

An Ethnohistory of the Western Ojibwa, 1780-1830

by

Laura Lynn Peers

A thesis  
presented to the University of Manitoba  
in partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
in  
History

Winnipeg, Manitoba

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ISBN 0-315-44087-2

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LAURA LYNN PEERS

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
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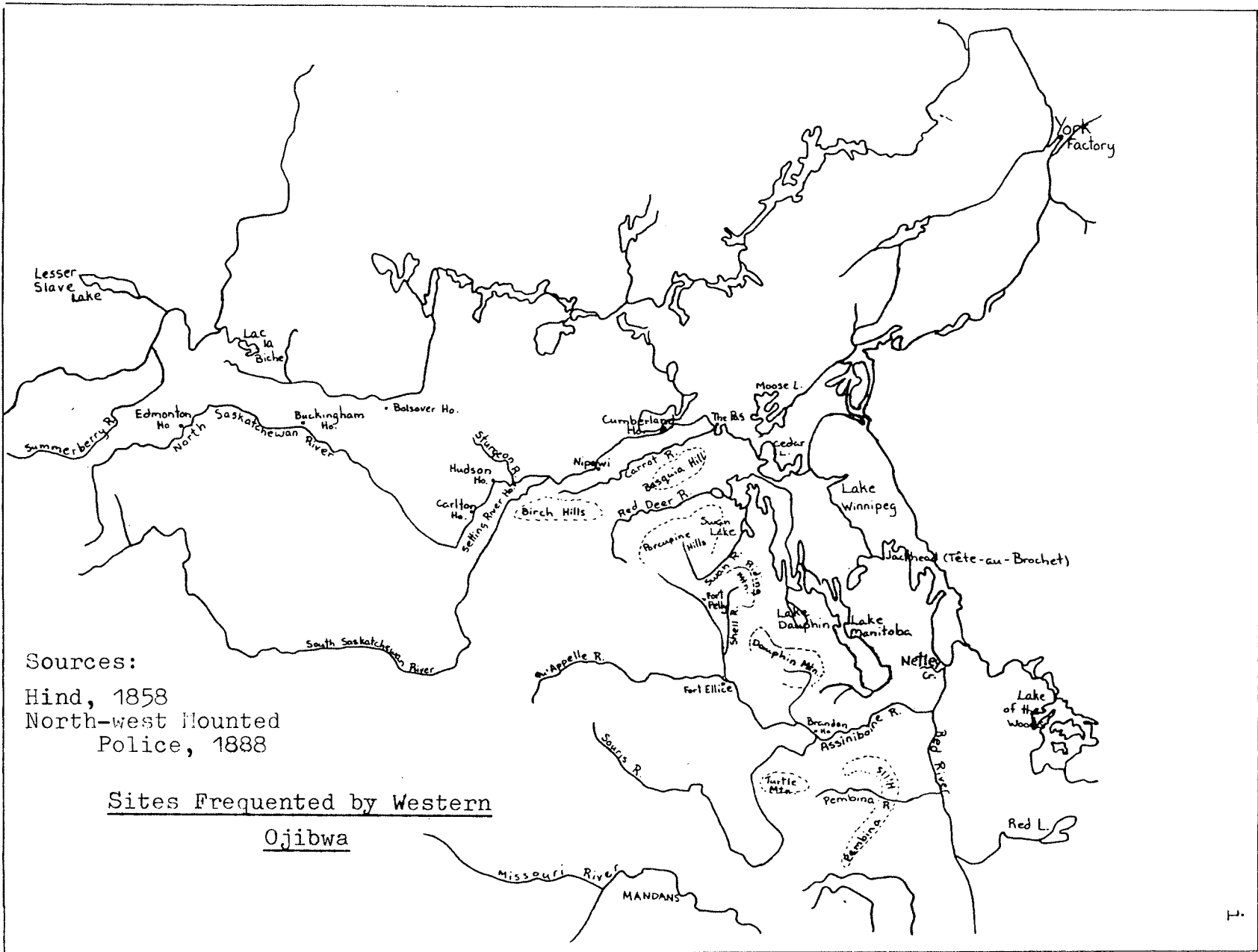
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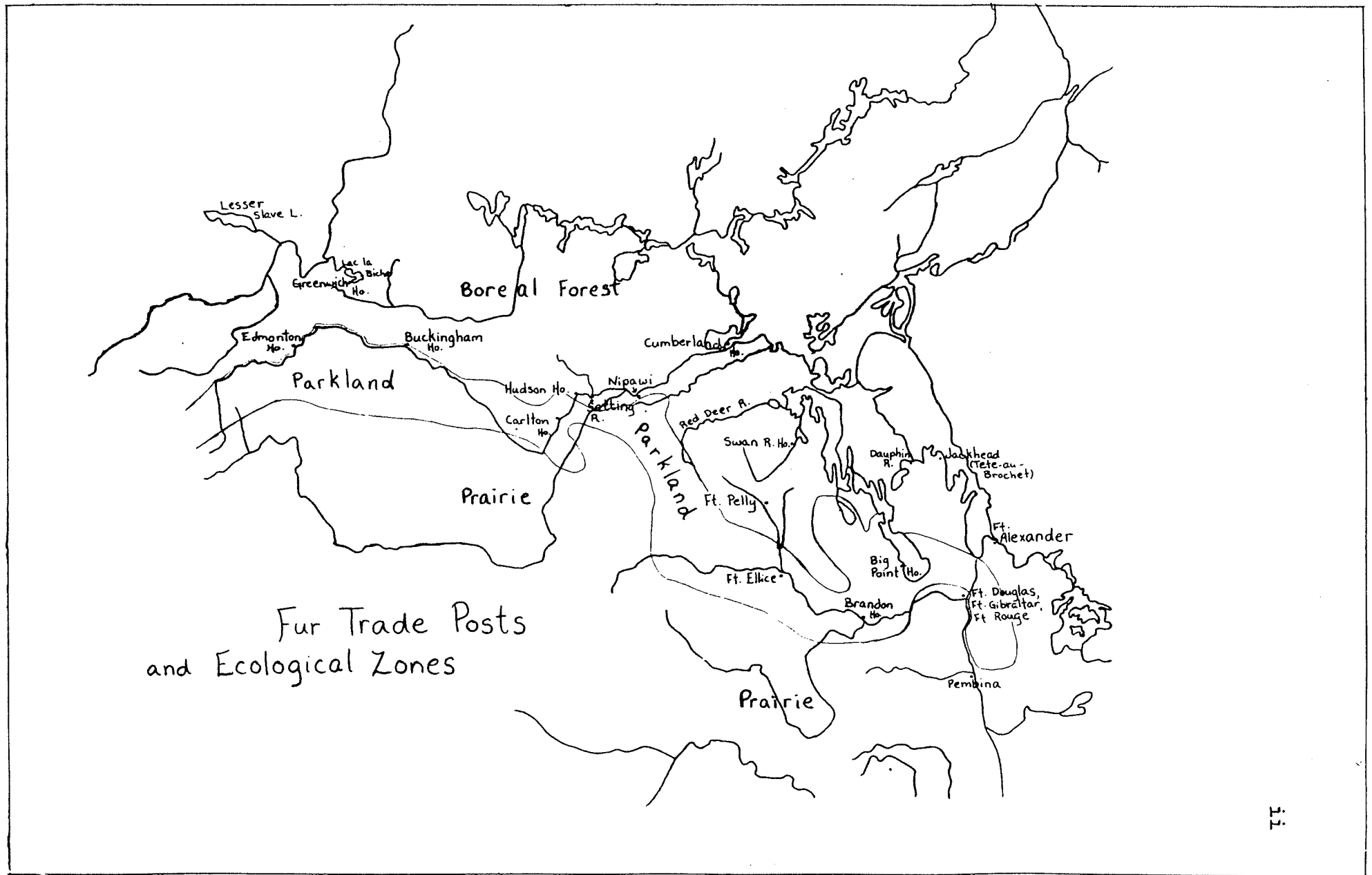
Abstract: An Ethnohistory of the Western Ojibwa, 1780-1830

This thesis traces the development of the western Ojibwa as an ethnic group. Reasons for Ojibwa movement into the area west of Red River are examined, including the nature of their involvement in the fur trade and the effects of the smallpox epidemic of the early 1780's. Their initial presence in the west was characterized by prestige and power gained from trading primarily in beaver. Their success in the trade was increased by rivalry between trading companies. As the beaver and large game populations diminished, the western Ojibwa diversified their economy to maintain the affluence they desired. Bison-hunting, potato horticulture, and the trading of less prestigious furs became increasingly important to the western Ojibwa after 1800. Their association with the Cree and Assiniboine produced cultural changes among the western Ojibwa after 1800 as well. Both their economic diversification and their incidence of co-residence with other Plains groups increased as trade conditions changed, especially after the merger of the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821. By 1830 a number of regional cultural adaptations had emerged among the western Ojibwa, including Peguis' band which was dealing with the influence of missionaries and the Red River settlement and the first "plains" or bison-oriented Ojibwa bands west of Lake Winnipegosis. By relying on the strength and flexibility of their culture, the western Ojibwa were able to retain their autonomy and their ethnic identity throughout this period of adaptation to new ecological conditions, cultural contacts, social networks, and trade conditions.

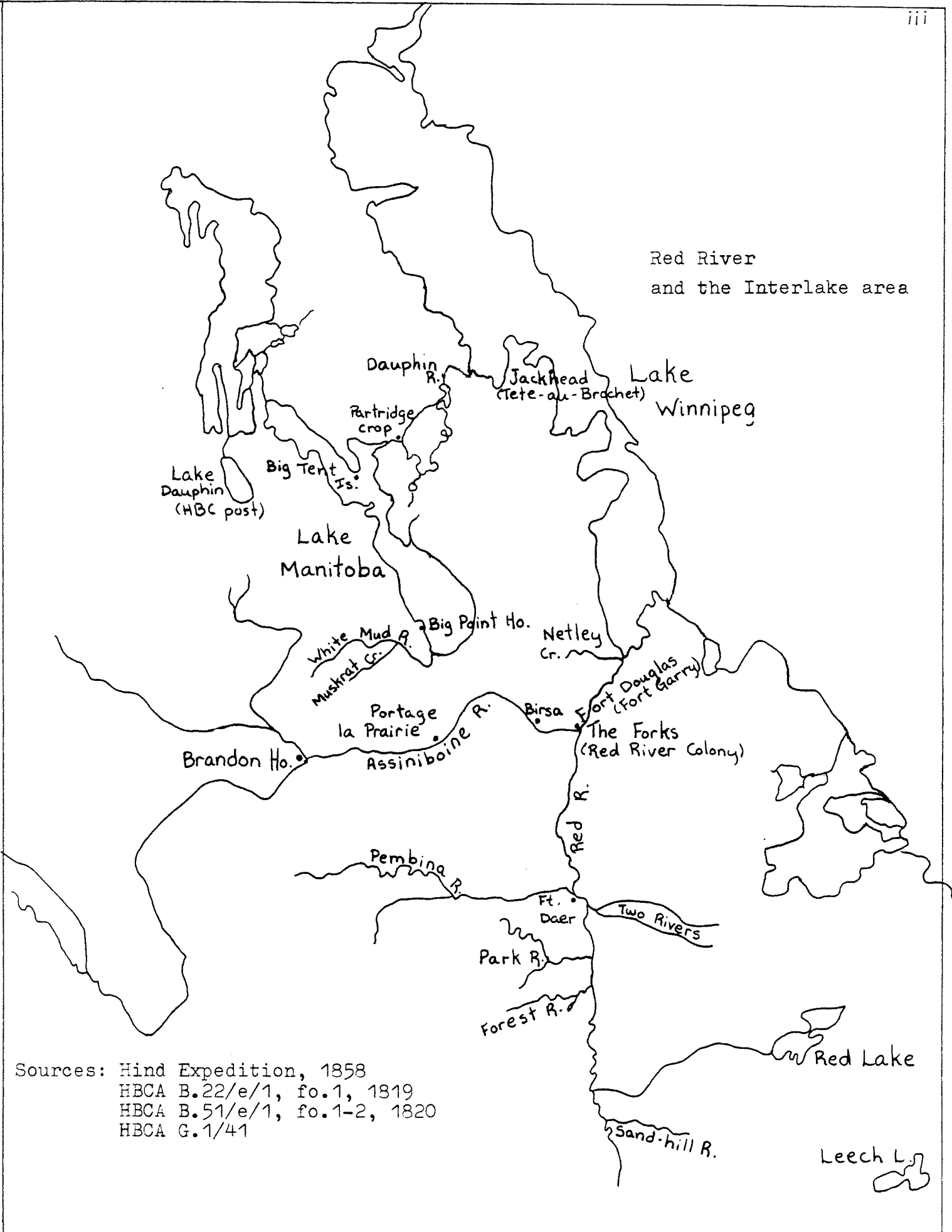
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Red River  
and the Interlake area



Sources: Hind Expedition, 1858  
 HBCA B.22/e/1, fo.1, 1819  
 HBCA B.51/e/1, fo.1-2, 1820  
 HBCA G.1/41

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## Preface

### 1. Scope of the Study

In the third quarter of the eighteenth century, small groups of Ojibwa began moving westward onto the prairies and parkland from their homes around the western end of Lake Superior and the forests to the north of the lake. Propelled by the effects of overhunting and epidemics, and drawn by westward-moving trade opportunities and the chance to maintain a high quality of life, the early western Ojibwa spread out along the Red River, the Interlake area, the Assiniboine and North Saskatchewan Rivers, and other major water routes as far west as Edmonton House and Lesser Slave Lake. By the end of the first quarter of the nineteenth century, the western Ojibwa had evolved several regional cultural adaptations in this vast area. In the process, they also acquired a history and identity very different from that of their relatives in the east.

Using an ethnohistorical approach, this study will examine the changing movements, motivations, and adaptations of the people who became the Saulteaux and Bungi. The dates 1780 and 1830 have been chosen as the chronological boundaries of the study because they demarcate the period in which a distinct culture, ideology, and identity became established among the western Ojibwa.

While the study is directly connected to the history of the fur trade, it is firstly the history of an ethnic group. As such, emphasis will be placed on identifying the motivations for and nature of both change and continuity in as many aspects of western Ojibwa culture as

possible. In response to calls by Robin Fisher and Jacqueline Peterson and John Anfinson for more detailed studies of individual native groups, the study is focused closely on the western Ojibwa. (1) Within this focus, emphasis is placed on tracing the cultural effects of changing ecological and trade conditions, and of changing relationships between the western Ojibwa and other ethnic groups. (2)

Primary data on the western Ojibwa for the period in question derives mostly from fur trade records. Hudson's Bay Company journals form the bulk of these sources, supplemented by important records from Nor'Westers Alexander Henry and George Nelson. With the exceptions of the Henry and Nelson materials, information on the Ojibwa in any one journal tends to be scanty and limited by the trader's business perspective. As Mary Black-Rogers recently wrote, a trader's job "was to keep account of the daily events that affected his business; very few interpreted this to tell all they knew about Indians..."(3) Thus, while information about transactions was frequently recorded in the journals, details on the character and motivation of individual Indians were rarely included. (4) This selectivity obviously affects the orientation of this study, which accordingly emphasizes subsistence pursuits and the nature of western Ojibwa participation in the fur trade. Such distortions and gaps are the unfortunate but natural result of historical records which were written by non-native people who were little interested in the processes of native cultural change.

A valuable addition to the information recorded by Europeans is the account of John Tanner, a Kentucky settler's son who was captured

as a boy and lived with an Ottawa-Ojibwa family in the North-West from about 1790 until about 1818.(5) Tanner's story, which was collected later in his life, is a remarkably detailed and insightful description of life on the other side of the trading post palisades. The information it contains on native kinship networks, decision-making processes, and interpersonal relationships make it particularly useful. This source is not without flaws: since most of Tanner's group was Ottawa, their actions and decisions may have been rather different from those of purely Ojibwa bands. Tanner himself was ambivalent about his identity; although he most often associated with Ottawa people, he identified himself as Ojibwa several times in the narrative. (6) He was also quite conscious of the fact that he was white. This recognition coloured the narrative and affected his relationships with native people, even the members of his own family. Because Tanner was not an ordinary Ojibwa (or Ottawa), his lifestyle was probably not entirely representative of that of the early western Ojibwa. Nevertheless, his information corresponds to and enlarges upon data available from fur traders, and is invaluable if used with caution.

Information taken from fur trade journals and Tanner's narrative has been supplemented by material from the records of the Red River settlement contained in the Selkirk Papers, and by early missionary accounts in the Church Missionary Society files. While these sources are more overtly biased than fur trade records, with the church emphasizing the efficacy of its missions and the colony officials struggling with the politics and problems of establishing a settlement,

the overtness of the bias does aid in correcting it. These sources are useful for the additional information they offer as well as for their documentation of Ojibwa adaptations to the increasing European presence in the north-west.

Finally, partial life-histories of a few individual Ojibwa men and their bands have been reconstructed from the above sources. These biographies, incomplete as they are, help to illustrate the process of cultural change at the most basic and important level of the individual's perceptions, identity, and priorities.

## 2. Significance of the Study

This study seeks to expand the current understanding of the western Ojibwa and their relationship with the Ojibwa as a whole. As well, it considers several issues relevant to the history of native groups in western Canada. It also offers detailed information on the changing adaptations and motivations of a single native group, a necessary prerequisite for the incorporation of the western Ojibwa and other native peoples into mainstream Canadian history. (7)

Studies of the western Ojibwa have been primarily ethnographic in nature, although some ethnohistorical work on the early western Ojibwa has been done. (8) Unfortunately, large gaps remain in our knowledge of the history of the western Ojibwa as a result of the scholarly biases of previous authors and their omission of Hudson's Bay Company sources. In particular, existing work has focused on the Turtle Mountain and middle Red River areas and has tended to be ethnographic in nature.

Alanson Skinner and James Howard were the first scholars to do

fieldwork among and write ethnographies of the western Ojibwa. (9) Both used oral accounts and available historical sources, primarily Alexander Henry the Younger's journals and Tanner's narrative, to attempt to reconstruct something of the origins and history of the people they were studying. Unfortunately, the published sources which were available to them provided an incomplete picture of western Ojibwa history, and neither scholar had access to the Hudson's Bay Company archives which were then in London. This led to speculation about motives for and dates of cultural changes: Howard, for example, claimed that "Henry's journal contains the first use of the name Bungi", when in fact the term began cropping up in Hudson's Bay Company journals as early as the 1740's. (10) Skinner similarly implied that John Tanner's band was the only Ottawa band to intermarry with the western Ojibwa. (11) The same problems plagued anthropologist A.I. Hallowell, who attempted to examine the history of the Midewiwin ceremony among the western Ojibwa. (12)

Both Skinner and Howard were greatly influenced by several then-current anthropological concerns. Beginning just after the turn of the century, anthropologists attempted to define the essential traits of Plains cultures and examined the effects of the diffusion of important traits such as the use of the horse from one culture to another. (13) These concerns are reflected in Skinner's and Howard's work by their obsession with the classification of cultural traits as being either "Woodlands" or "Plains". In Skinner's 1914 article, "The Cultural Position of the Plains Ojibway", he assigned the western Ojibwa a

position halfway between that of "classic" Woodlands and Plains cultures. (14) Howard similarly wrote of the simple substitution of "Plains" traits for "Woodlands" ones: "Instead of the canoe, they used the horse and travois..." (15)

Unfortunately, this debate was primarily concerned with the presence of traits, rather than with the exact motives and processes for their adoption, so that summaries of the "cultural position" of the western Ojibwa tell the ethnohistorian little about the processes of cultural change. Furthermore, studies such as Howard's and Skinner's emphasized a homogenous cultural make-up: they did not explore intra-cultural variability, the "contacts which existed between the forests and the grasslands", or the process of cultural change at the cognitive level of culture. (16) The present study hopes to fill in these gaps to some extent.

Some of these problems were remedied by the first ethnohistorical work on the western Ojibwa, which was Harold Hickerson's 1956 article, "The Genesis of a Trading-Post Band: The Pembina Chippewa", in which Hickerson traced Ojibwa expansion into the Red River valley during the 1790's. (17) Many of the observations and interpretations about social organization, seasonal rounds, and the motives for and processes of cultural change which Hickerson made in this paper and in notes on Chaboillez' journal were extremely perceptive, and remain valid. As with Skinner and Howard, however, the absence of Hudson's Bay Company material in Hickerson's paper resulted in a fragmentary and distorted picture of Ojibwa expansion. As well, Hickerson's conviction of the

centrality of the fur trade in native life, and of the power of the trader over the Indians who dealt with him, ignores the many indications of independence and autonomy--indeed, of control over certain aspects of the trade-- which were displayed by the Ojibwa whom he discussed. (18) Finally, Hickerson's study of the changes which occurred among the fledgling western Ojibwa is simply too brief to adequately consider such factors as the role of the individual in culture change. Another ethnohistorical study of this group by Gregory Camp, "The Chippewa Transition from Woodland to Prairie 1790-1820", is essentially a reiteration of Hickerson, using more recent secondary sources but the same primary sources, and covering the same geographical area. Camp's article exhibits the same weaknesses as Hickerson's, and fails to adequately document changes between 1808 and 1820. (19)

Other than the studies cited above, most work on Ojibwa culture has considered only the area east of Red River. A number of ethnographic and ethnohistorical studies of these more easterly groups have provided an understanding of the cultural and historical context of the western Ojibwa. For this, the present work draws upon George Quimby's "A Year With A Chippewa Family, 1763-64", Hickerson's and Wheeler-Voegelin's work on the Ojibwa of the western Great Lakes, E.S. and Mary Black Rogers' ethnohistorical studies of the Ojibwa of northern Ontario, and oral history recorded by the Ojibwa William Warren in the mid-1800's. (20) Other studies of the Ojibwa provide clearer understanding of particular issues relevant to the western

Ojibwa. Bruce M. White's "Give Us A Little Milk", for example, gives insights into the Ojibwa perceptions and expectations of the fur trade, while the Rogers' article, "Who were the Cranes?" has contributed to a better understanding of social organization among the more northerly Ojibwa and of the distortions incurred in the translation of social structures and events into historical records. (21) While these works contribute much to the study of the western Ojibwa, however, none of them considers the origins of the western Ojibwa or the relationship between them and their eastern kin. By examining these issues, this study hopes to add to our knowledge of the Ojibwa as a whole.

This study also seeks to contribute to several debates pertinent to the larger field of native history both in western Canada and in Canada as a whole. Early works which considered western Indian history did so within the context of fur trade history or the history of Euro-Canadian settlement in the west. These studies, including Alexander Ross's early The Red River Settlement, H.A. Innis' The Fur Trade in Canada, and A.S. Morton's A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 focused on the European side of the trade, and failed to appreciate native cultural differences and varied responses to the fur trade. (22) These works "have only inferentially cast light on the motivations and roles of tribal participants" in the fur trade. (23)

More recent works have begun to correct this perspective. A.J. Ray's Indians in the Fur Trade considered the changing economic adaptations of western natives who utilised the western parkland during the fur trade, and looked at the exploitation of different ecological



zones by particular groups. (24) However, Ray included little on the western Ojibwa, and he relied heavily on linking Hudson's Bay Company district reports, which are often too far apart chronologically to give a sufficiently detailed picture of the process of change. Ray and Freeman's Give Us Good Measure provided a detailed economic study of the nature of Indian participation in the fur trade, but examined only the period before 1780 and did not link changes in trade conditions to cultural developments inland. Other studies published as the proceedings of the fur trade conferences (particularly Rendezvous and Old Trails and New Directions) and in a volume edited by Shepard Krech III (The Subarctic Fur Trade) are focused more closely on the motivations and responses of particular groups and individuals, but have not considered the participation of the western Ojibwa in the fur trade. Given the warning of Toby Morantz and Daniel Francis that there was not one, but many different fur trades, more group-specific studies are necessary before generalizations can be made about Indian motivations in the trade. (25)

Another dominant theme in native history is the issue of the impact of the fur trade on native cultures. In Natives and Newcomers, Bruce Trigger notes that until recently, ethnographic and ethnohistorical studies of native groups overemphasized the amount of cultural continuity which persisted from pre-contact to post-contact societies. This trend has now reversed itself, and a number of scholars have argued against "the consistent under-estimation of the impact of European colonialism, especially the fur trade, on native

peoples". (26) As Charles Bishop has for the Ojibwa of northern Ontario, A.J.Ray claims that natives who exploited parklands and woodlands became dependent on trading posts as a result of overhunting large game and fur-bearers in these zones. (27) These and other scholars have downplayed the fact that acculturation involves cultural persistence as well as change, and that elements of European culture which were adopted by native groups were perceived from within an existing cultural system and were modified to fit that system. Thus, in discussing the disruptive effects of the fur trade on native subsistence patterns and autonomy, these scholars fail to consider the links between the well-developed prehistoric trade in exotic materials and the European fur trade, or the ways in which the fur trade reinforced existing cultural patterns.

Obviously, neither of these extreme positions is liable to be wholly accurate; again, detailed, group-specific studies which consider both aspects of native-European contact are necessary. To date, only a few such studies dealing with western native groups exist. John Milloy's thesis on the Plains Cree focused on the relationships between the fur trade and native trade and military patterns, while Paul Thistle's recent Indian-European Trade Relations in the Lower Saskatchewan River Region to 1840 examined the ways in which the western Woods Cree continued to incorporate the fur trade into their own cultural, social, and military patterns. (28) Gary Anderson's Kinsmen of Another Kind examines the evolution of Dakota Sioux relationships with European traders, military and political

representatives, and settlers. (29) A few shorter studies of other western native groups also exist, including Gertrude Nicks' "The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada", but much of the history of western native groups remains to be written. (30)

Finally, this study attempts to provide a basis for the incorporation of native history into mainstream Canadian history. Because of the paucity of detailed information on the perceptions and reactions of Indians to the fur trade and white contact, it has been easy to relegate native people to the introductory chapters of Canadian histories, and to perpetuate ethnocentric assumptions about the domination of native cultures by "superior" European technology and society. Detailed studies of the reactions of individual groups prove such assumptions to be false, however, and provide the material necessary for the writing of a more balanced history which credits native people for their skills, manipulation of Europeans, and continuing autonomy throughout much of the fur trade. (31) Gerald Friesen has taken a large step towards this goal in his The Canadian Prairies: A History, but this initiative must be continued in other regions and, in particular, must be incorporated into history texts at all levels of the educational system. (32)

### 3. Theory & Methodology

Every ethnohistorical study is based on particular ideas about the nature of culture and culture change. To facilitate an understanding of the direction and conclusions of this study, these concepts must be

clarified at the outset.

Ethnohistory, according to James Axtell, is "The use of historical and ethnological methods and materials to gain knowledge of the nature and causes of change in a culture defined by ethnological concepts." (33) The ethnohistorical approach evolved to bridge the gap between history, which has traditionally studied change in Western society, and anthropology, which has traditionally studied non-Western peoples at a single point in time (the "ethnographic present"), with little concern for historical perspective. (34)

Bruce Trigger offers a similar definition which hints at some of the difficulties of doing ethnohistory: "ethnohistory uses documentary evidence and oral traditions to study change in nonliterate societies." (35) Oral traditions, as Trigger points out, frequently change with a culture. Thus, even where places and events in oral traditions can be located in Western time and space to be of use in an ethnohistorical study, they do not always help to demonstrate or explain cultural change. (36) This problem often increases with the length of time and amount of cultural change which occurs between an event and the collection of oral testimony, and for this reason the use of oral history was not deemed to be a priority for the present study. Even memories of the late nineteenth century, which can still be obtained, would reflect very different conditions than were found in the early part of the century. Some older oral history has been used in this study, primarily in the form of anthropologists' field notes and observations and a number of Dakota winter counts collated by Howard,

but such data was used only when it could be firmly tied to the period studied.

Documentary evidence, which provides the bulk of information for the present study, must also be used with caution. As discussed earlier, the vast majority of historical records were generated by non-natives whose cultural backgrounds and careers predisposed them to record certain facts rather than others. Nor, despite the length of time spent by some traders and missionaries with Ojibwa groups, were they aware of all facets of Ojibwa culture. The range of facts from which they selected when recording events, therefore, was already limited. This creates difficulties when trying to reconstruct the pattern of an entire culture from often brief descriptions of a limited range of activities.

Because of these problems, it is necessary for the ethnohistorian to be aware of the kinds of information which are likely to have been omitted from different historical sources and of the ways in which recorded information has been "processed" and distorted. If used with caution, ethnographic studies of the same culture are often helpful in elaborating and understanding the historical records, particularly about aspects of culture which are rarely recorded by other observers: child-rearing, the roles of elderly people and women, and attitudes and motivations. All too often, however, ethnohistorians have assumed direct correlations between behavior recorded by ethnographers and fur traders or missionaries, with little consideration for the effects of the intervening years either on the behavior itself or the concepts and

motivations surrounding it. Despite such dangers, ethnographies can prove useful supplements to historic records, and can also provide a "snapshot" of a culture at a fixed point in time to assist the understanding of the nature and rate of cultural change.

An ethnohistorical study involves the study of change "in a culture defined by ethnological concepts." (37) "Culture" itself consists of the learned, shared rules and values which govern the behavior of a society's members; it functions as a system which relates human beings to their physical and social environments. (38) Of course, not every member of a culture abides by its rules to the same extent, nor does every member abide by exactly the same rules. For a multitude of reasons, the behavior of people in one culture may come to more closely resemble that of a culture other than their own. (39) Despite such variation, both anthropologists and the peoples they study are able to identify themselves and others as belonging to particular groups: "he is Cree"; "she is Ojibwa"; "the Bungi". Such identifications recognize not only overt behaviors and symbols, but also the members' subjective perception of their identity: that is, not only culture, but ethnicity.

Ethnicity is a personal identity which is based on a feeling of belonging to a group of people with similar lifestyles and ancestry. Ethnic groups frequently cut across the boundaries of cultural, residential, linguistic, and other organizational groups and are distinguished from these other categories by what Fredrik Barth termed boundaries: the behaviors and beliefs which the members of an ethnic

group perceive as significant characteristics, values and standards of the group, and which function to sustain a we-they dichotomy by reinforcing ethnocentrism. (40) Body language, dialects, values, and reputations for certain characteristics all serve as boundaries. The western Ojibwa, for example, were noted and feared for their supernatural power and the efficacy of their "medicines". Clothing, etiquette, the ethnic name, and the natural ethnocentrism of every group, also function as ethnic boundaries. (41)

These boundaries can continue to exist despite interaction between different ethnic groups. Although such interaction involves a reduction of cultural differences in order to produce a "congruence of codes" and allow communication (e.g., "I must remember not to point with my fingers as they think it impolite"), this process creates a heightened rather diminished awareness of ethnic identity ("I remember every time I point with my chin that we are different"). (42) Because of this, cultural change may occur without disturbing ethnic boundaries. This was certainly the case with the western Ojibwa, and it proves to be a useful phenomenon by providing an unchanging core or standard against which the ethnohistorian can examine "the nature of continuity and investigate the changing cultural form and content", which is precisely what the author hopes to do in the following chapters. (43)

#### Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my advisor, Professor Jennifer Brown, whose fine scholarship, assistance and patience have helped to shape my thinking on western Ojibwa history. I wish to especially thank

Professor Brown for sharing her copies of the George Nelson and A.I. Hallowell manuscript materials. Appreciation is also due to the members of my thesis committee, Professors Jean Friesen, Wayne Moodie, and George Schultz, who have also been of much assistance. They, along with Dr. Gertrude Nicks of the Department of Ethnology, Royal Ontario Museum, Dr. Leigh Syms of the Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature, Leo Pettipas of the Manitoba Department of Culture and Recreation, and Professors Gerald Friesen and Harry Duckworth of the University of Manitoba have all given freely of their time and information, and have done much to convert an anthropologist into something of an historian. This study could not have been conducted without the permission of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives to research in and quote from their material, or without financial assistance provided by a University of Manitoba Alumni Fellowship, for both of which I am grateful. Finally, I would like to thank Drew Davey, for withstanding prolonged chaos with such good grace.

Note: The original spelling and grammar of manuscript and archival materials has been retained in all quotations.



1. Robin Fisher, "In Search of the Historical Indian", Canadian Review of American Studies vol. 11, no. 3, 1980, pp.351-2; Jacqueline Peterson and John Anfinson, "The Indian and the Fur Trade: A Review of Recent Literature", in Scholars and the Indian Experience, ed. W.R. Swagerty (Bloomington, 1984), p.236.
2. This focus does not mean to oversimplify differences between European groups which influenced their relationships with the Ojibwa. The different organizational structures and attitudes towards country marriages exhibited by different levels of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, for instance, were partially the result of cultural differences, and affected Indian-European relations at each post. (Jennifer Brown, Strangers in Blood (Vancouver, 1980)) The attitudes of individual traders also affected (or prevented) the development of stable bands. However, it seems more fruitful to analyse wider pattern of Ojibwa responses, and these are most notable in reaction to trade conditions rather than to individuals.
3. Mary Black-Rogers, "Varieties of "Starving": Semantics and Survival in the Subarctic Fur Trade, 1750-1850", Ethnohistory 33:4 (Fall 1986), p. 375.
4. Ibid.. Rogers also notes that "The facts they did record may have been biased by their Indian informants, also for business reasons...". On this, see also Lewis O. Saum, The Fur Trader and the Indian (Seattle 1965).
5. Edwin James, A Narrative of the Captivity and Adventures of John Tanner During Thirty Years' Residence Among the Indians in the Interior of North America (Minneapolis, 1956 (1830)). Hereafter referred to as Tanner.
6. Ibid., p.134, 137, 192.
7. Bruce Trigger, Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered (Kingston and Montreal, 1985), p.49.
8. Alanson Skinner, "Political and Ceremonial Organizations of the Plains Ojibwa", Anthropological Papers of the American Museum of Natural History vol.XI, part 6, 1914; Skinner, "The Cultural Position of the Plains Ojibwa", American Anthropologist vol. 16, 1914; James H. Howard, The Plains-Ojibwa or Bungi (Vermilion,1965), and Howard, "The Identity and Demography of the Plains-Ojibwa", Plains Anthropologist vol.6, 1961; Harold Hickerson, "The Genesis of a Trading-Post Band: The Pembina Chippewa", Ethnohistory (Fall 1956), and Hickerson, ed., "Journal of Charles Jean-Baptiste Chaboillez, 1797-98", Ethnohistory 1959 (no. 3 and 4). One other anthropological work which attempted to utilize a historical perspective should be noted here. Omer C. Stewart's "Cart-Using Indians of the American Plains" (Men and Cultures, Selected papers of the 5th International Congress of

Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (Philadelphia, 1960), p.351-355) tried to demonstrate that the western Ojibwa were the Red River metis, and therefore used Red River carts instead of travois. Stewart's poor methodology, his failure to distinguish between cultural and ethnic groups (or, indeed, to perceive the many cultural differences between the metis and the Ojibwa) resulted in this inaccurate position.

9. Skinner, "Political and Ceremonial..."; Howard, The Plains Ojibwa or Bungi.

10. Howard, The Plains Ojibwa or Bungi, p.8; Rich, James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743, p. 191.

11. Skinner, "Political and Ceremonial...", p. 478.

12. A.I. Hallowell, "The Passing of the Midewiwin in the Lake Winnipeg Region", American Anthropologist 38, 1956; see also A.I. Hallowell papers, American Philosophical Society Library, Philadelphia, MS. Coll. #26, p.5.

13. Clark Wissler, quoted in Skinner, "The Cultural Position...", p.314-315; also Wissler, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture", American Anthropologist vol. 16 (new series), 1914. Wissler, quoted in Skinner, op. cit., p.314; also see pages 315-316 of this article.

14. Skinner, "Cultural Position...", p.318.

15. Howard, The Plains Ojibwa or Bungi, p.3.

16. A.J. Ray, Indian Exploitation of the Forest-Grassland Transition Zone in Western Canada 1650-1860 (PhD Dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1971), p. 6.

17. Harold Hickerson, "The Genesis of a Trading-Post Band: The Pembina Chippewa", Ethnohistory, fall 1956.

18. Jennifer Brown, "Algonquians from Lake Superior and Judson Bay to Manitoba in the Historic Period", Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience, ed. R.B. Morrison and C.R. Wilson (Toronto, 1986), p. 229: Hickerson's "own simple stereotype of the trader as exploiter and debaucher of defenceless natives..."

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## Chapter One: First Steps

### 1. Synonymy

The Ojibwa groups which moved into the north west have been referred to by a bewildering variety of names during the past two centuries. Before tracing their migrations and adaptations, it is first necessary to establish clearly their identity and background.

Historically, the western Ojibwa were referred to as Saulteaux (spelled variously Sauteurs, Sealteau, Soto, etc.), Bungees, and occasionally by a variant of Ojibwa (Ochippeways, etc.). The ethnographers of the twentieth century also differed in their terminology: Alanson Skinner called them Plains Ojibway, while James Howard preferred the term Bungees.(1) Today, the American government has labelled them Chippewas; the Canadian government, Saulteaux. According to Howard, they have traditionally named themselves Bungis or nakawiniok, meaning "those who speak differently".(2)

This proliferation of names is the result of the diverse experiences of the people doing the naming, and arises out of the history of the fur trade. The ancestors of the western Ojibwa were Algonquian-speaking people who were first encountered by French traders and missionaries in the seventeenth century at Sault Ste. Marie.(3) The French named these people "Sauteurs" or Saulteaux, and this name was subsequently applied to other groups of Indians related to the Sault Ste. Marie Saulteaux by kinship, commonality of language, and other cultural practices. (4) The term came to designate many people who had little connection with the original Saulteaux.

Two other terms used to refer to the Saulteaux, "Ojibwa" and "Bungee", evolved out of their relationship with a different group of traders. In the 1720's and 1730's, Saulteaux arriving at the Hudson's Bay Company's Fort Albany were noted in the journals as "Echeepoes" and "Oachiapoia Indians": renderings of ocipwe or Ojibway, which was "the name that a band north of Sault Ste. Marie gave for themselves in the late 1600's".(5) Like the term "Saulteur", ocipwe --once the name of a specific band-- has come to be a general term for many related bands.

As well as using specific band names, the Hudson's Bay Company servants also referred to the Saulteaux in terms meaningful to the fur trade. Joseph Adams, at Fort Albany in 1733, called them "the French Canada Indians" because they traded primarily with the Canadians, and James Isham referred to them in 1743 as "the Nakawawuck Indians, who border's by the Little Sea so Calld. where the french Settlement is...".(6) As the frequency of contact increased between them, the Honourable Company's servants began using a term based on their own experiences with these natives. "Pung'ke petun'n Enwewe son, Give me something to Eat I am a hungry or Starv'd", was the first sentence of James Isham's 1743 "Nakawawuck" vocabulary, and "bungee", the plea for "a little bit", was the word most often heard by the traders from these people when the traders' gifts were "not adequate to their wants".(7) It was as "Bungees", then, that the ancestors of the western Ojibwa were usually referred to by Hudson's Bay Company servants by the 1780's.(8)

Thus, Alexander Henry's attempt in the nineteenth century to

clarify the terminological confusion was quite accurate: "The Ogebois are commonly called...by the Canadians Saulteurs," he wrote, "and by the H.B. Co. servants Bungees".(9) Amongst thirteen North West Company sources consulted in this study, only two used the term "Bungee". (10) Some Hudson's Bay Company employees did use the term "Saulteaux", primarily after the 1821 merger when numerous former Nor'Westers began translating for and identifying Indians at the Hudson's Bay Company posts. Prior to this, a few Hudson's Bay Company traders with previous experience working for Canadian traders, such as John McKay and Donald McKay, also preferred the term "Saulteaux". (11) Individuals with influence also standardized the use of one term or the other in particular areas. Peter Fidler instituted the use of "Bungee" at Brandon House in 1816 when he was responsible for writing the journal there; they had formerly been called Sotos or Ochippeways. Similarly, Miles Macdonell (who had a brother, John, in the North West Company), Lord Selkirk, and probably the Canadian freeman group popularized the use of "Saulteaux" around the Red River colony.(12)

There is also some evidence that the different terms may occasionally have been used with more specific meanings. Alexander Henry distinguished between "A party of Red Lake Indians" (Ojibwa) and "my Saulteurs", using "my Saulteurs" to refer, presumably, to those who were more closely attached to him.(13) Some Hudson's Bay Company traders used both "Bungee" and "Saulteaux" in the same journal page, suggesting a differentiation between bands affiliated with different companies. Peter Fidler, for instance, noted in the Brandon House



Known Geographical Origins of Western Ojibwa

Date	Place Where Noted	Said to be From	Source
1793	Brandon House	Rainy Lake	B.22/a/1, 12 Nov.
1793	Fort Dauphin/ Swan River	Rainy Lake area	Mackenzie, <u>History</u> p.113
1795	Long Carrying Place, near Cumberland Ho.	Red Lake	B.51/a/1, 17 Aug.
1795	Forks, Red & Assiniboine R.	Red Lake, Rainy Lake,	John Macdonell, p.268.
1797	Brandon House	Rainy Lake	B.22/a/5, 22 Dec.
1797	Brandon House	Pembina R.	B.22/a/4, 27 Mar.
1797	Pembina	Rainy Lake	Chaboillez, p.285
1797	Pembina	Red Deer's River	Chaboillez
1798	Red River	Rainy Lake	B.235/a/1, 26 Jan.
1798	Red River	Rainy Lake	B.4/a/2, 14 Sept.
1800	Pembina	Lake of the Woods	Henry, p.333, 19 Aug.
1802	near Pembina	Rainy Lake	Henry, p.122, Dec.

journal in 1818 that "one of the Leech Lake Bungees stabbed a young Soteaux woman here...".(14) Fidler's usual term was "Bungees"; it is unclear why he used "Soteaux" as well, unless he meant Ojibwa who traded with the North West Company.

These problems are mentioned here as a reminder of the need for caution when reading the sources, and for clarity when referring to specific bands.(15) Given the continuing terminological confusion, I have chosen to use the term western Ojibwa to designate the people who form the subject of this study.

## 2. Prehistory and the Early Historic Period

The emergence of the western Ojibwa was the result of a series of events and changes which began centuries earlier and was accelerated when the Ojibwa became involved in the fur trade. An understanding of these changes, and the changing intergroup relations which they engendered, is vital to the study of the early western Ojibwa.

Ojibwa oral tradition holds that the westward movement of the Ojibwa began many centuries ago when, in fulfillment of a prophecy, they moved westward from the east coast to Lakes Huron and Superior. (16) There, the Saulteurs and other proto-Ojibwa groups became involved in the French fur trade in the second quarter of the seventeenth century. The influx of European trade goods and the increase in intergroup contact which accompanied them triggered a period of cultural florescence.(17) Contrary to the assumption made by a number of scholars, however, participation in the fur trade and the adoption of European goods did not lead to the abandonment of traditional

technological skills and the consequent dependence of Ojibwa society on guns, metal axes, and other imported tools. (18) As Paul Thistle points out, this "cultural amnesia" idea was first used by natives as a ploy to arouse the traders' sympathy and increase their generosity, and was not an admission of desperation. (19) Nor did European trade goods disrupt native social structure or other deep cultural patterns by introducing completely new ideas into native societies. In practical terms, trade goods were merely more efficient analogues of existing items of native material culture, and they were acquired during this period either through an ancient native trade network or after incorporating the European trader into that network.

The early Ojibwa became motivated to continue their participation in the fur trade not because of any dependency on trade goods, but because of the improved standard of living they attained through their participation in the trade. Not only did trade goods make daily chores easier in some respects, but some had supernatural connotations which gave them high status and prestige. Scholar George Hammell argues that certain kinds of trade goods, especially brass, copper and silver ornaments, wampum and glass beads, metal goods, and red cloth, were perceived by Indians as being analogous to native shell, copper, and crystal (siliceous) items. (20) Because shell, copper, and crystal were widely associated with the forces of life and powerful spirit-beings, items made from these materials carried connotations of supernatural power. The megis shell used in the Ojibwa midewiwin ceremony, for example, represented "the shell that the Creator used to blow his breath on the four sacred elements and give life to Original Man"; it

also became a symbol of the midewiwin ceremony and of the power of its practitioners. (21) John Long, who traded with Ojibwa north of Lake Superior in the 1770's, gave the Ojibwa term for (glass) trade beads as "Mannetoo menance", or spirit berries. (22) And according to an Ojibwa from Manitou Rapids in the 1850's, there were two great gods: "...the first god became silver and went up to heaven...the second god became brass and he went under the earth...". (23) Such statements indicate the association of shell and metals with supernatural beings and their promise of "assurance and insurance of long life..., well-being..., and success, particularly in...hunting and fishing, warfare, and courtship"; European items made with equivalent materials had similar meanings. (24) Thus, certain European trade goods were highly desirable to the Ojibwa not simply because they were more efficient than the native equivalents, but because they fitted into existing aspects of Ojibwa culture so well.

When French traders began to expand westward around Lake Superior in the 1670's and the Hudson's Bay Company established a competing network of bayside posts, the Ojibwa began dispersing in order to take better advantage of trade opportunities. By the mid-1700's they had either displaced or replaced the Cree in the forests north and west of the lake and were contesting fur, game and other resources south of Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake, and the western tip of Lake Superior with the Dakota, whose alliance with the Ojibwa had disintegrated in the late 1730's.(25) This region offered an abundance of furred and large game, fish, and other resources. While Ojibwa oral tradition

holds that the Ojibwa forced the Dakota to retreat westward, one scholar has noted that the Sioux movement occurred by 1737, well before the Ojibwa movement into the region.(26). At any rate, the effects of this feud were more important than its causes for the emergent western Ojibwa later in the century. Nearly continuous conflict turned large areas into little-used and therefore well-stocked resource areas which became increasingly attractive to the Ojibwa.

In their expansion into the Sioux-held Minnesota area, Ojibwa bands were assisted by Cree and Assiniboine warriors. Bands from these groups, together with the Mandan, formed an alliance in the early 1730's, about the same time as the Ojibwa-Sioux alliance broke down.(27) The alliance was based on a common antipathy to the Sioux, and on intergroup trade. Both the Cree-Assiniboine-Mandan-Ojibwa alliance and its conflict with the Sioux were intensified by the increase in the number of inland traders after 1767, when the British government lifted trade restrictions in the northwest.(28) After that date, Ojibwa groups had even more incentive to trap the richer areas to the west and southwest of Lake Superior.

The theory of Ojibwa expansion into the west has been challenged from two angles. A long-standing debate based on archaeological evidence exists over the correlation between groups represented in prehistoric sites and groups identified in historical sources. Similarities between pottery styles and artifact assemblages from the Lockport site, located on the Red River north of its junction with the Assiniboine, and other sites in Manitoba, northwestern Ontario,

northern Minnesota and northern Michigan suggests that Algonquian peoples migrated into these areas from the Great Lakes as early as 200 B.C. (29) At the Lockport site, people of the Laurel culture (200 B.C.--1000 A.D.) hunted, fished, trapped, and gathered wild rice: a way of life little different from that they had left to the east, and similar to that followed by the early western Ojibwa many centuries later. (30) By about 900 A.D. a group possessing a type of pottery known as "Blackduck" began living at the Lockport site; these people are believed to have been the ancestors of historic Algonquian groups such as the Cree. (31) The way of life of the Blackduck people was even more similar to that of the later western Ojibwa, including some maize cultivation and bison-hunting. (32) While archaeological evidence is not sufficient to equate the Blackduck people with the proto-Ojibwa, it does indicate that some of the ancestors of the western Ojibwa may well have circulated into the west and back again at least once before European contact, just as many of the western Ojibwa did during the historic period. (33)

The Ojibwa expansion theory has also been challenged by Adolph Greenberg and James Morrison, who contend that the Ojibwa did not move into the area north of Lake Superior after European contact. Instead, they were already present in the area but were not called Ojibwa; they "became" Ojibwa when the term diffused over a large area as a result of the confusion of early explorers and traders over the identity and affiliation of certain bands. (34) This is certainly plausible given the confusion existing in the early historical documents concerning

this area. Unfortunately, Greenberg and Morrison are too ready to equate individuals and groups in different documents to prove it; a more careful treatment of the sources is necessary to establish their argument conclusively. It seems unlikely that the Saulteaux of Sault Ste. Marie, for instance, would have had either reason or desire to venture more than occasionally into the inhospitable northern forests when they were accustomed to the comparatively rich resources and large, prolonged seasonal gatherings of the Lake Huron and Superior areas. Whether Greenberg's and Morrison's argument might also be extended to the forests west of Lake Superior, making Ojibwa aboriginal to that area, is also unclear. In the end, it seems probable that most Ojibwa moved north after European contact in search of furs.

By the late 1770's, the Ojibwa had established villages in northern and central Minnesota and the Lake of the Woods/Rainy Lake region.(35) Others had moved into Northern Ontario, and some few families were beginning to explore the area around Lakes Winnipeg and Manitoba. (36) In consequence of these movements, "new regional identities and affiliations began to take shape" (37): the northernmost bands began trading gradually with the Hudson's Bay Company or with Canadian traders in the forests north of Lake Superior and having less interaction with the more southerly village-oriented bands who were still tied primarily to the Canadian traders. It was at this time, in the decades after 1780, that the western Ojibwa began to emerge.

### 3. Ojibwa Life circa 1780

Many of the Ojibwa who migrated west after 1780 came from the

village centers of Rainy Lake, Lake of the Woods, Red Lake (Minnesota), and Leech Lake. In order to understand the cultural changes undergone by the western Ojibwa, it is necessary to be familiar with the social and economic structures which they left.

For the Ojibwa living around the western tip of Lake Superior, the most basic social and economic unit was the extended family. This was usually composed of several close relatives and their families, often an older hunter, his wife, and one or more of their married children with his or her family or two adult brothers and their families. The composition of the group was subject to change as a result of marriage, death, or friction, and in times of need people unrelated by blood or marriage would be incorporated into the "family". The size of the group ranged from about six to ten people. When all but the smallest children were included in the labour force, this number was large enough to perform the necessary daily work but small enough not to exhaust local resources too quickly. This unit has also been referred to as the "tent bandlet" and the "local group".(38) As accounts by Alexander Henry the Elder and John Tanner indicate, it was this group, more than any other, in which the individual was raised and lived.

Every Ojibwa also belonged to a patrilineal, exogamic descent group or clan which was named after an animal. (39) Members of a clan considered themselves to be close relatives, even though they might live hundreds of miles apart. Any extended family would consist of members of at least two clans (that of the senior male, and that of his wife); in times of need, they could literally "claim kin" with another



member of either group for assistance.

In early spring, several of these extended family groups would gather in the sugar bush, making maple sugar and living primarily on sugar supplemented by caches of meat and wild rice (which would have been traded from the Ottawa). When the sugar run ended, these larger groups would move to nearby sturgeon-fishing sites. Several hundred people might camp for several weeks at these sites, making sturgeon-fishing not just an economic activity but a regional social gathering as well. This local group or "village" existed at a spot central to the sugar bush and the fishing area. (40) Decisions about the wintering locations of particular bandlets were made by heads of families within the local group. When the Ojibwa started migrating west to trap, the size and composition of the parties were also determined by this group. (41)

In the early summer, families left the village and took the furs trapped the previous winter to the trading posts at Michilimackinac, Chequamegon, Kaministiquia, and other locations. The better part of several villages would meet at the post for as long as the local resources, their own provisions, and the traders' gifts would support them. Besides trading with the Europeans, Ojibwa at the posts made and renewed social acquaintances, discussed political alliances and enmities, and sometimes held group religious ceremonies such as the Midewiwin or Grand Medicine Society which reaffirmed Ojibwa world view and social cohesion. While older, experienced members of most tent bandlets conducted divinatory ("conjuring" or Shaking Tent Ceremony)

and thanksgiving ceremonies for their own families several times a year, the Midewiwin was performed only at large gatherings and by initiated members. The purpose of the Midewiwin was to cure serious illnesses and act as a means of approaching the supernatural to obtain health and success; the ceremony also included the retelling of Ojibwa history and origin stories, which contained lessons on the "right" way to live. Because participants in a Midewiwin ceremony regarded themselves as relatives although they came from different clans, families, and areas, the rite reinforced social ties between these groups and spread a common body of traditions. (42)

The gathering at the post was the closest thing to a "tribal" gathering as existed. The concept of "tribe" was not recognized by the Ojibwa at this time; the term was introduced by people from state-level societies such as Europe to describe the more loosely-structured groups they encountered in the New World. (43) Anthropologists adopted the term in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as a convenient means of demarcating contemporary native groups, but found it difficult to define the same groups in the earlier historic period. Harold Hickerson attempted to define the Ojibwa "tribe" as it existed during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries by stating that it included Ojibwa "of several villages and/or hunting territories who could conveniently travel to a designated meeting place on short notice". (44) This seems rather limited, and not very useful. Ojibwa society in the eighteenth century was based on the social units of family, bandlet, and village. They did have a sense of a larger

category, but this was based on ethnicity (the perception of an individual being Ojibwa) and the existence of a multitude of kinship links between families, rather than on formal political structure or other criteria. (45)

After the trade gathering, the Ojibwa dispersed and headed slowly back to their villages. Some families travelled to visit relatives at another village. Fishing, berry picking and some hunting sustained the people until the end of the summer, when they once again began gathering about the villages to harvest wild rice, and hunt migrating wildfowl. Another trip would usually be made to the trading post to obtain goods necessary for the main hunting and trapping season. Having done this, individual extended family units left the village and moved into the forest. A fall hunt was made to take a number of fat animals; this meat, and the size of the caches of wild rice and maple sugar, determined the amount of time the Ojibwa were obliged (or able) to spend trapping over the winter. Towards spring, several families would camp together to provide the labour force necessary for a final, intensive period of trapping; following this, the combined group would join other families in the sugar bush again. (46)

These activities, movements, and fluctuating social groups constituted the basic structure of the culture which the first Ojibwa who ventured west carried with them. Although much of this way of life proved adaptable and functional in the west, much also would be altered by the new ecological and social environments in which the early western Ojibwa found themselves.

1. Alanson Skinner, Plains Ojibwa; Howard, The Plains Ojibwa or Bungi, p.9.
2. Howard, "The Identity and Demography...", p. 173; Howard, The Plains Ojibwa or Bungi, p.9; Howard, "The Plains Ojibway", unpublished ms., 1974, p.17.
3. Jack H. Steinbring, "Saulteaux of Lake Winnipeg", Handbook of North American Indians, volume 6 (Subarctic), ed. J. Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institute, 1981), p.254.
4. Ibid.
5. Brown, "Northern Algonquians...", p.211; Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) B.3/a/14, Albany Journal 1726, by Joseph Myatt; HBCA B.3/a/22, Albany Journal 1734, by Joseph Adams.
6. Joseph Adams, Albany Journal 1733, quoted in Bishop 1982; E.E. Rich, James Isham's Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1743 (Toronto, 1949), p. 191.
7. Isham, op. cit.; HBCA B.51/e/1, Fort Dauphin District Report 1820, by Peter Fidler, fos. 15-17.
8. Margaret Stobie made this connection in her paper, "Backgrounds of the dialect called Bungi", Historical and Scientific Society of Manitoba Transactions Series III, no. 24, 1967-68, p.68; also see the synonymy by David Pentland in "Northern Ojibwa" by E.S. Rogers and J. Garth Taylor, Handbook of North American Indians vol. 6, p. 241.
9. Elliot Coues, New Light on the Early History of the Greater North West: The Manuscript Journals of Alexander Henry and David Thompson (Minneapolis, 1965 (1897)), p. 533. Hereafter referred to as Henry.
10. HBCA B.239/b/59, York Factory fo.27d, Angus Shaw (Nor'Wester, Fort Augustus) to Joseph Colen, 10 May 1797; HBCA A.11/116, fo.61, Holmes and Pangman (Nor'Westers, Sturgeon River Fort) to Tomison and Longmoor (Hudson's House), 2 December 1779.
11. Victor P. Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North (Winnipeg, 1986), 1986, p. 58, 63, 64; also personal communication with Professor Harry Duckworth.
12. HBCA B.22.a.3 to B.22/a/21; PAM, Selkirk Papers.
13. Henry, p.170, 20 February 1801.
14. HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-1819 by Peter Fidler, 20

September 1818.

15. Jennifer Brown has also noted the terminological confusion and need for clarity in a recent article: "we cannot assume a one-to-one relation between the "Saulteaux" of Sault Ste. Marie and Manitoba, given the ways that these names have spread and have been borrowed and generalized". (Brown, "Northern Algonquians...", p.211.)
  
16. Edward Benton-Banai, The Mishomis Book (St. Paul, 1981), p.89, 98-102; Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.78-84.
  
17. Charles Bishop, "The Emergence of the Northern Ojibwa: Social and Economic Consequences", American Ethnologist 3 (1976), p.43.
  
18. Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations, p.36-39; E.E. Rich, The Fur Trade and the Northwest to 1857, p.102 (quoted in Thistle).
  
19. Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations, p.36-39.
  
20. George Hammell, "Trading in Metaphors: The Magic of Beads", in C. Hayes III, ed., Proceedings of the 1982 Glass Trade Bead Conference (New York, 1982), p.18, 23.
  
21. Benton-Banai, Mishomis Book, p.65; Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.79.
  
22. R.G.Thwaites, Early Western Travels 1746-1846, vol.II, John Long's Journal 1768-1782, p.204; trader George Nelson similarly stated of the Lac la Ronge Cree in 1823, "They have feasts for the dead, most commonly berries..." (quoted in Jennifer Brown and Robert Brightman, The Orders of the Dreamed, (Manitoba, in press) ms.p.40); see also Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North, p.11-18.
  
23. Quoted in Michael Angel, The Ojibwa-Missionary Encounter at Rainy Lake Mission 1839-1857 (M.A. thesis, University of Manitoba, 1986), p.141; see also Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.98-99 re: copper considered sacred by the Ojibwa and reserved for midewiwin purposes.
  
24. Hammell, "Trading in Metaphors", p.25.
  
25. In summarizing theories about the early northern Ojibwa, Greenberg and Morrison note ("Group Identities in the Boreal Forest: the Origin of the Northern Ojibwa", Ethnohistory 29 (2) 1982) that Hickerson believes the Cree were displaced by the Ojibwa, while Bishop thinks they had already moved west and that the Ojibwa filled a "territorial vacuum" (p.75). Harold Hickerson (1956, 1974) discussed the Ojibwa movement into Minnesota. John Milloy (Plains Cree, p.114) mentions the breakdown of Sioux-Ojibwa relations; also see Gary Anderson, Kinsmen.

26. Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.40; Anderson, Kinsmen, p.19.
27. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.18; Milloy, Plains Cree, p.118.
28. Anderson, Kinsmen, p.61; Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations, p.26.
29. Manitoba Historic Resources Branch, "The Prehistory of the Lockport Site", 1985, pp.5-10.
30. Ibid.; see also Anthony P. Buchner, "The Kenosewun Centre and Lockport Dig", Dawson and Hind, vol.13, no.2, winter 1986-87, pp.24-25.
31. K.A. Dawson, "The Northern Ojibwa of Ontario", in Hanna and Kooyman Approaches to Algonquian Archaeology, p.83; Scott Hamilton, "The Blackduck Culture", in Ibid., p.102; E.L. Syms, "Identifying Prehistoric Western Algonquians", in Hanna and Kooyman, p.12.
32. "Lockport Site", p.11.
33. A.I. Hallowell papers, American Philosophical Society Library, Ms. Coll. #26; information was also kindly provided by L. Pettipas, Manitoba Culture and Recreation, and L. Syms, Manitoba Museum of Man and Nature.
34. Greenberg and Morrison, "Group Identities in the Boreal Forest" p.76.
35. Hickerson, Ethnohistory of Chippewa in Central Minnesota (New York, 1974), p. 54,59; C. Bishop, "Territorial Groups Before 1821: Cree and Ojibwa", Handbook of North American Indians vol.6, (Subarctic), ed. J. Helm (Washington, 1981), p.160.
36. A.I.Hallowell papers, American Philosophical Society, Ms. Coll. #26, p.5; Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations..., p.69-70.
37. C.A. Bishop, "Territorial Groups Before 1821: Cree and Ojibwa", in J. Helm, ed., Handbook of North American Indians (Volume 6, Subarctic) p.160.
38. Hickerson, "Chaboillez Journal", p.300,303; R.B.Lee and I. DeVore, eds., Man the Hunter (Chicago, 1968), p.9.
39. As the precise definition of "clan" is difficult, and as the western Ojibwa do not seem to fit G.P. Murdock's definition (Social Structure, New York, 1960, p.68-69), specifically the residence requirements, I am using the term with reservations; Warren does accept the term, as have more recent scholars.

40. Hickerson, The Chippewa and their Neighbors (Toronto, 1970), p.47.
41. Hickerson, "Genesis of a Trading Post Band" and "Chaboillez Journal".
42. Angel, The Ojibwa-Missionary Encounter..., p.55-59; J.G.Kohl, Kitchi-Gami: Life Among the Lake Superior Ojibway (St. Paul, 1985 (1860)), p.43.
43. Morton Fried, The Notion of Tribe (Menlo Park, California, 1975), preface, i.
44. Hickerson, "Chaboillez Journal", p.421.
45. See Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.41, 78-80 on the Ojibwa perception of "nationality".
46. Angel, The Ojibwa-Missionary Encounter..., p.28-29; Tanner p.16, 18, 19; Quimby, "Year With a Chippewa Family", p.230-231, Moodie, "Nineteenth Century Ojibwa Agricultural Sites", m.s., p.1-2.

## Chapter Two: Migration

Why did some Ojibwa leave the recently-settled village centres and continue their people's westward migration? Who chose to leave, what were their motivations, and how did these factors affect their adaptation to the west?

### 1. The Traders' Theory

The earliest and most common explanation for the Ojibwa expansion has been that "the north-west people had introduced some of the Saulteaux as trappers and hunters" during a period of intense fur trade competition in the 1780's and 1790's. (1) Hudson's Bay Company trader Peter Fidler stated the Ojibwa were "introduced by the North West Company about the year 1797...they was induced by the Reports of the Canadians that Beaver abounded here...".(2) Explorers Lewis and Clark and trader and historian Alexander Ross also offered this explanation in the nineteenth century.(3) Alexander Henry the Younger, a North West Company trader whose journals are an important primary source for the Ojibwa expansion, said nothing, however, about ordering or inducing his Ojibwa hunters and trappers to accompany him down the Red River in 1800; if anything, he had great difficulty in getting them to trap where he wanted them to. He does seem to have arranged for some Red Lake Ojibwa to trap near Red River, but not until about 1800. (4)

Ethnohistorians have also accepted this early explanation to some extent. In his important study Indians in the Fur Trade, A.J. Ray states that because the Ojibwa "were more proficient fur hunters (than the Cree),...the trading companies, especially the North West Company,



actively encouraged them to move into Cree territory".(5) Hugh Dempsey, in a recent addition to Indian Tribes of Alberta, writes,

Because of the location of their hunting grounds, the Ojibwa encountered fur traders at an early date and discovered the profits to be made by devoting their attention to trapping. Aggressively, and with the encouragement of the North West Company, they began to move out from their traditional areas, seeking furs in new lands. (6)

Harold Hickerson also emphasized the "need" for richer beaver areas as the prime motivation for the Ojibwa expansion into the middle Red River area.(7) Interestingly, the ethnographers of the western Ojibwa have not subscribed to the trapping theory. Alanson Skinner believed it was more likely that the Ojibwa preceded the traders in the Red-Assiniboine River area "than that they formed one of the more eastern bands of Ojibway urged westward by the traders." (8) James Howard ascribed the migration to a combination of game depletion in the east and "a desire for adventure and the lure of a new country to be explored".(9)

Given the biases of its origins, the traders' explanation must be examined with some caution. That traders "transferred" Indians implies European control over them due to a dependency or addiction to trade goods, which was simply not true for most of the fur trade. It certainly does not correspond with available evidence of Ojibwa actions during the period of western expansion. Chabouillez mentioned finding groups of Ojibwa as he proceeded up the Red River to Pembina in 1797, and three years later Henry attached himself to a band of Ojibwa who had already spent the better part of several years in the Portage la Prairie area. Furthermore, it was only with great difficulty that Henry

succeeded in getting some of the Ojibwa to go where he wanted them to.(10) Similarly, the Ojibwa-Ottawa group with which John Tanner lived travelled to Red River to visit relatives, rather than at the request of any trader, and appear strikingly autonomous in their relations with traders.(11)

There is, of course, some truth to the traders' explanations. As will be discussed later, the western Ojibwa did at first concentrate on trapping large numbers of beaver, so that it may well have seemed that they had been brought in to exhaust new areas. Too, many of the early western Ojibwa did trade almost exclusively with Canadian traders; friendships and kin ties existed between Ojibwa and Canadians; and some Ojibwa, such as those who traded with Nor'Wester George Nelson, sought out the same trader at different posts.

The subject of Ojibwa-Canadian relations has been mentioned often in the primary sources dealing with Ojibwa history. The connection between the two peoples stems from their association along the shores of Lake Superior during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As Peter Fidler expressed it, the Ojibwa were "from their infancy acquainted with the Canadians as they come from towards their Country, which makes them so much attached to them". (12) As mentioned earlier, John Tanner noted that one Canadian company was called "The Chippeway Frenchmen". (13) The Ojibwa enthusiasm for the French was based on the impression they left during the exuberant beginnings of the fur trade:

The days of the French domination were the Augustan era of the fur trade, and beavers were so plenty and the profits arising from the trade were so large, that the French traders readily afforded to give

large presents of their coveted commodities, their beloved tobacco and fire-water to the Indians...(14)

This passage by Ojibwa historian William Warren, written in the 1850's, indicates the degree to which Ojibwas mythologized their relationship with Canadian traders. This myth had practical as well as symbolic utility: like the "cultural amnesia" claim, it proved a useful lever for increasing the generosity of the Hudson Bay Company's traders. The manipulation of European traders by means of such threatening comparisons places a different perspective on the claim that traders had the influence to relocate Ojibwa bands, for example, from Rainy Lake to the Edmonton House area. Nor were the Ojibwa dependent on trade goods, which would seem to be a necessary condition for a trader to have such influence over them. Significantly, none of the records left by Canadian traders mentions arrangements for moving a specific band. Alexander Henry's journals might be an exception: he may have persuaded some Red Lake Ojibwa to trap along the Red River, and he certainly tried to get others to trap in the upper Red River area. As mentioned before, however, even he had difficulty giving them orders. It seems likely that the early explanation arose partly out of the frustration of Hudson's Bay Company traders attempting to compete with Canadians, and from the assumption of Canadian traders that they were able to dominate their relationships with Ojibwa bands.

Another statement made by several traders to explain the westward movement of the Ojibwa was that they had come in search of more abundant game and fur supplies. David Thompson and Alexander Mackenzie, among others, asserted that the forested area west of Lake Superior

from Lake of the Woods south to Red Lake and inland to Fond du Lac and Grand Portage were seriously depleted of animal resources, especially beaver and large game, by the 1780's and 1790's. Thompson noted several Ojibwa at the North West Company post at Swan River in 1798 who had left "their own countries" which were "exhausted of the Beaver and the Deer".(15) The following year he travelled east of Red River and noted with astonishment that, "Since we left the Red River...we have not seen the track of a Deer, or the vestige of a Beaver...The Indians we met with all appeared very poor..."(16)

Mackenzie's and Thompson's specific emphasis on beaver and large game--their own standards of plenty--raises doubts about the severity of conditions in the areas they describe. For example, Ojibwa near Red Lake (Minnesota) in May of 1798 had no ducks, but sufficient sugar and rice-- a fairly normal diet for the season.(17) Alexander Mackenzie claimed that Ojibwa in the area just east of Lake of the Woods "could hardly find subsistence, game having become so scarce, that they depended...for food upon fish, and wild rice", but given the extremely high productivity of some of the fisheries in that area it is difficult to believe the first part of his statement.(18) Conflicting statements have been made by a number of other traders and scholars regarding the availability of game, fish and beaver during the third quarter of the eighteenth century in the area bounded by Lake Nipigon, Rainy Lake, and the east side of Lake Winnipeg; they seem to indicate that this area was depleted of large game, but not of fish or small game, and that beaver continued to be found in reasonable numbers in some places.(19)

The west, though, was reported to be far more plentiful in game and beaver, particularly the wooded areas along the Red River and its tributaries which had been used as a "war road" between the Ojibwa and the Sioux for several decades.(20) Since the area was considered unsafe for hunting, it became something of a game preserve. Nor'Wester John Macdonell said of the Red River area in 1795 that

...Buffalo, Elk, Moose deer, Caberie and Fowl of all kinds...abound in this country...The country is so plentiful that the Canoes have always either fresh meat or Fowl for their kettles. (21)

The Ojibwa were interested in the more plentiful game and fur resources of the west not because they were actually starving, but as a means of continuing the high standard of living which they had enjoyed, but which was declining to the east. The Ojibwa seem to have particularly wanted the prestige of being able to bring in large numbers of beaver and to purchase coveted goods such as silver ornaments, scarlet cloth, wampum, and alcohol, all of which were demanded by the Ojibwa during the early period of their occupation of the west.

This was not simply a quest for material wealth, but rather for something akin to the concept of pimadaziwin as it was explained by anthropologist Irving Hallowell:

The central goal of life for the Ojibwa is expressed by the term pimadaziwin, life in the fullest sense, life in the sense of longevity, health, and freedom from misfortune. (22)

Pimadaziwin, then, was the Ojibwa ideal of "the good life" and the means of attaining it; it may be compared to the conceptual relationship between the work ethic and the criteria of success in

North American society. In Ojibwa society, pimadaziwin was attained by living "properly", by obeying Ojibwa religious customs, moral codes and taboos, and by according respect to humans and "other than human" beings such as animals and spirits.(23) The fierce and ever-present desire for prestige, ceremony, and pomp seen in the boasting and showiness of the Ojibwa was also part of pimadaziwin, for to achieve such recognition and distinction was to affirm that one was living "the good life".

To follow this idea further, the frustration and physical suffering caused by the depletion of large game and beaver may have been interpreted by some Ojibwa as a sign that personal or group transgressions were being punished by supernatural beings.(24) In contrast, "the good life" of plentiful game and luxury goods--symbols of prosperity--in the west may have been perceived as more than a physical or an economic blessing. These material things would also have been considered part of the state of well-being embodied by pimadaziwin. This would have been particularly true for those goods which, as discussed in Chapter One, had magical or supernatural connotations. Hammell's comment on such items is worth quoting in full in this context:

Archaeological, ethnological, and historical data of the last four and one-half centuries allow us to conclude that shell, crystal and native copper were also luxury, prestige and status goods, and as such, wealth. But this "wealth" should not be only understood in terms of the potential exchange value of these goods, but also in terms of their symbolic value. Shell, crystal and native copper were their owner's assurance and insurance of long life..., well-being..., and

success, particularly in...hunting and fishing, warfare, and courtship. The...data strongly suggest that at least some of the analogous European trade goods...were annexed to this system. (25)

The silver ornaments, scarlet cloth, and wampum beads demanded by the early western Ojibwa were three such European trade goods. The early western Ojibwa brought this belief system with them from the east and, as will be seen, pursued their ideals with energy and enthusiasm in the west. While the western Ojibwa were certainly seeking better fortune in the west, then, they were neither dependent on the fur trade nor seeking only material profit from it.

## 2. Smallpox, 1781-1782

The Ojibwa migration was not purely a matter of choice. Possibly the greatest factor behind the emergence of the western Ojibwa was the smallpox epidemic of 1781-1783 which devastated the native populations of the northwest. As reported by David Thompson, the epidemic spread from the south to the Sioux and Ojibwa, then to the Missouri area, and then to the Cree and Assiniboine. (26) Several decades after the epidemic, one of William Warren's informants told him that the disease had been caught by a Cree-Assiniboine-Ojibwa war party which raided an already-infected Gros Ventre camp on the Missouri.(27) According to Warren's source, most of the party died on the journey home; the others scattered in horror, contributing to the spread of the disease. The mortality rate varied amongst the infected populations. William Tomison, then at Cumberland House, reported that at least two-thirds of the Crees died, and Edward Umfreville believed that but one in fifty had survived. (28). Warren states that a large Cree village at Netley

Creek was entirely depopulated, giving it the name "Dead River".(29) These figures are relatively consistent with Conrad Heidenreich's data on major smallpox epidemics among unvaccinated native North American populations, which suggest a 50% to 70% mortality rate. (30)

The spread and effects of the epidemic are less well-documented for the Ojibwa. No Ojibwa are mentioned in accounts of the epidemic west of Red River. Matthew Cocking wrote from York Factory in August 1782 that the disease was "raging among our poor Pungee Deer Hunters of whom almost every one that has been seized with it have died". (31) The "Pungees" were, presumably, the Ojibwa of northwestern Ontario who traded with the Hudson's Bay Company at the Bay. Natives around Lake Nipigon and Sturgeon Lake in northern Ontario were also hard hit; one survivor reported in the spring of 1783 that of two "tribes" (presumably clusters of tent bandlets) that had lived about Sturgeon Lake, "not more than 2 or 3 children are left". (32) Further south, a Canadian trader named J.B. Cadotte reported in June of 1783 that "all the Indians from Fond du Lac, Rainy Lake, Sandy Lake, and surrounding places are dead from smallpox".(33) J.B. Perrault, another trader, stated that mortality was not very high at Leech Lake; Warren speculated that the epidemic died out there. (34) This meagre data suggests that the area from northwestern Ontario to Fond du Lac probably experienced a normal 50% to 70% death rate, while that at Leech Lake and possibly other villages southwest of Fond du Lac was below 50%. While it cannot be said with absolute certainty, probably half of the Ojibwa living west of Grand Portage perished between 1781



and 1783.

Besides the terrible fear and despair it must have created, the smallpox epidemic left survivors vulnerable to the crucial problems caused by a greatly reduced labour force. In a hunting and gathering society in which each individual made a significant contribution, the death of a single hunter or female worker could be a threat to the survival of an entire extended family. This problem would have been emphasized by the common response of small groups to isolate themselves in an attempt to avoid the disease. As well, multiple deaths in a closely-knit group would have disrupted the normal pattern of social relationships: parents lost children, children lost grandparents or other elders who functioned as teachers, and there might be no shaman to turn to for making formal petitions for help to the spirits. A common response to such problems, as identified by scholar Henry Dobyns, is the amalgamation of survivors from different families, clans, areas, and even ethnic groups into social units of the "right" size.(35) Such a response was undoubtedly partly responsible for the formation of mixed Ottawa-Ojibwa groups in the 1780's and 1790's such as John Tanner's family; it also validates accounts of Ojibwa being invited to move west into depopulated Cree and Assiniboine lands. (36) Finally, the sudden emptying of lands formerly occupied by the Cree and Assiniboine probably did much to make them seem well-stocked with game, and thus to create one more attraction for Ojibwa who may already have been considering moving west.

One final connection between the smallpox epidemic and the

emergence of the western Ojibwa lies in the loss of property due to the hasty abandonment of infected camps and by the practice of making extremely large sacrifices to the spirits in an attempt to escape the disease.(37) Presumably, many of the Ojibwa would have been quite poor in trade goods when the epidemic subsided. Mitchell Oman, a Hudson's Bay Company servant, observed such poverty in the aftermath of the epidemic among the Crees at Hudson's House : "in their sickness, as usual, they had offered almost every thing they had to the Good Spirit and to the Bad, to preserve their lives, and were in a manner destitute of everything". (38) This shortage would have been made more acute by the need of a reduced labour force for efficient tools such as kettles and axes, as well as by the perception that the epidemic, and the poverty that followed it, was the antithesis of pimadaziwin. Perhaps the aggressive trapping and the showiness which characterized the early western Ojibwa were, in part, attempts at restoring a feeling of balance and normality to life: "despair and despondency had to give way to active hunting both for provisions, clothing, and all the necessaries of life". (39)

### 3. Early expansion, 1780-1797

Within the period of study, the years 1780 to 1804 constitute the initial years of migration and adaptation for the early western Ojibwa. This period can be subdivided into the early years before the beaver epidemic (1797-1800) and the entry of the X Y Company in 1798, and the 1798-1804 period of intense fur trade competition.

Tracing the first movements of the Ojibwa into the west is made

difficult by the nature of their initial presence there and by the somewhat fragmentary source material. Caution is necessary in order to avoid what archaeologist Leigh Syms has termed the "fallacy of displaced observations": the illusion of tribal migration given by the movement of European observer-recorders. (40) The opening, closing, and re-opening of early inland western trading posts generated records which tell us more about the movement of the traders than about patterns of Ojibwa migration. Furthermore, the early western Ojibwa were strongly attached to the Canadian traders and seem to have had very little to do with the Hudson's Bay Company, so that the Hudson's Bay Company journals, which are in some cases the only records available, must be terribly incomplete regarding Ojibwa behavior.

Although it is impossible to trace a steady, year-by-year westward movement for the Ojibwa, it is certain that they entered the west from three areas: some from northwestern Ontario, others from around the northeastern end of Lake Superior, and others from the southwestern shore of the lake. (41) The movement was not an organized, large-scale exodus from the east. As John Tanner's narrative indicates, it was a process of extended-family visits to relatives, of invitations to live with more westerly groups, and of travelling in both directions many times. (42)

The earliest references to Ojibwa in the west are from the Cumberland House--Hudson's House area in the late 1770's. The first mention of them is in a Cumberland House journal entry for January 6, 1778 which describes "an old Bungee Leader and Family belonging to York

Fort".(43) The hunter had already traded his fall hunt with the Canadians and was apparently trying to get more credit from the Hudson's Bay Company; he is mentioned as having been at York Factory the previous spring "for necessaries". (44) This was probably an Ojibwa from northwestern Ontario who customarily traded part of his furs at the Bay and part with Canadian traders at Lake Superior or in the northern forests; he was in all likelihood experimenting with the more intensely competitive situation at Cumberland House. Another band of Ojibwa was trading at Sturgeon River and Hudson's House, much farther west than Cumberland House, in 1779, and according to oral tradition another group was residing somewhere west of Lake Winnipeg for at least part of the 1770's.(45) William Tomison reported in early 1783 that an Ojibwa had been in to trade at Hudson House, and they were encountered northeast of Cumberland House in the summers of 1781 and 1782.(46) A number of Bungees also arrived at Cumberland House in 1784 after having found York Factory destroyed by French forces the previous summer.(47) In 1793, seventeen canoes of Bungees (between eighty and one hundred people) arrived to take debt in late September. (48) Ojibwa were reported to be trading with Canadians on the Qu'Appelle River the same year, and Ojibwa from Rainy Lake ("the most Rascals in the Country") traded with Donald McKay at Brandon House that year as well. (49) Both Duncan McGillivray, a North West Company trader, and James Bird, his Hudson's Bay Company opposition, met Ojibwa at Nipawin and the Pas in 1794, and Paul Thistle feels they had "solidly established themselves" in the Basquiau and Cedar Lake areas by 1796.(50) They were also

entering the Interlake, Swan River and Qu'Appelle River areas about the same time.(51) At least seven canoes of Bungees (about forty people) arrived at Edmonton House in the fall of 1795. (52)

Much farther south, other groups of Ojibwa were braving Sioux opposition to trap beaver on the tributaries of the Red River and hunt bison on the plains near the river. Although the smallpox epidemic had also hit the Sioux hard, it did not halt Sioux-Ojibwa warfare for any length of time.(53) Despite Ojibwa boasting about having driven the Sioux west, the Ojibwa were forced to keep well east of Red River and above the Assiniboine River until the late 1790's except for occasional forays after bison or trapping expeditions along tributaries.(54)

Some of the Ojibwa in the Red River area arrived in company with Ottawa relatives. The Ottawa, whose homelands lay around Lakes Michigan and Huron, were known for their spirit of enterprise and adventure: the Ojibwa name for them, odawag, means "trading people". John Tanner, who was adopted into a mixed Ottawa-Ojibwa family in the late 1780's, came with them to the forks of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers in the early 1790's, where they "found great numbers of Ojibbeways and Ottawaws encamped".(55) Ottawa groups wintered in the vicinities of Edmonton House and Brandon House during the winter of 1795-96, where they brought in good returns of beaver.(56) As Tanner's account demonstrates, there was considerable intermarriage and co-residency among the early Ottawa and Ojibwa in the west. Such cooperation and assistance may well have encouraged those Ojibwa who first ventured west to remain there, or to return for more than one winter.(57)

In the process of spreading out over such a vast area, the Ojibwa encountered different ecological conditions, formed separate social networks, and participated differently in alliances with their Cree and Assiniboine neighbors. While all of the western Ojibwa shared some common background and experiences, they also developed several different adaptations to varying ecological, social and trade conditions. In this early period, Ojibwa in the area west and north of Lake Manitoba had rather different experiences than those living in the Interlake area and along the Red and Assiniboine rivers.

The Ojibwa became known throughout the west as consistently productive trappers of beaver: "14 Canoes of Lake le plus Indians arrived on their passage to the Red River...they are most of them prime Hunters". (58) Returns of fifty to several hundred prime beaver from a single hunting group were common during the 1780 to 1805 period at Fort Edmonton, Fort George, Brandon House, Cumberland House, and Chaboillez's and Henry's posts around Pembina.(59) In one instance, an Ojibwa encountered by Duncan McGillivray near Nipawin in the fall of 1794 insisted on accompanying the trader despite warnings of danger (presumably from Blackfoot, who were then hostile to the Ojibwas' Cree allies) because "he supposes [our wintering ground] to be a good Beaver Country". (60)

In return for their furs, the Ojibwa demanded not only basic goods such as knives, kettles, guns, and ammunition, but luxury goods such as liquor and flamboyant items such as wampum beads, red and blue cloth, silver jewellery, "hair pipes" and glass beads.(61) William Tomison, a

Hudson's Bay Company trader at Fort Edmonton, noted on 27 March 1798 that "The Bungee Indians traded 45 B[eave]r 20 of which was for silver work they wanted Wampum v. [erȳ] much which I was sorry to inform there was none", and Chaboillez noted in 1797 that he had to bring silver jewellery from Pembina to another post at the junction of the Red and Forest Rivers to replenish the supply there.(62) David Thompson later recalled that during this period the Ojibwa and Ottawa in the west

were rich, the Women and Children, as well as the Men, were covered with silver brooches, Ear Rings, Wampum, Beads and other trinkets. Their mantles were of fine scarlet cloth and all was finery and dress... (63)

This wealth, and the feeling of well-being and power which accompanied it, were what the Ojibwa had hoped to find in the west. Accounts of their behavior make it clear that the early western Ojibwa were proud, autonomous, enthusiastic about living in such a plentiful land, and very much in control of their participation in the fur trade. As one trader expressed it, "the Bunges...always Pay with Great Honor their Debts." (64)

The economic power of the Ojibwa was greatly strengthened by their knowledge of the demand for the furs they supplied and of the lengths to which the fiercely competitive European traders were willing to go to obtain them. Traders in competitive situations gave out substantial amounts of goods as presents in an attempt to prevent the Indians' hunts from going to the competition. Some ammunition, tobacco and alcohol were supplied gratis as part of the trading ceremony, and gifts of cloth, knives, gun flints, awls, needles, net thread, and vermilion

are also recorded for this period. (65) The Ojibwa were also given large amounts of goods on "debt", as the traders called it, in anticipation of receiving the group's next lot of furs. One Hudson's Bay Company trader noted that because of Canadian competition he had "fited the Inds out With a Part of every article of Tradeing Goods in the Company's warehouse as presents & as much Debt as they would take". (66) While traders hoped that such tactics would instil the concept of economic debt and obligation in the natives, the Ojibwa often regarded the same actions as means to increasing their access to trade goods and therefore as confirmation and reinforcement of their power. Thus, many Ojibwa took advantage of the competitive situation and traded with several companies, taking debt at one post and later taking their furs to the opposition. (67)

This practise raises the long-standing substantivist-formalist argument over "the extent to which Indian trade was 'embedded' in a socio-political system"--that is, whether Indians traded to create and sustain political and social relationships, or whether, as the formalists would argue, they sought to accumulate property and maximize profit. (68)

On the substantivist side, there is evidence that some Ojibwa were loyal to a single trader or company for long periods of time, and that they established relationships with these traders which they clearly regarded, if not as alliances, at least as being familial in nature. Either traders or Indians could establish such relationships by the giving of gifts. Thus, in 1797 one Ojibwa formally transferred his



allegiance from the North West Company to the Hudson's Bay Company at Brandon House by exchanging twenty beaver pelts for two guns and a small keg of brandy after smoking a pipe and having a drink with the Hudson's Bay Company trader. (69) Similarly, traders created and reinforced such relationships by giving presents to the Indians who traded with them. As well as giving the basic "gratuities" to each Indian who received credits, traders made larger annual presents to their more influential and productive hunters. Alexander Henry described one such presentation in 1800:

Everything being ready, I gave Tabashaw, Maymiutch, and Vieux Collier each some clothing and other articles, as follows: A scarlet laced coat; a laced hat; a red round feather; a white linen shirt; a pair of leggings; a breech clout; a flag; one fathom of tobacco, and a nine-gallon keg of rum. Among the others I divided three kegs of mixed liquor...and four fathoms of tobacco. (70)

Some of the annual gifts to these "chiefs" or trading captains were redistributed by the chief amongst his band, further raising his status and helping to ensure his loyalty to the trader who "clothed" him. More importantly, though, the act of giving paralleled the use of gifts in Ojibwa adoption ceremonies, and involved the establishment of kinship relations between the parties involved. (71) As explained by historian Bruce White, the Ojibwa assumed that like any other kin, individuals establishing kinship relations through gift exchanges would care for one another and that "adopted" traders would "take pity" on their "poor younger brothers" with generous gifts and plenty of goods on debt. Nor'Wester George Nelson, for example, was addressed as "my

son" by Ayagon, an Ojibwa leader with whom he dealt in the Dauphin River area between 1808 and 1811. (72) Ayagon often acted in a fatherly manner towards Nelson, helping the trader with medical problems and teaching him a great deal about Saulteaux culture and relationships with nature. (73) In return for his assistance and the furs which he and his relations brought to Nelson, Ayagon expected to be well recompensed and rewarded. That Ayagon made this quite clear is indicated by Nelson's habit of referring to him as "My Lord". (74)

In contrast to "clothed" chiefs, many Ojibwa trappers and their families chose not to tie themselves so closely to one trader or company. The incentives to utilize the competitive situation were plain: it was far more convenient to trade with the nearest post than travel for days to reach a particular trader, and it was also possible to obtain twice as many goods by taking debt at one house and trading furs at the other (although this could not be repeated often with impunity), or by making promises to both traders. James Sutherland complained at Brandon House in the fall of 1797 that the Ojibwa around that post "seldom winter two years in one place, which gives them many an opportunity of cheating those from whom they take debt." His irritation with them was tempered by his observation that "whoever has the luck to get their trade generally gets a good one, as they hunt nothing but Beaver." (75) On some occasions it was necessary to go to both agents in order to obtain specific goods. One frustrated Hudson's Bay Company trader complained of a shortage of steel traps and silver jewellery, saying, "an Indian who otherwise would never Trade a skin

with (the Canadians) must do it for these articles".(76) The practice of sending runners from the posts to the Indians' tents to trade "en derouine" often made convenience and the desire for a steady supply of goods of greater priority than loyalty. (77)

Some of the early western Ojibwa, therefore, certainly behaved as the formalists would have them: they wanted more goods, better terms, and convenience, and their ideas about trade were apparently unconnected to their concepts of alliance. An entry in the Brandon House journal for December 4, 1795 noted that, "two Soeties came in today with a few Furr...these Inds belong to Mr. Augee, gave them a good present away with them", and the Cumberland House trader wrote the same year that, "I was obliged to give several Credits to the Bungees which if not looked after will be lost as was the case last year by the Canadians going to the Indian Tents and taking the skins as they were procured". (78) On the other hand, trading was clearly connected with the native concept of gift exchange and kinship responsibilities and thus was perceived and ordered differently than European market exchange. (79) However, it necessary to remember, as Trigger points out, that the formalist/substantivist dichotomy confuses several important issues:

The substantivists have assumed that the "embeddedness" of precapitalist economies in their political and social organization implies a lack of optimizing behavior. Yet evidence of native traders seeking to derive...profit from their exchanges abounds... The real question is not whether individual traders sought such profits but why they did so and what they did with their gains...(For example,) the goods obtained were not hoarded by individuals but were redistributed in a traditional fashion as a source

of prestige. (80)

In the end, the choice between loyalty and "freelancing" was made by each family and probably depended a great deal on the needs and desires of individual hunters and on current trade conditions at the local level.

Whatever strategy was chosen by each hunter, it was certainly meant to maximize the benefits available to him. Again, however, these benefits were not perceived by the Ojibwa as being merely economic in nature. By 1796, those Ojibwa who had ventured west in search of a better life had, apparently, found what they were seeking. The increasing numbers of Ojibwa entering the west after 1796 would seem to indicate that the initial reports had been favorable. Between 1797 and 1805, the good life in the west began to turn into a new way of life.

1. Ross, The Red River Settlement, p.13.
2. A. Johnson, ed., Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence (London, 1967), p. 6n.
3. Lewis and Clark reference from H. Hickerson and E. Wheeler-Voegelin, The Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa, p. 94; Fidler reference from PAM HBCA B.51/e/1 fo.16, 1820; Ross, Red River Settlement.
4. Hickerson, "The Genesis of a Trading Post Band", p.313.
5. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.104.
6. H. Dempsey, Indians of Alberta (Calgary, rev. ed., 1986), p.83. I am grateful to Dr. Dempsey for supplying this information.
7. Hickerson, "The Genesis of a Trading Post Band", p.291.
8. A. Skinner, "Political and Ceremonial Organizations of the Plains Ojibway", p.477.
9. J. Howard, The Plains-Ojibwa or Bungi, p.12. These choices reveal interesting disciplinary biases: anthropologists looking for "pristine culture" and historians more accustomed to dealing with European ideology and motivations.
10. Henry, e.g. p. 56, 21 August 1800; p.103, 27 September 1800; p.159, 8 December 1800; also Hickerson, "Chaboillez Journal", p.257.
11. Tanner, p.19.
12. Fidler, in A.Johnson, ed., The Saskatchewan Journals, p. lxx.
13. Tanner, p.71.
14. Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.134.
15. R. Glover, ed., David Thompson's Narrative (Toronto, 1962), p.149. Hereafter referred to as Thompson.
16. Ibid., p.208, 6 May 1798. See also Hickerson, Ethnohistory of Chippewa of Lake Superior (New York, 1974), p.103,107; also W. K. Lambe, ed., The Journals and Letters of Alexander Mackenzie (Toronto, 1970), p.106-7.
17. David Thompson, p. 208.
18. Tim Holzkamm, "A Quantitative Analysis of Ojibway Sturgeon Fisheries in the Rainy River". Paper presented at the 18th Algonquian

Conference, Winnipeg, 1986. One has to wonder how much of the depletion theory arose from the European traders' prejudice for meat and other particular foods, and as a cover for their lack of control over native fur trappers.

19. George Nelson noted in his Reminiscences (Rem.5, p.37) that the Pigeon River, on the east side of Lake Winnipeg, was low in furs and game ca. 1803-1811; John Long claimed the Lake Nipigon area was good for furs and fish ca. 1770's (p.87, 91, 136, 144); scholar Charles Bishop states that the area south of the Albany drainage, including Lake Nipigon and Rainy R. was good for game 1760-1790 but that the area nearer L. Winnipeg was much leaner ("The Emergence of the Northern Ojibwa", p.143); Hickerson (Ethnohistory of Chippewa of Lake Superior, p.103), noted that the Ojibwa were moving INTO the Fond du Lac, Grand Portage, Vermilion L. districts in the 1780's and 1790's, so these areas must have offered some game resources. Finally, the trader Alexander Mackenzie ( p. 106-7) claimed that the Lake of the Woods area was extremely depleted about the time of the smallpox epidemic but that game levels rose again by 1800.
20. Hickerson and Wheeler-Voegelin, The Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa, p.36, 43; Tanner, p.39; John McDonell, "Some Account of the Red River..." ca.1795, from L. R. Masson, ed., Les Bourgeois de la Compagnie du Nord-Ouest (Quebec, 1890), vol.1 p.269.
21. Macdonell, in W.R. Wood and T. Thiessen, eds., Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains (Norman, 1985), p.86.
22. A.I. Hallowell, "Ojibwa Ontology and World View", Dennis and Barbara Tedlock, eds., Teachings from the American Earth (Toronto: 1975), p.171.
23. Ibid.
24. Harvey Feit, "The Ethno-ecology of the Waswanipi Cree", in B. Cox, ed., Cultural Ecology (Toronto, 1978) p.117.
25. Hammell, "Trading in Metaphors", p.18, 23.
26. Thompson p.236; Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.105.
27. W. Warren, History of the Ojibwa Nation p.261.
28. Umfreville quoted in Milloy, Plains Cree, p. 169; Wm Tomison in HBCA B.239/b/42, fos. 15d--16d, Matthew Cocking, York Factory August 1782 to Moose, Albany, and Churchill forts.
29. Warren, History of the Ojibway, p. 261.
30. C. Heidenreich, Huron: A History and Geography of the Huron

- Indians 1600-1650. (Toronto 1971), p. 97.
31. Matthew Cocking, HBCA B.239/b/42, fos. 15d-16d.
32. HBCA B.78/a/8, fo. 24d, quoted in Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North, p.44.
33. H. Hickerson, The Southwestern Ojibwa: An Ethnohistorical Study. AAA Memoir 92, vol.64, no. 3, part 2, 1964, p.84.
34. Ibid.; also Warren, History of the Ojibway, p. 262.
35. H. Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned (University of Tennessee, 1983), p.311. Bruce Trigger (Natives and Newcomers, p.243, 250) also notes that during seventeenth-century epidemics among the Huron, political structure suffered the worst damage of all cultural elements; this resulted in further social chaos. See also John Taylor's study, "Sociocultural Effects of Epidemics on the Northern Plains, 1734-1850", Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology 7:4 (1977).
36. Vide Donald Gunn, "Peguis Vindicated", Nor'Wester 28 April 1860: "after smoking and feasting for two or three days, the children of the forest were formally invited to dwell on the plains--to eat out of the same dish, to warm themselves at the same fire, and to make common cause with them against their enemies the Sioux..."
37. J. Taylor, "Sociocultural Effects of Epidemics" p.63.
38. Thompson, p.237.
39. Ibid.; also J. Taylor, "Sociocultural Effects of Epidemics", p.63: "...the loss of material goods through sacrifices and abandonment during epidemics created a need among Native Americans for the superior European technology...". From Bradley 1900, "Affairs at Fort Benton from 1831-69", Contributions to the Historical Society of Montana 3: 201-287, p.232.
40. E.L. Syms, "Identifying Prehistoric Western Algonquians: A Holistic Approach", in Hanna and Kooyman, eds., Approaches to Algonquian Archaeology, p.3.
41. C.A. Bishop, "The Emergence of the Northern Ojibwa: Social and Economic Consequences", p.45.
42. Tanner; Hallowell, A.I. Hallowell Papers, Am. Philos. Society Library, MS Coll. #26, p. 18 (courtesy Jennifer Brown), "Schematic Representation of the directions and localities..."; Syms, "Identifying Prehistoric Western Algonquians", p.2 re: fallacy of societal block movement, which assumes that all groups "with a 'tribal' name...act and move as a single unit".

43. HBCA B.49/a/6, Cumberland House Journal 1777-1778, by William Walker.
44. Ibid.
45. HBCA A.11/16, fo.61, Holmes & Pangman, Sturgeon River Fort, to Tomison and Longman, Hudsons House, 2 December 1779; also Hallowell Papers, as above, p.5.
46. B.49/a/13, Cumberland Ho. 1782-83, George Hudson, letter from William Tomison to George Hudson, 9 February 1783; also see Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations, p.65.
47. Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations p.66, from HBCA B.49/a/14, fo.25.
48. HBCA B.49/a/25a, Cumberland House Journal 1793-1794, Magnus Twatt and Malcom Ross, 27,28 September 1793.
49. HBCA b.22/a/1, Brandon House Journal, Donald McKay, 14 December 1793.
50. A.S. Morton, ed., The Journal of Duncan McGillivray of the North West Company at Fort George on the Saskatchewan, 1794-95, p.lxiii; Thistle, Indian-European Trade Relations, p.71; HBCA B.148/a/1, Nipawin Journal 1794-95 by James Bird, 10 December, 12, 25 March.
51. Thompson, p.149; HBCA B.51/e/1, fo.16; HBCA B.22/a/1, Brandon House Journal by Donald McKay, 26 February 1793 (for Qu'Appelle River).
52. HBCA B.60/a/1, Edmonton House Journal 1795-96 by William Tomison, 19 August 1795; see also Tanner, p.36.
53. Milloy, Plains Cree, p.122.
54. Hickerson, "Genesis...", p.294, 301; Anderson, Kinsmen of Another Kind, p.73; Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.227. Hickerson has examined the expansion of Ojibwa groups into the middle Red River area; this study will deal primarily with the area north and west of Pembina. Hickerson's material is included where applicable or relevant to other groups. See also Anderson, Kinsmen, re: Ojibwa boasting about Sioux.
55. Tanner, p.30-31.
56. HBCA B.60/a/1, Edmonton House Journal 1795-96, by William Tomison; HBCA B.22/a/3, Brandon House Journal 1794-95; HBCA B.22/a/4, Brandon House Journal, 1796-97; see also Tanner, p.28.
57. E.g. Tanner p.30, 70-71; HBCA B.104/a/1, Lac la Biche (Greenwich



- House) Journal 1799-1800 by Peter Fidler, 30 Sept, 7 April.
58. HBCA B.4/a/2, Fort Alexander Journal 1797-98, 14 September 1798.
59. HBCA B.60/a/1, Edmonton Journal 1795-96, by William Tomison; also Morton, ed., Duncan McGillivray, p.18, 2 September 1794; HBCA B.22/a/5, Brandon House Journal 1797-98, 30 January 1798; HBCA B.49/a/25a, Cumberland House Journal 1793-94 by Magnus Twatt and Malchom Ross, 11 Jan 1794; Henry, p.275, 23 May 1805; Hickerson, "Chaboillez", e.g. pp.288, 289, 292.
60. Morton, Duncan McGillivray, p.18, 2 Sept. 1794.
61. HBCA B.4/a/3, Fort Alexander Journal, 1799-1800, 20 May 1800; HBCA B.60/a/3, Edmonton House Journal 1797-1798, by William Tomison, 27 March 1798; Thompson, p.156, ca. 1797, Swan River area; HBCA B.22/a/1, Brandon House Journal 1793-94, Donald McKay, 15 March 1794.
62. HBCA B.60/a/3, Edmonton House Journal 1797-98, William Tomison; Hickerson, "Chaboillez Journal", p.287, 12 November 1797; see also Tanner, p.68, "My silver ornaments, one of my guns, several blankets, and much clothing, were lost. We had been rather wealthy..."
63. Thompson, p.156.
64. HBCA B.49/a/25a, Cumberland House Journal 1793-94, Magnus Twatt and Malchom Ross, 14 May 1794.
66. Henry, p.97, September 15 1800; HBCA B.49/a/25a, Cumberland House Journal 1793-94, 12 January 1794.
67. HBCA B.49/a/25b, Cumberland House Journal 1793-94, 16 October 1793.
68. E.g., Hickerson, "Chaboillez", p. 289, 292.
69. A.J. Ray and D. Freeman, Give Us Good Measure, p.231.
70. HBCA B.22/a/5, Brandon House Journal 1797-98, 22 December 1797.
71. Henry, p.56, 21 August 1800.
72. Bruce White, "Give Us A Little Milk".
73. Nelson Reminiscences, p.290; Jennifer Brown, "Man in his Natural State", p. 201-202.
74. Brown, "Man in His Natural State".
75. George Nelson Papers, Metropolitan Public Library of Toronto (typed transcripts in possession of Jennifer S.H. Brown, University of

Winnipeg), Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 19, 30 April 1808. Hereafter referred to as Nelson.

76. HBCA B.22/a/5, Brandon House Journal 1797-98 by J. Sutherland, 11 September 1797.

77. HBCA B.4/a/3, Fort Alexander Journal ("River Ouinepeauga House") 1799-1800, 20 May 1800.

78. E.g. HBCA B.148/a/1, Nipawin Journal 1794-95 by James Bird, letters from J. Bird to Magnus Twatt, 10 December, 25 March.

79. HBCA B.22/a/3, Brandon House Journal 1794-95; HBCA B.60/a/1, Edmonton Journal 1795-96, letter re: Cumberland House, 20 April 1795.

80. Trigger, Natives and Newcomers, p.183-85, 193-94.

81. Ibid., p. 193.

Chapter Three, 1797-1804

After a decade and a half of seasonal migration and tentative expansion, several events occurred in the mid-1790's which began to shape a new and more permanent Ojibwa adaptation to the west. The increasing association between the Ojibwa and their plains allies, the decline of desirable furs (especially beaver), a more intensely competitive fur trade, more frequent Sioux attacks, and weakening ties with their former villages were among the factors which affected the western Ojibwa during this period.

Beginning in 1797, the beaver population upon which the Ojibwa relied dropped sharply. Crees came to Edmonton House in May of that year, saying that "their has been a distemper Among the Beaver of which great numbers have died...".(1) Alexander Henry noted of the upper Red River in 1800 that "A few years ago beavers were plenty (here), but now they are nearly destroyed".(2) Twenty years later, Peter Fidler mentioned that an epidemic in 1800 had virtually destroyed the beaver population throughout the north-west from Moose Factory to the Rocky Mountains, "south of the Athapasow (River)".(3) John Tanner also recalled "that some kind of distemper was prevailing among (the beaver)...which destroyed them in vast numbers" one winter just after the turn of the century. (4)

Given the degree to which the Ojibwa relied on the beaver for their prosperity, the epidemic might have proved a disaster. Fortunately, its effects were offset by the entrance of a third rival fur trade company, the XY Company, into the west in 1798. The

increasing lengths to which Europeans resorted to obtain the Indians' furs during the six-year life of the new company created a period of prosperity for the Ojibwa. Such was the case with those taking advantage of the competitive situation around the Hudson's Bay Company's Winnipeg River House in the fall of 1800:

16 Sept.: 7 Canoes of Indians came down 6 of whom went to the other house.

17 Sept.: Indians still drinking the Quantity of Liquor and Goods they are getting for Nothing is Astonishing. (5)

Traders became more willing to collect furs and trade at the Indians' tents, and the yearly gifts to "chiefs" and their followers continued.

(6) Many traders became more protective of "their" beaver hunters: the Hudson's Bay Company men at Edmonton House accompanied an Ottawa-Ojibwa group to the Indians' wintering grounds in 1799, presumably to prevent a rival company from taking them elsewhere.(7)

The increasing European competition for their furs maintained and strengthened the autonomy of the Ojibwa in their relations with the traders. The Hudson's Bay Company trader at Brandon House, facing great competition from two rival houses in 1801, noted on December 23 that two Indians who had left the fort were not likely to return, despite the quantity of brandy given them. (8) Similarly, Alexander Henry fumed when an Ojibwa band refused to move to a richer trapping area: "The Indians being so obstinately bent on remaining at this place, where I was assured there were very few beavers...". (9) The Ojibwa were fully aware of their power in the trade; this is illustrated by incidents such as the one which occurred at Brandon

House in November of 1798. On that occasion, an Ojibwa band approached the two rival posts, which were side by side, and sent several people into each house to request traders to go to their tents and collect furs. Employees from the two companies were then forced to literally race in the middle of the night in a competition to see who got the furs. The Ojibwa must have known what the outcome of their requests would be, and may well have set the whole thing up as a diversion. (10) Some bands, such as those trading with Henry, were occasionally led by this knowledge to threaten traders and make "insolent" demands. Henry and his men felt obliged to build blockhouses at the Pembina River post in 1803: "We pretend it is on account of the Sioux, but I apprehend much less danger from them than from the Sauteurs, who are getting numerous, and at times insolent." (11) The following year, he faced an open confrontation:

Indians very troublesome, threatening to level  
my fort to the ground...I perceived they were  
bent on murdering some of us and then pillaging.(12)

Others, such as Tanner's family, simply used the traders' eagerness to reinforce their autonomy, knowing that they could trade furs and obtain credit virtually whenever and wherever they wished. (13) This attitude began to be extended even to some Canadian traders to whom Ojibwa were previously loyal. Despite Fidler's complaints about the tradition and strength of the Bungees' ties to the Canadians, and the mythology surrounding Ojibwa-Canadian relations ("The days of the French domination was the Augustan era of the fur trade...") more Ojibwa began trading with the Hudson's Bay Company during this period.

(14). As will be discussed later, this was probably the result of harassment by Canadian traders.

While fear of Sioux attacks may have been partly responsible for Henry's group's "obstinacy", the Ojibwa may also not have needed to trade as many beaver during the 1798-1804 period. Many were receiving more goods as presents and incentives to loyalty than previously, so that it may have been the trade situation as much as the beaver epidemic which lowered beaver returns for some Ojibwa bands.(15) Such a situation existed as early as the 1793-94 trading season along the Assiniboine River: "the Indians will not hunt, as they can get plenty now between so many houses...on this river at present there is nine settlements..." (16) Peter Fidler lamented a similar situation at Lac la Biche in 1799:

There is so many different oppositions that the Indians are supplied by one & another for nothing--and they have very little occasion to kill furs--while the petty company keeps them in any thing they ask for. (17)

The intense competition placed great strain on native-trader relations. The desperation of fur traders led in some cases to threats and acts of violence against native hunters, as well as other disruptive and upsetting interventions. Reports of traders' behavior tended to be exaggerated, since they were made by the accused's rivals, but they usually contained some truth. Traders occasionally resorted to force to obtain Ojibwas' hunts, as in the seizure of five hundred Made Beaver in furs from Bungees by the Canadians opposing Edmonton House in 1798, or the actions of a Canadian trader at Lac la Biche in

1799: " as soon as (the Ojibwa) came near the shore--all the Canadians ran into the water and took every thing from (them)...by force." (18) Other traders made threats which sounded quite convincing to the Ojibwa. One "Mr McKay" (probably William McKay, a North West Company trader) notified the Indians around the south end of Lake Winnipeg in 1800 that if any were to land at the Hudson's Bay Company post, he would "either shoot or hang him", and at Lac la Biche, Ojibwa hunters were forced to go to the Hudson's Bay Company post "slyly at midnight" to trade.(19) While such pressure was rarely physically damaging, few Ojibwa felt obliged to endure it for long. Eventually, insulting treatment by traders may have encouraged some western Ojibwa to participate less in the fur trade.

Pressure from traders also caused problems for the Ojibwa by encouraging them to venture farther into territory contested by the Sioux. As noted previously, the Sioux laid claim to a wide strip of land along both sides of the Red River, which was used by both Sioux and Ojibwa as a war road. In the 1790's, the Red River and its tributaries beginning just south of the Assiniboine River were considered unsafe by Ojibwa. (21) Ojibwa trapping beaver in this "no-man's land" were in constant fear of Sioux attacks, and their fears were realized with increasing frequency after 1800. The continuing warfare had significant effects on the emerging western Ojibwa by strengthening intergroup relations between the Ojibwa and the Cree and Assiniboine. These relationships later proved crucial to the development of a distinctive plains Ojibwa ethnic identity.

By the 1790's, the Ojibwa, Cree and Assiniboine bands in the Red River area were linked by over five decades of military cooperation in opposing the Sioux. With even greater incentives for Ojibwa to trap in the richer, Sioux-held territory between 1798 and 1804, warfare became almost continuous, and Cree and Assiniboine military aid was invaluable in retaliating against Sioux attacks. While the Sioux killed only one or two Ojibwa families along the Red River each year, Alexander Henry recorded mixed-group war parties ranging in size from fifty to three hundred warriors setting out against the Sioux in 1800, 1801, 1802, twice in 1804, and once in 1805. (22)

While their war parties were not successful in permanently pushing the Sioux south or west, the relationship between the Ojibwa, Cree and Assiniboine was strengthened considerably during this period. Besides the time spent together by males on war expeditions, families from all three groups camped together near the trading posts during the fall and spring gatherings. Brandon House, for example, was "swarming with Indians of all descriptions" in late April of 1805.(23) Ojibwa also camped together with Cree in the winter, especially when it was necessary to hunt bison. John Tanner's family spent parts of three winters around the turn of the century camping with Crees.(24)

It should be noted that the expansion of the Ojibwa was not seriously challenged by the Cree or Assiniboine either in the Red/Assiniboine area or the Saskatchewan region. A few quarrels occurred in the Red River area: Henry described Ojibwa-Assiniboine hostility during the summer of 1801, and John Tanner was denounced on



several occasions as being "a stranger...and one of many who have come from a distant country to feed yourself". (25) For the most part, however, the peoples whose territories were occupied --or, more to the point, whose resources were used-- by the Ojibwa made no objection to their presence. Several factors supported this acceptance. Lasting friendships often sprang up after different groups camped together because of labour shortages or simply for companionship. In one such case, Tanner's family camped with a Cree group led by Assiniboinainse ("Little Assiniboine") several weeks a year for a few years. Tanner referred to this group as "our friends", and mentioned their generosity when his own family was short of food. (26) Many of these new-found friends were literally made "part of the family" through the creation of fictive kin relationships. Of a Muskego who befriended his family when they were in need, Tanner said that if any of his own family "were now, after so many years, to meet one of (his)...family..., he would call him "brother" and treat him as such". (27) There were also direct kin ties as a result of marriage. Henry mentioned an Assiniboine who arrived at his post with "a young Saulteur..., who, having been married to an Assiniboine woman, was perfectly well acquainted with their language." (28) These kinship ties helped to minimize or prevent intergroup conflict during the westward expansion of the Ojibwa. (29)

In addition, the presence of Ojibwa in the west was not generally contested because they usually did not compete directly for resources with established local groups. (30) The difficulties cited above which

occurred in the Red River area were directly related to diminishing game and fur resources. Throughout most of the west, the Ojibwa occupied areas which most of the Cree and Assiniboine, having adopted a horse-and-bison economy, were no longer exploiting intensively. (31) Thus the Piegan, who later fought fiercely with the Cree over access to bison and horses, held no objection to a proposed influx of Ojibwa and Iroquois when asked by David Thompson in the late 1790's. (32) This was in spite of the Ojibwa link with the Cree, whose alliance with the Blackfoot was breaking down in the 1790-1806 period. (33)

Finally, there was another reason for the ready acceptance of Ojibwa in the west which, while it was real enough to the Cree and Assiniboine, is sometimes difficult for modern historians to accept. Like the other groups with whom they interacted, the Ojibwa lived in a world in which ordinary reality and supernatural (or spiritual, or non-ordinary) reality often merged. The failure to accord the proper respect and ceremonies to the spirit and bones of certain animals led to starvation; malevolent magic was commonly felt to be the cause of illness or misfortune. Among the other groups with whom they associated, the Ojibwa had a reputation as having powerful and dangerous magic. It is unclear how this reputation arose, although it may have been connected to the presence of the Midewiwin ceremony among the Ojibwa, and to the magical "killing" and "resurrection" of participants in the ceremony. By the 1790's, it was a significant factor in Ojibwa external relations. David Thompson noted in 1798 that "Of all the Natives, these people are the most superstitious, they may

be accounted the religionists of the North", and John Macdonell noted similarly that "Almost every great man or chief among the Indians is likewise a Juggler or doctor of physic [shaman]". (34) More than any other native group in the west, the Ojibwa were noted in the post journals as "conjuring and feasting". (35) This became more pronounced after about 1800, when the Ojibwa began celebrating the Midewiwin in the west.(36) The Ojibwa made use of their reputation and powers in their relations with other groups. Henry recorded in November of 1801 that the "Saulteurs" were trading medicines to the Assiniboines for horses, indicating the Assiniboines' respect for the powers of the Ojibwas' medicines.(37) Others were more frightened than respectful of Ojibwa powers. In 1799, Peter Fidler found himself unable to persuade any of the Indians around Bolsover House, at Meadow Lake, to guide him to Lac la Biche, "because all the Indians in this quarter are frightened of the Bungees (there)." (38) In some instances, then, local Indians gave incoming Ojibwa a wide berth, perhaps fearing the consequences if they were to challenge the newcomers. The Ojibwa maintained their reputation for having strong supernatural powers even in their close friendships with the Cree and Assiniboine. This reputation functioned to maintain a boundary between the western Ojibwa and other ethnic groups, and was therefore important in the development of a separate western Ojibwa identity.

Ojibwa-Cree relations were particularly close; there are few accounts of Ojibwa-Assiniboine coresidency or friendships. Tanner said of the Crees, "These peoples are the relations of the Ojibbeways"; he

also mentioned the "habitually unfriendly feeling which exists between the Ojibbeways for the [Assiniboines]" which was borne out by his own experiences. (39) The cause of the Ojibwa-Assiniboine uneasiness, which occasionally flared into hostility, is uncertain. Hickerson suggested that it stemmed from increasing Ojibwa use and subsequent depletion of game and fur resources which the Assiniboines felt to be theirs. (40) Intergroup tensions did not, however, keep Assiniboines from participating in mixed-group war parties with the Ojibwa, nor did they interfere with Ojibwa-Cree relationships. (41)

The Ojibwa-Cree relationship was also strengthened by Ojibwa participation in the Cree-Assiniboine-Mandan trade and in the problems arising from it between 1795 and 1805. Prior to the mid-1790's, the Cree and Assiniboine had been the sole suppliers of European trade goods to the Mandan in exchange for Mandan corn, craftwork, and horses. Ojibwa participation in the Mandan system is suggested by a quote in David Thompson's account indicating that the Ojibwa were trading for corn with the Cheyenne before their friendship ended sometime before the 1790's. Since the Crees and Assiniboines were obtaining corn (as well as other goods) from the Mandans just after the turn of the century, the Mandans would have been a logical replacement source of corn for the Ojibwa. (42) As more of the Cree adopted plains life in the late 1700's, the Mandan horse supply became increasingly important. The native trade system was upset in the mid-1790's when Europeans began trading directly with the Mandans in the Mandan villages on the Missouri. The Mandan continued to supply horses and other goods to the

Cree and Assiniboine, but at a much higher price since they had maintained their monopoly while the Cree and Assiniboine had lost theirs. As many of the Cree were by this time bison-hunters rather than fur trappers, they were treated less generously by European traders, making it even more difficult for them to meet Mandan prices. (43) This led to a period of poor relations between the Cree and the Mandan in the mid-1790's. Some Ojibwa may have participated in retaliatory attacks on the Mandan: the Brandon House trader noted in 1795 that "11 Crees and Soeties came here going to war against ye Mandalls". (44) The plains groups could not risk having their horse supply cut off in retaliation for such actions, however, and this as well as the increasing Sioux hostility to all four groups resulted in the restoration of peace to the alliance by 1800.(45)

While peace was restored, the Cree monopoly over European goods was not, and so the problem of horse prices remained. It would appear that one of the Cree solutions was to re-sell the expensive horses to the Ojibwa, who were the only group on the plains which did not have horses. This theory is supported by indirect but suggestive evidence. The first eyewitness reports of western Ojibwa possession of horses occur around 1800, when the Cree supply had been re-established. Alexander Henry reported that Ojibwa were trading guns and medicines to the Assiniboine for horses in 1801. (46) He purchased several horses from his "Saulteurs" in the fall of 1800, and a mixed Ojibwa-Cree-Ottawa group centred near Portage la Prairie already had horses by that date.(47)

Not all Ojibwa horses were acquired from the Crees. Of four owned by Tanner in 1800-01, one was "considered the best out of 180 which a war party of Crees, Assiniboines, and Ojibbeways had recently brought from the Fall [Gros Ventre] Indians." (48) Although the western Ojibwa remained "horse-poor" for many years, the number of horses they possessed increased steadily. By 1804, one Ojibwa band of 65 people had ten horses, or about one horse per tent. (49)

The reasons for the adoption of the horse by some western Ojibwa at this time are not as obvious as they might at first seem. True, horses are an efficient means of transportation; however, despite their increasing commitment to life in the west, most western Ojibwa continued to live along the wooded shores of rivers and lakes for the greater part of the year--an environment to which canoes, rather than horses, were more suitable. Indeed, canoes remained the standard means of transportation for the western Ojibwa. Nor were horses crucial to the hunting of bison, which the western Ojibwa began exploiting after 1800. Prehistoric peoples successfully hunted bison for thousands of years before the arrival of horses, and oral accounts indicate that as late as the 1840's, even the plains Cree did not possess sufficient numbers of horses trained as "buffalo runners" to consistently hunt bison in that manner.(50) Nor did all of the western Ojibwa adopt horses at the same time, or incorporate them into their lifestyles in the same manner or to the same extent. Ojibwa east of Brandon House had horses at least a decade earlier than Ojibwa west of that point; these groups were also the first Ojibwa to value horses highly enough

to begin stealing them (see chapter 5). Ojibwa in the vicinities of the Interlake, Swan River, Fort Pelly, Cumberland and Carlton House did not begin using horses until nearly 1820, and then only sporadically.

The other reason which has been given for the adoption of horses by some of the western Ojibwa is that they were necessary to repel (or defend themselves from) the Sioux. As one Ojibwa expressed it, the problem was that, "we being foot men, they could get to windward of us, and set fire to the grass; When we marched for the Woods, they would be there before us...and under cover fire on us". (51) Alexander Mackenzie was of a similar belief that if the Ojibwa continued "to venture out of the woods, which form their only protection, they will soon be extirpated". (52) For horses to have provided effective defense against Sioux attacks, however, nearly every individual in the band would have to have been mounted or had a mount, yet as late as 1815 the number of horses to Ojibwa in the Assiniboine/Red River area was only one per 7.5 adults, or about one per tent. (53) As well, even mixed-group war parties in the Red River area were not fully mounted by 1805, yet they stepped up rather than desisted from raids against the Sioux. (54) In 1804, three hundred Ojibwa and Assiniboines left Pembina to go against the Sioux; only half of these were mounted. (55)

Because of these inconsistencies, Hickerson's belief that the emergence of the western Ojibwa was dependent upon their acquisition of horses cannot be correct. (56) Certainly, horses were perceived by some Ojibwa as being useful and desirable. Many of the Ojibwa who had horses at an early period seem also to have spent more time with Cree

and, later, metis friends and relatives. (57) These Ojibwa may have become interested in horses as much because of the prestige and flamboyance they perceived in the Cree and metis as because of the practical usefulness of the horse: while the Ojibwa brought their own symbols of success, power, and independence to the west (silver ornaments, for instance), they would also have been attracted by the horse as a symbol of the success of their Cree and metis friends. Cree, for example was said to have been used as a trade language by many Ojibwa, giving Cree-speakers higher status in certain situations than Ojibwa-speakers.(58) The Ojibwa would also have been aware of the power and independence of the plains Cree and metis who supplied the posts with pemmican and provisions. Although their magic was commonly perceived to be stronger, the Ojibwa were apparently ready to adopt whatever seemed efficacious in their quest for "the good life". The combination of Cree social status, the value placed by the Cree upon horses, the feeling of superiority when mounted, and the usefulness of horses as beasts of burden, seem all to have been factors in the adoption of horses by the western Ojibwa.

Although the possession of horses made little difference to hunting techniques (horses trained as "buffalo runners" were rare and expensive), bison became increasingly important to the Ojibwa in the Red River area at this time. The declining numbers of other large game species and the effects of Cree and Assiniboine cultural influences made bison-hunting more attractive to the Ojibwa. By the late 1790's, many western Ojibwa bands in the Red and Assiniboine River areas were



relying on bison to support their more traditional activities. Bison supplemented other large game in the late summer and early fall, and were often hunted during winter when game was scarce in wooded trapping areas. (59) Most bison hunting occurred in the parkland or the edge of the prairie. The Ojibwa who traded with Henry favored "an open area on the east side of the Red a few miles south of Two Rivers, the Bois Perce, a famous crossing place for the buffalo". (60) Some hunting was also done farther out on the prairie, most often in company with Cree hunting camps, as was John Tanner's experience south of the Assiniboine River in the winter of 1800-01. (61)

Not all the Ojibwa in the west adopted horses and bison during this period. Ojibwa in the area along the Saskatchewan River as far west as Edmonton House maintained their woodland lifestyle for some years after the turn of the century. What little data is available for this area after 1800 contains no explicit references to Ojibwa hunting bison or using horses by 1805, and the exclusively woodland orientation of these Ojibwa was noted as being unusual. In a letter to fellow trader William Tomison, James Bird wrote from the Hudson's Bay Company post at Setting River in 1798 that "save the Bungees, all (the Indians) without exception are tenting in the plains, killing Buffaloe". (62) Presumably, the Ojibwa in the northwestern part of the study area would have killed bison occasionally, but they were not compelled to integrate horses and bison into their lifestyle as the Red River groups were. For one thing, the Ojibwa along the North Saskatchewan were not threatened by the Sioux, and did not need military assistance to lay

claim to their hunting and trapping grounds. Nor do they seem to have been involved in either the Cree-Blackfoot conflicts or the Mandan trade. They therefore spent less time with the Cree and Assiniboine, and were less influenced by them. Finally, the more westerly Ojibwa were not faced with the increasing game shortage which existed in the Red River area by 1804-5. (63) It was this condition in addition to the other incentives which compelled the Ojibwa in the Red River area to begin regular bison hunts. The availability of bison meat made it possible to continue trapping without long interruptions to find food; it also gave the Ojibwa an option of greater autonomy and independence from an increasingly competitive fur trade.

#### Changing Lifestyles

By 1804, then, there were several different Ojibwa adaptations to the west. In the area west of Lake Winnipegosis, Hudson's Bay Company records suggest a year-round occupation by part of the Ojibwa population. One group of "Bungee and Ottawa Indians" near Edmonton House was accompanied by a Hudson's Bay Company employee in June of 1798 "to red Deers lake [possibly Lac la Biche] where they mean to winter"; presumably, they spent the summer in this area. (64) Peter Fidler also appointed three men to follow Ojibwa who were leaving Lac la Biche to summer elsewhere in the spring of 1800. (65) All of these groups were small, consisting of one or perhaps two extended families. At least thirteen Bungees wintered around Lac la Biche in 1799-1800; these people, as well as the Ojibwa near Edmonton House, were accompanied by a number of Ottawa. (66) Available evidence indicates

that the majority of these westernmost Ojibwa traded with the North West Company, so it is not surprising that very little is known about their arrival at the posts in the autumn. One group trapped beaver in November of 1798 and visited the post in late November. (67) The same group remained in the parkland and woods during December either hunting or trapping; others visited the post in mid-winter to obtain cloth, hatchets, and liquor.(68) A band near the Hudson's Bay Company's Setting River post hunted for subsistence until early May and brought in only 7 made beaver in furs, but bands in the Buckingham House, Edmonton House and Nipawi areas conducted intensive late spring beaver hunts and came in to the post between the end of March and early May. (69) One band brought in 400 made beaver as its spring return (far higher than most) and then hunted large game near the river. (70)

The slight amount of data available for these bands points to the establishment of a lifestyle which did not differ significantly from that which the Ojibwa had left, and to an enjoyment of the affluence which was possible in the west. Unfortunately, evidence for this area is missing for the 1800-1805 period; it is possible that the westernmost Ojibwa made other adaptations by 1805.

To the southeast, along the Red and Assiniboine rivers, other distinctive lifestyles were evolving. Part of the Ojibwa population was summering in the Turtle Mountains and the Hair Hills with Crees and Assiniboines; these Ojibwa had some horses, and hunted for furs and large game both in the hills and on the plains during the summer.(71) Another group was based at Portage la Prairie; these also had horses

and hunted bison. Part of this group was Woods (possibly Homeguard) Cree and was later led by a Cree called "Captain Grant". James Howard mistakenly concluded that this group was "a Plains-Ojibway band" because of the presence of horses among them, but in fact the group utilized the Interlake and parkland areas as well as the prairie and cannot be so easily classified. (72) Others continued to spend much of the year hunting beaver and game along the tributaries of the middle and lower Red River. As Harold Hickerson has pointed out, the concentration of posts along the Red River around the turn of the century (there were three near the junction of the Red and Pembina rivers in 1797-98) is evidence that more Ojibwa moved into the Red-Assiniboine area at this time. (73) Most of the Ojibwa east of Lake Winnipegosis remained in the west year-round. This is indicated by an important change which occurred after 1797: the celebration of the Midewiwin ceremony in the spring at several locations in the west, including Pembina, Reed River near its junction with the Red, and the Shell River (upper Assiniboine River) area. (74)

From these specific adaptations, a pattern of activities emerges for most of the Ojibwa in the Red-Assiniboine River area. In the autumn, large numbers of Ojibwa arrived at the trading posts to socialize and take debt as before. (75) By 1800, many were arriving at the post with stores of both fresh and dried bison meat. The autumn trapping period continued as before, but was sometimes preceded by a brief bison hunt. (76) According to Tanner, a bison hunt during December or January became common for part of the Ojibwa population.

(77) Groups of seven to ten lodges (about fifty to seventy people) could easily be supported for several weeks in mid-winter on bison, as was the Cree practise, but of Tanner's band only the males ventured onto the prairie and for only brief periods. Tanner also gives the impression that mid-winter bison hunting was (at least for his group) a last resort: "Being...reduced to the apprehension of immediate starvation, I was compelled to go in pursuit of buffalo". (78)

Many Ojibwa continued to make their customary mid-winter visit to the trading post before beginning to trap seriously in February and March. (79) As described by Tanner, trapping and sugaring sometimes occurred simultaneously or overlapped, with the women producing sugar and the men trapping for beaver. (80) This was probably also the case with a group of Ojibwa who spent most of February and March in the Netley Creek area, which offered good trapping while being close to at least one sugaring site. (81) Some Ojibwa in the Pembina area returned to their eastern villages to make sugar and visit with relatives. (82) Many others stayed, making sugaring a social occasion for those who used sugar groves along the Assiniboine and the Red rivers. Tanner described a camp of "ten fires", or about seventy people, which cooperated in both sugaring and the spring beaver hunt. (83) The "sugar season" began "about the end of March". When it ended in April, the trapping and sugaring groups congregated at the trading posts. (84) In April and May the posts would be "swarming with Indians of all descriptions" trading furs and sugar and enjoying their spring celebration. (85) After trading, the large group at the post dispersed:

some returned east, some went to fish along the Red River, and some hunted bison and other large game. In some years Tanner's family, like many others, began making preparations for going to war soon after the spring trade gathering. This necessitated laying in stores of food and leather for the travellers and for the women left behind. Tanner's family "killed great numbers of buffaloes, and...dispersed ourselves about to make dry meat" one year; another year, they hunted elk and moose. (86)

The changes which the western Ojibwa made in their lifestyles between 1797 and 1804 -- living year-round in the Red River area, spending more time living with the Cree and Assiniboine, increasing their reliance on bison, and beginning to hold their own Midewiwin ceremonies-- were not made simply because substitutes had been found for the wild rice, sugar, and fish dietary staples of the east, or because the Sioux were no longer a threat, or because the western Ojibwa "possessed horses on such a scale as to permit success in hunting in a plains region", as Harold Hickerson believed. (87) Some changes, such as the hunting of bison and coresidency with other ethnic groups, were made as an efficient accommodation to the different resources of the west resources and to guard against over-reliance on the fur trade. As will be discussed in Chapter Four, these adaptations in the Red River area were also made in response to the declining availability of woodland game. Other changes, such as the year-round occupation and the celebration of the Midewiwin, were an affirmation of an increasingly strong corporate identity. As noted before, the

Midewiwin is a group ceremony in which teachings central to Ojibwa world view and identity are re-told. According to William Warren, a group or a seasonal village was considered to be "actually separated from the common central body and Me-da-we lodge...", and a "distinct branch of the same tree" when it "became of sufficient importance as to assume the privilege of performing the rites of the Me-da-we-win within its own precincts". (88) The gathering for and participation in such a ceremony defined social boundaries and networks. While many links between the older villages and the western Ojibwa continued, the most vital ones would have been among those who gathered at least yearly to share such an important ceremony.

While they had become "a distinct branch of the same tree" by 1804, the western Ojibwa still felt very much a part of that tree. Some continued to return east in the summer to renew kin ties and friendships there.(89) For those who remained in the west, the adoption of cultural traits such as the possession of horses and the seasonal reliance on bison from the Cree and Assiniboine did not immediately bring more profound cultural change or change in cultural identity. Many of the most basic details of daily life which reinforced Ojibwa everyday reality and identity continued as before: most subsistence pursuits (fishing, producing maple sugar, berrying, hunting and trapping) remained unchanged; significant social ties existed between the western bands and their villages of origin to the east, and such cultural elements as house styles and construction, mourning customs, and other religious ceremonies continued as before. As John Macdonell

noted in the mid-1790's, "Amongst the Sauteux in the Assiniboil River the same customs and superstitions prevail as in their native places..." (90) Thus when Alexander Henry purchased a white bison hide from some natives in 1804, he remarked that "The Sauteurs set no value on these skins". He would have gotten a very different response from the plains Cree and Assiniboine, to whom the bison meant life and was sacred. (91) By 1804 the western Ojibwa were still, as Harold Hickerson wrote, "a woodland people with a few horses"; or, as Peter Grant expressed it,

Many of the Sauteux families settle among [the Cree and Assiniboine], preferring those fruitful countries to their own, yet too tenacious to the customs of their own nation to conform to the manners of the others. (92)

After 1804, the western Ojibwa would begin to display cultural influences from other peoples in the west.



Population Estimates for Western Ojibwa in the Red River and  
Interlake Areas, 1793 to 1804

Date	Area	Estimate	Source
1793	Fort Dauphin/ Swan River	vague, but less than 200 adult men (about 1000 souls)	Mackenzie, p.113.
1797- 1798	Chaboillez' Ho., Pembina	60 men (about 300 souls)	Thompson, p.186.
	" (from Red Deer's River)	17 men (about 80 souls)	Chaboillez, 9 Oct. 1797
1801 (Aug.)	Pembina	55 + souls	Henry, p.184
1802 (fall)	Pembina	60 souls	Henry, p.203
1803 (fall)	Pembina	60 men	Henry, p.225
1804 (fall)	Pembina	10 long tents (several hundred souls)	Henry, p.250 -251

1. HBCA B.60/a/1, Edmonton House Journal 1795-96, by William Tomison, 3 May 1797.
2. Henry, p.6, 24 August 1800.
3. HBCA B.51/e/1, Manitoba District Report for 1820, by Peter Fidler, fo.6.
4. Tanner, p.88,89.
5. HBCA B.4/a/4, Winnipeg River House (Fort Alexander), 1800-01.
6. See, for example, HBCA B.22/a/11, Brandon House Journal 1803-04, March 6 1804; HBCA B.4/a/2, Point au Foutre Journal 1798-99, 12 March 1799; HBCA B.235/a/2, Winnipeg Post Journal 1799-1800, 1 April 1800; Henry, p.192, 3 January 1802; HBCA B.197/a/1, Carlton House/Setting River Journal by James Bird, 21,29 November 1798; Henry, p.196, 4 May 1802, and p.244, 21 May 1804.
7. HBCA B.60/a/5, Edmonton Post Journal 1799-1800 by James Bird, letter from J.P. Pruden to Bird, June 1799.
8. HBCA B.22/a/9, Brandon House Journal 1801-1802.
9. Henry, p.67.
10. HBCA B.22/a/6, Brandon House Journal 1798-99, 29 Nov. 1798.
11. Henry, p.210, 13 April 1803.
12. Henry, p.251, 23 September 1804.
13. E.g., Tanner, pp.57, 62.
14. Tanner, p. 71, 120; Alice Johnson, ed., The Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence, (London, 1967) p. lxx; see also Paul Thistle's discussion of French-Indian relations, Indian-European Trade Relations, p. 21, 64, 68; also Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.133; also HBCA B.60/a/3, Edmonton House Journal 1797-98 by Wm Tomison; HBCA B.197/a/1, Setting River Journal 1798-99 by James Bird; HBCA B.22/a/5, Brandon House Journal 1797-98, 22 Dec.1797.
15. E.g. HBCA B.49/a/31, Cumberland House Journal 1801-02, letter from William Tomison to John Ballenden, 6 June 1802: "their has been many Bungee Tawaw Mishilemacana Eroquee Indians killing up the Beaver wherever any was to be found..."; also, HBC Sturgeon River returns dropped drastically in 1802 for a variety of reasons including North West Company interference with native trappers. Ibid., 7 May 1802; see also HBCA B.24/a/6, Buckingham House Journal 1798-99 by Henry Hallett, and HBCA B.197/a/1 Setting River Journal by James Bird 1798-99.

16. HBCA B.22/a/1, Brandon House Journal by Donald McKay, 7 March 1794.
17. HBCA B.104/a/1, Lac la Biche Journal 1799-1800, Peter Fidler, 27 November 1799.
18. HBCA B.60/a/3, Edmonton House Journal 1797-98 by William Tomison, 14 May 1798; also HBCA B.104/a/1, 30 September 1799.
19. HBCA B.4/a/4, River Winnipeg Journal 1800-01, 11 September 1800; see also R.S. Allen, "William McKay", in Frances Halpenny, ed., Dictionary of Canadian Biography vol.VI (Toronto, 1987) p.464-466; B.104/a/1, Lac la Biche Journal 1799-1800, 13 October 1799.
20. HBCA B.104/a/1, Lac la Biche, 13 October 1799.
21. John Macdonnell, "Some Account of the Red River (about 1797) with Extracts from his Journal 1793-95", p.269; see Tanner, p.39 regarding the need for caution entering the junction of the Red and Assiniboine Rivers.
22. Henry, p.154, 18 November 1800, p.159, December 1 1800; p.163, January 2, 6 1801; p.195, 199, March 20 and 12 May 1802; p.197, 12 May 1802; p.249, 250, August 19, September 6 1804; p.260, August 1 1805; Tanner, p.105, 105, 112.
23. B.22/a/12, Brandon House Journal 1804-5, 26 April 1805.
24. Tanner, p.31, 49.
25. Henry, p.185, 23 August 1801; Tanner, p.134.
26. Tanner, p.49.
27. Tanner, p.24.
28. Henry, p.269, 30 Oct 1805.
29. P. Albers, "Pluralism in the Native Plains 1670-1870" (University of Utah, 1978), p.41.
30. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade; Dr. T. Nicks, personal communication; Barth, "Introduction", p.19: where two or more groups are in contact, they may either occupy distinct ecological niches or compete for resources.
31. Ray, p.106.
32. T. Nicks, "The Iroquois in Western Canada", p.87.

33. Milloy, Plains Cree, p.94.
34. Thompson, p.184; Macdonnell, in Wood and Thiessen, Early Fur Trade on the Northern Plains, p.88.
35. HBCA B.4/a/1, Point au Foutre Journal 1795-96, 8 May 1796.
36. Henry, p.182, 18 May 1802, also p.242, 16,18 April 1804, p.212, 23 April 1803, p.197, 20,27 May 1802; also Tanner, p.91.
37. Henry, p.190, 22-24 November 1801.
38. HBCA B.60/a/5, Edmonton Post Journal 1700-1800, by James Bird, letter from Peter Fidler to James Bird, 8 September 1799.
39. Tanner, p. 31,38; see also Henry, p.185, 23 August 1801.
40. Hickerson, "Genesis...", p.310-311.
41. Not all Ojibwa bands had good relations with Crees. Tanner met one band of Crees which debated whether to kill his party "on account of some old quarrel (they had) with a band of Ojibbeways" (Tanner, p.79). Herein lies another difficulty with the concept of "tribe": not all of the members or bands in a tribe maintain the same political alliances and enmities.
42. Thompson, p.195, and HBCA B.22/a/12, Brandon House Journal 1804-05, 27 February 1805.
43. Thompson p.145; HBCA B.22/a/3, Brandon House Journal 1794-95, 26 May and 7 November 1795; Milloy, Plains Cree, p. 148, 145.
44. HBCA B.22/a/3, Brandon House Journal 1794-95, 15 August 1795.
45. Milloy, Plains Cree, p.123; Tanner, p.70.
46. Milloy, Plains Cree, p.148; Henry, p.185, 23 August 1801.
47. Henry, p.46-47, 19 August 1800, p. 58, 22 August 1800.
48. Tanner, p.77.
49. Henry, p.244, 8 May 1804.
50. Mandelbaum, Anthropological Papers, American Museum of Natural History vol. XXXVII, 1940, p. 194-195.
51. Recorded by David Thompson, quoted in Hickerson, "Genesis...", p.307. This sounds suspiciously like a plea for "pity".

52. Mackenzie, p.111.
53. HBCA B.235/a/3, Winnipeg Journal, by Peter Fidler, July 1815.
54. Tanner, p.112, describes a war party which had a few horses but was mostly on foot.
55. Henry, p.250, 6 Sept. 1804.
56. Hickerson and Wheeler-Voegelin, Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa, p.42.
57. For instance, Tanner and a few of his relatives who were more accustomed to interacting with Cree and Assiniboine relatives and acquaintances were the first of their family to begin using horses (e.g. Tanner pp.77, 112, 126). As well, many of the Ojibwa whom Henry noted as having horses seem to have spent a fair bit of time with Cree, Assiniboine and metis groups (e.g. Henry pp.484, 31 August 1808; p.243, 8 May 1804; p.286, 7 July 1806). The mounted "Snakes" Henry met from Portage la Prairie (p.46, 19 August 1800) were a mixed Cree-Ojibwa group (see footnote 72). Having spent more time with Cree and Assiniboine people than other Ojibwa, these bands were naturally more influenced by them.
58. This status-seeking is in accordance with the principle that new behaviors are likely to be learned which are in accordance with existing personality traits in the old society; as discussed earlier, the Ojibwa were very much concerned with competence and well-being. See David Pentland, "Metchif and Bungee: Languages of the Fur Trade" (paper read in the series "Voices of Rupert's Land", 1985), p.4 regarding the prestige accorded the Cree language in the linguistic hierarchy during the fur-trade.
59. Henry, p.44, 18 August 1800; p.57, 21 August 1800; p.68, 28 August 1800; Tanner, p.73,75; Thompson, p.186, 12 March 1798. See also Thistle's discussion of the "principle of least effort", Indian-European Trade Relations, p.23.
60. Hickerson, "Genesis...", p.314.
61. Tanner, p. 31, 71-75; see also Thompson, p.184, "As they have no Horses, and only Dogs..."
62. HBCA B.197/a/1, Setting River Journal 1798-99 by J. Bird, 8 December 1798.
63. Hickerson, "Genesis..." p.309, 319, 320; also Daniel Harmon, A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America (New York, 1903), p.52, 2 October 1801, regarding Ojibwa about the Swan R. hunting moose and elk.

64. HBCA B.60/a/5, Edmonton Journal 1799-1800, by James Bird, letter from J.P. Pruden to J. Bird, June 17 1798.
65. HBCA B.104/a/1, 10 May 1800.
66. Ibid., letter from Peter Fidler to James Bird, 7 October 1799.
67. HBCA B.197/a/1, Carlton House/Setting River Journal 1798-99, by James Bird, 21,29 November 1798.
68. Ibid, 8 December 1798; B.49/a/25a, Cumberland House Journal 1793-94, 12,21 December 1793.
69. HBCA B.197/a/1, Setting River 1798-99 by James Bird, 28 February, 17,18 March, 2,7,12 May 1799; HBCA B.24/a/6, Buckingham House Journal 1798-1799, by Henry Hallett, 24 March, 10 April 1799; HBCA B.60/a/3, Edmonton Journal 1797-98, by William Tomison, 25 March, 14 May 1798; HBCA B.60/a/4, Edmonton Journal 1798-99, by William Tomison, 9 May 1799.
70. HBCA B.24/a/6, Buckingham House Journal 1798-99, by Henry Hallett, 29 June, 1,5,7,8,12,12 July 1798; HBCA B.60/a/4, Edmonton Journal 1798-99, by Wm Tomison, 12, 13 August 1798; HBCA B.60/a/5, Edmonton Journal 1799-1800, James Bird, 7 August 1799.
71. Henry, p.243-44, 7-8 May 1804; also HBCA B.22/a/9, Brandon House 1801-02; HBCA B.22/a/11, Brandon House 1803-04, 19 February 1804; HBCA B.22/a/12, Brandon House 1804-05, 20 July 1804.
72. Henry, p.46, 19 August 1800, p.57, 21 August 1800, p.75-76, 31 August 1800; Howard, "Identity and Demography", p.175; regarding Captain Grant, see also HBCA B.51/e/1, 1820, fo.19.
73. "Genesis...", p.301; also see HBCA B.235/a/1, Winnipeg 1797-98, Thomas Miller.
74. Tanner, p.91; Henry, p.242, 18 April 1804, p.212, 23 April 1803, p.197, 20 May 1802, p.182, 18 May 180; HBCA B.22/a/6, Brandon House Journal 1798-99, 22 September 1798; HBCA B.22/a/4, Brandon House Journal 1796-97, late August and early September; Henry, p.203, Sept. 13, 1802; p.225, 27 September 1803.
75. Henry, p.44, 18 August 1800; p.57, 21 August 1800; p.68, 28 August 1800; p.251, 26 September 1804.
76. Hickerson and Wheeler-Voegelin, The Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa, p.39; Henry, p.98, 16 September 1800; p.99, 18 September 1800; HBCA B.22/a/6, Brandon House Journal 1798-99, October-November 1798.

77. Tanner, pp.71,73,75.
78. Tanner, p.119, winter ca.1805. This pattern contradicts Ray's (Indian Exploitation..., p.219) claim that "the Ojibwa did not exploit the woodland and parkland environments on a seasonal basis."
79. HBCA B.22/a/5, Brandon House Journal 1797-98, 24 December to 14 March; Henry, p.239, 18 March 1804; HBCA B.235/a/1, Winnipeg Post Journal 1797-98, 2 April 1798; HBCA B.4/a/3, Fort Alexander Journal ("River Quinepeauga House") 1799:1800, 8 February 1800.
80. Tanner, p.69.
81. HBCA B.4/a/4, Fort Alexander Journal ("River Winnipeg") 1800-01, 15,30 March 1801; HBCA B.4/a/3, Fort Alexander Journal 1799-1800, February 8 1800.
82. Henry, p.170, 20 February 1801; p.214, 7 May 1803; p.195, 17 March 1802.
83. Tanner, p.81, spring ca. 1802.
84. Henry, p.170, 20 February 1801.
85. HBCA B.22/a/12, Brandon House Journal 1804-05, 25 April 1805; Henry, p.196, 4 May 1802; p.244, 21 May 1804; Tanner, p.76, spring ca. 1801, p.81, spring ca.1802, p.94, spring ca. 1803; also HBCA B.235/a/1, 1797-98, Thomas Miller, 27 April, trading sugar with natives.
86. Tanner, p.121, summer ca. 1805; p.105, summer ca. 1804.
87. Hickerson, "Chaboillez Journal", p.270-271; Hickerson, "Genesis...", p.308.
88. Warren, History of the Ojibway, p.193.
89. Henry, p.132, 31 Oct 1800; also HBCA B.104/a/1, Lac la Biche, 1799-1800, 16 Apr 1800, which states that the Ojibwa were going to summer elsewhere. While the behavior of such groups agrees with Hickerson's statement ("Chaboillez Journal", p.270-271) that "By Chaboillez's time, (the Ojibwa) had established no permanent communities, or villages, in the Red River valley...", it is evident that many bands were remaining in the west year-round.
90. Thompson, p.184; Henry, p.133, 1 November 1800; Macdonell, "Some Account of the Red River", p.275.
91. Henry, p.242, 24 April 1804.
92. Hickerson, "Chaboillez Journal", p.270-271; Grant, p.308, 1804.

Chapter Four: 1805 to 1817

"The country grows poorer every day, but does not diminish the Indians' wants..." (1)

The years between 1805 and 1817 brought several important changes to the west. These changes, especially the increasing shortage of furred game, the growth of the freeman population, and the establishment of the Red River settlement, all affected the continuing process of Ojibwa adaptation in the west. While A.J. Ray has stated that the ecological decline which occurred during this period and from 1817-1821 increased Ojibwa dependence on a failing fur trade, in fact, the western Ojibwa began to diversify their economy to avoid this problem.(2) The fur trade remained to a large extent a luxury trade, in which some western Ojibwa chose to participate less and less after 1804.

1. 1805 to 1811

The demise of the XY Company in 1804 had much less of an impact on the western fur trade than it might have had. Alexander Henry the Younger (and, undoubtedly, many other traders) gloated in 1805 that

Our Indians in the beginning attempted their old tricks, coming into the house every two or three days to beg for free rum, ...they were soon convinced there was no longer an X.Y. Co. to spoil and support them in idleness. They saw the need of hunting to procure their necessaries...We obliged them to pay their debts, and not a drop of rum was given... (3)

Despite Henry's boasting, the Ojibwas' "idleness" continued to be supported by increasing competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company. The years between 1805 and 1821 witnessed



witnessed the most violent and deadly fur trade rivalry in the west, including the dispersal of the Selkirk settlers, the "Athabasca War", and the battle of Seven Oaks. The level of competition varied from post to post, and accords were sometimes reached between opposing traders, but it certainly continued in all areas after 1804. (4) The Ojibwa who traded with George Nelson at Dauphin River and Tete-au-Brochet were certainly not chastened by changes in the Europeans' fur trade. Their behavior and attitudes were far from the desperate picture painted by Henry: they received respectable presents every spring, and were nonchalant enough about hunting for furs that Nelson had difficulty getting them to leave the post in the fall. (5) Many Ojibwa threatened to trade with the competition, and some carried out their threats; others decided to make substantial changes in their seasonal rounds and subsistence patterns in order to be less dependent on the fur trade.

The Ojibwas' power in the fur trade was reduced, however, by the continuing decline in beaver and other high-status furs. Their deferential treatment by fur traders depended primarily upon their ability to consistently bring in large numbers of such furs; without beaver, even intense competition could not maintain the affluence to which the Ojibwa were accustomed. The beaver population began to decrease about 1800 in the areas of the Red and Assiniboine River valleys which were safe from the Sioux; by 1805, the fur shortage was quite widespread. Ayagon (a.k.a. Eyagon, Iagon, and possibly Iacoo), Nor'Wester George Nelson's trading associate in the Dauphin River--Interlake area, complained "much of not being able to pay his

debt...owing to scarcity of beaver; and other peltries" in 1807. (6) That Ayagon's situation was not unique is indicated by Tanner's statement that around 1810,

there was a very general movement among the Ojibbeways of the Red River toward the Sioux country; but the design was not, at least avowedly, to fall upon or molest the Sioux, but to hunt.(7)

With a large group of Ojibwa for defense, Tanner and his family travelled south to the upper branches of the Red River to hunt beaver several years before this "general movement". Most of the Indians lived in a fortified camp because of constant expectations of an attack by the Sioux. The second time he travelled there, Tanner left the women in his family farther north so they would not be in danger. (8) The area was apparently far more productive than the safer parts of the Red River valley; Tanner claimed to have taken one hundred beaver in one month, at a time when beaver were rare. (9) As well as the danger and effort of these ventures, it is significant that the Ojibwa felt emboldened to undertake them partly because of a promise from a holy man that they would be invisible to the Sioux.(10) Clearly, there was an acute shortage of beaver in the lower Red River valley which was of great concern to the Ojibwa in that area.

By 1813, the shortage extended from the Winnipeg River near its junction with Lake Winnipeg south to the lower and middle Red River territory, north into the Interlake area, and west to the "Elbow" of the Saskatchewan River.(11) James Bird, writing at Edmonton House, noted that beaver were scarce there by 1808, and the Cumberland House

District Report for 1815 stated that the few beaver which came in there were taken from far away. (12) There were areas which remained relatively plentiful, such as the Dauphin River and Turtle Mountain areas. (13) Still, the discrepancy between the hunts of over three hundred beaver brought in by Henry's intrepid Ojibwa on the dangerous upper reaches of the Red River, and the more typical hunts of twenty to forty made beaver in mixed furs from most other parts of the west, points to the existence of a real problem. (14)

The ecological decline was exacerbated by competition from the rapidly growing freeman and metis population. With the union of the XY and North West companies in 1804, and the reorganization of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1810-11, many lower-ranking employees became redundant and were dismissed (or, in the case of the Hudson's Bay Company, quit when their pay and benefits were lowered). (15) A fair number of these chose to remain in the west, married native or mixed-blood women, and made their living by hunting, trapping, and performing some labour at trading posts. (16) A freeman population had existed in the west before 1800, but was small and scattered until 1804-1808 when freemen and freeman-Ojibwa groups developed in the Interlake, Cumberland House, and Pembina areas. (17) Freemen and their families later congregated in the Swan River area, the Turtle and Pembina mountains, and, after 1812, the Red River Settlement. (18)

The freemen offered stiff economic competition to the Ojibwa in the fur trade. Because of their origins and their former service in the fur trade, and as enticements to loyalty in trading their hunts,

freemen were commonly given higher prices for furs, meat and labour at posts than were Indians. Peter Fidler stated in the Red River District Report for 1819 that while Indians were paid less than one shilling per buffalo hide, freemen were paid between two and three shillings per hide. (19) As well, they were often hired instead of Indians as hunters and short-term labourers at posts.(20) Since freemen had native kin and often lived with native bands, some of their advantages were probably redistributed, which would have helped to minimize tensions between the two groups during this period.

The problems faced by native hunters and trappers between 1804 and 1811, then, were related to the decline of furred animals and the increase in competition for them. With furs declining, each Ojibwa family had to make a choice between spending more time in pursuit of furs, and risking starvation, or decreasing its participation in fur trade activities. Ojibwa also faced new competition in the quest for furs from the growing freeman population. In the Cumberland House area, Ojibwa also faced competition from a large number of Cree who were moving into that area from the "Rat Country" to the north, and throughout the west, Ojibwa population continued to increase. (21)

The Ojibwa coped with these problems in a variety of ways. Some retained their basic patterns of economic activities, but began hunting and trapping in areas which had previously been only lightly exploited. Some began living with plains Cree and freeman families, sharing the special skills and advantages of those groups, and others stayed in the areas to which they were accustomed, but traded a wider variety of furs

and began exploring alternative means of subsistence such as corn and potato cultivation, bison-hunting, and fishing.

Those Ojibwa who began looking for areas where the beaver had not been trapped out found several such locations, some safer than others. As noted earlier, a number of Ojibwa, including Tanner's group, began hunting on the upper branches of the Red and possibly parts of the Mississippi. (22) This was an extremely risky venture, as indicated by the fortified camp built by the Ojibwa and their continual state of alarm, but the danger from the Sioux was apparently felt to be worth the risk: two Ojibwa men arrived at Henry's post at Pembina in the spring of 1805 from Pelican River, where they had "seen Sioux repeatedly", but had stayed to obtain three hundred beaver pelts and forty prime otters. (23) As noted by Harold Hickerson, Ojibwa in the vicinity of Red River sent war parties against the Sioux in 1804, 1806, and 1807 in an attempt to make trapping in these areas safer. They were unsuccessful: Sioux retaliation in 1806, 1807, 1808 and 1810 forced the Ojibwa "to go northward out of danger" and abandon the resources of the upper Red River area. (24) Despite the depletion of beaver in its vicinity, Pembina continued as a trading centre for Ojibwa for several years after this. Competition between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company attracted Ojibwa from the Leech, Red and Rainy Lake areas to the east and from the Forks and Assiniboine River to the north. (25) Other groups of Ojibwa, Cree and freemen lived in the hills around Pembina, which remained relatively plentiful in furs for some time. These groups traded at Pembina and Brandon House, or with

outposts sent into the hills from these posts.(26)

The Ojibwa population also seems to have increased in the Cumberland House area, Red Deer River, Dauphin River and Swan River after 1804, although this is difficult to determine with certainty due to gaps in source materials. (27) Ojibwa also hunted beaver along the Souris River. (28) Intriguingly, there are no reports of Ojibwa west of the forks of the Saskatchewan River between 1801 and 1816 except for the use of the Souris River and a few families in the Fort Vermillion area.(29) Whether this represents the withdrawal of Ojibwa from this region or a problem with Hudson's Bay Company records is unclear.

Rather than moving into a new area, some Ojibwa sought to cope with the ecological decline by joining forces with freemen, who got better prices for furs and were often productive trappers, or with Cree relatives who were less reliant on the fur trade. Ojibwa were wintering with Cree and Assiniboine in the Pembina hills and at Turtle Mountain by about 1805, and Ojibwa-Cree bands were reported near Cumberland House in the winter of 1806-07 and around Setting River in the fall of 1808. (30) The Setting River camps also contained freemen. Ojibwa-freeman groups hunted in the hills and prairie west of Pembina by 1808, and near Cumberland House by 1807. (31)

While the formation of long-term multi-ethnic coresidential groups may seem paradoxical during a period in which ethnic groups in the west were beginning to compete for resources, such "increasing complementarity and interdependence" (32) was in fact an efficient method of dealing with the problem. The alternative was for one group

to displace another, as the Ojibwa had attempted to do with the Sioux. Unlike Ojibwa-Sioux relations, the existing kinship ties between Ojibwa, Cree, Assiniboine, and freemen reduced the frequency and intensity of conflict between groups and allowed groups with different resources to combine strengths and numbers. (33) Although virtually nothing exists in the historical records on the role of women in this and other aspects of the development of the western Ojibwa, they must have played an important part in maintaining these intergroup ties and in allowing the day-to-day functioning of multi-ethnic co-residence units.

A more common response to declining fur supplies was to increasingly rely on bison for subsistence during periods of intensive trapping. (34) This began, as discussed in the previous chapter, during the initial years of the game shortage just after 1800, and the frequency of reports of Ojibwa bison-hunting increased rapidly after that. Bison were also hunted during the summer and the leanest midwinter months. The camp of nine long tents observed at the Forks by Henry in 1806 had been living on bison for a month, and he noted several other groups which had also had summer bison hunts. (35) Some Ojibwa began arriving at the Swan River and Dauphin River posts in late summer from the plains after 1804, and Tanner spent more than one summer hunting bison after that date. (36)

As well as turning to bison, some Ojibwa adopted corn and potato horticulture to bolster their food supplies. Plant foods, including roots, berries, wild rice, and maple sugar, normally made up a large

part of the diet of all Ojibwa peoples; gardens were a concentrated (albeit less reliable) addition to the gathering component of a hunting and gathering subsistence. Gardens were planted by Ottawa at Netley Creek in 1805 and by Ojibwa at Pembina the same year. The Pembina site, however, had to be abandoned shortly after 1805 because of Sioux raids. (37) The Ottawa abandoned the Netley Creek site about 1813, possibly because of pressure by European traders to produce more furs, and moved their gardens to the Lake of the Woods. (38) Netley Creek became a favorite Ojibwa site after 1805, as it had the advantage of being near a marsh plentiful in muskrats, a fishery in the Red River, the fish and wildfowl resources of the Lake Winnipeg delta, and elk and bison on the plains to the south.

The acreage of the cultivated land at Netley Creek is unknown, as is the volume of the harvest. Henry hinted that it was sizeable. In 1806, he mentioned an Ojibwa summer camp "consisting of nine large cabins" south of Netley Creek at the forks of the Red and Assiniboine which had been subsisting there on bison for a month. (39) If these were typical Ojibwa summer houses which normally sheltered about four families, then at eight persons to a family, the camp would have contained nearly three hundred people. (40) A large part of this camp probably first congregated at Netley Creek to plant in late May and early June. Tanner, whose family planted gardens at Netley Creek for several years, only mentions his own and a related family as being at the site together. (41) The Ojibwa may also have begun cultivating gardens in the Interlake area, sometime between 1811 and 1820; they are



first mentioned in the Hudson's Bay Company records in 1819. Until then, many Ojibwa in this area supplemented their diet with wild rice from rivers along the east side of Lake Winnipeg. (42)

As well as planting enough to supplement their diet, the Ottawa and Ojibwa may have enlarged their gardens after 1805 in order to produce enough of a surplus "to make corn a regular article of traffic" with the traders. (43) For those who cultivated them, then, the gardens provided two partial solutions to the fur and game shortage. Firstly, they supplemented the Ojibwas' diet, thus bolstering game supplies and allowing more time to be spent obtaining furs. They also helped to compensate for the decrease in the number and quality of furs, since corn and potatoes could be traded.

Many western Ojibwa remained strongly tied to the fur trade during the 1805-1811 period, and coped with declining fur supplies by trading a wider variety of furs. Ojibwa around Brandon House between 1808 and 1811 traded a mixture of otter, bearskins, lynx, wolves, leather, meat, swans, mink, and fishers as well as the few beaver they could obtain. (44) Ojibwa in the Interlake also began trading more martens, otters, and muskrats between 1807 and 1811. (45)

Another coping strategy was to increase the amount of time spent hunting, fishing and gathering, and limit the time spent trapping. In the Interlake area after 1804, more than one primary Ojibwa hunter "amuse(d) himself at hunting game only" whenever possible and reduced the amount of time spent hunting and trapping for furs. One hunter arrived at Nelson's Dauphin River post with "the meat of three beavers

(and)...the skins of four & three otters all which he killed since three days past when he left his lodge to come this way".(46) At Cumberland House, complaints were made in 1807 that the Bungees there "had done nothing this winter". (47) Some of this was simply traders' griping: the Cumberland House Bungees, after all, were able to pay their debts for several years after the Crees in that area became unable to. However, even Nelson's fairly productive Ojibwa in the Dauphin--Interlake region spent enough time hunting and trading meat that Nelson frequently wished "that they should hunt wherewith to pay their debts (i.e., furs)". (48) Such comments underline the continuing autonomy of the western Ojibwa even in this period of decline in the fur trade.

Continuity in fur trade practices also helped to compensate for the lack of beaver. Credit was still given out in fall and spring. Nelson gave between 20 and 60 MB credit in fall to principal hunters, while some Ojibwa trading at Brandon House in 1811 received 70 MB in goods. (49) Some Ojibwa began taking fewer items on credit in the fall in order to maintain their standing with traders and their independence. (50) As well, fierce competition still existed between the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, which meant that "little presents" were still given to Indians by traders "to encourage them to give us a share of their hunts". (51) Trading chiefs continued to be clothed and presented with goods in the spring. (52) These measures helped to partially satisfy the Ojibwas' love of finery and desire for prestige. In the spring of 1808, for example, George

Nelson's superior, Duncan Cameron, distributed the following presents to Nelson's principal trappers:

[to] Ayagon he gave a Coat, hat & feather; to Old Muffle he gave an Illinois capot; to old Cu fesse, he gave one Blkt 3 pts [a three-point blanket] & one fathom HB's strouds... & after a long speech he gave them one keg mixed rum, six quarts of Powder Shot & Ball in proportion among them. (53)

Thus, Ojibwa who were loyal to their traders continued to be well treated. While the Hudson's Bay Company journals are not as detailed as Nelson's, they also indicate the value placed on loyal Indians. The Hudson's Bay Company trader at Brandon House noted in October of 1811 that a group of Ojibwa had arrived who were "old customers of ours"; among the items with which he outfitted them for the winter were ammunition, goods, and even two horses. (54) Remaining loyal to one trader was not simply a means of maximizing benefits, of course. Significant and lasting relationships ranging from friendship to adoptive parenthood to marriage developed between many Ojibwa and the traders and their employees. Ayagon was not merely taking advantage of George Nelson; fur trade rhetoric and complaints aside, Nelson respected and admired the older Saulteaux, and there are indications that Ayagon held Nelson in similar regard. (55) Even John Tanner, unpredictable as he sometimes was in his trading preferences, said, "I had long traded with the people of the North West Company, and considered myself as in some measure belonging to them." (56)

Other Ojibwa continued to manipulate the competitive system as they had before 1804. The additional goods they obtained in this manner

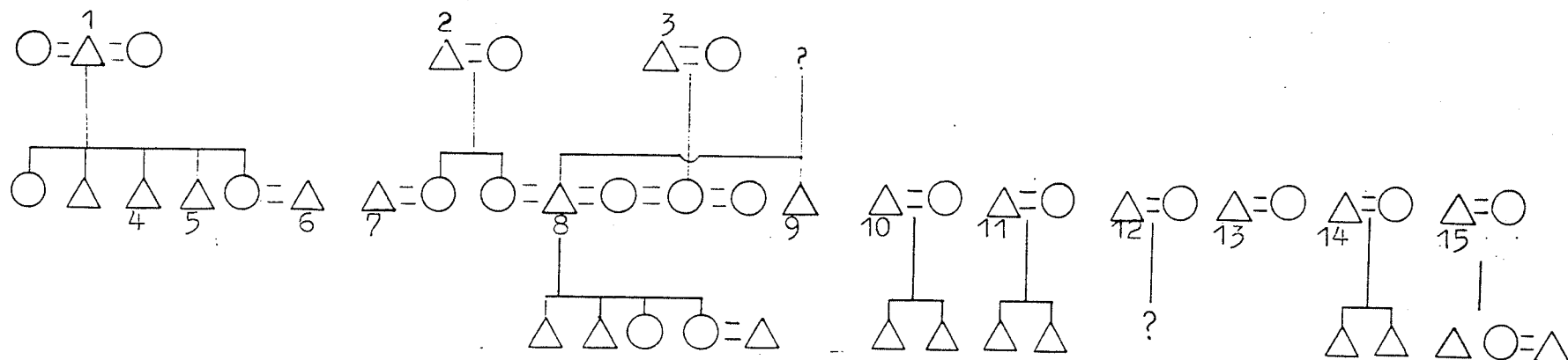
helped to maintain their access to luxury items as fur supplies diminished. One such band took debt from the Hudson's Bay Company at Brandon House in the fall of 1811, and then traded with the North West Company at Fort Dauphin during the winter. They reappeared at Brandon House with only a few dressed skins and some fishers in the spring of 1812, provoking an irate journal entry there. (57) Other bands, previously loyal to one company, switched allegiance during the 1805-1821 period after what they felt to be miserly or disloyal treatment in hopes of rewards and favors from their new traders. At one point John Tanner stopped trading at the "Mouse (Souris) River post" (possibly Brandon House) after a horse which he had been promised was sold to the North West Company in his absence: "I told him, since the horse had gone to the north west, the beavers might go there also". (58) Similarly, some of George Nelson's principal hunters in the Interlake area left his post one day stating that "They are determined not to have any more dealings with our people for they say themselves to be too pitiful with us". (59) Peguis, who later became "Colony Chief" at Red River, also switched his allegiance to the Hudson's Bay Company around 1812 after a quarrel with the North West Company. (60) In some cases, then, friendships between Ojibwa and traders could be broken by the perception that the trader was not treating the Ojibwa as generously as one ought to treat a relative.

An extremely detailed and sensitive picture of the diverse economic strategies, the social relations, religion and aspirations of one western Ojibwa group during this period is found in George Nelson's

writings on the band of Ojibwa he traded with at the North West Company's Dauphin River House between 1807 and 1811. This band consisted of about thirteen related families, comprising at least fifty people. (See chart, following page.) The area they chose to live in was a plentiful one; Nelson referred to Dauphin River as a "Land of milk & honey" in his reminiscences. (61) The families who traded with Nelson followed a varied and productive seasonal round of subsistence activities, including spring and fall gatherings, drinking parties, and spring ceremonies near Nelson's post; spring and fall hunting for large game and furs; fishing and making maple sugar in spring; and sometimes gathering wild rice along the eastern shores of Lake Winnipeg in late summer. Surprisingly little of their time was spent actually hunting for furs or preparing for fur hunts; Nelson seems to have spent much of his time persuading the hunters to leave the post, stop camping (i.e., socializing) together, and hunt furs. (62)

The Ojibwa who traded with Nelson also had an active and vital spiritual life. Several instances of "cunjuring" were recorded during Nelson's sojourn among them, as well as a naming ceremony. (63) One of the few traders who took the trouble to both learn about and record native religious beliefs and practices, Nelson also wrote of the pervasiveness of the supernatural in the lives of "his" Ojibwa, as when he noted the consternation in the camp when female taboos were broken or when the women believed they had seen a windigo. (64) When Nelson moved to the Jack Head/Tete-au-Brochet post in 1818, most of the Ojibwa from Dauphin River followed him, not only because of their established

## Ojibwa trading with Nelson, 1808-1811



- |                     |               |                      |                 |
|---------------------|---------------|----------------------|-----------------|
| 1. Muffle D'Orignal | 5. The Bird   | 9. Black Robe        |                 |
| 2. Cu-fesse         | 6. Old Pin's  | 10. Bras Court       | 14. Old Morpion |
| 3. Tete-Grise       | 7. La Bezette | 11. Nez Corbin       | 15. Old Brochet |
| 4. The Sourd        | 8. Ayagon     | 12. Cu-leve          |                 |
|                     |               | 13. Petites Couilles |                 |

Sources: Nelson, Dauphin River Journals 1807-08 and 1808-10

relationship but also because Nelson had a supply of medicines at his post which the Ojibwa apparently perceived as having both physical and spiritual powers. (65) This group was obviously maintaining what they perceived as a strong and satisfying way of life, and apparently had no reason to adopt beliefs or subsistence activities from other ethnic groups in the west. In fact, their contact with other groups to the south and west was remarkably limited.

The families who traded with Nelson also expressed their strength and autonomy in their clear expectations of their relations with fur traders. In one instance, one of the older hunters actually kept a tally of the amount of liquor given out by Nelson and the amount which would be left for the spring celebration, so as not to be cheated of any liquor which he felt was due him. (66) That these people had attained and were maintaining the state of affluence which they and other Ojibwa had originally sought in the west is indicated by Nelson's visual memory of them:

We, here found all our Indians collected and waiting our arrival. They were dressed in their best; that is, painted faces,...The hair carefully & neatly braided in one, two three or four plaits...covered with Silver brooches, as thick as they could be set...& the remainder also carefully gathered up into a knot of or 5 in. long covered with thin hoops of Silver & filled with the handsomest feathers. Ring of one to 2 ins. broad in the ears...with quills or Silver hoops in their nose. (67)

The similarity of this picture to that drawn by Thompson of the Ojibwa in 1798 is unmistakable. (68) It would seem that Nelson's observation in 1811 that "The country grows poorer every day, but does not diminish the Indians' wants..." was accurate, but that his sentiment was

unnecessary. Despite the problems experienced between 1805 and 1811, at least some western Ojibwa were coping quite well with "poverty".

## 2. 1812-1816: Years of Promise.

The failing fur trade revived briefly between 1812 and 1816, temporarily easing the frustration that must have been felt by many western Ojibwa by then. An upswing in the population cycles of muskrats and martens, and the market offered by the fledgling Red River colony, resulted in several good years for many western Ojibwa.

Beaver continued to be scarce after 1812, but the muskrat and marten populations began to increase prodigiously at that time.(69) In the fall of 1815, Hudson's Bay Company trader Donald Sutherland obtained between 400 and 500 muskrats in a single trading session from one group of Indians in the Interlake area, and in late December an Ojibwa from White Mud River came in to Sutherland's Big Point House with over three hundred "rats". (70) John Tanner also mentioned killing four hundred rats near Netley Creek in a spring fur hunt about this time. (71) Muskrats were worth only one-sixth to one-tenth the price of beaver, and martens one-half to one-third, but at least they were plentiful.

The establishment of the Red River settlement in 1812 was also a hopeful sign to Ojibwa in the Red River and Interlake areas. With the decline of the beaver, some Ojibwa may have been "afraid of being altogether abandoned by the traders"; they certainly welcomed what they saw as a permanent, year-round market. As one trader expressed it,



"they imagine that for the future they will want nothing."(72)

The colony certainly provided a new economic opportunity in the form of its eager market for game, leather, corn, fish, wildfowl, maple sugar, wild rice, and furs. The Red River Ojibwa and their Cree, freeman and metis relatives have been credited with keeping the settlers alive through the first desperate years of the settlement's existence. (73) Some Ojibwa drastically reduced the amount of time they spent trapping to take advantage of the situation. Hudson's Bay Company trader George Sutherland met a group of Ojibwa near White Mud River in 1815 who "seemed to be very sausey, and told me that they wear to be as well paid for provisions by the Coloney as they would be for their skins from us". (75) The "sausey"-ness displayed by this group indicates the degree to which provisioning freed them from dependence on the fur trade. Other traders were more critical of the effects of the colony market on the Ojibwa: it made them "avaricious with anything they have to trade", complained one, while another noted that because of the high prices given in the colony "for sugar & Drest Moose skins, they have not now that spur to exert themselves in the fur hunt as before."(76) Again, such critical comments must be inverted to be properly interpreted from the Indians' point of view: if the Ojibwa were "avaricious", then they had been doing quite well from the Colony trade, and if they had no "spur to exert themselves in the fur hunt as before", then neither were they dependent upon the fur trade.

The colony also provided opportunities for prestige and preferential treatment --an important part of the Ojibwa concept of

affluence-- for several years. This was particularly true for the band of Ojibwa led by Peguis. This band spent part of the year around Netley Creek, and was the Ojibwa group which most often came in contact with the colonists. Peguis and his band gave much assistance to the settlers during their first years at Red River. In return, Peguis became "Colony Chief", a favored position which he and other Ojibwa regarded quite seriously. As well as being treated with respect by colony officials and settlers, Peguis was taken in 1814 to see the ships and forts at Hudson's Bay. (77) While this was meant to impress Peguis with the strength and importance of the Hudson's Bay Company, it actually convinced the chief of his own importance.

That the Europeans at Red River considered the Ojibwa a significant force in the country was demonstrated by the appeals they made to the Indians during the colony's troubled early years. Because the location of Selkirk's colony "threatened serious interference... with the increasingly important supply of the Northwest Company's provisions", the Canadians vowed to destroy the tiny settlement. (78) Many of the Ojibwa around Red River were confused by "these quarrels between relatives", but most refused the North West Company's bribes and sided with the Hudson's Bay Company (with whom Peguis traded) and the colony during the worst of the crises. (79). As metis harassment began yet again in June of 1815, Hudson's Bay Company and colony officials appealed to Peguis and his young men "to see what they can do for us in making peace and remaining here" and later pleaded,

we know these Lands are yours, if you tell us  
to leave them we (will)...,but if you tell us to

remain here we will not leave these lands, but you must make peace for us with these people...(80)

While their actual military aid was negligible, the Ojibwa did not cooperate with the North West Company forces who burned the settlers' houses and threatened more violence. Peguis and a number of other Ojibwa escorted the fleeing settlers down the Red River to Lake Winnipeg to prevent further harm, and promised to assist them whenever they returned. In return, they were presented with trade goods and treated with honour by colony officials. (81) When the colony was re-established, it continued to provide alternative opportunities for recognition and the acquisition of trade goods for some time.

For the western Ojibwa, the years between 1805 and 1817 were ones of adaptation and therefore of tension between the older and the newer ways of life. New ideas resulting from contacts with members of more plains-oriented cultures, including the use of bison and horses, were incorporated into the existing Ojibwa culture. Peter Fidler's 1815 census of Red River Indians shows the continuation of cultural patterns in the relative numbers of horses and guns per tent among the Assiniboine, Cree and Bungees: the Assiniboines and Crees continued to have more horses, the Ojibwa more guns, indicating different economic activities for each group. Nor did those Ojibwa who first began using horses also adopt the horse-raiding complex of the plains peoples. Similarly, after 1805 some western Ojibwa began living in skin tents (probably tipis) rather than the traditional rush mat or bark wigwams and long lodges, but did not alter their seasonal round to become more nomadic (a trait commonly associated with the tipi) as a result.(82)

This incorporation of new practices and ideas did not greatly change deeper cultural patterns, or the world view or ethnic identity of the western Ojibwa. As Barth explained, "One ethnic group, spread over a territory with varying ecologic circumstances, will exhibit regional diversities of overt institutionalized behavior which do not reflect differences in cultural orientation." (83) From what is known about them, Tanner, Peguis and Ayagon did not change their language or religious beliefs and ceremonies at this time; the adoption of the sun dance and the inclusion of the bison in other aspects of ceremonialism would not occur for several decades. And despite the frequency of contact and coresidence between the Ojibwa and the Cree (and other groups), the boundaries of Ojibwa culture and identity remained firm: "the Mashquegons," noted Henry in 1808, "are afraid of the Saulteurs." (84) While the 1805-17 period saw the continuing development of a western Ojibwa identity based on different experiences, different social networks, and adaptations to different ecological conditions than those of their eastern kin, the western Ojibwa remained closely tied to their cultural heritage. And, as Nelson observed, their wants were in no way diminished during this decade.

Peter Fidler, 1815:

"Estimate of Indians who trade at the Settlements on (Red River) below Charlton House, also those at Turtle River on the South Branch of the Red River."  
(PAM, HBCA B.235/a/3, fo.32, July 1815)

	Stone Indians	Crees	Sauteurs or Bungees
Number of Tents	300	70	110
Warriors	800	200	300
Married Women	700	250	350
Old Men	100	10	30
Old Women	200	50	70
Boys	600	120	200
Girls	900	130	300
Horses	500	200	100
Dogs	1500	400	500
Guns	100	120	300

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Averages:

Persons per Tent:	11	10.9	11.4
Horses per Tent:	1.7	2.9	.91
Guns per Tent:	.33	1.71	2.72

1. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1810-1811, 19 Feb. 1811.
2. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p. 147-156.
3. Henry, p.268, 14 October 1805, Pembina River.
4. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p.269-279; Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North, p.113-127.
5. See, for example, Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1808-10, 6-11 October and 5 November 1808, and Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 28 March 1808.
6. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 18 November 1807.
7. Tanner, p.157.
8. Tanner, p.147-150.
9. Tanner, p.147. "One hundred beaver" is obviously an estimate, and probably an exaggeration, but still expresses the relative plentifulness of beaver in the area.
10. Ibid.
11. Provincial Archives of Manitoba (PAM), Selkirk Papers vol.3, 2 September 1813; Tanner p.147-150; Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1810-1811, 19 February 1811; HBCA B.22/a/15, Brandon House Journal 1807-08, 11 March 1808, the "Indian Elbow".
12. HBCA B.60/a/7, Edmonton House Journal 1807-08, 4 February 1808; HBCA B.49/e/1, Cumberland House District Report 1815 by Alexander Kennedy, fo.2.
13. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 31 March 1808: Ayagon and Muffle D'Orignal send in 92 lbs. furs, mostly beaver, and continue to pay their debts for at least the next three years; HBCA B.160/a/2, Pembina Journal 1809-10, 13 January 1810: men arrive from the hills with meat; HBCA B.22/a/9, Brandon House Journal 1801-02, 4 January 1802, HBCA B.22/a/11, Brandon House Journal 1803-04, 19 February 1804, and HBCA B.22/a/12, Brandon House Journal 1804-05, 20 July 1804 refer to hunting and trapping activities in the Turtle Mountain area.
14. Vide Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.117-121; Henry, p.275, 23 May 1805.
15. Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North, p.131.
16. Brown, Strangers in Blood; Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties (Winnipeg, 1983).

17. Henry, p.289, 9 July 1805, p. 424, 31 August 1807; HBCA B.49/a/32b, Cumberland House Journal 1806-07, probably by Peter Fidler, 14, 16 December 1806, 3 February, 31 March 1807 (mixed groups were there by 1802: HBCA B.49/a/32a, Cumberland House Journal 1802-03, William Tomison, Sep 26); Hickerson and Wheeler-Voegelin, Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa, p.87; Henry, p.438, 26 July 1808. On the 18th century origins of the metis population and their drift westward, see Jacqueline Peterson, "Many Roads to Red River: Metis Genesis in the Great Lakes Region, 1680-1815", in J.Peterson and J.S.H. Brown, eds., The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Metis in North America (Winnipeg, 1985), and J.E. Foster, "The Origins of the Mixed-Bloods in the Canadian West", in L.H. Thomas, ed., Essays on Western History (Edmonton 1976).
18. HBCA B.122/a/1, Manitoba Lake Journal 1815-16 by Donald Sutherland, 18 September 1815; HBCA B.213/a/7, Swan River Journal 1817-18 by William Garrioch, 10 Aug 1817; HBCA B.122/e/1, Manitoba District Report, fo.9; Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement.
19. HBCA B.22/e/1, General Report of the Red River District 1819 by Peter Fidler, fo.7; also Gertrude Nicks, "The Iroquois in Western Canada", p.94-95.
20. E.g. HBCA B. 160/a/2, Pembina Post Journal 1809-10, 13,19 January 1810, 2 May 1810, 16 August 1809; HBCA B.160/a/4, Pembina Journal 1812-13, 24 August 1812; PAM MG1 D3, Fidler 1814-15, Fidler hiring Canadians for odd jobs; and HBCA B.60/a/5, Edmonton House Journal 1799-1800, James Bird, letter from James Bird, Buckingham House, to Peter Fidler, Red Deer's Lake, 30 August 1799.
21. B.49/e/1, Cumberland House District Report 1815, fo.5. Another factor in the growth of the western Ojibwa population at this time was the rapid rebound after the smallpox epidemics of the 1780's.
22. Tanner, p.147-150, 157; Hickerson, "Genesis..." p.301-315.
23. Tanner, p.147-150; Henry, p.275, 23 May 1805.
24. Hickerson, "Genesis...", p.318, 321, 324; Milloy, Plains Cree, p.125; Tanner, p.120. Ojibwa-Sioux warfare had other causes as well, including the opportunity for war honours and revenge. In addition, the Sioux were affected after 1807 by a trade embargo and other, pre-War of 1812 measures which resulted in a shortage of ammunition and trade goods among the Sioux.(Anderson, Kinsmen of Another Kind, p.87). The Sioux, therefore, may well have been trying to push north to the traders at Pembina, and stood their ground against the Ojibwa for that reason. See also Henry, p.427, 29 December 1807, p.428, 4 March 1808 p.433, 22 July 1808; Nelson, Reminiscences 7, p.19.

25. Henry p.428, 2 April 1808; p.438, 29 July 1805.
26. John C. Ewers, Ethnological Report on the Chippewa Cree..., p.150; HBCA B.22/a/16, Brandon House Journal 1808-09, B.22/a/17, Brandon House Journal 1809-10.
27. HBCA B.176/a/1, Red Deer River Journal 1811-13, Alexander Kennedy, also Nelson, Dauphin Journals. Hickerson ("Genesis...") postulated a shift of Ojibwa west of the Red River during this period, but his data was incomplete: there was already a sizeable Ojibwa population there. HBCA B.49/e/1, Cumberland House District Report 1815, Alexander Kennedy, fo.6: Canadian traders were said to have "a good many Bungees".
28. HBCA B.22/a/18b, Brandon House Journal 1811-1812, 29 April 1812.
29. Ibid.; also Henry, p.584, 12 February 1809 and p.602, 1 June 1810.
30. Ewers, Chippewa Cree Tribe, p.150; HBCA B.49/a/32b, Cumberland House Journal 1806-07, probably Peter Fidler, 29 December 1806; Henry, p.488, 3 September, p.489, 4 September.
31. Henry, p.437; HBCA B.49/a/32b, 3 February, 31 March 1807.
32. Barth, "Introduction", p.19
33. Albers, "Pluralism in the Native Plains...", p.41.
34. Nelson, 7 December 1805.
35. Henry, p.286, 7 July 1806; Hickerson, "Genesis...", p.314.
36. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1809-10, 2 Aug 1810; HBCA B.176/a/1, Red Deer's River Journal 1812-13, Alexander Kennedy, at Swan River, 10 September 1812; Tanner, p.156, ca.1809.
37. Henry, p.448, 8, 11 August 1808; Tanner, p.171; Henry, May 1804, quoted in Hickerson, "Pembina Band", p.318.
38. W. Moodie and B. Kaye, "Indian Agriculture in the Fur Trade Northwest", p.175; Tanner, p. 190, 201-202.
39. Henry, p.286, 7 July 1806.
40. HBCA B.51/e/1, Fort Dauphin District Report 1820, Peter Fidler, fo.17.
41. Tanner p.168, 171.
42. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1810-11, 1 April, 29 July, 15 September 1810; PAM MGI, Peter Fidler, "Journal at Red River 1814-15",



- 20, 21 September 1814 re: Indians arriving from Lake Winnipeg with rice.
43. Henry, p.448, 11 August 1808; this was the intention of the Indians at Netley Creek, but whether they did so or not is debatable. See Moodie and Kaye, "Indian Agriculture in the Fur Trade Northwest", p.174-175.
44. Brandon House Journals HBCA B.22/a/16, 1808-08; HBCA B.22/a/18a, 1810-1811; HBCA B.22/a/18b, 1811-1812; HBCA B.63/a/2, Fort Ellice Journal 1812-13 by John R. McKay.
45. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 7 March 1808.
46. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1810-11, 27 April 1810; this hunter had already paid his fall debt in furs and meat (Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-8, 7 April 1808)
47. HBCA B.49/a/32b, Cumberland House Post Journal 1806-07 by Peter Fidler, 17 January 1807.
48. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 28 March 1808.
49. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1808-10, 14 September 1808: Rasette takes 25 skins in debt; Ibid., 20 September 1808, Ayagon takes 60 skins in debt; Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-07, 25 May 1808, Muffle d'Orignal's debt was 30 skins; HBCA B.22/a/18b, Brandon House Journal 1811-12, 20 October 1811.
50. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1810-11, 23 Sept 1810.
51. HBCA B.176/a/1, Red Deer's River Journal 1812-13 by Alexander Kennedy, 19 September 1812.
52. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 10 June 1808; Dauphin River Journal 1808-10, 23 Sept 1808; Dauphin River Journal 1810-11, 20 May 1810; HBCA B.22/a/13, Brandon House Journal 1805-06, 11 May 1806.
53. Nelson, 5 June 1808.
54. HBCA B.22/a/18b, Brandon House Journal 1811-12, 2 Oct 1811.
55. Brown, "Man in His Natural State", p.201-202; Nelson, Reminiscences No. 5, p.59.
56. Tanner, p.209 (re: 1815 period).
57. HBCA B.22/a/18b, 16 May 1812; this may have been a mixed Cree-Ojibwa band from the names listed.

58. Tanner, p.120.
59. Nelson, Dauphin River journal, 30 Sept. 1810.
60. HBCA B.160/a/4, Pembina Journal 1812-13, 14 October 1812.
61. Nelson, Sorel Journal, p.167.
62. Nelson, Dauphin River journals.
63. Nelson, Reminiscences no.5, p.56-58.
64. Nelson, Dauphin River journal 1808-10, 4 October 1808; Nelson, Dauphin River journal 1807-08, 7 April 1808.
65. HBCA B.16/a/1, p.26, quoted in Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North, p.149; also Nelson, Dauphin River journal 1807-08, fo. 36, 30 May 1818 re: conjuring.
66. Nelson, Reminiscences no.5, p.59-60.
67. Ibid., p.34.
68. Thompson, p.156.
69. HBCA B.22/e/1, Red River District Report 1819, fo.8; HBCA B.51/e/1, fo.6.
70. HBCA B.122/a/1, Manitoba Lake Journal 1815-16, 20 September 1815.
71. Tanner, p.176.
72. PAM, Selkirk Papers, vol.3, 8 March 1814, Miles Macdonell to the Agents of the North West Company; HBCA B.235/a/3, Winnipeg Journal 1814-15 by Peter Fidler, 18 October 1814.
73. Alexander Ross, The Red River Settlement.
75. HBCA B.122/a/1, 26 September 1815.
76. HBCA B.122/e/1, fo. 8c; HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, Peter Fidler, 8 February 1821.
77. HBCA B.235/a/3, Winnipeg Journal 1815-16, 26 September 1815.
78. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p.279.
79. Tanner, p.209; also Selkirk Papers, (VOL?) 20 June 1815 and 22 July 1816.

80. PAM MG1 D3, Peter Fidler, "Journal at the Red River Settlement", p.44, June 1815.
81. PAM Selkirk Papers p.1964-1965, 28 June 1815.
82. Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1810-10, 22 May 1810; Henry, p.133, 1 November 1800, and p.244, 286.
83. Barth, "Introduction", p.12.
84. Henry, p.477, 26 August 1808.

Chapter Five: 1817 to 1821

"The Indians I believe are becoming more lazy than formerly they are also much more troublesome and daring..." (1)

After the optimism inspired by the opportunities of 1812 to 1816, the years from 1817 to 1821 witnessed the further deterioration of the fur trade between Red River and the forks of the Saskatchewan River. In response, many western Ojibwa in this area became, in Peter Fidler's opinion, "more lazy...troublesome and daring" during this period. "Lazy", when used by a fur trader, was a technical term which ethnohistorian Mary Black-Rogers has recently defined as "not hunting furs". (2) By it, Fidler referred to the economic alternatives to the fur trade which the Ojibwa began re-emphasizing after 1817. "Troublesome and daring" referred to the Ojibwas' continuing autonomy in the west, their expressions of disenchantment with the fur trade, and to the influences of the plains Cree on some western Ojibwa groups during the 1817-1821 period.

On the positive side, the Red River settlement did remain an important market and an alternative to the fur trade for the western Ojibwa. Leather, maple sugar, and other types of country produce continued to command high prices in the colony. (3) Maple sugar, for example, brought prices as high as four shillings per pound, considerably higher than the price of nine pence per pound (less than the value of a single muskrat) listed in the Hudson's Bay Company's "Standard Price of Country Produce, 1820". (4) In addition, sugar and other country produce sold to colonists was paid for in cloth,

blankets, and other goods, while only liquor was given for sugar traded at Hudson's Bay Company posts in the Manitoba district. (5) Peter Fidler noted in 1819 that "since the colonists arrived...(the Bungees) receive many presents which enables them to live without that exertion they had been accustomed to." It is not surprising that at least one Ojibwa leader in the Interlake district had "the ambition of being a Colony chief" like Peguis. (6)

Even this opportunity was partially lost to the Ojibwa, though, as mounted freeman and metis hunters began supplying the colony with bison meat and hides. By 1821 there were at least five hundred metis and freemen centred around Pembina; these people continued to receive higher prices on furs and provisions from the Hudson's Bay Company than Indians.(7) Despite the many kinship ties between them, the Ojibwa resented the success of the freemen and metis. In December 1817 it was reported that the Saulteaux around Red River were "very Jealous of the freemen getting so much goods, and chasing the Cattle (bison) with Horses."(8) The Ojibwas' frustration was related to their loss of influence and prestige in the colony. After the crisis of 1815 and the return of the settlers, the Ojibwa were not needed for defense, and so did not have to be "wooded" by Company and colony officials. Having lost this valued source of prestige, it must have been galling to lose much of the colony market to the metis and freemen.

The signing of the Selkirk Treaty in 1817, by which the Ojibwa, Cree and Assiniboine

"sold the land to Lord Selkirk extending two miles on each side the two rivers from Lake Winnipeg to

Muskrat river above Portage des Prairies and up the Red River to the mouth of the river going to Red Lake" (9)

further distanced the Ojibwa from the colony by eliminating the land ownership which the Europeans perceived as another basis for authority and prestige. This reinforced the process of alienation from the colony which the Ojibwa experienced after 1816: within the boundaries of the treaty, the Ojibwa literally had no place in the settlement. The freemen and metis, on the other hand, were by virtue of their European connections and their economic activities becoming an even more important part of the Red River community.

The Ojibwa were also alienated from the Company to some degree over the issue of the Company's trade with the Sioux. In 1817, 1819, 1820 and 1821, groups of Yanktonai and Sisseton Sioux attempted to negotiate peace with the Ojibwa, Cree and Assiniboine so that the Hudson's Bay Company could trade with the Sioux unmolested by the Ojibwa.(10) The Ojibwa protested bitterly at what they perceived as the Company's disloyal treatment of them. One said "that it was very hard, we (the Company) were giving goods and ammunition to the other nation to the South of them to kill (the Ojibwa)..." (11) Fortunately for the Ojibwa, neither the Sioux nor those Ojibwa who were interested in it were able to maintain a united front long enough for a peace to exist, and all of the attempted truces were quickly broken by one side or another. (12) However, the Hudson's Bay Company's attempts to initiate trade with the Sioux must have disillusioned many Ojibwa who had previously thought of the Company as their friend and ally. The "betrayal" must have been especially bitter for the Ojibwa who, as the

populations of furred game began to fall again after 1816, may have feared they would be abandoned by the traders for the richer fur resources guarded by their enemies.

Between 1817 and 1820, even the muskrat and marten populations which had been high since about 1811 began to drop in the Red River, Assiniboine River, Interlake, Swan River and Lake Dauphin areas. (13) Beaver and bears remained scarce in these areas, and wolves were of very poor quality. (14) Beaver were found along the Souris River, especially its upper parts near the South Branch of the Saskatchewan and the Mandan villages on the Missouri, but Ojibwa were often afraid to hunt there because of the danger from Sioux (and, in some years, from the Blackfoot and Mandan) enemies. (15) In May of 1819, for example, Peter Fidler recorded a band which returned from its spring hunt along the Souris with only ten beaver skins: "They say the Sioux have killed all the Beaver this Winter--but I believe...fear is the sole cause of their unsuccessful return." (16) Red foxes and lynx increased after 1817, but none of the types of furs which were being brought in in any quantity was of much value. (17) While whole, prime beaver pelts were worth between 14 s. 5 1/4 d. and 36 s. 1 d., lynx were worth only 3s. 7 1/2d. to 11s. 11d. and red fox, 3s. 8 1/2d. to 5s. 8d. Martens, formerly plentiful, brought from 4s. 10d. to 9s. 9d.; muskrats were worth only 1s. 1d. In an effort to bolster their fur returns and maintain their standing with their traders, some Ojibwa groups began trading larger quantities of maple sugar. (18)

Fur returns between 1818 and 1821 were lowered still further by

difficult ecological conditions in those years. "Starvation" was reported during the winters of 1818-19 and 1819-20, meaning that due to lack of game (as in 1818-19) or the severity of the winter (as in 1819-20), Indians had to spend more time hunting and fishing for subsistence than normal. (19) To make matters worse, an epidemic of whooping cough and measles spread through the Red River colony and the western tribes between the summer of 1819 and the spring of 1820. (20) The Ojibwa do not seem to have been badly affected by the epidemic--certainly nowhere near as badly as the Cree and Assiniboine, among whom mortality rose to between 25% and 40% among adult males--but they did not completely escape the disease. (21) A semi-permanent Ojibwa-Cree camp at Birsa on the Assiniboine River was apparently deserted as a result of the disease, and the Indians (presumably both Cree and Ojibwa) in the Swan River and Qu'Appelle River areas were hard hit. (22) George Nelson's journal at Tete-au-Brochet for the 1818-19 season did not mention any deaths due to illness in that area, although he was aware of deaths at the Forks; mortality was high for Ojibwa in the area just east of Lake Winnipeg. (23) While it is not possible to ascertain the exact effect of the epidemics on the western Ojibwa, it is known that fur returns in the Cumberland House and Swan Lake regions were lowered as a result of illness and deaths. (24) Combined with the other problems they faced, the epidemics probably reinforced the trend seen among the western Ojibwa at this time towards decreasing their participation in the fur trade and emphasizing a diverse pattern of subsistence activities.

As the result of these conditions, the Ojibwa in the Red River,



Interlake, Swan River and Lake Dauphin areas accumulated large debts at both Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company posts between 1817 and 1821. (25) Peter Fidler wrote in 1820 that, "Formerly, the Bungees were much more punctual in paying their Debts than now", and as early as 1819 it was stated that Ojibwa debts in the Swan River district were of "such an amount that they can never be paid". (26) This was not strictly true; lists of Indian debts at Red Deer's River and Swan River in 1815, and at Fort Dauphin, Big Point House, and Partridge Crop for 1820-21 indicate that while two hunters owed over sixty made beaver, the majority had debts of less than twenty made beaver and several hunters paid off credits of twenty to seventy make beaver: (27)

Total Debts Listed, 1815, Swan River and Red Deer R.: 26

Range of Debts Listed, 1815: Swan River: 1 MB to 42 MB  
 Red Deer's River: 3 MB to 23 MB

Number of Debts, both houses, less than 10 MB: 14  
 " " " " " " 20 MB: 19

Total Debts Listed, 1820-21, Fort Dauphin, Big Point,  
 and Partridge Crop: 69

Range of Debts Listed, Fort Dauphin: 1 MB to 18 MB  
 Big Point: 1 MB to 63 MB  
 Partridge Crop: 4 MB to 33 MB

Number of Debts, all three houses, less than 10 MB: 43  
 " " " " " " " " 20 MB: 58

In addition, much of the Ojibwa population around Swan River in 1819 had "no Credits at all" at the posts. (28) The excessively large debts were created in part by the traders' mismanagement and the competitive situation. By 1815, most of the Indians who traded with the Hudson's

Bay Company were known to the traders, as were their abilities, and it was part of a careful trader's job to limit credit to reasonable amounts. This was impossible, however, in areas with intense trade rivalry, such as Big Point House, where the largest debts were recorded.(29) As well, the Ojibwa took advantage of the competition by refusing to pay debts remaining at the end of a season. (30) This practice was beneficial for the Ojibwa, but also caused a fair amount of tension. Some Ojibwa were forced "to use every stratagem to keep out of our (Hudson's Bay Company's) way when they have Furs--In case we would take them in payment of their debts and prevent them from bartering them." (31)

Large debts were also caused by changes in the relationship between some Ojibwa and their traders, and in the kinds of goods wanted by the Ojibwa. In the Manitoba district, for example, poor returns led to the discontinuation of the practise of "clothing" trading captains. (32) While some presents continued to be given in the spring, they were fewer and were more often liquor instead of material items. (33) This, of course, deprived the Ojibwa of a significant part of their "income" of trading goods. As well, the goods which were specifically mentioned by traders as being desired by the western Ojibwa were more strictly limited to high-priced items such as "Cloth, Blankets, Guns, Kettles, (and) Capots (blanket coats)", rather than the less expensive silver ornaments which were mentioned as being more desirable than these other goods in previous years. (34) Nicholas Garry listed the price of three yards of cloth (unspecified colour) as 9 M.B. in 1821, and that of a

large (probably three-point) blanket as 8 M.B.; only guns were more expensive, at 11 M.B. (35) Prices at Brandon House in 1813-14 were similarly scaled:

	s.	d.		s.	d.
common beads (1 lb.)	4	-	duffel (yd).	7	-
blankets, 3 point	31	6	guns, 3 foot (2/10/9)		
2 point	18	5	armbands, silver	-	8
ice chisels	3	6	wristbands, "	-	6
cloth, blue, fine (yd.)	0	10	rum (qt.)	11	5
red, fine (yd.)	20	-			

The Ojibwas' debts and their growing desire for dry goods after 1817 have been interpreted by historical geographer A.J. Ray as an indication of their increasing dependence on the fur trade to support them in an area becoming scarce in large game from which leather might be obtained. (36) However, cloth (particularly red cloth) was also "the chief article wanted" along the Red River in 1797-98, when leather was not in short supply; as discussed earlier, trade goods of certain colours and materials had other meanings and uses to native peoples than the utilitarian ones assigned them by Europeans. Similarly, Fidler noted in 1819 that freemen (who are usually perceived as having been strongly attached to, rather than dependent upon the trading companies) also traded for "serious" goods such as cloth, blankets, kettles, guns, and axes. (37) While Ray's explanation was undoubtedly true for some, then, it does not hold for all Ojibwa. There was another factor behind both the debts and the types of goods demanded by the western Ojibwa: their growing desire for horses.

Although Henry stated in 1805 that "The Saulteurs...are not so thievishly disposed" about horses as the Cree and Assiniboine, and Fidler's 1815 survey showed that the number of horses per Ojibwa tent had increased only slightly since 1804, the Ojibwa around Red River were stealing horses in the summer of 1817.(38) By the following summer, Fidler could state that "the Bungees are much addicted to Horse stealing in the summer Time." Horses were also stolen by Ojibwa in 1818 and 1819. (39) It would appear, then, that by 1817 some of the western Ojibwa had adopted at least part of the Plains horse-raiding complex which would in turn indicate that these Ojibwas' desire for horses was increasing greatly.(40) Bands between Red River and Swan River were obtaining at least some of their horses from the Mandan villages at the Missouri. Mandan horses were expensive, as the Cree had discovered some years earlier, and they were traded primarily in exchange for guns and other high-priced trade goods. In 1805, the Cree were giving guns to the Mandans "as fast as they take them in debt...they get nothing in return but Indian corn and Buffaloe robes, this is a great means why often they slip their debts." (41) It is quite probable that Ojibwa debts at posts, and the more expensive goods they demanded, were at least partly a result of their trade with the Mandan for horses. If so, then these changes in Ojibwa trading patterns do not indicate a growing dependence on the fur trade, but rather an increasing use of horses and thus a greater plains subsistence and cultural orientation: like the plains Cree and Assiniboine, the western Ojibwa were placing less dependence on the fur trade.

That Ojibwa were obtaining horses from the Mandan was unusual, given the complex political situation on the plains at the time. The Mandan alliance with the Cree, Assiniboine and Ojibwa began disintegrating as early as 1800, when the northern groups lost their monopoly on the supply of European trade goods to the Mandan. (42) In 1814, hostilities broke out between the Mandan and the Assiniboine after the latter attacked the Fall (Gros Ventre) Indians, allies of the Mandan, and brought away "many women & children...as slaves, also a considerable number of horses". The Crees, however, remained on friendly terms with the Mandan. (43) In 1817, the Mandan, formerly enemies of the Sioux, allied with the Sioux against the Assiniboine. (44) The Crees took pains to maintain their good relationship with the Mandans, however, in order to maintain access to Mandan horses and in an attempt to avoid attacks from combined Mandan and Sioux forces. (45)

The Ojibwa position in this political tangle is indicated by three statements from the Brandon House journals. In July of 1817, a group of Bungees were attacked by Mandans immediately west of Brandon House. (46) This was before the Cree had visited the Mandans to formally "renew Terms of Friendship between both Tribes"; presumably, the attack meant that the Mandans either considered all three groups (Cree, Assiniboine, and Ojibwa) enemies at this time, or that the raiding group was simply indiscriminating. (47) The situation had changed by early January of 1818, when Assiniboines near Brandon House were afraid of being killed by the Ojibwa around Pembina--an indication that the Ojibwa were siding with the Mandans and Crees. (48) In April of 1819,

fifteen Bungees went from around Portage la Prairie to the Mandan villages "as friends".(49) While the Ojibwa would have been eager to avoid combined Sioux-Mandan attacks, their kinship links with the Crees and their desire to ensure continued access to Mandan horses prompted them to side with the Crees.

Thus the Ojibwas' debts and demands for cloth were not simply indications of their dependence on a failing fur trade, but were partly the result of their desire for horses and of the complex native political system on the plains. Like Peter Fidler's accusation of "laziness", quoted at the beginning of this chapter, the slightly larger Ojibwa debts during these years reveal a determination to maintain a diverse economy and their control over the nature of their participation in the trade.

Bison continued to be one such supplement to the fur trade. In the Manitoba district report for 1821, it was noted that the Ojibwa who traded at Big Point House in the winter had "not exerted themselves in furs as last year, having followed the Buffalo." (50) Other Ojibwa from around the Dauphin Lake, White Mud River and the Hudson's Bay Company's Big Point House in the Interlake district all depended on bison for part of their subsistence, especially in summer and "to make a stock Dry provisions to enable them to pursue the Trapping" in late winter. Bison were hunted in the parkland and prairie south and west of the Assiniboine River, and along the banks of the Red River south of Pembina. (51)

Ensuring access to bison in these areas, as well as to beaver

along the Souris River, was at least partly responsible for continued Ojibwa-Sioux clashes between 1817 and 1821. Ojibwa men set out on war parties, most often from a meeting place at Portage la Prairie, in 1818, 1820, and 1821. (52) Sioux attacks occurred just as often, indicating that neither group was winning the struggle to control of these resources. Control over resources was by no means the sole or even primary cause of warfare at this time, however; after nearly a century of enmity, Ojibwa-Sioux warfare was by 1817 fueled by such factors as the desire for avenging family members killed by Sioux, the use of raiding parties as a means of continuing the sociability of the spring gatherings into the plentiful summer months, and the opportunity for gaining prestige in battle. Warfare at this time was also related to the complicated political situation on the plains, as has already been discussed.

Another indication of the disenchantment of some western Ojibwa with the fur trade by 1817 is the increasing number of gardens they cultivated. Peter Fidler gave a mixed group of Cree and Ojibwa "wheat Barley & Potatoes for seed" for their gardens at a site between Brandon House and Portage la Prairie in late April 1816. (53) A group of six tents of Bungees (between fifty and seventy people) was reported at Birsa, just east of Portage la Prairie, in May of 1819, camping near a fish weir and planting gardens. This site may have been abandoned later that summer, however, because of grasshopper damage and deaths from the measles and whooping cough epidemic. (54) The gardens at Netley Creek, which had apparently been abandoned sometime between 1812

and 1815 as a result of pressure from traders (and, probably, because of consistently poor weather in these years) were re-established by Peguis's band about 1819, and a map by Peter Fidler shows another garden on the south-eastern shore of Lake Manitoba. (55) Other Ojibwa had a large garden site at "Big Tent" at the north end of Lake Manitoba, where they grew potatoes. Hudson's Bay Company trader William Brown described the seasonal round of this group in his Manitoba District report for 1818-19; it demonstrates the independence of these people, and is worth quoting at length:

on an Island towards the north end of the Lake, they have erected what they call a Big Tent, where they all assemble in the spring, hold Councils and go thro' their Religious Ceremonies --The soil here is excellent and each family has a portion of it under Cultivation, which the women and old men remain, and take care of it during the summer-- while the young men go hunting-- In the fall of the year when they are going to abandon the place, they secure that part of the produce, under ground till spring, which they cannot carry along with them. During favorable years, they generally make a considerable quantity of Mapple sugar, part of which they also put in Cache. (56)

The combination of fur and provisions trading, gardening, sugar production and hunting of large and small game by such groups provided a reliable subsistence base which allowed for a comfortable and fairly affluent life. After caching surplus potatoes and corn in late summer, families went to one of the trading houses around the Interlake (most often Fort Dauphin, Big Point or one of the other lakeside outposts, or Swan River) in September to obtain ammunition, tobacco, and other goods. (57) A few families made an intensive fur hunt in November or December, but most hunters brought in small numbers of mixed furs



(three cats; two martens, two rats; one bear, two badgers, eight martens) throughout the autumn. (58)

Bison were hunted in January, February, and sometimes March and presumably occurred in the plains and less densely wooded areas south and west of the Assiniboine River. (59) The meat was used to sustain hunters and their families during a spring muskrat hunt which usually took place in March; following this, the people gathered in the sugar bush, where each family had its allotted grove of trees. (60) There is no evidence to suggest a division of spring activities by sex (men hunting for furs while women, children and elders made sugar), as would seem to be the case for some earlier groups.

Much of the sugar made was eaten, and some was cached. The rest was traded in May along with the furs from the spring hunt. A few chiefs continued to be clothed, and there was the by-now-traditional drinking party. (61) Spring religious ceremonies were held at about the same time as the visit to the post, but not at the post. The nature of these ceremonies is frustratingly vague in the Hudson's Bay Company records: Donald Sutherland noted that the Indians were gathering to "cungor or manitocawsui"--which could mean either a shaking tent or Midewiwin ceremony--at White Mud River in May of 1816. (62) Following this gathering, the Indians enjoyed, as William Brown phrased it, "a holiday Time till winter commences". (63) Families gradually dispersed from the gathering to hunt, to go to war, and to plant their gardens for the summer. This way of life was strongly tied to that which the western Ojibwa had brought with them from their settlements around Lake

Superior; the establishment of larger seasonal gardening communities such as that at Big Tent was a reversion to earlier subsistence practices rather than an innovation. Still, changes were noted among even the conservative people of the Interlake area between 1817 and 1821. Peter Fidler observed in 1820 that the Ojibwa around Lake Manitoba preferred bison hide over the traditional moose hide or rush mats to make their shelters, and that while ceremonial structures were still made in the old oblong or rectangular shape, "they are now becoming more generally to follow the Cree construction of their wigwams." (64)

Along the southern and western edges of the Interlake, the Ojibwa were more influenced by plains Cree culture. The Ojibwa in the Red River--Assiniboine River area began stealing horses during this period, and there is evidence that these bands adopted some Plains religious beliefs as well. No ceremony other than the usual "conjuring" and Midewiwin celebration is recorded for the Interlake area at this time, and Nelson recorded that the voice of the Bison spirit in the shaking tent ceremonies he witnessed in the Interlake and Lac la Ronge areas could only be understood "by the Conjuror, his [i.e., the Bison's] voice being hoarse and rough--his language quite foreign." (65) To the south, the Ojibwa were clearly more familiar with bison spirits: in 1819, Peter Fidler noted that "Some of the Freeman and all of the Indians near Pambina firmly believe that a Bull Buffalo held a long verbal conversation with a Soteaux..." (66)

Despite the differential rates of change among them, social ties

among western Ojibwa bands appear to have been stronger than between the western Ojibwa and Ojibwa who remained in the settlements to the east. In another incident observed by Peter Fidler at Brandon House, "One of the Leech Lake Bungees stabbed a young Soteaux woman...and it was with difficulty resolved between the two parties." (67) While there is a certain amount of heterogeneity and tension within every ethnic group, Fidler's clear distinction between "the two parties" hints at a widening of the social and historical gulf which separated the western Ojibwa from their eastern kin.

In general, the western Ojibwa coped well with the declining populations of fur-bearers and the ecological difficulties between 1817 and 1821. Far from "becoming more lazy than formerly", as Fidler claimed, the Ojibwa diversified their subsistence activities, retained their autonomy in the fur trade, and continued to satisfy their material wants during this period. William Brown's 1819 description of the Big Tent Island people is certainly not one of poverty or dependence. Peter Fidler's 1820 description of "the young Bungee men" demonstrates that the Ojibwa he encountered had maintained, and were able to satisfy, their desire for material affluence during a less affluent period of the fur trade: they were, he said,

"very flashy & decorated with a variety of silver ornaments...Such as necklaces made of whampum...Arm & wrist bands with gorgets Broaches &c --Scarlet Leggings garnished with Ribbands and Beads and a number of small Brooches..." (68)

The similarity of this description to those made by David Thompson and George Nelson is remarkable, and illustrates the continuity of values

and standards which was part of the process of cultural change and adaptation for the western Ojibwa.

1. HBCA HBCA B.22/e/1, General Report of the Red River District 1819, Peter Fidler, fo. 12.
2. Mary Black-Rogers, "Varieties of "Starving", p.374.
3. HBCA B.22/e/1, fo. 12.
4. HBCA B.51/e/2, Manitoba District Report 1821, fo. 2a; HBCA B.239/z/1, fo.35.
5. HBCA B.51/e/1, Manitoba District Report 1820, fo.10b; HBCA B.51/e/2, 1821, fo.2a.
6. HBCA B.51/e/1, fo. 16b; also HBCA B.22/e/1, Red River District Report 1819, Peter Fidler, fo.23.
7. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.205. Regarding the tariff, see G. Nicks, "The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada", p.95.
8. PAM, Selkirk Papers, vol. 13, p.4275, 27 December 1817, Fort Douglas, Alexander McDonell to Lord Selkirk.
9. HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1817-1818, P. Fidler, 18 July 1817. Peguis did retain the land from Sugar Point to Lake Winnipeg (Andrew McDermott, "Peguis Refuted", Nor'Wester, 28 February 1860.)
10. Hickerson and Wheeler-Voegelin, Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa, p. 92, 100; PAM, Selkirk Papers vol.11, p.3530, 7 June 1817, Fort Douglas, Miles Macdonell to Selkirk, and p.3926, 7 August 1817, Selkirk to James Bird; PAM, Selkirk Papers vol.13, p.4213, 1 December 1817, Lac des Grosses Roches, R. Dickson to Selkirk; PAM, Selkirk Papers vol. 23 p.7356-57, 30 August 1821, R Dickson to John Pritchard; HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1817-18, 5 August 1817; HBCA B.51/a/1, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, 4, 6--9 June 1819.
11. PAM, Selkirk Papers vol.13, p.4276, 27 Dec 1817, Fort Douglas, Alexander Macdonell to Selkirk; also HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1817-18, 4 Dec 1817.
12. PAM, Selkirk Papers vol. 11, p.3926, 7 August 1817, Selkirk to James Bird, which suggests that the Ojibwa who were allied with the NWC attacked the Sioux to sabotage the truce and frustrate the HBC.
13. HBCA B.22/e/2, Red River District Report 1819, Peter Fidler, fo.8; HBCA B.51/e/1, Fort Dauphin District Report 1820, fo.6.
14. HBCA B.22/e/2, Red River District Report 1819, Peter Fidler, fo.8.
15. HBCA B.22/e/2, Red River District Report 1819, Peter Fidler, fo.3; HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, 26 Apr 1819.

16. HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, 1 May 1819.
17. HBCA B.51/e/1, fo.6; HBCA B.22/e/1, Red River District Report 1819, fo.8.
18. HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler, and HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, Peter Fidler, 8 February and 11 March 1821.
19. Professor Tim F. Ball, University of Winnipeg, is currently organizing a conference on the effects of the weather of 1816. Vide also HBCA B.122/a/2, Manitoba Journal 1818-19, William Brown, 29 November 1818; HBCA B.161, 10 Mar 1820; PAM, Selkirk Papers vol. 21, p.6882, 27 May 1820, Montreal, Geo Garden to A. Colville; Mary Black-Rogers, "Varieties of "Starving"...".
20. HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler,; Morton, Duncan McGillivray, frontispiece; HBCA B.60/e/3, Edmonton District Rpt 1819-20, p.6; Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, pp. 105-113.
21. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.107-109; Taylor, "Sociocultural Effects of Epidemics", p. 78.
22. HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler, 13 September 1819; HBCA B.159/a/7, Swan River Journal 1818-19, W.H. Cook, 15 February 1819; PAM MG7 B1 West Journal 1819-20.
23. Nelson, Tete-au-Brochet Journal 1818-19; HBCA B.16/e/3, p.26, and B.64/e/2, quoted in Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North, p.155.
24. Morton, Duncan McGillivray, frontispiece; HBCA B.159/a/7, Swan River Journal 1818-19, W.H. Cook, 15 February 1819.
25. HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, Peter Fidler, 8 February 1821; HBCA B.122/e/1, Manitoba District Report, fo. 9; HBCA B.159/e/1, Swan River District Report 1818-19, fo. 8; HBCA B.51/e/1, Manitoba District Report, fo. 16; HBCA B.51/e/2, fo. 2b.
26. HBCA B.51/e/1, fo.16; HBCA B.159/e/1, Swan River District Report 1818-19, fo.8.
27. HBCA B.176/d/1, Red Deer's River Accounts 1815, fo.4; HBCA B.51/e/2, Manitoba District 1821; HBCA B.51/d/4, Manitoba District Accounts 1820-21, P. Fidler, fos. 20-21.
28. HBCA B.159/e/1, Swan River District Report 1818-19, fo.9.
29. HBCA B.51/e/2, Dauphin River District Report 1821; George Nelson also complained in 1811 that Ojibwa were arriving at his post for

credit when they had over 50 MB in debt from the previous season. This was the result of competition. (Quoted in Lytwyn, The Fur Trade of the Little North, p.134.)

30. HBCA B.51/e/1, Dauphin River District Report 1821, fo.2; HBCA B.122/e/1, Manitoba District Report, fo.8.

31. HBCA B.122/e/1, fo.9.

32. HBCA B.51/e/1, Dauphin District Report, fo. 19.

33. While there are few specific references to spring presents, see HBCA B.159/a/7, Swan River District (Fort Pelly) Journal 1818-19, 9 October 1818, "customary presents of Liqr &c"; HBCA B.51/e/1, Dauphin River District Report 1820, fo. 10: "They wish to Trade Cloth, Blankets &c for Sugar", but get only liquor; Nelson, Dauphin River Journal 1807-08, 20 November 1807 and 29 March 1808; and HBCA B.122/e/1, Manitoba District Report fo.9, recommending that little ammunition be given gratis.

34. HBCA B.51/e/1, Manitoba District Report 1820 by P. Fidler, fo.7; HBCA B.22/a/19, Brandon House Journal 1815-16, Peter Fidler, 16, 18 April 1816; HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler, 9 March 1820.

35. "Diary of Nicholas Garry", p.199-200.

36. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.156.

37. HBCA B.235/a/1, Winnipeg Journal, by Thomas Miller, 21 April 1798; HBCA B.28, fo.7. Ray (Indians in the Fur Trade, p. 149-53) notes that Indians at Cumberland House obtained the most blankets and cloth between 1811 and 1814 (2.5 blankets and 15.2 yards of cloth, as opposed to .6 blankets and .82 yards of cloth at Carlton or Brandon House); however, it should be noted that Cumberland Indians often hunted around Nipawin and along the Saskatchewan River and were not confined to the Cumberland area. Had the situation been very bad, they would presumably have left.

38. Henry, p.295, 11 July 1805; Henry, p.244, 8 May 1804: band of 65 people with 10 horses, or approximately 1 horse per tent; Fidler, HBCA B.235/a/3, Winnipeg Journal July 1815: estimates 750 Ojibwa adults between Carlton House and Turtle R., with 100 horses, or approximately 1 horse per 7.5 adults); HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1817-1818, P. Fidler, 30 July 1817.

39. HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, 7 June 1818; HBCA B.159/e/1, Swan River River District Report 1818-19, fo. 9; HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler, 9 June 1819.

40. A dated, but still relevant discussion of the effects of the horse on various aspects of native culture can be found in C. Wissler's article, "The Influence of the Horse in the Development of Plains Culture", American Anthropologist 16 (1), winter 1914.
41. HBCA B.22/a/12, Brandon House Post Journal 1804-05, 27 February 1805.
42. Milloy, Plains Cree, p.124.
43. PAM MG1 D3, Fidler Diary 1814-15, 9 Oct 1814; see also HBCA B.22/a/19, 1815-16, 23 Dec 1815, 4 April 1816; PAM Selkirk Papers vol.7, p.2175, 7 April 1816, Brandon House, P. Fidler to R. Semple.
44. Milloy, Plains Cree, p.151, 156, 158-9.
45. Milloy, Plains Cree, p.159; HBCA B.22/a/19, Brandon House Journal 1815-16, 4 April 1816; HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1817-18, 27 Jan, 17 March 1818,; HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, 13 Nov 1818.
46. HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1817-18, 30 July 1817.
47. Ibid., 9 November 1817; Milloy, Plains Cree, p.158, note 171.
48. HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1817-18, 2 January 1818; this incident may be unrelated.
49. HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, 23 April 1819.
50. HBCA B.51/e/2, Dauphin District Report, fo.2.
51. HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, Peter Fidler, 6 February 1821 and 18 September 1820; HBCA B.51/e/2, Dauphin District Report, fo. 2a; HBCA B.122/a/2, Manitoba Journal 1818-19, 21 March 1819; HBCA B.22/e/1, Red River District Report 1819, Peter Fidler, fo.5; HBCA B.22/a/19, Brandon House Journal 1815-16, Peter Fidler, 9 February 1816.
52. HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, 3 June 1818; PAM Selkirk Papers vol. 16, p.5331, 30 August 1818, Fort Douglas, Capt F. Matthey to Selkirk; HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler, 31 March, 3 May 1820; HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, Peter Fidler, 25 April 1821.
53. HBCA B.22/a/19, Brandon House Journal 1815-16, P.Fidler, 25 April 1816.
54. HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler, 20 May, 13 September 1819. It is also possible that garden sites were



- ordinarily abandoned in mid-summer, and that the Ojibwa returned to harvest them around the first frost.
55. PAM, Selkirk Papers, vol.16, p.5372, Ft. Douglas, 12 September 1818, Captain Matthey to Lord Selkirk; D.W. Moodie, "Indian Agriculture in the Fur Trade North West" p.6-7; Tanner, p. 168; PAM MG7 B1, West Journal, 22 February 1823; "Diary of Nicholas Garry...", p.135, 3 August 1821; HBCA G.1/41, Peter Fidler, Map of Lake Manitoba.
56. HBCA B.122/e/1, Manitoba District Report, fo.9.
57. HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, 21 October 1820; HBCA B.122/a/1, Manitoba Lake Journal 1815-1816, Donald Sutherland, 20 October 1815.
58. HBCA B.122/a/1, Manitoba Journal 1815-16, 28 December 1815; HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, 4,8 December 1820; HBCA B.122/a/2, Manitoba Journal 1818-19, William Brown, 17, 28 November 1818.
59. HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21, 6 February 1821; HBCA B.122/a/2, Manitoba Journal 1818-19, 21 March 1819; HBCA B.51/e/2, Dauphin District Report, fo.2; HBCA B.122/a/1, Manitoba Lake Journal 24 March 1816.
60. HBCA B.51/a/3, Dauphin Journal 1820-21, 29 March, 16 April 1821; HBCA B.51/e/1, Manitoba District Report, fo.10; HBCA B.122/a/1, Manitoba Lake Journal 1815-16, 16 March 1816.
61. HBCA B.51/e/1, fo. 19; HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, 19 May 1819.
62. HBCA B.122/a/1, Lake Manitoba Journal 1815-16, Donald Sutherland, 13 May 1816; HBCA B.51/a/3, Fort Dauphin Journal 1820-21; HBCA B.122/e/1, Manitoba District Report, fo.9.
63. HBCA B.51/e/1, Dauphin District Report 1820, fo.10.
64. HBCA B.51/e/1, fo. 5, 17.
65. Nelson, quoted in Jennifer Brown and Robert Brightman, eds., The Orders of the Dreamed (University of Manitoba Press, in press), ms. p.65. I am indebted to Professor Brown for allowing me access to this work. The Lac la Ronge people whom Nelson observed were Cree. See also HBCA B.51/a/2, Fort Dauphin Journal 1819-20, Peter Fidler, 18, 22 May for a description of a traditional Ojibwa ceremonial structure.
66. HBCA B.22/a/20, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, 1 February 1819.
67. HBCA B.22/a/21, Brandon House Journal 1818-19, Peter Fidler, 20

September 1818.

68. HBCA B.51/e/1, Dauphin District Report, fo. 17.

Chapter 6: 1821-1830

"These people know well how to take  
advantage of the times..." (1)

After competing for so many years, the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company merged in 1821. The transition to a monopolistic trading system and the reorganization of the new Hudson's Bay Company has been interpreted by historians as having had profound effects on western Indians. A.J. Ray, for example, has referred to the post-merger period as one of "declining opportunities", and H.A. Innis wrote that, "The Indians were assured of the supremacy of the Hudson's Bay Company and brought under the control of monopoly." (2) The Ojibwa themselves would have disagreed with such statements, especially since the existence of private traders, American traders, and the colony market challenged the Company's "monopoly control" throughout much of the west. The western Ojibwa continued to choose between a number of economic alternatives just as they had before the merger; at the end of the decade, they were neither under the control of nor dependent upon the Hudson's Bay Company.

Interpretations of the effects of the merger have been greatly influenced by the attitudes and policies of George Simpson, who was appointed Governor of the Company's Northern Department (which included the lands west and north of Red River) in 1821. (3) Preoccupied with the problems of creating an economical, efficient Department, Simpson had clear ideas about the place of Indians in the reorganized fur trade:

...but of course the scenes of extravagance are at an end...I am convinced they must be ruled with a rod of Iron to bring and keep them in a proper state of sub-

ordination, and the most certain way to effect this is by letting them feel their dependence upon us. (4)

Among the reforms Simpson hoped to make to the trade were the elimination of gratuities and the reduction of credit to Indians, the reduction of the trade in liquor, and the introduction of conservation practices to maintain fur yields in over-hunted areas. (5) While all of these measures were introduced in varying degrees in different areas, their feasibility was limited by a number of factors and few seriously affected the daily lives of the western Ojibwa.

The Company did make reductions in the amount of credit given to individual Indians, but the credit system itself could not be discontinued. This was partly to ensure the continuation of trade during poor seasons, but more importantly it encouraged Indians to keep trading with the Hudson's Bay Company (Simpson recognized that many would simply stop trading altogether if they were angered) and discouraged them from trading with American traders at the Missouri River, another site just south of Turtle Mountain, Pembina, Grand Forks, and occasionally in the Brandon House area. (6) The threat posed by American traders also made it extremely difficult for the Hudson's Bay Company to effect other reforms such as reductions in the amount of alcohol traded at the western posts, the discontinuation of steel traps as trade goods, and injunctions against taking beaver during summer.

In the Red River area, the illicit trade with settlers flourished during the 1820's and provided a ready alternative to credit for many western Ojibwa. Smug statements such as that in the Fort Douglas journal in 1826, that "Debts they never get here and increased industry

on their parts is the consequence" were countered by the frustration experienced by the Company in trying to stem the Indians' trade with the settlers and "petty traders":

Some of these rascals have come all the way from Fort Dauphin, and others from Swan River for the purpose of trading with the settlers at Red River, and until some measures are adopted for punishing those Colonists who carry on this illicit traffic it cannot be supposed that Indians will bring their skins to the Company's Store, whilst they meet with such...ready purchasers, who allow them better prices, than what the Company is in the habit of paying...(7)

Although Simpson tried hard to end the illicit trade, he was unsuccessful. (8) As they had from the beginning of the colony, settlers paid high prices and desirable goods for furs and provisions, including items such as rum and clothing during years in which these goods were difficult to obtain. (9) Credit restrictions may have forced the western Ojibwa to visit the posts more frequently, but did not necessarily produce "increased industry" or higher fur returns.

As well as limiting credit, Simpson reduced the amounts and values of gratuities given to Indians, particularly to trading "chiefs" of whom far fewer were clothed after 1821. Less ammunition was given, and items such as flags, knives and clothing were often replaced by liquor and tobacco. In 1830, one chief's present consisted of a suit of clothing "along with a present of Rum ammunition and Tobacco to the Indians attached to his party": a far cry from the presents given yearly to Henry's or Nelson's Indians and their leaders. (10) Combined with the decrease in the amount of credit allowed most Indians, the reduction in presents resulted in a comparative dearth of trade goods

for the western Ojibwa for the first time in decades.

Another change which affected the western Ojibwa was the temporary closure of certain posts in order to allow the fur-bearing populations around them to recover. In 1824, the Lake Dauphin, Swan River, and Red Deer River posts were closed for this reason. To replace them, Fort Pelly was built on the upper Assiniboine River. Brandon House was also closed in 1823, and the posts in the Interlake closed about the same time. (11)

The withdrawal of these posts at the same time had several effects on the western Ojibwa. Firstly, families who had lived and traded in the Interlake or Pembina areas for a number of years were forced either to make longer, less frequent trips to trade at Red River, Cumberland House, Fort Pelly, Fort Ellice, or Fort Carlton, shift their hunting grounds closer to one of these places, or trade with the Americans. This was one of the factors which contributed to the development of a stable Ojibwa population in the upper Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle River valleys during the 1820's. Along with other western groups, the Ojibwa perceived the closure of posts as something of an insult: this was poor payment of gratitude to hunters who were "brothers" in trade or fathers-in-law of European traders and who supplied the posts with furs and food. Indians complained "that they had been cast away by their old traders." (12) At least one group of Indians, either Crees or Ojibwa, protested the closing of posts by going to Red River

...with their faces painted black, in order to indicate their grief at the circumstance of the Company having withdrawn their trading posts from the Upper Red River

in consequence of which they had been brought to the extremity of distress. (13)

These Indians were not literally in the "extremity of distress"; their gesture needs to be interpreted within the context of the native concept of "pity", which involves the establishment of a sympathetic and reciprocal relationship. These men had an established relationship with the Company; they were doing their best to remind Company officials of the generosity that this was supposed to entail.

Many other Indians took "mortal offence" at the changes which followed the merger, and displayed what Simpson described as a "settled and sullen melancholy".(14) Some of the western Ojibwa reacted in a more active fashion to the insults and began to trade with Americans, Red River settlers, and petty traders: "the Indians of Upper Red River, are so exasperated at their posts being abandoned, that they will readily turn [to] American traders, to be revenged on [the Hudson's Bay Company]." (15) Because of the rapid increase in illicit trade, Fort Dauphin was reopened in 1827 and Brandon House in 1828. (16) Not all of the Ojibwa returned to these posts when they were re-opened, though; many families had shifted their hunting grounds and had developed new social ties around the alternative posts. There were, for instance, a number of mixed Cree-Ojibwa bands whose formation was partially the result of band movements following post closures, and who continued to trade sporadically with Americans on the Missouri. (17)

Another significant change with which the western Ojibwa had to contend after 1821 was the rapid growth of the metis population. As a result of the union of the two companies, approximately two-thirds of

the fur trade labour force, most of whom were metis, became redundant and was dismissed. (18) In 1821, there were about five hundred metis in a settlement at Pembina. These moved to the Red River settlement in 1823, and by 1831, there were thirteen hundred metis in and around the colony. (19) These people retained strong ties to their native kin, and most preferred hunting, fishing, and collecting berries and maple sugar to a sedentary lifestyle. During the 1820's, the metis began organizing large-scale collective bison hunts which set out from Red River in the summer and fall. According to Alexander Ross, a retired trader living in the settlement, the 1820 bison hunt involved 540 Red River carts, a number which grew to 680 in 1825 and 820 by 1830. (20)

Despite the fact that the huge scale of the metis hunt meant that the metis continued to dominate the colony and Company market for provisions, there was little animosity between the metis and the Ojibwa during the 1820's. Much tension was doubtless eased by allowing Ojibwa to accompany their metis relatives on the hunt. The large size of the main camp of the metis hunt was also an advantage for the Ojibwa, for it made them less vulnerable to Sioux attacks and therefore enabled them to venture farther into Sioux territory after bison. (21)

Western Ojibwa bands who did not hunt with metis also made bison an increasingly important part of their subsistence. Faced with a lack of large game in areas where they could obtain furs, and insulted (or at least not encouraged) by the Hudson's Bay Company's diminution of credit, presents, and appreciation of their efforts, many Ojibwa began "resort(ing) to the Plains to live on Buffalos", especially during



winter. (22) Not only was bison hunted to provide food for intensive fur hunts, as it had been for the past several decades, but references are also found in the 1820s to bands which subsisted primarily on bison both in summer and winter, and which spent comparatively little time hunting for furs or other game. Of a number of Ojibwa who traded at Fort Pelly in the late 1820s it was said that, "These Indians were formerly excellent fur hunters But having got a taste of the Buffaloe by bordering on the meadows since the rats failed they are from their dress and habits little better now than the meadow bucks." (23) This logical reaction to game shortages in the woodlands was the start of a cycle, though, for by abandoning the fur hunt the Indians were left with large debts, which simply encouraged them to join the Cree in the plains and stay there. (24) Because of such incentives, as well as the increasing number of kin ties among them over the previous decade, the incidence of mixed Ojibwa-Cree-metis bands was much higher during the 1820's than previously. This was especially pronounced around Turtle Mountain and the upper Assiniboine and Qu'Appelle River valleys. (25)

The western Ojibwa who appear in fur trade records during the 1820's continued to follow the pattern of diversity in subsistence activities which they had established at least a decade before. Since small game continued to become increasingly scarce in areas favoured for fur hunting, gardens and bison-hunting continued to be used both as supplements and alternatives to the fur trade. (26) According to no less than five separate Yanktonai Sioux winter counts, Ojibwa had large fields of corn near Turtle Mountain (which remained relatively

plentiful in game) in the early 1820's; they were driven from this site by the Sioux in 1824-25. (27) Ojibwa also kept gardens at Netley Creek, primarily of maize and potatoes, and several gardens near Fort Pelly may have been planted by mixed Cree-Ojibwa groups. (28) The fate of the gardens at Big Tent Island after the withdrawal of trading posts from the Interlake region is unknown, but as large numbers of Indians were met at Duck Bay and "the Grand Lodge" in the spring of 1830, it is possible that they were continued. (29)

The Ojibwa continued to be seen by traders as one of the "most industrious" groups in the western fur trade during the 1820's (as opposed to the Crees, who were "the most indolent", and the Assiniboine, who were "the most independent"). (30) As with other aspects of their subsistence, Ojibwa hunting furs emphasized diversity but relied most heavily on whatever species were currently most plentiful:

Our Fort Hunters Seauteaux giving themselves airs and little or no exertions in Hunting large animals, Rats being abundant and easier killed to pay their advances and requisite supplies. (31)

In years when the muskrat population was low, Ojibwa were usually able to obtain "the usual Debts" by promising to "make good hunts in other furs", usually marten and lynx. (32) The flexibility of the western Ojibwa was particularly evident during this decade of change.

The combination of ecological factors and post closures during the 1820's resulted in the formation of Ojibwa population concentrations in new areas. The Lower Red River district, which extended along the Red River from Pembina to Lake Winnipeg, was "exhausted...in animals of

the fur kind", and the Hudson's Bay Company post at Pembina was abandoned in 1823. (33) While the Ojibwa continued to exploit the lands along the Red River sporadically, many gravitated to Turtle Mountain, which remained well-stocked with game and offered access both to bison herds and American traders who were stationed near there. (34)

Similar factors contributed to the development of an Ojibwa population in the Qu'Appelle and upper Assiniboine River valleys. Game remained quite plentiful in these areas; in 1829, a Cree family which traded at Fort Pelly was able to find sufficient muskrats to pay its fall advances within two weeks of receiving them. (35) Forts Ellice and Pelly were also among the closest alternatives to Swan River House, Fort Dauphin, Brandon House, and the Interlake posts during the years in which they were closed. (36) Some of the Ojibwa who had formerly traded in the Interlake went to Fort Garry during the 1820's, but it does not appear that the population of the Netley Creek band was swelled as a result of post closures. The low game population along the Red River and competition at hunting and fishing from metis and European settlers in the colony undoubtedly made Netley Creek less attractive than the lands to the west of the lakes. (37)

Other families moved between the Red Deer's River and the Nipawin area of the Saskatchewan River, trading at Cumberland House and later the Swan River post when it was re-opened. (38) Part of the North Saskatchewan was also used by Ojibwa who travelled from the vicinity of Cumberland House to live in the Carlton area during the summer, presumably to hunt bison. (39) There was also a concentration of Ojibwa

between Jackfish Lake, just north of the North Saskatchewan River, and the Birch Hills, just east of Carlton House.

It should be noted that the general westward movement of the Ojibwa in this period may have been partially the result of the effects of the measles-whooping cough epidemic of 1819-20. While the Ojibwa were not badly affected by this epidemic, as mentioned in Chapter Five, the mortality rate was as high as 40% among the Cree and Assiniboine. (40) This would have greatly lowered the existing population in the valleys of the upper Assiniboine, Qu'Appelle, and North Saskatchewan Rivers, making the Ojibwa more welcome there than they might have been otherwise. (41) As well, pressure on game in these areas may have decreased for several years following the epidemic, resulting in attractive higher game populations.

These population shifts did not solve all of the difficulties encountered by the western Ojibwa in the 1820's, and they contributed to certain kinds of tension and change themselves. The remainder of this chapter will be devoted to an examination of the actions, decisions and adaptations made by several separate Ojibwa bands in the 1820's, focusing on the factors which, in each area, shaped a slightly different variation on the larger ethnic theme.

#### 1. The Move To The Plains: Tolibee and Baptiste Desjarlais

The choices and movements of the Lesser Slave Lake chiefs Tolibee and Baptiste Desjarlais during the 1820's clearly illustrate the adaptive flexibility of the western Ojibwa during that decade. In the fall of 1821, the Saulteaux and freemen of a mixed Ojibwa-metis band

headed by Tolibee and Baptiste Desjarlais arrived at the Lesser Slave Lake post with their usual ceremony. Tolibee was "the H.B.Cos chief" at Lesser Slave Lake in 1819-20, as was his metis half-brother Baptiste Desjarlais or Nishicabo. (42) Since their kinsmen included nearly all the best hunters around Lesser Slave Lake, they wielded considerable power and received sizeable presents to prevent them from defecting to the North West Company: "In spring & fall he receives a full suit of the finest clothing brought up (and a keg of Indian rum)". (43) As Robert Kennedy, an experienced Hudson's Bay Company trader, described them, "These people know well how to take advantage of the times". (44) In 1821, however, the chiefs were disappointed and offended to discover that, as part of the Company's new policy, all presents save a niggardly foot of tobacco and a dram of liquor had been abolished and their credit was to be strictly limited. Neither Tolibee nor Baptiste Desjarlais was reconfirmed as a trading chief; several Crees were clothed instead.(45) They were further offended when several of their kinsmen, including Antoine Desjarlais and Ignace Nipissingue, who had been employed as interpreters, were dismissed about the same time. (46)

As a result of these changes, the band decided to leave the Lesser Slave Lake area. Antoine Desjarlais travelled to the Red River settlement "to ascertain what encouragement the (area)...holds out to people of his description"; he later returned to the band, having apparently found Red River not to his liking. Baptiste, Tolibee and others remained in the area for several years, but began spending more time fishing and moving from post to post. (47)

The former chiefs undoubtedly missed the prestige, the gifts, and the preferred rates the freemen had been given before 1821, for they left that area in the spring of 1823, at which time Tolibee and Antoine joined a war-party of Crees and headed for the Saskatchewan River.(48) They then turned up at Cumberland House in the summer of 1827, where they hunted muskrats, which were plentiful that year. (49) But again, they were treated with less respect than they obviously felt they deserved. Tolibee's stepson was unable to obtain credits for the band at Cumberland House as he had hoped to do, since they came from another post district, and Tolibee himself "begged hard" for meagre advances for his group later in the season. (50) The group hunted muskrats and game in the fertile territory between Nipawin and Swan River for the following year, and took debt at Fort Pelly in the fall of 1829. (51) In the fall of 1830, Baptiste Desjarlais was clothed as a chief at Fort Pelly. (52) For the next several years he and his group lived well on whatever was plentiful that season: trading lynx and other species whose populations were high, and hunting bison when other game became scarce. (53)

In their desire to participate in the fur trade on their own terms, their decision to increasingly turn to the plains when they could not, and their exploitation of the most easily available game and fur-bearing species, the Tolibee-Baptiste Desjarlais band epitomizes the western Ojibwa during the 1820's. While they continued to participate in the fur trade after the imposition of the post-merger economy measures, it was in a lesser way. Where the Ojibwa had

previously looked to the trade for prestige, they were ready to look elsewhere when it was not forthcoming from that source. As will be discussed later, many Ojibwa never participated in the fur trade in the same way after 1821, but instead sought influence and esteem within the plains Cree value system and culture. Finally, even though Tolibee and Desjarlais remained closely involved in the fur trade after 1821, their decisions and movements certainly do not suggest that they were dependent upon the trade.

Tolibee also demonstrates the role of the individual in the process of cultural change. The personality and social status of individuals who accept new ideas and behaviors can greatly influence the process of change in a larger group. As a productive hunter and successful trading chief at Lesser Slave Lake, Tolibee earned the respect of many of his kinsmen. This respect would have helped to secure approval of foreign cultural traits such as the wearing of European clothing, for which Tolibee was noted, and later for the adoption of a bison-hunting lifestyle on the plains. The individual decisions and leadership of Ojibwa such as Tolibee were the very bases of the development of the western Ojibwa adaptations. (54)

## 2. The Abandoned Bands: The Interlake.

Little is known about the movements and activities of the bands within the Interlake area during the 1820's. As of 1821, there were enough hunters (a total of 106 men, representing at least five hundred people) to warrant posts at Dauphin River, the Partridge Crop, Duck River and Big Point in addition to the North West Company posts

opposing these. (55) These people hunted in an area from the western shore of Lake Winnipeg to Riding Mountain and Shell River in the west, and they traded at posts on the outskirts of their territory as well as within the Interlake. (56)

After the post closures, some of the Interlake Ojibwa undoubtedly remained in their accustomed territories but travelled to Cumberland House, Carlton House or Red River to trade. Some, evidently feeling that they had been abandoned by the Hudson's Bay Company, began going to Pembina and Grand Forks to trade with American firms. (57) Others gathered in the spring at such locations as Duck Bay and the "Grand Lodge" and waited to trade with the out-going brigade. (58) Several bands continued to reside for much of the year on the southern end of Lake Manitoba; others wintered in the same area, many drawn by the opportunity to trade furs and provisions with settlers from the Red River colony who wintered at a fishery at the lake. (59) This was a particularly appealing opportunity during the harsh winter of 1826-27 when the bison stayed far away from the colony. (60) The Lake Manitoba Ojibwa brought muskrats to Fort Douglas in late spring, late summer, and early winter. They also visited the colony occasionally in mid-summer to beg tobacco or while assembling for a war expedition. (61)

Other Ojibwa chose to re-orient themselves westward and trade at Forts Ellice and Pelly; at least 100 Ojibwa are known to have traded there in the 1820's. "7 principle Sotteaux" were equipped for fall hunts at Pelly in September of 1825. (62) Much of the activity at and around both of these forts was traditional for the people from the



Interlake: Ojibwa traded moose hides and meat, swan skins, muskrats, otters, martens, and so forth. (63) A few chiefs continued to be clothed and larger bands and chiefs were welcomed to the fort with the old ceremonies: "(I) fired a volley of small arms and Hoisted the Flag for them, Presented them with Four Kegs reduced Rum." (64)

On the other hand, spending more time in the parkland and plains west of Lake Manitoba meant increased contacts with plains Cree. (65) This trend became especially pronounced during the late 1820's, when the muskrat population dropped drastically. (66) As a result, the number of mixed Cree-Ojibwa bands increased greatly. Although their number varied seasonally, as many as half of the Ojibwa who traded at Pelly and Ellice may have been part of such mixed bands. When living with Cree, Ojibwa tended to trade more bison hides and meat and fewer furs. In a few cases, their returns were indistinguishable from those of plains Crees and Assiniboines: "A Small Band of Crees & Sotteux arrived and brought 1500 lbs dry meat and 1000 lbs Grease." (67)

Aside from their physical association with Crees and the emphasis placed on bison by some of the mixed bands, evidence about the effects of Cree culture on the Ojibwa who moved westward from the Interlake during the 1820's is slim. They do not seem to have participated in any organized way in the Cree-Mandan conflict, which continued throughout the 1820's. (68) The only hint of political action by these Ojibwa is the report that several were attacked by "Brandon House Indians" (probably either Crees or Assiniboines) in the summer of 1824. (69) This may indicate that some of the Ojibwa in that area were siding with

the Mandans (and, therefore, against the Cree), or it may have been completely unrelated to the political situation. Nor are the Ojibwa who traded at Ellice and Pelly mentioned as using or coveting horses. The Crees they were with must either have been hunting bison on foot, or lending surplus horses to the Ojibwa, or have been horse-poor themselves because of continuing disputes with the Mandan and the Blackfeet, both major suppliers of horses. One interesting hint regarding Cree effects on the Ojibwa was recorded in the Fort Pelly Journal in 1831:

These Indians were formerly excellent fur hunters But having got a taste of the Buffaloe by bordering on the meadows since the rats failed they are from their dress and habits little better now than the meadow bucks. (70)

That changes in both "dress and habits" of the Ojibwa were noted indicates the pervasiveness of Cree cultural influence on these people: this was not simply an increase in the amount of time spent hunting bison.

Not all Ojibwa left the Interlake area to live with Cree or rely on the bison in the 1820's; many remained in their accustomed territories to utilize fish, moose, and other familiar resources. It would seem, though, that the withdrawal of posts from the area and the declining availability of fur did much to encourage the development of a more plains-oriented adaptation among those who did leave.

### 3. Peguis and the Red River Ojibwa

The Ojibwa who resided around the Red River settlement had a different set of problems and opportunities to contend with than did

more westerly Ojibwa. As discussed earlier, the colony offered a ready, high-paying market for furs and country produce, and some of the local Saulteaux from Peguis' band participated in the large bison hunts led by their metis relatives. The colony also provided opportunities for prestige in the form of annual presents from the Company, the yearly payment of the rent for the Selkirk Treaty, and the custom of entertaining members of Peguis' band in the colony around Christmas-time and at New Year's.

The colony's attractions were, however, balanced by the poor treatment received by the Red River Saulteaux at Fort Douglas. According to the Company journals for most of the 1820's, Indians were allowed virtually no credit at all. (71) This was greatly annoying to the Saulteaux, but was made worse by the fact that because the settlers were given first chance at the goods when they arrived in the fall, the shop was often sold out of desirable items (such as clothing and blankets) before the Indians could trade what they needed. (72) In an area where large game--and therefore clothing--was in short supply, this was a significant problem. (73) The Saulteaux made their opinions of the situation perfectly clear:

They say matters are come to a strange pass, indeed, when with furs in hand and clear of debts, they cannot obtain their necessaries. The consequence of this want of the proper...goods is that many packs of rats have already gone the way of the Americans...(74)

Indians were given the first chance at the new goods beginning in the autumn of 1828, but by then the years of poor treatment at the colony fort and the stresses caused by the terribly difficult years of 1825 to

1827 had caused significant changes in the relationship between the Company/Colony and the Saulteaux.(75) Peguis maintained an official relationship with officials in the colony, but he and his band were made less and less welcome in Red River as the decade progressed and they consequently spent little time there.

When the new trading goods arrived at Fort Douglas in the fall, members of Peguis' band would trade a few furs for supplies, receive their annual treaty present of tobacco, and then go to hunt muskrats near Netley Creek. (76) They went "to the Buffalo plains" in early winter, but many returned to the settlement "to share in the good things of this life, during the Holidays". On New Year's Day Peguis and others fired a salute at the fort, and were each given some tobacco and a dram to celebrate with. (77)

Peguis' band apparently returned to the plains (they hunted around Pembina in 1823 and around Brandon House in 1826) and hunted bison after Christmas until mid-March or early April, at which time they visited the fort and received "a small present of Tobacco, ammunition, and provisions" as well as some liquor. They then set off to make maple sugar and a spring muskrat hunt around Netley Creek. (78) Trading continued until late May, when some men left on war parties against the Sioux. (79). Warfare between the Ojibwa and the Sioux became less frequent when the Hudson's Bay Company discontinued trade with the Sioux after 1821, and may also have been reduced by peace treaties made in 1820, 1821, and 1823 near Fort Snelling (on the Mississippi River at the site of present-day St. Paul) between the Sioux and the

Ojibwa of the upper Red River area. (80) War parties which left Red River during the 1820's seem to have been for the purpose of retaliating against attacks made on Ojibwa on the upper Red River, rather than as a defense against a local threat or as an attempt to gain access to resources. During the summer, Peguis' band planted maize and fished about the mouth of the Red River. They visited the post occasionally "to beg a pipe of tobacco", but brought nothing to trade until late August. (81)

This stable and productive round of activities was upset between 1824 and 1827 by a series of ecological disasters which made subsistence extremely difficult for everyone in the Red River area. The bison remained far out on the plains to the west of the river during the winter of 1824-25, causing famine; when spring came, the Red River flooded to record levels, forcing natives and settlers to abandon their homes and property and take refuge on the high bluffs along the Assiniboine River. The summer of 1825 was very poor for crops, and the plains west and south of Red River burnt to a great extent which kept the bison far away the following winter. (82) Many of Peguis' band were forced to beg in the settlement during the winter of 1825-26, but were largely unsuccessful since the settlers were no better off than the Indians. (83) Things began to improve in the spring of 1827, but then a bout of whooping cough broke out in the settlement. This in itself was not disastrous for the Ojibwa, but after the previous two years, any further difficulties must have been keenly felt.

The Red River Saulteaux survived these crises because they had a

diverse, reliable subsistence pattern which took advantage of the different resources around them. They also had a shrewd representative in Peguis and an active and satisfying social and ceremonial life: there was at least one conjuror in the band, and the band had a reputation for "heathenism" for decades. (84) These last factors did much to preserve social and cultural stability throughout the ecological crises, and also enabled the band to withstand acculturative pressure from the agents of the Church Missionary Society during those same difficult years.

The first missionary, Reverend John West, arrived in the settlement in 1821. He and his successors, Reverends David Jones and William Cockran, attempted to persuade Peguis' band to adopt a sedentary, agrarian lifestyle and to become Christians. Peguis, in turn, saw in the missionaries an opportunity to make up for the recognition and power which the Saulteaux had lost with the Hudson's Bay Company since 1815. For over a decade, he and his band did a masterful job of taking advantage of the missionaries' gifts and influence without committing themselves to the missionaries' plans. In one instance, Peguis' sister asked Reverend West to accept her son into the missionary's school for Indian children. Pleased at the opportunity to instruct the child, West took the boy, but was upset the following week, when the child's mother came to take the child back, saying "that they had parted from him in consequence of their not being able to obtain any provisions." (85) The Indian was affronted when West insisted the child should return the clothes he had been given;

apparently, the family was hoping for a cheap winter outfit for the boy. The Saulteaux also took advantage of the missionaries' Christian charity, using their houses as relief stations when the Indians were ill or hungry. (86)

The Saulteaux of Peguis' band did not want to give up their familiar and rewarding way of life. Peguis often attempted to stall for time by saying that he was unable to find his councillors to discuss a matter with them, or that he was too much in debt to the Hudson's Bay Company to stop trapping and begin sedentary cultivation. (87) In the fall of 1830, the Saulteaux told Cockran that they simply could not abandon their traditions:

If they were to accomodate themselves to the customs of the Whites; embrace their religion, and lay aside their medicines, dreams, & Conjurors They would soon all die. (88)

The debate between the Saulteaux and the missionaries was complicated by the apparent success of a number of Swampy Crees who moved into the area of the colony from the "Rat Country" to the north of the Interlake during the 1820's. These individuals adopted Christianity, took advantage of Cockran's offers of material assistance, and were the first to begin farming just north of the Red River settlement where Cockran had hoped to settle the Saulteaux. Peguis and his people became jealous of the Swampies' success in farming, of the esteem in which they were held as a result of their "exemplary" conduct, and by the assistance given the Swampies by their metis relatives. When confronted with the Swampies' success by Cockran, the

Saulteaux told Cockran that it was only the Swampies who were able to benefit from the adoption of sedentary agriculture and Christianity: "It would be contrary with us were we to adapt (sic) the same customs," Peguis said in the fall of 1830. (89)

In keeping with the tradition of the western Ojibwa as being people very much concerned with magic, members of Peguis' band responded to the stresses in their relationship with the Swampies by perceiving their success as due to supernatural power. Stricken by a run of personal bad luck, one Saulteaux decided that the Swampies were conjuring him. Acting on his behalf, Peguis decided to shoot the Swampies; he was dissuaded, with difficulty, by Cockran. (90) Several years later, indications of magical rivalries between the two groups were recorded in missionaries' diaries. (91) That at least some of the Saulteaux believed they were being injured by the Swampies' magic is an indication of the stress Peguis' band was under.

Despite such pressures, and despite the ecological problems which might have induced them to agree to the missionaries' proposals, the Red River Ojibwa maintained their way of life and their autonomy during the 1820's. Their resistance to missionary efforts became even more defined after 1829, when Reverend Cockran received permission from George Simpson to begin an experimental farm for the purpose of settling, civilizing, and converting the Indians around the colony. In the spring of 1831, the traditional religious leaders in Peguis' band held a feast "to conjure...for the purpose of ascertaining whether the change [to agriculture]...would be beneficial or otherwise." (92) Not



only were these people retaining a viable way of life, but they were doing so in an environment of social and ecological upheaval.

The adaptations made by Peguis, Tolibee, and the bands of the Interlake were all variations of a common cultural heritage. These adaptations enabled them, as Robert Kennedy wrote in exasperation, "to take advantage of the times": to exploit the opportunities offered by the particular ecological, social and political situations in which they found themselves and to maintain as much autonomy vis-a-vis the fur trade as they possibly could. This willingness and ability to exploit and adapt made the western Ojibwa a match for even the determined and ruthlessly efficient George Simpson: after nearly a decade of monopoly control, even Simpson was by 1830 unable to make these people truly "feel their dependence upon" the Hudson's Bay Company. (93)

Summary:  
Western Ojibwa Population around various Posts, 1808 to 1829

	1808	1815	1819	1823	1825	1829
Red River (incl. Netley Creek, Pembina) *including Brandon Ho.	784	* 1250	800	900	?	?
Assiniboine R. (Birsa, Halfway, Portage la Prairie)	?	40	200	?	?	?
White Mud River	?	65	50	?	?	?
Brandon House	22	with Red R.	45	100	closed	40
Jack Head	108 (1810)	?	75	?	?	?
Partridge Crop	?	?	36	?	?	?
Big Tent	?	?	30?	?	?	?
Dauphin R: NW Co.	92	?	?	?	?	?
HB Co.	?	?	140	?	?	?
Swan & Red Deer's R.	20	30	1000	?	1000	1200
Fort Ellice	not	in	existence	50	?	?
Fort Pelly	?	?	15	45 (1824)	50	55
Cumberland Ho.	125	?	10	?	18	?
Carlton	?	?	?	10	25	35
Edmonton	?	?	?	75?	?	?
TOTAL PERSONS	1151	1485	2401	1130	1093	1330

(given that 1 tent = 10 persons, including 2 men)

Sources: HBCA journals (estimates of spring and fall gatherings) and district reports.

1. HBCA B.115/e/1, Lesser Slave Lake District Report 1819-20, Robert Kennedy, fo.4.
2. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade; Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p.287.
3. During the reorganization of the new Hudson's Bay Company after the merger, the Company's territory was divided into 4 departments. The western posts relevant to this study were included in the Northern Department, which stretched from Hudson's Bay to the Rockies and from the Missouri to the Arctic Ocean. (Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p.285.)
4. Selkirk Papers, vol.24 p.7586-87, George Simpson to Alexander Colville, 20 May 1822.
5. Vide Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, pp.306-7, 326-7.
6. Innis, The Fur Trade in Canada, p.333-334; HBCA B.22/a/3, Brandon House Journal 1828-29, Francis Heron, fo.5; HBCA B.159/a/11, Pelly Journal, 1829-30, 16 Dec 1829; HBCA B.235/a/9, Winnipeg Journal, 1827-28, 30 September 1827; HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Journal, 1826-27, 1 January, 25 April 1827.
7. HBCA B.235/a/5, Winnipeg Journal, 1822-23, 6 October 1822. HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Journal, 1826-27, 3 October 1826.
8. PAM, SP vol.24 p.7750, 8 September 1822, Red River, A. Bulger to A.Colville; HBCA B.159/e/3, Swan River District Report 1828-29, fo.1.
9. HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Journal, 1826-27, 6 March 1827; HBCA B.159/e/3, Swan River District Report 1828-29, fo.1; PAM, SP vol. 24, p.7750, 8 September 1822, Red River, A.Bulger to A. Colville, and p.7600, 20 May 1822, Simpson to Colville; HBCA B.235/a/4, Winnipeg Journal, 1820-21, 21 September 1822. The settlers were able to pay higher prices than the H.HBCA B.C. because they were given a hefty discount themselves, which allowed them to act as middlemen (Morton, A History of the Canadian West, p.658)
10. HBCA B.159/a/12, Fort Pelly Journal, 1830-31, 5 October 1830. See Henry, p.550, HBCA B.63/d/1, Fort Ellice Accounts 1822, and HBCA B.4/a/5, Fort Alexander Journal 1822-23, 7 June 1822 for fluctuating gift amounts. The Fort Alexander trading captain and two other Indians received some clothing, but this seems to have been uncommon.
11. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.199.
12. HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Journal, 1825-26, 24 March 1826.
13. PAM, CMS reel M60, Reverend David Jones journal 6 September 1825.

14. PAM, SP vol.24, p.7587, Red River, 20 May 1822, Simpson to Colville.
15. HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Journal, 1825-26, 24 March 1826; see also HBCA B.22/e/23, Brandon House District Report 1828-29, Francis Heron, fo.2.
16. HBCA B.22/e/3, Brandon House District Report 1828-29, Francis Heron; Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.204.
17. HBCA B.22/e/3, Brandon House District Report, 1828-29, fo.4; John Ewers, Chippewa Cree Tribe, p.163; Howard, Plains Ojibwa p.18.
18. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.205.
19. Ibid.
20. Ross, The Red River Settlement, p.246.
21. Hickerson and Wheeler-Voegelin, Red Lake and Pembina Chippewa, p.201; Ross, The Red River Settlement, p.269.
22. HBCA B.235/e/1, Lower Red River District Report 1822-23, fo.3.
23. HBCA B.159/a/12, Fort Pelly Journal 1830-31, 5 October 1831.
24. HBCA B.159/a/12, Pelly Journal 1830-31, 10 April 1831; and see HBCA B.159/a/14, Fort Pelly Journal 1832-33, William Todd, 13, 17 May 1833: this "plain Sauteaux" may be the same Ayagon who traded with Nelson.
25. At least 4 large bandlets (two to five tents each) can be identified: Desjarlais/Tolibee; Big Bear; and two more trading at Fort Pelly.
26. Regarding the scarcity of game, see: HBCA B.159/e/2, Swan River District Report 1825, fo.2
27. Howard, Plains Ojibwa or Bungi, p.18; see also Howard, "Dakota Winter Counts", Anthropological Papers of the Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 173 no. 61 (Washington, 1960).
28. Diary of Nicholas Garry; HBCA B.159/a/12, Pelly Journal 1830-31, 25 October 1830; HBCA B.159/a/13, Pelly Journal 1831-32, 11 May 1832.
29. HBCA B.159/a/11, Pelly Journal, 1829-30, 6 May 1830.
30. HBCA B.159/e/2, Swan River District Report 1825, fo.1.
31. HBCA B.159/a/11, Pelly Journal 1829-30, 10 October 1829.

32. HBCA B.159/a/12, Pelly Journal 1830-31, 3 Oct 1830.
33. HBCA B.235/e/1, Lower Red River District Report 1822-23, fo.3.
34. HBCA B.49/a/43, Cumberland House Journal 1826-27, Thomas Isbister; HBCA B.235/e/1, Lower Red River District Report 1822-23, fo. 3a; HBCA B.235/a/13, Fort Garry Journal 1829-30, Francis Dease, 7 September: freemen going to Turtle Mountain for fall hunt; HBCA B.22/a/23, Brandon House Journal 1829-30, William Todd, 27 September: 4 Ojibwa arrive from the south with a pack of rats; HBCA B.22/e/23, Brandon House District Report 1828-29, Francis Heron, fo.2 re: American traders.
35. HBCA B.159/a/11, Fort Pelly Journal 1829-30, 13 October 1829.
36. HBCA B.63/a/3, Fort Ellice Journal 1822-23, Edward Ermatinger, 18 November 1822: Crees are going to Ellice now that Upper Swan R. post is closed.
37. E.g. HBCA B.22/e/23, Brandon House District Report 1828-29, fo.2; HBCA B.22/a/3, Brandon House Journal 1828-29, William Todd, 8 November.
38. E.g. HBCA B.49/a/43, Cumberland House Journal 1827-28, Thomas Isbister, 7 September 1827; HBCA B.49/a/42, Cumberland House Journal 1826-27, Thomas Isbister, 3 July, 9 Oct 1826; see also the following section on the Tolibee/Desjarlais band.
39. HBCA B.27/a/12, Carlton House Journal 1822-23, J. Pruden, 11 July 1822; HBCA B.27/a/13, Carlton House Journal 1823-24, J. Pruden, 2 August 1823.
40. Ray, Indians in the Fur Trade, p.110.
41. Albers, "Pluralism in the Native Plains", p.47-48; Dobyns, Their Number Become Thinned, p.311.
42. HBCA B.115/e/1, Lesser Slave Lake District Report 1819-20, Robert Kennedy, fo. 4b. I am grateful to Dr. Gertrude Nicks of the Royal Ontario Museum for sharing her research notes on the Tolibee--Desjarlais group.
43. Ibid.
44. Ibid.
45. HBCA B.115/e/3, Lesser Slave Lake District Report 1821-22. See also G. Nicks, "Native Responses to the Early Fur Trade at Lesser Slave Lake" (m.s., 1986), p.18.
46. HBCA B.115/e/3, Lesser Slave Lake District Report 1821-22.

47. HBCA B.115/e/3, Lesser Slave Lake District Report 1821-22; HBCA B.115/a/5, Lesser Slave Lake Journal 1821-22; HBCA B.115/a/6, Lesser Slave Lake Journal 1822-23. They may also have been at Fort Vermilion: see HBCA B.224/e/1, HBCA B.115/e/4.
48. These, too, had been ended for reasons of economy after the merger: Minutes of Council 1823, no.168, p.62, freemen to trade at Indian standard minus 20%; HBCA B.115/a/6, Lesser Slave Lake Journal, May 1823.
49. HBCA B.49/a/43, Cumberland House Journal 1827-28, 31 July, 26 August, 1,2 October 1827.
50. Ibid., 31 July, 1,2 October.
51. HBCA B.159/a/11, Fort Pelly Journal 1829-30, 6 December 1829.
52. HBCA B.159/a/12, Fort Pelly Journal 1830-31, 5 October 1830.
53. Ibid., November 1830, 13 January, 9 February, 12 June 1831.
54. Redfield et. al., "Memorandum for the Study of Acculturation", American Anthropologist no. 38 (1936), p.152; HBCA B.115/e/1, Lesser Slave Lake District Report 1819-20, Robert Kennedy, fo.4
55. HBCA B.51/e/1, Dauphin District Report.
56. Ibid., fo. 18a.
57. HBCA B.22/e/23, Brandon House District Report 1828-29, fo. 5.
58. HBCA B.159/a/11, Fort Pelly Journal 1829-30, 6 May 1830.
59. HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Journal 1826-27, 6,7 March 1827; HBCA B.235/a/12, Winnipeg Journal 1828-29, Francis Dease, 24 January 1829.
60. HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Journal 1826-27, 6,7 March 1827.
61. HBCA B.235/a/9, Winnipeg Journal 1827-28, 5 April 1828; HBCA B.235/a/12, Winnipeg Journal 1828-29, 11 May 1829; HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Journal 1825-26, 19 Aug, 6 Nov, 14 Dec 1825; HBCA B.235/a/13, Winnipeg Journal 1829-30, 21 Aug 1829; HBCA B.235/a/6, 1825-25, 30 June 1824.
62. HBCA B.159/a/9, Fort Pelly Journal 1825-26, 24 September 1825.
63. Ibid.; also HBCA B.63/d/1, Fort Ellice Day Book 1822-23.
64. HBCA B.159/a/11, Fort Pelly Journal 1829-30, 30 Sept 1829.

65. HBCA B.159/a/11, Fort Pelly Journal 1829-30, 30 Sept 1829; HBCA B.159/a/8, Fort Pelly Journal 1824-25, 29 Sept 1824: Indians have been about all summer, fishing from a weir.
66. HBCA B. 159/a/13, Fort Pelly Journal 1831-32, 6 Oct 1831.
67. HBCA B.159/a/12, Fort Pelly Journal 1830-31, 12 October 1830; see also HBCA B.159/a/8, Fort Pelly Journal 1824-25, 14, 28 September 1824, 1 (mixed) band of 10 tents "who had but little to trade with, the Buffaloe being far off"; HBCA B.159/a/10, Fort Pelly Journal 1828-29, 8 February 1829, camp of buffalo hunters: "Forty Tents Crees, Seauteaux & Stonies...they have no pound".
68. HBCA B.63/a/3, Fort Ellice Journal 1822-23, 19 March 1823; HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Journal 1825-26, 22 May 1826; HBCA B.27/a/17, Carlton House Journal 1828-29, 23 July 1828.
69. PAM, Church Missionary Society (Hereafter CMS), reel M60, D Jones Journal, 17 Sept 1824.
70. HBCA B.159/a/12, Fort Pelly Journal, 6 Oct 1831.
71. HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Post Journal 1826-27, 11 Dec 1826; HBCA B.235/a/5, Winnipeg Post Journal 1822-23, 19 October 1822.
72. HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Post Journal 1826-27, 8, 24 Jan 1827.
73. HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Post Journal 1825-26, 30 December 1825.
74. HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Post Journal 1826-27, 27 February 1827.
75. HBCA B.235/a/12, Winnipeg Post Journal 1828-29, 24 September 1828.
76. Ibid., 31 August 1828; HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Post Journal 1825-26, 31 August, 1, 10, 14 September 1825; HBCA B.235/a/6, Winnipeg Post Journal 1824-25, 18 September 1824.
77. HBCA B.235/a/5, Winnipeg Journal 1822-23, 3 October 1822; HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Journal 1825-26, 3, 24 October, 14, 18, 30 November 1825; PAM, CMS, reel M60, Rev. David Jones Journal, Fri. October 1; HBCA B.235/a/13, Winnipeg Journal 1829-30, 1 January 1825; HBCA B. 95, 20, 31 December 1827.
78. HBCA B.235/a/7, 1825-26, 14 April 1826; HBCA B.91, 10 March 1823; HBCA B.235/a/16, Winnipeg Post Journal 1824-25, 5 April 1825.
79. HBCA B.235/a/16, 1824-25, 12 May, 18 June 1825; HBCA B.235/a/5, Winnipeg Journal 1822-23, 13 May 1823; HBCA B.235/a/13, Winnipeg Journal 1829-30, 7 July 1829.

80. Governor and Committee to George Simpson, Hudson Ho, London, 8 Mar 1822, in R.H. Fleming, ed., Minutes of Council Northern Department of Rupert Land 1821-31 (Toronto, 1940), p.315; Anderson, Kinsmen, p.119.
81. Lucille Kane, June Holmquist, and Carolyn Gilman, eds., The Northern Expeditions of Stephen H. Long (Minnesota, 1978), p.192, 18 Aug 1823 (fishing); regarding the cultivation of corn, see "Diary of Nicholas Garry", Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada, sec.II, 1900, p.; HBCA B.235/a/8, Winnipeg Journal 1826-27, 1, 5 August 1826; HBCA B.235/a/16, Winnipeg Journal 1824-25, 14 July 1824; HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Journal 1825-26, 30 July, 1 August 1825.
82. HBCA B.235/a/16, Winnipeg Journal 1824-25; CMS, reel M60, Jones to Secretaries of the CMS, July 1827.
83. HBCA B.235/a/7, Winnipeg Journal 1825-26, 2, 11 January 1826.
84. E.G. Ross, The Red River Settlement, p. 13; CMS (PAM M64), Smithurst to CMS, 15 November 1839.
85. John West, The Substance of a Journal During a Residence at the Red River Colony (New York, 1966), p.118-119. See also Laura Peers, "Rich Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man, Chief: Saulteaux in the Red River Settlement, 1812-1833." In W. Cowan, ed., Proceedings of the 18th Algonquian Conference. Ottawa: Carleton University, 1987.
86. E.g., West, Ibid., p.125.
87. E.g., CMS, reel A85, Rev. Cockran's Journal 1830-31, 14, 28 October 1830.
88. CMS, reel A85, Rev. Cockran's Journal, 28 Oct 1830.
89. CMS, reel A85, Cockran Journal 28 Oct 1830.
90. CMS, reel A85, Cockran Journal 1830-31, 6 July 1831.
91. CMS, reel A77 (M45), David Jones to Secretary of the CMS, 25 July 1833; CMS, W. Cockran to CMS, 11 July 1836.
92. PAM, CMS reel A85, 31 May 1831.
93. PAM SP vol. 24, p.7587, 20 May 1822, Red River, George Simpson to Andrew Colville.



### Chapter Seven: Final Steps

Between 1780 and 1830, the western Ojibwa both changed much and retained a great deal. As demonstrated by Peguis, Tolibee, and the Interlake groups, the western Ojibwa had by 1830 integrated both material and cognitive elements from a number of other cultures. The cultural changes undergone by the the western Ojibwa were embraced in order to maintain, as nearly as possible, the autonomy and affluence with which the Ojibwa had entered the west. The decline of beaver, the rise of competition from freeman and metis groups, the loss of their competitive advantage and difficult ecological conditions were compensated for by a variety of alternatives, including decreased participation in the fur trade and the movement onto the plains. Other changes were the result of increased exposure to foreign ecological zones and new social networks. Despite the changes they made in their lifestyles and social networks and despite the variations which developed among Ojibwa groups in different parts of the west, the western Ojibwa maintained their ethnic boundaries and continued to identify themselves and be identified as Ojibwa by other ethnic groups.

While previous scholarship has focused on the supposed transition of the western Ojibwa from a "Woodlands" to a "Plains" people, the western Ojibwa actually moved back and forth between the ecological and cultural divisions of the forests and prairies and provided a strong link between them. The adaptations described in the preceding chapters do much to modify Howard's statement that "By the 1830's, the westernmost Ojibwa were fully adjusted to life on the Plains": in fact,

by 1830 the western Ojibwa were neither a strictly plains nor woodlands people, but utilised both zones as well as the parkland. (1)

There were, however, a number of western Ojibwa bands which were drawn to the extreme end of the woodland-plains cultural continuum. By increasing their contact with plains Cree and Assiniboine, absorbing ideas from these groups, and placing greater emphasis on bison-hunting, these plains-oriented Ojibwa developed a distinctive world view, value system, and lifestyle. Some of these bands (which were nearly always of mixed Ojibwa-Cree composition) were centred around Turtle Mountain and the Qu'Appelle River valley; others lived along the Saskatchewan River, and moved between the Birch Hills, Duck Lake, Fort Carlton, Redberry Lake and the hills to the north of it, and the Eagle Hills. A few bands also hunted in the hills south of the Battle River. (2)

One such plains-oriented band was a mixed Ojibwa-Cree group led by an Ojibwa named Black Powder. This band hunted in what are now "the Wainwright, Sounding Lake, and Empress areas" of eastern Alberta. (3) In terms of subsistence activities, these people differed little from many other western Ojibwa, although they were more inclined to hunt bison than some and placed relatively little importance on the fur trade. The journals from Fort Carlton mention Ojibwa trading small hunts of muskrats and other furs in fall and spring, picking large quantities of berries in summer, and hunting red deer and bison throughout the year. (4) Fish weirs were also built in spring, and according to oral tradition these people used pounds to catch bison. This enabled them to delay the necessary dispersal of the group in the

fall, and sustain large groups for some time either for necessity or ceremonial purposes during other seasons. (5)

Mixed Ojibwa-Cree groups west of the Interlake such as Black Powder's band were affected by the conflict between the Cree and the Blackfoot. Ojibwa became involved in this dispute as a result of the increased demand for horses which followed their general movement westward after 1821; their kinship with the Cree also implicated them in the eyes of the Blackfoot. Intensifying conflict with Blackfoot warriors during the early 1820's forced Cree hunters (and the Ojibwa who accompanied them) to be extremely cautious when venturing west or south of the Qu'Appelle River until 1828, when peace was negotiated. Isolated battles occurred after this, but in general it became much safer after 1828 for the Cree to hunt or travel in the prairie. (6) The ability to travel safely and the re-opening of the Blackfoot horse market to the Cree and Ojibwa encouraged the adoption of a Plains cultural orientation among the western Ojibwa, so that by the early 1830's "plain Sauteaux" were regular arrivals at Fort Pelly. (7)

By this time, Black Powder and other "plains Ojibwa" exhibited the effects of over a decade of co-residence with the plains Cree in many ways. Paul Kane described Black Powder, whom he encountered at Fort Pitt, as "a great warrior and horse thief, the two most important qualifications for a chief." Sun Dances were being held by these Ojibwa by the 1830's; a huge one was celebrated near present-day Towner, North Dakota in 1835 and there were probably other sites near Turtle Mountain and along the Qu'Appelle and Saskatchewan Rivers as

well.(8) In addition to such changes in religious ideology and ceremony, elements of personal style and decoration were also being adopted from plains peoples. In 1832, George Catlin painted an Ojibwa man named The Six at the mouth of the Yellowstone River in Montana. If Catlin's painting is accurate, The Six was wearing clothing and ornaments which were very much Cree-influenced: eagle feather and hair-pipe ornaments, quilled geometric designs and painted figures of horses on his shirt, and a bison robe. (9)

Black Powder's son, who was born in this cultural environment in the mid-1820's, provides a clear example of the effects of Cree influences on these plains-oriented Ojibwa. Although his father was Ojibwa, the boy was given a Cree name: mistahai muskwa, or Big Bear. (10) Big Bear's adolescent vision, however, had to do with a spirit-animal which was perceived by both the Cree and Ojibwa in his camp as connected to the woodlands and Ojibwa culture, rather than to Cree symbolism. (On the other hand, one of Big Bear's later visions involved horses and the importance of both owning and giving away horses, a concept and symbolism which was far more Cree than Ojibwa in origin.) The immense respect accorded Big Bear for the power given by his vision was typical of the perception of the strength of Ojibwa powers by the Cree. As late as 1875, Big Bear's leadership of his predominantly Cree camp was based to a large extent on this power and, therefore, on his Ojibwa ethnic heritage: "The Crees said they would have driven them [the Ojibwa] out of camp long ago, but were afraid of their medicines, as they are noted conjurors." (11) This fear was one

factor which acted to maintain a separate Ojibwa identity in mixed-group camps. As Robert Bee explains,

Any ideology or activity that strengthens the group's conviction that its members are somehow better than the members of other cultures or conversely, that the other group's members are better at something than the members of one's own group ...can serve as a boundary-maintaining device. (12)

The division created by this boundary between Big Bear and most of his followers may well have contributed to his downfall and death. After he had worked throughout the early 1880's to unify the plains Cree position in preparation for making demands regarding revisions to the treaties, Big Bear's leadership was challenged by the Cree warriors and war chiefs of his band at a crucial period in 1885. Ordinarily overridden by Big Bear's skill and experience, the ethnic boundary which existed between Big Bear and his Cree followers quite probably became yet another barrier to his ability to control his warriors during the Frog Lake "massacre". (13) As the recognized chief, Big Bear was ultimately imprisoned for the actions of his warriors; he died, dispirited, a few months after his release.

The development of plains-oriented or bison-reliant groups such as Black Powder's was more the result of such factors as the closure of the Interlake posts, the decline of beaver and other prestigious furs, and the decline of moose, deer and elk, than with the simple lure of a "superior" plains culture. Furthermore, these groups were only one of several regional adaptations of the Ojibwa to the west, all of which provided satisfying and comfortable ways of life.

The varied subsistence pursuits, beliefs and inter-cultural social

contacts of Ayagon, Peguis, and Black Powder emphasize the strength and flexibility of Ojibwa culture, but prevent any easy understanding of the western Ojibwa as a whole. It was precisely these qualities, however, which enabled them to participate in and integrate so many different cultural adaptations without losing either their identity or their autonomy, and which therefore make the western Ojibwa of interest and importance to studies of western native history and of the impact of European contact on native cultures.

1. Howard, The Plains-Ojibwa or Bungi, p.18.
2. HBCA B.27/a/15, Carlton Journal 1826-27, 26 May, 17 July; HBCA B.27/a/17, Carlton Journal 1828-29, 17-29 May, 19 June, 5, 9 July; HBCA B.27/a/18, Carlton Journal 1829-30, 9, 12-18 October; Dempsey, Indian Tribes of Alberta, p.84.
3. Dempsey, Indian Tribes of Alberta, p. 84; Dempsey, Big Bear, p.11.
4. HBCA B.27/a/17, Carlton Journal 1828-29; HBCA B.27/a/15, Carlton Journal 1828-29; HBCA B.27/a/15, Carlton Journal 1826-27; HBCA B.27/a/18, Carlton Journal 1829-30.
5. Dempsey, Big Bear, p.11-12; HBCA B.159/a/8, Pelly Journal 1824-25, 29 September 1824: "...the Indians have made a wear..."
6. Dempsey, Big Bear, p.13; Milloy, "Plains Cree", p.214.
7. HBCA B.22/a/23, Brandon House Journal 1829-30, 8 November 1829: Indians last summer made peace with the Blackfoot and traded guns for horses; "plain Sauteaux": e.g. HBCA B.159/a/14, Pelly Journal 1832-33, 17 May 1833 and HBCA B.159/a/17, Pelly Journal 1837-38, 12 October 1837.
8. Paul Kane, Wanderings of an Artist Among the Indians of North America (Edmonton, 1968), quoted in Hugh Dempsey, Indian Tribes of Alberta, p.84; Howard, Plains-Ojibwa or Bungi, p.18.
9. Howard, Plains-Ojibwa or Bungi, p.18.
10. Dempsey, Big Bear, p.17.
11. George McDougall to Lieutenant-Governor Morris, 23 October 1875, in Alexander Morris, The Treaties of Canada with the Indians of Manitoba and the North-West Territories, p.174. This challenges Howard's statement ("Identity and Demography", p. 172) that the Plains Ojibwa were not as concerned with magic as their eastern kin.
12. Bee, Patterns and Processes, p.98.
13. G. Friesen, The Canadian Prairies, p.150-153; John Tobias, "Canada's Subjugation of the Plains Cree 1879-1885", Canadian Historical Review 64 (1983), p.519-48; Hugh Dempsey, Big Bear: The End of Freedom.

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B.22/e, Brandon House (Upper Red River District) Reports

B.24/a, Buckingham House Journals

B.27/a, Carlton House Journals

B.28/a, Carlton House (Assiniboine River) Journal

B.49/a, Cumberland House Journals

B.49/e, Cumberland House District Reports

B.51/a, Fort Dauphin Journals

B.51/e, Fort Dauphin District Reports

B.60/a, Fort Edmonton Journals

B.63/a, Fort Ellice Journals

B.63/d, Fort Ellice Accounts

B.104/a, Lac la Biche (Greenwich House) Journal

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B.115/e, Lesser Slave Lake District Reports

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