also gone Inland has taken both his children along with him.'¹³⁴

Despite all these interruptions, however, the children seemed to attend constantly in certain months, March in particular. But because only one school journal exists which records one year's events it is difficult to determine progress made at Albany school in other years. Some information about the schools at Moose, York, Eastmain and Churchill can be gleaned from the post journals but it is sketchy.

When the school lessons began to be taught at the posts, actual physical structures were prepared specifically for this purpose. For example, it was recorded at York Factory on 3 October, 1809 that a bricklayer was 'erecting a chimney in the Beer

¹³¹Jennifer S. H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 167.

¹³²HBCA B.3/a/112, fo. 3, Albany Post School Journal, 1808-1809.

¹³³Ibid., HBCA B.3/a/112, fo. 3d.

¹³⁴Ibid.

Shed for the purpose of converting this place into a Winter School Room'.¹³⁵ At Albany, too, a few of the labourers began to convert the beer room or brewery into a classroom. The beer room was likely chosen because it would have a fireplace. The first white woman to enter the fur trade may have served as the children's nurse at the Albany School until she was discharged in September 1809. Her name was Isabella Gunn. She had accompanied her lover to Moose Factory in 1806 posing as a man named John Fubbister. Her identity was revealed a few months later when she gave birth to a son and was no longer allowed to work with the men.¹³⁶

Fathers educated children themselves in other regions at posts that did not have schools. The example of John Work educating his own children in the Columbia district has been referred to above. Similarly, James Bird Sr., who worked as a chief factor for the Hudson's Bay Company for many years in the Saskatchewan district, educated his own children at various posts on the North Saskatchewan River. David Smyth noted that James Bird's son, 'Jemmy Jock and all but one of his brothers received their rudimentary education at fur trade posts there, undoubtedly from their father.'¹³⁷ James Bird Sr. was an early advocate of education for the mixed-descent offspring of the fur trade.¹³⁸ From the mid-1790s he ordered a variety of books from England for himself and his family

¹³⁵HBCA B.239/a/119, fo. 26, York Factory Post Journal.

¹³⁶Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870, pp. 176-177.

¹³⁷David Smyth, James 'Jemmy Jock' Bird Jr., unpublished paper, 1986, p. 2.

¹³⁸Ibid.

including dictionaries and spelling books for children.¹³⁹ Although Bird welcomed the establishment of the company-sponsored school at York Factory in 1808, there is no evidence that any of his children had the opportunity to attend.¹⁴⁰

By about 1811 the post schools at Albany, York, Eastmain, Moose and Churchill River were declining or had already closed. Most schoolmasters found other work in the trade. James Clouston quit teaching at Eastmain in 1811 and began a career as a trader. It seems the Eastmain school was closed then because 'it would cost too much and take too long to form the required small colony of very useful hands' as there were rather more boys than girls in the school.¹⁴¹ It has been noted that William Garrioch left York Factory in 1812. Michael Payne points out that Mr. Geddes, the other schoolmaster at York, was listed in personnel records in that capacity up to 1813.¹⁴² The attempt at establishing schoolmasters at Bayside posts was abandoned completely after 1813. The reasons for this are unclear but the annual letter from York Factory, 28 September 1807, suggested that the officers in charge felt the school's progress would be hindered if 'native women' were attending to the children:

Native women as attendants on these young persons seems improper - their society would keep alive the Indian language & with it, its native superstition which ought to be obliterated from the mind with all possible care. It is therefore

¹³⁹Ibid., p. 3.

¹⁴⁰Ibid.

¹⁴¹Jennifer S. H. Brown, 'Colony', p. 43.

¹⁴²Michael Payne, The Most Respectable Place in the Territory: Everyday Life in Hudson's Bay Company Service York Factory 1788 to 1870 (National Historic Parks and Sites, 1989), p. 111.

humbly suggested that a female from England of suitable abilities & good moral character accompanying the schoolmaster would obviate the necessity of employing such attendants & the cleanliness of the Children & domestic Economy of the seminary under the superintendence of a respectable Matron, would, we have no doubt be equal to the wishes of your Honors & promise to the undertaking, that success, which could not be expected from a more limited regulation. The expenses necessarily incurred in forwarding this benevolent design, would, as far as your Honors thought proper be cheerfully sustain'd by those whose children received the benefit of the institution. The residence of the Children & their instructors would be most convenient at a short distance from the Factory, where firewood & country provisions, could with little difficulty be procured on the spot. Many places of this kind are to be found in the Vicinity of York & such retired situations would not only estrange the Children from their Indian acquaintance, but present other advantages friendly to the progress of Education morality & good order.¹⁴³

Had they managed to keep the schools open, they wanted to separate the children from their native families and hoped thereby to hasten the process of inculcating them with British values and morals. Although post schools were abandoned by 1811 as a resource for officers' children, in 1834 at York Factory, an evening school was set up for tradesmen, labourers and children.¹⁴⁴

Education at Red River

At about the same time that the post schools went into decline, the directors of the Company began to look to the Red River Settlement as a place to send children of officers and servants to be educated. This was particularly important for families of employees who were being discharged and for children whose parents had died or abandoned them for whatever reason. The first group of Selkirk settlers who wintered at

¹⁴³Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁴⁴Ibid., p. 112.

York Factory in 1811-12 also required schools and churches in the settlement. Miles Macdonell who was in charge of these colonists wrote to Lord Selkirk on 1 October 1811 regarding them:

They, as well as a great number of the Company's officers and other servants in the country, feel interested in its success and look towards it as a future asylum for themselves and their numerous offspring.--I am informed that many of the Company's Servants...who have served their time, and have families with Indian women will be induced to join as soon as they see a Settlement begun on a permanent basis.¹⁴⁵

Nine years later, the HBC's London Committee sent letters to George Simpson in February and March of 1822 reflecting the need to educate the children. Further, the letters noted that if no plan was devised for these children, 'they form a burden which cannot be got rid of without expense; and...will become dangerous to the Peace of the Country and the safety of the Trading Posts.'¹⁴⁶ The Committee felt it would be best in the long run to 'incur some Expense in placing these people where they may maintain themselves and be civilized and instructed in Religion'.¹⁴⁷ The same letter stated:

We consider these people ought all to be removed to Red River where the Catholics will naturally fall under the Roman Catholic Mission ...and the Protestants and Orphan Children as fall to be maintained and clothed by the Company, may be placed under the Protestant Establishment, and Schools under the Revd. Mr. West. The Church Missionary Society have voted large

¹⁴⁵Jennifer S.H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 168.

¹⁴⁶R. Harvey Fleming ed., Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-1831 (Toronto, Champlain Society, 1940), letter to George Simpson from the London Committee, 27 February 1822, pp. 32-33.

¹⁴⁷Ibid.

sums for the Provision of two Clergymen and a School Master and Mistress for the Instruction of Indian Children, and allow other Children to be educated in these Schools on Payment of a moderate fee.¹⁴⁸

In the following summer, 1823, the Hudson's Bay Committee decided to encourage its officers who had Indian wives and children to take a greater interest in education. In accordance with this, the Council at York required every father to attend divine service regularly with his family, to address his children in his own mother tongue, and to devote part of his leisure time 'to teach his children their A.B.C. [and] Catechism together with short or appropriate Prayer'.¹⁴⁹

By the time the London Committee of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Council at York began to consider the Red River Colony as a resource for the education of its native children, rudimentary educational facilities were being developed there. As early as 1812, Lord Selkirk had identified a need for educational institutions in the colony. He had, in fact, suggested that arithmetic, reading and writing be taught to children in their native tongue.¹⁵⁰ These subjects, he felt, should be taught along with much precision, drill and discipline. In the same year the Hudson's Bay Company sent a schoolmaster to the new settlement. He was Francis Swirds from Sligo, Ireland.¹⁵¹ George McBeth and John Matheson came out in 1815. These three teachers stayed only

¹⁴⁸Ibid.

¹⁴⁹Ibid., pp. 60-61.

¹⁵⁰C. J. Jaenen, 'Foundations of Dual Education at Red River 1811-1834', Transactions Series III, no. 21, 1964-1965, Winnipeg, 1965, p. 36.

¹⁵¹Ibid., p. 39.

a few months before the colony was dispersed by the North West Company.¹⁵² The uncertain existence of the colony and the conflict between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company made it a difficult place for educational developments and it was not until 1818 when Selkirk invited the Roman Catholic Bishop of Quebec, Joseph-Octave Plessis, to establish a mission in his colony that any permanent educational training began.¹⁵³

Plessis promptly appointed missionaries Joseph-Norbert Provencher and Severe Dumoulin to begin a mission in the colony.¹⁵⁴ His plan was not to rely on the administration of Red River for funding but rather to plunge ahead and create among the 'little bois brules', people who themselves could later become teachers.¹⁵⁵ Plessis planned to draw on the children of partners of the North West Company and other wealthy fathers to become part of the new schools. However, he made it clear that no social distinction was to be made among the children. Both the sons of bourgeois and lowly buffalo hunters were to be given a thorough classical education. In six months, three schools had been established, one in St. Boniface, one at the Forks and one at Pembina.¹⁵⁶ In 1820 the Reverend John West was appointed by the Hudson's Bay

¹⁵²J. W. Chalmers, 'Education and the Honourable Company', Alberta Historical Review, vol. 13, No. 3 (Summer 1965), pp. 25-28.

¹⁵³C.J. Jaenen, 'Foundations', p. 41.

¹⁵⁴*Ibid.*, p. 42.

¹⁵⁵*Ibid.*, p. 45.

¹⁵⁶*Ibid.*, p. 46.

Company to be the first Church of England chaplain in Red River. A graduate of Oxford, he was a member of the Anglican Church Missionary Society.¹⁵⁷ It was through West's Church Missionary Society connections that the Hudson's Bay Company had heard of him. They engaged him to serve as company chaplain. In addition, he was hired to set up and supervise schools at Red River and to provide religious instruction for the mixed-descent children of Company officers.¹⁵⁸ West also served as minister to the Presbyterian settlers of Red River who had been promised their own clergyman by Lord Selkirk.

West was accompanied to Hudson Bay by George Harbidge, who had been hired as a schoolmaster by the Company. West began his assigned tasks immediately upon his arrival at York Factory in 1821. He noted in his journal that there were a 'number of half-breed children running about, growing up in ignorance and idleness, and...that they were a numerous offspring of Europeans by Indian women found at all the Company's posts'.¹⁵⁹ West took a native boy, Pemuteuithinew, whom he renamed James Hope, with him from York Factory. At Norway House he recruited Sakachuwescum, later known as Henry Budd.¹⁶⁰ Nine more pupils joined him enroute to Red River. Upon his arrival he

¹⁵⁷John West, The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at The Red River Colony (Yorkshire: S.R. Publishers, Ltd., 1966), p. x.

¹⁵⁸Winona Stevenson, "The Red River Indian Mission School and John West's 'Little Charges', 1820-1833", Native Studies Review, vol. 4, 1988, p. 134.

¹⁵⁹C. J. Jaenen, 'Foundations of Dual Education', p. 53.

¹⁶⁰Raymond M. Beaumont, 'Origins and Influences: The Family Ties of the Reverend Henry Budd', Prairie Forum, vol. 17, no. 2, 1992, p. 168.

quickly established a residence and a school by repairing a log house and continued to assemble Indian children to attend his school.¹⁶¹ The main purpose of the Indian school was to introduce and extend Christianity among the Indians.¹⁶² In addition, he established a day school for the use of settlers' children, children of retired HBC employees and their native wives and in his words, 'half caste children whose parents had died or deserted them'.¹⁶³ Children in the day school were taught religion and British manners and customs. In addition, West set up a Sunday school designed principally for the benefit of Indian wives and older children of settlers.¹⁶⁴ It was intended to familiarize the students with the basic concepts of the Church of England as well as to develop their competence in writing and speaking English.¹⁶⁵ Texts such as the Bible and a Sunday School Speller were used. Agriculture soon became an important part of West's curriculum. It became a means of curbing the nomadic lifestyle of the Indians which he felt hindered their conversions.

Apart from George Harbidge, teachers were recruited from the settlement itself. In the early 1820s men such as Joseph Spence, a retired officer, Thomas Wishart, 'a

¹⁶¹Ibid., p. 54.

¹⁶²John E. Foster, Program for the Red River Mission: The Anglican Clergy 1820-1826, Histoire Sociale/Social History, no. 4, 1969, p. 62.

¹⁶³John West, Substance of a Journal, p. 100.

¹⁶⁴John E. Foster, 'Program for the Red River Mission', p. 62.

¹⁶⁵Ibid., p. 68.

settler' and Charles Cook, a 'Halfbreed Communicant' taught in the school.¹⁶⁶

In 1823 West returned to England permanently. While he was quite successful as a teacher, his preaching methods were less well received. Nicholas Garry, a Hudson's Bay Company director who visited Red River in 1821, recorded in his diary that he 'saw four little Indian Boys who have been educated by Mr. West and who speak very good English'.¹⁶⁷ Regarding his preaching, Garry recorded that 'Mr. West is not a good Preacher; he unfortunately attempts to preach Extempore from Notes, for which he has not the Capacity, his Discourse being unconnected and ill-delivered. He likewise mistakes his Point, fancying that by touching severely and pointedly on the Weakness of People he will produce Repentance'.¹⁶⁸ Similarly, George Simpson disliked West's attempts to curb trade on Sunday and felt that in general he did not always support the company's interests.¹⁶⁹ West was replaced by Reverend David Jones, a CMS missionary from Wales, and William Garrioch, the Orkneyman who had come to York Factory to serve as a schoolmaster in 1807. Garrioch, however, because of poor health, gave up teaching soon after he arrived in the settlement in 1829.¹⁷⁰ Jones continued the work that West had begun but found that teachers were badly needed at the day school. Therefore,

¹⁶⁶Ibid.

¹⁶⁷Diary of Nicholas Garry, Deputy-Governor of the Hudson's Bay Company from 1822-1835. A detailed narrative of his travels in the Northwest Territories of British North America in 1821. (Royal Society of Canada), p. 139.

¹⁶⁸Ibid., p. 157.

¹⁶⁹Ibid., p. 60.

¹⁷⁰Ibid., p. 66.

in keeping with West's practice of hiring local teachers, Jones hired Dr. John Bunn but Bunn resigned shortly thereafter to continue his medical practice and an older Orkney company servant by the name of Peter Corrigal was installed in his place.¹⁷¹

George Harbidge was sent back to England as well. On 24 July 1824, Jones wrote to Joseph Pratt, CMS Secretary, noting that Harbidge could not 'keep accounts nor teach the boys the common rules of Arithmetic'. These failings, however, Jones stated were not as offensive as 'a haughtiness of disposition which entirely alienates him from the affections of the Indians under his charge'.¹⁷² Harbidge himself made no mention of his difficulties teaching arithmetic. But he did voice his opinions about the need to teach the students to learn to speak English. Earlier that month, Harbidge had written to Joseph Pratt with the observation that 'until [the students] learn to talk [English] fluently it is next to impossible to convey any Ideas to their minds; they may read a Sentence fluently & even learn to repeat it & not understand a Syllable'. Additionally, Harbidge's purpose went much beyond teaching English. He continued in the letter to Pratt:

it is my frequent and fervent prayer that while I am thought worthy to hold this important situation; I may receive Grace, Wisdom, and understanding to enable me to pursue with Diligence, and Faithfulness; and with Singleness of heart the duties connected therewith. I trust my object is not merely to learn them to read the letter, but that they may know the spiritual meaning of the Word of God: to this end and for this purpose my prayers are directed to Him'.¹⁷³

¹⁷¹J. E. Foster, 'Program for Red River', pp. 66-67.

¹⁷²C.J. Jaenen, 'Foundations of Dual Education at Red River 1811-1834', pp. 63-64.

¹⁷³CMS cc1/ 030/2, George Harbidge Red River, to Joseph Pratt, Secretary of the Church Missionary Society, 1 July 1824.

Jones continued West's program for the next three years with reasonable success. He endeavored to 'collect as many children...and impart to them as much knowledge, especially religious knowledge, as they are capable of receiving'.¹⁷⁴ But steady progress was not always made. For instance, in 1825, Governor Simpson informed Jones that no more children could be obtained for the residential school because the deaths of some children led the Indians throughout the Company's territories to question the treatment the children were receiving at the school. As he wrote to Jones, 'Information of the death of the two Indian boys at the School under your direction last season has reached every Tribe in the Honble Company's Territories with the addition that it was occasioned by starvation and want of attention to their comforts, this report is said to have originated with Dr. Hamlyn, the colony's medical doctor, and the ulterior consequence 'tis more than probable may be dangerous to the lives of our people and to the safety of our Establishments'.¹⁷⁵ Despite this tragedy, Jones was liked much better than West. For instance, he was appreciated by the Presbyterian Scots because he amended the Anglican service to accommodate them on several points.¹⁷⁶ In addition, his strategy of integrating the school with the settlement likely contributed to his success.

In 1825, Jones was joined by Reverend William Cockran of the Church Missionary Society and his wife, and in the early 1830s by Reverend John Macallum, a

¹⁷⁴C. J. Jaenen, 'Dual Foundations', p. 62.

¹⁷⁵HBCA D.4/5, p.15 Simpson to Jones, August 26, 1825. These two boys were not identified.

¹⁷⁶C. J. Jaenen, 'Dual Foundations', p. 64.

classical tutor from Scotland who had a Masters of Arts from King's College, Aberdeen.¹⁷⁷ Macallum's sister, Margaret came with him as an assistant.¹⁷⁸ In July 1831, Simpson reported to the Governor and Committee his pleasure at the developments of the CMS schools in Red River as follows:

The former is conducted with great zeal and ability by Revd. Mr Cockran, whose praiseworthy and indefatigable exertions have been productive of the happiest result in the moral and religious improvement of their followers. The latter is on a much better footing than when I last had the honor of addressing you on this subject; a new teacher who is well qualified for the situation he fills, having been provided for the Indian School; while Mr & Mrs Cockran keep a public day school and Mr Jones has established a Boarding School for the Children of Gentlemen in the service to whom it is intended to afford the benefit of good education. These Establishments, together with a School kept by the Gentlemen of the Catholic Mission and a small temporary School kept by a Settler named Corrigal, I conceive are quite sufficient to answer every useful purpose in the present state of the Colony.¹⁷⁹

In 1832, Simpson's correspondence to the Governor and Committee mentioned several times Mr. Jones' plan to establish a boarding school at Red River. He reported that 'Mr. Jones has it in contemplation to establish an academy on a respectable footing, under his own direction assisted by regularly educated teachers from England for the instruction of boys, the sons of Gentlemen in the service whose parents may be desirous of affording their children the benefits of a good education'.¹⁸⁰ Jones himself

¹⁷⁷Thomas F. Bredin, 'The Red River Academy', The Beaver, Winter, 1974, p. 12.

¹⁷⁸Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties", p. 189.

¹⁷⁹HBCA D.4/98, fo.6-6d, July, 1831, Governor George Simpson's Official Reports to Governor and Committee.

¹⁸⁰HBCA D.4/99, fo.6d, Governor George Simpson's Official Reports to Governor and Committee, 1832.

commented that the school was to be 'an asylum for the reception and instruction of the children of Chief Factors, Chief Traders & clerks in the service of the Honble Hudson's Bay Company'.¹⁸¹

The construction of this school began in October 1832 and Simpson made several pleas to his chief factors, Alexander Christie, John George McTavish, Donald McIntosh and George Keith to send children to this school. He promised that the children would have free 'passage by the canoes from Canada' coming into Red River.¹⁸² On 29 June 1833, Simpson wrote from Red River to John George McTavish at Moose Factory : 'Pray give notice that passages will be obtained free of expence to any children for Red River School. I [am] very anxious that this establisht. should succeed & hope you will [give] it your best support...'¹⁸³ In addition, Simpson urged McTavish 'to encourage the sending of Children of any ages; they will be taken care of'.¹⁸⁴ In 1833, Reverend David Jones opened Red River Academy.

In the summer of 1834 Simpson reported to the Governor and Committee that on a recent visit to Red River he found, 'The Gentlemen of the Protestant and Catholic missions were pursuing their zealous endeavours, in the works of morality, religion and education, with success ...The boarding school under the direction of Mr & Mrs Jones is attended by about 40 boys & girls and seems to be well managed - the tutor and

¹⁸¹Thomas F. Bredin, 'The Red River Academy', p. 11.

¹⁸²HBCA B.135/c/2, fo.87, Moose Factory Correspondence Inward 1789-1864.

¹⁸³HBCA B.135/c/2, fo.109, Moose Factory Correspondence Inward 1789-1864.

¹⁸⁴HBCA B.135/c/2, fo.96, Moose Factory Correspondence Inward 1789-1864.

governess affording entire satisfaction'.¹⁸⁵

In August of the same year Simpson wrote to John George McTavish at Moose, the Red River Settlement continues in a tranquil and thriving state, and I have peculiar satisfaction in saying that morality religion & education are spreading rapidly among its numerous population, the Boarding School established by the Revd Mr Jones is really a credit to the country, and is highly deserving of being patronised and supported by all who have young folks of an age to benefit by the very important advantages it holds forth, at the very moderate expense of £20 p.annum for bed board washing & education, which I shall be obliged by your making known to the Gentlemen by whom you are surrounded.¹⁸⁶

During the years 1833 to 1845, several native sons, future employees of the Hudson's Bay Company, came to Red River to attend the academy, as it was then called. Their fathers paid fees for the following children to attend - William McMurray (1833-38); Alexander K. Isbister (1834-37); Peter Warren Dease Jr. (1833-41); Thomas Thomas Jr. (1836-42); William Lucas Hardisty (1836-42); Richard Hardisty (1840-49); Joseph Hardisty (1836-46); George Heron (1833-1837); Benjamin McKenzie (1845-53). Peter Ogden Jr., Hector Aeneas McKenzie, Pierre Pambrun, Ranald McDonald and John Charles also attended although their exact dates are not known.¹⁸⁷

Red River Academy was the only source of secondary education available to the Protestant population in Rupert's Land until 1849 when St. John's College was set up.¹⁸⁸

¹⁸⁵HBCA D.4/100, fo.3, Governor's Correspondence.

¹⁸⁶HBCA D.4/20, fos.27d-28, Governor's Correspondence.

¹⁸⁷HBCA Red River Schools search file.

¹⁸⁸William J. Fraser, St. John's College, Winnipeg 1866-1966: A History of the First Hundred Years of the College (Winnipeg: The Wallingford Press, 1966), pp. 7-11.

Fur trade children came from what is now Alberta, British Columbia and northern Manitoba to attend the school.¹⁸⁹ In 1832, a year before the school opened, Jones stated that he intended that the school be set up for moral improvement, religious instruction and general education of boys; the sons of gentlemen belonging to the trade.¹⁹⁰ Jones insisted that the pupils be isolated 'entirely apart from the natives of the country ...[with] no opportunity of speaking other than the English Language and... such children as may have relatives at the settlement may have but very limited intercourse with them'.¹⁹¹ Fees including tuition, clothing, and board and room totalled £30. In addition there was an entrance fee of £5. Jones himself was the headmaster and his wife supervised and taught the girls until her death in 1836. Reverend William Cockran taught the boys, and John Macallum joined the staff in 1833, later replacing Jones as headmaster. Expenses were covered by tuition fees and from 1835 on, an annual grant of £100 from the Company. The company granted an equal amount to the Roman Catholic schools.

At Red River Academy the same basics were taught that had been taught at the

¹⁸⁹In her PhD thesis, 'The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest, Fur Trade Children: Race, Class, and Gender', Juliet Pollard notes that a school was set up in Fort Vancouver in 1832. Anglican minister, Herbert Beaver served as the chaplain of the school. Two native sons, Ranald MacDonald and Andrew Pambrun who attended in that year came to Red River to attend the Academy in the mid-1830s. Ranald MacDonald did not serve in the fur trade and therefore is not included in my sample. Andrew Pambrun became a schoolmaster in Red River for a time in the 1840s and then worked for the HBC as a clerk in Washington Territory in the 1850s. (pp. 285, 288, 297, 303). Since only one son in my sample attended the Fort Vancouver school for a brief time, the school was not researched in detail for this study.

¹⁹⁰Thomas F. Bredin, 'The Red River Academy', p. 11.

¹⁹¹William J. Fraser, St. John's College, Winnipeg 1866-1966, p. 12.

post schools. Reading, writing, arithmetic and religion formed the main core of the curriculum. Spelling was taught as a number of spellers were ordered by the schoolmasters. In a report to the Church Missionary Society in 1835 Jones and Cockran included a summary of the courses offered to the twenty-five girls and thirty boys then in attendance. The academy also had a library that allowed access to a wider collection of books than usually available at the posts and the schoolmasters often channeled certain promising students in directions of higher learning. For example, some students were allowed to study Latin or Euclidean geometry. By the 1840s, some French may have been taught by the Church of England schoolmasters and missionaries as a Pronouncing French Dictionary and French Bibles were among books ordered by the Reverend John Smithurst.¹⁹²

At the CMS Upper Church day school, the teacher, Andrew Dominique Pambrun, son of Chief Trader Pierre Chrysologue Pambrun and his part-Cree wife, Catherine, noted in his report for 1844 that 'attendance of the School during the whole of last winter was very irregular, in consequence of the scarlet fever having been so prevalent through the settlement which was a great detriment to the progress of the children, but since the stay of the fever, the school has been pretty well filled'.¹⁹³ Pambrun commented in the same report on the progress that the children were making: 'some of the children are pretty well advanced, having gone through the whole of arithmetic, & having English

¹⁹²Transcribed from Pierre C. Pambrun file in possession of Jennifer S.H. Brown; CMS c c 1/063/37B, Reports for Schools, 1844-1845.

¹⁹³CMS c c1/048/1-2., Reports for Schools, 1844-1845.

Grammar, Geography, & Book-Keeping’.

After his wife’s death in 1836, Reverend David Jones decided to return to England with their children. In June of the following year the Hudson’s Bay Company offered to purchase the academy buildings from Jones and lease them to Reverend John Macallum who had taken over as headmaster when Jones left. After a visit to the academy in 1844, George Jehoshaphat Mountain, the Bishop of Montreal, reported that the academy was superior to schools in most remote settlements.¹⁹⁴ In the 1840s, however, the academy went into a decline due to a decrease in enrolment and it was shut down by the end of the decade. The reasons for the decline in enrolment are not known but they may have stemmed in part from the fact that there was great difficulty in obtaining and keeping a female teacher.

Another reason may have been the rather harsh discipline at the school as the students themselves testified. For example, Benjamin McKenzie, grandson of Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie Sr., attended the Academy in the mid-1840s and wrote about his experiences there. He described Macallum as a ‘stern, red-wigged, snuff-taking man who kept by his desk a finger-sized native brown willow stick, about three and a half feet long’.¹⁹⁵ He continued, ‘Rev. John McCallum...prepared a goodly number of Postmasters, Clerks and future Chief Traders and Chief Factors for the H.B.C. His ambition was to make good writers of boys. He was a conscientious and faithful worker, but a very severe pedagogue. He over-estimated the value of the use of the rod’.

¹⁹⁴Ibid., p. 10.

¹⁹⁵Thomas F. Bredin, ‘The Red River Academy’, p. 13.

Benjamin concluded his remarks with the comment that 'my school days under Mr. McCallum were bitter as Egyptian slavery and profited me very little'.¹⁹⁶

Other people commented on Macallum's harsh discipline and other aspects of his teaching at the Academy. For example, in a letter to her mother in September of 1843, Letitia Hargrave, the Scottish wife of York Factory's James Hargrave offered some insight into Macallum's character and his methods. She wrote:

Mr MacCallums school is going to wreck. Children who have had duck geese & venison 3 times a day are supposed to suffer from breakfasts of milk & water with dry bread, severe floggings, confinement after any fault & the total want of the following meal. The boys & girls are constantly fainting but MacCallum wont change his system. Many girls have got ill, and as he makes them strip off their Indian stockings & adopt English fashions it is not surprising. They must take a certain walk every day, plunging thro' the freezing snow...Then if their mother's are not legally married they are not allowed to see their children. This may be all very right, but it is fearfully cruel for the poor unfortunate mothers did not know that there was any distinction & it is only within the last few years that any one was so married.¹⁹⁷

Two years later in September 1845, Letitia wrote to her father regarding the conflict between John Macallum and Miss Allen, a teacher of the girls at the Academy:

Mr. Macallum has quarrelled with Miss Allen whom he accused of laziness & eccentricity. She is very angry & brings as heavy charges ag[ain]st him, going the length of saying he is deranged. His school has fallen off to nothing & he told her it was her fault. She retorted & told him it was his own, & that he was so despotic & overbearing that both boys & girls were terrified for [sic] him.¹⁹⁸

¹⁹⁶PAM PRL (Ecclesiastical Province of Rupert's Land) 84-89 file 1, 7953, pp. 1-2, Reminiscences of the Reverend Benjamin McKenzie, Matlock, Manitoba. Undated.

¹⁹⁷Margaret Arnett Macleod, ed., The Letters of Letitia Hargrave (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), p. 177.

¹⁹⁸Ibid., p. 200.

Peter Garrioch, son of William Garrioch and Nancy Cook, also had difficulties with Macallum. In his journal on 23 May 1845, he wrote: 'This is Easter Sunday, I did not join in the Communion Table from the sole reason that I could not go...with that feeling of brotherly love which Mr McAllum has dwelt so largely upon in his preparatory discourse. The only grudge in my heart against any man, was against McAllum himself.'¹⁹⁹

John Dugald Cameron, who sent one of his daughters to the academy, regarded the female teachers Mrs. Mary Lowman and Mrs. Jones very highly. However, he was less complimentary about Macallum. In 1834, he wrote to James Hargrave that he was afraid that Mr. Macallum did not like his job, noting, 'he is too refined a Scholar to teach little Bruilles [Brulés] the A.B.C.'²⁰⁰ He added that Macallum 'has not things so much at heart as Mrs. Lowman'.²⁰¹ However, the following year, in a second letter to Hargrave, Cameron was less critical of Macallum when he began teaching the girls as well as the boys. He reported, 'my Daughter told me yesterday that since mr. Macallum began to teach, none of them has been allowed the use of the needle, which I am not sorry for, as they all sew well enough—except some of the little ones. The Boys are coming on well. McAllum is a man possest of immense patience'.²⁰²

¹⁹⁹PAM MG 2 C38 Peter Garrioch's Journal 1843-1847, p. 54.

²⁰⁰PAC MG 19, Series A21(1), vol. 4, James Hargrave Papers, pp. 731-733.

²⁰¹Ibid.

²⁰²G. P. De T. Glazebrook, ed., The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938) p. 181.

Macallum's letters in reply to those sent him by former students are quite revealing. Written in the mid-1840s to William McMurray, but meant to be shared with a number of students as indicated by the greeting, 'Dear Friends', they exhibit a great deal of pride in the former students of the 'école du nord' as he preferred to call the school.²⁰³ He expressed his pleasure that these young men were 'pursuing the path of virtue...avoiding the...finger of scorn or the...tongue of scandal, performing their respective duties...resolved by well-doing to obtain the esteem of man, and the approbation of God'.²⁰⁴ In 1845, he relayed the news that former students 'J[ohn] Charles and J[oseph] Hardisty will enter the Service this season'. He added that 'they are both smart, active and intelligent young men, and I trust will maintain by their future conduct the reputation of l'école du nord'.²⁰⁵ He also noted that Pierre Pambrun Jr. 'still remembered the Religious instructions of his early youth' and adhered to a promise exacted from him ten years ago 'to communicate religious knowledge when an opportunity offered, to the natives of the desert'.²⁰⁶ Macallum also wrote about the achievements of current students. For example, he stated that 'your old friend, Mr.[Alexander Kennedy] Isbister, had the First Greek, Chemical, and Mathematical prizes awarded to him last spring'. Isbister, he added, had cultivated and improved on his

²⁰³HBCA. E.61/1, fos. 1-15, McGowan Collection, William McMurray Correspondence, 1845-1846. Though Macallum's letters exist in this collection, the letters that he is responding to have not survived.

²⁰⁴*Ibid.*, fo.10.

²⁰⁵*Ibid.*, fo.11.

²⁰⁶*Ibid.*, fo.12.

natural abilities from childhood; whereas, the majority of them had not begun schooling until later in life.²⁰⁷ He analyzed the literary style of their letters and found their 'style is easy and flowing, the language appropriate and correct'. But he was most impressed by the spirit which pervaded them which, he claimed, 'evinced patient endurance, disregard of hardships, sensitiveness of reproach, a laudable ambition to excel, and a sedulous attention to duty, and a filial fear of God'.²⁰⁸ While Macallum praised his former students for virtues that he could claim to have instilled in them, he also took the opportunity to preach to them to keep up this work.

Though the educational advances made by the Hudson's Bay Company might be praised, a Red River education did not always bring the rewards that the native sons or their fathers thought it should. In fact, despite the fact that Simpson was such an ardent advocate of education and was so convinced that it would anglicize and Christianize the native peoples to everyone's benefit, he himself often overlooked the educational achievements of some native sons in the trade in the post-1821 era, preferring instead to keep them in the lower ranks because of their racial background which he associated with low social status. By the late 1840s and well into the 1850s, several sons were protesting against the fact that their education was not being recognized. For example, Pierre Pambrun Jr., the son of Pierre Pambrun Sr. and Kitty, the mixed-descent daughter of Edward Umphreville, protested in a letter to Edward Ermatinger, after being an HBC

²⁰⁷HBCA E.61/1, fo.3-4, McGowan Collection, William McMurray Correspondence, 1845-1846.

²⁰⁸Ibid., fo.12, Red River, May 19, 1846.

clerk for eighteen years, that even to 'those of a better Class and who have received a better education they [the HBC] do not even award a much better position'.²⁰⁹ He pointed out further that 'their [native sons'] education is as good and conduct as correct'. Several sons became better educated than their fathers who were officers, yet they could not rise through the ranks to that level. Charles McKenzie, whose son, Hector Aeneas, had attended Red River Academy pointed out in the 1840s that, 'There are now 60 or 70 boys in the Red River seminary, a dozen of whom are ready yearly to enter the service in the same capacity [apprentice clerks] - if they can, - better educated than the Chief Factors'.²¹⁰ Hector was an intelligent young man who had gone through a complete course of studies at the academy by 1840 and had obtained the highest testimonials from his professor. His failure to advance prompted Charles McKenzie to observe of the native sons in the company, that 'neither education nor abilities serve them'.²¹¹

Chief Factor James Anderson made similar observations regarding the treatment of graduates of Red River seminary, complaining directly to George Simpson in the early 1850s that 'It has occurred to me that there is something very unfair and certainly impolitic - in the way the young gentlemen educated at the R R School have been treated, and they must be something more than human, if this treatment do not rankle in their minds. In general their education is fully equal to that of the ap[prentice]: Cl[erk]: from

²⁰⁹PAC MG 19 A2, Series 2, vol. 1, pp. 274-275, Pierre Pambrun, St. Paul's to Edward Ermatinger, 22 June, 1858.

²¹⁰L. R. Masson, Les bourgeois de la compagnie de Nord-Ouest: recits de voyages, lettres et rapports inedits (vol. I, Quebec, 1889) p. 319.

²¹¹Ibid., p. 318.

Europe, and they perform precisely similar duties, but have only the rank, pay and allowances of ap[prentice]: Post Masters'.²¹² As examples, he continued:

I allude to the cases of Messrs. Miles and McKenzie - the Rule hitherto has been for Young Gentm. Natives of this country particularly if they had the misfortune to be educated on the Banks of Red River instead of the Thames - to get £20 per an: for 5 Years as ap: P.M. tho' doing the duty of ap: Clerks - then as Clerks 30. 40 & 50 - then £75 and lastly £100 - I thought these terms hard enough - but here Mr Miles who behaves very well and has taken Mr Ross' place at £100 p an: offered by the Council £30 p An: as P.M. for 3 Years instead of £30. 40 & 50 as clerk. And Mr McKenzie an excellent officer fit for any post in the Dist who has passed thro' the first 2 stages is offered £50 instead of £75.²¹³

Anderson, as the supervisor of these two men, had the responsibility of recommending them for promotion. He told Simpson that if he could not do that, he wished to be removed from the District rather than being perceived as misrepresenting their characters which was the basis upon which they were evaluated.

Some sons who did not enter the company's employ but resided at posts with their fathers, assisted their fathers in the writing of the post journals. For example, in 1828 Donald McIntosh Jr., who was with his father at the Nipigon post, apparently wrote 'more literate journal entries on his father's behalf' than those of his father.²¹⁴

Aboriginal Education

The majority of the mothers of the native sons in this study were of Cree

²¹²PAC MG 19, Series A, File 1, p. 58, James Anderson Papers.

²¹³Ibid., p. 51-52.

²¹⁴Elizabeth Arthur, ed., Thunder Bay District 1821-1892 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1973), p. 35n.

background. Some were Ojibwa and some were of mixed parentage—the daughters of North West or Hudson's Bay Company employees. Because these mothers left no written records of the relationships between themselves and their children, researchers must turn to the evidence left by European fur trader fathers to get a glimpse of the nature of aboriginal and mixed-descent children and the bond that existed between them and their aboriginal parents and other relatives. Fur traders James Isham, Andrew Graham, and Daniel Harmon wrote about the close ties between aboriginal mothers and their children. All three of these men had native families. Their comments provide insights into the nature of the parent/child bond, child-rearing practices and aboriginal education.

In the 1740s, James Isham noted that 'these Natives are Very Loving and Fond of their Children, Never I think seen any parent or Relation strike a child in anger all the time I have been here, or in these parts, beleving itt may be the Same all over America'.²¹⁵

Later in the same century, Andrew Graham spoke specifically about children born to European fathers and Indian mothers: 'the Indian parent and step-father are remarkably fond of them [their children]; and by this means receive much benefit by taking care of them when young'.²¹⁶ Graham observed that aboriginals seemed to possess the 'principles of humanity' and 'parental affection' in a 'stronger degree than civilised nations'. He commented on the abundance of physical affection and the lack of discipline by European standards, as follows: 'they have a strong affection for their offspring,

²¹⁵E.E. Rich, ed., James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743, pp. 92-93.

²¹⁶G. Williams, ed., Andrew Graham's Observations, p.145. European fathers of mixed-descent children were referred to sometimes as step-fathers because they referred to these children as their 'adopted children'.

caressing them even to a fault, seldom or never correcting them'.²¹⁷ Graham also noted that the children were breast-fed for as long as three years or more. He stated that although by that age they could eat other foods the parents were so fond of them that they did not wish to wean them.²¹⁸

Besides the nature of the relationship, Graham observed that mothers taught the children to 'snare hares, angle fish, build marten-traps'. In addition, he wrote,

the girl is shewn how to make shoes and ornaments, while the boys [sic] plays with his bow and arrows; and in time accompanies his father, and is instructed in every species of hunting that can render him of utility to the family, or make him capable of providing for one himself. This education, however simple, is nevertheless productive of every qualification necessary for an Indian whose wants are easily removed, and whose unambitious heart is contented with the supplies of nature.²¹⁹

Daniel Harmon, a North West Company employee who spent from 1800 to 1819-20 in Rupert's Land, commented on the intelligence of Indian and mixed-descent children. One five-year old boy, the son of North West Company officer A. N. McLeod, and a Rapid Indian woman, who was placed in his care to learn English, was 'like the most of the Children in this Country blessed with a retentive memory and apt to learn'.²²⁰ The boy spoke Saulteux and Cree well and was reasonably fluent in Assiniboine and French. In Harmon's own family, several languages were spoken. He taught his

²¹⁷Ibid., p. 150.

²¹⁸Ibid., p. 178.

²¹⁹Ibid., p. 179.

²²⁰W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, p. 50.

daughter, Polly, to read English. He added that 'in conversing with my children, I use entirely the Cree, Indian language; with their mother I more frequently employ the French. Her native tongue, however, is more familiar to her, which is the reason why our children have been taught to speak that, in preference to the French language'.²²¹

John Charles, Chief Factor of New Churchill, in his 1823 District Report, wrote of the close bond of the Crees of the Nelson House area to their children, noting that they 'seem very much attached to their children, tho' they pay very little attention to their Morals or are any way careful in keeping them properly clothed until real Necessity obliges them'. Later in the same report he commented again on the Crees' attachment to their children but this time he noted that they preferred their sons, 'the females being considered as the Inferior part of the Family, all the Drudgery and Labour is performed by them but as the[y] know no better they appear to bear all with cheerfulness and endure Hardships and Privation with an Indifference'.²²²

Ellen Smallboy's recollections of her life as a young Cree woman born in the 1850s, provides a testimony about Cree child-rearing and educational practices.²²³ Ellen Smallboy grew up in the James Bay area of Moose Factory. She told her story to Regina Flannery when she was in her eighties. Her firsthand account contributes a great deal to our limited knowledge about Cree life in the latter half of the nineteenth century.

²²¹Ibid., p. 187.

²²²HBCA B.91/a/8, pp. 72-75, New Churchill Report, 1823.

²²³Regina Flannery, *Ellen Smallboy: Glimpses of a Cree Woman's Life* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995).

Children, according to Ellen, were taught to walk and talk as soon as they were able and then to learn other important tasks through play. Boys were given bows with blunt arrows and girls cloth to cover a miniature *mickiwan*.²²⁴ Fostering good relations between children and the animal world began early.²²⁵ Ellen had been trained by her mother to perform tasks assigned to women. Ellen recalled that by the age of five or six young girls could set rabbit snares by themselves. In addition, they were trained to make fish nets and sew moccasins.²²⁶ She noted that 'hunting meant stalking caribou or other large game', and this is what male hunters did.²²⁷ Trapping on the other hand referred to beaver and men were good hunters but never good trappers. Life in the bush demanded flexibility and there was not a sharp division of labour. Ellen said, for example, 'I had been taught to make fish nets when I was about ten. Boys were not taught that but grown men could make them and often repaired them'.²²⁸ In the fall she was busy plucking, butchering and preparing the flesh of birds for drying. She also fished by net and cleaned and dried her catch. She harvested beaver and helped dispose of shot caribou.²²⁹

E. Ryerson Young's reminiscences about the first seven years of his childhood contain insights into Cree attitudes toward children and childhood from the perspective

²²⁴Ibid., p. 34.

²²⁵Ibid., p. 35.

²²⁶Regina Flannery, Ellen Smallboy: Glimpses of a Cree Woman's Life, p. 13.

²²⁷Ibid., p. 22.

²²⁸Ibid.

²²⁹Ibid., pp. 36-37.

of a white child. From Young's memoirs of his early life with his Cree nurse, Jennifer Brown reconstructs and reflects upon this remarkable cross-cultural encounter.²³⁰ Young 'Eddie' was the first child born in 1869 to Methodist missionary parents, Egerton R. and Elizabeth Bingham Young while they were stationed at Rossville mission near Norway House.²³¹ Eddie was raised until he was seven by a Cree nurse or nanny called 'Little Mary'. Mary preferred Eddie to his younger sister Lillian, showing the Cree cultural preference for males noted earlier by John Charles. Mary taught Eddie and his younger sister, Lillian, to speak Cree fluently, a gift which his parents wished him to maintain after their departure from the Norway House area. But it was Mary's objection to Eddie's parents' use of corporal punishment and confinement as disciplinary measures that made a lasting impact on young Eddie. Mary in her own constructive way taught Eddie how to endure his parents' physical punishments. Furthermore, when he was confined, Mary would join him and pass the time telling Cree stories. Her approach helped Eddie to adjust to the challenge of fitting into a new 'white' community in what is now Ontario where he faced corporal punishment from his school teacher and was called 'Indian' by his schoolmates.²³² Little Mary's methods, although much different than those of his parents, managed to instill in young Eddie the qualities of strength and endurance that his

²³⁰Jennifer S.H. Brown, 'A Cree Nurse in a Cradle of Methodism: Little Mary and the Egerton R. Young Family at Norway House and Berens River', *First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. by Mary Kinnear (Regina, Canadian Plains Research Center, 1987), pp. 19-40.

²³¹*Ibid.*, p. 21.

²³²*Ibid.*, p. 32.

parents desired for him as well.

The ethnographies of anthropologists Frances Densmore (1929) and M. Inez Hilger (1951) provide an understanding of Ojibwa childhood.²³³ Densmore began her field work in 1905 among the Chippewa of the north shore of Lake Superior in Minnesota. She spent the next twenty years gathering information about various Chippewa groups. Hilger began her research on the Chippewa in the 1930s on reservations in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Michigan.²³⁴ She was aware of Densmore's work and drew from it in some areas. Densmore observed that mothers and infants were together constantly. She, like Graham, felt that the relationship between mother and child was closer than in European cultures.²³⁵ She, too, noted that children were breast-fed until they were at least two years of age, and sometimes reached the age of three or four years before being weaned.²³⁶ Densmore felt that the closeness of the mother/child relationship may be attributed in part to the fact that children were breast-fed so long. Densmore observed that Chippewa woman never allowed their babies to cry and went to great lengths to calm them. She concluded that for this reason 'small children were quite spoiled'.²³⁷

²³³Frances Densmore, Chippewa Customs (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1979); M. Inez Hilger, Chippewa Child Life and its Cultural Background (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1992).

²³⁴M. Inez Hilger, Chippewa Child Life and Its Cultural Background, p. xiii.

²³⁵Frances Densmore, Chippewa Customs, p. 48.

²³⁶*Ibid.*, p. 51.

²³⁷*Ibid.*, p. 51.

Densmore noted that gentleness and tact characterized the method of disciplining children.²³⁸ They were taught standards for good behavior and learned what types of conduct were acceptable and which ones were to be avoided. Little emphasis was placed on reward and punishment although fear was used occasionally as a deterrent for inappropriate behavior. Hilger noted that a Chippewa child was taught 'to conform to the moral standards, as well as to the religious, the economic, and the political pattern of his tribe'.²³⁹ The methods used to achieve this learning included the imitation of elders in play, the inclusion of children in both work and celebration and what Hilger refers to as 'lecturing and counseling, listening-in, and having ideals presented'.²⁴⁰

Both boys and girls were taught to do all the tasks their parents did on a smaller scale. Girls carried water, washed birch bark dishes, and made little wigwams and small buckskin clothes. In addition, girls learned to chop and carry wood, to make maple sugar and to gather wild rice. Boys were given miniature devices resembling bows and blunt arrows when they were five or six years of age to learn to become a hunter or a warrior.²⁴¹ Densmore noted that 'boys were encouraged to use these bows and arrows and that they could be trusted not to do any damage with it'.²⁴² Children were taught the value of everything in the natural environment. They learned to identify plants and to

²³⁸Ibid., p. 58.

²³⁹M. Inez Hilger, Chippewa Child Life and Its Cultural Background, p. 55.

²⁴⁰Ibid.

²⁴¹Frances Densmore, Chippewa Customs, p. 65.

²⁴²Ibid., pp. 65-66.

comprehend their nutritional and medicinal purposes. They were instructed by both parents and grandparents. Grandmothers advised girls on matters their mothers had taught them. Grandfathers and other elders spoke with boys collectively from an early age at gatherings. At puberty grandfathers began to counsel their grandsons on a more individual basis.²⁴³

Francis and Morantz' history of the Cree and the fur trade of the James Bay area in the period 1600 to 1870 provides valuable information about Cree seasonal subsistence hunting and gathering. They point out that both 'whites and Indians engaged in activities largely dictated by the seasons' which were often family based.²⁴⁴ Small groups of two or three families would travel together to fishing spots, to the goose tent sites and to the hunting grounds. Native sons George and Joseph Gladman, George and Jacob Atkinson, William Joseph Christie and Charles Thomas (who was born at Moose Factory in 1793) spent part of their childhood among the James Bay Cree when their fathers were stationed at posts in the area. They likely learned to fish and to pluck the birds after the spring and fall goose hunts. Fishing was done in a variety of ways. Charles Thomas' father, John, an HBC officer at Moose Factory, described one method of fishing he observed in the summer of 1775:

They use Netts but if they want a few fresh Fish and do not choose to go to their Netts they take a Small hand nett such as the Fishmongers use for taking the Fish out of their Cisterns and in the Space of about half [in fractions] an Hour I have

²⁴³M. Inez Hilger, Chippewa Child Life, p. 57.

²⁴⁴Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay 1600-1870 (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), p. 79.

seen them scoop out about 20 fine Tickomeg Up Ruperts River (Cabbage says) is a Fall where he never uses his Netts but Scoops them out many at a time by one of the small Hand Netts.²⁴⁵

James Clouston, one of the post schoolmasters, described the use of a large oval hand-held net used by the James Bay Cree. After freeze-up, nets were set under the ice. By the 1760s a few families were remaining a month longer in the fall to knit snowshoes and fish and hunt for provisions.²⁴⁶ They were given twine for the nets and paid in trade goods. It was in the capacity of netmakers that the first hunters were employed by the Company. Netting of snowshoes became one of the many essential services performed by the Indians and the native sons and it was the beginning of their involvement as labourers for the company. Other tasks included hauling and chopping firewood, picking oakum, cutting logs, sawing boards, and tending to livestock.²⁴⁷

Robert A. Brightman in his study of the Rock Cree in Northern Manitoba noted that their hunting groups were larger than those of the Eastern James Bay Cree.²⁴⁸ The groups trading into Nelson House in 1822-6 numbered twenty-eight members at their largest and eight at the smallest. These groups divided into their nuclear family units in

²⁴⁵Ibid., p. 82.

²⁴⁶Ibid., p. 84.

²⁴⁷Ibid., p. 88; Picking oakum was a task that involved gathering up old pieces of rope that had been untwisted and picked apart. These remnants were tarred and used for caulking and to patch holes in ships and buildings. Picking oakum was sometimes used as a naval punishment. (Personal communication Anne Morton, 1 December 1999).

²⁴⁸Robert A. Brightman, Grateful Prey: Rock Cree Human /Animal Relationships (Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1993), p. 11.

fall to hunt beaver and then came together again in winter to hunt big game animals.²⁴⁹

Hunting groups had male leaders whose authority and influence came from age and foraging expertise. Group decisions were made by consensus with leaders suggesting or initiating courses of action. Most power to control decisions and behavior of others was limited to the authority of men and women over their unmarried junior relatives.²⁵⁰

Like Ellen Smallboy, Brightman observed that Cree males valued big game hunting over other subsistence pursuits. Moose were hunted all year. Caribou were hunted most during spring and fall migrations. Brown bears were hunted in their dens in winter. In addition, men hunted and trapped beaver, lynx, porcupine and waterfowl. Contact between traders and Crees was frequent throughout the winter. Indians visited the posts to trade and traders frequently travelled to Indian camps to collect furs.²⁵¹ Some furs were cached until the Indians visited posts in summer. Each adult traded his or her own furs. In addition to furs, Crees also traded fresh meat, dried meat, fat, moose and caribou hides. In April or early May canoes were built and groups moved toward summer fishing sites.²⁵² Women fished, collected berries and other plant foods in summer and trapped small game such as hares, ptarmigans and martens. They also constructed lodges, prepared hides and pelts for clothing, cooked, cared for young children, retrieved game,

²⁴⁹Ibid.

²⁵⁰Ibid.

²⁵¹Ibid., p. 11.

²⁵²Ibid.

cut wood and drew toboggans during winter travels.²⁵³

Crees made little use of food preservation and storage, preferring to live on fresh meat. They occasionally discarded marketable pelts and sometimes killed caribou or beaver for specific parts, discarding the rest of the animal.²⁵⁴ Animals were sometimes killed for either the meat or the skin but not both depending on the need at the time.²⁵⁵ There was a specific interaction with each different type of animal based on the understood character of the animal. The character of the animal was built up in terms of the role it played in human social life.²⁵⁶

In Cree religion, the Crees perceived themselves to be in a social relationship with the animals.²⁵⁷ Cree religion included prayer, ritual and theology. Cree were taught to be generous and to respect nature. They used dreams and powers to help each other through illness, to kill animals to feed their families and to express gratitude for gifts of life.²⁵⁸

Because the native sons were rarely named individually during their childhood in documentary sources apart from baptismal records, and infrequently in post journals or in their fathers' correspondence, there is little evidence of the aboriginal cultural training that they may have acquired in their early years. We do know from their careers in the fur

²⁵³Ibid., p. 8.

²⁵⁴Ibid., p. 254.

²⁵⁵Ibid., p. 257.

²⁵⁶Ibid., p. 34.

²⁵⁷Ibid., p. 257.

²⁵⁸Ibid., p. xii.

trade that many were fluent in a number of aboriginal languages. During their childhood, numerous sons must have been familiar with the seasonal subsistence cycle practiced by the Cree and other aboriginal groups. Some may have accompanied family groupings on their seasonal migrations. In addition, some may have learned the religious or spiritual significance of hunting and gathering. The activities observed and skills learned while accompanying families in seasonal subsistence, combined with what they later learned at European-style schools, prepared them for their bicultural roles in the fur trade employ.

Aboriginal education in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries was quite different from that of the Europeans. It occurred through play and observation in a variety of natural settings. Behaviour was molded by positive examples and through the use of story-telling and participation in ceremonies. In most aboriginal cultures, warning and embarrassment rather than physical condemnation, confinement or deprivation were used as disciplinary measures. The corporal punishment methods of European schoolmasters represented a sharp contrast with teaching methods of the native cultures.

The atmosphere of a British parish school, a post school or a Red River boarding school was far removed from the lifestyle to which some of the native sons had been accustomed. Such a setting separated them from the aboriginal element of their culture. The familiar autonomy was replaced by an authoritarian model, one that required not only respect, but subservience and subordination. Rather than attempting to understand the values and practices of aboriginal cultures, some schoolmasters undoubtedly believed that the apparent disorderliness and indulgences of aboriginal life could be rectified by harsh

discipline. Letitia Hargrave's comments, cited earlier, point out some of the difficulties faced by the native children in the parish schools—for example, the clothing that they were forced to wear despite the fact that it was inappropriate for the North American climate. She realized, too, that the children were being punished if their parents were not married by the church. Those children were not allowed to visit their families. Chief Peguis paid a visit to David Jones shortly after his arrival in the colony and voiced his confusion over what the mission schools were attempting to accomplish. While he felt that 'we want our children to become like white people...for since you white people have got our lands, we are very poor'; he had reservations about sending native children to the boarding school.²⁵⁹

Despite the differences between aboriginal and European education there was much variation among the native sons' childhoods and education, some having spent more time in one culture than the other. However, collectively the combination of a dual heritage and a bicultural education equipped the native sons in a unique way to enter the service of the fur trade and to cope with the increasing colonization of the Northwest.

²⁵⁹Thomas F. Bredin, 'The Reverend David Jones: Missionary at Red River 1823-38', *The Beaver*, Autumn 1981, p. 48.

CHAPTER 4—Employment

‘So many obstacles of late years have been thrown in the way of...my advancement’¹

In the years 1750 to 1860 the Hudson’s Bay Company underwent significant changes which affected its recruitment patterns, hiring and employment policies. By the 1860s, it was quite a different company from what it had been more than a century earlier. Some of the changes were gradual responses to shifting economic, social and political conditions. Others came as a result of public criticisms such as those made in 1744 by Irish Member of Parliament, Arthur Dobbs, which resulted in a parliamentary inquiry five years later, exposing the company and the structure of its trade to public scrutiny. Additionally, former Hudson’s Bay Company servant, Joseph Robson’s 1752 account chastised the company for not having fully exploited its monopoly in the eighty years since its inception.² By the 1840s, former employees James Sinclair and Alexander Kennedy Isbister began to question the company’s right to its trading monopoly and protested against its strict enforcement. And in 1857 another parliamentary inquiry was launched to investigate more fully the question of this monopoly.

Various changes directly affected the careers of the native sons of the fur trade in the period from 1760 to 1860. For example, prior to 1790 as the Hudson’s Bay Company moved inland, the London directors stopped trying to forbid liaisons with aboriginal women and began to hire a few of the children of these unions. Before 1821,

¹HBCA D.5/15, fo. 137, James Sinclair to Governor George Simpson, 25 August 1845.

²G. Williams, ‘The Hudson’s Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870’, pp. 13-14.

the Hudson's Bay Company allowed for considerable vertical mobility. It was possible for a talented young native son who entered the company as a labourer, writer, apprentice or skilled tradesman to become a factor eventually. The tightening of the Company hierarchy in the post-1821 era, however, severely restricted the possibility of upward mobility. This significant shift was a hallmark of the Simpson era and was closely tied to a series of policies which attempted to justify and to rationalize the view that native sons were not worthy of entering the officer ranks of the Company. Of course, there were exceptions. but on the whole the treatment and status of officers' native sons in the company deteriorated particularly in the 1820s, 1830s and 1840s. One officer, Chief Factor James Sutherland, became disillusioned by these restrictions and in 1840 decided not to have his son seek employment in the Company because 'half-breeds as they are called has no chance there nor are they respected whatever their abilities may be'.³

Despite these changes, the Hudson's Bay Company remained one of the primary sources of employment for native sons in Rupert's Land and their numbers in the company grew particularly in the 1850s and 1860s. For example, the number of native employees in the permanent workforce in 1850 was 201, for the first time exceeding the number of Scots which was 185. By 1860, the number of native employees had risen to 337.⁴

In the late 1840s and during the 1850s, a shift in attitude toward the native sons

³G. Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870', The Beaver Autumn, 1983, p. 55.

⁴P. Goldring, 'The Permanent Workforce: General Measurements', p. 64.

occurred and by the 1860s they comprised nearly a third of the officers in the Northern Department.⁵ There were nineteen commissioned officers in the Northern Department at that time.⁶ The native sons were W.L. Hardisty (Mackenzie River district), Alexander Christie Jr. (Saskatchewan district), William Sinclair II (Norway House), John Rowand Jr. (Saskatchewan district), William McMurray (Saskatchewan district) and Joseph Christie (Swan River district). However, some of the sons who became officers in this period voiced complaints about the length of time it took to receive their commissions. As well, some European officers questioned the ability of the native officers to execute their duties. In the late 1860s, Chief Trader William Watt complained that there was a need to restore discipline among a workforce grown slack 'by the laxity of native officers'.⁷ He was referring to William Joseph Christie and Richard Charles Hardisty, two very capable officers who had served the company since 1841 and 1849 respectively.⁸

Beginning in the late 1840s the numbers of native sons in the servant ranks began to increase because of the need for reducing recruiting costs by hiring locally and the fact that the growing population of Red River provided a pool of potential servants.⁹ But as

⁵Ibid., p. 40 using 1869 as the cut-off date.

⁶Ibid., p. 40.

⁷P. Goldring, 'The Search for Internal Labour', p. 56.

⁸Irene M. Spry, 'William Joseph Christie', DCB, vol. 12, p. 194; Shirlee Anne Smith, 'Richard Charles Hardisty', DCB vol., 11, p. 383.

⁹P. Goldring, 'The Search for Internal Labour', p. 48.

their numbers grew, negative attitudes were voiced about their presence in the company's service. In 1852, Chief Factor John Rowand blamed the loss of twelve Canadian and two Orkney staff in his district on the fact that 'they don't like the half breeds who are more numerous'.¹⁰ On 29 June 1855, George Simpson expressed growing concern at the increased numbers of native sons in the service, noting that at Norway House and Red River 'we are in a certain degree, overawed and dictated to by the numerical superiority of those whom we are supposed to govern'.¹¹ He recommended to the Governor and Committee that the Northern Department's required complement of thirty-four labourers for the coming year be 'obtained from Europe, otherwise we shall be obliged to have recourse to Red River, and it is not considered good policy to employ at the Companys posts those whose sympathies are naturally in favor of the free traders'.¹²

This chapter analyzes the difficulties faced by native sons with particular regard to mobility within the company. In addition, it brings to the fore the unique abilities of the native sons which became an invaluable asset to the success of the company's trade despite the manner in which they were treated.

Charles Price Isham, who entered the HBC service in 1766, was the earliest native son to benefit from the possibility of upward mobility. He began his career in the company at a time when movement through company ranks was still a possibility for

¹⁰Ibid., p. 50.

¹¹Ibid., p. 51.

¹²HBCA D.4/75/fo. 404, Governor Simpson's Correspondence Book Outward 1854-1855.

native sons and others who started at low levels. For example, Orkneyman William Tomison, one of Isham's supervisors at Severn, had entered the service as a labourer just six years before Isham and ended his career as chief at York.¹³ Isham was contracted as an apprentice for seven years and first employed at Severn under Andrew Graham and William Tomison, who reported him as being 'a Strong Good working sober lad'.¹⁴ Throughout the 1770s and 1780s his skills expanded to include those of guide, interpreter and canoeman. He was a skilled bowsman and steersman. In May 1789, he was contracted as an 'Inland Trader and Supervisor in Swan River'. He then became from the 1790s until his retirement in 1814, the master of a series of small posts including Swan River, Marlborough, Somerset, Carlton and Jack River. He also worked in the Saskatchewan and Winnipeg districts at small posts. Jennifer Brown noted that although Isham became 'no more than a minor officer in obscure and often difficult posts, he may have been the first Hudson Bay native to rise that high'.¹⁵

George Atkinson II was another native son who became a minor officer in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. He began service with the company in 1792 as a provisioner.¹⁶ He worked in numerous capacities in provisioning and transporting and was placed in charge of minor posts in the Eastmain district such as Nemiscau Lake and

¹³Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870 p. 11.

¹⁴Jennifer Brown, 'Charles Thomas Isham', DCB, vol. 5, 1983, p. 450.

¹⁵Ibid., p. 451.

¹⁶K.G. Davies, ed. Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals and Correspondence (London: HBR, 1963) p. 329.

Big River. In 1807 he was invited to sit on the Eastmain Council. He was later placed in charge of the whale fishery at Great Whale River.¹⁷

Another son, James Swain Jr., was employed as an assistant trader at Severn House for 1814-1815 but later worked as an interpreter until his retirement in 1822.¹⁸ It is not known whether Swain was actually promoted and paid as an assistant trader and then demoted to interpreter but the company was much more fluid and flexible in this period than after 1821 regarding the promotion of native sons.

Beginning in the 1770s, the Hudson's Bay Company was forced to seriously consider moving its trade inland. Following an older pattern of competition from Canadian traders, a group of British 'pedlars' from Montreal began to set up trading posts in the region northwest of Lake Winnipeg.¹⁹ They posed a formidable threat to the HBC trade and its monopoly. The British traders were entrepreneurs of primarily Scottish origin who were organized, along with a few Englishmen, Canadians, and Americans, in a series of partnerships which competed with each other.²⁰ As early as 1772, Andrew Graham, master at York, wrote to the Governor and Committee expressing his concerns regarding competing forces inland and declining fur returns: 'the Situation of your Affairs in this Country is very unpromising...I have gained certain Information of what is

¹⁷Ibid., p. 335.

¹⁸E. E. Rich, ed., Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1939), p. 243.

¹⁹G. Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company', pp. 35-37.

²⁰Ibid.

doing Inland....Your trade at York Fort & Severn is greatly diminished'.²¹ He noted further that because the Canadians traded tobacco and alcohol so near, 'every Inducement to visit the Company's Factorys is forgot, & the prime ffurs are picked out & traded, the refuse is tied up & brought down to us'.²² Despite the fact that the Hudson's Bay Company had the edge over these pedlars with its Brazilian tobacco, the pedlars had the advantage of being able to trade in closer proximity to the Indians. Glyndwr Williams claimed that though the Indians did come down to the Bay for the coveted Brazilian tobacco, the furs they had to offer were but 'remnants of their catch' as they had traded their prime furs inland.²³ Furthermore, the formation in 1779 of the sixteen-share consortium of merchants which emerged in 1783 as the North West Company added considerable fervor to inland trade and heightened competition.²⁴ In 1798 some former Nor'westers and other trading partnerships merged to form the New North West Company which became known in 1800 as the XY Company led by Alexander Mackenzie. The latter company was absorbed in 1804 by the North West Company, narrowing the field in contending forces.

²¹W.S. Wallace, ed., Documents Relating to the North West Company, p. 39.

²²Ibid.

²³G. Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870', The Beaver, Autumn 1983, p. 35.

²⁴Ibid., p. 37.

Hiring of Native Sons

The HBC's expansion inland created demands for more personnel to manage new posts and to run transport lines between them and Hudson Bay. These demands opened the way for the employment of native sons. However, there was no formal direction from headquarters in London regarding this practice until 1794, when the Hudson's Bay Company began to officially apprentice young 'natives of Hudson's Bay'.²⁵ In the following year instructions from headquarters became more concrete. For example, William Bolland, master of Eastmain, received instructions from London to employ George Atkinson's brother, Jacob, because the Governor and Committee approved 'of taking into the service, young men the sons of ...old servants.'²⁶

By 1798, the London Committee decided not to engage any more servants in Britain under the age of eighteen.²⁷ The company began to recognize the fact that traders' native-born children, besides being numerous, were well equipped to undertake tasks formerly done by apprentices sent out from England.²⁸ The Hudson's Bay Company was pleased to be able to recruit locally since war in Europe had resulted in a scarcity of overseas recruits. By 1806, the Company actually began to promote the hiring of mixed-

²⁵S. Van Kirk, 'Fur Trade Social History: Some Recent Trends', Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the Third North American Fur Trade Conference, A. J. Ray and Carol M. Judd, eds. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press), p. 170.

²⁶HBCA A.16/15, fo.134d, Servants' Ledgers.

²⁷G. Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870', The Beaver, Autumn 1983, p. 71.

²⁸Ibid.

descent offspring. The Company's minutes of that year recorded the need to equip the children of servants with the skills which would enable them to become servants themselves.²⁹

In the period 1806 to 1821, the hiring of native sons became more common as the war in Europe continued and competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company increased. Before 1806, Orkneymen had been the recruits of choice for the Hudson's Bay Company. They had dominated the servant class working as tradesmen and labourers.³⁰ In 1799, for example, seven-eighths of the Company's men in Rupert's Land had come from the Orkney Islands.³¹ By 1800 the rival North West Company was hiring men cheaply in Canada. By 1815, the Hudson's Bay Company began recruiting 'Canadian' native sons as voyageurs. They cost less to hire because they were picked up on the spot wherever their labour was needed. They appeared in the 'Lists of Servants' as either 'Canadians' or 'halfbreeds'. The latter term began to appear in the Company's records with some regularity in the second decade of the nineteenth century. But in this pre-amalgamation period native sons held positions at almost all levels of employment including the lower ranks of the officer class.³² Twenty-eight sons of officers from this study were hired during this period and they held a variety of positions

²⁹Jennifer Brown, 'A Colony of Very Useful Hands', *Beaver* Spring 1977, p. 40.

³⁰Sylvia Van Kirk, "Many Tender Ties", p. 11.

³¹Philip Goldring, 'Scottish Recruiting for the Hudson's Bay Company 1821-1880', paper presented at the Canadian Association for Scottish Studies, June, 1979, p. 1.

³²C. M. Judd, 'Native Labour', p. 310.

as labourers, guides, interpreters, apprentices and writers or clerks. Five of these were sons of North West Company officers.

The most dramatic changes with regard to the employment of native sons occurred in the post-1821 era following the merger. The terms of the merger granted the new concern a monopoly of trade for twenty-one years in British North America except for areas which retained exclusive trade rights through the original charter.³³ The Hudson's Bay Company would dominate an area of more than three million square miles--in effect, from the Hudson Bay drainage to the Pacific.³⁴ This assertion of monopoly directly affected the growing population of Metis traders in the Red River. But a more immediate consequence of the merger was the imposition on all its employees of a much more rigid hierarchy.³⁵ Judd pointed out that this new inflexible hierarchy 'would not allow mobility of recruits from the servant class into the officer levels'.³⁶ Further, Judd noted that 'native sons of servants would probably not be affected by this change but the sons of officers would expect much more and would not be happy with this restriction'.³⁷ In addition, the amalgamated company adopted several of the personnel practices of the former North West Company. For example, the twenty-five chief factors and twenty-

³³E. E. Rich, ed., Hudson's Bay Company 1670-1870 (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1960), pp. 404-405.

³⁴G. Williams, 'The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade', p. 49.

³⁵C. M. Judd, 'Native Labour', p. 307.

³⁶C. M. Judd, 'Employment Opportunities For Mixed Bloods in the Hudson's Bay Company to 1870', paper presented to the American Historical Association, 1978, p. 15.

³⁷*Ibid.*

eight chief traders were granted shares of the profits in the newly amalgamated company.³⁸ Clerks remained salaried at the same rate as prior to the merger.³⁹ Servants, however, faced a cut in pay and the sharp class structure of the North West Company was continued in the newly formed company. For instance, the custom of servants and officers dining separately was more strictly enforced than it had been in the Hudson's Bay Company prior to the merger. In July 1822, resolutions of the Minutes of Council, Northern Department, stated that 'in order to draw a line of distinction between Guides and Interpreters and the Gentlemen of the Service, no Guide or Interpreter after this Season be permitted to mess at York Factory, or while Inland with Chief Factors, Chief Traders or Clerks in charge of Posts, but...they shall have a separate mess...'⁴⁰

The merger created an amalgamated labour force of about 2200 men, which was reduced to less than one-third of that amount and then gradually built back up.⁴¹ In the period 1821-1826, 1223 men were laid off, amounting to thirty-six per cent of employees at the time of merger.⁴² Then in the years 1827-1833 modest increases were made until more than one-half of the 1821 figure had been reached.⁴³

³⁸Jennifer S.H. Brown, Strangers in Blood, p. 111.

³⁹Ibid.

⁴⁰R. Harvey Fleming, ed., Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land, 1821-1822 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1940), pp. 25-26.

⁴¹P. Goldring, Papers on the Labour System of the Hudson's Bay Company, 'The Permanent Workforce: General Measurements', pp. 31-32.

⁴²Ibid.

⁴³Ibid.

The merger also coincided with the beginning of George Simpson's long tenure in the governance of the company. In 1821, he was appointed Governor of the Northern Department and was in charge of reducing staff. In July 1822, he was 'fully empowered to decide upon whatever steps he may consider necessary to be adopted for the Interest of the general Concern...'⁴⁴ For one who had been with the Company such a short period of time, he was given a great deal of power. Simpson was a neophyte in Rupert's Land. His views of fur trade social practices and his attitudes toward aboriginal and mixed-descent peoples were rooted in nineteenth century British prejudices and feelings of superiority. In essence, he tended to view mixed-descent employees as potential trouble-makers and he introduced policies which would ensure that they would be kept in their place at the bottom of the social order where they could never pose a threat to himself or the business. For example, in 1824, he observed that some native sons of Rupert's Land were too proud and independent to enter the service; they were also poor risks.⁴⁵

Simpson was particularly averse to the Canadian 'halfbreeds' hired during the height of competition. He saw these men as 'thoughtless, dissipated and depraved in every sense of the word, secretly attached to their former employers, the N.W.Coy. and in whom the smallest confidence cannot be placed.'⁴⁶ Therefore, in 1822, Simpson decided to get rid of these 'leading turbulent characters' as he called the former Nor'westers,

⁴⁴R. Harvey Fleming, ed., Minutes of Council, p. 27.

⁴⁵C.M. Judd, 'Mixt Bands of Many Nations': 1821-70, Old Trails and New Directions, p. 131.

⁴⁶E. E. Rich, Hudson's Bay Company, vol. 3, pp. 407-408.

along with the 'worn out useless men' especially those with burdensome families.⁴⁷ The following year, he introduced a strategy of placing equal proportions of 'halfbreeds', Canadian voyageurs and Orkneyman in various locations so that there 'would be less danger from their misconduct' and the 'company would have a freer hand in setting wages'.⁴⁸ Simpson certainly succeeded in the second goal. Between 1825 and 1855 servants' annual average wages were slightly more than £21 and although they fluctuated very little, they actually decreased in the period beginning in 1835 to about £20 and again in 1840 to about £19. In 1855, they were back at approximately the same level as in 1825. It was only in 1860 that they took a considerable jump to £25 and increased thereafter.⁴⁹

Simpson was soon forced to see the hiring of native sons in a new light for a number of reasons. By 1825, he thought hiring native sons from Red River would keep them from endangering the peace of the settlement. Second, he stated that if the native sons were 'brought into the Service at a sufficiently early period of life they [would] become useful steady men and taking all things into consideration...will be found the cheapest and best Servants we can get.'⁵⁰ Third, shortages of employees in the next few years forced him to view the native sons as a useful resource. By 1826, Simpson

⁴⁷HBCA D.4/85, p. 3, Simpson's Official Reports 1822.

⁴⁸Philip Goldring, 'Scottish Recruiting for the Hudson's Bay Company 1821-1880', p. 3.

⁴⁹P. Goldring, 'Permanent Workforce', p. 60.

⁵⁰C.M. Judd, 'Mixt Bands', p. 131.

proposed that the company try filling up vacancies with Red River 'halfbreeds' as he called them. He seemed, momentarily, to recognize their positive qualities and the benefits that they could bring. He noted that:

As boat and canoe men, and winter travellers they surpass both our European and Canadian Servants but they are not sufficiently steady for regular work at the Establishments until they attain a certain age when they become the most efficient men we have got...in the course of a few years I think it [Red River] will be found the best nursery for the service'.⁵¹

But this view was inconsistent with opinions that he expressed about 'halfbreeds' in his Character Book at about the same time.

Some employees saw the need for more change. For example, clerk Charles McKenzie commented in 1828 that two apprentice boys whom he had were 'more fit for inland duty than any green hands out from Orkney, being more up to the ways of the country & know how to fish'. McKenzie felt that hiring native sons was better than importing Orcadians but was not able to convince the Company of this fact.⁵²

Ranks of Postmaster, Apprentice-Postmaster and Apprentice-Labourer

Towards the middle of the 1820s the Hudson's Bay Company began to implement specific positions for native-born sons. For example, about 1825, the rank of postmaster was activated as a means to attract native sons of gentlemen to the service who could not

⁵¹HBCA D.4/90, p. 8, Simpson's Official Reports 1827.

⁵²Elizabeth Arthur, 'Charles McKenzie, l'homme seul', The Ontario Historical Society, vol. 70, March, 1978, p. 52.

gain admission as apprentice clerks.⁵³ Commenting on its original use in the latter third of the eighteenth century, Goldring noted that postmasters were treated as managers, not servants.⁵⁴ However, when the position was revived and redefined in the period 1825-1830, some postmasters had their accounts listed among those of the servants.⁵⁵ The rank of postmaster was just below that of clerk. A postmaster generally was in charge of a small fur trade post after having been promoted from the regular servant ranks.⁵⁶

Writing in his Character Book in 1831-1832, Simpson redefined the position of postmaster, describing it as ranking 'between interpreters & clerks....persons who while filling the office of Common Labourer brought themselves into particular notice by their steadiness, honesty and attention and were in due time raised from the 'ranks' and placed in charge of small Posts at salaries from 35 to £45 p Annum.'⁵⁷ His description stated further that 'other vacancies have been filled up by Young men, the half breed Sons or Relatives of Gentlemen...who could not obtain admission to the Service as Apprentice Clerks.'⁵⁸ Finally, Simpson added that the native sons had 'no prospect of further

⁵³G. Williams, Hudson's Bay Miscellany 1670-1870 (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), p. 232; P. Goldring, Papers on the Labour System, 'Race and Patronage', p. 53.

⁵⁴P. Goldring, Papers on the Labour System, 'The Permanent Workforce', p. 49.

⁵⁵Ibid.

⁵⁶C.M. Judd, 'Employment Opportunities', p. 18.

⁵⁷G. Williams, ed., Hudson's Bay Miscellany 1679-1870 (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), p. 232.

⁵⁸Ibid.

advancement, nor is it intended that they shall be removed from this Class except in very particular cases of good conduct coupled with Valuable Services'.⁵⁹ This final clause prevented some native sons from entering the officer classes. The increased hierarchical rigidity of the post-merger era, while permitting native sons to be hired as labourers or interpreters, prevented them from entering the ranks as apprentice clerks. The Hudson's Bay Company's inflexibility with regard to rank is evident in Simpson's reprimand of Chief Factor John Peter Pruden in 1836 for promoting his son, Arthur Pruden and Peter Ogden to the position of apprentice clerk. Simpson explained that 'it never was intended they should be engaged on the footing of App.[renti]ce Clerks....The young Men in question were engaged as apprentice Labourers with the intention that should they hereafter prove deserving...they should in due time be advanced to the rank of Interpreters and afterwards of Postmasters'. Simpson added: 'it never could...have been contemplated that they should be messmates'.⁶⁰

The same year, Chief Factor Robert Miles expressed concern about the low salary paid to postmasters. In a letter from Moose Factory to Edward Ermatinger dated 26 August he wrote: 'Look for instance at our friend Spence he is now one of my Postmasters with a salary barely equal to Supply the wants of a large family'.⁶¹

⁵⁹Ibid.

⁶⁰HBCA D.4/22, fos. 22-23, Governor Simpson's Correspondence Book, Norway House, 22 June, 1836.

⁶¹PAC MG 19 Series 2, A2, Vol.1, p. 234, Edward Ermatinger Papers, 26 August, 1836; Spence may be John Spence (E) from Birsay who was employed at Moose Factory 1833-1836.

The additional creation of the rank of apprentice postmaster in the 1830s, Goldring noted, was intended to give young native sons a chance to skip ahead of the initial lineup for clerkships as they could be hired to this position without direct approval of the London Committee.⁶² However, this advantage failed to put them on the same footing as Europeans because apprentice postmasters earned one-third less than apprentice clerks and promotion was postponed further by the addition of a step introduced at a lower rank.⁶³ Thus, apprentice postmasters cost the company less and stayed in the position longer. Further, Goldring believed that, at the time, the rank of apprentice postmaster, rather than assisting natives, was meant to discourage them because of their racial origin.⁶⁴

Some company officers articulated clearly their disenchantment with the position. Chief Factor Donald Ross despised the rank of apprentice postmaster. In 1845, he proposed that the position of postmaster be abolished and that more native sons be hired as apprentice clerks.⁶⁵ Ross thought the rank demeaning since he considered the sons of commissioned officers equal in breeding and education and superior in ability to the stream of raw apprentice clerks sent out to Rupert's Land by the London Committee.⁶⁶ In a brief entitled, 'Observations on the Class of Apprentice Postmasters, 1845', he stated:

⁶²P. Goldring, 'Race and Patronage', p. 54.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid.

⁶⁵Ibid.

⁶⁶P. Goldring, 'The Permanent Workforce', p. 81.

It is quite a common impression in the Country, and probably has ever been so, that the Natives as such, are looked down upon and discouraged by the higher authorities of the Service - this is undoubtedly a mere prejudice, but its existence is not the less injurious on that account - and the establishing of this new class, has unfortunately given a fresh and vigorous confirmation to that prejudice, in the general belief.... nor is it likely that any remedy of sufficient efficacy can be applied to eradicate the evil short of the entire abolition of the class:--it has acquired so much notoriety, and is looked upon with such a degree of contempt, that even those possessing the most ordinary capacity or pretensions, can hardly feel happy or contented as members of it.⁶⁷

Chief Trader James Anderson also spoke out against the position. In the 1857 McKenzies River District Report, he condemned the practise of appointing 'young gentlemen, natives of the country to the inferior grade of apprentice postmasters though doing the duty of apprentice clerks'. These young men, he wrote:

are generally the sons of your oldest and most faithful officers and on an average are fully as talented and well educated as the apprentice clerks from Europe and Canada and tho' they do precisely the same duty they are degraded to a lower rank, pay and allowances...This glaring injustice must--unless they be more than human beings--rankle in their minds, particularly in the minds of those of high spirit and superior ability.⁶⁸

Anderson, like Ross, recommended that the position be abolished, and that, 'banishing all considerations of origin that education, ability and character should be the qualifications required for granting Apprentice Clerkships in the service'.⁶⁹ Despite both these recommendations, the rank of postmaster continued to be used until 1875.⁷⁰ Red River

⁶⁷C. M. Judd, 'Employment Opportunities', p. 20.

⁶⁸Ibid.

⁶⁹Ibid.. p. 20-21.

⁷⁰P.Goldring, 'The Permanent Workforce', p. 85.

settler Donald Gunn had a straightforward view of the position. He wrote to James Ross, son of former fur trade clerk, Alexander Ross and his Okanagan wife, Sally, on 3 September 1857, 'apprentice post masters are of Rupertsland origin and are paid 15 pounds for the 1st and 40 pounds for the last years of their five years service. This group are generally half breeds are considered inferior and few rise to high office'.⁷¹ Gunn contrasted it to the position of, as he phrased it, 'Gentleman Apprentice Clerk' which he described as 'confined to persons born and educated outside of Rupertsland. They are paid 20, 30, 40, 50 and 60 pounds for each year and are intended to be the great men of the Co.'⁷²

The rank of apprentice postmaster was certainly problematic and it appeared by Simpson's definition, Gunn's comments and by practice to be a discriminatory position created specifically for mixed-descent sons. Judd pointed out that 'young men of similar qualifications entering the service from Europe were admitted at a considerably higher rank at a much higher salary and with more direct possibility of rising further'.⁷³ Goldring noted, however, that the rank of apprentice postmaster was not one that the company used on a regular basis. It rarely appeared as a designation in company records, though the London Committee felt it would cut costs by reducing wages.⁷⁴

Six sons in this study began their careers with the company in the position of

⁷¹PAM MG 9 A73, Harold G. Knox Collection.

⁷²Ibid.

⁷³C. M. Judd, 'Employment Opportunities', p. 21.

⁷⁴P. Goldring, 'The Permanent Workforce', p. 80.

apprentice postmaster. Alexander Kennedy Isbister, the son of Thomas Isbister, an Orkneyman, and Mary Kennedy, the daughter of Chief Factor Alexander Kennedy and his Cree wife Aggathas, was hired as an apprentice postmaster in 1838 at age sixteen and sent to Fort Simpson in the McKenzie River district. He helped to establish a trading post at Peel's River which later became known as Fort McPherson.⁷⁵ He undertook some exploration in the Peel River area which he later wrote about in the Journal of the Royal Geographical Society.⁷⁶ However, after three years of work at £20 per annum, he became frustrated by his lack of advancement and decided to leave the service. On 28 June 1841, George Simpson wrote to Chief Factor John Lee Lewes at Fort Simpson hoping that Isbister could be dissuaded from leaving. He stated, 'young Isbister has been expressing to some of his friends his intention of quitting the Service; have the goodness to advise him from me not to carry that silly intention into effect, but if he does so, he will have much cause to regret it'.⁷⁷ Isbister resigned despite Simpson's plea and moved to London where he became a bitter opponent of the company. William McBean, another native son, was not happy in the position of postmaster and attempted to look for a better position. He had been hired as an interpreter in 1828 and began his service in the Southern Department.⁷⁸ In March 1833, Chief Factor Joseph Beioley wrote to Simpson

⁷⁵ S. Van Kirk, 'Alexander Kennedy Isbister', DCB, vol.11, pp. 445-446; H.C. Knox, 'Alexander Kennedy Isbister' Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Papers, 3rd series, no.12, 1957, p.19.

⁷⁶H. C. Knox, 'Alexander Kennedy Isbister', p. 19.

⁷⁷Ibid., p. 20.

⁷⁸G. Williams, Hudson's Bay Miscellany, p. 232n.

from Rupert River that McBean had gone to Moose 'where, as I understand from himself only, he had hopes of being employed with greater advantage to himself, than he thought he was likely to attain by continuing in this quarter'.⁷⁹

Hector Aeneas McKenzie also began his career in the company in the rank of apprentice postmaster. The son of HBC clerk Charles McKenzie and Mary McKay, a mixed-descent Saulteaux woman, he entered the service in about 1839 at £20 per annum. He worked for at least three years as an apprentice postmaster and then left the service. He was employed again in 1847 with a contract to 1850 and listed as a postmaster at £50 per annum.⁸⁰ He was planning to retire that year when Dr. John Rae hired him to join his Arctic expedition as second in command. Rae reported positively to Simpson regarding McKenzie's work. He wrote in 1850 that McKenzie was 'very active and an excellent shot, and much liked by the men, whom he at the same time keeps in excellent order'.⁸¹ Rae excluded McKenzie from the expedition shortly after that, stating only that the reason was a 'punishment for his carelessness and inattention'.⁸² However, in 1850 when Hector Aeneas McKenzie was postmaster at Peels River, Chief Factor John Anderson wrote of him to William McMurray: 'McKenzie has charge of Peels River and La Pierres House--he manages his business well and is a most unobtrusive modest young

⁷⁹Ibid.

⁸⁰Elizabeth Arthur, 'Charles McKenzie, l'homme seul', The Ontario Historical Society, March, 1978, p. 60.

⁸¹E. E. Rich, ed., Rae's Arctic Correspondence 1844-1855 (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1953), vol. xvi, pp. 169-170.

⁸²Ibid., p. xcvi, n.

man'.⁸³

McKenzie himself did not leave a written record of how he felt about his career with the company, but his father voiced his frustration some years earlier about the Company's engagement of native sons in general. In a letter to Roderick McKenzie, Charles McKenzie, still himself a clerk, spoke about this problem:

The Honorable Co. Are unwilling to take Natives, even as apprentice clerks, and the favored few they do take can never aspire to a higher status, be their education & capacity what they may....I do not see the use of so much Greek & Latin for these postmasters, since neither artificial nor natural acquirements are of any avail.⁸⁴

Other sons who began in this position had more success. For example, William McMurray entered the service as an apprentice postmaster in 1838. He worked his way through the ranks and became in 1875 an Inspecting Chief Factor.⁸⁵ In 1851, while McMurray was still a postmaster, Dr. John Rae wrote of him as 'a very efficient post manager and otherwise an intelligent man; I hope his claims, when his services have been of sufficiently long duration to entitle him to promotion, may meet with the attention they deserve. He is a half-breed it is true, but he is also a very interested servant for the Company'.⁸⁶

⁸³HBCA E.61/3, fo.7d., McGowan Collection, William McMurray Correspondence.

⁸⁴Masson, Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie de Nord-ouest: recits de voyages, lettres et rapports inedits (Quebec, 1889), vol. I, pp. 318-319. This document is undated but Charles McKenzie was referring to a son who had just finished his studies at Red River in 1840.

⁸⁵E. E. Rich, ed., Rae's Arctic Correspondence, p. 128n.

⁸⁶*Ibid.*, p. 169-170.

William Lucas Hardisty, son of HBC clerk Richard Hardisty Sr., and Margaret Sutherland (native-born daughter of John Sutherland), entered the Hudson's Bay Company in 1842 at Fort Halkett in the Mackenzie River District.⁸⁷ In 1843, he was appointed apprentice postmaster at Frances Lake and in 1848 served at Fort Selkirk in that position. Like McMurray, he rose through the ranks, eventually becoming a chief factor in 1868 at Fort Simpson.⁸⁸ In 1849, William's brother, Richard Jr., entered the company as an apprentice postmaster. He too was promoted into the officer ranks in the 1860s. Promotion may have been easier for them to achieve because they entered the service at a time when attitudes were beginning to soften toward mixed-descent employees. In addition, the impressive service records of their brothers, Joseph and Thomas, may have had an influence on their appointments.

At about the same time as the revival of the postmaster position and the creation of apprentice postmaster position, the Northern Council created an apprentice-labourer rank. In July of 1830, the Council resolved to hire 'strong healthy halfbreed lads not under 14 years of Age' as apprentices to tradesmen such as boatbuilders, blacksmiths and tinsmiths.⁸⁹ The resolution set the wages at a total of £75 spread over a seven-year apprenticeship and added the stipulation that 'such lads [were] not to be employed with their Fathers nor in the Districts where their Fathers and Families resided'.⁹⁰ This was, in

⁸⁷HBCA B.239/k/2, p. 249; HBCA B.135/z/3, fo. 259.

⁸⁸HBCA Search Files, W.L. Hardisty.

⁸⁹P. Goldring, 'The Permanent Workforce', p. 80.

⁹⁰HBCA D.4/97, p. 65, Simpson's Official Reports, 1830.

effect, another attempt at a native apprenticeship program which followed upon the earlier recommendations to develop 'a colony of very useful hands' begun in the 1790s.⁹¹ However, Europeans had been hired to do these jobs without having to apprentice. Furthermore, while on the surface these policies appeared to accommodate native employees, they in fact often caused greater difficulty for them as will be demonstrated later in this chapter.

Although by the creation of the position of postmaster, apprentice postmaster and apprentice labourer, the Hudson's Bay Company intended to ease the entry of native sons into its ranks, the London Committee on Simpson's advice also created these positions to reduce infiltration into the officer levels, of what was perceived to be an unpredictable element. To some extent these positions were a means of control which either delayed for a very long time, or in some cases, blocked native sons' advancement altogether.

Goldring has criticized Van Kirk and Judd for asserting that race was a paramount factor in the treatment of native sons in the company, and cited instead social stratification and patronage for the difficulties the sons faced. For example, he saw patronage as operating in favour of London-based Company officials who obtained positions for relatives whom they sent to Rupert's Land.⁹² He also claimed that the same family favour worked for native sons because low level promotions were decided in Rupert's Land where the fathers' influence could be brought to bear. However, low level positions were often fraught with problems to begin with. My belief is that the evidence

⁹¹Carol M. Judd, 'Mixed Bloods of Moose Factory', pp. 72-73.

⁹²P. Goldring, 'Race and Patronage', p. 52.

of contemporary participants and observers points to race as a major factor in the native sons' treatment. Secondary to this were the problems that they faced because of the retrenchments of the 1820s and 1830s. In addition, the evidence suggests that the Company was inconsistent in its advancement of its native sons. Some sons were more successful than others who had similar abilities. Part of the inconsistency may be the result of the fathers' position and influence in the company as Goldring suggested. But in other cases, promotion decisions seemed to be rather arbitrary. According to the terms of the 1821 merger, the Councils of Chief Factors of both the Northern and Southern Departments were to meet once a year to determine policy and to decide on promotions. However, under Simpson's leadership, the Councils' influence decreased and Simpson held control.⁹³

Promotion for Native Sons in Higher Ranks

The complications and delays in promotion within the company were not only a problem for native sons in the ranks of postmaster and apprentice postmaster. They had an impact on all those who entered as clerks or as writers. The position of clerk was viewed as both the highest rank in the servant category because it was a salaried position, and the lowest rank of the officer class because it was sometimes associated with gentlemanly rank. Several native sons and others spent many years in this capacity before finally being promoted to chief trader or chief factor. For the native sons in this

⁹³G. Williams, ed., 'The Hudson's Bay Company and the Fur Trade: 1670-1870' The Beaver, Autumn 1983, pp. 52-53.

study, these promotions often came late in their careers at a time when they could be of little benefit. The barriers that clerks faced arose out of the reorganizations of the 1820s and 1830s which affected personnel at all levels. For example, between 1825 and 1835, the numbers of postmasters and clerks or 'salaried gentlemen' as the rank was sometimes called, did not change. By 1840 six employees were added at this level. In the period from 1840 to 1860 only sixteen were added to the ranks of salaried gentlemen.⁹⁴ The initial lack of increase in numbers at this rank was a result of Simpson's trimming of all employees following the merger. The small numbers of postmasters and clerks, and the modest increase after 1840, made promotions of both native and non-native employees from this level difficult.

Following the merger and into the mid-1830s, former Nor'westers dominated the ranks of chief factors and chief traders. Several personnel in these ranks were redundant because competition had ceased. For example, in the 1820s, there were too many chief factors in comparison to chief traders.⁹⁵ In an attempt to address this problem, chief factors were encouraged to retire through the terms of the Deed Poll of 1834. But these measures made it more difficult for all personnel to enter the highest ranks simply because there were fewer needed, particularly at the level of chief factor. In the 1850s the numbers of chief traders grew to double that of chief factors and several native sons gained admittance into the higher ranks during that time. Between 1844 and 1854 thirty-five clerks were promoted to the rank of chief trader. Five of these men were native sons.

⁹⁴Philip Goldring, 'The Permanent Workforce', pp. 45, 61.

⁹⁵Ibid., pp. 36-37.

They were William J. Christie, Joseph Gladman, Peter S. Ogden, John Rowand Jr., and William Sinclair II.⁹⁶ Between 1855 and 1869 fifty-three clerks were promoted to chief trader. Ten of these were native sons. They were William McMurray, William Lucas Hardisty, Alexander Christie, Thomas Charles, Joseph Hardisty, Thomas Taylor, George S. Miles, Arthur Pruden, Richard Hardisty Jr., and William Charles.⁹⁷

William Sinclair II was one native son who waited a long time to enter the officer ranks. He was born at Norway House in about 1794, the oldest son of William Sinclair Sr. and Nahoway, a Cree woman.⁹⁸ He entered the service of the Company in 1808 at the age of about fourteen years as an apprentice earning £8 per annum.⁹⁹ He served as a clerk from 1817 to 1844 at the Winnipeg River and Lac La Pluie posts before being promoted in 1844 to chief trader. His long tenure as a clerk led to his frustrated comments to Edward Ermatinger in a letter 15 August, 1838: 'The affairs in this Country are much the same as when you left it, what differences there is, is [sic] not for the better, particularly on the part of the clerks, several of them meet with dissappointment [sic] in their expectation of advancement, it goes all by favour'.¹⁰⁰ Later in the same letter

⁹⁶HBCA A.31/9, fo. 33, List of Commissioned Officers 1821-1870.

⁹⁷HBCA A.31/9, fo. 33d, List of Commissioned Officers 1821-1870.

⁹⁸I. Spry, 'William Sinclair II', DCB vol. 9, p. 722.

⁹⁹Ibid.

¹⁰⁰PAC MG 19, A2, Series 2, vol. I, pp. 285-286. Edward Ermatinger Papers; L. H. McDonald, The Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger (1818-1835) (Glendale, California: The Arthur H. Clark Co., 1980) p.18; Edward Ermatinger joined the HBC in 1818 and retired ten years later.

Sinclair noted: 'I am at the same salary as when you left-& there is very little hopes of my getting forward, the Country that gave me birth is against me'.¹⁰¹ However, in 1850, William Sinclair was one of the native sons who was promoted to chief factor, a position he held until his retirement twelve years later.

George Gladman II also protested about those who had been clerks for extended periods before receiving promotions, himself being one of them. He had entered the service of the Hudson's Bay Company at the age of fourteen at Eastmain. He was a clerk at Moose Factory from 1819 to 1834 and at Cumberland House from 1835 to 1836. After more than twenty years of service in the company, he became a chief trader in 1836.¹⁰² His discontent with the long wait for promotion and his current situation led him on 8 August 1843 to write from York Factory to Edward Ermatinger:

A chief Traders Commission is certainly no great compliment to a Clerk of 20 years standing yet there are a few who have been 30 and 40 years in these wilds and yet remain Clerks—true it is they are now not fit for any thing else and it is as well to go on in expectation; as to retire with their small savings could tend very little if anything at all to their benefit....I passed this last Winter at Oxford and so far as the Post is concerned I have nothing to complain of...but between the two Depots [York and Oxford] I have been marched backward and forward to act as temporary manager and assistant at each, which has tended very little to my own comfort or convenience - I am again to winter there this season and run the same round as Sir George says it is a good business arrangement.¹⁰³

About a month later Letitia Hargrave informed her father in a letter that George Gladman had resigned, adding, 'but I daresay they will ask him to stay & he will perhaps

¹⁰¹Ibid.

¹⁰²W. L. Morton, 'George Gladman', DCB, vol. 9, p. 319.

¹⁰³PAC MG 19, A2, Series 2, Vol. I, pp. 103-105, Edward Ermatinger Papers.

do it'.¹⁰⁴ But Gladman did retire to Port Hope, Upper Canada, joining the company once more, a few years later, for the period 1849 to 1853 at the King's Posts on the lower St. Lawrence River.¹⁰⁵ In 1857 the Canadian government appointed him to the Dawson-Hind expedition to explore the route between Lake Superior and the Red River Settlement and to assess the agricultural possibilities of the area. The expedition was struck in response to the HBC's petition seeking renewal of its charter which free traders and merchants were resisting. Gladman may have been chosen because he was an advocate of free trade in the northwest and desired an end to the HBC's monopoly.¹⁰⁶

George Gladman's older brother Joseph was faced with the same predicament. Joseph entered the service in 1814 and served as a clerk in numerous posts until he received a chief trader's position in 1847. In a revealing letter, James Anderson wrote to his brother, Alexander, from Lake Nipigon on 24 December 1846, just before Joseph Gladman's promotion:

I know that it was anticipated by every one in this quarter that I should have been promoted as well as Joseph Gladman—his Case is most gross—He was a district Master before the McTavishes were (perhaps) born— has borne an excellent character— and has been in charge of Ruperts River district— the most Valuable in this Dept. for Two Years— now mark how he has been treated— he was succeeded in the Charge of New Brunswick by Peter McKenzie— who is (entrenous) but three Removes from a Fool— and who could no more take charge of a district than he could fly - Still Peter was promoted in /44 as soon as he could be - he owed this to be a Governors Protégé - but poor Joe has 16th part of Indian blood in his veins

¹⁰⁴Margaret Arnett Macleod, The Letters of Letitia Hargrave (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1947), p. 149.

¹⁰⁵W. L. Morton, 'George Gladman', DCB, vol. 9, p. 319.

¹⁰⁶Lewis H. Thomas, 'The Hind and Dawson Expeditions 1857-1858', The Beaver, Winter 1958, pp. 40-41.

and for that unpardonable defect - he is deprived of the Fruits of his Labour – he does the duty of a Comd Officer - but he is declined its recompence.¹⁰⁷

Anderson believed that Joseph Gladman's biracial heritage was the primary reason for his lack of promotion and that he was, in fact, shouldering the responsibility of a commissioned officer but not getting the pay and recognition for it. Simpson's 1832 remark about Gladman in his Character Book may explain why his promotion was delayed and why Anderson felt it was race that had postponed it for so long. Simpson described him as:

more Steady and I think qualified to be a more generally useful man than the former [George Gladman]. Speaks both Cree and Chipaway, understands the management of Indians and conducts the business of the Small Post of New Brunswick very well. Irritable, short tempered and like his Brother, has an excellent opinion of himself, and is very conceited which is a leading characteristic in the half breed race.¹⁰⁸

Joseph Gladman, having spent thirty-three years as a clerk before being promoted to chief trader, waited an additional seventeen years before becoming a chief factor. The latter appointment did not occur until 1864, four years before he retired ending his fifty-three year career with the company.¹⁰⁹

In 1858, Pierre Chrysologue Pambrun Jr. also became frustrated in the position of clerk after eighteen years service. He left the Hudson's Bay Company at that time and began to work for the American Fur Company in St. Paul, Minnesota. He wrote from St.

¹⁰⁷B.C. Archives AB 40 An 32, James Anderson's Papers, emphasis on unpardonable defect in the original.

¹⁰⁸G. Williams, Hudson's Bay Miscellany, p. 209.

¹⁰⁹Ibid. p. 209 and note.

Paul to Edward Ermatinger on 22 June 1858 introducing himself as:

a native of the country, my father having enlisted the Hudson's Bay Service after serving as Lieutenant in the Voltigeurs Corps in the American War of 1812. He died in 1841 after a service of 25 years. in that year I entered the same employ, have quit[t]ed it after serving as clerk a term of 15 years. Am at present time employed...in Opposition to said Company and have done so for the last two years.

His criticism of the company went beyond being blocked from promotion. In the same letter, he clearly voiced several injustices which he felt the company practiced.¹¹⁰ The inequalities that he cited were a reaction against Simpson's practice of lumping all employees of mixed descent together at the lowest social rank. For instance, he told Ermatinger that in conduct and education, the 'half-caste[s]' as he called them, 'were as good as Europeans'.¹¹¹ Pambrun continued: 'no other nation can so easily surmount the obstacles and difficulties of the country. or are. So generally adequate to its management'. Yet, he pointed out, they 'entered into the Service upon a lower rank and salary than Europeans'.¹¹² Furthermore, he noted that even 'those of a better Class and who have received a better education they [the HBC] do not even award a much better position'.¹¹³ He also noted inequalities in the way the Hudson's Bay Company disciplined native sons: 'conduct which in a European is overlooked, is in a native punished, and has always been

¹¹⁰PAC MG 19 A2, Series 2, vol. I, p. 268, Edward Ermatinger Papers.

¹¹¹Ibid., p. 275.

¹¹²Ibid.

¹¹³Ibid., p. 274.

the case ever since a Bois Bruille [Brulé] was entered the Service'.¹¹⁴

Joseph Hardisty, son of Richard Hardisty Sr. and his mixed-descent wife Margaret, daughter of John Sutherland, also expressed concern about his treatment within the company. Hardisty was a graduate of the Red River Academy. He entered the service in 1847 and worked for most of his career in the Columbia district. In 1869, while he was a chief trader stationed at the Kootenay, the charge of the district was suddenly given to someone else. During that time a loss of several bales of fur while en route from Kootenay to Victoria resulted in a loss of profit for that outfit. Regarding this incident, Joseph stated that 'I have every reason to believe that had I been left to manage the business that I could (barring any unforeseen circumstances) have brought out the District with a profit in that Ot. It was the first Outfit that I had been at Kootaney [sic] at its commencement & I had everything in fair working order when in July & without any previous notice the charge of the district was transferred to another'. He continued 'what was the result, Perfect anarchy & Roguery. Goods stolen Indians couldnt pay their debts.¹¹⁵ Hardisty's explanation for this event was: 'Mr. F was of the impression that Phillips had never packed them. Mr P[hillips] maintained that he did pack them & I am strongly of the belief that the missing Furs were abstracted from the Bales while they remained at Shepherd en route to the Depot'.¹¹⁶

¹¹⁴Ibid.

¹¹⁵HBCA E.69/1, fo.9, Joseph Hardisty Private Papers, Biographical Notes 1847-1867, emphasis on pay their debts in original.

¹¹⁶Ibid., fo.9d; The Abstracts of Servants' Accounts indicate that 'Mr. F' was probably Chief Factor Roderick Finlayson, based in Victoria, as he was the only person

Another native son, Joseph Finlayson, son of Nicol Finlayson and a part-Cree woman named Elizabeth, born at Albany in April of 1830, expected a promotion from the position of clerk.¹¹⁷ Finlayson entered the trade in 1847 as an apprentice millwright and carpenter.¹¹⁸ He became the postmaster in charge of Green Lake and Ile à la Crosse in 1853, and unlike many of his colleagues passed from postmaster to clerk in 1862.¹¹⁹ Isaac Cowie commented that Joseph

had passed through an apprenticeship in all grades and risen by his talents to that of chief clerk, justly expecting a chief tradership as his reward. He was a man who could do everything himself that any Company's servant, interpreter or accountant, could be expected to do; he did everything excellently, and took pains and pleasure in training others to their duties. His geniality and kindness endeared him to everyone with whom he came in contact, and he was universally known, not as Mr. Finlayson, but by the popular name of "Joe".¹²⁰

Joseph unfortunately never did attain a higher position. He remained a clerk until 1872 when he retired.

working in the region at the time whose name began with the letter f.

¹¹⁷K. G. Davies, ed., Northern Quebec and Labrador Journals and Correspondence 1819-35 (London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1963), pp. 372-374.

¹¹⁸HBAC B.239/g/27-30, Abstracts of Servants' Accounts, Northern Department; B.239/u/1, no.728, Northern Department Servants' Engagement Registers.

¹¹⁹HBCA B.239/g/41-42, Abstracts of Servants' Accounts, Northern Department.

¹²⁰I. Cowie, Company of Adventurers, p.284; Isaac Cowie was an apprentice-clerk at Fort Qu'Appelle in the Swan River district for the outfit 1867-68. He later wrote for the Winnipeg Telegram and the Manitoba Free Press.

Native Sons Obtaining Furlough

Another difficulty which native sons and other clerks faced was the problem of getting furlough. Simpson stated the rules clearly when William Lucas Hardisty made a request for furlough in 1853. Hardisty was a clerk at the time and the policy stated that non-commissioned officers could not get furlough. Simpson wrote to James Anderson, officer in charge of the McKenzie River District at Norway House on 14 June, 1853 regarding Hardisty's request: 'should Mr Hardisty come out from McKenzie River it must be clearly understood that it must be on retirement, without any promise or guarantee that he will be readmitted'.¹²¹ Simpson stated further that:

The withdrawal of clerks from duty on the ground of ill health, private business and other reasons more frivolous than the foregoing is attended with serious inconvenience, and the council feel that the system must for the future be discontinued, and the well understood rules of the service on this subject be adhered to.¹²²

Because of this incident, Richard Hardisty Sr. was very concerned about William's desire to request furlough in 1864 almost ten years later. Richard Jr. mentioned this in a letter to another brother, Joseph: 'I know father has written him strongly not to apply for furlough since he has had charge of McKenzies River District, as he would have a much better chance of getting the next step by living in charge of such a large district'.¹²³ William Lucas' only furlough was granted in 1878 just immediately

¹²¹HBCA B.200/b/32, p.5, Fort Simpson Journal.

¹²²Ibid.

¹²³HBCA E.69/1, fo. 131, Joseph Hardisty Private Papers, Lachine 3 April 1864.

prior to his retirement.¹²⁴ Thus, William Lucas' first request for furlough in 1853, followed by a desire for one in 1864, was only finally granted in 1878. He was forced to wait a long time for furlough because he feared losing his position and status within the Company.

William McMurray was also denied furlough because he was not a commissioned officer. McMurray had initially requested furlough in the mid-1840s. He was discouraged by his father because of company policy on this matter. Simpson agreed with his father and supported his decision. He wrote to Thomas McMurray thus: 'I highly approve of the course you have pursued in dissuading your son Willm. from leaving the Service; a furlough or leave of absence is entirely out of the question, and if he comes down at all it must be on retirement, without any prospect of being readmitted'.¹²⁵

Later, in 1852, after his father's death in Upper Canada, McMurray had requested one year's leave of absence so that he could settle the affairs of the estate. On 6 June 1852, Eden Colvile wrote to McMurray regarding his request as follows: 'It has been, I believe, the invariable rule never to grant leave of absence to any, but commissioned officers, and in accordance therewith, I am compelled to refuse your request.'¹²⁶ Colvile

¹²⁴HBCA D.14/4, fo. 241, James A. Grahame, Chief Commissioner to W. L. Hardisty, Portage La Loche, Montreal 6 May 1878.

¹²⁵HBCA D.4/114, fos. 210-211, Simpson's Official Reports.

¹²⁶HBCA E.61/2, fo. 5, McGowan Collection, William McMurray Correspondence. Eden Colvile, son of Deputy Governor the Hudson's Bay Company, Andrew Colvile had been made Governor of Rupert's Land on 3 January, 1849. E. E. Rich, ed., London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile 1849-1852 (London: The

explained further that if McMurray wished to proceed to Canada he would have to retire and that a passage would be provided for him in the fall canoe.¹²⁷ Colvile then proceeded to reassure McMurray of his re-engagement if he did retire because of his past record. He stated: 'You have attained such a reputation for zeal and energy that I have little doubt that after you have transacted your business, there will be no difficulty in your returning to the service, which I hope you will be inclined to do.'¹²⁸ Colvile then wrote the following month to the Governor and Committee to lobby on McMurray's behalf, asking them 'to entertain favorably any application he may make for returning to the service'.¹²⁹

McMurray did come out from Great Slave Lake, wintered at Red River and proceeded in the spring to Upper Canada. Simpson's reaction to this was not favourable. In September, 1853, he wrote to Cuthbert Cumming ..'I pointed out heavy expense impolicy [sic] of leaving the country after so many years service, during which he had so conducted himself as to be entitled to look forward to promotion. He agreed, I promised...to act for him re Estate...'¹³⁰

What is perhaps most significant about native sons not receiving furlough as clerks after many years of service is not so much the policy itself but Simpson's

Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1956), p. xiv.

¹²⁷Ibid.

¹²⁸Ibid.

¹²⁹E. E. Rich, ed., London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile 1849-1852, p. 150.

¹³⁰D.4/82, fos. 88-90.

interpretation and use of the policy. Simpson stuck unwaveringly to the letter of the law and promised no re-admittance of men who were forced to retire. Colvile, on the other hand, though not in the position of authority that Simpson was, appraised the employment record, and encouraged the employee in question to re-engage and then informed the Governor and Committee about what might occur and recommended that they re-engage the employee. Simpson, rather, added insult to injury by first keeping these sons and others in the position of clerks. He expected some of them to perform the tasks of commissioned officers but denied them the privileges of the higher ranks.

Like promotions, decisions about furlough were decided at the annual council meetings. Furlough was considered to be a formal advantage of office for chief traders and chief factors. The concept of compassionate leave on the grounds of ill health or other personal matters did not exist at that time. Nor did annual vacations. Such leaves were considered 'frivolous' according to Simpson. Furlough was usually granted for one or two years. Because of the modes of transportation and the distances to be covered a minimum of one year would be necessary to make the leave feasible. One modern equivalent would be the sabbatical or research leave granted to tenured university professors. W. L. Hardisty and William McMurray may have requested furlough simply because it was the only option that would have allowed them to leave their posts and come back to them. They were doing the work of commissioned officers at the time and Simpson's comments indicate that the company had made exceptions to the rule in the past.

Reverend John Macallum's Observations

The Reverend John Macallum, the former teacher of the Hardistys, Pierre Pambrun and William McMurray at Red River Academy, was aware of the difficulties that these sons had working for the Company. His replies to their letters found in the McMurray correspondence in the mid-1840s were sympathetic to their plight within the company and reflected the fact that the sons themselves were accurately aware of their own unique problems within the company. For example, he stated 'Mr. P. Pambrun's last letter exhibits a complete consciousness of the peculiar difficulties of his position'.¹³¹

At the same time Macallum was an ardent advocate for the company as an employer and he never left his role as teacher. He encouraged these young men to stay with the Company because he felt their prospects otherwise were not very promising. For example, in November 1844, he wrote reminding these young men that 'your present position in the Company's service is, I allow discouraging, and your prospects everything but cheering'.¹³² Nevertheless he encouraged them to endure these hardships and continued, in elegant prose, to promise them that the hardships would in time decrease. Macallum then stated very clearly that they should not even think of leaving the service as this would be both 'imprudent and impolitic'.¹³³ He explained further that it was imprudent because, 'you cast yourself out of present employment--while you have no

¹³¹HBCA E.61/1, fo.11, McGowan Collection, William McMurray Correspondence, Red River, 25 May, 1845.

¹³²Ibid., fo. 3., Red River, 25 November, 1844.

¹³³Ibid.

immediate prospect of improving your circumstances; and impolitic because you thus deprive yourselves of that influence which number will eventually confer. Besides, if the most worthy retire, who will be disposed to advocate the cause of the careless, the inactive, and the useless?' ¹³⁴ But Macallum did not stop there. He stated further that they could promote their own interests and those of their countrymen best by retaining their positions and performing their duties with care and diligence. Furthermore, he felt that some of their problems arose because they had, in his opinion 'neglected the morning' of their lives, 'the only period when a foundation of future eminence can be laid'. ¹³⁵ In other words, according to his way of thinking, these native sons had not built up the foundation they should have had in their first few years of life.

Evaluating their letters as if marking essays, he commented on the personal qualities that their texts revealed and he grasped the opportunity to preach to them regarding their responsibilities. For example, he was pleased that they continued to pursue literary interests but he admonished them, 'never...permit your literary engagements to divert your mind, for a moment, from your official duties'. ¹³⁶ Furthermore he urged that in pursuit of their 'official duties', they increase the company's profits as well. He stated, 'however...commendable it may be to write well, it is much more praiseworthy to act well; and depend upon it, he that is found the most

¹³⁴Ibid.

¹³⁵Ibid., fo. 4.

¹³⁶Ibid., fo. 12

efficient servant, he that most augments the revenues of the Company'.¹³⁷ Macallum pointed out the actions and the qualities requisite for this task. He stated: 'One that displayed the most tact in providing, managing, trading and securing, that is obeyed with readiness and who is popular without being familiar, is the man that will be most esteemed and appreciated by the commercial body....Such a body only considers utility, and values intellectual endowments just so far as they contribute to the main object--aggrandis[e]ment'.¹³⁸

Macallum, in addition, reminded his former students to remain faithful to God and to 'communicate religious knowledge...to the natives of the desert' who come into the posts where they are employed. This task, Macallum stated, they had promised to do when attending the academy and he was most anxious that in all ways they should continue to maintain the reputation of the 'école du nord'.¹³⁹

Employees Retained to Keep them from Opposing the Company

In addition to the implementation of specific policies which limited the movement of native sons within the company, Simpson had a rationale for retaining employees who he believed could be detrimental to the HBC's trade if they were employed in opposition to it. In his evaluations of employees, phrases such as 'retained to keep from the opposition' appeared quite frequently and pertained to a number of the sons of this study.

¹³⁷Ibid., fo. 11.

¹³⁸Ibid., fos. 12-13., Red River, 19 May, 1846.

¹³⁹Ibid., fo. 11d., Red River, 25 May, 1845.

Simpson spoke quite negatively about these particular men. Yet many of them were gifted individuals. They were aware of the politics involved and the appropriate tactics required to enhance the trade in specific areas. On the one hand, Simpson's insistence on retaining these employees could be viewed as clever strategy for handling personnel and perhaps genuine fears about what a few men could do if they opposed the Company. But Simpson's negativity could also be interpreted as evidence of his stereotypical, prejudicial and manipulative attitude toward native sons.

One of the most notable of these men was Jemmy Jock Bird. He entered the HBC's service in 1809 as an apprentice at York Factory.¹⁴⁰ In the summer of 1810, he left York Factory for Edmonton House where he worked under his father, Chief Factor James Bird, for the next five years.¹⁴¹ In 1814, he signed a new three year contract at £15 per annum.¹⁴² In October 1815 he was a member of the party who brought Robert Semple, the new Governor of Assiniboia, from York Factory.¹⁴³ He was described by his superiors at this time as being 'sober, honest willing and obedient, an active young man'.¹⁴⁴ Simpson expressed his earliest opinion of Jemmy Jock in his 1827 annual report to the Governor and Committee at which time he described Bird's life among the Plains Indians. This account reveals Simpson's contradictory opinion of Bird. Simpson

¹⁴⁰David Smyth, DCB vol. 12, pp. 110-111.

¹⁴¹*Ibid.*, p. 110.

¹⁴²HBCA A.16/15, fos. 11-12.

¹⁴³HBCA B.22/a/19, fo. 6.

¹⁴⁴HBCA A.30/16, fos. 2-3, Lists of Servants.

saw him as a 'thoughtless' young man whose lifestyle he could not endorse. And at the same time he recognized that Bird had considerable influence over the Piegan and was a valuable trader who could be used in defense against the encroaching Americans.¹⁴⁵

Jemmy Jock left the company and became a freeman in the years 1821 to 1830. During this time, though not employed by the Hudson's Bay Company, he became their agent among the Blackfoot. He lived with the Blackfoot tribes encouraging them to trade with the Hudson's Bay Company. This work was difficult as the Blackfoot were traditional enemies of the Assiniboine and Cree nations who supported the Company. For a time he joined the American Fur Company. On 6 June 1830, Jemmy Jock re-entered the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company, signing a five year contract as a clerk and interpreter at £100 per annum.¹⁴⁶ On 10 June 1835, Simpson wrote to London regarding Jemmy Jock as follows:

although a very bad character, [Bird] has I believe exerted himself to the utmost to bring them [the Peigan] back to us, but although such fellows can in this country do a great deal of mischief, they have it in their power to do much good, and this has been the case with Jamey Jock. His terms are exceedingly high, but bad as he is, and mortifying as it is to have been under the necessity of giving way to unreasonable demands of such a fellow, it is much better that he should be with than against us, in proof of which we are mainly indebted to his exertions for a haul of 500 Beaver last winter, which would otherwise have gone to the Americans.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵David Smyth, 'James Jemmy Jock Bird Jr.', unpublished paper, 1981, p. 14.

¹⁴⁶HBCA A.32/21, no. 395, Servants' Contracts.

¹⁴⁷HBCA D.4/102, fo. 39, 10 June 1835, Red River Settlement, Simpson to Governor and Committee.

Jemmy Jock was re-engaged in 1838 at £100 per annum.¹⁴⁸ But in 1841 he became a freeman once again and never rejoined company ranks.¹⁴⁹ When Bird left the company the final time, Simpson tried to recover part of Jemmy Jock's balance of £400 which he felt had been 'fraudulently obtained by him from the Company'.¹⁵⁰

In 1841, Bird helped to guide his brother-in-law James Sinclair and his party of twenty-three families from Carlton House to the Rockies, a good part of their journey from Red River to the Columbia. Simpson reported that Bird abandoned Sinclair and that the 'emigrants had been treacherously deserted at Bow River, by their guide, a half-breed of some education'.¹⁵¹ It is difficult to determine whether or not Bird actually abandoned Sinclair and the emigrants. David Smyth noted that Jemmy Jock led the emigrants into the Rockies and there left them in the hands of another guide, Maskepetoon, a Cree chief.¹⁵² It is fairly clear that neither Simpson, nor Chief Factor John Rowand of Fort Edmonton, liked or trusted Jemmy Jock. But they repeatedly hired him for work which no one else at the time was capable of doing as no one had the ties to the Blackfoot communities that he did.

Lesser known individuals who were similarly engaged to keep them from

¹⁴⁸HBCA D.4/23, fo. 117, Simpson's Official Correspondence.

¹⁴⁹HBCA D.4/25, fols. 67-67d, Simpson's Official Correspondence.

¹⁵⁰HBCA D.4/25, fo. 134; D.4/30, fo. 16.

¹⁵¹Simpson, George, An Overland Journey Round the World During the Years 1841 and 1842 (Philadelphia: Lee and Blanchard, 1847), p. 81-82.

¹⁵²David Smyth, 'James Bird', DCB vol. 12, p. 110.

opposing the Company included John McIntosh; Edward, Donald and John McKay and William McBean. John McIntosh was the son of Chief Trader Donald McIntosh and Charlotte, a 'Chippaway' woman.¹⁵³ He was born in about 1798, educated in Cornwall, Upper Canada by Donald's sister, Christy and entered the trade in 1818 at the age of twenty.¹⁵⁴ He was transferred from the Lake Superior district to the Northern Department in 1823 and in 1835 was sent to the Columbia. In 1827 Simpson described John as 'a Halfbreed, unsteady not a man of veracity, stout, strong, and active, but deficient in Education yet can be made useful'.¹⁵⁵ In 1832, Simpson's evaluation stated that he was 'a half breed of the Chippaway Nation, About 34 years of Age has been 14 years in the Service. A stout strong low blackguard lying fellow, who is retained in the Service to prevent his being troublesome to us in Opposition on the shores of Lake Superior where he was born and brought up, and related to many of the Indians in that quarter'.¹⁵⁶

John McIntosh was killed on 8 July 1844. Chief Factor and surgeon, Dr. John McLoughlin, told Governor Simpson that he was 'shot dead by a Sickanie Indian at Mcleods Lake' whom he apparently feared.¹⁵⁷ One theory suggests that he was killed in revenge for threatening 'bad medicine'; the other for killing a party of Assiniboine a few

¹⁵³HBCA A.34/2, fo. 37, Characters and Staff Servants Records.

¹⁵⁴HBCA A.34/1, fo. 153, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

¹⁵⁵Ibid.

¹⁵⁶HBCA A.34/2, fo. 37, Characters and Staff Servants Records.

¹⁵⁷HBCA Search File of Donald McIntosh; The Sickanie Indian was probably a member of the Athapaskan linguistic group called the Sekani who inhabited the northern interior of British Columbia.

years earlier. Simpson's comments lent credence to the first theory and at the same time reaffirmed his negative attitudes toward him. In a letter to Chief Trader Donald Manson in July 1847, he stated: I notice what you say about the cause of late John McIntosh's death, which, from all I can collect, arose in great degree from his own want of sense in unnecessarily provoking the natives by threats of 'bad medicine', and other injudicious conduct, for which he was long conspicuous.¹⁵⁸

Simpson retained Donald McKay in the service for similar reasons. McKay joined the North West Company in about 1807 and entered the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 where he was placed in charge of a post in the Kenogamissee district.¹⁵⁹ In 1827, Simpson wrote that McKay was a 'Halfbreed & clever, but addicted to liquor, not to be trusted with the charge of a post, active in opposition, retained because he might be troublesome in the hands of petty traders'.¹⁶⁰ In 1832, Simpson's remarks were similar. He described him as 'A Temiscamingue half breed....An active useful Man at Kenigumissie, to the Indians of which place he is related and with whom he has much influence. Would be very troublesome if in the hands of opposition and therefore retained in the Service although not steady fond of Liquor and given to falsehood'.¹⁶¹

Edward McKay, too, was perceived as a threat to the Hudson's Bay Company

¹⁵⁸A.G. Morice, History of the Northern Interior of British Columbia, pp. 180-181.

¹⁵⁹G. Williams, Hudson's Bay Miscellany, p. 217, n. 3.

¹⁶⁰HBCA A.34/1, fo. 116, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

¹⁶¹HBCA A.34/2, fo. 37-38, Characters and Staff Servants' Records; D.4/99, fo.32d, Governors' Correspondence.

should he join the opposition. He was born in about 1797 to John McKay and Mary Favel, a part-Cree woman, joined the Hudson's Bay Company in 1815, deserted to the North West Company and then rejoined the HBC in 1822.¹⁶² Simpson described him as a 'halfbreed unsteady and of ...indifferent character...now retained in the Service to keep him out of hands of Petty Traders: but like many of his breed would be discharged if we were not apprehensive that he would in that case give us trouble'.¹⁶³

Additionally, William McBean was kept on the company payroll because, according to Simpson, he showed 'no great promise but [was] employed to keep him out of the way of the opposition'.¹⁶⁴ McBean was the son of Chief Factor John McBean and Isabella Latour, a woman of Cree descent.¹⁶⁵ He entered the trade in 1826 as an interpreter in the Southern Department.¹⁶⁶ He retired in about 1851 after serving for several years in New Caledonia.

These native sons who Simpson feared might oppose the company, causing serious decline in its trade, were men who had what Simpson called considerable 'influence over the Indians'. Though he was negative in his comments he was astute enough to recognize that the combination of skills which these men possessed ought best be used to serve the company's interests.

¹⁶²HBCA A.34/1, fo. 17, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

¹⁶³Ibid.

¹⁶⁴HBCA A.34/1, fo. 146, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

¹⁶⁵W. S. Wallace, Documents Relating to the North West Company, p. 475.

¹⁶⁶G. Williams, Hudson's Bay Miscellany, p. 232.

Former Employees Obtaining Work Outside the Company

In the post-merger era, the Hudson's Bay Company was, as Judd has pointed out, 'the only major employer, with controlling influence in government, the only link with the outside world and the sole agent for the sale of land' in Red River; 'it was in a unique position of being able to impose its wishes' on a large segment of the population.¹⁶⁷ This monopoly presented difficulties for former employees who were trying to make a living outside the company because they still had to deal with the company and lived in company owned territories. William Sinclair II, though still employed by the company, wrote of this problem in a letter to Edward Ermatinger on 22 June, 1832:

Red River has now become the point of attraction. For my part I have not yet changed my view of it; that it is one of the last places I will choose for a residence, it was very well when a person cannot do better & People there who call themselves freemen are just as much under subordination as any of those who are under Contract.¹⁶⁸

Sinclair's brother, James, a former employee, voiced his concerns about the company's exclusive control. His advocacy on behalf of the Red River Metis, both English and French-speaking, and his concerns expressed in an 1845 petition to Governor Christie regarding the company's monopoly, were mentioned in chapter two.

Previous to this petition, in the same month, Sinclair had written to Simpson on 25 August 1845, to explain the difficult situation he was in with regard to his contract allowing limited trade. The situation had become desperate for Sinclair because the Hudson's Bay Company was refusing to give him credit. He wrote explaining, 'so many

¹⁶⁷C. M. Judd, 'Employment Opportunities', p.11.

¹⁶⁸PAC MG 19 A2, Series 2, vol.1, p. 291, Edward Ermatinger Papers.

obstacles of late years have been thrown in the way of not only my advancement but the Settlers in general that I do not see how I can in any manner support myself and family except by entering into such business as may interfere with the interest and privileges of the Hudson's Bay Co'.¹⁶⁹

Simpson did not reply directly to Sinclair's letter but in a memo to Chief Factor Christie written over a year later on 21 September 1846, he stated, 'Sinclair, Haydon, Goulait and any other Americans, halfbreeds, settlers, or persons whatsoever engaged in illicit trade or contravening the laws of chartered rights of the Company, to be proceeded against with the utmost vigour of the law.'¹⁷⁰ Sinclair increasingly shared the opposition of his friend, native son Alexander Kennedy Isbister (mentioned earlier in this chapter), to the HBC's monopoly. Even though he had left Rupert's Land to live in Britain, Isbister supported his native countrymen. In 1847, he presented a paper to the British government articulating the grievances of about 1,000 natives of Red River and advocated for their right to free trade.¹⁷¹

A little over a decade later, Pierre C. Pambrun Jr. echoed similar concerns about the company. Like James Sinclair and Alexander Kennedy Isbister, he too was an advocate for his people. He was very opposed to the Hudson's Bay Company's monopoly on trade because he felt it was crippling them economically. Two years after his retirement from the company, he spoke out adamantly regarding this in a letter of 22

¹⁶⁹Ibid., fo.137.

¹⁷⁰HBCA D.4/35, fo.104, no.14., Governors' Correspondence.

¹⁷¹Sylvia Van Kirk, 'Alexander Kennedy Isbister', DCB, vol. 11., p. 445.

June 1858 to Edward Ermatinger. Pambrun believed that because the 'Half-Caste', as he called them, were born in this country they should have access to its resources 'whether Fur Bearing or large animal', to dispose of for their own advantage.¹⁷² Referring to the free trade disputes of the 1840s, Pambrun noted that the Metis were allowed trade within certain limits. This he felt was not adequate. He stated that the 'Bois Bruiles will allow no Restricts & no Restraints'. He asserted that because their progeny had intermarried with 'the women of every District now under control of the Hudson's Bay, they can trade in all those countries'.¹⁷³ Pambrun felt that if the Company's charter were renewed and the monopoly enforced, a serious revolt might result. He declared that 'there is a determination that they [Metis] will remain staunch to their rights, and shed blood if necessary in defence of their privileges rather than allow inclusive trade. And let it be known that this is not a slight Bark merely but a resolve that will be held good'.¹⁷⁴ He felt that the Company's right to exclusive trade would 'take every chance from the natives of bettering their condition'.¹⁷⁵ Finally, Pambrun protested against what he termed 'the bondage under which they were held' by the company's monopoly and he declared that they would no longer 'act the part of Serfs' which, in his opinion, was how they had been treated until recently when certain strides were made in the area of free trade.

¹⁷²PAC MG 19, A2, Series 2, vol. 1, p. 274. Edward Ermatinger Papers, Pambrun, St.Paul, to Ermatinger 22 June, 1858.

¹⁷³Ibid.

¹⁷⁴Ibid., emphasis on determination and Bark merely in original.

¹⁷⁵Ibid., p. 275.

Coincidentally, James Sinclair used the word 'slave' with regard to the way he was treated by Adam Thom, the chief magistrate of Red River. In attempting to work out the details of a trading contract outside the company, Sinclair noted that the arrangements were 'frustrated by Mr. Thom, who to my no small amazement addressed us in a tone and terms, which might have suited a Despot addressing his slave.'¹⁷⁶ Though Pambrun did not condone the HBC's monopoly or its treatment of native sons, he praised the company for maintaining their posts without bloodshed and for attempting to bring peace between the warring northern tribes. Additionally, he did not think that Canada should take over the Company's territories.

Accomplishments of Native Sons

Despite the fact that the native sons faced difficulties both working within the company's service and in their attempts to make a living outside its ranks in company owned territories, they, as individuals and as a group, accomplished a very great deal. Their contributions to the Company as employees were noted on occasion in official documents and in private correspondence by their supervisors, colleagues and family members. Their accomplishments fall roughly into four categories as follows: linguistic and interpreting skills; general labouring skills including those of canoemen, provisioners, hunters, marksmen, and guides; having influence over the Indians. And finally, from the late 1840s through the 1850s when several sons became managers, they

¹⁷⁶HBCA D.5/15, fo.350.Governors' Correspondence, James Sinclair to Sir George Simpson, Red River Settlement, 7 June 1846.

were praised for their capabilities in management. Some sons possessed skills in several of these areas.

Linguistic skills were a common attribute of the native sons. Many of them spoke one or more native languages and many spoke French as well. Several began their careers with the Company's service as interpreters. A few of the sons in this study were singled out in the official documents for their proficiency in speaking different languages.

Jemmy Jock Bird was undoubtedly the most talented in this area. He could speak fluently in English, French, Blackfoot, Gros Ventre, Stony, Cree and Sarsi.¹⁷⁷ He gained the reputation of being the 'best interpreter in the country', a label given him by the Governor of Washington Territory, Isaac I. Stevens and his assistant James Doty when they hired Bird to assist with the Blackfoot Treaty negotiations in 1854.¹⁷⁸ In addition, he was an interpreter for Treaty Seven in 1877. He was trusted by both Lieutenant Governor David Laird and Lieutenant Colonel James McLeod, although some Blackfoot did not think highly of him and felt that his lack of education limited his ability to translate certain concepts effectively.¹⁷⁹ Earlier, in the 1840s, he worked as the interpreter and guide for Wesleyan missionary Robert Rundle and Jesuit Father Jean-Pierre de Smet.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷David Smyth, 'James Bird', DCB (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), vol. 12, p.110.

¹⁷⁸Albert J. Partoll, ed., 'The Blackfoot Indian Peace Council', Frontier Omnibus (Missoula: Montana State University Press, 1962), p. 198.

¹⁷⁹Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt, Dorothy First Rider and Sarah Carter, The True Spirit and Original Intent of Treaty 7 (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), pp. 74,128.

¹⁸⁰David Smyth, DCB, vol. 12, 1990, p. 111.

William McMurray, son of Chief Trader Thomas McMurray and Jane Cardinalle, 'a native woman', was praised for his fluency in Saulteaux and Chipewyan and his oratorical skills.¹⁸¹ In fact, scientist Captain John Henry Lefroy wrote McMurray in 1845 encouraging him to continue his acquisition of Chipewyan: 'I hardly know any way in which you could make so valuable and creditable use of your leisure...as by acquiring a mastery of that language'.¹⁸² Lefroy added that mastery of the language was the first step in bringing Christianity to the Northern Indians. He felt that from 'a good, extensive, accurate vocabulary of Chipewyan words and phrases....you will do more to facilitate the extension of the incalculable blessing of Christianity...than half a dozen Mr. Evans'.¹⁸³ The Reverend James Evans was a Methodist minister who established his headquarters at Norway House in 1840.¹⁸⁴

Other skilled linguists included Thomas Taylor, who began as an apprentice-labourer and served as Simpson's personal servant. In 1832, Simpson praised him for several assets: 'he speaks several Native Languages, is a great favorite with Indians, is 'a Jack of all Trades' and altogether a very useful man in his line'.¹⁸⁵ In addition, Hector

¹⁸¹HBCA A.36/10, fo.116-117 Last Will and Testament of Thomas McMurray, 18 March 1824; I. Spry, ed., The Palliser Papers, p. 602.

¹⁸²HBCA E.61/1, fo.5., McGowan Collection. William McMurray Correspondence, Captain Lefroy, Montreal, 1845 to William McMurray.

¹⁸³Ibid., fo. 6.

¹⁸⁴J. G. MacGregor, Senator Hardisty's Prairies 1849-1889 (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1978), p. 7.

¹⁸⁵G. Williams, 'Hudson's Bay Miscellany', p. 233.

Aeneas McKenzie, besides being fluent in Saulteaux, was reportedly able to narrate tales of the Saulteaux people with whom he spent much of his early life.¹⁸⁶

Some native sons served as excellent guides for the company. Roderick McKenzie Sr. in a private letter to George Simpson in 1844 mentioned that 'our Guide Charles Thomas will answer our purpose much better... he is [an] honest, faithful servant and understands the Indian tribes very well, reads and writes and will work and steer his own Boat to the Post'.¹⁸⁷

Apart from their linguistic and interpreting skills which were an invaluable asset to the trade, some native sons were capable of living off the land and surviving in the harsh climate of Rupert's Land. In order to do this they had to be good netmakers, canoemen, guides, hunters, provisioners, marksmen, and winter travellers. These skills though often learned by European traders as adults, were acquired by the native sons as part of their bicultural upbringing and heritage. Some demonstrated expertise in a number of these areas as the examples will illustrate.

Netmaking or knitting fishing nets was a vital part of the fishing industry which provided a major source of food. It was a skill that some native sons were taught by their mothers or their mothers' relatives. James Swain Jr. possessed this skill among others. Before he entered the company's service in 1808, he was described as being a 'very

¹⁸⁶G. Williams, 'Hudson's Bay Miscellany', p. 233; W.H. Hooper, Ten Months Among the Tents of the Tuski, p. 283-285.

¹⁸⁷D.5/10, fo.371., Governors' Correspondence, Roderick McKenzie Sr. to Sir George Simpson, 1844.

promising, correct & attentive...interpreter & Net maker.'¹⁸⁸

Roderick McKenzie, son of Roderick McKenzie Sr. and his wife, Angelique, while stationed at Sturgeon Lake made several references to himself knitting a net.¹⁸⁹ He noted in the journal that the nets produced 60 fish. Netting snowshoes was another valuable survival skill. George Atkinson Jr., in 1794 at one of his earliest positions at Eastmain was asked to winter in the area of Nemiscau Lake where his primary role was to persuade the Indians to trade. In the Eastmain journal it was noted that he netted himself a pair of snowshoes before he set off.¹⁹⁰ Both George and his brother Jacob Atkinson were excellent provisioners as well.

Three native sons gained praise for their proficiency as marksmen. One of these was Thomas McKay who entered the service in 1813 and spent much of his career in the Columbia district. In 1824 Simpson praised him with the following evaluation: 'Valuable in the Columbia as Leader of a party on dangerous service, respected and Feared by the Indians, resolute, an unerring marksman, retired last season but retained'.¹⁹¹ William McMurray, too, was described as 'an excellent shot; and one of the best winter travellers'.¹⁹² And in 1850, Dr. John Rae praised Hector Aeneas McKenzie for being an

¹⁸⁸E. E. Rich, Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822, p. 243.

¹⁸⁹HBCA B.211/a/3, fos. 2-4, Sturgeon Lake Journal 1830-1831.

¹⁹⁰HBCA B.59/a/70, fo.34 Eastmain Journal, 1794.

¹⁹¹HBCA A.34/1, fo.109, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

¹⁹²I. Spry, Palliser's Papers, p. 602.

excellent shot.¹⁹³

Many of the native sons were noted for having a particularly good relationship with the Indians. The phrase 'beloved by the Indians' was used in the official documents to describe these ties which were often associated with possessing useful country skills. For instance, Philip Turnor wrote in the 1780s that Charles Isham was 'well beloved by the Indians and taulks the language exceeding well'.¹⁹⁴ Charles lived all winter with the Indians on more than one occasion which was not uncommon during that period of time. His ties to his Cree mother and her relatives likely played a role in earning their friendship. Additionally, Charles Isham was noted for being excellent at both building and steering canoes.¹⁹⁵ Philip Turnor observed on 15 July 1779, that Charles Isham, along with two others, were a 'set of the best men I ever saw together...obliging handy good Canoe Men'. He continued that they were 'little or none inferior to a good Indian & in some Particulars far Superior to any in a Canoe'.¹⁹⁶

John Richards McKay joined the service as a writer at Brandon House in 1809. By the time of the merger he was in charge there and in 1823 Chief Factor John McDonald wrote of him, 'he is very active and much beloved by the Indians of this

¹⁹³E.E. Rich, ed., Rae's Arctic Correspondence 1844-1855, p. 169-170.

¹⁹⁴Jennifer S.H. Brown, 'Charles Thomas Isham', DCB, vol. 5, 1983, p. 450.

¹⁹⁵E. E. Rich, ed., Cumberland House Journal and Inland Journals 1775-82, 1st Series, pp.14, 15, 52, 83n, 343-344.

¹⁹⁶J. B. Tyrrell, ed., Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor between the years 1774 and 1792 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), p. 251.

Quarter'.¹⁹⁷ McDonald added that during the time of competition prior to the merger, McKay 'had acquired the habits of extravagance', meaning that he was generous to the Indians in order to retain their loyalty and prevent them from trading with the opposition. McDonald added that 'this is wearing off fast and he will become a useful servant to the Company...'.¹⁹⁸ Simpson's evaluation of McKay concurred with that of McDonald's. However, Simpson threatened to take drastic steps if McKay's extravagance did not change. In 1822 he wrote: 'Sober honest tolerable clerk and trader, very active but supposed to be extravagant with Indians will be discharged if not improved'.¹⁹⁹ George Simpson praised Patrick Small in 1832 for the fact that he 'speaks several native languages, [is] liked by natives, respected by people, manages his post well'.²⁰⁰

Three native sons were praised as being good Indian traders. In his article entitled, 'The Indian Trader in the Hudson Bay Fur Trade Tradition', John Foster pointed out that this term meant that they were persons with whom Indian bands could make political, social and economic alliances.²⁰¹ He noted, too, that the Indian trader was a man of status and social rank in the trading post. Furthermore, Foster believed that

¹⁹⁷HBCA B.22/a/2, Brandon House Journal, 1823.

¹⁹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹⁹HBCA A.34/1, fo. 35, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

²⁰⁰HBCA A.34/1, fo. 92, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

²⁰¹John E. Foster, 'The Indian-Trader in the Hudson Bay Fur trade Tradition', National Museum of Man Mercury Series, Proceedings of the Second Congress, Canadian Ethnology Society, 1975, p. 577.

biracial sons who aspired to become Indian traders had kin ties to previous Indian traders, had education equal to or superior to that of their British fathers and a concern for decorum, manner and bearing.²⁰²

George Simpson referred to Patrick Small Jr. as an 'excellent Indian Plains trader' in 1830.²⁰³ Roderick McKenzie Sr. mentioned his son Samuel's skills in this area. On 8 July 1843 he wrote privately to George Simpson from Norway House regarding Samuel's expertise: 'I am well pleased with Samuel's conduct he so far conducts himself with the greatest propriety and I may say a good economical Indian Trader...'.²⁰⁴ McKenzie Sr. praised another son, Roderick Jr., for similar attributes though at the same time expressing disappointment over shortcomings in other areas. He wrote to George Simpson on 1 July 1845 that Roderick... 'always passed for a good industrious lad, and a very expert Indian trader.' In a candid statement he added: 'I know the lad very well, he was born and brought up with myself at Lake Nipigon'.²⁰⁵

Several sons were complimented for their expertise in the management of small posts. For instance, Chief Factor John Stuart complimented William Sinclair II in 1831 when Sinclair was in the Dalles, his first independent command. Stuart wrote that there

²⁰²Ibid., p. 580.

²⁰³HBCA A.34/1, fo. 57, Servants Characters and Staff Records 1822-1830.

²⁰⁴HBCA D.5/8, fo.352. Governor's Correspondence, Roderick McKenzie to Sir George Simpson.

²⁰⁵HBCA D.5/14, fo.116d.

were few to whom he 'would more willing commit a charge'.²⁰⁶

Similarly, Alexander Christie Jr. was praised by Chief Factor John Lee Lewes in a private letter to James Hargrave, 21 March 1842: 'Young Christie is with me and gives me the utmost satisfaction'.²⁰⁷ Similarly, a year later Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron wrote to James Hargrave from La Cloche on 5 May 1843 that a 'very fine young Man, a Son of Mr Christie past the winter at St Marys—I applied last fall to Sir George to let me have this young Man - but in his answer he gives a flat refusal. I however repeated my request by the Winter Express- of course it is useless for me to expect a compliance'.²⁰⁸ Alexander Christie Jr. was a clerk in 1843, and in that summer was appointed to Fort Halkett.

Alexander Christie Jr.'s brother, William Joseph, was singled out for praise by John Palliser when his expedition passed the winter at Fort Edmonton where William Joseph was in charge. Palliser wrote, 'Mr Christie...did everything in his power to contribute not only to the welfare of the Expedition, but also to our Personal Comforts. He undertook for me also the organizing of my goods for payment, and paid the men, a most troublesome office, which I should have had the greatest difficulty completing without his assistance'.²⁰⁹ On 29 June 1855, George Simpson reported to the London

²⁰⁶Irene M. Spry, 'William Sinclair', DCB, vol. 9, p. 722.

²⁰⁷G.P. de T. Glazebrook, The Hargrave Correspondence 1821-1843 (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), p. 380.

²⁰⁸Ibid., p. 437.

²⁰⁹I. Spry, Palliser Papers, p. 38.

Committee that 'Chief Trader Christie managed the affairs of Swan River with activity and good judgment, and it is satisfactory to learn that, notwithstanding strong competition we experienced, the returns of Outfit 1854...was above the average of several preceding outfits'.²¹⁰

William McMurray, too, was complimented highly for his work at Fort Ellice. In March, 1855, John Ballenden wrote to him, 'during the last winter I have studied carefully your correspondence and everything has met my entire approbation [sic]. Remarks that have reached me regarding your mode of conducting the trade, are excellent and show a system of management and economy as few men now can equal and I think the result of our trade will show very well this year'.²¹¹ McMurray had entered the service as an apprentice postmaster in 1838. He became a chief factor in 1866 and was appointed an inspecting chief factor in 1875.²¹² Fort McMurray in what is now Alberta was named after him in 1870.²¹³

James Anderson complimented W. L. Hardisty on his capable management in a letter to McMurray dated 28 November, 1854. He stated: 'Hardisty came here [Ft. Simpson] on a visit this fall. He has recovered his health - everything goes on well at the

²¹⁰HBCA D.4/75, fo. 400, Governor Simpson's Correspondence Outward 1854-1856.

²¹¹HBCA E.61/1, fos.13-14, McGowan Collection, William McMurray Correspondence.

²¹²E. E. Rich, ed., Rae's Arctic Correspondence, p. 128n.

²¹³W. S. Wallace, Documents Relating to the North West Company, p. 483.

Youcon under his very able management'.²¹⁴ Anderson praised W. L. Hardisty's abilities in another letter. He stated:

Mr. Hardisty [was] an excellent officer in every respect - a good accountant....If Hardisty be promoted he has abilities in my opinion equal to anything; I have not had an opportunity of forming an opinion on many other points of his character but there is no doubt that he could take the temporary charge of the District, if required, - the difficulty will be to fill his place at the Youcon'.²¹⁵

In addition, Anderson praised W. L. Hardisty directly on 25 August 1852:

the very handsome increase in your Returns, the methodical and neat manner in which your accounts are made out, and the way in which you have conducted the business generally, call for my warmest commendations, and you may rely that I shall not omit to represent your conduct in the proper quarter'.²¹⁶

William Lucas Hardisty, himself, in correspondence to James Anderson, demonstrated his insight into the trade. He reported on 12 August 1855, that the returns depended 'upon the caprices of distant tribes with whom we have no personal intercourse and among whom there is fierce competition, resulting frequently in deadly feuds'.²¹⁷ He reported further that 'distant tribes [were] deterred from coming by these rascally traders, who waylay them on their road to the Fort, force them to accept very inadequate remuneration [sic] for their furs, or pillage them altogether'.²¹⁸

Another letter showed his attention to duty and the men under his charge. On 20

²¹⁴HBCA B.200/b/28, fo.9, Fort Simpson Correspondence.

²¹⁵James Anderson Papers, PAC MG 19 A29, vol.1, file 4, p.140.

²¹⁶HBCA B.200/b/28, fo.3, Fort Simpson Correspondence.

²¹⁷HBCA B.200/b/32, p. 129, Fort Simpson Correspondence.

²¹⁸Ibid.

October 1855, he wrote:

I always consult the personnel comforts of the men under my charge, as far as my duty to the Company will allow me, and my having been able to keep so many of the Old hands so long at the Youcon is a sufficient proof of this. But the fact is the Youcon is a lonesome, isolated place, and the men have less frequent opportunities of seeing their friends and companions as those in other parts of the District.²¹⁹

In addition to the many years of capable and faithful service to the Company, Hardisty collected specimens for the Smithsonian Institution with the celebrated American naturalist, Robert Kennicott. He also submitted a report to them on the Loucheux Indians which is included in their annual reports for 1866.²²⁰ W. L. Hardisty was in charge of the McKenzie River district which was reported to be 'a most important Charge , the largest & most valuable district in the country'.²²¹

William Lucas' brother Joseph joined the Company in 1847 and became a chief factor in 1872. On 1 July 1852, Eden Colvile reported from Norway House to the Governor, Deputy Governor and the Committee that Joseph was 'being most assiduous in his duties' as the accountant at Fort Vancouver.²²² His brother George praised him further for his work on the accounts: 'McQuade said to me one day that the Company will never have another Cashier like you, in fact everybody around the establishment say[s]

²¹⁹Ibid., p. 135-6.

²²⁰Annual Report of the Board of Regents of the Smithsonian Institution (1866) Washington Government Printing Office, 1872, pp. 311-320.

²²¹HBCA E.69/2, fo. 104, McGowan Collection, Joseph Hardisty Private Papers.

²²²E. E. Rich, ed., London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colvile 1849-1852, p. 161.

the same'.²²³

Tom Hardisty, another brother, worked in the Montreal office for a time and his work was noted by J. S. Clouston who wrote on 27 June 1863: 'Tom was in this office for more than a year and I was very sorry when he was ordered to the North this Spring as he is a first-rate clerk and a very pleasant, obliging fellow. I have no doubt he will get on well in the service.'²²⁴ Thomas was sent to the MacKenzie River to be under his brother William who was in charge of that district.

Richard Charles Hardisty, brother of William, Joseph and Tom, also had a very successful career with the Company. He entered the service as an apprentice postmaster in 1849 and became a chief factor in 1872. In one of his postings it was noted that he had 'about doubled the returns from Manitoba this year as compared with last'.²²⁵ As a chief factor he was appointed to the charge of the Upper Saskatchewan District where he served for seventeen years.²²⁶ Following his retirement he ran for election in Alberta politics and was called to the Senate. As an Alberta politician he fought for Metis rights and requested that a highway be built between Edmonton and the Mackenzie River.²²⁷

John Rowand Jr., son of John Rowand and Lisette Humphrville was praised by

²²³HBCA E.69/2, fo. 167, McGowan Collection, Joseph Hardisty Private Papers.

²²⁴Ibid., fo.110.

²²⁵E. E. Rich, ed., London Correspondence Inward from Eden Colville 1849-1852 p. 261, n.2.

²²⁶Shirlee Anne Smith, 'Richard Charles Hardisty' DCB, vol. 11, 1982, pp. 383-4.

²²⁷Ibid., p. 384.

Simpson shortly after his appointment to Chief Trader in 1850. Simpson mentioned to Rowand's father that 'John is in high condition, the very image of yourself some thirty years ago'.²²⁸ Rowand, who had entered the service in 1833 had spent the previous seventeen years capably in charge of a series of posts in the Saskatchewan District. He retired to Red River after twenty-two years of faithful service.²²⁹

Simpson did praise his men for attributes that were valuable to the company in advancing the trade. He was, however, obsessed with keeping most of them in what he perceived to be their rightful place, both in terms of their positions in the company and as a social group. He was rarely able to overcome the racial prejudices which prevented him from realizing that the talents the native sons possessed arose largely from their bicultural heritage and that these attributes contributed a great deal to the company's success.

²²⁸HBCA D.4/73, p.600, Governor's Correspondence Outward 1852-1855.

²²⁹HBCA Search file, John Rowand.

Conclusions

'they are now not fit for anything else'¹

In the close-knit milieu of the fur trade, the lives of the native sons were shaped distinctly by the disparate traditions of both their European fathers and aboriginal mothers. The success of the fur trade depended upon the economic interdependence and mutual cooperation of these two sets of strangers. In turn, their progeny, aided the companies they served. The examination of the attitudes that informed the manner in which they were depicted in the records and their educational achievements and careers within the fur trade reveals that cultural and racial biases affected their lives, in both subtle and direct ways. These biases became more obvious from 1820 onward.

In the latter part of the eighteenth century an increasing number of native sons began to contribute their labour to the economy of the posts in significant ways. Competition between the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company coupled with a shortage of available young men from Britain opened the door for native sons to enter both companies' ranks. Fur trade fathers not only became more dedicated to their native families, they began to prepare them for larger roles in the fur trade by acculturating them further to the European side of their heritage and seeking a British-oriented education for them. In the period 1760-1820 native sons could obtain clerkships and become managers of small posts.

¹PAC MG 19, A2, Series 2, vol. 1, pp. 103-105, George Gladman II to Edward Ermatinger, 8 August 1843. Gladman told Edward Ermatinger that a promotion for men who have been clerks for thirty or forty years was no huge advantage. In addition, Gladman noted that because they had been in one position and one location for so long, they were not really capable of much else.

The arrival of white women as fur traders' and missionaries' wives in the 1820s marked the beginning of dramatic change for the native sons. The attention to race and class that white women's debut signaled resulted in the imposition of social barriers dependent on rank and education that excluded some of the native sons and their aboriginal or mixed-descent relatives from circles that had formerly included them. The newly amalgamated company's adoption of a much more rigid hierarchy posed difficulties and challenges for the native sons particularly in the three decades following the merger. Simpson's economic reforms resulted in a loss of jobs and a decrease in wages. Additional changes forced fur traders to contribute more to the support their wives and families and prevented families from accompanying the brigades on the long summer journeys to and from the main depots.

The strict adherence to the maintenance of the monopoly, with the exception of allowing a few private contractors to assist in the transport between York Factory and Red River beginning in the 1820s, discouraged native sons from pursuing other possibilities of making a livelihood in Rupert's Land or elsewhere. At about this time the numbers of mixed-descent free traders in the Red River area were seen as a threat to the Company's monopoly. James Hargrave, writing in the *Winnipeg Post Journal* on 13 November 1822, commented about them:

These free Half breeds in general are a band of lawless vagabonds who acknowledge no other rule than their own will, and seek no other redress of injuries than their gun or Scalping Knife. They are possessed of all the views of the white-man joined to the cunning and unrelenting cruelty peculiar to the Indian; which enables the character of the one, or which serve as a veil to the barbarism of the other.- Nothing but firmness and the most unbending resolution is capable of

keeping those villains in awe.²

More important, barriers were placed on the promotion of native sons. Together these factors placed native sons and their families in the position of being more dependent on a company that increasingly attempted to prescribe and restrict their place within it. Beginning in the late 1840s and throughout the 1850s and 1860s these restrictions began to be lifted to a degree for some native sons. Mixed-descent people, who formed the majority of the population of Red River, began to be recognized for the roles they were playing in its colonial society. Native sons were beginning to be seen as capable as European recruits. And it was much more cost effective to hire locally from growing numbers of native sons. After 1859 Simpson abandoned his effort begun in 1821 of funneling as much trade as possible through Hudson Bay in an effort to isolate trade from American, Canadian and Russian contacts. That same year the company encouraged a consortium of entrepreneurs to run a steam boat between Minnesota and Fort Garry for transportation of trade goods, essentially ending the closed-door policy. With the transfer of Rupert's Land to Canada a decade later, the Hudson's Bay Company stepped aside from directing the flow of trade altogether.³

The study of the traders' portrayals of native sons revealed a variety of contemporary opinions about mixed-descent peoples which included comments on physical appearance and prowess, intellectual abilities, and personality characteristics.

²HBCA B.235/a/5, p. 19, Winnipeg Post Journal 13 November, 1822.

³Philip Goldring, 'The Permanent Workforce', p.30.

These opinions, which were either positive or negative but seldom neutral, sprang from European and colonial world views carried by the fur traders into their work settings. James Isham and Andrew Graham saw a remarkable liveliness in children born of European and aboriginal parents. Others commenting similarly on skin and hair coloring and physical strength found the 'half breeds' to be fine specimens of the two races, combining the 'energy and perseverance of one' with the 'strong passions and determined will' of the other.⁴ In terms of intelligence, most observers situated mixed-descent peoples between aboriginals and Europeans perceiving them as decidedly superior in mental qualities to aboriginals, while still inferior to Europeans.⁵ Most observers had strong opinions about developing the potential that they saw in mixed-descent children. For example, Sir John Franklin found them to be 'a good-looking people, and where the experiments have been made, have shown much expertness in learning and willingness to be taught; they have however, been sadly neglected'.⁶

One common idea was to start teaching them while they were young. Fort Vancouver Anglican clergyman, Reverend Herbert Beaver, like John Macallum, thought there was an 'absolute necessity of an early and careful development of the dormant faculties of the almost vacant minds of our half-savage, half-civilized, but wholly

⁴George Wilkes, 'The History of Oregon, Geographical and Political', Washington Historical Quarterly, vol.4 (2), April, 1913.

⁵Juliet Pollard, 'The Making of the Metis in the Pacific Northwest, Fur Trade Children: Race, Class and Gender', unpublished PhD thesis, University of British Columbia, 1990.

⁶Ibid., pp. 380-381

ignorant and vicious youth'.⁷ Beaver's negative views reinforced the mistaken notion that mixed-descent peoples were less intelligent than Europeans because of their Indian heritage.

Personality traits were most often mentioned in the reports of George Simpson and other supervisors. Simpson described the native sons often as tolerable, steady and useful. But he also viewed many as proud, conceited, indolent and lawless. Another phrase he frequently used was 'deficient in education'.

In the period 1760-1820, native sons were not usually characterized in ways which set them apart from both European and aboriginal parents. They were described as 'Indian' or 'English'. Charles Isham was described in both these ways at different times. By about 1775 native sons began to be referred to as 'natives of Rupert's Land' or 'natives of Hudson's Bay' but because of their British surnames they were not marked as biracial in the records. By about 1815 the term 'halfbreed' began to be used in the engagement registers and fur trade journals as a non-pejorative means of describing them. In the cases of George Atkinson and John Richards, perceived shortcomings as employees were blamed on their aboriginal heritage. But such comments were fairly isolated in this period. However, the attitudes of Isham, Graham, and Harmon demonstrate that aboriginal and mixed-descent peoples were already under scrutiny. In their narratives, aboriginal and mixed-descent peoples were the 'other', and as such their beliefs and ways of life were perceived as heathen and suspect. Workplace inadequacies of native sons were often less tolerated than those of English or Orkney employees of

⁷Ibid., p. 388.

similar rank. The antecedents of the race consciousness of the post-merger era were clearly evident in this period.

From about 1820 to 1850, fur trade social life was increasingly permeated by class and race consciousness. Attitudes toward mixed-descent sons hardened and in some instances, race became the paramount factor in the hiring and promoting of native sons. The inconsistency, ambivalence and contradictory nature of George Simpson and some other company officers was evident during this period.⁸ Some mixed-descent people lost status in the eyes of those who tried to create a genteel society in Rupert's Land. Segments of the population were accepted for certain roles, while others were rejected for certain positions. For example, wives of aboriginal descent were accepted once again in the 1840s after several white wives left Rupert's Land, while on the other hand, native sons were kept from higher level positions. On the whole, it was a most difficult time for mixed-descent families. Attitudes toward native sons were the most negative from the 1820s to the 1850s.

Throughout the period of this study, fur trade fathers of sons examined here were earnestly committed to educating their children. They naturally chose the familiar British method as they felt that it presented the best opportunities for their children's futures. Reverend Daniel Haskel, who was well acquainted with Daniel Harmon's fur trade

⁸Part of the reason for the inconsistencies and contradictory nature of company officials' attitudes toward racial differences may have been due to the fact that race as a concept in the nineteenth century was variously defined. Philosophers', anthropologists' and scientists' theories of race abounded and the concept was not monolithic or static. It was subject to a variety of interpretations, some of which were quite narrow and deterministic.

family, wrote in 1820 that the mixed-descent children of the fur trade were well suited to this type of education and could benefit greatly from it. He thought that it would enhance their natural inclinations to cope in both cultures. Haskel was a New England Congregationalist who had developed an opinion about the education of native children in Rupert's Land from reading Daniel Harmon's journal (which he edited) and from his own experience as an itinerant minister in Vermont. Haskel felt that mixed-descent children would be better candidates for education than aboriginal children because they could 'endure confinement better than children who have lived among the wandering savages'. He stated that mixed-descent children were 'partially civilized by an intercourse with those who have carried into the wilderness many of the feelings and habits of civilized society'. They were also 'acquainted with the manners and customs and feelings of the savages by a frequent intercourse with them being able to speak their languages and having some of the Indian blood circulating in their veins, they would...be...well qualified to gain access to the Natives and to have influence over them'.⁹

A British-oriented education was also sought to overcome the 'Indianness' of the native children as George Atkinson Sr.'s phrase, 'to shake off a little of the Indian', indicates. The Church Missionary Society clergy sent to set up schools in Red River felt that because of the nature of the habits of fur trade children, they could only be expected to advance 'by slow degrees'.

The native sons' educational experiences were varied. Some received as little as one or two years schooling in England, Scotland or the Orkneys. Others spent longer

⁹W. Kaye Lamb, ed., Sixteen Years in the Indian Country, pp. 7-8.

there. Some returned to these locations later for post-secondary training. Some combined this with education at either post schools or in Red River. Others were taught solely in Rupert's Land. Although some general information about curriculum was found, individual assessments of scholars are rare. The few comments from fathers or teachers are fairly general in nature. Even more difficult to assess are the nature and role of aboriginal education in the native sons' lives. The tenets of aboriginal world views such as the belief in unity of all aspects of life and respect for animals and the environment were seen as inadequacies that had to be supplanted by British mores. However, the value of the native sons' aboriginal education was evident in the attributes that they brought to their roles in the fur trade. Native sons employed their skills as linguists, interpreters, boatmen, hunters, fishermen, canoe-builders and guides regardless of the positions in the trade that they held.

The British education that was to be the answer to all the perceived evils of the 'Indian country' was not enough to stem the tide of prejudice which swept the fur trade from the 1820s to the 50s when race became a factor determining the sons' role in the company. Even though some sons were more educated than their British fathers they advanced with difficulty. Both native sons educated in Rupert's Land and men such as William Sinclair and George and Joseph Gladman who had received some education in England waited for prolonged periods to receive promotions. The fur trade social climate and the company atmosphere that had restricted upward mobility in the post-merger era made that goal virtually unattainable for some native sons. The race and class-consciousness that constrained them eventually proved to be impractical as the numbers

of capable mixed-descent employees increased. Native sons, in fact, filled the needs of the company better in some cases than non-natives.

In the last two decades of this study, when some native sons did advance into the officer class, commentators' attitudes about their capabilities remained skeptical. Though native sons did not hold a majority of commissioned appointments in the Northern Department, seven out of ten districts were under the command of native sons between 1851 and the late 1860s.¹⁰ Isaac Cowie claimed Simpson maintained 'mediocre' officers in these positions as long as European officers held the three main depots of York Factory, Norway House and Red River so that annual requisitions, transport and control of the settlement, respectively, could be carefully controlled.¹¹ Simpson believed that native officers were not quite first rate nor could they command the loyalty and respect of servants and Indians. Similarly, Henry Hulse Berens who replaced Sir John Henry Pelly as Governor of the London Committee in 1858 expressed astonishment at the 'Indian element' at all ranks in the HBC's service.¹²

This study has focused on company employees' sons who became employees themselves. Most of these sons were privileged because they had received some formal education that led to their employment. But for some the cost of these benefits was high. William Sinclair complained about the lack of support given him by his country of birth. After twenty-one years as a clerk, he complained to a friend about not being able to

¹⁰P. Goldring, 'Race and Patronage', p. 46.

¹¹I. Cowie, The Company of Adventurers, p. 164.

¹²P. Goldring, 'Race and Patronage', p. 56.

advance and not receiving a raise in pay. He served as a clerk for a total of twenty-seven years before being promoted to chief trader. His younger brother, James, left the company because attempts to supplement his income were viewed as illicit trading. He confronted Alexander Christie, Governor of Assiniboia about the hunting and trading rights of mixed-descent people in the free trade dispute of the 1840s. He became a U.S. citizen in 1849 but Simpson engaged him as a clerk in 1853, ironically, to assist in an alliance against free traders. Pierre Pambrun, like William Sinclair, was frustrated at being blocked from promotion. In addition, he protested that 'half-caste' employees were being paid less than Europeans and their education was not being recognized. After eighteen years of service, fifteen of them as a clerk, he left and joined the American Fur Company. Jemmy Jock Bird, who claimed that the company owed him money, left several times to be a free trader, to work for the American Fur Company and to be a private interpreter.

The native sons' bicultural skills were used by the company to enhance its profits but were often poorly rewarded. Additionally, after 1820, some were maltreated or disregarded by the emerging dominant white society. The majority of native sons in this study, however, reacted to these circumstances by remaining obedient servants. A definite deference could be detected in most native sons. Even though they did not always agree with company policy there was an implicit willingness to defer to the company's wishes. They were determined to accept their situations with resignation and to do the best they could for themselves and their families. The few who left the company to find employment elsewhere did not sever their ties with kin. Some like

Alexander Kennedy Isbister fought the injustices that he could from afar, retaining his empathy with his countrymen.

The goal of this study has been to trace the histories of fur traders' native sons and to draw attention to the roles that they played in the economy and society of Rupert's Land. The identities of some native sons who succeeded in the European way of life have been obscured in the historical record, making it difficult for them to be recognized as biracial individuals. European cultural biases and ethnocentrism have 'white-washed' some native sons, particularly those who entered the officer classes, to the extent that they appear as Europeans in the records. Many of the others who did not become officers have been almost entirely neglected by historians.

This study contributes to the scholarship begun in the 1970s which investigates the multi-dimensional roles that various groups of non-European partners played in the fur trade. It extends current interpretations of Rupert's Land's social history and offers specific insight into the careers of some of the native sons employed in the fur trade. It sheds light on racial perceptions that underpinned trends after 1820 that had a marked impact upon some native sons' careers and their lives as a whole. Future studies might usefully examine the grandsons of the families discussed here as a means to compare their experiences with those of their fathers. Additionally, there is a need for broader studies of this nature—ones that would encompass, for example, more of the sons of employees of the servant classes.

**Table I
NATIVE SONS: PARENTAGE, DATE AND RANK OF ENTRY INTO
THE SERVICE, AND FAMILY COMPANY AFFILIATIONS.***

NAME	FATHER	MOTHER	DATE AND RANK OF ENTRY	COMPANY
Isham, Charles Thomas	James Isham	a Cree	1766 apprentice	HBC
Richards, John	William Richards	a Cree	1783 interpreter	HBC
Atkinson, George Jr.	George Atkinson	Necushin (Cree)	1792 provisioner, guide, interpreter	HBC
Atkinson, Jacob	same as above	same as above	1790s provisioner	HBC
Cadotte, Jean Baptiste Jr.	John Baptiste	Anastasia	1790s clerk	NWC
Cadotte, Michel	John Baptiste	Anastasia	1798 post manager	NWC
Favel, Thomas	John Favel	a Cree	1793 interpreter	HBC
Sutherland, John	George Sutherland		1795 apprentice	HBC
Finlay, Jacco	James Finlay Sr.	a Saulteux	1790s trapper, hunter, woodsman	NWC
Hodgson, James	John Hodgson	Caroline Goodwin	1800 assistant writer	HBC
Hodgson, Thomas	John Hodgson	Caroline Goodwin	1807	HBC
Richards, William	John		1800 cooper and canoeman	HBC
Cook, Joseph	William Hemmings Cook	Kahnawpawama	1802 apprentice	HBC
Montour, Nicholas Jr.	Nicholas Montour		1804 clerk	NWC

Small, Patrick Jr.	Patrick Small	a Cree	1804	NWC
Sayer, Henry	John Sayer	French-Canadian 'half breed'	1805	NWC
Sayer, John Charles	John Sayer	French-Canadian 'half breed'	1815 interpreter, clerk	NWC
Thomas, Charles	John Thomas	Meenish	1808 writer, assistant trader	HBC
Sinclair, William II	William Sinclair Sr.	Nahoway	1808 apprentice	HBC
Sinclair, James	William Sinclair Sr.	Nahoway	1826 apprentice	HBC
McKay, John Richards	John McKay	Mary Favel	1808 writer	HBC
McKay, William	John McKay	Mary Favel	1811	HBC
McKay, Edward	John McKay	Mary Favel	1815	HBC
Bird, George	James Bird	Mary	1805 apprentice	HBC
Bird, Jemmy Jock	James Bird	Mary	1809 apprentice	HBC
Bird, Joseph	James Bird	Mary	1815 labourer/boatman	HBC
Grant, Cuthbert Jr.	Cuthbert Grant	a Saulteux	1810-12 clerk	NWC/HBC
Umphreville, Thomas (Canoté)	Edward	a Cree	1813 native guide	HBC
Fidler, Thomas	Peter Fidler	Mary (Cree)	1813 interpreter, writer	HBC
Fidler, Charles	Peter Fidler	Mary (Cree)	1814 interpreter, labourer, steersman	HBC
Fidler, Peter Jr.	Peter Fidler	Mary (Cree)		HBC

Gladman, Joseph	George Gladman Sr.	Mary Moore	1814 apprentice clerk	HBC
Gladman, George II	George Gladman Sr.	Mary Moore	1814 apprentice clerk	HBC
Swain, James Jr.	James Swain	Mary	1814-15 assistant trader, steward	HBC
Taylor, Thomas	George Taylor	a Cree	1815 apprentice labourer, interpreter	HBC
Taylor, George Jr.	George Taylor	a Cree	1819 schooner master, sloopmaster	HBC
Taylor, Peter	George Taylor	a Cree	Arctic Discovery Expedition 1837-8	HBC
Vincent, John	Thomas Vincent	Jane Renton	1816 clerk	HBC
McIntosh, John	Donald McIntosh	Charlotte	1818	NWC/HBC
Bunn, John	Thomas	Sarah McNab	1819 surgeon	HBC
McGillivray, Simon Jr.	Hon. William McGillivray	Susan (Cree)	1803 clerk	NWC/HBC
McGillivray, Joseph	Hon. William McGillivray	Susan (Cree)	1813 partner	NWC/HBC
McGillivray, William	Duncan		1816 clerk	NWC/HBC
McKay, Thomas	Alexander Thomas	Marguerite Wadin McKay	1814	NWC/HBC
Moore, Samuel	George Moore	Mary	1820s	HBC
Davies, William	John Davies	Nancy	1825 interpreter and shopman	HBC

Kennedy, Alexander Jr.	Alexander Kennedy	Aggathas	1824 apprentice clerk	HBC
McMillan, William	James McMillan	Kilakotah	1826 middleman	NWC/HBC
Truthwaite, Jacob	Matthew		1823 trader	HBC
McBean, William	John McBean.	? Cloutier	1826 labourer	NWC/HBC
McLoughlin, Joseph	John McLoughlin	a Cree	1827-1828 apprentice labourer	NWC/HBC
McLoughlin, David, ½ bro. of Joseph	John McLoughlin	Marguerite Wadin McKay		NWC/HBC
Faries, Frederick	Hugh Faries	Josephte	1829	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, Roderick 'B' Jr.	Roderick McKenzie Sr.	Angelique	1818	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, Benjamin	same as above	same as above	1824 postmaster	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, Samuel	same as above	same as above	1837 milieu et hivernant	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, Ferdinand	same as above	same as above	1850s clerk	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, Patrick	same as above	same as above	1839 apprentice	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, Alexander	same as above	same as above	1840s	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, James	same as above	same as above	1840s	NWC/HBC
Pambrun, Pierre Chrysologue Jr.	Pierre C. Pambrun	Catherine Humperville	1841 apprentice postmaster	NWC/HBC

Pambrun, Andrew Dominique	Pierre C. Pambrun	Catherine Humperville	1851 clerk	NWC/HBC
McKenzie, Hector Aeneas	Charles McKenzie	Mary McKay	1839 apprentice postmaster	NWC/HBC
McLeod, Alexander Roderick Jr.	Alexander Roderick McLeod	a 'half breed'	1837 apprentice clerk	NWC/HBC
Ogden, Peter	Peter Skene Ogden	a Cree	1835 apprentice	NWC/HBC
Ogden, Charles	Peter Skene Ogden	Julia Rivet	1840s	HBC/NWC
McMurray, William	Thomas McMurray	Jane Cardinalle	1838 apprentice postmaster	NWC/HBC
Miles, George	Robert Miles	Betsey Sinclair	1848	HBC
Rowand, John Jr.	John Rowand	Lisette Humphrville	1834 postmaster	NWC/HBC
Logan, Robert Jr.	Robert Logan	Mary (Saulteux)	1830s	NWC/HBC
Logan, Kenith	Robert Logan	Mary (Saulteux)	1840s apprentice clerk	NWC/HBC
Manson, John	Donald	Felicité	1850s	HBC
Manson, William	Donald	Felicité	1848 apprentice clerk	HBC
Christie, Alexander Jr.	Alexander Christie	Ann Thomas	1834 apprentice clerk	HBC
Christie, William Joseph	Alexander Christie	Ann Thomas	1840s apprentice clerk	HBC
McDermot, Thomas	Andrew McDermot	Sarah McNab		HBC
Tod, James	John Tod	Catherine	late 1830s carpenter and millwright	HBC

McDonald, Alexander	Archibald McDonald	Jane	late 1840s	HBC
Robertson, Colin Jr.	Colin Robertson	Therese Chalifoux	1842 apprentice clerk	HBC
Finlayson, Hector	Nicol Finlayson	Josephte	1838 boatbuilder	HBC
Finlayson, John	Nicol Finlayson	Josephte	1838 cooper	HBC
Finlayson, Joseph	Nicol Finlayson	Josephte	1847 apprentice millwright and carpenter	HBC
Thomas, Thomas Jr.	Thomas Thomas	Sarah		HBC
Charles, John Jr.	John Charles	Jane Auld	1846 apprentice postmaster	HBC
Charles, Thomas	John Charles	Jane Auld	1844	HBC
Pruden, Arthur	John Peter Pruden	Nancy	1835	HBC
Pruden, James Peter	John Peter Pruden	Nancy	1840s apprentice postmaster	HBC
Isbister, Alexander Kennedy	Thomas Isbister	Mary Kennedy	1838 assistant postmaster	HBC
Hardisty, William Lucas	Richard Hardisty	Margaret Sutherland	1842 apprentice postmaster	HBC
Hardisty, Joseph	Richard Hardisty	Margaret Sutherland	1847	HBC
Hardisty, Richard Jr.,	Richard Hardisty	Margaret Sutherland	1849	HBC
Hardisty, Thomas	Richard Hardisty	Margaret Sutherland	1850s	HBC

Flett, George	George Flett	Margaret Whitford	1864	HBC
Hallet, William	Henry Hallet			NWC/HBC
Erasmus, Peter	Peter Erasmus Sr.	granddaughter of W.H. Cook	1860s trader	HBC

*Sources for this table include HBCA Servants' Ledgers (A.16), Servants' Lists (A.30), Servants' Contracts (A.32), Officers' and Servants' Wills (A.36), Red River Parish Registers (E.4/1) and Search Files. Information was also obtained from fur traders' files in possession of Jennifer S. H. Brown and from her book, Strangers in Blood, as well as from Sylvia Van Kirk's Many Tender Ties and biographies in Joseph Tassé, W. S. Wallace and numerous Hudson's Bay Record Society and Dictionary of Canadian Biography volumes.

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