

‘Far asunder there are those to whom my name is music’:  
Nineteenth-Century Hudson’s Bay Company Families in the British Imperial World

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## ABSTRACT:

The Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) establishment of trading posts throughout Rupert's Land, the vast territory it claimed in British North America, provided the context in which marriages 'in the custom of the country' between its employees and Indigenous women became a pillar of fur trade social relations. In the wake of the personnel surplus brought on by the HBC's merger with the North West Company (NWC) in 1821, employees and their Indigenous families began to settle in clusters outside Rupert's Land. This dissertation examines the understudied experiences of HBC families that settled in Britain or the burgeoning agricultural communities of present-day Ontario and Quebec in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The racial and gendered terrain of their new home communities in Canada and Britain were complex ones for Indigenous women and their children to navigate. They were connected to vast imperial networks of power and patronage and occupied the upper echelons of the small towns they settled in; yet, their presence raised potentially unsettling questions about race, gender, and citizenship. They played roles in both the reification and subversion of racial and gendered imperial hierarchies, and thus came to occupy unexpected and even contradictory positions in family and local historical narratives.

The dissertation highlights the extent to which women and children were vital to the creation and maintenance of networks kith and kin that linked the geographically (and often historiographically) far-flung yet mutually constituted imperial contexts of Rupert's Land, Canada, and Britain. Looking at these families as British imperial subjects highlights the extent to which these diverse settings operated as part of a single, and decidedly imperial, tapestry of social and economic opportunity for HBC families. The



families examined in this study lived their lives across a variety of borders, creating webs of connection that extended across the British Empire. Comparing the experiences of fur trade families in different social and geographic contexts reveals how imperial identities were constructed and reconstituted and how everyday people on both sides of the Atlantic defined and constructed race and family in the context of empire.

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## **INTRODUCTION:**

*The perusal of all these letters has been a great treat to me, & yet the pleasure is attended with some painful feeling...it is only on such occasions as reading their correspondence that I feel myself lonely in the world. It is however consoling to think that though far asunder there are those to whom my name is music & whose image is scarcely ever absent from my recollection.*

- HBC Clerk James Hargrave, 1828<sup>1</sup>

Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) Clerk James Hargrave's musings on love, family, distance and the approach of his thirtieth birthday are preserved on just a few leaves of paper among the millions of folios that make up the HBC's immense archive in Winnipeg. Hargrave's parents, siblings, extended family, and friends in Scotland and the Canadas were 'scarcely ever absent' from his mind as he contemplated what his future in the HBC might hold.<sup>2</sup> Hargrave spent the next three decades in the company's service, but his sustained connection to his geographically far-flung kin continued to influence, and at times even constrain, his choices for the rest of his life. Hargrave's words speak to a mutual connection and longing between kith and kin leading very different lives in various parts of the British Empire. The families HBC officers formed with Indigenous women in Rupert's Land were part of much larger, multigenerational imperial stories.

The Hudson's Bay Company's (HBC) establishment of trading posts throughout Rupert's

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<sup>1</sup> Written at York Factory in a journal he intended to send his parents, 16 August 1828. Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) E.21/7, Typewritten copy of the Journal of James Hargrave, fo.3.

<sup>2</sup> The cohort of families studied here arrive in what became Ontario and Quebec while they were still known as either Upper and Lower Canada or Canada West and Canada East. 'The Canadas' is used throughout when referring to the two districts together. When referring to them individually I use 'Ontario' and 'Quebec'

Land, the vast territory it claimed in British North America, provided the context in which marriages *à la façon du pays* between its employees and Indigenous women became a pillar of fur trade social relations for more than a century.<sup>3</sup> These relationships had profound cultural and demographic implications well beyond the geographic and temporal bounds of the HBC's fur trade ascendancy. In the wake of the personnel surplus brought on by the HBC's merger with the North West Company (NWC) in 1821,<sup>4</sup> officers and their families began to settle in clusters outside Rupert's Land.

This dissertation centers the understudied experiences of HBC families that left Rupert's Land and settled in Britain or the burgeoning agricultural communities of the Canadas (present-day Ontario and Quebec) in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. It argues that HBC families were imperial subjects whose choice and experiences were inextricably defined by both multigenerational histories of empire, and their experiences as fur trade people. In the context of this study, I refer to 'HBC families' and 'fur trade families' as the families of British HBC officers and their Indigenous partners.<sup>5</sup> This group of families saw itself as a distinct and interconnected collective that shared common experiences and subjectivities, sometimes referring to themselves as 'Hudson's Bay folk'. In wrestling with how to define this group, scholars have at various times posited that a certain cultural ambivalence existed among them.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> For detailed studies of marriage in the 'custom of the country,' see Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); and Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur trade Society in Western Canada, 1670—1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980).

<sup>4</sup> Before the establishment of the Red River Colony in 1812, the HBC prohibited its non-Indigenous employees from permanently settling within Rupert's Land and the passage of Indigenous women and children on HBC ships was strictly regulated, constraining the retirement options of employees who wanted to remain with their families. See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 52.

<sup>5</sup> Throughout the text, a woman's specific community name (i.e. Cree, Ojibwe) is used whenever it is known.

<sup>6</sup> See for example Sylvia Van Kirk, "'What if Mama is an Indian?': The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross Family," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, edited by Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985); and also Brenda Macdougall, "The Myth of Metis Cultural Ambivalence," in *Contours of Metis Landscapes: Family, Mobility, and History in Northwestern*

The research collected here does not support this contention, but rather demonstrates that HBC children with British fathers and Indigenous mothers simultaneously held and embodied ‘multiple truths’ that gave them the tools to navigate different social contexts.<sup>7</sup> As a result, individuals from the same family might come to be documented and understood by colonial administrators or their neighbors and relations as British, Metis, or First Nations, and these categories could shift within a single lifetime, or from generation to generation.

The HBC’s employees were embedded in Indigenous kin networks and economic, legal, and political systems for generations by the time the families studied here were formed at company trading posts in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Indigenous women who started families with HBC officers were part of communities with deep histories on the land that Britain claimed as Rupert’s Land. Many of the women studied here were Anishinaabe or Cree; in some cases, their home communities remain unknown.

The racial and gendered terrain of their new home communities in Canada and Britain were complex ones for Indigenous women and their children to navigate. They were connected to vast imperial networks of power and patronage and occupied the upper echelons of the small towns they settled in; yet, their presence raised potentially unsettling questions about race, gender, and citizenship. They played roles in both the reification and subversion of racial and gendered imperial hierarchies and thus came to occupy unexpected and even contradictory positions in family and local historical narratives.

Women and children were vital to the creation and maintenance of networks of kin and patronage that linked the distant imperial contexts of Rupert’s Land, Canada, and Britain.

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*North America*, edited by Nicole St-Onge and Carolyn Podruchny (Norman OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2011).

<sup>7</sup> My thinking on ‘multiple truths’ is influenced by Dr. Kim Tallbear, who has discussed this concept in relation to the intersection of Indigenous spiritualities, science, and Christianity during her regular contributions to: Rick Harp, *Media Indigena*, podcast audio, April 23 and 26 2019 et. al., <https://mediaindigena.libsyn.com/>



Looking at HBC families as British imperial subjects highlights the extent to which these diverse settings operated as part of a single, and decidedly imperial, tapestry of social and economic opportunity for HBC families. The families examined in this study lived their lives across a variety of borders, creating webs of connection that extended across the British Empire.

Comparing the experiences of fur trade families in different social and geographic contexts reveals how imperial identities were constructed and reconstituted and how everyday people on both sides of the Atlantic defined and constructed race and family in the context of empire.

The families of the HBC officer class are the focus of this study for several reasons. Many of the men whose families are studied here began their lives in the fur trade working with the NWC. However, by the time retirees began settling outside Rupert's Land in larger numbers, the HBC and NWC had merged under the banner of the HBC. As result, it is the families of HBC officers and not those of NWC men that are the focus of this study. Furthermore, the families studied here benefitted from the heyday of the HBC officer class, since men who retired in the middle decades of the nineteenth century did so with the freedom that came with increased mobility, settlement options, and financial means. For these reasons, heir deliberate settlement choices can tell us a great deal about how they conceived of their place in a wider British imperial world. Men in the lower ranks of the company's service did retire with their families, though the Red River Settlement and points west were generally favoured as more economically feasible options. Officer families also ultimately left more archival and museological traces, and provide unique windows on the interplay between class and social standing and the construction of race and imperial identities in this period.

The dissertation's six chapters chart long family histories and range widely in their coverage. They centre on prolonged moments of choice in HBC families, such as where to

work or live, how to divide assets, and where to donate family heirlooms. These choices were often constrained in a variety of ways, for Indigenous women in particular. But the choices people made tell us about how they saw the world, and how they differed from their contemporaries. It is clear that HBC families differed in many ways from other wealthy people in Britain and British-claimed territories. These differences demonstrate the ways that Indigenous maternal heritage and the unique context of the fur trade impacted daily life long after families left Rupert's Land.

The chapters intentionally range widely in their coverage, each following a particular aspect of the family life cycle, broadly conceived. Beginning with imperial ancestors, the narrative moves to the settlement choices of families, the experiences of women and adult children, the deaths of patriarchs, and acts of remembering and forgetting by descendants. This range of topics emphasizes diversity of experience in ways that strengthen the dissertation's main argument; that HBC families were imperial subjects whose choice and experiences were inextricably defined by both multigenerational histories of empire, and their experiences as fur trade people.

The first chapter serves as a wide-ranging overview of the multigenerational imperial histories that were the backdrop to men's involvement with the fur trade. Many came from families with long and complex relationships with Britain's empire. Chapter Two is concerned with the settlement of HBC families in Scotland and the Canadas, paying particular attention to their standards of living, settlement trends, and the means by which connections between 'Hudson's Bay folk' were strengthened and maintained over time.

Chapters Three and Four look at the settlement experiences of Indigenous women and their children, paying particular attention to key aspects of daily life such as physical and

affective labour, and significant life events such as marriage, parenthood, and widowhood.

Chapter Four also takes the imperial archive as a central issue, showing how official government records have rendered Indigenous wives and mothers invisible, and the contradictions inherent in this invisibility.

In Chapter Five I examine the transmission of family wealth from HBC patriarchs through estate planning and will writing, demonstrating that HBC wills were underpinned by distinctly imperial parental anxieties and provided moments where imperial hierarchies of gender and race could be both enacted and subverted. The final chapter charts how HBC families, and Indigenous matriarchs in particular, have factored into family and community historical narratives over successive generations, as well as the ways that gendered power dynamics were brought to bear on these stories.

## **I. Literature Review:**

Over the last four decades, a flurry of scholarship has worked to uncover the experiences of fur trade families who spent their lives at fur trade posts, were part of Metis communities in Red River or elsewhere, or settled what became the American and Canadian Wests. There has been comparatively less attention paid to those families who left Rupert's Land and settled in Britain and the Canadas in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Since the early 2000s, historians of the fur trade have asserted the need for scholarship that looks beyond both the geographic bounds of Rupert's Land and the political watershed of its 1870 sale to the Dominion of Canada.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> See, for example, Michael Payne, "Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Present Circumstances and a Hint of Future Prospects" in *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, eds. Ted Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R. C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001). The tendency to bookend the 'fur trade era' with 1870 can be seen in twentieth-century histories of the HBC: E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1870. Vol. I.* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958); A.S. Morton and L.G. Thomas, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870–71* (2nd ed.). Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973).

Though the migration of HBC families from Rupert's Land was not a main focus for Sylvia Van Kirk and Jennifer S.H. Brown's respectively groundbreaking 1980 studies on women and families in the fur trade, each did provide some discussion of this phenomenon. Based on her cursory analysis Brown concluded that references to racial difference in regard to women and children of the fur trade "were decidedly rare in the context of eastern Canada", and that fur trade families integrated rather seamlessly into new communities.<sup>9</sup> My work builds from and problematizes Brown's finding by demonstrating that an examination of HBC family migration within an imperial framework can yield new insights into the racial and gendered tensions, negotiations and contradictions that existed in the communities in Britain and the Canadas where HBC families settled.

Historians of the fur trade have begun to look at the HBC within a British imperial context, but steps in this direction have been tentative when compared to the rich body of literature focused on other chartered companies. Work on race, gender, and intimacy in the context of the fur trade has been quicker to adopt an imperial framework of analysis and to engage with scholarship on other imperial contexts.<sup>10</sup> Recent scholarship has also foregrounded the histories and experiences of Indigenous nations, knowledge keeping, and lifeways to challenge earlier work that often privileged or centered the fur trade.<sup>11</sup>

Metis historians have also emphasized the need for more inclusive studies, working to redress the historiographical emphasis on Red River by examining Metis culture and identity in a

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<sup>9</sup> See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties* and Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 193.

<sup>10</sup> See for example Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); and Ann Laura Stoler, "Tense and Tender Ties: The Politics of Comparison in North American History and (Post)Colonial Studies" *The Journal of American History* 88, No. 3 (2001): 829-865.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of this development, see Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Rupert's Land, Nituskeenan, Our Land: Cree and European Naming and Claiming Around the Dirty Sea," in *An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land: Unfinished Conversations* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2017). For earlier work in this vein, see Lytwyn, Victor P. *Muskegowuck Athinuwick: Original People of the Great Swampy Land* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002).

variety of North American contexts.<sup>12</sup> Much of the scholarship on the Metis in Canada works from the understanding that generations of Metis people gradually migrated from east to west, forging distinct cultural identities and communities.<sup>13</sup> The families that are the subject of this study do not fit within this group, as people of Indigenous and British ancestry who moved from Rupert's Land to Britain and the Canadas, or between Indigenous and settler lifestyles, perhaps multiple times in a single generation or lifetime. This study is situated in dialogue with the most recent scholarship on Metis peoples in Canada, in that it avoids equating the 'mixedness' of HBC families with a Metis identity. Throughout this dissertation, I refer to individuals as Metis only if they specifically identified themselves as Metis, or if they forged cultural and kin ties that brought them into distinct Metis communities.<sup>14</sup> I also engage with the work of Jean Barman, Heather Devine, Anne Hyde, Melinda Jetté, Brenda Macdougall, Lucy Eldersveld Murphy and Susan Sleeper-Smith for their insights on gender, culture, mobility and identity among Metis and Creole families.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> See in particular: Sandy Campbell, "'I Shall Settle, Marry, and Trade Here': British Military Personnel and Their Mixed-Blood Descendants," in Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, eds., *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007): 81-107; Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); and Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

<sup>13</sup> See for example: Gerhard J. Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University Press, 1996); Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock: The Social Origins of the Riel Resistance 1869-70* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1991); D.N. Sprague, *Canada and the Metis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988); D.N. Sprague and R.P. Frye, *The Genealogy of the First Metis Nation: the development and dispersal of the Red River Settlement, 1820-1900* (Winnipeg: Peguis, 1983).

<sup>14</sup> See for example Adam Gaudry and Darryl Leroux, "White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: the Evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia," *Critical Ethnic Studies*, I (Spring 2017): 11-142.

<sup>15</sup> See for example: Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014); Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves*; Anne Hyde, "Hard Choices: Mixed Race Parents and Children in a Post-Conquest West," in David Adams Wallace and Crista DeLuzio, eds., *On the Borders of Love and Power: Families and Kinship in the Intercultural American Southwest* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012); Melinda Marie Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859* (Corvallis OR: Oregon State University Press, 2015); Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family*; Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, *Great Lakes Creoles: A French-Indian Community on the Northern Borderlands, Prairie du Chien, 1750-1860* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); and Susan Sleeper-Smith, *Indian Women and French Men: Rethinking Cultural Encounters in the Western Great Lakes* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2001).

This study focuses on a group of HBC families with specific characteristics. Their patriarchs were commissioned officers in the HBC from British families who formed families with Indigenous women and generally retired in the middle decades of the nineteenth century and settled in the Canadas and Scotland. Historians have long debated the extent to which this group comprised a distinct ethnic collective, and if so, how to refer to that collective.<sup>16</sup> As this dissertation will show, these families had a sense of themselves as a distinct group for whom the maintenance of close bonds was valued. They referred to themselves as Hudson's Bay folk, Hudson's Bay friends, or Hudson's Bay people. However, as this dissertation also shows, the individuals within this group and within individual families lived very different lives and were categorized, racialized, and remembered in very different ways by their contemporaries and descendants, and in scholarly writing over time.

Studies of Metis education, women in the fur trade, and the role of Scots in the HBC have touched on the topic of HBC employees who retired to Britain and Canada with their families. However, since these families' experiences of empire occurred within a range of social and geographic contexts that have often been the subject of traditionally separate fields of historical study, this group has remained very much at the periphery of scholarly inquiry. A chapter by Patricia McCormack in her co-edited work *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands* provides an introductory study of fur trade families that

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<sup>16</sup> Jennifer Brown and Theresa Schenck, "Métis, Mestizo and Mixed-Blood," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip Deloria and Neil Salisbury (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 321-338; John E. Foster, "The Country-Born in the Red River Settlement, 1818-1870 (PhD diss., Queen's University, 1974); John E. Foster, "The Origins of the Mixed-Bloods in the Canadian North West," in L.H. Thomas ed., *Essays on Western History: In Honour of Lewis Gwynne Thomas* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1976), 69-80; Frits Pannekoek, *A Snug Little Flock*; Sylvia Van Kirk, "What if Mama is an Indian?: The Cultural Ambivalence of the Alexander Ross family," in Jennifer Brown and Jacqueline Peterson eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis*, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 205-217; Sylvia Van Kirk, "Colonized Lives: The Native Wives and Daughters of Five Founding Families of Victoria," in Mary-Ellen Kelm and Lorna Townsend eds., *In the Days of Our Grandmothers: A Reader in Aboriginal Women's History in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 170-199.

settled in northern Scotland, hinting at both the powerful contemporary resonance of these transatlantic ties and the need for similar studies of other locales that are attuned to regional differences and change over time.<sup>17</sup>

Canadian social historians have emphasized the importance of examining Canada's past as a colonial one, investigating intersections of race, gender, and imperial identities.<sup>18</sup> This shift has intersected with changes in British imperial historiography more broadly. Over the last decade, historians of the British Empire have renewed scholarly interest in Britain's settler colonies. This literature has emphasized the violence and oppression that undergirded forms of settler colonialism, arguing for approaches to imperial history that provide a single framework of analysis for settler, extractive and other forms of colonial expansion.<sup>19</sup> Scholarship on British North America has perhaps been slower to develop than work on colonies like Australia, though a growing body of scholarship with particular emphasis on British Columbia and the Maritimes now exists. This research contributes to the literature that has demonstrated the importance of examining Canada's history within the context of the wider imperial world.

Transatlantic and trans-imperial approaches have been seen as a way forward for historians interested in the complex and mutually constitutive interactions between Britain and

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<sup>17</sup> Patricia A. McCormack, "Lost Women: Native Lives in Orkney and Lewis," in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, Sarah Carter and Patricia A. McCormack, eds. (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011). See also, McCormack, "Transatlantic Rhythms: To the Far Nor'West and Back Again," in *Irish and Scottish Encounters with Indigenous Peoples*, Graeme Morton and David A. Wilson, eds. (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013): 253-286.

<sup>18</sup> Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About: British Imperial Family Correspondence and the Everyday Foundations of Settler Colonialism in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019); and chapters by Elizabeth Elbourne, Angela Wanhalla, Penelope Edmonds, Ryan Eyford, Laura Ishiguro, Kristine Alexander and Karen Flynn in Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry and Henry Yu, eds. *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

<sup>19</sup> See for example: Penelope Edmonds, *Settler Colonialism and (Re) Conciliation: Frontier violence, affective performances, and imaginative refoundings* (London: Palgrave Macmillan: 2016); and Annie Coombes, *Rethinking Settler Colonialism: History and Memory in Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa* (Manchester University Press, 2006).

its colonies, and between different colonial contexts.<sup>20</sup> Catherine Hall's analysis in *Civilising Subjects*, which ranged throughout the British Empire, is a salutary embodiment of many of these trends.<sup>21</sup> Studies on imperial law, networks, and careering have also demonstrated the utility of looking beyond assumptions of a unidirectional movement of people and ideas from metropole to colony.<sup>22</sup> This project builds from and is situated within these recent bodies of transnational and trans-imperial historical scholarship.

Additionally, my work draws on the rich bodies of literature that have developed over the last two decades on gender and the family in British North America. Work by scholars like Bettina Bradbury, Catharine Wilson, Cecilia Morgan and Beatrice Craig has studied aspects of gender and family relations in order to chart wider social, legal and political processes and developments, while the work of Jane Errington, Katherine McKenna, Françoise Noël and others has shed light on changes in family relationships in this period.<sup>23</sup> This literature has detailed the ways in which gender and class operated in nineteenth-century family life, although issues of

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<sup>20</sup> See for example: Karen Dubinsky, Adele Perry and Henry Yu, "Canadian History, Transnational History," in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*; and Jane Errington, *Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Ontario in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007).

<sup>21</sup> Catherine Hall, *Civilising Subjects: Metropole and Colony in the English Imagination 1830-1867* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002).

<sup>22</sup> See for example: Lauren Benton, *Law and Colonial Cultures: Legal Regimes in World History 1400-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001); Zoë Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections, 1815-1845: Patronage, the Information Revolution, and Colonial Government* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2005); and David Lambert and Alan Lester, eds. *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire: Imperial Careering in the Long Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

<sup>23</sup> See for example Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives, Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2012); Catharine Wilson, *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land and Liberalism in Ontario, 1799-1871* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill Queen's University Press, 2009); Cecilia Morgan, *Public Men and Virtuous Women: the Gendered Languages of Religion and Politics in Ontario, 1791-1850* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); Beatrice Craig, *Backwoods Consumers and Homespun Capitalists: The Rise of a Market Culture in Eastern Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009); Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Ontario, 1790-1840* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1995); Katherine McKenna, *A Life of Propriety: Anne Murray Powell and Her Family, 1755-1849* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1994); and Françoise Noël, *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870: A View from Diaries and Family Correspondence* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003).



race and ethnicity have received comparatively less attention. Historical analyses of interracial relationships in a variety of contexts has shown that marriage was a key site where social and legal perceptions of race were worked out and challenged in the nineteenth century.<sup>24</sup>

Recent works of imperial history have also reoriented their attention towards the study of the family, demonstrating the extent to which colonial and metropolitan families were influenced by, and in turn influenced, the social, political and economic terrain of the British Empire.

Literature in this rapidly growing field has sought to redress the marginalization of family history in earlier work of ‘new imperial history’. These scholars have repositioned family history, earlier anchored firmly within the confines of individual nation states, at the centre of histories of empire. Primarily, this literature has made use of two related approaches: using family biography as a lens through which to observe broader imperial networks, and studying families in their own right as sites where colonialism was reproduced and mediated. Instead of focusing solely on how family members acted upon the imperial world around them, scholars in this field have highlighted the ways that empire permeated the everyday intimate interactions of family life in both the metropole and colonies. This literature has further eroded traditional divisions between private and public, colony and metropole, family and empire, and shown the utility of the family unit as a window through which historians can move beyond national boundaries. The work of scholars such as Durba Ghosh, Adele Perry, Ann Laura Stoler, Angela Wanhalla, and others, has

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<sup>24</sup> Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation-Building in Western Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2008); Daniel Livesay, “Emerging from the Shadows: New Developments in the History of Interracial Sex and Intermarriage in Colonial North America and the Caribbean,” *History Compass* 13, no.3 (March 2015): 122-133; Cecilia Morgan, “Creating Interracial Intimacies: British North America, Canada, and the Transatlantic World, 1830-1914,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 192, (2008): 76-105; Peggy Pascoe, *What Comes Naturally: Miscegenation Law and the Making of Race in America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010); Damon Ieremia Salesa, *Racial Crossings: Race, Intermarriage, and the Victorian British Empire* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011); Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Interracial Marriage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013).

demonstrated the important insights to be gained from using the family as a window on the wider imperial world.<sup>25</sup>

Anne Hyde's work on families in the nineteenth-century American West provides an instructive touchstone for this study.<sup>26</sup> This project similarly emphasizes that the survival of Britain's colonies, in Canada as elsewhere, was not a foregone conclusion in the early decades of the nineteenth century. Like the families studied by Hyde, the families examined here made rational choices based on the situation on the ground and gambled, to varying degrees of success, on the futures of colonies, nations and empires. This perspective informs my contextualization of the migration of HBC families.

There is currently little research on the experiences of fur trade families who left nineteenth-century Rupert's Land, an important missing link between the mutually constituted social contexts of Rupert's Land, metropolitan Britain, and the growing settlements of the Canadas. In the colonies that became Ontario and Quebec, the dominant historical narratives have focused overwhelmingly on the Loyalist influx and the forward march of settlement, agriculture and responsible government in this region, emphasizing intrinsic differences between these developments and conditions in the perceived wilds of Rupert's Land. Yet, when we look at these social and geographic contexts within the frame of empire, the choices made by fur trade

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<sup>25</sup> See, for example, Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons in Late Imperial India* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004); Esmé Cleall, Laura Ishiguro, and Emily Manktelow, "Imperial Relations: Histories of Family in the British Empire," *Journal of Colonialism and Commonwealth History* 14, no.1 (Spring 2013); Ryan Eyford, "'Close together, though miles and miles apart': Family, Distance, and Emotion in the Letters of the Taylor Sisters, 1881-1921," *Histoire Sociale/Social History*, 46 no. 96 (May 2015): 67-86; Ellen Filor, "'He is hardened to the climate & and a little bleached by it's [sic] influence': Imperial Childhoods in Scotland and Madras," in *Children, Childhood and Youth in the British Empire*, ed. Simon Sleight and Shirleen Robinson (New York: Palgrave, 2016): 77-91; Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India: The Making of Empire* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006); Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015); Ann Laura Stoler *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: Race and the Intimate in Colonial Rule* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 2010); and Angela Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

families take on new meanings, and a thick web connecting Britain, Canada and Rupert's Land in this period is revealed. This project contributes to redressing the paucity of research on this topic, and towards the greater integration of histories of the fur trade within wider Canadian and British historical narratives.

## **II. Sources and Research Approaches:**

The collection and preservation of archival material within specifically defined geographic boundaries has privileged the histories of those fur trade families who remained in Rupert's Land, unintentionally obscuring the histories of those who migrated east to Britain and the Canadas. Nineteenth-century fur trade families viewed migration as a pragmatic family strategy for seeking out opportunity and improvement. However, their mobility presents a number of challenges to historians, who in many ways continue to be limited by the practical, logical and disciplinary boundaries of the nation state so freely traversed by nineteenth-century imperial subjects. Surmounting these challenges involves a close textual reading of archival sources from a variety of locales, operating at two distinct but mutually reinforcing levels of analysis.

The study is focused throughout on the ways imperial ideas of race, gender and family were articulated and reworked through both the internal and external interactions of the HBC families under study. There is, however, an imbalance in the archival record that makes it difficult to ascertain what HBC families outside Rupert's Land thought about the changing cultural and political landscape of what became Western Canada towards the end of the nineteenth century, including shifting ideas about race in the Red River Settlement and elsewhere, the imposition of the Indian Act, and the Metis resistances of 1870 and 1885. It is possible, indeed likely, that HBC families discussed these issues with their relatives, friends, and

former colleagues. However, most of the correspondence from the families studied here relates to the middle decades of the nineteenth century; the years preceding and immediately following their departure from Rupert's Land. For a variety of reasons, the HBC families that are the focus of this study often did not preserve large personal archival collections detailing their lives and relationships in their new home communities. Most often the letters that survive were written to former colleagues in the HBC's service and preserved in the company's vast archive. As their correspondents also retired, these families faded from the company's archive in the later decades of the nineteenth century. Despite imbalances in the archival record, it is possible to bring together a range of sources that shed light on the settlement experiences of HBC families in Scotland and the Canadas, placing fur trade history firmly within an imperial frame of analysis to document the lives of historical actors who have been marginalized in the historical record to date.

This study is not intended to be a comprehensive account of all the families that left Rupert's Land for Britain and Canada over the course of the nineteenth century. It is rather a detailed comparison of illustrative examples from communities in Scotland and Canada. Through this instructive comparison, it is possible to tease out the layered colonial identities that were shaped and reconstituted as a result of participating in, or interacting with, this unique form of colonial migration. Since HBC employees in this period saw Britain and its empire (including the company's proprietary holdings in Rupert's Land) as a single field of opportunity for work and settlement, so too does this study; making use of a biographical approach that transcends and traverses the physical and socially constructed boundaries between Rupert's Land, the Canadas, and Britain.

Ethnohistorian Jennifer S.H. Brown described this approach in her own work as a ‘macrobiographical’ one that can allow social historians to work within and beyond source material constraints by using available sources as fragments in a patchwork of ‘partial truths’.<sup>27</sup> Correspondence, genealogical sources, community histories, and material objects can help piece together the fabric of everyday life for fur trade families whose intimate geographies spanned Britain and its empire. This range of sources can add texture and depth to the experiences of fur trade people who did not disappear from the historical record after they left Rupert’s Land, but continued to sustain and expand longstanding multigenerational imperial networks.

I approach the families studied here as a large network of multilayered connections, the geographic and affective contours of which shifted over time. Representing connections through networks deepens my analysis of the motivations precipitating settlement in particular places, while also demonstrating clear links between the colonies, Rupert’s Land, and the metropole. This approach is informed by the work of Zoë Laidlaw and others who have advocated for the analytic utility of imperial networks.<sup>28</sup> Making creative use of traditional sources alongside alternative sources allows for a more nuanced and wide-ranging examination of HBC families capable of taking into account both the trans-imperial and the locally specific.

My analysis draws in particular on postcolonial and feminist studies that provide models for reading archival sources in ways that uncover the experiences of those who were marginalized in traditional historiography, such as women, children, and Indigenous peoples. In order to illuminate the experiences of historical actors in my study whose voices have been obscured in archival records, I incorporate creative approaches to traditional sources while also making use of a wider range of source materials including; oral history, material culture, and

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<sup>27</sup> See Jennifer S.H. Brown, “Partial Truths: A Closer Look at Fur Trade Marriage,” in *From Rupert’s Land to Canada*, eds. Theodore Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens, and R.C. Macleod (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001).

<sup>28</sup> See: Laidlaw, *Colonial Connections*; and Lambert and Lester, eds. *Colonial Lives Across the British Empire*.

genealogical and statistical data. My use of non-archival source material and my approaches to ‘reading against the grain’ of traditional archival sources are informed by the work of fur trade and imperial historians like Durba Ghosh, Jennifer S.H. Brown, Sylvia Van Kirk, Adele Perry, Carolyn Podruchny, Clare Anderson and Ann Stoler.

Like the Metis and Creole families studied by Jetté, Lucy Eldersveld Murphy, Heather Devine, Brenda MacDougall and others, HBC families lived very much ‘betwixt and between’ different social and economic worlds.<sup>29</sup> The fluidity and mobility that allowed them to confound easy categorization, itself a salutary reminder of the locally contingent nature of racial and cultural categories, does not mean that such categories did not have profound implications for daily life. Grounded in literature on what Martha Hodes has called the “mercurial nature” of race and racial categories, I examine the ways Indigenous women and their children were, and conversely were not, made legible to the imperial state through official categories and documents.<sup>30</sup> This aspect of my research is also informed by literature on vital statistics collection, much of which has been strongly influenced by Foucault’s writing on knowledge production and governmentality.<sup>31</sup>

The work of feminist scholars like Durba Ghosh, Antoinette Burton and others on the colonial state and the power and violence manifested in and exercised through the colonial archive frames my approach to finding HBC families in government records. Throughout the study I emphasize that racial categories were mutable and historically contingent, but they also

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<sup>29</sup> Melinda Marie Jetté, “Betwixt and Between the Official Story: Tracing the History and Memory of a Family of French-Indian Ancestry in the Pacific Northwest,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111:2 (Summer 2010): 142-83.

<sup>30</sup> Martha Hodes, “The Mercurial Nature and Abiding Power of Race: A Transnational Family Story,” *American Historical Review* 108 no.1 (February 2003): 64-118.

<sup>31</sup> See Bruce Curtis, *The Politics of Population: State Formation, Statistics, and the Census of Canada, 1840–1875* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); and George Emery, *Facts of Life: The Social Construction of Vital Statistics, Ontario 1869-1952* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993).

had profound impacts on daily life, as has been demonstrated in a vast body of literature on a range of colonial contexts.

Since the HBC families that ultimately settled in Scotland and the Canadas continued to be part of fur trade networks of correspondence, their voices are uncovered in large part through the letters they wrote to fellow ‘Hudson’s Bay folk’. Studies of transatlantic and imperial epistolary practices that have been conducted by David Gerber, Sarah Pearsall, Laura Ishiguro and others guide my reading and interpretation of family correspondence.<sup>32</sup> The letters of the HBC’s most prolific correspondents, which include James Hargrave, George Simpson, and Edward Ermatinger, are used extensively throughout this study. These substantial collections of letters are essential windows on the social world of the HBC, though they have their limitations. As letters written between elite British men, they offer views of domestic life that were filtered through the patriarchal gaze of fathers and husbands, and self-consciously presented in particular ways when they communicated with men who were often simultaneously their friends, colleagues, relations, and superiors or subordinates. The correspondence of Governor George Simpson preserved within the HBC’s vast corporate archive forms what is perhaps the largest and most complete set of correspondence for this period in British North American history. He was a friend and colleague of many of the men whose families are studied here, yet he could also be a ruthless and unrelenting superior who was known to judge people harshly, particularly those of Indigenous ancestry. This inevitably impacted what his correspondents did and did not include in their letters, and the ways they described their personal lives. Other kinds of archival and material sources are used to balance the perspectives that loom largest in HBC letters.

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<sup>32</sup> See for example: David Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Laura Ishiguro, *Nothing to Write Home About: British Imperial Family Correspondence and the Everyday Foundations of Settler Colonialism in British Columbia* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2019); and Sarah Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

Several families under study preserved material collections that were donated to museums by subsequent generations. These objects largely take the form of beadwork articles of clothing and accessories handmade at fur trade posts, often by family matriarchs. As Sherry Farrell Racette's large body of work has demonstrated, such collections can be used to highlight women's labour and subsistence activities.<sup>33</sup> They are also used in Chapter Six to underscore the various forms of female agency inherent in the creation and preservation of family heirlooms.

I endeavor to use specific community names whenever the birth communities of the Indigenous women are known or can be inferred. Throughout the dissertation I generally avoid applying the term 'Metis' unless the individual or family being referenced was part of the culturally, geographically and politically specific fabric of a Metis community in Red River or elsewhere. In part, this emphasizes the cultural and geographical contingency of race, highlighting instances where members of the same family became part of distinct cultural groups, and were thus racialized in different ways. It also avoids equating Metis identity with 'mixedness'. Scholars such as Chris Andersen, Darryl Leroux, and Adam Gaudry have shown how this tendency has continued to undermine Metis culture and nationhood.<sup>34</sup>

Throughout this study I also avoid the use of words like 'remote' and 'isolated' to describe places. Many of the HBC posts where families were formed and spent much of their lives are described in these terms in contemporary southern Canadian discourse around 'The North'. In the contemporary context of fly-in communities, and imperiled rail and bus access, it is important to remember that the bays, lakes, and rivers of what became known as the Hudson's

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<sup>33</sup> See, especially, Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Métis Women's Artistic Production," in Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale, ed., *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005).

<sup>34</sup> See Chris Andersen, "*Metis*": *Race, recognition and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2015); Adam Gaudry and Darryl Leroux, "White Settler Revisionism and Making Métis Everywhere: the Evocation of Métissage in Quebec and Nova Scotia," *Critical Ethnic Studies*, I (Spring 2017): 11-142.



Bay watershed served as highways through the continent for thousands of years. Places like Moose Factory and York Factory were key hubs for supplies and transatlantic travel. In the late nineteenth century Reverend John Horden, the first Anglican Bishop of Moosonee, referred to Michipicoten and Timiskaming as the “gates leading from Hudson’s Bay to Canada.”<sup>35</sup> Wealth and influence flowed into and out of British North America<sup>36</sup> through fur trade gateways, with profound implications for the particular iterations of colonialism that took shape across what became the Dominion of Canada. As this study shows, Rupert’s Land, its people, and its history cannot be separated out from the settler colonial enterprises underway in parts of British North America in the nineteenth century.

### **III. Conclusion:**

This dissertation is a product of its time and place. It builds on decades of work by imperial historians, as well as on the painstaking archival labour performed by fur trade scholars and by genealogists across North America, Australia, New Zealand, and the United Kingdom. It also relies on the recent and continued expansion of archival digitization projects, and online databases and catalogues to follow the transimperial movement of nineteenth-century fur trade people. The historiographical and imagined boundaries between Rupert’s Land, Britain, and the Canadian colonies have tended to segment the histories of these families in ways that obscure continuities and connections. The settler colonial enterprises underway in the Canadas have been artificially separated out from the extractive imperial project of the fur trade. In fact, these very different processes were linked in a variety of economic, political, and particularly personal and

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<sup>35</sup> Letter from Rev. John Horden to CMS Lay Secretary, May 2, 1876, Church Missionary Society, MG17, Vol.B2, reel A-80. Cited in: Cath Oberholtzer, “The Legacy of William Bell Malloch, M.D.: The McGill, Moose Factory and McCord Connection,” *Fontanus* 11 (2003), 68.

<sup>36</sup> In this dissertation, British North America refers collectively to the colonies and territories over which the British Crown attempted to assert sovereignty in the period under study.

intimate ways, with each other and with the British metropole. Perhaps paradoxically, focused study at the family level brings these far-flung yet mutually constituted contexts together into a single frame of analysis.

## Chapter One

### **‘Ties of Bluid, Kin & Countrie’:**

#### **Imperial Entanglements<sup>1</sup>**

The historiographical and imagined boundaries between Rupert’s Land, Britain, and the Canadian colonies have tended to segment the histories of Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) families in ways that obscure imperial continuities and connections. This chapter charts multigenerational family histories of Empire much like the work of Anne Hyde, Claudio Saunt and others, who have demonstrated the utility of using families as windows on wider imperial and political processes.<sup>2</sup> This chapter takes a different approach from the following chapters, employing a wider lens to look backward at their parents and grandparents. This view is essential for understanding the imperial contexts within which HBC families lived, worked, and migrated. Through a discussion of the imperial networks of HBC men, this chapter outlines the multi-generational career paths that led to involvement in the fur trade, and the creation of dense webs of intercultural kin ties in (and well beyond) Rupert’s Land.

By centering families and their relationships, it is possible to trace a much larger imperial story. Highland families that played active roles in the Jacobite Risings contradictorily went on to be central to the survival and expansion of the British Empire in the long nineteenth century. The Jacobite Risings were a series of armed conflicts that occurred between 1688 and 1746 with the goal of restoring Catholic descendants of King James VII to the throne of Great Britain. The

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<sup>1</sup> Tanja Bueltmann, Andrew Hinson, and Graeme Morton, eds., *Ties of bluid, kin and countrie: Scottish associational culture in the diaspora* (Guelph: University of Guelph, 2009).

<sup>2</sup> See for example: Anne Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011); and Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000).

movement drew supporters largely from the Catholic Highlands of Scotland, as well as support from Catholic allies in Europe, before its final and devastating defeat at the Battle of Culloden in 1746. After the defeat, supporters of the Jacobite cause faced harsh recriminations and social and economic policies aimed at suppressing future opposition from the Scottish Highlands. In addition to those killed at Culloden, some Jacobite leaders were executed and were the subject of an Act of Attainder from the Crown, which stripped them of their lands and hereditary titles and had far-reaching impacts for their descendants.

Yet, the children and grandchildren of prominent Jacobite families became the plantation owners, sugar merchants, fur traders, and colonial officials that sustained the Crown's long imperial reach overseas for generations. Fur trade wealth in turn enabled and supported the institutions that formed the backbone of settler society in the Canadas. The patronage of HBC men supported the establishment of the universities, churches, and hospitals that were fundamental to the operation of settler society in the nineteenth century and beyond. Children and grandchildren of the fur trade went on to other fields of empire as colonial administrators, resource extractors, and settlers in places like Australia, western Canada, New Zealand, and India.

This chapter's coverage is necessarily selective, but centering the genealogies of fur trade families puts their decisions, motivations, and actions into a much wider context that highlights continuities in communities and economic activity over multiple generations. The experiences of eighteenth-century Highland families were fundamental to the decision-making processes of future generations; the stances taken by parents and grandparents unavoidably informed and impacted the choices of their descendants, perhaps sometimes in unconscious ways, yet always with profound implications for those that came after them. The overarching narrative arc of this

chapter weaves its way from the eighteenth-century Jacobite Risings in the Scottish Highlands, across the Atlantic to the American Revolution, northward to the Loyalist settlements of the Canadas, and into the heart of the nineteenth-century fur trade. Each of these historiographic trails is well-worn in their own right. To some extent, these areas of study received comparatively little attention in the last two decades, as historians turned away from ‘great man’ military and political histories, and topics of study that garnered disproportionate attention from scholars in the years before the diversification of the historical profession and the increased emphasis on social history.<sup>3</sup>

Since the rise of the “new imperial history,” the economic implications of Britain’s Empire at home have been a key area of focus, as has the operation of commerce and trade as an informal empire overseas.<sup>4</sup> Chartered companies, and in particular the East India Company (EIC), have garnered significant attention as agents of empire.<sup>5</sup> Though the HBC fulfilled similar imperial functions and ambitions as a chartered company roughly contemporary to the EIC, there is comparatively less work that interrogates the commercial, institutional, sexual, and political interactions that took place under the umbrella of the HBC’s fur trade operations through an imperial lens.<sup>6</sup> A focus on families demonstrates the utility of studying the history of the HBC within an imperial framework.

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<sup>3</sup> Historical writing on the Jacobite Risings has only begun to see a resurgence in the last few years. See for instance, Douglas Hamilton and Allan MacInnes, eds., *Jacobitism, Enlightenment and Empire, 1680-1820* (New York: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>4</sup> See for example, Martin Lynn, “British Policy, Trade, and Informal Empire in the Mid-Nineteenth Century,” in *British Empire Vol. III* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 101-120.

<sup>5</sup> For a sampling of the range of this scholarship, see: H.V. Bowen, *The Business of Empire: The East India Company and Imperial Britain, 1756-1833* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Margot Finn and Kate Smith, *The East India Company at Home, 1757-1857* (London: UCL Press, 2018); Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720-1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2002); and Nida Sajid, “Myth, Language, Empire: The East India Company and the Construction of British India, 1757-1857,” PhD diss., (Western University, 2011).

<sup>6</sup> An early look at the imperial connections of the HBC can be found in: John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor, 1821-1869* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1957). For a more recent look at the HBC in the context of imperial chartered companies, see: Philip Girard, “Imperial legacies: Chartered enterprises

As Helen Buss and Judith Beattie asserted in their introduction to a volume of HBC correspondence, “the history of the company and its men has always been closely related to Canada’s history as a colony and as a nation.”<sup>7</sup> Carl Berger’s classic work *The Sense of Power: Studies in the Ideas of Canadian Imperialism* demonstrated that “imperialism was one form of Canadian nationalism,” the two phenomena were not mutually exclusive, and in fact went hand in hand. In the early twentieth-century, Judge Charles Oakes Ermatinger, the son of HBC Chief Factor Edward Ermatinger, echoed this line of thinking. Ermatinger characterized the nineteenth century as “the period when the self-governing colonies of the British Empire first shared the burthens as well as the benefits of the Empire cast off the swaddling clothes of colonial immunity to don the toga virilis [‘toga of manhood’] of national adolescence.” In Ermatinger’s view, it was love of the British Empire that created the impetus for nationhood, as colonies wished to become full partners of empire, paying their dues and reaping the benefits.<sup>8</sup> The role of the HBC in extending Britain’s imperial reach across North America was fundamental to the development of settler colonialism and the Canadian nation state. At a more individual level, as the proceeding chapters will show, HBC families themselves were foundational settlers and financiers for the new Dominion. Men like Judge Ermatinger came from HBC families with long and varied histories of imperial involvement. In these families, the fur trade was seen as one of many possible fields of imperial activity.

In 1980, historian Philip Goldring asserted that: “Fur trade records are impaired as sources for general social history by the unusual nature of the men’s employment, and the out-of-

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in Northern British America,” in Shaunnagh Dorsett and John McLean, eds., *Legal Histories of the British Empire: Laws, Engagements and Legacies* (London: Taylor and Francis, 2014): 127-140.

<sup>7</sup> Beattie and Buss, *Undelivered Letters to Hudson’s Bay Company Men on the Northwest Coast of America, 1830-57* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2003), 8.

<sup>8</sup> Western University Archives (hereafter WUO), B5575-1, CO Ermatinger, “The United Empire and the United States – their mission in the world By a British American,” pg. 1 Western University Archives, pg. 1. B5575-1.

the-way places from which they came.”<sup>9</sup> By virtue of the fairly recent explosions in interest in genealogical research and the online availability of records, it is possible to show that HBC men and the ‘out-of-the-way places’ from which they came, were central to the fabric of the British Empire over many generations. The fur trade cannot be looked at as merely an isolated extractive enterprise. It was part of much larger imperial processes at the personal, political and economic levels.

### **I. Out From the Highlands:**

Scholars have shown how the unique social, economic and political conditions in the Scottish Highlands after the Jacobite Risings encouraged young men, families, and in some cases entire communities to leave Scotland in the latter half of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.<sup>10</sup> Of particular relevance to the study of the fur trade are two broad trends in the movement of Highland Scots after the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1746. Elite Jacobite families who lost their titles and estate in the wake of the failed risings, or whose loyalty came under government suspicion, saw their opportunities at home severely limited after 1746. They looked to imperial enterprise as the means to restore their families to country seats and elite social and political circles. In particular, many of them realized massive financial gains from the ownership of estates and enslaved people in places like Guyana, Grenada, and Jamaica.<sup>11</sup> As will be seen below, the interconnections between this phenomenon and imperialisms in British North America and the fur trade have not yet benefitted from sufficient scholarly study.

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<sup>9</sup> Philip Goldring, “Labour Records of Hudson’s Bay Company,” *Archivaria*, 11 (Winter 1980), 85.

<sup>10</sup> See for instance: Andrew Mackillop, *More Fruitful than the Soil: Army, Empire and the Scottish Highlands, 1715-1815* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 2000).

<sup>11</sup> See Alan Karras, *Sojourners in the Sun: Scottish Migrants in Jamaica and the Chesapeake, 1740-1800* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1992).

In a related and more well-studied process, middling and lower rank Highland families who fought for or sympathized with the Jacobite cause, or who were disadvantaged by the sweeping changes underway in the Highlands, also saw British North America as the place to remake their fortunes. Men were recruited in large numbers for Highland regiments that fought overseas in the Seven Years' War (1756-1763) and the Revolutionary War (1775–1783) in what became the United States of America. In many cases, two generations of the same families fought in both conflicts. By the start of the Revolutionary War in 1775, many Highland families were established in enclaves across the Mohawk Valley in northern colonial New York.<sup>12</sup> During the conflict, Loyalist families took refuge in communities like Sorel and Terrebonne, where they awaited land grants that would open Ontario to settlement. Loyalist families and veterans of the Revolutionary War received Crown grants of land in what became Ontario. Highland Loyalists clustered in particular around what became the County of Glengarry in eastern Ontario, where many other immigrants from the Highlands eventually joined them.<sup>13</sup>

In Ontario, Loyalist history has to some extent fallen by the wayside in recent years. The field had more than its fair share of scholarly attention in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, and was in some ways considered 'case closed' once the earliest social historians complicated the dominant historical narrative and offered interpretations that saw Loyalist refugees through the lenses of race, gender, and class and considerably complicated our understanding of their impact on Ontario.<sup>14</sup> Fur trade historians have studied and acknowledged the link between

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<sup>12</sup> Matthew P. Dziennik, "Through an Imperial Prism: Land, Liberty, and Highland Loyalism in the War of American Independence," *Journal of British Studies*, 50, No. 2 (2011): 332-358.

<sup>13</sup> For a more detailed discussion, see: Marian McLean, *The People of Glengarry: Highlanders in Transition, 1745-1820* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993); and R.B. Fleming, *The Lochaber Emigrants to Glengarry* (Toronto: Natural Heritage/Natural History Inc., 1994).

<sup>14</sup> See for example Jerry Bannister and Liam Riordan, *The Loyal Atlantic: Remaking the British Atlantic in the Revolutionary Era* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2012); Maya Jasanoff, *Liberty's Exiles: the Loss of America and the remaking of the British Empire* (London: Harper Press, 2011); Janice Potter-MacKinnon, *While the Women Only Wept: Loyalist Refugee Women in Eastern Ontario* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University



Loyalist families and the fur trade. Heather Devine, Judith Hudson Beattie and Michael Payne, in particular, have explored these links.<sup>15</sup>

Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron, for instance, was born at Sorel while his father served with the British army fighting to maintain control over the Thirteen Colonies. At Sorel, his family may have numbered among the refugee families encamped at that place as they waited for the colonial government to make treaties with Indigenous peoples in order to open tracts of land for them along the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario. An HBC colleague wrote of Cameron's imperial family history:

His Father was a Scottish emigrant, and he was born in Canada, his Uncle was killed at Culloden fighting for Charlie, I believe his father would have been there too, but he happened to be too young he afterwards joined the British Army and fought against the Americans in the revolutionary War.<sup>16</sup>

By the nineteenth century, a history of Jacobitism in a Highland family was no longer seen as a sign of disloyalty. In 1893, in his history of Glengarry, Ontario, J.A. Macdonell asserted that:

Our present gracious Sovereign...has no more loyal subjects than the descendants of the men who fought with such chivalry for those they recognized as Kings by the Right Divine. They were unsuccessful in their efforts, but the history of Great Britain does not contain no more glorious chapter than that which tells of the struggles of the Highland Jacobite Chiefs and Clans, and how they pored out their blood like water for those they called Kings...Conspicuous among the Jacobites were the people of Glengarry."<sup>17</sup>

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Press, 1993); and Norman J. Knowles, *Inventing the Loyalists: The Ontario Loyalist Tradition and the Creation of Usable Pasts* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997).

<sup>15</sup> See in particular, Heather Devine, "Roots in the Mohawk Valley: Sir William Johnson's Legacy in the North West Company," In *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles and Donald P. Heldman, eds., (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994); and Michael Payne, "Fur Trade Historiography: Past Conditions, Present Circumstances and a Hint of Future Prospects," In *From Rupert's Land to Canada*, Ted Binnema, Gerhard J. Ens and R. C. Macleod, eds. (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001); and "Foreword: Loyalists and the Teaching of Canadian History," *The Loyalists, Pioneers and Settlers of the West; a Teacher's Guide* (Ottawa: UELAC Education Committee, 2006).

<sup>16</sup> Dugald McTavish to Mrs. McTavish, *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, P. De T. Glazebrook, ed., (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938), 244.

<sup>17</sup> J.A. Macdonell, *Sketches illustrating the early settlement and history of Glengarry in Canada: relating principally to the revolutionary war of 1775-83, the war of 1812-14 and the rebellion of 1837-8, and the services of*

Over time, a heightened sense of loyalty was attached to Jacobite families who went on to fight for Britain in the Seven Years' War, the Revolutionary War, and the War of 1812, and who sided with the Crown in the 1837 Rebellions in the Canadas. After all, it was the particular context of the post-Culloden Highlands that resulted in the movement of Highland people across the Atlantic, where they were fundamental to the operation of British imperialism in many forms.

While scholarly links have been drawn between the fur trade and Highland Loyalists who settled the Canadas, links between elite Jacobite Highland families and the fur trade are less well studied. In the mid-nineteenth century, the HBC functioned as a node in a web of interconnected imperial outposts that were intertwined at personal levels through family networks. It was not uncommon for HBC families to have relations with ties to imperial structures of wealth and power in places like India, Jamaica, and the Canadas. Highland Scots in particular had multigenerational histories of imperial endeavor. In the century following the Jacobite Risings, it was imperial profits that both restored many Highland families to the upper ranks of Scottish society through the purchase of titles and estates and underpinned transimperial networks of power and patronage.

Both the Baillie and Johnstone families, who have recently been the subject of wide-ranging scholarly studies of their imperial involvement, were also involved in the Jacobite Risings.<sup>18</sup> Andrew Wedderburn Colville and his son Eden, who both served in leadership roles with the HBC in London, came from an attainted Jacobite family whose wealth reoriented from

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*the King's Royal regiment of New York, the 84th or Royal Highland regiment, the Glengarry light infantry regiment, and the Glengarry Militia* (Montreal: W. Foster, Brown & Co., 1893), 7.

<sup>18</sup> See: Alexander Charles Baillie, *Call of Empire: From the Highlands to Hindostan* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 3-17; and Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth Century History* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012), 16-17.

landed Scottish estates and titles to sugar plantations, land, and enslaved people in Jamaica.<sup>19</sup> Sir John Wedderburn was executed after the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1746. His sons James and John fled to Jamaica to remake the family's fortunes, where they eventually owned enslaved people and plantations with values in the millions of pounds.

Despite the family's attachments to slavery, the Wedderburns contributed materially to its downfall. When John Wedderburn returned to Scotland to reestablish a countryseat for the family, he brought with him an enslaved man named Joseph Knight, whose escape resulted in the pivotal 1775 court ruling that affirmed the freedom of enslaved people in Scotland.<sup>20</sup>

Additionally, his brother James Wedderburn left a son named Robert behind in Jamaica, whose mother was an enslaved woman named Rosanna.<sup>21</sup> Robert Wedderburn eventually moved to Britain and reached out to his half brother, James Wedderburn's legitimate son and heir Andrew Wedderburn Colville, who unceremoniously rebuffed him.<sup>22</sup> In 1824, Robert Wedderburn wrote a letter to the editor of *Bell's Life in London*, a weekly broadsheet, exposing his connection to his half brother, and outlining some of the atrocities he accused their father of committing in Jamaica. Colville responded with his own letter in response to the 'slandrous' publication, denying his father's paternity of Robert Wedderburn and asserting that his mother was sold because of her intractable and violent temper, and that 'several years later' when Rosanna gave birth, her master gave the child the Wedderburn name as "a foolish joke."<sup>23</sup> All of this was

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<sup>19</sup> Highland patriarchs who were the subject of an Act of Attainder lost their heredity titles and lands, and consequently the ability to bequeath these to their descendants.

<sup>20</sup> Joseph Knight's life was the subject of an historical fiction novel. See James Robertson, *Joseph Knight* (New York: Harper Collins, 2003).

<sup>21</sup> Earl Moxam, "Visiting Inveresk - The story of Robert Wedderburn of Jamaica and Scotland," *Jamaica Gleaner*, 23 March 2008.

<sup>22</sup> In 1814 Andrew Wedderburn assumed the surname Colville, as his mother was the last heir to the Colville title. See Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), Biographical Sheet, "Colville, Andrew."

<sup>23</sup> Reprinted in Robert Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery* (London: R. Wedderburn, 1824), 14 and 15.

included in Robert Wedderburn's influential and widely circulated treatise *The Horrors of Slavery* (1824).<sup>24</sup>



Figure 1.1: Robert Wedderburn<sup>25</sup>

The Wedderburns extracted significant wealth from their Jamaican plantations. After their father's death in 1807, Andrew Wedderburn Colvile and his surviving siblings each received thousands of pounds under the terms of his will, which directed that the funds should be drawn from his collection of prosperous estates in Jamaica.<sup>26</sup> Andrew Wedderburn Colvile was a business partner of HBC Governor George Simpson's uncle (and future father-in-law) in the enterprise Graham, Simpson, and Wedderburn, where young George Simpson started out as a clerk and was scouted for work in the HBC by Wedderburn Colvile, who sat on the London Committee, the company's governing body. In 1821 Simpson wrote to Colvile: "To you I Feel that I am solely indebted for my advancement in Life and it will ever be my study to show that

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid.

<sup>25</sup> From Wedderburn, *The Horrors of Slavery*, frontispiece.

<sup>26</sup> Andrew and his brother James received £5,000, while their sister Lady Selkirk received £2,000. Will of James Wedderburn Colvile, 2 April 1808, National Archives PROB 11/1477/19. See the biographical sketches for Andrew Wedderburn Colvile, Lady Jean Wedderburn Selkirk, Peter Wedderburn, and James Wedderburn, on the "Legacies of British Slave Ownership" database, [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs).

your good offices have not been misapplied.”<sup>27</sup> Governor George Simpson’s impact on the fur trade and the governance of Rupert’s Land in the nineteenth century is unmatched, and all of it was made possible by Andrew Wedderburn Colville and his range of his imperial political connections, which were in turn the result of the Jacobite family’s revived fortunes thanks to chattel slavery and plantation agriculture.

Chief Factor James Anderson likewise benefitted from his uncle Alexander Seton’s business partnership with Andrew Wedderburn Colville. Anderson’s brother Alexander also became a Chief Factor in the company’s service, along with another Anderson cousin, referred to in HBC records as Chief Factor James Anderson (B). Members of the Anderson-Seton family occupied the upper ranks of the military in India, and also invested significantly in indigo plantations there.<sup>28</sup>

After the abolition of slavery in 1833, the Crown compensated the Wedderburns handsomely.<sup>29</sup> Andrew Wedderburn Colville alone appears in nineteen settlements related to estates in Jamaica, representing thousands of pounds in compensation for the loss of ‘property’ occasioned by the freedom of hundreds of enslaved people.<sup>30</sup> This compensation, combined with the fortunes and investments already obtained before the abolition of slavery, positioned members of the Wedderburn family to occupy stations of influence in the HBC and in Britain’s empire more broadly. Andrew Wedderburn Colville’s son Eden Colville married into a military

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<sup>27</sup> Cited in Jan Peterson, *Kilts on the Coast: The Scots who built HBC* (Victoria: Heritage House Publishing, 2012), 29.

<sup>28</sup> Like Andrew Wedderburn Colville, Alexander Anderson took the surname of Seton when he inherited a title from his maternal kin. Notes on members of the family can be found in: Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives Anderson Family Fonds, A.J.U. Anderson, “Some Notes on an Anderson Family History.” (n.d.).

<sup>29</sup> A search of the surname Wedderburn in University College London’s “Legacies of British Slave-ownership” ([www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/)) database yields 44 results.

<sup>30</sup> On the “Legacies of British Slave-ownership,” database, Andrew Colville appears as an awardee or claimant in relation to nineteen estates with a total of 3,440 enslaved people, mostly in Jamaica. See: [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/)

family, while his sister Jean was the wife of Lord Selkirk.<sup>31</sup> Their brother James was advocate-general of Bengal in India, and later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court there.<sup>32</sup>

Emma Rothschild's award-winning *The Inner Life of Empires* charted a similar story of multigenerational imperial involvement. Andrew Colville's father, brother, and grandfather make appearances in the imperial life of the Johnstone siblings at the centre of the book, an indication of the many imperial entanglements that linked elite imperial families, and imperial places, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.<sup>33</sup>

The Ellices were another Highland family whose wealth and influence straddled various imperial locales. Patriarch Edward Ellice worked behind the scenes of many historical moments that shaped the governance and territory of British North America. For this reason, it was Ellice whom retired Chief Factor Angus Cameron wrote when trying to secure, by purchase or patronage, a military position or title for his fur trade son Alexander.<sup>34</sup>

Ellice played a key role in the debate over the implementation of responsible government in the Canadas, as well as in boundary negotiations with the United States that resulted in the Webster-Ashburton Treaty (1842) and the Oregon Treaty (1846).<sup>35</sup> Ellice was also a shadowy but influential presence behind the HBC's success in the nineteenth century. He refused the post of Governor, but leveraged his many political connections to the company's benefit, particularly with regard to the 1857 Parliamentary Inquiry into the company's charter and business practices.<sup>36</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> See HBCA Biographical Sheet, "Colville, Andrew".

<sup>32</sup> See HBCA Biographical Sheet, "Colville, Andrew".

<sup>33</sup> See Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires*, 13-17.

<sup>34</sup> HBCA D.5/30 fo. 491, Angus Cameron to George Simpson, 29 March 1851.

<sup>35</sup> See James M. Colthart, "ELLICE, EDWARD," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice\\_edward\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice_edward_9E.html).

<sup>36</sup> For a discussion of the 1857 parliamentary inquiry, see Adele Perry, "Designing Dispossession: The Select Committee on the Hudson's Bay Company, Fur trade Governance, Indigenous Peoples and Settler Possibility," in

The following year, his son Edward Ellice Jr. became Deputy Governor of the HBC. Edward Ellice Jr. built Invergarry House on the estate he inherited from his father on the banks of Loch Oich, south of Inverness. Constructed between 1866 and 1869, the stately entrance hall was finished entirely in imported Canadian pine paneling as an homage to the family’s fur trade connections. The National Archives of Scotland’s website recommends Ellice’s voluminous papers to researchers interested in learning about the business of sugar plantations in the Caribbean.<sup>37</sup> Ellice appears as a claimant or awardee on the “Legacies of British Slave-ownership” database in relation to five estates in Grenada and Tobago, with a total of 389 enslaved people.<sup>38</sup>



*Figure 1.2: Invergarry House viewed from Loch Oich*<sup>39</sup>

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*Indigenous Communities and Settler Colonialism: Landholding, Loss and Survival in an Interconnected World*, ed. Zoe Laidlaw and Alan Lester (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 158-172.

<sup>37</sup> See: [www.nls.uk/collections/topics/slavery](http://www.nls.uk/collections/topics/slavery)

<sup>38</sup> Two claims for plantations in Guyana were unsuccessful. See entries for Edward Ellice at: [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/)

<sup>39</sup> Photo by author, September 2014.

Historical treatments of Andrew Wedderburn Colvile and his son Eden Colvile, as well as of Edward Ellice and Edward Ellice Jr., particularly related to their Canadian exploits, avoid reference to both families' connections to slavery and the rest of the British imperial world. Andrew Wedderburn Colvile appears as “a London sugar broker”<sup>40</sup> and “a West India sugar merchant” in Canadian biographical sketches of his life,<sup>41</sup> while his son Eden was “the son of a wealthy British merchant.”<sup>42</sup> Edward Ellice was “a prominent merchant-banker...trading in furs, fish, sugar, cotton, and general merchandise in North and South America, the East and West Indies, and Europe.”<sup>43</sup> The cloaked and coded language that describes the Colvile and Ellice men's roles in the HBC and in British North America obfuscates much wider imperial ties. These elite Highland families and others injected the wealth, power and patronage that underpinned British imperial endeavours in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

While these families' connections to other areas of the British Empire were known and leveraged in the nineteenth century, certain aspects of that involvement, particularly with regard to slavery, have fallen away from public memory and representations of key figures in the history of the HBC. As authority figures whose careers generally kept them geographically distant from Rupert's Land, it can be easy to dismiss their influence as limited to figureheads or transitory figures in the company's long governance history. Yet, the Wedderburn and Ellice families and their diffuse social networks were fundamental to the success of the iteration of British imperialism that was the 'Honourable Company.'

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<sup>40</sup> See Peterson, *Kilts on the Coast*, 31.

<sup>41</sup> See J.M. Bumsted, *Dictionary of Manitoba Biography* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999), 54.

<sup>42</sup> See for example, J. E. Rea, “COLVILE, EDEN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/colvile\\_eden\\_12E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/colvile_eden_12E.html).

<sup>43</sup> James M. Colthart, “ELLICE, EDWARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice\\_edward\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ellice_edward_9E.html).



This is not to say that the families of all HBC men were made wealthy by direct associations with slavery, but to show that imperial power, wealth and influence in the HBC and across the British imperial world often flowed through the same circuits of Highland people. While the following reads like many early histories of the Scots in the fur trade, it is in fact an excerpt from Henry Dalton's *The History of British Guiana* (1855):

A large proportion was from Scotland, for the most part of humble extraction, uneducated and glad to accept of any opening that presented itself; they exemplified the well-known caution and parsimony of their race, and, from the humblest, gradually rose to fill some of the highest situations.<sup>44</sup>

As Adele Perry's recent work has shown, the plantations of nineteenth-century British Guiana attracted the same sorts of Scots as nineteenth-century British North America.<sup>45</sup> While the upper echelons of the HBC benefitted most directly from their imperial entanglements elsewhere, men from all ranks of the company's service had kin working in other parts of the British Empire. In a number of cases, siblings were involved in different fields of empire as a strategy for diversifying the financial portfolio that was the imperial family economy. Brothers and Chief Factors James and George Keith had a brother named Patrick who worked on an estate in Jamaica.<sup>46</sup>

The involvement of Chief Factor Angus Cameron and a number of his Scottish kin in the HBC began after his uncle Aeneas Cameron found he disliked working in Jamaica and instead travelled to Montreal to work in the fur trade. Aeneas Cameron's own uncle was John Grant, the

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<sup>44</sup> Henry G. Dalton, *The History of British Guiana, Vol. I* (London: Longman, Brown, Green and Longmans, 1855), 307. For similar writings referencing Scots in the fur trade see; George Bryce, *The Scotsman in Canada: Western Canada*. Vol II. (Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1911); John Murray Gibbon, *Scots in Canada* (Toronto: Musson Book Co., 1911), 104; and W.J. Rattray, *The Scot in British North America*. Vol. 1 (Toronto: Maclean & Co., 1888).

<sup>45</sup> Now postcolonial Guyana. For a discussion of the people, wealth and commodities that linked Guyana with the rest of the imperial world, see Chapters Two and Three in Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>46</sup> HBCA A.36/8 fo. 38, Will of James Keith, 19 January 1826.

Justice of Jamaica from 1783-1790.<sup>47</sup> Chief Factor John Hodges Spencer's life in the HBC began after his father's premature death in Jamaica. Out of financial necessity, his mother sent him to Christ's Children's hospital in London, where he was educated and recruited into the HBC's service.<sup>48</sup> A number of Spencers appear in the lists of those who received compensation after the abolition of slavery, but it is difficult to tell if any of them are Spencer's widowed mother or members of his late father's family.<sup>49</sup>

This is not intended to be an exhaustive account of HBC families' connection to other parts of the British imperial world, and in particular, the profits from estates that relied on the labour of enslaved people. Rather, the examples of the Keith, Cameron and Spencer HBC families demonstrate the sorts of motivations that underlay the choice of the HBC over other imperial locales. They also serve as reminders of the pragmatic, wide view HBC people took of the British imperial world. In this view, Rupert's Land was not separate from the wider British Empire of which it was a constitutive part. In recent years there has been greater public and scholarly attention brought to Scotland's connections to slavery and the many economic benefits that flowed from those connections.<sup>50</sup> In Canada there has been less dialogue surrounding the influence of plantation wealth as it was distributed across the imperial world.

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<sup>47</sup> See Elaine Mitchell, "The Camerons of Temiskaming." *International Review of Scottish Studies* 1 No. 1 (1971), 21-22.

<sup>48</sup> See HBCA Biographical Sheet, "Spencer, John Hodges".

<sup>49</sup> A search of the surname Spencer on the "Legacies of British Slave-ownership" database yields 39 successful claims. See: [www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/](http://www.ucl.ac.uk/lbs/search/)

<sup>50</sup> See for instance: Tom Devine, ed., *Uncovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh, Edinburgh University Press, 2015); Katie Donington, Nicholas Draper, Catherine Hall, Rachel Lang, and Keith McClelland, *Legacies of British Slave-Ownership: Colonial Slavery and the Formation of Victorian Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014); Nicholas Draper, *The Price of Emancipation: Slave-Ownership, Compensation and British Society at the End of Slavery* (Cambridge, 2009); Karly Kehoe, "From the Caribbean to the Scottish Highlands: Charitable Enterprise in the Age of Improvement, c.1750 to c.1820," *Rural History* 27, No. 1 (April 2016): 37-59.

## II. Investing in Empire: Fur Trade Dividends at Work

In the nineteenth century, education was a key site where British imperial identities were articulated through school curriculum and displayed through the physical presence of imperial children at schools in the metropole.<sup>51</sup> Educational institutions were also key beneficiaries of imperial wealth. This could take the form of donations to established educational institutions, or of tuition paid for the education of imperial children at elite boarding schools and universities. As Erin Millions' work has shown, imperial children from across the British Empire could be found at boarding schools like The Nest Academy in Jedburgh. Scotland's universities also hosted young men of means from across the British Empire.

The University of Aberdeen educated a number of HBC family members and was also the recipient of public demonstrations of imperial wealth through donations. A number of Scots in the HBC's officer class made donations to the institution or educated their sons there. Chief Factor Colin Robertson sent his son to be educated at the University of Aberdeen and also paid for his brothers' tuition there.<sup>52</sup> Members of the Cameron, Christie, Stuart, Smith, and Isbister families attended or were otherwise affiliated with the institution.<sup>53</sup> Donald Smith, future HBC Governor, High Commissioner of Canada and Lord Strathcona, donated large sums of money to the university, while his brother John Stuart Smith was educated there and went on to serve in the British army's Medical Department in India, China, Ireland, and New Zealand.<sup>54</sup> The

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<sup>51</sup> For an overview of the education of imperial children, see Millions, *By Education and Conduct: Educating Trans-Imperial Indigenous Fur trade Children in the Hudson's Bay Company Territories and the British Empire, 1820s to 1870s*, (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2017) "Introduction" and Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families: Britons and Late Imperial India* (London, Oxford University Press, 2004).

<sup>52</sup> Material Histories: Scots and Aboriginal Peoples in the Canadian Fur Trade, "Colin Robertson Biography" <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/materialhistories/people.php?id=2>

<sup>53</sup> Angus Cameron's son James attended, as did the sons of Alexander Christie. See Millions, "By education and conduct," 37 and 73.

<sup>54</sup> Obituary for John Stuart Smith, 11 March 1899, *British Medical Journal*, page 636.

institution is mentioned tangentially or in passing in many studies related to imperial families and imperial careering.<sup>55</sup> Even a cursory look at a list of alumni from the university's Marischal College reveals the large numbers of students who came from or ended up working in places like Barbados, Calcutta, Ceylon, and Jamaica.<sup>56</sup> More detailed study of the university's donors and pupil rolls from other colleges of the university is necessary, but there is some indication that the institution played an important role in solidifying imperial networks.

Educational and other civic institutions in Scotland received support from the profits of plantations. Historians have shown that the riches gained from the work of enslaved people in places like Jamaica and Guyana were directed into the Inverness Royal Infirmary and the Fortrose Academy, Inverness Royal Academy, and the Tain Royal Academy, for instance.<sup>57</sup> All of these also received donations from the profits of empire in British North America.

In the Scottish Highlands and Islands the financial support of education through imperial gains took a different form than tuition payments or cash donations. In some cases, men of humble origins who made their fortunes abroad left bequests to their rural home parishes to establish and permanently endow small local schools. These institutions were meant to prepare local boys for future success abroad and to educate imperial children near their paternal kin. Often they were targeted towards young men perceived to have natural aptitudes that suited them for imperial service. In addition to the desire and abilities, many of these boys also had pedigrees that tied them into longstanding imperial networks, if not necessarily wealth. Graduates were

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<sup>55</sup> See for instance Members of the Baillie family in Alexander Charles Baillie, *Call of Empire: From the Highlands to Hindostan* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017), 295.

<sup>56</sup> Peter John Anderson, ed., *Fasti Academiae Mariscallanae Aberdonensis: selections from the records of the Marischal College and University, vol.2* (Aberdeen: Printed for the New Spalding Club, 1889-1898).

<sup>57</sup> See David Alston, "Very rapid and splendid fortunes"? Highland Scots in Berbice (Guyana) in the Early Nineteenth Century," *Transactions of the Gaelic Society of Inverness*, 63 (2002-2004): 208-36; and "Grenada Heritage: From the Caribbean back to Scotland," National Archives of Grenada blog (1 March 2016), [www.grenadanationalarchives.wordpress.com/2016/03/01/grenada-heritage-from-the-caribbean-back-to-scotland/](http://www.grenadanationalarchives.wordpress.com/2016/03/01/grenada-heritage-from-the-caribbean-back-to-scotland/)

outfitted with the academic tools for success, which primarily included (sometimes rudimentary) literacy, and arithmetic sufficient for demonstrating basic facility in keeping accounts.

The education available to Orcadian men towards the end of the eighteenth century indicates that they were likely being trained specifically for service in the lower ranks of the HBC's service, rather than given the tools to rise up the ranks and into the officer class. There were certainly men from Orkney who accomplished this, but imperial wealth was invested in basic education befitting imperial labourers.

In 1790, for instance, nearly 40 percent of the employees who signed contracts with the HBC could not sign their own names, and instead endorsed their contracts with their 'mark'. Considering that estimates place Scotland's male literacy rate at more than 75 percent by this time, it is likely that the men signing contracts with the HBC in this period hailed disproportionately from the lower socio-economic rungs of society.<sup>58</sup> Even though Orcadians accounted for about 75 percent of the HBC's labour force at this time, they represented 92 percent of the employees who were unable to sign their own names in 1790.<sup>59</sup> A lack of education, and in particular literacy, certainly contributed to the underrepresentation of Orcadians among the HBC officer class by the middle of the nineteenth century.<sup>60</sup>

Retired HBC officer William Tomison left a large bequest to his home parish of South Ronaldsay in Orkney for the establishment of a school. Several men who spent careers in the

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<sup>58</sup> See for example Arthur Herman, *The Scottish Enlightenment: The Scots' Invention of the Modern World* (London: Fourth Estate Publishing, 2003), 23.

<sup>59</sup> Sample compiled from HBCA A.32/4, *Servant's Contracts, 1790-1791*. See also Krista Barclay, 'Slaves in a savage land'? Orcadians in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1727-1870," *History Scotland*, 11:5 (October 2011): 23-27.

<sup>60</sup> Given typical career lengths, men who were officers at their end of their careers in the 1840s or 1850s would have begun work with the HBC in the 1790s.

HBC were trained there at no cost.<sup>61</sup> HBC men Magnus Twatt and James Tait both endowed schools in their home parish of Orphir, also in Orkney.<sup>62</sup>

Donald Smith was educated at a local school funded with the proceeds of empire. Jonathan Anderson “who, like many of his neighbours, had wandered afar and acquired a small fortune,” established the Anderson Institution in 1824 for the education of boys from around his hometown of Forres who were academically inclined but lacked the funds to pay for private school tuition.<sup>63</sup> Donald Smith attended the school and was joined by his brother John, who went on to study at the University of Aberdeen and rose up the ranks of the British military in various imperial postings.

In February of 1891, Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona) donated £1,000 towards education in Orkney. The funds were intended to be used “primarily for educational purposes, with preference to be given to children of Orcadians and Shetlanders who have been in the service of the Hudson’s Bay Company.”<sup>64</sup> HBC wealth, and the proceeds of empire more generally, had a long history of supporting educational institutions in Scotland, particularly in smaller and more rural areas that served as continuous sources of imperial labour both at home and abroad.

Additionally, fur trade dividends became investments in the institutions that were catalysts for the emergence of a sustainable settler society in Canada. The fledgling dominion needed banks, railways, churches, hospitals, charities, and universities. It needed young professionals who were academically, socially, and economically positioned to occupy a growing merchant elite dependent on international trade. Fur trade dividends supported all of these hallmarks of ‘civilization’ for settler society in Canada, unsurprisingly, invested as they were by men whose

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<sup>61</sup> William C. Wonders, “Orkney and the ‘Nor-Wast’,” *Alberta History* 41, no. 1 (1993), 8.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Beckles Wilson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal* (Toronto: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1915), 8.

<sup>64</sup> *Orkney Herald*, 31 December 1891.

families had long, intimate histories bound up with Britain's Empire. As will be seen in Chapter Five, HBC estates were comprised overwhelmingly of stocks and investments as opposed to farms or other kinds of landholdings. The network of Hudson's Bay Company officers was also a network of financiers. At every turn and in myriad ways, the fur trade propped up and enabled the expansion of imperial authority in British North America.

Many HBC retirees were involved in the establishment of early banking institutions in the fledgling towns of the Canadas. Robert Henry established the first bank in Cobourg, while retired Chief Trader John McLean operated Guelph's first bank out of his home. After retirement from the HBC, Charles Stuart served as a Director of the Bank of Toronto, while Edward Ermatinger's portrait appeared on banknotes for the Bank of the County of Elgin, which he helped to found in St. Thomas.

In 1851 the *Montreal Weekly Herald* published a Queen's College Subscription List from May 1848 that listed donors who supported the establishment "of a college at Kingston for the...education of youth and especially for the education of candidates for the Holy Ministry of the Presbyterian Church in connection with the Church of Scotland."<sup>65</sup> Retired Chief Factor James Keith collected subscriptions from 26 of his HBC colleagues, who donated an average of £10 each.<sup>66</sup> In 1848, £10 represented the annual wage for an HBC apprentice or half a year's wages for more skilled workers such as bowsmen.<sup>67</sup> According to British figures, £10 was equivalent to nearly two months of wages for a skilled tradesman in 1850 and was enough to buy a cow.<sup>68</sup> The sums are significant enough to demonstrate a shared ethic of philanthropy among

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<sup>65</sup> *Montreal Weekly Herald*, 29 March 1851. Clipping in James Keith's Account Book, University of Aberdeen Special Collections (hereafter UASC) MS 2769/I/57/3.

<sup>66</sup> See James Keith's Account Book, UASC MS 2769/I/57/3.

<sup>67</sup> See for example HBCA A.32/37 fo. 245, Contract of Alexander Cadieu, Apprentice Interpreter, 1848; and HBCA A.32/25 fo. 32, Contract of James Daniel, Bowsmen, 1848.

<sup>68</sup> See: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/)

HBC officers that supported organizations and institutions that strengthened metropolitan and settler societies in Britain and North America.

Angus Bethune served as an alderman in what became the city of Toronto, and the list of debentures itemized in his estate showed that his fur trade wealth aided in no small way in funding: St. James Cathedral (£1600), Toronto's new Lunatic Asylum (£1000), City of Toronto's local government (£620), the County of Simcoe (£500) and others, all in addition to investments in bank and railway stocks in Ontario and Quebec.<sup>69</sup> Through large loans, investments, and donations Bethune played a role in perpetuating and strengthening settler society in the Canadas.

Similarly, HBC Governor Donald Smith supported dozens of institutions in Canada and Britain, having turned his fur trade salary into a vast fortune by investing in a wide range of enterprises. By the time he died in 1914, his estate had an estimated value of fifteen million dollars. Between 1871 and his death, he supported dozens of individuals and educational and community organizations with donations ranging from £5 to £50,000 pounds for everything from Knox College in Toronto to the New Zealand Sailors' Rest Home.<sup>70</sup> Smith served on the boards of railways, banks, coal companies, Vancouver real estate speculation, telephone companies, life insurance companies, newspapers, and companies searching for oil in Persia. He was the largest shareholder in the Anglo-Persian Oil Company, which the British government supported as a vehicle for gaining influence in the region. At a cost of more than one million dollars, Smith personally funded a Canadian military regiment for participation in the Boer War. He supported the establishment of the Boy Scout movement and was the godfather of founder Robert

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<sup>69</sup> Bethune's estate included the following bank stocks: Bank of Montreal (£2600), Bank of Ontario (£1752), Commercial Bank (£1775), and the Gore Bank (£340). See: Archives of Ontario, Will of Angus Bethune, RG 22 Series 6-2 B11.

<sup>70</sup> Donna McDonald, *Lord Strathcona: A Biography of Donald Alexander Smith* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2002), "Appendix I: Donations and Bequests," 510-526.



Stephenson Smyth Baden-Powell's son.<sup>71</sup>



*Figure 1.3: Donald Smith driving the last spike to complete the Canadian Pacific Railway, 7 November 1885. A copy of this photo also accompanies a souvenir rail spike in the Falconer Museum's collection in Smith's hometown of Forres, Scotland.<sup>72</sup>*

Like Donald Alexander Smith, Edward Seaborne Clouston also saw a future in colonial banking. Clouston was a Director of the Bank of Montreal after leaving the HBC. Donald Smith also served on the Board for the institution, which by the late nineteenth century advertised itself as the third-largest bank in the world.<sup>73</sup> In the days before conflict of interest and antitrust legislation, Clouston and Smith sat on the boards of many firms that both they and the bank invested in.<sup>74</sup> Also like Smith, Clouston advocated for Canadian involvement in the Boer War. Donald Alexander Smith and Edward Seaborne Clouston were the quintessential imperial success stories. Their successes were built on the multifaceted expansion of British imperialism

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<sup>71</sup> See McDonald; and Alexander Reford, "SMITH, DONALD ALEXANDER, 1st Baron STRATHCONA and MOUNT ROYAL," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith\\_donald\\_alexander\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_donald_alexander_14E.html).

<sup>72</sup> "Donald Smith driving the last spike to complete the Canadian Pacific Railway, 7 November 1885," Library and Archives Canada, MIKAN 3194528.

<sup>73</sup> See Carman Miller, "CLOUSTON, Sir EDWARD SEABORNE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [www.biographi.ca/en/bio/clouston\\_edward\\_seaborne\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/clouston_edward_seaborne_14E.html).

<sup>74</sup> *Ibid.*

in North America through the fur trade and the entrenchment of colonial institutions, and later through the dispossession of Indigenous peoples that facilitated the movement of railways, settlers, and colonial government westward. For Clouston and Smith, as for many others in the HBC's service, the fur trade was one in a series of closely connected fields of imperial activity.

### **III. Conclusion:**

There was no steadfast line that divided personal, corporate, and imperial interests in the nineteenth-century British imperial world. The same families who lost wealth and influence in the wake of upheaval in the eighteenth century Highlands were the same ones who found it again in the Caribbean, India and the fur trade. They put that wealth and influence to work in Britain's settler colonies across the globe. The financial and political entanglements of empire mobilized vast wealth in the perpetuation of British imperial expansion. For this reason, Rupert's Land, the HBC, and the fur trade cannot be set apart from the imperial tapestry of which they were constitutive threads.

In Orkney, which was the HBC's main source of recruits through much of its history, descendants of HBC employees view their ancestors not as temporary contract labourers in an extractive imperial enterprise, but as settlers and pioneers, whether they stayed in North America or not. When interviewing his grandfather for a school assignment, young Archie Porteus asked whether his grandfather "thought he was a pioneer like his great great granddad" who returned to Orkney after working for the HBC in the early nineteenth century.<sup>75</sup> The image of the Orcadian HBC pioneer unseats any stark separation between the fur trade and iterations of settler colonialism elsewhere in North America, and certainly complicates North American notions of an archetypal 'pioneer'.

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<sup>75</sup> Orkney Archives, D70/16/37 Archie Porteus, "Johnston Family Ancient and Modern", 2012, p.3.

At the same time, casting Orcadians as settlers has enabled the creation of local historical narratives that have denied the existence of the Indigenous women and children who came to Orkney in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. A newspaper article in the early 2000s asserted, for example, “few of the Orkneymen bridged the social gap completely – by bringing their native families back across the Atlantic.”<sup>76</sup> In Orkney, the image of the Orcadian fur trade pioneer belies an understanding of the HBC’s work in British-claimed territories as work that supported and was intimately tied to settler colonialism in North America.

Similarly, when a local Ontario newspaper printed an obituary for the son of Chief Factor James Anderson in the 1930s, it announced the death of a “North Pioneer’s son” whose father took part in “extending the outposts of civilization” for the Dominion of Canada.<sup>77</sup> No mention was made of James Anderson Jr.’s Indigenous heritage or the importance of his maternal kin to the fur trade. Mention was likewise avoided of Chief Factor James Anderson’s birth in India to a woman who was most likely of Anglo-Indian descent. In the communities where they settled in Canada and Scotland, HBC officers were seen as pioneers who worked to shore up the British Empire’s ‘outposts of civilization’. The extractive mercantile enterprise of the HBC’s fur trade was a constitutive part of the work of empire, and thus also enabled and perpetuated Britain’s settler colonial enterprises in North America and elsewhere.

It is because of the HBC’s entanglement with settler colonialism that the streets that cross settler cities like Winnipeg and Thunder Bay are named for HBC officers, who in many cases never lived in these places. Streets in downtown Thunder Bay, for instance, are named for many HBC officers whose families will appear in the proceeding chapters: Bethune, Cameron, Christie, Cumming, Finlayson, Hardisty, McMurray, McKenzie, Miles, and others. Many of

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<sup>76</sup> Orkney Archives, D133/7/4/2, Mary Bichan Collection, clipping of Kath Gourlay, “Canadian Indians go back to Scots Roots.”

<sup>77</sup> “North Pioneer’s Son, James Anderson, Dies,” *Georgina Advocate* (18 May 1932).

these names were also given to the neatly delineated townships that were carved out of Rupert's Land when it was sold to the Dominion of Canada.<sup>78</sup> The borders of both the townships and the fur trade districts were, of course, all imposed over the homelands of many Indigenous peoples through imperial processes that were linked through the people, ideas, power structures, and institutions they privileged and perpetuated.

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<sup>78</sup> A number of fur trade surnames were given to historical townships in the settler districts of Algoma, Cochrane, Kenora, and Timiskaming (all in Northern Ontario).

## **Chapter Two**

### **‘Some snug place near each other’: HBC Families in Scotland and the Canadas<sup>1</sup>**

This chapter sketches the contours of daily life for HBC families that settled in the Canadas and Scotland in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. Particular attention is paid to the motivations that underlay this unique form of imperial migration, the integration of HBC families into new colonial and metropolitan social milieus, and the maintenance of ties between HBC colleagues and fur trade country after retirement. Largely in the context of the personnel surplus brought on by the HBC’s merger with the North West Company (NWC) in 1821, employees and their Indigenous families began to retire to villages, town, and cities outside of Rupert’s Land, often settling in close proximity to other HBC families. This development brought the far reaches of Britain’s Empire home to the metropole and its Canadian colonies in new and complicated ways. HBC families were at the centre of social and professional networks that transcended national boundaries and compressed the vast expanse of the British Empire.

For HBC families, the distant social and geographic contexts of Rupert’s Land, Scotland and Canada operated within a single, decidedly imperial, field of opportunity for work, settlement, and prosperity. Each family chose from a wide range of possible futures when carefully selecting a new home community. In Scotland, retiring patriarchs could return to their birthplace equipped with the economic and social capital needed to

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<sup>1</sup> Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA), E.94/3 fo. 298, Robert Miles to Edward Ermatinger, 25 July 1833.

perform elite sociability. In Canada, they sought Loyalist or predominantly British communities that were, by the middle of the nineteenth century, growing agricultural centres ripe for investment.<sup>2</sup> Wherever they settled, officers and their families maintained close ties with fur trade country and with other HBC families across the British Empire.

Writing from York Factory as he contemplated retirement, Chief Factor Robert Miles mused to his former colleague Edward Ermatinger; “[Chief Trader] John Tod, now here, fully agrees that we should try hereafter to bring up, three or four of us, in some snug place near each other.”<sup>3</sup> Miles did not ultimately join his colleagues Edward Ermatinger and Thomas Dears in St. Thomas, Ontario, but instead joined other HBC retirees in Brockville. His letter speaks to a desire among retiring officers to settle alongside other “Hudson’s Bay friends” who shared similar experiences, financial circumstances, and family lives.<sup>4</sup> This resulted in a deliberate clustering of HBC families in communities across Scotland and the Canadas. By virtue of their extensive connections and a measure of wealth accumulated in the service of the ‘Honorable Company’, HBC families often found themselves occupying the moneyed upper ranks of their new home communities. This was particularly true in the Canadas, where the standard of living for HBC families was quite high relative to many of their neighbours.

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<sup>2</sup> For an account of settlements in what was then Upper Canada, see Thomas Rolph, *A Descriptive and Statistical Account of Canada: Shewing its Great Adaptation for British Emigration* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1841). All of the areas settled by HBC families are referenced by Rolph as promising regions for settlement.

<sup>3</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 298, Robert Miles to Edward Ermatinger 25 July 1833.

<sup>4</sup> Many traders used this and similar turns of phrase to refer to one another, particularly when referencing encounters outside Rupert’s Land. Alexander Christie to George Simpson, 16 February 1852, HBCA D.5/33 fo. 210. John Dugald Cameron, George Keith, and Robert Cowie also used similar terms in their letters to Simpson.

The HBC imposed a rigid hierarchy on its employees that sought to maintain social distance between Commissioned Officers and those classed as ‘servants’.<sup>5</sup> The London Committee was the central governing body of the HBC, though it did so from a distance and relied on an appointed Governor in Rupert’s Land to gather information, provide recommendations, and manage the company’s affairs. The Governor in turn relied on two main classes of officers to oversee day-to-day operations at company trading posts; Chief Factors, who were the highest-ranking Commissioned Officers, and Chief Traders.<sup>6</sup> Chief Factors had voting rights when they attended council annually with the Governor, and they were usually the heads of districts comprised of several trading posts. Chief Traders were paid less than Chief Factors and oversaw smaller units of the company’s trade, whether a single post or a branch of the business done at a larger depot. Both classes of officers were paid in shares of the company’s profits, while company ‘servants’ such as labourers, tradesmen, and clerks signed contracts that guaranteed them a set annual wage.<sup>7</sup>

The average income of HBC officers is difficult to ascertain, as they were paid a portion of the company’s profits each year (one share for Chief Traders and two shares for Chief Factors), along with a ‘retirement interest’ after leaving the company’s service.<sup>8</sup> Since officers were not salaried employees, their contracts did not specify income

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<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the ways that social distance between officers and servants was imposed, and sometimes subverted, see: Edith Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); Michael Payne, *The Most Respectable Place in the Territory: Everyday Life in Hudson's Bay Company Service - York Factor, 1788 to 1870* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1989); and Scott Stephens, “Masters and Servants: The Hudson’s Bay Company and its Personnel, 1668-1782,” PhD diss. University of Manitoba, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> These categories shifted at various times both before and after the period studied here.

<sup>7</sup> Servant contracts were usually drawn up for five-year service intervals, though contracts could range from three to ten years.

<sup>8</sup> The Deed Poll of 1871 did away with the ‘retiring interest’, angering many clerks and chief traders who were working their way up to promotion. See HBCA E.94/3 fo. 261, George Barnston to Edward Ermatinger, 11 September 1872.

amounts. John Clarke was promised £400 per year when he was recruited to the HBC in 1815 during the height of the company's competition with the NWC.<sup>9</sup> With the restructuring that took place after the HBC's merger with the NWC in 1821, officer wages generally increased substantially. In the decades after the merger, the annual value of a Chief Trader's share could be in the neighbourhood of £360, while a Chief Factor's share could be worth perhaps £700.<sup>10</sup> By 1886, officers were making considerably less than they had in previous decades, as Chief Factor Roderick Macfarlane complained of the decrease in dividends from "over £490" to "little over £200."<sup>11</sup> The men that are the subject of this study became Commissioned Officers during what was, in many ways, the HBC's heyday. Profits were high after the 1821 merger eliminated the expensive rivalry between the HBC and NWC, and new Governor George Simpson implemented a variety of cost-saving measures that drove up officer dividends. While officers' exact income could change from year to year, it was certainly much more than members of the fur trade laboring classes could ever hope to earn.<sup>12</sup>

Annual wages tell only a partial story, however, since a wide range of factors impacted the actual buying power of an officer's savings by the time he reached retirement. The skill and trustworthiness of the agents he relied on to invest his dividends, the stability of colonial banks, the size, health, and education of his immediate family, the

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<sup>9</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown, "CLARKE, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/clarke\\_john\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/clarke_john_8E.html).

<sup>10</sup> For discussion of wages see: Carol Judd, "Mixed Bloods of Moose Factory, 1730 -1981: A Socio-Economic Study," *American Indian Culture and Research Journal*, 6 No. 2 (1982), 75; and A.S. Morton and L.G. Thomas, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71 (2nd ed.)* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 690.

<sup>11</sup> Roderick McFarlane to the London Committee of the HBC, 1 May 1886. Cited in Beckles Wilson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal* (Toronto: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1915), 317.

<sup>12</sup> Wages for HBC staff were fairly consistent over long periods of time. After 1821 servants (i.e. labourers) could make between 16 and 40 per year, while a clerk's salary was in the order of 75 to 100 per year. See Carol Judd, "Native Labour and Social Stratification in the Hudson's Bay Company's Northern Department, 1770-1870," *Canadian Review of Sociology* 17, No. 4 (1980): 305-314.



extent and success of his investments after retirement, and the financial condition of his extended family could all impact an officer's retirement savings.

Chief Trader Cuthbert Cumming, for instance, invested through Montreal agents in a firm that ultimately went bankrupt, costing him part of his savings.<sup>13</sup> In addition, Cumming still had young children to maintain and educate throughout his retirement years. This further constrained his budget when compared with some of his colleagues, who could retire on the interest of profitable investments once their children reached adulthood.<sup>14</sup> Nevertheless, Cumming was able to retire with his wife Jane McMurray and their growing family in a brick cottage in the centre of the busy village of Colborne.



*Figure 2.2: Widow Jane McMurray Cumming and family at their home, 7 King Street West, Colborne ON<sup>15</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> See several letters from Cumming to George Simpson throughout 1853 in HBCA D.5/37.

<sup>14</sup> Cumming was 70 years old when his youngest son Dugald McMurray Cumming was born in 1856.

<sup>15</sup> Cramahe Public Library, CTP002805172

In the Canadas, HBC retirees owned lots in prosperous farming communities like Brockville, Cobourg, Sutton, and St. Andrews that were centrally located close to urban centers and major water routes.<sup>16</sup> Their neighbours included many whom rural historians would categorize as ‘gentry farmers’ who owned and lived comfortably on large farms but relied on the productivity of those farms for subsistence.<sup>17</sup> The standard of living for fur trade families in the Canadas, at least during a patriarch’s lifetime, was generally higher than for their gentry farmer neighbours.<sup>18</sup> Retirement life was not characterized by a reliance on physical labour. At its largest, the Cumming family’s town lot in Colborne was just two acres. The lot was clearly never intended to provide subsistence through farming but was instead centrally located and large enough to convey the family’s social standing and provide privacy, recreation, and a garden. The home itself was constructed to include separate servants’ quarters, and Cumming repeatedly appeared in census enumerations as a ‘gentleman’.<sup>19</sup>

In Quebec, Chief Factor Allan McDonell settled his family at Lundy Cottage, “a splendid mansion” close to the prosperous centre of Montreal “with a valuable altho [sic] small lot of land” and “elegant accommodations and furniture.”<sup>20</sup> McDonell’s small lot did not need to be manually worked to sustain his family since he could rely instead on income from investments and HBC dividends. In 1843 McDonell commissioned portraits of himself and his wife that likely hung above their mantle at Lundy Cottage, putting

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<sup>16</sup> Known today as the municipality of Saint-André-d’Argenteuil along the Ottawa River in Quebec.

<sup>17</sup> See for example James O’Meara, “The Seasonal Round of Gentry farmers in Early Ontario: A Preliminary Analysis,” in *Canadian Papers in Rural History*, 2 (1980): 103-112.

<sup>18</sup> As Chapter 6 will show, fur trade wealth could dwindle rapidly after a patriarch’s death.

<sup>19</sup> “Cuthbert Cumming House, 7 King Street W. Colborne”, Heritage Building Files, Cramahe Township Public Library.

<sup>20</sup> George Keith cited in Elaine Allan Mitchell, “McDONELL, ALLAN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonell\\_allan\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonell_allan_8E.html).

their elite respectability on display. The McDonells sported clothing in the latest fashion. Margaret Cameron McDonell's portrait exhibited the trappings of genteel womanhood; an intricate dress and headpiece, a large gold brooch and wedding ring, and a small book (likely a bible) clasped delicately in her hand.



*Figure 2.2: Margaret Cameron McDonell, 1843<sup>21</sup>*

Retired Chief Trader Jacob Corrigan's home was one of the first brick residences in the bustling lakeshore town of Cobourg. It featured fireplaces in every room and a formal drawing room with a marble mantle, "a mirror above that reached to the ceiling...bronze clock covered with glass...a magnificent chandelier...little cabinets of ivory...a grand piano," and carpets imported from Europe. Though he was never promoted to the higher rank of Chief Factor, Corrigan was able to fund the educations of

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<sup>21</sup> Margaret Cameron McDonell, 1843. Samuel Palmer. Musée national des beaux-arts du Québec, MNBAQ 1957.535.

two sons and a grandson in London, and retire with the means to support four adult children in relative luxury in Cobourg.<sup>22</sup>

Similarly, the home of James and Margaret (McKenzie) Anderson called Ainslie Hill in Sutton “was built as a home – not just to be lived in, but to be lived in graciously.” It boasted seven fireplaces, “was the only home for miles around to have gas lights” and “had a carriage and a pair of horses with a coachman.”<sup>23</sup> Margaret Anderson managed the couple’s large working farm, which was somewhat of an anomaly among HBC families, who Chief Factor John Siveright once remarked were “rather out of their Element when taking to the farming line – few who tried it in the Canadas have been successful.”<sup>24</sup> If their stately homes and mode of living are any indication, those HBC families that settled in the Canadas seemed to have enjoyed material circumstances that were notable, exceptional, or even unheard of in the communities where they settled.

### **I: ‘Canada-ward...their favorite roosting place’:**

In an 1844 letter, Chief Trader John Tod observed of retiring company officers that: “guided, no doubt, by the same instinct that teaches rats to leave a falling house — Canada-ward, seems to be their favorite roosting place.”<sup>25</sup> Tod’s letter speaks to a trend among the HBC officer class who in this period increasingly saw the burgeoning agricultural communities of the Canadas as places to retire and take advantage of new opportunities for themselves and their families. In some cases, they seem to have integrated rather seamlessly into the upper echelons of their new home communities,

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<sup>22</sup> Invoice, 17 May 1833, Mrs. Monger to Jacob Corrigan. Personal Collection of D. Fowler.

<sup>23</sup> GPVA, Ruth Scott Miller, “A History of the Andersons and Bourchiers,” *Georgina Advocate* (8 June 1983), 1.

<sup>24</sup> John Siveright to James Hargrave, 18 April 1835, in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843*, ed. G.P. Glazebrook (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 195.

<sup>25</sup> HBCA E.94/2 fo. 2, John Tod to Edward Ermatinger, 21 March 1844.

owing in large part to their extensive connections and wealth accumulated in the service of the ‘Honorable Company’. Class and respectability were central to this process. At face value, the documentary record indicates a smooth transition into life in Canada. The few scholarly mentions of this settlement trend also bear this out. Jennifer S.H. Brown’s germinal work *Strangers in Blood*, for instance, briefly addressed this issue, observing that, “unlike the situation in the fur trade country, references to racial distinctions and handicaps were decidedly rare in the context of eastern Canada.”<sup>26</sup> While this may, in some ways have been the case, this and the following chapters will show that HBC families differed in key ways from their non-fur trade contemporaries, both in Scotland and in the Canadas.

Owing to the length of service required before attaining the higher incomes that came with promotion to Chief Factorships, many HBC officers were into their sixties by the time they retired.<sup>27</sup> Hector Mackenzie, for instance, took “early retirement” at the age of 54.<sup>28</sup> Given their age and financial means, retired fur traders were not interested in homesteading and instead looked for prosperous towns ripe for investment. Some may have tried the gentry farming life, but ultimately found it beyond their abilities. In 1845, just four years after arriving in Cramahe Township in Ontario, Chief Trader Thomas McMurray was obliged to advertise his farm “containing 100 acres, 60 acres of which are under a high state of cultivation” complete with a house and outbuildings “fit for the

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<sup>26</sup> Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 193.

<sup>27</sup> Duncan Finlayson was considered a beneficiary of ‘rapid promotion’, securing his Chief Factorship after fifteen years of service. Gerald Friesen, “FINLAYSON, DUNCAN,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/finlayson\\_duncan\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/finlayson_duncan_9E.html).

<sup>28</sup> Mackenzie took early retirement after coming into conflict with new HBC Governor A.G. Dallas. Mitchell, 244.

residence of a genteel family” for sale or rent.<sup>29</sup> By this time McMurray was 65 and his health was failing.

Writing from Carlton House, 50-year-old Chief Factor Robert Hamilton looked towards retirement: “When I get quietly settled down in some out of the way corner of Ontario, I will have plenty of leisure on my hands.” At that time he still had “not the slightest idea” where he might settle, though he was looking for an economical choice with good schools for his children.<sup>30</sup> Hamilton ended up settling with his family in the bustling town of Peterborough where members of Jacob Corrigan, Robert Scollie and William Traill’s families could also be found. As a result of the example set by the senior HBC officers who came before him, Hamilton expected a quiet, genteel life of leisure for his retirement years. For many HBC retirees, the realities of their age, health, and visions for retirement drove them to seek out communities where their savings and investments would support an elite lifestyle without wholly depleting their savings or requiring them to rely on income earned through physical labour. As will be seen in the following chapter, the wide range of work performed by Indigenous women was often invisible in this image of gentility.

In Quebec, the St. Lawrence River was the locus of colonial settlement, attracting French and later British imperial aspirations. By the early nineteenth century, colonial settlements were well established along the river. A number of fur trade families had long histories in Montreal and nearby Loyalist enclaves such as Sorel and Terrebonne. In the early decades of the nineteenth century, these communities were popular retirement

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<sup>29</sup> *Cobourg Star*, 6 August 1845. For a discussion of renting as a family economic strategy see Catharine A. Wilson, *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land, and Liberalism in Ontario, 1799-1871* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2009), 93-102.

<sup>30</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), MG 29, A11, fo. 556. Robert Hamilton to Roderick MacFarlane, 29 May 1876.

options for HBC officers and their families, who were attracted by the accessibility and commercial opportunities offered in these areas. Into the middle and later decades of the nineteenth century, however, it was settlements in the western half of the Canadas (where their savings went further) that gained popularity among HBC families.

Colonization began in earnest in what became Ontario with the arrival of the Loyalists between 1783 and 1791. At first glance, the appeal of the relatively newly settled agricultural district to fur trade families who had spent their lives at subarctic trading posts seems unclear. The dominant historical narrative has focused overwhelmingly on the Loyalist influx and the forward march of settlement, agriculture, and responsible government in the Canadas, positioning these developments as separate from the social and economic world of the fur trade.

The timing of the arrival of HBC families in the Canadas, largely in the 1840s and 1850s, was no accident. When trying to ascertain the motivations for settling in Ontario in particular, it is important to bear in mind that the success of Britain's colonies in Canada was not a foregone conclusion in this period.<sup>31</sup> Similar to the families examined in Anne Hyde's award-winning study of the nineteenth-century American West,<sup>32</sup> the HBC families studied here hoped to guarantee their futures by making rational choices with the information at hand, and at times gambling on the success of nations and empires. As they prepared to retire, HBC officers kept well informed of events in the colonies, and held off on relocating until they thought conditions were favourable.

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<sup>31</sup> HBC retirees did not begin arriving in Ontario in earnest until the 1840s. Before 1821 a cluster of North West Company families was centred on Montréal. See Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Diverging Identities: The Presbyterian métis of St. Gabriel Street, Montreal" in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, eds. Jennifer S.H. Brown and Jacqueline Peterson (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 195-206.

<sup>32</sup> See Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations and Families: A History of the North American West, 1800—1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron and Chief Trader Thomas McMurray, who were both born in Quebec to British parents fleeing the American Revolution, knew all too well how changing tides of imperial politics could have real implications for daily life. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, the letters of these men and their colleagues were replete with concern about the possibility of the Canadian colonies being annexed to the United States. In 1837 the same men nervously eyed the Rebellions as a destabilizing force in the colonies whose effects rippled well into the 1840s.

The process of selecting a retirement destination required extensive research. In the years before they retired, HBC officers wrote to colleagues and friends of friends looking for information on various settlements. Chief Factor Robert Miles began investigating potential hometowns more than two decades before his retirement. Miles anxiously peppered colleague Edward Ermatinger with questions about St. Thomas: “Let us know what you are doing and if you want a dozen or two of old Cronies to sit down along side you – what is the price of Land State of Cultivation – Crops – Facilities of Markets &c &c.”<sup>33</sup> Not wanting to leave anything to chance, Miles and his colleagues conducted extensive research before deciding on a retirement destination. Ultimately HBC families chose communities in proximity to promising colonial markets and their cross-border trade with the United States, but also for the access they afforded to the main water routes into Rupert’s Land.

Clusters of fur trade families sprung up in areas of colonial settlement that met these requirements. When Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron contemplated retirement he favoured Grafton, observing “my son Ronald is on a good farm [there] ... Clouston will be within a short distance of Ronald’s — and our old friend Tommy [McMurray] is

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<sup>33</sup> E94/3 folio 297, Robert Miles to Edward Ermatinger, 25 July 1833.



not far below.”<sup>34</sup> Indeed, by the time the Camerons landed in Grafton they joined a network of at least a dozen HBC families that lived within 20 kilometres of their new home.<sup>35</sup>

Access to established water routes was a necessity for many families. In 1831 Thomas Dears wrote to a friend: “the spot I should wish to bring myself to anchor on, is a thriving Canadian village near water communication on a farm.”<sup>36</sup> Ultimately Dears settled near former colleague Edward Ermatinger in St. Thomas, not far from the shores of Lake Erie and its shipping routes to Buffalo, Detroit, and other economic centres.<sup>37</sup> Like many of his HBC contemporaries, Dears yearned for a settled, prosperous farm life, but one that maintained some connection to the birthplaces of his Indigenous wife and children and the social and economic relationships cultivated over many years in the service of the ‘Honourable Company’.

Into the 1860s, newspapers in eastern Canada and the Red River Settlement continued to bemoan the lack of an adequate overland route connecting Lake Superior and Red River.<sup>38</sup> Indeed, it was not until 1868 that construction began on a road linking the two economic hubs, which was not completed until 1871.<sup>39</sup> For much of the nineteenth century then, water routes remained pivotal to the transportation of people,

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<sup>34</sup> John Dugald Cameron to James Hargrave, 5 May 1843, in Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence*, 437.

<sup>35</sup> This radius included: Robert Henry, William Nourse, Robert Scollie, Jacob Corrigan, and children of Angus Bethune in Cobourg; Erland Erlandson, George and Joseph Gladman in Port Hope; Thomas McMurray and John Clouston in Grafton; and Donald McTavish and Cuthbert Cumming in Colborne.

<sup>36</sup> HBCA Ermatinger Correspondence, E.94/3 fo.268, Thomas Dears to Edward Ermatinger, 5 March 1831.

<sup>37</sup> Port Stanley (and thus, its harbour on Lake Erie) was accessible from St. Thomas by a maintained road as early as 1833, but also by water along Kettle Creek. See Historical Conservation District Steering Committee, “Port Stanley Heritage Conservation District Study: Phase One Historical Report and Area Study” (Oct 2012), 14.

<sup>38</sup> “The Lake Superior Route (reprinted from the *Toronto Leader*),” *Nor’Wester* (17 March 1863), 3.

<sup>39</sup> The unfinished Dawson Trail was used in 1870 to convey colonial troops to Red River. See for example Victor P. Lytwyn, “In the Shadows of The Honourable Company: Nicolas Chatelain and the Metis of Fort Francis,” in Nicole St.-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny and Brenda Macdougall, eds., *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman OK: Oklahoma University Press, 2012), 204.

commodities, and communications between more southerly settlements in British North America and the United States, and the northern reaches of the social and economic world of the fur trade. Unsurprisingly, letters indicate that HBC employees enjoyed the hospitality of retired men and their families, whose homes became customary stopovers along the water route into or out of Rupert's Land. Ermatingers lived at Sault Ste. Marie where Lakes Huron and Superior met, and at St. Thomas, near the shores of Lake Erie;<sup>40</sup> the Andersons lived at Sutton, with access to the growing centre of York and to the route north via Lake Simcoe; clusters of families lived in Northumberland County along the north shore of Lake Ontario, while others gravitated to settlements along the St. Lawrence River such as Brockville, Lachine, and St. Andrews.

The Anderson home in Sutton was used as a stopover by Margaret McKenzie Anderson's kin in their travels across the British Empire. In 1864 her sister Jane, brother-in-law Roderick and their four sons stopped over in Sutton. Jane and the two youngest boys remained with the Andersons while Roderick and the two eldest boys made their way to Quebec to set sail for Scotland.<sup>41</sup> In this way, the Anderson household provided economic and emotional support to extended family members; served as a practical stopping place on the long journey east from the Red River Settlement; and allowed the Andersons to continue to play a direct role in a wide-ranging fur trade social network.

Chief Factor Archibald McDonald wrote of his 1846 journey east on furlough: "On our way down we spent three nights at St. Thomas with Ermatinger, and as many with Cameron near Cobourg, but saw neither McMurray nor Cumming. Corrigan's family

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<sup>40</sup> For a more detailed discussion of the Ermatinger family, see W. Brian Stewart, *The Ermatingers: A 19<sup>th</sup> Century Ojibwa-Canadian Family* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2007).

<sup>41</sup> LAC MG29 A11 folio 103, James Anderson to Roderick MacFarlane, 1 Nov 1865.

we did.”<sup>42</sup> It is clear that while these stopovers were practical, the opportunity to reunite with old friends and colleagues who strategically settled in these locales was treasured and looked forward to.

During Christmas of 1852, Chief Trader Francis Ermatinger wrote to his brother Edward, a retired HBC Clerk settled at St. Thomas. He wanted Edward to find him a farm in St. Thomas, and noted that his wife Catharine Sinclair had requirements also, writing “she says you must get her a neat house, merely large enough to have a good spare bedroom for any friends of hers who may come from the North to see her.”<sup>43</sup>

Records show that in the first year of her widowhood, Catherine’s brother and sister each came to stay with her in St. Thomas at different times, and other friends and relations may also have visited.<sup>44</sup> A desire to have access to the friends and information that regularly traversed the well-worn water routes to Rupert’s Land was likely a deciding factor in the settlement of HBC families in this region.

The relative avoidance of the Yonge Street corridor in Ontario as a settlement destination provides additional insight into the settlement preferences of HBC families. The area had many features that should have made it an attractive locale. HBC son Norman Bethune recalled that by 1819 the new capital city of York contained “families of the highest respectability, persons of refinement and many of high intellectual

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<sup>42</sup> Archibald McDonald to Donald Ross, 1 May 1846, in *This Blessed Wilderness: Archibald McDonald’s Letters from the Columbia, 1822-44*, ed. Jean Murray Cole (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2001), 256.

<sup>43</sup> Francis to Edward Ermatinger, 25 December 1852, in Lois Halliday McDonald, *Fur Trade Letters of Francis Ermatinger, Written to His Brother Edward During His Service With the Hudson’s Bay Company, 1818—1853* (California: A.H. Clark, 1980), 291.

<sup>44</sup> In 1859 the St. Thomas newspaper reported on a carriage accident that left both Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger and her brother seriously injured. See: *St. Thomas Weekly Dispatch*, 26 May 1859. Catherine’s sister Maria Sinclair Calder wrote a letter to Governor George Simpson from the Ermatinger residence in March of 1859. See HBCA D.5/48 fo. 305.

culture.”<sup>45</sup> Yonge Street was passable between York (on Lake Ontario) and Lake Simcoe, where it linked up with the water route to Rupert’s Land. By the 1830s an elite enclave of merchants and retired military officers from across the British Empire lined the southeastern shore of Lake Simcoe;<sup>46</sup> and by the 1840s, several retired fur traders<sup>47</sup> and a community of Scottish immigrants from the Red River Settlement lived in the area.<sup>48</sup> Yet, unlike other parts of Ontario, this region was not popular among fur trade families after 1840. This was in spite of the southeastern shore of Lake Simcoe’s continued economic growth, the availability of affordable land, and the proximity of other British imperial families with similarly far-flung connections and experiences.<sup>49</sup>

HBC correspondence is not explicit in outlining the reasons for avoiding York and its environs. However, the Yonge Street corridor differed in key ways from the areas where HBC families did choose to cluster together. Firstly, the War of 1812 demonstrated the ease with which American forces could invade York. For HBC officers who were contemplating retirement in the 1840s and 1850s, the conflict was a relatively

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<sup>45</sup> Dr. Norman Bethune recollection cited in John Ross Robertson, *Landmarks of Toronto*, Vol. I (Toronto: J. Ross Robertson, 1894), 30.

<sup>46</sup> The present-day Town of Georgina was settled by veterans like Captain William Bouchier, Major William K. Rains and servants of empire like the Sibbald family, John Mills Jackson, and Robert and Eliza Anderson (parents of HBC Chief Factor James Anderson).

<sup>47</sup> Angus Bethune lived in York, John Spencer, Michael McDonell, and John McDonald lived on the western shore of Lake Simcoe and William Henry lived at Newmarket. See W. Stewart Wallace, ed., *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), 457; Jennifer S. H. Brown, “McDONALD, JOHN (1770-1828),” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald\\_john\\_1770\\_1828\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald_john_1770_1828_6E.html).

<sup>48</sup> A group of Highland Scots from Selkirk’s Red River Settlement arrived on the shores of Lake Simcoe in 1815 and eventually established a community west of Yonge Street in the present-day municipality of Bradford West Gwillimbury. See Lucille Campey, *The Scottish Pioneers of Ontario, 1784-1855: Glengarry and Beyond* (Toronto: Natural Heritage Books), 106.

<sup>49</sup> James Anderson is one exception to this trend; he and his family settled in Sutton next to his widowed mother. Though Anderson was a well-liked and well-connected, none of his HBC colleagues followed him to Sutton.

recent one, which proved to them the inherent precariousness of York as a capital city easily accessible by would-be American invaders.

Secondly, the region was home to several ethnic enclaves that were relatively homogenous in the first decades of the nineteenth century and included Quakers, retired German mercenaries who fought for Britain in the American Revolution, Low German-speaking Mennonites, and Irish Catholics.<sup>50</sup> It is possible that this deterred HBC families, who actively sought out communities that were largely comprised of British Loyalist settlers with whom they already shared meaningful social, political, and economic ties.

Additionally, by 1837 it was also clear to HBC officers, many of whom were conservative-leaning in their political convictions, that the Yonge Street corridor was home to many who opposed the conservative elite's stranglehold on politics and patronage in the Canadas.<sup>51</sup> Many of William Lyon Mackenzie's supporters came from communities at the north end of Yonge Street,<sup>52</sup> which they used to travel south for their failed march on York in December of 1837. For retiring fur traders, the area seemed like a veritable hotbed of rebellious sentiment. In Ontario historiography, the Rebellion of 1837 appears largely as an ill-fated and "less violent, more limited affair" than the uprisings that took place in Quebec.<sup>53</sup> In many ways this was true, however, it is important to acknowledge that for conservative-leaning citizens on the ground, it seemed

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<sup>50</sup> For a basic overview see Charles Pelham Mulvaney, Graeme Mercer Adam and Christopher Blackett Robinson, *History of Toronto and county of York, Ontario Vol. I* (Toronto: C.B. Robinson, 1885), 20.

<sup>51</sup> For a discussion of Quaker involvement in the Rebellions, see Robynne Healey, *From Quaker to Upper Canadian: Faith and Community among Yonge Street Friends, 1801-1850* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006).

<sup>52</sup> Many of Mackenzie's followers came from communities in the present townships of East Gwillimbury and Georgina.

<sup>53</sup> For a discussion of see Maxime Dagenais, "The Canadian Rebellion and Jacksonian America: A Connection Decades in the Making," in Maxime Dagenais and Julien Mauduit, eds., *Revolutions Across Borders: Jacksonian America and the Canadian Rebellion* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2019): 3-26.

as though the Canadas could be on the brink of ‘civil war’ between Loyalists and ‘revolutionist’ colonists – as the authors of *The History of Toronto* (1885) saw it.<sup>54</sup>

Famed writer Stephen Butler Leacock recalled of his childhood near the southeastern shore of Lake Simcoe that “the rebellion of 1837 was an event thirty-nine years old, and several of the “rebels” were still there in the settlement.”<sup>55</sup> The political leanings of the citizenry likely deterred HBC officers from settling in the area. Many of them disagreed fundamentally with the rebels’ political stance, particularly since some of them were tied into the Family Compact web of connections that was the focus of rebel ire.<sup>56</sup> In the wake of the Rebellions, which many HBC officers openly denounced in their correspondence, the area between York and Lake Simcoe became less attractive as a settlement destination, making clear both the spectre of the Rebellions in the minds of retiring fur traders and their conservative-leaning political views.

The same conditions discouraged HBC settlement of St. Thomas, where Edward Ermatinger settled in the 1820s and was one of the community’s leading citizens.<sup>57</sup> Through the 1830s colleagues including George Gladman, Robert Miles, and John Todd expressed interest in retiring to St. Thomas alongside Ermatinger. In the wake of the Rebellions, these men all chose to settle elsewhere. St. Thomas was an area of concern owing to its proximity to the United States. Ermatinger himself was involved in raising a militia after receiving news of Mackenzie’s march on York. He recounted that “there was

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<sup>54</sup> Mulvaney, Adam and Robinson, *History of Toronto and county of York*, 159 and 160.

<sup>55</sup> Leacock grew up in Georgina Township, in the hamlet of Egypt. Stephen Leacock, “The Place of History in Canadian Education,” *Report of the Annual Meeting of the Canadian Historical Association*, 4 No. 1 (1925), 33.

<sup>56</sup> See Chapter 1 for a more detailed discussion of these ties.

<sup>57</sup> Ermatinger was a postmaster and merchant and dappled in banking and politics during his time in St. Thomas. See L. G. Thomas, “ERMATINGER, EDWARD,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval (2003), [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ermatinger\\_edward\\_10E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/ermatinger_edward_10E.html).

a feeling of insecurity prevalent, owing to the supposed number of disaffected men in the settlement, many of whom were from the United States, and only watched it was thought, for an opportunity to shake off the yoke of British supremacy.”<sup>58</sup> Retiring officers actively avoided areas where they perceived that rebellious sentiment had a foothold.

In the wake of the Rebellions, Cameron wrote to a friend that he wished to leave Rupert’s Land, but could not for “these are bad times to settle in the civilized world.”<sup>59</sup> Cameron waited as long as his health would allow before choosing the village of Grafton as his retirement home. His perspective on the ongoing tug of war over responsible government no doubt influenced his selection, as he concluded that “Toronto, like Montreal” was a “Hotbed of Hot Heads.”<sup>60</sup> The perception that the regional hubs of Toronto and Montreal were magnets for unrest influenced the choices of many HBC officers, who remained in the company’s service as long as possible to give colonial governments time to stabilize, and hopefully, guarantee the best possible futures for their families.

In 1840 Cameron’s friend and colleague Chief Trader William Nourse wrote to James Hargrave that “there is not much room to say anything either wholly favorable or unfavorable about Canada affairs - a grand experiment is going to be tried and may it be crowned with success and add to the prosperity of the Colony.”<sup>61</sup> Nourse waited another eight years before retiring with his wife and children to Cobourg, perhaps by then satisfied that the ‘grand experiment’ of responsible government had been a success.

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<sup>58</sup> Edward Ermatinger, *The Life of Colonel Talbot and the Talbot Settlement...* (St. Thomas: A. McLachlin, 1859), 148.

<sup>59</sup> J.D. Cameron to James Hargrave, 1 May 1839, in Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence*, 297.

<sup>60</sup> HBCA D.5/26 fo. 259, John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 10 October 1849.

<sup>61</sup> William Nourse to James Hargrave, 1 May 1840, in Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence*, 313.

Nourse's words speak to the uncertainty of affairs in the Canadas in the middle decades of the nineteenth century. The survival of stable British settlements was doubted to the extent that HBC men actively put off retirement while they awaited the outcome. Nourse himself was nearly completely immobilized with a neurodegenerative condition before he finally retired from the company's service.<sup>62</sup>

By 1843 there was still some concern among company families about the political situation in the Canadas. Chief Factor George Gladman posited that "the general impression is in favor of Canada, were the Government only a little more stable than it has been of late years – it is to be hoped that Sir Charles Metcalfe is as deservedly popular in Canada as he has been in other ... British Colonies."<sup>63</sup> Metcalfe, who, by this time, had been appointed to governorships in both India and Jamaica, was expected to stem the tide of responsible government and protect the Crown's interests in the Canadian colonies.<sup>64</sup>

Two years into Metcalfe's tenure, Gladman seemed more confident in the stability of Canadian politics and joined his former colleagues on the shores of Lake Ontario. Gladman's wife Harriet Vincent and their children accompanied him on what he called the "uncommonly tedious and boisterous" two months of travel from Moose Factory to Port Hope.<sup>65</sup> By this time the Gladmans were able to settle among a number of other fur

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<sup>62</sup> Nourse was granted sick leave from 1848 to 1851 and formally retired in 1851 as he was unable to use either of his legs or his left arm, the result of painful "spasms and twitches of the nerves." By 1852 he also lost the use of his right arm. See John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 18 March 1851, HBCA D.5/30, fo. 421; and John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 24 January 1852, HBCA D.5/33, fo. 111.

<sup>63</sup> HBCA Ermatinger Correspondence, E.94/3 fo. 282, George Gladman to Edward Ermatinger, 8 August 1843.

<sup>64</sup> Metcalfe took office in March of 1843. See Donald R. Beer, "METCALFE, CHARLES THEOPHILUS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003.

<sup>65</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 284, Ermatinger Correspondence, George Gladman to Edward Ermatinger, 26 September 1845.



trade families, forming a web of familial, social, and business relationships that stretched across British North America, the Atlantic, and the British Empire.

The political climate in Montreal remained tumultuous throughout the 1840s, and particularly in the wake of the Rebellion Losses Bill of 1849, which incited riots by English-speaking Montrealers. Into the 1850s, Montreal again became a more popular retirement option for HBC officers, who were attracted by the city's location and the new city centre subdivisions of the 1840s and 1850s.<sup>66</sup> John Swanston and George Barnston settled their families in the new Georgian style subdivisions in the city's west end that echoed Edinburgh's New Town.<sup>67</sup> Between George Barnston's retirement in 1863 and his wife's death in 1898, the Barnstons lived at several addresses within what became known as Montreal's Golden Square Mile where power, wealth, and influence were concentrated for more than a century.<sup>68</sup>

By virtue of a robust and complex imperial network of travel and communication, HBC officers at trading posts across Rupert's Land had access to detailed information about social, political and economic conditions across the British Empire. Carefully gathered intelligence informed the decisions and settlement patterns of HBC families in the Canadas. Issues and events with wide geopolitical implications, such as the Rebellions, the development of colonial transportation networks, and looming questions about relations with the United States and the economic and governmental future of the colonies, all informed the decisions and settlement patterns of HBC families.

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<sup>66</sup> David B. Hanna, "Creation of an Early Victorian Suburb in Montreal", *Urban History Review* 9, No. 2 (1980), 42.

<sup>67</sup> See plans for the Fisher & Smith Subdivision and the Phillips Subdivision in; Hanna, "Creation of an Early Victorian Suburb in Montreal", 45 and 46.

<sup>68</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown and Sylvia M. Van Kirk, "BARNSTON, GEORGE," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 11, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed January 12, 2019, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/barnston\\_george\\_11E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/barnston_george_11E.html).

## II: ‘All our Hudson’s Bay friends in Scotland’<sup>69</sup>:

For HBC officers who could afford it, retiring to Scotland represented a return to their birthplace and perhaps their parents and extended family, as well as to the friends of their youth. Scotland offered greater access to elite education and career prospects for fur trade children, proximity to better medical care, and the promise of a life of leisure alongside other imperial families from across the British Empire. HBC dividends went further in the Canadas than they did for men of similar rank ‘at home’ in Britain, where their quality of life was more in step with the growing professional middle class examined by Catherine Hall, Leonore Davidoff, and others.<sup>70</sup> As he purchased an urban townhouse in preparation for retirement, Chief Factor John Ballenden remarked “I am now busy arranging a house for my children in Edinburgh... this has put me to considerable expense, much more than I anticipated.”<sup>71</sup> The cost of establishing a family home in Scotland was surprising to men like Ballenden who had been largely absent from their homelands for decades before settling with their Indigenous families in retirement.<sup>72</sup>

After nearly thirty years in the company’s service, Chief Trader Donald Sutherland retired with his children to the small rural parish of Clyne, where he lived in a modest stone farmhouse and worked as a miller into his nineties.<sup>73</sup> Sutherland’s colleague Nicol Finlayson lived in Nairn with his daughter and her husband above the Bank of Scotland branch on High Street. He wrote apologetically to his son John in Rupert’s

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<sup>69</sup> HBCA D.5/33 fo. 210, Alexander Christie to George Simpson, 16 February 1852.

<sup>70</sup> Lenore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780–1850* (London: Routledge, 2002); Catherine Hall, ed., *White, Male and Middle-Class: Explorations in Feminism and History* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

<sup>71</sup> John Ballenden to George Simpson, 24 March 1851, HBCA D.5/30 fo. 457.

<sup>72</sup> Ballenden for example, spent 27 years in the company’s service before his retirement to Edinburgh. See HBCA Biographical Sheet, “Ballenden, John.”

<sup>73</sup> See HBCA Biographical Sheet, “Sutherland, Donald”; and 1871 Census of Scotland, Clyne, Page 11, Line 19, Reel 9, General Register Office Scotland.

Land: “when I am dead and gone you or your heirs will receive £100 from my executor, which is all I can do.”<sup>74</sup> The sum was not insignificant, yet Finlayson fretted in letters about his ability to leave his children financially secure after his death.

While there was concern among retiring officers that their savings might not allow them to sustain an elite lifestyle in the metropole, a number of men were able to achieve this goal. Though relatively wealthy by the time he considered retirement, James Keith expressed concern that he might not be able to afford the gentlemanly life of leisure he envisioned. Like other nineteenth-century men of means, Keith hoped to spend his retirement travelling in Europe and ‘taking the waters’ at Britain’s most fashionable spa towns.<sup>75</sup> Keith wrote to HBC Governor George Simpson sardonically “if I cannot afford to live comfortably on about £500 a year in Europe I do not in my own opinion deserve to live.”<sup>76</sup> The ability to spend £500 per year was no small feat. Known as a meticulous financial manager, Keith was one of the few HBC retirees who invested in real estate. In 1847, he owned three Aberdeen townhomes with a combined annual rental income of £114.<sup>77</sup> This was in addition to Keith’s funds on account with the HBC, as well as income from stocks.

An 1867 study found that just over one percent of income-earners in Scotland made more than £300 per year.<sup>78</sup> James Keith was employed as a Chief Factor for over a decade. During that time the lion’s share of his wages went into investments and savings,

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<sup>74</sup> Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, 22 August 1870, HBCA E.137/1 fo. 8.

<sup>75</sup> For discussion of this trend in medical tourism see Richard E. Morris, “The Victorian ‘Change of Air’ as medical and social construction,” *Journal of Tourism History* 10, No.1 (2018): 49-65.

<sup>76</sup> James Keith to George Simpson, 7 August 1833. University of Aberdeen James Keith Papers, Private copybook, page 8.

<sup>77</sup> Keith built and rented out the town homes at 73, 75 and 99 Crown Street, and lived at 101 Crown Street (now a hotel). University of Aberdeen James Keith Papers, Box 3, Account book, fo. 50-2.

<sup>78</sup> For a detailed breakdown of wage earner categories see; Dudley R. Baxter, *National Income: The United Kingdom* (London: Macmillan & Co., 1868), 56.

as HBC officers had the added benefit of room and board provided by the company.<sup>79</sup>

Keith's savings and investments put him well within the top one percent of Scottish wage earners, even in retirement.

Keith's brother and fellow Chief Factor George Keith had the means to gift his daughter Fanny a farm at St. Eustache as a wedding present when she married James Heron in 1832.<sup>80</sup> Three years later his eldest daughter Louise and her new husband François Xavier LeClaire also received a farm as a wedding gift.<sup>81</sup> In 1837 he transferred £500 from his account with the HBC to his daughter Betsy's partner, HBC clerk John Swanston.<sup>82</sup> George and his wife Ann Sutherland settled first in a townhome in downtown Aberdeen. Their residence on Craibstone Street eventually became the home of the Spanish Consulate. George's brother James retired three blocks away on Crown Street: his home later became a boutique hotel. The urban neighbourhoods where HBC officers settled were purpose-built for just the sort of Scots they wished to be; moneyed and respectable members of the professional upper-middle class.

Retired Chief Factor Angus Cameron's standard of living was akin to those of Scotland's wealthiest elite. Firhall, Cameron's estate in Nairn, was one of only six 'mansion houses' listed for the County of Nairn in the *New Statistical Account of Scotland* in 1845.<sup>83</sup> Hector Mackenzie retired in a nearby parish, taking up residence at

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<sup>79</sup> This depended a great deal on the expenses associated with educating fur trade children. Roderick McKenzie, for instance, was spending £280 per year in the mid-1840s to educate his children and grandchildren. See Erin Millions, "'By education and conduct': educating trans-imperial children in the Hudson's Bay Company Territories and the British Empire, 1820s to 1870s," Phd Dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2017, 62.

<sup>80</sup> See Lloyd Keith, *North of Athabasca*, 260.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, 261.

<sup>82</sup> The couple were formally married at Michipicoten in 1846. James Keith to William Smith 7 July 1837. James Keith Papers, UASC MS 2769/I/57/1 Bundle 5.

<sup>83</sup> Rev James Grant, "Nairnshire", In *The New Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol. XIII (Edinburgh and London: William Blackwood and Sons, 1845), 698.

Gollanfield Mansion.<sup>84</sup> While the purchasing power of their savings might have diminished slightly upon crossing the Atlantic, their years in the HBC's service certainly left most retired officers and their families outfitted for at least a middle class, and in some cases an elite, lifestyle in Canada or Scotland.

HBC homes in Scotland served as bases for visitors from Rupert's Land and fur trade children at school in the metropole. The clustering of HBC retirees is clear from third-party correspondence recounting the customary round of visits that took place whenever men in the company's service visited Britain on furlough. While staying with his sister in Edinburgh, John Ballenden updated George Simpson: "Mr. Charles, I have just seen, indeed I spent a couple of hours with him this evening...Mr. Siveright is as usual well – I have never seen Mr. Haldane" though he had received an invitation to dine with him at his home not far from Edinburgh.<sup>85</sup>

While HBC families inevitably spent a great deal of time with one another, they also cultivated new friendships in their new home communities. Letitia Hargrave, the well-connected Scottish wife of Chief Factor James Hargrave, reported after visiting George and Ann Keith in Aberdeen that "they are very comfortable here and their circle is most respectable."<sup>86</sup> Keith himself considered it a "limited circle of friends and acquaintances", but was on the whole satisfied to be living back in his homeland.<sup>87</sup> Keith concluded that the Christies in turn had "lots of polite acquaintances in Town and in its vicinity."<sup>88</sup> When the Christies moved to a cottage just outside the city centre, Keith

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<sup>84</sup> 1871 Census of Scotland. Hector Mackenzie, 106/6, page 8 (Gollanfield Mansion, Petty).

<sup>85</sup> John Ballenden to George Simpson, 24 March 1851. D5/30 fo.457.

<sup>86</sup> UM Archives, Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave, 28 March 1852, MSS 15 Box 2 Fo.4, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds.

<sup>87</sup> HBCA D.5/33 fo.133, George Keith to George Simpson, 28 January 1852.

<sup>88</sup> Emphasis in original. HBCA D.5/30 fo. 128, George Keith to George Simpson, 23 July 1851.

remarked “plenty of friends...will be glad often to look in upon them from Town.”<sup>89</sup> The Christies were accustomed to playing the role of genteel British hosts from their time in Red River while Christie served as the Governor of Assiniboia, which likely helped them integrate into elite social circles in Aberdeen. The Keiths, however, spent most of their life together at small HBC posts far from the social centres of Red River and Montreal.

Officers who retired to Scotland generally settled in or near the major cities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. Glasgow was not a popular destination, perhaps owing to Edinburgh’s location on the east coast with easier water access to London’s main port of Gravesend, and later, passenger service by rail to London. Some HBC men retired to the parishes where they and generations of their ancestors were born. However, many officers eschewed small-town life for the urban amenities of Edinburgh and Aberdeen. In these cities, they could settle into newly constructed neighbourhoods that catered to upper-middle-class desires for larger homes with more privacy. Census data shows that HBC retirees had the means to maintain their families in such homes, along with help from at least one live-in servant. This sort of analysis is easier for families in Scotland, where decennial censuses recorded fairly consistent household information from 1841. Two decades passed before similarly detailed information was available through Canadian censuses.<sup>90</sup>

In his later years, Alexander Christie lived in the Newington neighbourhood of Edinburgh, which was filled with Georgian villas and large private gardens that were marketed towards the city’s affluent merchants and professionals. Newington had among the lowest population density in Edinburgh in the 1860s at just 40 persons per acre,

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<sup>89</sup> D.5/30 fo. 471, George Keith to George Simpson 27 March 1851.

<sup>90</sup> The 1861 Census of Canada was the first to enumerate family members and non-members in each household, giving a clearer picture of live-in servants.

compared with parts of Old Edinburgh that housed in excess of 200 or even 300 people per acre.<sup>91</sup> Chief Factor Donald Smith's older brother, retired from a career as an imperial medical officer, lived around the corner.<sup>92</sup>

Widower Christie's household included his daughter Mary and her husband William Patterson, a lady's maid, a cook, and two housemaids.<sup>93</sup> His neighbours on Minto Street each employed at least one servant, and many in the area had two or more. The Keith household in Aberdeen employed three servants. A live-in cook, housekeeper and general servant were required to maintain Robert Cowie's small household in Montrose, comprised of himself, his ten-year-old daughter and his sister.<sup>94</sup> Angus Cameron's estate in Nairn relied on the labour of a live-in cook, housemaid, nursemaid, and three local men employed as labourers.<sup>95</sup>

Fur trade scholars have examined the class and racial tensions that existed within HBC communities and households where elite Indigenous women had authority over British and European servants.<sup>96</sup> Ann Christie was used to navigating the power dynamics of managing a refined household as a result of her time in Red River when her husband served as the Governor of Assiniboia. For over a decade the Christies were the most prominent couple in the settlement, hosting distinguished guests at dinner parties and other functions.

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<sup>91</sup> W.W. Knox, "Health in Scotland, 1840-1940," in *A History of the Scottish People* (SCRAN), Chapter 3, page 2. [https://www.scran.ac.uk/scotland/pdf/SP2\\_3Health.pdf](https://www.scran.ac.uk/scotland/pdf/SP2_3Health.pdf)

<sup>92</sup> In 1871 John Stuart Smith (named for his uncle, Chief Factor John Stuart) lived at 3 Oxford Street, 0.3 miles from Christie's home on Minto Street. 1871 Census of Scotland, District 71, Page 4, Household 77. Smith remained in the Newington neighbourhood until his death in 1899.

<sup>93</sup> 1861 Census of Scotland, Alexander Christie, 685/5/68, page 14 (51 Minto Street, Edinburgh).

<sup>94</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, Robert Cowie, 312/13, page 39 (Montrose, Angus).

<sup>95</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, Angus Cameron, 123/5, page 3 (Firhall, Nairn).

<sup>96</sup> See for example, Frieda Klippenstein, "Domestic Servants and Fur Trade Households," in *Papers of the 1994 Rupert's Land Colloquium* (Winnipeg: Centre for Rupert's Land Studies, 1994): 255-70; and Sylvia Van Kirk, "'The Reputation of a Lady': Sarah Ballenden and the Foss-Pelly Scandal," *Manitoba History*, 11 (Spring 1986): 4-12.

In Scotland, urban HBC households typically employed Scottish servants hired from nearby communities. The women who served as household staff to the Christie family were all Scots. While the Christies were living in Aberdeen they employed local women as maids and cooks, hiring new staff from the area once they relocated to Edinburgh. All of Angus Cameron's household staff were born locally in the Highlands.

The Keith household in Aberdeen was unique in that it included only one servant born locally, alongside one from Rupert's Land, and one from London.<sup>97</sup> It is likely that the Keiths first met their future housemaid Mary Turner while George Keith was stationed at Moose Factory in the late 1830s.<sup>98</sup> In 1851 the Keiths' ailing daughter Betsy, her husband John Swanston and their children were accompanied by a servant named Jean Turner on the company ship from Moose Factory.<sup>99</sup> This was likely Mary Turner's sister, and the migration of Keith family members facilitated the movement of household labour across the Atlantic that further bound the Keith and Turner families together. The Keiths also employed a governess from London, who was recruited specifically for her specialized experience working with the Keiths' youngest daughter Mary, who had physical and intellectual disabilities.

Correspondence and other records contain few mentions of the inner workings of the family household, particularly with regard to the social or power dynamics at work between Indigenous women and their household staff. Unlike in many genteel British households of the day, it is likely that George Keith had more direct interaction with female staff than his wife. Ann Keith spoke very little English during her early years in

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<sup>97</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, 168/0B 016/00, page 18. George Keith (Morningside Cottage, Aberdeen).

<sup>98</sup> Mary Turner was born at Moose Factory in 1824.

<sup>99</sup> Samuel Taylor Journal, 10 September 1851, HBCA P4641/1, Book 2, fo. 5.



Scotland. She may have communicated with Mary Turner in Cree or in French,<sup>100</sup> but it would have fallen to her husband to manage their English-speaking household staff.

Unsurprisingly, household labour is most visible in the archive once HBC officers became widowers. As widowers, men were responsible for seeking out, paying for, and overseeing housekeeping staff, increasing the visibility of household labour to the patriarchal gaze. When faced with his maid's departure for North America Nicol Finlayson lamented "I suspect after she leaves I shall be obliged to provide myself with another housekeeper or take an old spinster for a wife!!."<sup>101</sup> In the end, Finlayson decided to move in with his newly married daughter Mary and her new husband, above the Bank of Scotland branch on Nairn's High Street. The lack of household labour, or at least a lack of interest or ability to effectively coordinate and oversee domestic help, essentially left Finlayson reliant on his daughter, which no doubt shifted the power dynamics of their relationship to some extent.

Gendered power dynamics also shifted as widowers' health failed and they became increasingly isolated and dependent on the care provided by female housekeeping staff. Isabella Henderson and Jean Low were Alexander Christie's constant companions in the last years of his life. Both women were in Christie's employ for over a decade. They were so central to Christie's life that he left each of them legacies in his will, both of which he later added a codicil to increase. Isabella Henderson received £50 and Jean Low received £90.<sup>102</sup> These funds were large enough to materially alter the women's lives and give them a measure of independence in choosing their future paths.

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<sup>100</sup> Cree was likely not Ann's first language, but she spent many years in the HBC's Lake Superior District, where Cree was widely spoken. Mary Turner was born at Moose Factory in that same district.

<sup>101</sup> D5/43 folio 338, Nicol Finlayson to George Simpson, 31 March 1857. Emphasis in original.

<sup>102</sup> Edinburgh Sherrif Court Wills, Alexander Christie (1873), SC70/4/143.

In addition to living near other ‘Hudson’s Bay folk’, it was also common for urban HBC retirees to live alongside other imperial families. This could be the result of deliberately choosing particular neighbourhoods, or a reflection of the general cosmopolitanism of Scotland’s cities in the mid-nineteenth century. Census records are particularly illuminating in this regard. In 1851, four of John Ballenden’s children were living with his widowed sister Elizabeth Bannatyne on Clarence Street in Edinburgh.<sup>103</sup> Widow Sarah Crichton lived two doors down. She and three of her children were born in the East Indies and were supported by an annuity from the estate of her late husband, a military officer in India.<sup>104</sup> Two doors up, unmarried annuitant Mary Kaye lived with several members of her extended family, including a two-year-old nephew born in British North America.<sup>105</sup> Sugar agent Robert James lived at the corner with his wife, three children, two nieces, and two servants. James, his nieces, and two of his daughters were all born in Madeira.<sup>106</sup> HBC retiree John Siveright lived around the corner on Nelson Street.<sup>107</sup> When John Ballenden formally retired and joined his family in Edinburgh, they moved into a townhome in this same neighbourhood of imperial families.

In Inverness, John Clark lived alongside the family of Englishman James Naish, whose wife and eldest daughter were born in India, while two of his sons were born in Malta.<sup>108</sup> Naish was a market superintendent who spent time as a merchant in Madras, where he met and married his wife Mary. The Naish family had a long history with the East India Company, dating back to at least the middle of the eighteenth century.

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<sup>103</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, Elizabeth Bannatyne, 685/2/210, page 3 (13 Clarence Street, Edinburgh).

<sup>104</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, Sarah Crichton, 685/1/74, page 3 (9 Clarence Street, Edinburgh). Lieutenant Colonel David Crichton (1791-1845). For marriage and baptismal records see The British Library’s India Office Family History Search page at <http://indiafamily.bl.uk/ui/about.aspx>

<sup>105</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, Mary Kaye, 685/2/210, page 5 (17 Clarence Street, Edinburgh).

<sup>106</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, Robert James, 685/2 household 77, page 12 (29 Clarence Street, Edinburgh).

<sup>107</sup> 1851 Census of Scotland, James Siveright, 685//1/160, page 3 (6 Nelson Street South, Edinburgh).

<sup>108</sup> 1901 Census of Scotland, John Clark, 098/12, page 15 (91 Church Street, Inverness).

For those who settled in rural areas of Scotland such as Nairn, Sutherland, Orkney, or Shetland, they were establishing themselves in communities that were more homogeneous but whose local men had long histories of itinerant imperial careering. Orkney was a main source of HBC labourers for generations. Patricia McCormack tracked a number of clerks and labourers who returned home to Orkney and Lewis in retirement.<sup>109</sup> Donald Sutherland retired to his birthplace, the parish of Clyne in the county of Sutherland. This sparsely populated northern coastal area had multi-generational ties to plantations in Guyana before the abolition of slavery, and also sent many men into the HBC's service.<sup>110</sup>

Like their kin and colleagues in British North America, proximity to water played an important role in determining settlement locations in Scotland, although navigation was likely less of a concern. Company ships to and from North America stopped at Gravesend (the port for London) and Stromness, but most retiring officers were not interested in settling near these hubs. Even John Ballenden, who was born and raised in Stromness, chose Edinburgh for his retirement home. While access to navigable water routes was less important for HBC families in Scotland, homes on or near the water were coveted and strived for.

Retired Chief Factor James Anderson lived southwest of Aberdeen on the River South Esk.<sup>111</sup> John Ballenden's home in Edinburgh faced the bank of the Water of Leith

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<sup>109</sup> James Kirkness, Peter Baikie and Andrew Kirkness, for example. See McCormack in *Recollecting*, 73-75.

<sup>110</sup> For a discussion of the connections of northwestern Highland families and slave plantations, see the work of David Alston, such as "'The habits of these creatures in clinging one to the other': Enslaved Africans, Scots and the plantations of Guyana," in Tom Devine, ed., *Recovering Scotland's Slavery Past: The Caribbean Connection* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2015): 99-123.

<sup>111</sup> Referred to as James Anderson 'B' in HBC personnel records. His first cousin Chief Factor James Anderson 'A' retired to Sutton ON. James Anderson 'B' retired to a house at the end of East Mill Road (next to the River South Esk) in his hometown of Brechin. 1871 Census of Scotland, James Anderson,

northwest of the city centre. Donald Sutherland's home in the parish of Clyne was steps from the River Brora. The garden behind Nicol Finlayson's home backed onto the River Nairn, which was just downriver from Angus Cameron's large riverfront estate. Robert Cowie settled in the coastal town of Montrose, just one-half mile from both the seaside and the River South Esk.<sup>112</sup>

Some HBC families who did not initially settle near bodies of water eventually relocated closer to waterways, demonstrating that waterfront homes were clearly a goal for many HBC families. George and Ann Keith initially settled in an affluent city centre neighbourhood of large townhomes in Aberdeen.<sup>113</sup> Within a few years, they decided to relocate just beyond the city limits, in a new neighbourhood of detached cottages next to the River Dee. The Christies likewise started retirement in the downtown core of Aberdeen and relocated to a detached cottage around the corner from the Keiths. This private lot near the river was likely intended to be their permanent home, however, their daughter's failing health necessitated a move to Edinburgh where she could access the best medical care Scotland had to offer.

When John Clark first returned to Scotland with his second wife and four children, he settled two blocks from the River Ness.<sup>114</sup> Several years later he upgraded to a larger home where the river's edge could be accessed out the back door and was visible from the upper floor windows. Clark remained in this home for the rest of his life.<sup>115</sup>

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275/12, page 14 (East Mill Road, Bridge End House). See HBCA Biographical Sheet, James Anderson B (1814-1874).

<sup>112</sup> The town of Montrose on the east coast of Scotland occupies a peninsula one mile in width where the River South Esk meets the North Sea.

<sup>113</sup> No census was undertaken while they lived in this area, but their address appears on George Keith's letters.

<sup>114</sup> 1891 Census of Scotland, John Clark, 098/6/8 page 8 (48 Academy Street).

<sup>115</sup> Scotland Statutory Registration of Deaths, 098/A 143 page 48 #173. John Clark, 91 Church Street Inverness.

Whether homes near waterways were selected as an outward demonstration of elite status, or because they evoked the vast lakes and rivers of Rupert's Land, few records state this connection to water plainly. On one occasion George Keith recounted that his wife was "just returned from a tour up the River Dee – the scenery of which strongly reminded her of the romantic rivers of her beloved native Country."<sup>116</sup> Keith's account draws a clear link between the riverside scenery of their new home and the one they left behind. The River Dee was less than a mile down a gently rolling slope from the Keith residence. It was not as wide or vast as the Mackenzie River of Ann's childhood, or as rugged as the cascading Michipicoten River where she raised her children, yet the River Dee evoked an emotional connection to her homeland.<sup>117</sup> Perhaps she walked along the riverbank with her daughters and grandchildren, speaking of their maternal kin or relaying news from across fur trade country. For Ann, their home near the river was a considerably more comfortable upgrade from the bustling confines of the city centre.

The similarities of settlement destinations in British North America and Scotland were made plain in a 1910 speech given by Donald Smith. By this time Smith had retired from the HBC, become Lord Strathcona and Mount Royal, and was serving as the High Commissioner of Canada. On receiving the Freedom of the Town in his hometown of Forres Scotland in 1910, Smith mused aloud to the audience:

There is a resemblance between this and another city with which I have been intimately connected. Here you have as the background Cluny Hill, and in the face of you Findhorn and the placid Mosset; and in that town to

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<sup>116</sup> D.5/30 fo. 199 George Keith to GS, 4 February 1851.

<sup>117</sup> Before the construction of hydroelectric dams in the early twentieth century the Michipicoten River descended from a series of cascades.

which I refer – in Montreal – you also have a background of a beautiful mountain, and before it the broad, flowing St. Lawrence.<sup>118</sup>

Like Ann Sutherland Keith, who saw the river of her homeland reflected in Aberdeen's River Dee, Smith drew connections between the landscape of his birthplace and that of his new home in Montreal. Smith took the opportunity of his speech to bring this imperial connection home to his listeners, tying Scotland and Canada together in concrete, personal ways that collapsed the vast distance between them.

These connections between distant imperial places could also be deliberately manifested in the landscape. In the 1890s, Smith purchased a large Scottish estate in Glencoe. To assuage his wife Isabella Hardisty's homesickness he had a tract of forest planted around a small loch (*loch*) using tree species from Rupert's Land. The estate was deliberately landscaped, presumably at great expense, to mirror the area around Banff in what became the province of Alberta.<sup>119</sup>

Similarly, retired Chief Factor Angus Cameron planted Firhall, his estate in Nairn, with red pine seeds brought from Fort Temiskaming.<sup>120</sup> His children Elizabeth, Sophia, and Alexander no doubt drew comfort from the familiar sight and smell when strolling across the manicured estate of their new home. Historian Susie Fisher has recently shown how plants and seeds were the focal point of a complex interweaving of myth, memory, and place-making for nineteenth-century Russian Mennonite immigrants to Manitoba.<sup>121</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Cited in Beckles Wilson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal* (Toronto: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1915), 2. The Burn of Mosset runs through the centre of Forres and is a tributary of the River Findhorn, which passes along the western extent of the town.

<sup>119</sup> Cathal Hutchinson, "The Significance of Highlanders in the development of the Canadian West," (PhD Diss., University of the Highlands and Islands, 2008), 270. Today the estate is home to a luxury boutique hotel.

<sup>120</sup> Elaine Allan Mitchell, "The Camerons of Temiskaming." *International Review of Scottish Studies* 1 No. 1 (1971), 32.

<sup>121</sup> See Susie Fisher, "Seeds from the steppe: Mennonites, horticulture, and the construction of landscapes on Manitoba's West Reserve, 1870-1950," (PhD. Diss., University of Manitoba, 2017).

The importation of seeds from Rupert's Land allowed fur trade families to construct familiar spaces that also exposed Britons to colonial landscapes and became part of local stories about fur trade families.



*Figure 2.3: Tree planted at Angus Cameron's estate, Firhall in Nairn, Scotland from seeds brought from Fort Temiskaming<sup>122</sup>*

This exchange was not one-sided. In fact, the same person who longed for the natural world of Rupert's Land while living in the Scottish Highlands also made use of imported British seeds while living at northern fur trade posts. As a young mother at an HBC post in Labrador, Isabella Hardisty Smith wrote to her own mother "I spend a great deal of my time in the garden, where we have sown all the English seeds as well as all Maria's Orkney ones. We hope with care to have a fine show of flowers this year."<sup>123</sup> The

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<sup>122</sup> Photo by author, April 2015.

<sup>123</sup> Isabella Hardisty Smith at North West River to Margaret Sutherland Hardisty at Lachine, 28 June 1856. Cited in Wilson, 101. The Maria mentioned is most likely Isabella's sister.

everyday experience of gardening allowed women to claim space, whether at the heart of the metropole or an outpost of Empire across the Atlantic. There was a layered, shifting, and complex interplay between fur trade people and the natural world around them as they moved across different imperial spaces over the course of their lives. Gender, occupation, life stage, and worldview all impacted an individual's experience of the environment over time. As will be seen, horticultural activities were a key way that Indigenous women experienced the landscape of their new homes in Canada and Scotland.

Isabella Hardisty Smith's experiences speak to a certain rootlessness; a sense of searching out a home place, but never wholly finding it.<sup>124</sup> By literally planting roots wherever she was living she gathered together the branches of her geographically wide-ranging family ties. In her maternal homeland of Rupert's Land, she nurtured seeds both from England, where her father was born and from Orkney, the home of her mother's paternal kin. Through the transatlantic importation of seeds, HBC families created hybrid natural spaces that mirrored their own lived experiences. HBC patriarchs had the means to alter a great deal about the physical worlds they chose for retirement. Houses could be purchased close to waterways and plants could be imported from Rupert's Land to create gardens or even forest tracts that colonized space for fur trade women and children. Yet, the environmental aspect that caused HBC fathers the greatest unease was not one they were capable of altering.

Whereas colonial political unrest was the key source of worry for HBC officers who settled in Canada, the climate was a chief concern for those who made their homes in Scotland. Letters were permeated with a sense that Scotland's weather had a direct and

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<sup>124</sup> This sense of rootlessness among HBC children will be addressed in more detail in Chapters 4 and 5.



life-threatening impact in HBC households in general, and on Indigenous women and children in particular. At the time, the medical profession and various government agencies saw climate and health as inextricably linked.<sup>125</sup> Scotland's first Superintendent of Statistics saw weather data as an essential component of vital statistics collection, to the extent that the Scottish Meteorological Society was established in the same year that compulsory death registration was introduced.<sup>126</sup>

In their correspondence, HBC husbands and fathers characterized Scotland's weather as an unexpectedly pernicious menace to their Indigenous wives and children. While climatic dangers were expected for imperial families in India or the Caribbean, officers who spent decades pining for the hills and streams of their boyhood Highland parishes were taken aback by the dangers Scotland posed to their loved ones.<sup>127</sup> Men wrote of an initial period of sickness that was an expected part of arriving in Britain after living in Rupert's Land. Some HBC women and children never got over this initial period of sickness, while others suffered intermittent bouts of ill health that were perceived as causally linked to the climate of their new homes.

Speaking of their colleague's arrival in Scotland, Alexander Christie wrote to George Simpson that "Mr. Swanston's family have so far got over the winter without being much afflicted with colds, or other ailments, which...[those] coming to this

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<sup>125</sup> See for example A. Cameron, "Medicine, Meteorology and Vital Statistics": the Influence of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh Upon Scottish Civil Registration, c.1840-1855", *The Journal of the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh*, 37.2 (2007): 173-180; F. Sargent, *Hippocratic Heritage: A History of Ideas About Weather and Human Health* (New York, 1982); J. Stark, *On the Influence of Heat and Odours...* (London, 1833).

<sup>126</sup> A. Cameron, "Medicine, Meteorology and Vital Statistics," 173.

<sup>127</sup> For discussions of climate as a dangerous force in the fields of Empire see; Laura Ishiguro, "Relative Distances: Family and Empire between Britain, British Columbia and India, 1858-1901", (PhD Diss., University College London, 2011); Elizabeth Buettner, *Empire Families*; Mark Harrison, *Climates and Constitutions: Health, Race, Environment and British Imperialism in India, 1600-1850* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

climate, are generally troubled to undergo during the first season.”<sup>128</sup> It may have been the case that the Swanstons made it through this arrival unscathed, however, three years earlier they weathered the death of their teenaged son Charles from tuberculosis. Charles was living with his grandparents while attending school in Aberdeen. His aunt Jane, who was living in the same house, also died that year from what was likely the same illness.<sup>129</sup> Two of Charles’ younger siblings perished within seven months of each other, also while living with their grandparents in Scotland.<sup>130</sup>

To John Ballenden, sickness in his family also appeared to have a direct link to their relocation to Scotland. He voiced his concerns in a letter to George Simpson: “I am very nervous regarding my little boy Duncan. He has been unwell ever since we arrived in this country. He has no particular disease, but a general debility.”<sup>131</sup> Two months later the Ballendens were mourning the death of Duncan, followed by his mother two years later. Though she was just 33 years old, Sarah McLeod Ballenden’s cause of death was listed simply as “decline.”<sup>132</sup> Indigenous women and children found themselves in completely new social and geographic contexts away from the people, landscapes, weather, foods, and medicines they had known all their lives. These conditions could combine to create disastrous consequences in HBC families.

Alexander Christie concluded “neither this climate or England is suitable for those who have passed the greater part of their life in the company’s territories... the

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<sup>128</sup> HBCA D.5/33 fo. 210, Alexander Christie to George Simpson, 16 February 1852.

<sup>129</sup> HBCA D.5/26 fo. 417, George Keith to George Simpson, 27 July 1849. Keith referenced Charles’ death from consumption (tuberculosis) and his daughter’s illness with a “disorder of the lungs” – likely also tuberculosis.

<sup>130</sup> The Keith household was hit with the deaths of grandson Charles Swanston and daughter Jane Keith in 1849. Infant Elizabeth Swanston died in August of 1854, followed by her brother James in March of 1855. Information gathered from George Keith family memorial stone, northwest corner Nellfield Cemetery, Aberdeen.

<sup>131</sup> HBCA D.5/30 fo.539-42, Ballenden to GS 4 April 1851. Duncan died on 4 June 1851 at the age of six.

<sup>132</sup> Scotland, Edinburgh Death Register, 23 December 1853.

chilling damp...we cannot overcome.<sup>133</sup> The following year he wrote of his daughter's recurring illness that "her indisposition leads me almost to regret me leaving the Red River Settlement and come to settle down in this variable climate which is doubtless more prejudicial to health."<sup>134</sup> For HBC fathers, attaining the wealth to enter the upper echelons of Scottish society was no small feat. No doubt there was a level of distress and frustration that set in with the realization that their greatest economic achievement could come with great personal risk and loss on account of the danger that the natural environment posed to their loved ones.

Roderick Finlayson refused to retire to Britain alongside his brothers as he "dreaded the climate" for his daughters. For the benefit of their health, he instead retired to Victoria on the Pacific coast.<sup>135</sup> There was an abiding feeling among HBC patriarchs that Scotland's climate had a deleterious impact on their wives and children.

At the same time, there was a sense that returning to the Highland climate of their birthplace could be restorative for men returning from careers spent in Rupert's Land. In 1838 Barbara Smith wrote to her brother Chief Factor John Stuart when she heard of his decision to retire to Scotland after a period of ill health: "there is no prescription better to be recommended than that of breathing your native air again."<sup>136</sup> The perception that the climate of an individual's birthplace was uniquely amenable to their health worked both ways. John Dugald Cameron wrote to Governor Simpson inquiring about a position for his youngest son, who was anxious to enter the company's service but was "weak and rather delicate in health." Cameron added that his son was "so anxious to go thinking he

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<sup>133</sup> Emphasis in original. Alexander Christie to George Simpson, D.5/30 fo.276. 18 February 1851.

<sup>134</sup> HBCA D.5/35 fo. 209a, Alexander Christie to George Simpson, November 1852.

<sup>135</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 261, George Barnston to Edward Ermatinger, 11 September 1872. Roderick Finlayson's brothers Nicol and Duncan were both officers in the company's service.

<sup>136</sup> Cited in Wilson, 22. Barbara Stuart Smith was the mother of Lord Strathcona.

will enjoy better health in his native country.”<sup>137</sup> George Barnston likewise recounted that his son Alexander joined the Geological Survey west of Lake Superior on account of his “weak health [which] induced him to try the Woods & Morasses for a Year...[taking] up other work probably as soon as his health is reestablished.”<sup>138</sup> The climate of one’s birthplace was clearly seen to offer the best circumstances for the general health of fur trade family members. This created a serious impasse for HBC families whose members were born and raised in Britain and various points across northern North America.

After weighing his options for retirement, George Gladman concluded that “Canada affords not only the best prospect of an opening in business but is at the same time a climate best suited to the constitution and habits of Natives of these Northern Regions.”<sup>139</sup> For HBC parents concerned about the environmental dangers Scotland posed to their children, the Canadas was seen as a middle ground where all family members could thrive.

This is not to say that illness did not lurk in mid-nineteenth-century Canada, but that it was seen to impact settlers generally, rather than to target Indigenous women and children specifically. In 1851 John Dugald Cameron reported that in Grafton there had been “a great deal of sickness – Ague, Pleurisy, Inflammation of lungs and bowels, and measles have carried off a great number of young people.”<sup>140</sup> Death and burial records are often silent on causes of death in Ontario and Quebec before the introduction of formal registration in the late 1860s. However, it is likely that epidemic diseases like cholera, smallpox, and measles were the cause of family losses that were clustered together in

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<sup>137</sup> John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, D5/30 fo. 421, 18 March 1851.

<sup>138</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 258. George Barnston to Edward Ermatinger, 11 September 1872.

<sup>139</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 277, George Gladman to Edward Ermatinger, 27 July 1840.

<sup>140</sup> HBCA D.5/30 fo. 627-8, John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 21 April 1851.

particular years. Four members of the McMurray family died during a nine-month period in 1849, which coincided with one of many cholera epidemics in Ontario.<sup>141</sup> The Clouston family lost four members over the course of fourteen months beginning in May of 1866 with the death of 29-year-old Samuel.<sup>142</sup> In Montreal during the spring of 1841 Theresa Chalifoux, the wife of HBC retiree Colin Robertson, and the couple's two-year-old son William died within two days of one another.<sup>143</sup>

In the Canadas, it was likely that the elite social standing of HBC families worked against them during epidemics. Their carefully selected town and village centre homes in close proximity to other families, the frequent arrival of visitors from near and far, and a reliance on the labour of many people outside the family unit to sustain their estates all likely increased the risk of infection in these households. Despite the prevalence of epidemic disease in the Canadas, HBC patriarchs saw therapeutic potential in the colonial climate. Francis Ermatinger wrote Governor Simpson seeking an extension of his medical leave in St. Thomas, citing his doctor's advice that he "ought not to return to the rigorous climate of Hudson's Bay for at least another year."<sup>144</sup> When William Lucas Hardisty's daughter was ailing he removed her from school at Red River and sent her east as he "thought the climate of Canada would do her good which it did."<sup>145</sup> Several years later Hardisty himself spent time in "Canada for change of air."<sup>146</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> Anglican Church Archives, Accession 85-10, St. George's Church Grafton Burial Register, Register Numbers 47, 51, 52, and 58. See C.M. Godfrey, *The Cholera Epidemics in Ontario, 1832-1866* (Toronto: Seacombe Books, 1968).

<sup>142</sup> Anglican Church Archives, Accession 85-10, St. George's Church Grafton Burial Register, Register Numbers 218, 222, 223, and 227.

<sup>143</sup> Ancestry.com. *Quebec, Canada, Vital and Church Records (Drouin Collection), 1621-1968* [database on-line]. Provo, UT, USA: Ancestry.com Operations, Inc., 2008; Montreal, Anglican Trinity Memorial Church, 21 and 23 April 1841.

<sup>144</sup> HBCA D.5/30 fo. 283, Francis Ermatinger to George Simpson, 19 February 1851.

<sup>145</sup> HBCA W.L. Hardisty to Matilda Davis, 20 November 1869, fo.114.

<sup>146</sup> LAC MG29 A11, folio 557 Robert Hamilton to Roderick MacFarlane, 29 May 1876.

George Barnston similarly believed in the curative potential of the Canadian climate. In 1872 he sent his daughter “to Mrs. Macdonald’s at Glencoe [in St. Andrews, Quebec] for the benefit of her health.”<sup>147</sup> Canada was seen as a climactic middle ground that was restorative for both retiring officers and their wives and children.

### **III: ‘Hudson’s Bay Friends’: Maintaining Bonds Across Time and Space**

Members of HBC families put considerable time and effort into maintaining close ties with other fur trade families, even across generational and geographical distances. Owing to the geographically diffuse organization of the HBC’s fur trade in Rupert’s Land and the small numbers of staff present at many trading posts, close friendships between officers did not necessarily result from extended in-person interactions with others of similar rank. Rather close relationships were cultivated with the shared experience of fur trade life as their foundation and maintained over time through particular strategies of socializing.

Angus Cameron entered the company’s service more than a decade before Nicol Finlayson. The two men never worked at the same post yet became close friends who both retired to the seaside town of Nairn. In the summer of 1860, they travelled together to the fashionable spa town of Harrogate.<sup>148</sup> Angus Cameron and John Siveright also spent time in the Highland spa town of Strathpeffer.<sup>149</sup> In some instances, tourism of this sort served medical purposes. Angus Cameron, for instance, suffered from arthritis, but

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<sup>147</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 259, George Barnston to Edward Ermatinger, 11 September 1872.

<sup>148</sup> Both men wrote to George Simpson on 26 July 1860. Angus Cameron to George Simpson, D5/52 fo. 374; Nicol Finlayson to George Simpson, D5/52 fo. 372.

<sup>149</sup> HBCA D.5/26 fo.136, George Keith to George Simpson, 21 September 1849; HBCA D.5/26 fo. 259, John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson.

remarked that his travelling companion Nicol Finlayson was there “like many others who have nothing else to do.”<sup>150</sup> Engaging in tourism to spa towns allowed HBC men to maintain their connections to one another through shared experiences in a new geographic context, but also to demonstrate their financial means and perform elite masculine sociability.<sup>151</sup> In his study of French colonial spas, historian Eric Jennings found that the renowned spa at Vichy served as a haven where those returning ‘home’ from across the French Empire could reassert their connection to French culture and their place in metropolitan society.<sup>152</sup> Elite identities and relationships were also forged and put on display by ‘taking the waters’ at fashionable British spa towns.

Other types of shared metropolitan experiences affirmed connections between ‘Hudson’s Bay Friends’ living in Scotland. Over the last two decades, imperial historians have foregrounded the experience of peoples from across Britain’s Empire in the metropole.<sup>153</sup> Most recently Erin Millions has shown that the movement of Indigenous women and children was central to the maintenance of trans-imperial networks that “unsettle historical perceptions about the place and role of racialized peoples in the

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<sup>150</sup> HBCA D.5/52 fo. 372, Angus Cameron to George Simpson, 26 July 1860.

<sup>151</sup> For a more detailed discussion of spa resorts in nineteenth-century Britain see; Peter Borsay, “Health and Leisure Resorts 1700-1840,” in *The Cambridge Urban History of Britain Vol. II, 1540-1840*, Peter Clark ed. (Cambridge, 2000), 775-803. For a discussion of spas as gendered spaces see; Amanda Herbert, “Gender and the Spa: Space, Sociability and Self at British Health Spas, 1640-1714,” *Journal of Social History*, 43, No. 2 (Winter 2009): 361-383. For an overview of the history of spa tourism see; John K. Walton, “Health, sociability, politics and culture: Spas in history, spas and history,” *Journal of Tourism History*, 4 No. 1 (2012): 1-14.

<sup>152</sup> See E. Jennings, “Vichy: Taking the Waters Back Home,” In *Curing the Colonizers: Hydrotherapy, Climatology and French Colonial Spas* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2006): 175-210.

<sup>153</sup> See for example: Antoinette Burton, *At the Heart of Empire: Indians and the Colonial Encounter in Late-Victorian Britain* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Elizabeth Elbourne, “Family Politics and Anglo-Mohawk Diplomacy: The Brant Family in Imperial Context,” *Journal of Colonialism & Colonial History* 6, no. 3 (2005); Neil Parsons, *King Khama, Emperor Joe and the Great White Queen: Victorian Britain through African Eyes* (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1998); Angela Woollacott, *To Try Her Fortune in London: Australian Women, Colonialism and Modernity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2001).

Empire.”<sup>154</sup> Work by Coll Thrush and Cecilia Morgan has also explored the movement of Indigenous peoples from British North America to the metropole.<sup>155</sup>

In the summer of 1851, George Keith advised George Simpson “Most of our HB [sic] friends are presently visiting the great World’s Fair in the Metropole.”<sup>156</sup> Keith did not provide a list of those who attended, though the implication seems to be that Keith himself did not travel to London to take in the spectacle. Angus Cameron and his daughter Sophia are known to have attended the Great Exhibition in London.<sup>157</sup> John Siveright and Nicol Finlayson were both frequent travelling companions of Cameron and perhaps accompanied them. Twelve-year-old Mary Finlayson would have been on her summer break from school and may have relished the prospect of accompanying her father to the metropole and visiting the Exhibition alongside 22-year-old Sophia Cameron. Robert Cowie and his ten-year-old daughter Jane may also have joined in the festivities. George Keith likely did not attend, though it is possible that his wife Ann Sutherland or her friends the Christies also made the trip. Disparaging comments made by Letitia Hargrave indicate that Ann Sutherland Keith’s dark complexion may have caused her to stand out physically in the metropole.<sup>158</sup>

For Indigenous women and fur trade children, their consumption of empire at what George Keith called “the unusual attraction” allowed them to identify with and

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<sup>154</sup> Millions, “By education and conduct,” 301.

<sup>155</sup> See Cecilia Morgan, *Travellers Through Empire: Indigenous Voyages from Early Canada* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2017); and Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travelers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven, NJ: Yale University Press, 2016).

<sup>156</sup> HBCA D.5/31 fo. 322, George Keith to George Simpson, 20 August 1851. Letitia Hargrave’s letters also mention the Great Exhibition but give no indication as to who attended.

<sup>157</sup> Mitchell, *Temiskaming*, 238.

<sup>158</sup> University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (hereafter UMASC), Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, MSS 15 Box 2 Fo.4, Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave, 28 March 1852.



assert their Britishness.<sup>159</sup> This furthered their sense of being ‘at home’ in the metropole. Keith’s brief mention gives little insight into his friends’ experiences at the Exhibition. The empire was on display for Britons at such events, and important work has foregrounded the presence of racialized peoples as part of the ‘spectacle’ of World Exhibitions. Less attention has been given to the presence of racialized peoples, and particularly women, from across the Empire present at such occasions as imperial consumers and spectators. This fragment of a letter tells us that Indigenous women attended the Exhibition as genteel British ladies.

It is unclear how other spectators might have viewed or engaged with them. Letters contain no explicit mentions of Indigenous women or their children encountering racism in the metropole. However, in 1873 Alexander Christie’s granddaughter Lydia recounted a visit to Britain: “I do not like Scotland as well as I did Canada...on the whole I prefer my Canadian friends...I think as a rule the Scotch people are very rude they will beat any people in the World for staring.”<sup>160</sup> Whether fur trade women and children saw themselves or their homelands reflected in the Great Exhibition displays they viewed, and their reactions to those representations, are unknown. The displays representing the Canadian colonies included multiple examples of ‘Indian curiosities’ and ‘Indian dress’.<sup>161</sup> Perhaps the sight of Indigenous beadwork transported Sophia Cameron to a time when she worked on similar pieces alongside her mother at Fort Temiskaming.<sup>162</sup> Perhaps

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<sup>159</sup> HBCA D.5/30 fo. 128, George Keith to George Simpson, 23 July 1851.

<sup>160</sup> Emphasis in original. Lydia Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June [1873], P2342 fo.16, Matilda Davis Family Papers. See Millions, “‘By education and conduct,’” 199.

<sup>161</sup> See Robert Ellis, ed., *Official catalogue of the Great exhibition of the works of industry of all nations, 1851* (London: Spicer Brothers, 1851), 168-71.

<sup>162</sup> The name of the Cameron children’s mother is unknown. She is said to have stayed behind at Fort Temiskaming. Elaine Allan Mitchell, “CAMERON, ANGUS,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 10, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cameron\\_angus\\_10E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cameron_angus_10E.html).

the detached display of Indigenous women's craft and skill made Sophia and her HBC travelling companions deeply uncomfortable. In either case, shared metropolitan experiences where elite sociability was performed and displayed, whether through leisure tourism or in visiting imperial spectacles like the Great Exhibition, brought HBC people of different generations together to assert their ties to British identity and culture, which in turn strengthened the fur trade bonds that connected them.

Historians of migration have shown how letters were central to the maintenance of affective ties across time and space, particularly in the nineteenth century as the post became incrementally more reliable and cost-effective.<sup>163</sup> The vast majority of surviving HBC family correspondence is written by patriarchs and survives as part of much larger collections of HBC correspondence that were preserved by the company itself. It is therefore important to be mindful that the social world revealed by HBC letters is incomplete; its contours defined by what upper-middle class or elite men considered legible and relevant to other men of similar social standing. In many nineteenth-century contexts, scholars have found that it was usually women who served as 'kin keepers' and performed the labour of sustaining connections across extended family networks through letter writing.<sup>164</sup> The unique context of the HBC's archive and of HBC families themselves results in a body of sources in which the work of patriarchs as kin keepers

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<sup>163</sup> See for example, Eve Tavor Bannet, *Empire of Letters: Letter Manuals and Transatlantic Correspondence, 1688-1820* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005); Konstantine Dierks, *In My Power: Letter Writing and Communications in Early America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Elizabeth Jane Errington, *Emigrant Worlds and Transatlantic Communities: Migration to Ontario in the First Half of the Nineteenth Century* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007); David A. Gerber, *Authors of Their Lives: The Personal Correspondence of British Immigrants to North America in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Sarah M.S. Pearsall, *Atlantic Families: Lives and Letters in the Later Eighteenth Century* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008); Ian K. Steele, *The English Atlantic 1645-1740: An Exploration of Communication and Community* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986).

<sup>164</sup> See for example Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires*, and the detailed literature review in: Sarah Hurlburt, "Kin Keeping and Family Storytelling in Nineteenth-century French-Canadian Immigrant Letters: The Bergevin Corpus," *Histoire sociale/Social history* 50, no. 102 (November 2017), 286.

looms largest. Few letters written by Indigenous HBC wives survive, owing to both the provenance of the HBC archive and to the fact that a number of these women were illiterate. While it is possible that men within HBC families performed a larger share of the more visible kin keeping that occurred on paper, women's less visible kin keeping labour underpinned this work. For illiterate women, kin keeping activities included: serving as family knowledge keepers; telling men what questions to ask in their letters; undertaking arduous long-distance travel to visit and provide care, and handcrafting heirlooms that could be sent to distant friends and family.

When Robert Campbell retired to Scotland, a friend wrote that he departed "in love still with the wild Indian country for the sake of the friends & reminiscences connected with it."<sup>165</sup> It was these friends and reminiscences, acquired over many decades of shared experiences that spurred HBC patriarchs to maintain social ties through letter writing. The far-flung webs of communication that maintained connections between retired officers are brought into sharp relief in a letter written by HBC retiree George Barnston. In 1872, the retired Chief Factor wrote from his home in Montreal, Quebec to Edward Ermatinger who was living at St. Thomas, Ontario. Barnston reported that:

Old Mr. Christie is still alive [in Edinburgh]...Nicol Finlayson is still alive in the North of Scotland. Anderson saw both him & Hector MacKenzie a year ago near Nairn or Inverness, & they had the pleasure of having the company of Bob Ballantyne...The North was their favorite theme. Roderick Finlayson called here with his two daughters on his way to Scotland."<sup>166</sup>

Barnston's report demonstrates the geographic and temporal expanse crossed through the circulation of information between retired officers. The information Barnston relayed

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<sup>165</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 260, George Barnston to Edward Ermatinger, 11 September 1872.

<sup>166</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 260, George Barnston to Edward Ermatinger, 11 September 1872.

came from a letter he received from newly retired Chief Factor James Anderson, which recounted interactions that had taken place during the previous year.<sup>167</sup> By the time Barnston wrote his letter, he had been retired from the company's service for nearly a decade, while more than 40 years had passed since his correspondent Ermatinger left the company's service.

Barnston's letter exposes a network of communication that maintained connections between men who perhaps went decades without seeing each other, but remained interested in each other's lives beyond the fur trade. The letter also demonstrates the importance of visiting. Upon his arrival in Scotland, it was incumbent on Anderson to visit widely and update his HBC acquaintances, who could in turn distribute that information among their own network of colleagues. Anderson undertook a round of visits in Scotland to HBC men with whom he likely had very little professional connection aside from a network of mutual acquaintances. Given the locations of Anderson's postings, it is unlikely that he ever even met either Alexander Christie or Nicol Finlayson.<sup>168</sup> Furthermore, Anderson was at least a generation younger than all of the men he visited, having entered the service when they were nearing the apogee of their respective career paths in the company's service. The entrenched custom of ritual visiting sustained a network of intergenerational connections that went far beyond the interaction that took place between the visitor and the colleague he visited.

Visiting was important for maintaining ties between HBC officers, but also for solidifying bonds between different generations of fur trade families. Nicol Finlayson

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<sup>167</sup> Chief Factor James Anderson 'B' retired to Brechin, Scotland in 1871.

<sup>168</sup> See HBCA Biographical Sheets for James Anderson 'B', Alexander Christie and Nicol Finlayson.

visited the children of HBC colleagues who were at school in Scotland.<sup>169</sup> In the fall of 1868, young Roderick McKenzie wrote from boarding school to his mother in Rupert's Land that he "stayed a few days with Mr. McLeod in Edinburgh and...saw mostly all the best views in the City."<sup>170</sup> As McKenzie lay dying at his school in Jedburgh, Scotland the following year, he wrote to his "dear Mama" at La Cloche updating her on the letters he sent and received to correspondents in Montreal, Red River, Ullapool, and Sutton.<sup>171</sup> Roderick's surviving correspondence demonstrates the extent to which young fur trade people played active roles in the maintenance of intergenerational ties that solidified far-flung family networks. While the social worlds of family members overlapped, importance was placed on individual members cultivating relationships with fur trade people from different generations. Individual family members engaged in ritual visiting and correspondence across generational gaps that maintained close networks of connection with other HBC families. Children visited with colleagues of their fathers or grandfathers and wrote to adult cousins or acquaintances, while HBC colleagues from different generations maintained close connections. Visiting transcended generational gaps and maintained imperial social networks.

George Barnston wrote to Edward Ermatinger of meeting the latter's son-in-law in Montreal "I feel happy...in knowing that you were once so closely connected with him, and that he is thus a living link to our ancient friendship."<sup>172</sup> The tenuous connection between Barnston and the son-in-law of his long-ago colleague demonstrated a closeness

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<sup>169</sup> See Millions, "By education and conduct," 227.

<sup>170</sup> AM H2-142-2-1 fo.14, Roderick McKenzie to Jane McKenzie, 3 October 1868. Roderick McKenzie fonds.

<sup>171</sup> See for example; AM H2-142-2-1, 6 November 1869, Roderick McKenzie to Jane McKenzie.

<sup>172</sup> Church of England clergyman Maurice Scollard Baldwin was married to Maria Ermatinger from 1861 until her death two years later. E.94.3 fo.258 George Barnston to Edward Ermatinger, 11 September 1872.

and intimacy to the British Empire. Ritual visiting of friends, and those connected to them, forged and maintained a sense of community and reassuringly compressed the great expanse of the British Empire.

The staying power of intergenerational connections is clear in an 1865 letter from James Anderson to Roderick MacFarlane. Anderson wrote that “death [had] reaped a rich harvest” among former fur traders. The six names he listed included Margaret Cameron and Leith Robertson, who were actually the children of former HBC officers.<sup>173</sup> John Dugald Cameron was retired for more than two decades before his death in 1857, while Colin Robertson died in Montreal in 1842. Anderson felt the names worth including, indicating that MacFarlane knew of both the late Cameron and Robertson and would want to be updated about their children. This was despite the fact that MacFarlane had never worked alongside either man, having joined the company’s service long after they retired.

Connections between HBC people could be enacted and reaffirmed through small, seemingly mundane transatlantic connections. James Keith, for instance, kept his subscription to a Montreal newspaper during his retirement in Scotland in order to keep abreast of news among his family and friends there.<sup>174</sup> In 1859 John Swanston wrote from Aberdeen to his friend and colleague William McMurray at Fort Alexander (present-day southern Manitoba) to update him on the status of the latter’s watch, which Swanston left with his wife in Montreal for repairs the previous fall.<sup>175</sup> Something as ordinary as the

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<sup>173</sup> LAC MG29 A11 fo. 103, James Anderson to Roderick MacFarlane, 1 November 1865.

<sup>174</sup> See James Keith’s Account Books, University of Aberdeen Special Collections (hereafter UASC), MS 2769/I/57/3, Box 3.

<sup>175</sup> HBCA E.61/5 fo.8, John Swanston to William McMurray, 8 February 1859.

repair of a watch enacted a transatlantic communication that connected Manitoba to Montreal to Aberdeen.

In 1855 Nicol Finlayson wrote to George Simpson, having heard second-hand that Simpson caught a cold sometime in the previous months. Finlayson wrote that he was glad “that cold you caught Toronto to Michipicoten is improved – canoe travelling...I observed always did you good.”<sup>176</sup> By the time the intelligence regarding Simpson’s cold travelled from Michipicoten on Lake Superior to Finlayson in northern Scotland, it had likely been at least several weeks, and perhaps even months, since the illness first struck.<sup>177</sup> The transatlantic travel of this fairly unremarkable piece of information allowed Finlayson to participate in and maintain his connection to a tightknit yet geographically dispersed imperial community.

Letters between HBC officers communicated much more than the words written on the page, particularly in cases where men knew one another and corresponded over many decades. Changes in the quality of the pen, ink, or paper might indicate to the receiver that his correspondent had fallen on financial hardship, or that changes in his mobility or support network made it difficult for him to restock writing supplies. Changes in penmanship could signal failing health or eyesight, or the use of a scribe.<sup>178</sup> Underlines and dashes could denote the punch line to a joke, emotional anguish, sarcasm, or secrets between old friends.

Phrases written in Gaelic, French, Cree, or other Indigenous languages emphasized shared cultural competencies and experiences. Nicol Finlayson, for instance,

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<sup>176</sup> HBCA D.5/40 fo. 306, Nicol Finlayson to George Simpson, 23 July 1855.

<sup>177</sup> In 1851, for example, it took Letitia Hargrave one month to travel from York Factory to London. See Macleod, *The Letters of Letitia Hargraves*, 261.

<sup>178</sup> Children in particular often filled this role when a patriarch was unable.

wrote from Scotland to his son John in Rupert's Land using English peppered with Gaelic and Cree.<sup>179</sup> What letters could and did communicate was diverse and informative.

At times the textual and non-textual elements of letters worked together. Letter writers might attempt to explain their poor penmanship, inkblots, or the state of their paper. Retired Chief Factor Charles Stuart received a letter from his teenaged daughter Josephine that drew his attention to tear stains on the page as evidence in support of her bid to return home from boarding school.<sup>180</sup>

At a more abstract level, letters communicated a great deal about a writer's priorities. How they allotted those currencies of life, that is their time and effort, communicated and continues to communicate a great deal about the value they placed on relationships forged in Rupert's Land and maintained over decades through letters. This is particularly true for HBC men in retirement, many of whom suffered from arthritis or failing eyesight and could only physically write, or impose upon a relative to write, a certain amount in a given day. The written word was a currency; a representation of care for a person and for the social network they represented. Over the course of less than two weeks in January of 1849, John Dugald Cameron wrote two long letters to George Simpson in addition to letters he likely wrote to other HBC colleagues, to his daughter at Red River, or his son at Sault Ste. Marie.<sup>181</sup> Cameron's letters accounted for just seven percent of the total letter pages Simpson received and preserved from that same two-week period.<sup>182</sup>

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<sup>179</sup> HBCA E.137/1-2.

<sup>180</sup> Josephine was enrolled at Dufferin House, a ladies school in Toronto. Archives of Ontario, F471-2-0-118, Josephine Stuart to Charles Stuart, 30 October 1880.

<sup>181</sup> HBCA D.5/24 fo. 17-18 and 73-74.

<sup>182</sup> Cameron's letters accounted for folios 17-18 and 73-74, or four out of 57 folios amounted to four out of the total 74 folios Simpson received between 27 December 1849 and 15 January 1849.



The prioritization of correspondents is stated plainly by James Anderson in one of his many long letters to Roderick MacFarlane. Anderson asked MacFarlane to pass along his greetings to their mutual acquaintances and asked that he: “tell them I cannot write to all. I have so many additional correspondents in the shape of sons &c.”<sup>183</sup> The life stage of Anderson’s family impacted his letter-writing priorities. His sons were youths and young adults away at school or in distant fields of employment.<sup>184</sup> The increased time required to write to his sons meant that Anderson, whose health was failing, had less time to devote each day to maintaining connections with other HBC officers.<sup>185</sup> By this metric, Anderson’s long and descriptive letters to MacFarlane speak to the importance Anderson placed on this relationship. The textual and non-textual communication of letters maintained relationships between HBC officers by affirming the importance of such connections.

HBC men dedicated large sections of their letters to detailed embodied descriptions that emphasized the homosocial intimacy of long-distance friendships. As it had during their working lives, physicality played an important role in the way HBC men described interactions with colleagues in letters. George Barnston’s description of a visit to friend and former colleague Cuthbert Cumming painted a vivid image:

We found Cumming the ‘Noble Burgundy’, seated in all his breadth and Majesty, on the Hall Bench, a perfect picture of ease and contentment. As soon as we entered, with great agility, he squared up to John George [McTavish], and set himself in Boxing attitude, seemingly jealous of the honor of rotundity being

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<sup>183</sup> LAC MG29 A11, fo. 109, James Anderson to Roderick MacFarlane, 8 November 1866.

<sup>184</sup> The previous year, Anderson’s son James Jr. was working on the Siberian Telegraph project, son Aleck was at McGill, Alan was at Trinity College in Toronto, and Roderick and William were at a boarding school in Barrie. See LAC MG29 A11 fo. 102, James Anderson to Roderick MacFarlane, 1 November 1865.

<sup>185</sup> Anderson was suffering from tuberculosis and died the following year.

contested with him. You would have laughed to have witnessed the graceful movements of these sparring Birds of a feather.<sup>186</sup>

The physicality of the interaction looms large in Barnston's retelling, which commented both on the aging fur traders' physical appearance and abilities.

When HBC retirees wrote to their friends and colleagues, descriptions of physical ability or debility affirmed affective connections across time and space. Scholars have found that letter writers employed affective language, in instances where close relationships may not necessarily have existed, as a device for sustaining connections with transatlantic correspondents.<sup>187</sup> Laura Ishiguro's work has demonstrated that nineteenth-century settlers in British Columbia emphasized the bodily impacts of settler life when writing to correspondents in Britain.<sup>188</sup> Letter writing among HBC officers in the company's service also exhibited this tendency, though this is beyond the purview of this study. Language of the body, and of close physical intimacy and proximity, operated differently once officers retired to Canada and Scotland. In 1851 retired Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron's letter to George Simpson recalled his visit with their mutual friend former Chief Trader William Nourse:

He goes regularly to bed at 9 o'clock and passes the night in a sound sleep – His appetite is good – and suffers with patience and good humour. But his legs & left arm are altogether powerless...with his right hand he can handle his fork. And I made him take up his glass of wine in order that he might show us what a clever fellow he was.<sup>189</sup>

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<sup>186</sup> Cited in Elizabeth Arthur, "CUMMING, CUTHBERT," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cumming\\_cuthbert\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/cumming_cuthbert_9E.html).

<sup>187</sup> See, for instance, Michael Borsk, "Appraising Affect in the Transatlantic Correspondence of Richard Popham and John Large," <http://earlycanadianhistory.ca/2018/11/19/appraising-affect-in-the-transatlantic-correspondence-of-richard-popham-and-john-large/> (19 November 2018).

<sup>188</sup> Ishiguro, "Relative Distances," 115.

<sup>189</sup> John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 18 March 1851 D.5/30 fo.422.

Not only was Cameron and Nourse's relationship such that Nourse allowed Cameron to visit him in his vulnerable physical state, but that Cameron even played a role in treating his friend, coaxing him to lift his wine glass in a display of his abilities.

Similarly, as former Chief Factor Thomas McMurray was ailing at his home in Canada a colleague reported: "He is quite light – his son Jacky carries him about like a child. He is in fact withering away – what a wonderfully strong constitution that wretched man has destroyed."<sup>190</sup> These letters bear witness to an embodied intimacy that existed between HBC retirees who lived near one another. They also speak to a custom of sharing those vulnerable moments with geographically distant members of the social circle. Rather than a use of language that alluded to affective ties that did not exist, the embodied moments described in detail in these letters demonstrated genuine and intimate closeness and affection between HBC retirees.

When John Swanston wrote of his father-in-law George Keith's unexpected demise, he took care to provide every detail of the occurrence.

A sore foot...confined him to the house for about a month...he was suddenly seized on Christmas night with a severe bilious attack...he gradually grew weaker and weaker, and on the evening of the 22<sup>nd</sup> Ultimo at 6 o'clock in the morning he departed this life...he dropped off like...falling into a sound sleep."<sup>191</sup>

A similar emphasis on communicating the details of death has been discerned in nineteenth-century condolence letters more generally.<sup>192</sup> Descriptions of the male body in letters, and in these instances particularly debility and death, in letters between HBC

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<sup>190</sup> D.5/24 fo. 17, John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 3 January 1849.

<sup>191</sup> HBCA E.61/7, John Swanston to William McMurray, 8 February 1859.

<sup>192</sup> See, for instance, Laura Ishiguro, 'How I wish I might be near': Distance and the Epistolary Family in Late Nineteenth-Century Condolence Letters," in *Within and Without the Nation: Canadian History as Transnational History*, eds. Henry Yu, Adele Perry and Karen Dubinsky (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015), and Samira Saramo, 'I have such sad news': Loss in Finnish North American Letters," *The European Journal of Life Writing* 8 (2018), 61.

officers asserted longstanding and transatlantic bonds of intimacy and affection. Letters communicated a closeness and intimacy that transcended physical distance.

#### **IV: Conclusion:**

Many HBC officers who prepared for retirement in the middle decades of the nineteenth century had the financial means to carefully select retirement destinations that allowed them to fulfill their own vision of upper-middle class or elite gentility while securing the best possible futures for their families. Since they were of similar economic and social standing and approached retirement with similar goals and experiences of family life, HBC retirees tending to cluster together in Scottish cities and towns and in the growing agricultural centres of Ontario and Quebec. Patriarchs often spent years investigating their retirement destinations, paying close attention to imperial political shifts that could potentially impact their daily lives.

In the Canadas, their savings and investments tended to secure a more elite standard of living that often set HBC families apart from their gentry farming neighbours. Families who retired to Scotland favoured upper middle class urban neighbourhoods alongside other imperial families. In both the Canadas and Scotland, settlement on or near bodies of water was a priority. Enduring connections to the people and landscapes of Rupert's Land endured long after families settled elsewhere. Letters maintained affective ties between distant former colleagues through embodied expressions of homosocial intimacy, while correspondence and visiting between fur trade people from different generations solidified transatlantic family networks. As will be seen in Chapter Six, burial practices and the circulation of photographs and other physical items also allowed HBC families to transcend the limits of time and space in distinctive ways. Choosing

between Canada and Scotland for retirement was not a choice between diverging paths; both locales allowed HBC families to benefit from the same web of attachments and communication, albeit with a shifted geographic configuration.

## Chapter Three

### **Narratives of Invisibility:**

#### **‘Finding’ Indigenous Wives and Mothers**

*There was a woman here who was loved...Her life mattered, utterly, to herself, to her children, to the man she loved, to the birds she scattered crumbs to after the family had eaten. This was her house, and years later the house still remembers her, though it is almost gone and the woman’s spirit has flown to the other side.*

- Joy Harjo<sup>1</sup>

Indigenous women were vital to the creation and sustenance of family economies and extensive networks of kin and connection not only through their marriages, but also by forging and maintaining social relationships, acting as guardians of family estates, and preserving the artifacts that continue to highlight these webs of interconnection today.<sup>2</sup> Scholars have shown how the colonial archive worked to erase, silence, and exclude racialized subjects that threatened imperial hierarchies of race and authority in other imperial contexts such as India,<sup>3</sup> while Melinda Marie Jetté has shown how French-

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<sup>1</sup> From Joy Harjo, “There is No Such Thing as a Land Bridge”, quoted in Janet Berry Hess, *Osage and Settler: Reconstructing Shared History through an Oklahoma Family Archive* (Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland and Company, 2015), v.

<sup>2</sup> Artifacts will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Antoinette Burton, *Dwelling in the Archive: Women Writing Home, and History in late Colonial India* (London: Oxford, 2003); Betty Joseph, *Reading the East India Company, 1720—1840: Colonial Currencies of Gender* (Chicago: University of Chicago, 2003); Durba Ghosh, “Decoding the Nameless: Gender, Subjectivity, and Historical Methodologies in Reading the Archives of Colonial India” in *A New Imperial History: Culture, Identity, Modernity, 1660—1840* ed. Kathleen Wilson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-*

Indian families existed “betwixt and between the official story” in Oregon.<sup>4</sup> The experiences of Indigenous women in nineteenth-century Scotland and the Canadas are foregrounded in this chapter, which looks at how the imperial archive reckoned with their presence in these spaces, sketches the contours of their daily lives, and places particular emphasis on recovering the experiences of Indigenous widows, who have been particularly marginalized in historical and genealogical study of Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) families.

### **I. The Archival Invisibility of Indigenous Women**

In the 1960s the HBC’s Archivist wrote a descendant of Jacob Corrigan and his daughter Ann, who married William Nourse: “unfortunately I do not think that however much more time we spend on the search we shall be able to tell you anything more about William Nourse’s wife, or her mother.”<sup>5</sup> The HBC’s vast archive contains a considerable amount of information about Ann Corrigan Nourse and her mother Mary. However, the experiences of women such as Ann and Mary were largely unexplored in the literature on the fur trade until the work of Jennifer S.H. Brown and Sylvia Van Kirk in the late 1970s. Their work in the archive was painstaking, and in some ways limited by the accessibility of records on both sides of the Atlantic. In some cases, it is only the recent digitization of archival collections that has made it possible to bridge the gaps in women’s stories.

For nineteenth-century HBC wives, mothers, and children in the Canadas, it was their in-betweenness that rendered them invisible to the Canadian colonial archive and

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Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015).

<sup>4</sup> Melinda Marie Jetté, “Betwixt and Between the Official Story: Tracing the History and Memory of a Family of French-Indian Ancestry in the Pacific Northwest,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 111:2 (Summer 2010): 142—83.

<sup>5</sup> HBCA RG20/4/191, Archives Research Correspondence: Nourse, 4 August 1966.

subsequently to historians and their own descendants.<sup>6</sup> In a time when the so-called ‘fur trade society’ of the West was becoming increasingly concerned with racially categorizing people,<sup>7</sup> the colonial governments in eastern Canada were not. The construction of government census categories, combined with cultural assimilation into their new home communities, meant that families could downplay or deny their Indigenous ancestry as a survival strategy to avoid stigma and intolerance; a phenomenon that has been observed in a variety of colonial contexts by scholars such as Heather Devine, Angela Wanhalla, Claudio Saunt, and Melinda Marie Jetté.<sup>8</sup>

Conversely, the structure of the census in Scotland provided opportunities to self-consciously represent one’s self in ways that subvert our assumptions about how Indigenous women and their children might have positioned themselves in the metropole. This chapter takes the imperial archive as a central issue, examining the ways official government records have rendered Indigenous wives and mothers invisible, and the contradictions inherent in this invisibility. Shifting categories of race and ancestry, along with state efforts to ‘know’ Indigenous peoples will be discussed.

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<sup>6</sup> This has thankfully begun to give way. For examples of descendants’ reflections on uncovering their fur trade family histories after years of secrecy, see: Virginia Barter, “Searching for the Silver Fox: A Fur trade Family History,” in *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities & Family Histories*, eds. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007), 247-303; Donna G. Sutherland, “The Kokum Puzzle: Finding and Fitting the Pieces” in *ibid.*, 304-28; and Vernon R. Wishart, *What Lies Behind The Picture? A Personal Journey into Cree Ancestry* (Red Deer AB: Central Alberta Historical Society, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> Erica Smith, “‘Gentlemen, This is no Ordinary Trial’: Sexual Narratives in the Trial of the Reverend Corbett, Red River, 1863” in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History* eds. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1996), 364-402; Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg, Watson and Dwyer, 1980), 174—96; Sharron A. FitzGerald and Alicja Muszynski, “Negotiating Female Morality: Place, Ideology and Agency in the Red River Colony,” *Women’s History Review* 16, no. 5 (2007): 661—80.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Heather Devine, “Being and Becoming Metis: A Personal Reflection” in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, eds. Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 198; Melinda Marie Jetté, *At the Hearth of the Crossed Races: A French-Indian Community in Nineteenth-Century Oregon, 1812-1859* (Corvallis OR: Oregon State University Press, 2015); Claudio Saunt, *Black, White, and Indian: Race and the Unmaking of an American Family* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Angela Wanhalla, *Matters of the Heart: A History of Inter-marriage in New Zealand* (Auckland: Auckland University Press, 2013).



In nineteenth-century Canada, census enumeration differed by jurisdiction and sometimes according to whether or not a place was considered urban or rural.<sup>9</sup> HBC families who migrated together to the Canadas generally did so between the late 1840s and the 1860s. Ethnicity was reckoned according to male descent in Ontario and Quebec during this period. This allowed Indigenous women and their children to ‘pass’ by not requiring them to disclose their maternal heritage but has also resulted in an official archival record that obfuscates the importance of matrilineal kin in HBC families and communities. Census enumerators asked residents for their father’s place of birth, as well as their own. For those born at trading posts in British North America, they generally had to choose between short-form options like USA, ON, Q, and the amorphous NWT, which tended to be used as a catchall for everywhere else.

HBC wives and children appearing in the census in the latter half of the nineteenth century were typically born between the 1780s and the 1840s. Throughout this era, the HBC’s territories covered the bulk of British North America, with comparatively tiny pockets of settler-colonial activity concentrated on the east coast and southern Great Lakes. In many areas of the continent, Indigenous peoples migrated, settled, and hunted across territories they had occupied since time immemorial. The geopolitical landscape of British North America was indelibly altered between the 1840s and the early twentieth century. During this period women and children born in Rupert’s Land were asked their place of their birth by census takers, who had no idea just how complicated this question could be. In many instances, fur trade women and children either used or were told to use the Northwest Territories as their birthplace. Some projected the boundaries of the new Dominion backward, working out which of the relatively new provincial boundaries their

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<sup>9</sup> See Curtis, *The Politics of Population*; and Emery, *Facts of Life*.

birthplace fell into. HBC family members may have worked out their answers to this question in advance, or perhaps they faced additional lines of questioning from impatient census enumerators at their doorsteps or kitchen tables.

The racial categories used in each census give a glimpse into the settler government's anxieties and perceptions of its citizenry. The 1842 census of Ontario, for instance, offered sixteen options for religious denominations, and seven categories for men's ages compared to four for women. The state's priorities at this time were clearly related to determining the precise number of current and future working-age men, the current and future number of childbearing women, and the most statistically dominant religious denominations. There was a category for 'coloured persons', and seven categories for a person's origins, four of which focused on Britain and Ireland. The colonial state was not concerned with individualized information, but with gathering the aggregate data needed to govern.

Few HBC families were settled in the Canadas at this time; most appeared in their first settler census in 1851. In this year, enumerators in rural Ontario and both urban and rural Quebec were given columns for counting both 'Indians' and 'negroes'. HBC wives and children generally did not appear in these categories, although it is unclear if this was the result of how they identified themselves or how the census enumerator perceived them, as genteel British families living in ostensibly white British towns.<sup>10</sup> Interestingly, no column for 'Indians' was provided for urban Ontario, indicating an official assumption that 'Indians' did not belong, and thus would not be found, in urban areas.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>10</sup> To date, Okaquajibut 'Mary' Cameron is the only HBC family member I have studied who was enumerated as an 'Indian' in 1851.

<sup>11</sup> This perception has a long history in Canadian society. See Evelyn Peters and Chris Andersen, eds., *Indigenous in the City: Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation* (Vancouver: University of British

By 1861 the state was concerned with birthplace alone and not a person's origins. There was a column for "colored persons: mulattos or Indians", which indicates an underlying assumption that residents of African ancestry were necessarily mixed, but that 'Indians' were not. Ten years later the census included no such column and asked merely about birthplace rather than origins. In 1881 there was a column for recording origins where 'Indian' was an option, but by this point in the century, surviving HBC family members simply recorded their father's origins in this column.<sup>12</sup> Ellen Matthews Barnston, for instance, gave her father's origins (English) in this column rather than her mother's (Chinook).<sup>13</sup> The rest of her large family, which included her husband (retired Chief Factor George Barnston) also gave their origins as English, despite the fact that George was born in Scotland.



Figure 3.1: Ellen Matthews Barnston<sup>14</sup>

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Columbia Press, 2013); and Evelyn Peters, Matthew Stock, and Adrian Werner, *Rooster Town: The History of an Urban Métis Community, 1901-1961* (Winnipeg, University of Manitoba Press, 2018).

<sup>12</sup> 1881 Census of Canada, *St Antoine Ward Montreal West, Quebec*; Roll: C-10047; Page: 46; Family: 164.

<sup>13</sup> Van Kirk, *Tender Ties*, 136.

<sup>14</sup> Ellen Matthews Barnston, British Columbia Archives BC Archives b-00102-141.

Interestingly, Margaret McKenzie Anderson gave her origins in this year as ‘French’, which was her mother’s paternal ancestry.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the enumerator formed a judgment based on Margaret’s appearance and asked specifically about her maternal heritage, expecting the answer to be ‘Indian’. For the families at the centre of this study, the imperial archive, and state efforts to ‘know’ populations were highly variable throughout the period. What they did provide to fur trade people was the ability (if they wanted) to ‘pass’ in settler society, without reference to their maternal origins.

Perhaps surprisingly, it was the Scottish census that gave Indigenous mothers and their children the freedom to identify with their specific birthplaces and in some small way subvert British patriarchal models of kinship. For HBC families in Canada, the census offered limited options for self-identification that belied the settler state’s anxieties and preconceptions and corresponded with newly imposed colonial jurisdictions and boundaries. In Scotland, respondents were given an open box where the enumerator could record their place of birth as they named it; they did not need to choose from a limiting list of government jurisdictions. Naming their specific places of birth emphasized maternal kin ties to place, and acknowledged the importance of their homelands without reference to government borders. While HBC wives and children in Canada listed birthplaces like Northwest Territories, Ontario, and Quebec, the Scottish census recorded birthplaces like Moose Factory, Abitibi, and Norway House.

Vital statistics registrations in Scotland could offer similar spaces for the assertion of maternal kin ties. In 1872, when retired Chief Trader Donald Sutherland died at his home in the parish of Clyne, northern Scotland, he was over ninety years old and had

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<sup>15</sup> See Elizabeth Arthur, “Angelique and her Children,” Papers and Records, Vol. VI, *Thunder Bay Historical Society*, (1978): 30-40.

been retired from the company's service for nearly five decades.<sup>16</sup> Sutherland took early retirement from the HBC to return to Scotland and live alongside his four children, presumably after the death of his wife, Sally. At the time of Sutherland's death, he and Sally's son William was serving as the local registrar. On the seventh of December, four days after his father's death, William sat down to record the event in the register book at the bottom of the page. As the result of either intention, or a quirk of digitization, Donald Sutherland's entry is the most legible on the page. The letters are darker and more clearly formed, perhaps the result of the registrar/grieving son pressing his pen harder to the paper, or taking more care in shaping each letter. The other two entries on the page mark the deaths of women; the space below their names filled with the name and occupation of their respective husbands.

Under Donald Sutherland's name is his occupation (he was still working as a miller with his family's help), and "widower of Sally Wappis."<sup>17</sup> Sally was Cree, and likely met Sutherland while he was posted at Red Deer River, south of Cumberland House, Saskatchewan. Their four children were born between 1815 and 1820 and were all baptized in August of 1821 at Norway House, where Sutherland was posted as a Chief Trader. The baptismal records list the parents of William, Sinclair, Jane, and Isabella Sutherland as Donald Sutherland "and an Indian woman."<sup>18</sup> Sutherland's death registration in Scotland, written forty-eight years after he left Rupert's Land, seems to be the only document that names Sally. As a registrar who committed people's names to

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<sup>16</sup> His death certificate lists his age as 99, while census records indicate that he may have been in his early nineties.

<sup>17</sup> Scotland Statutory registers Deaths, Donald Sutherland, 3 December 1872, Parish of Clyne (45), page 11, no. 33.

<sup>18</sup> See Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) Biographical Sheet for Donald Sutherland for an overview.

paper every day, perhaps Sally's son William was aware that in an imperial context, it was through being named on paper that people became real and known and remembered. In committing his mother's name to paper, William staked a claim for her in the heart of the British Empire, where her name could be permanently linked with her husband and children.

Despite these brief moments of archival subversion by HBC family members, the archival erasure of Indigenous women could also work in ways that were less formal, but no less intentional. As historian Jill Lepore has asserted, "most of what historians study survives because it was purposely kept...the accidental and the intentional..."[the historical record] is maddeningly uneven, asymmetrical, and unfair."<sup>19</sup> In the case of fur trade families in Canada and Scotland, Indigenous women have been intentionally erased from the archive. Particularly instructive is the case of Mary Taylor, the partner of HBC Chief Factor John Stuart. In a biography of Stuart's nephew, HBC man Donald Smith (Lord Strathcona), Stuart's family life was summarized: "In Indian country he married a half-breed girl but she soon died, leaving him an only son, whom he placed at school in London."<sup>20</sup> John Stuart in fact had three children: a daughter from an earlier relationship, and two sons with Catherine La Valle. Stuart and Mary Taylor did not have any children together, though she did initially accompany him when he retired to Scotland.<sup>21</sup> Mary Taylor's long-term relationship with Stuart was unceremoniously erased in this text, in favour of a more distant, deceased Indigenous partner. In addition to removing any trace of Mary Taylor in Stuart's life, it also left out Stuart's son and daughter.

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<sup>19</sup> Jill Lepore, *These Truths: A History of the United States* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2018), 2.

<sup>20</sup> Beckles Wilson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona & Mount Royal* (Toronto: Cassell & Co. Ltd., 1915), 11.

<sup>21</sup> Shirlee Anne Smith, "STUART, JOHN (1780-1847)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stuart\\_john\\_1780\\_1847\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stuart_john_1780_1847_7E.html).

Donald Smith himself was known to influence biographical mentions of his wife Isabella Hardisty Smith in particular ways. He and their daughter were “protective of her reputation, and ensured under threat of legal action that passages regarding her native blood and her marital history were excised from several biographies.”<sup>22</sup> Smith’s efforts to control the narrative seem to have succeeded. In 1974 a descendant wrote to the HBC Archives looking for information about Smith’s family, writing: “was Isabella Hardisty’s mother a Metis? According to one source she was, and according to another she was Scotch.”<sup>23</sup> Smith and his daughter succeeded in casting enough of a shadow over his wife’s background that, by the 1970s, descendants knew very little about their family’s history.



*Figure 3.2:*  
*Isabella Hardisty Smith, Lady Strathcona*<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> Alexander Reford, “SMITH, DONALD ALEXANDER, 1st Baron STRATHCONA and MOUNT ROYAL,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 14, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith\\_donald\\_alexander\\_14E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/smith_donald_alexander_14E.html).

<sup>23</sup> HBCA RG20/4/104, 19 July 1974.

<sup>24</sup> Image from Wilson, *The Life of Lord Strathcona*, 272.

For Indigenous women with fair complexions, trans-imperial mobility had the power to recast them in local history writing as representatives of genteel white British womanhood. One local history write-up about Cuthbert Cumming asserted that he “followed the very common practice we see in the trader community in the early 1800’s by taking a native woman as his wife while living in the wilderness and then marrying a white woman later in life.”<sup>25</sup> Both of Cuthbert Cumming’s partners were women of Indigenous and British descent who he met and started families with in Rupert’s Land. In relocating to Ontario, Jane McMurray Cumming’s maternal heritage was dropped from stories told about her family in their new hometown. Her mobility remade her in contrast to Cumming’s first partner Susette McKee.

Similarly, local history notes about the family of Mary Finlayson Lamb asserted that: “Nicol Finlayson’s wife was a Kennedy whose father came from Orkney and was a Chief Factor. Both Nicol Finlayson and Alexander Kennedy had aboriginal wives until they married white women.”<sup>26</sup> Mary Finlayson Lamb’s mother was Elizabeth Kennedy, whose parents were Scottish and Cree, while her half-siblings in Rupert’s Land were also of Cree and Scottish ancestry. As was the case for Jane McMurray Cumming, Mary Finlayson Lamb’s maternal heritage was obscured by her mobility beyond Rupert’s Land. In both these examples, HBC men’s partners were assigned different origins and racial categories as they relocated to settler or metropolitan spaces. In this way, women’s ongoing connections to their maternal kin and homeland could be obfuscated and obscured.

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<sup>25</sup> The narrative is posted on a popular local history and genealogy page, and became part of the local history files at the local library. Dan Buchanan, “Memorials in Trinity Anglican Church,” (25 May 2012). [www.treesbydan.com/Memorials%20at%20Trinity%20in%20Colborne.pdf](http://www.treesbydan.com/Memorials%20at%20Trinity%20in%20Colborne.pdf), accessed 10 May 2019.

<sup>26</sup> From Nairn local history notes provided by the late A. Barron, March 2016.



## II. Indigenous Women, Labour, and the Family Economy

In a 1979 article on ‘fur traders in retirement’, L.G. Thomas asserted that the Indigenous wives of these “men of substance” struggled to adapt to a “higher-class” lifestyle, and ultimately became “victims of their husbands’ ambitions for their children.”<sup>27</sup> As will be shown, this interpretation obscures women’s agency in settling into their new home communities, and particularly in widowhood, which gave them a measure of financial independence for creating their own futures.

In her study of colonial India, Ghosh found that different categories of sexual relationships with Indian women were memorialized in the wills of Anglo men. Relationships with female slaves or domestic servants were distinct from those where couples lived and were recognized as husband and wife. In all cases, the power disparity between Indian women and their Anglo partners was vast and reflected in the inheritances women received.<sup>28</sup> Relationships between HBC men and Indigenous women diverged to some extent from the archetypes Ghosh documented in India. While fur trade sexual encounters existed along a continuum between transitory consensual or coerced encounters and lifelong monogamous partnerships, HBC men lived communally at fur trade posts and did not have slaves or household domestic staff in quite the same sense as their imperial contemporaries in India.

In addition, gendered power inequalities in fur trade relationships were mutable and shifted widely over time. In the context of the fur trade, Indigenous women were invaluable to the success of their partners, and thus the HBC itself. They contributed specialized skills, labour, knowledge, and kin networks that were legible to the

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<sup>27</sup> L.G. Thomas, “Fur Traders in Retirement,” *The Beaver Outfit* 310, vol. 59, no. 3 (1979), 18.

<sup>28</sup> Ghosh, 110-111 and Chapter 3.

patriarchal fur trade society in which they operated because of their clear and tangible economic value. Gender dynamics could shift once couples left Rupert's Land, particularly in instances where women were isolated as they worked to learn a new language, yet their skills and labour remained vital to the sustenance of HBC family economies.

This study confirms Sylvia Van Kirk's assertion that Indigenous women's labour and skills were fundamental to the success of the fur trade. It also suggests that many of these skills were transferrable to other imperial contexts. In 1875, fifteen years after her parents left Rupert's Land, Isabella Hardisty Smith wrote of arriving at Fort Coulogne on the Ottawa River: "I think we would get plenty of fish if we had a net. I wonder if Mamma & Mrs McK. have finished the one they were making."<sup>29</sup> By this time, Hardisty Smith's mother Margaret Sutherland Hardisty was in her early seventies and had been living in the Montreal suburb of Lachine on the St. Lawrence River for more than a dozen years. Her daughter's letter affirms that women like Margaret Sutherland Hardisty and her companion 'Mrs. McK' continued skilled subsistence activities such as making nets for harvesting fish long after they left fur trade country.

When Chief Factor Robert Miles prepared to retire to the Canadas in 1859, his mind was eased by the fact that his children "under their mother have been taught to work tolerably well and should a reverse of fortune happen I hope will not be at a loss to provide for themselves."<sup>30</sup> Elizabeth Sinclair Miles provided her children with the life skills they need to succeed, whether in Rupert's Land or the Canadas. Her husband saw these skills as a valuable buffer against any future 'reverse of fortune'.

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<sup>29</sup> Macfarlane fonds, fo. 459. Isabella Hardisty Smith to Colin Rankin, 13 July 1875.

<sup>30</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 317, Robert Miles to Edward Ermatinger, 16 May 1859.

Indigenous women engaged in a wide range of agricultural, emotional, and household labour, regardless of their relative wealth once they settled in Scotland or the Canadas. Isabella Hardisty Smith's letter to her mother also reveals aspects of the skilled labour Indigenous women performed in fur trade family economies, both in and out of Rupert's Land. She wrote: "Maria tells me she has written and sent you all the patterns you asked for."<sup>31</sup> As will be seen in Chapter Six, work with a variety of textiles was an important aspect of women's daily lives and could serve many purposes.

Writing to her mother from boarding school in 1880, Josephine Stuart reported: "I went into a store the other day and priced a pair of chausettes & they were \$10.00...I think we could make a pair cheaper than that don't you?" Josephine reasoned that since "the most fashionable ones" were made on satin, that it would be easy for them to emulate "if you can silk work (like Indian shoes you know)."<sup>32</sup> This letter, written nearly a decade after the family left Fort Timiskaming to settle in Port Hope, Ontario, indicates that Josephine's mother Margaret Gladman Stuart still had, and likely practiced, her skills in moccasin work. Indeed, the beadwork of women in the Gladman family is today displayed in museums on both sides of the Atlantic.

Friends and family members worried about how HBC wives were settling into life outside Rupert's Land. In 1856, while her parents spent a leave of absence in the Canadas, Isabella Hardisty Smith anxiously wrote to her mother Margaret Sutherland Hardisty: "I think of you often, dearest Mamma, and wonder if you like the change. I sincerely trust you do." It is possible that Margaret did not like the change, as she and her

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<sup>31</sup> Cited in Wilson, 101.

<sup>32</sup> Embellished silk stockings were popular at the time. Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO) F471-2-0-118 fo. 3, Josephine Stuart to Margaret Gladman Stuart, 15 October 1880.

husband returned to Rupert's Land for another five years, likely retiring only when their health required it.

Few archival traces remain of Jane Cardinalle, the partner of HBC Chief Trader Thomas McMurray. In 1843 an HBC colleague wrote of Thomas McMurray's retirement to Colborne: "I understand that he is very comfortably housed with his family – his old lady and daughter at first did not like the change but they have become reconciled to their new mode of Life."<sup>33</sup> The McMurrays remained in Colborne alongside their daughter Jane, who married Chief Trader Cuthbert Cumming, for the remaining six years of their lives.<sup>34</sup>

Similarly, Ann Corrigan Nourse and her husband William Nourse were unhappy with their new home in nearby Cobourg. An HBC colleague wrote that Nourse "and his wife talk of going back again they dislike Cobourg very much."<sup>35</sup> The Nourses stayed in Cobourg for the rest of their lives. Perhaps they, like the McMurray women, became 'reconciled to their new mode of Life'.

Indigenous HBC wives were vital to family economies, whether within the social and economic context of the fur trade, or beyond it. Their skills helped sustain their families in ways large and small. As Chapter Six will show, their skilled textile work could serve as monuments to the lives they lived and could bring successive generations of their descendants together. However, not all Indigenous women became reconciled to

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<sup>33</sup> John Dugald Cameron to James Hargrave, 5 May 1843, in *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821—1843*, ed. G.P. Glazebrook (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1938), 437.

<sup>34</sup> Thomas McMurray and Jane Cardinalle McMurray both died in 1849 at their home in Colborne. Anglican Church Archives, Burial Register for St. George's Anglican Church Grafton, Accession 86-10, entry numbers 47 and 51.

<sup>35</sup> HBCA D.5/24 fo. 73, John Dugald Cameron, 15 January 1849.

life outside Rupert's Land. Some used the measure of financial independence they gained through widowhood to seek new modes of life elsewhere.

### **III: Mobility, Agency, and Widowhood**

As the sun rose over Lake Simcoe on a Thursday morning in the fall of 1867, Margaret McKenzie Anderson awoke in her finely furnished hilltop home to the first day of her widowhood.<sup>36</sup> Over twenty-eight years of marriage, she brought ten children into the world, and travelled the canoe routes from Great Slave Lake to southern Ontario (and many points in between), weathering the deaths of three children along the way. For Margaret, the establishment of the new Dominion of Canada heralded her last summer with her husband and the marriage of their only surviving daughter into a prominent British settler family.<sup>37</sup> Margaret remained in Sutton, Ontario for the rest of her life and outlived her husband by more than two decades, yet much of the texture of her daily life, in her own words and from her own perspective, is lost to us.

Before leaving fur trade country, couples often participated in Christian marriage rites as a way to legitimize their longstanding unions in conformity with the standards of genteel British society. In many cases, the Indigenous partners of HBC officers were much younger, potentially outliving their husbands by decades. This section centres the choices and experiences of Indigenous HBC widows, redressing their marginalization in historical and genealogical pursuits over time. A focus on the choices made by HBC wives in widowhood, when their freedom to choose their own path was the greatest, can

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<sup>36</sup> In 1867 James Anderson succumbed to pulmonary tuberculosis contracted during an Arctic expedition on behalf of the HBC. Son Allan died from the same condition in 1870. See: AO, Series MS935, Reel 2, "Ontario Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869-1947"; and C.S. Mackinnon, "ANDERSON, JAMES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 9, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 22, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/anderson\\_james\\_9E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/anderson_james_9E.html).

<sup>37</sup> James and Margaret Anderson's daughter Eliza married James Bouchier, 14 August 1867. AO, Series MS248, Reel 18, "County Marriage Registers, 1858-June 1869."

provide some indication of how Indigenous HBC wives in all stages of the family life cycle may have felt about their lives in Scotland and the Canadas.

Widows were less subject to the patriarchal decisions of their husbands, and could to some extent freely decide where they wanted to live. This freedom was not absolute; HBC patriarchs used the terms of their wills to influence the options open to their family members after death. However, the actions HBC widows undertook with the circumscribed autonomy that came with widowhood, show us that in a number of cases, they did not wish to stay in Scotland or the Canadas once their husbands died.

These stories unsettle traditional historical narratives that see the nineteenth century in northern North America as a linear march of people and progress from east to west. HBC families, and Indigenous widows in particular moved back and forth between the social and economic worlds of the fur trade, Scotland, and the Canadas, which were distant but interconnected hubs in a much wider British Empire. The women whose stories are highlighted here came from Indigenous communities across northern North America, though in some cases their birth names and communities are unknown. In some ways, they lived lives of wealth and privilege by virtue of their partners' employment as officers of the HBC. At the same time, they were also rooted in structures of patriarchal authority and racial and gendered inequalities that circumscribed their choices and experiences, and also the traces they left behind. Laurel Thatcher Ulrich reminds us that "history is a conversation and sometimes a shouting match between present and past, though often the voices we most want to hear are barely audible."<sup>38</sup> This is certainly the case with the women highlighted below.

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<sup>38</sup> Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Well Behaved Women Seldom Make History* (New York: Random House, 2007), xxxiii.

Scholars in British imperial contexts like India and New Zealand have shown how the colonial archive worked to erase, silence and exclude racialized subjects that threatened imperial hierarchies of gender, race, class, and authority.<sup>39</sup> Traces of Indigenous women in traditional archival sources are often fragments shaped and mediated by these hierarchies. Yet, Clare Anderson and others have challenged “the assumption that it is methodologically impossible to write marginal life histories.”<sup>40</sup> In particular, studies focused on fur trade and Metis family and kinship have demonstrated the ways that experiences of Indigenous women and children can be foregrounded, revealing that they were central to the creation of influential networks of kith and kin.<sup>41</sup>

Tracing their lived experiences, choices and priorities centers an ‘Indigenous world’ that existed beyond, alongside and uncomfortably within an imperial project that worked to erase it.<sup>42</sup> As historian Coll Thrush recently asserted in his study of Indigenous travellers to London, “Indigenous people who remain in or move to urban places are all too often portrayed, if at all, as somehow out of place, and that out-of-place-ness is all too easily transformed into absence.”<sup>43</sup> Simply by their persistence ‘out of place’ the

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<sup>39</sup> See, for example, Durba Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*; and Angela Wanhalla, *In/visible Sight: The Mixed-Descent Families of Southern New Zealand* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010).

<sup>40</sup> Clare Anderson, *Subaltern Lives: Biographies of Colonialism in the Indian Ocean World, 1790-1920* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 17.

<sup>41</sup> See, for example, Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Pat McCormack, “Lost Women: Native Lives in Orkney and Lewis,” in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, Sarah Carter and Patricia A. McCormack, eds. (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011); Erin Millions, “‘By Education and Conduct’: Educating Trans-Imperial Indigenous Fur trade Children in the Hudson’s Bay Company Territories and the British Empire, 1820s to 1870s,” (PhD dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2017); and Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations*.

<sup>42</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies* 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (London and New York: Zed Books, 2012), 147. As part of ‘Indigenizing and indigenist processes’ Tuhiwai Smith advocates for centering “the landscapes, images, languages, themes, metaphors and stories of the Indigenous world.”

<sup>43</sup> Coll Thrush, *Indigenous London: Native Travellers at the Heart of Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2016), 14. In recent years imperial histories have highlighted various forms of Indigenous mobility;

Indigenous widows whose stories are foregrounded here challenge notions of the nineteenth century as one where Indigenous people, particularly women, existed and remained in particular, bounded places. These women were the spouses of HBC officers, and in some cases, celebrated ones whose stories loom large among scholars and descendants. To counter the archival and historiographical imbalance, each woman is highlighted here in her own dedicated section, under her own birth name.

### **Margaret McKenzie (1823-1888)**

Margaret McKenzie was the daughter of prominent HBC Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie and his Ojibwe wife Angelique. She was married at the age of sixteen to HBC Clerk and future Chief Factor James Anderson, whom she had never met, at Sault Ste. Marie in the fall of 1839.<sup>44</sup> A friend of her father stood in to ‘give her away’ in a formal wedding ceremony officiated by an American missionary.<sup>45</sup> Such ceremonies were relatively rare for most of the HBC couples studied here, as their relationships often began between the 1780s and 1810s at trading posts where clergy were unavailable.<sup>46</sup>

James Anderson’s marriage to Margaret McKenzie was a beneficial match, as it drew him into a far-flung web of kin ties and social capital that crisscrossed Britain and North America. What is known of Margaret’s daily life comes from the voluminous records of her husband and son, now preserved in repositories across Canada. James

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See, for example, J. Carey and J. Lydon, eds. *Indigenous Networks: Mobility, Connections and Exchange* (London: Routledge, 2014).

<sup>44</sup> Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives (hereafter GPVA), Anderson Family Collection, Certificate of marriage by A. Bingham, 16 September 1839.

<sup>45</sup> William Nourse filled the role of the bride’s father. Nourse to James Hargrave, 1 May 1840, in Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence*, 313.

<sup>46</sup> James Anderson falls among the youngest in the cohort of HBC officers studied here. For more detailed discussion of fur trade marriage practices see: Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); and Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur trade Society in Western Canada, 1670—1870* (Winnipeg: Watson & Dwyer Publishing Ltd., 1980).



Anderson's HBC accounts make clear that Margaret engaged in British styles of embroidery and crochet, but family heirlooms treasured by her children indicate that she was equally versed in making moccasins and producing beadwork.<sup>47</sup>

Among the trip journals, account statements, and lists of places 'named' by Anderson during his various North American expeditions, two faded sheets of HBC stationary give insight into Margaret's life as his companion. The pages are full of verse; a poem written 'for Mrs. Anderson' on behalf of the residents of Fort Rae in the winter of 1858. It is unclear how long Margaret had been at the fort on the shores of Great Slave Lake, though the poem's tone is intimate and familiar, suggesting that the author and community knew her well. The poem seems to have been presented as a farewell gift as Margaret left to join her husband on the first furlough (leave of absence) of his 27-year career.

The poem attempted to console Margaret on the death of her "last born darling little child," going on to assure her that "from heaven your daughter wafts a smile, your sinking heart to cheer."<sup>48</sup> This daughter does not appear in the genealogical notes created and preserved by Margaret's son and grandchildren.<sup>49</sup> The child's name and date of birth are not listed in genealogies alongside her nine siblings. Margaret's grief and the compassion of the people of Fort Rae are palpable on the yellowed sheets of paper. The verses spoke to a grief that was uniquely Margaret's; they included no mention of her husband or her other children. A reflection of gendered notions of parental grief, the

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<sup>47</sup> See HBCA E.37/2, Anderson Family Collection, crochet and embroidery patterns; also GPVA Anderson Family Collection and Parks Canada Anderson collection for heirlooms.

<sup>48</sup> HBCA E.37/11 fo. 25-26. Fort Rae, 17 January 1858.

<sup>49</sup> HBCA E.37/25 fo. 15. "Children of James Anderson and his spouse Margaret McKenzie," written by James Anderson Jr. in 1927 lists nine children, leaving out the daughter that died at Fort Rae in 1858. Later genealogies mirrored this omission.

poem serves as the only tangible reminder of a loss that likely impacted Margaret for the rest of her life.

After more than two decades living at HBC trading posts across Rupert's Land, James Anderson began preparing for retirement and purchased Ainslie Hill, a stately farm in the small settlement of Sutton.<sup>50</sup> Margaret was pregnant with her tenth child when she left Fort Simpson in 1858. Her four youngest children accompanied her, and they stopped to retrieve the three eldest from school in Red River. Joined by her husband, the whole family journeyed from Red River by cart train to St. Paul, and on to Prairie du Chien by steamer, making their way by train to Holland Landing via Chicago and Toronto, before finally travelling by stagecoach to Sutton.<sup>51</sup> Margaret set to work enrolling her sons in school and managing the farm and household.

James Anderson did not join his family at Ainslie Hill on a permanent basis until he formally retired in 1864. His letters to HBC friends emphasized Margaret's agricultural activities in their new home. In 1865 he wrote that: "Mrs. A. is as jolly as ever and very busy among her cows, sheep, pigs, geese, turkeys, ducks, fowls etc. I have a farm attached to this place...I don't meddle with it...I have a man who manages it."<sup>52</sup> Though he explicitly listed what were likely only a few of Margaret's farm tasks, her performance of income-generating farm labour seems to have been invisible to her husband, who credited profitable management of the farm entirely to the manager he hired.

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<sup>50</sup> Anderson's parents were early British settlers in Sutton, arriving in the early 1830s.

<sup>51</sup> HBCA E.37/4 fo. 39-40. Journal of James Anderson Jr., undated.

<sup>52</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC). Roderick Macfarlane Fonds, James Anderson to Roderick Macfarlane, 1 November 1865, MG29-A11, vol.1, fo. 102.



*Figure 3.3: 'Ainslie Hill', the Anderson Family Home in Sutton, Ontario*<sup>53</sup>

When Margaret became a widow in 1867 she was named an executor to her husband's will, which left her a modest annuity for her maintenance, and the use of (but not control over) Ainslie Hill.<sup>54</sup> Archival hints indicate that Margaret was prudent and cautious in the management of her financial affairs, enrolling sons William, Robert, and Roderick at the prestigious Upper Canada College for short stints interspersed by what were likely more economical educational pursuits elsewhere.<sup>55</sup> Margaret was literate. A letter she wrote to George Simpson survives and an 1874 letter from her son Alexander to his "dear mother" indicates that Margaret read and received letters from her widespread family.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Ainslie Hill," Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives.

<sup>54</sup> HBCA E.37/22 fo. 3-6, Will of James Anderson, 1863.

<sup>55</sup> Upper Canada College Toronto, *The roll of pupils – January 1830 to June 1916* (Toronto: Hanson, Crozier & Edgar, 1917), 79-80. Son Robert attended the school in 1868 and for 6 months in 1872, while his brother Roderick attended in 1867 at the age of 15. William attended the longest, from 1867-1870.

<sup>56</sup> HBCA E.37/21 fo.7. Alexander Anderson to Margaret Anderson, 13 January 1873.

Finances, family stage, obligation, and bonds of affection all likely played a role in Margaret's decision to remain in Sutton after her husband's death. Her younger sons, one of whom was suffering from tuberculosis, were in their early teens and required ongoing financial and emotional support, while her sister-in-law, elderly mother-in-law, and daughter all lived nearby and likewise benefitted from her assistance. Just as Margaret's sons reached adulthood and struck out on their own, her daughter Eliza died in childbirth, leaving behind three young children. Even if she entertained the idea of joining her siblings in Red River, or returning to her maternal kin near the north shore of Lake Superior, ties of affection and obligation maintained her connection to the land she worked in Sutton. In 1881, the fourteenth year of her widowhood, the extent of Margaret's agricultural work was validated in some small way when she was enumerated in the census as a farmer (rather than a widow) by occupation.<sup>57</sup> The completion of her death certificate in 1888 with the occupation 'merchant's wife' might have vexed her considerably, given her 21 years of hard work as a farmer in her own right.<sup>58</sup>

The extent to which the new Dominion was a welcoming one for Margaret and her children is unknown. Their position as one of the wealthier families in Sutton, and the marriage of daughter Eliza into the prominent Bouchier family were likely helpful in this regard. By the time Margaret arrived in Sutton, successive treaties and government interventions aimed at opening the area to British settlers resulted in the relocation and dispossession of the Chippewas and the establishment of a reserve on Georgina Island.<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>57</sup> See: 1881 Census of Canada, Gwillimbury North, York North ON, Roll: C\_13249; Page: 29, Family No: 138.

<sup>58</sup> AO, Series MS935, Reel: 53, Ontario, Canada, Deaths and Deaths Overseas, 1869-1947.

<sup>59</sup> For an overview of this history see: Indian Claims Commission, "Chippewa Tri-Council Inquiry: Coldwater-Narrows Reservation Surrender Claim," (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 2003).

Community oral histories indicate that in Margaret's time, island residents could easily access the mainland by foot, wagon or sled to engage in commerce, travel, harvest and worship across the shallow waters of Lake Simcoe. A drastic rise in water levels by the 1930s increased the geographic isolation of the island reserve.<sup>60</sup> This combined with an increase in pollution to severely impact manomin (rice) populations, once a locally abundant and culturally and nutritionally significant food source for the Chippewas of Georgina Island.<sup>61</sup>

It is impossible to know what (or if) Margaret thought about the Ojibwe island community visible across the lake,<sup>62</sup> or to what extent she encountered discrimination in her daily life as an Indigenous woman running her own farm in predominantly British-settled Sutton. Descendants of her son James Anderson Jr. recalled that he was self-conscious of his 'dark complexion' and may have considered it a social liability.<sup>63</sup> Perhaps Margaret created an insulated social world on her own terms; HBC friends and family were known to write and come to stay with her for periods of time,<sup>64</sup> and her

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<sup>60</sup> Increases in the Lake's depth and current, combined with climate change, have also made access across the ice in winter less reliable in recent decades. See Patricia Eileen Albani Simpson, "Reconceptualizing Development from Women's Standpoint in Colonial Relations," (PhD dissertation, University of Toronto, 2003), 100.

<sup>61</sup> A large-scale rehabilitation of Lake Simcoe, including efforts to re-establish rice in the ecosystem, is now underway. See Ministry of Natural Resources, *Minister's Annual Report on Lake Simcoe, 2016* (Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2017). I have deliberately avoided reference here to 'wild' rice. For a discussion of terminology around manomin, see: Brittany K. Luby, "Kill the "Indian" and Save the "Wild": Vocabularies with Political Consequences in Indigenous Studies," 10 December 2018, <https://niche-canada.org/2018/12/10/kill-the-indian-and-save-the-wild-vocabularies-with-political-consequences-in-indigenous-studies/> NiCHE /// Network in Canadian History & Environment

<sup>62</sup> The Chippewas of Georgina Island were Ojibwe (Anishinaabe) who migrated from the area that now includes Northern Ontario and the states of Minnesota and Wisconsin.

<sup>63</sup> See Krista Barclay, "From Rupert's Land to Canada West: Hudson's Bay Company Families and Representations of Indigeneity in Small-Town Ontario," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 26, 1 (2015): 40.

<sup>64</sup> LAC, Roderick Macfarlane Fonds, MG29-A11, vol.1, James Anderson to Roderick Macfarlane, 1 November 1865.

mother-in-law, who had been born in India to a Scottish father, lived next door.<sup>65</sup> Adele Perry found that fur trade daughter and wife Amelia Connolly Douglas was “Indigenous and powerful within a settler society premised on the dispossession and disregard of Indigenous peoples,” complicating biographers’ attempts to write her story as a pioneer settler narrative.<sup>66</sup> Margaret McKenzie Anderson similarly eludes easy categorization, occupying the upper economic echelons of settler society while challenging hierarchies of race and gender in her community simply by her presence there.

### **Okaquajibut (c.1780-1866)**

Some Indigenous widows like Okaquajibut, an Ojibwe woman born near Lake Nipigon, chose to leave the homes they shared with their husbands, using the limited freedom that came with widowhood to decide their own futures.<sup>67</sup> In 1833, her experiences were recorded in the imperial archive for the first time. At the Anglican Church in Red River, she was recorded as an ‘Indian woman’ that was baptized, given the Christian name Mary, and formally married to HBC Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron, the father of her eight children.<sup>68</sup> John Dugald Cameron’s plans to retire to the Canadas were the impetus for the ceremonies, which took place before the family settled in the small village of Grafton near the shores of Lake Ontario.

The only surviving testaments to Okaquajibut’s time in Grafton are not her own. Her husband wrote to George Simpson that his wife had been travelling to Cobourg to help care for ailing retired Chief Trader William Nourse, indicating that women’s

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<sup>65</sup> Eliza Charlotte Simpson was born in Calcutta, where she later married and started a family with Robert Anderson from Scotland, settling in Sutton in the early 1830s.

<sup>66</sup> See Adele Perry, “Beyond Biography, Beyond Canada,” *Canadian Historical Review* 98, 1 (June 2017), 325-326.

<sup>67</sup> Okaquajibut, rather than Mary, is used throughout this project, since her son referred to her by her birth name in his written correspondence.

<sup>68</sup> HBCA Red River Register of Baptisms, Marriages and Burials, E.4/1 no. 260, 5 June 1833.

emotional and physical labour in times of sickness continued regardless of geographic context.<sup>69</sup> In 1848, when she was in her sixties, John Dugald Cameron recounted that his wife was “engaged in the woods making a new road for hawling [sic] out wood” and bragged that given “control over the Farm she would conduct it much better than her son.”<sup>70</sup> Much like James Anderson’s written accounts of his wife’s experiences in Sutton, John Dugald Cameron’s focused on Okaquajibut’s agricultural labour in her new home.

In the late 1940s historian Margaret Arnett MacLeod included a passing reference to Okaquajibut in the introduction to *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, asserting that: “she grew to be a woman of fineness and dignity... [and] on her husband's retirement she travelled with him and lived happily among his people in Canada.”<sup>71</sup> The source for this information is unclear, and out of step with what we know about Okaquajibut, which is that she ultimately envisioned a different future for herself.

While life in Grafton seems to have suited Okaquajibut, at least for a time, her husband’s will makes clear that by 1857 she was considering leaving. John Dugald Cameron’s will included a provision for extra funds “in the event of my wife removing from my present residence at Grafton and going to reside at Red River.”<sup>72</sup> After weathering the deaths of her husband and one of their sons that year, Okaquajibut said a final goodbye to her daughter, son and grandchildren in Grafton and made the journey to Red River where she lived with her daughter Anne, a widow herself with ten children.<sup>73</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> HBCA D.5i33 fo. 111; John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson.

<sup>70</sup> HBCA D.5/21 fo. 322, John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 28 February 1848.

<sup>71</sup> Margaret A. MacLeod, ed. *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), lii-liii.

<sup>72</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/4 fo. 5, Will of John Dugald Cameron, 1857.

<sup>73</sup> HBCA George Simpson Correspondence, D.5/47 fo. 27, Anne Nolin to George Simpson, 26 August 1858.

Okaquajibut died in Red River in the summer of 1866.<sup>74</sup> Her reasons for making the more than two-thousand-kilometre journey to Red River do not survive, making it impossible to know whether she was motivated by concern for her daughter, a profound unhappiness with life in Grafton, or by something else. In any event, Okaquajibut and other HBC widows chose not to remain in eastern settler society once they attained the limited freedom and financial independence that came with widowhood, hinting at the possibility that integrating into life beyond the fur trade was not quite as seamless as it appeared.

### **Ann Sutherland (1788-1862)**

Similar was the case of Ann Sutherland, who was born near the banks of the Mackenzie River and was formally married to HBC Chief Factor George Keith, with whom she already had nine children, before his retirement to Scotland in 1845.<sup>75</sup> Ann and the couple's daughter Mary accompanied Keith to Aberdeen and eventually settled at Morningside, a cottage on an acre of land just outside the city. Keith's correspondence indicates that Ann did not begin learning English in earnest until after they arrived in Scotland.<sup>76</sup> HBC friend Robert Cowie wrote that Ann initially pined for "scenes and associations left behind."<sup>77</sup> By 1852 'the Duchess', as her husband called her, was said to be happily managing a large garden on the couple's property, selling eggs and produce, entertaining guests from Rupert's Land and from the couple's "limited circle of friends

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<sup>74</sup> Archives of Ontario, GS1 Reel 1106, file 1305, fo. 6. Margaret Cameron Estate.

<sup>75</sup> Ann has been referred to as Nanette, but was enumerated in censuses and buried under the name Ann. While the region of Ann's birth is known, it remains unclear which Indigenous community she belonged to.

<sup>76</sup> HBCA D.5/20 fo. 308, George Keith to George Simpson, 25 September 1847.

<sup>77</sup> HBCA D.5/20 fo.69, Robert Cowie to George Simpson, 1 August 1847.



and acquaintances.”<sup>78</sup> Retired HBC officers like James Anderson, John Dugald Cameron, and George Keith clearly viewed their wives’ agricultural pursuits as a marker of acculturation and successful integration into what they called the ‘Civilized World.’<sup>79</sup>

George and Ann Keith’s HBC son-in-law John Swanston happened to be visiting Morningside on leave when George Keith unexpectedly died in the winter of 1859. Swanston wrote that “Poor Mrs. Keith was and still is most painfully distressed...I have been wishing of her to accompany me to Canada...but at the present moment she is quite undecided.”<sup>80</sup> Swanston believed that Ann and Mary should join his household in Montreal. Ultimately the women decided to bid their Scottish friends and family goodbye and set out for Montreal on their own.<sup>81</sup> Ann chose to use the modest annuity provided by her husband’s will to establish her *own* home in Beauharnois rather than living with relatives in Montreal. Perhaps she preferred a quieter setting close to the water over life in another bustling city, or perhaps like her home on the River Dee in Aberdeen, Beauharnois at the confluence of the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Rivers reminded her of her birthplace near the McKenzie River. The household was comprised of mother and daughter, Ann’s granddaughter Sophie Leclair was listed as an absentee family member, as well as three women that were either boarders or servants.<sup>82</sup> One of these women was from Ontario, one from the United States, and one from Quebec. The 1861 census did not collect language data, but the household composition indicates that both French and

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<sup>78</sup> HBCA D.5/33 fo.133-134, George Keith to George Simpson, 28 January 1852. See also Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave, 28 March 1852, University of Manitoba Archives and Special Collections (hereafter UMASC), Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, MSS 15 Box 2 Fo.4.

<sup>79</sup> For example, see HBCA E.61/5 fo.7, John Swanston to William McMurray, 8 February 1859.

<sup>80</sup> E.61/5 fo.7-8 John Swanston to William McMurray, 8 February 1859.

<sup>81</sup> See, for example, Jennifer S. H. Brown, “KEITH, GEORGE,” in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 23, 2017, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/keith\\_george\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/keith_george_8E.html).

<sup>82</sup> The Keith’s daughter Louise married F.X. Leclair. See Lloyd Keith, North of Athabasca

English would have been used. Most likely then, Ann had facility in at least her first language, and English and French by this time.

Ann died the following year and was buried in Mount Royal Cemetery in Montreal. She had family in Scotland, Montreal, Red River, and at fur trading posts across the Northwest, which presented a number of challenges for tracking her whereabouts after leaving Aberdeen. For many years, her fate after her husband's death was unknown. This was partly due to the challenges of transatlantic research (particularly in the days before digitization), and partly because Ann was extremely mobile and outlived nearly all of children, leaving few archival or material traces of her life that the next generation could treasure and preserve.<sup>83</sup> Ann ultimately had the financial means and social and kin networks to make a smooth transition into life in Montreal, choosing the shape her final years would take on her own terms and in her own interest. Her actions indicate that a measure of self-determination came with widowhood and that women who had this opportunity might choose to leave the homes their husbands chose for them.

### **Mary Moore (1801-1887)**

HBC Postmaster Charles Stuart wrote from Grand Lac Post to his retired friend and HBC colleague Angus Cameron in Nairn, Scotland.<sup>84</sup> Stuart recounted his “ramble in the new Dominion” and a visit to his widowed mother-in-law Mary Gladman in Port Hope, Ontario. Of the ‘old widow’ he wrote: “though living in a splendid large commodious and well-furnished brick house with beautiful garden and excellent

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<sup>83</sup> Mary Keith outlived her mother by six years. Due to her cognitive impairments she may have been unable to live independently, and likely joined her brother-in-law's household. HBCA D.5/10 fo.549, George Keith to George Simpson, 29 March 1844.

<sup>84</sup> Grand Lac was located in what is now Southern Quebec.

orchard...she still yearns for Hudson's Bay."<sup>85</sup> Like Ann Sutherland Keith, Mary Moore Gladman pined for the homeland she left behind. Yet, she remained at the family home, called Ballintruan, until her death in 1887.<sup>86</sup>

Some sense of Mary's personality is conveyed in a letter written by her granddaughter Josephine Stuart. Young 'Josie' wrote home to her mother from boarding school describing her teacher Miss Dupont as one who "gets into fearful passions & keeps harping on the same thing for a whole day. Something like Grandma. Give Grandma my love & tell her that I am going to write to her some day & I wish I was home to go for a drive with her."<sup>87</sup> Josephine's letters home from boarding school indicate that into the 1880s her mother and grandmother were visited by fur trade people from the Miles, Hamilton and Hardisty families and that they corresponded with men like W.B. Malloch and Donald Smith, who were still in the company's service.<sup>88</sup>

For Mary Moore Gladman, as for other upper-class Indigenous women in Scotland and the Canadas, attachments to family and to land; whether the land of their birth or the land they lived on and perhaps toiled over, were central to how they conceived of themselves as part of a wider British Empire. Their intimate geographies spanned the vast and varied landscapes of Scotland, the Canadas, and the fur trade Northwest, structuring their choices of 'home' in the years of their widowhood and giving them the space to control their own futures.

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<sup>85</sup> HBCA E.41/14 fo. 24, Reel 4M62. Charles Stuart to Angus Cameron, 20 October 1867.

<sup>86</sup> *Port Hope Weekly Guide*, 16 September 1887, page 4, column 5. The paper reported the death of Mrs. Gladman "At Ballintruan, residence of Charles Stuart, relict of Joseph Gladman, born James Bay."

<sup>87</sup> Archives of Ontario, F471-2-0-118, fo. 2, Josephine Gladman to Margaret Gladman Stuart, 8 October 1880.

<sup>88</sup> See for example Archives of Ontario, F 471-2-0-117, fo. 2, 4, 9, 11; and F471-2-0-118 fo. 1.

## **Catherine Sinclair (1824-1876)**

Unlike Okaquajibut Cameron and Ann Sutherland Keith, some HBC widows eventually chose to relocate, but not in the early days of their widowhood. In 1853, when Chief Factor Francis Ermatinger retired to settle alongside his brother in St. Thomas (Ontario) he was accompanied by his wife Catherine Sinclair and their ten-year-old daughter Frances.

Catherine remained in St. Thomas for her daughter's wedding, and the births of her grandchildren. Ultimately she left to live with her own mother at Fort Frances and then Red River, where she died in 1876, having lived across North America over the course of her 52 years in places as diverse as Fort Vancouver, St. Thomas, Fort William, and York Factory.<sup>89</sup> In Catherine Sinclair's case, her sense of obligation and connection to her daughter are underscored by the fact that she remained in St. Thomas at all after her husband's death.

By their correspondence, it is clear that her brother-in-law Edward Ermatinger, and many of her late husband's HBC associates had little affection for her. Three years before arriving in St. Thomas she had given birth to a daughter, the result of an encounter that took place during one of her husband's extended absences.<sup>90</sup> Letitia Hargrave wrote to her sister in Scotland about the incident:

Mrs. Ermatinger stonished [sic] her household in December last by producing a daughter, which was the moment after its birth sent out ...[Catharine] joined her husband at Norway House in July last & as I said the catastrophe ensued in December...he became suspicious and discovered from her own confession that she had been 'led astray' by poor old Mr. Christie's eldest son who had passed the Winter at Edmonton where she had sojourned for many months...Frank is going to bring her to

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Ermatinger was considering a divorce in 1849; see HBCA D.5/26 fo.745.

her father in the course of this Summer & with his daughter intends going in the Canoes to Canada & leaving the service.<sup>91</sup>

Only Letitia Hargrave's account of these events survives, and thus, only her third-party description of the interactions that took place between Catharine Sinclair Ermatinger and Alexander Christie Jr. Francis Ermatinger's own letters indicate that he considered a permanent separation from Catharine after discovering that she was pregnant. The couple eventually reconciled, and Catherine accompanied her husband when he retired to St. Thomas, Ontario.<sup>92</sup>

For HBC officers, this incident ran contrary to notions of wifely devotion and respectability, and they harboured longstanding ill will towards Catherine because of it, even after Francis Ermatinger's death. In the wake of his friend's death, Chief Factor Robert Miles wrote to Edward Ermatinger: "I am very glad to hear that you have interested yourself in the affairs of your Brother Frank for the sake of Fanny, as for the widow I am sorry to say she has no sympathy from me...for really her conduct is undeserving commiseration."<sup>93</sup> Such scandals around infidelity reflected differently on fur trade men than they did for women. Men's affairs were the topic of gossip, to be sure, but men like Alexander Christie Jr., William McMurray, and Robert Scollie were never the subjects of longstanding derision or ill will as Catherine clearly was.<sup>94</sup> The unique context of the fur trade, where couples could be separated for months or even years at a

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<sup>91</sup> Letitia Mactavish Hargrave to Flora Mactavish, 1 June 1850, UMASC, Margaret Arnett Macleod Fonds, MSS15, Box 2, fo. 3.

<sup>92</sup> Ermatinger wrote to George Simpson that he was considering dissolving the union. It is unclear what became of the daughter Catherine gave birth to that winter. Francis Ermatinger to George Simpson, 27 December 1849, HBCA D.5/26 fo. 745.

<sup>93</sup> Robert Miles to Edward Ermatinger, 5 August 1859, HBCA E.94/3.

<sup>94</sup> Robert Scollie had two children with the wife of Andrew Thompson. Cited in "Scollie Family Chronicle by F.B. Scollie, 31 Jan 1991," Orkney Archives, D1/222, fo. 3. William McMurray was involved in an affair with Alexander Fisher's wife. See Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 147.

time, created an environment of patriarchal anxiety where women's fidelity was closely monitored, discussed, and policed.<sup>95</sup> Undoubtedly the social climate would have been tense for Catherine in St. Thomas and her decision to remain with her daughter until she was established in her own household speaks to the extent to which her labour, guidance, and support were needed.



*Figure 3.4: Francis and Fanny Ermatinger<sup>96</sup>*

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<sup>95</sup> See literature on the Foss-Pelly Scandal in Red River for more discussion of this issue: Sharron A. FitzGerald and Alicja Muszynski, "Negotiating Female Morality: place, ideology and agency in the Red River Colony," *Women's History Review* 16, no.5 (2007); Sylvia Van Kirk, "'The Reputation of a Lady': Sarah Ballenden and the Foss-Pelly Scandal," *Manitoba History* 11 (Spring 1986): 4-12.

<sup>96</sup> Chalk Courchane, "Francis Ermatinger in the Pacific Northwest in 1824, Part IV," (2012), 113. [www.oregonpioneers.com/bios/FrancisErmatinger34.pdf](http://www.oregonpioneers.com/bios/FrancisErmatinger34.pdf), accessed 5 May 2019.

The preservation of a portrait of Francis Ermatinger and his daughter Frances ('Fanny') is particularly intriguing in light of the marital rupture that briefly occurred between him and his wife, and of his colleagues' resultant negative perceptions of her. At first glance, the portrait is typical of the period; young Fanny stands closely beside her seated father, one hand on his shoulder and the other gently grasping his arm. An Ermatinger descendant wrote of this portrait: "the right arm of Catherine is visible. Somewhere I saw the complete photograph many years ago."<sup>97</sup> At the left of the frame, a woman's puffed sleeve is clearly visible, her wide skirt touching Ermatinger's leg. It seems most likely that the photograph was taken before Francis Ermatinger discovered his wife's affair, since he would likely have had the portraits taken of just himself and Fanny if the couple were separated. Perhaps a family portrait was taken before the brief separation, and a cropped copy was ordered during the couple's period of estrangement.



*Figure 3.5:*  
*Photo of Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger*<sup>98</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> Ibid.

<sup>98</sup> Photograph taken of an Oregon Historical Society portrait. Ibid.

Multiple portraits of Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger survive across North America, and they have provided valuable sources of connection for Ermatinger descendants. In 1917, one J. Elliott from Walla Walla, Washington, wrote to Judge Charles Oakes Ermatinger of his research into the family's history:

I called yesterday for an hour upon a lady here of more than eighty years named Mrs. Jamima Sinclair. Her husband was William Sinclair and a brother of your Aunt Kate Ermatinger... The picture of Mrs. Kate Ermatinger hangs on her wall, of a lady dressed in the manner of ladies of those days... a fine looking woman.<sup>99</sup>

Catherine's absent presence in the Ermatinger family photo is contrasted by portraits where she alone is the subject, which have been displayed and preserved by relatives and museums for decades. Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger was a complex historical actor who has been remembered in a variety of ways since her death in 1876. What is known of her life shows the variety, geographical range, and complexity of the lived experiences of Indigenous women in the nineteenth century.

#### **IV. Archival Silences:**

At least one other HBC widow lived in St. Thomas while Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger lived there, which could have factored into her decision to stay there after her husband Francis Ermatinger's death. Hardly any trace of Mrs. Thomas Dears has yet been found. In some cases, the archives are silent on the lives of HBC wives beyond the deaths of their husbands. Before moving to St. Thomas, Francis Ermatinger wrote to his brother, "I expect with a lesson or two from your wife upon housekeeping and a few from

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<sup>99</sup> Western University Archives, AFC 131, B5575-15, J. Elliott to Judge Charles Oakes Ermatinger, 22 January 1917.



you upon her music, [Mrs. Dears] will be able to pass in a crowd.”<sup>100</sup> The ability to ‘pass’ in settler society was foundational to the ways women experienced widowhood in Canada and Scotland. Probate records meant to decide guardianship of Thomas Dears’ young son after his death reveal that at some point his wife had taken, or been given, the name ‘Emma’.<sup>101</sup> She was most likely Chinook, but her name and place of birth are unknown, and no further records of her life after widowhood have been found.

The life of Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger’s mother, Mary Wadin McKay Sinclair is better documented. When she married William Sinclair Jr. she was a resident of Norway House, near the northern shore of Lake Winnipeg. She raised her children at the HBC’s Lac La Pluie post (near what is now Fort Frances, Ontario).<sup>102</sup> Her husband William Sinclair died in at their home in Brockville, Ontario in 1868. Mary also died at Brockville more than two decades later. In the intervening years, she was never in one place very long, moving frequently between her children, who were scattered across British North America. In 1870 she was enumerated in the census of Red River, and most likely remained there with her widowed daughter Catherine Sinclair Ermatinger, who died there of cancer in 1876. By 1881 she was with her son Alexander at Spanish River, Algoma. To date, no 1891 census records have yet been located for her. According to genealogical notes, she “spoke Indian using very very few English words”, and no writings or material objects connected to her have been found.<sup>103</sup> She died in Brockville in 1893 at the age of 89, presumably while living with her daughter Mary and son-in-law

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<sup>100</sup> HBCA E.94/4, Francis Ermatinger to Edward Ermatinger, 4 March 1843.

<sup>101</sup> AO Elgin County Surrogate Court Records, Reel 1374, file 11, Yarmouth, 1839.

<sup>102</sup> T.C. Elliott, “Marguerite Wadin McKay McLoughlin,” *Oregon Historical Quarterly* 36, no. 4 (Dec. 1935), 339.

<sup>103</sup> Notes by Judge Charles Oakes Ermatinger. Cited in Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, Box 3, Folder 5, fo. 1. UMASC, MSS366 A.11-28.

William Joseph Christie. Census records and vital statistics registrations can be particularly difficult to locate for women who moved back and forth across government jurisdictions.

Similarly, we only know widow Jane Robertson Flett through a small anecdote written by Letitia Hargrave. She wrote to her husband:

[Mr. Wilson] had a superb wedding 3 days before the ship sailed. The bride was a widow from Orkney her name Mrs. Flett who came out by the ship & set up in Red River as a dress maker, with her relative M<sup>r</sup> Cumming of Baring's [Beren's] River's patronage. She is a 'Native' but has been in Orkney for 30 years... The woman had an excellent character & is very industrious, her age 37.<sup>104</sup>

It is only with the relatively recent increased availability of Scottish records that it is possible to say anything more about Jane Robertson Flett's life in Scotland. She was born in about 1814 in Rupert's Land, and sent to Orkney as a child.<sup>105</sup> Jane married John Crookshanks Flett (1811-1840) and had two children, Betsy, born in 1836, and John, born in 1839.<sup>106</sup> Her husband may have signed up with the HBC when Jane was pregnant with their son, or shortly after the birth.<sup>107</sup> Between 1840 and 1848 Jane became a widow. She found work as a straw plaiter in Stromness to support her two children. In 1851 she left Scotland for good after three decades there, marrying Robert Wilson (1799-1864) in Red River.<sup>108</sup> What is known of Jane Robertson Flett Wilson's life indicates that, even

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<sup>104</sup> Letitia Hargrave to James Hargrave, 5 October 1851. MacLeod, *Letters of Letitia Hargrave*.

<sup>105</sup> Her father was possibly John Robertson (1786-1828). See HBCA Biographical Sheet for Robertson, John (c)."

<sup>106</sup> See: Scotland Old Parish Registers Marriages, 030/40 page 235, Jean Robertson, Stromness, 25 December 1834; 1841 Census of Scotland, 030/7 page 1, Jane Flett; 1851 Census of Scotland, 030/4 page 27.

<sup>107</sup> A contract for a John Flett from Orkney appears in the HBC's contract books for 1838 as a blacksmith. Flett is an extremely common name in Orkney, so it is hard to say if this was the same man. HBCA A.32/128 fo. 259.

<sup>108</sup> It remains unclear what happened to her children at this time. See HBCA Biographical Sheet for "Wilson, Robert (a)."

after spending most of her life in Orkney, she yearned for her homeland and used widowhood as the opportunity to return.

## **V. Conclusion:**

They lived between worlds, and have continued to exist between bodies of scholarship, complicating and subverting the divides between Indigenous, imperial, and family history. Their stories bring together the separate areas of historical inquiry and complicate our understandings of where Indigenous women belonged and can be ‘found’ in nineteenth-century records. Fragments detailing the lives of widows who were extremely mobile are exceedingly hard to track down, and in this circumstance, genealogical sources, with their emphasis on reckoning male lines of descent, can be unhelpful. Even some of the most interested and dedicated genealogists are not concerned with tracking down widowed female ancestors, and instead often opt for a simple “died after...” on their family trees to represent the breadth of these women’s experiences in the years of their widowhood. By this reckoning, once a woman became a widow, she did not really die, though she also did not really live, she merely existed for an indeterminate period of time marked by no meaningful engagement with, or impact on, the world around her. This was not the case for the women described here; they persisted in meaningful and impactful ways, both in their everyday lives and within and across the boundaries of a settler state that so often sought to contain, divide, or exclude them, their kin, and their descendants.

Privileging the lives of husbands and particularly male descendants truncates family histories that were considerably more far-flung and complex, ignoring continuities and the emotional and physical labour Indigenous widows undertook in these families by

maintaining family estates, networks of kith and kin, and emotionally and financially sustaining their friends, family, and communities. They left very few records of their own creation, but what we can uncover are choices that hint at their ideas of family, obligation, gender, and race. Of the examples highlighted here, those women who remained ‘out of place’ in the settler locales where they lived with their husbands did so when family attachments, obligations or modest inheritances from their husbands held them in place.

In families where children were adults with families of their own, widows had more flexibility and freedom to choose their own path and had the financial security to make it a reality. They were mobile because their class standing allowed it, but that mobility was predicated on gendered and racialized expectations about the places they belonged and felt accepted. Their stories are necessarily incomplete but nevertheless important. Even if their motivations are unknown and perhaps unknowable, they made what were surely difficult decisions that changed the course of their lives, and those choices, and their ability to make them are significant in and of themselves.

## **Chapter Four**

### **Social Mobility, Class, and Respectability: HBC Children Beyond Rupert's Land**

This chapter is concerned with tracing the fortunes of the children and grandchildren born in Rupert's Land to the couples examined in Chapter Two. It focuses in particular on issues of class and social mobility in settler communities, examining the integration of fur trade children into new geographic contexts. This chapter studies various aspects of descendants' lives, including education, marriage practices, and employment prospects in order to draw out comparisons between and across different colonial spaces. As people of Indigenous descent raised at least in part in settler-colonial society, it is important to highlight the ways in which children's experiences may have mirrored or diverged from those of their parents. A key goal of this chapter is uncovering the processes through which a family's capital, both social and economic, was applied to attaining or maintaining respectability and social standing for subsequent generations. This chapter follows Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) children through the major life transitions they experienced: migration, employment, marriage, and death. Rather than an exhaustive account of the experiences of HBC children outside Rupert's Land this chapter aims to highlight broad trends and emphasize the diversity in the lived experiences of elite fur trade children. In particular, it underscores HBC children's stories that have been obscured or constrained by the imposition of particular boundaries and limits in historical and genealogical inquiry over time.

Scholarly examination of fur trade families has focused overwhelmingly on couples themselves. Studies focused on the education of fur trade children have looked through a gendered lens at childrearing practices and parenting more generally. There has been less focus on sibling relationships, both in the fur trade and in nineteenth-century society more broadly.<sup>1</sup> Ethnohistorian Jennifer S.H. Brown's early work highlighted the experiences of fur trade children outside Rupert's Land to compare HBC and NWC children's experience. A focus on family economies, the intimate geographies of family units, and the dynamics of sibling relationships within them was beyond the purview of that work.<sup>2</sup> As Leonore Davidoff's work has recently shown, in most families sibling relationships are the longest relationships in one's life, and are thus important areas of historical analysis.<sup>3</sup> In the context of mobile HBC families, charting diverging sibling life courses also offers a valuable window on the malleability and contingency of racial categories in the nineteenth-century British Empire.

Since families arrived in Scotland or the Canadas after a patriarch's retirement from the company's service, many of their children were adults by the time these relocations took place. Children who entered adulthood while their fathers were still employed with the HBC followed them into that vocation, in the case of sons, or started families of their own with HBC men, in the case of the daughters. A retiring officer's

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<sup>1</sup> Françoise Noël's *Family Life and Sociability in Upper and Lower Canada, 1780-1870* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003), for instance, includes sections on couple relationships, parent-child relationships, and the social interactions of the family unit itself. No distinct coverage is devoted to sibling relationships. An example of work in this vein is: Elizabeth Vibert, "Writing 'Home': Sibling Intimacy and Mobility in a Scottish Colonial Memoir," in Tony Ballantyne and Antoinette Burton, eds., *Moving Subjects: Gender, Mobility, and Intimacy in an Age of Global Empire* (Urbana and Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 2009): 67-88.

<sup>2</sup> Jennifer S.H. Brown, "Ultimate Respectability: Fur trade Children in the 'Civilized World (Part I)." *The Beaver* (Spring 1977): 4-10; and (Part II). *The Beaver* (Spring 1978): 48-55.

<sup>3</sup> Leonore Davidoff, *Thicker Than Water: Siblings and Their Relations, 1780-1920* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

eldest children were often married with growing families at Red River or HBC posts by the time the rest of the family settled elsewhere.

In some cases, HBC fathers retired early after becoming widowed. Chief Trader Donald Sutherland, for instance, left the company's service and took an early retirement after the death of his wife Sally. Gendered and occupational expectations may have precluded men in these situations from keeping their children with them at company forts, and if they lacked the funds to send each child to boarding school then retirement might have been the only option after a partner's death. Nineteenth-century gendered expectations around childrearing, combined with highly variable work hours and the scarcity of women considered capable of inculcating British education and values all played a role in these decisions. By returning to Scotland with his children, Sutherland could ensure they all received an education at a more reasonable cost by attending a local school, and domestic tasks could be hired out to a local or live-in housekeeper.

The involvement of HBC officers in their children's upbringing, even if it was only in a pecuniary sense, greatly impacted the options available to them. In Britain, Victorian fatherhood was characterized by a more involved and nurturing approach.<sup>4</sup> These mores were remade in Rupert's Land and other fields of empire, where fathers of Indigenous children became more actively involved in their children's upbringing, particularly with regard to sons. As Adele Perry and Erin Millions have shown, imperial manhood was modeled and inculcated by HBC fathers, many of whom strived to give their sons access to the financial means, social capital, and education that were seen as

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<sup>4</sup> For more detailed discussion of Victorian-era shifts in fathering, see: Joanne Bailey, "Paternal power: the pleasures and perils of 'indulgent' fathering in Britain in the long eighteenth century," *The History of the Family* 17, no.3 (2012); Davidoff and Hall, *Family Fortunes*; John Tosh, "Authority and Nurture in Middle-Class Fatherhood: The Case of Early and Mid-Victorian England," *Gender and History* 8, no.1 (April 1996).

essential to success in imperial contexts.<sup>5</sup> Patronage, and in particular their fathers' connections, were vital for HBC sons to attain economic success.<sup>6</sup> Actively involved fathers called in favours and appealed to ties of kith and kin to secure advantages for their children, most often their sons. Retired Chief Factor Angus Cameron wrote of his efforts to secure a military commission for his son Alexander:

Finding that there was much difficulty in getting a commission even by purchase, in the army at present...I ventured to write a few lines to the Right Honble Mr. Ellice on the subject and was gratified by a very kind reply and in less than a fortnight I was informed that my son was appointed to a Commission in the 54<sup>th</sup> Regt.<sup>7</sup>

There was a distinctly imperial flavor to the operation of this sort of patronage, where fur trade networks of kin and connection overlapped with other areas of imperial enterprise and enabled HBC fathers to secure opportunities for their sons. Access to these opportunities, as Cameron learned, was not usually possible without both wealth and social connections.

Lack of paternal involvement could severely limit the possible pathways open to fur trade children. The range of relationships that existed between fathers and their children is important to highlight. Fathers were not always sources of emotional and pecuniary support. Indeed, HBC fathers ran the gamut from hyper-involved, to distant and even indifferent. Of course, archival evidence for close relationships is more plentiful

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<sup>5</sup> See Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2015) and Erin Millions, "'By education and conduct': educating trans-imperial children in the Hudson's Bay Company Territories and the British Empire, 1820s to 1870s," (Phd Dissertation, University of Manitoba, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> For detailed analysis of the prospects open to fur trade sons, see: Denise Fuchs, "Native Sons of Rupert's Land 1760 to 1860s" (PhD diss., University of Manitoba 2000), 94.

<sup>7</sup> Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) D.5/30 fo. 491, Angus Cameron to George Simpson, 29 March 1851.



but should be understood as a partial view of the diversity of relationships between HBC officers and their children.

On one hand, fathers like James Anderson, George Gladman, George Barnston, and Charles Stuart were closely involved in their children's lives. Chief Factor George Gladman wrote to his adult son Henry to make sure he was avoiding foods that would upset his digestion,<sup>8</sup> while Chief Factor Charles Stuart and his wife Margaret Gladman became anxious after their daughter Josephine wrote from boarding school about catching a cold.<sup>9</sup> On the other end of the spectrum, Chief Factor John Siveright made very little provision for his two children in his will and had very little to do with them in life. In 1825 and 1826 Siveright wrote to James Hargrave asking him to "let me know how my little daughter...is provided for...My means does not allow the idea of removing her...but as far as in my power, I would wish she should be decently kept."<sup>10</sup> It is unknown whether Siveright ever visited with or had a relationship with his son and daughter.

Governor George Simpson, who was not known to be a particularly shining example of parental involvement, chastised Chief Factor Cuthbert Cumming for his failure to engage with his son John, who was a postmaster in the company's service. Simpson recounted that he saw John Cumming twice that season in the Lac La Pluie District and that, "he is a very good looking and steady fellow, and so like his father...John was a good deal hurt at not receiving a letter from you this spring, which I

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<sup>8</sup> Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO) F432 Gladman Family Fonds (MU1144), George Gladman to son Henry Gladman, 5 November 1854.

<sup>9</sup> The school's headmistress wrote to allay their concerns. Archives of Ontario, Barbara Loucks Collection, F 471-2-0-117 fo. 8, J. Dupont to Charles Stuart, 15 March 1881.

<sup>10</sup> John Siveright to James Hargrave, 2 May 1825 and 27 April 1826, G.P. De T. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence, 1821-1843* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1938) 9-13.

was sorry for, but I trust you will not further neglect him.”<sup>11</sup> Cumming seems to have had close relationships with some of his twelve children. It is important to keep in mind that diversity in father-child relationships existed within individual families.

### **I: HBC Family Life Cycles:**

Large (and sometimes blended) families with wide age gaps between the eldest and youngest siblings and generally high mortality rates in both infancy and early adulthood resulted in specific sibling dynamics in HBC families. Close relationships could exist between half-siblings. This reality is often obscured through Western genealogical methods, which chart direct lines of descent to make sense of kinship and family units. Angus Cameron’s older fur trade children lived alongside his Scottish wife and son in Nairn, Scotland. Sophia and Elizabeth Cameron were primary caregivers of their half-brother James after his mother Elizabeth Morriston’s death in 1846, just five days after his birth.<sup>12</sup> Likewise, John Clark’s only surviving child from his first marriage accompanied Clark, his second wife, and their children when they relocated to Inverness. Biographies of Lord Strathcona (formerly Chief Factor Donald Smith) portray his acceptance of his wife’s son as benevolent and magnanimous. However, the acceptance of relations by marriage and adoption was longstanding and common in Rupert’s Land, both in Indigenous communities and in HBC households.<sup>13</sup>

Chief Trader Cuthbert Cumming’s family illustrates a number of trends that were common among other HBC families. Cumming’s relationship with Susette McKee

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<sup>11</sup> HBCA D.4/82 fo. 90, George Simpson to Cuthbert Cumming, 9 September 1853.

<sup>12</sup> Angus Cameron and Elizabeth Morrison died at the age of 34, a little over a year into her marriage to Angus Cameron. *Elgin Courant*, 20 August 1846 page 3 column 3. 1851 Census of Scotland, Angus Cameron, 123/5, page 3 (Firhall, Nairn).

<sup>13</sup> Erin Millions addresses some of these complexities. See Millions, “By education and conduct,” 280.

resulted in six children, while another six children were born during his marriage to Jane McMurray, the daughter of his contemporary Thomas McMurray.<sup>14</sup> A chasm of fifty years stood between Cuthbert Cumming's eldest and youngest children. Cumming's first child Margaret was born in 1806 when he was a young man of twenty years. His last child Dugald McMurray arrived in 1856 when Cumming was 70 years old.<sup>15</sup> Cumming is illustrative as an extreme example of this phenomenon, but many HBC families had large age gaps between the eldest and youngest children and, as seen in Chapter Three, at times between spouses as well. HBC mothers were often in their teens when their eldest children were born, and many had children at regular intervals into their forties.<sup>16</sup> This could result in upwards of two or three decades between the eldest and youngest children in any given family.

Mortality rates among children less than five years of age and young adults in their teens and early twenties also resulted in particular family compositions, leaving gaps between surviving siblings. Infant mortality was high in elite fur trade families as a result of both the living conditions at HBC forts and the disproportionate vulnerability of Indigenous people in disease epidemics of the early nineteenth century.<sup>17</sup> The premature deaths of HBC children sent to distant boarding schools were also not uncommon.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Jane McMurray was 28 when she married 56 year-old Cumming. When the couple's youngest child was born, Jane was 42 years old.

<sup>15</sup> Margaret Cumming (1806-1833) was the daughter of Susette McKeen, while Dugald McMurray Cumming (1856-1861) was the son of Jane McMurray Cumming.

<sup>16</sup> This trend is mirrored in other studies of elite fur trade families. See: Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980), 154; and Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 74-75.

<sup>17</sup> For a discussion of epidemic diseases in Rupert's Land see: Paul Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness: Epidemics in the Petit Nord, 1670-1846* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002). Adele Perry found high mortality rates for young children of the Douglas family while at Fort Vancouver in the 1830s. See Perry, *Colonial Relations*, 75. For a more detailed discussion of mortality rates among fur trade children, see: Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, Chapter Seven; and 'Many Tender Ties': *Women and Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980) 138 and 198.

<sup>18</sup> See Millions, "By Education and Conduct," 219-225.

The survival rates among older fur trade children has been less studied. Mortality rates among the Indigenous children of the HBC officer class, particularly as young adults, are striking. In instances where causes of death are known, it is clear that many HBC families lost adult children to tuberculosis. After relocating to Scotland with their father, two of Angus Cameron's three children perished in their twenties as the result of tuberculosis.<sup>19</sup> A number of fur trade daughters died prematurely as the result of complications related to pregnancy and childbirth. The Anderson and Cumming families, for instance, both lost adult daughters after difficult deliveries.

It is difficult to know the extent to which these rates were out of step with mortality rates for young adults in the Canadas or Scotland, as death registration in the middle decades of the nineteenth century ranged between inconsistent and nonexistent. Scotland introduced compulsory registration in 1855, but registrations remained inconsistent for much of the century, particularly in the Highlands and rural parishes. By 1893 for example, more than 40 percent of deaths in Inverness still went uncertified.<sup>20</sup> In Ontario and Quebec, compulsory registration was introduced in 1868, but took some time to fully catch on in districts with few doctors, and in northern areas beyond the Confederation-era borders of these provinces. As a result of these realities, our understanding of mortality rates by age or cause of death is necessarily incomplete for Scotland and Canada in this period.

William Clouston and his wife Elizabeth Cameron settled in Brighton, Ontario, not far from her parents. The Cloustons had at least twelve children over twenty-two

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<sup>19</sup> Elaine Mitchell, "The Camerons of Temiskaming," *International Review of Scottish Studies* 1, no. 1 (1971), 28.

<sup>20</sup> "Death Certification: Report of the Select Committee of the House of Commons," *British Medical Journal* 2 (1893): 597-599.

years. All of the couple's children survived to their teenage years, which was likely a relief to their parents. Unfortunately, between 1859 and 1867, the Cloustons lost seven adult children under the age of 35. The remaining five children all lived beyond the age of 70. Though the Clouston children were raised with siblings very close in age to themselves, those that survived had large gaps between them after weathering the deaths of so many sisters and brothers.<sup>21</sup>

Since Indigenous mothers were often ten or more years younger than their fur trade husbands, they were often the longest surviving parent in HBC families as long as they survived their childbearing years.<sup>22</sup> The example of the Keith family is instructive in this regard. Chief Factor George Keith and his wife Ann Sutherland had at least nine children together over 31 years. Only two daughters, Betsy Keith Swanston and Mary Keith, outlived their mother, and in these cases only by three and six years respectively.<sup>23</sup> Just three of the Keiths' nine children survived beyond the age of thirty.

The case was similar in the large family of George and Ellen Matthews Barnston, who retired to Montreal. Over the course of twenty-five years, the Barnstons had thirteen children. All of the Barnston children except infant daughter Sarah survived through childhood. Over the course of her life Ellen Matthews Barnston buried at least seven children, most of them adults. When she died at Montreal in 1893 at the age of 78, only six of her children were still living.

The loss of children of any age deeply affected HBC parents. Daniel Harmon wrote in his journal about the heartbreak of informing his wife of their young son

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<sup>21</sup> There was fourteen years between the eldest and youngest of the five surviving siblings.

<sup>22</sup> Louisa McKenzie Bethune (1793-1833), Elizabeth Kennedy Finlayson (1808-1842), and Mary Corrigan (1788-1823), and Sally Wapisk Sutherland, for instance, all had young families when they died.

<sup>23</sup> Ann Sutherland Keith died in 1862, followed by her daughters Betsy Keith Swanston in 1865 and Mary Keith in 1868. All were buried in Montreal's Mount Royal Cemetery.

George's death: "She looked at me with a wild stare of agony, and immediately threw herself upon the bed, where she continued, in a state of delirium, during the succeeding night."<sup>24</sup> In her study of the Connolly-Douglas family, Adele Perry similarly found that the repeated loss of fur trade children was, and remained, devastating to HBC parents like Chief Factor James Douglas and his wife Amelia Connolly.

The geographical separation of families occasioned by the fur trade added additional anxieties about the safety and welfare of fur trade children of all ages. The long silences that could result when letters were lost or recipients relocated, meant that parents could wait for a year or more to hear news of their children. Cuthbert Cumming received news of eldest daughter Margaret's death in childbirth in May of 1834 via a letter from Red River bearing the date of December 19<sup>th</sup>, 1833. Five months had passed by the time he received "the melancholy intelligence."<sup>25</sup>

For retired HBC parents, distance amplified worry about the possibility of never seeing their children again. After retiring to Scotland Nicol Finlayson wrote to his son John in Rupert's Land: "In all human probability it is very likely that we may never see each other in this world for I am getting an old man."<sup>26</sup> Later he wrote: "did my great age allow it I would have great pleasure in passing a winter with you and family at Long Lake."<sup>27</sup> Many HBC officers worked for decades towards a comfortable retirement in Scotland or the Canadas. By the time they realized this goal, many of their children were adults starting lives of their own in Rupert's Land or elsewhere. Letters indicate that aging parents like Finlayson struggled with the reality of distance in their later years.

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<sup>24</sup> *Daniel Harmon's Journal, 1800-1819* (Surrey, BC: TouchWood Editions, 2006), 201.

<sup>25</sup> Cuthbert Cumming to James Hargrave, 20 February 1835. Glazebrook, ed., *The Hargrave Correspondence*, 185.

<sup>26</sup> HBCA E.137 fo. 5, Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, 9 April 1866.

<sup>27</sup> HBCA E.137 fo. 10, Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, 5 January 1871.

## II. Gendered Prospects: Marriages and Careers

Markers of British respectability were highly valued by nineteenth-century imperial parents. Social standing, education, and respectability were seen as the fundamental ingredients for the success of imperial children in metropolitan and settler societies. Fur trade sons were groomed for career paths in enterprises of empire like mission work, the fur trade, government posts, and the military. Other popular professions for fur trade sons included banking, insurance, and medicine in settler colonies and other British-claimed territories. While HBC officers retired to Ontario with sufficient capital to build or purchase upscale homes on prime plots of land, in many families this wealth and privilege dwindled significantly within two or three generations. The 1881 census of Scotland listed Roderick Finlayson's occupation as simply "interest of money."<sup>28</sup> Roderick remained unmarried and was able to live off of a combination of his inheritance and help from his sister and brother-in-law for the rest of his life. Undoubtedly these funds would not have gone far if Roderick had children of his own to support.

HBC family wealth could be lost in other ways as well, particularly through ill-fated investments. Louisa Bethune wrote of her father Donald: "he entered into a law partnership with Mr. Robert Armour, through whom he lost considerable of his own money and some of his wife's."<sup>29</sup> In her estimation, her father's inability to succeed financially as an elite HBC child in settler society was the result of his complicated relationship with his father, Chief Factor Angus Bethune, who "left the bulk of his property to the family of his second son, to the exclusion of all his other children. This

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<sup>28</sup> 1881 Census of Scotland, Nairn, Roderick Finlayson, 123/8, page 18.

<sup>29</sup> Louisa Browne-Calvert, "Donald Bethune," (1897), photocopies in UMASC, Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, MSS 336, A.11-28, Box 1 Folder 19, fo. 21-22.

disappointment seemed to have formed a crisis in Mr. [Donald] Bethune's life...he never regained ambition."<sup>30</sup> Donald Bethune was able to access his father's wealth through his wife's inheritance, just not on his own terms and not to the same extent as his brother Norman. Even with limited access to the estate, Donald Bethune chipped away at the estate's ability to support successive generations of the Bethune family, as patriarch Angus Bethune envisioned.

Similarly, retired Chief Trader Jacob Corrigan left the bulk of his estate to his unmarried daughters, who allowed their brother William to access equity from the estate to invest in a business venture. A relative recounted: "William Corrigan had been operating a book store in Cobourg, but was getting badly in debt...the brave William lost every thing."<sup>31</sup> The unmarried Corrigan daughters enjoyed financial independence and lives of leisure, for a time. As a result of William's financial losses, the Corrigan estate was eventually auctioned off and liquidated. After a number of years relying on the assistance of family members in Peterborough, the longest living Corrigan daughters, Charlotte and Elizabeth, eventually resorted to the town's Home for the Aged Poor, where they died within two months of each other in 1897. HBC sons had complicated relationships with their fathers' wealth. HBC estates were divided in deliberate and unequal ways that often worked to the financial disadvantage of fur trade sons. In the Finlayson, Bethune, and Corrigan families, patriarchs were concerned about their sons' financial acumen and skeptical of their ability to perform a vision of imperial manhood that centered patriarchal responsibility for dependents, particularly unmarried sisters. In some instances, paternal concerns proved warranted, as poor investments by HBC sons

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Recollections of Mary Ettie "Minnie" (Wilson) Davidson [great granddaughter of Jacob Corrigan], 9 October 1941. Personal Collection of I. Wilson.



endangered the financial security that their fathers sought to provide for female dependents.



*Figure 4.1: Corrigan family portrait thought to be of the three unmarried Corrigan daughters (Charlotte, Elizabeth, and Catherine), and one of their nieces.<sup>32</sup>*

In some ways, the education of HBC daughters challenged dominant perspectives on the roles of women in the nineteenth-century British Empire. HBC officers who paid for their daughters to be educated at boarding schools were keen for them to hone the trappings of professional middle class or even elite wives and mothers. Many daughters were educated to fulfill roles as wives of middle-class professionals or the imperial elite,

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<sup>32</sup> Personal collection of D. Fowler.

while others worked as educators themselves. The earliest fur trade histories to centre Indigenous women and their children were often concerned with measuring the extent to which these individuals ‘succeeded’ or were accepted in settler and metropolitan social milieus. These studies are valuable, though they can inadvertently work from an assumption that this was the only metric by which success was measured in fur trade families.

Nishnaabeg scholar Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s recent work centers *Nishnaabewin*, or “the lived expression of Nishnaabeg intelligence” to challenge settler-colonial modes of teaching and learning. She asserts that:

Nishnaabewin did not and does not prepare children for successful career paths in a hyper capitalistic system. It is designed to create self-motivated, self-directed, community-minded, inter-dependent, brilliant, loving citizens, who at their core uphold our ideals around family, community and nationhood by valuing their intelligences, their diversity, their desires and gifts and their lived experiences. It encourages children to find their joy and place it at the centre of their lives.<sup>33</sup>

Simpson’s words are a helpful way to think about the teachings some HBC children likely received from their Indigenous mothers, particularly when they spent their childhoods at HBC posts near their maternal kin. This model provides a useful counterbalance to gendered imperial metrics of success in a nineteenth-century context. Measuring fur trade children against a British imperial worldview ultimately does a disservice to children who did not centre those values. HBC children who did not wholly embody success according to metropolitan and settler lifeways may have found precisely the sort of success they were taught to strive towards, becoming ‘self-directed, community-minded, inter-dependent’ and putting joy and family and community ‘at the

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<sup>33</sup> Leanne Betasamosake Simpson “Land as Pedagogy: Nishnaabeg intelligence and rebellious transformation,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society*, 3, No. 3 (2014), 23.

centre of their lives'. As the previous chapter demonstrated, Indigenous mothers educated their children, particularly their daughters, in many aspects of their maternal heritage and communities.

There is evidence that many HBC children were fluent in multiple languages and lived at trading posts near their maternal kin, indicating that relationships were likely maintained with their mothers' community. Daniel Harmon wrote of his family life: "In conversing with my children, I use entirely the Cree, Indian language; with their mother I more frequently employ the French. Her native tongue, however, is more familiar to her, which is the reason our children have been taught that, in preference to the French language."<sup>34</sup>

French and a dialect of Anishinaabemowin were the first languages spoken by the eldest son of Chief Factor Angus Bethune and Louisa McKenzie Bethune.<sup>35</sup> Donald Bethune's daughter later recounted that "when eight years of age, and unable to speak a word of English – nothing but French and Indian – he was sent down to Montreal [to live with his uncle Norman]."<sup>36</sup> In the Harmon and Bethune families, it is clear that success in the British Empire was not necessarily front of mind for HBC parents, as English cultural and linguistic facilities were not taught from early ages. Chief Factor Angus Bethune grew up in a household where his father spoke primarily Gaelic and English and his mother's first language was French. Daniel Harmon was born in the United States and likely spoke only English in his formative years. English was a first language for both

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<sup>34</sup> Harmon, *A Journal of Voyages and Travels in the Interior of North America*, 218-9.

<sup>35</sup> This is inferred, as Donald Bethune's maternal grandmother was Ojibwe and he spent his early years at HBC posts around Lake Superior. Chief Factor Angus Bethune spent much of his career at Michipicoten and Sault Ste. Marie. See: Hilary Russell, "BETHUNE, ANGUS," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bethune\\_angus\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/bethune_angus_8E.html).

<sup>36</sup> Louisa Browne-Calvert, "Donald Bethune," (1897), photocopies in UMASC, Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, MSS 336, A.11-28, Box 1 Folder 19, fo. 21-22.

men, but it was not the language they prioritized teaching to their young children at home.

Former Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron was raised with English as his first language.<sup>37</sup> Yet, when writing about his son Hugh, he assured Governor George Simpson that his son had “not forgotten his Mother Tongue”, by which he meant a dialect of Anishinaabemowin.<sup>38</sup> Another of Cameron’s sons, James Dugald, operated primarily in Anishinaabemowin for most of his life, since it was the language he learned from his mother and the first language for both of his wives. For most of his adult life, he worked among Ojibwe communities near Sault Ste. Marie as a Baptist Missionary.<sup>39</sup> James Dugald Cameron recounted that he was born, not at the HBC post where his father worked, but among his mother’s people “at Butterfly Lake in the Nipigon Country.”<sup>40</sup>

Ann Sutherland, the wife of George Keith, did not begin learning English until the couple retired to Scotland in 1845 when she was in her late fifties.<sup>41</sup> Ann’s first language is unknown, though it may have been an Athabaskan dialect since she was born near the southern end of the Mackenzie River. Her language would also have been the first language learned by all of her children since the youngest was already twelve years old by the time the Keiths arrived in Scotland.

Nicol Finlayson occasionally wrote to his son John in Cree (Ininîmowin) and recounted practicing his language skills with fellow HBC retiree Angus Cameron, who

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<sup>37</sup> Since he was born in Sorel, Quebec and baptized in a French church, his family may also have operated to some extent in French.

<sup>38</sup> Most likely Cameron was referring to his son Hugh Cameron (1828-1857). HBCA D.5/30 fo. 422, John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 18 March 1851.

<sup>39</sup> During his career he also worked on an Anishinaabemowin bible translation. Letter from James D. Cameron to Rev. Solomon Peck, Baptist Missionary Society, 30 November 1842. Copies in Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 2 File 10, UMASC.

<sup>40</sup> Letter from James D. Cameron to Rev. Solomon Peck, Baptist Missionary Society, 30 November 1842. Copies in Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 2 File 10, UMASC.

<sup>41</sup> HBCA D.5/20 fo. 308, George Keith to George Simpson, 25 September 1847.

also settled in Nairn, Scotland. Gaelic words also graced the pages of Finlayson's letters to his son.<sup>42</sup> The range of language-scapes of HBC families indicates that, in at least some households, greater importance may have been placed on developing Indigenous cultural competencies when children were young. While most HBC fathers eventually hoped that their children's futures would align with models of respectable British manhood and womanhood, this was not necessarily the only path that fur trade children envisioned for themselves.

This is particularly true for unmarried children, whose vital role in extended family economies was more in line with living lives that centered many of the values that Betasamosake Simpson identifies as central to Nishnaabewin. A number of HBC children in Scotland and the Canadas remained unmarried. Scholars have debated the extent to which this reflected prejudices that limited marriage prospects, particularly for women who could not 'pass' as white outside the social context of the fur trade. There were certainly instances where this was the case, though some HBC daughters had the financial independence to eschew marriage. In the mid-nineteenth century, it was not uncommon for unmarried siblings across the British Empire to play central roles in sustaining family networks and economies.<sup>43</sup>

The experiences of unmarried women are foregrounded here in particular, as they have been most often marginalized in both academic and genealogical histories of HBC families. Among HBC sons and daughters in the Canadas and Scotland, marriage rates

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<sup>42</sup> See HBCA E.137, Letters from Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, 1865-1871.

<sup>43</sup> For work on the role of unmarried siblings in families more generally, see: Alison Duncan, "'Old Maids': Family and social relationships of never-married Scottish gentlewomen, c.1740–c.1840." (PhD Diss., University of Edinburgh, 2012); Amy Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005); Michelle Stairs, "Matthews and Marillas: Bachelors and Spinsters in Prince Edward Island, 1881," in Nancy Christie and Michael Gauvreau, eds., *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700-1975* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2004): 247-266.

could be relatively low. The incremental expansion of compulsory civil registration in both places over the latter half of the nineteenth century hamper attempts at rigorous comparisons of the marriage prospects of HBC children and their settler and metropolitan contemporaries.<sup>44</sup> In the cohorts of families that are the subject of this study, children generally reached marriageable age between the 1820s and 1860s, before rigorous and compulsory marriage statistics were centrally tracked in either Scotland or Canada. In a number of families, less than half of adult children went on to marry and start families of their own.<sup>45</sup> This was the result of a complex interplay between the timing of a family's relocation, the prevalence of sickness and high mortality rates among adult fur trade children, the financial security of unmarried adult children, the possibility of racial prejudice, and the reliance on unmarried siblings as anchors in extended families.

Of Jacob Corrigal's six children to reach adulthood, only his daughters Ann and Mary went on to have lifelong marriages and families of their own.<sup>46</sup> Ann married William Nourse, who was her father's friend and colleague in the company's service. In 1834, Mary chose HBC man Robert Scollie as her suitor. It is unknown whether Mary knew about her husband's past, but her father knew that by 1830 his future son-in-law was the father of two children born to the wife of Andrew Thompson.<sup>47</sup> Family reminiscences hint at Corrigal's influence over his daughter Charlotte's marital choices, and perhaps he unsuccessfully attempted to do the same when it came to Mary's

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<sup>44</sup> Detailed marriage statistics are available in Canada from the late nineteenth century. For a discussion of these, see: Eric W. Sager, "The Transformation of the Canadian Domestic Servant," *Social Science History* 31, No. 4 (2007), 528-530.

<sup>45</sup> Two of the seven Corrigal children married, while four of John Dugald Cameron's eight children did. Of Angus Cameron's three fur trade children in Scotland, one married, but waited until her mid-thirties.

<sup>46</sup> Both Mary Corrigal Scollie (1811-1862) and Ann Corrigal Nourse (1804-1857) died in their early fifties when their youngest children were still quite young.

<sup>47</sup> George Barnston wrote to Jacob Corrigal regarding provisions for the children in 1834. Cited in Orkney Archives, D1/222, "Scollie Family Chronicle by F.B. Scollie, 31 Jan 1991," fo. 3. See also HBCA B.3/b/59, Edward Mowat to Alexander Metavish 24 June 1830, cited in *Ibid.*

relationships with Scollie. It is also possible that gendered understandings of matrimony and fidelity meant that the scandal surrounding Scollie's relationship with Mrs. Thompson did not reflect as negatively on him as it did on her, particularly since he made financial provision for the children when he left the HBC's service. While a more emotionally attached model of fatherhood was on the rise in this period, a father's financial support of his children remained the primary social metric against which he was judged.

Charlotte Corrigan was briefly connected to her father's subordinate, a clerk named Robert Elliott Byfield, while the family was living at the HBC's Marten Falls post on the bank of the Albany River. In the fall of 1822, sixteen-year-old Charlotte gave birth to a son named Robert Jacob Byfield.<sup>48</sup> A note in Robert Elliott Byfield's personnel file indicates that he "misconducted himself" five days before the birth of his son, which resulted in his discharge when the company ship came back the following year.<sup>49</sup> This could perhaps coincide with Byfield's superior Jacob Corrigan becoming aware of either the circumstances surrounding his daughter's pregnancy, or of Byfield's future plans with or without Charlotte, but no further information survives. Whatever the case, Charlotte had no further contact with Byfield once he returned to Britain.<sup>50</sup> Their son arrived in London for school in 1831, and by 1834 he was boarding alongside his uncle at his grandfather's expense.<sup>51</sup> By 1840 Charlotte had relocated to Cobourg with her father and

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<sup>48</sup> County of Surrey UK, St. Peter's Church Baptismal Register, Robert Jacob Byfield, 27 November 1831, page 66.

<sup>49</sup> HBCA A.34/1 fo.139. Servants' Character and Staff Records 1822-1830, Lac Seul Post Albany District, 1824.

<sup>50</sup> Byfield left Rupert's Land on the same ship as Jacob Corrigan, who was travelling to London to enrol his son William in school. HBCA C.1/223, Camden Ship Log, 15 Sept.1824. Byfield's personnel records indicate that he was discharged 10 months earlier in December of 1823, but remained in Rupert's Land until the *Camden* departed in September.

<sup>51</sup> Receipt from Mrs. Monger to Jacob Corrigan, 1831. Personal collection of D. Fowler.

her three unmarried siblings. When she and her sisters Elizabeth and Catherine were baptized at St. Peter's Anglican Church in Cobourg in 1843, Charlotte gave Byfield as her surname.<sup>52</sup> By the time the census was taken in 1851 she returned to her former surname. Over time, the contours of Charlotte's story changed to romanticize and sanitize her relationship with Byfield.

According to family lore, Charlotte was married to a young man with whom she had a son, but his name was "kept a profound secret" by Charlotte and her father. The story recounts that Charlotte's husband received word that his father had died and:

He was to come home at once, as he was now heir to a title and great estates. Grandfather Corrigan said he could take his son & go, but Charlotte he would not allow to go, as she was not fitted to fill the position of a great bards wife. He was not going to have his daughter looked down upon.<sup>53</sup>

The man returned to Britain with their son and Charlotte never heard from him again, and "poor Aunt Charlotte had only her ruby earrings left to remind her that her romance had ever been."<sup>54</sup> This story sits awkwardly with the facts about Robert Elliott Byfield. As a clerk who was discharged from the company's service, it is unlikely he was in fact an heir to a great estate, particularly since it was Jacob Corrigan who paid for his son's upkeep at school in London. The ruby earrings were certainly real; Charlotte never removed them and did not sell them even when she and her sisters fell upon hard times later in life. Perhaps the story was embellished as a way to formalize Charlotte's marital life in ways that would be legible in settler society.

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<sup>52</sup> Charlotte was enumerated as single under her maiden name beginning in 1851. Anglican Church of Canada Archives, St. Peter's Church Cobourg Baptismal Register, Charlotte Byfield, 19 July 1843.

<sup>53</sup> Recollections of Mary Ettie "Minnie" (Wilson) Davidson [great granddaughter of Jacob Corrigan], 9 October 1941. Personal Collection of I. Wilson.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid.



Of Charlotte's unmarried sisters, Catherine was said to have danced with the Prince of Wales when he visited Cobourg in 1860. She was an avid equestrian, her social circles included members of prominent Ontario families, and she was active in the Anglican Church in Cobourg.<sup>55</sup> While Catherine and unmarried brother William served as the public face of the family, it is likely that Elizabeth, the next eldest daughter, held domain over the private sphere of the large family home. Though a descendant noted: "Aunt Elizabeth never had anything special happen in her life," it is likely that Elizabeth took joy in the many nieces and nephews who she and her siblings nurtured and supported. The unmarried Corrigan children factored prominently in the childhood memories of their nieces and nephews and were remembered for their love of dogs, the beautiful home and gardens they kept, and their care of family members in times of need.<sup>56</sup>

The three unmarried Corrigan siblings cared for a revolving host of nieces and nephews at various times who stayed with them while attending school, after the unexpected death of one or both parents, or during their summer holidays. The Corrigan women raised some of their sisters' children after the premature deaths of both women. Nieces Kate Nourse and Margaret Scollie, and nephew George Jacob Scollie lived with the Corrigan siblings in Cobourg.<sup>57</sup>

The roll of pupils for Upper Canada College listed several Corrigan nephews as wards of their unmarried uncle William Corrigan, who arranged their education after their

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<sup>55</sup> Catherine Corrigan's circle of acquaintance included members of the Boulton family, as well as politician and novelist Sir Gilbert Parker. Orkney Archives, D1/222 "Scollie Family Chronicle by F.B. Scollie 31 Jan 1991," Letter from Sir Gilbert Parker to Anne Fowler Scollie, 1902.

<sup>56</sup> Recollections of Mary Ettie "Minnie" (Wilson) Davidson [great granddaughter of Jacob Corrigan], 14 November 1941. Personal Collection of I. Wilson.

<sup>57</sup> Ibid.

fathers had died. Nephew George Jacob Scollie was attending Upper Canada College in 1848 when he was twelve years old, while his cousins Jacob William Nourse (age thirteen) and William C. Nourse (age twelve) attended in 1845 and 1857, respectively.<sup>58</sup>

Many imperial families had long traditions of relying on the labour of unmarried siblings to sustain family networks and take advantage of economic opportunities.<sup>59</sup> HBC officers appealed to their own unmarried siblings for help securing housing for their children while they were educated outside Rupert's Land. HBC Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron sent his daughter to live with his sister Janet in Toronto in the 1840s. Janet kept house for their lifelong bachelor brother, the Honourable Duncan Cameron, at his large Toronto estate.<sup>60</sup> Evidently, John Dugald Cameron and his wife made at least two attempts to send their daughter to her aunt in Toronto. In 1841 he lamented, "My foolish Daughter did not like Toronto – she returned to us [at La Cloche] last summer."<sup>61</sup> By the spring of 1843 Margaret was again living with her aunt.<sup>62</sup> Janet Cameron kept house for her brother Duncan all his life and inherited his sizeable Toronto estate when he died in 1838. She was the mistress of her own affairs in Toronto for the rest of her life, supporting her brother John Dugald's children when they needed a place to live.

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<sup>58</sup> Upper Canada College Toronto: the roll of pupils January 1830-June 1916 (Kingston: Hanson, Crozier & Edgar, 1917), 463 and 536.

<sup>59</sup> See for example: Emma Rothschild, *The Inner Life of Empires: An Eighteenth-Century History* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2011); Alexander Charles Baille, *Call of Empire: From the Highlands to Hindostan* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2017); and Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets, Shame and Privacy in Modern Britain* (London, Oxford, 2017).

<sup>60</sup> The Cameron home, called Gore Vale, stood at what is now the corner of Queen Street and Gore Vale Avenue in Toronto. Trinity Bellwoods Park was part of the original lot. Duncan Cameron was a member of the Executive Council of Ontario (1806-1817) and a warden of St. James Church (1811-1812). See Eric Arthur, *Toronto, No Mean City: 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003), 222. See also Jon Harstone, *Between the Bridge and the Brewery: A History of the Trinity-Bellwoods Neighbourhood in Toronto* (Toronto: Trinity Bellwoods Neighbourhood Association, 2005), 20. J.D. Cameron applied for a leave of absence in 1839 to attend to his brother's affairs. See his letter in Glazebrook, ed., *Hargrave Correspondence*, 297.

<sup>61</sup> John Dugald Cameron to James Hargrave, 1841. Glazebrook, ed., *Hargrave Correspondence*, 345.

<sup>62</sup> John Dugald Cameron to James Hargrave, 5 May 1843. Glazebrook, ed., *Hargrave Correspondence*, 437.

Later in the family lifecycle, unmarried adult children were called on to care for their aging parents, as well as members of their married siblings' families in times of need. These adults also fulfilled key functions in local communities. Unmarried children often appear as genealogical 'islands' in family trees because they did not marry or have children of their own. This has obscured the central roles they played in injecting emotional and physical labour and financial support into extended family economies.

In the wake of the deaths of John Dugald Cameron and his son Hugh in close succession, unmarried daughter Margaret Cameron assumed control over the Cameron family household in Grafton, Ontario. At this time, Cameron's nephew Duncan Nolin travelled from Red River to stay for several months with her and his widowed grandmother.<sup>63</sup> While the women undoubtedly benefitted from his assistance to keep the household running, their home also provided a sort of pressure valve for the Nolin household in Red River. Duncan's mother (Margaret's older sister Anne) was herself a widow with ten children, and sending her son to stay with his aunt and grandmother meant one less teenaged boy to feed.

Initially, the household was comprised of Margaret, her mother, and her nephew. Later that year, however, her sister-in-law Selina Bidwell Cameron and her three children also joined them. For reasons unknown, Margaret's brother John Ranald Cameron was gone, leaving his wife and children behind unsupported. By the time the census was taken in 1861, he still had not rejoined his family. In 1871 his death was registered in Grafton and his name added to a memorial stone in the local Anglican cemetery. His name does not appear in the burial registers for that year, indicating that he may have been buried elsewhere.

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<sup>63</sup> HBCA D.5/46 fo. 464, Margaret Cameron to George Simpson, 23 April 1858.

Most often the emotional and household labour that supported family members in times of need and distress fell to unmarried sisters. When John Ranald Cameron left his wife and children behind, it was his sister Margaret that wrote to HBC Governor George Simpson begging for an advance on interest from her father's estate to support them.<sup>64</sup> Of her two remaining brothers, James was a missionary in Sault Ste. Marie, Michigan with a family of his own, and her unmarried brother Charles was thought to be somewhere amongst the goldfields of California, though he was never heard from again.

Other unmarried HBC children went on to contribute to the education of younger generations in different ways. Abby Maria Harmon, the daughter of Daniel Harmon and his Indigenous wife Lisette Duval, went on to found a boarding school for young ladies in Ottawa. Daniel Harmon died suddenly in 1843, leaving his wife and six children in dire financial straits. By 1861 Abby was supporting herself as a teacher in the affluent Golden Square Mile of downtown Montreal.<sup>65</sup> The following year she established the Harmon Ladies' School in Ottawa.<sup>66</sup> Newspaper coverage of her sudden death estimated that Harmon touched the lives of "hundreds of Ottawa's foremost women" over the course of her career, and that "few residents of the city were known so widely or held in greater esteem and respect than was Miss Harmon."<sup>67</sup>

A former student of Harmon's recounted that she was "proud of her Cree blood and ancestry, and no less proud of her father's reputation as a fur trader and explorer."<sup>68</sup>

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<sup>64</sup> HBCA D.5/46 fo. 334, Margaret Cameron to George Simpson, 1 April 1858. For more detailed discussion of these exchanges, see Chapter Five.

<sup>65</sup> For more discussion of the Golden Square Mile, see Chapter Two. Library and Archives Canada, Census of Canada 1861, Roll C-1243, District 36, p. 7, line 7.

<sup>66</sup> The school was located at 49 Daly Street until 1892, and at the corner of Elgin and McLaren streets for another twelve years. *The Ottawa Journal*, 21 Sep 1904, Page 10.

<sup>67</sup> *The Ottawa Journal*, 21 Sep 1904, Page 10.

<sup>68</sup> From John Spargo, *Two Benington-Born Explorers and Makers of Modern Canada* (1950), Cited in Smith, 81.

Historian Stewart Wallace recalled: “I well remember meeting her when I was a child; and she bore unmistakable signs of her Indian ancestry.”<sup>69</sup> The Harmon Ladies’ School’s reputation was such that Prime Minister John A. Macdonald’s granddaughter was an attendee. Historian Donald B. Smith has seen this connection as evidence of Macdonald’s racial tolerance towards Indigenous people.<sup>70</sup> In historical writing over time, Harmon has been put forward as a shining example of success in spite of, rather than owing to, her Indigenous heritage. This obscures the influence of Harmon’s fur trade roots on her career path. Harmon’s success was a product of her relentless work ethic, her early education during her father’s lifetime, her mother Lisette Duval Harmon’s influence, and the financial insecurity that followed Daniel Harmon’s death.

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<sup>69</sup> W. Stewart Wallace, “The Wives of the Nor’Westers,” in *Pedlars from Quebec and their Papers on the Nor’Westers* (Toronto: Ryerson, 1954), 68.

<sup>70</sup> Donald B. Smith, “Macdonald’s Relationship with Aboriginal Peoples,” in Patrice Dutil and Roger Hall, eds. *Macdonald at 200: New Reflections and Legacies* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 2014), 81-82. See also Donald B. Smith, “We should honour Sir John, eh?” *Globe and Mail*, 11 January 2000. The extent to which Macdonald’s profoundly racist and genocidal view of Indigenous peoples was not simply a product of his time has, however, been well documented in the archive and by scholars in recent years. See for instance: Leela Viswanathan and Scott Morgensen, eds. Special Issue: “Contested Histories of Racialization and the Legacies of Sir John A. McDonald” *Journal of Critical Race Inquiry* 3, No. 1 (2016); and James Daschuk, *Clearing the Plains: Disease, Politics of Starvation, and the Loss of Indigenous Life* (Regina: University of Regina Press, 2014).



Figure 4.2: Abby Maria Harmon<sup>71</sup>

On a Monday evening in September of 1904, Abby Maria Harmon took her own life. She was 63, and had outlived both of her parents and all of her six siblings. Her death was announced under the headline: “Very Pathetic Death of Miss A. Harmon/Ended Her Life While Temporarily Insane.” Harmon’s doctor George S. MacCarthy spoke to *The Ottawa Journal* and explained that he advised Harmon to retire from teaching and give up keeping student boarders. MacCarthy recounted that Harmon “had sufficient to live comfortably for the rest of her days, [but] in her nervous condition she worried and expressed a fear that she would become bankrupt if she gave up teaching.” As a result of what he considered an irrational fear of poverty, MacCarthy attributed “her rash act to nervous prostration and mental depression which produced

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<sup>71</sup> “Abby Maria Harmon,” Library and Archives Canada MIKAN 3470100.

insanity.”<sup>72</sup> Harmon bequeathed a considerable \$20,000 estate to a number of charities.<sup>73</sup> She was buried with her mother at Mount Royal Cemetery, the only one of seven children to outlive her mother Lisette Duval Harmon.

A week earlier, local papers also reported on the death of fellow fur trade daughter and educator Annabella MacLeod (daughter of Chief Factor John MacLeod), who continued teaching until the week of her death.<sup>74</sup> Teaching provided a way for HBC daughters to assert their independence and put their educations to use. While a great deal of wealth was concentrated among the HBC’s officer elite, that wealth did not always have the staying power to benefit the next generation, compelling HBC daughters to find either vocations or husbands. Leanne Betasamosake Simpson’s words echo here, as Harmon and MacLeod, and other HBC daughters like them became ‘self-motivated, self-directed, community-minded, inter-dependent’ and harnessed the value of ‘their intelligences, their diversity, their desires and gifts and their lived experiences’.

### **III. Mobility, Race and Remembering:**

The high degree of mobility that characterized the lives of some HBC families presents a number of challenges to historians, who in many ways continue to struggle with the practical, methodological and disciplinary boundaries of the nation states so freely crisscrossed by this nineteenth-century group as they moved back and forth between the social and economic worlds of the fur trade, the Canadas, and Britain. Identities could be refashioned, and as a result, HBC siblings from the same family could

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<sup>72</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, 20 September 1904. For more information on Harmon’s school and the buildings it occupied in Ottawa, see photographer and local historian Christopher Ryan’s excellent “The Margins of History” blog: [www.historynerd.ca/2014/01/04/miss-harmons-tragic-end/](http://www.historynerd.ca/2014/01/04/miss-harmons-tragic-end/), accessed 10 May 2019.

<sup>73</sup> *Ottawa Journal* 19 October 1904.

<sup>74</sup> *Ottawa Journal*, 13 October 1904.

live their lives in very different social and geographical worlds. Siblings with diverging life courses do not fit easily within geographically bounded historiographical categories and have thus been represented in very different ways in historical writing over time.

Even in their own lifetimes, archival invisibility could pose a challenge for fur trade children. In the summer of 1955, the HBC's archivist received a letter from Ronald Christie, whose father James Grant Christie was one in a long line of Christies who served the HBC. Ronald was born at Moose Factory in 1890 to Isabella and James Grant Christie. By 1955 Ronald was a farmer in Florida who needed the HBC to certify his birthdate in order to qualify for a Florida senior's pension.<sup>75</sup> By the time Christie was born in 1890, administrative boundaries were still in flux in northern North America. Though Europeans had lived, worked, and fought over Moose Factory for more than two centuries, there was no official registration of Christie's birth. At that time Moose Factory was still lumped into the amorphous 'North West Territory'. It was nominally under the direct control of the federal government, deemed insufficiently populated or 'developed' for provincial status.<sup>76</sup> Into the late nineteenth century in what was Rupert's Land, the settler colonial state's ability to 'know' its residents through official recordkeeping could not always surmount the practical challenges of shifting jurisdictions and mobile subjects.

As Chapter Two demonstrated, the tandem advantages of mobility and financial means allowed HBC people to recast themselves as genteel British subjects in other imperial contexts. In 1910 the daughter of Sir Edward Seaborn Clouston, director of the Bank of Montreal, received a Rolls Royce, one of only 489 automobiles in use in

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<sup>75</sup> HBCA Archives Department Research Correspondence, RG 20/4, Ronald Christie to HBC Archivist, 4 July 1955.

<sup>76</sup> Moose Factory became part of Ontario in 1898.



Montreal that year.<sup>77</sup> Her father was among the merchant princes and self-made men of the era, who got his start with the HBC and leveraged his deep familial connections in the company to entrepreneurial success in Montreal. The Cloustons visited the summer home of former HBC colleague Lord Strathcona and counted the Redpaths, McGills, and Oslers among their social circle. In these cases, economic success outside Rupert's Land could recast longstanding fur trade families. This refashioning could be limited however, in instances where a fur trade person's physical attributes put their histories on display regardless of how much they worked to hide them.<sup>78</sup> Sir Clouston's daughter Osla was said to have been a topic of gossip in Montreal's high society as a result of being "dark-skinned."<sup>79</sup>

The expansion of colonialism across the globe in the nineteenth century was the thread that connected the diverse pathways of elite HBC sons. Members of the Sutherland and Ballenden families settled and worked in the settler colonies of Australia and New Zealand, while members of the Finlayson, Barnston, and Anderson families pursued financial success in business and imperial civil service in India. Macdonell and Cameron sons became missionaries, while McDonald, Anderson, and Finlayson sons became Indian Agents in the new Dominion of Canada.

Between the 1840s and 1860s, young men from the McDonald, McMurray, Anderson, and Cameron families all left eastern Canada in search of fortunes from the late-nineteenth-century explosion of 'gold rush imperialism' in Australia, New Zealand,

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<sup>77</sup> It is unclear whether the car belonged to Marjory or Osla Clouston. McCord Museum, M2001X.6.57, Clouston-Todd, Garantee No.94 Rolls-Royce Ltd London & Derby, Rolls Royce delivered March 9, 1910 to Miss Clouston of Montreal, daughter of Sir Edward Seaborn Clouston. <http://collections.musee-mccord.qc.ca/en/collection/artifacts/M2001X.6.57/>

<sup>78</sup> This will be addressed in more detail in Chapter Six.

<sup>79</sup> Elizabeth Kirkland, "Mothering Citizens: Elite Women in Montreal 1890-1914" PhD Diss., McGill University (2011), 30.

British Columbia, and California.<sup>80</sup> In an intensified way, gold rushes were sites where settler colonial governance was worked out and enacted, and where imperial scientific knowledge and manpower were circulated and exchanged between imperial seats of power and sites at the margins of empires.

William McMurray's nephew wrote to him about the gold rush in New Zealand and the news he had from acquaintances in the gold diggings of California and Australia.<sup>81</sup> The California gold rush was particularly popular for HBC sons.<sup>82</sup> Thomas Matheson left his aunt's home in Colborne, Ontario, bound for California. Once there he happened to run into his uncle Thomas McMurray from Brighton, Ontario, who no one had heard from for nearly a year.<sup>83</sup> Many of the same imperial families circulated through various fields of empire in the nineteenth century. In this way, it was possible for HBC sons to find other fur trade people while working abroad. In the nineteenth century, colonialism operated as a single backdrop to the diversity of career opportunities explored by HBC sons, and the different pathways taken by elite fur trade siblings.

Identities could shift or could be deliberately reworked through transimperial mobility, which could impact HBC siblings in very different ways. When HBC officer Nicol Finlayson retired to Nairn, Scotland in 1855, his teenaged daughter Mary accompanied him. She went on to marry a prominent local banker and raise a large family. Finlayson lived with his daughter and son-in-law on High Street for the rest of his

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<sup>80</sup> The study of global gold rushes with single frames of analyses has increasingly garnered attention from imperial and global historians. See: Benjamin Mountford and Stephen Tuffnell, eds., *A Global History of Gold Rushes* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2018); and James Belich, *Replenishing the Earth: The Settler Revolution and the Rise of the Anglo-World, 1783-1939* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 306-330. For an examination of the social dynamics of gold rush migrations, see: Susan Lee Johnson, *Roaring Camp: The Social World of the California Gold Rush* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2000).

<sup>81</sup> HBCA E.61/11 fos. 15-16, Henry Gray to William McMurray, 11 July 1865.

<sup>82</sup> Charles Cameron, Roderick and Robert Anderson, and Thomas McMurray and his nephew Thomas Matheson, for instance, all headed for California.

<sup>83</sup> HBCA E.61/8 fo.41, Colborne 6 May 1862 Jane Cumming to William McMurray.

days, writing the rest of his children regularly. Only letters written to his son John in the 1860s and 1870s survive, though they clearly indicate that Nicol was in regular correspondence with each of his six adult children during his retirement years in Nairn. The surviving letters updated John on his sister in Scotland, his sister Nancy and brother Hector in Red River, his brother Joseph in Saskatchewan, and his troublesome brother Roderick who occasionally came to land at their father's home in Nairn. Their father vented: "I have been at much expense on the education of your brother...he has vexed me so much that I do not write him...Mary unites with me in love to yourself and children."<sup>84</sup> The letters hint that the Finlayson family members did not distinguish between full and half-siblings.

Many years later a descendant in Canada came across a photograph of John and members of his large family that was captioned "An Indian Family." A distant cousin in England also looked through Finlayson family photographs, though these depicted a nineteenth-century genteel British family. The widely diverging life courses of the Finlayson siblings are particularly evident in these two images. Nicol Finlayson's son John appears with his wife Angelique Shebagijig, their grandchildren, and their son Louis Victor Nicol Finlayson and his wife Jane Soulière. The family is posed outdoors, likely near Fort Michipicoten where John Finlayson lived and worked in the company's service.<sup>85</sup> John's sister Mary Finlayson Lamb is depicted seated in front of a photographic background, likely near her home in Nairn, Scotland.<sup>86</sup> One of her daughters sits on her lap, dressed in lace with a tartan sash, while her mother wears a lace collar affixed with a

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<sup>84</sup> HBCA E.137/1 fo. 6, Nicol Finlayson to John Finlayson, 6 April 1866.

<sup>85</sup> The Fort stood at the mouth of the Michipicoten River, near present-day Wawa, Ontario.

<sup>86</sup> Mary and John were half-siblings, but their father did not make this distinction when writing to John about his sister, or when writing his will.

large gold brooch. Portraiture was part of the trappings of late-nineteenth-century genteel British life. It could be used as a way to represent a particular vision of oneself, but photographs could also live many different lives across vast distances as keepsake or artifact. In the case of Finlayson descendants, digital images could evoke the same emotional reactions as physical objects, revitalizing links between distant branches of a transatlantic family.



*Figure 4.3: Mary Finlayson Lamb and her daughter in Nairn, Scotland<sup>87</sup>*

Descendants of Mary Finlayson in the United Kingdom had no idea that she and her siblings were born to Indigenous women in Rupert's Land, or that many Finlayson

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<sup>87</sup> Personal collection of W. Lees.

cousins could be found throughout northern Ontario and across North America.

Descendants would have a difficult time reconciling the closeness demonstrated in Nicol Finlayson's letters to his son John with the silence that replaced it in the following generation when each sibling's family lost sight of each other entirely. After Nicol's death his children, whose life experiences diverged greatly, could not find the common ground needed to maintain a tradition of letter writing capable of bridging the physical and growing cultural gulfs between them. As a result, the siblings have been represented and categorized in very different ways by both historians and their own descendants; a reminder of the mutability of racial and cultural categories.

Of the six Finlayson children to reach adulthood: Mary and Roderick blended into Scottish society; Joseph belonged to the Metis community of Prince Albert, Saskatchewan, working first for the HBC and later as an Indian Agent. John served the HBC in the area around Michipicoten and Longlac and his descendants belonged to First Nations communities in that area. Hector, along with his sister Nancy's family, were among the Cree signatories to Treaty One at Lower Fort Garry in 1871, though Hector also later applied for Metis scrip.<sup>88</sup> Nicol Finlayson's children were all of Indigenous and Scottish ancestry, yet they all identified with very different cultural groups depending on where they lived, who they married, the languages they spoke, and the communities where they felt they belonged. HBC families like the Finlaysons demonstrate the

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<sup>88</sup> See: James Fortier, "Ojibway Family History: Finlaysons of Long Lake and Pic River bands of Ojibway," accessed 11 January 2019, [http://www.turtle-island.com/native/family-roots.html#New\\_Finlayson](http://www.turtle-island.com/native/family-roots.html#New_Finlayson); and Norma J. Hall, "St. Peter's Parish/ 'the Indian Settlement'/ Peguis' Settlement," (published 15 May 2013), <https://hallnjean2.wordpress.com/resources/definition-provisional-government/the-people-electorate/st-peters-parish/>; and Gary Still, "Nicol Finlayson," (updated 12 July 2016), <https://www.redriverancestry.ca/FINLAYSON-NICOL-1794.php>

contingence of racial categories, and the importance of land, kinship, culture, and community for determining an individual's membership in a particular group.

Nicol Finlayson's colleague Chief Trader Cuthbert Cumming retired with his wife and younger children to Colborne, a small town near the shores of Lake Ontario in 1844. Cumming appears, alongside his first domestic partner Susette McKee and their six children, in Red River Metis genealogy books and indexes. Many sources make no mention of the six children Cumming went on to have with wife Jane McMurray. Both of his long-term partners were of British and Indigenous ancestry, and nearly all of Cumming's twelve children were born at HBC posts, yet it is the children who remained in Rupert's Land that have been accounted for in the historical record, appearing as a large Metis family at Red River.

Cumming's children with Jane McMurray were much younger when he retired and accompanied the couple when they settled in Ontario, integrating into rural gentry farming life. Unlike the case of the Finlaysons, few surviving letters have been found that demonstrate on-going links and correspondence between the Red River and Ontario branches of the Cumming family, aside from scattered references indicating that Cumming was in some kind of contact with most of his children.<sup>89</sup> What is certain is that their mobility resulted in branches of the family existing in totally different social milieus that have made them the subjects of separate historiographical fields and disjointed genealogies.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>89</sup> Cumming occasionally mentioned his children when he wrote to HBC colleagues.

<sup>90</sup> For an example, see the partial listing of Cumming's children in: Gail Morin, *Métis families: a genealogical compendium* (Pawtucket, RI: Quintin Publications, 2001), 519-521.

Like his friend and colleague Cuthbert Cumming, HBC Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron retired with his wife Okaquajibut and some of his adult children to Grafton, not far from Cumming's home in Colborne. The Cameron children who accompanied their parents east blended into settler society and largely disappeared from the historical record. Their sister Anne, however, appears in histories of the Red River Metis as the matriarch of a large French Catholic Metis family, with little discussion of her Scots Loyalist and Ojibwe roots. After the death of her husband Augustin Nolin in 1848, Anne remained with her ten children in the parish of Ste-Anne-des-Chènes, not far from what became the city of Winnipeg. French was her preferred language, and she used the inheritance she received from her father and husband to purchase investment property, amassing a large estate that secured her children's position in the upper echelons of Red River society.

Letters between Anne Nolin and her parents or siblings in Ontario do not survive, but her sister Margaret's letters to Governor George Simpson make clear that the sisters were in regular contact, with at least one of Anne's children spending nearly a year with his maternal relatives in Grafton. The political opposition of Anne's son Charles to his cousin Louis Riel through the 1870s and 1880s is perhaps understood differently in light of his maternal heritage.<sup>91</sup> The varied trajectories of the Ontario and Red River branches of the Cameron family have led to the imposition of historiographical walls between the siblings, truncating and constraining the family's history despite the close relationships they maintained in the decades after their physical separation. John Ranald's difficulty settling into British gentry farming life, or daughter Anne's incomplete assimilation into

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<sup>91</sup> Diane P. Payment, "NOLIN, CHARLES," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 13, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/nolin\\_charles\\_13E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/nolin_charles_13E.html).

French Red River Metis society cannot be fully understood apart from each other or apart from the social and imperial fabric of the fur trade. Families like the Camerons are perhaps best understood within a wider frame of reference that grapples with the realities of lives lived within and beyond national and historiographical walls and thresholds. In both the Cameron and Cumming families, older children (and their descendants) who remained in Rupert's Land 'became' Metis, showing the extent to which such identities could derive from situational context rather than notions of inherent biological or cultural distinctions.<sup>92</sup>

#### **IV. Conclusion:**

The trends mapped here with regard to family composition, mortality, and marriage prospects are necessarily partial but indicate areas where they may have differed from contemporary British families. Above all, the families of HBC officers were characterized by diversities in experience that occurred within and across a variety of imperial spaces. As adults, elite fur trade children contributed to and became enmeshed in different colonial projects. Over time, this obscured historical connections between them. A focus on individual families ultimately results in a much wider frame of analysis that demonstrates the ways that members of nuclear families could be racialized, categorized, and memorialized in very different ways. This focus also underscores the importance of individuals such as unmarried women, who supported extended family economies and kin ties.

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<sup>92</sup> See Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 2014); and Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2005) for discussions of similar issues.



## **Chapter Five**

### **The Economy of ‘Tender Ties’: Race, Gender, and Inheritance**

This chapter examines the transmission of wealth within Indigenous Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) families in Canada and Britain, paying particular attention to will writing and inheritance practices. Though the chapter looks at families in Scotland and Canada, Britain is used in this instance as many HBC estates were probated through the Prerogative Court of Canterbury in England, which handled estates when testators died overseas. HBC officers had assets in England by virtue of their accounts with the HBC’s London Committee. Close analysis of the wills and codicils of HBC retirees shows that inheritance practices were underpinned by distinctly imperial paternal anxieties, and provided moments where imperial hierarchies of gender and race could be both enacted and subverted. It is important to note the particularities of wills as primary sources in this context. While many HBC labourers left wills on file with the company, the HBC’s officer class was unique in that their economic status and the nature of their work created circumstances under which will writing was almost universal. Some wills were basic, perfunctory, or out of date by the time a testator died, while others were complex and updated regularly with codicils to reflect changes in family and material circumstances. In all their forms, will documents offer a glimpse of family life as members of the HBC’s officer class envisioned it. Though they are rooted in particular and fleeting moments, wills are not snapshots in time. Reading a will is more like flipping through a photo album, where the arrangement and labelling of photographs give a sense of how the

album's creator wanted to exhibit their social world. Wills could lay bare uncomfortable family truths, but also obscure them, particularly when they occupied a liminal space between different legal jurisdictions and categories. Such documents, written for public consumption solely from the perspective of privileged (usually white) men, can never communicate the range and complexity of family relationships or individual experiences.

With these limitations in mind, wills can be valuable sources for thinking through the broader social and legal pressures brought to bear on nineteenth-century imperial families, and the ways that upper-middle-class or elite men made sense of their relationships and responsibilities. The wills of HBC men differed from the wills of others in their new home communities in distinct ways. In most instances, their estates were quite large and comprised largely of cash and stocks rather than real estate. The text of the wills themselves belies patriarchal concern about providing a single, stable home for Indigenous widows and children in times of need, and anxiety about the legal status of heirs and consequently their ability to inherit the bequests allotted for them. Wills, and in particular the designation of executors, created and reasserted the bonds between an HBC officer and his colleagues, and in a sense secured a means of patriarchal supervision and control that could be wielded from the grave. As in other British imperial locales, the wills of HBC men yield rare insight into racial and gendered family dynamics, and the ways such men reckoned and made sense of family, duty, and legacy.

In her germinal work *Strangers in Blood*, Jennifer S.H. Brown used fur trade wills to trace social networks among fur traders and to shed light on changes in the legal status of fur trade children.<sup>1</sup> This chapter also uses wills as a window on fur trade family and

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<sup>1</sup> See for example Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver, University of British Columbia Press, 1980) 91, 98, and 103.

social relations but does so by setting them within the context of a wider British Empire. Historians of colonial New Zealand, Jamaica, and India have examined wills and inheritance patterns as indicators of the racial and gendered hierarchies that existed within the private realm of imperial households. In recent years, historians interested in uncovering the gendered and material experiences of women over time have also found will documents useful for both qualitative and quantitative analyses.<sup>2</sup> An ‘emotional turn’ in legal scholarship has also seen scholars look critically at the affective landscape of the family as it is represented or enacted through the administration of estates.<sup>3</sup>

Much like Brown’s work with fur trade wills, Daniel Livesay and Trevor Burnard have examined the interplay between legal status and the choices and opportunities open to eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Jamaicans with British fathers.<sup>4</sup> Bettina Bradbury has explored the ways that private family relationships in New Zealand could be publicly “articulated, measured, and judged” when colonial wills were challenged in imperial courts.<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> See for example Stephanie Appleton, *Women and Wills in Early Modern England: The Community of Stratford-Upon-Avon, 1537-1649* (University of Birmingham, 2016); Cordelia Beattie, “Married Women’s Wills: Probate, Property and Piety in Later Medieval England”, *Law and History Review* (2019): 1-32; Bettina Bradbury, *Wife to Widow: Lives, Laws, and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Montreal* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2011); Amy Porter, *Their Lives Their Wills: Women in the Borderlands, 1750-1846* (Lubbock TX: Texas Tech University Press, 2015); Sharon Teague, *Patterns of Bequest within the Family: Testamentary Evidence from the Ecclesiastical Registers of Canterbury and York c. 1340-1440* (University of Toronto, 2013).

<sup>3</sup> H. Conway, “‘Where There’s A Will...’: Law and Emotion in Sibling Inheritance Disputes”, in H. Conway, & J. S. (Eds.), *The Emotional Dynamics of Law and Legal Discourse* (pp. 35-57). (Oxford: Hart Publishing, 2016): 35-57.

<sup>4</sup> See Trevor Burnard, “Family continuity and female independence in Jamaica, 1665-1734,” *Continuity and Change* 7, no. 2 (1992): 181-198; and Daniel Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune: Mixed-Race Jamaicans in Britain and the Atlantic Family, 1733-1833* (Chapel Hill NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2018).

<sup>5</sup> Bradbury, “Troubling Inheritances: an illegitimate, Māori daughter contests her father’s will in the New Zealand courts and the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council,” *Australia and New Zealand Legal History* (2012), 126.

Durba Ghosh's influential *Sex and the Family in Colonial India* examined the "economy of sentiments and affect" in the wills of British men in India, demonstrating that Anglo fathers distributed wealth among sons and daughters in distinct ways that upheld their own notions of gendered difference and authority.<sup>6</sup> Ghosh found that wills were spaces where Indian women were simultaneously acknowledged by their partners yet also hidden and devalued; often appearing as 'housekeepers'. Anglo men simultaneously articulated emotional attachment to their Indian partners and their children, yet demonstrated concern about the social and legal ramifications of these relationships.

A similar tension was worked out in HBC wills, which both forged and expressed affective bonds, but were also permeated with patriarchal anxiety about the legal status of widows and children. Additionally, the unique circumstances of fur trade family life gave rise to a fixation on the idea of a family home as a safe space for Indigenous women and their children in times of hardship. The designation of executors reasserted homosocial bonds between HBC officers and established a system of patriarchal supervision and control, while will documents themselves provided a space where distinctly imperial economic and intimate lives could be asserted and negotiated.

On a practical level, HBC men (and less often women) wrote and rewrote wills to ensure the orderly distribution of what were generally large and cumbersome estates with assets, executors, and legatees spread across territories that operated under varying legal systems. Employee accounts were based at Hudson's Bay House in London under English common law, which also prevailed in Ontario. French civil law took precedence in Quebec, while Scots Law was a combination of these systems. Before 1870 an uneven

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<sup>6</sup> Ghosh, 110 and Chapter 3.

mix of English common law, Indigenous protocols, and locally specific legal practices governed Rupert's Land, with Indigenous legal orders often taking precedence.<sup>7</sup>

Like their contemporaries among the ranks of Britain's growing middle class of professionals, the estates of retired HBC officers were comprised largely of cash and stocks rather than large tracts of real estate, though they also differed in key ways. The estates of HBC retirees were notable in the comparative lack of real estate they included. In most cases, their wealth was liquid; they invested and held stock in banking institutions, railway and land companies, and the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, alongside their annual dividends on account with the HBC.<sup>8</sup> Many owned just enough land for a fine country home and perhaps space to keep a small number of livestock, a carriage house, and a garden or fruit trees. Unlike other Canadian gentry farmers or middle-class British urbanites in this period, they were not largely invested in real estate with resulting income from mortgages and rents, nor were they interested in creating enduring landed estates or multigenerational commercial enterprises. Cash payments and annuities were the most common modes of distributing wealth. In this way, HBC officers most closely resembled the growing ranks of British middle-class professionals.<sup>9</sup>

### **I. 'One common home'**

Dominion over land, as it was sought and experienced in the Canadas and other settler colonies, was not an experience of Empire that was common to HBC men and

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<sup>7</sup> For a discussion of legal regimes see: Louis A. Knafla and Jonathan Swainger, eds. *Laws and Societies in the Canadian Prairie West, 1670-1940* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005).

<sup>8</sup> The Puget Sound Agricultural Company was established in 1839 at arm's length from the HBC to promote settlement and agriculture in the disputed Oregon Territory, though many HBC officers were associated with and invested in it.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the composition of the estates of professionals in Britain at this time see Leonore Davidoff and Catherine Hall, *Family Fortunes: Men and Women of the English Middle Class, 1780-1850* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), 211-212.

their families. Their sense of belonging in a place had very little to do with the modes by which settlers in the Canadas claimed space; that is by dividing, owning, enclosing, and agriculturally extracting monetary value from the land. As seen in Chapter One, HBC men's experience of Empire in British North America was of a fundamentally different character. It was based on the extraction of natural resources within the context of Indigenous kin networks, shifting geographical ranges, and varied seasonal rounds, and thus was not based in individual land ownership or agricultural activity. Land was central to the extractive imperial enterprise of the fur trade, but its role differed profoundly from nineteenth-century iterations of British settler colonialism.

In most cases, the estates of HBC officers were comprised of annuities paid out of stock dividends or interest payments. The generally high value of HBC officer estates meant that the interest and dividends from investments could often support dependents for many years without liquidating the principal investment or assets such as the testator's home. As a result, the wills of HBC officers differed in key ways from their landowning contemporaries in Britain and the Canadas. Unlike gentry farmers in Ontario and Quebec, HBC officers were not interested in establishing a family farmstead that could be passed down through generations.<sup>10</sup> They also differed from the British professional class. Hall and Davidoff found that a significant proportion of the wills of British professionals (30 percent) included directives to immediately sell real estate so

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<sup>10</sup> For discussions of impartible inheritance in rural North American settings see David H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Carole Shammas, "English Inheritance Law and its Transfer to the Colonies", *American Journal of Legal History*, XXXI (1987): 145-63. For discussion of the inheritance of family farms in Ontario specifically, see; Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Kingston and Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 236; Catharine Wilson, *Tenants in Time: Family Strategies, Land, and Liberalism in Ontario, 1799-1871* (Kingston & Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 190-213.

that the proceeds could be divided equally among their heirs.<sup>11</sup> In nearly 80 percent of all middle-class wills, sons and daughters inherited equally in terms of value.<sup>12</sup> Conversely, the wills of HBC retirees divided wealth in distinct and unequal ways and made clear that their home should be maintained as a landing place for family members (particularly women) in need. These wills clearly displayed an attachment to the idea of a family home as a safe space for minor children or unmarried, widowed, or otherwise unsupported adult daughters.

Differences between HBC officer wills and the wills of their British and Canadian contemporaries were rooted in the unique circumstances of fur trade family life. For HBC families, mobility and distance were constant. It was not unusual for children to travel vast distances for the purposes of education, while patriarchs could be transferred hundreds of miles away on short notice, or travel to Britain for a year of furlough; family members could pass years or even decades apart. A sense of endemic rootlessness underpinned family life for members of the officer class. In 1842 a son of Chief Factor John Dugald Cameron and his Ojibwe partner Okaquajibut answered a questionnaire about his origins, writing: “I was born A.D. 1806, Oct. between 8 and 9<sup>th</sup> at Butterfly Lake, in the Nipigon Country, Canada. I never had a permanent home.”<sup>13</sup> James Dugald Cameron was born near his maternal kin, was a fluent Anishinaabemowin speaker, and continually returned to the region of his birth in adulthood as a Baptist Missionary. Yet, his formative years were spent with his family in the officer’s quarters of various HBC posts along Lake Superior and Lake Huron, before he was sent south to Toronto and later

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<sup>11</sup> Hall and Davidoff, *Family Fortunes*, 206.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>13</sup> Letter from James D. Cameron to Rev. Solomon Peck, Baptist Missionary Society, 30 November 1842. Copies in Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 2 File 10, UMASC.

Ottawa for schooling. His siblings lived in places as diverse as Labrador, Red River, and California, and his parents eventually settled in Grafton, Ontario. HBC children like James Dugald Cameron might have maintained attachments to their place of birth or to the geographic base of their maternal kin, yet this attachment may not have translated to a feeling of rootedness to a particular home place that physically linked family members.

This yearning for a sense of home tied to the physical presence of one's family unit is likely what influenced HBC retirees to deliberately create such places, as demonstrated through both the will-writing process and the creation of family memorial stones (which will be discussed in Chapter Six). Retired Chief Trader Jacob Corrigan was careful to specify that his home and furnishings in Cobourg, Ontario should remain intact for the use of all three of his surviving daughters, whether married or single, so that they might "leave said premises and return again thereto at any time they may choose, with their child or children in widowhood, or under any unfortunate circumstance."<sup>14</sup> Corrigan spent nearly his entire adult life in the service of the HBC where relationships and personal fortunes were often casualties of the exigencies of the trade, and so he made a concerted effort to safeguard a family home for his daughters.

Provisions of this sort protected minor children and unmarried daughters, but could also disadvantage sons and married daughters, whose access to family wealth could be delayed by many years. When Corrigan's son-in-law Chief Trader William Nourse later encountered financial hardship, a friend wrote that it was unfortunate that Nourse had "nothing from his late father-in-law at least not until the deaths of his three unmarried sisters-in-law."<sup>15</sup> Once the patriarch's widow and daughters remarried or passed

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<sup>14</sup> Archives of Ontario (hereafter AO) Probate Records, RG22 6-1-A, Will of Jacob Corrigan, 1844.

<sup>15</sup> HBCA D.5/24 fo. 308, John Dugald Cameron to George Simpson, 27 February 1849.



away, the implication was that their home should be sold and the proceeds added to the principal value of the estate that would be split in deliberate, and often unequal, ways among the surviving legatees.

Although Nourse himself would have benefitted from the immediate and equal division of his father-in-law's estate, he also upheld the importance of maintaining a family home in his own will. Nourse directed that his home and furnishings should be left intact "for the use and benefit of my daughters Eliza and Catherine for so long a period as they or she respectively shall remain single and unmarried...my desire being that my [children]...may have one Common Home."<sup>16</sup> Unlike the archetypal gentry farmer, Nourse was not concerned with maintaining a family farm or homestead that could remain intact for generations of his descendants. His will was clear that the property should be liquidated after the death or marriage of his daughters so that the proceeds could be divided among his surviving children. Nourse's main concern was the provision of something his children never had during his working life with the HBC; a family home imbued with all the specificity and security that such structures were supposed to offer. Once his children went on to create their own family homes, it was Nourse's wish that the equity from his own property would be used to help fund his children and grandchildren's lives elsewhere.

Of course, there are instances where HBC will writers demonstrated a desire for their executors to quickly liquidate assets into cash. Chief Factor Alexander Stewart asked that, "without delay after my death all my property and estate real and

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<sup>16</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.44/3 fo. 2, Will of William Nourse, 1855.

personal...be sold and converted into money.”<sup>17</sup> Stewart’s failing health required him to retire from the company’s service much earlier than he intended, and three of his seven children were still minors.<sup>18</sup> Stewart’s direction to liquidate his assets was motivated by the knowledge that they were insufficient to both provide long term income for his wife and children and maintain a ‘common home’ for his family after his death.

Corrigal and Nourse were not unique in their wish to preserve a family home for as long as their immediate family members might need it. Many of his HBC colleagues made provisions for the maintenance of a family home until their widows and children no longer needed it. John Dugald Cameron directed that his home and its furnishings should remain intact as long as his unmarried daughter Margaret and widow Okaquajibut remained living.<sup>19</sup> James Anderson’s will declared that his home could not be sold by his wife Margaret during her life unless she remarried.<sup>20</sup> George Keith took a similar approach to his home in Aberdeen, leaving it and its furnishings for the use of his wife Ann and their daughter Mary for as long as they needed it.<sup>21</sup> The gender politics at work in these and similar estates will be discussed in more detail below. Certainly arrangements such as these guaranteed that some of the material needs of widows and unmarried daughters were provided for on a long-term basis, though they could also circumscribe women’s autonomy.

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<sup>17</sup> Transcription of the will of Alexander Stewart, 12 December 1839 from James Keith’s Letter Book, University of Aberdeen Special Collections (hereafter UASC) MS 2769/1/57/1.

<sup>18</sup> Twins Henry and Flora were fourteen, and their older sister Mary was sixteen. See: The National Archives; Kew, England; *Prerogative Court of Canterbury and Related Probate Jurisdictions: Will Registers*; Alexander Stewart Probate 27 February 1841 (hereafter *PROB*) 11/1941, Vol.3, fo. 366).

<sup>19</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/4 fo. 5, Will of John Dugald Cameron, 1857. Cameron’s son-in-law also included a similar provision in his will:AO, GS1 Reel 1099, fo. 61, Will of William Clouston, 9 November 1866.

<sup>20</sup> HBCA Anderson Family Fonds, E.37/22 fo. 3-6, Will of James Anderson, 1863.

<sup>21</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/8 fo.9, Will of George Keith.

HBC officers clearly valued the preservation of ‘one common home’, but only as long as their immediate family members might need it. In this regard, they differed significantly from their neighbours in the Canadas or Scotland, for whom family homes were either maintained over many generations or immediately liquidated. This was a direct result of the relative affluence of retired HBC officers and also derived from the peripatetic nature of fur trade family life.

## II. ‘Strangers in Blood’

As the unique social and economic conditions of the fur trade gave rise to alternate conceptions of the family home, it also created specific legal quandaries for HBC will writers. Nineteenth-century imperial families posed a number of legal challenges for imperial governance. HBC families were no exception. Bettina Bradbury’s case study of a court battle over a Maori woman’s inheritance in nineteenth-century New Zealand revealed that race, gender, and class all factored into the highly variable process by which imperial courts reckoned with the legal rights of children from across the Empire.<sup>22</sup> Questions around inheritance, the legality of fur trade marriages, and the British subjecthood of Indigenous women and their children tested the boundaries and flexibility of both the imperial state and the HBC’s dominion over Rupert’s Land. Though the HBC was a part of Britain’s wider imperial ambitions, and its legal authority over Rupert’s Land derived from a Crown Charter, the two entities were not always in agreement on legal questions related to the wills of HBC men.<sup>23</sup> Company officers, who generally had large estates and equally large families, employed a variety of legal

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<sup>22</sup> Bradbury, “Troubling Inheritance”, 163.

<sup>23</sup> For a discussion of ‘contradictory sovereignties’ in Rupert’s Land, see; Edward Cavanagh, “A Company with Sovereignty and Subjects of Its Own? The Case of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1763,” *Canadian Journal of Law and Society*, 26 No. 1 (2011): 25-50.

strategies to ensure their wealth was distributed according to their wishes. Anxieties about the legal legitimacy of fur trade heirs dominate estate documents. HBC officers consciously deployed legal terminologies to support the legal rights of widows and children to varying degrees of success. Executors pragmatically used both company and state legal practices to influence estate outcomes in line with their colleagues' final wishes.

A large proportion of the officer wills consulted for this study included specific and deliberate terminology that affirmed the legal status of their children, while references to the validity of fur trade marriages occurred less often. No records explaining the use of particular terms in the context of HBC wills have been located. However, the dominant trends in will vocabulary suggest that HBC officers worked from a similar understanding of the legal particularities of fur trade will writing. Perhaps they sought advice or templates from the HBC or their fellow officers to ensure their will documents were above legal reproach. Despite the lack of documentation of these sorts of exchanges in meticulously kept officer letter-books, the similarity of officer wills indicates that some exchange of knowledge and advice regarding estate planning must have taken place.

While nineteenth-century British will writers often used the terms 'issue' or 'heir' to refer to their children, HBC officers did not. Their deliberate avoidance of these terms stemmed from the legal realities they conveyed. Both terms related to family units as defined by Western legal tradition; 'heirs' included one's spouse and blood relatives, while 'issue' applied to heirs of the body (children born in wedlock). In environments of heightened patriarchal concern about the legal legitimacy of imperial children such as

Rupert's Land, these terms unnecessarily opened the door to challengers that refuted the legality of fur trade marriages.

Instead, HBC fathers often employed the terms 'natural', 'adopted', 'reputed', and 'legatee' with reference to their children; avoiding terms with narrow definitions predicated on legally endorsed biological relationships. In the context of will writing, the labels 'natural', 'reputed', and 'adopted' rested on the father's acknowledgement of his child.<sup>24</sup> In these instances, biological relationships and the marital status of the child's parents were irrelevant. References to Indigenous women and their children as 'legatees' similarly avoided definitions of legitimacy that could be challenged in court by an HBC officer's British family. A legatee was simply any person who was named in the will and received a legacy from the estate, though it generally referred to people such as friends who were not related to the testator. In a sample of officer wills written between 1824 and 1866, two-thirds of testators used additional terminology to clarify and bolster their children's legal status, with the terms 'adopted' and 'legatee' being the most commonly used.

In his will, retired Chief Factor Angus Bethune referred to each of his children as "natural" sons and daughters, but ironically specified that his children's annuities could only pass to his grandchildren if they were considered "lawfully begotten." Interestingly, a transcript of Bethune's will, most likely authored by his granddaughter, completely omitted any reference to Bethune's children as natural.<sup>25</sup> Wills were legal documents with

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<sup>24</sup> If paternity was supported by evidence of some kind, the term 'reputed' could also apply even if the father did not acknowledge his child. There are no examples of unacknowledged reputed children in the wills consulted.

<sup>25</sup> Photocopies in UMASC Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 1, Folder 19, fo. 21-22. It is likely that Donald Bethune's daughter Louisa Bethune Browne-Calvert transcribed the will, as she was the author of the accompanying biographical sketch of her father.

potentially life-altering implications for descendants. As a result, the text itself needed to lay bare family relationships in all their legal complexity to ensure that the testator's wishes could be enacted and upheld. Once the document served its legal purpose, any inconvenient truths it put on display that were obstacles to neat and tidy family histories could be conveniently erased or forgotten by descendants. The terminology an HBC father used in his will did not necessarily correlate with how he saw his legal relationship to his children. In most cases where wills were drawn up, children were born to couples that considered themselves and were publicly acknowledged as husband and wife. However, the easiest way for HBC fathers to skirt legal challenges to their children's legitimacy was to avoid conventional terminologies that were predicated on family relationships that conformed to British legal and social standards.

Scholars writing on many fields of Britain's empire have uncovered patriarchal anxiety regarding the legitimacy of imperial children.<sup>26</sup> Challenges to the inheritance rights of Indigenous women and their children generally focused on the legal validity of marital relationships, and consequently, the legitimacy of children that resulted from such relationships. Estates were usually only the subject of court challenges if the estate was very large and worth the time and expense of litigation. A relatively early instance of a disputed fur trade estate was that of Chief Factor John McDonald, who died intestate at his home on Kempenfelt Bay (near present-day Barrie, Ontario) in 1828. The result was more than two decades of legal wrangling to wade through competing claims on the

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<sup>26</sup> See for example: Bradbury, "Troubling Inheritances"; Burnard, "Family continuity and female independence in Jamaica"; Margot Finn, "The Barlow Bastards: Romance comes home from the Empire", in Finn, Lobban and Taylor, eds. *Legitimacy and illegitimacy in nineteenth-century law, literature and history* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010): 25-47; Ghosh, *Sex and the Family in Colonial India*; and Livesay, *Children of Uncertain Fortune*.

estate from McDonald's children and his brothers.<sup>27</sup> In the end, only the legal legitimacy of McDonald's youngest child Catherine was affirmed, as she was the only child born after he and his wife were married in a Christian ceremony.<sup>28</sup> The disinheriting of McDonald's older children would have been a cautionary tale to HBC officers, highlighting the vulnerable legal position of fur trade children if their fathers left no will.

Similarly, when Chief Trader James Cameron died suddenly in 1851,<sup>29</sup> his uncle and former Chief Factor Angus Cameron wrote to Governor Simpson out of concern over the estate:

[The] loss to his mother and young family is irreparable and I would beg to submit for your mind's consideration to see if it were possible to make his retiring interest something more liberal than the bare allowance provided by the Deed Poll...there is no will and his mother will be his Heir at Law.<sup>30</sup>

By this time, the disadvantaged legal position of fur trade children when their fathers died intestate was more entrenched. Angus Cameron knew that if there was no formal will listing the members of James Cameron's 'young family' as legatees, they could not successfully challenge the designation of the deceased's mother as his only heir. Instead of helping James Cameron's fur trade family mount an ill-fated legal challenge, Angus Cameron wrote directly to Governor Simpson. Cameron's hope was that the company would circumvent imperial inheritance practices by undertaking a parallel process of acknowledging the legitimacy of the fur trader's family in Rupert's Land and paying part

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<sup>27</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown, "McDONALD, JOHN (1770-1828)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 6, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald\\_john\\_1770\\_1828\\_6E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/mcdonald_john_1770_1828_6E.html).

<sup>28</sup> HBCA A.36/9 fo. 6-37; A.F. Hunter, *A History of Simcoe County, Volume I* (Barrie: Simcoe County Council, 1909), 27.

<sup>29</sup> No further information about Cameron's 'young family' has yet been located. For a short biographical sketch of James Cameron see: Elaine A. Mitchell, *Fort Timiskaming and the Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1977), 242.

<sup>30</sup> HBCA D.5/30 fo. 491-2, Angus Cameron to George Simpson, 29 March 1851.

of his retiring interest to them directly. This would allow some of the estate to be distributed before it could be inventoried and probated in Britain.

It was not uncommon for legatees to skirt formal imperial legal proceedings in favour of appealing directly to the HBC's desires to assert its sovereignty in Rupert's Land and avoid the costs associated with supporting destitute HBC widows and children at company posts. In 1848, Governor Simpson wrote to advise James Keith of funds he advanced to Keith's niece. Fanny Keith Heron was in "great distress" and needed funds for her daughter's medical care. Her husband was awaiting the outcome of legal proceedings regarding an estate in which he was a legatee. Simpson wrote that he advanced Heron the funds since "the forms of law are so tedious that although the thing has been in court for a length of time, it is still uncertain when, if ever, any part of it may be forthcoming."<sup>31</sup> While Simpson received many letters from HBC family members in dire financial straits, it is important to bear in mind that Fanny Keith Heron's success in her application for aide was due in no small part to her father and uncle's close friendships with Simpson. Social capital and networks of kin and patronage were essential to a legatee's ability to appeal to alternate forms of estate management through the HBC rather than imperial courts.

Widow Ann Ballantyne also wrote to Simpson for financial assistance for her and her daughter on the basis that her late brother, an HBC employee, had always helped her financially in the past and would have left her a legacy if he had written a will.

Ballantyne assured Simpson: "my brother always was very kind to me on account of me bein a widdow [sic]."<sup>32</sup> It is unclear from the letter who exactly Ann's brother was,

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<sup>31</sup>UASC James Keith Fonds Letter book, George Simpson to James Keith, 25 November 1848.

<sup>32</sup>HBCA D.5/37 fo. 273, Ann Ballantyne to George Simpson, 22 December 1859.



though the Ballantynes were well connected with the HBC's upper echelons through kinship with the Governor's wife and with the Finlayson brothers. The fact that the letter did not provide such information indicates not only that Simpson knew Ann Ballantyne, but also that he felt compelled to assist her even though there was no formal legal basis for her claim. Simpson's notations in the margins of the letter show that he was able to procure £100 for Ann and £50 for her daughter Isabela. These were not trivial sums; according to the National Archives, £100 at this time was enough to pay the wages of a skilled tradesman for 500 days.<sup>33</sup>

In situations where an HBC man left no will, or when an estate was mired in legal proceedings, those with sufficient social capital could appeal directly to the HBC (through George Simpson) to resolve inheritance issues in a parallel process that at times worked at variance with imperial courts and solidified allegiance to the HBC as a paternalistic entity that asserted sovereignty in North America.

This is not to say that HBC executors never appealed to formal imperial legal processes to clarify the legal rights of fur trade legatees. Executors for Alexander Roderick McLeod referred his will to the Doctors' Commons, a legal advisory body in London, for advice on how the estate should be administered. Chief Factor Alexander Roderick McLeod died in June of 1840 while on furlough in Quebec, leaving behind a widow and seven children. His will referred to the unnamed mother of his children as his "legitimate wife", but made no such statements in relation to his children's legitimacy. McLeod's short will stated that his assets should be "disposed of in the best manner my Executors may deem most expedient for the use and benefit of my family." McLeod's executors referred the will to the Doctors Commons for advice on "whether any question

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<sup>33</sup> See: [www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/](http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/currency-converter/), accessed 1 May 2019.

can arise as to the legitimacy of the children” and whether they had the power to apportion the estate “according to their own views of what is just and beneficial” or were bound by a particular law or standard, and if so, which. Eighteen months after McLeod’s death the Doctors’ Commons affirmed the children’s legitimacy but curtailed the executor’s discretion, directing that the estate should be disbursed in accordance with English customs, that is one-third of the estate to the testator’s widow and the remaining split equally among his children.<sup>34</sup>

The Doctors’ Commons was a self-governing society of civil and ecclesiastical lawyers with the power to rule on legal questions involving jurisdictions outside of England. It was disbanded as legal institutions were streamlined in the late 1850s.<sup>35</sup> The existence of the Doctors’ Commons largely kept the fundamental question of the legal legitimacy of fur trade families from being argued in British North American courts before the 1850s, as executors could appeal directly to the Doctors’ Commons for rulings on individual cases, or British relatives disputing a will could do so through metropolitan courts. After a handful of inconsistent verdicts, the precedent-setting *Connolly v. Woolrich* (1867) case ultimately affirmed the legal validity of fur trade marriages in the new Dominion of Canada.<sup>36</sup>

Though the Doctors’ Commons affirmed the legal rights of McLeod’s family, the time involved in forwarding the case and waiting for the findings created a chain reaction of delays in distributing the estate. Before the estate could be finalized, one of the

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<sup>34</sup> UASC James Keith’s Executory Book, John Doddson, Doctors’ Commons, 28 December 1841.

<sup>35</sup> The Matrimonial Causes Act of 1857 in large part led to the obsolescence of the Doctors’ Commons. See: R.B. Outhwaite, *The Rise and Fall of the English Ecclesiastical Courts 1500–1860* (Cambridge University Press, 2006), 103-104.

<sup>36</sup> For more fulsome examinations of *Connolly v. Woolrich*, see: Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 90-96; Philip Girard and Jim Phillips, “Rethinking ‘the Nation’ in National Legal History: A Canadian Perspective,” *Law and History Review*, 29 No. 2 (2011): 610-614; and Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: the Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (London, Cambridge University Press, 2015) 102-107.

executors died and another renounced his role. Probate was granted to McLeod's daughter Sarah Ballenden in 1842 but was reassigned to her sister Amelia in 1854 after Sarah's death.<sup>37</sup> The everyday impacts of administering estates through overseas imperial courts were no doubt front of mind for legatees and executors. The time and expense involved in legally complex cases, and the hardships that could arise for fur trade families while they awaited their inheritances would have motivated HBC will writers to make their bequests as clear and enforceable as possible.

HBC fathers put great effort into reinforcing their children's inheritance rights. John Dugald Cameron's will was permeated with concern that his children's access to his estate could be hampered by the fact that they were all born before he married their mother by church custom in 1833.<sup>38</sup> The closing to his 1857 will clearly attempted to remove any ambiguities about his children's legal status, stating that "the words son or sons and daughter shall not be read or construed in the strictly legal sense ... but shall be held to apply to and mean those whom I have always recognized and treated as my sons and daughters without reference to their strictly legal claim as such."<sup>39</sup> While Cameron's declaration seems unequivocal, his concern proved warranted.

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<sup>37</sup> PROB 11/1956, p. 31, No. 301.

<sup>38</sup> HBCA Red River Register of Baptisms, Marriages, and Burials, E.4/1 no. 260, 5 June 1833.

<sup>39</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/4 fo. 5, Will of John Dugald Cameron, 1857.



*Figure 5.1: Cameron Family Home in Grafton, Ontario*<sup>40</sup>

Two years after John Dugald Cameron's death, his son-in-law William Clouston wrote to George Simpson on behalf of his two sons. He reported that his late father-in-law's estate was under the control of local executors (not HBC colleagues) who would "not pay any thing Note even the intreste [*sic*]." Clouston asked about copies of paperwork in Simpson's possession related to property Cameron owned, as "by that means the boys wishes to try to gete something [*sic*]."<sup>41</sup> Clouston, as a former labourer in the company's service, was very much Simpson's social inferior in the HBC's strict hierarchy. Clouston's tone in the letter is deferential and apologetic. He clearly felt that his sons had great need of the funds owed to them, or he never would have appealed to Simpson for help.

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<sup>40</sup> Personal collection of W. Darou.

<sup>41</sup> William Clouston to George Simpson, 10 February 1859, HBCA D.5/48 fo.189.

Nearly two decades later, Cameron's descendants were still trying to access their inheritances. In 1876 his widowed daughter-in-law Selina Bidwell wrote to Cameron's grandson Joseph Nolin in Red River. She asked Nolin to join in a lawsuit, explaining to her nephew that the executors were unwilling to pay the legacies that were owed to the grandchildren of John Dugald Cameron (himself and her own children included) on the grounds that "the marriage of your grandfather was informal and consequently no legal heirs survive." She went on to inform him that "after a great many ineffectual attempts to obtain the share which should come to my children" a lawyer was retained.<sup>42</sup> Once an estate became the subject of litigation, legatees sought relief through multiple channels, sometimes simultaneously and to varying degrees of success. Court records indicate that in 1880 Selina Bidwell Cameron was successful in securing the promise of payment, but did not receive the funds. By 1885, nearly three decades after her father-in-law's death, the matter was still before the courts.<sup>43</sup> Records related to John Dugald Cameron's estate show that patriarchal anxieties about the legal status of fur trade children were well founded.

Chief Factor George Keith was similarly concerned about his own family members' ability to inherit from his estate. Keith sought legal advice on an 1836 draft of his will. An advisor wrote: "there may be some difficulty with respect to legitimacy on which account it may also be necessary to be more particular in particularly designating the legatees." As a result of the instructions he received, Keith's will was amended to refer to "legatees whether legitimate or illegitimate" rather than 'children'.<sup>44</sup> By clearly

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<sup>42</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/11 fo.54, Selina Cameron to Joseph Nolin, 6 March 1876.

<sup>43</sup> See James F. Smith, ed., *Reports of the High Court of Justice for Ontario, Vol. X* (Toronto: Rowsell & Hutchison, 1885), 58-66.

<sup>44</sup> HBCA A.36/8 fo.9, Instructions for the will of George Keith, 5 October 1836.

addressing the issue of legitimacy, and by referring to his children as simply legatees, Keith barred any potential challenge to his children's right to inherit.

While working at the HBC's Fort Garry in 1865, Chief Factor William Christie received a letter from an Edinburgh solicitor hired by his father retired Chief Factor Alexander Christie. The elder Christie was advanced in years and his health was failing, and so he decided to hire a lawyer to draw up settlements for his sons in advance of his death. The settlements disbursed the bulk of Alexander Christie's assets before his death, likely to put him at ease that most of the funds intended for his children were safely distributed and could not be tied up in court after his death. While the paperwork was being drawn up, William Christie wrote to his father's attorney to voice concern about his legal status, since he was born in Rupert's Land before his parents were formally married. The lawyer wrote to Christie to assuage his concerns, assuring him that "according to our law you are a Scotchman...place of birth does not touch or affect your legal status" with respect to inheritance.<sup>45</sup> Although William Christie was assured that there would be no complications arising from his legal status, the fact that he was concerned enough to write to Edinburgh for reassurance indicates that the issue was not uncommon.

In fact, the estates of HBC retirees such as John Stuart, Samuel Black, Hugh Faries, Peter Skene Ogden, and John McDonald were all subject to litigation over the legal legitimacy of HBC widows and children.<sup>46</sup> By the time Christie began settling his father's affairs in the 1870s, the social landscape of the fur trade had changed considerably. Precedent-setting court cases, the proliferation of missionaries across

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<sup>45</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/4 fo.117, John Marshall to W.J. Christie, 6 September 1865.

<sup>46</sup> McDonald, Stuart, and Black's cases are discussed here. Peter Skene Ogden settled in the United States and is outside the purview of this study. See Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 98 for mention of this case. Faries v. Montferrand, Superior Court of Montreal No. 286, 27 October 1854. Photocopies in Jennifer S.H. Brown fonds, MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 3 Folder 8, fo. 9-10.

British North America, and growing social pressures to conform to British Christian family and gender relations meant that fur trade unions and the children they produced were increasingly regularized in the eyes of the state, both in Scotland and in Canada.<sup>47</sup>

In 1853, Chief Factor Donald Smith presided over his own marriage ceremony with Isabella Hardisty, five years after the birth of their only child Maggie. Years later, after amassing a sizeable estate and the title of Lord Strathcona, Smith became concerned that a more official marriage ceremony would be necessary to put his daughter's legitimacy above reproach. In 1896 Lord and Lady Strathcona were married in New York with two lawyers in attendance. At the end of his life, Smith still took pains to emphasize the legality of his marriage and the legitimacy of his daughter and heir. Even on his deathbed, Smith was careful to assert the legitimacy of his marriage and his daughter Maggie in his updated will.<sup>48</sup> Worry about the financial futures of their fur trade children was a common experience for many HBC officers.

However, for more ambivalent or detached HBC fathers, the lack of clarity with regard to fur trade children's legal status could be used to disinherit previously acknowledged wives and children entirely. Chief Factor John Haldane's will made no reference to his wife Josette Latour at Moose Factory, or the annuity he reportedly promised her when he retired to Scotland.<sup>49</sup> Even if the couple were separated, Josette would be entitled to a 'widow's share' of Haldane's estate under Scots law, which

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<sup>47</sup> For more detailed discussion of social change in Rupert's Land, see: Ted Binnema, Gerhard Ens, and R.C. Macleod, eds., *From Rupert's Land to Canada* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2001); Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*, 197-207.

<sup>48</sup> For discussions of the Smiths' weddings see: Donna McDonald, *Lord Strathcona: A Biography of Donald Smith* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1996), 101, 405; and Nancy Millar, *Once Upon a Wedding: Stories of Weddings in Western Canada, 1860-1945* (Calgary: Bayeux Arts Inc., 2000), 22.

<sup>49</sup> See HBCA, A.44/3: f.116; and Elizabeth Arthur, "HALDANE, JOHN," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 8, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/haldane\\_john\\_8E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/haldane_john_8E.html).

guaranteed widows at least one-third of their husband's estate. Children were entitled to share at least one-third of the estate, while the additional third could be disbursed according to the testator's wishes. By Scots law, it was not possible to completely disinherit one's spouse or children.

John Siveright made an addition to his will that left interest from a small number of shares to his unnamed 'adopted' son and daughter, but only if funds remained after all the other legacies and charitable donations were paid.<sup>50</sup> Geographical distance and legal ambiguities surrounding fur trade family units meant that patriarchs could deliberately avoid supporting marital partners or acknowledged children. While this study is focused largely on families that remained intact after their patriarchs retired from the HBC, it is important to bear in mind that this family formation was not universal.

The settlement of one Chief Factor's estate could attract the competing interests of his family, the HBC, and the Crown. The HBC nervously eyed the legal wrangling over the estate of Chief Factor John Stuart out of concern that if Stuart's widow was left with nothing, the company would need to make provision for her. Stuart was separated from his acknowledged wife Mary Taylor in the final years of his life, though she received a large bequest in his will. Stuart's sisters disputed the estate and eventually had Taylor's inheritance reduced.<sup>51</sup> The Scottish court undermined the validity of Stuart's marriage. All the while, the HBC remained keen to uphold the inheritance rights of HBC wives and children against Scottish parents or siblings who sought to disinherit them. In large part, this came from a pragmatic self-interest to avoid financially supporting HBC

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<sup>50</sup> Edinburgh Sherriff Court, Will of John Siveright 15 May 1855, SC70/4/48 fo. 1012-1014.

<sup>51</sup> See Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 136; and also Shirlee Anne Smith, "STUART, JOHN (1780-1847)," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stuart\\_john\\_1780\\_1847\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/stuart_john_1780_1847_7E.html).



dependents at company posts and to maintain the company's sovereignty over Rupert's Land.

Samuel Black's Scottish siblings hotly contested his estate in court, hoping to disinherit Black's children and his partner Angélique Cameron.<sup>52</sup> Black had thousands of pounds to his credit with the HBC at the time of his death. After more than a decade of court proceedings, executor James Keith worked tirelessly to secure £100 for Black's two youngest children.<sup>53</sup> Under typical circumstances, widows and children were guaranteed minimum levels of support from wills. In light of this well-established legal precedent, the range of outcomes in disputes over HBC estates is telling. The uncertainty surrounding the legal status of fur trade wives and children clearly opened the door to challenges that could disinherit them entirely.

Durba Ghosh found that courts generally upheld the validity of unions between Anglo men and Indian women in the interest of buoying the patriarchal authority of Anglo men over their family units. On the contrary, court decisions in HBC estates often did the opposite by ignoring the wishes of British male testators and undermining the inheritance rights of fur trade widows and children.

HBC will writers deployed particular language with reference to their partners and children as a way to suppress potential challenges to their legal status, to varying degrees of success. Fundamentally, HBC families fit imperfectly within imperial and settler systems of inheritance, which relied on narrowly defined legal categories to regulate kinship. In addition to their basic function as vehicles by which family wealth

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<sup>52</sup> George Woodcock, "BLACK, SAMUEL," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 7, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003–, accessed November 2, 2018, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/black\\_samuel\\_7E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/black_samuel_7E.html). HBCA A.44/3,

<sup>53</sup> HBCA D5/30 fo. 199 George Keith to George Simpson, 4 February 1851.

was conveyed to younger generations, wills served other distinct purposes in fur trade families. Through wills, homosocial bonds between a testator and his executors were established, while patriarchal control of a testator's family could also be facilitated.

### **III. 'Refractory, headstrong and incorrigible subjects': Executors and Patriarchal Control<sup>54</sup>**

HBC estates were incredibly time-consuming to administer. Executors could be living inland at an HBC post where mail packets might arrive twice a year, or they could be retired fur traders living an ocean away from their fellow executors and the legatees, solicitors, and banks involved in the estate. The administration of wills maintained affective ties between unrelated men for decades after their geographical separation from one another. For HBC families, the complex and long term administration of wills served as a tool for forging and maintaining social bonds and as an antidote to the physical and cultural distance created between kith and kin after families left Rupert's Land. The selection of executors was particularly important since it allowed patriarchs to create a longstanding and continually renewed link between his legatees and his most trusted friends, while ensuring some form of patriarchal care and control of his family. Naming an executor affirmed homosocial relationships of trust and respect, but also tied fur trade families together beyond the lifetime of their patriarchs.

Wills made in Rupert's Land often went so far as to simply list the legatees and leave the estate to be divided at the discretion of the executors to the benefit of the family. Chief Factor John MacDonell, for instance, gave his executors the power to distribute his estate "in the like manner as they may suppose I would do were I allowed to

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<sup>54</sup> UMASC, James Keith copy book, James Keith to Governor and Committee of the HBC, 13 March 1834.

remain upon earth.”<sup>55</sup> These clauses required and demonstrated implicit trust between HBC officers. The maintenance of close relationships during life assured will writers that their open-ended pronouncements would be interpreted correctly by their executors in death. The decedent placed absolute trust in his executors’ ability to both interpret his wishes and carry them out, or the consequences could be grave for his family.

Fur trade families kept in touch with and looked out for one another both out of genuine friendship and feeling and out of legal responsibility and pecuniary interest. Surviving family members could not break ties with executors because wills set up complex and longstanding relationships that persisted for decades or even for life. This trend was in line with inheritance practices in Rupert’s Land, where it was not uncommon for the widow or daughters of a deceased fur trader to collect annuities from estates for many decades. Matilda Moar, the daughter of Chief Factor William Thomas, was still receiving an annuity from her father’s account with the HBC in 1878, fully six decades after his death.<sup>56</sup> Nancy Goodwin, the daughter of Master Trader Robert Goodwin and his Cree partner Mistigoose (Jenny), received payments from her father’s estate for more than 70 years.<sup>57</sup> Annuity payments were a cumbersome financial and administrative drain on HBC resources, yet they were an expected part of fur trade family life that was fundamental to encouraging employees to re-sign consecutive contracts that saw them remain in the company’s service for decades.

Chief Factor Richard Hardisty asked that any wages in his account with the HBC be left with the company until after his wife’s death, so she could access emergency

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<sup>55</sup> PROB 11/1849, p. 325, no. 14. Will of John McDonell, 1834.

<sup>56</sup> HBCA B.135.z.4 fos. 21-43, Annuity Certificate of Matilda Moar, 28 August 1878, Moose Factory.

<sup>57</sup> HBCA B.135.z.4 fos. 21-43, Annuity Certificate of Nancy Goodwin, 28 August 1878, Moose Factory.

funds if she ever needed them.<sup>58</sup> Margaret Sutherland Hardisty outlived her husband by more than decade during which time the HBC presumably reserved her husband's funds for her. This provision in Richard Hardisty's will demonstrates an implicit trust in the HBC. Hardisty relied on the company firstly to act promptly if Margaret was in need, and secondly, ensure she could access everything left for her use in her husband's account. This feeling was no accident; officer loyalty and faith in the HBC's paternalistic 'care' for their employees and their families was built over two centuries through the hierarchy and corporate culture of the 'Honourable Company'.<sup>59</sup>

While longstanding annuities and investments were commonplace to estate planning in the fur trade, such complicated and drawn out estate administration was unheard of in the so-called 'civilized world', where executors were expected to conclude the decedent's affairs as quickly and efficiently as possible. Even Chief Factor Alexander Stewart, who directed that his estate be converted to cash as soon as possible after his death, declared that payments could only be made to legatees who survived him by at least one year.<sup>60</sup> Perhaps this was an attempt to simplify the administration process in the event of an epidemic where multiple family members (particularly young children) could perish within a short time. The twelve-month timeline also allowed for delays in locating and corresponding with legatees, executors, and lawyers who lived elsewhere in the British Empire.

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<sup>58</sup> HBCA E.214/2 Richard Hardisty Estate, 4 October 1865.

<sup>59</sup> For an examination of Company hierarchical divisions, see: Edith Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); Michael Payne, *The Most Respectable Place in the Territory: Everyday Life in Hudson's Bay Company Service - York Factor, 1788 to 1870* (Ottawa: Parks Canada, 1989); and Scott Stephens, "Masters and Servants: The Hudson's Bay Company and its Personnel, 1668-1782," PhD diss. University of Manitoba, 2005.

<sup>60</sup>UASC James Keith Collection, Copy of the will of Alexander Stewart (d. 7 June 1840), 12 December 1839.

The distinctiveness of fur trade estates relative to those in settler society is perhaps best illustrated by the will of retired Chief Factor Angus Bethune (1783-1853) who died at his home on Richmond Street in Toronto.<sup>61</sup> Like many of his HBC colleagues, Bethune provided for many contingencies in his will, allotting specific lifelong annuities to four of his children and one of his grandchildren. The will also laid out how each of these annuities should be redistributed if any of these heirs died without issue, creating a hierarchy of preferred recipients for Bethune's wealth. Bethune gave his granddaughter Louisa May Bethune £60 per year for life, while her mother Mary Telfer Gay Bethune was allotted £40 per year for life. Louisa's father Donald (Angus' eldest surviving son) received nothing. Bethune's sons John and Alexander were each given £50 per year for life, while their sister Anne Bethune Martin was allotted £12 per year for life. Bethune's son Norman and his heirs were named the residual legatees to the large estate. In case any of the annuity recipients died without issue, Angus Bethune decreed that their legacies would go firstly to any "lawfully begotten" grandchildren. Bethune's niece Catherine Veronica McKenzie would be next in line to inherit, followed by the children of his brothers, the Reverends John and Alexander Bethune.<sup>62</sup>

Bethune forwent the custom of naming HBC colleagues as his executors, perhaps out of necessity as he was not well regarded amongst his fellow members of the HBC officer class.<sup>63</sup> Instead, he named prominent Toronto-based merchants Lewis Moffatt and Peter Patterson, and financier James Chewett as his executors. Within two weeks of

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<sup>61</sup> Bethune's two-storey brick house stood on the south side of Richmond Street, between Church Street and what is now Victoria Street. See W.H. Pearson, *Recollections and records of Toronto of old: with references to Brantford, Kingston and other Canadian towns* (Toronto: W. Briggs, 1914), 78.

<sup>62</sup> AO, RG 22 Series 6-2 B11.

<sup>63</sup> Bethune's relationships with fellow officers were often fractious. See Hilary Russell, "Angus Bethune," in Carol Judd and Arthur Ray, eds., *Old Trails and New Directions: Papers of the 3<sup>rd</sup> North American Fur Trade Conference* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1980), 177-190.

Bethune's death, all three men co-signed a letter lamenting that the testator's will was "so complicated and providing for so many contingencies extending over so long a period of time that we reluctantly decline to assume the responsibility." Instead, Bethune's son Norman was appointed to administer the estate, which was valued at more than \$56,000.<sup>64</sup> Angus Bethune's executors clearly felt that their friend's will asked them to go far above and beyond the typical duties undertaken by executors in British or colonial society at that time, to the extent that they eschewed the role altogether. In comparison to the wills of his HBC colleagues, Bethune's was perhaps exceptional in its value but was not unusual in its structure or complexity. The terms would not have shocked or concerned HBC colleagues, who commonly wrote similarly complicated wills or served as executors to estates that remained active for many years after a testator's death.

Towards the end of his life, James Keith was still keeping track of the whereabouts of Chief Factor John Spencer's children, whose father's estate he had been administering for more than a decade. Likewise, Keith spent over a decade in court attempting to uphold Samuel Black's will. The estates of HBC officers Alexander Roderick McLeod and Peter Skene Ogden were similarly lengthy and complex for Keith to manage.<sup>65</sup>

Letters written by John Dugald Cameron's children hint at the difficulties that arose when retired fur traders entrusted even some of the administration of their estates to men who were not part of the closely connected web of HBC kith and kin. Margaret Cameron remarked to Governor Simpson in 1858: "how very considerate of you to have attended so promptly to my sister's affairs if all our business were in your hands how

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<sup>64</sup> Chewett, Moffatt and Patterson to York Surrogate Court, 27 December 1858. AO, RG 22 Series 6-2 B11.

<sup>65</sup> See UASC James Keith's Executry Book.

differently we should be situated.”<sup>66</sup> John Dugald Cameron’s only local executor was not an HBC man, which perhaps contributed to the variety of complications and roadblocks that emerged for his legatees, particularly his widow, daughter Margaret, and widowed daughter-in-law Selina, who relied on the estate for survival.

Perhaps as a result of these or similar cases, Chief Factor Robert Miles was wary of the influence of outsiders over the administration of his friend Chief Factor Francis Ermatinger’s estate. He wrote to Francis’ brother Edward: “I hope you will be able to prevent that Gent’n [sic] of your town from realizing the hopes he entertained from his appointment as Executor.”<sup>67</sup> Many HBC officers put complete trust in their fur trade colleagues to carry out their wishes after death, and by extension were suspicious of the motivations and abilities of those unaccustomed with the social world of the fur trade to adequately attend to the legal complexities of fur trade families.

In Rupert’s Land, such administrative connections reaffirmed homosocial bonds in the absence of regular in-person interactions. These bonds existed between Chief Factors or Chief Traders who may have worked at posts far distant from one another. Members of the HBC officer class may have served alongside perhaps only one or two other men of the same rank, as populations at most posts were small and usually included only one or two officers. Despite the low probability of seeing one another in person, HBC officers were closely connected in myriad ways. If officers worked in the same Department they might see each other briefly at annual Council meetings, while in transit between postings, or on furlough in Britain or the Canadas.<sup>68</sup> Yet, as seen in Chapter

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<sup>66</sup> Margaret Cameron to George Simpson, D.5/46 fo. 334, 1 April 1858.

<sup>67</sup> HBCA E.94/3 fo. 321, Robert Miles to Edward Ermatinger, 5 August 1859.

<sup>68</sup> Rupert’s Land was divided into geographic Departments (North, South, Montreal, Columbia), with each Department comprised of separate Districts.

Two, they wrote to and about each other at length, in many cases over decades, creating a tightly-knit social fabric that transcended physical distance. Fur traders wrote to one another about work, love, loss, longing, concern for their children, politics, gossip, and health. Close lifelong friendships existed between men who had in fact very little contact with one another beyond written correspondence.

Governor Simpson was named as an executor in many HBC officer wills, personally administering many estates until his death in 1860. The Governor's acceptance of the charge of executor confirmed an officer's social standing while allowing them to take advantage of Simpson's facility with estate matters and his access to the London Committee where employee accounts were maintained.

Chief Factor James Keith, who was stationed at Lachine with easy access to colonial banks and postal networks and was known to be an excellent accountant, was also a popular choice as executor for his friends and colleagues. A number of men also granted him Power of Attorney so he could tend to their investments and withdrawals. In response to questions from the London Committee about the amount of time involved in administering to his colleagues' affairs, Keith wrote:

This agency has been throughout entirely gratuitous on the part of Governor Simpson as well as myself, one which has caused both a good deal of trouble...Governor Simpson has repeatedly suggested and recommended that I should break it off so far as regards drawing and investing funds... I would be released from all but the Family Concerns and disbursements attending them; a duty which is in no wise enviable more particularly in cases of refractory, headstrong and incorrigible subjects."<sup>69</sup>

Fed up after a series of complicated and troublesome estates, Keith was keen to emphasize the time and trouble that he and Simpson invested, of their own volition and

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<sup>69</sup> UASC James Keith's Letter Book, James Keith to George Simpson, 13 March 1834.



without compensation, to manage the affairs of their fellow officers. Simpson suggested to Keith that he forego acting as Power of Attorney to living company men and instead limit himself to involvement in the estates where he was an executor. This suggestion was of little help to Keith, for whom the family estates were the most onerous part of his labours. His letter speaks to the pressure, time, and effort attended in managing large transatlantic imperial estates. It also alludes to a key aspect of the executor role that is not always considered; the importance of the executor as a manager of the testator's 'subjects', that is, his family. As will be seen below, the management of sometimes 'incorrigible subjects' was fundamental to an HBC executor's responsibilities.

HBC widows and children from across Rupert's Land, the Canadas and Britain regularly wrote to Governor Simpson seeking payment of their dividends and annuities, assistance with estate administration, and in desperation with nowhere else to turn. In 1857 Simpson received a letter from Mary Campbell conveying her "gratitude and thankfulness...in so liberally administering to my pecuniary need in the very moment of almost necessity," making it possible for her to pay the increased monthly fee at her residence, the Industrial Home for Gentlewomen in London's West End.<sup>70</sup> It is difficult to ascertain Mary Campbell's precise HBC kin, as there were a number of Campbells in the HBC's ranks at this time. As a result, it is unclear whether the funds she gratefully received from Simpson were hers by right or by virtue of her correspondent's generosity.

Simpson received a similar letter of thanks the following year from Margaret Cameron advising that she "received the thirty dollars...and was agreeably astonished at

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<sup>70</sup> Emphasis in original. Mary Campbell to George Simpson, 24 March 1857, HBCA D.5/43 fo. 315. The Home catered to gentlewomen "suffering under reverses of fortunes" and stood at 25 and 26 Queen Square. See advertisement in: *The British Metropolis in 1851: A Classified Guide to London* (London: Arthur Hall, Virtue & Co., 1851), n.p.

so large a remittance I am sure I give you a great deal of trouble, in addition to what you already have and I can never feel too grateful for the kindness you have shown me since I required it.”<sup>71</sup> It is unclear whether these were funds owed to Cameron from her father’s estate, or whether Simpson advanced them to her as an act of charity in her time of financial need. Governor Simpson’s correspondents, particular women like Margaret Cameron and Mary Campbell, often took a deferential and grateful tone in their letters to him. It is difficult to know whether their words to Simpson were expressions of gratitude to someone who went well beyond his pecuniary responsibilities as an executor or were simply a matter of protocol for women writing to an older elite man.

Women from the Cameron family sent Simpson a total of nine letters in just over one year concerning dividends from John Dugald Cameron’s estate. In 1858 Margaret wrote “I am completely out of funds, having a very large family to support...If there are any funds in the shape of interest at the Commercial Bank, however small the dividend may be, it will be very thankfully received.”<sup>72</sup> The following year, she reminded Simpson that the interest payment was due and that “as usual, money has at this time, become very scarce with us.”<sup>73</sup> The desperation in Margaret Cameron’s repeated entreaties to Simpson is palpable. For various reasons, her three surviving brothers were not contributing financially to the family’s support.<sup>74</sup> In the wake of her brother Hugh’s sudden death, Margaret was thrown into the role of managing the finances for a household that included herself, her aging mother, her brother Ranald’s wife and children, and her visiting nephew.

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<sup>71</sup> HBCA D.5/46 fo. 464. Margaret Cameron to George Simpson, 23 April 1858.

<sup>72</sup> HBCA D.5/46 fos. 334-5, Margaret Cameron to George Simpson, 1 April 1858.

<sup>73</sup> HBCA D.5/46 fo. 404, Margaret Campbell to George Simpson, 30 November 1859.

<sup>74</sup> Charles’ whereabouts were unknown, James was a missionary north of Lake Superior with his own family to support, and Ranald was no longer living with his wife Selina and their children.

Margaret McKenzie Anderson wrote Governor George Simpson in 1860 to ask if he would “be so good as to pay the dividends” from stock he administered from her late father’s estate after “kindly undertak[ing]” to be her trustee. Margaret recounted that it was her husband James Anderson that advised her of the more than \$12,000 worth of stocks left to her in her father’s will, which Simpson would be managing on her behalf.<sup>75</sup> While it is difficult to estimate the purchasing power of that sum, available Canadian figures indicate that by 1870 it was equivalent to sixteen years’ income for a fully employed skilled tradesman such as a mason.<sup>76</sup> Even in the case of such a large bequest, Margaret still needed to send a flattering letter to Simpson to spur him to action and procure the payment that was due. As a married literate woman of means who personally knew George Simpson and had even named her firstborn in his honour, Margaret still had to write beseeching letters to access her own funds. Appealing to Simpson’s sense of urgency would have been more difficult for women who were mobile, financially desperate, illiterate, or lacking social capital.

By creating situations where female heirs needed to write in search of the funds owed to them, patriarchs gave their executors license to surveil and control women’s lives. More than a decade after the death of retired Chief Trader Donald McIntosh, Simpson was still receiving letters about annuities from his widow Charlotte in St. Polycarp, Quebec.<sup>77</sup> Simpson received similar letters from Maria Barnston in Edinburgh,<sup>78</sup> Isabella Heron in Kingston,<sup>79</sup> Eliza McLeod in Montreal,<sup>80</sup> and Eliza

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<sup>75</sup> HBCA D.5/51 fo. 512, Margaret McKenzie Anderson to George Simpson, 6 April 1860.

<sup>76</sup> See J.G. Snell, “The Cost of Living in Canada in 1870,” *Social History* 12, no. 23 (1979), 4.

<sup>77</sup> HBCA D.5/27 fo.440; D.5/40 fo.295; D.5/41 fo.200, Charlotte McIntosh to George Simpson, 1850, 1855, 1856.

<sup>78</sup> HBCA D.5/52 fo. 596, Maria Barnston to George Simpson, 20 September 1860. Maria was the sister of Chief Factor George Barnston.

Anderson in Sutton.<sup>81</sup> In their letters, women clearly felt that they needed to explain how the funds would be used and justify their financial need.

An astounding level of administrative time and effort over many years was required to manage large and complicated fur trade estates. Additionally, men who administered multiple estates, such as George Simpson, were not always punctual in distributing funds when they became available. The sums involved likely seemed trifling to executors who managed the accounts for vast fur trade districts. For the people (usually women) who relied on annuity or dividend payments from estates, these seemingly small semi-annual or quarterly sums were the key to survival and the bedrock of family economies.<sup>82</sup>

Furthermore, those appealing to executors for payments needed to have settled lifestyles with stable addresses in order to receive responses to their requests. John Dugald Cameron's son Charles, for instance, was never able to collect any dividends from his father's estate. His itinerant lifestyle in the gold diggings of California meant that he was never in one place long enough to send and receive transnational letters.<sup>83</sup> By choosing annuities and dividends to distribute their wealth, HBC testators required their legatees to maintain British settler lifeways in order to benefit from their inheritances.

Through their wills, HBC retirees constructed relationships between their legatees and their executors that were longstanding, and at times constraining. By naming their

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<sup>79</sup> HBCA D.5/51 fo. 490, Isabella Heron to George Simpson, 2 April 1860. Isabella was the widow of Francis Heron.

<sup>80</sup> HBCA D.5/43 fo. 315, Mary Campbell to George Simpson, 24 March 1857.

<sup>81</sup> HBCA D.5/20 fo. 200, Eliza C. Anderson to George Simpson, 2 September 1847. Eliza was the mother of James, Alexander, and George Anderson.

<sup>82</sup> Annuities provided based on Scottish traditions were usually payable semi-annually on Whitsunday (28 May) and Martinmas (28 November).

<sup>83</sup> Charles's surviving siblings suspected that he later died in California. Attempts to locate him after his sister Margaret's death proved unsuccessful.

executors, HBC officers conferred trust and respect and reaffirmed their own social standing. The executor-legatee relationship in this context was characterized by elements of patriarchal coercion and surveillance that were specific to the administration of HBC estates in this period, in large part because of the recurring correspondence and interaction they required. These relationships, as well as the structure of the wills themselves, also worked to bolster gendered models of behaviour for HBC widows and their children.

#### **IV. Gendered Legacies**

Imperial hierarchies of race and gender were upheld and reworked in the wills of retired HBC officers. Their wills differ from those of their settler or upper middle class Scottish neighbours, and from those of HBC men living at trading posts in key ways. The HBC kept wills on file for its employees in order to pay out annuities and owed wages, a record that allows for direct comparisons between earlier wills and those drafted after retirement. The HBC officers who had early wills on file overwhelmingly divided their estates equally among all acknowledged children and provided some measure of support to the mothers of those children, along with a caveat that their executors could “best judge of my true intentions and meaning”<sup>84</sup> or “apply the money to the best and most advantageous” support of children and former partners.<sup>85</sup> Once they settled outside Rupert’s Land, their estates were divided in much more complex, unequal, and ultimately telling ways.

Two wills written by Chief Trader Cuthbert Cumming are particularly illustrative. Cumming had seven children during a long-term relationship with an Indigenous woman

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<sup>84</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/5 fo.128, Will of Cuthbert Cumming, 1828.

<sup>85</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/10 fo.116, Will of Thomas McMurray, 1824.

named Susette McKee in Rupert's Land, and six more children with his wife by Christian marriage rite, Jane McMurray. Jane was the daughter of Chief Trader Thomas McMurray and his Indigenous wife, also named Jane.<sup>86</sup> Cumming's first known will was drafted in 1828 when he was still in Rupert's Land. It allotted equal portions of his estate to all of his "seven reputed children" with Susette McKee, some of whom were settled at Red River and company posts, and others who lived among their maternal kin.<sup>87</sup>

In a later will written in 1844, before the births of his five youngest children and shortly before his retirement to Ontario, Cumming left the bulk of his estate to his new wife and their infant son. Scholarship on other imperial contexts like India and New Zealand has discerned a clear hierarchy in the division of wealth that privileged children born of formal marriages and those who were perceived to be racially or culturally closer to their paternal heritage.<sup>88</sup> In this way, the distribution of Cumming's estate is in line with imperial will writing elsewhere in the British Empire. However, Cumming's children from his previous relationship did factor prominently in the will text. Of his seven eldest children, two daughters (one married and one single) at Red River each received £200, while each of their four brothers received £100. Eldest daughter Madlain in Labrador received £50, as did Cumming's former partner, Susette McKee.<sup>89</sup>

The distribution of Cumming's estate indicates that a strict hierarchy in the distribution of wealth to fur trade children may not have existed in the same form as in

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<sup>86</sup> See HBCA Biographical Sheet, "McMurray, Thomas."

<sup>87</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/5 fo.128, Will of Cuthbert Cumming, 1828.

<sup>88</sup> See for example Wanhalla, *In/Visible Sight* and Ghosh, chapter 5.

<sup>89</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.36/5 fo.130, Will of Cuthbert Cumming, 1844. Both wills include seven reputed children. Margaret and Pitiway are listed in the early will but not the later one, while Malcolm and Madlain only appear in the later will. It is unclear whether Margaret/Madlain and Pitiway/Malcom are the same people.

other imperial locales.<sup>90</sup> In this case, it was Cumming's youngest child and two of his daughters from his first relationship that received the largest portions of his estate. The amounts Cumming set out for his children were clearly deliberate, but his exact motivations are unknown. Perhaps Cumming recognized that Indigenous women could be vulnerable in the changing social climate of Red River, where Hannah and Elisa lived. The extra funds could also have been intended to insulate the women to some extent from potential hardships or set them up to bring financial assets into their marriages.

In a different way, former Chief Trader William Nourse also used his will to ensure that his daughters and granddaughters were financially secure. Nourse's will laid out a series of contingencies for his executors to follow in distributing his estate. In one instance, he directed that £500 be invested for the "daughters of [his] daughter Mary." The amount was earmarked specifically for Nourse's future granddaughters, and could only pass to a male legatee if no daughters survived.<sup>91</sup> In Nourse's will, clauses of this nature ensured predictable, stable amounts for female relatives, while sons and grandsons only factored into the equation if there were no surviving daughters or granddaughters that might have greater need of financial security.

As seen above, Jacob Corrigal used his will to set aside his home and furnishings for the use of his daughters, regardless of their marital status.<sup>92</sup> Corrigal's daughter Charlotte, for instance, was briefly connected to her father's subordinate, a clerk named Robert Elliott Byfield, while the family was living at the HBC's Marten Falls post on the bank of the Albany River. In the fall of 1822, Charlotte gave birth to a son named Robert Jacob Byfield but had no further contact with her son's father once he left Rupert's Land

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<sup>90</sup> See for example the chapter on wills and inheritance in Ghosh, 133.

<sup>91</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.44/3 fo. 2, Will of William Nourse, 1855.

<sup>92</sup> See the section

that same year.<sup>93</sup> Whether or not his daughters chose to subscribe to the model of Christian marriage, Corrigan clearly wanted to ensure that his estate provided for them and his grandchildren so they did not need to rely on support from a husband. Like the wills of other HBC husbands and fathers, Corrigan's will belied an undercurrent of anxiety about the legal position of children born to Indigenous women at company trading posts, and their ability to access family wealth and property to secure their futures. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Four, this concern is in part explained by fatherly perceptions that marriage prospects for Indigenous women could be limited in settler or metropolitan contexts.

The wills of retired company men such as Cuthbert Cumming complicate expectations about the gendered distribution of wealth in this period. Overwhelmingly the financial stability of daughters with a measure of independence was paramount, often to the disadvantage of fur trade sons. Specific patriarchal expectations underlay these divisions. Unanimously, the wills of HBC men settled in the Canadas took care to ensure the financial stability of widows and daughters independent of sons or other male relatives. In farming communities where the paramount concern might have been avoiding the fragmentation of landholdings, a surviving widow or son might inherit the farm or estate.<sup>94</sup> In Britain, urban middle class professionals opted for divisions of

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<sup>93</sup> County of Surrey UK, St. Peter's Church Baptismal Register, Robert Jacob Byfield, 27 November 1831, page 66.

<sup>94</sup> This was the case in places where impartible inheritance by the eldest or youngest child (primogeniture or ultimogeniture) was practiced. For a discussion of ultimogeniture in nineteenth century Canada see Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Kingston and Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1988), 236. For discussions of impartible inheritance in the British Empire, see: Trevor Burnard, "Family Continuity and Female Independence in Jamaica, 1665-1734," *Continuity and Change* 7, no. 2 (1992): 181-98; and David H. Fischer, *Albion's Seed: Four British Folkways in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); and Carole Shammas, "English Inheritance Law and its Transfer to the Colonies," *American Journal of Legal History*, XXXI (1987): 145-63.



property that might be different in kind but equal in value for all recognized children.<sup>95</sup>

Bettina Bradbury found that in nineteenth-century Montreal, the widows of upper middle class men who did not have marriage contracts often received half of their husbands' estate, while the testator's children equally split the remaining half.<sup>96</sup>

In the case of HBC families, sons usually received little or no portion of their father's estates, and the family home was most often set aside for the surviving widow and daughters to share, with seemingly no expectation that the property remain intact or be passed down to future generations once the initial heirs passed away. In his will George Gladman explained about his sons that: "I have not thought it necessary to leave them any share in this small property as I hope they are now provided for in the Hudson's Bay Company's Service."<sup>97</sup>

While sons frequently received no share or perhaps very small shares of their fathers' estates, a number of HBC will writers made large bequests to their daughters or other female relatives that were expressly for their own use and control. In these instances, HBC fathers wanted to safeguard some measure of financial independence for their daughters exclusive of their husbands. Chief Factor James Keith, for instance, declared that his daughter Mary's inheritance "shall not be subject to the debts, control, engagements or administration of her present or any future husband."<sup>98</sup> Keith's provisions were likely informed by his brother's experiences. Chief Factor George Keith gave his daughter Fanny money to invest in land, which her husband James Heron used to purchase land in his own name. By 1849 Heron was nearly destitute, and Keith worried

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<sup>95</sup> See Davidoff and Hall, 211-212.

<sup>96</sup> Bradbury, *Wife to Widow*, 168-170.

<sup>97</sup> AO, Gladman Family Fonds, F432 Acc 13006, Will of George Gladman, 1821.

<sup>98</sup> UASC James Keith's Executry, 9 Feb. 1850 copy of will, (Bundle 9).

that his daughter would be left with no assets in her own name for herself and her children if Heron went bankrupt.<sup>99</sup> As a result, George Keith wrote a will that excluded his daughters' inheritance from the *jus mariti* of their husbands. This was a Scottish legal custom that enshrined a husband's control over his wife's property upon marriage.<sup>100</sup> The wills of James Keith and William Nourse also expressly limited the *jus mariti* of their sons-in-law, while other HBC fathers embraced this approach without reference to the Scottish legal terminology, asserting their daughters' authority over the wealth they inherited.<sup>101</sup>

Efforts to provide a measure of independence to HBC widows and daughters were, perhaps unsurprisingly, measured in many cases. Women's inheritances might not be subject to their husbands' control and possible mismanagement, yet the executors who distributed annuities maintained the prerogative to circumscribe women's choices. Chief Factor John McDonell provided for his "beloved wife friend and companion" Mary McDonell's maintenance during widowhood, but only as long as his Executors found "her worthy and deserving."<sup>102</sup> Mary McDonell undoubtedly contributed to her husband's estate and the family economy in a variety of ways through her labour, support, and kin networks. Yet, her ability to benefit from the estate after her husband's death depended entirely on her satisfactory performance of widowhood in line with the expectations of her husband's executors.

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<sup>99</sup> HBCA D.5/26 fo. 136, George Keith to George Simpson, 21 September 1849.

<sup>100</sup> For discussion of *jus mariti* and marriage contracts in Scotland, see; Katie Barclay, *Love, Intimacy and Power: Marriage and Patriarchy in Scotland, 1650-1850* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2011).

<sup>101</sup> HBCA Employee Wills, A.44/3 fo. 2, Will of William Nourse, 1855.

<sup>102</sup> PROB 11/1849, p. 325, no. 14. Will of John McDonell, 1834.

Retired Chief Factor Robert Cowie of Montrose in Scotland, left the bulk of his estate to his ‘adopted’ daughter Jane, who was born to his partner Jane Flett of Moose Factory. Cowie’s estate was sufficient to give his daughter financial independence so that she would not need to rely on a husband for financial support. Her freedom was limited, however, since her uncle Alexander was given the power to invest the funds however he “consider[ed] most advantageous for her interest.”<sup>103</sup> This put Jane Cowie’s affairs squarely in the hands of her uncle, whether or not he had the financial acumen to administer the investments to her advantage, or in accordance with her goals for her own future. Through their wills, HBC patriarchs gave widows and daughters the financial means to support themselves, but not unfettered self-determination.

Similarly, Chief Factor Alexander Stewart’s will allotted equal amounts to each of his seven children. For his unmarried daughters Sophia, Jane, Mary, and Flora, however, he added the caveat that they would only receive interest payments and could not access the principal amounts left for them until they married “with the consent of my said Executors.”<sup>104</sup> By this reckoning, sharing in a patriarch’s estate was a privilege that could and should be revoked upon the unsatisfactory performance of appropriate gendered behaviours. Through his will, Stewart put financial incentives in place that allowed him to exercise patriarchal authority over his daughters from the grave, using his executors as proxies. HBC officers tried in myriad ways and to varying degrees of success, to constrain, dictate, and even punish women’s choices and behaviour.

As seen in Chapter Three, widowhood could furnish women like Margaret McKenzie Anderson, Ann Sutherland Keith, and Harriet Gladman with a measure of

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<sup>103</sup> SC47/40/26 p.317-324, Forfar Sheriff Court, Will of Robert Cowie, 1 April 1847.

<sup>104</sup>UASC James Keith Collection, Copy of the will of Alexander Stewart (d. 7 June 1840), 12 December 1839.

autonomy and independence. Overall, HBC wills certainly subverted typical nineteenth-century gendered inheritance practices by making the (limited) financial independence of Indigenous widows and their children a priority. The different ways that legatees' agency was circumscribed by wills hints at the way HBC fathers envisioned patriarchal authority within the family.

A number of HBC retirees used their wills to articulate gendered models of behaviour to male children, using their estates as tools to compel or incentivize their sons to conform to specific ideals. Angus Bethune used his will as a vehicle for managing the conduct of his descendants generally, and his eldest son Donald in particular. Bethune's will allowed that if his children died, their annuities could pass to any of his "grandchildren lawfully begotten." These terms put in place a legal standard of legitimacy for his future grandchildren that Bethune's own "natural" children could not meet since he and Louisa McKenzie were married *à la façon du pays* at an HBC post, and not according to Christian marriage rite. Bethune's will reiterated the importance of "lawfully begotten" children or "lawful issue" at least six times, indicating both concern and fixation with the legal legitimacy of his descendants. The reference was not a formulaic one made in passing; it was central to how Bethune envisioned his family tree in the decades after his death. Through the terms of his will, Bethune laid out his expectation that his children would contract marriages according to British legal and religious customs that would result in grandchildren whose status and ability to inherit would be legally and morally unimpeachable.

Though Bethune's eldest son Donald received no share of his father's estate, it was his choices that were perhaps most managed and constrained by the terms of the will.

By providing an annuity for Donald's wife Mary Telfer Gay, Angus Bethune ensured that the only way for Donald to access any benefit from the estate was by living amicably with her for life.

Furthermore, the will specified; "the children of my said son Donald [are] limited to his issue by his present wife – Mary Gay, and not to include the issue by any other marriage that [he] may contract." This decree was repeated twice in different sections of the will, and only in reference to Donald. No similar measures were applied to any of Donald's four living siblings, even though his sister Ann and his brother Norman were also married when the will was written. Angus Bethune's motive in singling out his eldest son in this way is unclear, though the terms indicate that he was somehow concerned about his son's marital conduct, or perhaps believed that Donald might wish to leave his marriage. By giving Donald's wife and daughter annuities and restricting the eligibility of any other children as heirs to the estate, Angus Bethune provided a financial incentive for Donald to remain with his wife and maintain a relationship with his daughter. In the event that Donald became a widower, his only access to support from the estate would be through the generosity of his daughter Louisa, who would keep her annuity for life while also inheriting her mother's portion of the estate.

The terms of Angus Bethune's will make clear his desire to manage his children's choices after his death, particularly when it came to their marriages. It is also clear from the will that Bethune's relationship with his eldest son was fraught, but that he still wished to influence Donald's family life in specific ways. Bethune's will filled ten handwritten foolscap pages, but his reasons for structuring it the way he did remain unclear. Bethune seems to have had few friends among his HBC colleagues, and in the

latter years of his life he suffered from dementia.<sup>105</sup> As a result, no correspondence with HBC colleagues survives from his years in Toronto that gives any context to his feelings towards his eldest son. A biographical sketch written by Donald Bethune's daughter gives some insight into Angus' relationship with his eldest son: "Of all the family, [Donald] resembled his father most in form and feature, but not at all in disposition...he was a great favourite with his father [when Angus retired to Toronto], but sometime later they quarreled, and the quarrel was never made up."<sup>106</sup> In any event, the terms of Angus Bethune's will seem to have had the desired effect. His eventual grandchildren were "lawfully begotten", and Donald remained with his wife until her death in 1879 and maintained ties with their daughter until his own death at her home in Detroit in 1886.<sup>107</sup>

Archibald McDonald's will threatened that if his son Allan "disturbs [his mother] in such possession and enjoyment [of the farmhouse and implements] or fails to act towards her as a dutiful son" the farm would pass to his brother instead.<sup>108</sup> Like Angus Bethune, McDonald singled out one child, likely one he viewed as quarrelsome or intractable, and composed a will that would manage their behavior and ensure that they conformed to a particular vision of nineteenth-century gendered respectability.

George Gladman also used his will to instill a sense of filial duty and respect. He wrote: "I hereby charge all my sons to aid their mother with the settlement of this affair and at all times during the remainder of her life."<sup>109</sup> Even though Gladman deliberately made no provision for his sons in his will, they were clearly still front of mind as he

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<sup>105</sup> See Hilary Russell, "Angus Bethune." Bethune's dementia is mentioned in LAC MG19 A21 Series 1 Vol. 18, fo.626-7, John Swantston to James Hargrave, 1 June 1857,.

<sup>106</sup> Louisa Browne-Calvert, "Donald Bethune," (1897), copies in Jennifer S.H. Brown Fonds, University of Manitoba Archives MSS 336 A.11-28, Box 1 Folder 19, Fo. 21-22.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> PROB 11/2193 p.194 #14. 19 May 1852 St. Andrews.

<sup>109</sup> AO George Gladman 5 April 1856, Port Hope, Durham County Surrogate Court.

drafted it. Unlike Archibald McDonald's estate, Gladman used no overt financial incentive to compel his sons' behaviour; instead simply reminding them of their responsibilities. As a father, Gladman must have felt that his words and his authority spoke for themselves, even from the grave. As he sat to commit his final wishes to paper, Gladman articulated his own vision for his family's future. In it, his wife Harriet had the freedom to manage her own affairs, yet could rely on the respect and assistance of her children. In this way, some incentive did exist for Gladman's sons to behave according to their parents' standards, since it would be up to their mother to divide the estate when she drafted her own will more than two decades later. The Gladman sons presumably fulfilled their father's wishes, as they each received an equal share of the family estate after their mother's death in 1877.<sup>110</sup>

Retired Chief Factor Nicol Finlayson used his will in a similar way to ensure that his son Roderick received a fair share of the estate, but did not have the freedom to spend it recklessly. In the last years of his life, Finlayson wrote in letters about the vexatious antics of his youngest son Roderick.<sup>111</sup> Nicol Finlayson placed conditions on Roderick's inheritance, ordering firstly that the bulk of the funds could only be accessed with permission from the estate's executors, which included Roderick's brother-in-law James Dunbar Lamb, with whom he sometimes resided. Additionally, part of Roderick's share would be disbursed by his brother-in-law in small regular payments as an 'alimentary provision' to be used strictly for food or clothing.<sup>112</sup>

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<sup>110</sup> AO, Harriet Vincent Gladman, 17 April 1877, Northumberland and Durham Counties Surrogate Court, GS Ont. 1-1106, Will #1246.

<sup>111</sup> See Nicol Finlayson's letters to his son John between 1859 and 1871, HBCA E.137/1.

<sup>112</sup> Nairn Sheriff Court Wills, SC31/34/1 page 281, Nicol Finlayson, 1877.

## **V. Conclusion:**

Consideration of inheritance practices among retired HBC officers highlights the extent to which concerns about race, gender, and legitimacy governed will writing in fur trade families in Britain and British North America. Overall, HBC wills complicate our assumptions about nineteenth-century family life, but also open avenues of inquiry that can help us better understand the settlement experiences of Indigenous wives, mothers, and children outside Rupert's Land. Traditional archival sources such as letters and wills offer only a glimpse of these realities mediated by the husbands and fathers who created these documents. The importance of a home place and the security of widows and daughters were paramount for HBC husbands and fathers. They expected their sons to live as they did; by becoming self-made men whose fortunes resulted from their own (ideally intellectual) exertions. Sons usually received a one-time cash payment, while wills might specify that the family home remain intact for the use and benefit of their mother and sisters, who were more likely to receive annuities from a patriarch's investments. The wills of HBC men yield insights into racial and gendered family dynamics, and the ways that will writers reckoned and made sense of family, duty, and legacy.



## **Chapter Six**

### **Family Treasures/Family Secrets: Representing Indigeneity in Family and Community Historical Narratives**

*I imagine someone walking through the ruins of my house,  
years later when I am gone and anyone who knew me and my  
family and nation is gone and there are only speculations as to  
what happened to us. The shells and shards of memory are  
searched for meaning...*

- Joy Harjo<sup>1</sup>

Secrets, shadows, fragments, and deafening silences. Historians and descendants of HBC families have often described the process of uncovering such families' stories in these terms. In the spring of 2016, after returning from a research visit to Scotland, I received an email from a volunteer at a small coastal museum. Attached was a scan he thought might be of interest. It was, and he put me in touch with the man who sent it to him, who in turn received it from a newly discovered distant cousin, a Canadian-born Finlayson descendant living in the United States. Neither knew who had the original photograph, or how the scan originally came to hand, only that it was inscribed with the caption, "An Indian Family", and that it was a photograph of John Finlayson, son of HBC Chief Factor Nicol Finlayson, and members of his large family.

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<sup>1</sup> Joy Harjo, "Songs from the House of Death," *How We Became Human: New and Selected Poems, 1975-2002* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 2002), 228.



*Figure 6.1: John Finlayson (centre left) with his wife Angelique Shebagijig, their grandchildren, their son Louis Victor Nicol Finlayson (in hat), and his wife Jane Souliere. Likely taken near Michipicoten c.1895<sup>2</sup>*

Nicol Finlayson's descendants in the United Kingdom grew up knowing about their ancestor's work in the HBC, but were not aware that Nicol Finlayson's children were all born to Indigenous women in Rupert's Land. A meticulously documented family tree passed down through Finlayson descendants in the United Kingdom contained little information about Mary Finalyson Lamb's Indigenous maternal kin, or her siblings in Rupert's Land.<sup>3</sup> Generations of descendants in the United Kingdom never knew that many Indigenous Finlayson cousins could be found throughout northern Ontario and across North America.

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<sup>2</sup> Image courtesy of A. Barron, J. Fortier, and W. Lees. Location of original unknown.

<sup>3</sup> Family tree provided by W. Lees.

For Finlayson descendants, a whole network of connection was revitalized through the transatlantic circulation of a single image. Mirroring the disjointed electronic route travelled by the scanned image, that is through the United States, across the Prairies to northern Ontario, and across the Atlantic to England and Scotland, Nicol Finlayson's children lived far and wide, in many cases so much so that their connections to each other were almost entirely lost to their descendants within a single generation. The Finlaysons' story is not unique. As Chapter Four demonstrated, many of the families in this study became geographically, and at times culturally, scattered and fragmented over time. Their mobility, combined with the operation of stigma, and the influence of museum collection and cataloguing practices over time have fragmented family histories that can be difficult for researchers to bring back together.

Various kinds of objects, whether a photograph, a beadwork hood, or even a distant memorial stone, can serve as points of connection for both descendants and researchers. Heirlooms act as windows on far-flung family histories that have been segmented by the social, geographic and historiographical borders between Britain, the Canadas, and Rupert's Land. For the purposes of this chapter, heirlooms and family treasures are broadly defined to include physical objects and stories created and preserved by HBC families to represent themselves and their histories. Today, HBC family treasures might be found in cemeteries, museums, attics, or email inboxes, yet they were all created by nineteenth-century families to represent themselves to friends, family, and the outside world. This chapter pays particular attention to family and community historical memory. Looking at the stories HBC families told about themselves, and the

stories others told about them, provides windows on the operation of stigma, nostalgia, and changing museological practices over time.

### **I: Photography:**

Through photographs, nineteenth-century HBC family members sought to communicate particular visions of themselves to the outside world. These objects are also manifestations of networks of kin, correspondence, and exchange. Not only were photographs circulated to cement kin ties over long distances, they have been circulated digitally in recent decades by descendants hoping to reconnect with their relations. Angela Wanhalla and others have shown how the analysis of archival photographs as texts and objects can centre stories of Indigenous agency and resistance.<sup>4</sup> Erin Millions' recent work has highlighted the challenges of working with fur trade family photographs as sources and demonstrated their utility for uncovering the experiences of fur trade children abroad.<sup>5</sup>

Recently, through the Indigenous Archival Photo Project, Paul Seesequasis has worked to foreground images of Indigenous people that have “transcended tropes of tragedy and subjugation, and spoke to visual themes that were inherently subversive of the hegemony of the state and its policies of disenfranchisement and assimilation.” For Seesequasis, the digital circulation of archival images results in “a new imagining, a

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<sup>4</sup> See Angela Wanhalla and Erika Wolf, “Photography, materiality, and history,” in ed. Angela Wanhalla and Erika Wolf, *Early New Zealand Photography: Images and Essays* (Otago: Otago University Press, 2011); Elizabeth Edwards and Janice Hart, ed., *Photographs, Objects, Histories: On the Materiality of Images* (New York/London: Routledge, 2004); Elizabeth Edwards, Chris Gosden, and Ruth B. Phillips, *Sensible Objects: Colonialism, Museums, and Material Culture* (Oxford/New York: Berg, 2001); Carol Williams, *Framing the West: Race, Gender, and the Photographic ‘Frontier’ in the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003).

<sup>5</sup> Erin Million, “Portraits and Gravestones: Documenting the Transnational Lives of Nineteenth-Century Indigenous Fur Trade Children,” *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* (forthcoming 2019).

return of kin, of ancestors, cousins, through an online dialogue and reclamation.”<sup>6</sup>

Seesequasis’ work foregrounds candid photographs of everyday life, particularly of Indigenous women, that decenter colonial narratives about Indigenous peoples.<sup>7</sup>

Similarly, anthropologist Celeste Pedri-Spade has seen Indigenous photography as significant for “reclaiming identity, cultural memory, intergenerational knowledge, and sovereignty” as part of wider conversations around decolonization.<sup>8</sup> The photographs examined below also subvert nineteenth-century assumptions about Indigenous people, while serving as catalysts for renewed kin networks in the digital age.

From start to finish, the process of having photographs taken was a deliberate one that was inflected by the subjectivities of the people who paid for, appeared in, and created the final photographic object. The financial circumstances and the intended use of the photograph dictated its size and format, while the intended audience dictated the composition of the image itself. HBC family members were partial to the small and fashionable *carte de visite* size of photograph marketed so successfully by Montreal photographer William Notman. These small photographs were mounted on cardstock, making them portable and robust, and particularly amenable to transatlantic travel in envelopes and trunks. Photographic subjects carefully selected their clothing and hairstyle and put thought into the pose, accessories, and background they would use. The

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<sup>6</sup> See Paul Seesequasis’ blog post “Turning the Lens: Indigenous Archival Photo Project” 21 June 2018 at Shekon Neechi: An Indigenous History Project, [www.shekonneechee.ca/2018/06/21/turning-the-lens/](http://www.shekonneechee.ca/2018/06/21/turning-the-lens/). For another photography project in this vein, see Kali Spitzer’s tintype portrait series, “An Exploration of Resilience and Resistance” discussed by photographer Henri Robideau in “Nurturing Resilience: The Photography of Kali Spitzer,” [https://capturephotofest.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/HenriRobideau\\_Resilience.pdf](https://capturephotofest.com/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/HenriRobideau_Resilience.pdf), accessed 5 July 2019.

<sup>7</sup> See Seesequasis, “Turning the Lens” and *Blanket Toss Under Midnight Sun: Portraits of Everyday Life in Eight Indigenous Communities* (New York: Knopf, 2019).

<sup>8</sup> Celeste Pedri-Spade, “Waasaabikizo: Our pictures are good medicine,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* 5, no. 1 (2016), 45.

final product could be intended to convey a ‘true’ representation of the subject to their distant friends and kin. It could also be used to convey the subject’s interpretation of British gentility for consumption by relatives in Britain or across the British Empire.

Photographs taken of Mary Gladman and her stepdaughter Margaret Gladman Stuart give a sense of how HBC wives wished to represent themselves through portraiture. Both women were born at trading posts in Rupert’s Land and found themselves navigating life in the growing lakeside community of Port Hope, Ontario. The images convey affluence and genteel British womanhood, which was precisely the sort of image women needed to maintain in small social circles like Port Hope.

*Figures 6.2 and 6.3: Margaret Gladman Stuart (1830-1901)<sup>9</sup> and Mary Moore Gladman (1801-1887)<sup>10</sup>*



<sup>9</sup> “Margaret Gladman Stuart,” HBCA 2011/14/10.

<sup>10</sup> “Mrs. Joseph Gladman,” HBCA 2011/14/5.

Of course, self-representations displayed through portraits, such as those of women from the Gladman family, relied on recipients, family members and archival institutions for their survival. The messages they convey are only accessible if the images were preserved and displayed. Margaret Gladman Stuart's aunt Harriet Gladman also sat for a portrait, likely around the same time as her female kin. A photocopy of the original portrait is all that survives, printed in a typewritten history of the Gladman family. A descendant suspected that the original was one they witnessed a relative burning in a barrel in the 1960s as she prepared to donate the family's collections to museums. She wanted to portray a particular vision of her ancestors as British explorers and nation builders and feared the stigma that could be directed at Harriet Gladman's dark features and complexion.<sup>11</sup> Women's agency in contracting and paying photographers, and curating their own image through portraits, could be limited or erased by the intervention of descendants or others once the portrait left the hands of its subject.



*Figure 6.4:*  
*Harriet Vincent Gladman (1807-1877)<sup>12</sup>*

<sup>11</sup> Family history information provided by B. Loucks, 2017.

<sup>12</sup> From Archives of Ontario, F432 acc.10036.

Into the latter half of the nineteenth century, photographs played an important role in the maintenance of connections between geographically distant family members. Jane McMurray Cumming wrote to her brother Chief Factor William McMurray with regret that she had only a photograph of herself to send. She wrote:

I send you my likeness by Mrs. Clare I am sorry we could not send the rest but they were taken large and moreover I have none of the children's taken left. Mr. Cumming could not sit for his as his eyes were too weak and Mary Jane has one she intended for you she gave it to her Brother when he went away.<sup>13</sup>

McMurray Cumming's letter to her brother gives a glimpse of how photographs were circulated through extended kin across vast distances. Smaller photograph sizes were required for long-distance mailing, or for packing into the luggage of relatives like Mrs. Clare, who was Jane McMurray Cumming's stepdaughter. Photographs were a commodity often in short supply in geographically far-flung fur trade families.



*Figure 6.5: Jane McMurray Cumming, most likely a copy of the same portrait she sent to her brother William in 1862<sup>14</sup>*

<sup>13</sup> Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) E.61/8 fo.19, Jane McMurray Cumming to William McMurray, 28 January 1862.

<sup>14</sup> "Mrs. Cumming, Montreal, QC, 1861". McCord Museum, I-1554.1



Roderick McFarlane's letters also hint at the ways photographs travelled among kin networks. McFarlane received a letter from Chief Factor William Joseph Christie, who wanted Mrs. McFarlane to know that "so soon as I can, we shall send her our photos & those of other relatives we have."<sup>15</sup> The Christie residence was, in this case, a relay point where family photographs were sent, seen, and sent onwards to other friends and relations. HBC family members exchanged photographs over large distances, in some cases even if the recipient could not remember what the subject actually looked like. In 1873 William Joseph Christie's daughter Lydia wrote to Matilda Davis at Red River: "I should like to have your photo very much also Miss Lane's. I really forget your face."<sup>16</sup> Christie's letter demonstrates how networks of association were enacted in individual letters, as her letter to Davis was also intended to result in a discussion between Davis and Miss Lane.

Similarly, Roderick McKenzie wrote to his mother from boarding school in Scotland about a recent letter he received. He assured her: "I got the Photographs of my brothers and Sisters, which you sent to me...I would not have distinguished one of them, except Margaret, if you had not written their names below. I hope in the next letter you will send me yours and Papa's and cousin Roderick's."<sup>17</sup> This transatlantic letter indicates that photographs of HBC family members were circulating throughout the British Empire as a way of creating familial closeness between people who would not otherwise be recognizable to one another. Roderick's parents were living at an HBC trading post, while some of his siblings were attending school in Red River, and his 'cousin Roderick'

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<sup>15</sup> Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC) MG29 A11 fo. 1573, W.J. Christie to Roderick MacFarlane, 18 April 1892.

<sup>16</sup> Archives of Manitoba (hereafter AM), Matilda Davis Family Papers, Lydia Christie to Matilda Davis, 30 June [1873], P2342 fo.16.

<sup>17</sup> AM, H2-142-2-1, Roderick McKenzie to Jane McKenzie, 9 October 1869.

was living in Ontario. Without his mother's notations on the photographs, Roderick could not identify his own siblings. The relatively new portable technology of the photograph added depth to his connection to his immediate family. Roderick never saw his parents or siblings in person again. The photographs added depth to his connection to them and allowed him to conjure a mental image of his nuclear family.

Both Roderick McKenzie's letter and Jane McMurray Cumming's letter make clear that immediate family members often sat for photographs individually and at different times, even if they lived together. This could be due in part to the expense of photography, travel, or postage. In any event, the incremental distribution of family photographs resulted in networks of communication that were continually renewed each time a new photograph was circulated.

For HBC people, travel was not always a family activity. It might be undertaken individually to fulfill work, educational, and family obligations. Travel could also create contexts in which the worlds of family and work were inextricable. A number of HBC families who settled in the Canadas travelled together to Montreal to have individual portraits taken at William Notman's studio. The Notman photographs that can be linked to specific HBC family members were taken before Notman's operation expanded to Ottawa, Toronto, Boston, and Halifax in the late 1860s. This indicates that HBC families deliberately sought out Notman's studio in Montreal rather than using one of the many smaller local photography studios across the Canadas. In these instances, photographs were an event; a special object created to commemorate family travel to Montreal. Undoubtedly photographs were taken at other studios, and in part, the overrepresentation of Notman-produced images is the result of the extent to which his extensive body of

work was labeled, preserved, archived, and digitized by Notman studios, archival repositories, and elite families with the means to preserve their Notman portraits. However, letters indicate that even in instances where HBC families lived near other local photography studios, Notman photographs were preferred. The Cumming family, for instance, opted to travel to Notman's studio in Montreal in 1862 despite the fact that there were a number of photographers operating in proximity to their new hometown of Colborne, Ontario.<sup>18</sup>

Notman, who advertised under the banner of 'Photographer to the Queen,' was also known for his composite photographs, which could have brought him to the attention of HBC officers who may have been, or who aspired to be, photographed as part of officer composites commissioned by the HBC. When he arrived in Canada, Notman also worked for the Montreal firm Ogilvy, Lewis & Co, which had strong fur trade affiliations and loaned Notman the funds to establish his first photography studio in Montreal.<sup>19</sup>

Images of the Anderson, Barnston, Clouston, Cumming, Hardisty, McDonald, McMurray, Sinclair, Stuart, and Swanston families and likely many others, are contained within the McCord Museum's vast collection of Notman studio photographs. This massive body of work, and the individuals, networks, and themes it represents, deserves further attention from researchers.

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<sup>18</sup> HBCA E.61/8 fo.19, Jane McMurray Cumming To William McMurray, 28 January 1862. For a list of photographers in the area see the list compiled by local historian Fraser Dunford in *The Heritage Gazette of Trent Valley*, 6 No. 2 (August 2001), 24-25.

<sup>19</sup> For sketches of Notman's life and career, see: Sarah Parsons, *William Notman, Life and Work* (Toronto: Art Canada Institute, 2014); Miriam Scott, "William Notman: portrait of visionary photographer at McCord Museum," *Montreal Gazette* (4 November 2016); and Stanley G. Triggs, "NOTMAN, WILLIAM," in *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, vol. 12, University of Toronto/Université Laval, 2003, [http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/notman\\_william\\_12E.html](http://www.biographi.ca/en/bio/notman_william_12E.html).

A photograph of Margaret McKenzie Anderson, the only one known to exist, can be found among the massive Notman collection at the McCord Museum.<sup>20</sup> Margaret is accompanied by a small child, most likely her youngest son Francis who died the following year. The copy she purchased of this photograph was likely the only likeness of Francis that was ever created. Concluding that Margaret was the subject of the photograph required matching facial features from a faded oil portrait of Margaret that at one time hung in her family's home in Sutton, Ontario. All of the photographs of Anderson women in the Notman collection are identified by only their surname but can be matched to extant identified portraits that the family's descendants later donated to other museums and archives. Patriarch James Anderson's photo is the only one identified with a first name. In their curatorial context, the Anderson photographs are just a few out of scores of photographs representing Notman's body of work. The breadth and historical value of the Notman collection is immeasurable, yet its utility can be limited in instances where there are no extant images to compare in order to identify the women and children whose names were not deemed important enough to record. When set within the context of the Anderson family's history, the Notman photographs add texture to a transatlantic story of family, migration, and loss.

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<sup>20</sup> McCord Museum, I-398.1, "Mrs. Anderson and boy, Montreal, 1861." The collection also includes photographs of her husband James Anderson (I-3182.1, "James Anderson, Montreal, 1862"), their daughter Eliza Anderson (I-414.1, "Miss Anderson, Montreal, 1861"), their son Roderick (I-399.1, "Master R. Anderson, Montreal, 1861") and possibly James' sister Eliza (II-40358.1 and II-40359.1, "Miss Anderson, Montreal, 1876").



*Figure 6.6: Margaret McKenzie Anderson and son Francis Anderson<sup>21</sup>*

## **II: Gender, Power, and Representation: HBC Families on Display**

As photographs can be separated from their familial context, so too can handmade family heirlooms. In the context of HBC family treasures, this has often happened in one of two ways; through the donation of objects with no accompanying provenance information, or through the erasure of women's artistry and influence when items are catalogued and attributed to male 'collectors'. Various seen as family secrets and sources of public pride, family heirlooms preserved from fur trade posts were most often articles that were handmade by female relatives, such as ornate beadwork bags, jackets, and moccasins. The fact that beaded objects, in particular, were privately treasured for

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<sup>21</sup> "Mrs. Anderson and boy, Montreal, 1861," McCord Museum, I-398.1.

many decades, and in many cases only donated to museums when the family itself could no longer care for them, seems to indicate that they were invested with a significance and emotional relevance well beyond acting simply as curiosities or mementos from a distant homeland. It is most likely then, that the objects were handcrafted and invested with love by mothers, grandmothers, sisters, and aunts, and represented intimate connection with these family members. As Sherry Farrell Racette puts it, “every stitch, every bead that you put on is like an act of love for that person.”<sup>22</sup> In each object then, the artists left something of themselves, through which their voices can still be faintly heard. Alison Brown has stressed the need for more detailed study of how fur trade artifacts “are, or are not, spoken of, displayed, touched, and treasured by the descendants of people that have used them, and thus how they are active agents in the creation of history.”<sup>23</sup> The variety of family treasures preserved by HBC families who settled in the Canadas and Scotland can support such an analysis.

The practical difficulties of repeated long-distance travel in the nineteenth century meant that most families did not preserve large collections of records or heirlooms. The piecemeal donation of family collections over time also resulted in geographically far-flung and fragmentary collections that existed largely in isolation from one another before digitization became more common.

The work of Alison Brown, Laura Peers, Sherry Farrell Racette, and others has demonstrated the insights into fur trade life gained from British museum collections, as

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<sup>22</sup> In Alison K. Brown, ed., “Group Discussion” in *Material Histories: Proceedings of a Workshop Held at Marischal Museum, University of Aberdeen*, ed. Alison K. Brown (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2008), 93.

<sup>23</sup> Alison K. Brown, Christina Massan, and Alison Grant, “Christina Massan’s Beadwork and the Recovery of a Fur Trade Family History” in *Recollecting: Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*, eds. Sarah Carter and Patricia A. McCormack (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2011), 110.

well as the connections those objects can facilitate, drawing different communities and areas of inquiry together.<sup>24</sup> This is particularly true in Scotland, where many local museums have been in existence since the late nineteenth century. These institutions were often founded in communities where significant numbers of young men left in pursuit of wealth and opportunity in the various fields of Britain's Empire. Some of these men returned to Scotland as newly minted members of the middling and upper classes, and museums were established to showcase the imperial curiosities amassed by these gentlemanly collectors and their families.<sup>25</sup>

Nairn, where Chief Factor Nicol Finlayson retired, was one such community. In the late nineteenth century, it was a cosmopolitan seaside town whose residents had economic and kin ties that crossed the globe. Many men in the HBC's ranks came from this area or visited on furlough. Traces of these connections can be found in local cemeteries and parish registers, and on the landscape through the institutions and public works they funded, and even the trees they planted, in the case of retired Chief Factor Angus Cameron, who planted his estate with seeds from Fort Timiskaming.<sup>26</sup>

Nairn's local museum was founded in 1858 as a "treasure store of unusual objects." The present-day museum building was once the home of a retired British

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<sup>24</sup> See for example contributions in Alison K. Brown, ed. *Material Histories: Proceedings of a workshop held at Marischal Museum* (Aberdeen: University of Aberdeen, 2007); Alison K. Brown and Laura Peers, *Visiting With the Ancestors: Blackfoot Shirts in Museum Spaces* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2016).

<sup>25</sup> For an overview, see: John M. McKenzie, *Museums and Empire: Natural history, human cultures, and colonial identities* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); James Clifford, "Museums as contact zones," in *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1997). For discussion of 'gentlemanly collectors', see Ted Binnema, *Enlightened Zeal: The Hudson's Bay Company and Scientific Networks, 1670-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2014); and Maya Jasanoff, "Collectors of Empire: Objects, Conquests and Imperial Self-Fashioning," *Past and Present* 184 (August 2004): 109-135.

<sup>26</sup> Elaine Allan Mitchell, "The Camerons of Temiskaming," *International Review of Scottish Studies* 1, No. 1 (1971), 32.

Colonel.<sup>27</sup> The museum's collection includes items of Indigenous clothing and beadwork donated in the very early days of the institution by locals connected to the HBC.<sup>28</sup> Such men are known to have retired locally, but it is impossible to link families to specific objects due to the lack of documentation created when objects were donated.<sup>29</sup>

In nearby Forres, the Falconer Museum was established in 1871 with funds from the estate of Alexander Falconer, who returned to Forres after a successful career in India. The museum's collection includes several HBC-related items. Unsurprisingly, the items with the most detailed provenance are connected with famed local Donald Smith, who became Governor of the HBC and went on to become Lord Strathcona and the husband of HBC daughter Sophia Hardisty.<sup>30</sup> Almost nothing is known about a colourful pair of moccasins donated by former HBC clerk James Forsyth sometime during the museum's first decade of operation.<sup>31</sup> In nineteenth-century institutions, detailed accession records were not the cornerstones of curatorial practice that they are today. Examples of Indigenous women's artistry were of interest as imperial curiosities, and so, much of the light they could shed on family and social networks, and the daily lives of their makers, is lost to us. The skill, effort, and enterprise of Indigenous women displayed through such objects were not valued or perhaps even legible in these contexts. Nineteenth-century museums were originally established as repositories of the weird and wonderful from near and far – they were not intended to interpret or illustrate particular

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<sup>27</sup> <http://visitnairn.com/tourist-information/nairn-museum/>, accessed 8 May 2019.

<sup>28</sup> The museum's collection includes beadwork pouches, moccasins, leggings, gloves, snowshoes, and a model canoe of unknown provenance and likely donated early in the museum's history.

<sup>29</sup> These included Nicol Finlayson, Hector McKenzie, James Forsyth, and Angus Cameron.

<sup>30</sup> Objects connected to Lord Strathcona include a painting, powder horn, pocket watch, and items related to the Canadian Pacific Railway.

<sup>31</sup> Falconer Museum, Accession 1978.263.



themes, times, or places within specific collection mandates.<sup>32</sup> Detailed information about individual objects was simply unnecessary since it was a museum's collection in totality, rather than its individual pieces, that was meant to dazzle, shock and entertain. These collections brought the empire home to everyday Britons in detached, sanitized ways that avoided uncomfortable stories about race, gender, and imperialism and actively erased the family networks that created them.

Until digitized records become more accessible online, little was known about the life of HBC clerk John Clark after he retired with his family to the Scottish Highlands. Clark's years in Rupert's Land were punctuated by the loss of two infant children and his twenty-one-year-old wife Eliza. When he retired to Inverness in 1881, Clark was accompanied by his and Eliza's daughter Margaret, his second wife Lucy, and their three young children. Several objects related to the family's time in Rupert's Land were eventually donated to the National Museums of Scotland.



*Figure 6.7: Clark Family items donated to National Museums Scotland<sup>33</sup>*

<sup>32</sup> In Canada, local museums did not proliferate until the twentieth century. These institutions were largely focused on representing 'pioneer' histories of nation builders and enterprising farmers. See for example: Mary Tivy, "Museums, Visitors and the Reconstruction of the Past in Ontario," *Material Culture Review*, 37 (Spring 1993); and Cecilia Morgan, *Commemorating Canada: History, Heritage and Memory, 1850s-1990s* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2016); and also *Creating Colonial Pasts: History, Memory, and Commemoration in Southern Ontario, 1860-1980* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

<sup>33</sup> National Museums Scotland, Pouch (A.1968.727) and Wall Pocket (A.1968.728). <https://www.abdn.ac.uk/materialhistories/people.php?id=6>, accessed 8 May 2019.

The collection includes a richly embroidered deer leather wall pocket and pouch, and vibrant beaded leggings. Since these items were kept as heirlooms over multiple generations of the Clark family, it is likely that the pieces were made by a female relative, such as Clark's daughter Margaret or late wife Eliza. The embroidered items demonstrate the use of similar motifs and colour schemes using greens, pinks, and purples, as well as fur trim. The wall pocket is more ambitious in its execution, perhaps indicating that the two items were made by different women working from similar training, materials, and influence but with different levels of experience. It is also possible that the objects embody the evolution of one woman's craft over time. In any event, the items were important enough to be cared for by descendants until they were donated to the National Museums of Scotland in the late 1960s.<sup>34</sup> At that time the items must have been of curatorial interest chiefly for their association with Clark, rather than as demonstrations of fur trade family ties and the labour and artistry of an Indigenous woman, as the name of their maker is unknown. Objects embody particular sets of relations and connections that can be lost in these contexts.<sup>35</sup>

When additional information is available, artifacts can bring fragmented family histories together.<sup>36</sup> The so-called 'archival turn' in imperial history has resulted in a rich body of literature that critically interrogates the violence, dispossession, and erasure inherent in the colonial archive. Scholars have examined similar themes with regard to museums, but the archive continues to loom large in history as a discipline. The archive

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<sup>34</sup> A.1968.727 (pouch); A.1968.728 (wall pocket); A.1968.729 (leggings).  
<https://www.abdn.ac.uk/materialhistories/people.php?id=6>, accessed 8 May 2019.

<sup>35</sup> For discussion of the challenges of repatriation, see Laura Peers, "Boxes of possibility—and frustration," *Active History*, 6 March 2019, <http://activehistory.ca/2019/03/boxes-of-possibility-and-frustration/>

<sup>36</sup> Stacy Nation-Knapper, "Shoes, Canoes, and Lives in Unexpected Archives: Searching in Fur Trade Ledgers beyond the Hudson's Bay Company Archives," *Past Imperfect* 19 (2016): 35-54.

has been and largely continues to be, the ore from which most historians extract the raw materials of their craft. Material objects such as heirlooms and artifacts have factored into historical writing, to be sure. Over the last two decades, in large part initiated by Laurel Thatcher Ulrich's *The Age of Homespun: Objects and Stories in the Creation of an American Myth* (2001), rich historical analyses have resulted from work that centers the lives of objects.<sup>37</sup> In the last decade, object biographies have picked up considerable interpretative momentum, particularly for transnational and imperial histories.<sup>38</sup>

In many cases, the very survival of such objects is a demonstration of the importance of maternal kin and women's artistry and labour. The decisions to pack, store, and protect such items across expanses of time and space were deliberate and often carried out by Indigenous women and their female descendants. HBC families that remained in a single residence after leaving the fur trade were more likely to maintain large collections of records and artifacts. The family of Chief Factor James Anderson and his wife Margaret McKenzie is a rare example. They purchased a farm called Ainslie Hill in Sutton, near the shores of Lake Simcoe, where successive generations remained, resulting in a large collection of heirlooms that fell to granddaughter Winifred Anderson to make provisions for, as she prepared to move into a retirement residence in the 1960s.

Winifred's grandfather James Anderson was born in India, educated in Scotland, explored the Arctic and worked at trading posts across Rupert's Land. His wife and children lived at HBC trading posts, Red River, and finally Sutton. Winifred's father James Anderson Jr. spent his working life in Winnipeg, Siberia, and Sutton. The family's

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<sup>37</sup> See also: Janet Hoskins, *Biographical Objects: How Things Tell the Stories of People's Lives* (London: Routledge, 1998).

<sup>38</sup> See for example: Annabel Cooper, Angela Wanhalla, and Lachy Paterson, eds. *The Lives of Colonial Objects* (Otago: Otago University Press, 2015).

geographical range posed a challenge for determining where the family's treasured papers and objects should go. As a result of the family's mobility across different imperial spaces and historiographies, their heirlooms fit uneasily within museum and archival collections in institutions with defined geographical, thematic or temporal collection mandates. In all, Anderson collections can be found in at least seven institutions across Britain and Canada.<sup>39</sup> It is only in recent years with the expansion of digitization projects, online museum and archival catalogues, and the growth in popularity of genealogy research, that connections have begun to be made between the various parts of the Anderson family's treasures.

As women of independent means, female descendants of HBC families maintained collections of artifacts beyond those related to their own families. Montreal actress Rosanna Seaborne Todd (1912-2009), a granddaughter of the HBC Clouston and Miles families, donated objects related to her own life and family to the McCord Museum.<sup>40</sup> She was also a prolific collector of objects related to the 1837 Rebellion in Lower Canada. When she eventually sold the collection to fund her production company, the newspaper *Le Devoir* described it as "the most important private collection" of such objects in existence.<sup>41</sup> As seen in the previous chapters, the wealth of HBC patriarchs could give their female descendants access to a measure of financial independence. It was

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<sup>39</sup> Anderson collections can be found at: Archives of Manitoba, British Columbia Archives, Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives, Library and Archives Canada, Parks Canada, Scott Polar Research Institute Archives at Cambridge University, and the University of Aberdeen. Photographs of some family members also appear in the William Notman Collection at the McCord Museum in Montreal.

<sup>40</sup> See for instance McCord Museum objects M966.57.17, 19, 21, 23, and M20524. Rosanna's grandfather was Sir Edward Seaborne Clouston (b. 1849 at Moose Factory). He was the son of Chief Trader James Stewart Clouston and Margaret Miles.

<sup>41</sup> The collection of more than 1,200 objects was auctioned off in 2004. See F.F. Langan, "ROSANNA TODD, 96: ACTRESS AND PRODUCER" *Globe and Mail*, 11 April 2009.

this financial security that made the preservation of HBC family homes, and the treasures they contained, possible.

Like the women of the McKenzie-Anderson family, those of the Gladman-Stuart-Grant family were both the creators and keepers of their family's Indigenous heirlooms. Successive generations of daughters were responsible for managing the family estate in Port Hope, Ontario, and eventually for curating the family's artifacts and papers and advocating for their preservation in museums and archives across Canada.

Beaded fire bags (also known as octopus bags) and handcrafted tikinagans, or cradleboards, were among the objects passed down through generations and donated to museums by the last surviving descendant in a long line of women who served as guardians of the family's treasures. These objects were likely the work of patriarch George Gladman's mother and mother-in-law, who lived together at Moose Factory in the 1840s. To support themselves, widows Mary Gladman and Jane Renton made and sold a range of handcrafted articles, some of which are now housed in museums throughout the world.<sup>42</sup> As Sherry Farrell Racette's work reminds us, Indigenous women's artistic productions served many purposes. Through this work, women could "inscribe their voices on the canvas of the male body", they could dress the ones they loved, and they could support themselves and their families through the sale of handmade goods.<sup>43</sup> Jane Renton and Mary Gladman's elaborate beadwork, clothing, and other

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<sup>42</sup> Cath Oberholtzer, "Thistles in the North: The Direct and Indirect Scottish Influence on James Bay Cree Material Culture," in *A Kingdom of the Mind: How the Scots Helped Make Canada*, eds. Peter E. Rider and Heather McNabb (Kingston and Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2006), 110.

<sup>43</sup> Sherry Farrell Racette, "Sewing for a Living: The Commodification of Metis Women's Artistic Production" in *Contact Zones: Aboriginal and Settler Women in Canada's Colonial Past*, ed. Katie Pickles and Myra Rutherdale (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2005), 42.

articles served all of these purposes at various times, though the pieces preserved by the family were likely never intended for sale.



*Figure 6.8: Fire Bag passed down through generations of the Gladman-Stuart-Grant family and likely made by Jane Renton and Mary Gladman, who lived together at Moose Factory in the 1840s, where they made and sold a range of goods.<sup>44</sup>*

The late Cath Oberholtzer's survey of North American collections revealed many other pieces of beadwork that were most likely the work of the Moose Factory widows. Pieces likely also exist in British museums, as the women were known to have made items that Dr. John Rae and others took home as gifts. Interestingly, the women do not appear in the accession records, even for items passed down through the family itself, indicating that their roles as makers may have been hidden or undervalued over time among even their own descendants. Though women were central to the use and construction of these objects, patriarchs and HBC Chief Factors George Gladman and Charles Stuart are most often attributed as their 'collectors'.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> Photograph by author. Donated by Dorothy Grant to the Nor'Westers & Loyalist Museum (969.11.01).

<sup>45</sup> See, for example, the entry for Charles Stuart in the "Collectors" listing at [www.creeculture.ca](http://www.creeculture.ca).

It was Charles Stuart's only child Josephine who held power of attorney over his affairs towards the end of his life and served as executor of the estate after his death in 1907.<sup>46</sup> This role was later filled by Josephine's daughter, Dorothy Grant, who occupied the family home until 1948 when she began a deliberate and lengthy process of carefully curating donations to institutions across Canada.<sup>47</sup> The museum cataloguing process, which once celebrated gentlemanly collectors of Indigenous curiosities, has contributed to the erasure of the physical, intellectual, and emotional work of Indigenous women and their descendants, who were ultimately the creators, stewards, and donors of their family's treasures. In this way, objects scattered across North America and Britain have been disconnected both from their makers and from those who treasured them.

Dorothy Grant and Winifred Anderson both interacted with multiple institutions about the donation of their family heirlooms. While some of these exchanges took place through letters that eventually became part of archival collections, some were more informal and were not preserved. Several of Dorothy Grant's donations were facilitated in some way by a third party, Hugh P. Macmillan, who was at the time serving as the Liaison Officer (self-titled 'roving archivist') for the Archives of Ontario.<sup>48</sup> Macmillan was also involved with founding the Glengarry Historical Society (1958), Dunvegan Pioneer Museum (1962), and the Nor'Wester and Loyalist Museum (1967). Some of his acquisitions ended up in collections in Ottawa, Williamstown, Toronto, and Guelph. It is unknown whether Grant, or Macmillan, or both parties determined the institutional destinations of Gladman family treasures. The preferences and mandates of favoured

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<sup>46</sup> For a power of attorney, wills, and deeds, see HBCA, Gladman Family Collection, HB2011/14.

<sup>47</sup> Archival material was donated to provincial archives in Manitoba and Ontario, while objects were gifted to the Nor'Westers and Loyalist Museum and the Canadian Museum of History.

<sup>48</sup> Macmillan advocated for the creation of the role so that significant archival collections could be actively searched out and preserved.

institutions would also have exerted influence over the process. The donation of the Gladman collection to different institutions was deliberate, but it remains unclear whose deliberations are reflected in the collections' dispersal.

Hugh P. Macmillan was an intermediary in the donation of a number of significant collections related to Loyalist Ontario, the fur trade, and the history of Scots in Canada. Sometime after his death in 2012, his voluminous papers were donated to the Glengarry County Archives, which was incorporated in 2013 and until recently operated out of the local high school in Alexandria, Ontario. Macmillan wrote a memoir of his career as a 'paper chaser'.<sup>49</sup> His wide-ranging career and personal papers could support scholarly analysis of object histories, or historical study of archival and museum acquisition practices in Canada. The research, travel, and visits Macmillan undertook resulted in the acquisition of many key archival collections related to Canada's history. Within contemporary funding constraints, and in light of shifts in acquisition procedures and mandates, Macmillan's activities would not be possible today; he was very much a product of a particular time and context. Canadian scholars have recently begun to turn a critical eye towards the donation, collection, exhibition, and contextualization of records and artifacts in museums and archives.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>49</sup> Hugh P. Macmillan, *Adventures of a Paper Sleuth* (Newcastle ON: Penumbra Press, 2004). Sincere thanks are due to David Anderson of Williamstown ON for providing me with a copy of Macmillan's book and speaking with me about Macmillan's career and legacy.

<sup>50</sup> See for example: Jarrett Henderson, "'I am pleased with my Lambton loot': Arthur George Doughty and the Making of the Durham Papers," *Archivaria* 70 (Fall 2010): 153-176; Kimberly Mair, "Spatial Deployments to Synchronic Witnessing: Reiterations of Contact in Museum Spaces," and Cheryl Avery and Shelley Sweeney, "Discombobulated Remnants?: Preserving LGBTTTIQ Histories," in George Colpitts and Heather Devine, eds. *Finding Directions West: Readings that Locate and Dislocate Western Canada's Past* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2017): 19-37 and 39-57.



### III: Secrets and Stories:

Chance and economic considerations have factored prominently in the survival of family treasures made by Indigenous wives and mothers, and in some cases, little or no trace remains. After Jacob Corrigan's death in 1844, his estate became mired in legal struggles. The stately family home and associated parcels of land were ultimately auctioned off and by the 1860s, Jacob's surviving children liquidated the estate and moved away. One of the only family treasures that survived this period of upheaval is a single sheet of paper, torn and yellowed.

When Jacob's Indigenous wife Mary died at a trading post on the Albany River in 1823 at the age of 35, he commissioned a large engraved stone to mark her resting place. As Jacob prepared to leave Rupert's Land, he decided to transcribe her gravestone inscription and kept the tattered piece of paper with him for the rest of his life, passing it down to his descendants, in whose care it remains today. In part, it read: "Greatly lamented by all who knew her. An affectionate wife, a tender mother, and a sincere friend. Mourn not for me, my husband and my children dear. I am not dead but sleeping here."<sup>51</sup> This handwritten note was such an important part of the family's remembered past that the couple's daughter asked that the same verse be added to her own gravestone decades later.<sup>52</sup>

While it is certain that Mary Corrigan would have made clothing, moccasins, and other goods for her family, her early death before her family relocated to Cobourg and the difficult financial situation that followed her husband's death meant that no such objects,

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<sup>51</sup> Personal collection of D. Fowler.

<sup>52</sup> Mary Corrigan Scollie's gravestone can be found at St. Peter's Cemetery in Keene, Otonabee Township, Ontario.

and thus, no further traces of Mary, were ever preserved. Indeed, the family's Indigenous roots were not openly discussed or acknowledged for many years.

The late 1960s provided the context within which descendants could begin the process of 'finding' their Indigenous ancestors after generations of silence, secrets, and stigma. In Ontario, this resulted from the growth of community museums and local historical societies, a broad consensus on the inherent value of these institutions to civic life, and the injection of funding for research, exhibits, and local history publications in anticipation of Canada's centennial celebrations in 1967.<sup>53</sup> Into the 1970s, genealogy expanded in popularity in Britain with the release of the 1871 census. The massive popularity of the American miniseries *Roots* (1977) only increased public interest in genealogical research in Britain and North America.<sup>54</sup>

It was not until the 1960s that the HBC's Archivist began receiving letters from descendants of Jacob and Mary Corrigan seeking genealogical information. While it was clear that the writers knew a number of details about Jacob and his career, they had no knowledge whatsoever about his beloved wife Mary, or the circumstances surrounding her life and death. She had been erased from the family's stories about itself; her Indigenous heritage had been deliberately hidden away. One descendant wrote in 1963: "I am anxious to discover information about my ancestor ... to whom was Corrigan married? Family tradition suggests his wife was an Indian."<sup>55</sup> In 1967 another descendant admitted that "we know little about my grandmother's family but believe she was part

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<sup>53</sup> See Mary Tivy, "The Local History Museum in Ontario: An Intellectual History 1851-1985," (Ph.D. diss., University of Waterloo, 2006), 189-92.

<sup>54</sup> For a more extensive discussion of this shift see Deborah Cohen, *Family Secrets*.

<sup>55</sup> HBCA Archives Department Research Correspondence, RG20/4/51, 7 July 1963.

Indian.”<sup>56</sup> The following year another wrote to ask: “Is there any record of who Jacob Corrigan married? Would he marry an English woman so early? Or would she be Indian?”<sup>57</sup> As Angela Wanhalla has written of mixed descent families in southern New Zealand: “stories circulated, myths abounded,” and “ancestry was shadowy”, a situation that was mirrored in the secrecy and innuendo that surrounded attempts by the descendants of HBC families to uncover their heritage.<sup>58</sup>

While Mary Corrigan was tenderly remembered by her husband and children, she was gradually erased from the family’s collective past over successive generations. Descendants began piecing her story back together in the 1960s, though it was not until the 1980s that the stigma of Indigenous ancestry began giving way to a romanticized public interest in small-town Ontario’s fur trade families. Leading up to its sesquicentennial in 1987, the Town of Cobourg witnessed a proliferation in local history writing, walking tours, and newspaper articles detailing the supposed lives of the “adventurous Corriganes.”<sup>59</sup> The sensational tale of Jacob Corrigan’s marriage was particularly popular. According to local lore, Corrigan eloped with the daughter of the Cree chief who murdered his brother.<sup>60</sup> In all iterations of this tale, the ‘Indian princess’ appears unnamed; an anonymous actor in a tale that conveys much more about those who told it, than it ever could about those ‘adventurous Corriganes’.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> HBCA Archives Department Research Correspondence, RG20/4/191, 1 May 1966.

<sup>57</sup> HBCA Archives Department Research Correspondence, RG20/4/51, 2 January 1967.

<sup>58</sup> Angela Wanhalla, *In/Visible Sight: The Mixed Descent Families of Southern New Zealand* (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2010), 2.

<sup>59</sup> “458 William St. was home to the adventurous Corriganes,” *Cobourg Star* (18 November 1988).

<sup>60</sup> While a William Corrigan was murdered in the so-called Hannah Bay Massacre of 1832, it is unclear whether he and Jacob were brothers, and this event took place seven years after Mary Corrigan’s death.

<sup>61</sup> For retellings of the story see “adventurous Corriganes,” *Cobourg Star* (18 November 1988), and John R. Spilsbury, ed., *Cobourg: Early Days and Modern Times* (Cobourg, ON: Cobourg Book Committee, 1981), 22.

Similarly strange was the story of a homesick Mary Corrigan erecting “a tepee in the living room” of the family’s grand home on William Street, made more incredible by the subject’s untimely death nearly twenty years before her family arrived in Cobourg.<sup>62</sup> From her permanent resting place at a northern trading post, Mary Corrigan was for many years an obscured, shadowy presence in her own family’s history; yet she came to factor prominently in local understandings of Indigeneity in a town she never saw. Her physical absence, and within a few decades, the absence of her descendants, gave space for myths and legends to circulate unchecked; there was no one to correct them or to reclaim Mary’s story. At various times since her death, Mary’s experiences have been appropriated to build romanticized local historical narratives of an imagined Indigenous past for heirs to the same settler colonial system that stigmatized her own descendants. Yet, at other times, her story was a catalyst that pushed her descendants to reclaim and celebrate their heritage and the affective bonds of place, family, and community.

In her history of family secrets Deborah Cohen observed that the family history boom of the late twentieth century required more than just the democratization of genealogy through technology, it was contingent on both “the desire to know and, for many, a need to tell.”<sup>63</sup> The late twentieth century ‘need to tell’ was a key feature in representations of Indigenous heritage by descendants of HBC families at the end of the twentieth century, and the stories they told often included highly romanticized ‘Indian princesses’, formidable chiefs, and clandestine weddings.

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<sup>62</sup> The anthropologist recounted being told this story by community members. See Cath Oberholtzer, “Second Beginnings: Nineteenth-Century Fur Trade Families of the Cobourg Area,” *Cobourg and District Historical Society Historical Review*, 26 (April 2009): 31. She was also told a similar story about the wife of John Dugald Cameron.

<sup>63</sup> “458 William St. was home to the adventurous Corriganes,” *Cobourg Star* (18 November 1988).

<sup>63</sup> Cohen, *Family Secrets*, 243.

Claims to kinship with distant ‘Indian princess’ ancestors have been ways for descendants to distance themselves from the legacies of violence, dispossession, and oppression inherent in settler colonialism.<sup>64</sup> Genealogical discussion boards are replete with references to these.<sup>65</sup> As in narratives about the Corrigan family, the trope of the ‘Indian princess’ factored prominently in local and family stories about the McKenzie-Anderson family of Sutton. Margaret McKenzie was born in 1823 on the northern shores of Lake Superior to Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie and his Ojibwe wife Angelique.<sup>66</sup> Among descendants, it was said that Roderick “abducted” Angelique, an Ojibwe ‘princess’ whose father was a powerful chief.<sup>67</sup> Their daughter Margaret was married to Chief Factor James Anderson, whom she had never met, at Sault Ste. Marie on 16 September 1839.<sup>68</sup> Chief Trader William Nourse, who stood in for the bride’s father, called the marriage “something of a singular choice as [James] had not seen the lady,” but posited that it was likely to be a happy union.<sup>69</sup> The marriage was lifelong and resulted in a large family that accompanied the couple when James retired to Sutton in the late 1860s. Though Margaret remained in Ontario for the rest of her life and outlived her husband by more than two decades, few writings attributed to her have survived. While

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<sup>64</sup> See, for example, Victoria Jane Freeman, “‘Toronto Has no History!’ Indigeneity, Settler Colonialism and Historical Memory in Canada’s Largest City” (Ph.D. Diss., University of Toronto, 2010), 263. See also Sarah Nickel, “‘You’ll probably tell me that your grandmother was an Indian princess’: Identity, Community, and Politics in the Oral History of the Union of British Columbia Indian Chiefs, 1969-1980.” *Oral History Forum d’histoire orale* 34 (2014), 2.

<sup>65</sup> See for example a forum on RedRiverAncestry.ca discussing HBC Chief Trader Donald Sutherland: <http://www.redriverancestry.ca/rraForum/viewtopic.php?f=2&t=104&start=10>, accessed 8 May 2019.

<sup>66</sup> For a more detailed discussion of Angelique and Roderick McKenzie’s life together, see Elizabeth Arthur, “Angelique and Her Children,” *Thunder Bay Historical Museum Society Papers and Records*, VI (1978): 30–40.

<sup>67</sup> See, for example, Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives (hereafter GPVA), Anderson Research Files, “Notes on Anderson Family History by A.J.U. Anderson, 1997”, folio 14; and Margaret A. MacLeod, ed. *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), liii.

<sup>68</sup> GPVA, Anderson Research Files, Anderson-McKenzie marriage certificate (photocopy), 16 September 1839.

<sup>69</sup> William Nourse to James Hargrave, 1 May 1840, in Glazebrook, 313.

the voluminous papers kept by her husband and son have acted as their monuments, Margaret's family heirlooms have stood as a testament to the love and care she put into creating clothing and other goods for her family.

A tiny pair of toddler's moccasins that Margaret made for her son in the 1840s, along with a range of beadwork articles, remained treasured family heirlooms for decades after her death. James Anderson's papers indicate that while the couple lived at HBC posts, Margaret ordered supplies for making a range of objects using both Indigenous and settler techniques. She ordered commercially printed embroidery patterns and crochet supplies to keep up with the newest trends in Britain, all while continuing to create beadwork clothing and accessories for her husband and children.<sup>70</sup> Up to the late 1960s, the family's heirlooms were privately treasured and lovingly preserved by descendants at the original family home in Sutton. Scholars have recently paid closer attention to the importance of informal archival and heirloom collections as the means by which living family members shape 'cross-temporal family identities'.<sup>71</sup> The private and informal collection and preservation of family treasures by members of the Anderson family opened a line of communication between relations who were living, those who were dead, and those who were not yet born.

Outside the family circle however, descendants worked to represent themselves as the archetypal British pioneer family, emphasizing in particular their ties to the founders of Sutton through the marriage of James Anderson Jr. into the Bouchier family, one "whose ancestors can be traced back to the Norman period, to Earls, Barons, Knights of

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<sup>70</sup> HBCA Anderson Family Collection, E.37/2, Miscellaneous Documents and Drawings.

<sup>71</sup> Liz Gloyn, Vicky Crewe, Laura King, and Anna Woodham, "The Ties that Bind: Materiality, Identity and the Life Course in the 'Things' Families Keep," *Journal of Family History* 43, no. 2 (2018), 157.

the Garter, a Chancellor of the Exchequer, and even to Kings.”<sup>72</sup> As Jean Barman’s examination of colonial Vancouver has demonstrated, a “conspiracy of silence” that erased aspects of a family’s heritage that were seen as problematic was essential to the process of recasting identities.<sup>73</sup> James Anderson Jr.’s obituary made no mention of his mother or her prominent fur trade kin, and concluded instead that, “he inherited most of [his] characteristics of his father.”<sup>74</sup> In this way, James’ mother could be unceremoniously erased from the public, sanitized community narrative of his life, safeguarding his wish to be seen as the head of a respectable pioneer family.

Women’s historians have shown the extent to which women’s identities could be erased from public narratives through patrilineal naming practices and patriarchal social structures that sought to constrain and confine women’s daily lives.<sup>75</sup> In this sense, the invisibility of Margaret McKenzie in her son’s obituary and elsewhere is, unfortunately, not surprising. Interestingly though, it was the heritage of James Jr.’s wife, Susannah Bouchier, that was emphasized in accounts about him and his descendants. Rather than becoming subsumed within her husband’s social identity once they married, Susannah’s heritage provided a foil to the uncomfortable questions raised by James Jr.’s fur trade roots. To capitalize on this, all of the couple’s children carried Bouchier as their middle

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<sup>72</sup> Pronounced “Bowcher.” Ruth Scott Miller, “A History of the Andersons and Bouchiers,” *Georgina Advocate* (8 June 1983), 1.

<sup>73</sup> Jean Barman, “Erasing Indigenous Identity in Vancouver,” *BC Studies* no. 155 (Autumn 2007): 4.

<sup>74</sup> “North Pioneer’s Son, James Anderson, Dies,” *Georgina Advocate* (18 May 1932).

<sup>75</sup> For discussion of women’s roles in the Canadas and in historical narratives, see: Colin M. Coates and Cecilia Morgan, *Heroines and History: Representations of Madeleine de Verchères and Laura Secord* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2002); Jane Errington, *Wives and Mothers, School Mistresses and Scullery Maids: Working Women in Ontario, 1790—1840* (Kingston and Montréal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1995). For a discussion of patriarchal naming practices, see Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Métis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); and Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations*.

name, and mentions of the family in newspapers and works of local history devoted considerable attention to this aspect of the prosperous family's heritage.

Among mixed race families in nineteenth-century British Columbia, Barman also observed: "where physical characteristics made it possible, many not only effectively became White but convinced their children and grandchildren that they were White."<sup>76</sup> For James Anderson Jr., his physical characteristics presented a problem. A newspaper account described him as "a tall, handsome, well-built proud man with a dark complexion."<sup>77</sup> James Jr.'s granddaughter later posited that prejudice experienced by her grandfather as a result of his 'dark complexion' drove his relentless pursuit of financial success and his resultant "class bigotry," which in turn spurred his tight policing of his children and grandchildren's relationships, education, and occupational pursuits.<sup>78</sup> When his daughter Winifred "fell in love with the coachman and planned to elope with him," for instance, "she was very quickly dispatched out West to keep house for a widower and bring up his two motherless sons."<sup>79</sup> In his granddaughter's estimation, James Anderson Jr.'s close management of the family's social standing was rooted in his concern that they could experience discrimination as a result of their Indigenous ancestry.

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<sup>76</sup> Jean Barman, "Invisible Women: Aboriginal Mothers and Mixed-Race Daughters in Rural British Columbia" in *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia*, ed. Ruth Sandwell (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1998), 177.

<sup>77</sup> Scott Miller, "A History ...," 1.

<sup>78</sup> GPVA, Anderson Research Files, "James Anderson Notes." Anderson opposed that his granddaughter attend public school.

<sup>79</sup> Scott Miller, "A History ...," 1.





Figure 6.9: James Anderson Jr. (1845-1932)<sup>80</sup>

In 1970 James Jr.'s 86-year-old son Alexander took part in an oral history interview conducted by the local historical society. During the interview, the facilitator made a cryptic attempt at addressing the Anderson family's Indigenous and fur trade heritage, asking Alexander "Were you always aware of your background, your — the importance that your grandfather had in the community?" He replied: "Well, I heard so much about it from my aunts and uncles and different relatives." The interviewer attempted to clarify the question by adding: "So you were aware, in a way, that you had a *special* type of background? (emphasis added)." The answer was simply a quiet "yes."<sup>81</sup> This interview makes clear that a degree of stigma remained attached to this aspect of the family's history since the interviewer struggled to find the right words to address it. It also shows that the family itself continued to discuss and reminisce about their history

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<sup>80</sup> Georgina Advocate, 18 May 1932.

<sup>81</sup> GPVA, Interview with A.B. Anderson, 1970.

and experiences in Rupert's Land, just as they remained silent on these matters with outsiders.

Two years later Alexander's sister, Winifred (who had returned from her sojourn out West as a governess), was featured in the local newspaper in honour of her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday. Winifred never married, and remained the keeper of the family's heirlooms at Ainslie Hill, ensuring their preservation even as she left the family home and moved to a local retirement residence. Despite the important role that her fur trade grandparents played in early Sutton, the article only focused on her maternal grandparents, the Bouchiers, whose long line of noted British ancestors better fit the dominant Loyalist-centred narrative of Ontario history.<sup>82</sup> A similar article also marked Winifred's birthday the following year.<sup>83</sup>



*Figure 6.10: Winifred Anderson on her 90<sup>th</sup> birthday with her dog Pixie<sup>84</sup>*

By the time Winifred began to put her affairs in order and make provisions for the future of her family's large collection of Indigenous family heirlooms, there was no one

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<sup>82</sup> GPVA, Anderson Research Files, Newspaper Clipping, *Georgina Advocate* (29 March 1972).

<sup>83</sup> GPVA, Anderson Research Files, Newspaper Clipping, *Georgina Advocate* (11 April 1973).

<sup>84</sup> *Georgina Advocate*, 29 March 1972.

left to pass the torch to. After her death in 1978, her heir and closest surviving Anderson relative, then a resident of Nova Scotia, wrote the local historical society to express “sincere appreciation to you for all the help, monetary and otherwise, in assisting me to cope with the disposal of the past generations’ treasures.”<sup>85</sup> As was the case with the Corrigan family, the Anderson family fortune had dwindled along with the number of surviving descendants, resulting in the donation of the family’s treasures to the local museum.

As in the case of the Corrigan family, the late twentieth century saw McKenzie-Anderson descendants publicly acknowledging their Indigenous heritage. In the process of ‘outing’ the secrets of earlier generations, these descendants also grabbed hold of romanticized constructions of what Indigenous ancestry meant to them. A great-grandson of James and Margaret Anderson recounted “while some of the family seem reluctant to acknowledge Indian descent, for my part I am proud to claim a modicum of Red Indian blood since I am an admirer of their virtues and capabilities. Not least, their gifts in the sphere of healing and herbal medicine.”<sup>86</sup> The meanings this descendant constructed from the family’s Indigenous ancestry make clear the changes and contradictions in family and community storytelling over the course of more than a century. In the Corrigan and McKenzie-Anderson families, Indigenous women and the family treasures that testified to their existence were variably seen as family secrets and sources of public pride.

#### **IV: Tombs with a View:**

Gravestones and memorial stones are examined here both as objects of material culture, and, like the other kinds of family treasures examined above, manifestations of

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<sup>85</sup> GPVA, Caroline Goodfellow to Nena Marsden (Director), *Georgina Historical Society* (16 June 1978).

<sup>86</sup> GPVA Anderson Research Files, “Notes on an Anderson Family History, 1997”, folio 14.

gendered power dynamics and transatlantic kin networks.<sup>87</sup> Unlike the objects and stories examined above, however, memorial stones were not mobile. Their meanings could not shift as they moved through different geographic or institutional contexts. Yet, different meanings can be constructed from these objects, even though they remain in a single place and serve a singular purpose.<sup>88</sup>

Historians of Britain and its Empire have shown that “consolation for the living is sought *in* landscape. Landscape has long provided humans with a physical, sensorial ephemeral repository for both grief and for the dead.”<sup>89</sup> Closeness to lost loved ones could be achieved by inscribing those individuals on the landscape, whether or not they were physically connected to that place at the time of death. Epitaphs, in physical and symbolic forms, gave voice to and maintained trans-imperial connections. At their most basic level, memorial stones are objects. As Cooper, Paterson, and Wanhalla assert: “Things...invite us into the past through their tangible, tactile and immediate presence.”<sup>90</sup> This is particularly true of metropolitan memorial stones, which linked distant family members and communities to further trade family histories across the Atlantic by embedding them in the landscape and setting them in stone. In the nineteenth century, urban ‘garden cemeteries’ were commonly seen as public green space that was strolled for leisure by members of the middling and elite classes.<sup>91</sup> In this context, memorial stones served as

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<sup>87</sup> While some of the stones examined here do mark actual gravesites, most are memorial stones installed in memory of individuals who died and were buried elsewhere.

<sup>88</sup> For a discussion of artifact biographies and gravestones see Harold Mytum, “Artefact Biography as an Approach to Material Culture: Irish Gravestones as a Material Form of Genealogy,” *Journal of Irish Archaeology* 12/13 (2003/2004): 111-127.

<sup>89</sup> Karen Baptist, ‘Diaspora: Death without a Landscape,’ *Mortality* 15, 4 (2010): 295. See also Laura Ishiguro, “Relative Distances: Family and Empire between Britain, British Columbia and India, 1858-1901,” (PhD dissertation, University College London, 2011).

<sup>90</sup> Cooper, Paterson and Wanhalla, *The Lives of Colonial Objects*, 13.

<sup>91</sup> Sarah Tarlow, “Landscapes of memory: The nineteenth-century garden cemetery,” *European Journal of Archaeology*, 3, No. 2 (2000): 217-239.

very public markers that communicated deliberate messages about the families they memorialized.

There were a number of moments in the course of installing a memorial stone where power and ownership over the deceased could be exerted and displayed. Fundamentally, only those whose relatives had the desire and the financial means would be memorialized in stone. Okaquajibut (Mary) Cameron, for instance, was not added to any of the stones dedicated to her husband and children in the Anglican cemetery near their farm in Grafton, Ontario. Grave marker scholar Richard Meyer concluded that: “In a very real sense, memorials erected to the dead are the material representatives of those now departed, and we...often draw our impressions of what these persons must have been like from the things we find upon them.”<sup>92</sup> Like portraits, gravestones and memorial stones could act as outward demonstrations of how individuals wished to be seen. They could also communicate how the deceased’s loved ones wanted them to be seen by others, whether friends, family, or strangers.

When retired Chief Factor Alexander Christie’s Indigenous wife Ann Thomas died in Edinburgh in 1860, he commissioned a large granite stone that he had engraved with the words: “Sacred to the memory of Ann Thomas, the beloved wife of Alexander Christie Esq., of the Hudson’s Bay Co. who died on the 11 November 1860 aged 65 years. She thirsted after holiness.”<sup>93</sup> In his deliberate choice of words for his wife’s gravestone, Alexander Christie hoped to portray his wife as a respectable Scottish woman of means who actively sought out Christian salvation (‘holiness’) during her life. The extent to which these words communicated any realities about Ann Thomas Christie’s

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<sup>92</sup> Richard E. Meyer, “Preface,” in Douglas Keister, *Stories in Stone: A Field Guide to Cemetery Symbolism and Iconography* (Layton UT: Gibbs Smith, 2004), i.

<sup>93</sup> Transcription by author, The Grange Cemetery Edinburgh, September 2018.

life remains unclear. In any event, it was her husband who had the financial means and patriarchal influence to determine how everyday Scots strolling through The Grange Cemetery in Edinburgh would interpret her life and legacy.

Particularly in Scotland, family memorial stones were established traditions that showed filial piety and demonstrated reverence, but also that showcased a family member's social and economic standing. In many cases, HBC officers born in Scotland came from humble beginnings. It is not surprising then, that once these men made their fortunes in the fur trade they returned to their home towns and invested in family memorial stones listing their parents and siblings, some of whom likely passed away while they were in Rupert's Land. The stones acted as outward signs of the economic success of their sojourns with the HBC but also anchored members of a family unit to a single place.

In 1844, after retired Chief Factor James Keith returned to Scotland, he installed a new memorial stone in memory of his parents and extended family in their home parish of Netherthird, Aberdeenshire.<sup>94</sup> An 1894 local history of Aberdeenshire included the following description: "Within a railing at the south-west corner of the old church is the burial place of a family of Keith, in Netherthird, who held at one time an important position in the parish."<sup>95</sup> The memorial stone bore the names of James Keith's parents, maternal grandmother, aunt, sisters, brother, and sister-in-law.<sup>96</sup> Neither James Keith himself, his Indigenous daughters, or his Scottish wife appear on the stone. Nor do any members of his brother Chief Factor George Keith's Indigenous family. James and

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<sup>94</sup> Keith kept the receipt for the stone and its installation, as well as the sheet where he wrote out the inscription. University of Aberdeen, B9.

<sup>95</sup> Rev. William Temple, *The Thanage of Fermartyn...* (Aberdeen: D. Wyllie & Son, 1894), 110.

<sup>96</sup> James Keith himself, his brother George, and their wives do not appear on the stone, even though the names of their brother Alexander and his widow appear. See *Ibid.*

George Keith were both living in metropolitan Aberdeen and each commissioned their own separate granite memorial stones. The family stone in Netherthird was not meant to memorialize every member of the Keith family, but was rather intended as a public display of James Keith's success, ensuring that the family's once 'important position in the parish' could not be forgotten.

After his mother's death in 1874 Chief Factor Donald Smith returned home to Forres, Scotland to serve as the executor of her estate. A stone in the local cemetery indicates that both Donald Smith and his only surviving sibling were involved in furnishing a memorial stone for their family which read "This stone with enclosure is erected by John Stuart Smith and Donald Alexander Smith to mark the place where lie interred" their parents, brother, and two sisters.<sup>97</sup> The surviving Smith brothers' imperial lives ranged widely and kept them away from their birthplace for years at a time. By installing a family memorial stone, they demonstrated their imperial successes, as well as their continued connection to Forres and to their kin.

Other HBC patriarchs carried on the well-established tradition of naming themselves on the memorial stones they commissioned. A memorial stone's physical attributes, location, text, and the names included on it were all decided by the person who commissioned it and paid the bill. Maria, the daughter of retired Chief Factor Edward Ermatinger, died from complications after childbirth at St. Thomas, Ontario in 1863. Her father commissioned a large white sandstone grave marker, encircled with four sandstone pillars attached by chains easily visible to anyone strolling past the entrance of the

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<sup>97</sup> Wilson, *Life of Lord Strathcona*, 16.

cemetery.<sup>98</sup> The stone was the most ornate in the old St. Thomas churchyard, and stated that Maria was the “daughter of Edward Ermatinger Esq.” The words “wife of the Rev Maurice S Baldwin” followed below. Through his daughter’s gravestone, Ermatinger displayed his wealth and the depth of his love and mourning. He also demonstrated his influence over how Maria Ermatinger Baldwin would be remembered – firstly as his daughter, and lastly as Reverend Baldwin’s wife. Memorial and grave stones were sites where particular legacies could be etched in stone, and where patriarchal dominance or ownership could be asserted.

Similarly, retired Chief Factor Thomas McMurray’s daughter Mary was the first person to be buried in Colborne’s newly consecrated Anglican cemetery in 1847. Her father commissioned a large stone with more text than was common for the period, which announced that she was “Eldest Daughter of Thos. McMurray, Esq., Late of The Hon. Hudson Bay Co. and Wife of John Matheson of Murray.” Gravestones for Maria Ermatinger Baldwin and Mary McMurray Matheson were commissioned by their fathers (likely at great expense) to proclaim their patriarchal authority over both their daughters and their daughters’ husbands, who appeared as secondary actors on the stones.

Retired Chief Factor Cuthbert Cumming’s name and HBC affiliation were also etched into each of the memorial stones dedicated to his children in the Anglican cemetery in Colborne, Ontario. Ten years after Cumming’s death, his son Thomas Wallace Cumming was buried in the same churchyard. His gravestone listed him as “third son of the late Cuthbert Cumming, of the Hon. Hudson Bay Co.” Thomas was, in fact, Cumming’s sixth son. The stone likely indicates a desire on the part of Thomas’

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<sup>98</sup> After the stone turned black, it became the subject of local lore and is known locally as ‘the witch’s grave’.



mother (Cumming's widow Jane McMurray Cumming) to erase her husband's first family, perhaps to avoid any stigma surrounding her family's fur trade past and to influence the way her family was represented.



*Figure 6.11: John Ballenden family memorial stone, New Calton Burial Ground Edinburgh, Scotland<sup>99</sup>*

Retired Chief Factor John Ballenden also created a particular representation of his extended family through the large memorial stone he erected in a prominent position near the main entrance of Edinburgh's New Calton Burial Ground in 1853. In two different locations, the text of the stone credits Ballenden with installing it. The side of the stone that gives his date of death lists him as "John Ballenden, Esq. who had dedicated this stone in memory of so many broken ties of kindred and affection." The Ballenden family weathered the loss of three members that year, which likely precipitated the stone's

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<sup>99</sup> Photo by author, September 2018.

installation.<sup>100</sup> In all, the deaths of twelve members of the Ballenden extended family dating between 1817 and 1872 are memorialized on the stone. The memorial brings together family members who died in Edinburgh at various times, but also those who died in Orkney and Peebles in Scotland, as well as Sault Ste. Marie in Canada. The inscriptions represent members from four generations of the Ballenden family, yet they are incomplete.

Ballenden's widowed sister Eliza Ballenden Bannatyne is listed on the stone, along with her daughter Eliza Gray Bannatyne, and her infant grandson John Ballenden Bannatyne. Her husband James Bannatyne's 1832 death at Stromness is not memorialized alongside his wife, daughter, and grandson. Back in Red River, John Ballenden Bannatyne's parents later erected another memorial to their infant son at Kildonan Presbyterian Cemetery, where he is listed alongside his five-year-old brother Charles.<sup>101</sup>

Not all of John Ballenden's own children are accounted for on the stone. Four of his children appear alongside their relations, while their four siblings are absent. Notably absent is son John Jr., who died as a teenager serving in the Maori Wars in New Zealand, ten years before the last addition to the stone. The other three missing siblings (Elizabeth, Frances, and William) left Scotland as adults and possibly never returned.

Family memorial stones in these contexts were not intended to serve as exact genealogical records of a distinct family unit. The Ballenden stone allowed John Ballenden to outwardly demonstrate his wealth by purchasing a family plot at the main

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<sup>100</sup> John Ballenden's mother Eliza Gray Ballenden (age 75), his wife Sarah Ada McLeod Ballenden (age 33) and his sister's grandson John Ballenden Bannatyne (age 14 months).

<sup>101</sup> John Ballenden Bannatyne was the son of Andrew Graham Ballenden Bannatyne and his wife Anne McDermot. He was born at Red River but died while visiting the Ballendens in Edinburgh with his parents.

entrance of a city centre cemetery, but also to outwardly display filial piety. The stone brought together immediate family members who died in distant places. It also provided a place where extended family members such as unmarried adults and widows who might not otherwise be memorialized in stone could be remembered.

Likewise, John Clark erected a large memorial stone sometime before his retirement from the HBC. The stone memorialized Clark's young wife and their two children, all of whom he lost in less than two years. The stone was installed at Moose Factory but reminded its visitors that twenty-one-year-old Eliza was "buried at Long Portage House."<sup>102</sup> No resting place was listed for her two infants. Clark was not serving at Moose Factory when his family members died, though he and the couple's surviving daughter would have travelled there to depart for Scotland in 1881.<sup>103</sup> Clark knew Moose Factory well, as it was his first posting in Rupert's Land. It is possible that John first met Eliza at Moose Factory, or that her kin were based there. The stone could also have been erected as the Clarks prepared to leave fur trade country. Since company ships inevitably docked at Moose, it is possible that Clark wanted the stone to be nearby in case the couple's daughter Margaret ever returned to Rupert's Land and wished to visit it. John Clark never saw the stone again, and in all likelihood, neither did his daughter Margaret. In this context, the stone was not intended to be visited regularly, but to anchor Eliza Clark and her two children together in a single place of significance.

In the case of Eliza Clark, her gravestone at Moose Factory is the only object that can be directly linked to her, even though it does not mark her actual burial place. This is

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<sup>102</sup> John Long, ed. "Moose Factory HBC Graveyard Transcription," (1981), entry #4.

<sup>103</sup> Clark's Biographical sheet indicates that he had a wife and two children in 1873, so it is possible that he and Eliza had a second surviving child that died before the Clarks were enumerated in the 1881 census, as it shows only one child born before 1873. 1881 Census of Canada, District 192, Sub-district 103, Martin's Falls, page 1, household 1.

also the case for Ann Sutherland Keith, whose name appears on a memorial stone far from her actual gravesite. Sometime before his death in 1859, Ann's husband George Keith commissioned a large granite memorial stone which was installed on a prominent outer wall at Nellfield Cemetery, in the heart of Aberdeen. The impetus was likely the deaths of Keiths' daughter and grandson in close succession at their home, Morningside Cottage just outside the city centre.<sup>104</sup> Eventually, inscriptions were added to the stone in memory of George Keith, his wife, two of their daughters, and three grandchildren who died while staying with the Keiths in Aberdeen. After Keith's death, his widowed sister-in-law Susan Angus Keith likely coordinated the addition of names to the stone. Ann Sutherland Keith and her daughter Mary Keith left Aberdeen after George Keith's death, settling just outside of Montreal, yet both of their deaths are memorialized on the family stone in Aberdeen. The memorial stone tied Ann and Mary to Aberdeen, giving local friends and family a place to grieve that tangibly linked the women with George Keith and the Swanston children who died at Morningside.

Immediately to the left of George Keith's family memorial stone is another granite stone whose inscription announces that it was "Erected by George Keith... in memory of James Keith." James Keith's papers seem to indicate that it was he, and not his brother George, who purchased both of the cemetery plots in 1849.<sup>105</sup> It is clear that whoever purchased the stone did so expecting that additional names would be added, as more than half of the stone's polished surface remained blank and untouched. Most likely

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<sup>104</sup> Charles Swanston died in June and his aunt Jane Keith died in November of 1849.

<sup>105</sup> James Keith purchased two neighbouring plots in October of 1849, in the wake of the deaths of his brother's daughter and grandson that same year. Receipt from Nellfield Cemetery, 17 October 1849, Aberdeen in James Keith's Account Books, University of Aberdeen Special Collections (hereafter UASC) MS 2769/1/57/3, box 5. Further work with burial registers would be required to find out whether George and James Keith are the only ones physically buried in these plots, and in that case, where the remaining family members who died in Aberdeen are buried.

there was an expectation that James' daughters in Rupert's Land would appear inscribed alongside their father and his new wife.

This was also the case for the large stone erected in memory of retired Chief Factor Alexander Christie and his wife at The Grange Cemetery in Edinburgh. Most of its large granite surface must have been reserved for the couple's children, who lived in England, Scotland, the Canadas, and across Rupert's Land. None of James Keith or Alexander Christie's relations were ever added to the large memorial stones they installed; possibly a symbol of 'broken ties of kindred and affection' that John Ballenden stated so plainly on his own family's memorial stone.

### **V: Conclusion:**

Family artifacts and community records reveal that Indigenous heritage, and Indigenous women in particular, came to occupy complex and even contradictory positions in HBC family and community historical narratives. Family treasures underscore efforts by descendants, community members, and others to appropriate or attach new meanings to the labour, artistic expression, and experiences of Indigenous women; yet, they also remain testaments to women's unwillingness to be erased from their descendants' histories. Family heirlooms, whether a scanned photograph, a tiny pair of moccasins, or a distant memorial stone, transcend the limits of traditional archival sources. They centre the experiences of highly mobile HBC families who sometimes fit uneasily within geographically bounded historical narratives or museum and archival collections or contemporary assumptions about family bonds. The mobility of HBC families has resulted in truncated family histories that have obscured continuities, connections, and individual choices and experiences. Memorial stones demonstrated

wealth and patriarchal ownership, but also the ways that extended family networks were fundamental to daily life for nineteenth-century imperial families. Perhaps paradoxically, focused study at the family level draws distant imperial and museological contexts into a single, and more fruitful, frame of analysis.

The fur trade provided the social and economic advantages that allowed officers to retire and establish themselves in new communities, but it was also fundamental to the stories told and the secrets kept in ensuing generations. The unique socio-economic context of the fur trade bounded, structured and reified family and social relationships that crisscrossed the nineteenth-century British Empire. Their mobility across vast cultural and physical distances perhaps makes them more difficult to locate, but it also provides a window on the many ways stories could be crafted and reworked in different colonial contexts.

## CONCLUSION:

In a small museum in Ontario a beautiful hide jacket, with brightly coloured quillwork and long hide fringe is displayed in a large glass case. The jacket's genealogy, that is, its life as an object, embodies many of the themes that this dissertation has explored. The jacket was said to have been a gift to Chief Factor James Anderson from his wife Margaret McKenzie's Ojibwe grandfather in 1847. When conservators restored it for display in 2008, they found original repairs carefully done in sinew, and residues of pine resin and pipe smoke embedded in the jacket. The quillwork decoration down the front and shoulders of the garment featured vivid red, orange, purple, green and blue dyes, and the work of a skilled hand. At the elbows of each sleeve, the hide was thinned, a sign of a garment well loved.<sup>1</sup> The jacket travelled with the Anderson family from Sault Ste. Marie, west as far as Fort Simpson, and perhaps east again to the small agricultural town of Sutton where the family settled. At some point, it was tucked away in the home of a distant Anderson cousin in the United Kingdom, who eventually sent it to a cousin in Canada for donation to the Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives in Sutton. The jacket displays an unknown Indigenous woman's skill and care and is a manifestation of the powerful kin network that Chief Factor James Anderson joined through his marriage to Margaret McKenzie, the daughter of well-connected Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie and his Ojibwe wife Angelique.

Yet, the jacket is on display in a 'James Anderson Gallery' at the museum, in a town where many traces of James Anderson remain, even though he only lived there for

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<sup>1</sup> Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives, "Canadian Conservation Institute Report No. ARL4576" (2008).

the final four years of his life. Margaret, on the other hand, spent decades in Sutton raising her family, running a farm, and maintaining her connection to a kin network that spanned from India to the United Kingdom to North America.



*Figure 7.1: Quillwork hide jacket that belonged to HBC Chief Factor James Anderson.<sup>2</sup>*

At different points in the hide jacket's life then, it has been the site of shifting power dynamics and relations; between the woman who made it and the gift giver, the gift giver and the wearer, the wearer and the descendant to whom the jacket passed, the donor and the museum, and the museum and its visitors. At the heart of these relations are acts of remembering and forgetting, which are, fundamentally, the central themes of the preceding chapters. Among HBC families and their descendants, acts of remembering and forgetting have been central to how they have conceived of themselves as part of

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<sup>2</sup> Georgina Pioneer Village and Archives. Photo by author, 2015.



wider Indigenous, settler, and metropolitan worlds. They have also played a role in how such families have been documented by scholars and descendants over time.

By existing ‘betwixt and between’, geographically, culturally and historiographically, HBC families that settled beyond Rupert’s Land have often evaded the researcher’s gaze.<sup>3</sup> Their mobility across different colonial spaces and categories has been at the crux of this marginalization. By foregrounding the settlement experiences of Indigenous women and their children in Scotland and the Canadas, this dissertation worked to redress this marginalization, and also to demonstrate the utility of viewing fur trade families within a wider imperial framework.

This work began by situating HBC officers within much longer histories of imperial mobility and investment that sprung from the Scottish Highlands in the wake of the Jacobite defeat at Culloden in 1746. These events created a specific economic and political context that pushed Highland families to look to Britain’s Empire for employment and enrichment, and invest their newfound wealth and influence back into Britain’s imperial expansion. Following multigenerational imperial entanglements from the Scottish Highlands, to places such as India, the Caribbean, and British North America places HBC families and the fur trade within a wider imperial context, demonstrating that threads of kin, wealth, and power tied distant imperial locales together, even if these connections were obscured or forgotten over time. In particular, a wider view on family relationships and the flow of wealth and patronage across the British Empire demonstrates the ways that involvement in one field of imperial activity could strengthen and perpetuate imperial expansion in others. Without this wider view, it would not be possible to highlight the connections between wealth gained from plantations in India and

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<sup>3</sup> I use ‘researcher’ here deliberately, to include scholars, genealogists and amateur historians.

the Caribbean, compensation paid after the abolition of slavery, the HBC's fur trade, and the expansion of settler colonies in British North America.

It was within this much wider imperial context that British men entered the fur trade, started families with Indigenous women, and became Commissioned Officers in the HBC. It was also this context that shaped and constrained the settlement choices HBC families made when they prepared to leave Rupert's Land. Since the cohort of families studied were generally quite wealthy, any number of retirement destinations were viable possibilities for them. Yet, as Chapter Two demonstrates, they chose to settle close to one another, usually near bodies of water, in Scotland and in the Canadas. Remembering maternal homelands and birthplaces, and maintaining strong connections between 'Hudson's Bay folk' remained priorities long after families left Rupert's Land. A wider imperial view of HBC family migration cannot be separated out from the Indigenous histories embedded in the social world of the fur trade.

The third and fourth chapters showed that for Indigenous women and their children, the unique social and economic context of the fur trade continued to shape and define their daily lives in diverse and sometimes contradictory ways. Many Indigenous women chose to return to Rupert's Land in widowhood, using their limited financial independence to craft their own visions for their futures. In so doing, they complicated assumptions about where Indigenous people could be found in the nineteenth-century British Empire; they were genteel travellers, farmers, employers, wealthy heads of families, and the owners of fine country estates. Indigenous kin networks were central to the fabric of the imperial kin ties that crisscrossed British-claimed territories all over the world. As this dissertation has shown, HBC families were part of a much wider British

imperial world, but this did not preclude them from maintaining connections to their maternal relations, languages, and landscapes.

HBC children embraced overlapping and shifting subjectivities, moving between and across different social worlds over the course of their lives. In Scotland and the Canadas, racialized peoples could be erased or excluded from the colonial archive, yet Indigenous women and their children represented themselves in ways that subverted the efforts of imperial governments to categorize and quantify them. The lifeways of siblings could diverge widely and resulted in different branches of descendants being racialized and remembered in very different ways in their families and communities.

Chapter Five focused on wills and estate planning as contexts where HBC officers worked out decidedly imperial anxieties about patriarchal control and hierarchies of race and gender that were both imperial in character, and shaped by the unique context of the fur trade. However, large estates in many instances gave Indigenous widows and their children a measure of freedom to choose their own paths and remain embedded in fur trade networks of kin and mobility.

While the first chapter took a multigenerational view of HBC families that looked at some of their ancestors, the last chapter took a multigenerational view forward to look at descendants. Through the operation of stigma in settler and metropolitan contexts in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries, Indigenous women were obscured or separated from their descendants' stories about themselves. The archival materials preserved by nineteenth-century HBC families are often silent on racism, discrimination, and questions of identity. Tracing the ways that family histories were and were not transmitted to future generations and to museum contexts indicates that families grappled

with anxieties about their Indigenous maternal ancestry, even if these anxieties were never committed to paper or preserved in archives. These histories could be sources of private shame or public pride for descendants, many of whom did not set out to ‘find’ Indigenous ancestors until the late twentieth century. Family treasures underscore efforts by descendants, community members, and others to appropriate or attach new meanings to the labour, artistic expression, and experiences of Indigenous women; yet, they also remain testaments to women’s unwillingness to be forgotten. Family treasures (and HBC families themselves), tell us stories about race, family, and migration. They enrich our understandings of the fur trade, and British North America more broadly, while also drawing the distant and divergent imperial contexts of Rupert’s Land, Scotland, and the Canadas into a single frame of analysis.

At one time, perhaps foolishly, I envisioned this project as one that had a concrete beginning and end. Perhaps inevitably, this ‘end’ presents a number of other starting places. Many of the possibilities that have arisen through this research centre on the need for, and the possibilities of, closer integration of geographically distant museum and archival collections through digitization and contextual work that draws together seemingly disparate historical fields and contexts.

Over the course of this research, I was often surprised by both the geographic distances that archival and museum objects travel in their lifetimes, and the disjunctures that mobility can create in family and community historical narratives and scholarly analyses. This is how, for instance, a newspaper clipping advertising the sale of a farm in Queensville, Ontario can be found tucked away with early nineteenth-century letters at

the University of Aberdeen.<sup>4</sup> Through the increasing availability of online materials, scholars are better placed than they once were to make linkages between related, yet geographically distant collections. Further integration of distant museum and archival holdings related to the same families, as well as matching the handiwork of unnamed women are areas that warrant more scholarly work. More engagement with museum collections, and work to reconnect objects with their human and non-human relations can yield new insight into women's lives and the transatlantic imperial networks through which objects circulated over generations.

Creating these links often still requires in-person visits to small repositories that can yield new insights into well-known or more readily available sources. A number of national archival repositories in the Caribbean house collections that are considered at risk or endangered, adding a level of urgency to the need for finding ways to create connections between geographically distant but closely related archival materials.<sup>5</sup> As part of this process, the relations, contexts, and value judgments that facilitated the donation of museum and archival collections in Canada warrant further scholarly attention.

Developments in the digital humanities, particularly around Social Networking Analysis (SNA) hold promise for better understanding the contours and hubs of HBC family networks, and the kinds of relations and naming practices that underpin them. Interesting comparisons with HBC families who clustered in what became British Columbia and Washington could result from the scale of analysis enabled by SNA. This

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<sup>4</sup> Newspaper clipping advertising the 1871 sale of a farm owned by the Honourable Alexander Arbuthnott. Arbuthnott Correspondence, University of Aberdeen Special Collections MS 2764/3/2/2/11.

<sup>5</sup> For a discussion of the challenges, and an overview of repositories at risk, see "The Library, Archival, Museum Services" and "Grenada's Endangered Archives" sections of the National Archives of Grenada website at: [www.grenadanationalarchives.wordpress.com/](http://www.grenadanationalarchives.wordpress.com/)

kind of work would also better integrate unmarried people as key nodes in social networks. Social network mapping could also provide a better sense of the ways that imperial families connected British-claimed territories in North America with others across the globe.

The integration of family and imperial history has, and will continue to, open exciting avenues for increasing the accessibility of imperial histories to non-academic audiences. Such works can act as valuable scholarly expressions of the ‘tense and tender ties’ that continue to be marked and commemorated on both sides of the Atlantic.

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