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CHIPEWYAN ETHNO-ADAPTATIONS:  
IDENTITY EXPRESSION FOR CHIPEWYAN INDIANS  
OF NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN

Robert Wesley Heber

B.A., Saint Mary's University, 1978

M.E.S., Dalhousie University, 1981

A Dissertation

Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

at

University of Manitoba

1989

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**BY**

**ROBERT WESLEY HEBER**

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies of  
the University of Manitoba in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
of the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

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TITLE: Chipewyan Ethno-adaptations: Identity Expression for  
Chipewyan Indians of Northern Saskatchewan

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## ABSTRACT

Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan, Canada are experiencing rapid social and cultural change. One area of change is in social identity expression as ethnicity.

This study makes use of an ethnohistorical approach to trace continuities and change in expressions of ethnicity for Chipewyan Indians from prehistoric to contemporary times. Comparisons are made in ethnohistorical processes and ethno-ecological adaptations between sub-populations of Chipewyan to determine similarities and differences in ethno-adaptation by regional groups within the Chipewyan collective.

Research was carried out for this study using historical information supported by ethnographic observations of two regional Chipewyan populations, the Buffalo River people of the Upper Churchill River and Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin.

The research demonstrates that while Chipewyan Indians share common features of ethnicity, sub-populations express distinct identity features that can be traced to different adaptive processes over space and time.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I dedicate this work to the late Albert Sylvestre who passed away at Dillon, Buffalo River in June, 1988. Albert was a good friend who provided gentle encouragement and support, often at the most needed times. I also dedicate this work to the people of Buffalo River who I lived with and served in the past, and who welcomed me back into their community with hospitality.

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CHAPTER ONE  
THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

Introduction

Indian people living in the western Canadian subarctic are expressing a renewed sense of self awareness as they attempt to integrate traditional features of Indian culture with a new way of life. A renewed sense of self awareness may be seen as the emergence or re-emergence of an ethnic identity by which Indian people are defining themselves and their place in a rapidly changing world.

This study is an attempt at further understanding of the relationships between identity expression and social and cultural change as experienced by Chipewyan Indians living in northern Saskatchewan, Canada. This study makes use of an ethnic model to analyse social and cultural change as ethno-adaptations. Ethno-adaptations are the ways people use their ethnic identity to respond to changing conditions and to control and direct the change process.

This study is not concerned with ethnicity as a social label or as a minority designation for Indian people. Rather, this study makes use of an ethnic model to identify sub-groups of Chipewyan Indians within larger Indian collectives and to determine differences and similarities in ethno-adaptations between regional Chipewyan populations.

An ethnohistorical approach is used in this study as a means for identifying social and cultural continuities and

for tracing social and cultural change. The ethnohistorical perspective provides a way for studying persistence and change in the human condition by reference to the records of the past and the expressions of living peoples of the present. Ethnohistory integrates generalized ethnographic observations with the oral and written history of past cultures to produce an account of change in terms of social and cultural continuities in which the past is seen to influence present conditions and may go towards directing future actions (Carmack 1972). Ethnohistory in anthropology also makes use of linguistic analysis and archeological information to reconstruct culture histories and to explain differences and similarities in historical experiences between related groups. Ethnohistory is thereby useful in drawing out cross-cultural comparisons between sub-groupings within larger populations. In this study ethnohistorical comparisons are made between sub-groups of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan to determine how past experiences have gone to define sub-group identity and to facilitate social and cultural change.

The use of ethnohistory in anthropology is not new, but rather, as noted by Nancy Lurie (1961:79): "is as old as ethnology itself." The use of ethnohistory in the study of North American Indians has increased over the past quarter century as social scientists attempt to gain greater understanding of conditions of native people in terms of their

history as well as the relationships between social and cultural continuity and social and cultural change.

Ethnohistorical studies into social and cultural change among Northern Athabaskans have been carried out since the 1960's (de Laguna 1960; Townsend 1965; VanStone 1965) making use of archeological, ethnographic, and historic information. Ethnohistorical studies of Northern Athabaskans have been carried out as well which stress social and cultural continuities (Smith 1970, 1975, 1976, 1976b, 1978; Gillespie 1975, 1976; Sharp 1975a, 1977, 1979), and social and cultural change (Jarvenpa 1976, 1980; Krech 1976, 1978, 1984; Townsend 1970, 1970a, 1979; Yerbury 1976, 1981, 1986).

In this study social and cultural continuities and social and cultural change are analysed in terms of ethnic identity as determined by reference to historical information and ethnographic research of contemporary conditions. Social and cultural change is addressed in this study in terms of processes as outlined by Eric Wolf (1982:1-23) in which interacting and interconnected populations influence each other through space and time. In this historic process identifiable groups of people like the Chipewyan are seen as a number of specialized populations shifting their strategies and priorities as adaptations to ever changing conditions. As Wolf (1982:17) notes, the Chipewyan are an aggregate of separate units:

...some of whose bands gave up hunting to become fur trappers, or 'carriers', while others continued to hunt for game as 'caribou eaters', with people continuously changing from caribou eating to carrying and back.

In this work Chipewyan are not viewed as a single population, but rather as a collective of sub-groups which are part of larger units. The Chipewyan recognize and acknowledge themselves as having several identities, each indicating specific attachments, yet each part of a greater entity. The people of this study identify themselves as Buffalo River people, as Dene people, and as Indian people. In this manner the Chipewyan perceive themselves not as part of some hierarchical social ordering based on dominant and subordinant relationships, but rather, like the Russian doll, they are found as units within units, all part of the same order, yet each fitting into its own niche and each adapting to its own experiences.

### Ethnicity

The concept of ethnicity is used in this study to determine differences and similarities in ethno-adaptations for sub-groups of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan. The concept of ethnicity has been defined in several ways. Isajiw (1974) provides over forty definitions, each expressing a particular perspective in the study of social identity and social identity change. For the purpose of this study ethnicity is defined as a recognition of social membership

based on a perception of shared origins, history, and traditions along with commonly held customs, values and goals that together identify the individual with the group and distinguish one's own group from all others.

Ethnicity generates and sustains a sense of shared identity among a group of people that is expressed by symbolic representations and social and environmental relationships.

Ethnic groups are self-perceived and conscious social constructs that are different from cultural groups. The concepts of ethnic group and culture group have been analytically separated by Barth (1969), Glazer and Moynihan (1975), Brass (1976), and Hechter (1976). Yet, cultural features and institutional behaviors are integrated within an ethnic consciousness contributing to an ethnic identity structure. An ethnic group is thereby a culture bearing unit whose members acknowledge common origins, history, and purpose, and who may direct ethnic expression as cultural symbols towards achieving specific ends.

#### Anthropology and Ethnicity

Studies in ethnicity are generally based on two perspectives. The first views ethnic identity as founded on attachments to the past, and the second deals with ethnic phenomena as experiences of the present. In early studies employing a past orientation (Shils 1957; Almond and Coleman

1960; Geertz 1963; Inkeles 1966; Eisenstadt 1970) ethnicity was addressed in terms of a set of identity features that together provide the basis for an emotional attachment with the past and which go towards engendering a sense of loyalty by the individual to the group with whom that past was believed to be shared. A past orientation in ethnic studies that focus on emotional sentiments founded on historical ties has been presented in terms of primordialism (Shils 1957; Geertz 1963; Isaacs 1974; Bell 1975), as non-rational attachments (Isaacs 1975; Devereux 1975) by which people are seen to define themselves and their group. The primordial or non-rational attachments may include commonly held bonds of kinship, descent, birthplace, territory, race, religion, language, or any other objective criterion of identity. For some (Van den Berghe 1978), primordial attachments are believed to be expressed through genetic inheritance and can be understood by reference to kin selection in which the driving force of ethnicity is founded on genetic criteria for maintaining one's inclusive fitness in terms of group identity. For other (Geertz 1963; Francis 1976; Keyes 1981) ethnicity is derived from a cultural rather than a biological interpretation of descent. In either case the primordial or non-rational attachments to a commonly perceived past implies that ethnicity is an involuntary predisposition imposed by the accident of birth in which individuals have

no choice in their group affiliation or control over their social destiny. Yet, as noted by DeVos and Wagatsuma (1967), Berreman (1975), Royce (1982), and others, ethnic identity is largely arbitrary in nature in that ascriptive characteristics of identity structure, including common heritage, common place, common culture, and even common race by which a people are defined or define themselves can be devised, manipulated, denied, or ignored in order to stress an attachment or the lack of an attachment. Furthermore, identity symbols, including the manner of speech, dress, and other behaviors, can be affected and displayed or suppressed in order to stress or cover up features of identity. This manipulation of one's identity is situational, often in response to circumstance, and can be employed as a tactic, a conscious effort to further the aspirations of the individual or of the group. As such, ethnicity and ethnocultural symbols are readily contrived and controlled to achieve basic needs and to further political desires, social ambitions, or economic goals (Geertz 1965; Cohen 1969; DeVos 1975; Isaacs 1975).

The ways by which individuals manipulate their identity structure in response to circumstance provides the basis for a present orientation in the study of ethnicity. The present orientation in ethnic studies deals with the experience of individuals that go towards shaping their ethnic

consciousness and changing their perception of self.

The present orientation in the study of ethnicity has been referred to as circumstantialism as treated by Moerman (1965), Porter (1965), Barth (1969), Cohen (1969), Haaland (1969), Mitchell (1974), Nagata (1974, 1981), Patterson (1975), Hechter (1976), Yancy, Erickson, and Julian (1976), and Esman (1977). Circumstantialism is a psychosocial approach in the study of social identity and social identity change.

The study of ethnicity as a subjective-experiential process was pioneered by Fredrik Barth (1969) in his "Ethnic Groups and Boundaries" in which ethnicity is recognized not only as a set of cultural traits or territorial integrities, but also by psychosocial boundaries that create distinctions between members of a group and outsiders. These distinctions that maintain ethnic boundaries between people are expressed in their interactions with the world around them.

Ethnicity, as an experiential phenomenon in group identity, has been studied with reference to a number of conditions as recognized by Judith Nagata (1981) including socio-ecological interactions (Leach 1954; Barth 1969; Haaland 1969), socio-economic relationships (Cohen 1969; Foster 1974), political interests (Cohen 1969; Hechter 1976), and class consciousness (Patterson 1975; Stavenhagen 1975). In this study there is an attempt to determine the role of ethnicity in social and cultural change as expressed by

Chipewyan Indians as socio-organizational patterns, socio-ecological and socio-economic relationships, and spiritual expressions.

Circumstantial expression of identity features are the basis for functional relationships, and the circumstantial-experiential approach to the study of ethnicity focuses on dynamic social and social-environmental relationships and changes in those relationships as social processes. Through circumstantial action people may direct their identity as a conscious effort to achieve basic needs, to further social ambitions, and to attain political objectives and economic goals.

In contrast the primordial approach to the study of ethnicity stresses those objective features of identity that go towards defining group membership in terms of sentimental attachments and group loyalties. The primordial-circumstantial distinction was first used by Shils (1957) to differentiate between what he called the primordial and ideological Bunds. He defined 'Bunds' as:

that intense and solidary little confraternity whose bonds of mutual attachment could stem either from a common ideological commitment (the ideological Bund) or from the 'primordial' ties of common origin or birth (the primordial Bund) (Nagata 1984:121).

Primordial attachments are seen to generate an ethnic awareness and ideological commitments produce an ethnic

consciousness. McKay and Lewins (1978) distinguish between ethnic awareness as a knowledge of one's ethnic origins, and ethnic consciousness as a focus for solidarity under situations of conflict and change. For Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan, who are experiencing rapid social and cultural change, features of an ethnic awareness, based on primordial attachments to common origin and shared history, are weak and are being strengthened out of a growing ethnic consciousness. In this manner the primordial and ideological Bunds are mutually supportive to bring about and sustain an identity structure as individuals recognize their membership in an ethnic group.

The primordial ties and ideological commitments of ethnicity are integrated in that they are expressed by individuals as self-perceived criteria of identity. Max Weber (1968) first recognized the subjective nature of ethnicity when he wrote that:

We shall call 'ethnic groups' those human groups that entertain a subjective belief in their common descent....Ethnic membership (Gemeinsamkeit) differs from the kinship group precisely by being a presumed identity... (Weber 1968:389).

Through the expression of ethnic identity the individual is able to direct attachments of the past and relationships of the present towards future action. For Indian people a statement of ethnic awareness and ethnic consciousness may provide the framework for future action and may direct the

process of change. By studying how ethnicity is expressed under different conditions the anthropologist may gain insights into the process of change and may even be able to predict future direction of change.

### Ethnicity as Social Identity

Ethnicity is only one of several forms of social identity that are commonly associated with group definition within socially plural societies. The term 'pluralism', as a social condition, was first used by J. S. Furnivall (1948) who describes plural societies in the following manner:

It is in the strictest sense a medley, for they mix but do not combine. Each group holds by its own religion, its own culture and language, its own ideas and ways (Connor 1978:391).

Social identities within pluralistic societies are of two categories. The first are socially stratified categories of class, caste, and lineage which exist as interdependent units within a social system to differentiate groups of people one from the other by ascribed features of birth and/or condition, and in which role expectations are attributed to the group. The second category of social identity is found among groups of people who are held together by shared features of group membership as independent units within pluralistic societies. These include ethnic groups and nations (DeVos and Romanucci-Ross 1975). Ethnic groups differ from castes, social classes, and lineage groups in

that those latter types of social groups comprise social strata in which differences exist in prestige, status, and activity between divisions within each type. Ethnic groups, on the other hand, are found within pluralistic societies in which there is no inherent difference in status, prestige, or activity unless artificially imposed or accepted. In that case the ethnic unit takes on class or caste-like characteristics.

Castes, classes, and ethnic groups are all founded on past orientations and are sustained by present circumstance and experience. However, ethnic groups as well as social classes may also display a future orientation in that they can be a social forum for achieving desires and fulfilling goals. When ethnic groups take on a future orientation they become interest groups as social forces in their own right.

The application of an ethnic model to the study of Indian social and cultural change does not subsume or deny social identities that may be emerging based on class or lineage, or a place that Indians may be occupying within a stratified social order. Rather ethnicity is used here as a means for describing social and cultural change for a people who are increasingly expressing their realities in terms of the larger society and as identifiable groups within an Indian collective.

### Ethnicity as Interest

Ethnic groups have only recently been recognized as a forum for expressing group interest. Glazer and Moynihan (1975:18) note the emergence of ethnicity as interest when they write that:

Class was expected in the modern world to become the focus for the mobilization of group interest....Nation was the other great pole around which group interests could be mobilized....We must add ethnicity as a new major focus for the mobilization of interest.

Ethnicity, as Daniel Bell (1975:169) notes, has become more significant than class as a focus for identity and the mobilization of interest because ethnicity integrates a shared interest as an orientation for action with an affective tie to an actual or perceived common past.

The emergence of ethnicity as interest may be partly the consequence of conflict arising out of recent desires by identity groups to seek their national autonomy in a post-colonial era, and ethnicity becomes the framework within which that interest can be pursued as national interests. For Indian people, individual and group interests are often articulated at the level of nation.

The concepts of ethnicity and nationhood are closely allied as subjective perceptions of belonging that engender feelings of loyalty based on a shared sense of common ties of place, origin, custom, tradition, language, religion, or some other objective features that go towards defining the

collective self. The terms 'nation' and 'ethnicity' also share common origins of meaning. Walker Connor (1978:386) notes that the word 'ethnicity' is derived from the Greek 'ethnos' meaning 'nation' in the sense of a social group characterized by common ideology, institutions, customs, and goals. When ethnic loyalties become national loyalties ethnicity can function to help define the status of the group as a nation of people even within the existing framework of a state.

For Indian people, the concept of nationhood or peoplehood is that of an affirmed historical continuity as well as an awareness of self in relation to the group, and in relation to the spiritual realities that give the group substance and meaning in a rapidly changing world. Harold Cardinal (1977:141-142) expresses the integration of ethno-national constructs for Indian people in the following manner:

Indian people look upon themselves as the chosen people of the Great Spirit because the first father of their nation had a special covenant with the Great Spirit. Out of that covenant, come the responsibilities of the elders: the laws and rules that they should follow, as well as their obligations to the land and to all things in the land; water, air, all the basic elements of life itself.

This inter-relationship that is perceived to exist between the past, the self, the land, and the creator encompass for Indian people what Cardinal (1977:142) calls a 'tribal

definition of nationhood' and this definition and condition, he believes, likely applies to tribal peoples throughout the world in that "...they find their whole purpose in being where they are and who they are."

For Indian people, nationhood is part and parcel of an identity structure that is founded upon objective criteria of place, culture, and history and is reaffirmed by continued relationships with the people, the land, and the creator through a sense of loyalty, responsibility, and purpose. For Indian people it appears that the concept of nationhood or peoplehood is the expression of ethnicity as an affirmation of a shared history, and shared relationships that go towards defining the collective self and structuring collective action.

In past studies in ethnicity, especially those dealing with Amerindians, there is a lack of emphasis on the ethnographic perspective. This apparent neglect may be due in part to the past recognition of ethnic groups as non-aboriginal minority groups existing within larger sociopolitical units, and to the treatment of Amerindians as racial and cultural isolates displaying only a racial and cultural identity. Past studies into ethnic phenomena that tended to focus on racial and culturally visible minority groups within larger plural societies include works by Thomas and Znaniecki (1918), Wirth (1928), Drake and Cayton (1945), Frazier (1949), Park (1950), Hughes and Hughes

(1952), Berry (1958), Simpson and Yinger (1958), Blalock (1967), and Van den Berghe (1967). Ethnic studies in anthropology that have been carried out with reference to the organization of plural societies include those by Rubin (1960), Benedict (1961, 1962), Despres (1964, 1967, 1969), and Smith (1965, 1969). In these and other studies ethnics are seen always in relation to others in which ethnic groups are believed to operate within other social and cultural frameworks often as survivals from other times to eventually merge into the more dominant host society. More recently ethnicity has been recognized as a social force in its own right contributing to social stability and instability and capable of self-renewal and change (Glazer and Moynihan 1975). The ethnic model may be useful in the study of social and cultural change for Indian people who still find themselves, for the most part, living outside the mainstream of North American society, not as anachronistic survivals passively assimilating, but rather as dynamic social entities taking an active part in defining who they are and where they are going. The process of self-definition for Indian people may not be a recent occurrence, but may rather be a part of Indian ethnohistory since Indian people, like other people, define themselves in relation to those with whom they interact and to the world in which they live.

Indian people living in the western Canadian subarctic

remain outside of the mainstream of Canadian society, not only physically isolated on reserves or in northern frontier communities, but also socially isolated from any intimate and meaningful interaction with non-Indian people. During ethnographic research for this study individual Indians commented "you are the first White man to come into our home" and "you are the first White man to sit at our table and eat with us." The social isolation of Indians from Whites is commonplace despite an increasing interaction between Indians and Whites in the work place and their increasing professional interdependence on the job. Similar forms of social separation were found by Matthiasson and Matthiasson (1978) for the Inuit of the Eastern Canadian Arctic in which ethnicity was a means for social isolation by Inuits from Whites in arctic settlements at a time when Inuit were adopting an ethnic stance.

The focus for this study, however, is not on Indians as visible minorities within the larger Canadian society, nor is it on Indian/non-Indian segregation in northern communities, but is rather concerned with the historic expression of Chipewyan ethnicity within larger Indian collectives and the various forms ethnic expression take to distinguish various Chipewyan groups one from another under conditions of change.

In this study individual Indian groups will be viewed in terms of their ethnic awareness based on their objective identity features of place, tradition, and culture, and on

their ethnic consciousness; the ways by which they have employed their concepts of self to resolve conflicts and to adjust to new situations brought about by culture contact and culture change experiences.

### The Role of Culture

All ethnographic studies refer to the identity of ethnic groups. However, in most studies culture is the means for the study of identity, and identity change is attributed to change in a people's cultural repertoire.

The concept of culture remains fundamental to any study of social and cultural change, including change in ethnicity. Kroeber and Kluckhohn (1952) provide over one hundred definitions of culture, reflecting the great diversity that exists in culture theory and the application of the culture concept to the study of human behavior.

In this study, in which the expression of self-identity is recognized as an integration of the social, cultural, and historical, culture is defined as a set of attitudes, beliefs, techniques, customs, and traditions held in common by a group of people and which is expressed in a symbolic and abstract manner as changing patterns over time and over space.

Culture provides the symbolic orientation for ethnic expression as well as a means for defining relationships, and includes both traditional cultural features as well as adopted and innovative cultural elements. It is, however,

not the cultural features themselves that comprise an identity structure, but rather the symbolic and behavioral expressions of those features, and how they are consciously employed to emphasize an identity and to distinguish one's own identity group from all others. George DeVos and Lola Romanucci-Ross (1975:16) refer to the role of culture in ethnicity in that:

The ethnic identity of a group of people consists of their subjective, symbolic, or emblematic use of any aspect of culture in order to differentiate themselves from other groups.

In early studies of ethnicity (Mitchell 1956; Epstein 1958; Gordon 1964; Naroll 1964) cultural features were over-emphasized in defining ethnic identity and were exclusively used to define the boundaries of an ethnic group. Yet, ethnicity is not only a recognition of shared cultural features but is also an awareness and acknowledgement of common attachments to place of origin, common ancestry, shared history, and even shared physical appearance, or at least the perception of these features as being significant or central to group affiliation. These objective features of identity, including cultural features, give form to ethnicity and provide for continuity of group identity.

However, ethnic identity is also derived out of dynamic relationships with the social, physical, and metaphysical environments, and it is these experiences that provide the basis for identity change. The integration of the concepts

of culture and ethnicity brings about what Babinski (1984: 38) calls an ethnic culture which he defines as:

a specific culture created by an ethnic group and identical neither with the culture of the country of origin nor with the one of the country of settlement, although connected to both of them.

Within the emerging ethnic culture there is an amalgam of adopted cultural features and traditional cultural elements that together generate a new sense of group identity.

#### Social and Cultural Persistence

The expression of traditional cultural features may be a means for adapting to imposed change; an adaptive strategy for Indian people based on what Trottier (1981;273) refers to as: "...'traditionalism'...the attempt to preserve traditional culture and socio-economic prerogatives in the face of White dominance...."

The persistence of Indian culture has been explained by reference to several hypotheses as set out by Evon Vogt (1972). The first is that persistence of Indian culture is the consequence of isolation of Indian populations on reserves, and that this isolation encourages and promotes the retention of aboriginal cultural features and traditional ways of life. While physical isolation may contribute to cultural persistence, this explanation fails to account for cultural retention among Indian people found living in close proximity to or even within predominantly White communities. Furthermore, Indian populations are no longer isolated from

the influence of Euro-American culture in a world of universal education, mass communication, and modern transportation. Yet, Indian culture not only persists, it is emphasized and renewed through expressions of self identity, even in the most remote circumstances.

A second perspective in the study of cultural persistence among Indians is that forced acculturation by the dominant White society tends to generate a resistance to change. It should, however, be recognized that this resistance does not necessarily preclude change, but rather may go towards limiting and directing change.

A third hypothesis related to cultural persistence is that culture, being non-uniform, erodes by degree in which some features of culture are more susceptible to change than are others. Material culture is believed to change most easily, family and kinship institutions are believed to be more persistent, and values, cultural orientations, and personality type are even more persistent and less subject to change (Vogt 1972:9). This approach to the study of culture change presumes a multilinear de-evolution in which a culture core or culture base is found to remain as an historical cultural root as a people are absorbed into the culture and society of another people. This perspective also assumes that not only are some features of culture more susceptible to change than others, but that some cultures

are less resistant to change than are others. While some cultural features may be more amenable to change, this approach fails to account for the interdependence of cultural characteristics and the influence change in one sphere of culture has on other spheres of culture.

A recent approach in the study of cultural persistence for North American Indians focuses on pan-Indian identity in which Indians perceive themselves as sharing a set of cultural symbols and values that set them apart from the rest of society as a unique people. Pan-Indianism has most often taken the form of nativistic movements in which Indian people from differing historical and cultural backgrounds have adopted a set of identity features that function to set them off from the rest of society. Stein and Hill (1977:2) refer to this phenomenon as a 'New Ethnicity' that: "confers the illusion of continuity with the chosen past." However, pan-Indian identity features, being highly selective, do not constitute the individual's complete identity picture. Rather, like all forms of nativism, pan-Indianism allows individuals from diverse cultural backgrounds to express common themes of ethnicity in a selective fashion.

Nativistic movements tend to evolve out of past cultural forms in response to some felt need. They provide a focus for identity expression for people who share a common sense of purpose and destiny.

Examples of nativistic movements among American Indians include the revived Sun Dance and the Ghost Dance of the Plains Indians (see Mooney 1965, original 1896), and the Peyote Cult which has its roots in earlier practices. The use of peyote (Nahuatl peyotl) has been part of American Indian tradition since the time of Cortez (Burkholder 1974: 37) and has been used, particularly by Plains Indians, in religious ceremony since about 1870 (La Barre 1970:7). Peyote continues to be used in religious ceremony within the Native American Church. (For more on the ritual use of peyote see Slotkin 1975).

Nativistic movements have been explained by sociologists and anthropologists in terms of social disruption and social disorganization (Linton 1943; Wallace 1956, 1966) and social deprivation (Aberle 1966; Hine 1974). Social disruption and disorganization may be a consequence of the stress of culture contact. The response is often an organized attempt by the subordinant group in society to sustain specific features of their culture as a framework for social action. Social deprivation models for the study of nativistic movements focus on the frustration of inequities that are perceived to exist between a group of people and their identified oppressors in the form of economic inequalities, social or status deprivation, and psychic or worth deprivation (Hine 1974:653). Relative deprivation is seen to exist where there is an apparent erosion of the old social order

and system of culturally founded values. Nativistic movements function to remove inequities and increase the individual's sense of pride as a member of the group by reference to cultural symbols of the past reinterpreted for directing present action and for enhancing future prospects. Nativistic movements operate at a general level of identity structure in which the group focus may be too broad and the cultural symbols too narrow to provide a universal appeal or a concerted and sustained social political action. Local level identity structures that may be influenced by Nativism can only be devised out of specific and relevant social and cultural histories, meaningful experiences, and individually expressed desires and goals.

Nativistic movements provide Indian people with a focus for universal identity which Trottier (1981:283) calls a "pan-ethnic charter." He recognizes the major problem in formulating pan-ethnic charters as the selection of appropriate symbols that will have universal appeal to a great number of groups that come from different ethnohistorical backgrounds. The basis for symbolic identity of recent Nativism is Plains Indian culture with its emphasis on the Sun Dance, the Round Dance, the Pow-wow, the ceremonial pipe, the use of sweet grass, and the Sweat Lodge, much of which has little or no relevance to the culture history of the Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan. However, Chipewyan Indians, as well as other Northern Athabaskans,

are adopting Plains Indian cultural symbolism to provide themselves with a basis for Indian identity. This is a recent phenomenon occurring where culture contact between Indian people and between Indians and Whites is rapidly escalating. Pan-ethnic features that are being introduced to Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan include the Sweat Lodge and the Round Dance. These adopted cultural features are being incorporated, with varying degrees of acceptance, into Chipewyan culture as practices that are either believed to be a part of Chipewyan culture history or are seen as a means for self expression of 'Indianness' and a means of coping with and even directing change.

#### Social and Cultural Change

The role of culture in the study of ethnicity is recognized not only in terms of persistence but also in terms of change. The process of social and cultural change, including change in identity, has tended in the past to be studied from the perspective of acculturation and assimilation. Acculturation is a process of social and cultural change that comes about under conditions of contact in which one group of people are believed to acquire cultural traits and social patterns from another group. Assimilation is considered the complete absorption of one social and cultural group by another so that no distinctive social identity features are apparent. The process of identity assimilation follows what Neil Sandberg (1974) calls

'strait-line' theory in which there is an eventual absorption of an ethnic group into the larger host society.

The theme of social and cultural assimilation has dominated much of social science thinking as it relates to identity groups. Paul Metzger (1971:628-629) notes that:

Sociologists, by and large, have accepted the image of Horatio Alger in the Melting Pot as the ideal definition of American Society. Although they have repeatedly documented the discrepancy between social reality and cultural myth in America, they have also taken the view that the incorporation of America's ethnic and racial groups into the mainstream culture is virtually inevitable.

The term 'acculturation' was first used by J. W. Powell in 1880 in reference to a force for change that is affected by the influence of one people upon another. He noted that: "The force of acculturation under the overwhelming presence of millions has wrought great change" (Herskovits 1958:3).

The process of acculturation occurs by the diffusion of cultural traits over space and time through direct, indirect, or induced culture contact. W. H. Holmes described the process in 1886 in the following manner:

The arts...pass from place to place and from people to people by a process of acculturation so that peoples of unlike origin practice like arts, while those of like origin are found practicing unlike arts (Herskovits 1958:3).

In this manner, minority groups existing in a subordinate position to the larger society are seen to assimilate under

the pressures of contact, losing their own sense of identity in the process.

Acculturation and assimilation have been viewed from different perspectives, either as a total process in which the influence of culture contact may lead to the loss of social, cultural, or even racial differentiation between the contact groups, or in which acculturation and assimilation are influential processes that are bi-directional and are reciprocal in nature bringing about a change in social and cultural identity through a blending of cultural features between contact groups. For some, processes of acculturation and assimilation are separated out as either one-way or reciprocal relationships. Lesser (1933) states that:

in acculturation the cultural groups involved are in an essentially reciprocal relationship....In assimilation the tendency is for the ruling cultural group to enforce the adoption of certain externals, in terms of which superficial adjustment seem to be attained. The adopting culture is not in a position to chose (Herskovits 1958:ix).

Parsons (1936:xii-xiii) on the other hand takes the opposite position, that acculturation is a one-way adoption of culture traits and assimilation is a reciprocal process as in the case of "what the early Spaniard took from the Indian in the development of both Spaniard and Indian into modern Mexican." In both views what is overlooked is the adaptive nature of the culture change process and the distinction between free adoption of cultural features as part of an

adaptive process and the imposition of culture by one group upon another, either by direct force or by influence. In the case of culture contact between subarctic Indians and Whites the experience has been bi-directional but not necessarily reciprocal in nature. Non-Indians have adopted many cultural features from Indians including elements of their language, dress, recreational technology, and environmental ethics. Indians, on the other hand, have come under the growing influence of Euro-American culture in the form of technology, education, political organization, and religion. These features of foreign culture were not always freely adopted but rather were imposed as forced acculturative experiences requiring a further adaptive response before they could be molded into the identity structure of Indian people. These adaptive responses have often been detrimental to native populations leading to loss of economic and social independence and to long-term disruptions to individuals and to communities of Indians. However, adaptive responses to forced acculturation are also incorporated into the identity structure of Indian people.

The acculturation-assimilation model has been applied in anthropological studies of American Indians. Brady and Isaac (1975:12) recognize this tendency:

Most studies of acculturation by American anthropologists have been carried out on Indian Reservations, and most have focused on the replacement of Indian culture by White culture.

In anthropological descriptions of Chipewyan Indians the acculturation-assimilation model has often been presented in negative terms, as noted by Koolage (1975) in that social and cultural change is seen to result in deculturation, and social disorganization and disintegration of Chipewyan society (see VanStone 1965; Honigmann 1966; Birket-Smith 1976). Deculturation is defined by VanStone (1965:110) as occurring "when the abandonment of an aboriginal cultural trait is not replaced with a White cultural equivalent." The often perceived consequence is what Oscar Lewis (1966) calls 'cultures of poverty'. However, these negative ethnological descriptions stressing acculturation or deculturation are misleading in that they give a distorted image of identity change and, as noted by Koolage (1975:45-46) "fail to elaborate the many ways in which the Chipewyan are adapting to changing socio-cultural conditions in northern Canada." Furthermore, such descriptions of culture change fail to account for the cross-cultural influence between Indian groups throughout their contact and pre-contact history, and how those influences may have contributed to Indian group identity. Some of these influences of culture that flow from group to group may be instrumental today in redefining Chipewyan social and cultural identity in which re-emerging or new Indian symbolism is being adopted by Chipewyan, contributing to their identity structure.

Ethnic identity for Chipewyan Indians incorporates

their acculturative experience, their adopted symbolism, and their enculturated traditions. It is the synthesis of these three processes that are operating to bring about social and cultural change, including change in Chipewyan identity.

### Conclusion

In this study ethnic identity is a recognition of social membership based on a self awareness of common origins, heritage, traditions, values, and goals that allow groups of Indian people to distinguish themselves from all others with whom they come in contact. Ethnic awareness and ethnic expression are here analytically separated by reference to primordial attachments to a perceived common past and circumstantial features of identity used by people to address daily problems and to adapt to change. In this study the primordial attachments are not viewed as biologically or environmentally determined, but rather are treated as a set of identity criteria that are socially and culturally inherited and which people may modify to provide themselves with a means for facing new situations and for achieving desired goals. Ethnicity is thereby seen as a dynamic force that provides Indian people with a mechanism for adapting to change and for meeting challenges of the future.

An ethnic model is used in this study in the description and analysis of social and cultural change as processes in ethno-adaptation. Barth (1981a:78) describes 'process' as:

...a generalizable set of linked events which keep recurring, the necessary interconnections of which, and the consequences of which, can be clearly described.

Past ethnographic studies by Nadel (1947) and Barth (1956) have attempted to seek out variation within regional populations who shared common territory and features of ethnicity (Barth 1981b:125). In this study variation is sought, not only among contemporary Chipewyan, but variation is described in terms of both continuities with the past and innovations of the present.

An ethnohistorical perspective is used in this study to identify social and cultural continuities and to trace social and cultural change. Fredrik Barth (1981a:6), in cautioning the use of historical explanations in anthropology, acknowledges their value in that: "We must struggle to ascertain the dynamics of cultures and societies in time as ongoing systems and through time as emergent sequences." He recognizes two major advantages in using an historic approach:

On the one hand, they may reproduce the awareness of the past held by the actors themselves, and depict how their 'consciousness' - i.e. values, rights, and world view - is molded by that knowledge....On the other hand, critically evaluated information about the past may also be used by the analyst to establish what the events and conditions of the past really were, thereby furthering our understanding of the influences that have in fact affected the course of change, and, according to some, also furthering our understanding of the real character of the present (Barth 1981b:127-128).

## CHAPTER TWO

## METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH TECHNIQUES

Introduction

A research methodology is the application of a set of procedural rules, including theories and concepts, to a series of observations in order to explain phenomena and the relationships between phenomena. Research techniques make up a part of the methodological framework and consist of a set of strategies used in carrying out observations and collecting and analysing data (Pelto 1970).

Bronislaw Malinowski, in his introduction to *Argonauts of The Western Pacific* (1961:6, original 1922) outlines the fundamentals of ethnographic research methodology in the following statement:

The principles of method can be grouped under three main headings; first of all, naturally, the student must possess real scientific aims, and know the values and criteria of modern ethnography. Secondly, he ought to put himself in good conditions of work, ...right among the natives. Finally, he has to apply a number of special methods of collecting, manipulating and fixing his evidence.

This study of self identity expression as ethno-adaptation by Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan is carried out with the assumption that people structure their social identity out of their life experiences and, as conditions change, these are reflected in changing expressions of

ethnicity. The expressions of identity can be observed as symbolic representations and social and environmental relationships as well as through the subjective account of individual ethnics of their interpretation of their history, their own experiences, interests, desires, and goals

This study is carried out by reference to both objective features of identity expression as observed by the investigator and the subjective perceptions of identity as communicated by individual ethnics. By integrating objective observations with subjective accounts, the final goal of the ethnographer, as stated by Malinowski (1961:25), "to grasp the native's point of view, his relation to life, to realise his vision of his world" may be achieved.

The research methodology for this study is conceptually divided into three components; a literature review, regional familiarization research, and field research. The study was carried out over a five year period, from 1984 to 1989.

#### Literature Review Strategy

A literature review was conducted into forms of social identity and culture change directed generally to theoretical perspectives in ethnicity and to hunting and gathering societies in transition, and more specifically to Indians living in subarctic regions of Canada. The literature review was also directed towards primary data gathering of demographics, family composition, economic condition, and community development for Chipewyan Indians living in the

study region. Primary data gathering made use of several sources, including federal and provincial government agencies, archives, and Indian band records.

#### Regional Familiarization Research

Regional familiarization research was conducted to increase the investigator's understanding of a range of issues of concern to Indian people in the study region. During 1985 and 1986 the researcher participated in a number of Indian sponsored conferences and workshops held in Saskatoon, Edmonton, and Ile-a-la-Crosse. Regional familiarization research was supported by three years of residence by the researcher in subarctic Indian communities in northern Saskatchewan and Manitoba as an employee of the Hudson's Bay Company during the period 1959 to 1961. For eight months of that three year tenure, from December, 1959 to August, 1960 the researcher lived in the research community of Dillon, Saskatchewan located on the Peter Pond (Buffalo River) Indian Reserve, participating on a daily basis in the life of the community. Regional familiarization research was also supported by the researcher carrying out a socio-economic impact assessment of the provision of hydro-electric power to the Chipewyan Indian communities of Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, and Wollaston Lake in the Athabasca Basin of northern Saskatchewan (Saskatchewan Power Corporation 1986).

### Field Research

The third component of the study, field research, was carried out among two regional populations of Chipewyan Indians living in six communities in northern Saskatchewan. The primary research population are people at Buffalo River who live on the Buffalo River Indian reserve at Dillon, and in two non-status Indian communities adjacent to the Buffalo River Indian reserve, Michel Village and St. George's Hill. These first communities are located near the mouth of the Dillon River along the southwest shore of Big Buffalo (Peter Pond) Lake. The Dillon River and Big Buffalo Lake are part of the Upper Churchill River system (figure one).

Field research at Buffalo River was carried out over a five year period, from 1984 to 1989. The field experience consisted of from three to five sojourns each year to Buffalo River, each stay lasting from two to five days duration during which time the researcher took up temporary residence in regional Indian communities. The use of multiple short-term field trips allowed for selected occasions of intensive observations and interactions interspersed with periods of evaluation of research activity and assessment of research results. In this manner research strategy was continually being modified and re-designed to meet ongoing research requirements. Field research at Buffalo River was extended beyond the research community as the

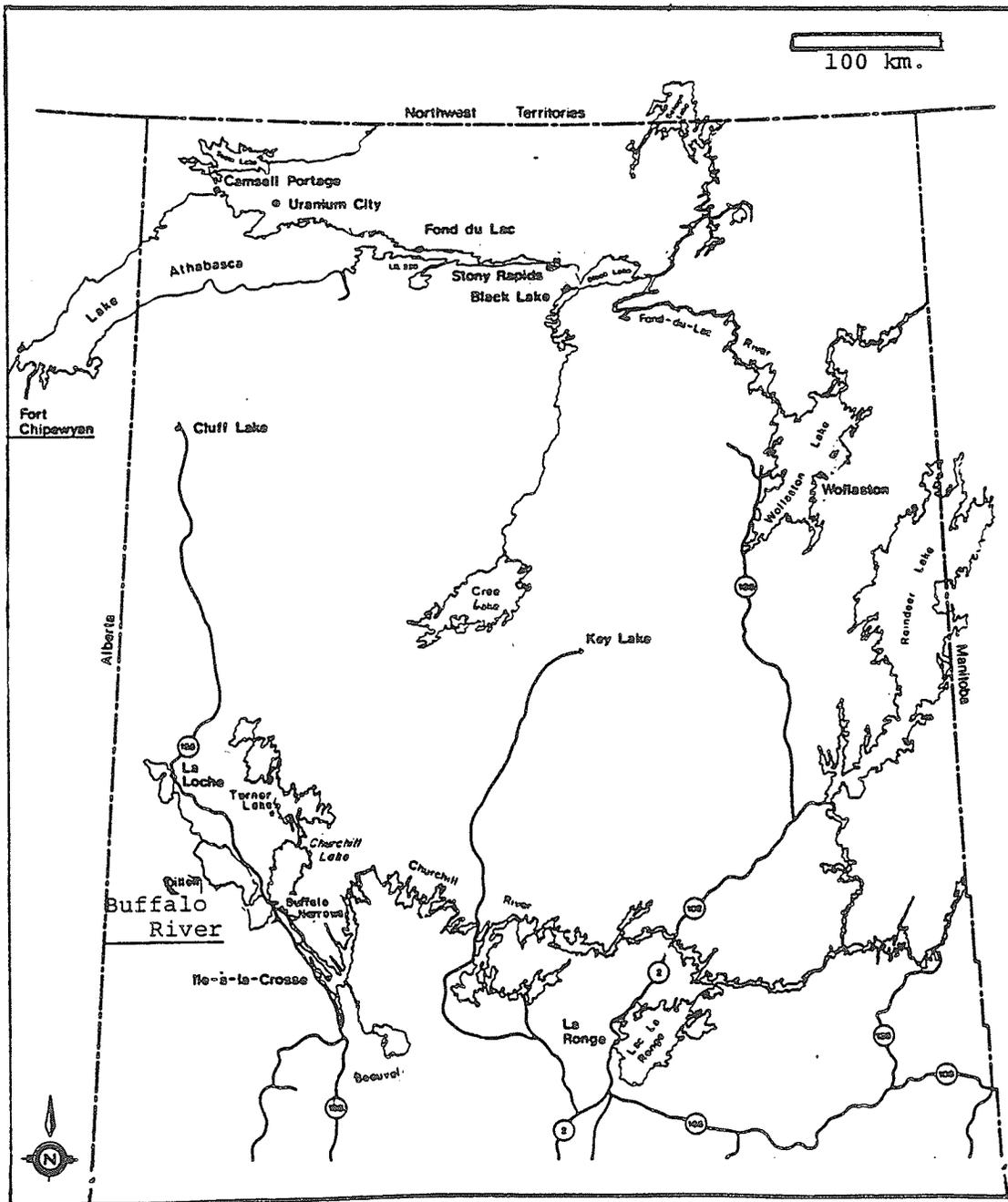


Figure 1. Regional Map, Northern Saskatchewan.

researcher reciprocated as host to individual members of the research population when they visited his home in Saskatoon.

Field research was expanded to include a second regional population of Chipewyan Indians in order to provide a comparative basis for studying social identity and identity change. The comparative regional population are Chipewyan Indians referred to as 'Caribou-Eater Chipewyan' (Mooney 1928; Simpson 1938; Hearne 1958, original 1775). Caribou-Eater Chipewyan occupy the more northerly forest-tundra transition zone of northern Saskatchewan, living in the communities of Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, and Wollaston (see figure one). Field research among the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan took place during the summer of 1985 in conjunction with a socio-economic impact assessment of the development of a hydro-electric transmission line across northern Saskatchewan from Uranium City to Wollaston Lake. Field research consisted of random interviews and general observations over a two week period.

#### Observation Techniques

Ethnographic field research was carried out by use of a combination of observation techniques designed to promote effective information gathering under different field conditions. Junker (1960) identifies four different conditions under which ethnographic observations may take place, each based on a desired relationship between the observer and

the research population.

The first condition is observer as complete participant in which the researcher becomes a member of an ingroup and gains access to information held by that group through direct observations. By use of this research technique, observations are limited in that the observer may become isolated within a select group, and be unable to cross social boundaries and gain the trust of other members of the community under study who are not members of the ingroup. Complete participation can lead to a conflict of interest and confusion of loyalties in that the observer may have to sacrifice research objectives in order to demonstrate his or her loyalty to the group.

The second condition is that of participant as observer. In this approach the researcher stresses his or her role as participant in the activities of community life as a member of the community through which observations are concealed or given a low profile. A drawback to this field research strategy is that the researcher may become captured into a system of duties and obligations that are poorly understood, and thereby not only limit the effectiveness of observations but may also run the risk of being alienated even by those to whom he or she has become attached.

More importantly, any attempt to conceal research purpose or to disguise research activity may lead to ethical

problems and a possible research dilemma.

A third approach to field research is that of observer as participant in which case the purpose of a study and methods of information gathering are made known to the research population at the outset, and in which the role of the researcher is clearly defined, and where participation in community life is neither clandestine nor contrived. In this approach full cooperation by all members of a population can not be expected, however it allows for free participation choices by both the researcher in community activities, and by members of the research population to become involved in the study. In this approach individuals have the opportunity to take a conscious role in defining their own condition, their inter-personal relationships, and their individual and collective goals, thereby limiting inferences and the need for subjective interpretations of observations.

A fourth field strategy is one in which the researcher is complete observer, recording observations as they are presented. With this approach objective information is gathered and subjective opinion is elicited without the researcher becoming involved in community life. The strategy of researcher as complete observer allows for the gathering of information over a broad range of issues to gain a general overview of conditions as they exist as well as some limited insights on how the research population perceive

and express realities. Complete observer techniques provide an opportunity for introducing the topic of research to the population under study and of assessing the population to determine which individuals are knowledgeable and approachable for more indepth involvement in the study.

Observation techniques in ethnographic field research need to be capable of meeting a number of field conditions and situations as they change from moment to moment and from interaction to interaction. It is appropriate to incorporate features found in more than one observation technique to allow for flexibility and innovation in conducting research, to provide opportunity by the research population to take part in the research project, and to enhance selective control over the field research situation as it unfolds.

In this study a research strategy was adopted for field research at Buffalo River that combines observer as participant with complete observer techniques. That strategy is here referred to as association observation by which general observations produce ever more intimate contacts, allowing the researcher to take on the role of observer as participant within sub-groups, families, and with individuals. In this manner increased associations are developed over time that allow the establishment of information groups and that identify and draw out knowledgeable individuals as informants. Through association observations the

knowledge base of the researcher was continually expanded by ongoing direct observations of conditions and behaviors. At the same time associations were being developed for the eliciting of subjective opinion and interpretation of symbols of identity and patterns of behavior. As associations were expanded to take in individuals within sub-groups, information gathered was cross-checked and confirmed. As associations extended across sub-groups greater participation in inter-group activities became possible. Through greater participation the knowledge of sub-group relations increased.

Through association observations several informant relationships developed, allowing individuals to take an active role in the research project. Some members of the research population acted as interpreters while others volunteered to record life histories of elders. Informant relationships were based on mutual respect and trust, and several developed into friendships.

Subjective accounts of identity expression related to social, economic, and spiritual issues were gathered through open-ended, unstructured interviews that took the form of discussion. All semblance of formality in interviewing was avoided as counter productive. Rather individuals were encouraged to express their opinions on a broad range of subjects. Interviews and interactions were guided purely by research objectives to gain an understanding of conditions, practices, perceptions, and attitudes and how those

are related to ethnohistorical processes of change.

Sampling of the research population was carried out in an opportunistic manner with observations and interactions taking place in people's homes, on the roadway, at public gatherings, and in public places. The intent was to make multiple contacts with as many people within the community as possible over an extended period of time. Subjective information was gathered through use of association observation techniques as outlined above. Objective information and quantitative data was gathered by two methods; the use of government statistics, band files, and archival material, and secondly by informal and unstructured interactions with the research population. Through informal interactions, quantitative data was compiled on such information as animal harvest figures, seasonal employment activities, and declared alcoholics in recovery. Objective information was cross-checked through multiple interactions and was updated throughout the study.

Structured sampling methods using more formal sampling techniques were avoided as potentially limiting, counter productive, and subject to sampling error due to the small numbers of people within communities.

Influences of researcher bias were controlled by maintaining a broad informant base that allowed for cross-checking of information gathered and for a variety of expressions of individual perceptions and opinions. Cultural

relativity, the interpretation of observations and information from the cultural perspective of the research population, was enhanced by the researcher's long-time association with the realities of northern living and familiarization with social practices and cultural values of subarctic Indian people.

Field research among the comparison population of Caribou-Eater Chipewyan was carried out using a strategy in which the researcher was complete observer, gathering information and opinion by selected interviews as well as by taking advantage of opportunistic occasions for interviewing a cross-section of the regional population. In this manner a broad range of issues were addressed that related to economic and political conditions, social patterns and social relationships, spiritual practices and beliefs, and life style. Interviews were open-ended, and directed to individual interests or areas of individual expertise, and were guided simply by research objectives. An intensive interview regime was followed with the researcher conducting twelve to fifteen scheduled and unscheduled interviews per day over the two week field experience. Interviews and general observations extended beyond the selected research communities to include the communities of Uranium City and Stony Rapids to provide a regional perspective for issues and conditions for Chipewyan Indians of the Athabasca Basin.

The intensive research conducted in the comparative study communities was supported by objective data gathered from external sources including from government agencies, industry, and libraries, and by the researcher carrying out a social and economic impact assessment of the Athabasca Basin as part of a private research contract. Comparative research provided a means for analysing ethnohistorical and ethnographic differences and similarities between sub-groups within the Chipewyan collective. The comparative evaluation between Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin and Buffalo River Chipewyan of the Upper Churchill River is presented in the following chapters to demonstrate the relationships between ethnicity and adaptation for Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan.

CHAPTER THREE  
AREAL OVERVIEW

Introduction

This study makes use of ethnohistorical comparisons in identity expression between two regional populations of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan, the Buffalo River people who occupy territory within the Upper Churchill River Basin and the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan found further north within the Athabasca Basin. Both regions of occupation will be dealt with separately in this chapter in terms of physiography, climate, and floral and faunal conditions. These areal descriptions will set the stage for discussion of prehistoric and historic occupations, migrations, and ways of life that go towards molding identity patterns for Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan.

The Upper Churchill River

The Buffalo River people are found inhabiting the full boreal forest of north-western Saskatchewan within the Upper Churchill River Basin. The population is made up of treaty Indians who are members of the Buffalo River Indian Band living in the community of Dillon, and non-treaty Indians living in the nearby settlements of St. George's Hill and Michel Village. The three Indian villages are located on the southwest shore of Big Buffalo (Peter Pond) Lake near the mouth of the Buffalo (Dillon) River at 55° 50' north latitude and 109° west longitude. Big Buffalo Lake

and the Buffalo River are part of the Upper Churchill River system, a vast network of rivers and lakes that drain the southern subarctic from Alberta, through the Provinces of Saskatchewan and Manitoba, into Hudson Bay (see figure one). The people of Buffalo River hunt, trap, and fish an area of about 2,500 square kilometers (965 square miles) south of Dillon to the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range and west to the Saskatchewan-Alberta border (see figure two).

### Physiography

Physiographically Buffalo River is within a region known as the Ile-a-la-Crosse Lowlands which is a sub-group of the Upper Churchill Lowlands (Harms 1974) located between the Saskatchewan Plains to the south and the precambrian formations of the Canadian Shield to the north and east. The southern boundary of the precambrian formations are found within fifty kilometres northeast of Dillon running in a north-easterly/south-westerly direction.

The Upper Churchill Lowlands is a gently rolling forested plain 350-450 metres above sea level (Richards and Fung 1969). The region is a mixed boreal forest zone interspersed with numerous lakes, rivers, streams, muskeg, and bog areas with stunted tree growth. Many rivers in the region fan out to form deltas of broad marshes and meadows where they enter lakes. Such a delta occurs at the mouth of the Buffalo River, forming a broad meadow and marshland protected from wave erosion by a sand island across the

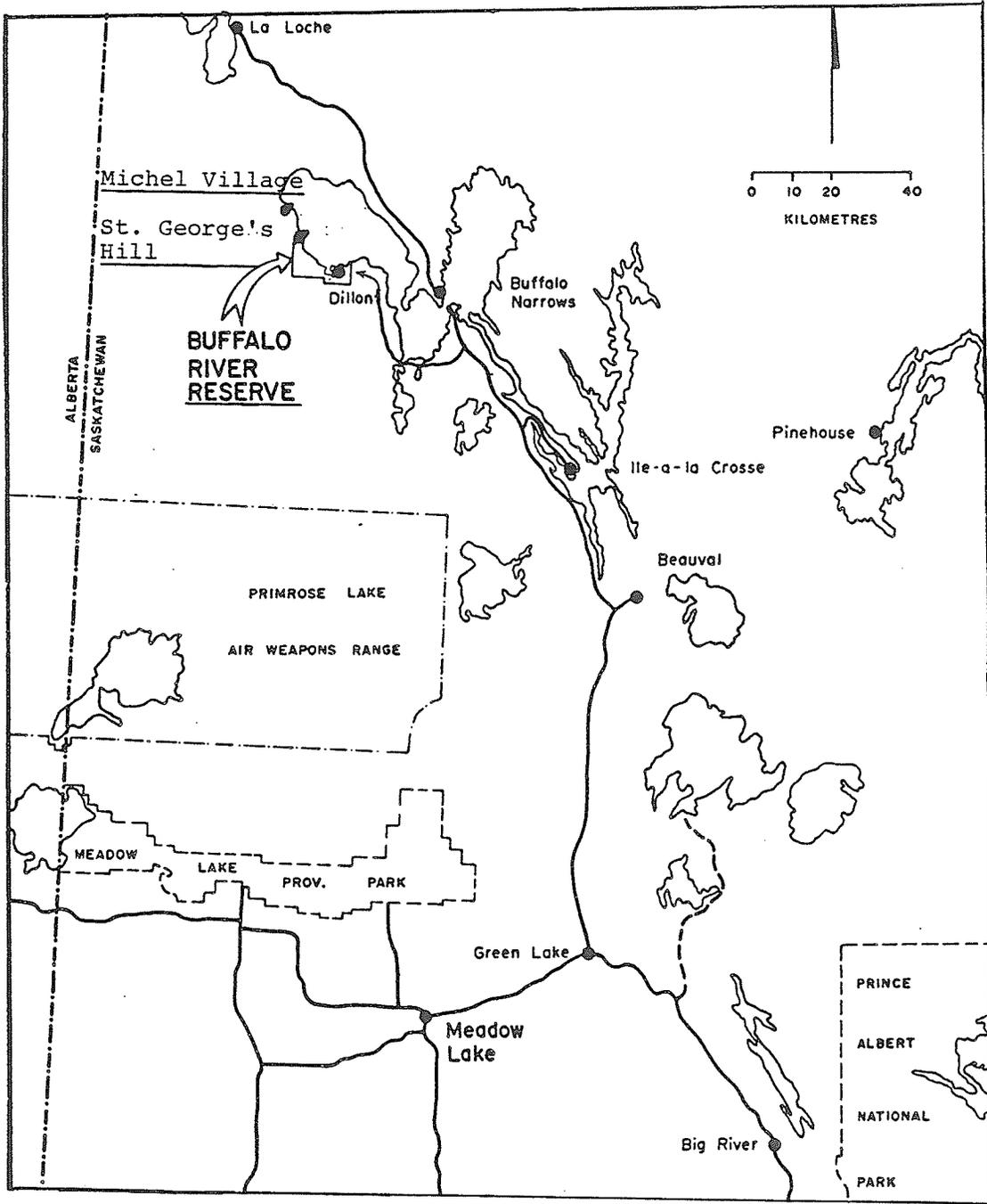


Figure 2. Regional Map, Upper Churchill River.

river mouth. These features not only attract a large number of migrating waterfowl, but also made for ideal feeding ground for wood bison (*Bison athabasca*) in earlier times and provide pasture for cattle today.

### Climate

The climate of the southern subarctic in north-western Saskatchewan is typical of similar interior forest regions in Asia and North America with long cold winters and brief mild summers. The mean annual minimum temperature recorded over a thirty year period from 1931 to 1960 for the Upper Churchill River district is  $-41^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-42^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) (Chapman 1966). However, the normal mean daily temperature for the month of January is between  $-20^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-5^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and  $-24^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-10^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). For the month of July the normal mean daily temperature ranges between  $16^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $60^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) and  $18^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $65^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Minimum winter temperatures may reach  $-49^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-56^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) while summer temperatures may occasionally rise above  $32^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $90^{\circ}\text{F}$ ) (Chakravarti 1969).

Precipitation is moderate in the Upper Churchill River averaging between 375-425 mm (15-17 inches) each year. Approximately 300 to 325 mm (12-13 inches) of annual precipitation is in the form of rain and about 130 to 154 cm (50 to 60 inches) of annual precipitation falls as snow (Chakravarti 1969).

The frost free period is from early June to late August, and waterways are normally frozen from mid November through May.

## Flora

The Upper Churchill River country is heavily wooded. Within about 95 kilometers (60 miles) radius of Buffalo River there are approximately 38,200 square kilometers (14,750 square miles) of land within which there are 12,160 square kilometers (4,695 square miles) of forest growth (MacDonald and Olenius 1972). Forested lands in the region make up about thirty percent of the total land area.

Rowe (1959:22-26) identifies four northern boreal forest zones in northern Saskatchewan, the Athabasca South and Northern Coniferous sections located in the Athabasca Basin and the Upper Churchill and Mixed-wood sections which are found further south. Coupland and Rowe (1969:75) refer to the Upper Churchill and Mixed-wood sections as Upper Churchill Mixed-woods consisting primarily of trembling aspen (*Populus tremuloides*), white spruce (*Picea glauca*), black spruce (*Picea mariana*), jack pine (*Pinus banksiana*), balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*), balsam poplar (*Populus balsamifera*), and paper birch (*Betula papyrifera*).

The Buffalo River Indian reserve has approximately 5,458 hectares (13,482 acres) of forested land with a species distribution of black spruce (seven percent), white spruce (twenty nine percent), aspen (fifty one percent), and jack pine, fir, poplar and birch (thirteen percent) (MacDonald and Olenius 1972). The species composition for adjacent forests off the reserve is similar with aspen

predominating in the region. The forests are a valuable resource for the people at Buffalo River, providing a stable habitat for birds and animals, and a timber reserve for a local logging industry. Figure three and figure four indicate areas of potentially harvestable forest on and off the Indian reserve at Buffalo River (Underwood Mclellan 1980).

The forest undergrowth in the Upper Churchill River district consists of a variety of shrubs and ground cover, much of which produces fruit including Canada blueberry (*Vaccinium myrtilloides*), highbush cranberry (*Viburnum edule*), wild strawberry (*Fragaria virginiana*), common bearberry (*Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*), Saskatoon serviceberry (*Amelanchier alnifolia*), and black currant (*Ribes lacustre*). Berries provide a seasonal food resource for the local Indian population, and have potential for commercial harvesting. Other common shrubs in the region include alder (*Alnus rugosa*), and a variety of willows (*Salix* spp.) (Harms 1974) which provide brows for ungulates and nesting sights for many species of birds.

#### Fauna

The forests and wetlands of the Upper Churchill mixed-wood boreal zone provides a varied and rich habitat for many species of game and fur-bearing animals and birds. Maher (1969), in his Mammals in Saskatchewan, lists 78 mammal species. Of these there are perhaps a dozen species found in the hunting territory of the Buffalo River people

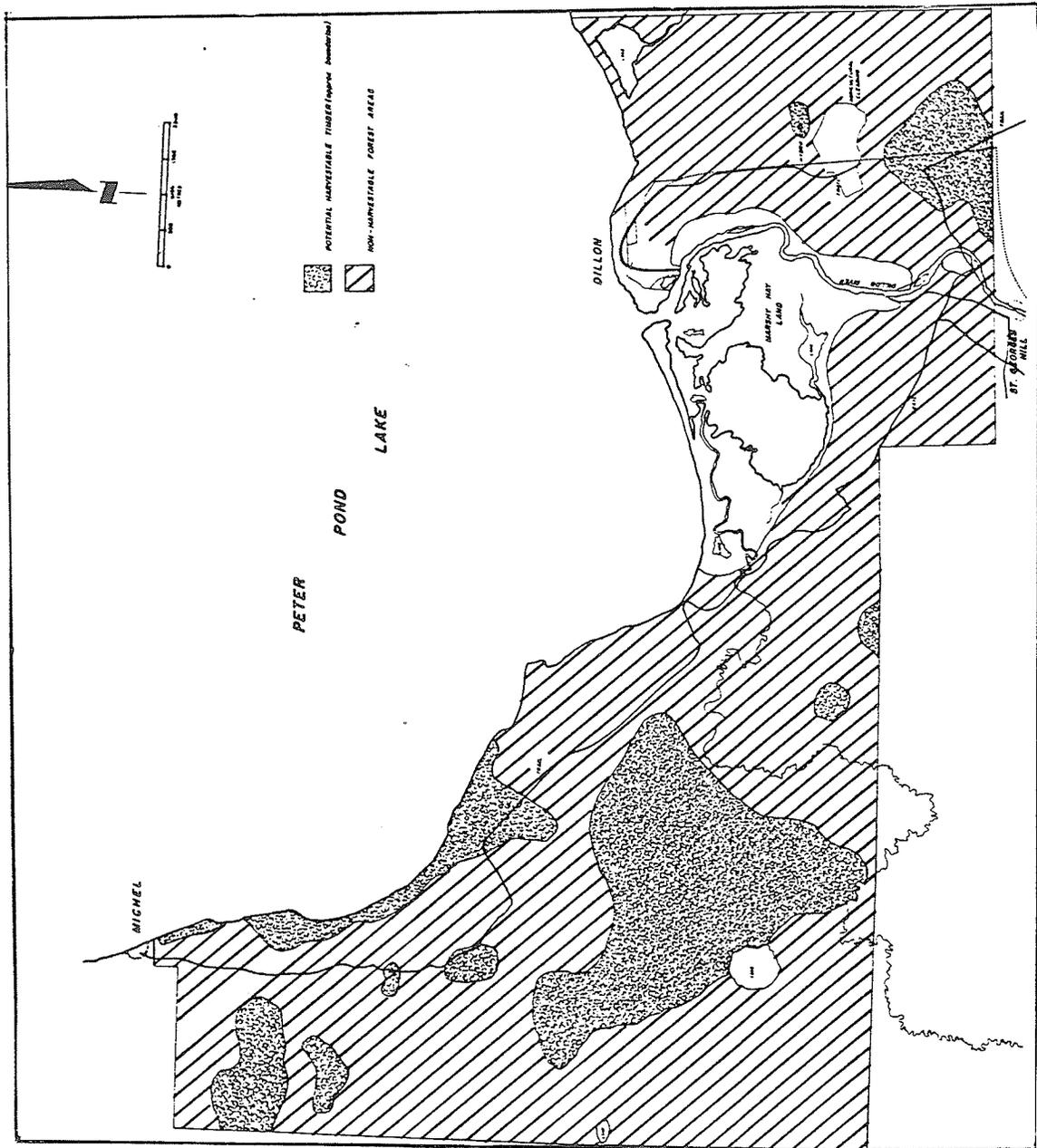


Figure 3. Timber Potential: Buffalo River Reserve

Source: Underwood Mclellan 1980.

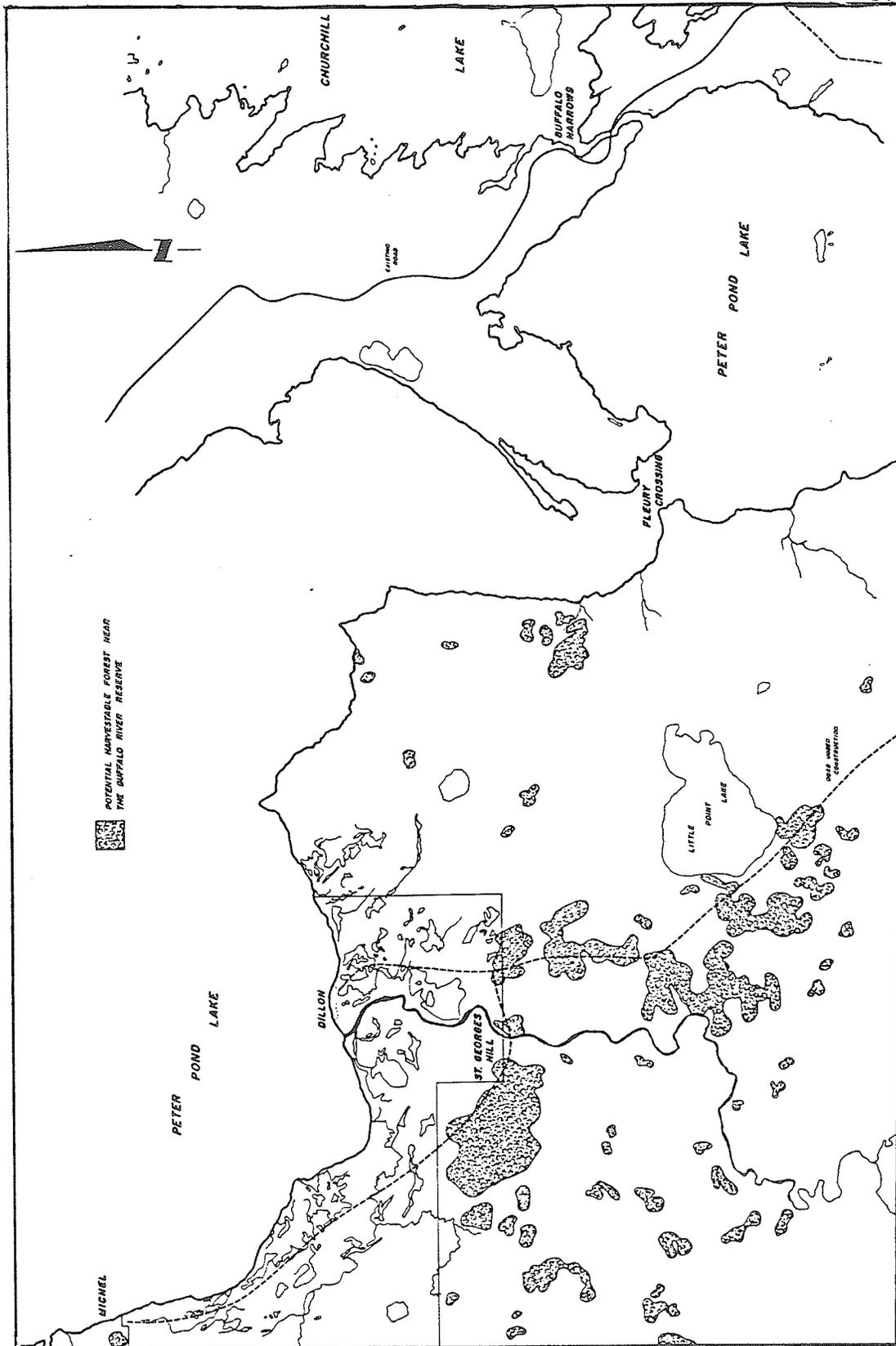


Figure 4. Timber Potential near Buffalo River.

south and west of Big Buffalo Lake that remain important to the local economy. The most important big game animal is the moose (*Alces alces*). Moose range throughout the mixed-wood zone and their presence was noted by Alexander Mackenzie in his description of the resources south of Great Slave Lake as recorded in his journal of June 9, 1789 (Yerbury 1986:133-134).

The Indians tell me that at a very little distance on both sides the River (Slave) are very extensive Plains, where there are vast Herds of Buffaloes, and that the Moose Deer and the largest kind of Rain Deer keep in the Wood close by the River.

The people at Buffalo River procure moose in large numbers for food and for the hide which they cure and sell or use in the making of moccasins, mitts, jackets, gun cases, and other personal use items.

Moose find a particularly favorable habitat in the Upper Churchill River district with marshes and bogs supplying much of their summer aquatic vegetational needs, and willow, poplar, and birch being available for winter browse. Moose are taken by gun or by snare. In earlier times moose were snared using babiche cord made from hide (Spencer, Jennings, et al. 1977:102). Today snares are fashioned from steel cable and anchored to trees at a height to capture the moose by the neck in much the same manner as those made from babiche (personal communication, Dillon 1986).

Black bear (*Ursus americanus*) and snowshoe rabbit (*Lepus americanus*) are also important sources of meat for the people at Buffalo River. Less important and less plentiful are woodland caribou (*Rangifer tarandus caribou*) which tend to range in a few localized areas, and mule deer (*Odocoileus hemionus*) and white-tailed deer (*Odocoileus virginianus*) which are found in greater numbers in more southerly mixed-wood zones. Barren-ground caribou (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus*) winter in the district from time to time, and wood bison were found in great number in earlier times from Great Slave Lake to the Upper Churchill River. Pike (1892:141) gives an account of Indians hunting wood bison between Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca as late as 1890, and MacFarlane (1905:691) states that wood bison were seen "on the east side of the Athabasca (River), below and above Fort McMurray" around 1800 (Soper 1941:357). Peter Pond, exploring the country between the Churchill River and Lake Athabasca in the late eighteenth century, notes that the Buffalo River district was wood bison habitat by naming Big Buffalo Lake as 'Beef Lake' on his map of 1785 (Soper 1941:357) (see figure five). The wood bison suffered a great decline until by 1889 there were only about 550 of the animals remaining (Hornaday 1889:525). According to Seton (1927, 3:669) wood bison were last seen in the Upper Churchill River district in 1888 when eight bulls were killed between Methye Portage and Lac la Biche (Soper 1941:358).

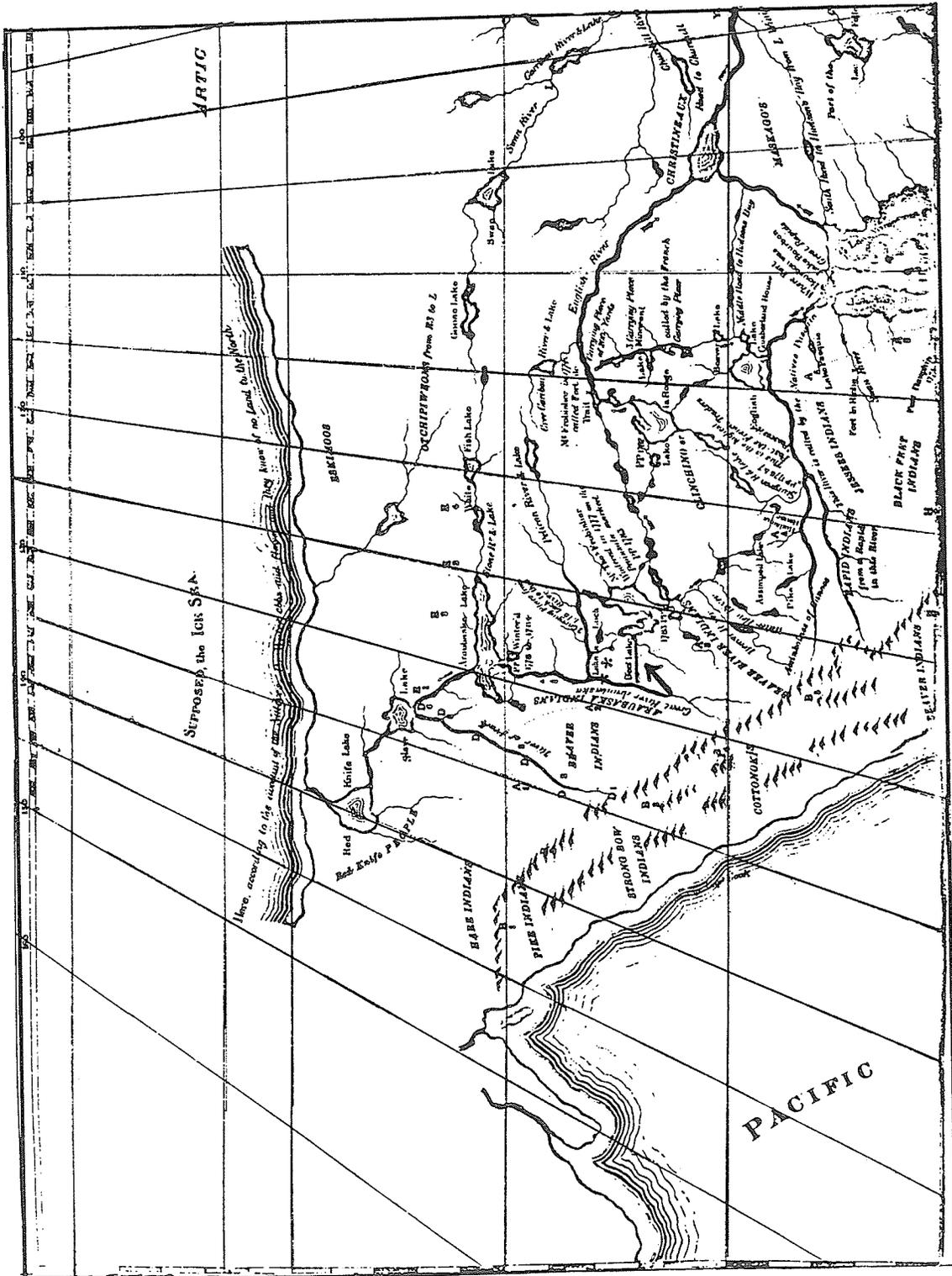


Figure 3. Peter Pond's Map of 1785 (Big Buffalo Lake indicated as 'Beef Lake').

Source: Gillespie 1971:379.

Only in the past few years have wood bison and wood bison sign been seen by the people of Buffalo River as small numbers of animals have been re-introduced to the area from recovering stocks in the Wood Buffalo National Park (personal communication, Dillon 1988).

The area in and around Buffalo River, especially the grassy plain at the river's mouth and the open woodland west of Big Buffalo Lake, was an habitual feeding ground for wood bison in earlier times, and according to elderly residents at Buffalo River the presence of these animals in great number was the incentive for settlement by their ancestors in the area some two hundred years ago (personal communication, Dillon 1985).

Elk or wapiti (*Cervus canadensis*) were also found in the Upper Churchill River district in earlier times, ranging as far north as Cree Lake (Maher 1969:81). Today elk are still taken occasionally by hunters from Buffalo River (personal communication, Dillon 1988), but are generally found in the mixed-wood forests of central Saskatchewan south of 55° north latitude, and are concentrated in and around the Prince Albert National Park (see figure two).

Fur-bearing animals of commercial value found in the Upper Churchill River country include beaver (*Castor canadensis*) and muskrat (*Ondatra zibethica*) which thrive in the numerous ponds and marshy areas of the region. There are also lynx (*Lynx canadensis*), ermine or short-tailed weasel

(*Mustela erminea*), and red squirrel (*Tamiasciurus hudsonicus*) which are found in relatively large numbers evenly distributed throughout the forests. Less plentiful are red fox (*Vulpes vulpes*) and cross fox (*Vulpes fulva*) which range throughout the district. Rare species include river otter (*Lutra canadensis*), fisher (*Martes pennanti*), marten (*Martes americana*), and wolverine (*Gulo luscus*). Grey wolf (*Canis lupus*) are seldom found in the country of the Upper Churchill River, and tend to range further north (Maher 1969; Smith 1975).

A great variety of waterfowl and upland game birds are found in the Upper Churchill River Basin. Migratory waterfowl, including different species of geese and ducks, find an abundance of aquatic plant food in the many lakes, ponds and backwaters of the district and tend to congregate in early spring and late fall at strategic locations, including the marsh at the mouth of the Buffalo River.

Waterfowl species found in the area, either migrating through or nesting, include Canada goose (*Branta canadensis*), mallard duck (*Anas platyrhynchos*), pintail duck (*Acuta* sp.), bufflehead (*Bucephala albeola*), common goldeneye (*B. clangula*), American widgeon (*Mareca americana*), ruddy duck (*Oxyura jamaicensis*), black duck or surf scoter (*Melanitta perspicillata*), shoveler (*Spatula clypeata*), common loons (*Gavia immer*), coots or mud hens (*Publica americana*), sandhill cranes (*Grus canadensis*), pelicans (*Horacali*), and

gulls (*Larus* sp.). Upland game birds of the district include willow ptarmigan (*Lagopus lagopus*), spruce hen or spruce grouse (*Canachites canadensis*), and ruffed grouse (*Bonasa umbellus*) (Smith 1975; Gillespie 1981). Ptarmigan and spruce hen are prevalent during the winter months.

Fish are relatively abundant in many of the lakes and rivers of the Upper Churchill River, although there has been an overall decline in many commercial species over the past quarter century. This decline in fish stocks is due to several inter-related causes, including overfishing. In years past fish taken from Big Buffalo Lake were sold commercially, used for household consumption, provided feed for ranch mink, and were a major food for the large population of sled dogs (personal observations, Dillon 1959).

Commercial fishing began on Big Buffalo Lake in 1918. Mink ranching began in the 1920's and declined sharply after 1958. Dog transportation was introduced to the area after 1850 (Gillespie 1981) and continued into the 1970's when motorized tracked vehicles (snowmobiles) replaced dog traction as the primary means of winter transport for the Indian people. All of these activities drew on the local fish resource.

The general decline in fish stocks over the past quarter century may be attributed to several inter-related causes. Fish, like many animal species, are subject to fluctuations that are brought about by a number of conditions including

climatic variation, change in water levels, forest fires, vegetational successions, disease, as well as over exploitation by resource users. All of these factors contribute to cycles of population growth and decline, and many species interact in population dynamics often in prey-predator relationships which affect population cycles.

Population dynamics of fish species influence the economic condition, social pattern, and life style of resource users. For example, as fish stocks fluctuate in Big Buffalo Lake individuals enter or leave the commercial fishery or shift their fishing operations to other bodies of water in the region. Fishermen may also change their fishing activity from full-time to seasonal. These shifting patterns of resource use take place in other resource-based activities including hunting, trapping, logging, and berry picking all of which are subject to resource fluctuations. The social and economic impacts of resource fluctuations are dealt with in greater detail in a subsequent chapter.

Today the people at Buffalo River concentrate their fishing efforts on Big Buffalo Lake, Dillon Lake, and Vermette Lake. Fish species found in these bodies of water include common whitefish (*Coregonus clupeaformis*), cisco or tullibee (*Leucichtys* sp.), northern pike or jackfish (*Esox lucius*), pickerel or yellow walleye (*Stizostedion vitreum*), lake trout (*Cristivomer mamaycush*), white or common sucker (*Catostomus commersonni*), longnose sucker (*Catostomus*

catostomus), burbot or ling, also known locally as maria (*Lota maculosa*), loche or methye (*Lota lota*), yellow perch (*Perca flavescens*), lake shiner (*Notropis atherinoides*), northern chub (*Couesius plumbeus*), trout perch (*Percopsis omiscomaycus*), ninespine stickleback (*Pungitius pungitius*), brook stickleback (*Eucalia inconstans*), log perch (*Percina caprodes*), iowa darter (*Poecilichthys exilis*), northern sculpin (*Cottus cognatus*), spot-tail minnow (*Notropis hudsonius*), and fathead minnow (*Pimephales promelas*) (Rawson, 1957). Commercially fished species include whitefish, jackfish, pickerel, lake trout, and mullett the latter being a term used for a variety of other less valued species.

### The Athabasca Basin

The Chipewyan Indians referred to as Caribou-Eater Chipewyan (Smith 1976, 1976b, 1978) occupy territory in northern Saskatchewan from Lake Athabasca in the west to Wollaston Lake in the east within the Athabasca drainage basin. The Caribou-Eater Chipewyan live, for the most part, in three communities: Fond-du-Lac, which is located on the northeast shore of Lake Athabasca at Pine Channel at  $59^{\circ} 20'$  north latitude and  $107^{\circ} 20'$  west longitude; Black Lake at  $59^{\circ}$  north latitude and  $105^{\circ} 40'$  west longitude; and Wollaston, which is located on Wollaston Lake at Welcome Bay at  $58^{\circ} 5'$  north latitude and  $103^{\circ} 15'$  west longitude. The people at Fond-du-Lac are members of the Fond-du-Lac Indian Band; the people at Black Lake are members of the Stony Rapids Indian Band; and the people at Wollaston are made up of members of the Lac la Hache Indian Band and non-status Indians of the adjacent settlement of Wollaston Post. The people of the Athabasca Basin hunt over a vast area, extending their winter range of hunting camps northward into the Northwest Territories.

### Physiography

The Athabasca Basin is located within the Kazan physiographic region which is divided in northern Saskatchewan into the Kazan Upland and the Athabasca Plain (Richards and Fung 1969) (see figure six). The Kazan Upland is typical of the Canadian Shield with morainal veneer overlaying the

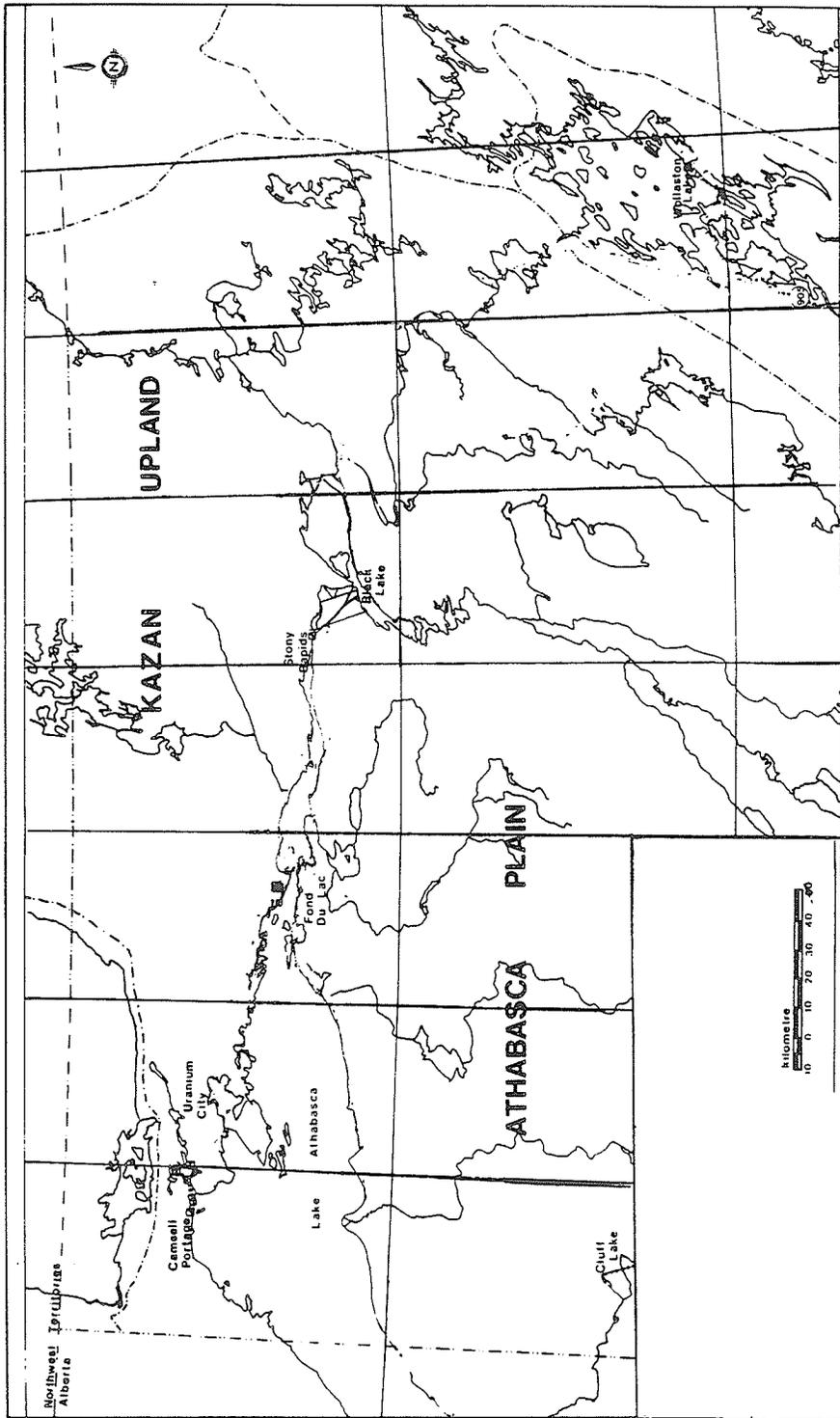


Figure 6. Athabasca Basin

Source: Saskatchewan Power Corporation  
1986 (modified).

precambrian rocks. Rock outcrops are common throughout, and there are numerous lakes and muskegs found between rocky ridges and hills (Schreiner 1984). The Athabasca Plain is made up of sandy drift plain, glacial lake plains, and meltwater channels with eskers and drumlinoid features across the region (Richards and Fung 1969). The vast number of lakes and rivers in the region drain into the Fond-du-Lac River and Lake Athabasca which are part of the Mackenzie River drainage system. Much of the interior is poorly drained, forming numerous bogs and muskeg.

#### Climate

The Athabasca Basin lies within the discontinuous permafrost zone, in which permafrost is confined to raised bogs that are insulated by layers of peat, moss, or other surface vegetation. Winters are long and cold with temperatures dropping to  $-50^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $-58^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Summers are short and cool with temperatures seldom reaching  $30^{\circ}\text{C}$  ( $86^{\circ}\text{F}$ ). Precipitation is limited to about 375 mm (15 inches) a year (Hofer 1975). The frost free period is from late June to mid August, and waterways are normally frozen from early November until early June.

#### Flora

The Athabasca Plain, also referred to as the Athabasca South section of the boreal forest region of Canada (Rowe 1972), is characterized by forest growth of jack pine and black spruce. Trembling aspen, Alaskan paper birch, balsam

poplar, and white spruce are found in favorable locations along river valleys and lake shores.

The Kazan Upland, also known as the Northern Coniferous forest zone, is a transitional boreal forest (Rowe 1972) consisting of subarctic open woodland interspersed with bogs, muskeg and exposed rock outcroppings. The forest growth is sparse and open due to the severe climate, thin soils, and the reoccurrence of forest fires. The dominant tree species is black spruce with white spruce, tamarack (*Larix laricina*), balsam poplar, and stunted trembling aspen also occurring. Jack pine is found only in the more southerly areas of sandy soils where forest fires have resulted in regeneration of great expanses of jack pine growth. Overall the forest cover is sparse and is interspersed with open areas of tundra, bare ridges, bogs, and muskeg. The more open areas have a ground cover of lichen growth (*Cladonia mitis*, *C. stellaris*, *Cetraria* spp.) and short shrubs dominated by blueberry. Other species of ground cover may include dry-ground cranberry (*Vaccinium vitis-idaea*), sheep fescue (*Festuca ovina*), bog laurel (*Kalmia polifolia*), and bearberry. In areas where there is a denser forest growth the lichen mat is not as prevalent and other ground cover is similar to that found in the open forest. In areas that are dominated by black spruce, the ground cover consists of feather moss (*Hylocomium splendens*, *Pleurozium splendens*), Labrador tea (*Ledum groenlandicum*), bearberry, cranberry,

blueberry, and crowberry (*Empetrum nigrum*) (Rowe 1972).

The forest growth, while sparse in some areas, is generally sufficient to provide fire wood and building material for the Indian population who build their trapping cabins out of locally acquired timber, and who heat their homes and cook almost exclusively with wood.

### Fauna

The animal resources of the Athabasca Basin taiga, and the forest-tundra margin further to the north are varied and some species are seasonally abundant. Fur-bearing animals that are consistently trapped are beaver, muskrat, squirrel, marten, mink, weasel, fox, rabbit, and otter. Other more rare species include wolf and lynx. Fisher, wolverine, and bear are seldom found in the region. Samuel Hearne (1958:136) found that beaver, the most important animal to the early fur trade, was rare in the region during the late eighteenth century. Today, beaver remain of secondary importance to the fur trade ranking fifth in animals most often trapped following muskrat, squirrel, mink, and martin (Province of Saskatchewan 1986).

Most species of waterfowl and upland game birds that are found along the Upper Churchill River are also found in the Athabasca Basin.

There are a variety of fish species in the Athabasca and Mackenzie drainage, many of which support a commercial fishery and a recreational fishing tourist industry. The

important sport and commercial fish species are northern pike, whitefish, lake trout, walleye, and arctic grayling (*Thymallus thymallus*). Less important and less plentiful species include yellow perch, burbot, white sucker, and longnose sucker.

Big game animals hunted for their meat are moose and barren-ground caribou. Woodland caribou are rarely found, and then only in the more southerly boreal forest zones. Moose are found throughout the Athabasca Basin, and especially in bog areas containing black spruce undergrown with willow. While moose are an important source of meat for Indians in the region, the most important big-game animal is the barren-ground caribou, which not only contribute to the Chipewyan economy, but are also the conceptual center of their universe (Sharp 1975:31-32). Caribou define Chipewyan identity in terms of social organization, territoriality, world view, and way of life. One hunter from Black Lake summarized the relationship the people have with the caribou when he said "Caribou are everything to us. When word of the caribou comes, everybody is happy, the whole town is wild" (personal communication 1985).

Barren-ground caribou are given detailed consideration in this study due to their significance in the diet, identity, and way of life of prehistoric, historic, and contemporary populations of Chipewyan Indians.

The barren-ground caribou are seasonally migratory herd animals that move in the spring (late April to early June) to habitual calving grounds on the tundra, and in the late summer and fall (late August and September) migrate to spend the winter in the protection of the northern boreal forests. The winter range may vary considerably from year to year depending on conditions of climate, forage, and herd population size.

There are four major herds of barren-ground caribou found in the western Canadian subarctic (Thomas 1969); the Bluenose herd, Bathurst herd, Beverly herd, and Kaminuriak herd. Each herd is named after the lake in which its calving grounds are found. The Bluenose herd calves north of Great Bear Lake and is beyond the traditional hunting range of Chipewyan Indians. The Bathurst herd ranges northwest of Great Slave Lake in an area that was occupied during the prehistoric and early historic period by Yellowknife Indians, a branch of the Chipewyan. The summer range of the Beverly herd is north and east of Lake Athabasca, and the Kaminuriak herd is found north and east of Wollaston and Reindeer Lakes to Hudson Bay (Kelsall 1968). The Beverly and Kaminuriak herds are hunted by Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan. Figure seven indicates the major divisions of barren-ground caribou herds and the socio-territorial distribution of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan (Smith 1971:402).

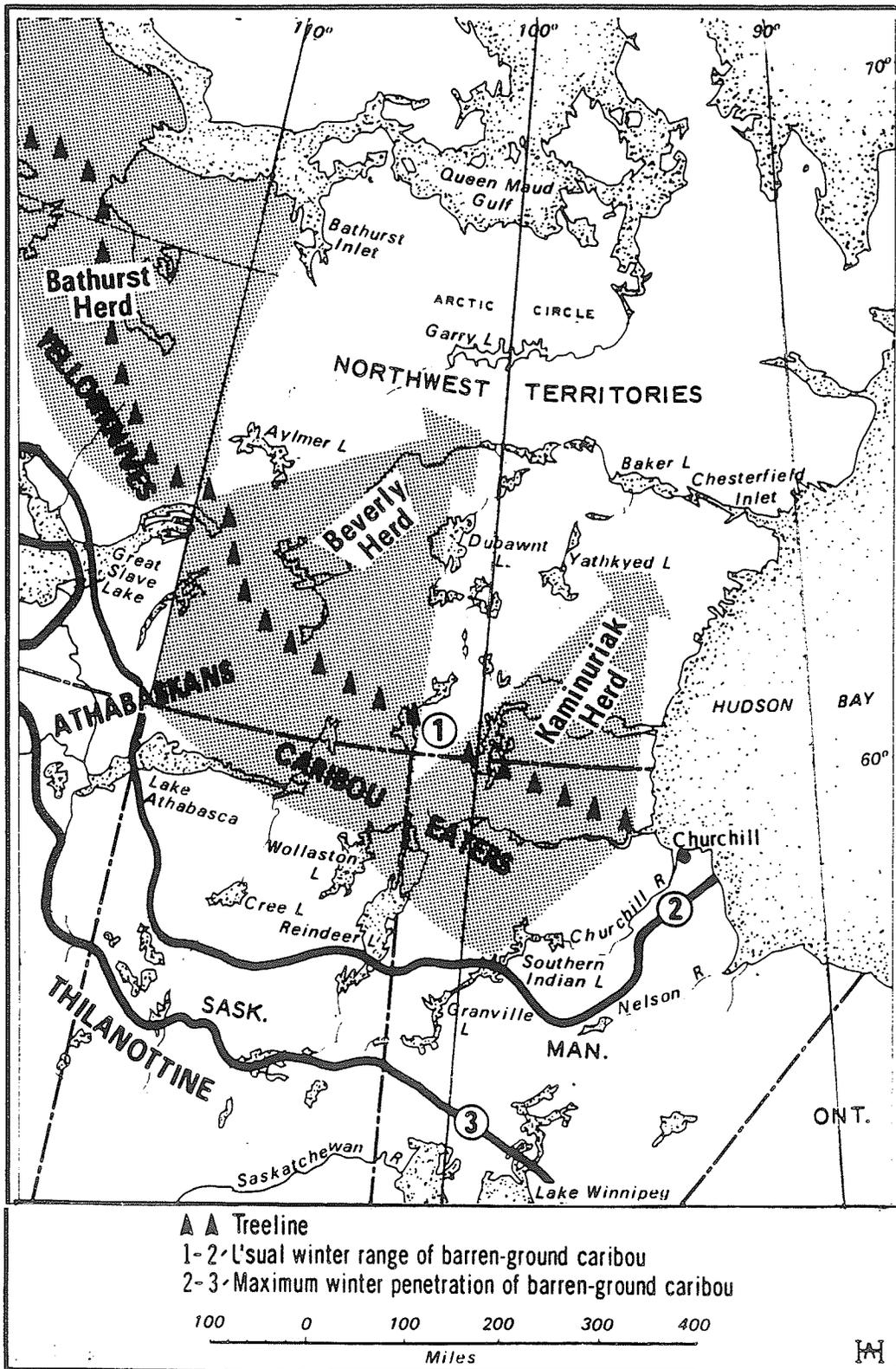


Figure 7. Chipewyan Socio-territorial Divisions and Barren-ground Caribou Herds.

The Beverly herd migrates north to spring calving grounds which cover an area of about 13,000 square kilometers (5,000 square miles) in the Beverly Lake region of the Northwest Territories (Kelsall 1968:110). Winter range for the Beverly herd is generally north of 59° north latitude (Muller-Wille 1974) and seldom does the herd move south of the Fond-du-Lac River. The most recent migration south of the Fond-du-Lac River was in the winter of 1979-1980 when barren-ground caribou were found as far south as the Cree and Reindeer Lakes at 58° north latitude (personal communications). Figure eight is a composite of herd migration patterns between 1979 and 1986 as derived from interviews with hunters, bush pilots, and officials of the department of Parks, Recreation and Culture, Province of Saskatchewan.

Barren-ground caribou are seldom found in the Upper Churchill River district, and were last hunted on Big Buffalo Lake in the winter of 1950-1951 (personal communication, Dillon 1986). This information coincides with that gathered by Jarvenpa (1980:20) from members of the English River Indian Band living at Patuanak who reported that barren-ground caribou had crossed the Churchill River at Patuanak during that season.

Southerly migrations into the Upper Churchill River also occurred during the 1930's and the 1940's when barren-ground caribou were reported to winter regularly in the

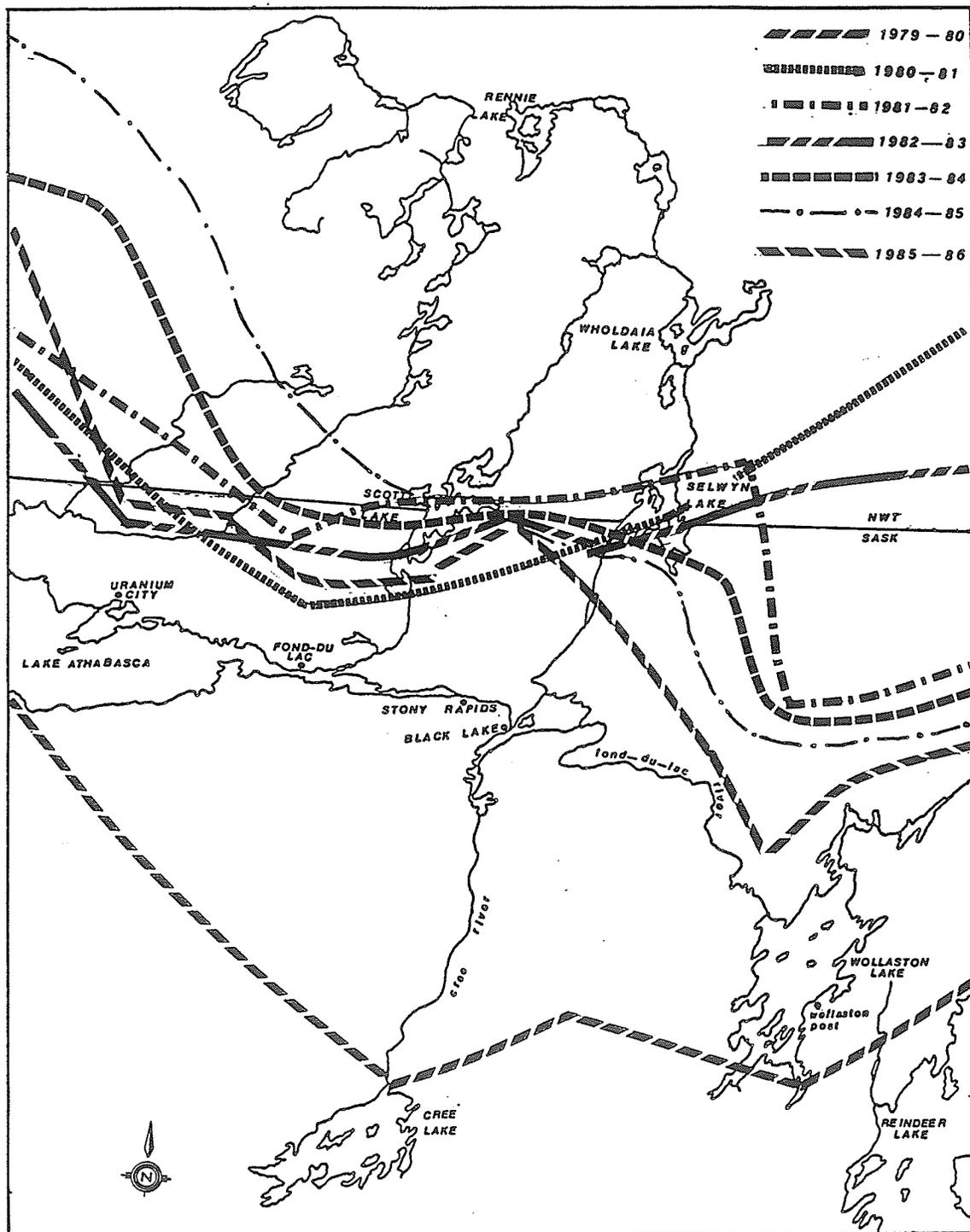


Figure 8. Variation in Barren-ground Caribou Winter Range, 1979-1986.

vicinity of Cree Lake and Porter Lake south of 58° north latitude (Jarvenpa 1980:20). During these southerly penetrations of the Beverly herd, barren-ground caribou enter into the resource base of the Buffalo River people. Individual hunters from Buffalo River have recently begun traveling north during the winter to acquire caribou meat from Chipewyan living in the Athabasca Basin or to take part in the northern hunt (personal communications, Wollaston 1985; Dillon 1987).

In early historic times barren-ground caribou numbered in the millions of animals. Even as late as 1937 the population of caribou in the eastern Mackenzie and Keewatin districts of the Northwest Territories were estimated to number three million animals (Thomas 1969:18). However, since that time there has been a rapid decline in caribou to about 700,000 animals by 1950 (Banfield 1954:20) and 200,000 animals by 1958 in the Beverly and Kaminuriak herds (Kelsall 1968:146; Thomas 1969:42). The reasons for the rapid decline in barren-ground caribou are not fully understood and may include such factors as over-hunting, loss of habitat, predation, disease, or interference. However, there is evidence that the species are subject to a thirty five year cycle of population growth and decline (Kelsall 1968:200).

Since 1958 the population of the Beverly and Kaminuriak herds have been gradually increasing in numbers. In 1974

there were an estimated 249,000 animals in the two herds (Hawkins and Howard 1974; Heard 1980), and by 1982 the population had climbed to about 320,000 animals (Heard 1983). The barren-ground caribou hunt will be described in detail in a subsequent chapter.

It is likely that during prehistoric and early historic times musk-ox (*Ovibos moschatus*) were available to the Chipewyan. However, musk-ox are tundra dwelling animals, and were no longer within the Chipewyan hunting territory after Caribou-Eater bands moved south into the boreal forest following the smallpox epidemic of 1781.

#### Conclusion

Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan live in a vast territory characterized by relatively homogeneous sub-arctic conditions of climate, physiography, and plant and animal life. These environmental conditions sustained a long-term hunting and gathering tradition and way of life. Yet, regional distinctions exist between the Upper Churchill River district and the Athabasca Basin that are reflected in different social and cultural expressions by sub-groups of Chipewyan as regional adaptations.

Major differences between the two regions are found in the gradual depletion of forest cover that occurs from the southwest towards the northeast following the precambrian formation. The spacial shift from full boreal forest to-

wards a sparse and stunted transitional forest is accompanied by a change in animal species and numbers of animals within species across the territory. Although most animal species are found in common throughout, fur-bearing animals are more numerous within the full boreal forest zone.

A major difference in animal resources between the Churchill River district and the Athabasca Basin is the seasonal availability of barren-ground caribou in the more northerly zone. While caribou occur with some regularity in the Athabasca Basin, they are seldom seen along the Churchill River.

Wood bison were found in earlier times along the Upper Churchill River and as far north as Great Slave Lake, and likely played a significant role in defining local patterns of resource procurement and identity for regional Indian bands. Today wood bison do not enter into the ecological strategy of Chipewyan Indians.

The variation in occurrence of different renewable resources across the territory played a role in defining Chipewyan Indian adaptive strategies and identity patterns. In the following chapters Chipewyan adaptations and identity change will be addressed taking into consideration variation in regional resources across the western Canadian subarctic.

CHAPTER FOUR  
ETHNOHISTORICAL IDENTITY

Introduction

This chapter deals with the Chipewyan past, where they came from, their ways of life, and the pressures that brought about changes in territory of occupation, conditions of living, and identity for sub-groups within the Chipewyan collective.

The history of subarctic Indian people in western Canada has generally been outlined by reference to culture contact and adaptive processes in which change is attributed primarily to Indian involvement in the fur trade, and later, to dependence of Indian people on government agencies. Indian history is often expressed by reference to three sequential culture impact periods, as used by Helm, Rogers, and Smith (1981:146); the early contact era represented by indirect influence of the fur trade, the contact-traditional era during which time the Indians were directly involved in, and were dependent upon trade with the Europeans, and the modern era when economies and ways of life based on hunting and trapping give way to what Smith (1975:395) calls the "Micro-urban Village" or "Government-Commercial" phase after World War Two when Indian people of the western Canadian subarctic took up permanent settlement under government auspices. The account of subarctic Indian history by reference to culture impact eras has been employed by Helm and

Damas (1963), Rogers and Trudeau (1969-1972), Helm and Leacock (1971), Helm, Alliband, et al. (1975), and Helm (1981). The culture contact/culture impact approach for describing Chipewyan history is avoided here for several reasons. Firstly, it tends to over-emphasize the Euro-Canadian influence of trade as a prime causation for change while giving limited recognition to other factors or to interacting phenomenon of which trade may have been only one element. For example, migration by Chipewyan Indians over the past several hundred years may best be understood by considering such interacting issues as resource population cycles, climatic change, disease, conflict between groups, or the opening and closing of ecozones within a region. Secondly, the approach tends to ignore continuities of traditional economies and their ongoing influence on Indian societies. Thirdly, the approach relies on absolute and historically varifiable dates to establish periods of settlement, failing to recognize that settlement is often a gradual process, beginning with seasonal encampments at preferable sites before the direct intervention of traders, governments, or missionaries. Finally, the culture contact/culture impact model emphasizes Indian-White relationships from a Euro-centric perspective, stressing European influence on Indian culture change, often ignoring the effect that Indian populations had on one another. The consequence can be a failure to recognize sub-group adaptations as

distinctive features of identity within an Indian collective.

In this study the history of the Chipewyan is outlined by reference to a subarctic chronology based on a spatial-temporal model of prehistoric, protohistoric, and historic periods after Bishop and Ray (1976) for Algonquian speaking Indians of the central Canadian subarctic and Yerbury (1986) for Athabaskan speaking Indians of the western Canadian subarctic. The prehistoric period ends in any one area and for any one population of Indians with the first indirect influence of Europeans. The protohistoric period lasts from first indirect influence until direct and habitual contact is established by an Indian population with Europeans. The protohistoric for Chipewyan bands includes their time of middleman contacts with other Northern Athabaskan Indians during the early fur trade. The historic period is ushered in with the establishment of inland trading posts in the interior among the Chipewyan during the last quarter of the eighteenth century. This chronology offers an heuristic device that is population specific, allowing for close scrutiny of interactions between traders and Indians and between Indian groups throughout the district. In this manner sub-groups of Chipewyan are identified and prehistoric occupations and historic migrations are traced.

In this chapter the prehistoric period is outlined for Athabaskan and Algonquian speaking groups by reference to territory of occupation as interpreted from archeological

evidence, ecological relationships, and the analysis of name/place associations.

The protohistoric period is concerned with changing economic strategies of regional Chipewyan populations and their early movements and dislocations as they became involved in the trade for fur with neighboring Athabaskan groups. Activities and movement of regional populations are drawn out of the literature and from folk histories derived from ethnographic research during the study.

The historic period is recognized as beginning for individual Indian bands and regional populations as they come into direct contact with European traders, primarily during the time when inland trading posts were becoming established in the region. Movements and settlements of Indian bands are traced by reference to historical accounts and the further analysis of name/place associations of Indian bands as well as the recognition of increasing influence of traders, missionaries, and government agencies on Indian people.

#### Chipewyan Groups and Sub-groups

The Chipewyan Indians of the western Canadian subarctic are the most easterly population of Northern Athabaskan speaking people. The spelling 'Athabaskan' is that preferred by the Alaska Native Language Center (Krauss and Golla 1981:67), and is used here to distinguish the general population of Northern Athabaskans from similarly named local

and regional groups. Other renditions of the term that have been applied to specific populations at different times include Athapaskan (Smith 1975:396) or Athabaskan (Smith 1981:271) (those who dwell in the trembling aspen) who came to occupy the country between Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca during the mid eighteenth century and who displaced Cree populations (Northern Algonquians) who were known as Athabasca Cree or variously as Athup'piss'Caw, A'Tha'pee'Skaw, Athapescow, and Araubaska Indians (Gillespie 1975:373, 377, 379).

The Athabaskan speech family is one branch of a larger linguistic grouping, the Athabaskan-Eyak. The Northern Athabaskan language group consists of about twenty three languages identified for people living in the subarctic regions of Canada west of Hudson Bay and into Alaska. The Sarcee of southern Alberta also belong to this speech community (Krauss and Golla 1981) (see also Powell 1891; Sapir 1929; Kaye 1979). The people within the Northern Athabaskan speech community of subarctic Canada refer to themselves collectively as 'Dene' and have done so since early times. David Thompson (1962), the eighteenth century trader and surveyor, noted in reference to the Northern Athabaskans: "the country is occupied by a people who call themselves 'Dinnie' (Gillespie 1981a:161).

Chipewyan is the earliest documented Northern Athabaskan language and vocabularies are dated from 1742 (Thompson in

Dobbs 1744:206-211) and 1743 (Isham 1949:183-191) and Alexander Mackenzie (1970:156-159) obtained a vocabulary in 1793 (Krauss and Golla 1981:80). The Chipewyan Language has been extensively described by Petitot (1876), Legoff (1889, 1916), Goddard (1917, 1917a), Li (1932, 1933, 1946, 1964), Li and Scollon (1976), Scollon (1979), and Scollon and Scollon (1979) (Krauss and Golla 1981:80-81).

During the mid nineteenth century Oblate missionaries of the Catholic Order of Mary Immaculate (OMI) developed a Chipewyan syllabary after the one used for Cree. This form of writing is still used by some of the older generations.

A variant form of Chipewyan was spoken by Yellowknife or Copper Indians (T'atsan ottine) who occupied the taiga north of Great Slave Lake and east of Great Bear Lake in the Yellowknife River and Upper Coppermine River drainage basin during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The Yellowknife Indians were culturally and linguistically assimilated into Dogrib Indian bands during the nineteenth century. Today some of their descendents are again identifying themselves as Yellowknife.

Chipewyan, as one of the Northern Athabaskan languages, is spoken by people who occupy the taiga or tundra-forest transition zone in the Northwest Territories and the northern boreal forest region of northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba. Chipewyan is spoken by Indians living in

<u>Chipewyan phone</u>	<u>English equivalent</u>
Vowels	
a	f <u>a</u> ther
á	ma <u>n</u>
e	sle <u>igh</u>
i	fe <u>et</u>
í	si <u>t</u>
é	se <u>t</u>
o	bo <u>at</u>
u	po <u>ol</u>
ú	ho <u>ok</u>
æ	cu <u>p</u>
y	ye <u>llow</u>
Consonants	
c	<u>ch</u> ipewyan
h	<u>h</u> orse
x (glottal aspirate as in the German)	<u>ach</u>
q	<u>qu</u> ick
s	<u>sh</u> ip
z	rou <u>ge</u>
θ	<u>th</u> em
n	<u>ne</u> t
t	<u>th</u> ick
ɬ (lateral fricative)	
k (glottalized guttural)	
ʔ (glottal stop)	

Figure 9. Orthography of Chipewyan Speech.

settlements at Cold Lake, Fort Chipewyan, Fort McKay, and Janvier in Alberta; Fort Resolution, Fort Smith, and Snowdrift in the Northwest Territories; Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, Stony Rapids, Wollaston Lake, Turnor Lake, Portage la Loche, Dillon, St. George's Hill, Michel Village, Patuanak, Dipper Lake, Primeau Lake, Pinehouse Lake, Cree Lake, and Southend in Saskatchewan; and at Lac Brochet and Churchill in Manitoba. Carter (1975) has noted an apparent dialect division between eastern and western populations of Chipewyan. Smith (1981:275) believes this reflects older language divisions that correspond to regional distribution of the major caribou herds. There are dialect distinctions between Chipewyan living on the Upper Churchill River in Alberta and western Saskatchewan, and those Chipewyan Indians of the Athabasca Basin in northern Saskatchewan.

Most Chipewyan Indians are bilingual, speaking both Chipewyan and English; and many are multilingual, with a knowledge of Cree (western Algonquian) and/or French. The Chipewyan language is, however, being lost by many of the younger generation, and there is an effort in some Chipewyan communities to teach Chipewyan in the schools as a 'cultural' language. In the communities of this study Chipewyan remains a working language, and is the first language for the Chipewyan inhabitants.

### What's In A Name

The names applied to Indian groups in North America are often a source of great confusion in that individual groups may have acquired several names through contact with neighboring Indian populations, with European explorers and traders, and due to migration to new territories. Furthermore, within named groups are often sub-groupings that have names for each other, usually of a descriptive nature referring to their country of origin, their territory of occupation, or their relative location from another subgroup within the same family. Gillespie (1981a:161) notes that European names for Indian groups were often derived from other Indians who were in earlier contact with the Europeans, and these names were often derogatory in nature. The name 'Chipewyan', for example, was first applied by Cree Indians in reference to Northern Athabaskan speaking people who occupied the forest-tundra margin northwest of Hudson Bay. The Cree source for the term Chipewyan (ci'pwaya'n) or (Oci'pwaya'ni'w) was likely in reference to the way in which those people cut their hunting shirts or prepared their beaver pelts in a pointed manner, a fashion which the Cree apparently ridiculed (see Petitot 1976:xix; Faries 1938:176; Mackenzie 1970:120-121). The term was also used by the Cree to describe those Athabaskan speaking people who fashioned their parka hoods in a pointed style as 'the pointed hood people' (personal communication, Dillon

1987).

The Cree also provided the traders on Hudson Bay with names for more westerly Athabaskan groups including the Dogrib, Slavey, and perhaps Beaver Indians as well (Gillespie 1981a:161). These Northern Athabaskans were collectively referred to as 'Northern Indians' or 'Northward Indians' by early traders and explorers including Henry Kelsey (1929:25) in 1689, James Isham (1949:3) in 1743, Samuel Hearne (1958:9) in 1770-1772, Philip Turnor (1934:338) in 1790, J. F. Kenney (1932:163) in 1717, and others (Gillespie 1975; Smith 1981).

The Chipewyan were also called Dog-rib or Dog-side Indians by early traders and explorers. Henry Kelsey (1929:25) attempted in 1689 to contact the Northern Indians living in the country west of Hudson Bay whom he called "ye dogside Nation". The French occupying Fort Bourbon (York Fort, York Factory) at the mouth of the Nelson and Hayes Rivers on Hudson Bay between 1697 and 1714, also referred to the Northern Indians as Dogribs (Platscotes de Chiens) (Jeremie 1926:20). The terms 'dog-rib' or 'dog-side' was used in reference to Chipewyan bands who were found at the time north and west of Hudson Bay, and does not apply exclusively to the Dogrik branch of the Northern Athabaskan who are found today living northwest of Great Slave Lake. Gillespie (1975:355) notes that the Athabaskan myth in which the people originated out of the rib of a dog

has been transcribed for both Chipewyan and Dogrib Indians. June Helm (1981:306, 309) provides a detailed synopsis of the term 'dogrib' along with its historical application.

Variations on the name 'Chipewyan' were used by European traders and explorers of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. These include:

Chepewyans, 1776 (Henry 1969:333); Otchipiweons, Orchipoins, Ochipawayons, 1785, 1787 (Peter Pond in Davidson 1918: maps facing 23, 36, 42); Chi-pa-why-ans, U-che-pi-wy-an, Chepawyans, 1790 (Turnor and Ross in Hearne 1934:338, 341, 359); Chepewyan, 1801 (Mackenzie 1970). Later renderings included Chippewyans and Chip-pe-wi-yan, 1830 (J. Tanner 1956:391); Chippeweyans, 1849 (McLean 1932:134); Cheepawyans (Thompson 1916:78); and in other spellings listed by Hodge (1907a:276) (Smith 1981:283).

While there are a myriad of terms applied by other ethnics to define the Chipewyan in a collective manner, among the Chipewyan there are names used for individual sub-groups within the Chipewyan collective. These sub-group or band names are generally descriptive in nature of place of occupation, and by reference to band name-changes it is possible to trace individual band movements over time and to identify each band's territory during any one particular period. Figure ten shows approximate locations of Athabaskan groups before 1821 (Gillespie 1981a:162).

By the use of name changes Indian bands may not only be traced historically as to their migrations, but also the stimulus for band movements may be determined through

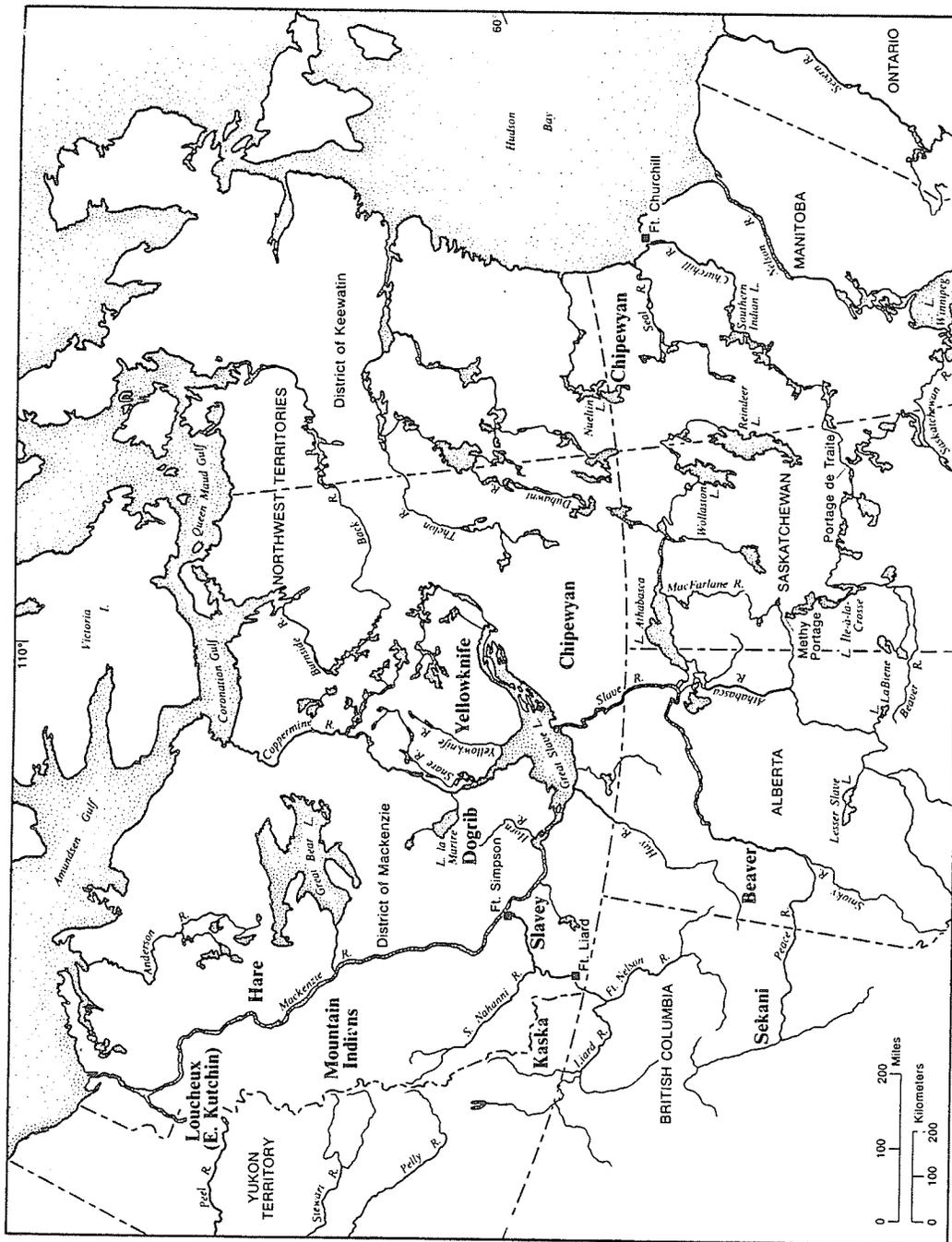


Figure 10. Location of Athabaskan Groups before 1821.

cross-reference with other occurrences during the same time period whether these stimuli were ecological in nature or the result of conflict or contact pressures. An ethno-historical analysis of Chipewyan movements, band divisions, territorial and ecological relationships, and identity features with reference to sub-group and regional names is carried out in this chapter.

Finally, the Chipewyan Indians, like so many other aboriginal people, employ a collective term to define themselves. They call themselves simply 'The People' (Dene).

Us Indians, we do not call ourselves Indians or Chipewyan. We call ourselves 'Dene' which means 'The People'. The Cree and all us Indians, we are The People (personal communication, Dillon 1986).

### Chipewyan Prehistory

The prehistory of the Chipewyan is tied in with that of other subarctic Indian groups who first moved into the western Canadian subarctic during the time when the Wisconsin Laurentide ice sheet had retreated north-eastward by about 5,000 B. C. (Noble 1981:79). Clark (1981:108) notes, with reference to early occupation of the Northwest Territories:

Much of the central (and eastern) Subarctic had not recovered from the last glaciation until about 8,000 to 6,000 B. C., at which time the Northwest Territories was colonized by hunters whose non-fluted spear points link them with the later Paleo-Indian culture of the northern Plains.

The Paleo-Indians of the region were big-game hunters

whose ancestors likely moved out of eastern Asia to cross into North America via a Bering Sea land bridge to occupy the unglaciated interior of Alaska and the Yukon Territory by 8,500 or 9,000 B. C. (Clark 1981:128). However, as noted by Bruce Trigger (1982:6), this interpretation of Indian prehistory is often rejected by Indian people as it does not fit in with their origin myths.

Archeological research in the forest-tundra margin of the Northwest Territories suggests a long-term occupation by Chipewyan Indians who had evolved a caribou hunting tradition as a regional adaptation. Archeological research indicates that Northern Athabaskan groups were in the area north of Great Slave Lake in the Mackenzie District of the Northwest Territories since about 200 B. C. Other Northern Athabaskan occupation sites based on the Taltheilei Shale tool tradition have been identified by Gordon (1975) in the Upper Thelon River of the eastern Mackenzie District from between 400 B. C. to A. D. 1450 (Wright 1981:91-92) and also at Grant Lake from 655 B. C. to A. D. 1700 (Gordon 1976).

Northern Athabaskans extended their occupation further to the east into the Keewatin District and the extreme northern part of Manitoba. Archeological sites that have been excavated by Ronald Nash (1970) indicate that there were Chipewyan Indians occupying the region possibly as early as A. D. 500 and likely by A. D. 1000. Many of these sites are

associated with major caribou crossing places and fish runs (Wright 1981:87). Figure eleven shows areas of Indian occupation in the Canadian Shield in prehistoric and early historic times (Wright 1981:87).

Archeological research indicates that some ancestors of modern Chipewyan and related Yellowknife Indians were long-term residents of the forest-tundra transition zone in the Northwest Territories and that the Chipewyan have only recently moved into the full boreal forest taking over that territory previously held by Cree Indians. Archeological evidence places Cree in the northern boreal forests of Manitoba and Saskatchewan long before Chipewyan southern expansion during the eighteenth century. Wright (1981:92-94) attributes the Selkirk pottery complex in northern Manitoba and northern Saskatchewan as far west as Lac Ile-a-la-Crosse to Cree occupation:

Archeological evidence strongly suggests that the Cree had a very long period of cultural development in the region under consideration and that they are not easterners who have pushed to the west and northwest in response to the fur trade.

According to Wright (1968) the Cree were inhabiting the Lower Churchill River below Ile-a-la-Crosse since the tenth century.

However, Cree expansion north and west of Ile-a-la-Crosse to Great Slave Lake may have been a more recent



event, and may have been influenced by trade with the Europeans and the early acquisition of firearms by the Cree. Jenness (1932:248) describes Cree expansion in the following manner:

As soon as they (Cree) obtained firearms from Hudson Bay, however, they expanded westward and northward, so that by the middle of the eighteenth century they controlled northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan as far as Churchill River, all northern Alberta, the valley of Slave River, and the south-eastern part of Great Slave Lake.

Curtis (1928:8) also recognizes Cree movement to the north and west, with greater specificity:

The Cree...pressed beyond Churchill River, which had been their northerly limit, drove the Athapascans before them, and took possession of Athabasca river down to the lake (Athabasca).

This expansion by the Cree beyond the Churchill River has been considered by some (Birket-Smith 1976:13) to have been at the expense of the Chipewyan who were thought to have been pushed before them into the marginal forest-tundra zone. However, Alexander Mackenzie, in his journal entry for 13 October, 1792 (Yerbury 1980:24), states that the Athabaskan speaking Beaver and Slave Indians were driven by the Cree out of the country between Churchill River and Lake Athabasca and northwest to the Peace River and Great Slave Lake:

On the 13th, at noon, we came to the Peace Point: from which, . . . the river derives its name; it was the spot where the Knisteneaux (Cree) and Beaver Indians settled their dispute; . . . When this country was formerly invaded by the Knisteneaux, they found the Beaver Indians inhabiting the land about Portage la Loche (Methy Portage), and the adjoining tribe were those whom they call Slaves. They drove both these tribes before them; when the latter proceeded down the river from the Lake of the Hills (Athabasca), in consequence of which that part of it obtained the name Slave River. The former proceeded up the river; and when the Knisteneaux made peace with them (1761 or later), this place was settled to be the boundary.

The reference here to Beaver Indians should not be confused with Beaver River Indians who are Algonquian speaking Cree who occupied at that time the country around the head of the Beaver River within the Upper Churchill River Basin (see figure ten). After the expulsion of the Beaver and Slave Indians various bands of Cree then controlled the whole of the Churchill River, and also the country north to the Fond-du-Lac (Stone) River to Lake Athabasca. The Cree Indians of the Lower Churchill River were known as 'Mishenepe' or 'Great Water Indians' in reference to Southern Indian Lake which is part of the Churchill River system (Kenney 1932:57; Wright 1968:21), and are likely ancestral to those Indians known today as Rocky Cree living in northern Manitoba (Gillespie 1975:358). The Cree of the Upper Churchill River were the Beaver River Indians. The Cree who came to reside around Lake Athabasca were known

as Athabasca Cree. Other terms for Cree include 'Maskegons' or 'Makegonehirinis' (Potherie 1931:265), 'Knisteneaux' (Jenness 1932:86), and 'Nahathaways' (Wright 1981:92).

In Mackenzie's account of the expulsion of the Athabaskans (see also Petitot 1883:649-650; Coues 1897:510) there is no mention of Chipewyan Indians being displaced by Cree from the Churchill River. At that time it is likely that the Chipewyan had established a long-term adaptation to the taiga ecological zone, while the Cree had adapted to the full boreal forest, each exploiting different resources and evolving different traditions and ways of life under different conditions. While the Cree had come to control the territory between the Churchill and Fond-du-Lac Rivers and northwest above Lake Athabasca, the Chipewyan lived within the transitional forest-tundra zone that forms a great arch following the tree line from Hudson Bay to Great Slave Lake. The Chipewyan did not move south into the full boreal forest until the late eighteenth century when territory along the Fond-du-Lac and Upper Churchill Rivers was, for the most part, abandoned by the Cree.

The following section deals with the Chipewyan proto-historic period when Chipewyan Indians continued to live within the northern transitional forest, but were coming under increasing influence of European traders.

In the following section parallels are apparent in adaptations to the fur trade for Northern Athabaskans

of the western Canadian subarctic and Northern Algonquians of the central and eastern Canadian subarctic. For an account of Northern Algonquian adaptations to the fur trade see Bishop (1974; 1984), Ray (1974; 1984), and Morantz (1983; 1984).

Parallel adaptive response to European traders include the use of Indian middlemen to promote inland trade during early periods of interaction; the isolation of northern Indian populations by southern Indians who had a longer history of interaction with Europeans; the development of interdependencies between Indians and Whites through a growing relationship between 'homeguard' Indians and traders; and a reluctance by those Indians who hunted caribou to shift their economic activities towards fur trapping. These and other similarities in adaptive response across the Canadian subarctic may be explained by common ecological relationships, common environmental adaptations, and the same ethnohistorical experiences with Europeans by widely separated Indian groups. While ecological and environmental factors contributed to common adaptive patterns, the primary determinant was likely a uniform trade strategy by Europeans which was implemented, often by the same individuals transferred from one trading post to another across the subarctic north.

### Chipewyan Protohistory

During the late seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries eastern bands of Chipewyan occupied territory within the forest-tundra margin west of Hudson Bay and western bands of Chipewyan were in the territory east of the Slave River in the taiga between Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake (see figure twelve) (Smith 1981:272). At the time, between 1680 and 1689, there were several attempts by the European traders on Hudson Bay to make contact with the Northern Indians, to make a peace between them and the Cree and to draw them into the fur trade. These included instructions to Captain Thomas Draper from the Hudson's Bay Company on 21 May 1680 to build a trading post on the New Severn (Churchill) River, a communique on 15 May 1682 to John Bridgar, governor of Fort Nelson: "...to Penetrate into the Countrey to make what discoveries you can, and to gett an Acquaintance and Comerce with the Indians thereabts" (Rich 1948:35), and instructions to Governor Geyer at York Fort in June 1688 that: "...the Boy Henry Kelsey bee Sent to Churchill River with Thomas Savage because Wee are informed hee is a very active Lad Delighting much in Indians Compa." (Kelsey 1929:xxiv). However, Kelsey's expedition to "... discover & Endeavour to bring to a Commerce y<sup>e</sup> northern Indians Inhabiting to y<sup>e</sup> Northward of Churchill River & also y<sup>e</sup> dogside Nation" (Kelsey 1929:25) did not set out until June 1689, and met with no success in contacting the

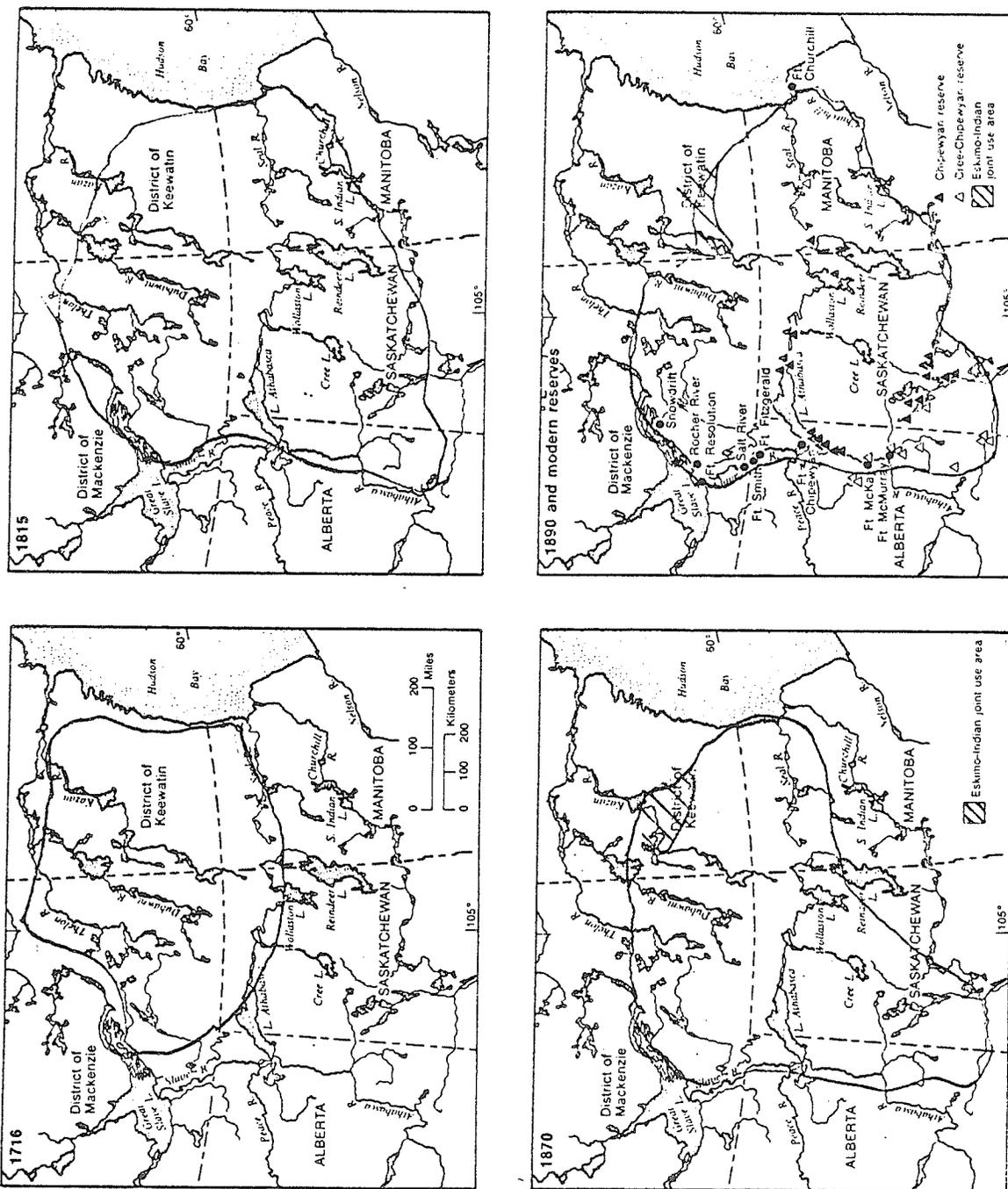


Figure 12. Chipewyan Territory of Occupation, 18th and 19th Centuries.

Northward Indians (Gillespie 1975; Yerbury 1986:17-18). The trading post at the mouth of the Churchill River, built for the Chipewyan trade, was burnt down and abandoned in 1689, and was not re-built until 1717. During the intervening quarter century there were no further attempts to make direct contact with the Chipewyan nations north and west of the Churchill River.

In 1694 and between 1697 and 1714 the French were in possession of Fort Bourbon at the mouth of the Hayes River. The French trader at Fort Bourbon, Nicolas Jeremie (1926: 20-21) identifies Chipewyan Indians, who he calls 'Dogribs' (Platscotes de Chiens) as living in the territory beyond the headwaters of the Seal River (see figure twelve):

Seal River extends up to the country of a nation called Dogribs (orig. text: 'Platscotes de Chiens') who make war on our Maskegons, that is, the people with whom we trade. As they have no experience with firearms, no more than the Eskimos, as soon as they hear a few shots fired they all run away, leaving their women and children and these our natives carry away as prisoners and make them slaves.... The Dogribs have pleasant and kindly faces, and...if we could persuade them to trade, we would get along well with them. Their country is very barren, without beaver or other fur, and all they have to live on is fish and a kind of deer which we call caribou. The caribou they kill with arrows, and also take them with snares (Gillespie 1975:356).

It is clear from this account that the eastern bands of Chipewyan were restricted to the forest-tundra margin, and were being harassed by the Cree Indians with whom

they had been in conflict for some time, likely since the Cree had penetrated that country. It is also likely that warfare between the Cree and neighboring Athabaskan groups escalated as competition for the fur trade grew.

Competition for the trade in fur was intense both between the French and British traders on Hudson Bay, and between Indian groups who vied with each other for control over territory and trade routes. The conflict between the French and British traders is most apparent in the rivalry over trading post sites, and continued until 1821 when the Hudson's Bay Company gained a monopoly over trade in the northwest. An indication of this rivalry at the early stages of the fur trade on Hudson Bay is apparent in the following sequence of events acted out by traders in the area in and around York Factory where the Nelson and the Hayes Rivers enter Hudson Bay (Yerbury 1986:19):

- 1682 Fort Bourbon 1 built by Pierre Esprit Radisson on the south bank of the Hayes River. Destroyed in 1683.
- 1682 Fort Nelson 1 built by Zachariah Guillam for the Hudson's Bay Company on the north bank of the Nelson River and held for five or six years.
- 1682 Guillam Post built by New England Company under the direction of Benjamin Guillam on Guillam Island. Burnt the same year.
- 1683 Chouart's Post built by the French on Rainbow Island. Burned the same year and rebuilt in 1684 and abandoned that year.

- 1684 Abraham's Post built on Walker's Point in an attempt to control both sides of the Nelson River.
- 1684 York Fort 1 built on the north shore of the Hayes River by the Hudson's Bay Company.
- 1684 La Martiniere's Post built to control the trade at French Creek by the French.
- 1685 French Post built to replace Radisson's Post by the French. Used only one year.
- 1694 Fort Bourbon 11 was the occupation of York Fort by the French in 1694 and from 1697 to 1714.
- 1700 Fort Phillipeaux built by Nicolas Jeremie on the south shore of the Hayes River near Ten Shilling Creek. It was sacked in 1712.
- 1715 York Factory 11A built by the Hudson's Bay Company after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) by Captain James Knight.
- 1782 French under Jean Francois Galaup burned York Factory to the ground.
- 1783 York Factory rebuilt by the Hudson's Bay Company.

During the early fur trade period on Hudson Bay, from 1680 until about 1728, the Cree and Chipewyan were engaged in protracted war, fighting over trapping territory and trade routes from Hudson Bay to Lake Athabasca, and over access to the trading posts at the mouth of the Churchill, Nelson, and Hayes Rivers. The Cree were able to effectively isolate Chipewyan from trade at York Fort and keep them out of the full boreal forest and rich trapping grounds to the south. The trade in firearms was brisk (see Yerbury 1980,

1986) and may have given the Cree an advantage over other Indians in the region. However, Townsend (1983) questions the advantage of muskets over aboriginal weapons, and Kretch (1984:123-125) notes that although guns were highly valued by Indians, they were usually of poor quality and were often "bursting and breaking", injuring their owners in the process.

The first contact between British and Chipewyan was made between James Knight and Chipewyan slaves who had been left behind when York Fort was re-occupied by the Hudson's Bay Company traders in 1714. It is from these slaves that Knight learned of the western Chipewyan and the extent of warfare between the Chipewyan and the Cree. In his journal entry of 6 May 1715 Knight records his discussion with the Chipewyan slaves (Yerbury 1986:22):

They (Athapaskan slaves) tell me they have abundance of people still but the Indians (Cree) as Destroyed a great-many thousands of them....I told them I was there friend & was very angry with those Indians for going to war with them and killing so many of them as they had don...and I would send some Guns with them to force there way down they was very Pleased at that and told me that in two or three years there would abundance come down...here is not one Indian in the country can speak a word of that Language and it is a very difficult Language to Learn they Speak thro the throat so and Speak very Quick.

With the intention of establishing contact with these western bands of Chipewyan, and to encourage peace between them and the Cree, Governor Knight dispatched William

Stewart (Stuart) along with a group of Cree Indians, "150 Southern (Cree) Indians" (Smith 1981:273) including twenty five men and their families (Yerbury 1986:22), and led by a Chipewyan woman named Thanadelthur, also known as the Slave Woman (Smith 1981:273) inland in June 1715. The introduction from Knight's instructions to Stewart are transcribed below from a copy of the original text signed at "York Fort, Hays River, hudsons bay, America" (Johnson 1952:43) on June 27, 1715:

To W<sup>m</sup> Stewart; The Orders w<sup>ch</sup> you are to Observe & Follow as Nere as Possible.

1st; Imprimis You are to go w<sup>th</sup> these Indians in Company with you going to the Northward to make a peace w<sup>th</sup> the Northern Indians & to use Your utmost Indeavour to make a firm & a lasting peace & not to suffer them if possible to kill hurt or wound any of you but use them w<sup>th</sup> all the friendship you can & to persuade the Indians that You are with to bring Six or more of them w<sup>th</sup> you to the factory where they shall be treated w<sup>th</sup> all Civillity as may be.

2nd. Then I Order You to take care that none of them Indians abuse or Mitsuse the Slave Woman that goes w<sup>th</sup> You or to take what She has from her that is to be given among her Country People & likewise to tell her to acquaint her Country people that wee for all Settle a Factory at Churchill River next fall & that wee will trade w<sup>th</sup> them for Beavor Martin fox Queequihatch (wolverines) Wolf Bear Otter Catt Moose & Buffalo Skins & Yellow Mettle.

The expedition travelled north-northwest from York Fort and according to Governor Knight's account (Johnson 1952:45):

...then he Imagined he was in the Lattitude of abt. 63 then they went NWT to cross the Baren Desarts and when they had cross'd them they went WNWt and came into a very Plenti-full Country for Beasts there they found... the Indians...and went no farther.

The journey had taken them across seventeen rivers:

...the third River from Churchill...thare is no wood grows till they come to the 13th River and then there begins to grow wood again and all the other 4 Rivers the woods begins to grow bigger & thicker and the (trees of the) 17th River is bigger than any of the rest. (Johnson 1952:45).

The expedition travelled 600 to 1000 miles northwest of York Fort (Smith 1976a:2) to the country east of Slave River and south of Great Slave Lake (Johnson 1952:45). It is here that they encountered about 400 Chipewyan, with whom they traded and made peace, bringing ten of them back to York Fort to initiate trade. Governor Knight provided these with guns stating that:

...they may Defend themselves if attackd by any of their Enemy's in there Return home and to learn their Country Men the Use of em as also to head em when they come to trade w<sup>th</sup> us (Yerbury 1986:23).

As for Thanadelthur, she continued to pursue her personal mission to bring other Indian groups into the trade with the Hudson's Bay Company. Knight gives an account of her intent and accomplishments in his journal entry of 5 February 1716 (Yerbury 1986:24):

(Thanadelthur) had compleated it by going among all the Nations thereabouts & to Acquaint them what Commoditys wee deal for & what Seasons they must Gett there Skins in and how they must Dress them & Stretch em. And further Said upon consideration of my makeing her brother a Captain he whould Go Amongst them Indians that had the Yellow Mettle...they was very Goods Friends (probably Yellowknife) when they parted and feasted one another She Said She did not Expect to do what she went about before 2 years & half was Expired but she would send in all the Indians as soon as possible to trade & that there was a ll Great Nations as was there friends as understood one Another and that their is 5 Great Nations bordering upon their friends that does not understand each other but does marry one amongst another one of those Nations goes by the Name of Martin Indians by there abounding with such Great Quantity of Martins they have amongst themselves and are clothd with them another is Called the Buffalo Indians by the Abundance of White Buffalo as is in there Country. Another Nation they call fish Indians they liveing So much upon fish. Another Nation they call Ice Indians they haveing so much ice in that part of the country. As likewise Another Partridge Indians they Call which She Said in time she did no 6 Nations but she could bring them all to trade.

It is apparent that Knight was excited with the prospects for expanding the inland trade, perhaps from the promises of Thanadelthur, a trade that would extend westward to the Rocky Mountains and north to the Arctic Ocean, opening up a vast hinterland for mineral exploration as well.

Governor Knight's ambitions could not be immediately realized as Thanadelthur, along with a number of Northern Indians, died at York Fort in February 1717 (Johnson 1952: 45; Yerbury 1986:25). In May 1717, Knight was able to

purchase another Northern Slave woman, paying sixty skins for her (Yerbury 1986:25). This woman served as interpreter for the Hudson's Bay Company at Prince of Wales Fort (Fort Churchill ) which was built that year at the mouth of the Churchill River.

The incident of the first contact between the Chipewyan and European traders is known as part of an oral history by Chipewyan Indians of the Upper Churchill River. The informant, a Chipewyan woman from Cold Lake who married into the Buffalo River Band, was told the story by Rosaline Andrews, her grandmother, and the great granddaughter of Thanadelthur. Rosaline Andrews died on June 29, 1979 at the age of one hundred and eleven years. Her story of first contact is related below (personal communication, Dillon 1987):

The Cree at that time used to raid the people who were easy to kill because they lived in small bands. The Cree stole their fur and the women and the children. This is how Thanadelthur came to live with a Cree man. She had been captured when she was only sixteen. One time they travelled to the Company's place at York Factory, it was a fort built of logs placed upright in the ground and inside the gate were great houses. Thanadelthur's husband told her to stay hidden outside the fort while the Cree men went inside to trade the furs they had taken from raiding her people. Several times before she had been told to stay outside and keep hidden when they came to the fort. This time Thanadelthur crawled up and looked in the fort and heard the Cree talking with the White men. She heard them deny that the furs they had were from her people and she rushed in shouting in Cree that these men had stole the furs from her people and had killed them

because they were ugly people. She was told by the White man that her people could not be ugly as she was not ugly. The Cree men were placed in irons and Thanadelthur was asked if she could lead the White men to her people. The White men brought many gifts to her people, knives, pots, and other things. The people were so happy they wore out the pots banging on them all night long. These were heavy iron pots and pans.

The two accounts of the first contact experience make several points. The first is that, while the Europeans were well established on the coast, they were dependent on the Indian people to promulgate and expand the fur trade inland. This was done by use of Indian trading Captains who were recruited and given preferential treatment, and for this they maintained trading gangs to acquire and transport pelts, skins, and meat to the coastal trading posts. The acquisition of pelts appears to have been by three methods. Either they could trap the furs themselves, trade goods that were provided by the Europeans in exchange for furs from neighboring Indian groups thereby functioning as middlemen, or they could raid other Indian bands and steal the fur thereby receiving double payment in trade goods from the trading posts. It is this third tactic in acquiring furs that appears to have escalated the conflict among Indians throughout the region. The reality of inter-tribal warfare had prompted Governor Knight to supply the Northern Indians with firearms, yet this was not sufficient to deter their enemies, the Cree. The trade with the Northern Indians,

including the Chipewyan, was secured only after the establishment of Fort Prince of Wales (Churchill) at the mouth of the Churchill River in July of 1717. Only then were the Northern Indians able to travel to the coast and come in to trade with some sense of security from hostile encounter.

The second point of the accounts of first contact is that the Cree and Chipewyan were clearly enemies to the point that even on the peace mission a group of Cree guides, "Eight Lusty Young fellows" of Stewart's party who had separated in search of game, came upon tents of Northern Indians and killed nine of them, likely the men, and taking the remainder prisoner, returned to York Fort (Johnson 1952:44). It would seem that while the European traders were attempting to expand their inland trade by means of a peace mission, they retained little control over Cree/Chipewyan hostilities and were forced to isolate the Chipewyan trade at Churchill to insure Chipewyan security. Some, (Gillespie 1975:360-364) believe that conflict between Indian groups was based on traditional hostilities and revenge raids and not on the competition for fur and trade goods, and that once Churchill was established, both Cree and Chipewyan could carry on the coastal trade without animosity. However, though peace was eventually made between the Cree and Chipewyan, the latter remained cautious, and only came to trade at Churchill in any great number after 1721. By 1724 the Cree and Chipewyan were again at war and hostilities between the two groups

continued until 1728. On 13th June, 1725 a gang of 104 Northern Indian men arrived at Churchill and reported to the factor, Richard Norton (Yerbury 1980:22):

that the Southern Upland (Cree) Indians had been to Warrs in their Country Last winter & has Distroyd a Vast Quantity of their Country men....Several of the Chipewyan men and their families had been plundered of most of their season's furs.

During this time and afterwards, the Company factors were continually counseling the Indians in peace. For example, Norton received forty three canoes of Cree and a gang of eighty Chipewyan men in mid June, 1727 and "after having had Some Distcuss with them (Chipewyan) & the Uplanders (Cree) forwarning their Warring they traded and went away (Yerbury 1986:34).

The third point to be made of the first contact account is that the Chipewyan living near the coast had limited access to desirable fur-bearing animals, and the traders had to extend their influence further inland to the Peace and Mackenzie River districts to recruit western bands, including Chipewyan, into the fur trade. However, the Chipewyan remained for some time peripheral to the fur trade for several reasons. The most obvious reason is that the country they inhabited was not well stocked with commercially valuable fur-bearing animals. Samuel Hearne (1958:135-136) notes as late as 1771 that the northern country of the Chipewyan generally lacked desirable fur-bearers:

Except a few martins; wolves, quiuehatches (wolverines), foxes, and otters, are the chief furs to be met in those parts, and a few of the Northern Indians chuse to kill either the wolf or the quiuehatche, under a notion that they are something more than common animals.

Secondly, during the early days of contact with the French, the Chipewyan were perhaps intimidated by the Cree who were constantly raiding them and who were well established in the fur trade. Even after the Hudson's Bay Company had established a trading post at Churchill exclusively for the Chipewyan trade, the Chipewyan continued to be harassed and intimidated by the Cree.

A third reason for the Chipewyan remaining somewhat indifferent to the fur trade during the early years may have been their relative independence and self-sufficiency as caribou hunters. Hearne (1958:51-52), in describing their way of life, recognizes their limited need for trade goods:

The real wants of these people are few, and easily supplied; a hatchet, an ice-chissel, a file, and a knife, are all that is required to enable them, with a little industry, to procure a comfortable livelihood.

Finally, the majority of the Chipewyan who had access to forest dwelling, fur-bearing animals occupied territory near Great Slave Lake, too far to trade easily at posts on Hudson Bay. This problem was never fully resolved until the traders established posts inland within Chipewyan territory in the late eighteenth century.

In the meantime, the traders at Churchill continued to encourage the Chipewyan to become involved in trapping for fur, instructing them on how to catch and dress the animals and to pursue trapping in the forests. Hudson's Bay Company records for Fort Churchill in 1721 (Gillespie 1975:369) indicate that the Chipewyan were being encouraged to go trapping "into ye Woods up on ye Countrey & not to keep by ye side & in ye barren plaines." However, for the most part, the Northern Indians did not have access to the woodlands. Hearne (1958:115) recognizes the difficulty for the Northern Indians in that "being...at war with the Southern Indians, they are prevented from penetrating far enough backwards to meet with many animals of the furr kind."

The account of first contact indicates that the various groups of Chipewyan had clear identity structures that were maintained by group membership, territoriality, ecological adaptation, as well as by their relationships with neighboring Indian groups and an emerging interdependency with the Whites.

The bi-directional nature of dependencies between Indians and Whites can be traced back to the fall of 1715 when the trade ship from England failed to arrive at York Fort, and post supplies became depleted. Local Indians were engaged to hunt for the post. From that time onward, as noted by Yerbury (1986:23), local Indians played a role as provisioners for the trading posts, and that role was to

expand over the years with Indians engaged in a number of positions necessary for the efficient operation of trading posts. Chipewyan were first employed by the Hudson's Bay Company in the spring of 1723 when two men were engaged to hunt geese for the post larder at Churchill thereby becoming the first of a Chipewyan homeguard within a local trade area (Yerbury 1986:31-32).

The dependence of Indians on Europeans also increased over time, especially during periods of shortage when incoming Indians found themselves in severe want or when Indians became sick as was often the case when they came into contact with Europeans and their contagious diseases. These dependencies mark the earliest contact experience for the Chipewyan with the traders from whom they often had to secure aid on arrival at the coast. Such was the case for Thanadelthur and those western Chipewyan who accompanied her to York Fort in 1716. According to Governor Knight (Johnson 1952:44):

...they had a most Misserable fatigue in doing of it and have undergon a Great deal of Hardships both for hunger and cold and hard travelling.

From that time on the impact of war, displacement, and epidemics were factors in a growing dependency by Indians on Whites, and as trade and trader moved inland, periods of hardship increased the dependency cycle.

As trade expanded inland from Churchill, the western

Chipewyan bands increased their role as middlemen in the fur trade (Helm, Rogers, and Smith 1981:148), acquiring furs from neighboring Yellowknife and Dogrib Indians, and transporting these to Churchill. This role suited the Chipewyan since their territory produced few furs (Hearne 1958:135-136; Glover 1962:115) while the Yellowknife and Dogrib had greater access to fur-bearing animals within the boreal forests. However, the trade was difficult since the Chipewyan had to make the long trek to the coast to trade, and most accomplished this trip only once in every two or three years (Birket-Smith 1976:14).

By the middle of the eighteenth century the western bands of Chipewyan were increasing their competition with Cree middlemen for the inland trade, and were making inroads amongst the Slavey, Beaver, Hare, and other Athabaskan groups within the trade territory of the Athabasca Cree southwest of Great Slave Lake (Gillespie 1975:368-385). This intrusion by the western Chipewyan into Cree territory created conflicts between neighboring groups and in 1762 the Chief Factor at Fort Churchill, F. Jacobs, was informed by Indians from the interior that:

the leader of the Athup:piss:Caw Indians  
is gone with his whole Gang to Warr; Also  
that the Leader of the Beaver River Indians  
(Cree infra) with Som of his Tribe has Killd  
a great many of Our farthest Northern Indians,  
therefore are ashamed & afraid to Come here  
(Gillespie 1975:373)

Hostilities between the Cree and various Athabaskan groups in the 1760's resulted in the displacement of Hare, Dogrib, Slave, Sekani, and Beaver Indian populations as recorded in the journals of the North West Company explorers and traders out of Montreal including Sir Alexander Mackenzie (Lamb 1970:174, 238), his nephew Alexander McKenzie (1805), Willard-Ferdinand Wentzel (Masson 1960:85), Simon Fraser (Lamb 1960:178), Roderic McKenzie (Masson 1960:68), and Daniel Harmon (Lamb 1957:114) (Yerbury 1980:23; 1986:43). The Cree maintained their position as middlemen in the fur trade until the mid 1770's when the North West Company established trading posts in the Upper Churchill River and Peace River country.

The disruptions of protracted warfare along with the increasing occurrences of epidemic diseases plagued Indian populations throughout the region from the 1760's to the 1780's. The introduction of European diseases, for which the Indians had no natural immunity, created havoc and resulted in depopulation over wide areas. The most devastating of these diseases were influenza and smallpox. Hearne (1934:200) describes the effect of the 1780-1781 smallpox epidemic that swept through the western Canadian subarctic:

Since this Journal was written (1769-72), the Northern Indians, by annually visiting their Southern friends, the Athapuscaow Indians, have contracted the small-pox, which has carried off nine-tenths of them, and particularly those people who composed the trade at

Churchill Factory, The few survivors follow the example of their Southern neighbours, and all trade with the Canadians, who are settled in the heart of the Athapuscaow country.

The estimates of Chipewyan mortality as made by Hearne may be excessive since the Chipewyan remained numerous enough to rapidly move into territory vacated by the Cree. James Smith (1975:427) suggests that the spread of disease among the Chipewyan may have been limited due to the scattered isolation of local bands and the Chipewyan habit of destroying all of a dead person's possessions and the immediate removal by the band from the place where a person had died.

Mortality for the Cree from the epidemic was also high and apparently more devastating since much of the southern territory was subsequently abandoned by them, including that along the Fond-du-Lac River and the Upper Churchill River Basin. David Thompson (1916:109) estimated that more than one-half of the population of the Cree had succumbed to the plague, while John McDonnell (1889:227) believed that: "...owing to their wars with their neighbours, the smallpox of 1780-81 and other misfortunes, the third of the nation does not now remain" (Gillespie 1975:375).

The effects of war, disease, and the fur trade throughout the eighteenth century had resulted in the relocation of many regional Indian populations, and brought about changes in their relationships and ways of life (see Helm

1980; Krech 1983). The expansion of the fur trade inland in the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the growing influence of the Chipewyan as middlemen in the trade to other Athabaskan groups, and the starvation and disease that accompanied the period all combined to encourage Chipewyan movement south into the full boreal forest and into direct contact with the Euro-Canadians. These actions and interactions usher in the historic period for the Chipewyan Indians of the western Canadian subarctic.

#### Chipewyan History

During the fourth quarter of the eighteenth century the western bands of Chipewyan moved south from Great Slave Lake into the country around Lake Athabasca and further south to the Upper Churchill River. Figure thirteen shows the extent of that southern migration by 1800 (Gillespie 1975:381). George Simpson (1938:355-356) gives the following account of Chipewyan southward excursions in search of fur:

The Chipewyans do not consider this part of the Country (Lake Athabasca) to be their legitimate Soil: they came in large Bands from their own barren Lands situated to the North of this Lake, extending to the Eastern extremity of Gt. Slave Lake and embracing a large Track of Country towards Churchill. The Compys. Traders at the latter Establishment, made them acquainted with the use and value of European Commodities...and those articles becoming necessary to their Comforts, they...became expert Beaver hunters, and now penetrate in search of that valuable animal into the Cree and Beaver Indian hunting Grounds, making a circuit easterly by

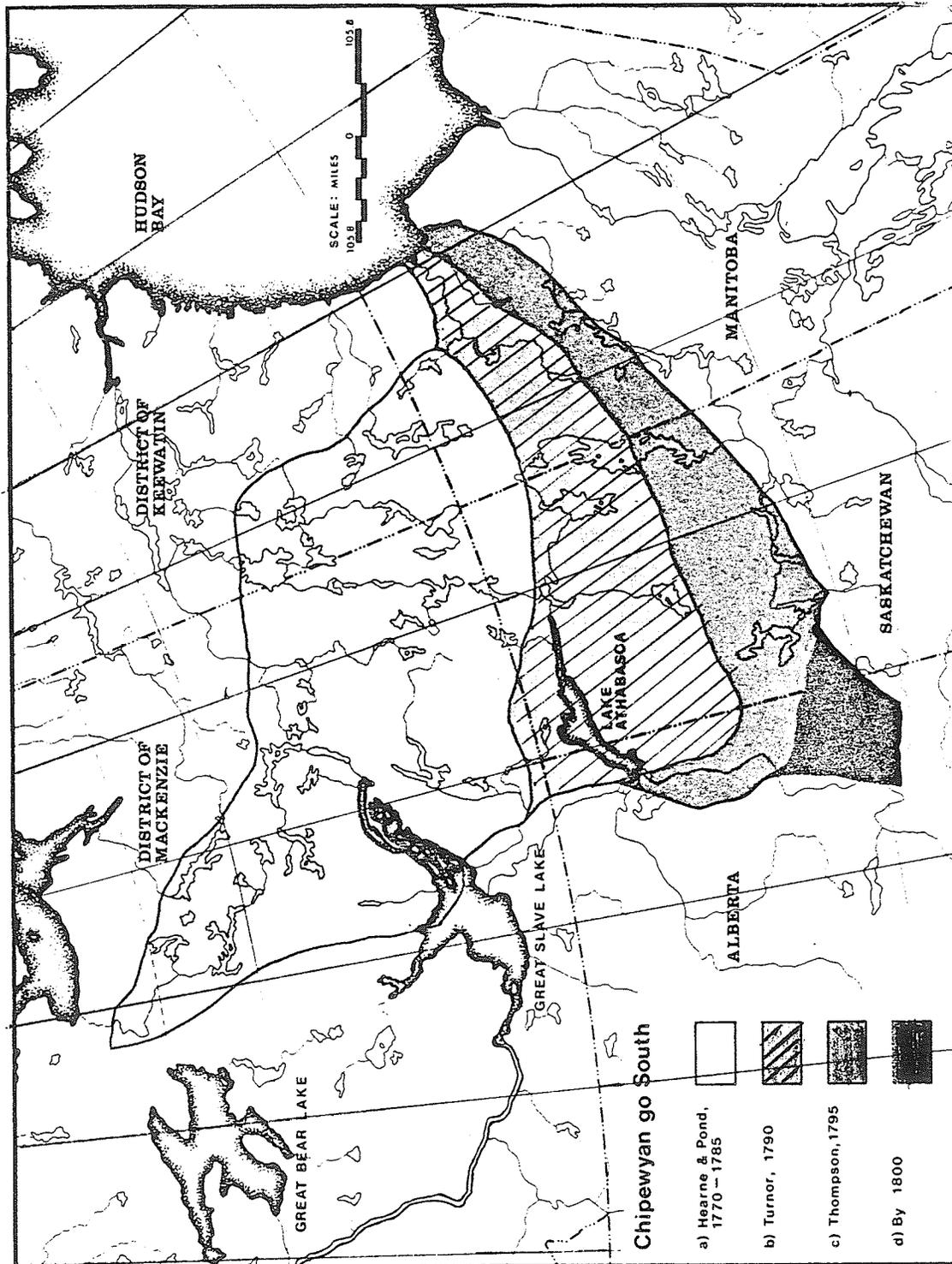


Figure 13. Chipewyan Migrations 1770-1800.

Carribeaus Lake; to the South by Isle a la Crosse; and Westerly to the Banks of Peace River (Wright 1981:92),

The reference here to 'Carribeaus Lake' is likely Reindeer Lake in northeast Saskatchewan as no other significant body of water north of Ile-a-la-Crosse by that name exists. The description of a hunting circuit followed by western bands of Chipewyan Indians in the late eighteenth century supports similar descriptions by Jarvenpa and Brumbach (1984) in their analysis of nomadic hunting patterns of eastern Chipewyan bands in the nineteenth century. A crucial point is that both western and eastern Chipewyan bands that migrated south into the full boreal forest centered their seasonal nomadic cycles on the trading posts at Ile-a-la-Crosse after 1790.

Early incursions into Cree territory were short-term trapping and trading expeditions. Chipewyan from the Lake Athabasca region traded with the Frobisher brothers at Ile-a-la-Crosse for the first time in 1775, and again in 1777 (Innis 1962:152), and were also reported at the same place in 1776 by Alexander Henry (1969:329). He writes that two groups had come in together "for mutual defence, against the Christinaux (Cree), of whom they were in continual dread. They were not at war with that nation, but subject to be pillaged by its bands" (Gillespie 1975:374).

The North West Company trader and explorer, Peter Pond, in his travels between the Upper Churchill River and Lake

Athabasca during the years 1778 to 1784, encountered and traded with Chipewyan but considered them as occupying territory north of Lake Athabasca. Pond's map of 1785 (figure five) indicates that the 'Otchipiweons' were located north and east of Lake Athabasca (Araubaska) in the transitional forest-tundra zone north of the Stone (Fond-du-Lac) River, and that the country south of Lake Athabasca to the Churchill River was home to the 'Araubaska Indians' (Athabasca Cree), and south of them were the 'Beaver River Indians', also Cree.

Chipewyan movement south appears to have occurred soon after. Philip Turnor, a Hudson's Bay Company surveyor travelling in the region from 1790 to 1792, notes that the Chipewyan occupied lands east and south of Lake Athabasca to the Churchill River and that they remained unfamiliar with much of the country being recent occupants (Gillespie 1975:377) (see Turnor 1934). Turnor's map of 1790 (figure fourteen) indicates that the Northern Indians (Chepawya) were to be found at the time north of the Churchill River, and the Cree (Nehethaway) were to the south of the Churchill River in 'Southern Indian Country'. Within about a ten year period, from 1780 to 1790, the Chipewyan had penetrated south into former Cree territory as far as the Churchill River.

While movement of Chipewyan into the Upper Churchill River Basin was rapid, occupation by early immigrants was

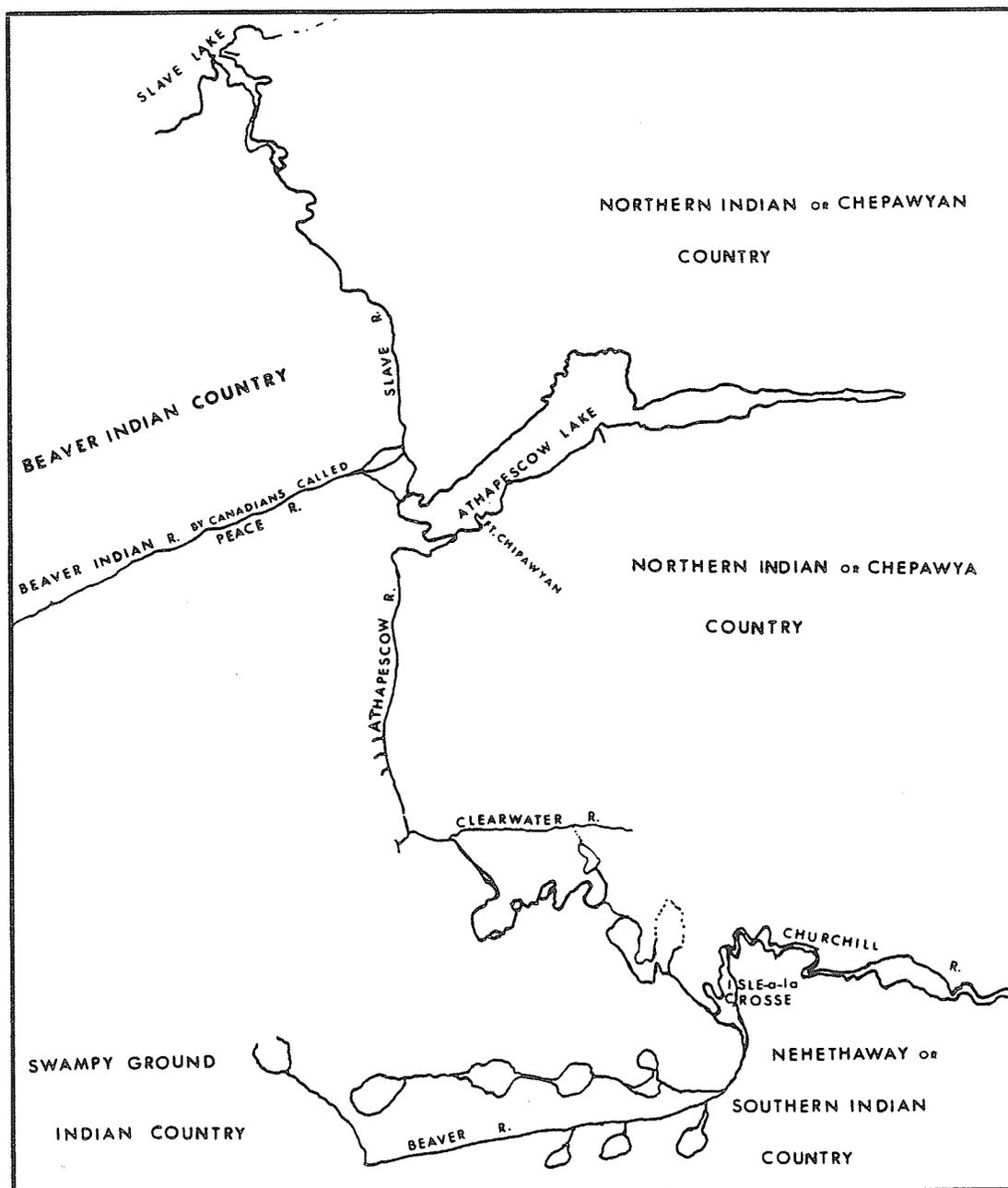


Figure 14. Philip Turnor's Map of 1790 (modified).  
 Source: Gillespie 1975:378

often temporary. William McGillivray (1809:15-16), writing on the trade of the North West Company, describes the early immigration by Chipewyan to the Upper Churchill River in the following manner:

The countries thro which it (Churchill R.) runs from the head of the Beaver River and including all its other head branches to its mouth, are inhabited by the Knisteneaux (Cree)...Within these thirty years however the Chepwyen tribes have emmigrated in considerable numbers from Athabasca and the barren lands...to the banks of the Missinippi (Churchill R.), finding the Country more suited to their purposes....It is not so easy to ascertain the number of this tribe who reside on the banks of the Missinippi as they are continually changing their ground between this and their own country (Gillespie 1975:375).

McGillivray indicates that two 'Chipwyen tribes' had moved south to the Churchill River, those from 'Athabasca' Lake and those from 'the barren lands'. The migration and settlement patterns of these two groups are traced more fully below as separate movements by different Indian bands.

The inland fur trade expanded throughout the latter part of the eighteenth century and competition for furs increased both between Indian groups and between trading companies. The North West Company established a trading post on Great Slave Lake in 1786, and on Lake Athabasca in 1788. By 1790 they had trading posts on the Churchill River. The Canadians from Montreal had thereby acquired the trade that had previously gone to Hudson Bay, forcing the Hudson's Bay Company to also move inland. Between 1780

and 1800 the Hudson's Bay Company had built trading posts at Ile-a-la-Crosse, Green Lake, La Ronge, Frog Portage, Stanley House (Stanley Mission), Buffalo Lakes House (Buffalo Narrows), Pine House, Pelican Narrows, Bedford House, and South Reindeer Lake (McConnell and Turner 1969: 17). Figure fifteen (Helm, Rogers, and Smith 1981:147) indicates fur trading posts held for four or more years by the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company prior to their amalgamation in 1821.

The proliferation of inland trading posts after 1780, and the epidemic of smallpox that accompanied their spread, opened up the country for Chipewyan immigration. The bands of Chipewyan that moved south into the region between Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca came to be known as Athapaskan or 'dwellers among the quaking aspen' (Kkpest'aylekke ottine). This includes the people found along the Slave River who were distinguished by Petitot (1891:363) as 'they (who) dwell on the wide river' (Des-nedhe-kke-nade) (Smith 1981:271).

Those Chipewyan who came south from Lake Athabasca to the Upper Churchill River came to be known as 'those who dwell at the head of the Lakes', or 'dwellers at the top of the head (of the ice giant)' (see Petitot 1891:363) and were collectively referred to as Thi-lan-ottine. Petitot (1876:xx) refers to the Thi-lan-ottine as the Chipewyan "proprement dit" or Chipewyan proper, believing they had,

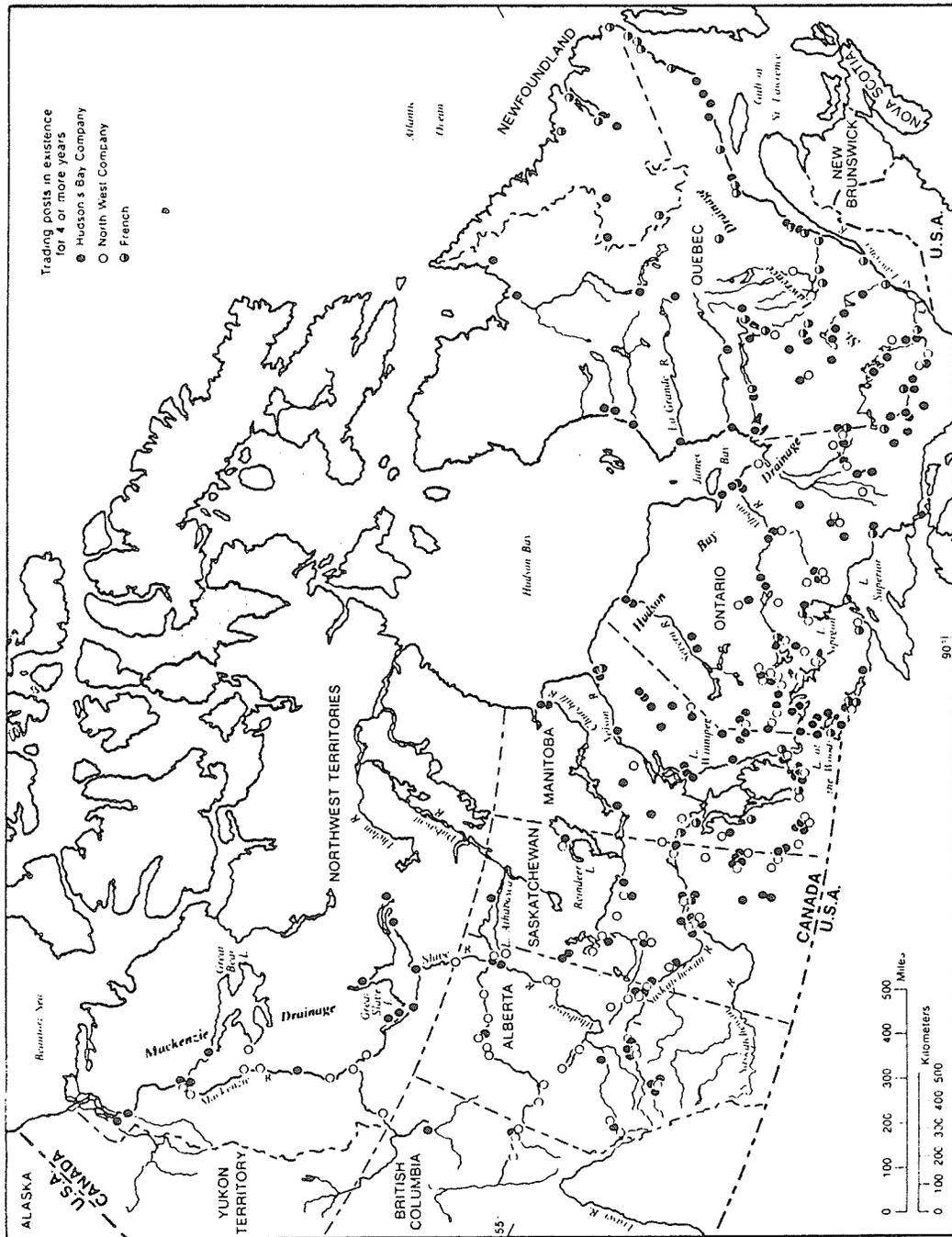


Figure 15. Fur Trading Posts before 1821.

according to local legend, originated in the Peace River district and that other northern and eastern groups were recent migrants from that area. However, Smith (1975; 1976a) notes that there is no archeological evidence to support this interpretation. Today, people at Buffalo River are not familiar with the term Thi-lan-ottine. Rather they call themselves Echetri-desi-che (Buffalo River People).

At the time that western Chipewyan bands were moving south from Great Slave Lake into the Lake Athabasca and Upper Churchill River districts, other more easterly bands of Chipewyan Indians near Hudson Bay were moving south and west into former Cree territory in and around Wollaston and Reindeer Lakes in northeastern Saskatchewan. David Thompson (1962:126) describes how this movement took place, first as initial hunting intrusions on former Cree lands by Chipewyan bands from the northeast:

...their lands, which they claim as their own country; and to which no other people have a right, are those eastward of the Rein Deer's and Manito (Wollaston) Lakes to Churchill Factory and northward along the interior of the coast; all other lands they hunt on belonged to the Nahathaways (Cree), who have returned to the Southward (Wright 1981:92).

The eastern Chipewyan who moved into former Cree territory around Wollaston and Reindeer Lakes came to be known as 'the people of the south' (Nunarna-dene) (Smith 1975:434).

Other Chipewyan bands took over territory along the Fond-du-Lac River northwest of Wollaston Lake. This immigration likely took place after the Cree had abandoned that part of the country following the smallpox epidemic of 1780-1781. David Thompson (1962:115) refers to these movements in the following:

...the Cree "made offerings to" the country around Manitou Falls on the Fond du Lac River between Lake Athabasca and Wollaston Lake at approximately 59° north latitude and 104°28' west longitude, while they "possessed" it, but "they have retired to milder climates; and the Chepawyans have taken their place" (Wright 1981:92).

The Chipewyan who came to occupy that country along the Fond-du-Lac River as far west as Stony Rapids came to be known as 'people of the west' (Yodai-dene), and those who traded at the North West Company and Hudson's Bay Company posts at Pine Channel at the east end of Lake Athabasca after 1788 are known as 'people of the pine house' (Ganikwe-dene) (Smith 1975:434-435).

Those Chipewyan who remained in the east near Hudson Bay are known as 'people of the rising sun' (Sayise-dene) or 'dwellers at Stone Fort' (Fort Churchill) (The-ye-Ottine) (Smith 1981:271).

All of these Chipewyan bands are collectively known as Caribou-Eater Chipewyan (Ethen-eldeli). The term 'Caribou-Eaters', according to John Cooper and J. M. Penard (1929) was used by other Athabaskan groups for Dene people who originally occupied the territory west of Hudson Bay

"...to the north of Lake Athabaska and Cree Lake around Lac Caribou (Reindeer Lake) and Lac La Hache as far as the territories of the Yellowknives of the Coppermine" (Cooper and Penard 1978:76). James Smith (1975:391) notes that George Simpson (1938:370-371) used the term "caribou-eater" as early as 1821 for those Chipewyan who remained in the forest-tundra margin, and who were peripheral to the fur trade.

During the late eighteenth century some of the Caribou-Eater bands moved south of Reindeer Lake (Jarvenpa 1980). Smith (1975) links the southward movement of eastern bands of Caribou-Eater Chipewyan to the seasonal migratory habits of barren-ground caribou, basing his conclusions on recent information on the Kaminuriak herd gathered by the Canadian Wildlife Service, and on ethnohistorical research. These people remained seasonally nomadic until the late nineteenth century, exploiting a territory from Cree Lake in the north to Dore Lake in the south, and centering their trading activities at Ile-a-la-Crosse (Jarvenpa 1980; Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984). These people came to be known as the 'Aspen House' or 'Poplar House people' (Kesye-hot'inne) due to their growing dependence on and increasing association with the trading posts at Ile-a-la-Crosse. Jarvenpa (1980: 44) explains that:

The prefix kesye, which translates as 'poplar house' or 'headquarters', is

also the Chipewyan designation for the settlement of Ile a la Crosse which the people explain was their primary trading store or 'headquarters' until the early 1900's.

The Kesye-hot'inne are recognized by Penard (1929) and by Jarvenpa (1980) as being descended from Caribou-Eater Chipewyan who occupied the taiga north of the Seal River in earlier times.

The Kesye-hot'inne continue to interact with other Caribou-Eater Chipewyan further north who they call 'Hotel-adi' (literally 'northerners'), maintaining close ties with them through marriage. Sharp (1975:73) recognizes the continued close relationship between these bands "...in recent intermarriage, in close kinship ties between communities such as Patuanak and Black Lake, and in the relative ease with which individual Chipewyan shift regional identities." In contrast, the people living west of Ile-a-la-Crosse, including the Echetri-desi-che of Buffalo River, have only recently become acquainted with the more northerly Caribou-Eater bands and acknowledge no kinship affiliation with them.

The Kesye-hot'inne, having moved south and west of the Wollaston and Reindeer Lakes in the late eighteenth century, remained seasonally mobile for a hundred years, gradually integrating trapping with the caribou hunt, and centering their trade at Ile-a-la-Crosse (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984). By the 1890's they were occupying a number of seasonal hunt-

ing camps along the Churchill River north and east of Ile-a-la-Crosse. The Hudson's Bay Company responded by establishing a network of winter outposts throughout the district, and many of these became permanent settlements including Patuanak, Dipper Lake, Primeau Lake, Knee Lake, and Cree Lake.

The western bands of Chipewyan, who had moved south of Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca during the late eighteenth century (Petitot 1891; Turnor 1934) depended initially on the wood bison that were to be found within the Upper Churchill River Basin in great numbers at the time (Pike 1892; Soper 1941). The western bands of Chipewyan were less mobile than those of the east, likely having adapted to the behavioral characteristics of the wood bison which are such that they promote territorial stability for resource users. Wood bison are browsers, forming smaller herds than the grazing plains bison (*Bison bison bison*) (Soper 1941). Being browsers, the wood bison do not overgraze their habitat, and therefore have little need to migrate. Park (1969: 60-61) observes that while some herds may move over distances of from twenty to one hundred miles, others may not move at all.

The Thi-lan-ottine of the Upper Churchill River were able to exploit wood bison in the region for the first hundred years of their occupation, and were able to integrate trapping into their relatively sedentary lifestyle.

Furthermore, the Thi-lan-ottine, unlike the more easterly Kesye-hot'inne, had been active in the fur trade prior to their arrival on Churchill River, having functioned as middlemen and trappers since the early eighteenth century. After 1790 the western bands of Chipewyan regularly traded at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and by 1890 they were frequenting outposts at Portage la Loche and Buffalo Narrows (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984:159). Winter outposts had also been supplied from Ile-a-la-Crosse as far west as Cold Lake by 1864, and the Hudson's Bay Company set up its first winter outpost at Buffalo River during the first decade of the twentieth century although traders had been 'tripping' or 'camp trading' by visiting trappers at their winter trapping camps for some years previous (personal communication, Dillon 1987). The people at Buffalo River had direct access to trade since 1890 at two locations on Big Buffalo Lake, at Fort Point and Bull's House which were transshipment points for goods being transported by boat from Buffalo Narrows to Portage la Loche (personal communication, Dillon 1987).

Western Chipewyan eventually settled along the Upper Churchill River system at Portage la Loche, Turnor Lake, Buffalo River, Cold Lake, and Lac la Biche.

The ethnohistorical and ethnoecological distinctions between the eastern and western bands of Chipewyan of the Upper Churchill River are supported by linguistic differences as noted by Carter (1975) who has determined a dialect

division between eastern and western groups. The people at Buffalo River, who are coming into increasing contact with Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin, also note a dialect difference in that: "we can understand them, but they speak differently than we do" (personal communication, Dillon 1987).

### Conclusion

The ethnohistorical account of the Chipewyan indicates an early awareness by Indian people of ethno-distinctions and ethno-affiliations within Indian society. From the earliest recorded history Northern Athabaskans expressed their collective identity as hunters in a western Canadian subarctic environment and distinguished themselves from all others as 'Dene'. Ethno-distinctions between regional and local groups were also based on linguistic and territorial divisions and different adaptive patterns and ecological relationships. The folk heroine of the western Chipewyan, Thanadelthur, indicates this awareness by identifying several Indian nations that are close to and distant from her people, stating that some are closely affiliated as friends sharing common identity features and intermarrying, while others are separated by distance, language, and custom. The name of each nation is a further indication of distinct identity as each name reflects a particular ecological relationship or territorial integrity. Within nations of Indians are regional and local populations who defined

their ethnic boundaries in accordance with the social and ecological boundaries of the regional population to which they are attached. Prehistoric and historic Indian people thereby recognized their identity structure within larger Indian collectives, and sub-groups were known by a set of identity features that set groups off one from another.

Ethno-distinctions between Indian populations were also made by Europeans during the earliest time of contact, and relationships between Europeans and Indians often went to strengthen identity divisions between Indian groups.

European traders were aware of differences between Chipewyan populations from the outset, and distinguished between eastern and western branches of Chipewyan according to their territory, proximity to other Northern Athabaskans, and their relative access to fur-bearing animals of value to the trade.

Eastern bands of Chipewyan were found within the forest and tundra transition zone near Hudson Bay while western bands lived in the taiga in the vicinity of Great Slave Lake. While eastern bands were seasonally nomadic, exploiting the migrating herds of barren-ground caribou and fish runs, the western bands were likely more sedentary, hunting both the caribou and wood bison found within their home territory.

Eastern bands of Chipewyan were also distinguished by their relative isolation. They were physically isolated from other groups by a vast expanse of tundra that extended

from Hudson Bay to the Mackenzie valley. They were ecologically isolated by their great dependence on barren-ground caribou. They were also socially isolated by Inuit to the north and hostile Cree to the south which kept them hemmed in along the forest-tundra margin.

Western bands of Chipewyan, on the other hand, lived in close proximity to other Northern Athabaskan groups and were closely allied with many of their neighbors, especially the Yellowknives who Thanadelthur described as 'very close friends'. The western bands enjoyed a freedom of movement, not only between forest and tundra ecozones, but also across ethnic boundaries to hunt, trap, and engage in trade within neighboring territories. They were readily drawn into the fur trade with the Europeans, functioning as middlemen, and extending the trade in furs to distant inland groups.

The historic spread of inland trading posts along with the spread of epidemic disease created a regional shift in Indian populations which are traced ethnohistorically as migrations of identifiable regional groups and local bands. Western Chipewyan migrated south to the Upper Churchill River, eventually settling west of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Eastern bands of Chipewyan moved into the forests of the Athabasca Basin, with some eastern bands eventually migrating further south to the Churchill River to finally settle the country east of Ile-a-la-Crosse. Ethnic distinctions have been

retained for western and eastern bands of Chipewyan to the present as evidenced by territoriality, dialect divisions, regional and local group names, and adaptive strategies to different ecological zones. These distinctions fade only where the two populations merge along the Churchill River below and above Ile-a-la-Crosse.

Ethnic awareness, those objective criteria of identity, underwent change as regional populations incorporated new aspects of identity into traditional identity structures. Ethnic consciousness between eastern and western Chipewyan populations also changed as different groups responded in different ways to historic experiences as ethno-adaptations.

In the following chapters differences in ethno-expressions for Caribou-Eater and Buffalo River people will be examined with reference to social, economic, and spiritual identity change in order to determine the relationships between ethnicity and adaptation, between social identity and change.

## CHAPTER FIVE

## SOCIAL IDENTITY

Introduction

The social identity of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan has undergone change as individual populations of Indian people responded to new conditions throughout their protohistoric and historic experiences. Social identity change has taken place through organizational changes in the social structure of Chipewyan society.

The structures of a society, as noted by Raymond Firth (1963), are formed by the ideal patterns of behavior through an established tradition of social roles and interpersonal relationships. Firth recognizes that social continuity is expressed in the social structure as: "the sets of relations which make for firmness of expectations, for validation of past experiences in terms of similar experiences in the future" (Kaplan and Manners 1972:103). Included in the structural patterns that guide social roles and interpersonal relations are patterns of kinship, residence, and activity-group formation.

Social structure is, however, a static concept that by itself fails to account for social change. The structure of a society is subject to a multitude of dynamic influences which affect social roles and interpersonal relationships. Firth (1963) accounts for change in the social structure through what he terms social organization: "the systematic

ordering of social relations by acts of choice and decision" (Kaplan and Manners 1972:103) that produce what Rushforth (1986:244) calls "patterns for behaviour",

The structural features of a society express continuity of identity for a group of people while the organizational features of a society account for changing circumstance in individual social roles and interpersonal relations as determined by individual decision and action. The structural features of a society provide for a past orientation to ethnicity by which a people are seen to define themselves and their group, while the organizational features of a society support a present orientation by which a people mold and direct their ethnic consciousness. The social structural and social organizational features of a society may thereby reflect individual and group patterns of social identity and changes in interpersonal relations may be interpreted as changes in ethnicity.

The social structure of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan, including patterns of kinship, residence, and work-group formation, indicate features of continuity with past structures and of change in their conditions of life.

#### Athabaskan Social Organization

Past studies into the social identity of Athabaskan Indians of the Canadian subarctic have stressed normative patterns of kinship and kin-based organizational adjustments to specific ecological zones in which marriage, residence

patterns, and activity-group formation are considered a function of resource exploitation strategy (Helm 1965; Sharp 1977; Rushforth 1986). For some (Chang 1962) the social structural features for prehistoric and historic populations of Northern Athabaskans, including Chipewyan, Slavey, Dogrib, and Yellowknife, are thought to have lacked clans or any clearly defined descent group. Rather kinship was thought to be reckoned bilaterally in which the individual traces his or her descent equally through the mother's and father's line (Helm 1965). Bilateral descent was seen to permit individual nuclear families the organizational choice of associating with a broad range of localized kinship groups or to function as independent units during times when resource availability favored the single hunter.

Patterns of social organization for Dogrib Indians have been described by Helm (1968) as consisting of socio-territorial groups whose membership was based on bilaterally related conjugal pairs and their dependents. Hearne (1934) refers to this basic organizational unit as 'the tent' consisting of two hunters and their dependents (Smith 1975:431). Socio-territorial groups expanded and contracted in order to accommodate people to the seasonality and unpredictability of the hunt. Seasonally coalesced large territorial grouping have been termed 'macrocosmic units' (Honigmann 1946:64) or 'regional bands' (Helm 1968:118) that: "banded together as a compact residence group" to function as 'task groups'

which are short-term affiliations of people coming together for the purpose of carrying out specific economic activities. Regional bands were made up of smaller groupings of related nuclear families that together comprised a resident group. These kin-related resident groups have been termed 'micro-cosmic units' (Honigmann 1946:64) or 'local bands' (Helm 1968:118). Local band resident patterns were such that individuals were free to change band affiliation according to inclination or as conditions warranted. June Helm (1981:297) notes for the Dogrib that: "residential movement from one group to another followed ties by blood or marriage."

Band-affiliated grouping with bilateral and bilocal patterns exist in modern times as the basis for community organization for Dogrib (Helm 1981:297) and for Caribou-Eater Chipewyan (Sharp 1977:37). For the Caribou-Eater bands (Ethen-eldeli) of the Athabasca Basin the bilateral kindred, consisting of 'blood' relatives or consanguineal kin, constitute what Smith (1975:442) refers to as the 'minimal group: "upon which the individual has absolute rights of cooperation and sharing." Affinal relationships, those kinsmen related by marriage, extend across both local settlements and regional populations to sustain what Smith (1975) calls the 'maximal group'. The terms 'minimal' and 'maximal' group correspond to Helm's 'local' and 'regional' bands and Honigmann's 'micro' and 'macro' units. Smith (1975:442-443) describes the function of the bilateral-bilocal patterns as

they existed in the past among Caribou-Eater Chipewyan in the following manner:

In the context of a largely nomadic life dictated by the uncertainties of the caribou population, the kindreds provided the basis of small hunting, and later, trapping groups that necessarily wandered over vast areas, and through the wide-spread network of kin relations could almost invariably rely upon encountering others with whom they could depend for cooperation or assistance, and with whom they could affiliate either temporarily or permanently.

Smith (1975:438-439) indicates that band fluidity continued into the twentieth century as a characteristic of the region and can be attributed to the lack of government-imposed territoriality. Today, the practice of band inter-marriage and shifting residence continues for the people in the Athabasca Basin, integrating members of the Lac la Hache Band at Wollaston Lake with members of the Stony Rapids Band at Black Lake and people residing at Lac Brochet in north-western Manitoba. These inter-band ties ensure economic reciprocity, especially in the distribution of caribou meat, and provide mutual support for people from different communities who work together at regional uranium mines.

The possible existence of bilateral and bilocal patterns of kinship for aboriginal subarctic Indians has recently been challenged. Research into descent and residence patterns for high latitude foraging societies suggests that matrilineal descent and matrilocal residence occurred most frequently in those societies where males carried out

most of the hunting and fishing activities. According to Martin (1974) matrilineal-matrilocal patterns of social organization for subarctic foragers may have functioned to distribute related males among several regional groups thereby expanding alliances within resource districts. This strategy would have maximized inter-group cooperation and could have produced a high level of regional economic stability through regional distribution of resources between kin-related bands. Moreover, male exogamy within a socio-territorial grouping would have enhanced socio-political stability in that male-held power and authority positions would have been distributed non-locally. Economic and political stability would have allowed for optimal success in seasonal resource exploitation in terms of fish runs and barren-ground caribou migrations, and may have provided a structure for inter-group socialization, ritual, and work.

Charles Bishop and Shepard Krech (1980) apply the term 'matriorganization' to describe possible social patterns for Northern Athabaskans of earlier times. Matriorganization is characterized by occasional matrilineal descent in which descent is traced through the female line, and matrilocal residence whereby post-marital residence is with the wife's mother's residence group (Krech 1978; Bishop and Krech 1980). Jenness (1956:24) suggests possible existence of early matriorganization for Caribou-Eater Chipewyan from early observa-

tions of matrilocal or uxorilocal post-marital residence in which the newly married couple stayed in the wife's mother's household or with the resident group of the wife's female relatives until a child was born (see also Helm 1965:371).

Prehistoric and early historic existence of matrilineal patterns of social organization with matrilocal residence for Caribou-Eater Chipewyan may presume an abundant and predictable resource base. However, as noted by Krech (1978: 725) matrilineal-matrilocal features may have adaptive value under conditions of cyclical resource failure since male linkages between local bands could have functioned as redistributive networks to overcome any failure in animal or fish migrations in any one area. Today, male outmarriage continues to provide those necessary linkages between regional bands of Caribou-Eater Chipewyan in northern Saskatchewan.

Matriorganization may also have been the basis for social patterning for prehistoric and protohistoric Chipewyan living further to the west as there is evidence that the western bands of Thi-lan-ottine continued to follow matrilineal and matrilocal patterns of social organization even after they had moved south and settled along the Upper Churchill River. Kinship terms derived from Chipewyan near Cold Lake in Alberta indicate a preference for patrilateral cross-cousin marriage as recent as the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Smith 1975:441) (see Petitot 1876b; Legoff 1889; Curtis 1928; Penard 1938).

By the early twentieth century patrilateral cross-cousin marriage was in general decline among the Chipewyan. This may have been due to the influence of Christian missionaries who discouraged the practice. More likely it was a consequence of reduced mobility by the Chipewyan for whom ecological flexibility was no longer a strong influence in organizational choices. Today marriage at Buffalo River is bilateral. Yet, unrestricted cousin marriage is recent as it is considered improper conduct by some of the older people. One woman at Dillon expressed her awareness of social proscriptions on parallel cousin marriage. This may indicate that cross-cousin marriage was preferred in earlier times. She said:

When I was young we could not marry those  
(parallel) cousins because they were like  
brothers. Now the young people are not told  
who they cannot go with.

Kinship terms used today at Buffalo River seem to demonstrate bilateral descent as there is no terminological distinction made between cross and parallel cousins (see figure sixteen). Also no terminological distinction is made between patrilateral and matrilateral uncles and aunts. There is, however, a difference in term of address for stepmother and stepfather. One's stepmother is given the same term as is one's mother's sister indicating bifurcate merging. Hallowell (1937:109) and Eggan (1955:532) note a similar practice by Northern Algonquians, and recognize that this may denote previous matrilineality.

<u>Referents</u>	<u>Fort Chipewyan and Cold Lake c1900</u>	<u>Buffalo River 1988</u>
<u>First Ascending Generation:</u>		
Fa	seta	sáθa
FaBr	setaze	sené
FaSi	setsu	sánkla
Mo	ene	ne
MoBr	se'e	sene
MoSi	sak'ie	sánkla
Step Fa	setaze	sánθléne
Step Mo	enaze	sánkla
<u>Ego's Generation:</u>		
OlBr	sonave	siyise
YoBr	secele	siyise
OlSi	sare	silyné
YoSi	sedeze	silyné
FaSiSo (cross-cousin)	secae	seláqe
MoBrSo (cross-cousin)	secae	seláqe
FaSiDa (cross-cousin)	seve	seláqe
MoBrDa (cross-cousin)	setsunaze	seláqe
FaBrSo (parallel-cousin)	sonave	seláqe
MoSiSo (parallel-cousin)	sonave	seláqe
FaBrDa (parallel-cousin)	sare	seláqe
MoSiDa (parallel-cousin)	sare	seláqe

Figure 16. Chipewyan Kinship Terms.

Figure sixteen provides a comparison in kinship terms between Chipewyan Indians at Cold Lake (Curtis 1928) and Fort Chipewyan (Legoff 1889; 1916) (MacNeish 1960:280-281) used in the early part of the twentieth century with the Chipewyan terms used today by people at Buffalo River (personal communications, Dillon 1988). These comparisons indicate a shift during the past century away from a lineal system of descent reckoning towards a bilateral system of descent as evidenced by a change from distinctive cousin terms in the earlier period between cross and parallel

cousins to a uniformity in cousin terms of address today among the Thi-lan-ottine. Previous proscriptions on parallel cousin marriage is indicated by the use of sibling terms for parallel cousins. Today, no such restrictions on cousin marriage are expressed in the terminological system, and no such restrictions are applied in practice.

It is apparent that the shift from a unilineal to a bilateral system of social organization is recent for both the Ethen-eldeli of the Athabasca Basin and the Thi-lan-ottine of the Upper Churchill River, and is likely a reflection of ongoing change rather than a sudden response to the introduction of trade, the consequence of disease, depopulation, dislocation, resettlement, or other influences of early contact and long-term association with White people.

#### Chipewyan Marriage and Residence Patterns

While marriage practices and residence patterns for the Ethen-eldeli of the Athabasca Basin continue to integrate regional bands through a network of male relatives living uxorilocally, these patterns among the Thi-lan-ottine at Buffalo River tend towards female exogamy and patrilocal or virilocal residence whereby men, upon marriage, take up residence in the vicinity of their father's or other male relative's dwelling. The pattern of patrilocal and virilocal residence clusters at Buffalo River is a recent occurrence that has emerged over the past quarter century with the development of a centrally planned community. Previously,

housing at Buffalo River was, for the most part, dispersed and residence patterns were often neolocal in which a man, upon marriage, took up residence in an independent situation apart from both his own and his wife's relatives, or was uxorilocal, especially when male hunting partnerships were formed out of brother-in-law relationships. At that time work-group formation for hunting and trapping was a major consideration in establishing residence clusters. While work-group or brother-in-law relationships remain a motive for some residence location, virilocal residence clusters are a common feature today at Buffalo River. Virilocal patterns of residence provide security for women and children, and for the elderly while husbands and fathers are away from home hunting and trapping or engaged in off-reserve wage employment. The shift from neolocal and uxorilocal residence towards virilocal clusters reflects a change in economic activity and work-group formation during a period of decline in family oriented bush-life, increasing off-reserve wage employment, and reduced individual security due to the abuse of alcohol and drugs and increased vandalism within the community which demands greater mutual protection.

Marriage practice at Buffalo River tend towards female exogamy as males solidify their residence priorities and females broaden their opportunities through education and other off-reserve activities. Off-reserve exposure for people at Buffalo River has increased over the past decade

with the extention of radio and television services into the area and the opening of a highway into the community. Increased communication and mobility have encouraged inter-band and cross-ethnic marriage with Chipewyan and Cree women marrying into the community and increasing numbers of local women marrying off the reserve, frequently to non-Chipewyan and non-Indian men. Chipewyan at Buffalo River have married Cree in the past and Wilson (1986:239) recognizes the long association between Chipewyan and Cree as an exception among Northern Athabaskan groups.

While there is increasing mobility for Chipewyan at Buffalo River, especially for females, figure seventeen indicates much less mobility for Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin. Figure seventeen provides on and off reserve population statistics for male and female members of the Buffalo River, Fond-du-Lac, Stony Rapids, and Lac la Hache Bands. The population figures compare two years, 1979 and 1986, and include all adults of the Indian bands between the ages of 15 and 64 years. For Buffalo River there is a clear indication of high female outmigration with 27.5 percent of adult female band members living off the reserve as compared to eight percent of males living off the reserve in 1986. The trend to off reserve residence for females at Buffalo River has increased from 23.8 percent in 1979 to 27.5 percent in 1986. A high rate of off reserve residence for females suggests a high rate of female exogamy for the

## Adult Sex-based Demographics 1979 and 1986

sex	<u>1979</u>			<u>1986</u>		
	<u>on</u> <u>reserve</u>	<u>off</u> <u>reserve</u>	<u>mobility</u> <u>percent</u>	<u>on</u> <u>reserve</u>	<u>off</u> <u>reserve</u>	<u>mobility</u> <u>percent</u>
<u>Buffalo River Indian Band</u>						
M	88	12	12.0	136	12	8.0
F	83	26	23.8	100	38	27.5
<u>Fond-du-Lac Indian Band</u>						
M	113	66	36.8	220	117	34.7
F	105	59	35.9	234	102	30.4
<u>Stony Rapids Indian Band</u>						
M	160	0	0.0	211	7	3.2
F	132	2	1.0	201	14	6.5
<u>Lac la Hache Indian Band</u>						
M	93	4	4.1	112	7	5.8
F	78	5	6.0	113	10	8.1

Figure 17.

Source: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada.

band. The increase in female outmigration has coincided with the development of a road into the community in 1982 which is likely one contributing factor in greater female mobility, opportunity, and outmarriage.

In contrast, the population figures for the Fond-du-Lac, Stony Rapids, and Lac la Hache Indian Bands indicate a greater balance in male to female outmigration. Off reserve residence for Stony Rapids and Lac la Hache Bands is low, with a slightly greater female than male off-reserve residence. There is a much higher rate of outmigration for members of the Fond-du-Lac Band, with just under one half of the adult population, and approximately one third of the total population of the band living off the reserve. This unusually high rate of outmigration from Fond-du-Lac may be attributed to mining operations at nearby Uranium City during the years 1953 to 1982, which provided long-term and regular employment and specialty skills for members of the band. The closing of the mine and mill at Uranium City resulted in a dramatic population decline in that community from 2,479 people in 1981 to 237 people by 1986 (Province of Saskatchewan). This exodus included many members of the nearby Fond-du-Lac Indian Band who migrated south to seek new employment opportunities. However, while the outmigration of adults from Fond-du-Lac almost doubled from 1979 to 1986, the balance between male and female outmigration was retained (see figure seventeen).

### Conclusion

Changing patterns of social organization for Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan, including those based on work-group formation, residence, and marriage, are adaptive responses to changing conditions of life. New patterns of social organization are based on decisions and choices by individuals and by groups of Indian people that go towards defining their social identity and the identity change process. Different adaptive responses between local bands and regional populations are reflected as different expressions of ethnicity.

Changes in the patterns of residence and work-group formation can be traced to a shift in economic strategy as Chipewyan Indians integrate wage employment and other sources of income into a hunting and trapping way of life. These and other changes in social organization, including marriage practices, can also be attributed to new opportunities gained through enhanced communication and mobility with the outside world. Different social-organizational responses between local and regional groups reflect different ethno-historical experiences and ethno-ecological conditions as well as limitations imposed on people living in more remote circumstances.

While Caribou-Eater Chipewyan are maintaining a pattern of balanced bilocal residence, people at Buffalo River are favoring male residence clustering and increasing their

rates of female outmigration and exogamy. These tendencies at Buffalo River reflect the increased communication and mobility opportunity for female band members along with a greater need for male solidarity in the community during times of social disruption and economic change.

In more northerly communities of the Athabasca Basin, traditional patterns of social organization based on male exogamy are retained as a means of sustaining useful reciprocal relationships through integration of regional communities. These inter-community ties have socio-ecological functions related to caribou hunting and the distribution of caribou meat, for work-group and social group formation for seasonal and family-oriented bush activities, and for interpersonal support for men and women working in regional mines.

It may be expected that social patterns of organization along with social identity will continue to undergo change as Chipewyan Indians respond to new conditions and face new challenges in the future. While the patterns of change that have taken place at Buffalo River may provide some insights into future directions for change among Caribou-Eater bands, these will be of limited value since innovations in social organization take place within ethnohistoric and ecological context of local and regional groups. As such, cross-ethnic comparisons must be treated with caution due to disparate historic and contemporary conditions even within ethnic collectives where many common features of identity exist.

CHAPTER SIX  
ECONOMIC IDENTITY

Introduction

The economic strategy employed by a people is a reflection of their perception of self, their condition of living, and their way of life. The economy of Northern Athabaskan Indians has been described in historical terms as a series of adaptive stages (Helm and Damas 1963; Bishop and Ray 1976; Helm 1981; Yerbury 1986) during which the Indian economy is seen to change from a subsistence hunting and gathering economy to an increasing involvement in and dependence upon the trade in fur throughout the protohistoric and historic period. The modern era, beginning with the end of World War Two, has been referred to as the "government-industrial" or "modern government commercial" stage (Helm, Alliband, et al. 1975) when hunting and trapping give way to what James Smith (1975:395) calls "the micro-urban village" or "government-commercial" phase characterized by some as a "modern welfare society" (see Krech 1984:xi; Ray 1984:16).

In this chapter the Northern Athabaskan economy is described, not as a series of evolutionary stages changing from hunting and gathering towards a modern commercial or industrial condition, but rather in terms of continuity in economic strategy integrating new features in an adaptive manner so that people are able to retain a degree of stability in the face of change. The Northern Athabaskan economic

strategy is founded on the principle of occupational pluralism in which individual Indians and Indian bands draw on more than one sector of a mixed economy in order to make a living and meet their needs. In the case of contemporary populations of Chipewyan Indians, the present day economy integrates both traditional and modern features. In this chapter it is demonstrated that a subarctic economy that integrates the traditional with the modern is not simply a transitional economy, but rather is a long-term adaptation to a northern boreal condition with ethno-ecological implications for northern residents.

Finally, in this chapter, it will be argued that modern-day dependencies that are part of Indian economies are not recent phenomena, but rather developed out of the historical relationships between Indians and Whites.

#### Structure of the Chipewyan Economy

The economy of Northern Athabaskans may be defined as a mixed economy characterized by a high degree of seasonal mobility and occupational pluralism in which people rely on a number of income sources and are able to rapidly shift from one economic activity to another as conditions change throughout the year. Thomas Berger, in his Report of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline (1986:182), identifies four sectors for the Indian economy of the Northwest Territories; subsistence, trading of renewable resource produce, local wage employment, and industrial wage employment.

Berger's economic sectors, while insightful, do not provide a complete picture for Indian economies of the western Canadian subarctic where government transfer payments represent a part of total incomes for many people. Transfer payments are the transfer of monies from federal and provincial governments to individuals and to Indian communities in the form of social assistance, family allowance, social security, and disability benefits. Transfer payments are often the only form of regular cash income for those people who are not part of the permanent wage labor force, or who are engaged primarily in subsistence activities and commercial resource harvesting on a seasonal basis. It should be noted that the concept of transfer payments has been used by others to describe government subsidies to Indian people (see Usher 1971:101-102).

In this study the Chipewyan economy is analysed in terms of four income sectors; subsistence hunting and gathering, commercial harvesting of renewable resources, wage employment, and incomes from transfer payments. Each sector is addressed within its historical context and then is employed as a format for describing contemporary economic conditions in each of the study communities through a series of economic profiles. In this manner similarities and differences in economic activity as identity expression may be determined for Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan over space and time.

### Continuities in Economic Strategy

The prehistoric Athabaskan economy was characterized by regional hunting and gathering bands engaged in subsistence resource harvesting. Indian bands consisted of several interrelated families who were mutually supportive, coming together seasonally to fish or to hunt barren-ground caribou (Spencer, Jennings, et al. 1977). Cooperation optimized resource harvesting, and reciprocity functioned for the distribution of goods. These economic strategies combined to overcome seasonal uncertainties under conditions of periodic resource failure.

Inter-regional exchange of goods was also part of the Northern Athabaskan economic strategy. The archeological evidence shows that native copper as well as other material, including European goods, were traded between regional bands prior to direct European contact (Clark 1981:118; Asch 1986: 278).

Subsistence activities for Chipewyan Indians of the western Canadian subarctic were based on the seasonal exploitation of migrating herds of barren-ground caribou and fish runs, and these activities helped to define Chipewyan patterns of social organization, social interaction, and ecological relationships. Subsistence was not only a basis for the Chipewyan economy, but was also the foundation for Chipewyan culture, identity, and way of life.

The economy of Chipewyan Indians living in the modern

era has been described in terms of change as subsistence activities and commercial trapping decline. Smith (1975:395) attributes this decline to increasing sedentism since the Second World War:

Aboriginal patterns of subsistence were rapidly lost, and even post-contact trapping patterns are of rapidly diminishing importance. The diminished nomadism of the late developed fur trade period culminates in the increasing endogamous village.

In this statement is reflected the attitude that hunting and gathering as a way of life is over, or at least on its way out, and that subsistence activities have no place in a modern Indian economy. In a 1966 international symposium on Man the Hunter, held at the Center for Continuing Education at the University of Chicago, the opinion was that hunting as a way of life was in decline. Richard B. Lee stated that: "Finally, hunting and gathering, as a way of life, is rapidly disappearing" (Lee and DeVore 1968:vii).

Today it is increasingly being recognized that the subsistence features of a traditional hunting and gathering society are often retained as an integral part of a mixed economy, and that subsistence activities and a knowledge of resource acquisition helps to define identity and way of life. Richard Lee resurrected the hunting and gathering way of life at the Hunter-Gatherer Conference in Paris in 1978 by stating:

Hunting is real. Hunting exists and hunting and gathering economies exist and this is

to me a new fact in the modern world because twelve years ago at the Man the Hunter conference we were writing an obituary on the hunters (Asch 1982:347).

Thomas Berger (1985:55), in his Alaska Native Review Commission Report, succinctly states the case for the continued role of subsistence for people of the western subarctic: "...dependence on renewable resources continues to define village life." Berger (1985:51) outlines the nature of subarctic subsistence economies and their relation to culture, identity, and way of life:

The traditional economy is based on subsistence activities that require special skills and a complex understanding of the local environment that enables the people to live directly from the land. It also involves cultural values and attitudes: mutual respect, sharing, resourcefulness, and an understanding that is both conscious and mystical of the intricate interrelationships that link humans, animals, and the environment. To this array of activities and deeply embedded values, we attach the word 'subsistence', recognizing that no one word can adequately encompass all these related concepts.

Subsistence for subarctic Indians integrates awareness with being with world view to affirm Indian identity, even within the modern village context.

Subsistence activities continue to contribute to the economy of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan, and are increasingly being employed in the instruction and reinforcement of Indian cultural awareness and ethnic expression through both formal and informal education.

Throughout the protohistoric and historic period, the Chipewyan incorporated commercial resource harvesting and wage employment into their economic strategy, and they were introduced to transfer payments through gifts, incentives, and gratuities by the traders from the earliest time of contact. However, these early forms of income were often based on a need for mutual support between Indians and traders in which there were expectations for return.

In the following section the development of the mixed economy by Chipewyan Indians is outlined, indicating that each sector of the modern Chipewyan economy has evolved out of earlier adaptive processes, and each sector has been integrated to sustain an overall strategy of seasonality, mobility, and economic pluralism within a subarctic environment.

#### Economic Independence and Interdependence

During the protohistoric and early historic period the Chipewyan remained, for the most part, independent from the fur trade. This was likely due to the general lack of fur-bearing animals within their territory and the abundance of barren-ground caribou which supplied most of their needs. The Chipewyan may be described as belonging to the "original affluent society" of hunter-gatherers (Sahlins 1968:85-89) in which subsistence activities, even in marginal environments, provided what Richard Lee (1968:39) calls a "security of life." Early observations indicate that the Chipewyan were self sufficient. Samuel Hearne (1958:51-52), in

his travels among the Chipewyan between the years 1769 and 1772, observes that: "...the real wants of these people are few and easily supplied...to procure a comfortable livelihood." Eastern bands of Chipewyan living at Reindeer Lake in the years 1819 to 1821 were described in a similar manner by the Hudson's Bay Company trader Hugh Leslie when he wrote: "...they are somewhat careless about furs being then well clothed in Deer skins so that they consider themselves somewhat independent" (Smith 1975:430), and as late as 1825, the trader Robert McVicar describes the western Chipewyan bands found near Great Slave Lake as living a life of relative abundance and ease requiring from the Europeans only axes, knives, and files (Smith 1975:430).

The condition of relative independence continued for the Chipewyan even after they moved south to the Churchill River. For those Caribou-Eater bands that moved south of Reindeer and Cree Lakes, barren-ground caribou remained the basis of their subsistence economy until the latter part of the nineteenth century, a hundred years after their movement south. For those western bands of Chipewyan that moved south of Lake Athabasca beyond the normal range of barren-ground caribou, wood bison remained a major resource for almost a hundred years until the late nineteenth century. For both regional populations other animals were introduced into the subsistence economies as they adapted to the southern forest ecozone, the most important being the moose which continues

to be a major source of meat and hide for Chipewyan Indians of the Upper Churchill River and a secondary economic resource for Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin.

The western bands of Chipewyan gradually increased their involvement in the fur trade throughout the early historic period, first as middlemen, trading with neighboring Athabaskan groups for furs and transporting those furs across the barren lands to European traders at Hudson Bay, and later as trappers, trading their furs and hides for supplies at inland trading posts.

The degree of early involvement in the fur trade by different Chipewyan populations depended on their contact experience with trade and on their relative proximity to trading posts. Bishop and Ray (1976) employ a spacial-temporal model to indicate the variation in dependence and independence of various Indian populations to the fur trade. The temporal dimension follows the prehistoric, protohistoric and historic framework, while the spacial dimension is put in terms of direct, indirect, and induced trade activity. The level of dependence on Europeans or independence from them is determined by the proximity of Indians to trading posts. "Shortly after each post was established, it was encircled by Local, Middlemen, and Indirect Trade Areas" (Yerbury 1986: 11). For the Chipewyan of the protohistoric period, indirect and induced trade was accomplished by use of middlemen and trade Captains for promulgating the trade among

Indians distant from the trading posts on Hudson Bay. Subsistence continued to be the primary economic strategy, and trade in fur was a secondary activity. As Chipewyan became more active in the fur trade subsistence remained as a major source of food with subsistence being supported by trapping activities. Joan Townsend (1970, 1970a, 1973) for the Tanaina and Shepard Krech (1976, 1978, 1984a) for the Kutchin, indicate that a knowledge and expertise in bush living is supported by trapping, and that trapping activities are carried on in conjunction with hunting and gathering.

As Indians became more directly involved in the fur trade, or as individual bands became attached to one of a growing number of inland trading posts, the degree of dependency upon Europeans increased, especially in times of shortage, disease, or warfare. However, in the history of Indian-White relationships, dependency was often mutual, with Indians relying on traders for supplies and provisions, and the traders being often dependent upon the Indian people for food, labor, and services. The earliest indication of a need for mutual interdependence occurred in 1716 when the trade ship from Europe failed to arrive at York Fort and one-third of the Indians that had come to the coast to trade died from starvation on their return home (Yerbury 1986:23). Mutual needs between Indians and Europeans were satisfied by a growing interdependence, and from that time on shortages experienced by Indians were often overcome by distribution

of trade goods, and traders were time and again able to stave off starvation and prevent disaster by procuring meat from Indian hunters. The dependence by traders on Indian provisioners lasted throughout the historic period after trading posts were established inland. For example, Hudson's Bay Company Records indicate that:

...throughout June and July 1836, the caribou hunters in the vicinity of Martin Lake produced a considerable quantity of meat for Fort Simpson. On 9 July 1836, Jose with twenty-one followers and Little Chief, alias Tecounnebeth, brought in 544 tongues, 650 lbs. of dried meat, and thirty-five lbs. of bear meat. They had returned mainly for ammunition to enable them to continue hunting (HBC B 200/a/18, fo. 6d). Fort Liard provisioners delivered 2,480 lbs. of dried moose meat on 21 July (Yerbury 1986:121).

The practice of hiring provisioners continued into recent times (personal observations) with Hudson's Bay Company posts being supplied with fire wood, water, fish, and fresh game by local Indians on a regular basis.

From the start traders relied on Indians to function as guides, peace emissaries, interpreters, and informants, as well as providing any number of required services in and around the posts. Dependencies were also developed from earliest times of contact as features of the Indian economy through the practice of gift giving. Traders established contact and trading relationships with Indian people as a general policy by giving individuals preferential treatment, or by giving gifts. When William Stewart was dispatched

from York Fort in 1715 to make contact with western bands of Chipewyan, gift items included:

...sixty hawk bells, seventy-two knives, twenty-eight hatchets, eighteen ivory combs, twenty-seven yards of cloth, fifteen blankets, twenty-four fire steels, twenty scrapers, and several other items in quantity (Yerbury 1986:23).

Similarly, the practice of appointing trading Captains was through initial gift giving followed by continued preferential treatment in trade as long as those individuals were active in bringing in fur and in controlling the trade among their people. Through incentives, trade was expanded inland to regions beyond the direct influence of the Europeans. Gift giving and other inducements for the Indian trade established a reciprocal relationship that was based on mutual expectations for returns. Gratuities given by traders would have been distributed to others in the form of general reciprocity within and between Indian bands as this was the dominant mode of internal exchange, as noted by Ray (1984:3) in which: "Individuals were expected to share whatever surpluses they had with their families, close relatives, and members of their band." In this manner, early forms of European gratuitous assistance were effectively incorporated into the traditional Chipewyan economic structure, and were directed towards further resource procurement activities. The system of gratuity assistance became a means for directing and controlling Indian involvement in the fur trade, and

evolved into the credit system by which the giving of goods no longer implied, but rather demanded a return. Extended credit was also incorporated into traditional practices of sharing in that individuals receiving credit in the form of a grub stake often distributed those supplies to other members of their family or band who had limited access to credit due to their age or unreliability in repayment (personal observations).

From the earliest days of contact, traders provided assistance to Indian people during hard times and in times of shortage (see Ray 1984). This practice may have been for humanitarian reasons, but it also furthered the Indian's obligation to keep to the trade. The Hudson's Bay Company District Manager of the Richmond Gulf area stated the reason for giving Indians assistance in the following: "...it is true that the natives are our assets, that we must keep them alive for future profits even though we carry them at a loss till such time shall come" (Ray 1984:16).

By the early twentieth century the Canadian Government began to take over the role of providing assistance to Indians by reimbursing the Hudson's Bay Company for their gratuity expenses (Ray 1984:14). By the end of World War Two government social assistance programs for native people were well established, not only as a means for alleviating hardship, but also for directing and controlling the Indian social and economic condition. Government assistance, un-

like assistance from traders, was given without any apparent expectation for return beyond the expectation by government for Indian compliance with government policy programs. However, government assistance, like trader assistance, was incorporated into the general pattern of the Indian plural economy, often going to support more traditional subsistence-based economic activities.

The Chipewyan economy integrates economic strategies of seasonality, mobility, and occupational pluralism to provide individuals with opportunities to exploit a variety of income sources and rapidly shift from one activity to another as conditions change throughout the year. The economic strategy incorporates traditional subsistence hunting, fishing, and gathering with commercial resource harvesting, wage employment, and transfer payments that together have sustained Indian people throughout their historic experience. The Chipewyan economy makes use of traditional forms of work-group and kin-group formations as well as a set of social relationships that stress cooperation and sharing. The Chipewyan continue to employ familiar economic strategies to integrate new economic activities into established patterns that help to define their identity in a subarctic environment. However, distinctions in economic condition exist between Caribou-Eater and Buffalo River people that go towards defining sub-ethnic identities for Chipewyan in northern Saskatchewan.

### Economic Profiles

In the following section the regional economies of the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan (Ethen-eldeli) and of the Buffalo River Chipewyan (Echetri-desi-che) are presented with reference to the four economic sectors of subsistence, commercial resource harvesting, wage employment, and transfer payments. The economic profiles provide comparative information between the two regional populations in the history of economic change and contemporary economic conditions. The intent is to determine what differences exist in economic expression and how these differences contribute to sub-ethnic identity for regional Chipewyan populations.

#### Economic Profile: Caribou-Eater Chipewyan

The Athabasca Basin is a transition zone between boreal forest and northern tundra. The region is inhabited primarily by Chipewyan Indians and secondarily by Cree and non-native people. The combined regional population is about 3,000 people. The majority of the Chipewyan live in the communities of Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, and Wollaston. Cree Indians are found living on the north shore of Lake Athabasca (Athabasca Cree) at Camsell Portage and Uranium City. Uranium City and Stony Rapids are mixed communities of native and non-native people.

The Chipewyan Indians of the region are both status and non-status Indians. Status Indians live at Fond-du-Lac

(Fond-du-Lac Indian Band), Black Lake (Stony Rapids Indian Band), and Wollaston Lake (Lac la Hache Indian Band). Non-status Indians are also found at Wollaston living in the settlement of Wollaston Post adjacent to the Indian reserve. In this study the people of the Lac la Hache Band and the Indian residents of Wollaston Post are treated as members of one community, Wollaston.

The Chipewyan Indian population for the three study communities totals about 2,141 people representing over two thirds of the regional population. There are 612 Chipewyan Indians at Fond-du-Lac, 858 Chipewyan Indians at Black Lake, and 671 Indian people living at Wollaston (Province of Saskatchewan 1985; Canada 1986). The non-Indian residents of the three study communities make up a small percentage of the populations and the majority of these are short-term residents engaged in trade, mission work, education, transportation, health care, and police work.

The Caribou-Eater Chipewyan traditionally followed a subsistence economy based on hunting, gathering, and fishing. Features of the aboriginal economy included seasonal mobility, inter-group cooperation, sharing, and occupational pluralism. The mainstay of their economy was the barren-ground caribou which, as noted by Samuel Hearne (1958:135-136) provided almost all of their needs.

The Chipewyan were gradually drawn into the fur trade

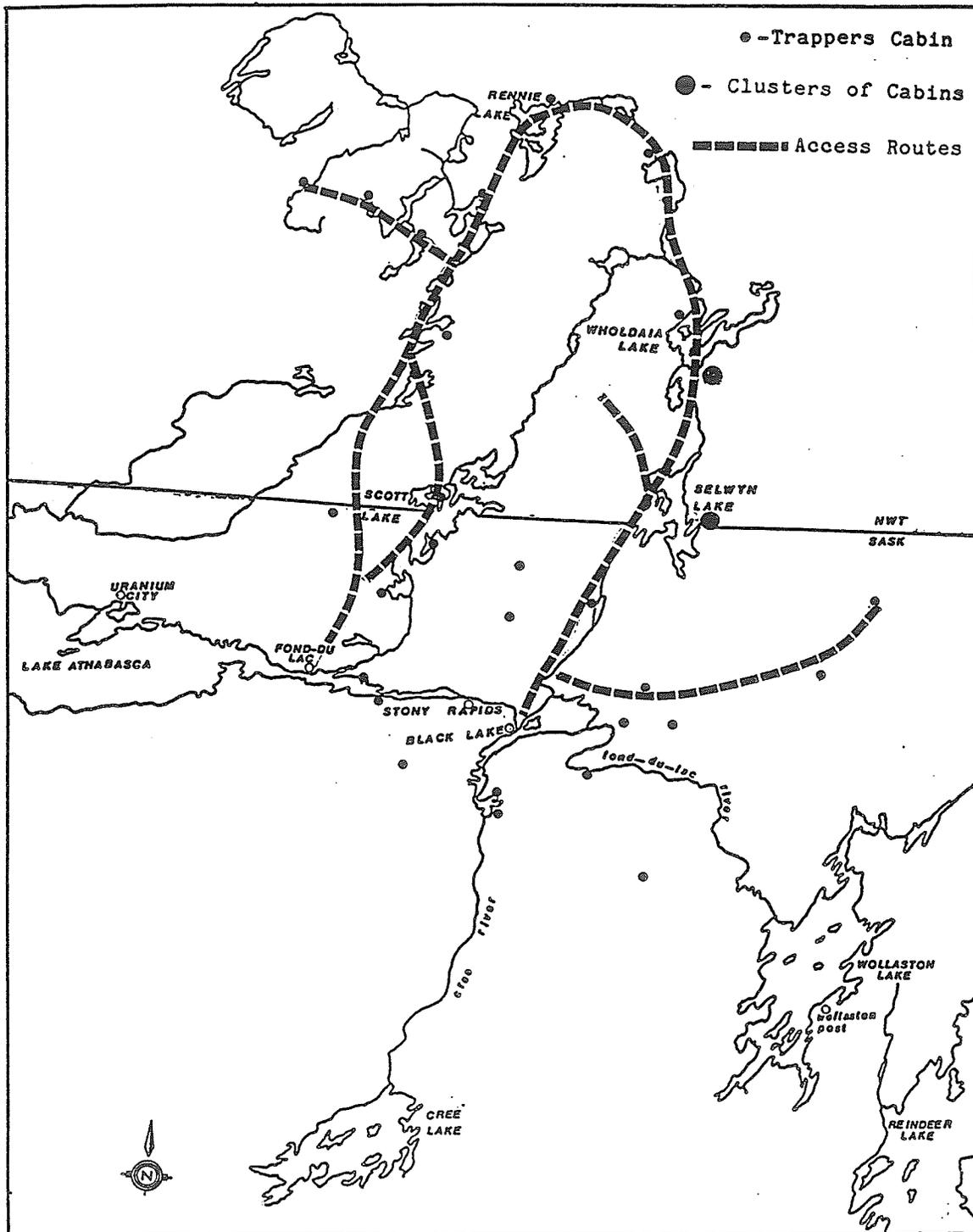


Figure 18. Seasonal Encampments, Caribou-Eater Chipewyan.

after 1780 when they moved south and west into the Athabasca Basin, taking over hunting territory vacated by the Cree. The Caribou-Eater Chipewyan remained seasonally nomadic well into the twentieth century, and continue to include caribou hunting and trapping in their present day economy.

Some of the Caribou-Eater bands centered their trading activities on Lake Athabasca after 1787 when Alexander Mackenzie established a trading post at Fort Chipewyan specifically for the Chipewyan trade. In February 1789 he reported:

I sent Roderick Mackenzie with goods & men to the Lake of the Hills (Athabasca) where he got a House built and we call it Fort Chipewyan as it is intended for that nation.  
(Gillespie 1975:382)

However, even after the establishment of inland trading posts the Chipewyan continued to follow the caribou, as Mackenzie notes (1927:96), returning to the barren grounds during the summer: "with their relations and friends in the enjoyment of that plenty which is derived from numerous herds of deer" (Gillespie 1975:382-383).

By the middle of the nineteenth century some of the Caribou-Eater bands were taking up seasonal residence at the east end of Lake Athabasca at Fond-du-Lac where a Hudson's Bay Company post and Catholic mission had been established. These people continued exploiting the Beverly herd of barren-ground caribou, integrating trapping into their hunting and gathering subsistence economy. By the

middle of the twentieth century some of these people came to settle on the Fond-du-Lac River at Stony Rapids, and became members of the Stony Rapids Indian Band. The majority of the Stony Rapids Band relocated in 1952 to nearby Black Lake where they remain today.

Further to the east Caribou-Eater Chipewyan took up seasonal residence by the middle of the twentieth century at the mouth of the Cochrane River on Wollaston Lake following the establishment of a government trading post and fish plant on nearby Hungry (Moose) Island in 1949. These people are members of the Lac la Hache Indian Band who centered their activities in earlier days in the vicinity of nearby Hatchet Lake. In 1956 they settled at Welcome Bay on Wollaston Lake along with other Caribou-Eater Chipewyan from Lac Brochet, Manitoba. The people at Wollaston Lake continue to exploit both the Beverly and Kaminuriak herds of barren-ground caribou as their winter ranges overlap in the Wollaston Lake region (see figure seven). They have integrated commercial fishing and trapping into their subsistence economy.

The regional economy of the Athabasca Basin diversified in the 1930's when mineral exploration began on the north shore of Lake Athabasca. Early mineral exploration focused on gold, and a gold mine was opened at Goldfields on Beaverlodge Lake near the present day community of Uranium City. The focus for mining changed in the late 1940's to uranium and in 1953 a uranium mine and mill began operations

at Beaverlodge, initiating rapid expansion of Uranium City. Today uranium mines are located at Collins Bay on Wollaston Lake, at Cluff Lake, south of Lake Athabasca, and at Key Lake, southwest of Wollaston Lake. A new mine is under development at nearby Cigar Lake and mining exploration is ongoing throughout much of the study region. The mining industry is today the primary source of full-time employment for the Indian people of the Athabasca Basin.

Commercial fishing is active on Wollaston Lake, and is supported by a fish packing plant located at Hidden Bay. However, commercial fishing for the people of Fond-du-Lac and Black Lake has been severely curtailed since 1980 when the Freshwater Fish plant closed in Uranium City. Today fishermen from those communities must air freight their fish to Hidden Bay on Wollaston Lake at prohibitive cost.

There are nine fly-in fishing lodges in the region for tourist recreational fishing. Two are located northwest of Uranium City on Tazin Lake, two are southeast of Fond-du-Lac, three are in the vicinity of Black Lake, and two are located near Wollaston Lake on Hatchet and Waterbury Lakes. Tourist fishing lodges provide seasonal employment for many Indian people from the region.

Trapping is carried on by people from the three study communities, with many trappers relocating with their families to interior camps in the fall to trap and hunt barren-ground caribou (see figure eighteen).

Employment opportunities in regional communities have increased since the initiation of community development programs in the 1960's, and with growing initiatives in Indian self-government more jobs are available for local people in band administration and servicing.

The following section is an outline of the economic condition for the three study communities in the Athabasca Basin using the four sector model of subsistence, commercial resource harvesting, wage employment, and transfer payments. Each sector of the economy is dealt with separately. Most individuals are involved in more than one sector of the economy, thereby continuing the traditional economic strategy of seasonality and occupational pluralism in making a living.

#### Subsistence

The subsistence sector of the Chipewyan economy is supported by a wide range of hunting, gathering, and fishing activities. However, the subsistence sector remains centered on the harvest of barren-ground caribou. Caribou have been an important resource for the Chipewyan since earliest times. Hearne's narrative (1958:127-128) indicates the importance of caribou, not only in providing food for man and dogs, but also hides for making clothing, lodges, bags, babiche line for snow shoes, nets, and snares, and antler and bone for manufacturing a variety of implements including spear points and fish hooks:"and many other things which it is impossible to remember, and unnecessary to enumerate."

Caribou were hunted on the open tundra during the summer and within the northern forest in the winter. They were hunted while herding during spring and fall migrations, and while scattered in small groups. The hunting methods were therefore dictated by seasonal movements and concentrations of animals, and at times involved only a few men spearing caribou from canoes or hunting with bow and arrow. At other times, when the caribou were on the move, communal hunts were organized using the pound or surround whereby caribou were driven into a great corral constructed out of trees and brush where the animals could be easily killed in large numbers. Hearne (1958:50-51) noted that the caribou pound was so successful that: "many families subsist by it without having occasion to move their tents above once or twice during the course of a whole winter." Smith (1975:409) notes that, according to his informants, the caribou pound was used by the Hatchet Lake (Lac la Hache) and Barren Lands Bands into the twentieth century.

Today the hunt begins with the first sighting of caribou moving south, usually by mid August, and is vigorously pursued by use of aircraft, snow mobiles, and dog sleds throughout the fall and winter. Many people relocate from their home communities into winter camps to hunt caribou and trap fur-bearing animals. As recent as 1985 it was reported that fifty to seventy five percent of the people at Wollaston, Black Lake, and Fond-du-Lac moved north into hunting camps

each October, returning to their home communities by mid December (personal communications). Figure eighteen is a map of trails and hunting cabins used by people from Black Lake and Fond-du-Lac who annually hunt caribou and trap in northern Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories. The seasonal movement of families into the interior is being discouraged by school authorities, and today many parents leave their school-aged children with relatives while they relocate to interior hunting camps (see plate one).

From time to time barren-ground caribou migrate south of the Fond-du-Lac River, and are found in close range to highways and communities (see figure eight). At such times Indian hunters from more southerly regions, including people from Buffalo River, travel north to take part in the hunt. The last through migration occurred in 1979-1980 and it was reported at Stony Rapids that: "when the caribou came near town everyone who could carry a gun was out shooting."

The number of barren-ground caribou taken each year is difficult to determine, and depends on such mitigating factors as climate, time of freeze-up and break-up, and migration patterns of the caribou. Smith (1975:406) suggests that in earlier times the great abundance of caribou resulted in a lack of a positive conservation attitude, and that when the caribou were plentiful: "they were killed in large numbers and perhaps only the choice morsels, such as the tonque, were consumed and the major part of the carcass left to rot."



Plate 1. Wolf Pelts: At Winter Camp, Damant Lake 1985.

Today reports of overkilling are contradictory with some Indian people from the region stating that hunters are wasteful when animals are plentiful, shooting until all their bullets are gone, and taking only the fattest animals, removing the heads or only the tongues from those carcasses that are left behind. Others, including aircraft pilots who often observe the hunt, and who transport hunters and caribou carcasses, indicate that there is little waste and that while initial kills may exceed the capacity of their aircraft, hunters or others informed of the kill may return to the kill site to retrieve dead animals. Negative reports of waste in the hunt are most often given by uninformed individuals and by non-status Indians whose own hunt is limited by government regulation. These reports may be given through ignorance or envy by those who are jealous of the unrestricted hunt enjoyed by status Indians.

Resentment is shown by the local populace towards non-resident status Indians who come into the region to hunt caribou when there is a through migration, especially to non-Chipewyan who are said to be "not of the caribou" (personal communication). This sentiment may express the recognition that the Chipewyan have a special relationship with the caribou that is part of their spiritual belief and oral tradition (Smith 1975:392; 1981:272) in which: "the Chipewyan are identified with the wolf, whose pattern of predation and reliance on caribou is remarkably similar to the traditional

Chipewyan pattern" (Smith 1981:279).

While there may be some incidents of waste in the caribou hunt, especially by younger men who tend to be less judicious than their elders, the value that caribou represents, both for sustenance and cultural continuity, is likely directed towards the preservation of the herds rather than to their annihilation. However, caribou are taken in quantity, and the meat is preserved both by drying and by freezing. Each of the study communities have community freezers for the storage of fish and meat, and most houses that are electrified have one or more freezers as priority appliances.

Though accurate harvest figures are not available for barren-ground caribou, estimates derived from field surveys and aircraft haul records indicate that about 3,000 animals are taken each year in the unregulated hunt by status Indian hunters in the region. Table one gives harvest figures by study community for barren-ground caribou from 1982 to 1986 as derived from these sources. However, the actual number of caribou taken in any one year may be considerably different from the estimated number as the hunt, according to one game management officer on the scene, "is completely out of control."

While not all adults hunt caribou, except on those infrequent occasions when caribou migrate through communities, all Indian people in the region include caribou meat in their diet. The value of barren-ground caribou to the regional

TABLE ONE

## Barren-ground Caribou Harvest

Community	1982-1983	1983-1984	1984-1985	1985-1986
Fond-du-Lac	1,761	1,297	1,041	861
Black Lake	903	780	817	717
Wollaston	1,341	702	833	1,058
Totals	4,005	2,779	2,691	2,636

Source: Wildlife Branch, Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, 1986.

and household economy may be estimated by placing a figure of ten dollars per kilogram (2.2 lbs.) on caribou meat, which compares to the average price for beef in the region, and allowing for an average dressed weight of 42 kilograms (100 lbs.) per animal. In the 1985-1986 season it is estimated that 2,636 caribou were taken in the unregulated hunt for a total of 110,912 kilograms (244,006 lbs.) of meat for a derived value of \$1,109,120. The per capita value of caribou meat for the 1,972 status Indians living in the three study communities is at least \$662.

While these harvest figures for barren-ground caribou are conservative estimates, they do indicate a reduction in the dependence on the caribou herds by the native population over the years. Samuel Hearne (1958:127-128) reported that during the early historic period when he first visited the Chipewyan, upwards of 20 caribou skins were needed each year for the domestic needs of one person. Mooney (1928:4) estimates that the Northern Indian population at the time, like-

ly derived from Hearne's journal, were about 4,000 (430 Yellowknife and 3,500 Chipewyan). If a minimum of twenty caribou were required annually to meet the per capita need, then the Northern Indians would have harvested at least 80,000 animals per year. However, the supply of caribou may not have been assured each season as migration routes are subject to change and overall population of caribou may have varied considerably from time to time due to natural cycles of climate, predation, and disease.

By the mid twentieth century June Helm (1972:62) found that Dogrib Indians north of Great Slave Lake took an average of 36.7 caribou per hunter over a 10 year period from 1942 to 1953. Assuming that each hunter supported a five member family, the average consumption per capita would have been about five caribou each year.

At this time the rate of consumption for caribou is at least one caribou per person per year for Chipewyan Indians of the Athabasca Basin.

Moose are also part of the big-game hunting economy for the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan. During earlier times moose were available to some of the Northern Indians, but were generally outside of the Chipewyan territory and not a regular part of their diet. Samuel Hearne (1958:167-168) indicates that the Chipewyan did not consider moose as "substantial food", and that they were not skilled in dressing moose hides. He reports in 1770 that while moose were "never found in the

Northern Indian territories" they were "plentiful" around Lake Athabasca and that the Chipewyan he was with "intended to make an excursion into the country of the Athapuscow Indians in order to kill moose and beaver" (Hearne 1958:135). Once the Chipewyan came to occupy the country south and east of Lake Athabasca, moose were readily available and would have naturally become integrated into their subsistence economy. Moose, and moose hide, along with other animal products, were likely traded as commercial products on a regular basis to support the provisioning of inland trading posts.

Today, moose remain secondary in importance to barren-ground caribou in the subsistence economy of the Caribou-Eater people. However, people at Wollaston report a greater reliance on moose than do others in the region, likely due to the higher incidence of moose in that part of the country.

Fish and fowl contribute to the diet throughout, and many families spend the summer and fall in bush camps, drying fish, hunting waterfowl, and gathering berries (personal communications).

The gathering of wood for fuel also contributes to the Indian household economy, as wood is used for both heating and cooking in most Indian homes. The use of wood for heating and cooking is likely to continue as the cost of imported fuel is prohibitive.

The subsistence sector of the Indian economy remains an

important and vital component of the total economy. It is observed that aboriginal patterns of subsistence persist both for the economic value and to support and confirm cultural awareness and Chipewyan identity. Subsistence techniques, especially those related to caribou, are taught in regional schools and are informally absorbed through daily life as enculturative experience.

#### Commercial Resource Harvesting

The extraction and sale of renewable resources is a recognizable feature of the Chipewyan economy, and was a major impetus for the establishment of inland trading posts and the movement of Caribou-Eater Indian bands into the Athabasca Basin during the late eighteenth century. Before that time the eastern bands of Chipewyan had little opportunity or inclination to become involved in the fur trade being too isolated from other Athabaskan groups to develop a middleman role, and living in territory where trapping for fur was neither practical nor economic. Once trading posts moved inland after the mid 1770's, and the Athabasca Basin had been vacated by the Cree, Caribou-Eater bands gained access both to fur-bearing animals and to traders. Yet, for the most part, they remained marginal to the fur trade continuing to rely on caribou to supply most of their needs. As late as 1825, fifty years after the establishment of inland trade, Robert McVicar, the Chief Factor at Great Slave

Lake, reports for the Chipewyan:

The most serious and lasting obstacle to the profitable employment of the resources of this District is the vicinity of the Rein Deer/or Chipewyan Lands (Gillespie 1975:367).

McVicar complains that it is difficult to persuade them: "to resort to the beaver country and encounter the additional labour, hardships and privations they so often experience in the pursuit of furs" (Gillespie 1975:368). However, trapping incomes did support subsistence activities in that manufactured European goods made traditional activities easier. Smith (1975:397) notes that among the most important early trade item was the ice chisel as it made winter fishing much easier in a region where lakes and rivers freeze to a depth of four to five feet. In the main, however, the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan did not become dependent on the fur trade, but rather incorporated trapping into their seasonal round of subsistence activities. Similarly, commercial fishing developed out of subsistence fishing, and never came to dominate the Chipewyan economy. Today, commercial resource harvesting based on trapping and fishing is part of an integrated economy for Chipewyan Indians of the Athabasca Basin.

In 1985-1986 there were 142 licensed trappers from the three study communities of Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, and Wollaston representing 27 percent of the work force. The species that are consistently trapped for their fur are beaver, muskrat, squirrel, marten, mink, weasel, fox, and

lynx. The dollar value for furs harvested are indicated in table two which provides numbers of trappers and trapping incomes for the years 1981 through 1986 for regional Indian bands.

TABLE TWO

Licensed Trapper Incomes by  
Indian Band 1981 to 1986

Indian Band	Year	Number of Trappers	Trapping Income	Average Earnings
Fond-du-Lac	1981-1982	21	\$17,980	\$ 856
	1982-1983	19	9,098	478
	1983-1984	32	10,545	329
	1984-1985	32	46,939	1,466
	1985-1986	62	56,569	912
Stony Rapids	1981-1982	44	32,406	736
	1982-1983	50	26,871	537
	1983-1984	42	26,751	637
	1984-1985	40	47,518	1,187
	1985-1986	42	76,485	1,821
Lac La Hache	1981-1982	48	37,035	771
	1982-1983	41	27,227	664
	1983-1984	33	21,220	643
	1984-1985	37	57,284	1,548
	1985-1986	38	62,557	1,646

Source: Wildlife Branch, Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources.

Figure nineteen shows Fur Conservation Areas in northern Saskatchewan. The Fond-du-Lac Indian Band trap for fur in conservation areas N50 and N57, the Stony Rapids Band trap in areas N24 and N80, and the Lac la Hache Band trap in areas N26 and N93. However, many people also trap in their winter hunting grounds in the Northwest Territories.

The average income for each licensed trapper is low,

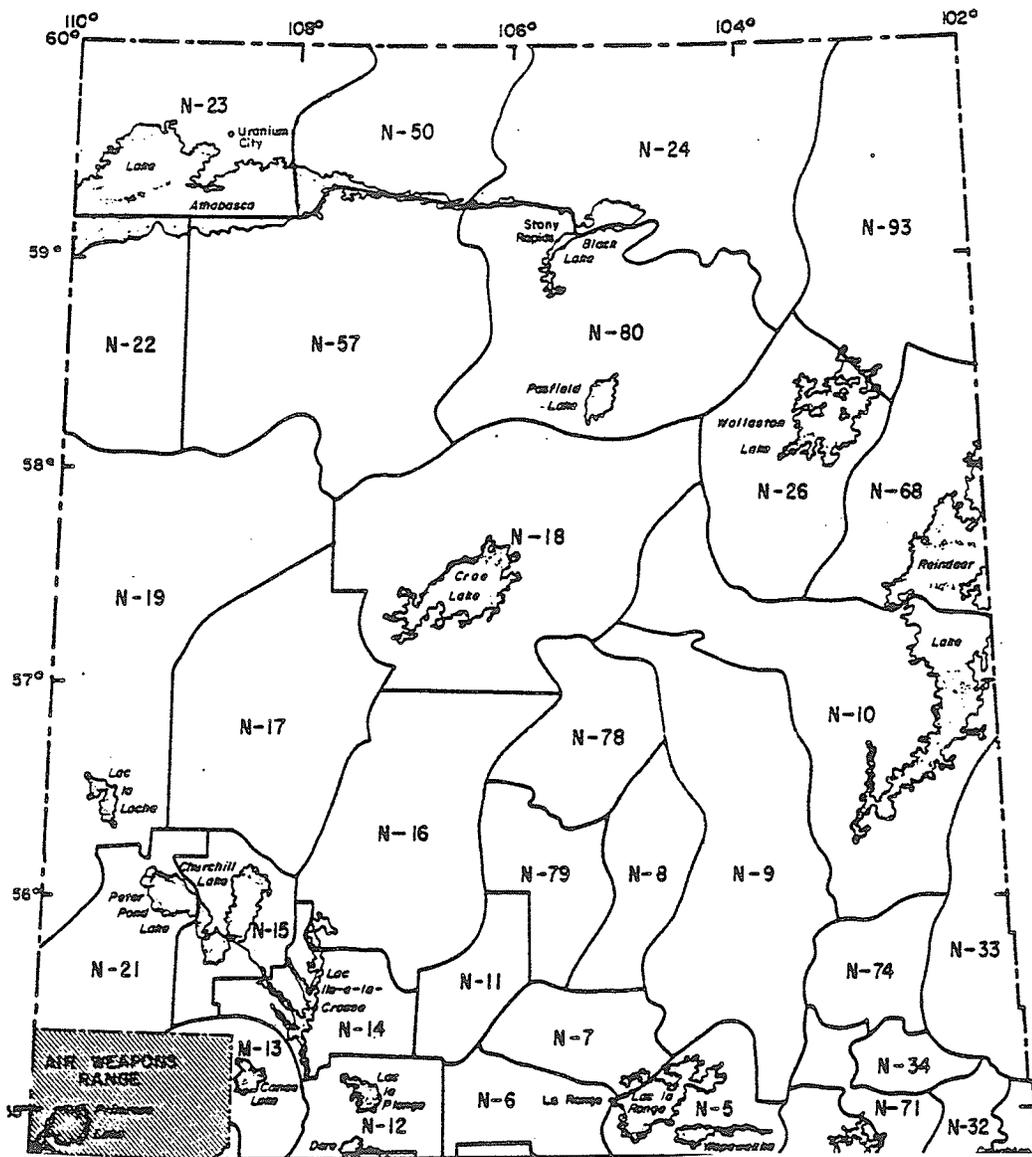


Figure 19. Fur Conservation Areas in Northern Saskatchewan.

Source: Wildlife Branch, Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources.

even during profitable years when prices are high and fur-bearers are plentiful. In 1985-1986 the average income for licensed trappers in the three Indian communities was \$1,377. Incomes vary according to effort, skill, luck, animal numbers, and the fluctuations in a volatile and uncertain international market.

Trapping is supported by trapper assistance programs operated by individual Indian bands. Trapper assistance in 1985-1986 for the Fond-du-Lac Band was \$10,000, for the Stony Rapids Band was \$10,000, and for the Lac la Hache Band amounted to \$3,795 for a total trapper assistance of \$23,795 for the 142 trappers licensed in the three study communities that season. The average assistance to each trapper was \$168.

While the amount of cash income from trapping is low it contributes as one sector of an interdependent and mixed economy. Trapping incomes provide for many people a 'grub stake' for other than trapping activities, including hunting of caribou and moose which contribute significantly to the overall Chipewyan economy. Trapping itself adds to the household larder as many fur-bearing animals, including beaver, bear, and muskrat, are important sources of protein. Finally, trapping is a bush activity that helps support social, cultural, and spiritual features of Chipewyan identity, and is being taught in most regional schools as part of an industrial arts training program.

Commercial fishing is also part of the commercial re-

source sector of the Indian economy, and was likely developed out of aboriginal practices. Birket-Smith (1930:27-28) notes that eastern bands of Chipewyan made fishing nets out of babiche (strips of raw hide) knotted by hand, for unlike Athabaskan Indians further to the west, they did not make use of the needle or shuttle in net construction or repair (Smith 1975:396-397). By use of nets the Chipewyan were able to catch large quantities of fish, supplementing their diet and overcoming any failure in the caribou hunt. The ability to catch great quantities of fish was necessary for the maintenance of large populations of dogs that were kept in the recent past.

Fish are unevenly distributed throughout the lakes in the Athabasca Basin. Fish are found in great quantity in Lake Athabasca, Black Lake and Wollaston Lake. The establishment of a fish plant on Wollaston Lake in 1949 encouraged members of the Lac la Hache Band into commercial fishing. Also members of the Stony Rapids Band relocated from Stony Rapids to Black Lake in the mid 1950's to take advantage of a rich local fish resource. Black Lake has been long recognized as a body of water rich in fish. Peter Pond, in his map of 1785 (figure five), designated Black Lake as Fish Lake likely as an acknowledgement of that rich resource. A commercial fishery was developed on Lake Athabasca and thrived until 1980 when the fish plant at Uranium City ceased operations as part of a rationalization program in

the fishing industry in northern Saskatchewan following a general market decline. Annual commercial fish harvests on Lake Athabasca in the mid 1970's averaged about 250,000 kilograms (550,000 lbs.). In 1979 the catch on Lake Athabasca dropped to about 70,000 kilograms (154,000 lbs.) and by 1984 commercial catches were down to 3,990 kilograms (8,788 lbs.). The number of commercially licensed fishermen on Lake Athabasca declined from 37 in 1979 to five in 1984. By 1985 commercial fishing on Lake Athabasca experienced a revival, with 106,074 kilograms (233,363 lbs.) being caught by 29 licensed fishermen (Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation). In that year commercial fishing at Fond-du-Lac was reactivated with six men fishing Lake Athabasca, transporting their catches by air to the fish packing facility on Wollaston Lake (personal communication).

The commercial fishery on Wollaston Lake has also experienced some change over the past ten years, although it has been more stable than the fishery on Lake Athabasca. In the mid 1970's fish catches on Wollaston Lake were over 200,000 kilograms (440,000 lbs.) each year. However, by 1979 catches drastically declined to about 65,000 kilograms, (143,000 lbs.), and in 1984 they dropped to 2,025 kilograms (4,455 lbs.) of fish. The number of commercially licensed fishermen fell from 42 to two between 1978 and 1984. In 1985 the commercial fish catch increased on Wollaston Lake to about 106,000 kilograms (233,300 lbs.) sold under 30 commercial

licenses (Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation).

Other lakes in the region are commercially fished sporadically, opening and closing as fish prices rise and fall or as fish populations fluctuate. People from Wollaston fish from time to time on nearby Unknown, Murphy, Henday, Lampin, and Waterbury Lakes with each lake supporting from one to three licensed fishermen from the Wollaston community.

People of the Stony Rapids Indian Band fished a number of lakes during the 1970's including Black Lake, Wapata Lake, Richard Lake, and Riou Lake. In 1977 there were approximately 35 commercially licensed fishermen operating on these lakes, with the majority fishing Black and Riou Lakes. By 1980 there were only three men from Black Lake active in the commercial fishery. In 1985 people from Black Lake reactivated their commercial fishery with six families spending the summer fishing on nearby Riou Lake and transporting their catch by air to the fish packing plant on Wollaston Lake (personal communications).

In 1985 the commercial fishery produced about 454,133 kilograms (999,092 lbs.) of fish which sold under 62 licenses for a total of \$365,208 (Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation) for an average income of \$5,890 per licensed fisherman.

The above account of the commercial fishery in the Athabasca Basin over the past decade indicates that fishing is unstable, and not a dependable source of income. Yet, for many Chipewyan Indians commercial fishing is the main

summer employment opportunity and the major source of earned cash income. Fish also provides food for people in the area.

Despite generally low returns and fluctuating prices in both fish and fur, people persist in these commercial activities as part of a seasonal round. Seasonality and occupational pluralism are the key components of both subsistence and commercial resource harvesting for the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan.

#### Wage Employment

The third sector of the Chipewyan economy is in full-time and seasonal employment. Wage employment was first introduced to the Chipewyan during their early days of trade with Europeans on Hudson Bay. Early forms of employment included post provisioning, guiding, and individuals functioning as interpreters and middlemen for explorers and traders. For these services people were paid off in preferential treatment and trade goods.

Indians continued to work for traders throughout the historic period, providing necessary services and provisions for trading posts. In recent years, as the Chipewyan came to settle more permanently in and around trading posts, they became a source of labor not only for traders, but also for missionaries and government agents. Wage employment opportunities for Chipewyan Indians in the Athabasca Basin expanded in the 1930's when mineral exploration began in the region. In more recent years an important area of private sector

employment has been jobs in regional tourist fishing lodges in which Indian people are employed in housekeeping and as guides. Public sector employment has also increased with the extension of local administration to Indian bands since the 1970's.

Wage employment in today's Chipewyan economy may be divided into permanent and seasonal categories. Permanent jobs are mainly in the mining industry, in band administration, and in small business. Seasonal work is found in tourism, forest-fire fighting, and construction. Table three gives a breakdown of permanently employed and seasonal workers by community for the Indian work force for 1985-1986.

TABLE THREE

Permanently Employed and Seasonal  
Workers by Community, 1985-1986

Community	Adult Population	Work Force	Permanently Employed	% of W/F	Seasonal Workers	% of W/F
Fond-du-Lac	296	163	66	40%	97	60%
Black Lake	364	195	113	58%	82	42%
Wollaston	307	169	55	33%	114	67%
Totals	967	527	234	44%	293	56%

The work force for each community is derived by applying the northern Saskatchewan employment participation rate for 1986 of 55.1 percent of the adult population which includes those people between the ages of 16 and 65 years (Employment and Immigration Canada, March 1986). It is noted, however, by Employment and Immigration officials at La Ronge that the

employment participation rate for Indian reserves in northern Saskatchewan is lower than 55.1 percent due to the limited job opportunities for females in reserve communities.

Of the 234 permanent jobs held by residents of the three study communities 112 jobs, or 48 percent, are in the mining industry. Most of the other permanent positions are in band administration and service work. This narrow base for permanent employment leaves the work force vulnerable to sudden decline in the uranium industry or to changes in federal policy governing administration of Indian reserves that would act against band administration employment.

The weakness in the permanent employment base is mitigated to some degree by seasonal work opportunities primarily in tourism, forest-fire fighting, and house construction. It should be noted that the high rate of seasonal jobs for Black Lake is due to the greater demand for workers in tourist fishing lodges in that area during the summer months. There is also a higher rate of permanent employment at Black Lake since many people find jobs in the nearby administrative center of Stony Rapids.

Most seasonal jobs are available in the summer, and seasonal unemployment is highest in the winter. It is during the winter months that many of the seasonal work force are engaged in trapping and hunting. Most seasonal jobs are uncertain and of short duration. For example, the demand for forest-fire fighters varies greatly from year to

year and from day to day during the fire season. In years when seasonal jobs are scarce people must rely to a greater degree on other sectors of the economy and other sources of income. The great dependence on seasonal work results in a high rate of seasonal unemployment with people continually shifting on and off unemployment insurance roles. Table four gives the seasonal unemployment rate in 1985-1986.

TABLE FOUR

Seasonal Unemployment by Community, 1985-1986

Community	Adult Population	Work Force	Seasonally Unemployed	Percent of Work Force
Fond-du-Lac	296	163	97	60%
Black Lake	364	195	82	42%
Wollaston	307	169	114	67%
Totals	967	527	293	56%

Seasonal unemployment is offset to some degree by unemployment insurance which is available to wage earners who have sufficient numbers of weeks of earned income to qualify for insurance benefits. For most of the seasonally employed the total duration of employment is usually insufficient to qualify them for unemployment benefits. For example, during 1986 the average number of recipients of unemployment insurance during any one month for the three study communities was 63 people (see table five) which represents 12 percent of the total work force, while the seasonal unemployment rate was 56 percent (see table four).

Table five is a summary of monthly recipients

of unemployment insurance in 1986 for the three study communities in the Athabasca Basin.

TABLE FIVE

Unemployment Insurance Claims 1986  
Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, Wollaston

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Claims	62	72	72	49	71	73	59	51	56	5	71	59
Percent of Work Force	12	14	14	9	13	14	11	10	10	11	13	11

Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, 1988.

While seasonal unemployment is extremely high, few people are able to benefit from unemployment insurance, and those who do receive low payments due to their low rate of contributions to the unemployment insurance program.

Unemployment insurance may be seen as part of the economy, contributing to the multiple income sources for Indian people. The high rate of unemployment and the great dependence on seasonal and occasional jobs makes a plural economic strategy a necessity in a region where economic pluralism is a traditional way of life.

Transfer Payments

The fourth sector of the Chipewyan economy is the transfer of monies by the federal and provincial governments to Indian bands and to Indian people in the form of family allowance, social security, disability benefits, and social assistance. Each of these are sources of income that are

fitted into the overall pattern of the economic structure, with each functioning to offset the uncertainties characteristic of the Chipewyan economy, and each going to support other economic activities.

Transfer payments not only provide a regular source of cash income for many people, but for some they are the only significant cash income. Transfer payments act as a supplement to low income earnings from commercial resource harvesting and subsistence activities. Transfer payments also provide operating funds for individual Indian bands.

The greatest source of income from transfer payments comes from social assistance funds made available to Indian bands to be distributed to individual band members according to need. Social assistance paid by the three Indian bands in the Athabasca Basin is given below for 1986.

TABLE SIX

Social Assistance Payouts for 1986

Indian Band	Annual Payout	Per Capita Worth
Fond-du-Lac	\$595,000	\$ 972
Stony Rapids	755,000	879
Lac-la-Hache	539,000	1,073

Source: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1986.

Although the per capita worth of social assistance is low, and not sufficient in itself as a means of livelihood, it is an important source of cash income within the total Indian economy.

Within the framework of transfer payments are also fiscal arrangements for the operation and administration of Indian bands. Transfer of funds from federal and provincial governments allows Indian administrations not only to redistribute funds in the form of social assistance payments, but also to allocate their annual budgets for the development and maintenance of community infrastructure, including water and sewer facilities, streets and street lighting, docks, community freezers, and other capital works. Funds are also put into housing construction and the operation of schools. Grants are made to local initiatives in economic development projects that are capable of expanding the employment base. Salaries are paid and programs, such as the trapper assistance program, are funded. All this locally administered activity adds to the Chipewyan economy, providing full-time and temporary employment and support for the resource and subsistence sectors of the Chipewyan economy.

The total economic picture for the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan is one of a mixed economy with traditional features of flexibility, seasonality, and occupational pluralism. No one sector of the economy dominates, rather each sector contributes to overall incomes. The flexible nature of the economy allows people to shift their efforts easily from one range of activities to another with minimal disruption to the system. Seasonality insures that activities can be spread over time to take advantage of a broad range of resources and

sources of income. Occupational pluralism gives an advantage to individuals who are capable of performing a wide range of tasks under various conditions thereby maximizing opportunities.

While the economy appears fragile and without form, with people drifting from one range of activities to another in a haphazard manner, it is in actuality highly structured with multiple sectors meshing at regular intervals to produce a coherent whole. The structure of the economy is sustained by a dual strategy of seasonality and pluralism, and is supported by traditional patterns of social organization characterized by cooperation, reciprocity, and flexibility in activity group formation. Flexible social patterns allow people to shift from individualized tasks, such as seasonal employment in tourist lodges, to group-oriented subsistence activities, including hunting and fishing from interior bush camps. Under these conditions social structures based on traditional patterns of marriage, residence, and group affiliation continue to be relevant in the Caribou-Eater economy and way of life.

#### Economic Profile: Buffalo River Chipewyan

The Buffalo River Chipewyan occupy territory within the full boreal forest of the Upper Churchill River in northwestern Saskatchewan. The Chipewyan at Buffalo River are both status and non-status Indians. Status Indians live on the Buffalo River Indian reserve at Dillon, and non-status

Indians are settled in the nearby communities of St. George's Hill and Michel Village. The combined resident population of the three communities is about 671 people.

The people at Buffalo River took treaty on August 28, 1906, signing Indian Treaty number 10 at Ile-a-la-Crosse, thereby becoming members of the Clear Lake Indian Band. In 1927 the Clear Lake Band, with a population of 210 people, received three parcels of land under the terms of their treaty consisting of 10,708 hectares (26,450 acres) at Peter Pond (Big Buffalo) Lake, 159 hectares (395 acres) at nearby Churchill Lake, and 93 hectares (231 acres) at Turnor Lake. On November 16, 1972 the Clear Lake Band split into the Peter Pond Band and the Turnor Lake Band, thereby reducing the lands held by the people at Buffalo River to 8,260 hectares (20,406 acres). On September 15, 1976 the Peter Pond Band officially changed its name to the Buffalo River Indian Band with a band membership of 396 people (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada). As of December, 1986 the Buffalo River Band had a total membership of 526 people with 439 people living on the reserve at Dillon (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, 1986). Plate two is a photograph of Dillon in 1988.

The non-status Indian community of St. George's Hill, (plate three) is situated across the River from Dillon and developed during the 1970's out of a settlement site known locally as '44' where the two pre-existing houses overlooking the river mouth and marshy plain appear to resemble

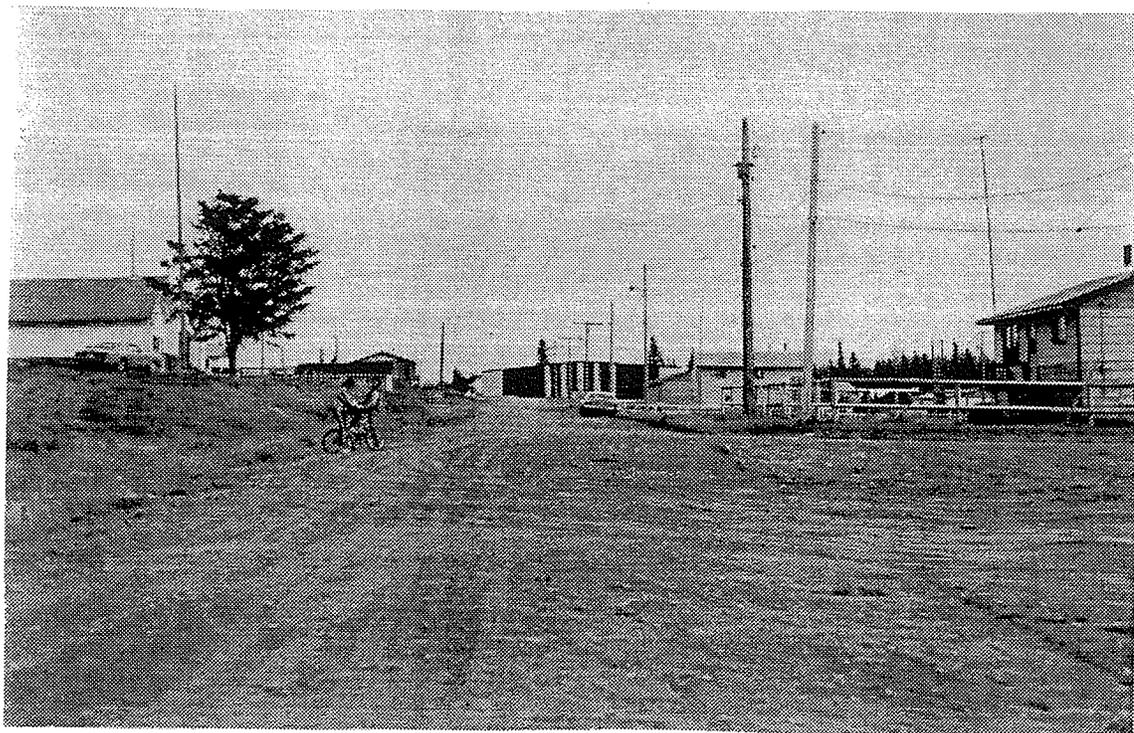


Plate 2. Dillon, Buffalo River Indian Reserve, 1988.

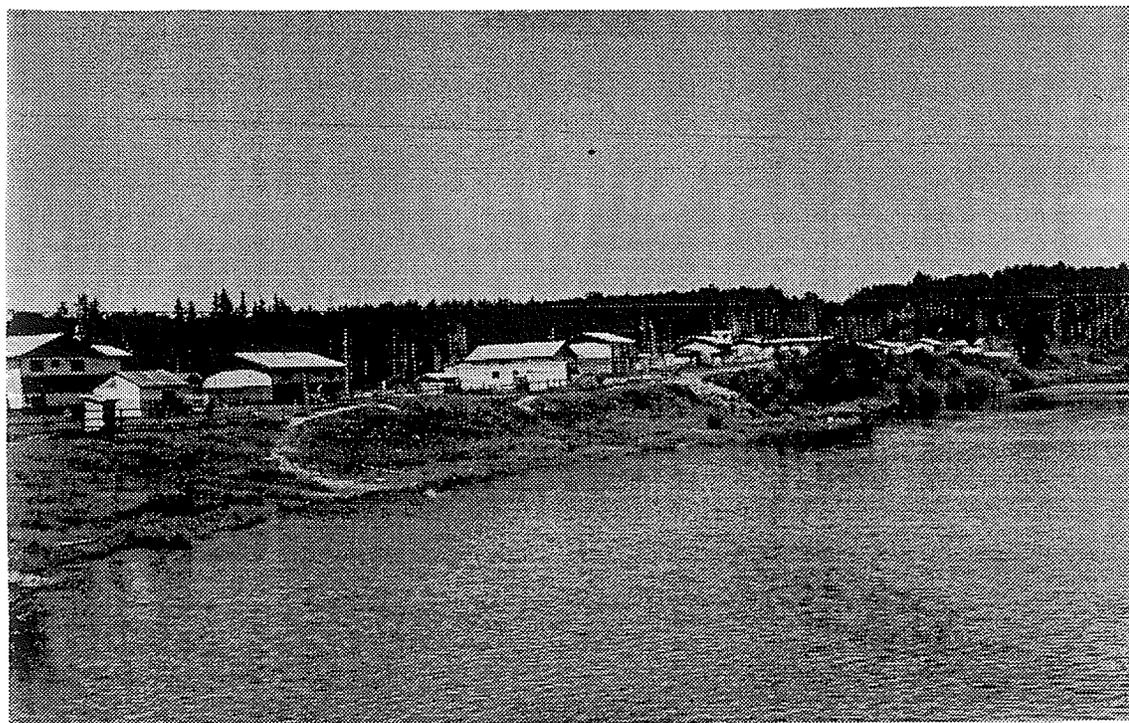


Plate 3. St. George's Hill, Buffalo River, 1988.



Plate 4. Dillon, 1960.

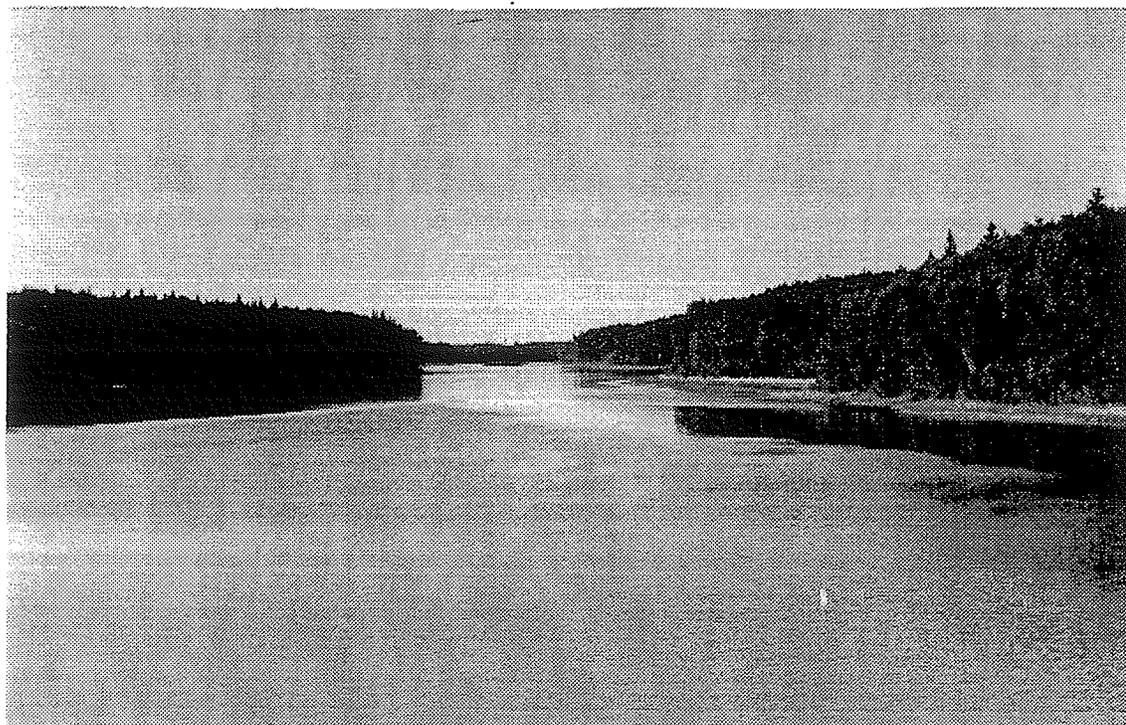


Plate 5. Niska Channel, Upper Churchill River System.

those numerals when viewed from Dillon (personal communications). People from Dillon first located at St. George's Hill to raise cattle on the broad meadow that lies between the Buffalo River and Buffalo Hills to the west of Dillon. Today there are about 25 houses located along the west bank of the Buffalo River at St. George's Hill and the community is home to about 112 people. The cattle industry has expanded at St. George's Hill since the days of '44' and people are also engaged in logging and fishing as commercial enterprises.

The non-status Indian community of Michel Village is located across the west end of Big Buffalo Lake from Dillon. Michel Village began as one of many mink ranching sites in the region during the 1940's, and developed into a non-status Indian community during the 1970's with a present day population of about 120 people. Fishing is the major commercial activity for people at Michel.

The people of the three communities at Buffalo River are linked by ties of kinship and a common history, and in many respects consider themselves as one people, the Echetri-desi-che or Buffalo River people. The people at Buffalo River are likely descendents of the Thi-lan-ottine who are distinguished from other regional Chipewyan populations by Petitot (1883:651) as those who dwell at the head of the lakes, having migrated south and east from Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca to the Upper Churchill River in the late eighteenth century.

The Thi-lan-ottine of the prehistoric and protohistoric periods occupied the transitional northern forests between Great Slave Lake and Lake Athabasca, extending their range south and west into the full boreal forest as far as Peace River. Petitot (1876:xx) indicates that the Chipewyan had occupied the Peace River district in earlier times and may have originated from that country.

The economy of the western Chipewyan was founded upon subsistence hunting and gathering which incorporated seasonality and economic pluralism with social patterns that promoted flexibility in organization, cooperation, and sharing. The mainstay of the economy were barren-ground caribou and wood bison. However, access to the full boreal forest would have provided a rich and varied resource base.

During the early historic period the western bands became established as middlemen in the fur trade, acquiring furs from neighboring Yellowknife and Dogrib Indians, and transporting these to the trading posts. They also were engaged as post provisioners, and by the 1730's the Hudson's Bay Company journals indicate that Chipewyan groups coming in to trade usually brought with them musk-ox or caribou meat for the forts (Gillespie 1975:365). Chipewyan who arrived at the coast in the spring were often engaged to hunt geese, and some were kept on as post hunters (Yerbury 1986).

The economy of the western bands of Chipewyan underwent a rapid change from a subsistence to a mixed economy that included commercial trade and casual employment. They became involved with trapping after being instructed in "...ye ways of hunting & trapping according ye Southern (Indian) Method" by the Hudson's Bay Company traders who encouraged them to go "backwards" into the woods beyond their own country to trap (Gillespie 1975:365, 369). By the 1770's Chipewyan from Great Slave Lake had penetrated into the forests as far south as Lake Athabasca, at least during the winter months, to trap for fur. Samuel Hearne (1958:115-116) reports these intrusions by the Chipewyan into Cree territory, apparently without incurring hostile reactions:

...the poor Northern Indians reap innumerable benefits from a fine and plentiful country, with the produce of which they annually load themselves for trade, without giving the least offence to the proper inhabitants.

In 1776 Alexander Henry (1969) reports trading with Chipewyan from Lake Athabasca at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and by 1790 the western bands were fully involved in the fur trade economy, trading at interior posts on Lake Athabasca and along the Churchill River.

The Chipewyan who came to the Upper Churchill River continued to integrate subsistence activities with trapping, following seasonal rounds that centered on regional trading posts. Some of these people took up seasonal residence at Buffalo River where they were able to exploit the local pop-

ulation of wood bison and a rich hunting and trapping territory to the west. After 1790 these people regularly traded at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and by 1890 they were frequenting outposts at Portage la Loche and Buffalo Narrows.

The Buffalo River people continued the seasonal round for a hundred years, from the 1790's when they first hunted on the Upper Churchill River, to the 1890's when they began to congregate during the summer months in and around regional trading posts. By the late 1840's a Catholic mission had been established at Ile-a-la-Crosse, and from that time on the seasonal round of economic activities was increasingly directed by the religious calendar with Chipewyan congregating at Ile-a-la-Crosse more frequently for religious celebrations, especially at Christmas and Easter (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984). By the first decade of the twentieth century the Hudson's Bay Company operated a winter outpost at Buffalo River, and by 1920 they had established a permanent trading post at Dillon. This post remained the focus for trade for the Buffalo River people until 1982 when the opening of an all-weather road to Dillon gave local people easy access to the outside. In 1987 the Hudson's Bay Company ceased operations at Buffalo River, unable or unwilling to compete with other suppliers and traders in the region.

Seasonal nomadism declined for the Buffalo River people during the first half of the twentieth century as people

moved into settlement at Dillon. Nevertheless, many people continued to relocate to winter camps as family units, returning to spend the summers at Dillon. The family hunting and trapping unit was abandoned in favor of male partnerships after a day school was established at Dillon in 1958. By the mid 1960's there was a decline in international fur prices followed by a collapse of the trapping industry.

During the first half of the twentieth century the economy at Buffalo River had diversified. Commercial fishing began on Big Buffalo Lake in 1918 and continued to produce high fish catches into the 1960's. Mink ranching was introduced to the Upper Churchill River district in the 1920's and locally caught fish of non-commercial value were used for ranch mink food. During the 1960's the Chipewyan economy suffered a general collapse as trapping, fishing, and mink ranching all but disappeared as economic activities in the region. At the same time the wage sector was poorly developed and there was an increase in welfare dependency. People at Buffalo River continued to be relatively isolated as road access was not developed until the early 1980's. During the intervening twenty years, between 1960 and 1980, Buffalo River people experienced a period of decentralization as non-status people were moved from Dillon into the settlements of Michel Village and St. George's Hill.

The local population suffered under generalized underemployment, rampant alcohol abuse, and social and cultural decay. During the 1980's the people at Buffalo River have produced a social, cultural, and economic revival, the features of which include traditional cultural components along with innovations that are together molding a new sense of purpose and a renewed sense of identity. Employment opportunities are increasing, primarily in community development and band administration, and there is some return to subsistence activities and to the commercial sectors of the economy, including fishing and trapping.

The following section is an outline of the economy at Buffalo River following the four sector model of subsistence, commercial resource harvesting, wage employment, and transfer payments. Although each sector is addressed separately, most people are involved in a multi-sector economic strategy and make use of traditional pattern of occupational pluralism in making a living.

### Subsistence

The subsistence sector of the economy at Buffalo River is centered on hunting and fishing. Accurate harvest figures for subsistence resources are not easily determined, and surveys often result in contradictory information. In the case of the moose harvest, which is the most important subsistence resource hunting activity, contradictions and misinformation may be due to a desire by Indian hunters to maintain a low

profile in what at times may be unusually high kill rates for individual hunters. For example, in 1986 one hunter from Dillon took three moose, while in 1987 the same hunter killed seven moose (personal communications). However, as with the barren-ground caribou hunt for Caribou-Eater people, the moose hunt is most often pursued by the best hunters, and these individuals distribute meat and hides to kinsmen and friends who are unable to engage in hunting or are unsuccessful in the hunt. A low profile is also a means for limiting criticism and resentment by non-native hunters and game management officers who are conditioned to rigid forms of regulation as a means for game management. In contrast, Caribou-Eater Chipewyan living in greater isolation, are more open about discussing kill rates and show little concern for externally imposed game management regimes. Yet, the people at Buffalo River demonstrate a great intimacy of detail for hunting, and several were able to recall with accuracy an occasion a quarter of a century earlier when the youngest son of the local Hudson's Bay Company manager had shot a moose, and how the meat had been distributed.

In this study estimates of moose harvest are made for Buffalo River based on general observations for determining who is doing what and when in the community. The accuracy of using the local 'gossip' network depends on the number of interactions and sources of information. At Buffalo River it was possible over several years of observations to determ-

ine who had gone moose hunting, when they had gone, how long the trips lasted, what means of transportation were used, who accompanied a hunter, and how many animals were taken during any one hunt. In this manner an estimate of the moose harvest from 1984 to 1988 indicates that an average of 10 moose were taken by people from St. George's Hill, 12 moose were killed by people from Michel Village, and about 25 moose were harvested by people from Dillon for a total annual average moose harvest of about 47 animals.

The average dressed weight for moose is from 360 kilograms (800 lbs.) for a cow to about 455 kilograms (1000 lbs.) for a bull. The harvest of 47 moose per year at about 410 kilograms (900 lbs.) average dressed weight per animal results in a total acquisition of about 19,223 kilograms (42,300 lbs.) of moose meat a year. If a price of ten dollars per kilogram is placed on moose meat, the cash value of the annual moose harvest at Buffalo River is \$192,230. The per capita value of moose meat for the 671 people at Buffalo River is \$286 a year or about half the per capita estimated value of barren-ground caribou for Caribou-Eater Chipewyan.

While moose are by far the most commonly hunted big game animal, bear, deer, and woodland caribou are occasionally taken. From time to time barren-ground caribou also enter into the subsistence hunt during those years when the migration patterns bring barren-ground caribou into the Upper Churchill River district.

Barren-ground caribou are increasingly being acquired from Caribou-Eater Chipewyan further north through rapidly expanding friendship networks, and in future years may become an important source of meat for people at Buffalo River. It is also likely that wood bison will again become part of the subsistence economy at Buffalo River as animals released into the wild successfully breed and multiply.

The hunting grounds for the people at Buffalo River provide a varied and rich resource territory covering about 2,500 square kilometers (965 square miles) extending to the Alberta border in the west and the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range to the south (see figure two). The air weapons range provides an animal sanctuary that greatly favors the long-term preservation and growth of animal populations in the region, and thereby supports the hunting and trapping activities of the Buffalo River people. It is reported that: "there is lots of game in the bombing range, and we hunt near that place" (personal communication).

Fish is an important feature of the subsistence economy at Buffalo River, and for most people fish is a regular part of the daily diet. This is very different from Caribou-Eater Chipewyan for whom fish is secondary to caribou as a source of protein, making up only about fifteen percent of protein needs (Murray and Clouthier 1986:187).

People at Buffalo River procure fish for food from local commercial fishermen, or from individuals who make a

habit of setting a net or two in order to catch fish for household consumption. People dry fish, and most homes have a fish smoking rack in the back yard. In recent years fish stocks have declined on Big Buffalo Lake, and some families now spend the summer months at nearby Vermette Lake catching and drying fish for the winter. Three cabins have been built at Vermette Lake, and some people who work full-time in the community spend their summer holidays at these camps fishing, hunting, and picking berries for the household larder.

Cutting firewood also contributes to the subsistence activities at Buffalo River as most homes are heated by wood or wood is used for cooking and to supplement heating needs.

Subsistence remains an important feature of the economy at Buffalo River, and subsistence activities are pursued by many of the older and middle generations who were, for the most part, raised with knowledge of bush living. However, few of the younger generation are familiar with bush life and it is often stated that most of the young people could not survive in the bush. In recent years there is an effort by some parents to pass on traditional skills to the youth, both in an informal manner and through cultural education programs within the formal education system. Part of that effort involves a summer camp for school age children at Vermette Lake where they experience bush living and learn

subsistence techniques. Other young people learn hunting, trapping, and fishing skills by engaging in these activities with adults. However, for the most part, the younger generation is not familiar with bush living, nor are they competent in resource procurement activities.

#### Commercial Resource Harvesting

Commercial resources are harvested by the people of Buffalo River through trapping, commercial fishing, and logging. In the past mink ranching was a major commercial enterprise, first established in the 1920's and expanding steadily until by 1956 there were 31 mink ranches with about 20,000 mink in the Buffalo Narrows region (Rawson 1957:52). During the 1950's two mink ranches were located at Michel Village and four others were scattered at various locations on neighboring Little Buffalo Lake. Mink ranching was supported by a rich fishery which provided a source of mink food. Mink ranching ended in the 1960's with a drop in fur prices. Today one commercial fisherman at Michel Village expresses a desire to start a mink ranch operation.

There is an ongoing effort by three men from Buffalo River to establish wild rice (*Zizania aquatica*) in the region, however they have not had success to date.

A recent commercial enterprise is the development of a berry picking industry which was initiated by a producer from La Ronge in 1988. Berry picking is expected to provide seasonal employment for several weeks of the year.

Trapping for fur has been a long time occupation for the Buffalo River people, and was a major factor in the migration of Chipewyan Indians into the Upper Churchill River during the latter part of the eighteenth century. For almost two hundred years trapping and the trade in fur was the major source of income for the Indian population, providing support for related subsistence activities. Today, trapping remains part of the mixed economy and continues for some to support other bush related subsistence pursuits.

In 1986-1987 there were 36 licensed trappers from Buffalo River representing 14 percent of the adult work force in the three communities. The people from Buffalo River trap in fur conservation area N-21 (see figure nineteen) located south and west of Dillon to the Alberta boarder. The species that are most often trapped for their fur are muskrat, mink, squirrel, beaver, fisher, lynx, fox, weasel, and otter. The dollar value for furs harvested and number of licensed trappers from 1982 to 1986 at Buffalo River is provided in table seven.

TABLE SEVEN

Licensed Trapper Incomes, Buffalo River 1982 to 1986

Year	Number of Trappers	Trapper Income	Average Earnings
1982-1983	76	\$67,527	\$ 888
1983-1984	63	54,549	866
1984-1985	55	39,353	715
1985-1986	43	50,669	1,178

Source: Wildlife Branch, Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources.

The average per capita earnings for individual trappers exceeds the figures indicated in table seven because not all licensed trappers actually trap, and for those who do trap, incomes vary considerably depending on effort and trapping success. The Buffalo River Indian Band provide financial assistance for trappers to encourage trapping as an economic and cultural endeavor. In the 1985-1986 trapping season the Band provided \$9,003 in assistance to trappers (Financial Report, Buffalo River Band, 1986). The combined trapper income was thereby increased that year from \$50,669 to \$59,672 for an average income per licensed trapper of \$1,387.

In recent years trapping has changed from a family oriented activity, or an extended family enterprise, to one that is based on male partnerships, often from inlaw relationships. Trapping has also changed from a full-time and seasonal occupation in which families relocated to trap lines for several months at a time, to a part-time casual activity with trappers returning to their home communities after two or three weeks on the trap line in order to visit their wives and children who, for the most part, remain at home to comply with school and work schedules in the community. As a result, trapping is no longer carried out in conjunction with other hunting activities, and the animals that are trapped are not always used to nourish a trapper's family. The consequence is a greater reliance on store bought food, and cash incomes necessary for family maintenance.

In years past trapping, along with related bush activities, sustained the trapper and his family for several months of the year. Today, incomes from trapping often do not cover expenses, yet people persist in trapping, incorporating trapping in a seasonal round of economic activities.

Interest in trapping varies from year to year as fur prices change, other employment opportunities or inclinations change, and as the populations of fur-bearing animals rise and fall. In recent years there has been a renewed interest in trapping by people at Buffalo River, and many young men are establishing trap lines and building trapping cabins. In the fall of 1987 the Buffalo River Band provided assistance to trappers in the form of a chartered, float-equipped Otter aircraft to ferry men and supplies to the trap lines (see plate six). In one day the aircraft did eight trips out of Dillon, and on each flight lumber and other building materials were loaded for cabin construction and repair.

Trapping, as an economic activity, is very different at Buffalo River than it is for the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin. The Caribou-Eater Chipewyan retain more traditional features of social organization based on family hunting bands, and many people relocate as families and bands of families to interior hunting and trapping camps for several months of the year. During these periods in the bush the subsistence features of hunting and trapping are combined to help offset low returns from fur. However, even

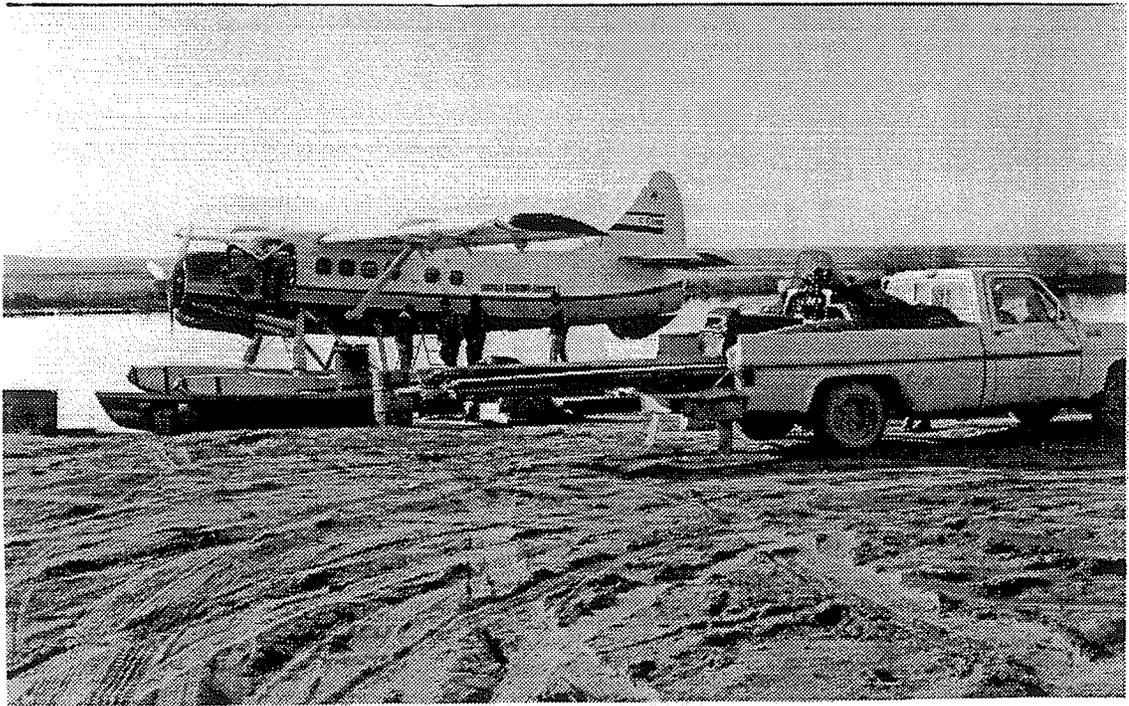


Plate 6. Going Trapping, Dillon 1987.



Plate 7. Building a Fishing Skiff, Dillon 1986.

among the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan, the growing restrictions of school and work schedules are undermining bush life as more people are obliged to remain in their home community during the winter months.

At Buffalo River the income from trapping appears to be stabilizing at a relatively low rate of return. Yet, there is a renewed interest in trapping, suggesting that trapping along with related subsistence activities may be retained as part of a mixed economy, and that bush living may continue to contribute to the identity of the Buffalo River people.

Commercial fishing began at Buffalo River in 1918 when the McInnes and Alberta Fish Companies entered the region to buy fish, transporting fish by horse drawn sleigh to Alberta. Commercial fish catches on Big Buffalo Lake were high and remained so into the 1950's with annual catches of whitefish running between 600,000 and 1,000,000 pounds (Rawson 1957). Of the five major fishing lakes in the Upper Churchill River drainage, Big Buffalo Lake has consistently produced twice the numbers and weight of fish caught in all the other four. While northern pike are represented about equally in all the lakes, whitefish, pickerel, and ciscoes are most abundant in Big Buffalo Lake (Rawson 1957:35). The fishery supported mink ranching, and by the 1950's, when mink ranching was at its height, fifty percent of the total catch was being used for mink food. During the 1960's and 1970's fish stocks declined throughout the Upper Churchill River drainage and

have never recovered to previous levels. Today, commercial fishing continues at a reduced level. The fishery on Big Buffalo Lake is primarily a summer fishery, and during the winter months several of the local fishermen transfer their fishing operations to nearby Dillon Lake.

Table eight provides numbers of commercial fishermen by community, annual fish catches, and incomes earned.

TABLE EIGHT

Commercial Fish Catches and Fishing Incomes  
by Community, 1984 to 1987

Community	Year	Licensed Fishermen	Total Annual Catch/kg	Total Income
Dillon	1984-1985	5	40,002	\$48,331
	1985-1986	5	58,034	53,433
	1986-1987	7	81,474	86,091
St. George's Hill	1984-1985	3	2,799	3,454
	1985-1986	5	31,865	30,527
	1986-1987	6	36,271	35,662
Michel Village	1984-1985	3	3,485	9,385
	1985-1986	2	11,350	11,480
	1986-1987	6	36,182	35,001

Source: Freshwater Fish Marketing Corporation, La Ronge.

Commercial fishing varies from year to year, including fishing income and the number of men employed in fishing. In 1986-1987 six of the 19 active licensed commercial fishermen at Buffalo River made over \$10,000 each, while income for the other 13 licensed fishermen ranged from \$10,000 to less than \$500 from fishing that year. In the 1986-1987 fishing season the total catch for Buffalo River fishermen was 153,927 kilograms (338,639 lbs.) for a total cash value

of \$156,754. The average gross income was \$8,250. Out of the income earned fishermen must pay expenses in terms of equipment, repairs, fuel, and wages for crew. In 1986-1987 six men were hired as crew for the outfits at Buffalo River. Commercial fishing thereby provided employment for 25 people which represents about 10 percent of the adult work force of the three communities. Commercial fishing is for most fishermen short-term and seasonal. In 1986-1987 there were eleven licensed fishermen who fished less than ten weeks of the year, while one fisherman managed to deliver fish for 32 weeks during that year. For those who fish part-time, trapping, logging, forest-fire fighting, construction, or other occasional employment may be included as sources of income at other times of the year.

Fishing is an important feature of the commercial economy at Buffalo River adding to overall incomes. The flexible nature of the fishing industry enhances seasonality by allowing individuals to take advantage of other sources of income as they occur, and reverting back to fishing when other sources of income fail or dry up.

Fishing is generally a family enterprise with several of the fishermen employing their sons as crew. In this way some of the younger generation are being drawn into fishing, learning valuable skills. One commercial fisherman from Dillon has expressed a desire to establish a summer training program for young people to encourage greater employment

opportunities in the fishing industry, and to help alleviate youth unemployment. He noted that: "fishing is still number one here in employment, and can provide a good income" (personal communication).

Forestry is the third area of commercial resource income for the people at Buffalo River. A sawmill was first set up at Dillon in 1960 (personal observation) by the Department of Indian Affairs to provide building material for housing construction and to generate local employment. However, with the sawmill under control by the Department of Indian Affairs the market for lumber was limited to Indian reserves in the immediate area. In order to take advantage of a broader market the Peter Pond Lake Indian Band took over milling operations in 1973, and at its peak period of operation the mill employed from six to 12 men for three to four weeks a year, producing about 100,000 board feet of planed lumber. The mill sustained a logging industry with six to eight men working in the bush cutting and hauling timber during the winter months.

The sawmill has not been in operation for the past ten years at Dillon, and forestry work has been limited during that time to fence post cutting which employs up to ten men intermittently in the winter. In 1987 a sawmill was purchased by the Buffalo River Band and existing milling equipment was put back into service. Logging and milling operations are again in production under Band administration as the

Warrior Lumber Mills Limited.

Wage Employment

Wage employment at Buffalo River exists as permanent work and seasonal jobs. Permanent wage employment is, for the most part, in band administration and service work and secondarily in small business. Seasonal wage employment is in forest-fire fighting, logging, and construction. Table nine gives a breakdown of permanent employment and seasonal workers for the Indian work force by community for 1986-1987.

TABLE NINE

Permanently Employed and Seasonal Workers by Community, 1986-1987						
Community	Adult Population	Work Force	Permanently Employed	%of W/F	Seasonal Workers	%of W/F
Dillon	261	143	44	31%	99	69%
St. George's Hill	70	38	8	21%	30	79%
Michel Village	60	33	2	6%	31	94%
Totals	391	214	54	25%	160	75%

Of the 54 permanent salaried jobs, 36 are in band and community administration and other positions include school teachers, health-care workers, and support personnel. The remainder of the permanent employment is in the private sector and includes people managing and working in the grocery store, garage, pool hall, taxi/ambulance service, and in the cattle industry.

Incomes in all areas of permanent employemnt are low.

Of the 36 people employed in the public sector, 19 earn less than \$10,000 a year (Financial Report, Buffalo River Indian Band, 1987). Salaries are generally lower in the private sector than in the public sector and small businesses are only able to survive as family-run enterprises. In most of the households incomes from permanent employment are supplemented by other part-time and seasonal occupations by various members of the family.

Seasonal unemployment for the work force at Buffalo River runs at about 75 percent. Many of the seasonally unemployed find short-term work in forest-fire fighting, logging, and construction. Seasonal wage employment is expected to increase with the introduction of a berry picking industry and the re-establishment of a saw mill at Dillon. Table ten gives the seasonal unemployment rate for the three communities at Buffalo River in 1986-1987.

TABLE TEN

Seasonal Unemployment by Community, 1986-1987

Community	Adult Population	Work Force	Seasonally Unemployed	Percent of Work Force
Dillon	261	143	99	69%
St. George's Hill	70	38	30	79%
Michel Village	60	33	31	94%
Totals	391	214	160	75%

Seasonal wage employment varies greatly from year to year depending upon the number of jobs generated in construction and the extent and duration of forest fires in the area. In 1987 there was an increase in seasonal job opportunities at Buffalo River as 26 people were employed in carpentry and masonry work as an on-the-job training initiative in the construction of a new school and band office at Dillon. Also a high rate of forest fires in the spring of 1988 resulted in an increased short-term demand for fire fighters. At times every available man and woman in the three communities was on the fire line.

People who are seasonally employed are vulnerable to rapidly changing conditions in the labor market, and many have to rely on other sources of income in order to make a living. Most seasonal wage labor jobs are low salaried, and total duration of employment for many is not sufficient to qualify workers for unemployment benefits. For example, during 1986 the average number of recipients of unemployment insurance during any one month at Buffalo River was 33 which represents only 15 percent of the work force, while 75 percent of the work force in the three communities were seasonally unemployed. Furthermore, the average bi-weekly payout of unemployment insurance for northern Saskatchewan is about \$200 (Employment and Immigration Canada, La Ronge) which reflects the low wage rate for the northern part of the province. The people of Buffalo River, and indeed the people of

the north are disadvantaged in terms of employment opportunity, wages, and social program benefits. While seasonal unemployment is extremely high, few people are able to benefit from unemployment insurance, and those who do, receive low payments as a reflection of their low earning-contributions to the Unemployment Insurance Program. Table eleven is a summary of monthly claimants of unemployment insurance at Buffalo River during 1986 and 1987.

TABLE ELEVEN

Unemployment Insurance Claims  
Buffalo River, 1986-1987

1986	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Claims	38	26	31	35	31	30	31	31	34	31	41	41
% of Work Force	17	8	14	16	14	14	14	14	16	14	19	19
1987												
Claims	45	45	39	25	23	32	28	29	32	22	23	23
% of Work Force	21	21	18	12	11	15	13	14	15	10	11	11

Source: Employment and Immigration Canada, La Ronge 1988.

Like other forms of income, seasonal employment and unemployment insurance payments make up only part of individual annual income, and are part of the mixed economy and the plural economic strategy for people at Buffalo River.

### Transfer Payments

The fourth sector of the economy at Buffalo River is the transfer of monies by the federal and provincial governments to communities and to individuals in the form of family allowance, social security, disability benefits, and social assistance. Of all transfer monies, social assistance comprises the greatest amount, and has the greatest impact on individual incomes.

Funding for social assistance is made available to the Buffalo River Indian Band by the federal government, and these funds are in turn distributed by the band to band members according to their criteria. In 1987 the Buffalo River Indian Band paid out a total of \$481,641 in social assistance to band members for a per capita income of \$1,097 from social assistance for people living on the reserve. However, many families and individuals do not collect social assistance as their financial needs are met through other income sources. Therefore the average payout in social assistance exceeds the per capita worth.

Non-status Indians living at Michel Village and St. George's Hill receive social assistance payments directly from the provincial government. Table twelve gives provincial social assistance payouts for January and July of 1986 and 1987 for people living at Michel Village and St. George's Hill.

TABLE TWELVE

Provincial Social Assistance Payouts,  
January and July 1986-1987  
St. George's Hill and Michel Village

Month-Year	Number of Cases	Number of Dollars	Average Payout in Dollars
January 1986	29	11,572	399
July 1986	24	6,209	258
January 1987	12	3,212	267
July 1987	19	5,811	305

Source: Province of Saskatchewan, Department of Social Services, 1988.

The number of people receiving social assistance from the provincial government varies greatly from month to month and from year to year depending on need. The variation in social assistance is a reflection of the general nature of the economy in which seasonal employment is prevalent and full-time jobs are rare. There are only ten people in the two communities that are permanently employed representing 14 percent of the derived work force and eight percent of the adult population. Yet, in January 1986, there were 29 people receiving social assistance which represents 22 percent of the adult population and 41 percent of the derived work force. It would appear that while permanent employment is very low many of those without permanent jobs must meet their needs through seasonal employment, commercial resource harvesting, and subsistence activities since social assistance payments are not sufficient to meet even basic needs.

While many people draw social assistance in the two non-status communities, most cannot rely on government welfare

for their total livelihood. The bulk of social assistance payments go to the support of single mothers who have few employment opportunities.

Social assistance, like other forms of income, does not dominate the Indian economy, but is rather one more source of income for people following a northern economic strategy.

### Conclusion

The Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan have an integrated economy in which no one sector is capable of meeting most people's needs, yet each sector contributes to overall incomes. The economy effectively combines subsistence activities that are founded in prehistoric traditions and lifestyles with techniques and strategies that, for the most part, have their roots in the fur trade. Commercial resource harvesting of fish, meat, and furs has developed out of the long contact experience with traders and for a time these resources were the mainstay of a trade or barter-cash economy. Wage labor, with its history of Indian contribution to the support of traders and missionaries, now is directed to those jobs that help support and further Indian identity, especially those jobs in education and in band administration. Industrial wage labor is limited and is founded primarily on a few extractive industries like mining which are subject to external influences of supply and demand or policy directions that are beyond the control of local people.

Transfer payments developed out of relationships with traders and missionaries in which gifts and gratuities were a means for directing and controlling Indian people, and which became a way for governments to direct settlement, education, and the Indian political process. Yet, all of these features of the Chipewyan economy, both the traditional and the adopted, the innovative and the imposed are employed by individuals to make a living and to retain traditional features of identity in the face of change.

The Chipewyan economy, despite interventions and change over the past three hundred years, retains the basic characteristics of aboriginal economic strategies including a great deal of flexibility in decision making, seasonality, pluralism in occupation, territorial mobility, a systematic exploitation of a wide range of opportunities, and a mixed resource base. The Chipewyan economy also incorporates traditional features of social interdependencies that are founded on and supported by kinship ties. These include cooperation in production and distribution of country food, especially among kinsmen and between friends. Cooperation and sharing promote traditional values of generosity and of mutual support that are important not only for general well-being, but also for furthering Indian identity. The reciprocity that is associated with hunting, gathering, and fishing reinforces family, community, and friendship ties that are often eroded through the increased individualism that

is associated with wage employment. Reciprocity in country food is extending beyond the community to include regional Chipewyan populations in that people from Buffalo River are increasingly visiting more northerly Caribou-Eater Chipewyan to procure caribou meat, and in exchange are promoting social and economic stability through the spread of ideological features of Chipewyan identity in the form of spiritual beliefs and practices, including the Sweat Lodge complex and Alcoholics Anonymous.

Cooperation and sharing also promotes social and cultural autonomy for Chipewyan Indians and strengthens their sense of independence from the greater Canadian society while encouraging interdependence among themselves. Harvey Feit (1982:384) recognizes similar influences of subsistence activities on James Bay Cree in that: "production and sharing of (country) food, and economic interdependence among Cree themselves, remain central to the Cree economic and social life." Cooperation and sharing also strengthens group solidarity and group identity by drawing people together, some of whom may no longer participate directly in bush life, yet continue to share in bush produce.

Economic interdependence is a key feature in the continuity of Chipewyan society in northern Saskatchewan. Individuals make use of cash derived from any source to fund bush-related subsistence or commercial resource harvesting activities. Cash incomes from wage employment or from transfer

payments are used by many to pursue the hunt which in turn goes to support traditional values and attitudes, beliefs and perceptions, behaviors and practices that together make up an identity structure and a way of life.

The modern Indian society is often described as a welfare society in which Indian people are seen as dependent on government for their continued existence (Frideres 1983; Ray 1984). Helm, Rogers, and Smith (1981:149) date the beginnings of the modern era to the end of the fur trade when:

the Canadian government began to assume direct responsibility for native health, education, and welfare needs long neglected.

Others, including Krech (1983), Jarvenpa and Brumbach (1984), and Ray (1984) recognize Indian dependencies as growing out of their long history in the fur trade and some believe that these dependencies have spawned the modern welfare society of the north in which:

various forms of government assistance provide the principal sources of income for many northern Canadian native settlements, thereby supporting a welfare society (Ray 1984:1).

The use of the term 'welfare society' in relation to Indian people implies that Indians are completely dependent on external assistance and are not actively supporting themselves. James Frideres (1983:185) sums up these perceptions of modern Indian conditions in Canada when he writes:

Native Canadians do share one common feature: across Canada, they lead marginal lives, characterized by poverty and dependence. Indeed, many people argue that Natives are members of a culture of poverty.

In this manner some brand Canadian Indians as not only impoverished economically but also as impoverished in every sphere of social and cultural life. Yet, Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan have a vibrant economy that incorporates both traditional and modern features to support and maintain social patterns and cultural elements that go towards proclaiming Chipewyan identity in a modern world. Government transfer payments, like trader gratuities in the past, are an integral part of that economic structure. At the same time, as noted by Honigmann (1981:713) both wage income and social assistance have provided Indian people with increased opportunity for socioeconomic integration into metropolitan society so that many can move freely from bush living to urban living, integrating both environments into the modern life style. Both economic and social mobility is, after all, part of the flexible nature of Chipewyan society providing an adaptive advantage under rapidly changing conditions and shifting opportunities in Chipewyan life.

The economic profiles indicate that both Caribou-Eater and Buffalo River people continue to practice a traditional economic strategy of seasonality and occupational pluralism, integrating social patterns and social-cultural values within their economic system. Wage labor and transfer payments are not new to their economy, and continue to be used to

support subsistence and resource procurement. The production of country food from subsistence and commercial resource activities continues to fill domestic needs as a major source of income. At Buffalo River country food is experiencing a recent resurgence in popularity. Following five deaths from various forms of cancer in 1987, people are giving up store bought foods with their chemical additives in favor of what is perceived as more healthful bush food. The general consensus is that: "food from the store is full of cancer and is making us sick" (personal communication), and people are very attentive to documentary television programs on chemical use that support these perceptions. It can be expected that dependence on country food will increase as part of a general move towards Indian traditionalism which is taking place throughout the region. Today, country food and other renewable resources make up a significant percentage of community income, and for many people these resources are the primary means for meeting basic needs. A high rate of dependence on renewable resources is typical for subarctic Indians. Ken Bodden (1981:116) notes for Slavey Indians of Fort Resolution that income from country food, including fur production that contributes to domestic nutritional needs: "accounted for 35.6 percent of total income in 1975-76 and about 27.5 percent in 1977-78." Derek Smith (1975:iii) notes for natives of the Mackenzie delta that: "over 75 percent of protein demand of native people was met by land resources." Similarly,

renewable resource procurement accounts for a large proportion of income for Chipewyan Indians in northern Saskatchewan, and for some is the only source of meat and fuel. Furthermore, activities surrounding resource procurement go towards supporting many of the traditional features of Indian culture which in turn strengthen Chipewyan identity. These features are found primarily in the relationships that resource procurement encourages between people, animals, the land, and the spirits.

The following chapter deals with Chipewyan spiritualism and how spiritual beliefs and practices are being used to integrate Chipewyan identity with their way of life in a modern world.

## CHAPTER SEVEN

## ETHNO-SPIRITUALISM: BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

Introduction

The spiritual beliefs and practices of the Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan are part of their identity structure and help define Chipewyan relationships to one another and to the world in which they live. Spiritual expression takes many forms and is expressed for both the Buffalo River people and the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan through Christianity, Nativism, and Alcoholics Anonymous. These three institutions are for many integrated within the individual's spiritual identity. Nativism is here defined as a belief in spirit power by which Indian people explain phenomena, manipulate and control events, and direct their destiny. The Athabaskan concepts of spirit power are derived from the spiritual relationship that is believed to exist between people and animals (Spencer, Jennings, et al. 1977; Honigmann 1981a; Helm 1981).

The Athabaskan concept of spirit power suggests that their aboriginal system of beliefs were animistic in nature in which the idea of a personal supernatural force was expressed as a belief in an indwelling soul, not only in humans, but also in plants and animals. According to E. B. Tylor (1958:196, original 1871):

...the conception of human soul once attained to by man, served as a type or model on which he framed not only his idea of other souls of lower grade, but also his ideas of spiritual beings in general, from the tiniest elf that sports in the long grass up to the heavenly Creator and Ruler of the world, the Great Spirit.

A belief in animal spirit power engendered for Northern Athabaskans a sense of respect by men toward animals, especially, as noted by Spencer, Jennings, et al. (1977:111), those animals of great economic importance including the moose and caribou. Spirit power was acquired by the individual through visions or dreams in which a spirit of an animal, as a medicine animal, became that person's personal guardian spirit (Ridington 1971).

Spirit power for Northern Athabaskan Indians is a personal power that can be used to maintain relationships with the past, to predict the future, and to ensure or deny an individual's or a people's general well-being. June Helm (1981:302) describes the function of spirit power for Dogrib Indians as a means for divining and for controlling activities of animals and of natural phenomena, including the weather. Spirit power is also used by Northern Athabaskans to curse and to cure, and as such is the basis for shamanism and for sorcery. Chipewyan Indians most often express the concept of spirit power in terms of medicine, either as good or as bad medicine. Good medicine is acknowledged in those spiritual practices that benefit the individual and may take

the form of religious ceremony or folk medicine and which are administered by good spiritual practitioners. Bad medicine is recognized in the form of curses or the manipulation of individual well-being by bad spiritual practitioners.

In the aboriginal condition shamanism was practiced throughout the subarctic region as a demonstration of spirit power in healing (Honigmann 1981a:719). Curing power was gained through access to animal spirit power or animal medicine from the bear spirit (Spencer, Jennings, et al. 1977:112). The shaman diagnosed by determining any breaking of taboos in the form of improper conduct towards animals or animal remains that may bring offense to animal spirits. The shaman could also discover and overcome the effects of sorcery. Among Northern Athabaskans sorcery was practiced traditionally through foreign object intrusion or the projection of malevolent spirit power towards an individual to bring about misfortune or to cause illness or even death. Intrusion could be countered by the shaman removing the foreign object by sucking.

Today spiritualism and beliefs in animal spirits and medicine are all part of Nativism among Chipewyan Indians

of northern Saskatchewan. Native spiritualism for the Chipewyan includes a belief in animal spirits as good and bad omens, and mystical spirits that are harbingers of evil. Nativism is practiced in divination and in folk medicine, and is also used in sorcery or witchcraft. Many forms of Nativism are integrated with Christian beliefs and practices by the Chipewyan Indians, and Christian institutions are attempting to accommodate certain features of Nativism within their religious practice. For many Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan Nativism is centered around the Sweat Lodge, a recent innovation in Northern Athabaskan spiritual practice.

This chapter describes and analyzes Chipewyan spiritual beliefs and practices as observed among people living at Buffalo River and in the Upper Churchill River district, and recognizes the growing spiritual relationship that is developing between the Buffalo River people and Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin.

#### Spirit Power and Medicine

Northern Athabaskan Indians in the aboriginal condition had no concept of a personalized god or Great Spirit (Honigmann 1981a:718). Rather their belief system was centered on the relationship between people and animals in terms of spirit power or medicine; "In the old days, there were no gods, only medicine, the Slavey Indians told J. A. Mason (1946:37)" (Honigmann 1981a:718). Through medicine the

individual could draw on universal power to influence events and thereby gain assistance in life. Personal misfortunes indicated a loss of spirit power due to some improper conduct or failure in the man-animal relationship. Spirit power or medicine was gained through a personal and mystical experience and was maintained and nurtured by a duty-obligation relationship between men and animals in which animals had a duty to give themselves up to man in the hunt and man had an obligation to show respect and consideration towards animals and animal spirits. In general, respect was shown to bear, beaver, moose, and caribou through proscriptions on unnecessary killing and defiling of the animal remains, and prescriptions on butchering and disposal of bones, especially the skull (Honigmann 1946:76-79; Helm 1961:119). Other animals that were not used for food were treated with great circumspection as they were feared for their spiritual power. These included the wolf, otter, mink, and lynx which when killed were treated with "special magical precautions" (Honigmann 1981a:724).

Today the special relationships between animals, animal spirit power, and men is recognized and animal remains are handled with care so as not to offend animal spirits or to jeopardize the relationship between animals and hunters. The wolf is most feared, and when killed the remains are treated with special care (see plate eight). Men compete with wolves for caribou, and wolf carcasses are layed out on



Plate 8. Wolf Carcasses, Damant Lake, Northwest Territories, 1985.

high ground with their legs in the air so that the spirit of the wolf can no longer take part in the chase (personal communication).

Bear is also treated in a circumspect manner in the recognition of the relationship between bear spirits and curing power. Bear ceremonialism and the special attachment of subarctic Indians to the bear is noted for both Algonquian (Hallowell 1929) and Athabaskan (Honigmann 1946) Indians.

The close bond between Indians and animal spirits does not appear to extend to the ceremonial dismemberment and distribution of game among Northern Athabaskans. As observed by Honigmann (1981a:725):

Sharing game, although often obligatory, was done so informally that it scarcely resembled what Euro-Americans are apt to regard as ceremonial.

However, the apparent lack of ceremony may be misleading due to the emotional restraint that is practiced by Northern Athabaskans in which public display is considered inappropriate behavior. Among Chipewyan Indians, generosity in the sharing of game is common, especially among related kinsmen. That generosity initiates and sustains reciprocal economic and social relationships which can extend beyond the family and the community to include non-Indian friends and fictive kin. One woman at Dillon, having adopted this ethnographer's wife as a sister, takes every opportunity to strengthen and reaffirm that fictive tie through giving of dried moose meat or other gifts.

Social ceremony may not be readily apparent in the dismemberment and distribution of game animals, yet, it is noted for people at Buffalo River that the handling of game has social significance. One man at Dillon remarked:

In the olden days a man could not marry until he could cut off a moose's head cleanly. It is not easy to cut off a moose's head. I only learned to do it the right way a few years ago myself.

Also marriage preparation for women was, in the past, related to proper treatment of game in that:

A woman was ready for marriage if she knew how to prepare dried moose meat and could sew up any tears she made so the holes did not show. Then she could get married.

This reference reflects the fact that moose meat is prepared for drying in thin and broad slices, and these are easily torn, reducing its esthetic appeal.

Barren-ground caribou are treated with great care, and there are proscriptions that apply to the handling of caribou and caribou carcasses to ensure continued proliferation of the species and future success in the hunt. One man from Black Lake, in describing the caribou hunt, stated a specific taboo related to handling of the carcass:

We always take great care in how we treat the caribou that we kill. A caribou should never be dragged by the neck because that will choke the spirit. We must be careful so the caribou will come back.

The consequences of violating caribou spirits are noted by Smith (1978:72). Caribou-Eater Chipewyan are said to

believe that caribou only die by hunting, and if trapped or abused, the caribou spirit will tell others of its kind of the mistreatment, and they will no longer frequent that place (see Bone 1973:86-87; Muller-Wille 1974:7).

It is likely that for aboriginal Northern Athabaskans, tradition, folk lore, and mythical beliefs of man-animal relationships all went to support the spiritual beliefs and practices which together functioned to integrate man, animals and spirits in a common reality. Traditional beliefs and practices that integrate man with animal spirits continue to define Chipewyan identity and world view.

Nativism based on animal spiritualism and animal medicine supported shamanism and witchcraft among aboriginal Northern Athabaskan people. Spiritual power or medicine was gained by an individual, usually through dreams. Although most men and some women acquired spirit power, that power was only recognized as it was manifested in success in hunting, divining, curing, or some other manipulation of the corporeal world. Spirit power was a transient phenomenon and one's reputation was based on the ability to succeed through the aid of one's spirit helpers, or one's relationship with the spirit world.

The most powerful spiritual forces were those recognized in curing which were controlled by a spiritual healer or shaman. The power of the shaman was often symbolized by special objects used in communication with spirits.

Honigmann (1981a:719) describes the spiritual paraphernalia of a Slavey shaman collected at Fort Nelson in 1943. It consisted of a medicine bag which contained packets of red ocher, seeds, pieces of root, and tobacco among other objects which were all used to aid the shaman in his or her spiritual practice.

Today spiritual curing and religious ceremony are practiced by Chipewyan Indians as part of traditional Nativism and are integrated into new forms of spiritual expression, some of which have been recently adopted as part of an effort in the revival of Indian identity.

Spiritual healing is practiced by Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan both through personal intervention for the sick and through group ceremonies that are intended to promote general spiritual well-being. At Buffalo River there are individuals who are recognized for their spiritual power in healing, in divining, and in conducting religious ceremonies. There are two classes of spiritual healers or modern day shamans that are identifiable; those who practice traditional medicine employing direct methods to prevent or to overcome illness and misfortune by use of herbal medicine and purification ceremonies, and those more modern spiritualists who center their practice within the Sweat Lodge.

The traditional healers at Buffalo River are medical practitioners who diagnose illness and prescribe cures for a broad range of complaints. A combination of herbal medica-

tion and purification are used to prevent or alleviate such general ailments as stomach, liver, or heart disorders or to relieve emotional stress. However, in Chipewyan medicine there is no apparent distinction made between physical, emotional, or social ailments in that all are believed to be the result of a spiritual disorder brought on by improper relationships between spirits and people which are often expressed in terms of bad luck or the effect of some external influence. Illness is often seen as the result of ecological disharmony, and major debilitating diseases such as tuberculosis, ulcers, and cancer are believed to be White man's diseases. There has been a high incidence of cancer over the past several years at Buffalo River, and this is attributed by many people in the region to White man's interference with the environment in terms of replenished fish stocks in the lakes "that taste different", White man's food which is "full of chemicals", and uranium mining which is "poisoning the air and the water causing many people to die" (personal communications). In 1987-1988 there were five deaths at Buffalo River from cancer, and this has brought about a general fear and a dramatic resurgence of native spiritualism in an attempt to counter the effects of disease.

#### Sorcery and Medicine

Traditional healers make medicine to overcome misfortune believed to be brought on by sorcery. Sorcery is practiced among Chipewyan for retribution and out of vindictive desire

by some to destroy the health or well-being of others. Any disruption, misfortune, or bad luck may be seen as the result of sorcery or bad medicine being directed towards an individual by someone who wishes them ill. People are said to engage in sorcery or hire a sorcerer if there is some personal or family feud, or out of jealousy and people say they have been cursed if there is a suspicion of sorcery. A recent suspicion of sorcery at Dillon was countered by the hiring of a medicine woman to remove a curse and provide medicines to nullify the effects of sorcery. The woman, whose family was affected, believed that their marital problems and the decline in their family-run business was the result of sorcery and expressed her concern in the following:

I know someone is doing bad medicine to us to destroy our life and our business. I got someone to come here and take the curse off the buildings and the house and everything. She went all around the place and purified everything. She gave me this medicine to keep away any more trouble.

The same medicine woman also regularly prescribed and provided medicines to prevent ill health which also could be attributed to sorcery. In this manner sickness, misfortune, and even death may be attributed to bad medicine, while protection, prevention, and cures are affected by good medicine practice.

Sentiments about sorcery extend beyond the community at Buffalo River, and it became common knowledge when a woman from Alberta entered the region to hold Sweat Lodge ceremon-

ies for the curing of alcoholism. However, it was also the general opinion that this woman was practicing bad medicine by controlling the will of her clients and by extracting exorbitant fees for her services. Many believe this woman to be a sorcerer, while others believe she is simply a charlatan.

Spiritual healers with a good reputation for curing are known throughout the region and people will travel great distances to take part in ceremonies conducted by a reputable and powerful healer. In the summer of 1988 such a healer held a medicine ceremony at Cold Lake, Alberta and several families from Buffalo River attended seeking spiritual renewal or a cure (personal communications). Such interventions are often sought by alcoholics in their constant struggle for sobriety. Spiritual renewal and personal strength is also sought by alcoholics through Christian intervention within the Catholic Church and through Alcoholics Anonymous. These sources of spiritual healing are addressed further below.

#### Spirit Possession

The belief in spirit power among Chipewyan Indians also extends to a belief in spirit possession. Among Northern Algonquian and Canadian Athabaskan Indians there is a belief in giant person-eating animals who hunt, capture, and devour men (Ridington 1976:109). For Algonquian Indians this

monster is the Windigo or Wetigo, and among Athabaskan speaking Beaver Indians of the Peace River region it is known as Wechuge (Ridington 1976). Robert Lowie (1925) reports a myth of a Chipewyan Windigo for the Barren Lands Band which they term Wildigai (Smith 1978:74). However, Smith (1976d: 32) indicates that the concept of Wittiko may have been learned from Cree, as there are no reports of Wittiko possession among Chipewyan.

Spirit possession by a cannibalistic spirit monster is thought to instill a psychotic state in the victim (see Cooper 1933; Hallowell 1955; Parker 1960; Hay 1971) which is manifest as a desire to eat human flesh. This aberration may be attributed to a general fear among subarctic hunters of resource failure and subsequent starvation that may lead to cannibalism. The relationship between ecological stress and Windigo spirit possession is noted by Smith (1978:74) and by Bishop (1984:40) who report incidents of cannibalism for Cree in the James Bay region during the early historic period.

While the fear of being possessed by a spirit monster may have a strong psychological component, affecting the individual who is possessed, the report of a spirit monster can instill general fear and hysteria in the group. In 1960 it was observed among Saulteaux Indians at Red Sucker Lake, Manitoba that the report of a Wetigo resulted in group hysteria. People of the community congregated in one house

under protection of an armed guard of men who occasionally fired their guns to scare off the spirit (personal observation). Similar fears are reported for Beaver Indians by Ridington (1976:108) who states that: "Wechuge is as feared as the Algonkian windigo but because he has become too powerful, not because he is in some sense psychotic."

Caribou-Eater Chipewyan also recognize a spirit monster or 'bush spirit' which they call 'Aboogee' (personal communications). The Aboogee is reported to take the form of a tall bearded man who steals women and children. The Aboogee is often reported by people and its sighting can create a general panic to the point of women and children being fearful of entering a house where the Aboogee has been seen. Men have been known to give up the hunt after encountering an Aboogee in the bush. Spirit fences are constructed in villages to ward off or confuse the bush spirit. Spirit fences are long wooden fences adorned with strips of white cloth that extend across open spaces for some distance enclosing nothing. There are spirit fences at Fond-du-Lac and Black Lake where the Aboogee is often sighted and is greatly feared.

The belief in cannibalistic monster spirits is deeply rooted in both Algonquian and Northern Athabaskan mythology in which giant person-eating animals appear in human form. However, the Aboogee spirit of the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan is possibly based on historic experiences with Cree who

often raided and killed Chipewyan men and carried away the women and children. This interpretation may be a recent innovation of the more general cannibal monster theme.

People at Buffalo River are not familiar with the Aboogee spirit and do not readily acknowledge spirit possession. Yet, individuals do seek spiritual healing for conditions that may be interpreted as spirit possession. In one case, a young man who was inflicted with wanderlust and could not settle into married life, was taken to a spiritual healer by his parents. The mother reported that this healer: "removed two bugs from his head. He took the bugs out, one from each side and showed them to us. He said that these bugs caused all the trouble. After that he was alright and now he stays home more."

Spirit possession and sorcery are both overcome for people at Buffalo River by the use of spiritual healing and purification rites that are recognized as valid forms of traditional medicine.

#### Sweat Lodge

A more recent expression of spiritualism among Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan is found in the Sweat Lodge ceremony. The Sweat Lodge was introduced to people at Buffalo River in the early 1980's by a local man who learned the practice and spiritual philosophy of the Sweat from Plains Cree. In turn, the knowledge of the Sweat has been passed on to Caribou-Eater Chipewyan in the Athabasca Basin

by people from Buffalo River.

The Sweat Lodge is used by many Indian people of the western Canadian boreal and sub-boreal region and is being used as part of spiritual expression by both Chipewyan and Cree Indians living in northern Saskatchewan. Sweat Lodge ceremonies are also conducted in urban centers for native populations in prisons and psychiatric institutions, and has been incorporated into the University of Saskatchewan Native Studies program as a means of increasing awareness for both native and non-native students of Indian spiritual beliefs and practices.

The Sweat Lodge is only one of several forms of Indian spiritualism that are being expressed by Indians in western Canada. Others include the use of the ceremonial Pipe, the Round Dance, and the Shaking House among the Cree. Sweat Lodge and Round Dance have recently been introduced to the people at Buffalo River (see plates nine, ten, and twelve).

There is no reference to the Chipewyan practicing either Sweat Lodge or Round Dance ceremonies in the past. Nevertheless, people at Buffalo River believe that Sweat Lodge may be a part of their cultural heritage as they report locations near Dillon where piles of heat-cracked stones indicate ancient Sweat Lodge sites. It is most likely that these were left by Cree who occupied the Upper Churchill River district in earlier times.

A Sweat Lodge is established by individuals often as

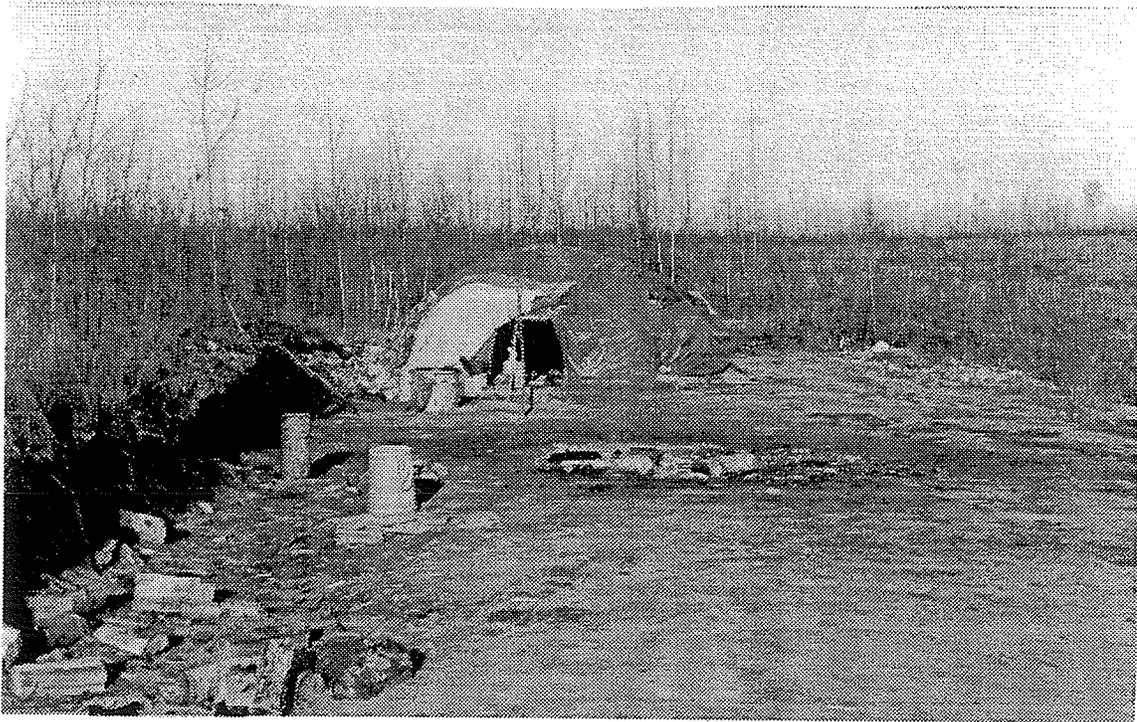


Plate 9. Sweat Lodge, Dillon 1987.

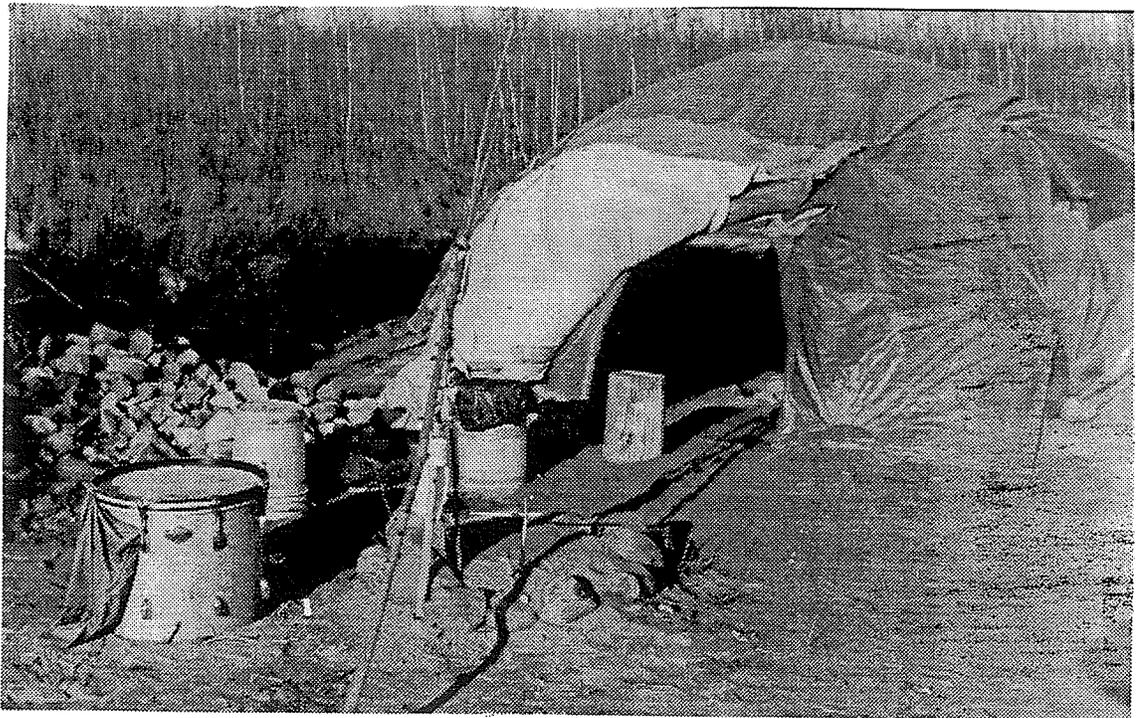


Plate 10. Sweat Lodge, Dillon 1987.

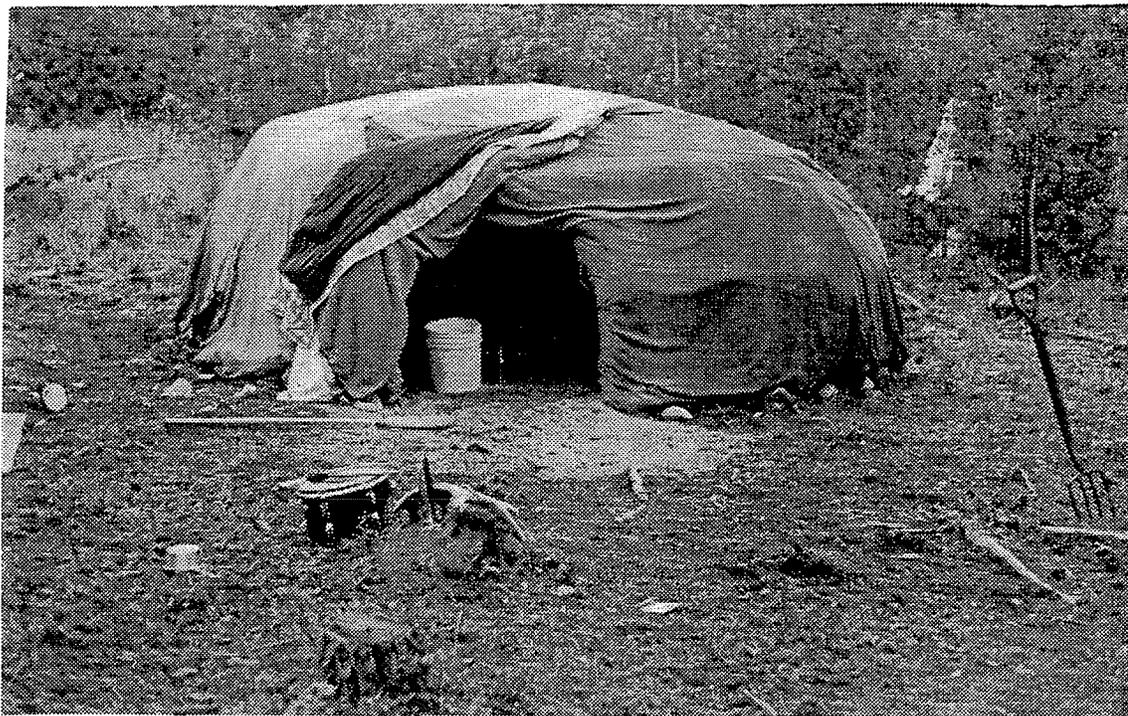


Plate 11. Sweat Lodge, Ile-a-la-Crosse 1987.



Plate 12. Round Dance, Dillon 1988.

part of a personal spirit quest in which the person is seeking spiritual strength or a spiritual renewal. Some use the Sweat Lodge as a vehicle to spread spiritual awareness and to further a sense of Indian identity. Others conduct sweats for profit and receive payment from people who are seeking spiritual renewal or a spiritual cure. Each Sweat Lodge is, therefore, a reflection of the intention, beliefs, and philosophy of the Sweat Lodge leaders who draw to themselves a core of adherents who share their spiritual philosophy and who agree with the way the Sweat is being conducted. Individual sweats may be conservative, adhering to tradition and restricting membership to Indian people, or they may be more liberal, incorporating features of Christian worship and open to all.

Sweat Lodge was first introduced at Buffalo River in a liberal fashion with a strong Christian component. The liberal approach was taken to limit opposition to native spiritualism in a community where Roman Catholicism has been the only outward expression of spiritual belief for over a hundred years and where there is a strong adherence to the Catholic faith. The Sweat Lodge leader considers himself a good Catholic and does not want to offend the Catholic priest or the Catholic parishioners. At the same time he recognizes a need for a spiritual revival and sees himself as a charismatic leader preordained by God to help his people to a better life. He stated his position in the following way:

I was raised in the Church and was an altar boy....I do not want to tell people what to do. Everyone should believe what they want. I have been told what to do and Christ tells me what to say. He talks to the people through me.

The Sweat Lodge leaders often see their role as that of intermediary between man and the Great Spirit, or between man and the spirits of the ancestors. The function of intermediary is a common theme in subarctic Indian spiritualism, and is found in the Shaking Tent or Conjuring House ceremony of the Ojibwa (Hallowell 1934, 1942; Rogers 1962; Preston 1966), in which the practitioner acts as a medium, taking on a trance in order to contact ancestral spirits who speak through him in response to questions posed by the assembled people. A similar ceremony is conducted among Cree in northern Saskatchewan and was described by people at Ile-a-la-Crosse as the Shaking House ceremony in which a shaman is bound in blankets or some other wrapping, and is placed on the floor of a darkened house. The people assemble and the shaman: "struggles with the spirits" trying to free himself from his bonds. During the process "the spirits come in and the whole house shakes and even the dishes fall off the shelves. Many people get scared and run outside" (personal communications).

The Sweat Lodge ceremony is fundamentally a means for coming into contact with the spirit world and is used by individuals for spiritual renewal, for gaining access to personal spiritual strength, and to cure. People diagnosed

with debilitating and terminal illnesses, including heart disease and cancer, seek strength and a cure through the Sweat. The belief in the healing power of the Sweat is great and many testimonials of dramatic cures are given to demonstrate its efficacy. One Sweat Lodge leader stated:

The Sweat is very good and no one has ever been hurt in here. Even babies are brought in. There was a baby who had chest problems and couldn't breath. The doctors said she would not live. They brought that baby here to the Sweat and she got better.

An old woman who couldn't walk came to our Sweat. She came many times and had to crawl in through the opening. Finally she was able to walk a bit better each time. The Sweat helped her.

The Sweat is also practiced at Buffalo River as a curing ceremony for individuals in their own homes. A leader said:

One girl here had a bad cold and I made a Sweat for her in the house, right in her bedroom. The rocks were put into a tub, the window was covered to make it dark, and the drummers came and sat on the floor. She got better.

When Albert got cancer they were going to send him for treatment at Meadow (Lake), but the doctor said they could not stop the cancer. It would only make him suffer longer. He said no, and we brought him home. We got someone to come in and he put up a Sweat Lodge outside, there by the lake. Albert went every night until he couldn't get out of bed anymore.

The Sweat Lodge is described as a place where people sacrifice and share their suffering. One woman stated:

We suffer in the Sweat because it is so hot. We suffer together to help each other.

Many people who suffer from alcoholism attend the Sweat to gain spiritual strength, and they find courage in mutual support. Between rounds in the Sweat people share their feelings, and often give testimony of personal sufferings and triumphs. In this manner, the Sweat resembles Alcoholics Anonymous meetings that are in themselves a major source of spiritual support for many of the people.

The Sweat Lodge, as a religious institution, integrates man with the spiritual and physical world. The relationship between man, spirits, and nature are expressed in a number of symbolic ways both in the structure of the Sweat Lodge and in the Sweat Lodge ceremony as described at Ile-a-la-Crosse:

The Sweat is sacred and should not be taken lightly. Everything here has meaning and we have to act properly. The lodge is built round like the heavens and sits on Mother Earth. The entrance is low so you have to crawl in. I don't even touch the sides when I come in or go out. You move from the left to the right inside the Lodge, and sit in a circle. We take turns speaking also from left to right just as the sun moves across the sky....Here we call on our ancestors to help us. We hear them and we speak to them.

The Sweat Lodge expresses Indian cosmology and world view. The lodge is dome shaped, and at the center of the lodge is a circular depression or pit for the heated stones. This pit represents the center of the universe and the center of self. The dome of the lodge is half a sphere, and may be seen as being of this world, while the unseen half is a

reflection of corporeal reality beneath the surface, and may be seen as representing the spiritual world. The two halves of the dome, the physical and the metaphysical, come together at the surface of Mother Earth, the giver of life. In this manner the Sweat Lodge fuses the spiritual and the physical into one reality and provides a focus for the integration of man, spirits, and nature and a continuity between this world and other than this world experience.

The structure of the Sweat Lodge is, for some, highly symbolic with different features representing mystical qualities and human virtues. The framework of the lodge is constructed out of sixteen saplings making four quadrants of four saplings each. The four quadrants may be set off by colored cloth on the inside of the dome, with the colors representing the four Thunder Birds. In this manner the Sweat Lodge expresses Indian cosmology, oriented to the four cardinal directions. The red quadrant is oriented to the east and represents birth and spiritual renewal. The yellow is for the south indicating the land of the ancestors and the source of all wisdom. The blue quadrant is to the west as the source of spirit power and strength. The quadrant to the north is white, the source of all evil. The four colors of the Thunder Birds are often replicated externally to the lodge as strips of cloth tied to trees or poles to mark the four directions (see plate eleven).

For some, the poles of the framework each represent

some human virtue, however, this interpretation varies from one Sweat Lodge leader to another. The human virtues are acquired through spiritual strength in diligence, perseverance, abstinence, and moderation. Symbolic meaning and representation is not uniform nor universal, but rather is left open to a high degree of individual interpretation.

At the entrance to the Sweat Lodge is found a small fire pit which is used for offering tobacco and for preparing a smudge of sweet grass that is used to purify the lodge and the leaders before they take part in the ceremony. At the entrance is an eagle feather or an eagle head suspended from a short pole, and there may also be a medicine bag or other ceremonial object attached to the pole (see plates ten and eleven).

The stones for the Sweat are heated in a large fire external to and some distance away from the lodge, and once heated are carried in and deposited in the central pit. The material for firing the stones is supposed to be natural, with no artificial aids used to start the fire. However, it was noted that at one Sweat Lodge at Ile-a-la-Crosse propane was used for starting the fire. No paper or trash is to be thrown into the fire as it is to be kept pure.

People attending a Sweat strip off their clothing, and wear only shorts and light tops. They remove all foreign objects including jewelry and eye glasses. Once people are seated in a circle within the lodge the hot stones are carr-

ied in and smudged with sage or a mixture of tobacco and red willow bark termed in Cree 'kinekinek'. The stones are then considered sacred and infused with spirit power. This power is such that its release causes the stones to crack and break apart. Once the hot stones are smudged, the incense rising from them is dispersed with an eagle wing to purify the assembled people. The entrance flap is closed plunging all inside into total darkness. Water is poured on the stones immediately producing a hot blast of steam so intense that any movement is avoided. Drumming and chanting begins as people 'pray' and 'talk' to the spirits. The combination of complete darkness, overpowering heat, and incoherent, all-pervasive sound creates an atmosphere that is both awe inspiring and frightening in its totality. The round is brought to an abrupt end by any person who wishes to have a break simply by shouting a pre-arranged signal. Except for the smudging, the procedure is repeated usually four times, and each round is interspersed with a brief interlude when the entrance flap is opened to allow in fresh air. During the intermissions tea or water is passed around and some people may go out for relief. It is at this time that instruction is given in spiritual awareness and testimonials may be heard.

After the ceremony is complete some people plunge into the lake, or in winter roll in the snow as a means of invigorating and cleansing themselves. A feast may follow.

The Sweat Lodge ceremony usually takes place in the evening and many are conducted several times a week.

Sweat Lodge for Chipewyan Indians is a rapidly expanding institution in northern Saskatchewan. Sweat Lodge focuses on Indian spiritualism as Nativistic belief to provide a new and acceptable means for rationalizing Indian identity.

#### Death and Dying

Death among the Chipewyan affects the whole community and is of great concern; especially when people die from illness or suicide rather than from accident or old age. In the case of an illness-related death there is a tendency to place the blame on some external force. For example, deaths from cancer are often attributed to White man's food or to uranium mining that is believed to be poisoning the air and water, and not to personal habits such as smoking. Honigmann (1981a:727) notes for subarctic Indians that death: "frequently meant inimical forces--evil spirits, ghosts, or the effects of sorcery--had intruded in human affairs."

Among the Chipewyan a death watch is maintained for the terminally ill. Spencer, Jennings, et al. (1977:111) note for the Slavey a similar attentiveness to the dying when:

...the whole camp remained awake both to wait for the prophetic power said to be associated with the approach of death and for the sound of the animal spirit associated with the dying person.

Among the Chipewyan there is a strong association of death with animal spirits who maintain a vigil for the dying,

who are heard to cry out at the time of death, and who are seen to remain in the vicinity after a person has died. These phenomena are especially noted for the death of a well respected person who is renowned for his concern and support for others during his lifetime, and for his strength and personal spirit power as acquired from his spirit helper.

At Buffalo River the relationship between deceased people and animals is often expressed in that an animal will be noted as frequenting the dead person's home or camp for some indefinite period, and an attachment is recognized between the deceased and the animal. One woman at Dillon noted:

There are always loons along the shore here where that old man lived. Every day those loons come here.

After a recent funeral of a well respected and deeply loved man at Dillon the widow related the following incident,

We put his bed in the livingroom so he could look out over the lake. The last thing he saw was the sunrise. It was a beautiful morning and there were no clouds in the sky....When he was carried out of the house there was a loud boom in the sky like thunder, but the sky was clear....Ever since he came from the hospital that loon has been sitting on the lake and you can see it is still there.

The spirits of the recently dead are often seen as apparitions, especially for those who were close to these persons and these apparitions may be a source of fear or of comfort to the living. Comfort is also gained from an acknowledgement of spiritual strength displayed by the deceased during their life. This often involves a recognition of

spiritual strength in defeating alcoholism with statements such as: "he died on the tenth anniversary of his sobriety."

Death from accident is an all too common occurrence at Buffalo River and most accidental deaths result from automobile mishaps, often associated with drinking. Relatives of the deceased mark these tragedies with either a simple cross or a shrine erected at the side of the road where the accident occurred (see plates thirteen and fourteen).

Death is generally feared by the Chipewyan and in earlier times people fled from the place where a person had died (Smith 1975:427). They were afraid of the ghost that was believed to cling to the body it had recently inhabited (Honigmann 1981a:727). Among Chipewyan people today death from suicide is most feared and that fear is strengthened by the Catholic emphasis on suicide as a mortal sin. When a suicide takes place the living abandon the place. In 1960 a teenaged girl shot herself at Dillon and her family immediately abandoned the house where the tragedy happened (personal observation). That house remained vacant thereafter (see plate sixteen).

Similar fears of the spirits of the recently dead exist among Saulteaux Indians of northwestern Manitoba (personal observations). Among the Saulteaux of Red Sucker Lake, when a person died, the door of the house was sealed off and a new door was cut in another wall to: "confuse the spirits so they cannot get back in the house" (personal communication).



Plate 13. Roadside Memorials, Buffalo River.



Plate 14. Roadside Memorial, Buffalo River.

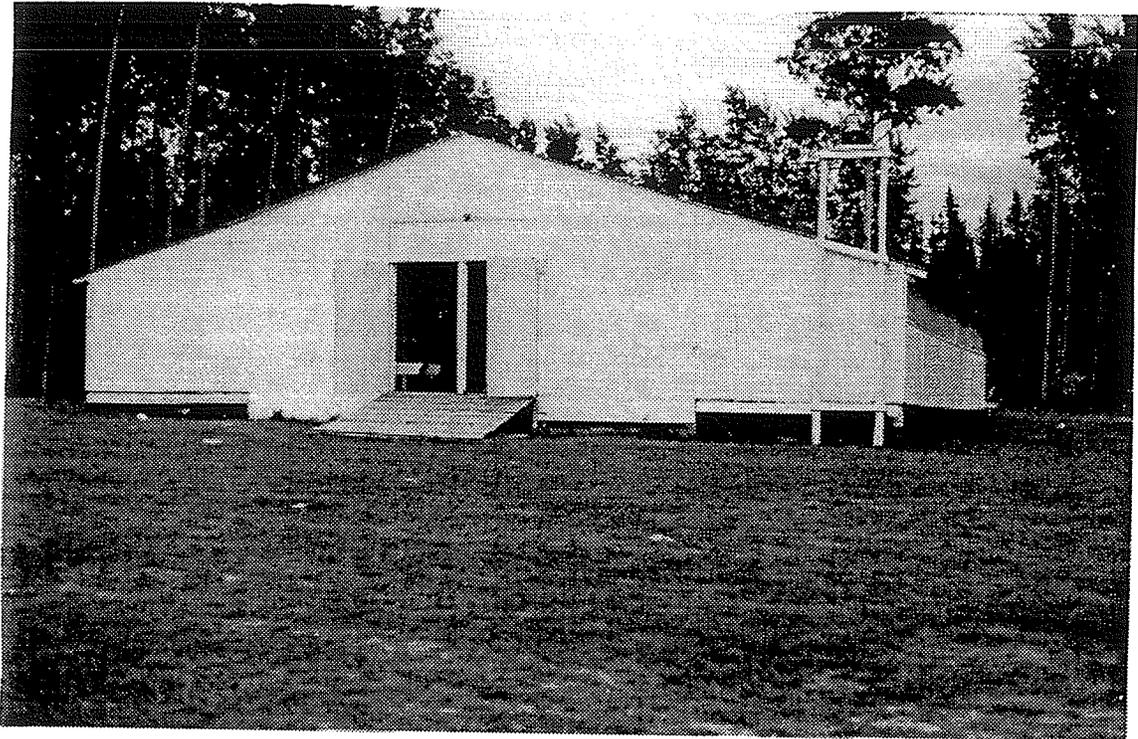


Plate 15. Pilgrimage Center, Dillon 1987.



Plate 16. Traditional Housing, Dillon c1960.

This fear of the recently dead appears to be universal for subarctic Indians. Honigmann (1981a:727) notes for the Kaska that: "Circuitous removal of a corpse from a dwelling was intended to prevent the ghost from finding its way back."

While death is feared by the Chipewyan, especially a death from suicide, respect for the dead is evident in the funeral arrangements and in the memories people cherish of their dead relatives and loved ones. Funerals are a major event in the life of Indian people, and are characterized by long wakes in which the deceased is well laid out with great care and expense. Funerals of well-known and respected individuals draw people from great distances and are one means by which there is increasing contact being made between the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan and people from Buffalo River. The funeral process culminates with a funeral Mass and interment which are generally attended by everyone in the community.

Throughout the ordeal of death, from illness to burial, all arrangements are made by the family. Doctors, clergy, and funeral directors are engaged in their official capacities to provide services to which Indian people have become accustomed. These services are integrated for many Indian people with more traditional spiritual practices to maintain relationships between animal spirits and men, and between the living and the dead. Both Christianity and Nativism provide for Chipewyan Indians spiritual fulfillment and spiritual renewal as part of a changing identity structure.

### Christianity and Pilgrimage

The influence of the Christian religion upon subarctic Indian people is usually dated to the arrival of missionaries and the establishment of missions in Indian territory. However, in the western subarctic Christian influence predated the arrival of missionaries by 150 years as Indians came into initial contact with Christian European traders and were introduced through exposure to their values, beliefs and practices.

By the middle of the nineteenth century the French Catholic order of Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI) had established missions at Fond-du-Lac and Ile-a-la-Crosse in order to minister to and convert the Chipewyan. From that time Christianity became incorporated into the Chipewyan belief system (McCarthy 1981).

The attraction of trade and of Christian worship drew the Chipewyan into closer association with the trade and mission posts. By the end of the nineteenth century major assemblages of Indian bands took place at Ile-a-la-Crosse in June and September for trade, and at Christmas and Easter for religious celebration (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984:160). The result was a shift in the seasonal migratory range of regional Indian bands which became increasingly centered on the outpost settlements. Elders at Buffalo River recall major assemblages at Ile-a-la-Crosse:

In the old days we had something like a pilgrimage at Ile-la-Crosse. We went by canoe right after the ice was out and we camped on Big Island right across from the mission. Many people were there. ...Hundreds of canoes along the shore. We stayed two or three weeks, going to church and visiting. Some people stayed at that place all summer drying fish.

Today Indian people of the western subarctic continue the age old practice of coming together during the summer for religious ceremony and socialization. The focus for major assemblages is the pilgrimage. Pilgrimage for Northern Athabaskan Indians is a gathering of Indian people for spiritual renewal under the auspices of the Catholic Church. The central pilgrimage site is at Lac Saint Anne, Alberta, and it is there that the annual pilgrimage round begins. Cree and Northern Athabaskan Indians from all parts of the western subarctic of Canada congregate at Lac Saint Anne in the early part of the summer for a week of religious celebration and worship, each band occupying a designated area of the pilgrimage grounds. In this fashion individual bands are easily identified and people can readily locate friends among the large encampment which number several thousand people and several hundred tents. During pilgrimage people attend religious services which are conducted several times each day, take part in work-shops and Alcoholics Anonymous meetings, visit, and pray. Prayer meetings are often spontaneous with people coming together to say the rosary and sing hymns. Blessings are invoked from Saint Anne and the Blessed Virgin

Mary, and the Ave Maria is heard droning through the camp late into the night.

At the end of pilgrimage people disperse back to their home communities, with some continuing to follow the pilgrimage round throughout the summer. The regional pilgrimage round in northern Saskatchewan follows the Lac Saint Anne gathering, beginning with a pilgrimage at Saint Louis near Batoche, the site of the last battle in the Northwest Rebellion in 1885. From Saint Louis the pilgrimage round is taken up by the communities of Patuanak, Canoe Lake, and Buffalo River, with each community taking turn as pilgrimage host.

Pilgrimage at Buffalo River marks the end of the annual gatherings in northern Saskatchewan, and usually takes place over a three day weekend in late August.

A pilgrimage center was first built at Dillon by the people of Buffalo River in 1971 as an attempt at spiritual renewal during a period of excessive alcohol abuse and social and moral decay . The pilgrimage center is located in an isolated spot on the outskirts of Dillon along the shore of Big Buffalo Lake (plate fifteen). The site is marked by a large open-air chapel and a grotto enclosing a statue of the Virgin Mary overlooking the lake (plates seventeen and eighteen). An open wood surrounds the pilgrimage grounds where visitors and local people camp during the religious festival. Pilgrimage is, for the people of Buffalo River, the social and spiritual highlight of the year. The community takes a



Plate 17. Pilgrimage Grounds, Dillon 1987.



Plate 18. Pilgrimage Shrine, Dillon 1987.

great pride in hosting pilgrimage and everyone takes part. Preparations begin weeks in advance under the direction of a village elder and ex-chief of the Buffalo River Band. Posters are printed and distributed, camp grounds are cleaned, and the grass is cut around the pilgrimage center. Fire wood is cut and fish are caught to feed the expected guests. The pilgrimage center is cleaned, painted, and set up for the religious services with lights, sound system, organ, and altar installed. The event draws people together from the three communities at Buffalo River in a common cause, and brings home many people who live and work in other places. The occasion is therefore one of reunion as well as social and spiritual renewal, and functions to provide a focus for identity expression and identity awareness for the people at Buffalo River.

In recent years pilgrimage at Dillon has provided a forum for the integration of various forms of spiritual expression and social action. Catholic worship is conducted in the form of Catholic Mass several times a day, ending with a Mass at midnight when, according to local legend, a miracle occurred during the first pilgrimage in the form of a bright light in the sky which was seen to hover over the pilgrimage center during the inaugural Mass (personal communications). The miracle provided a spiritual sanction for pilgrimage at Dillon and indicated to the people that a spiritual resolution was at hand to aid in overcoming social

disruption and individual despair.

During the 1987 pilgrimage, Sweat Lodge ceremonies were conducted in conjunction with pilgrimage, and the schedule of Sweats were announced following each Mass. The overall theme of the pilgrimage was social and cultural revival, and it was noted that the Catholic priest encouraged the people, through his homily, to seek out traditional means to support their culture and identity (personal observation).

A third form of social and religious renewal attached to pilgrimage is Alcoholics Anonymous meetings which are held at intervals between religious services. Alcoholics Anonymous (AA) was introduced to the people at Buffalo River in the mid 1970's following a decade of excessive alcohol abuse in the community which was accompanied by a general social and economic decline.

Alcoholics Anonymous is an institution for the control of alcoholism through mutual support. The institution was founded in 1935, with a 1980 membership of over 300,000 people in 85 countries (Steinbring 1980:91). The AA movement incorporates Christian principles with self-help and mutual support to arrest the use of alcohol by those who feel addicted and who want to regain control over their lives. For a complete description of Alcoholics Anonymous see its official publication, Alcoholics Anonymous, Works Publishing Company, 1946.

Indians, Alcohol, and Alcoholics Anonymous

Alcohol was first introduced to Canadian Indians by European explorers and was often used as a medium of exchange in the fur trade (MacAndrew and Edgerton 1969; Hamer and Steinbring 1980). Dailey (1968) provides an overview of the role of alcohol among Canadian Indians as reported in the Jesuit Relations.

The Chipewyan, and other Northern Athabaskans, had access to alcohol through trade from the earliest times of contact. The Hudson's Bay Company records of sales at Fort Churchill for the period 1760-1764 indicate the trade in alcohol with 950 gallons of brandy traded to the Northern Indians (Yerbury 1986:44). It is likely that some of the alcohol traded at the coast was carried inland by Chipewyan middlemen to encourage trade with other Athabaskan groups of the interior.

Sir John Franklin (1824-1:241-242), in his 1819-1822 expedition to the Mackenzie River district gives an account of the nature of trade with Northern Athabaskans:

At the opening of the water in spring, the Indians resort to the establishments to settle their accounts with the traders, and to procure the necessaries they require for the summer. This meeting is generally a scene of much riot and confusion as the hunters receive such quantities of spirits as to keep them in a state of intoxication for several days (VanStone 1980:31).

Drinking was a common part of the trade experience throughout the district.

Today the use and abuse of alcohol are widespread across the western Canadian subarctic. Drinking patterns are reported for various Athabaskan groups by Honigmann and Honigmann (1945; 1970), Honigmann (1946; 1949; 1966), Helm (1961), and Helm and Lurie (1961).

Alcohol use and alcohol abuse are known to the Chipewyan Indians at Buffalo River, and the abuse of alcohol is becoming an increasing concern for Indian leaders in the Athabasca Basin (personal communications). While the people at Buffalo River have a long history of alcohol use, extensive abuse of liquor did not emerge until the mid 1960's. This period coincides with a general economic collapse and an increasing dependence on social assistance. The pattern of alcohol abuse and socio-economic stagnation continued into the mid 1970's when the people at Buffalo River experienced a social, political, economic, and spiritual renewal accompanied by sudden and dramatic change.

In the mid 1970's the Peter Pond Indian Band took on an increasing role in self government and began to implement economic and community development programs. The period was marked by the change in the name of the Indian Band on the 15th of September, 1976 from the Peter Pond Band to the Buffalo River Band, and the declaration of Buffalo River as a 'dry' reserve where the possession of alcohol was prohibited. At about the same time an evaluation of Band membership resulted in the relocation of many non-status Indians from

Dillon to St. George's Hill and Michel Village, initiating community development at those two sites. The economic development for all three communities focused on the construction of housing and community infrastructure. At the same time that political and economic renewal were taking place there was a spiritual revival in the form of Alcoholics Anonymous which was introduced to Buffalo River in the mid 1970's by Indians from nearby communities along the Upper Churchill River. The people at Buffalo River are, in turn, introducing the AA movement to Caribou-Eater Chipewyan further to the north in the Athabasca Basin.

Studies of North American Indians and alcohol indicate a great variation in findings for why Indians drink and what are the consequences of their drinking behavior. In most of these studies two general themes emerge in which drinking is seen as either a positive or a negative force in Indian society. For some, drinking among Indians is analysed in relation to acculturation experience as a consequence of the pressures for change (Graves 1967; Hamer 1980). For others (Field 1962) drinking is seen as a result of breakdown in the social structure, or a release of suppressed impulses which result in a breakdown of the emotional structure (Hallowell 1955:141). In these and other studies, drinking among Indians is treated as a destructive force in native society (see Honigmann and Honigmann 1945; 1970).

However, as noted by Mandelbaum (1965:281), drinking is

a cultural artifact, and like any other major cultural artifact, its "form and meanings...are culturally defined." As a cultural artifact drinking may have utility functions to promote, encourage, and maintain relationships or to help define identity, especially during times of rapid cultural change. Studies by Lemert (1954) among Northwest Coast Indians, and by Heath (1964) for the Navajo found that drinking can promote social integration. Matthiasson (1975) has found that among Inuit of Baffin Island, alcohol is useful in maintaining traditional patterns of reciprocity in economic exchange. Robbins (1973) shows that the use of alcohol among Naskapi Indians of northern Quebec serves to focus interpersonal conflict on the resolution of status positions and on the emphasis of personal identity for Indian people working in a modern wage labor economy.

Others have studied the relationship between spirit power and drinking. Hamer (1969) suggests a relationship between dependencies created by drinking and those nurtured through sacred guardian spirit-helpers. Ferguson (1971) claims that drinking became a substitute for shamanism for Inuit of the western Canadian arctic (Price 1975:19). Dailey (1968:57) recognizes that:

...liquor greatly facilitated the attainment of dreams which was for the Indian his most valued experience. Through alcohol he was able to achieve a degree of ecstasy never possible in prehistoric times.

Price (1975:19) notes that: "(T)he transendence of the

physical to obtain a spiritual experience was valued and became identified with drinking," and that drunkenness as a transcendent experience "has been suggested generally for those Indian societies which valued the vision quest, dreams, trances, and related experiences." Dailey (1968:49), in his review of the role of alcohol among American Indians as reported in the Jesuit Relations, notes that: "intoxication was included in the category of the supernatural."

It would appear from past studies that drinking among Native North Americans is both functional and dysfunctional depending, for the most part, on how alcohol is used and if that use is abused. It is clear from the extensive historical documentation provided by MacAndrew and Edgerton (1969) of the role of alcohol in Indian-White relationships, that while use of alcohol by Indians often resulted in social degradation, Indian abuse of alcohol was not universal. Rather, the taste for liquor was acquired by some Indians gradually through their association with European explorers and traders, and for others, liquor was rejected out of hand. Some Indian leaders recognized the potential harm in alcohol, and incorporated abstinence from liquor as a social or religious proscription. Price (1975:23) notes that some Indian bands had penalties for drunkenness, including exclusion, and that the Handsome Lake religious movement of the Iroquois, and the Native American Church both prohibit the use of alcohol by their adherents.

Today, the social cost of drinking for Indians is high. However, not all Indians drink, not all Indians get drunk when they drink, and many Indians who drank and got drunk in the past no longer engage in drinking behavior. Yet, the use and abuse of alcohol are part of the ethnohistory of Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan.

Alcoholism, and its causes, may be related to biological, psychological, or sociological processes or some combination of these. The intent here is not to study alcoholism as a disease or as a psycho-social phenomena, but rather to analyse alcohol abuse and the relief from that abuse as a collective phenomena among a specific Indian population.

The abuse of alcohol and the relief from that abuse may be seen as either an individual or as a collective process. Among non-native people alcohol abuse is often individualistic and the effort to stop drinking is a personal struggle. Alcoholics Anonymous creates a support system to overcome the sense of isolation and to promote individual strength through a collective will, common philosophy, and an institutionalized procedure. The propensity for alcoholism may also be seen as personalized, as a means for coping or failing to cope with any number of internal or external pressures. However, among Native people, alcohol abuse and relief from that abuse is often observed as a collective phenomenon, occurring under similar conditions and shared by a group of people during the same period of time. This collective and

synchronous process is observed for Chipewyan Indians at Buffalo River and suggests that there are common factors that initiated and supported alcohol abuse and the desire to stop that abuse. These common factors may be sought in the social and cultural milieu as changes in interpersonal, ecological, or metaphysical relationships and may be related to the loss and subsequent reattainment of autonomy, control over life, a sense of worth, and self esteem. Yet, at Buffalo River it was recognized that causes for alcohol abuse cannot be easily determined by focusing on why people drank, but was rather discovered by understanding why people stopped drinking.

People at Buffalo River do not seem to know what brought on their excessive drinking, but rather are only aware of the problems that accompanied their drinking behavior. The general response is that "it was a bad time....Almost everyone was drinking." No excuses are given nor do people attempt to justify their drinking as a consequence of some felt need or some felt loss. Yet, people are very aware and are quick to relate why they stopped drinking, expressing their motivation in terms of retrieval and of achievement. Retrieval is expressed as regaining control over self, family, and community. A typical response is:

I quit drinking because I was scared for my kids. I didn't know what was going to happen to them. A lot of younger people were running wild and still some are like that. We have to look after them so they can do better.

Achievement is put in terms of overcoming a debilitating force that has the power to take over and destroy one's life. Alcoholism is thereby viewed, as are other debilitating diseases, as a force external to self, and like other diseases, alcoholism is subject to treatment, control, and remission. Like other diseases, a cure may be sought through use of Indian medicine, including Sweat Lodge, or relief may be through following non-native avenues of treatment, or a combination of both. Individuals who regularly attend Sweat Lodge to seek support and gain strength as alcoholics, also seek maintenance support through the Native Alcoholic Council Centre in Saskatoon where group therapy and counselling are expressed as treatment: "I am going to Saskatoon for treatment" (personal communications).

Mutual support is also gained through AA meetings where people share their experiences with alcohol through public testimonials. Public testimonials tend to follow common themes of personal trials and triumphs, and are often a forum for articulation of Indian values and aspirations that through repetition come to define a collective awareness of Indian identity, objectives, aspirations, and goals.

Personal testimony has a basis in Indian cultural tradition in terms of confession in conjuring ceremonies for the Ojibwa (see Dunning 1959; Steinbring 1967), and in Catholic confession for Northern Athabaskans. Individual oratory and story telling are also part of traditional Indian practice

as a means of instruction and of validating leadership roles. The presentation of public testimony at AA meetings gives the orator an opportunity to gain respect and to contribute to the well-being of the group. Testimonials not only reinforce acceptable standards for behavior, but also provide a forum for introducing new ways for coping with change. Through AA people at Buffalo River are thereby able to define the present and design the future. Through AA roundups regional populations come together to communicate their perception of self and what it means to be Indian under different conditions in different parts of the country. Alcoholics Anonymous meetings and AA roundups, like pilgrimage, provide opportunities for Indian people to come together in micro and macro assemblages where identity attributes can be claimed, verified, learned, and expressed. For Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan, this follows age old traditions of seasonal aggregation when identity was affirmed through contact and social interaction. Robbins (1973:100), in discussing social gatherings as identity resolving forums, states that:

...the forums serve as a time during which participants in the gathering have the opportunity to seek information to allow for the aligning of the identity they believe they possess with the identity they believe others attribute to them. In sum, such gatherings or interactions involve the enactment of behavioral strategies to permit persons to maintain, attain or protect desired identities or social positions.

Identity resolving forums are found by Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan in pilgrimage and through AA where the search for spiritual awareness furthers the perceptions of ethnic awareness.

### Conclusion

Ethnic identity for Chipewyan Indians is supported by spiritual expression through Christianity, Alcoholics Anonymous, and Nativism. However, native spiritualism, with its focus on spirit power, appears to be central to spiritual belief and practice as an integrating force in Chipewyan belief system. Spirit power is used as medicine to curse and to cure, and is manifested through spirit possession, sorcery, and shamanism. Traditional medicine and Christian belief is supported by the Sweat Lodge ceremony and the AA movement to express relationships that are acknowledged between people, ancestral spirits, animals, animal spirits, and God. Through an integrated system of spiritual beliefs and practices Chipewyan Indians are able to explain phenomena, resolve problems, cope with change, and define who they are and where they belong in a rapidly changing world.

Recently adopted spiritual practices from Plains Indian culture are finding expression among Chipewyan Indians. Sweat Lodge has been introduced to the people of Buffalo River over the past several years and is being practiced to define Chipewyan spiritual identity and to provide an alternative outlet for Indian medicine. Sweat Lodge is also

being introduced by people from Buffalo River to Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin primarily as an aid in treating alcoholism. It may be expected that the Sweat, along with other forms of spiritual practice, will extend across regional ethnic boundaries to provide the Chipewyan and other subarctic Indians with a greater sense of their collective identity as Northern Athabaskans and as Indians. It may also be expected that specific features of spiritualism will be adopted or rejected by localized groups resulting in the retention of identity divisions between regional populations within the Chipewyan collective. Each change in spiritual expression will continue, however, to address changing needs as ethno-adaptations.

## CHAPTER EIGHT

## SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

This study has attempted to present ways in which the Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan express their identity as ethno-adaptations. The objective of the study was to integrate historical information with contemporary observations to determine differences and similarities in identity expression and identity change for regional populations of Chipewyan over space and time.

An ethnic model was used to identify sub-groups within the Chipewyan collective. The ethnic model provided a means for tracing regional populations and individual Indian bands by reference to their primordial attachments to territory, tradition, and way of life and circumstantial features of identity expressions that are used by people as innovations for resolving conflicts and coping with change.

This study made use of an ethnohistorical approach and ethno-comparisons to trace Chipewyan identity expression from the late prehistoric to modern times. Ethnohistorical analysis made use of the limited archeological evidence that is available for the region, linguistic research, archival information gathered primarily from trader journals, past ethnographic research related to Northern Athabaskan Indians, and oral histories gathered through ethnographic research of the study populations. Through ethnohistorical analysis two regional populations of Chipewyan have been identified based

on different social-ecological adaptations and contact experiences; a western and an eastern population. Distinctions in ethno-adaptations and identity expressions have been traced for both regional populations. Distinctions between the eastern bands of Ethen-eldeli and western bands of Thi-lan-ottine were determined by contrasting the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan from the Chipewyan at Buffalo River.

The methodology applied in field research for this study made use of an innovative approach of association observation. The intent was to combine observer as participant with complete observer techniques in order to have a flexible research strategy that would respond to different field conditions and changes that occur from one interaction to another. The strategy was also designed to elicit both objective information and subjective opinion over a broad range of subjects in order to gain an understanding of differences in the expression of social and cultural behaviors that go towards structuring an ethnic identity.

Research among Caribou-Eater Chipewyan relied on a strategy of researcher as complete observer to aid in gathering of information over a limited period of time which precluded the researcher from becoming involved in the daily lives of the people under study. This research strategy was adopted as the most efficient means of data and information gathering for the comparative populations at Fond-du-Lac, Black Lake, and Wollaston under conditions of time and funding

constraints. Research among Caribou-Eater Chipewyan was also limited to direct observations and open ended interviews that were both opportunistic and scheduled. The limitations imposed by these methods were offset by extensive ethnohistorical research to determine ethno-adaptive processes for the Caribou-Eater bands.

Field research at Buffalo River made use of association observations which integrated observer as participant with complete observer strategies. Association observations were effective in that initial contacts were progressively expanded through increasing associations with individuals, their families, and sub-groupings that extended beyond the research communities to encompass people from Buffalo River living in other regional communities and in Saskatoon.

Association observations allowed the researcher to interact at the interpersonal and at the community level to place individualized experiences, perceptions, and expressed attitudes into a community and a regional context.

Associations developed exponentially over time, allowing the researcher to continually expand the informant base, the degree of interactions, and depth of knowledge, while providing ever increasing opportunities for cross-checking information gathered.

Association observations encouraged increasing participation by drawing the researcher into community life, thereby expanding the information and knowledge base over

time. Association observations allowed for effective sampling of the population in that specific data on particular issues could be gathered without resorting to structured interview schedules or other more rigorous sampling techniques. Informal interactions over an extended period of time drew out information on topics that were often closely guarded. Quantitative data were also obtained from government statistics and band files and these were used to develop a framework for analysing social and economic adaptations. A drawback in the use of association observations in data gathering is that the technique can be tedious in that multiple contacts and confirmations must be made before information can be considered reliable and complete. Single source information that is closely guarded may be considered accurate once it is released.

Field research was facilitated by previous researcher residence at Dillon and in other Indian communities of the western Canadian subarctic. These experiences proved useful for renewing contacts and for making comparisons from personal observations that took place a quarter of a century before.

A major concern of the study was to provide comparative information in a regional context of Chipewyan ethno-adaptations. A regional approach involving several Indian bands was necessary to analyse ethnicity since ethnicity is not only a subjective feeling of belonging to one's own

group, but is also a group sense of self as being different from others. In this study it was suspected that sub-groups within the Chipewyan collective existed and that the separate identity and the collective identity expressed by Chipewyan Indians contribute to different adaptive strategies today as they had in the past. Ethno-adaptations for Chipewyan Indians are seen to take place not only within the physical and cultural environment, but also within the metaphysical and social spheres since ethnic identity is an expression of material, ideological, and social realities.

All Chipewyan Indians, and indeed all Northern Athabaskans of Canada, share general features of social identity that include a sense of common origins, language affiliations, a hunting and gathering tradition, and prehistoric adaptations to a subarctic environment. These common features are furthered by similar experiences of contact and interaction with Euro-Canadians that include technological influences, increasing dependencies on traders, missionaries, and government agencies, relocation of regional bands, religious conversion to Roman Catholicism, and village settlement. Differences between regional populations are found in prehistoric territoriality, in dialect and language distinctions, and in orientations to the land. Many of these differences were strengthened by non-uniform contact experience with Euro-Canadians by various regional Indian populations.

While eastern bands of Chipewyan occupied the edge of the forest near Hudson Bay, basing their subsistence economy on the caribou hunt, western bands of Chipewyan were found in the taiga near Great Slave Lake where they had access to both tundra and forest resources. While eastern bands remained marginal to the fur trade and isolated from other Athabaskan speaking groups, western bands were readily drawn into the early fur trade as middlemen and as trappers due to their more favorable location in the western forests among neighboring Athabaskan groups. These different conditions and early experiences with Europeans were influential in later attachments and adaptations by different regional Chipewyan populations.

Prehistoric ethnic distinctions likely existed between eastern and western Chipewyan in terms of primordial features of identity that contributed to distinctive patterns of ethnic awareness, and circumstantial strategies and actions that went to the formation of differences in ethnic consciousness. The different populations had clear identity divisions in terms of separate territorial integrities as defined by band names which reflected their relative position to other groups or were descriptive of their homeland and their hunting territory. The names people had for themselves and for others with whom they came in contact is a clear indication of an awareness of self in relation to all others. These patterns of identity awareness are seen from earliest

contact as indicated in the account of the folk heroine Thanadelthur, who intended to introduce neighboring groups to the fur trade, and names these groups with decreasing familiarity relative to distance from her own country of birth.

Early traders recognized not only different tribal groups among their 'Northern Indians', but also distinguished local and regional populations within tribal collectives. As European contact with Indians expanded, so did their recognition of the ethnic diversity that existed in the interior of the country. The early recognition of ethnic divisions among Indians was founded on territorial and language differences and on distinctive ecological adaptations and ways of life of diverse Indian groups. Europeans also observed and recognized group divisions based on territorial conflict and growing trade competition between regional populations of Indian people. This external recognition of ethnics by outsiders is also a feature of ethnicity as people not only identify themselves but are identified by others as distinct socio-cultural entities within larger groupings.

The early circumstantial features of ethnicity between regional Chipewyan populations is apparent in how different groups made use of their identity awareness to direct and control events as ethno-adaptations. The eastern bands were not only recognized by European traders as independent and

aloof, having little need for European goods, but were also able to make use of their territorial isolation and resource-rich habitat to remain relatively safe from marauding and hostile Cree. Western bands of Chipewyan, on the other hand, were able to use their advantageous and strategic position to establish themselves as middlemen in the fur trade, expand that trade to neighboring Indian groups, force a peace treaty with the Cree, and gradually expand southward into Cree territory, trading on the Upper Churchill River at Ile-a-la-Crosse a decade before that country was abandoned by those people. All of these incidents were manifestations of Chipewyan ethnicity, a series of deliberate decisions and actions by individuals who responded to their changing circumstances as Chipewyan to further their ambitions, desires, and goals within the family, the band, and the regionally affiliated group.

It may be concluded that the early historic experiences of different populations of Chipewyan took place within pre-existing identity structures and that the identity awareness of different regional groups was a basis for decisions and actions.

Distinctions in identity were retained between eastern and western bands throughout the historic period in terms of different ecological adaptations, territorial occupations, and relationships with traders.

By the late eighteenth century eastern bands of

Chipewyan had moved south and west of Hudson Bay into the Athabasca Basin, taking up territory that had been vacated by the Cree. These bands remained nomadic, following the herds of barren-ground caribou in their seasonal migratory cycle. These people came to be identified as Caribou-Eater Chipewyan, and are still distinguished from other Chipewyan populations by their close relationship to the caribou herds. Some of these Caribou-Eater bands moved south of the Cree and Reindeer Lakes, exploiting a hunting territory as far as the Churchill River. These southern Caribou-Eater bands remained seasonally mobile for nearly a hundred years, finally settling along the Churchill River east of Ile-a-la-Crosse by the end of the nineteenth century. These eastern bands of Chipewyan retain an awareness of a common heritage with Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin, and this awareness is expressed by ongoing affiliations through marriage and friendship ties.

The western bands of Chipewyan migrated south of Lake Athabasca to the Upper Churchill River during the latter part of the eighteenth century and became well established in the fur trade. They also became attached to the trading posts at Ile-a-la-Crosse and eventually settled along the Upper Churchill River west of that station. The western bands, including those people at Buffalo River, had few permanent affiliations with the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan of the Athabasca Basin, and only recently, as a consequence of

modern communication and transportation, have they come to know those people as part of the Chipewyan collective.

Today Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan continue to express distinctive features of identity despite common acculturative experiences with traders, missionaries, educators, government officials, and government agencies. While many of the differences in ethno-identity are a product of separate adaptive patterns in different ecological zones, others can be attributed to different conditions of development change that have taken place in recent years under the modern contact experience. Past and present differences in adaptation between regional populations are apparent in social organization, economic activity, and spiritual expression, and each of these provide the means for analysing Chipewyan identity and the ways identity is used to cope with change.

In the sphere of social organization based on patterns of marriage, residence, and mobility differences are observed between Caribou-Eater and Buffalo River people. While the more isolated Caribou-Eater bands retain traditional features of social organization related to the caribou hunt, including male exogamy, early marriage matri-locality, and limited out migration, people at Buffalo River are increasingly practicing female outmarriage, virilocal residence clustering, and greater rates of migration or mobility, especially for young women. Although reasons for recent shifts in patterns

of social organization at Buffalo River are complex, contributing factors include a changing economic climate, accompanied by a general decline in commercial resource harvesting, a shift from seasonal to permanent village occupation, changing educational opportunities, and increased communication with the outside world. These changes have contributed to the development of new work-group formation, new priorities for residence clustering, and new incentives for promoting social harmony. It may be expected that changing conditions of increased contact with the outside world will also produce similar patterns of change in the social organization of Caribou-Eater Chipewyan. Indications of future directions for change for people of the Athabasca Basin are suggested by the recent out migration of people from Fond-du-Lac whose mining experience encouraged many to move to other parts of the country in search of employment. While this study does not trace relationships between those who have stayed in northern villages and those who have left, it was observed that close contacts are retained between people, and these are supported by frequent visits between those who have left and those who continue at home. Close family and kinship contacts promote a form of shifting residence for some Chipewyan between southern cities and northern communities. These contacts provide ongoing and extensive support systems that aid in individual adaptation to new surroundings while retaining alternatives for those who have ventured away.

Should need arise people can always return to their home community, not only because they remain family and kin, but also because they remain Chipewyan. For the people from Buffalo River, ties are retained through socio-religious events such as pilgrimage and funerals which draw people home. Through regular visits people are able to reinforce their identity and contribute to the identity change process.

The economic identity for the two regional Chipewyan populations is founded on several common features. These include a common economic strategy of seasonal activities and occupational pluralism with an emphasis on reciprocity, cooperation, and sharing especially within the extended family. Continuities in economic strategy are integrated with social patterns of organization to sustain a way of life.

All Chipewyan who reside in the study communities, and indeed most people living in the Canadian subarctic, pursue a mixed economy the main features of which are subsistence hunting and gathering, commercial resource harvesting, wage employment, and transfer payments. Each of these four economic sectors has evolved out of earlier relationships with the land and with incoming Europeans as adaptive strategies. Within the generally uniform economic structure there are significant local variations that go towards distinguishing one regional population from the other, and even neighboring communities, one from another. These distinctions are often

based on relative access to government funded programs in job creation depending on Indian status and non-status qualifications. An example is the comparatively low rate of full-time wage employment in local administration for non-status Indians living at Wollaston Post, St. George's Hill, and Michel Village in contrast to the extensive administrative regimes and their salaried positions that exist in neighboring reserve communities. These economic distinctions are reflected in subtle identity divisions and feelings of being different between neighboring people who share close historic and family ties, and who are united by common language and heritage. These economic differences are exacerbated by separate policy in housing, community development, job creation programs, educational systems, health care delivery, and social programs that come from different levels of government. All of these and more create sub-group distinctions within local populations in cultural awareness and identity expression. It has also been noted that distinctions exist even at the community level, and that these are reflected as differences in ethnicity. Henry Sharp (1975) describes ethnic divisions within the Chipewyan community of Mission Lake (pseudonym) which is clearly Black Lake, Saskatchewan, one of the communities of this study. Sharp (1975:32) states:

The village of Mission is a large new community. It was founded in 1953 when the priest moved his church to Mission Lake in order to escape the increasing influence of the whites and Metis of Stony Rapids.

The Mission Chipewyan are distinguished by two named groups; the Yonthehotina and the Thulekayaratina, and this division reflects two historically separate populations.

The majority are Hearne's caribou-eater Chipewyan....During the 1920's and 1930's a number of people moved to the Mission region from Chipewyan communities along the Churchill River in Saskatchewan and from Brochet in Manitoba (Sharp 1975:33).

These two groups express their distinctive identities not only by recognizing different heritages and traditions, but also by different economic adaptations to separate micro-environments in the region. One segment of the community remains attached to the resources of the full boreal forest to the south of Mission while the other identifies itself in ecological terms with the hunting of barren-ground caribou within the forest-tundra transition zone further to the north. Sharp (1975) shows how the different ecological adaptations by people at Mission are reflected in different patterns of welfare dependency.

The economic expressions and adjustments of different populations of Chipewyan within the Chipewyan collective provide a means by which communities of people can be distinguished one from another, and a means by which anthropologists may study sub-groups and regional populations, identifying ethno-differences even within local bands and between neighboring communities.

There is a recognition in this study that spiritual expression is used by Chipewyan Indians to generate and sustain ethno-distinctions, and that spiritual beliefs and practices are part of ethno-adaptations. The Chipewyan Indians of northern Saskatchewan share a common spiritual tradition with other Northern Athabaskans that is centered around the belief in spirit power and relationships between spiritual forces that integrate people, animals, and the land. These spiritual beliefs have been sustained by an ongoing hunting and gathering way of life. Continuities in native spiritualism are evident in the practice of Indian medicine, divination, and sorcery.

Chipewyan Indians also share a common spiritual adherence to Roman Catholicism as introduced by missionaries in the mid nineteenth century.

Today distinctions can be made in spiritual expression between regional populations of Chipewyan as sub-groups adopt new religious institutions and integrate those into the traditional spiritual practice. At Buffalo River Sweat Lodge is being used as a means for defining spiritual identity by integrating native spiritualism with Christian beliefs. Through the Sweat people are able to define themselves in relation to their ancestors, to their creator, and to the world of spirits in which they live. Sweat Lodge is being introduced to Caribou-Eater Chipewyan and may become part of their emerging pan-Indian awareness as a means for coping

with change.

It can be expected that other cultural symbols will be adopted by Chipewyan Indians to become part of their identity structure as they increase their contact with the outside world. The recent introduction of the Round Dance at Buffalo River is an example of ongoing cultural change as Chipewyan seek out new ways to proclaim themselves as Indians and as Chipewyan. While traditional features of Chipewyan ethnicity and new pan-ethnic symbols will increase the Chipewyan sense of collective identity, the rejection or selective acceptance of specific identity features by different groups will create new divisions to distinguish one group from another.

The identity of Chipewyan Indians in northern regions of Saskatchewan is a complexity of tradition, heritage, and design for expressing a new sense of who they are and for coping with change. Within that complexity can be found elements of culture, beliefs, and action that provide distinctions within the Chipewyan collective. These distinctions in identity are founded on territorial, ecological, and historical relationships that provide the Chipewyan with a means for self identity and that give anthropologists a valuable format for the study of change.

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