DINJII KAT CHIH AHAA:
GWICH'IN NOTIONS OF LEADERSHIP

BY

SHELAGH MARIE BEAIRSTO

A Thesis

Submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

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MASTER OF EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation began the process of implementing their land claims and self-government agreements in the spring of 1995. The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation approached Yukon College's Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Campus to deliver leadership training in Old Crow. Old Crow is the homeland of the Vuntut Gwitchin people. This thesis explores Gwich'in perceptions of leadership through the exploration of Vuntut Gwitchin Elder Edith Josie's life story coupled with an exploration of historical documents, ethnographies and oral histories.

Through this study, it has become apparent that Gwich'in notions of leadership have remained consistent amidst the massive changes that have occurred among the Gwich'in people since European contact. Gwich'in people have chosen leaders who possess the following characteristics: knowledge of land and traditions, commitment to community service; an ability to communicate effectively and wealth. This study explored how the above attributes were manifested among Gwich'in leaders from pre-contact time to modern times.

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ACKNOWLDEGMENTS

I would like to thank many people for their support while I was researching and writing this thesis. I would like to dedicate this thesis to Edith Josie who patiently worked with me as I struggled to gain a better understanding of Gwich'in leadership. I would like to extend my thanks to Vuntut Gwitchin people who were so supportive of my husband and me during the six years we resided in Old Crow.

I wish to extend thanks to my Yukon College colleagues who encouraged me to finish this thesis amidst all the activity that emerges from Yukon College's Community and Extension Services Division. I would especially like to thank Dudley Morgan for encouragement and his insistence that I finish! I would also like to extend my thanks to my colleagues at Advanced Education for encouragement and flexibility this past year.

I want to thank my thesis committee. In particular, I would like to thank Tony Riffel who continued to monitor my progress from such a great distance. I also appreciate Tony's understanding of the untimely events delaying my research such as the Old Crow school fire and the early entrance of my son, Henry, into this world. It was always encouraging to receive his e-mail reminding me to soldier on with my research.

Finally, I would like to thank my family for all their support. Without my husband Colin's regular reminders to keep working, I question whether or not I would have completed the research. I am most appreciative of his

willingness to allow me the time to research and write the thesis when I know that he had a lot of work to complete himself.

I thank my children Bronwyn, Seamus and Henry who have never really known their mother without a thesis to write. Bronwyn and Seamus even created a thesis dance. Henry was born at the time I was collecting data.

I would also like to thank my parents, Mary and Sid Rowles for their willingness to watch our children and listen to me in the final stages of my thesis writing.

CHAPTER ONE

GENERAL BACKGROUND AND ISSUE

Old Crow, the most northerly community in Yukon, is located approximately one hundred and fifteen kilometres north of the Arctic Circle at the confluence of the Porcupine and Old Crow rivers. Approximately ninety-five percent of Old Crow's three hundred residents are members of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.[1] Old Crow is only accessible by air or boat. Air North, Yukon's northern scheduled air carrier, flies to Old Crow six days per week.

Yukon College, Yukon's sole post secondary institution, established Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Campus in Old Crow in 1987. Towards the end of August of 1991, my husband and I moved to Old Crow. Yukon College hired me to teach at Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Campus while the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation hired my husband to work in their land claims department as a land claims negotiator. My husband and I lived in Old Crow until the fall of 1997.

Arriving in Old Crow was an unforgettable experience. After a four-hour flight from Whitehorse to Old Crow, Air North's DC-3 landed on Old Crow's runway, which runs parallel to the Porcupine River. Peering out of the vintage aircraft on that late August day, we were amazed to see trees at their fall peak and smoke coming from the log cabins wedged between the riverbank and the

[1] The Vuntut Gwitchin have chosen the "Gwitchin" spelling while the preference of the broader ethnic group is "Gwich'in".

runway. The airport was full of people meeting friends and relatives returning to the community and people saying good-bye to their teenage children going to high school in Whitehorse. People were also catching a glimpse of new teachers arriving in the community.

During my first months at work, I tried to understand what a college instructor's role should be in Old Crow. Although Yukon College hired me to teach Adult Basic Education (ABE), people in Old Crow clearly indicated that local educational priorities exceeded ABE. Between 1991 and 1995, Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Campus delivered a broad variety of education and training programs allowing community residents to develop proficiencies in areas such as plumbing, office administration, and research. The greatest challenges I encountered as an educator arose from the pressure to expose Old Crow people to educational processes of the outside world while providing opportunities for students to explore their language, culture, and heritage.

On February 14, 1995, the Vuntut Gwitchin land claims and self-government agreements came into effect. Through those agreements, the First Nation is reclaiming responsibilities for areas such as health, education, municipal management, and land management. The new government is located in Old Crow and is administered by Vuntut Gwitchin people.

One critical training area identified by the First Nation is leadership training. Those acting in leadership capacities within the community felt that leadership training would better equip them with the skills necessary to implement their agreements. When this request was forwarded, I did not know where to look for leadership programs that might assist Old Crow people in their goal of realizing the full potential of their land claims and self-government agreements. Through discussions with people in Old Crow and through exploring leadership programs delivered at southern colleges and universities, it became increasingly apparent that before considering leadership programs to import, the best place to explore leadership was from within Gwich'in history and culture.

Few scholars have explored the meaning and nature of leadership in Aboriginal communities. Since Canadian Aboriginal peoples, such as the Vuntut Gwitchin people of Old Crow, primarily record their culture through oral tradition, little written documentation of Aboriginal leadership exists. Currently, stories from Elders are the primary sources of information regarding First Nations conceptualizations of leadership. Fur traders, anthropologists, and missionaries have documented different aspects of Gwich'in leadership, but few studies have focussed specifically on leadership. Gathering information about the nature of Gwich'in leadership is difficult because much of the information about Gwich'in people is only to be found through exploring events that have

occurred in North Yukon since European contact. Gwich'in people, similar to other Aboriginal people in Canada, have encountered massive social, political and economic change following European contact.

This study explored Gwich'in notions of leadership through investigating Vuntut Gwitchin Elder Edith Josie's life story and by comparing Edith's notions of leadership to information provided by oral histories, ethnographies and historical documents. It shows that Gwich'in notions of leadership remained consistent amidst tremendous social, economic and political change.

CHAPTER TWO

METHODOLOGY

To explore leadership within the context of Gwich'in culture, I used exploratory and participatory research models. Aboriginal people across North America argue that leadership in Aboriginal communities differs from leadership in the corporate Western world. The following section explores the necessity of considering leadership outside of Western leadership constructs as well as an explanation of the methodology used for this study.

Leadership Among Aboriginal Peoples

There is no consensus among Western leadership scholars about what leadership is (Burns; 1978; Yukl, 1989). It is also evident that Western social, political and economic structures significantly influence popular understandings of leadership. Researchers continue to recommend further research to understand more about the mystery of leadership. However, most North American leadership studies remain tightly bound to Western paradigms.

Exploring Aboriginal leadership separately from mainstream notions of leadership is important. It is quite possible that there are areas where Aboriginal and Western notions of leadership overlap; however, it is clear that our propensity to classify and pigeonhole elements of our social lives is not indicative of how many Aboriginal people view the world (Cruikshank 1988;

Knudtson & Suzuki, 1992; Kowagely, 1995; Ross, 1996). Because of the diversity of Aboriginal heritage and language across North America, it is unlikely that all Aboriginal people share a common understanding of leadership. However, nearly all Aboriginal communities have experienced the process of colonization and are in the process of deconstructing the effects of colonization. Therefore, leadership literature by American Indians or Southern Canadian First Nations people may provide insight for leadership research in Old Crow.

Rupert Ross (1996) explores issues related to Aboriginal Justice over a three year period. His study examined Aboriginal people's approach to justice across Canada. It was clear from his research that Aboriginal people envision justice differently from Western society. Ross quotes a portion of a report on justice from an Elder's justice conference in Ontario.

> We understand that way of life does not correspond in any way with the current justice system, so our approach in trying to research the material we wanted would have to come from a different angle. It would appear that trying to identify a justice system, *as most people understand it* is going to be virtually impossible (p. 254).

The document that Ross quotes clearly illustrates how problematic it is for Aboriginal people to approach justice using the language and structures of the Western justice system. Further, it calls into question the validity of isolating

specific phenomena, such as justice or leadership, from the way of life of Aboriginal people.

Ross' research negates the helpfulness of comparing one system of justice to another. According to Ross, to understand Aboriginal notions of justice, one must be open to discussing justice on the terms set by Aboriginal people. Edith's story leads me to believe that the approach to understanding Aboriginal leadership is analogous to understanding Aboriginal justice. It is not useful to apply already conflicting Western leadership models to Aboriginal interpretations and approaches to leadership. The following literature probing Aboriginal leadership supports this theory.

Norbert S. Hill (1995) explores the nature of leadership in Aboriginal communities. Hill argues that Aboriginal communities are beginning to heal and recover after the debilitating effects of colonization. Hill's introduction is similar to Ross' insight into Aboriginal justice in Canada. Hill suggests that leadership is a way of living as opposed to the acquisition of a series of skills.

> I am reminded of the simple words from my very first teacher, my father, who said, "Speak softly, walk humbly and act compassionately". If we live by those words, we would not require leadership training programs. (p.2)

Hill implies that leadership is learning to behave in a way that upholds the values of a community. Hill also argues that leadership and other community

issues, such as healing, are not separate. When leadership is described as a way of being, is it useful to measure empirically its worth? Western leadership scholars place considerable emphasis on the productivity of leadership (Bass, 1984; Burns, 1978; Drucker, 1990; Yukl, 1989).

Hill acknowledges that community change coincides with technological development. He identifies the conflict that arises between the need to have sophisticated understanding of technology and the application and celebration of traditional values. Hill argues that there is an inherent danger in the temptation to become a technocrat. Hill emphasizes the need for community members to consider technology as a tool, not as a replacement for culture and tradition. He emphasizes that human issues are the core of all leadership issues. The spirit of the community needs revitalization. Once the spirit of the community returns, energy returns to the community. Hill suggests that understanding community in a holistic way is critical.

> Time and place, tradition and ceremony, are all vital to our healing. Living forward and looking backward provides a perspective that is needed now, more than ever. Looking at Indian leadership in this way, community becomes action -it becomes a verb as well as a noun. Leadership becomes a process rather than an event. (p. 23)

Hill argues that leadership training is critical, but he states that a systematic approach is necessary to discontinue the process of colonization.

Carl Urion (1993) affirms much of what Hill states about the nature of leadership. He states that in the past, communities recognized a leader by virtue of that individual's power.

> ...compassion, along with the knowledge that whenever people connect in caring for each other the tradition revitalizes us and the Ancestors are honoured. Leaders serve when they see their own place in maintaining the connection of people. There is a way that leaders carry that connection among people as a concern in their heart. Leadership becomes an example of service, not to gain individual recognition, but because their vision makes their service inevitable (p.1)

Urion also identifies the importance service plays in Aboriginal leadership. Several Aboriginal communities across North America are exploring leadership studies and how their ancestors understood leadership (Evans, 1995; Haase and Soldier, 1993; Hill, 1995; Stanley and Ryan, 1993). All of these writers seek to reclaim what has been lost through the process of colonization. They also explore how modernity impacts their current struggle to define leadership in their own communities.

Dianna Thorson-Randall (1990) provides helpful insight into how Aboriginal women in North America seek to regain power lost through the processes of colonization. She investigates the ways in which Aboriginal women are confronting their loss of power through written stories, songs, and poetry. Thorson-Randall argues that oral tradition reflects the balance between men and women. Today, women are using writing as a means of restoring the balance.

> Endurance is greater than politics and economics. True knowledge is remembering what you already know. Native American women are remembering what they knew in the pre-patriarchy past. As an act of survival, they now communicate their knowledge and understandings through speaking and writing. Their call is not for more data gathering, classifying, segmenting and evaluating as if they were a plant species. Their call is for acceptance, understanding and communication of the knowledge that is already known (p.76).

Thorson-Randall claims that an Aboriginal community's societal truths become evident through an application of the wisdom of the oral traditions. She also demonstrates the need for researchers to use Aboriginal stories in research.

Research Methods

Other researchers, seeking to understand how people outside the structures of Western society view the world and interact with one another, have applied exploratory and participatory methods of research. While preparing for this study, I found Michel Foucault's (1983) discussion of power useful. Foucault's discussion provided support for distancing this study from Western leadership structures. Michel Foucault explores the nature of power, often intertwined with leadership, in his book Power and Knowledge (1983). Foucault argues that a society's truth implicitly ties to power. Each society has its own way of distinguishing what is right from wrong. Truth is power.

> 'Truth' is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution circulation and operation of statements.
>
> 'Truth' is linked in circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of power which induces and which extend it (p.133).

What we consider as truth about leadership sustains our existing social, political and economic structures. Foucault illustrates the need to deconstruct our common understandings of truth. When exploring leadership in Old Crow, it is critical to understand how it is practised within the social, political and economic structures of the community. Furthermore, this study must consider how

leadership is exercised amidst the tremendous changes that have occurred in Old Crow.

Empirical research on Aboriginal leadership in Old Crow would not provide insight into how people in Old Crow envision leadership because the researcher would have to presuppose how Old Crow people envision leadership. The truths of Western society become the study focus as opposed to the truths about Gwich'in society. Patti Lather (1986) argues that research must be participatory in order for researchers to avoid confining research participants to society's dominant political, social and economic structures. Lather (1986) claims that it is essential for research participants to be a part of the development of theory and interpretations so that they are centrally part of the discussion and interpretation of their own reality.

> If it is to spur toward action, theory must be grounded in the self-understandings of the dispossessed even as it seeks to enable them to reevaluate themselves and their situations...The potential for creating reciprocal, dialogic research designs is rooted in the intersection between people's self understandings and the researcher's designs to provide a change-enhancing context. Such designs would both lead to self-reflection and provide for the forum...whereby the people for whom the theory is supposed

> to be emancipatory can participate in its construction and validation (p.269).

Lather concludes her article by encouraging researchers in the human sciences to reconsider how they conduct research.

Verna St. Denis (1992), describes how painful racial and class discrimination were to her as a Cree- Métis woman growing up in rural Saskatchewan. St. Denis suggests that social science research in Aboriginal communities perpetuated and supported discrimination. To counter the destructive nature of much of the research conducted in Aboriginal communities, St. Denis endorses community involvement and direction in research conducted in First Nations communities. St. Denis presents fourteen guidelines for community based research.

The thrust of St. Denis' (1992) guidelines is the need for active participation of community members in the research process. After an extensive review of literature concerning community-based participatory research, St. Denis argues that participatory research can help reverse the discriminatory effects of traditional research. "Community-based participatory research offers a way for First Nations communities to gain more control over their lives and, in gaining that control, to exert the power needed to effect decisions regarding their lives (p. 70)." Ideally, this study will help members of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation begin the process of reclaiming leadership in their own community.

I gathered the majority of information through a series of interviews with Edith Josie, a Vuntut Gwitchin Elder from Old Crow. The interviews were designed to explore her life story. Through the exploration of Edith's life story, her understandings of Gwich'in leadership are highlighted. The process of highlighting emerges from recurring themes about leadership that arise in her story and in her news. I chose Edith Josie for this study because of her long dedication to documenting the daily activities of people in Old Crow in her *Here Are the News* column in the Whitehorse Star. She has also attended the campus in Old Crow since its inception in 1987. Edith often states that she attends college to act as a good role model for youth.

When I began this study, I wanted to ensure that the research was open-ended so that I would not impose a predetermined hypothesis on the topic of Gwich'in leadership. Rather than conducting an empirical study where I would need to measure a predetermined hypothesis, I chose to explore Edith's story as well as ethnographic and historical documents, and then examine leadership themes arose in the process.

Following the interviews with Edith, I asked a focus group, comprised of two individuals from Old Crow, to discuss their interpretations of leadership and their reactions to Edith's discussion of leadership. I intentionally chose younger people for my focus group to understand how the younger generation of people envisions leadership.

The identity of focus group members remains hidden. However, responses from the group are included in the analysis of Gwich'in leadership following Edith's story. Throughout my discussions with Edith, and with the focus group members, I attempted to discover subtle aspects of Gwich'in leadership.

Although this study is situated in the North Yukon, upon reviewing ethnographic and historical data, it became evident that this study must also include discussions of leadership among Gwich'in people in the North West Territories (NWT) and Alaska. Historically, Vuntut Gwich'in people maintained close contact with neighbouring Gwich'in groups in NWT and Alaska (Balikci 1963). Edith Josie's story highlights this reality. Edith's family was originally from the Peel River area in NWT. Her parents moved to Eagle Alaska before she was born. When Edith was nineteen, her family moved to the Old Crow area.

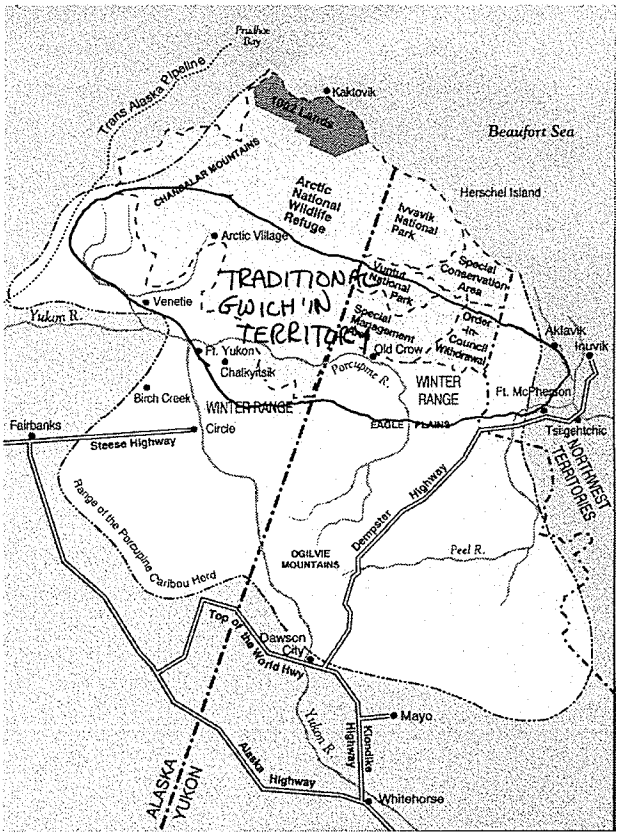


FIGURE 1 Map of Gwich'in Territory. General map used by permission from Gary Kofinas (Kofinas, 1998 p. 18)

To acquire copies of Edith Josie's newspaper column, I visited the Yukon Archives, the Rasmusen Archives at the University of Alaska Fairbanks, and reviewed Whitehorse Star publications of Edith's news. Edith's columns between 1963 and 1967 were the most accessible as the Whitehorse Star had bound them during those years. Other documents such as oral histories, ethnographies and historical documents, collected at the Whitehorse library and the Yukon Archives, provided information for this study as well. Documents,

such as the journals of traders, proved to be beneficial for gathering information and insight into the fur trade and missionary eras. In addition, I found oral histories collected in Old Crow and Alaska as invaluable sources for this study.

Following the interviews with Edith and the discussions with focus group members, it became increasingly obvious that the discussions of leadership in historical texts and ethnographic data supported what Edith and the focus group identified as leadership. Through this study, I have discovered that although the practice of leadership has changed, Gwich'in understanding of what leadership is has remained constant amidst the massive social, political and economic changes of the twentieth century. This will be explored more fully in chapters three and five of this study.

Limitations of the Study

There are four obvious limitations to this study. First, as only one person has been interviewed for this study, detailed life histories and worldviews of other Old Crow Elders will not be explored. As such, the data collected will reflect a limited view of Gwich'in culture.

The second limitation of the study is the translation of oral interviews into written word. Some meaning may be lost, as written word cannot convey subtleties evoked by voice pitch, intonation, and facial expression. Although a translator was available, Edith chose to be interviewed in English. Some of Edith's thoughts and ideas may not readily translate into English as her first

language is Gwich'in. I am non-Gwich'in; therefore some subtle characteristics and understandings of the culture may be overlooked.

The third limitation in this study is that although I seek to explore social, political, and economic changes that have occurred among Gwich'in people since European contact, I have likely overlooked many aspects of change because the focus of the study is leadership. I have consciously attempted to confine the discussion, as much as possible, to leadership.

The fourth limitation is the data used to highlight leadership in the fur trade and missionary eras. The journals of the traders and missionaries were written from a pointedly Western perspective. When considering their observations, we must remain cognisant of the bias inherent in their descriptions. At the same time, many of their observations provide us with a glimpse into the past that we might not otherwise have. As a result, they are worth reviewing.

CHAPTER THREE

THE PRE-CONTACT ERA

To understand the context of Edith Josie's story and how it speaks to leadership, it is important to examine social, political, and economic changes that have occurred among the Gwich'in people since European contact. Through this examination, I endeavour to highlight stories, ethnographies, and historical documents that make reference to leadership or that explore the topic of leadership more fully and demonstrate how the desired qualities of leaders have remained consistent over time while the roles and responsibilities of leaders have changed enormously. In an effort to remain focussed on this study's purpose, the exploration of Edith Josie's story and the exploration of Gwich'in leadership, this chapter may overlook many changes that occurred among Gwich'in people before and after European contact. In addition, this study only partially reflects the profound relationship Gwich'in people maintain with the natural and spiritual worlds.

Historically, leadership among Gwich'in people was exercised by chiefs. The term for leadership in Gwich'in is *Dinjii Kat Chih Ahaa*[2]. The literal translation of this concept is "one who leads". The term leadership in Gwich'in

[2] Personal Communication with Edith Josie and Jane Montgomery, January 10,1999.

attributes the notion of leadership to a person or position. Although men typically dominated the chieftanships, the wives of chiefs often held special leadership status within the community (Osgood 1936; Slobodin 1969; Mishler 1995). Medicine Men also played significant roles as spiritual leaders among the Gwich'in people. However, people identified formal leadership as chieftanship. Through exploring ethnographies, oral histories, and historical journals, I discovered that Gwich'in people tended to choose leaders who possess the following characteristics: knowledge of land and traditions[3]; commitment to community service (inherent in this characteristic is generosity); an ability to communicate effectively; and wealth.

In the time before European contact, chiefs were responsible for overseeing the welfare of their people. Furthermore, they were accountable to their people for the success or failure of their group's hunting parties, trading expeditions, and warfare (Osgood 1936; Balikci 1963; Mishler 1995). At the height of the fur trade, particularly when the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) dominated the northern trade, Gwich'in chiefs acted as trade agents on behalf of their people with the HBC traders. In the 1860's, Anglican missionaries reached the North Yukon. The arrival of the missionaries coincided with a drastic reduction of Gwich'in populations due to disease and the shift from a communal economy to a more individualistic trapping economy. The Anglican Church was

[3] The knowledge of culture and traditions included a comprehensive understanding of the natural and spiritual worlds.

keen to maintain a strong presence in Gwich'in territory. To promote the continuation and practice of Anglicanism among the sparsely populated Gwich'in communities, missionaries chose and trained Gwich'in individuals to act as Native priests and catechists. The Gwich'in priests and catechists in this era assumed many of the responsibilities held by the chiefs of previous eras.

During the 1920's, the Canadian federal government reintroduced chiefs as a form of leadership in Old Crow and other Aboriginal communities across the country. This form of leadership included a formally elected chief and council in all Canadian Aboriginal communities. Coinciding with the new governance structure and the increased contact with Federal government agents and programs was a propensity for Vuntut Gwitchin people to become more sedentary, thus centring their activities more within the community of Old Crow and other communities scattered along the Porcupine River (Acheson-Welsh 1977). As the village became more sedentary, people had greater access to a variety of Western institutions and utilities. Chiefs became leaders of more permanent villages. To explore the changes that occurred during the different eras more thoroughly, I have divided this chapter into two sections: background and the pre-contact era. The following chapter will explore the fur trade era and the missionary era. Edith's story in chapter five will highlight the modern era. Chapter six will also identify recent changes that occurred among Gwich'in

people and the tendency for modern leaders to demonstrate the same leadership attributes as leaders in the other eras.

Background

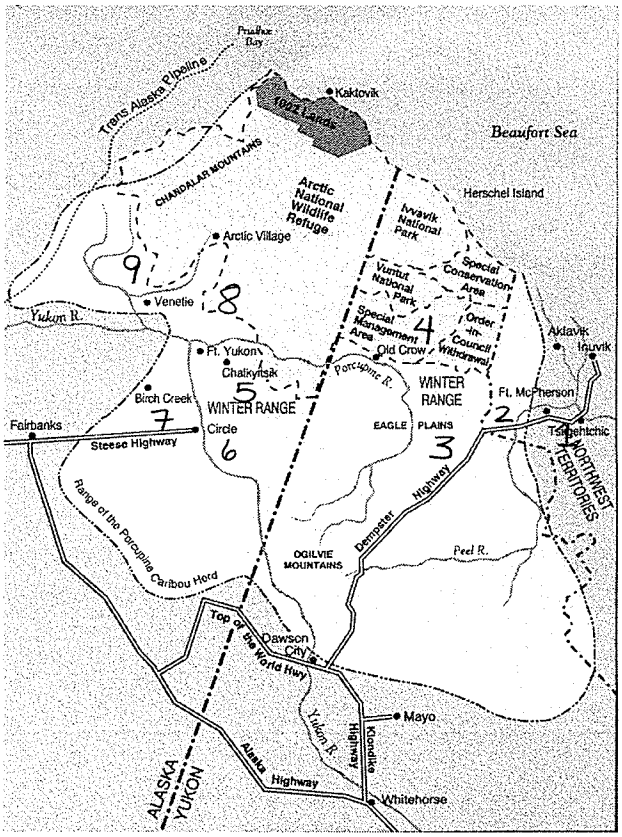
The Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation is a part of a larger nation of Gwich'in people who traditionally inhabit the subarctic forest land ranging from northwestern Alaska to northwestern North West Territories (Osgood 1936; Balikci 1963; Acheson-Welsh 1977; Krech 1976; Slobodin, 1981). Gwich'in territory encompasses much of the habitat of one of North America's last large wild caribou herds, the Porcupine Caribou Herd. The Canadian and American subarctic also provide a breeding habitat for migratory birds that arrive in this region, on mass, each fall and spring on their migration routes (Berger, 1977: xii).

The Gwich'in people of North Yukon occupy land that was unglaciated during the last ice age. Archaeologists refer to the unglaciated land, extending between North Yukon and Siberia, as Beringia. Due to the absence of glaciation, archaeological remains are well preserved allowing scientists to make archaeological discoveries that provide rich evidence of prolonged human occupation in North Yukon. A controversial archaeological find at the Bluefish Caves, approximately forty kilometres Southwest of Old Crow, suggests that human occupation in North Yukon could date back as far as forty thousand

years before present[4] (Greer 1998). However, conclusive evidence indicates the humans have occupied North Yukon for at least 11,500 years before present (Clark 1991). Gwich'in people are a part of the larger Athapascan language group that reaches as far south as the Navaho of Arizona and New Mexico (Osgood 1936; Slobodin, 1981).

At the time of European contact, approximately nine regional bands of Gwich'in people occupied the northern forests of Alaska, North West Territories (NWT), and Yukon (Osgood 1936, Slobodin 1962).

[4] 'Before Present' is an archaeological term that refers to the year 1950. This allows archaeologists to refer to a common date when dating artefacts.



Map of Gwich'in Regional Bands. 1. Arctic Red River; 2. Peel River; 3. Upper Porcupine River; 4. Crow Flats; 5. Black River; 6. Yukon Flats; 7. Birsch Creek; 8. Chandalar; 9. Dihai (Slobodin suggests that the Dihai were displaced by the Eskimos in the 1850's. General map outline used by permission from Gary Kofinas (Kofinas, 1998 p.10)

Each of the nine bands maintained a particular dialect and a measure of cultural distinction (Slobodin 1981: 515; Krech 1976). According to ethnographic records, the bands maintained contact through trading expeditions into one another's territory and through broader clan, Crow and Wolf, affiliations (Balikci, 1963). The bands themselves consisted of smaller groupings of people:

> The major intraband socioeconomic groups were nuclear and paired families and small fluid band groupings, which alternately

> dispersed and merged, depending on the season, for caribou hunting and fishing. Fall and spring were seasons of aggregation and cooperative caribou hunting; in summer fishing and raiding were cooperative pursuits. (Kretch 1976: 217)

Currently, many Gwich'in communities maintain close alliances. Often family and friends will charter planes into Old Crow from Fort McPherson, Aklavik, Arctic Village or Fort Yukon to attend an Old Crow wedding or funeral, or other special events. Likewise, many Old Crow people attend celebrations in their neighbouring communities. Usually Old Crow hosts three large celebrations yearly, Christmas and New Years, Easter Carnival, as well as July's Gwich'in Gathering, where people from neighbouring Gwich'in communities come to Old Crow to participate in games, feasting and dancing.

Historically, Gwich'in travelled throughout their territory to harvest fish and game at different times of the year. People hunted caribou in late spring and early summer, fished in the summer, hunted caribou in the fall and hunted moose and small game in the winter (Acheson-Welsh 1977; Kofinas 1998). Crow Flats, an enormous network of lakes northeast of Old Crow, provided Vuntut Gwich'in people with an abundant supply of muskrat and migratory birds in the spring. Below, Old Crow Elder Andrew Tizya describes the historical seasonal patterns of Gwich'in people:

> People had a very hard time surviving, but people were always there to support one another, like one big family. People travel a lot them days; they go trapping, hunting [and] fishing. In the early fall, people leave town to prepare themselves for the winter for both families and dogs, so get enough meat, fish to dry. Since they got no fridge, nor freezer, people dug a hole in the ground which they called "cellar" where the meat and berries were kept to protect them from flies, or decay…People made use of almost everything they killed. They made tools from bones. People only travel by boat canoes in the late spring and summer. Dog packs, backpack when they travel by land. Dog packs were made from the caribou legs, canvas in the winter we travel by dog teams, snowshoes which was good. Exercise makes people strong, healthy. (Recollections, 1997, p.44)

According to Tizya, people were bound together by the will to survive and by their respect for the land.

Pre-Contact Era

Most stories and oral histories concerning Gwich'in leadership in the pre-contact era imply that leadership belonged in the domain of chiefs. According to the stories and ethnographic data, each group of Gwich'in people had a chief

(Osgood 1936; Balikci 1963; Mishler 1995). At this time, there were chiefs who led smaller groups of people by overseeing their hunting expeditions and overseeing the well being of their immediate groups. In this study, I refer to such chiefs as secondary chiefs. Secondary chiefs were part of a larger grouping of people that were led by regional chiefs. Johnny Frank in Craig Mishler's compilation of interviews with Johnny and Sarah Frank from Arctic Village, Alaska, affirms the presence of regional chiefs prior to contact and prior to the massive decline in the populations of Gwich'in people. Acheson-Welsh's (1977) discussion of leadership in Old Crow corroborates the existence of regional chiefs.

> Oltih[5], for example, is cited by Balikci as a sib (clan) chief who led his kin group into inter-sib skirmishes. My informants reported that he was also the headman for the Vunta Kutchin regional band at large-scale gatherings, supervised caribou surround, had powerful "medicine," and was involved in the long distant trade network which first brought White goods to the Vunta Kutchin. (p. 60)

Acheson-Welsh claims that some Gwich'in leaders, such as Oltih described above, possessed charismatic leadership qualities that would draw other groups

[5] Acheson-Welsh uses a different spelling for *Óol Tì.*

into his regional band. Chiefs that maintained such influence over large groups of people are referred to as "big chiefs"(Acheson-Welsh 1977; Mishler 1995).

The chiefs of old are portrayed as being endowed with superior intellectual and physical characteristics (Netro 1972; Slobodin 1975; Wallis 1993). Two traditional stories, *Man Without Fire* and *Two Old Women* highlight the characteristics of pre-contact chiefs as well as to expose the social, political and economic realities of that period. Oral histories, historical documents, and ethnographies also provide insight into the views of people during this era.

As identified at the beginning of this chapter, good leadership involves knowledge of land and traditions; commitment to community service; an ability to communicate effectively; and wealth. Each story and historical account does not specifically identify these characteristics, but collectively they provide a rich description of the leadership rendered by old time chiefs. To complement the elevated status of chiefs, the wives of chiefs long ago also were considered to possess superior intelligence and were influential among their people. This is examined more fully in the exploration of the story *Man Without Fire*. Gwich'in people did not traditionally measure time as Westerners do. Therefore, I had some difficulty identifying exactly when the chiefs described in this section lived. It is quite possible that some chiefs described in this section were in their role during the early years of the fur trade era.

Before introducing the stories of *Man Without Fire* and *Two Old Women*, I will briefly explore the social context of the pre-contact era. As identified at the beginning of this chapter, before European contact, different groups of Gwich'in people maintained close contact with one another (Balikci, 1963). Trade networks were well established prior to European contact. Below, Douglas Leechman (1954) describes how trade delegations operated along the Porcupine River.

> However, it is probable that commerce followed the Porcupine River both east and west many years before this, and the Indians still talk of the annual trading expeditions in which chiefs from this district used to go down toward the Yukon River. On the way, somewhere along the Porcupine, they would meet with other Indians coming up. The principal exports from here were caribou skins and dried fish; the chief imports were spears and birchbark canoes. (p. 26)

The presence of trade along the Porcupine is supported by Johnny Frank's (Mishler 1995) story that refers to the wealth of chiefs and to the exchange of goods along the Porcupine River. This story is highlighted later in this section.

Through the intragroup communications and interactions, stories about the big chiefs were widespread. Evidence for this rests below, in Johnny Frank's description of Gwich'in life long ago. He does not confine his stories to his

native Alaska; rather, he elaborates his stories to embrace the entire Gwich'in Nation. Frank's (Mishler 1995) description identifies how difficult it was for people to survive, how conscious people were of potential ambushes by enemies, and how fully people relied on the leadership of their chiefs.

> Bands of Indians were always scared of each other. When they got near each other, they usually sent out two people from each band to meet each other before the whole bands met. "We shouldn't fight", they said.
>
> And so when they met, they held a meeting with loud speeches. People those days were very smart. Every person in Alaska worked for what he would eat. People only thought about having better lives...
>
> The population at Chandalar was maybe four thousand. At Old Crow also there were five thousand. Even at Fort Yukon too. But the population of the Eskimos was even higher. There were four thousand people at Point Barrow and at Huron Island and all around there.
>
> When the food ran out, lots of people starved. And when big game animals were scarce, lots of people froze to death. We've come a long way through a really hard life. My grandmother remembered it all. When she was living with my father, she got up

> in the morning and told stories all day long about the days of long ago. She really remembered well all the stories about the time when she was a child. That was her generation, but there were some people her age who didn't tell stories at all. It was no good because of them.
>
> They were all over the country. My grandfather *Ditsii GiitŁ'uu* was *Di'hjj Gwich'in* and was a big chief. His younger sister's son *Dèets'è* was the same way too.
>
> So there used to be lots of people at Arctic Village...It was because of them that there was power to go on living. Over at Old Crow, there were *Óol Tì* and his older brother, who were rich and powerful men. They were like Presidents. They were all Democrats. And so was everybody over at Fort McPherson....
>
> (Michler 1995: 15)

Johnny Frank's comparison of the Gwich'in chiefs of long ago to modern day American Democratic Presidents may relate to a strong sense of community service upheld by those chiefs.[6] Frank implies that because of the power and effectiveness of the chiefs, people had the power to go on living in the face of hard times. From Frank's description, it is evident that chiefs commanded respect. Frank's comparison of the power of the chiefs to the powers of the

[6] Johnny Frank later describes a war between the Democrats and the Republicans (he insinuates that Republicans were more self-serving).

United States President suggests that, in the eyes of Johnny Frank, chiefs served large populations of people and possessed the authority to profoundly influence the activities of his people. The economy of Gwich'in people was plagued by instability and people could not be assured that food would always be available. Because of this uncertainty, it is understandable that individuals would seek hope and stability under the direction of a strong chief.

In the above quote, Frank alludes to the importance of communication processes when people encounter one another. To diffuse hostilities, people would meet and give loud speeches. Frank implies that the speech making was a means of articulating reasons why the groups should not fight. Acheson-Welsh (1977), too, identifies the need for chiefs to possess effective communication skills.

> Modern informants indicate that the "strongest" among the several local band leaders was usually recognized as the spokesman for the whole regional band on those occasions when they were in contact with "outsiders," i.e. members of other regional bands or "tribes." (p. 62)

Speech making and strong communication skills remain as an essential ingredient for modern day leaders. While I lived in Old Crow, I was told, on a few occasions, that speeches that were given long ago were retold in modern day –verbatim. Speeches are something people possess; like heirlooms. They are

preserved and cherished in the memories of the people. I was always impressed by the ability of Old Crow people to deliver speeches without prior warning or formal preparation.

Before European contact, a chief made decisions with and for his group concerning hunting, warfare, trade, and the social well being of his people. Below, Osgood (1936) describes the activities of a traditional chief.

> The routine of life of a chief differs little from that of any other person. He fishes and hunts, builds sleds and other implements, and in general, works as hard, if not harder, than anyone of the wealthy class...In a sense, the chiefs and wealthy class compose a paternalistic insurance company for the poor, as they give instruction and good counsel to all and willingly loan their possessions... The paternal role of the chief is an important aspect of the culture, for it is he who generally decides the place to hunt, or to build a fish trap, and gives advice as well on social material difficulties. He loans tools to those who need them and acts as host to visitors, giving the first meal to all newcomers. (p. 108)

Osgood's description provides some insight into the pivotal role chiefs played in the lives of people. Besides engaging in the activities of daily living, people expected that chiefs should ensure that the needs of all his people were met. Acheson-Welsh (1977) claims that chiefs did not use military or police force to

remain in their positions. They were followed because they demonstrated the suitable behaviour to command a following. Supporting this assumption is Arctic Village Elder, Sarah Frank (Mishler 1995) as she describes Chief Peter, a Han man who came into Gwich'in territory. It is one of few accounts that describe how chiefs attract followers.

> Chief Peter was a *Han* Gwich'in and the people up north made him a chief once...He was a chief and was camping out at this one place during the fall time when people came and gathered there for him. They built him a house there...
>
> Yes, they say Chief Peter was a leader who gave directions on how they would hunt, and this is how many people lived well....
>
> My mother saw him. She remembered him. She said if he thought the food was in a certain area, then he gave orders to go there, and that is just what they did. Sometimes they ended up with food.
>
> And when they got food they shared it all evenly. They really shared their food...(p. 567)

According to Sarah Frank, people recognized the skills of Chief Peter and chose him as a leader. This suggests that leaders did not lobby for followers, rather, leaders were chosen because they possessed desirable leadership attributes. On the other hand, if people did not like a leader, they could choose

not to follow him (Slobodin 1969; Acheson-Welsh 1977). This, too, is a common practice today. If people do not find value in a person's presence or leadership, they simply do not interact with that person or attend an event in which that person is acting in a leadership capacity.

Slobodin's (1969) anecdote of his participation in a Gwich'in hunting party sheds additional light onto how a leader was selected. Although he is reflecting on an event that occurred one hundred years later than Frank's (Mishler 1995) event, he strengthens the impression that a Gwich'in people chose a leader partly because of his skill and his knowledge of the land and partly because of his social consciousness. Similar to Frank's account above, the leader Slobodin (1969) describes was not originally from the Fort McPherson, he was from the Old Crow area. However, because of his demonstrated leadership qualities, he became a leader in Fort McPherson at an early age. This alone illustrates that leaders were chosen because of their behaviour as opposed to their lineage. Below, Slobodin (1969) identifies what attributes were desired of leaders.

> The Kutchin have clearly conceptualized qualities requisite for leadership in their society. A *sine qua non* for leadership is above-average competence in economic pursuits. In addition, proper balance in 'hard' and 'soft' qualities is necessary. "Hard' qualities may be designated as shrewdness, drive and a touch of

> ruthlessness; the soft qualities are generosity and concern for the common weal as defined in Kutchin culture. Willie Lake was well endowed with these qualities and, apparently, with the proper balance of them. (p. 66)

Slobodin's identification of the necessity of a chief posessing 'hard and soft' skills is a theme that recurs in subsequent sections of this study. Similar to what I have found with Edith Josie and the focus group members, Gwich'in people have a clear concept of what qualities leaders should possess.

Understanding and respecting the natural and spiritual worlds was also a necessity for chiefs (Acheson-Welsh 1977). Although chiefs were not usually medicine men[7], they relied on their medicine men to know where to hunt, to call the caribou, to read signs, or to influence the weather (Jones 1866; Leechman 1954; Slobodin 1981).

> ...They had, however, magicians, who could do wonderful things. If you were to believe in their own story, they could make wind, prophesy, and when a storm of rain was coming, by putting their medicine bag on the pole at the side of the lodge next to the storm, they could make the clouds turn and the rain fall in another place. (Jones 1866: 325)

[7] As mentioned above, leaders were not necessarily medicine men. However, there are some accounts of some leaders being powerful medicine men.

Jones' description of medicine men also illustrates the role such individuals played in prophecy and curing disease. A chief had to maintain a strong relationship with the natural and spiritual worlds in order for his group to survive. He depended on this relationship for obtaining enough food for his people to live through a season.

Ethnographies and oral histories indicate that warfare with neighbouring groups occurred prior to European contact. Douglas Leechman (1954) published a bulletin exploring the culture and lifeways of Vuntut Gwitchin people. Below Leechman (1954) explores the topic of warfare; however, he argues that warfare was uncommon among Gwich'in people.

> Moses Tizya says that even as recently as fifty years ago, Indians (Beavers he believes) from the east of the Mackenzie River used to come up to this district in the hope of capturing women and children.
>
> Balaam reports good friendship between Indians and Eskimos in recent years but says it was bad "a thousand years ago". (p. 21)

The above quote suggests that although warfare was not a common event in the daily lives of Gwich'in people, it remained as an ongoing threat. People needed to be wary of newcomers entering their territory (Netro 1972; Slobodin 1971;

Mishler 1995). Asen Balikci (1963) supports the notion of limited warfare in his ethnography of social change among the Vuntut Gwitchin people.

> Old Crow informants attested that, in traditional times, the Vunta Kutchin were rather peaceful people when compared with the rest of the Kutchin tribes. While the elderly informants knew about the fights between the Mackenzie Delta Eskimos and the Peel River Kutchin, they suggested that the mountains separating the coastal Eskimos from the inland Vunta Kutchin were an obstacle to contact, and also to war, between the two nations. (p. 31)

Regardless of the frequency of warfare, pre-contact chiefs needed to be capable of making good decisions when encountering unknown groups of people or when encountering known enemies. *Man Without Fire* explores what may happen when one group ambushes another.

Man Without Fire, a story about the strength and character of an old time chief, was documented by anthropologist Cornelius Osgood (1936); by a Vuntut Gwitchin Elder, Joe Netro (1972); by anthropologist Richard Slobodin (1971)[8]; and by Craig Mishler (1995) as told by Sarah Frank. I chose this story because it explores the characteristics of an old time chief and because the story is well known in NWT, Yukon, and Alaska. In this story, Kwanetun[9], the chief,

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[8] Richard Slobodin recorded the story of *The Man Without Fire* at a hunting camp of Peel River Gwich'in in the Richardson Mountains on Februrary 17, 1947. The narrator was William Ittza who was originally from the Old Crow area.

[9] Joe Netro never refers to the protagonist as Kwanetun. He only refers to him as "Man Without Fire". Sarah Frank

demonstrates his commitment to social responsibility, his extraordinary physical endurance, his intelligence, and his knowledge of the land in the face of starvation following a brutal attack on his people.

As the story opens, it affirms the chief's social responsibility to serve his people. Similar to Johnny Frank's account of old time chiefs; Kwanetun maintains the responsibility for the welfare of his people. In this story, the chief is responsible for the preparation and redistribution of food among his group.

> Man without Fire was a Chief of his people that winter. There was no caribou so they lived on snowshoe rabbit. Since he was a Chief, he got all the rabbits people killed. He did this so he could cook all the rabbits up and divide them amongst the people. (Netro 1972: 20)

The story continues by describing how Kwanetun, his wife, and his sister-in-law[10] survive a brutal raid on his people's camp, which killed all the people in his camp including his brother. Aside from his wife, Kwanetun[11] is the only survivor among his people.

Just before the raid, Kwanetun takes off his rabbit skin jacket because the jacket was too hot to wear while he is cooking the rabbits. Consequently, he

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refers to the protagonist as Kó'ehdan. For this study, I will use the name Kwanetun for the protaganist.

[10] The sister-in-law hides under a snow bank, but is severely crippled by the enemies as they walk over her leg that is sticking out of the snowbank. Kwanetun comes back to find her at the camp, but she asks him to leave her to die as she is crippled, and would soon die anyway, and would only be a burden to him.

[11] Kwanetun's younger brother escapes with Kwanetun,but is killed when he was climbing a rocky mountain and the enemy put a pole into his snowshoe and pull him down off the mountainside. Kwanetun's brother is then killed.

does not have time to get his jacket when the enemies attack. Following the raid, the Man Without Fire lives for a period of time without proper clothing. While trying to kill a rabbit, he knocks his fire stick with fire on it into the snow and the fire is extinguished. To clothe himself, as he catches rabbits, he attaches their skins together and winds them around his upper torso. As the collection of rabbit skins grow, Kwanetun makes himself a rabbit skin coat.

According to Slobodin's (1971) account of the story, without fire it is impossible for Kwanetun to eat rabbit as he could not eat them uncooked. Netro's account suggests that Kwanetun feeds the meat of the rabbits to his dogs while he eats the guts[12]. By living for an extended period without fire, Kwanetun is awarded the name *Man Without Fire*. Although the accounts differ in fact, they suggest that Kwanetun holds the appropriate knowledge and the appropriate strength to survive in the subarctic without fire[13]. Kwanetun's aptitude as a tracker allows him to find a neighbouring group of people that he can join. Below is a brief description, from Slobodin's (1971) account of the story, of how people in a neighbouring group perceive Kwanetun's physical strength and abilities in comparison to the rest of his group. A girl from the camp notices smoke coming from a fire that she had left almost out the previous day.

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[12] Although Netro and Slobodin have different accounts of what Kwanetun ate during his time without fire, they both identify how remarkable his physical strength and survival skills were to survive such hardship. Sarah Frank does not mention whether or not Kwanwtun eats rabbit.

[13] Osgood and Frank's versions only briefly touch on this topic.

> ... On her way to catch up with her people, she looked and saw smoke rising again from the fire she had left almost out. When she got home, she told her father. He told the news to the chief and other men. They knew that Kwanetun's band, which lived in that direction had been wiped out, and they figured that Kwanetun was the only one who had a chance of surviving. (p. 266)

The assumptions of the neighbouring group illustrate the widespread knowledge of Kwanteun's physical strength and keen intellect. They believed that the visitor had to be Kwanetun as they assumed that only he could survive such an attack. Kwanetun soon joins up with this group of people and successfully leads a war party to avenge the death of his brother. The story indicates that The Man Without Fire's strength, his knowledge of resources and ability to command respect from people allows him to be successful in avenging the death of his brother and to be successful in reclaiming his wife.

Man Without Fire also contemplates the intellect and the superior position of the chief's wife. The group who kill Kwanetun's people stole his wife as she was well known among people for her intelligence and beauty. This corroborates the suggestion within oral histories, and within Edith's story, that the wives of chiefs traditionally held significant prestige among their people. In Osgood's (1936) account of the story, the captured woman was now the wife of the Mackenzie Indians' chief (in Osgood's version the Mackenzie Indians were

the perceived attackers), but she originally was Gwich'in. Netro's (1972) and Slobodin's (1971) accounts *of "Man Without Fire"* clearly identify the intelligence and desirability of Kwanetun's wife.

> His wife's name was "La tay tran da." She was a very smart woman. Everytime there was a battle between the people the side that won took her. (Netro 1972: 20)
>
> ...The rest of the band was cleaned up, exept for Kwanetun's brother's wife, who crawled into a bank of snow, and Kwanetun's wife who was captured and taken away. She was famous as a wise and clever woman, and word about her had even reached this strange band. (Slobodin 1971)

Both accounts of the story identify the intellect and the prominent status of the chief's wife.

Slobodin (1971) explores this theme further in his analysis of the story and identifies Kwanetun's wife as a prize woman[14]. In the section below, Slobodin refers to the Gwich'in people as Kutchin. Kutchin is a term used by Westerners, until recently, when referring to Gwich'in people.

> In Kutchin tradition, a Prize Woman is associated with high-status men. She is the wife of a chief or established war leader who is

[14] According to Slobodin, a "prize woman" is a common anthropological term for a woman who is stolen back and forth because she is very beautiful and intelligent. Slobodin also argues that wife stealing was rare among the Gwich'in people.

> captured by her husband's opposite number, or numbers, in another band- -or in a series of bands. (p. 288)

Slobodin suggests that only a chief would be worthy enough to possess such a woman. Sarah Frank only identifies that Kwanetun's wife was taken by the Eskimos[15]; however, she indicates that Kwanetun told his wife what to do as she was being taken away. Osgood (1936) indicates, in his version of the story, that she was "very smart".

Kwanetun's wife is the one who assists Kwanetun's party to carry out a successful raid on her abductors. Without raising the suspicions of her captors, Kwanetun's wife left a trail to her camp for Kwanetun to follow. Her courage to look out for her people, though under scrutiny by her abductors, also ensures that Kwantun's raid is successful. In addition to the more central theme of the story, the remakable strength and wit of Kwanetun, this story clearly identifies the influential role a chief's wife may possess.

Verna Wallis (1993), a Gwich'in woman from Fort Yukon, documents a version of a Gwich'in story about a hunting band's decision to abandon two old women. Similar to *Man Without Fire*, people residing in Old Crow and Fort McPherson, NWT are familiar with the story of *Two Old Women*.[16] As in the

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[15] While Sarah Frank suggests that the attackers were Eskimos, Joe Netro claims that the people were Beaver Indians. William Itza, Slobodin's informant, is unclear as to who the attackers are.

[16] I have learned this through discussions about the book with Elders and residents from Old Crow and Fort McPherson.

story of *Man Without Fire*, the chief's social obligations to his group are identified early in the story. In addition, his superior physical characteristics identified.

> On that day, something more than cold hung in the air as The People gathered around their few flickering fires and listened to the chief. He was a man who stood almost a head taller than the other men. From within the folds of his parka ruff he spoke about the cold, hard days that they were to expect and what each would have to contribute if they were to survive the winter.
>
> Then, in a loud clear voice he made a sudden announcement: "The council and I have arrived at a decision". The chief paused as if to find strength in his next words. "We are going to have to leave the old ones behind"...(p. 4)

In this story, the chief bears the burden of making vital decisions pertaining to the survival of the group. In the above quote, the chief is the one to communicate the difficult decision to abandon the old women.

This section of the story also identifies the presence of a council to the chief. Little information exists about the presence of councils in the pre-contact era. However, Strachen Jones (1866), a trader who resided in Fort Yukon, refers to the presence of councils. "The chiefs and old men are all who are entitled to speak in council, but any young man will not hesitate to get up and give his seniors the benefit of his wisdom. (p. 325)" Although the story does not explore

the role of councils further, it does imply that they were a part of leadership prior to the creation of the Indian Act.

Two Old Women explores the ramifications of a poor decision made by the chief as well as the strength and fortitude of the two women abandoned by their people. The group considers the women too great a burden. Without the strain of caring for the old women, the chief and his council believe that they are able to move faster to reach better hunting areas and to maintain a greater chance of survival.

Although left to die, the two old women carry valuable knowledge of survival derived from their life experiences. Revisiting areas that they knew as children, the two old women managed to survive the harsh winter and store enough food to sustain themselves as well as their people.

During the winter, The People[17] continue to starve. Following a winter of profound hardship and starvation, the chief and one of the elderly trackers, decide to revisit the site where they abandoned the women only to find that the women were not there. The tracker, accompanied by three other men, follow the trail leading them to the women. Not only had the women survived, but also they had moved to a bountiful hunting location. The People are shocked at how well the women did for themselves. Following a brief reunion, the chief asks the old women for provisions to sustain the rest of the group. Ironically, the

[17] This is the term Wallis uses to refer to the broader group.

women, abandoned for the survival of the group, were the ones that carried the knowledge and skill necessary for the entire group to survive.

Leadership in this story implies the need for leaders to maintain a strong bond with the past, a strong relationship with the land, and a sense of wisdom. The chief chose to abandon the Elders, whom we can assume are the group's connection to the past, and paid dearly for his mistake. In Wallis' (1993) story, we capture a glimpse into the profound responsibility felt by the chief for his decisions.

> The chief was quiet about what he suspected, but he knew that the guide and the three hunters would understand, especially Daagoo, for he had watched the chief from season to season and had come to know what the man was thinking. Daagoo respected the chief and realized that he suffered from self-loathing because of the part he had played in abandoning the old women. The guide knew the chief despised his own weakness, for it showed in the hard lines of bitterness etched on his face. The old man sighed. He knew that soon the self-hate would take its toll, and he did not like the thought of a good man such as the chief destroyed this way...
>
> Long after the four men left camp the chief stared after them. He could not understand why he wasted precious energy and time on what might be a futile effort. Yet he, too, had a strange feeling of

> hope. Hope for what? He had no answer. All the chief knew for sure was that in hard times The People should hold together, and last winter they had not done so. They had inflicted injustice on themselves and the two old women, and he knew that The People had suffered silently since that day. (p. 97-98)

Elders, commonly referred to as living libraries by their people, are greatly valued because of the knowledge they hold of old time stories, passed down to them from their Elders, and from their rich life experiences. The combination of history and valuable personal experience assisted people in making good decisions. During the time they were away from the old women, his leadership was unbalanced and his group was starving. The reunion between the chief and the Elders restores balance. The chief's promise never to abandon the Elders reconfirms his leadership. In the following chapter, Edith reflects on the need for leaders and for community members to support and serve Elders.

The power of chiefs, according to Osgood (1936), directly related to their wealth and their strength. Wealth, measured in terms of food and skins, ensured survival in the harsh subarctic environment. Johnny Frank (Mishler 1995) describes the wealth of an old time chief, *Òol Tì'*, in the Old Crow area.

> At Fort Yukon *Òol Tì'* was chief, and he was also a chief at Old Crow. They had things like animal hide, beaver hide, and smoked

caribou hide. *Òol Tì'* also had a large band of people at that time. Old Crow had a population of around 10,000, they say.

Òol Tì's band had a big raft, and on it was a big pile of things. They met *Òol Tì'* on the way up to Old Crow at a place called *Ch'iteenjii' Ddhak.* And when they stopped next to their big raft and got on. The big raft was full of good food, all kinds of fur, caribou hide, babiche, and smoked tanned skin...(p. 121)

Osgood (1936) finds that chieftanships were not inherited, but sons of wealthy chiefs were more likely to inherit the chieftanships because of their family wealth. "Although chieftanships were not inherited, there was a strong tendency for a son to inherit the position of chief due to his exposure to the wealth and tutorship of his father (p. 123)." Although there may have been some tendency toward inherited chieftanships, Sarah Frank (Mishler 1995) and Richard Slobodin's (1969) earlier arguments indicate that performance more than status dictated whether or not an individual would become a chief. In modern times, the correlation between personal wealth, defined as accumulation of money, and leadership is not obvious. Rather, wealth can be measured by a chief's ability to protect and preserve the land while ensuring the social well being of the people.

In this section, I have attempted to demonstrate that pre-contact leaders possessed a character that encompassed the knowledge of land and traditions;

commitment to community service; strong communication skills; service to community; and wealth. From oral histories and ethnographic records, it is evident that chiefs held a central position among Gwich'in groups in the pre-contact years. The stories of *Man Without Fire* and *Two Old Women* provide some insight into the interactions between leaders and their people. In addition, they provide examples of how leaders behaved and how people perceived the leaders.

CHAPTER FOUR

THE FUR TRADE AND MISSIONARY ERAS

Fur Trade Era

Among the political, social, and economic changes that occurred during the fur trade era were changes that resulted from the introduction of European goods, the shifting economy, interracial marriages, disease, and, finally, the division of Gwich'in territory through the sale of Alaska to the Americans. Amidst the changes, Gwitchin people continued to support leaders who possessed a knowledge of land and traditions; a commitment to community service; an ability to communicate effectively; and wealth.

The first contact Gwich'in people had with Europeans was through the trade of furs for European goods. Before the arrival of the British and French traders, the Gwich'in, through their traditional trade networks along both the Yukon and Mackenzie drainages, obtained goods from Russia through the Russia American Fur Company that operated along the Pacific coast (Acheson-Welsh 1977; Krech 1976, Coates, 1993). Ann Acheson-Welsh (1977), in her dissertation, recounts an Old Crow narrative describing the traditional trade patterns and trade acquisitions.

> The first iron spears came to Old Crow through three chiefs. A man on the coast brought them from the Russians and carried them over

> Ice Mountains. Another chief brought them upriver, and the Old Crow chief went down with a raft to get them, trading meat, fur, and caribou skins.
>
> Ha'Jidayu was the first chief to bring pots and guns into the country. He made long trips in summer (to Fort McPherson and maybe even Fort Simpson), buying goods from Hudson's Bay and getting furs here. Nisilityi is the chief who carried Russian spears over Ice Mountains. He sold it to Ditsikiti who met Old Crow chief to trade (Oltih was chief then). The Old Chief would make a raft and come down the Porcupine with a bunch of people. He would buy spears and birch bark canoes from the tranjikutchin. They would come up to Rampart House [ie: the site where it later was] and pack canoes and spears to Crow Flats by King Edward Mountain. (p. 91)

The above narrative illustrates the great distances Gwich'in people travelled to access the sparsely scattered trading posts and goods in the early years of the trade. According to Acheson-Welsh, travelling such long distances would require trading parties to be away from their people for long periods of time.

Before a HBC post was established in Fort Yukon, the Vuntut Gwitchin people benefited greatly from the European traders because they were middlemen for Russian goods going into the Mackenzie drainage and the HBC

products going into the Russian territory (Coates 1991; Kretch 1976; Murray 1848). Kretch (1976) argues that the HBC encouraged their traders to advocate the use of the traditional trade networks as the networks enabled the HBC posts to acquire furs from as far south as the Han in central Yukon and Alaska and the Eskimos along the arctic coast. However, as the trade became more entrenched in the North, the HBC began to establish posts within Gwich'in territory that would interfere with the traditional trading networks.

In 1840 John Bell established a Hudson's Bay Post on the lower Peel River, Fort McPherson (Coates 1993), while in 1847, a Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) post was established at Fort Yukon, in Russian territory, at the confluence of the Yukon and Porcupine Rivers (Wright 1976). After the HBC established these posts, Gwich'in people were not as dependent on their traditional trading networks for obtaining European goods. Instead, each group traded directly with the European traders at posts within their traditional territories.

Following the establishment of the post at Fort Yukon, people residing at Fort Yukon were nervous about the arrival of the Vuntut Gwitchin because they were thought to be angry with the establishment of Fort Yukon as it weakened their status as intermediaries. Below, Kretch (1976) identifies the Upper Porcupine Kutchin as the most important middle men during the height of the trade, prior to the establishment of Fort Yukon.

> The Upper Porcupine River Kutchin were reported to be "enraged" at the establishment of Fort Yukon (Murray 1910:55) and at the subsequent erosion of their trading position between the Western Kutchin and the Peel River Post. They had been the most important middlemen in the trade at the Peel River Post prior to 1847; by 1858 they bartered with only muskrats. (p. 219).

In this excerpt, Kretch points out how the economy of the Vuntut Gwitchin shifted from being most lucrative in the trade to one of increased hardship following the establishment of Fort Yukon.

Many of the goods acquired were items such as guns and ammunition for hunting. Although guns were valuable trade items, Kretch (1976) argues that, in the early years of the trade, they were not as reliable as traditional weapons for hunting. He suggests the European manufacturers did not build the guns to withstand the extreme conditions of the subarctic as they would always freeze up. In addition to guns, western tools, and cooking utensils, beads were also highly prized trade items. Clothing and other accessories were decorated with intricately beaded designs (Krech 1976). Dry goods were also a desirable commodity at the trading posts. Sarah Frank (Mishler 1995) describes food items they received from the HBC post at Fort Yukon. "At the time they lived there, you see, we needed things like shells, matches, tea, rice, sugar and flour. That's all they had. Very few people had any of these things either. That's all we used

from Whiteman." (p. 385) Sarah Frank's description of what items her people acquired from the post indicates that the items acquired by Aboriginal people went beyond beads, guns and shells.

Because the traders did not have large stocks of provisions, they were dependant on the Gwich'in people for food such as meat. Alexander Murray (1848), a trader at the HBC Fort Yukon Post, hints at his desperation for good provisions in his description of an encounter with a Vuntut Gwitchin chief at the Fort Yukon post. Included in the description is the chief's promise to provide provisions for the Fort.

> The "Letter Carrier" with nine of his followers again visited us towards the end of August, he brought some good furs and a respectable supply of dried meat, but very lean, he renewed his promise to make provisions for us after he went to Peels River to pay his debt, and I am informed by a letter from Mr. Perrs that he had been there and squared his account; he always kept his promises, and none exert themselves more in trying to please us, in speaking in our favour. (p. 36)

Murray's comment about the leanness of the dry meat demonstrates how carefully he viewed the provisions. Kretch (1976) argues that the traders never became adept at hunting or fishing, thus they maintained a dependence on the Gwich'in people for supplying provisions.

Interestingly, Kretch (1976) claims that Gwich'in people did not adopt European clothing quickly though the fabrication of traditional clothing was incredibly labour intensive. Having spent several winters and summers in North Yukon, it is not hard for me to believe that the clothing technology of the Gwich'in was superior to the European clothing technology. Clothing had to be warm and flexible in the winter and light but mosquito proof in the summer! Some European goods such as rifles, kettles and tools, freed up time that was needed to construct such items, but, as Sarah Frank (Mishler 1995) pointed out above, people could not always rely on the availability of such resources. Johnny Frank (Mishler 1995) describes hardships his people endured when they could not acquire the appropriate goods: "In those days, there were lots of muzzle loaders. It was no good when there were no shells for them. People went hungry when there were no shells for them." (p. 363) Frank goes on to explain how his people were better able to survive when they relied on their traditional methods of hunting -such as the use of caribou fences.

According to Kretch (1976), at the onset of the trade Gwich'in people were able to take full economic advantage of the HBC by manoeuvring the credit system. The HBC encouraged the traders to extend credit to the Aboriginal people to ensure that the Aboriginal people would continue to visit the HBC posts.

> In 1848 an Upper Porcupine Kutchin who had traded at the Peel River Post since 1840, took his furs to Fort Yukon where he convinced company traders to accept them. It was thought at the Peel River Post that he had bartered with middlemen Yukon Flats Kutchin. In another instance, a Crow River Kutchin traded high-value marten at Fort Yukon and low-value, high transport-cost muskrats at the Peel River Post, a situation that infuriated the Peel River Post Clerk...(p. 220)

Kretch's description of the Gwich'in ability to manipulate the traders indicates how well the Gwich'in people adapted to the new economy of the fur trade. In many respects, the Aboriginal people were controlling many aspects of the trade and the traders had to adjust their practices to meet the demands of the Gwich'in. Kretch identifies that not only did traditional trade networks work to the advantage of the Gwich'in people, the dependence of the traders on the Gwich'in for provisions was also a trump for the Gwich'in.

As trading posts became more common in the north, the economies of many Gwich'in people began to shift. Murray (1848) indicates that many Gwich'in people were hired by the HBC as guides, interpreters, and hunting providers. By entering the wage economy, some people abandoned their traditional lifestyles. For example, a person acting as an interpreter would be unable to follow the seasonal cycles, as the demands of working at the trading

post would occupy his time. This would result in a more sedentary existence. The western wage economy also slipped into the Gwich'in world through the emergence of steamboats delivering provisions to communities along the major water routes. The steamboats required wood for fuel and people to stoke the boilers in the boats. Steamboat operators hired many northern Aboriginal people to collect the wood and to stoke the boilers (Coates 1993). The emergence of the wage economy began to erode the collective economies of the Gwich'in people. Although the economy shifted, most Gwich'in people remained dependant on the land for their livelihoods. Individual groups of people were still deeply susceptible to bouts of starvation provoked by scarcity of caribou or moose (Mishler 1995).

Another significant change in the lives and customs of Gwich'in people was the emergence of interracial marriages. Coates (1993) argues that senior officials within the HBC subtly encouraged such marriages as it motivated the traders to remain at the northern posts. Coates further suggests that the Aboriginal women agreed to the unions to solidify preferred trade relationships made between the HBC and the Gwich'in people. In short, the unions were political. Little information exists to shed light on how the interracial marriages would affect a woman's status or influence among her people. Osgood (1936) claims that the offspring of such unions were better able to cope with life at the trading posts and were less susceptible to disease. I suspect that the children

would simply be more Westernized, thus in Osgood's eyes, "better at coping" with life at the trading posts, as they would be brought up under the influence of their Western fathers. The most obvious impact of the emergence of interracial presence was a prolonged presence of Westerners in the lives of Gwich'in people.

Tensions between the Russians and the HBC traders initially worked to the Gwich'in people's favour. They were able to play one against the other. Murray (1848) reports that he sent false messages to the groups to keep the Russians from trading up as far as Fort Yukon. From his accounts, it is evident that the Russians were doing the same thing.

> The Russians were trying to incite the Indians here against us by telling them, that it was on account of our being in their country that so many people had died in summer, that we were bad people, etc... and inviting Indians to go to them with their sick friends as they had medicine to cure all diseases...(p. 47)

This account also confirms that disease was taking a devastating toll on the populations of Gwich'in people at this time. Traditional medicines were not working to cure the widespread disease. Harold Napoleon (1996) describes the spread of disease through many northern villages as described to him by Elders.

> First one family fell ill, then another, then another. The people grew desperate and the angalkuq along with them. Then the death

> started, with people wailing and mourning, noon and night. Soon whole families were dead leaving only one boy or one girl. Babies tried to suckle on the breasts of their dead mothers, soon to die themselves. Even the medicine men grew ill and died in despair...(p. 11)

Coates (1993) sheds further light into the impact of disease. He argues that disease alone substantially changed the social patterns of Yukon Aboriginal people.

> When the documented severity of virgin-soil epidemics throughout the world and the appearance of small-pox, scarlet fever, mumps, measles and influenza between 1840 and 1890 is taken into account, the suggested depopulation ratio is 2:3. Although shocking in its scale, appears to be consistent with both evidence and logic. (p. 13)

Coates' estimate of population loss allows us to better comprehend the crippling effect disease would have on the lives of Gwich'in people.

In 1867, Alaska was sold to the United States by Russia. Subsequently, the Hudson's Bay post moved upriver from Fort Yukon to Howling Dog in 1869 and to Old Rampart House in 1873 (Beairsto 1998). In 1889, American surveyors discovered that Old Rampart House was on the American side of the border. Following this discovery, the HBC established a post in New Rampart House in 1890 and, due to intense competition with private traders, closed the post in

1893. At the same time, many Gwich'in people were trading with whalers at Herschel Island where prices were often lower than the HBC posts (Greer 1998). At this time, people began to reside for longer periods around the trading posts and older trapping settlements were abandoned (Acheson-Welsh 1977).

> In 1904, Dan Cadzow, an independent trader, bought the HBC store at New Rampart House. The store remained in operation until Cadzow's death in 1929. At its peak, Rampart House supported a church, a North West Mounted Police Station, a fox farm and the trading post. While using New Rampart House as a trading base, many Gwitchin people continued to live on the land for extended periods. (p. 23).

As illustrated above, the trading posts began to offer a broad range of services to the Gwich'in.

In 1910, surveyors arrived at New Rampart House. Following a survey of the area, the surveyors declared that half of the community of New Rampart House was in Alaska, while the other half was in Canada (Rampart House, 1993). The international division between Yukon and Alaska enormously changed the ability of Gwich'in people to use their traditional trails and hunting practices. Below, Vuntut Gwitchin Elder, Hannah Netro, describes the arrival of the American surveyors.

> ...they put a boarder line across here, through the middle of this village right here [Rampart House]. It was on this site where we are, somewhere around here. They, the surveyors, had a lot of horses, and made a boarder line with the horses. That's another reason for us to move to Old Crow. The people, they had difficulties hunting and trapping. They shoot caribou this side, but really they were on the American side. It made it difficult for them...They move to Old Crow where it's easier. There's more freedom for them to do whatever they need to survive. (Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Students 1993:15)

Following the division of New Rampart House, and a possible case of small pox, people began to abandon Rampart House for Old Crow. Not only did Old Crow have the advantage of being in Canada, it also provided Gwich'in people easy access to Crow Flats, via the Crow River, where they trapped muskrats in the spring. Although some people started to reside in Old Crow, small clusters of family groups were also established along the Porcupine River including Bluefish, Old Crow, David Lord Creek, Driftwood, Salmon Cache, Johnson Village and Whitestone Village (Greer 1998). Edith Josie's family lived in Whitestone Village prior to permanently settling in Old Crow.

Murray (1848) provides valuable information to better understand the role of Gwich'in leaders at the height of the fur trade. To some extent, it is

possible to view the fur trade era as the golden age for the strength and influence of Gwich'in chiefs. Various accounts from Gwich'in people support this notion as they claim that coinciding with the end of the nineteenth century was the end of the era of "big chiefs". During this era, Gwich'in chiefs used their traditional networks and resources to influence the acquisition and distribution of goods. This was not limited to their own people because, as already indicated, they had the power to control the provisions supplied to the traders as well.

The information provided above provides political, social, and economic information about the Gwich'in during the fur trade era. For the duration of this section, I will use Murray's (1848) journals, as well as other historical information, to explore how leaders during this era possessed attributes such as knowledge of land and traditions; a commitment to community service; an ability to communicate effectively; and wealth. I will focus primarily on communication and wealth in this section, as fewer sources are available to illustrate a leader's knowledge of the land and service to his community. I will also highlight the importance of ceremony as this era provides us with some of the richest illustrations of ceremonies and the roles leaders played in such ceremonies.

Since many Gwich'in oral histories to do not explicitly differentiate whether the chiefs they depict were living prior to or during the fur trade, it is hard to differentiate the social responsibilities of chiefs during these two periods.

Because the oral histories do not describe a marked change in the social consciousness of chiefs during the fur trade era, I assume that the chiefs' role, as providers for their people, did not change in this period. In addition, I suspect that leaders needed to maintain a strong knowledge of the land to have furs and provisions for trade. Much of the information provided in this section is offered through the journals and observations of traders. The information they provide is through a very Western lens.

Below, Murray's (1848) description of the arrival of the local Gwichyaa Gwich'in at the newly established Fort Yukon provides insight into the importance of a chief's communication skills. This passage also illustrates the authority a chief possessed and his people's willingness to defer to him prior to landing their canoes at the post. At the encounter described below, the Gwichyaa Gwich'in face the Tetlit Gwich'in of the Peel River area on the riverbank at Fort Yukon. In this account, Murray (1848) is uneasy about the arrival of the Gwichyaa Gwich'in as they previously traded with the Russians and Murray believed them to be loyal to the Russians.

> About 4 o'clock in the morning we are aroused by reports of fire arms from the point below, and every one was on his feet in an instant, three shots were fired by us in return[18], twenty canoes hove in sight around the point and soon paddled up along shore until

[18] By returning shots, Murray's people were signalling that the meeting would be peaceful.

> close to our encampment, all the Indians joining in songs and most unearthly shouts. They remained in their canoes without attempting to land, until the Indian leader spoke to them: as soon as they collected on the bank (there were fifteen men with their wives and children in all about forty) their chief, a young man, commenced to harrangue, but it was addressed to the Peel River Indian, who replied at great length in his own defence. (p. 24)

In this section, Murray confirms that, similar to the pre-contact era, speech making, and effective communication skills, were critical attributes of chiefs. In the previous section, the pre-contact era, I included a quote from Johnny Frank (Mishler 1995) from Arctic Village regarding chiefs of long ago. In the quote, Frank identifies that speeches are used when two groups meet to ensure the meeting will be peaceful. It is interesting to note that the chief described above was a secondary chief. This indicates that the secondary chiefs commanded a reasonable degree of respect and authority.

Below, Murray (1848) describes how his interpreter counselled him not to speak to the secondary chief before the arrival of the principal chief. This implies that there was a pronounced order of authority among the Gwich'in chiefs. "As advised by the interpreter, I deferred saying much until the principal chief arrived with another band which one of the Indians had gone after." (p. 24) Murray's principal chiefs were probably the same as Frank's (Mishler 1995)

regional chiefs. Coates (1993) identifies the presence of trading chiefs during the fur trade era. It is likely that regional chiefs, principal chiefs, big chiefs,[19] and trading chiefs were different names for the same role[20]. Because people arrived in small delegations to the trading posts, it is difficult to ascertain the total size of the Gwich'in nation in 1848. It is safe to assume that the regional, or principal chiefs, wielded significant authority over a reasonably large population of people. Regional chiefs, prior to the fur trade, would act as principal negotiators within the indigenous trade networks (Acheson-Welsh 1977; Mishler 1995). Murray's (1848) account indicates that the regional chiefs did not abdicate their roles as ambassadors for their people when encountering unknown groups during the fur trade.

Following the speeches made between the two groups at Fort Yukon, the principal chief of the Gwichyaa Gwich'in also gave a speech to Murray. From what Murray (1848) chronicles below, it is evident that the chief is confirming his group's relationship to the traders. It is interesting to note that Murray underlines "made a speech" indicating that the principal chief made a most memorable speech!

> The principal chief, after being spoken to by several others, walked to the front and made a speech, the longest I have ever listened to, except, perhaps, a cameronian sermon, and some parts of equally

[19] This is the term many Gwich'in people use to refer to chiefs during this era.

[20] Balikci claims that the HBC created the role of trading chiefs. I would argue that the HBC reinforced the role of the

> far from the text. The interpreter could not repeat one fourth of it. He began by telling us of the bravery of his nation, the extent of their country, the quality of furs they could bring, and the moose and reindeer they could bring. (p. 26)

Frank's (Mishler 1995) assertion about speeches in the previous section insinuates that loud speeches were used to represent the strength of a group of people. From what Murray documents above, it seems as though the chief was clearly identifying the parameters of his jurisdiction, the ability of the his people to defend their land, and the willingness of his people to work peacefully with the traders. I suspect there were hidden threats in the chief's references to the bravery of his nation. If pushed or mistreated, his nation would fight back. Murray's description of the above encounter corroborates Frank's description of the existence of regional chiefs.

Murray (1848) chronicles the progression of the Gwichyaa Gwichin to the post after the first speeches are made between the Gwichyaa Gwich'in and the Tetlit Gwich'in[21]. Again, his description depicts the elevated status of the Gwich'in leaders.

> ...They hauled up their canoes a short distance below, and formed on the bank in "Indian file", the chief in front, the women and children in the rear, and danced forward by degrees until in front of

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principal, or regional, chiefs.

[21] The Teltlit Gwich'in had accompanied Murray to Fort Yukon from the Peel River Post (Murray 1848).

> the tent, where they were joined by the first party, joined into a large circle, with the two chiefs in the centre, and continued dancing and singing without intercession for upwards of half an hour...the chief, a fine looking young man, easily distinguished from the others by his eagle feathers and greater profusion of beads on his dress. (p. 25)

Murray's account of this procession is rare. It is most interesting to envision the degree of ceremony that was involved at this initial meeting. The chief's attire is worth noting, as the beads on his clothing would tout his wealth. In addition, the presence of women and children in the original trading expeditions to Fort Yukon is notable. However, following his initial meetings with the various Gwich'in-groups, Murray only identifies men as being present on the trading expeditions.

According to Murray (1848), there was considerable ceremony upon the arrival of the Vuntut Gwitchin people in Fort Yukon. The selection below describes the importance of gathering and the roles that games played during the gatherings.

> On the 6th of July the "Letter Carrier"[22], chief of the "Vunta Kutchin" (people of the lakes) arrived with twenty men...The Letter

[22] It was this chief who failed to carry a message for Murray to the Gwich'in of Alaska giving notice of Murray's intention of establishing a post at Fort Yukon. An establishment of a post at Fort Yukon would undermine the middlemen status of the Vuntut Gwitchin people who traded between the Peel River Gwichin and the Alaskan Gwithcin. Because of this, Murray refers to the chief as "Letter Carrier" (Murray 1848).

> carrier said this place was much more convenient for him and nearer his country than the Peels River and he would prefer trading here if I wished it, he had a debt at Peels River but had furs to pay for it...They remained here for four days during which time a party of Youcon[23] Indians arrived and we witnessed some of their great dances, and gimnastic games between the two parties: such a dancing and singing, leaping and wrestling. whooping and yelling, I have never heard before or seen...these people consider it the greatest retreat they can give us, by carrying on their games in our camp, they said they had not been so happy for many years. (pp.34-35)

Gwich'in people's love of dancing and festivities remained in spite of changes that occurred within the culture. However, when people did gather at Rampart House, the gatherings were spirited. Below an Old Crow Elder, Hannah Netro, describes festivities at Rampart House.

> At that time, they used to make feast and after feast they used to have a dance. They (the people) come from all over. Lots of people were here and they danced all night. Those who dance all night, sleep all day and those who slept all night, dance all day. They used to use the church for dance. The minister okayed it-as long as

[23] Murray refers to the Yukon river as the "Youkon River".

> they have fun and stuff... (Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Students 1993: 16)

Interestingly, in the modern era, each July 1, Old Crow hosts the Gwich'in Gathering where Gwich'in people from all over gather to feast, dance, and play games. This is usually a three-day event. Highlights of this event include a *Gwich'in Man* and a *Gwich'in Woman* contest where individuals compete to erect a wall tent and set up camp. The contest requires the winners to demonstrate their knowledge of camp life and to demonstrate their physical strength.

In his journal, Alexander Murray (1848) suggests that the acquisition of beads was considered a symbol of wealth and valour among the Gwich'in people. Murray claims that without plenty of beads, there was little use trading. Gwich'in people would trade elsewhere if they could not obtain the beads they desired, or sufficient numbers of their beads of choice (Kretch 1976). Murray (1848) also identifies how beads symbolized wealth at this time.

> ...none are considered a chief until they have 200 skins worth of beads. This Indian never saw whites before we arrived. He has given us more meat than any other, was our Fort Hunter this spring, has great influence with his band, and is a person for whom the Red Coat[24] is intended, after our arrival from Lapiers House. (p. 68)

[24] The red coat is the HBC's "Chief's Coat" that recognizes the authority of a chief.

The need for individuals to have 200 skins worth of beads before becoming eligible for a chieftanship demonstrates the continued value Gwich'in people placed on traditional knowledge. Consistent with the pre-contact era, a person had to prove his skills as a hunter to be acknowledged as a leader. Wealth would improve the authority of a chief as it would improve his ability to provide for his people. Indeed, the more wealth he had the bigger the group a chief could provide for.

This section identifies the many changes that occurred during the fur trade era. Gwich'in people were forced to adapt quickly to changes such as the introduction of European goods, the shifting economy, interracial marriages, disease, and the division of Gwich'in territory due to the sale of Alaska to United States. Amidst these changes, Gwich'in people continued to choose leaders who possessed a knowledge of land and traditions, a commitment to community service, strong communication skills, and wealth.

Starting in the 1860's, missionaries began to influence the lives of Gwich'in people. The presence of independent traders subverted the monopoly the HBC had on the fur trade. This resulted in the chiefs losing their status as "trading chiefs" because people traded individually with the independent traders. It became more common for some people to remain at the trading posts year round as both churches and Northwest Mounted Police maintained a permanent presence in the Gwich'in communities. To complicate matters further, the

international boundary slicing through the middle of Gwich'in territory created havoc with Gwich'in traditional trading networks. The decline of the fur trade and the drastic reduction of population due to disease significantly altered the role and authority of chiefs.

Missionary Era

The missionary era is difficult to summarize, as it was a time of massive change. Because change does not occur in all places to all people at the same time, there are many inconsistencies in the accounts from this period. In addition, the international boundaries between the Gwich'in in Alaska and the Gwich'in in Canada resulted in a parting of closely shared history among the people of the Gwich'in Nation. American and Canadian governments had different systems and policies for interacting with their Aboriginal people. It is important to remain cognisant of the fact that the people in Alaska would have strong influences from the government in the United States. As a result, I will make some reference to the Gwich'in people in Alaska, but this section will focus more on the Canadian Gwich'in people.

To highlight the impact of the changes that occurred during this era, I will discuss the arrival of missionaries in Gwich'in territory, the relationship between the influence of missionaries and disease, the emergence of Gwich'in people as church leaders, and the impact that the introduction of Yukon residential schools

had on the Gwich'in people. In this section, I will pay special attention to the roles of the Native priests and catechists as they assumed considerable influence among their people.

While this section does accent some aspects of leadership from this era, it also provides a context for the transition between the lifestyles and leadership of Gwich'in people described in the pre-contact and fur trade eras and the lifestyle and leadership described in Edith's story. In many respects, the missionary era saw the role of chiefs eroding, as the powers of leaders crumbled amidst the devastating effects of disease and the arrival of the missionaries. Although the formal roles of chiefs diminished during the missionary era, Gwich'in leaders reappeared, in a modified form, as church leaders. Outside influences, such as the introduction of Christianity and the arrival of independent traders, splintered the once centrally positioned moral and economic influences of the chiefs. Missionaries and local native ministers assumed responsibility for the moral well being of the people. In many respects, the economic leadership became less prominent as people entered a more individually focussed economy.

Christian missionaries visited Gwich'in territory as early as 1860 when Pierre–Henri Grollier visited Fort McPherson (Hardaker 1979). However, the first missionary to fully penetrate Gwich'in territory was William Kirkby. In 1861 (Beairsto 1996:48), Kirkby travelled along the Porcupine River, visiting the various villages along the river, on his way to Fort Yukon. Confirming the

notion that trading posts were central meeting posts for the Gwich'in people, Kirkby (1864) describes his arrival into Fort Yukon.

> On my arrival at the Youcon there were about 500 Indians present, all of whom were astonished, but appeared glad, to see a missionary among them...They were formally very numerous, but wars among themselves and with the Esquimaux[25] have sadly diminished them. They are however, still a strong and powerful people. (p. 27)

He attributes the declining population of Gwich'in people to wars they had with the Eskimos. This is an interesting point as Johnny Frank (Mishler 1995) identified the same phenomena in a story cited in the pre-contact era section of this chapter. However, as discussed in the section on the fur trade, it is most likely that disease took a greater toll on the populations of Gwich'in people than warfare.

Harold Napoleon (1996) claims that people adopted Christianity, as a means of coping with the disease that was so widespread in the north. Although he speaks about cultural changes that occurred among his people, the Yup'ik[26], it is quite possible that many elements of what he says ring true for Gwich'in people as well. However, it is important to note that while Napoleon argues that disease all but exterminated his people's willingness to practice their native

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[25] Esquimaux is Kirkbys name for the Inuit people.

[26] Napoleon often makes reference to his Athapascan neighbours which would include the Gwich'in.

spirituality, it is evident that Gwich'in people did not fully abandon their traditional practices. Napoleon believes that his people suffered from posttraumatic stress disorder, as they never had physical or psychological help subsequent to their survival of the "great death". According to Napoleon (1996), the European diseases rendered the medicine men powerless, as their medicines were not effective to cure people from Western disease such as influenza, scarlet fever, and small pox.

> Traumatized, leaderless, confused, and afraid, the survivors readily followed the white missionaries and teachers, who quickly attained status once held only by the *anfalkuq*. The survivors embraced Christianity, abandoned *Yuuyaraq*, discarded their spirit world and their ceremonies, and buried their old culture in silence and denial. (p. 13)

Napoleon claims that the people were suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder from the enormous losses that occurred in such a short period of time. Survivors of the epidemics, in efforts to suppress their understandably turbulent emotions while coping with their chaotic surroundings, refused to talk about the old ways. They passively withdrew as Western cultural influences permeated their lives as well as the lives of their children. Included in Napoleon's argument is the suggestion that current disfunction in Northern Aboriginal communities, manifested by alcohol abuse and violence, is a result of the

inability of subsequent generations of people to confront the past. He claims that posttraumatic stress disorder has been transmitted through the generations, as the symptoms of the disorder have never been treated. Napoleon provides us with some explanation as to why such strong people abandoned some aspects of their culture to adopt Western practices and social structures with seemingly little resistance.

The first missionaries arrived in the North before the full extent of disease was felt by the Gwich'in. At the time of Kirkby's arrival, in 1861, regional chiefs still maintained considerable authority over their people. Kirkby (1864) provides helpful insight into the interactions among the Gwich'in chiefs. Kirkby is surprised to note that battle between two chiefs did not involve physical combat, but verbal conflict. This, again, confirms the importance Gwich'in people placed on effective communication skills.

> A chief, whose tribe was in disgrace for a murder committed the summer before, met the chief of the tribe to which the victim belonged, and in the presence of all commenced a brilliant oration in favor of him and his people, while he feelingly deplored his own and his people's inferiority. At once, in the most gallant way, the offended chief; in a speech equally warm, refuted the compliments so freely for an hour or two, when the offender, by a skilful piece of tactics, confessed himself so thoroughly beaten that he should never

> be able to open his lips again in the presence of his conqueror. (p. 413)

Kikby's description may also reinforce Leechman's (1954) argument that warfare was not common among the Gwich'in. To a certain degree, people may have diverted combat through dialogue. This quote also allows us to envision what the contents of the loud speeches that Johnny Frank (Mishler 1995) describes.

Some of the "big chiefs" were notorious for resisting the teachings of the missionaries. They refused baptism, marriage, and Christian law. One such chief was Shahnyatti. Shahnyatti continues to be notorious among the people in Old Crow for the authority he exercised and for the number of wives he kept. One Elder, when we visited Rampart House, told me: "Even you, White lady, could not say no to Shahnyaati'.[27] If he wanted you, you would have to go with him. " In 1889, the English fifth Earl of Lonsdale traveled through the subarctic on an expedition. Along his journey he arrived at Old Rampart House and had the memorable opportunity to meet Shahnyaati'. A British researcher, Shepard Kretch III (1989), describes the Earl of Lonsdale's encounter with the great chief.

> At Rampart House Lonsdale traded with the large number of Western Kutchin gathered there for trade goods. Among them was Shahnyaati', the aging leader of the Yukon Flats Kutchin. These Kutchin had long held a formidable reputation as shrewd,

[27] Personal communication with Hannah Netro, August 1993.

> independent assertive traders and shamans who resisted, more than other Kutchin, attempts to control their trade networks, to ban polygany and to substitute Anglican eschatology for shamanistic beliefs. By the 1880s, however, these Kutchin had experienced the same devastation from disease as natives elsewhere in this region, they had added Christianity to traditional religious beliefs and rituals which had become less significant over the last decade, and after forty years of European trade conducted in their territory, they had become thoroughly accustomed to whites and their technology...Shahnyaati' was the last of the great nineteenth century chiefs for the Kutchin. Many who encountered him were struck by his authority, including Françios Mercier, a trader who regarded him as 'a man of extraordinary stature and strength, of braveness or more than that, ferocity and duplicity that one rarely encounters'. (p. 67)

Kretch's description provides us with some insight into the respect the chiefs, such as Shahnyaati', commanded. Nevertheless, as each year progressed, the autonomous powers of the old time chiefs, such as Shahnyaati', were diminishing, and the Western world was encroaching further into the lives of the Gwich'in people.

The meddlesome practices of the missionaries changed some of the social and spiritual interactions of the Gwich'in people. Their sole reason for being in the North was to convert the Aboriginal people to Christianity. Unlike the traders, missionaries were not in the North to make a financial profit. Although the traders may have been uncomfortable with the cultural practices of the Gwich'in, they did not aggressively seek to change behaviour. Balikci (1963) describes the various aspects of Gwich'in culture that the missionaries sought to change.

> The missionaries vigorously denounced all heathen beliefs and practices, particularly shamanism and the more exotic dances, and consistently preached the basic Christian dichotomies: God and Devil, Paradise and Hell, Good and Evil, etc. Indians were taught to read scriptures and to pray. When living in isolated trapping camps, people saw their beliefs and practices controlled by the local catechist. During the summer period, with all the people settled around Rampart House, and later Old Crow, church attendance was at its maximum. (p. 52)

However, according to Acheson-Welsh (1977), Christianity only partially transformed the lives of Gwich'in people. She suggests that a hybrid form of religion emerged that was not completely Western and not completely Gwich'in.

Archdeacon Robert McDonald, an Ojibway métis Anglican priest from Red River, travelled extensively through Gwich'in territory between 1862 and 1904 (Sax and Linklater 1990). McDonald initially used Fort Yukon as his base, but from 1872 he resided in Fort McPherson. Hardaker (1979) claims that much of the initial zeal of missionaries was due to a competition between the Anglicans and Catholics over the northern regions. She argues that the presence and determination of Archdeacon McDonald helped secure the north for the Anglicans. Hardaker suggests that McDonald developed a strong rapport with Gwich'in people and, because he learned to speak their language, earned the people's respect. Further, when he married a Gwich'in woman from Fort McPherson, the Catholics abandoned hope of winning converts in Gwich'in territory.

One particular function within Gwich'in culture that the missionaries intentionally suppressed was the spiritual role of medicine men. Joe Netro (1972) tells us, in his book of Gwich'in stories, a story entitled *A-Chi-Ka, The Medicine Man*, about a medicine man and the medicinal powers he had before the introduction of Christianity. Netro (1972), being a member of the Vuntut Gwich'in First Nation, carefully states that medicine men "quit medicine" once they learned of Christianity. However, his story shows his great reverence for the skills of the medicine man.

> These Indian people had never heard of religion yet. As soon as these people learned about God and religion they quit medicine work. A father of a child went to A-Chi-Ka and asked him if he could help the hurt child. The child got hurt and there was lots of blood in his chest. This medicine man said "Yes, I could fix him." So he made the knife from wood. With that wooden knife he cut the child's chest wide open, cleaned the blood out of the chest and put the chest back together again. This injured child was named Henry Zay. He lived up to 75 years, died in 1925. During this operation Henry never felt any pain because it was done by a medicine man. (p. 12)

Netro's account of this story demonstrates the measure of trust people had in medicine men. Contrary to Netro's claim that medicine men "quit medicine" once Christianity was introduced. Balikci (1963) claims that medicine men continued to practice their medicine to modern day. He suggests that the missionaries were successful in removing medicine men's overt leadership roles, but unsuccessful in extinguishing their practice as healers and prophets.

> The position of the shaman, was vigorously attacked by the missionary's activity of Christianization. Shamans, however, continued to be active well into the first decades of the century. A first analysis of the not too ancient shamanistic behaviour indicates

> that shamans did lose their social leadership traditionally connected with migration in search of game and war. They retained their powers of caring, malevolent magic, fabrication of luck charms...(p. 48)

The continued presence and practice of medicine men imply that on the surface the lives of Gwich'in people changed considerably, but their spirituality was not extinguished.

According to Ken Coates (1993), because people refused to settle in the missions, efforts were made by McDonald to visit each community yearly. This ensured the practice of the Christian faith. In addition to his yearly visitations, Archdeacon McDonald trained local people to become ministers. Acheson-Welsh argues McDonald enlisted men that had a natural aptitude for leadership into his native ministry (Acheson-Welsh 1977).

Information pertaining to chiefs in this era is murky. It seems as though the whole title of chief disappeared until it resurfaced again in the 1920's. One Old Crow Elder, when asked about leadership at Rampart House, claims that there were no chiefs at that time. Sarah Frank (Mishler 1995) supports that notion in her life-story, as does Balikci (1963). People simply made their own decisions as required. According to Acheson-Welsh (1977), the cohesiveness of the bands began to disintegrate during this period. Trapping became a more popular means of securing a livelihood. People were accustomed to rifles and

no longer needed to work collectively to hunt big game animals such as caribou. Families, as opposed to formal hunting parties, were more inclined to go on hunting expeditions. Consequently, the role of a chief, as one who could direct hunting parties, was no longer necessary. As identified in the previous section, chiefs were no longer required to negotiate with traders as individuals were encouraged to deal directly with the trader themselves. Joe Netro of Old Crow became a trader himself and operated a store in Old Crow for a number of years.

At the same time, as Acheson-Welsh (1977) suggests, from people's descriptions of the Native Anglican ministers, it is obvious they, the Native ministers, played an influential leadership roles among the Gwich'in people. To some extent, it is possible to presume that as the trading chiefs faded, the Native ministers assumed some of the moral responsibilities originally held by chiefs. Two Gwich'in ministers served the Gwich'in people in their ministry: Amos Njootli, who served as a minister to the Gwich'in people between 1911 and 1929, and Julias Kendi, who served as a minister to the Gwich'in people between 1929 and 1941 and 1946-1949. Since this time, Native ministers and Native catechists have continued to play leading roles in the Anglican Church in Old Crow.

The introduction of Native ministers encouraged Gwich'in people to continue as practising Christians during the extended absences of the missionaries. Below Old Crow Elder, Alice Frost, recounts the role of the Aboriginal ministers:

> My grandfather, Amos Njootli[28], was the minister and when he got sick and passed away; there was no minister here. I guess that is one reason why they moved to Old Crow. He passed away here. He was the one who taught some people the catechism for the Anglican Church such as Joe Kaye and John Tiyza and others. Archdeacon McDonald would pass through here by canoe. He would pick out his leaders and he taught them. My grandfather Amos Njootli was appointed for the church. He taught a lot of people here. (Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Students 1993: 68).

The catechists, such as Big Joe Kaye and John Tizya, also assumed prominent leadership roles. Balikci (1963) describes the activities of the catechists:

> They were usually trained by the ministers themselves, and performed various functions in the church, including holding services in Athapascan and preaching. Their religious activities were important in winter and spring when the people lived in small isolated groups away from the main settlements. They interpreted the teachings of the missionary to the people, preached the gospel, tried to enforce the observation of the Christian norms, and conducted prayers. They drew considerable prestige from their activities. (p. 51)

[28] AmosNjootli was Tetlit Gwitchin from Fort McPherson area.

In many respects, the catechists assumed another measure of leadership that once resided in the domain of chiefs. One could suggest that the relationship between the Native ministers and their catechists was not unlike the relationship between the regional chiefs and the secondary chiefs. The secondary chiefs presided over the smaller groups and were a part of their people's daily lives while the regional chiefs would have presided over the entire regional group and would assume duties that are more global. Similarly, the catechists monitored and supported religious worship while people were on the land while the Native minister would serve the needs of the broader population including those of the White population.

It is quite possible that the Native ministers and catechists acted as intermediaries between the traditional spirituality and Christianity. One could compare their role to that of the trading chiefs, as they were the ones who negotiated between the Western missionaries and their own people. As already identified, the catechists upheld the responsibility of interpreting the messages of the missionaries to the people. Again, this function would previously have belonged to chiefs and medicine men. The catechists would have to have some sense in their own minds as to what parts of the old ways were acceptable and what part of the new ways were acceptable. This may have led to the emergence of the hybrid spirituality to which Acheson-Welsh (1977) refers. Today, the role of the chief leaders is similar. Ellen Bruce, daughter of Big Joe Kaye, is the

Native Priest in the community. People ask Ellen for permission to hold community events during sacred periods such as Lent. Ellen interprets how serious an infraction such an event would be.

Balikci (1963) further argues the missionaries and the Native ministers' chose the catechists by virtue of their recruits' demonstrated leadership skills. Given that in the past, Gwich'in people chose their leaders by their demonstrated skills, Balikci's theory is quite plausible. People would not follow local church leaders who did not demonstrate leadership skills. According to Balikci, the leadership skills that were desired were the same as those possessed by the pre-contact chiefs. He supports this assumption by pointing out that the first chief in Old Crow, under the new chief and council model, was Big Joe Kaye, the catechist. In addition to his moral leadership, Big Joe was also an accomplished hunter.

Other qualities that would have been essential for the Native ministers and catechists were effective communication skills. Individuals who worked as ministers and catechists would have to possess strong communication skills to give sermons and engage in religious discourse. The suggestion of wealth as prestige disappears during this period. This may reflect an economic shift as opposed to a philosophical shift. The wealth of the pre-contact chiefs would be balanced, as the wealth would be collective. Conversely, once people adopted a more individualistic economy, the personal wealth of a leader became irrelevant.

The native ministers and catechists maintained the respect of Gwich'in people, suggesting that they did possess the appropriate qualities to be considered as leaders.

Archdeacon McDonald translated a number of religious books, including the Bible, the Anglican Book of Common Prayer, and Anglican hymns into Gwich'in. The intensity of the early missionaries led Anglicanism to become an institution among the Vuntut Gwitchin people of North Yukon and the Tetlit Gwich'in people of Fort McPherson. Interestingly, today the Church is one of the few remaining public institutions where people in Old Crow use Gwich'in. Ellen Bruce, daughter of Big Joe Kaye, is an ordained Anglican Priest with an Honorary Doctorate of Theology from the Vancouver School of Theology. Edith Josie, and Marion Schafer are lay ministers and, similar to the original Gwich'in catechists, draw prestige and appreciation for their efforts. Sermons, hymns, and prayers are all in Gwich'in. People use the same texts that were originally translated and compiled by Archdeacon McDonald.

To envision the extent of change that occurred within the Gwich'in Nation during this period, it is important to briefly examine the emergence of an Anglican residential school in Yukon. In 1911, the Anglican Church established a mission school approximately seventy-five miles Southwest of Whitehorse in Carcross. Between 1911 and the early 1950's, the Carcross Indian Residential School educated Aboriginal children from Aboriginal communities throughout

the territory (Coates, 1991). Some Gwich'in children from Old Crow and NWT also attended residential schools in Aklavik NWT, and Herschel Island (Rampart House, 1993: 62). A few children from Old Crow attended the Carcross School; however, because of the great distance between Carcross and North Yukon, the majority of Gwich'in children did not attend mission school. Below Old Crow Elder, John Joe Kaye, son of Big Joe Kaye, reflects on the Carcross Residential School.

> There are a lot of us who have never been to school. There was very few people that went to Carcross Missionary school, so most of us spoke our own language which is Loucheaux in Gwitch'in. Elders would tell us their stories which taught me a lot of things about how to survive out on the land by hunting, fishing trapping and snare rabbits. (Te'sek Gehtr'oonatun Zzeh Students 1997: 36)

For children who did not attend the Carcross Residential School, day school was available. Missionaries sometimes asked children returning from Carcross Residential School to teach at the day schools. Coates (1993) argues that the day schools had a nominal effect on Yukon Aboriginal people including the people of Old Crow.

> At best, teachers provided marginal literacy and computation skills, but to only a few in attendance. Throughout the territory, the schools functioned alternately as a vehicle of community recreation,

> drawing many adults and children, or as a babysitting service, the children remaining in attendance as long as their parents were in camp. (p. 144)

Day school remained the primary means of transmitting Western educational processes until the early 1960's when the Yukon Government built an elementary school in the community. The introduction of schools helped separate children further from the lives, customs, beliefs, and values of their ancestors. However, it is worth noting that the majority of the chiefs did not attend school. This pattern began to change in the early nineteen eighties when children, who were old enough to have attended Old Crow's public schools in the sixties, were of an age to assume leadership roles within the community.

The missionary era brought profound change to Gwich'in culture. This section has explored the arrival of missionaries in the subarctic and has considered how their presence influenced Gwich'in leadership. Economic leadership partially was controlled by the local traders and partly was assumed by individuals as the Gwich'in economy had shifted from a collective economy to a more individualistic economy. On the other hand, leadership pertaining to community service and communication drifted into the domain of Native ministers and catechists. Although the formal role of the leaders changed, the desired attributes such as knowledge of the land, traditions, and culture; community service, and effective communication skills remained consistent.

This chapter examined how Gwich'in perceptions of leadership remain fairly consistent amidst the social, political, and economic changes that occurred during the fur trade and missionary eras. Between the fur trade and missionary eras, it is evident that the influence of Gwich'in chiefs declined enormously. However, in spite of the turbulent events of these eras, Gwich'in people maintained a strong perception of leadership.

CHAPTER FIVE

EDITH'S STORY

This chapter is unique from other chapters in this study as it is constructed from a series of interviews that I had with Edith Josie about her life. I have tried to use Edith's words to ensure that her intended meanings are not lost in the transcribing process. I have read this chapter aloud to Edith to ensure that it reflects what she wanted to say.

Edith's notions of leadership are deeply embedded in her personal experience. Because this is a story about Edith's life, many references to leaders are not as direct as they are in the previous sections of this study. Some parts of Edith's discussion may not seem to pertain directly to leadership, but taken as a whole, many themes about leadership emerge. This is particularly true when she describes the chiefs in Eagle, Alaska and Old Crow, Yukon.

In her story, Edith pays particular attention to the necessity of leaders to be committed to service and to be strong communicators. She spends considerable time contemplating the need for leaders, and community members, to serve the Elders through visiting and helping out with household chores. She speaks strongly about the need for leaders to pay attention to the youth through the transmission of traditions. Edith also identifies the necessity for leaders to communicate with their people. This information emerges when Edith describes how social assistance and housing programs were introduced to Old Crow. The

relationship between leadership and communication also emerges in Edith's discussions about the future of Old Crow.

Chapter Six will explore some of the leadership themes that emerge from Edith's story as well as Edith's news that was published in the Whitehorse Star. I will also consider how leadership themes emerging from Edith's story reflect leadership themes that emerged in the pre-contact era, the fur trade era, and the missionary era.

Edith's Story

My mother's mother is Jane Nukon. Her husband is Albert Nukon. My father's mother is Edna Josie and his father is Albert. My father's parents passed away in the McPherson[29] area. My mother's father passed away up in the Ogilvie Mountains. My mother's mother was with us in Eagle. She used to look after us. She fell in love with this one guy, little Paul James. They shacked up together. He called us granddaughter and grandson. We called him grandfather. I never saw the rest of my grandparents. They passed away before I was born.

My father is Paul Josie and my mother is Elizabeth Josie. They are both McPherson people. They got married in McPherson and from there they moved around. They ended up in Eagle, Alaska.

[29] In Old Crow, people often refer to Fort McPherson as "McPherson".

I was born on December 8, 1921 in Eagle, Alaska. After I was born, I was raised in Eagle. I lived there until 1940. That long I stayed in Eagle. With all the kids and everyone, there were about three hundred people living in Eagle at that time. I had five brothers. I am the only girl in my family. Now I am the only one in my family left. My brothers were William, Albert, Amos, John, and Suzie Paul. John passed away when I was a kid. Those were my five brothers.

Parental Teachings

When I was a little girl, I stayed with my parents. My father taught us all about different kinds of culture. Indian ways. We would go out into the bush. He would show my brothers how to set snares and how to trap. In the summer time he would take my brothers out on the river. They would set our fish wheel. While they went to the fish wheel, I would stay home with my mother.

My parents really raised us strictly. They would not let us walk around. When the kids were playing around, they would not let us go out. When Christmas and Easter dances were on, kids were dancing. My parents kept us at home. We never went to dances. That is the reason why I never go around much when people are having fun. It is no good. That is how my parents raised me.

My father would always talk to us. I learned from my father to respect everything. I respect Elders and all my neighbours. My parents talked to us

about how to be good to the Elders. My father told my brothers: "When you guys walk around, you will see lots of Elders around. Just go into their house and if they need wood, cut wood. In summertime, pack water for them. In wintertime, pack ice for them." He would then tell me: "You too, when you go around, go to some of those old people. Sweep their floor and do their dishes. Ask them if they need anything more done. Then just leave. Go away. You guys have everything here. You have lots groceries and you are not starving so you don't have to look for pay." We did that. I tell the same thing to my kids. They kind of listen to me.

My mother told me to be good to people over my whole lifetime. She said it would make me feel better. My father taught us how. He would always talk to us. Today I still go around to old people. I really like to do it. My parents told us not to miss a Sunday service. They told us to pray in church so that God would be with us. Believe in God. That is what my mother would tell us. Since I have grown up, I have stayed in Old Crow and I go to church every Sunday. I still keep it up now. I am a lay reader and really work for God and the Church. I do not want to get pay or anything. I am just working for God so he will stay in my heart and close to me. That is how my parents trained me. I am very glad that I had such nice parents!

Seasonal Activities in Eagle

In the springtime, as soon as the snow started melting, we got snow water. Before that, my father would cut ice from the river and pack it to our house. We would fill our water pail with ice and let it melt. In the spring, we would also clean around the house after the snow was gone. My brothers would clean around the place where our dogs were too.

Often there was not much happening in the summertime. My mother would have a fire in her cache and the women would get together. They would sew. Those women taught me to sew. There were about twelve of us girls. They would teach us to cut patterns out for the moccasins and upper boots. After that they would draw a flower on the upper and show us how to sew beads. I started that when I was about five years old. We did sewing all summer long. Often we did not even walk around. After five o'clock the women would take us back to my mother's cache. They would let us cut dry willow for my mother's cache and for other people who had fire in their caches. We would take dry willow around to all the caches. People used to help each other.

Around August, when the berries were getting ripe, we would go around berry picking. My father would set our fish wheel. Sometimes he would get thirty fish and sometimes he would get about fifty. My mother would cut the fish, pack them into a tub and then hang them in the cache. One lady helped my

mother cut fish so my mother gave her fish. That lady had two kids so I baby-sat for her.

In the fall time, around September, people would see caribou up on the mountain. The mountain was between our village and downtown Eagle. Halfway between the village and downtown was the cemetery. They would see the caribou behind the cemetery. The men would come back to the village and tell people that caribou were coming. At first, only three or four men would go out. After they got the first caribou, a bunch of men would go down and just shoot caribou. It was not very far from the village. They would bring the meat home by dog pack. There was no car or truck at that time. They brought the meat back and shared it with everyone. The meat was cut and hung to dry by the women. I helped my mother cut meat, that is how I know how to make dry meat now.

In wintertime, my father would set traps. He would go trapping and two of my brothers would go out with him. Two would stay at home. My brother Amos worked down at the store in downtown Eagle. We had about five dogs. My brother would tell me that we were going to cut wood and that I was going to haul it. He would force me to haul the wood. My brother, William, would hitch up a dog for me and I would just take off! He would just laugh hard. Then I would haul that wood. I would only haul wood once in a while. The rest of the time I would sit home and sew. I did not want to be cold.

In 1938, my brothers William and Suzie Paul went to Fairbanks and Seattle for the army. One brother had a bad heart and the other had a touch of Tuberculosis so they had to come home. William came back just before Christmas and Suzie Paul came back just after New Years.

When I lived in Eagle, it was silent. Nobody knew about drinking. People would help each other. Women would visit each other and tell stories. In summertime and wintertime they would visit and tell stories. The women would do things together. Around 1938 and 1939 boys and men started to drink. Women start to fool around. After 1940, when we left Eagle, drinking became really bad. It was really wild. A lot of people left Eagle.

Chiefs in Eagle

When I was about five years old, the Chief in Eagle was Andrew Silas. He was chief for a good many years. He had two guys on council: Bob Juneby and Willie Juneby. Bob Juneby and Andrew Silas were brothers. At that time, chief and council talked to the people and helped them. Everyday they visit people's houses and ask people how they can help them.

People used to protect each other. When some boys and men went out hunting, the chief would go too. They would get about three or four moose and then have a feast. The chief would put a feast on for the whole village. That is

how they used to do it. Andrew Silas was a good chief. He was really good because he talked with people.

After Andrew Silas, my father became chief in Eagle. His one council member was Bob Juneby. My father was chief for about two years. He would really try to help the people. In those days at Christmas and New Years they would really have big feasts. They would take all the food down to the community hall for the feasts. My mother would cook and some of the women would help out.

One time, my father and Bob Juneby went to Fairbanks for meetings. They told the people in Fairbanks that people in Eagle were having hard times. He was able to get those families some groceries. It was kind of like social assistance. My father was really good at helping people.

Move to Whitestone

My mother only has one brother. That is Dick Nukon's father. He stayed with his wife for two years in Eagle before moving to Whitestone village. All at once, my aunt got sick. My uncle took her down to Fort Yukon to see a doctor. The doctor said there was no hope for her. They buried her in Fort Yukon. After that, my uncle sent the news to my mother.

My uncle's daughter, Jessie, married Charlie Thomas and moved to Old Crow. My uncle asked my mother to go to Whitestone. He said that my

cousins, Dick and Kenneth, miss their mother. We told my uncle that in the fall we would try to go to Whitestone.

In the fall, just before Halloween, we left Eagle. The ice was moving on the river because it was just before freeze-up. Although it was dangerous, the boys took us across the river with the boat. My father went across before us and took his snowshoes. He made a trail for us. The rest of us camped across the river from Eagle that night. The next morning we took off. William had seven dogs, Albert had six, and Amos had five. We only had three dog teams and we had quite a few groceries. My brothers were able to put quite a bit of stuff on the sleighs, but they had to leave quite a bit behind too. The next day they went back to pick up the stuff they had left behind.

The next day we made it up to the Ogilvie Mountains. We only had to camp two times to make it that far. My father and brothers set traps at this camp until after Christmas. Two of my brothers went down to Eagle before Christmas to sell some of the furs they had trapped with my father. They were able to pick up some groceries with the money from the furs. After my brothers come back from Eagle, we left to go down to Whitestone.

My mother and I would walk as we traveled. My father and brothers would go ahead and they would make camp. They would set the tent up. After I got there I would put brush down and put all the blankets in the tent. We would then make a fire. We would make tea and start to cook. After I made tea,

three of my brothers would go ahead to take a load to our next camp. They would get back around ten o'clock. Each night they would do this, they would take a load ahead and we would get as far as that spot the next day.

After camping two times, we made it to Willow Creek. From Willow Creek, we could see Whitestone. When we saw Whitestone, my brothers put my mother and I on their toboggans and left their stuff. We went straight down the river. We reached Whitestone about the last week of February.

My brothers took their dog teams to my uncle's house. The dogs were barking and Kenneth heard them. He just hollered as he was telling his father that we were coming. Dick came out and looked at us for a long time. My uncle came out and shook hands with us. He shook hands with my mother and started to cry. My mother told him that although it was a long way, we came to him. She told him that it was no use crying. Just feel happy!

Living in Old Crow

We lived at Whitestone during 1941 and 1942. We would stay in Old Crow during the spring and summer and return to Whitestone in the fall. When I came from Eagle to Old Crow, things were pretty much the same. The women would help each other tanning skins. They would sit outside and do their work. When I came, Moses Tizya's wife, Martha Tizya, was young. Women such as Martha Kendi, Martha Charlie, Mary Charlie, and Eliza Ben Kassi were good.

They would talk to the girls in their own language when the girls came around. They would show the girls how to work with meat and skin. Every Friday there would be a Women's Auxiliary (WA) meeting. The girls would come around and the women would let the girls cut out patterns and sew.

The women taught their daughters how to sew and wash their clothes. At that time, there was no electricity and we used washboards to do our laundry. We started to wash our laundry in the morning around nine o'clock and it would last until two in the afternoon. It would take us that long with wash boards!

The girls were also shown how to keep a house. They had to wash floors and do the dishes. They learned this by watching their mothers. When their mothers were busy, the girls would do the cooking. They did everything their mothers taught them. It is not the same anymore. Those little girls now, they could help their mothers, but they are just running around. When I first came to Old Crow parents would ask their girls to go visit the old people. The girls did not even think of pay. They just get a cup of tea and bannock and are glad for that. Now everything anyone does, they want pay. It seems kind of funny to me.

Some of the boys and men would build boats and canoes. The boys would come around and watch. They tried to help those men make boats and canoes. They did really well!

Role of the Church in the Community

The old mission church was here when we got here. That is where they held services. At that time, Reverend Julias Kendi[30] was here. Big Joe Kaye and Elias Gwatlati would help with the service as well. The three of them worked together to make the service. In 1959, people in Old Crow built the new St. Luke's Church. The Chief at the time was Charlie Abel and he wanted a new church. So it was built.

People helped each other. When they started to build the church, everyone worked together. All the women brought food to cook down to the riverbank in front of the church. They would make tea and coffee and cook down there. The men would start working around eight in the morning. People would eat dinner and supper by the church and after supper, everyone would go home.

When Julias Kendi was the minister, everything was done very well. During the church service, people helped Big Joe and Julias Kendi. They would do a reading or pick up collection. That sort of thing. In fall, the men would build a wood raft. They would float wood down the river and then bring it up to the church after that, the men would saw all the wood. They would make a big pile of kindling as well. Both John Kendi and John Moses would make a fire

[30] Julias Kendi was a Native minister from Fort McPherson. He also served as a minister in Mayo, Yukon for a number of years.

in the church every Sunday. They would ring the bell for the church as well. John Kendi was the churchwarden.

Myra Moses was WA [Women's Auxilary] President when I first came to Old Crow. She was old, but she worked at the WA every Friday. When something came up, like Victoria Day, she would go down to the church. The women would be with her and they would gather dry willow to make a fire. Then they would make tea, soup, and boiled meat. Martha Tizya would make bannock. Everyone in town would sit and eat down by the church for Victoria Day. In August, when they finished cleaning the graveyard, they would eat by the church. That is how Myra Moses worked with the WA.

Sarah Abel was Council for two years when Charlie Peter Charlie was chief. She also worked for the WA. Every Friday all the women got together at the Mission House. They sewed. Some women made moccasins and boots. At Christmas time, they would have a big sale. Some of those women even bought those slipper and canvas boots. Sarah Simon was there at that time. Together, Sarah Abel and Sarah Simon would teach people how to sing Christmas Carols in Gwich'in. They let the women sing in Gwich'in. Sometimes the women did a little acting. At Christmas time, they had a midnight service. While the women were singing, Sarah Simon and Sarah Abel acted out Jesus being born. All that they do. Sarah Abel really worked well on Council and in WA.

Family Life

I am still single today, but I have two boys and one girl. My daughter Jane is married to Jim Montgomery and they have one son. My oldest son is William. He is married to Vicky and they have one girl and one boy. William's youngest brother commit suicide when he was fifteen years old. I have those three kids. Now I have my grandchildren around me and they help me a lot!

I was twenty years old when I moved here. All at once, something came into my mind and that is how I got my first kid. Then I thought to myself, why did I do this? What a crazy thing! After that first kid, I thought that I was not being too good. I really wanted to try to be good. Even with that, I have three kids!

My parents were really glad that I had kids. They really told me to look after my kids well. Ever since my kids were small, I trained them. My mother helped out. She talked to them and they really listened well to us.

My mother wanted me to get married to some boys. But I told my mother that I would look after her until she passed away. She got really mad at me and just screamed at me! Even with that, I am still single. People tell me that I should get married, but I still say that single is better than married!

Writing for the Whitehorse Star

I started writing news in 1963. My Auntie, Sarah Simon, and her husband, Reverend James Simon, moved to Old Crow from Whitehorse on July 2, 1962. The Bishop told them that they would be working at St. Luke's Church in Old Crow. They lived down at that old mission house. Sarah Simon was related to my mother through her mother. That is why I call her Auntie. I really thank Sarah Simon for all her help. I always say a prayer for her.

When they came, I was doing a little work cleaning-up at the mission house. Sarah Simon got a letter from the Whitehorse Star. The next day when I went to work at her house, she said that she received a letter from the Whitehorse Star. They said that they wanted somebody from Old Crow to write news for them. She asked me if I could write down information about what people do, who went out to the flats and mention how many muskrats they got. She asked me to write all of that down. She then asked me if I could bring what I wrote to her the next day. So I did that. I wrote three pages of news and gave it to her. Sarah Simon read it and said that it was good. She sent it to the Whitehorse Star the next day. She told me that I would get a cheque from the Whitehorse Star for every news I gave her.

After she sent my news to the Whitehorse Star, they sent a message back to her saying that it was really good. They asked me if I could start writing for the Whitehorse Star. After that, I got letters from the Daily News Miner in

Fairbanks and the Edmonton Journal. My news went all around Alberta and Saskatchewan. With the Whitehorse Star, my news went all around the Yukon. My Auntie Sarah Simon sent for tracing paper to make writing the news easier for me. With the tracing paper, I only had to write my stories one time.

In 1963, the Whitehorse Star published a book with my news in it. They made about five hundred copies of the book. Recently they made another set of copies and it is available at the Whitehorse Star bookstore. In 1967, I went to Ottawa to receive the Canadian Centennial Award for contributing my news to people all around Canada. People tell me that before I started writing news, people did not know about Old Crow. Now people know about Old Crow. Some people travel long distances just to see the community. Some people told me that when I received my award, I became really famous. "Don't give up", they say. "Just keep it up." Today I even hear from places as far away as Germany and Australia.

Chiefs in Old Crow

When I first got here, Old Peter Moses was chief. His wife was Myra Moses and she was the President of the WA. Chief Peter Moses' brother, John Moses, was on council. John Kendi and Moses Tizya were council members as well. At that time, there were no planes coming to Old Crow. Many people in Old Crow did not know where other places were. Some people did not even

know where Dawson was. Planes were flying around, but they only went as far as Dawson. Peter Moses was chief when the first plane came to Old Crow. That was 1947. In the fall time of 1947, he was asked to go to meetings in Ottawa. He was not sure about what the meetings were for, but the people told him to go to Ottawa and to talk lots! Before he went, he wrote down what people wanted him to say in Ottawa. When he got to Ottawa, he was given an award.[31] When he was in Ottawa, he met Eric Nielson. He gave his paper to Eric Nielson. Eric Nielson told chief Peter Moses that he would go to Old Crow to meet with the people.

On July 2, the RCMP received a radio message saying that Eric Nielson was coming. The RCMP went to Chief Peter Moses' house to tell him what was happening. When the plane came, everyone ran down to the riverbank. When Eric Nielson came off the plane, some of those women ran up to him and gave him a big kiss. After he got into town, everyone had dinner with Eric Nielson at the community hall. Following dinner, there was a meeting.

Effie Linklater's father is Neil McDonald. He was a translator for the people. Neil acted as an interpreter for Eric Nielson. Mary Kassi's father, Elias Gwatlati, spoke. He said: "Those Elder people get pension cheque. It is only seventy-five dollars. Those who got big family only get twenty-five dollars. Some families have ten kids and they only get twenty-five dollars! That does not

[31] At some point Chief Peter Moses received British Empire medal for his collection of money in Old Crow for the children who were affected by the bombing of Britain.

last very long. People have nothing to eat especially those kids. Nothing in their houses to eat! I wish those families' cheques could go up. Those Elders pension cheques should raise up too." Eric Nielson wrote down all that was said.

At that time, my family lived in a tent frame. Elias told Eric Nielson that some people in town did not have a house. He also mentioned that some houses were in poor shape. Some houses only had dirt floors. He mentioned that my father had been in Old Crow since 1940 and he did not have a house. Elias mentioned that some boys could build a house for my father. Soon after Eric Nielson left Old Crow, Peter Moses and Neil McDonald said that they received a letter telling them to build some houses. Right away, they started to build us a house. The Brainstorm Boat that came from Dawson to Old Crow had plywood, doors, and windows on it. Kenneth Nukon got a house at the same time we did. Not too long after that, Eric Nielson came back to Old Crow, he announced that pension cheques had were raised to one hundred and seventy five dollars per month while the family allowance cheques had been raised to two hundred dollars.

When Chief Peter Moses was chief, he, and his council, John Moses and Moses Tizya would go to people's houses asking them what they thought chief and council should do. Often council members were close relations to the chief. They spent their time in Old Crow helping people. When somebody needed help, they collected a little money to help those people.

People wanted their kids home by nine o'clock. The council would walk around town after nine o'clock. If they saw kids, they would chase them home. Council members would go into people's homes to see if kids were at home. If they saw a kid that was not supposed to be there, they would ask that kid why he or she was not at home. They had a big willow and they would just grab the kid and spank him. The kid would cry hard. Kids were scared to go out after nine o'clock. They would watch the time and just before nine, they would run home.

What went on way back is not like today. See, that Charlie Peter Charlie, Alfred Charlie, and John Joe Kaye were Chiefs. Charlie Thomas, he was Council. They do not agree with how things are done today. Chief and Council need to go around and visit each house. That is how you get good advice. That way people can support Chief and Council.

They put that Charlie Peter Charlie in as Chief after Chief Peter Moses. When Charlie Peter Charlie was Chief, he wanted people to get new housing. What people need, they ask Indian Affair. They wanted big families to have social assistance. They called it relief. That came out well.

At that time, Chief and Council only had a small office. The Chief and Council, they had no staff working. Chief and council just worked there. Often they just wrote letters. They got their letter together and had a

meeting. They never were paid. They also said that they never wished to be paid.

At one time, the people decided that they wanted women to be on Council. When John Moses and Lazarus were Council, they took Sarah Abel to be Council too. They say that they wanted Lazarus on Council because he knew how to talk and write. Sarah Abel used to ring the bell for the kids to go home. When she saw kids, she would just chase them. The Council never came out to Whitehorse or any place. They just stayed in Old Crow.

Charlie Abel became Chief in 1958. He worked with Eric Nielson[32]. That Land Claim building was the old community hall.[33] People had meetings there. Eric Nielson would attend to find out what people needed. So Mary Kassi's father, Elias Gwatlati, was the one who got up. He said: "Once in a while teacher come around to teach our kids. There is no school. I think people need a good school building put up." That is what he said. By the end of July some of those men and boys were told that they could go get logs for the new school. They went up river and brought back a few big logs. While that, plywood, windows, and a door were sent to Old Crow. My brother Amos, Neil McDonald, Moses Tizya, Paul Ben Kassi, Pete Lord, all those guys, work and build up that school. It was built in the same place where it burned last year. In two weeks time, the school was all fixed up.

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[32] Eric Nielson was the Member of Parliament for Yukon from 1957-1987.

[33] The building that Edith refers to is now called Chief Peter Moses Centennial Hall.

They put all the plywood inside and by September, the school was open. Eric Nielson sent two teachers to Old Crow. After that the school burned down. Eric Nielson also got a sawmill for Old Crow. My brother Amos and Abraham Peter sawed logs. In that same place, they built another school. But that one burned down too.

Charlie Peter Charlie became chief again after Charlie Abel. In 1964, Charlie Abel ran for chief again. Those PC's, NDP's and Liberals would come around at election time. They would try to have meetings. One time that Joe Netro, that Hannah Netro's husband, pointed at those Liberals. He asked them where they were in the forties when people were having hard times. He said that he did not think that people needed Liberals in Old Crow. He just told those Liberals.

At that time, the plane landed right on Second Island, on the other side of the slough. My brother Amos was working at the post office. In the winter, he would go to Second Island to get mail by dog team and in the summer he would go by boat. People wanted an airstrip to be built in Old Crow. People in the community were asked where they thought the airstrip should go. That fall, the men cut all the trees and willows down behind the town. After September, they fixed up airport. Last year, people in Old Crow said that the airport needs to be moved. People said that we could not use this airport anymore. It is not right! People talk before, when Charlie

Abel was Chief, about where to put the airport, and they made a decision. It used to be so hard to get things like mail from the plane. That airport was put where it was through Charlie Abel's name. People do not know how much money was spent putting it there! I just tell people to forget it and not to touch it! I also tell people to go ask their parents about the airport.

Alice Frost was Chief for three years. She sometimes went to Whitehorse and to Ottawa. She understood things very well. All that she did for the people. After her, they put different guys in for Chief. That Johnny Abel was a good Chief too. That is Tabitha Peter's kid, Ernest and Joel's brother. Ellen and Charlie Abel raised him. After his father was Chief, people asked him to be Chief. He was only around thirty years old. But he did really well.

Reflections on Modern Leadership

Last week there was a meeting in the community hall. Why do Chief and Council just sit around in Band Office and never have community meetings? How come they want to be paid every month? Charlie Peter Charlie says, at the public meetings that other guys like John Joe Kaye, Alfred Charlie and him, they never were paid. He just worked like that, just free. Even then it came out well. Charlie Peter Charlie tells those guys that this is what they should do.

Charlie Peter say to Chief and Council that Elders keep asking them to go around and talk to people. He wants them to talk to John Joe, Alfred or himself to hear about how they worked as Chief. He mentions those old Council members too. He says they can go talk to that Moses Tizya.[34] He is kind of deaf, but he could tell those Council how he worked in Council.

Charlie Peter Charlie also talks about the kids being out too late these days. Way back, they rang a bell at nine o'clock so those kids would know they had to be home. Even with the bell, some kids were out until nine thirty. Therefore, as soon as nine o'clock come around, those Council walked around. Charlie Peter Charlie talks about how John Moses and Lazarus Charlie, John Moses son-in-law, would split up with one going one way and the other going the opposite way. They would go through the whole town to make sure all the kids were home. They would carry around a short willow and if they caught a kid, they would spank them. All the Elders tell the Council that they should do that. Today kids are running all around town at four o'clock in the morning. Parents should look for their kids. They should chase them home. Even that, parents never do. That is how kids get bad.

Now when people have meetings, I ask them to take an interpreter. I ask them to have meetings with the people when they get back into town. I want them to tell as all that they did when they were in Whitehorse. Nothing ever

[34] Moses Tizya passed away in 1998, after the interviews with Edith.

comes out when they get back. People start to ask questions. People do not know what is going on.

Land Claims, what is it? What does it mean? Chief and Council should explain this to the people. Sometimes I hear that we got land claims because we want money really bad. That is what I hear. People work really hard on land claims. Some people do not understand. Last meeting, they only talked about the land claim in English. When we talk to people in our own language, they do not understand. Some people do not understand English very well either. Every time people go out, they should take a good interpreter with them. That is how Charlie Peter and Alfred worked, they took Neil McDonald as an interpreter. But he passed away now.

Today people just go out of Old Crow too much. I think I have said everything. Just people need to remember to talk to people. They need to listen. People need to know the right way to work and to help each other. People need to help the Elders. They need to work for free. Now all people want is money. It used to be that everyone would help each other, now everyone wants pay.

I want people to know what it was like before. Young people think it was like this, but it was not. There was no electricity, no telephone, and no radio. Only the RCMP had radio. They used to send messages to Fairbanks or Whitehorse for people. That was the only way we could get our messages out. It was hard then. People use washing machines now. We used to use

washboard. When the women were young, they know about hard work. They could tell their children and grandchildren about how hard it was. Me, I got three grandchildren. I tell how people make living way back. I tell them that hard times are coming back and they will see them. I tell them that. That is how people should talk to their children and grandchildren, I tell people that.

Two weeks ago my son check his net and brings home lots of fish. All the fish were whitefish. I cut the heads off, open the fish, and take the guts out. I cleaned seventeen whitefish. When the flesh is fat, the flesh is soft. Those ones I throw into the dog pot. What fish are good, I just open them, hang them up, and then put them in the freezer. My grandson Paul was with me. He say: "Dudu, I'm going to cut fish for you." I cut lots of fish and I ask him: "Do you think you could do this?" He says that it is just easy. Then he just cut the whitefish head off, opens their belly, and takes out the gut. That is how he starts.

That is what everyone should do with his or her kids. Those men should take their kids out into the bush and show them how to work in the woods. They should show them how to cut wood and make snowshoes. Stuff like that they need to do. People just do lots of things in other places. Those communities teach their kids how to work. We are not doing anything here. People need to teach the youth to be good.

CHAPTER SIX

LEADERSHIP IN THE MODERN ERA

In this chapter, I will explore how Edith's story reflects Gwich'in leadership in the modern era. I will compare and contrast how the attributes of leaders including knowledge of land and traditions, commitment to community service; effective communication skills and wealth are manifested through the different eras, including the modern era as identified in Edith's story. In addition, I will include comments I received from the focus group members, and some reference to Edith's news, to provide a broader context of modern perceptions of leadership.

Chiefs in the pre-contact era possessed intimate knowledge of how to maintain a relationship with the land to ensure their own survival and the survival of their people. The stories *Man Without Fire* and *Two Old Women* illustrate how reliant people were on the success of their chiefs as leaders and how people interacted with their leaders. In particular, *Two Old Women*, highlights the importance of tradition by exploring what happens when a chief makes a poor decision that fractures his relationship to the past. Food is scarce and the chief makes a decision that he believes will enhance the likelihood of his people's survival. The story accentuates the importance of traditional knowledge when the chief reflects on how his decision to abandon the old women contravenes his peoples' tradition of remaining together in hard times.

His failure to do this lost the information his group needed for survival. The chief's reunion with the two old women, who symbolize the past, alleviates some of the economic pressures that dominated much of the hard winter.

Conversely, *Man Without Fire* explores what happens when a leader makes good decisions. Kwanetun survives without clothing or fire by his intense knowledge of the land and his ability to use its resources. Sarah Frank (Mishler 1995) claims that people, in the pre-contact era, chose a chief because of his demonstrated abilities as a hunter. A chief told people where to hunt and directed how the hunt was executed. Without the knowledge of the land and its resources, and an ability to apply such knowledge, a person could not be a leader.

A leader's commitment to service in this era was demonstrated through his ability to care for the social welfare of his people. The redistribution of food was paramount to the role of chief. *Two Old Women* also reinforces the need for a chief to ensure that the needs of the elderly are taken care of. Leaders needed to demonstrate effective communication skills to be considered as leaders. *Two Old Women* identifies that a chief maintained the responsibility of articulating difficult decisions as well as negotiating with people outside the group. As one trader identified, communication skills were also needed as a means of averting warfare.

In the pre-contact era, the wealth of a chief was demonstrated by his ability to hunt game successfully. Through demonstrating competent hunting skills, an individual would have proven that he had the attributes to become a leader. A chief's wealth reflected his ability to meet the social needs of his people and to make good hunting decisions. A disharmonious group would have difficulty pulling together to hunt, and poor hunting leadership would ensure that food would not be readily available. A chief's wealth reflects his ability to make effective decisions.

In the fur trade era, like the pre-contact era, knowledge of land and tradition were critical aspects of leadership. It is difficult to distinguish the role of chiefs in the pre-contact era and the fur trade era because of the difficulty finding dates for many of the chiefs described though the oral histories of Gwich'in people. Successful chiefs during this era worked the traditional trading networks to their advantage. They relied on their knowledge of where they could locate resources to maximize their benefits from the trade. Consequently, this era epitomized the winning blend of leadership and knowledge of the land and resources.

This era also brought to light the complex relationships between the distinct groups of Gwich'in people, the regional chiefs, the secondary chiefs, the medicine men, and the traders. The traditional trading networks and group affiliations were essential to ensure that trade occurred. The regional chiefs

depended on the secondary chiefs to oversee successful hunting expeditions thus ensuring that they had trade resources and food. The secondary chiefs depended on the regional chiefs to negotiate with the traders for hunting supplies, tools, and dry goods. For a group to be successful, they relied on their traditional relationships and their knowledge of how to use the resources available to them.

A leader's commitment to service in this era was demonstrated by his willingness to travel great distances for obtaining goods for their people. Frank (Mishler 1995) refers to chiefs of old as being great Democrats[35]. Similar to the pre-contact era, the redistribution of food and supplies was a central role of a chief. A chief became great when he demonstrated that he had the ability to provide for a large number of people. The fur trade era was most likely the most ostentatious era for Gwich'in chiefs. Their wealth was exhibited by the intricate beading that adorned their attire. The more beads a chief displayed, the more people would recognize his abilities as a hunter and leader. However, a chief's wealth was reflected in the wealth of his people as redistribution remained as an important aspect of leadership. The spread of disease, the arrival of the missionaries and the emergence of the independent traders eroded the role of chiefs following the fur trade era.

In the missionary era, leadership became splintered. During this period, the role of chief disappeared as the roles of Native minister and catechist

[35] As already identified, it is difficult to distinguish whether or not the chiefs Frank refers to were living in the pre-contact era or the fur trade era.

emerged. The Native ministers and their catechists assumed some, though not all, of the chief's leadership responsibilities. The relationships between the native ministers and the catechists closely mirrored the relationships between the regional and secondary chiefs. A significant change in this era was the appointment of leaders by missionaries. This was the first time that Gwich'in people did not choose their own leaders. Although it is argued that the missionaries chose individuals who demonstrated leadership qualities similar to those of the old time chiefs, the choice of who the church leaders were did not belong to the people.

The Native ministers and catechists did not maintain the economic leadership role that the chiefs of the pre-contact era and the fur trade era did. The economy of the Gwich'in people became more individualistic and people no longer relied on their chiefs to direct communal hunting expeditions. However, the religious leaders had to maintain a profound knowledge of tradition, as they were the intermediaries between the past and present. In particular, they would need to possess a strong understanding of both their traditional spiritual world and of Christianity as they were bound to interpret the Christian message to their people. In some respects, this was the first time that Gwich'in people were forced to walk in both the Western world and their traditional world, a theme that became increasingly important in later years.

The missionary era can best be described as one of great confusion for the Gwich'in people. This was especially true for the Vuntut Gwitchin people who relocated several times as surveyors drew the lines of the international boundary. In addition, people were reeling from the ravaging effects of disease. Community service, in some respects was not entirely beneficial as the intention of the missionaries was to erode the traditional practices of the Gwich'in people. However, the Native ministers and catechists likely dedicated significant time tending to the social and spiritual needs of their people. Day schools were another service provided by the church, but they were often administered by the graduates of residential schools and not by the Native ministers or catechists. As this was an era of intense confusion, and the accumulation of personal wealth was not a virtue taught by the Christian missionaries, little information is available concerning the relationship between leadership and wealth in this era.

The modern era has exposed Gwich'in people to rapid political, social and economic change. One of the most profound changes of this era was Gwich'in people's transition from leading a nomadic lifestyle to leading a sedentary community lifestyle (Acheson-Welsh 1977). Because Edith's story is used as the primary source for the modern era, this section will primarily focus on leadership among Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation people. As indicated in her story, Edith lived most of her adult life in Old Crow among the Vuntut Gwitchin people. She is a member of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation.

Changes that have occurred in Old Crow since the 1940's are unprecedented in recent Gwich'in history. The examples I provide illustrate how complex the relationship between the outside world and Gwich'in culture has become. The Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) have maintained a presence among the Vuntut Gwitchin people since they established a detachment in Rampart House in 1914. Currently, Old Crow has three RCMP members residing in the community year round. Since Edith's arrival to Old Crow in 1942, a school, a nursing station, an airport, and a college were introduced and have become institutions in the community. Electricity, telephones, radios, televisions, videos, computers, and Internet have all become permanent fixtures within the community of Old Crow.

Between 1940 and 1999, typical modes of transportation have shifted from dog teams to skidoos. Canoes and rafts have been replaced by riverboats. During the past five years, people have been abandoning their smaller boat motors for large ones that allow them to reach their remote camps and neighbouring communities along the lower Porcupine in short periods of time. Transportation in and out of the community is available by scheduled air service that serves the community six days per week. Currently trucks are becoming more common in the community as a means of local transportation. However, people rely on skidoos for travel on the land. As outside institutions and conveniences are introduced, Gwich'in people become more dependent on their

relationship with the outside world. They must retain their relationship with the outside world to ensure that they have the means to keep the non indigenous institutions in operation. For example, diesel for the electric generator, fuel for the skidoos, building supplies for the construction projects, and shells for guns must all be transported to the community from the outside. Further, people must have money to pay for the utilities and services that they have become accustomed to.

On the other hand, from what we understand from the oral histories, trade and commerce have played significant roles in Gwich'in culture since the pre-contact era. Although some changes have grievously threatened the survival of certain aspects of Gwich'in culture, such as language, some aspects of their culture have remained remarkably intact. One focus group member despairs over modern leadership practices, but he maintains a clear perception of what good leadership is. He says that people in Old Crow have always told him that Chief Peter Moses was a good chief because of his ability to work for his people. Although many aspects of leadership have changed since the pre-contact era, people continue to maintain a clear understanding of what attributes good leaders should possess. They can clearly differentiate between good leadership and poor leadership.

The federal government reintroduced chiefs to Canadian Aboriginal communities in the early 1920's. In Yukon, the creation of formal chief and

councils was an effort to create one local body in each community to communicate with the territorial Indian Agent (Coates 1993). When councils were first introduced, they consisted of one chief and two council members. Modern day leadership often consists of one chief and four council members. Each is formally elected. Although the federal government created the formal roles of chief and council to cater to the federal agenda, many of the traditional responsibilities that belonged to the chiefs in the pre-contact and fur trade eras re-emerged in the newly elected chiefs of the 1920's. This was the first time, since the fur trade era, that the Gwich'in people were able to select their chiefs. According to Edith, formal ballot elections were not used until the 1950's. However, unlike the chiefs of the pre-contact era and the fur trade era, the role of a modern chief has remained secular, as spiritual guidance remains in the domain of the church. In addition, some Gwich'in individuals have earned respect locally for their pursuit of traditional spirituality. Regardless of whether or not people attend the Anglican Church or practice traditional spirituality, the chief no longer plays an influential role in the spirituality of his people.

Knowledge of the land and tradition once more emerges as desirable characteristics of leaders in the modern era. In the pre-contact era and the fur trade era, knowledge of the land was reflected by the ability of a leader to interact successfully with his people and with the land. If the group survived without serious hardship, the leader likely had a good understanding of the land

and its resources. In her story, Edith's description of the relationship between modern day chiefs and the land is sporadic. She mentions the presence of hunting parties in Eagle, but does not provide detail about the structure of such parties. Her description of her family's journey between Eagle and Whitestone Village implies that members of her family had considerable knowledge of the land.

However, Edith's "news" between 1963 and 1967 is dominated by reports of who was out on the land and how many rats they trapped. In recent years, trapping in Old Crow Flats has declined. Whenever people go out "ratting" in the spring, Edith is quick to report their successes in her news. Below is an excerpt from Edith's news describing the accomplishments of local trappers.

> Daniel Frost went out to Flat for a trip with skidoo for Caribou but no sign and no caribou so he camp once and arrived into town on April 30. He saw Mary Kassi and she got 40 rats already. Was she a lucky woman she could easily make 100 rats next week...
>
> Still cold and most the time it is wind and I know the flat is sure cold to set trap. When the weather change and it get warm it will be lots of water in one day. Even cold weather the snow birds are having fun in Old Crow. We will be glad to see ducks and geese and summer birds soon. (Josie 1965: 8)

Edith's news and conversations were and continue to be dominated by reports of the weather, when the birds return, when the ice breaks and when the caribou return to town. Gwich'in people's relationship with the land remains closely linked with their perceptions of the world around them. A modern Gwich'in leader must demonstrate his or her commitment to the land. Most recently, this has been exhibited through the Vuntut Gwitchin people's attempt to challenge oil and gas development in their traditional territory through the Supreme Court of Canada. People in Old Crow strongly believe that oil and gas development will threaten the wintering grounds and the sustainability of the Porcupine Caribou herd. For many years, local leadership has strongly advocated a non-development stand on the range inhabited by the Porcupine Caribou Herd. In so many ways, the health of the Porcupine Caribou Herd reflects the health of the First Nation.

Both focus group members mentioned that a good chief is one who has a good understanding of both Gwich'in tradition and modern ways. One focus group member provided me with a story of someone who comes to mind when she envisions good leadership. Interestingly, the leadership described below closely resembles leadership described in the various eras identified in this study including Edith's story. In particular, this leader's respect of, knowledge of and stewardship of the land is highlighted in this section.

Johnny Charlie - a few years ago, somebody went to McPherson from Old Crow. On his way back his skidoo broke down and he had to abandon it. Johnny Charlie flew to the lake to get the skidoo before it polluted the lake. Johnny Charlie did not care about the money; he only cared for the land.

Johnny Charlie was always straightforward. He doesn't beat around the bush. He always checks on hunters. He always makes sure that people get to their destinations. He often sends people out to make sure others do reach the destinations.

He was not competitive. Johnny Charlie did not waste time on consumerism. He was always satisfied with what he had. He was always making sure that things were done, and were done the proper way. He was the keeper of traditions. He looked out for the future of the kids. He made sure that things were done. He would always take teenagers out hunting to make sure they knew how to do it.

Johnny Charlie was involved in protecting land for the future. He was chief in Old Crow for about fifteen years. His father was John Charlie and he was Johnny Charlie. Many people who were counsellors during the time of Johnny Charlie's leadership are still working.

> Band meetings were open to the public. Every Tuesday night people attended meetings. He used the local radio station to send out messages. Two hours per week were set aside for people to announce what was going on. Johnny Charlie often visited people in their houses, but he saw more people at meetings.
>
> People trusted him to do the right thing. He insisted on not being treated differently than anyone else. Johnny had good policies and he stuck to them. He would not change his mind by having a conversation with someone on the street. (Vuntut Gwitchin Focus Group Member: December, 1998)

In her story, the focus group member emphasized that a good leader, such as Johnny Charlie of McPherson, not only knew the traditions of his people, he made special efforts to ensure that children learned how to engage in traditional pursuits such as hunting. Charlie, according to the focus group member, acted quickly when he heard a skidoo was abandoned on one of the lakes. To preserve the lake, Charlie chartered a helicopter to the lake and removed the skidoo before the ice melted and the skidoo polluted the lake. This story demonstrates Charlie's commitment to the land.

Edith reflects on the need to transmit traditional knowledge to children as well. Toward the end of her story, Edith carefully describes how she exposes her own grandchildren to traditional activities. She despairs over people's lack of

interest in teaching their children the old ways. In many ways, this can be seen as a critical element of community service. As identified in the focus group member's story above, modern leaders must include the youth to ensure that youth have an applied understanding of traditional practices. The other focus group member is also disturbed about the current relationship between youth and leadership. "Chiefs long time ago, anything they asked people to do, people did it. No questions asked. Today is hard. Kids don't listen to leaders. They often do the opposite. Both the leaders and the kids are at fault." (Vuntut Gwitchin Focus Group Member: Dec. 1998) This focus group member's discussion clearly suggests that the relationship between young people and their leaders has changed drastically in the modern era.

Edith recognizes the activities of youth in her news. When Edith first started to write her news she identified activities and issues pertaining to the youth. Although she does not explicitly explore the relationship between leadership and youth, the attention that she gives youth in her news demonstrates the value she places on celebrating their activities as important events. Below is an excerpt from Edith where she describes Old Crow cross-country skiers' preparation for international competitions.

> February 17, I had wire from Mr. Harry at Whitehorse. He said Ben Charlie and Mrs. Martha Benjamin will go to Ottawa for International Olympic competition for skiers on February 13 Frank

> Cook will take them out. Everyone is glad to hear that those two will go out long travel. Hope they have a good trip Old Crow is little town and Father Mouchet is training boys and girls for the skiers. Now they even go way out to Ottawa. Sure big surprise for people in Old Crow. (Josie 1963: 3)

Edith is obviously proud of the success of local youth in the ski competitions. More recent news often refers to the children attending school in Whitehorse. Edith also articulated how empty the community was when the older children left to attend school in Whitehorse. "All the school kids went away in motor boat and they all went away but Stringer Charlie. No room for him so he stay overnight in Old Crow. After all the kids left sure look lonesome but nice for them to learn at school "(Josie 1965: 20). Edith always tries to encourage young people so that they will remain at school. Edith's story, as told in chapter four, clearly suggests that she is concerned about the activities and the future for youth in Old Crow.

In her story, Edith mentions that it used to be the role of council to ensure that all children were in their homes by nine o'clock. Although this was a policy that the federal government was attempting to make local Aboriginal councils implement (Coates 1993), it was a function that people fondly look back on today. One focus group member referred to this practice as well. He felt that it assured some measure of control in the community. According to focus group

members, a leader is responsible for ensuring that the knowledge of the community is not lost. A leader would not have to assume the responsibility of teaching the children, but a leader should influence people to spend time with their children exploring traditional activities.

The first person in Old Crow to assume the formally recognized position of chief in the modern era was the Anglican catechist, Big Joe Kaye. Acheson-Welsh (1977) interviewed Big Joe about his role as chief when she was researching social change in Old Crow in the 1970's. Big Joe identified the importance of chief's role as provider. He also reflected on the importance of New Years Day and Dominion Day as occasions the chief would give feasts to the community.

> Big Joe said himself that when he was chief, he used to give big feasts on New Year's Day and July 1st (Dominion Day). He would never take up collection from the villagers (as is done today), but would bear all the expense and labor himself, though assisted by his immediate family. "That time, no Indian agent. Make nothing, spend lots of things, "he remarked. In other words, he continued the Kutchin tradition of extreme generosity required of a successful leader. (p. 119)

This selection identifies the continued importance of the chief's role as one of service and accountability for the reallocation of food among his people. The

reintroduction of chiefs by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs allowed chiefs to reclaim some local responsibility for the community's economic well-being. This has been reclaimed more extensively through the implementation of the land claims and self-government agreements.

Corroborating Big Joe Kaye's notion of the importance of a chief's role as provider, Edith's reflections on the leadership of Andrew Silas, her father, and Chief Peter Moses identifies the necessity of chiefs to provide feasts for the community. In many respects, similar to the old time chiefs, chiefs of the modern era upheld the ritual of redistributing food. Edith, on several occasions in her story, describes the feasts hosted by Chief Peter Moses[36] of Old Crow as well. In her news, Edith describes a New Years Feast in 1964 when Charlie Peter Charlie was chief.

> Mr Charlie Peter he really busy with cooking and did very nice work for the supper. Dec 31 is the New Year Eve and everybody is excited for shooting at midnight.
>
> Around 11 p.m. the service for 1964 and after church is out Mr. Charlie Peter Charlie serve coffee and cake at the hall. (Josie 1964: 12)

This excerpt from Edith's news identifies some of the expectations placed on a chief at New Years. Over and above the role of chiefs at New Years, Edith's

[36] Gwitchin people always refer to Peter Moses as Chief Peter Moses. He was the chief in Old Crow for eighteen years. Many people refer to Chief Peter Moses as the last of the great chiefs.

news cites several occasions when successful hunters give their meat to the chief for local redistribution.

In her Whitehorse Star column, Edith provided an eloquent obituary for Chief Peter Moses at the time of his death that reflects the respect that Chief Peter Moses commanded from his people. The obituary also gives us insight into the characteristics of someone who Vuntut Gwitchin people refer to as a great chief.

> Mr. Peter Moses, has been doing lots of work when he arrive on this earth. He was happy old man and friendly with anybody even with white people. So I know everyone will miss him but hope he will have a good rest. He was very kind to the kids and all the kids like him. When he sees the boys and girls, he talk silly and laugh. When someone make feast, he make feast everyone like him because he make everyone laugh.
>
> When the dance is on he always make jig with his wife. He always make double jig with the girls. He was born on the American side and the year he was born is 1882. I hear he got married in 1901…
>
> They make him chief in Old Crow in 1936 and he was chief for 18 years…

All the men make coffin for him and they going to dig ground for him on Oct. 2.

They will have funeral service on Oct. 3. Everybody will go to service and the grave yard. That much we miss him. So we will do our best for him. Some women make a beautiful flowers for his grave yard. They will have English and Indian hymn and prayer. Even the school kids will go to service so will have English hymn for him...

So on Oct. 4 afternoon 2:30 p.m. they had funeral service, Everybody go to service and the kids, also the white people go to the service. Sure nice old man he's happy and kind to everyone...everybody said farewell to him at the graveyard. And they sang God Save the Queen at the Graveyard...After service is over went out from the church, Mr. John Kendi took a picture of the coffin and the cross. While they have funeral, it is little rain but not heavy

Oct 5 morning at 9 a.m. some women burn his clothes ...these women they burn his clothes and blanket. And today is last work day for him and everyone is happy. (Josie 1963: 23-24)

Edith's description of Chief Peter Moses' funeral preparations clearly shows how eager Old Crow people were to show their respect to Chief Peter Moses. Edith

strongly articulates his ability and efforts to communicate with people in the community and Elders.

Below Edith describes a feast held in early July celebrating the arrival of a steamboat bringing supplies into Old Crow.

> July 6, Mr. Stutter boat arrived to Old Crow and when it coming Mr. Stephen Frost and Philip met the boat at Bluefish and they coming up and they saw one moose and they killed it. After they brought it to Old Crow, they gave it to Chief Charlie Peter and he make feast and dance. Sure make good time. (Josie 1963: 14)

Currently, feasts given by leadership may act as a symbol of the responsibility of the chief to oversee the equitable distribution of resources in the community.

Recently Edith mentioned that this year, 1998, the outgoing chief and some of his close friends went on a hunting expedition and shot a moose. The outgoing chief gave the moose to the newly elected chief to cook for the New Years feast. The chief put on the feast and gave a speech to the community about his background and his impressions on how he became chief of the Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation. Edith was pleased that the elected chief upheld this tradition. Today the chief and council are accountable for the well being of their people through the administration of a lands and resources department, local housing, and social services, including welfare. As identified at the outset of

this study, the responsibilities of the community are being reclaimed through the implementation of land claims and self-government agreements progress. Edith describes the election process:

> Morning they start to vote for chief again. So Amos Josie and Charlie Abel work for it. And so Mr. Constable Glean is helping them too. They say vote is start at 1 to 4 p.m. So around 4 p.m. they went down to new school for chief and councils. We wonder who will be chief and sure enough Mr. Charlie Abel is new chief. And Councils are Amos Josie, Charlie Thomas, John Kendi and Sarah Abel. While Rev. Macolum [McCullum] is here we have a new chief. But too bad he won't be in town for a while but those three councils will keep up the meeting while he's away. He will go to Whitestone for trapping and they think he will be back after Christmas or before. Everybody glad for Charlie Abel is new chief again. (Josie 1964: 23)

Edith identifies another way that chiefs have reclaimed responsibilities for the welfare of their people in her reflections about chiefs in Eagle and Old Crow.

In her reflections on chiefs in Eagle, Edith mentioned that her father and one of his council members travelled to Fairbanks for meetings. Through those meetings, her father was able to relay that his people were having difficult times and needed relief. Edith also spends considerable time reflecting on the

willingness of Chief Peter Moses of Old Crow to travel great distances to alleviate the suffering of his people. Further, he would have to have the ability to synthesize his people's needs and articulate them clearly to the people with whom he was meeting. Although the players are different, the role of chief as a representative of his people looking out for their welfare is not unlike the role of the trading chiefs who would travel great distances to acquire supplies for their people.

Edith explores the attributes of commitment to community service and effective communication skills in her lengthy description of Eric Nielson's visit to Old Crow in the late 1940's and the early 1950's. During the 1950's, the federal government introduced a social welfare policy that affected Aboriginal people throughout the country, including the Vuntut Gwitchin people of Old Crow (Coates 1993). The federal government began to take interest in the needs of Aboriginal people. Chief Peter Moses was chief when this initiative first began and, as Edith suggests, was responsible for articulating the needs of his people to the federal agents and politicians. She attributes the arrival of the second wave of development to the negotiation and communication skills of Chief Charlie Abel.

Edith's story also reflects on the role of the wives of leaders. Although different from the description of a chief's wife in the story of *Man Without Fire,* Edith suggests that the wife of modern leaders provide important service roles in

the community. The woman described in *Man Without Fire* is portrayed as being a possession of the chief more than fulfilling a specific role within the group. However, Edith's description of Myra Moses, the wife of Chief Peter Moses, suggests that her role was one of community service. For example, she describes the role of Myra Moses as President of the Anglican Women's Auxiliary in the 1940's. From Edith's description, it seems as though Myra Moses facilitated church related events for the women in the community. She ensured that events were organized and executed properly. From Edith's description, it seems as though the Women's Auxiliary remained as an institution where people could still work collectively on projects. Interestingly, the Women's Auxiliary remains active today.

Sarah Simon was the wife of another Gwich'in minister, Reverend James Simon, who served in Old Crow. She also maintained a prominent role in the community and worked extensively with the Women's Auxiliary. Sarah Simon is also prominent in Edith's news. She also acted as a contact for outsiders wanting to learn more about the community. As Edith notes, the Whitehorse Star contacted Sarah Simon regarding the possibility of an Old Crow correspondent. Sarah Simon chose Edith. Since both focus group members are young, they have witnessed women occupying leadership roles on council all their life. Neither focus group member comments directly about the relationship

between women and leadership though one identifies several Gwich'in women as possessing strong leadership skills.

Since the 1950's, women have assumed formal leadership roles. However, many of these women also possess the attributes of leadership that have been evident in Gwich'in leadership for the past one hundred and fifty years. Sarah Abel was the first woman to hold a position on council, while Alice Frost was the first, and to date, only female chief. Both women had many of the attributes that are considered desirable for leadership. Both were well known for their personal strength and their self-sufficiency. Both women were highly respected for their knowledge of Gwich'in culture and tradition. Sarah Abel was considered the living authority on the old ways until her death, at age 102, in the summer of 1998. Alice Frost, who passed away in January of 1998, was highly respected for her persuasive speaking abilities. Alice, when chief of Old Crow, negotiated the establishment of the college in the community. Alice was also renowned for her passionate appeals for the preservation of the environment and for healing to take place among her people. Although neither woman was personally wealthy, they contributed greatly to the collective wealth and wisdom of Old Crow people. During the past fifteen years, several women have sat on council, but leadership remains dominated by men. As I identified in the missionary section of this document, women dominate the leadership of the church.

Strong communication skills is another attribute that Gwich'in people preferred their leaders to possess. In her story, Edith emphasizes the need for modern leaders to communicate with their people. Edith questions how people can lead when they do not communicate what is going on to the people. The monthly community meetings facilitated by chief and council are critical according to Edith. In her news, Edith is careful to mention when community meetings take place. Edith often recognizes the occasions when the chief provides a speech. Below, is an example of how Edith commonly describes the speeches of leaders in her news. "Still cold and everybody busy with wood. Chief Charlie Abel make meeting. He make good meeting that is for the first month in 1965." (Josie, 1965: 3) Edith rarely goes into detail about the speeches, but often includes a line in her news mentioning that that the chief held a meeting and gave speeches about the meetings he was about to attend outside of Old Crow.

One focus group member commented that good leaders should possess strong communication skills. This is also illustrated in this focus group member's story about Johnny Charlie. In the story about Johnny Charlie, she relates how Charlie used to communicate with his people two times weekly on the local radio station. Charlie's communication skills must have been strong to maintain an audience on the local radio station twice weekly when people in his community had the opportunity to access a variety of radio stations. The other

focus group member agreed that communication was an important attribute of good leaders, but did not go into detail about the topic.

Public meetings have remained a strong avenue for communication in Old Crow. During the six years I lived in the community, local leadership made efforts to have public meetings once monthly. Because people were in and out of the community frequently, public meetings were often postponed. Usually meetings took place monthly. Often they would begin at seven thirty and go for several hours. Sometimes the entire meeting is translated from English to Gwich'in or vice-versa, but usually the entire meeting is in English. The chief is usually the first to speak followed by his counsellors. Below, researcher Gary Kofinas (1998) describes the structure of Old Crow meetings.

> Community members of Old Crow recalled with nostalgia how notice was taken at those meetings of those community members who were *not* in attendance, how youth were seated in the front rows to learn from the events, and the manner in which traditions dictated the sequence of speakers. The sequence was described as beginning with the chief, followed by the talk of the elders, with the general public to follow. (p. 244)

Modern leaders are strongly encouraged by Elders to continue using the public meetings as a means communicating what leaders are doing.

Another recurring theme in Edith's story is her displeasure with the relationship between leadership and money. This is closely related to both the service of leaders and the wealth of leaders. She believes that both community members and leadership should offer their services free. Not only has this theme emerged in Edith's story, it emerged in Sarah Frank's (Mishler 1995) oral history as well. Frank claims that chiefs were "no good" once money was introduced as means of payment. According to Frank, rather than concentrating on the overall prosperity of the group, people began to fight over who received the money. Edith also implies that people's desire for money has undermined the virtue of caring for the whole community. She explains, in great detail, how her father insisted that she work for Elders for free. Acheson-Welsh (1977) also documents some displeasure people had with the new relationship between leadership and money. Further, one focus group member emphasized that a good chief acts to better his community free of charge. Perhaps with the introduction of money, leadership no longer represents service, but represents personal gain. This was also apparent in my discussions with focus group members. Both focus group members were uncomfortable with people serving the community for money. As identified in the story about Johnny Charlie, he cared more about the preservation of the land than acquisition of money.

This theme, money and competition, in many respects can be seen as the catalyst for the negotiation of land claims. Although the federal government

reintroduced chiefs to Old Crow, new rules were established for choosing chiefs. People could not informally decide, as they had done in the past, who could be chief. They had to hold a formal election. The rules of leadership selection were not enforced until the 1950's when the federal Department of Indian and Northern Affairs (DIAND) became active in the North.

In the early 1970's, Yukon Aboriginal people began to resent how the new leadership model contravened their traditional leadership practices. This is clearly stated in a document collectively complied by Aboriginal people from the majority of Yukon's fourteen First Nations. In 1973, Aboriginal people in Yukon, led by Elijah Smith, Chief of Yukon Native Brotherhood, identified the elected Chief and Council model of leadership as divisive and contradictory to traditional perceptions of leadership.

> Many Indians look at the Social and Political organizations and wonder why Whitemen seem to think more about getting to the top than helping those on the bottom. The organization of Band Councils and the Yukon Native Brotherhood has been very difficult because some Indian leaders do not want that kind of power, if they have to step on other people. When people try to get themselves elected as Chief of a Band, the people often turn against them (Yukon Indian People 1977).

The statement above illustrates the conflicts Yukon Aboriginal people find inherent in the DIAND model of Aboriginal governance and leadership. This document acted as a catalyst for the negotiation of land claim and self-government agreements in Yukon. The federal government's assumption that Aboriginal leadership was inherently competitive caused considerable hardship in Yukon Aboriginal communities, including the Vuntut Gwitchin community of Old Crow.

Following the settlement of the land claims and self-government agreements, wealth emerges, once more as an important aspect of leadership. Similar to the chiefs of long ago, the sustainability of the First Nation is dependent on the ability of the chief to attend to the social and economic needs of the people. Edith's concern about the welfare of the community is not rooted in concern for herself; it is in her concern for her children and grandchildren who will be deeply affected by the decisions of modern leadership. This was strongly echoed by both focus group members. They felt that leadership today is more complicated than it was in the past. One focus group member articulated this quite clearly.

> When Chief Peter Moses was chief, things were simpler. They always had positive things done such as the curfews, the group hunting trips, and collecting money for the children in Britain in World War II. Today community members have to take an active

> role and participate in community events and help out at community emergencies. Our leadership needs to be geared toward educating young people better, developing businesses, knowing about land and resources, understanding self-government, and understanding technology. It's hard. (Focus Group Member: December, 1998)

This focus group member was worried that modern day leaders may not possess the necessary skills to fulfil the potential of the land claim and self-government agreements.

The relationship between leadership and wealth in the modern era is difficult. As described earlier in this section, many people feel that money has corrupted the nature of leadership. Personal wealth does not necessarily reflect good leadership. However, Edith and the focus group members identify that they want their community to do well through the land claim and self-government implementation processes. They are concerned that the implementation will not go well and the community will collectively suffer. Modern leaders may be measured on their ability to encourage the collective wealth of the community. Good leadership may mean making good economic decisions that allow people to live to some degree in the modern world and the traditional world. Edith and focus group members clearly suggest that modern

leaders must have an understanding of their past as well as an understanding of the Western world.

When reviewing information on Gwich'in leadership, Gary Kofinas (1998), who spent considerable time within the various Gwich'in communities exploring co-management structures in place for the Porcupine Caribou Herd, investigates how Gwich'in people perceive leadership on the International Porcupine Caribou Management Board. Kofinas' findings demonstrate, once more, how strongly Gwich'in people maintain their notions of leadership. Kofinas (1998) identifies the following characteristics as necessary for leadership on the International Porcupine Caribou Management Board:

> a person knowledgeable of the old and new ways, someone who speaks for the people, and someone who will keep them [government] on track, a strong person, someone who doesn't do it for the money, a young person who will learn from the experience, someone with lots of time on the land, not just someone out to school, someone who has good words and is a good hunter,...someone who'll go around and visit,...Elder who knows caribou and speaks real good (p. 217).

Many of the characteristics that Kofinas captured in his interview demonstrate how clearly Gwich'in people envision leadership. Several of the characteristics of leaders identified in the onset of this study are reflected in the above excerpt.

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This study explored Gwich'in leadership from the pre-contact to the modern era. Information gathered for this study suggests that Gwich'in people maintain a consistent understanding of leadership amidst the massive changes that have occurred since European contact. Gwich'in people show a preference for leaders who demonstrate a knowledge of land and traditions, commitment to community service, effective communication skills, and wealth.

Among the leadership attributes described above, the most difficult attribute to comprehend is wealth. Information gleaned from Edith's story, focus group information, and oral histories, demonstrates that leaders were not recognized for their accumulated personal wealth, but for their skills and accomplishments that led to increased wealth for their people. In the pre-contact era, the acquisition of sufficient resources including food, clothing, and shelter to survive the harsh winter was a form of wealth. Wallis (1993) tells the story of two old women abandoned by their people. The two old women had the knowledge and the ability to acquire an abundant supply of resources to sustain themselves and their people when their band was starving. The abundant supply of resources was a form of wealth.

During the fur trade and missionary eras, wealth was ascribed to the acquisition of furs for trade for European goods such as guns and cooking utensils. Chiefs who had bountiful resources reflected their status as leaders by adorning themselves with intricately beaded clothes. The acquisition of food and clothing was also important during this era since people remained dependent on the land for their livelihood.

In the modern era, Gwich'in people have strongly advocated the preservation and collective ownership of land as a means of sustaining wealth in their community. This was particularly evident in the negotiations of the land claims and self-government agreements. Elders told their negotiators to focus their negotiations on securing Vuntut Gwitchin ownership and protection of land their traditional territory rather than large monetary compensations. The Elders said the money could be spent, but the land would be there to support future generations.[37] The continued relationship between the Gwich'in people and their land comprised their collective wealth. To an extent, modern leadership is measured by the ability of leaders to promote economic sustainability while acting as stewards to the land. However, modern definitions of wealth become murky among Gwich'in people as consumerism becomes increasingly apparent in Old Crow.

[37] While I was living in Old Crow the land claims and self-government agreements were being negotiated. I obtained this information from a variety of sources as it was a common topic of conversation.

When I began exploring this topic I suspected that Edith's interpretations of leadership and the Gwich'in focus group's interpretations of leadership would differ. However, following my interviews with Edith and focus group members, I was surprised to find the remarkable similarity between their interpretations of leadership. Further, I suspected that Western written assessments of Gwich'in leadership, such as ethnographies and the traders' descriptions of Gwich'in leaders, would present a substantially different view of leadership than Edith and focus group members. Although there were sections of the Western material that presented clear biases, I was surprised to see the consistency between the Western descriptions of Gwich'in leadership and Gwich'in descriptions of Gwich'in leadership. The consistency of information suggests a pervasive vitality in the transmission of Gwich'in notions of leadership to generations of Gwich'in people.

When organizing this study, I attempted to separate Gwich'in notions of leadership from Western notions of leadership. I wanted to ensure that Western leadership theories would not dominate more subtle aspects of Gwich'in leadership. However, as the study progressed, it became increasingly evident that some Western leadership studies reflect elements of Gwich'in leadership as described by Edith and the focus group members. In particular, I found that Gwich'in leadership had commonalties with J.M. Burns' (1978) discussions of transforming leadership.

Transforming leadership, according to Burns, occurs when an individual works in collaboration with others focusing on an issue or event that brings all parties collectively to a higher common purpose. Burns describes transforming leadership as:

> Whatever the separate interests persons might hold, they are presently or potentially united in the pursuit of 'higher' goals, the realization of which is tested by the achievement of significant change that represents the collective pooled interests of leaders and followers. (p.426)

Burns identifies Mahatma Ghandi as an example of a transformative leader because of his ability to work with the people of India to liberate them from a system of domination to one of self-determination. Ghandi, together with the people of India, challenged the British rule and reintroduced Indian governance. Ghandi challenged British rule through communication and principles of non-violence.

Similar to Rupert Ross' (1996) discoveries about Aboriginal justice, Gwich'in leadership is deeply embedded in the historical, political and cultural realities of the Gwich'in people. Leadership is more than the simple acquisition of skills; leadership encompasses the ability to work with community members to respond to individual needs as well as to the broader collective needs of the community. As in any society, Gwich'in people have been influenced by good

leaders and poor leaders. However, Edith's and the focus group's descriptions of good leaders reflect characteristics that are consistent with Burns' notion of transforming leaders. Gwich'in leaders such as Chief Peter Moses and Johnny Charlie were respected as leaders because they lobbied for change. They used communication and role modelling to improve conditions for their people. They did not advocate change through coercive action.

Chief Peter Moses and Johnny Charlie worked to improve the conditions of their people. They worked to make the world a better place not only for themselves, but also for their grandchildren. Information obtained for this study identifies hardships faced by the Gwich'in people over the past century such as scarcity of resources for survival, disease, and the imposition of Western social, political, and economic structures. Edith describes good leaders, like Chief Peter Moses, as individuals who worked with the people of his community to improve social conditions. She reinforces that his success as a leader was partially attributed to the fact that he did not work in isolation to only benefit himself; he inspired others to work with him to serve the whole community.

Although there are commonalties between Gwich'in leadership and some Western leadership studies, there are significant differences between Gwich'in leadership and the dominant hierarchical leadership practice. One significant difference rests in the geographic and demographic realities of the Gwich'in people. Gwich'in communities in Alaska, NWT, and Yukon vary in size between

ninety and eight hundred individuals. Gwich'in communities generally consist of groupings of families that have lived together since they were drawn to sedentary settlements at the turn of the century. Prior to the creation of the settlements, people lived in small groups and convened with neighbouring groups on occasion at different times of the year. Their family relationships literally extend for thousands of years. In Western society, particularly North America, people immigrated from a variety of countries for a variety of reasons. Few North American communities share the homogeneity that Gwich'in communities enjoy. In Western heterogeneous communities, leaders become more separated from the people they are mandated to serve.

Social, political and economic relationships are still deeply influenced by the traditions of the Gwich'in people. As a result, it is difficult for institutions and leaders within the institutions to become rigidly hierarchical. Dominant Western leadership is hierarchical in structure. People in the top positions make decisions while people in the subordinate positions execute the decisions made by their superiors (Angus 1989; Foster 1986). This structure is not easily adopted in Gwich'in communities. This is particularly true because the Gwich'in communities are small and hierarchical systems conflict with the more flat structures of Gwich'in society. Through her criticism of leaders who did not communicate with their people or who spent significant periods of time outside

of Old Crow, Edith highlights the need for leaders to remain in close contact with their people.

Gwich'in leaders are forced to be accountable to their people since they are constantly challenged at an informal level to identify why they make certain decisions. Each year political leaders as well as administrative leaders are subject to open public criticism and to strong direction at a General Assembly. The General Assembly is an annual meeting that includes all members of the First Nation. During the General Assembly a number of resolutions are adopted and become a part of the mandate of the First Nation. A leader must attend to the aspirations of his or her people. Western political leaders receive direction from the people they represent, but few have the same level of interaction that Gwich'in leaders do in their remote communities.

Unlike dominant Western leadership, a Gwich'in person is not recognized as a leader because he or she holds a position within the community. Leaders are recognized as leaders because they demonstrate appropriate leadership skills and attributes such as knowledge of land and traditions, commitment to community service, effective communication skills, and wealth. Unlike Western political or corporate leaders, Gwich'in leaders only possess the influence that their people allow them to possess. If a leader does not demonstrate the appropriate behaviours, people will simply stop following that person. In dominant Western political systems, it is often difficult to remove ineffective

leaders because of their inaccessibility. This is particularly true of corporate leadership. Corporations are comprised of individuals who may have no common bond outside the reality that they happen to work for the same organization (Foster 1986). Leadership among Gwich'in people functions on a far more personal level.

Historically, Gwich'in people have been encouraged to adopt Western social institutions and structures. However, the Western world would benefit from exploring elements of Gwich'in leadership. The notions of Gwich'in leadership identified in this study do not promote intense competition nor do they measure their leaders by personal financial gain. In a world where globalization and intense corporate competition are becoming more prevalent, where natural resources are being depleted at an alarming rate, where homelessness is on the rise, and where the gaps between the rich and the poor are becoming increasingly pronounced, Western leadership scholars and political masters may benefit from recognizing and affirming the strength of alternative leadership structures. I am not recommending that the Western world adopt Gwich'in notions of leadership as its own, but I do suggest that we take measures that affirm rather than erode alternative leadership structures such as Gwich'in leadership.

As the people of Old Crow implement their land claims and self-government agreements, leadership practice becomes increasingly important.

Vuntut Gwitchin people have regained the prerogative to develop their own leadership structures. The community remains under tremendous pressure from Western governments to assume Western hierarchical models of leadership. However, it is evident from this study that both young people and old people maintain a strong understanding of what Gwich'in leadership is and what attributes their leaders should possess. Their understanding of leadership does not reflect a Western hierarchical leadership model.

The Vuntut Gwitchin's collective understanding of leadership should allow people in Old Crow to be confident in developing leadership structures that reflect Vuntut Gwitchin culture and traditions. A packaged leadership training program from an outside educational institution would not allow Gwich'in people to affirm their traditional leadership structures. Leadership training in Old Crow would benefit from a comprehensive exploration of formal and informal structures of Gwich'in leadership. Rather than focussing on developing a leadership-training program, it may prove more beneficial to promote a leadership development process where Vuntut Gwitchin First Nation members explore emerging leadership challenges in the community. For example, one recurring leadership challenge identified in Edith's story is tension that emerges from the presence of a wage economy and the collective economy that is inherent in the land claims and self-government agreements. The tension is evident in Edith's and others' criticisms of local leaders receiving pay as

leaders. Edith suggests that money corrupts the integrity of leadership. However, individuals who work as leaders have little or no opportunity to obtain resources from a paid job or time on the land.

Prior to introducing leadership training in Old Crow, Gwitchin people should explore traditional leadership structures further. This will result in a greater understanding of how to establish leadership structures that preserve and promote existing notions of leadership. Educational processes should celebrate how effectively traditional concepts of leadership have been transmitted to generations of Gwich'in people. This may not only impact leadership practice; it may also influence educational leadership and practice. It is incumbent on educational leaders to explore more fully how traditional knowledge is transmitted. Gwich'in people are successful at educating their children outside the structures of Western educational systems and structures.

Many First Nation communities in Yukon are in a similar position to the Vuntut Gwitchin people of Old Crow. They have finalized their land claims and self-government agreements and are in the process of implementing their agreements. Some communities have altered their leadership selection process to reflect their clan systems while others have chosen not to change their leadership selection processes. Perhaps the most beneficial way for neighbouring communities to support one another in the implementation process is to communicate how and why they have made the decisions they have

concerning leadership. By recognizing the integrity and strength of their indigenous leadership systems, First Nation communities in Yukon will gather increased strength to challenge the pressure to adopt Western hierarchical leadership systems.

This study has allowed me to develop a greater understanding of the strength of oral traditions. I find myself encouraged to re-examine my own understanding of education and how educational processes and structures may better reflect traditional Gwich'in communication methods. I hope this study will encourage people in Old Crow to affirm the strength of their traditional leadership structures before seeking outside leadership training that may erode leadership notions that are so vital in the Elders and youth of Old Crow.

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Appendix A

Letter of Consent for Edith Josie to Act as Research Participant in Vuntut Gwitchin Notions of Leadership.

I am aware that the purpose of this study is to examine how a Vuntut Gwitchin woman perceives leadership and how she perceives herself in that role. This will be done through an exploration of the life story and written observations of Edith Josie, a Vuntut Gwitchin woman from Old Crow. I understand that Shelagh Beairsto is completing this study as a part of the fulfilment of her Masters of Education requirements at The University of Manitoba.

I am aware that I will be interviewed by Shelagh Beairsto about my life in North Yukon and Alaska four different times with each interview lasting apporximately one and a half hours. I am also willing to meet with Shelagh Beairsto for approximately five additional hours in order to informally discuss the research as well as assist Shelagh Beairsto with the interpretation of information gathered during the interviews. I understand that a focus group, comprised of three Vuntut Gwitchin members, will discuss information from my interviews and discussions with Shelagh.

Because this study is a celebration of my life, I am aware that my identity in this study is not hidden. I know that Shelagh Beairsto will give me all interview audio tapes upon completion of the interviews. I will place them

where I deem appropriate. I also understand that upon completion of this study, I will receive a copy of the Masters thesis.

I consent to participate in the research investigation entitled *Vuntut Gwitchin Notions of Leadership*. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time.

I understand that any questions I have about the study may be answered by Shelagh Beairsto at Box 96, Old Crow, YT. Y0B 1N0 (403) 966-3524. I understand that I may also contact Shelagh Beairsto's major advisor, Tony Riffel, at The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2 (204) 966-9075 if I have any questions regarding the study.

Signed _____	Researcher _____
Date _____	Date _____
Witness _____	Witness _____
Date _____	Date _____

Appendix B

Letter of Consent for Focus Group Members

I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine how a Vuntut Gwitchin woman perceives leadership and how she perceives herself in that role. This will be done through an exploration of the life story and written observations of Edith Josie, a Vuntut Gwitchin woman from Old Crow. I also understand that this study is a part of Shelagh Beairsto's fulfilment of University of Manitoba's Master of Education requirements.

I am aware that I will be interviewed by Shelagh Beairsto about my reactions to the information she collected from interviews with Edith Josie. I will be asked to comment on Edith Josie and Shelagh Beairsto's interpretations of Vuntut Gwitchin leadership gleaned from the interviews and written documents by Edith Josie. I am willing to participate in two one hour interviews for this study. I am aware that Edith Josie will have access to the comments I make, but she will not be aware of who made the comments as my identity will be hidden.

I understand that my identity will be hidden in this study to ensure confidentiality. All audio tapes from my interview will be destroyed. I also understand that upon completion of this study, I will receive a copy of the Masters thesis.

I consent to participate in the research investigation entitled *Vuntut Gwitchin Notions of Leadership*. I understand that my participation in this project is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the study at any time. I am aware

that any questions I have about the study may be answered by Shelagh Beairsto at Box 96, Old Crow, YT. Y0B 1N0 (403) 966-3524 or Shelagh Beairsto's major advisor, Tony Riffel, at The University of Manitoba, Department of Education, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3T 2N2 (204) 966-9075.

Signed _____	Researcher _____
Date _____	Date _____
Witness _____	Witness _____
Date _____	Date _____

Appendix C

Interview Questions:

Interview 1

1. Background Information:

-Who are your parents?

-Who are your grandparents?

-Who are your siblings?

-What year were you born?

-Where were you born?

-How long did you live there?

-What First Nation did you belong to?

-How many people lived in the community?

-Did your community have a clan system?

-How was clan membership decided?

-What restrictions were placed on clan members?

-What privileges were given to clan members?

-What does it mean to be a part of a clan?

2. Description of Childhood:

-What relationship/ interaction did you have with your mother/ father?

-What relationship/interaction did you have with your grandmother/ grandfather?

-What relationship did you have with your aunts/ uncles?

-How much interaction did you have with other community members?

-What activities took place during the spring/ summer/ fall/ winter?

-How did you participate in those activities?

-Who decided what needed to be done?

-What activities were conducted exclusively by women?

-How was work divided among the women?

-What activities were you, as a child, allowed to participate in?

-How did you learn the rules and expectations of you? Who taught you?

3. Teenage Years:

-At what was a girl considered to be grown up?

-Were you ever married?

-What activities did you participate in as a young woman?

-What did you do for enjoyment?

-Describe what activities you participated in during spring/ summer/ fall/ winter.

-Why did your family move from Eagle? Who decided that you would move?

-Would you tell me the story of your move?

-What were the differences you noticed between the Han Gwich'in and the Vuntut Gwitchin?

-Were the clans similar?

-How were community decisions made in Old Crow?

-What role did the Chief and Council have in community decisions?

-What role did Elders have in community decisions?

-Were the seasonal activities different in Old Crow from the seasonal activities in Eagle?

-How did people take care of each other?

4. Adult Years:

-How many children do you have?

-What traditions surround child rearing? Are there stories surrounding child-rearing?

-As an adult, what activities did you participate in during spring/ summer/ winter/ fall?

-When did you start writing for the Whitehorse Star?

-What prompted you to write about particular community events?

-What changes have you seen in the community since you were a young adult?

-decision making?

Appendix D

Interview Questions for Focus Group Particiapants

1. What is leadership?

2. What do good leaders do?

3. In her story about leadership, Edith talks about knowledge of traditions, commitment to service, and strong communication skills as essential for good leadership. Do you agree?

4. Why or why not?

5. Can you tell me a story of a good leader?

6. What made that person a strong leader?

7. How do you envision leadership in the future?