

Research Report

An Ethnohistory of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

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1. Introduction and Terms of Reference

I was invited by Chief Allan Adam of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation to work on its behalf as it prepared for the hearings for Shell's proposed Jackpine Mine Expansion and new Pierre River Mine (letter 18 Nov. 2010). Sean Nixon, with Woodward & Company LLP, then provided me with terms of reference to follow in writing an expert report (e-mail letter 21 Dec. 2010):

1. Provide an ethnographic description of the people who now form Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, including an analysis of how traditional band structures differ from those created by virtue of the *Indian Act*.
2. Describe how ACFN passed on their culture and cultural practices to future generations (e.g., what were their oral history traditions?).
3. Provide a description of ACFN traditional territory or traditional lands, including:
 - a. whether there was a pre-contact (and/or pre-Treaty) concept of ACFN territory,
 - b. the extent to which ACFN moved around within their territory (including: the amount of space required to carry out their traditional activities; the need to be respectful of others' rights; and the depletion of resources),
 - c. "axes" of ACFN territory (if this concept is relevant to ACFN),
 - d. whether there was any amalgamation of groups (e.g., was there any overlap between local groups and bands through marriage and family connections?),
 - e. whether there was any effect of the formation of a separate First Nation at Fort MacKay on ACFN membership and on its relation to the "southern territories" (i.e., the southern portions of ACFN traditional territory or traditional lands)?
4. Describe the circumstances around ACFN presence in Wood Buffalo National Park in the 20th Century, and whether the Park should be considered when defining the scope of ACFN traditional territory/lands (historically and now). If ACFN members were excluded from the Park for some period of time, how has this affected ACFN's conception of its territory/lands and the exercise of ACFN rights within that area?
5. What was the impact of the W.A.C. Bennett dam on ACFN and on the exercise of ACFN rights?

6. Why were Poplar Point and Point Brûlé established where they are? Why are they the size they are? Were there any primary values and resources that led to ACFN choosing or receiving reserves at Poplar Point and Point Brûlé? If so, what were those values and resources? Is there historic evidence regarding the values or resources that were important to the way of life of ACFN members in the area near those reserves? Were these areas historically/culturally important for ACFN in other ways?
 - a. Was access to fishing locations a value that led to the establishment/site selection of any of ACFN's other reserves?
7. When were traplines established in the "southern territories"? Were there conflicts of issues around the formation of these traplines? How did ACFN manage trapping, subsistence, and other resources in the area at the time of Treaty, prior to establishment of traplines? How did these management systems change or persist after traplines were established? How did the formation and regulation of registered traplines affect ACFN traditional practices?
8. Describe ACFN population growth and movements from the early 20th Century to the present. Have the "southern territories" around Poplar Point, Point Brûlé, and areas to the south become more or less important over time? Why?
9. What role did woodland caribou play in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, when Wood Buffalo National Park was established, and after the 1950s (following changes in barren land caribou migration)?
10. What role did bison play in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, when Wood Buffalo National Park was established, and after?
11. What role did moose play in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, when Wood Buffalo National Park was established, and after?
12. What role did fish caught from Lake Athabasca, the Athabasca River, and waters connected to the Athabasca River have on the ACFN way of life and economy at the time of Treaty, and after?
13. What role did migratory birds have in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, and after?

Summary Responses

- 1. Provide an ethnographic description of the people who now form Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, including an analysis of how traditional band structures differ from those created by virtue of the *Indian Act*.**

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation is the contemporary outgrowth of both Chipewyan and Cree people and the former Chipewyan and Cree Bands of the Fort Chipewyan region.¹ It is a legal “Indian Band” that was created under the framework of the Indian Act in 1899, when Chipewyans and Crees at Fort Chipewyan negotiated their entry into Treaty No. 8, or, in the eyes of the treaty commissioners, took separate adhesions to the treaty that was first signed at Lesser Slave Lake. If the population had been smaller, there might have been only one Chipewyan-Cree Band, as there was at Fort McMurray. The size of the Chipewyan and Cree populations were sufficiently large that the commissioners created two separate bands, each with its own chief and two headmen, following a government formula. In the past, such Indian bands were administrative units for the convenience of the Department of Indian Affairs. They had no correspondence to the on-the-ground reality of the local bands in which Aboriginal people lived on the land. Today, thanks to living with these legal band structures for over a century, the Indian Bands - now known as First Nations - have acquired meaning and significance to their members, and as units of governance they enjoy a reality that did not exist at the time of treaty and that continues to strengthen with time.

This report focuses on the local band structure that was the everyday social reality in

¹When I capitalize “Band,” it is a reference to the legal entity created by the Government of Canada under the framework of the *Indian Act*. Some Europeans also appear in the ancestry of both First Nations; see below.

northeast Alberta for both Chipewyans and Crees, both in the pre-contact past and in the years when they became involved as trappers in the fur trade. Local bands were small, autonomous, co-residential units of production and consumption. They had individual leaders. Neither Chipewyans nor Crees had a single overarching “chief.” Members of the local bands were related to one another by a complex network of kinship ties. Local bands often came together in summer or winter, producing temporary larger groupings, sometimes called a “regional band,” but the regional bands were not bounded formally, nor did they exhibit any special social organization at that time. Movement and membership was fluid between regional bands as well as between local bands.

2. Describe how ACFN passed on their culture and cultural practices to future generations (e.g., what were their oral history traditions?).

When Athabasca Chipewyan members lived in local bands on the land, passing on their knowledge and culture was a seamless process. Children learned from watching and listening to their parents, grandparents, and other relatives, and from taking part in all the activities that occurred. While such transmission is no longer possible on a full-time basis, it is still very important to Athabasca Chipewyan members to pass on their knowledge, culture, and values to their children and grandchildren. While there are some initiatives in the schools, that approach is not considered an adequate solution.

The most appropriate place for Chipewyan children to learn cultural values today is still “on the land,” also phrased as “in the bush,” just as it was in the past, traveling and spending time with their relatives. Moreover, there are some aspects of culture and values, which Athabasca

Chipewyans call “place-based cultural knowledge,” that can only be learned on the land, not in a town or in a classroom (ACFN 2010:27). Nor is any part of the northern landscape suitable; it needs to be those areas that constitute the lands to which people were connected in the past and to which they enjoy on-going connections in the present – their “traditional lands.”² Even today, traditional lands are highly important locations for learning spiritual values and having spiritual experiences, and they are the only places where they can learn those aspects of Chipewyan history that are encoded in geography, in the features of the landscape, and that are passed along in the oral traditions shared while people are on the land together. An understanding of their history as Chipewyan people is a critical element in shaping Chipewyan identity. By spending time in the bush, children can thereby learn not only practical skills, but also their Chipewyan identity and a wide range of traditional Chipewyan values that are still considered to be crucial not only for today but also for their future as Chipewyans.

- 3. Provide a description of ACFN traditional territory or traditional lands, including:**
 - a. whether there was a pre-contact (and/or pre-Treaty) concept of ACFN territory,**
 - b. the extent to which ACFN moved around within their territory (including:**

²These relationships are rarely obvious to outsiders or casual observers, but they are real nevertheless. Many of them are encoded in place names, which are used as part of the process of talking about locations that are meaningful for various reasons. The importance of place names to Athapaskan-speaking peoples has been demonstrated in studies from the Northwest Territories and the Yukon to the Southwest United States. Some of the foremost scholars in these studies include Julie Cruikshank (e.g., 1998, esp. chp. 1), Keith H. Basson (e.g., 1996), and Thomas D. Andrews and John B. Zoe (e.g., 1997). For a detailed example of Sahtu Dene (formerly, Hare) places and place names and their importance, see “Rakekée Gok’ée Godi: Places We Take Care of” (Sahtu Heritage Places and Sites Joint Working Group 2000).

- the amount of space required to carry out their traditional activities; the need to be respectful of others' rights; and the depletion of resources),**
- c. “axes” of ACFN territory (if this concept is relevant to ACFN),**
 - d. whether there was any amalgamation of groups (e.g., was there any overlap between local groups and bands through marriage and family connections?),**
 - e. whether there was any effect of the formation of a separate First Nation at Fort MacKay on ACFN membership and on its relation to the “southern territories” (i.e., the southern portions of ACFN traditional territory or traditional lands)?³**

Both during the pre-contact period and the years in which they were involved in the fur trade, Chipewyans had lands or territory that they considered to be their own; that is, lands that were available for them to use, that were off-limits to others, such as Crees or Inuit, and that they defended when necessary. The term “homeland,” popularized in 1977 by Mr. Justice Thomas Berger, is a rough equivalent to what today is more likely to be termed traditional territory. Berger contrasted Aboriginal homelands and Euro-Canadian resource frontiers as very different ways of conceptualizing northern lands (Berger 1977). Elsewhere, I have described an Aboriginal homeland as a landscape that:

...encompasses their personal and cultural identities, their histories, and their religions. These are embedded within complex oral traditions. The place names for geographic features contained within the oral traditions embody the relationships among people, the land, and the spiritual world. They also provide the method for remembering this

³While Fort MacKay is the official spelling used for the hamlet, Fort McKay is the local First Nation (Fort McKay people use the same spelling – “McKay” – for the hamlet) (Govt. of Alberta 2010b; Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo n.d.; Fort McKay First Nation n.d.). This report uses those different spellings.

information and reproducing it over time by transmitting it from one generation to the next [McCormack 1998:27].

The homeland and traditional territory for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation constitutes the totality of the lands known to have been used by the ancestors of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and those lands used by their descendants over time. The total territory includes all those lands that were used by Athapaskan Chipewyans in the past, are used in the present, and might be used in the future as a result of interactions made possible and even directed by their kinship ties. There were reasonable limits, but no clear boundaries, to this traditional territory. The fringes of the traditional territory in the past were governed solely by the abilities and decisions of Chipewyans and Crees to travel to areas where they had or could establish kinship ties.

What the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation calls its “core” territory, located in the vicinity of Lake Athabasca, is a subset of this much larger territory (Figure 1). It comprises the lands that became especially important to First Nation members when they became involved in the fur trade centered at Fort Chipewyan, and they continue using much of this land today. They no longer use some portions of their core territory for diverse reasons:

- Some lands were vacated for a period of time because the resources had diminished or other lands were seen as more attractive.
- Some families and persons relocated to different areas for social or personal reasons.
- Federal or provincial government regulations devised in the 20th century prevented many land uses or made those uses difficult.
- Land was “required or taken up” under the terms of Treaty No. 8 (Govt. of Canada

1966:12) and was therefore no longer available for use.

As a result of that complex history, today this First Nation identifies a subset of its traditional core territory (and a smaller subset of its traditional lands) as its key “Cultural Protection Areas” (ACFN 2010:2; also in ACFN 2012:10) (Figure 2). People remain connected to their traditional lands on multiple levels, including their personal and second-hand knowledge of its features and related oral traditions, their on-going use and potential uses for aspects of their livelihood and cultural and linguistic renewal, and a strong sense of emotional connectedness.⁴

The reality of a distinctive Chipewyan homeland and traditional territory is supported by the archaeological evidence of Chipewyan occupations and by Chipewyan oral traditions about their relations with their neighbors. The former indicates the extent of their traditional lands before contact with Europeans, while the latter indicates that they engaged in raids and warfare to protect their right to exist on these lands. (Crees, too, had lands that they considered to be their own.) Normally, one could join with and use lands of kinsmen. Among Chipewyans (and Crees), “kin” was a cultural category that was defined broadly, extending beyond people known to be related through biological ties. There is evidence from oral traditions of occasional intermarriage between Chipewyans and Crees prior to involvement with Europeans, and in the

⁴Most of these elements are not obvious to outsiders, and there is a tendency by non-Aboriginal people in the broader Canadian society to believe that First Nations who are no longer living by the ways of the past have in fact abandoned their distinctive cultures and identities. This belief is an aspect of a widely-held stereotype that “real” Aboriginal people had an “essential quality” that was lost when they incorporated new material culture, customs, beliefs, and ways of doing things that originated with Europeans. In the public eye, they became less “genuine” or “authentic” as Aboriginal people. In a common example, Aboriginal hunters who use rifles are often regarded as less Aboriginal than those who used bows and arrows, and there are occasional letters to the editor of the *Edmonton Journal* in which the writers challenge the Aboriginal right to hunt if it is not with bows and arrows. It is a double standard about culture change that is not similarly applied to Euro-Canadians.

Fort Chipewyan region Chipewyans and Crees began to intermarry in large numbers in the mid-18th century. It was intermarriage that facilitated peaceful occupation and use of the entire northeast Alberta region and beyond, as individuals and local bands moved from place to place during the course of each year, both locally as well as longer-distance movements along various axes (e.g., the Athabasca River, Lake Athabasca, the trails between the Peace River and Lake Claire, and the trails across the Birch Mountain to the Fort MacKay region) that were undertaken for a variety of subsistence and cultural reasons.

In terms of subsistence, people moved for multiple reasons. Most obviously, they had to travel to different locations at different seasons to access the plant and animal species upon which they relied, which were (and are) not distributed equally over the landscape. Also, people moved due to what has been called “the law of diminishing returns”: having to put increasing effort into food and fur production - hunting, fishing, trapping, and gathering - for decreasing results. This factor may have become more significant once they became involved in the fur trade, because it can be easy to trap out fur bearers such as beavers. It was probably affected as well by their shift to the lands surrounding the western end of Lake Athabasca, where they hunted large animals that tended to be solitary (e.g., moose) or live in smaller populations (e.g., northern bison, woodland caribou) than did the barren ground caribou that had previously been their primary target. Hunting large game may have become more precarious, in which case it was especially important to be able to move around on the landscape. However, members of local bands also did considerable environmental management by using controlled burning, which produced rich habitats that were suitable for most of the animals they hunted or trapped and for many of the plants they gathered. Such environmental management speaks to considerable

investment of labor and planning in the land and supports the idea that Chipewyans considered it to be “their” territory. People and bands also moved for a broad group of cultural reasons: either the husband or the wife moved at marriage; an internal conflict could result in the relocation of an individual or family group; people often moved following a death; people wanted to travel and see new country. Everyone had the right to live anywhere they had kinsmen and to use land that no one else was using at the time. The extensive kinship ties that joined together Aboriginal people throughout northeast Alberta and into the Northwest Territories and northern Saskatchewan can be found in genealogies and treaty pay lists.

The existence of a separate Fort McKay First Nation (originally, the Cree-Chipewyan Band; later, the Fort McKay Band) was the consequence of the creation of legal Indian Bands under the Indian Act in 1899 under Treaty No. 8. There is no evidence that explains why certain families were at Fort Chipewyan when the treaty was signed on 13 July 1899 and therefore entered onto the Chipewyan Band list there, as opposed to the joint Cree and Chipewyan Band created at Fort McMurray on 4 August 1899, whose members were entered onto a different band list. The families at Poplar Point and Point Brûlé, for example, were about half way between the two centers and could have joined either band. They became part of the Chipewyan Band because their names were added to the band list there. That meant that they were in Fort Chipewyan when the treaty party was there, before it went on to Fort McMurray; perhaps they had gone to Fort Chipewyan for the occasion, which had been publicized and widely discussed. Many kinship connections exist among Chipewyans from these two different treaty bands. Historically, Indian Agents altered treaty pay lists to accommodate movements by treaty Indians to new communities and of course to change the formal band affiliation of women who married

treaty Indians from other bands.⁵ The first was for the administrative convenience of the Department of Indian Affairs; the second followed from a requirement of the Indian Act.

4. Describe the circumstances around ACFN presence in Wood Buffalo National Park in the 20th Century, and whether the Park should be considered when defining the scope of ACFN traditional territory/lands (historically and now). If ACFN members were excluded from the Park for some period of time, how has this affected ACFN’s conception of its territory/lands and the exercise of ACFN rights within that area?

Wood Buffalo National Park was created in two stages in 1922 (north of the Peace River) and 1926 (south of the Peace River). If they wished, members of both the Chipewyan and Cree Bands were allowed to remain in the portion of the park that was north of the Peace River. Other people under Treaty No. 8 were allowed to enter the park if they chose. All non-treaty people were forced to leave. In 1926, government officials imposed a different access rule that allowed people to remain in the part of the park south of the Peace River, but only if they were there at the time the second part of the park was created.⁶ That included members of the two Indian

⁵All treaty Indians also enjoyed legal Indian status, but not all status Indians belonged to a treaty. In most of the Canadian Northwest, including northern Alberta, virtually all status Indians are also members of one of the numbered treaties. Until Bill C-31 was enacted in 1985, the *Indian Act* provided that a status Indian woman would belong to the band of her father and then to that of her husband. If a woman married a man from a different band, she was removed from her natal band list and added to the band list of her husband. A non-status woman also acquired legal Indian status if she married a status man.

⁶It appears that at this time they also stopped allowing Treaty No. 8 Indians from outside the park to enter the “old” part of the park.

Bands, as well as many non-status people from Fort Chipewyan and some White trappers.⁷

Evidently all the members of the Cree Band were present in the park, because they all acquired park privileges. Only about half the members of the Chipewyan Band were in the park; they also acquired park privileges. Their Chipewyan relatives outside the park boundaries did not, even if they or their families had previously used park lands.

Chipewyans outside the park tried unsuccessfully to gain park access during the years that followed. Park users were economically much better off than were First Nations people living outside the park in Alberta, because they were protected from the destruction of animal resources by White trappers who had no interest in conservation and disregarded the occupations of Aboriginal users. This situation encouraged park Chipewyans and Crees to focus their land use in the park. In 1946, the Chipewyans who were on the Fort Chipewyan treaty pay list for the Fort Chipewyan Chipewyan Band were legally transferred to the Cree Band.⁸ Shortly after that, the park administration introduced group trapping areas for status Indians that divided up all the land in the park except for the rich muskrat trapping grounds in the delta. Originally those lands were to be a communal trapping area, but in the end, they were mostly divided into individual trapping areas for Métis from Fort Chipewyan, and Indians assigned to group areas no longer had access to them for trapping. Each group area had a defined membership and leader. Group members have considered the lands to be fully allocated and able to accommodate only a few new

⁷This discussion concerns only the two Indian Bands based administratively at Fort Chipewyan. There are other legal Indian Bands in northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories with interests in and access to the park; they were also governed by these rules for access.

⁸I name this group precisely because there were other Chipewyans living to the north were not affected by this administrative change.

members, normally the children of people who are already members.⁹

The Chipewyans without park access pressed throughout the 1920s for a hunting and trapping preserve in order to protect their livelihoods from the depredations of White trappers. They wanted it to include all the lands within Alberta that were within their traditional land use areas outside the park. Such an extensive reserve, which would have been much greater than the land area provided for their reserves under Treaty No. 8, was supported by the Indian Agent and the federal land surveyor, on the grounds that most of the lands available locally for a reserve were unfit for agriculture.¹⁰ Their reserves were finally surveyed in the 1930s and included small areas set aside for what were basically the residential bases of local bands - not their major land use areas - as well as one large area particularly well-suited for trapping muskrats.¹¹ The amount of land provided was based on the total number of Chipewyans, which included those

⁹However, in a recent development, members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation are once again allowed into the park. The implications for future land uses are unknown, but I was told by the park superintendent that it will impact the group area system (Robert Hunt, personal communication, Fort Smith, 4 Aug. 2011).

¹⁰The size of reserves in the numbered treaties was based on the amount of land considered appropriate in the late 19th century for family agriculture. This model was followed in Treaty No. 8, even though it was clear in 1899 that most northern lands would not support an agricultural economy and that most signatories were not expected to shift to agriculture. As the treaty commissioners explained in their report: "...although there are stretches of cultivable land in those parts of the country [at Lesser Slave Lake and the Peace River], it is not probable that the Indians will, where present conditions obtain, engage in farming further than the raising of roots [potatoes, possibly turnips] in a small way, as is now done to some extent. ...[T]he great majority of the Indians will continue to hunt and fish for a livelihood" (Govt. of Canada 1966:7).

¹¹While reserves were supposed to provide land for economic livelihood, these reserves clearly did not, except for the large reserve. Such a measure points both to the lack of correspondence between the federal treaty system and Treaty No. 8 in particular and the reality of northern Aboriginal life and to the misguided belief by government officials that Aboriginal people had access to boundless wilderness.

Chipewyans resident in the park. The reserves were not formally constituted as reserves by Orders in Council until 1954. In the meantime, Chipewyans became greatly impoverished and suffered enormously from unprotected competition with White trappers, who trespassed even on the lands set aside for the reserve, with virtually no protection provided for Chipewyans by either the federal or provincial government. In the 1940s, the lands in northern Alberta beyond the reserved areas were divided into registered trapping areas, which allocated lands to Chipewyans, Métis, and White trappers. Chipewyans, who had long suffered from the activities of White trappers, complained that their trapping interests were considered secondary to those of White trappers.

The existence of Wood Buffalo National Park and the respective federal and provincial regimes of group/individual trapping areas were initiatives by the federal and provincial governments that were imposed on Chipewyans over the express objections of Chipewyan leaders. Chipewyans did not support any of these initiatives, all of which they considered to be violations of treaty promises. Although they greatly restricted Chipewyan movements on the land, they should not be considered to have transformed the extent of Chipewyan traditional territory, which - outside regulations aside - are still governed by relationships of kinship. Athabasca Chipewyans know that they used the lands of Wood Buffalo National Park in the past, and they never relinquished their claims to those lands. Their dispossession from their traditional lands in the park and from trapping areas assigned to outsiders was a strong lesson for them about how they could be forcibly alienated from important parts of their homeland.

5. What was the impact of the W.A.C. Bennett dam on ACFN and on the exercise of

ACFN rights?

The W. A. C. Bennett dam was built on the upper Peace River in British Columbia to generate electricity for Vancouver and the lower British Columbia mainland and for export to the United States. The dam was completed in December, 1967, and it began to impound water to fill its huge reservoir, Williston Lake. The drop in water levels in Lake Athabasca and the Peace-Athabasca Delta was obvious in the summer of 1968, when vast mud flats were exposed.¹²

The pre-dam hydrological regime involved occasional, extensive regional flooding over the low-lying lands of the delta, which is one of the largest inland freshwater deltas in the world. While some years might be very dry, the floods always recurred at intervals that were frequent enough to maintain the wetlands and other habitats that characterize this distinctive ecosystem. The remarkable delta was considered so significant that it was a major reason for Wood Buffalo National Park to be named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, one of only 15 in Canada. The delta itself, along with the summer range of the rare and endangered Whooping Cranes, are two sites designated as “Ramsar sites” under the Ramsar Convention, which is intended to identify and protect “Wetlands of International Importance” (Parks Canada 2009; UNESCO World Heritage Centre 1992-2011b; Ramsar Convention n.d.). Wood Buffalo National Park and the Peace-Athabasca overlap, but the delta extends beyond the eastern park boundary to include the delta of the Athabasca River and most of the Athabasca Chipewyan reserves. These are lands that the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation has identified as part of their “cultural protection areas” (Figure 2).

¹²That was the first summer I spent in Fort Chipewyan, and I well remember the expanse of mud flats but only later learned the cause.

After Williston Lake was filled, the dam began to release water, but these releases did not replicate the former pattern of river flooding. Without regular flooding, the wetlands began to dry up permanently, reducing the habitats available for key species such as muskrat, moose, and migratory waterfowl. The dam has therefore had serious and long-lasting negative impacts on the ecosystem of the Peace-Athabasca Delta, to the detriment of Chipewyans and other local people who used those lands. In 1998, a report issued by the Indian Claims Commission concluded that the Athabasca Chipewyans "...suffered extreme hardship and economic loss as a result of the destruction of the delta and environmental damages to IR 201" (Prentice *et al.* 1998:78). That makes the water from the Athabasca River even more important for the Chipewyans and the entire Peace-Athabasca Delta than it had been formerly. Water that continues to decline in quantity and deteriorate in quality will continue to have deleterious impacts on the Chipewyans and could affect the international designations the delta enjoys.

The Bennett Dam is a classic example of down-river users paying social and environmental costs, while the developer reaps financial and political benefits. Neither of the two Fort Chipewyan bands was able to obtain any compensation or other redress. Their concerns and claims were marked by a distinct lack of attention from either the federal government or the Alberta government. Officials for Wood Buffalo National Park took steps to try to restore some measure of the pre-dam hydrological regime, though not successfully. There were no attempts by the province to address the problems facing the delta outside park boundaries. In short, the existence of this dam has caused long-term harm to both the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Mikisew Cree First Nation (including its formerly Chipewyan members) and the ability of both First Nations to exercise their rights under Treaty No. 8. The Athabasca Chipewyans

point to the problems caused by this dam as a key factor in their inability to continue to live in the bush and their eventual relocation to Fort Chipewyan, although they continued to practice their bush-based activities from the town (ACFN 2003a:85-6). Moving to Fort Chipewyan (and eventually to other urban centers) was a process that simultaneously involved looking for wage employment, to provide income to replace the income they could no longer make by trapping. It was not done because they wanted to leave the bush or to become wage-laborers. To the Athabasca Chipewyans, the Bennett Dam was the beginning of the end to their land-based way of life. The lesson of the Bennett Dam was that their very land base could be destroyed, with dire consequences.

6. Why were Poplar Point and Point Brûlé established where they are? Why are they the size they are? Were there any primary values and resources that led to ACFN choosing or receiving reserves at Poplar Point and Point Brûlé? If so, what were those values and resources? Is there historic evidence regarding the values or resources that were important to the way of life of ACFN members in the area near those reserves? Were these areas historically/culturally important for ACFN in other ways?

a. Was access to fishing locations a value that led to the establishment/site selection of any of ACFN's other reserves?

The surveyor chose the lands for these reserves, based on his knowledge of the treaty entitlement for reserves, his own observations, and his discussions with Chipewyan Band members. All lands lived on by Chipewyans outside the park appear to have been proposed as

reserves. The original surveyor's proposal lists the number of houses or families at each location; no other demographic information is provided. Typically, an extended family lived together in a house or in neighboring houses, and the members of the houses or families at each settlement would also have been related to one another. Poplar Point and Point Brûlé, situated on the Athabasca River, were two of these reserves. Both reserves were settled by a number of Chipewyan families at the time of reserve creation. The amount of land provided for Poplar Point probably reflected in part the surveyor's observation that approximately 300 acres were suitable for cultivation, but that still does not explain the large amount of land provided for this site.

The surveyor's report noted that one reserve location (201D) was situated to provide camping for a traditional fishing location.

- 7. When were traplines established in the "southern territories"? Were there conflicts of issues around the formation of these traplines? How did ACFN manage trapping, subsistence, and other resources in the area at the time of Treaty, prior to establishment of traplines? How did these management systems change or persist after traplines were established? How did the formation and regulation of registered traplines affect ACFN traditional practices?**

At the time of treaty, members of local bands regulated their own uses of the land in the interests of personal survival, not profit. People could trap anywhere they wished, as long as no one else had set up a trap line there. The numbers of animals they trapped were relatively few, intended to give them the amount of exchange value they required for their needs to purchase

items at the stores. If fur prices rose, the number of animals trapped tended to decline. If a trapper abandoned an area he and his family/local band had been using, then it was available to another trapper. Hunting and trapping occurred in tandem in winter; which means that people hunted and trapped in the same area. Meanwhile, some Chipewyans continued to travel to the barren grounds to hunt caribou. Members of the local bands cooperated to do controlled burns, probably mostly in spring, a widespread form of land management. Little is known of the actual social dynamics underlying this widespread practice, which ended in the early 20th century as a result of fire prevention regulations introduced and enforced by the federal government.

When White trappers arrived, they did not respect the existing trapping areas used by Chipewyan trappers. They established their own trap lines wherever they pleased and used large numbers of traps to “produce” as many furs as they could, in order to generate as much profit as possible. Neither the federal government nor the provincial government took any steps to regulate White trappers, who were allowed to decimate the animal resource base. Some White trappers eventually began to spend every winter trapping in the Fort Chipewyan region (and other places in the north), and they lobbied for the creation of registered trapping areas, such as those that already existed in British Columbia, in order to be able to control and conserve the resources of “their” areas.

The Province of Alberta introduced a new system of registered trapping areas in the early 1940s, thereby transforming the traditional lands of Chipewyans into bounded plots of land held by individual trappers, many of whom were not Chipewyan, and who could thereby legally exclude Chipewyans from trapping resources. That also made it difficult for Chipewyans even to continue to hunt on those lands, although some hunting on the trapping areas of others did occur.

Chipewyans were never compensated for either the deterioration of the resource base or the loss of a significant portion of their traditional land base.

Wood Buffalo National Park introduced a somewhat different system of registered trapping areas: the park was divided into group areas for status Indians, which restricted Chipewyans and Crees to those areas, even though fur-bearing animals were not distributed evenly across the landscape. The rich muskrat habitat of the delta was divided into individual areas for other trappers, thereby making it unavailable to either the Chipewyans or Crees living in the park. The consequences of these developments were that Chipewyans were unable to continue their activities and livelihoods as they had in the past, and Chipewyans living outside the park became greatly impoverished over time. These changes also contributed to the eventual transfer of Chipewyans living in the park to the Cree Band.

The land restrictions caused by the creation of registered trapping areas by province or group areas and individual areas by the federal government in the park continued to reduce the previous flexibility that Chipewyans had enjoyed and that they believed they were promised under Treaty No. 8. They also tended to crystalize land uses into those of the present. Over time, these new forms of land use that were once protested as violations of the treaty have become protected by their users, mainly because they are trying to maintain some hold on these portions of Crown or park lands, not because they have given up on once again being able to access their broader traditional land base.

8. Describe ACFN population growth and movements from the early 20th Century to the present. Have the “southern territories” around Poplar Point, Point Brulé, and

areas to the south become more or less important over time? Why?

Treaty No. 8 lists the number of people who joined the Chipewyan Band at Fort Chipewyan in 1899 as 410. To trace subsequent 20th century population growth and movements would require both a count of the band numbers found in the treaty pay lists since 1899 and an examination of the treaty pay lists of the neighboring First Nations for the same period. Otherwise, statistics to address this question do not exist.

Northern First Nations, including the Chipewyan Band, continued to suffer from serious epidemics during the 20th century until the years that followed World War II, when their numbers began to recover, in part due to the availability of improved health care. About 40 per cent of the Chipewyan Band members was transferred to the Cree Band in 1946, which resulted in a significant drop in the official size of the Chipewyan population. However, the Chipewyan Band population continued to grow since then. It became the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in 1987. Its population doubled at about the same time, going from about 300 to 600 members, the result of Bill C-31 in 1985 and the development by the First Nation of an inclusive membership code. As of August 2011, the First Nation's membership numbers 923 people. Only 12 live on their reserves, however. The remainder live in Fort Chipewyan or in other centers such as Fort McMurray or Fort MacKay.

In the 1950s and 1960s, due to a serious decline in the trapping economy, members of the two First Nations began to relocate to Fort Chipewyan itself, abandoning the traditional bush settlements. Members of the Chipewyan Band were slower overall to relocate to Fort Chipewyan than were members of the Cree Band. They were the beneficiaries of an Indian Affairs housing program that constructed several houses on two of the Chipewyan Reserves from 1958 through

1960 (see PAA Stewart 1958; 1959). Eventually, the federal government stopped building houses on the reserve but continued its housing program for status Indians in Fort Chipewyan itself. While most families still used the land for traditional pursuits, the “southern territories” continue to be regulated by the presence of registered trap lines and, more importantly today, by the expansion of oil sands industries and related infrastructure, such as roads. Such industry has been afforded priority over trapping as a land use and has eclipsed registered trap lines in areas granted in leases to corporations. To the extent to which the industrial “footprint” has “stepped” on areas of traditionally used by the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, it now interferes with or prevents those uses.

The “southern territories” around Poplar Point, Point Brûlé, and other areas to the south have become more important in the last 40 years. Many Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation members now live at Fort McMurray and Fort MacKay and are still looking to use the resources of the land for food, medicines, and spiritual reasons. The land is important culturally to First Nations members, who still feel a strong connectedness to the land itself and, through the land, to one another.

9. What role did woodland caribou play in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, when Wood Buffalo National Park was established, and after the 1950s (following changes in barren land caribou migration)?

Little detailed information is available about the earlier historic use of woodland caribou in this region. Chipewyans historically are closely associated with barren-ground caribou, both spiritually and for subsistence purposes. As Chief Allan Adam said in 2010, “We have a

spiritual connection and relationship with the caribou.... The Dene have always lived of[f] the caribou, regardless of whether it's woodland or barren ground..." (Candler *et al.* 2011:59).

When Chipewyans relocated to the Fort Chipewyan region, they hunted woodland caribou as one species among others available locally, although many people still continued to travel east and northeast to hunt barren ground caribou. Their hunting of woodland caribou intensified after the migratory routes of barren ground caribou shifted eastward, the result of the terrible fires set by prospectors in northern Saskatchewan in the 1920s and 1930s to remove forest and underbrush, which destroyed much of the critical winter habitat for these caribou (Gulig 2002; ACFN 2003a:32). As a result, it became difficult for Athabasca Chipewyans to continue to hunt barren ground caribou, and woodland caribou became more important to their economy. Yet after 1926, when the southern part of Wood Buffalo National Park was established and the Chipewyan Band was divided into two portions, due to the new park access regulations, Chipewyans living outside the park were no longer allowed into the park to hunt, which cut off their access to the park's woodland caribou populations. They did, however, continue to hunt woodland caribou populations outside the park.

A big forest fire in 1951 is blamed for another eastward shift of barren ground caribou in the 1950s (ACFN 2003b) and a renewed reliance by Athabasca Chipewyans on woodland caribou. There are still caribou to hunt in the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation region, in caribou ranges both east and west of the Athabasca River, although their numbers seem to be in serious decline.

This statement is complicated by a lack of reliable information. Woodland caribou in Alberta are now considered to be "threatened" under both the *Alberta Wildlife Act* and the federal

Species at Risk Act (Athabasca Landscape Team 2009:i). Yet the Government of Alberta's 2005 "Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Plan 2004/05 - 2013/14" contained no population information about the caribou in the ranges bordering the lower Athabasca River. Moreover, it indicated that they had not even been monitored and that their status for survival was unknown (Govt. of Alberta 2005:5,6). No First Nations representatives sat on the Alberta Woodland Caribou Recovery Team that prepared this report. Despite the lack of data, Minister of Sustainable Resource Development noted that the report was adopted by the province as its recovery plan, "...with the exception of the recommendation in Section 7.2 relating to a moratorium on further mineral and timber allocations on specific caribou ranges" (*ibid.*:i). A key element of the government's recovery plan was "effective predator control," which basically means the killing of wolves (*ibid.*:23). In 2009, the "Athabasca Caribou Landscape Management Options Report" stated:

The ALT [Athabasca Landscape Team] determined that there is insufficient functional habitat to maintain and increase current caribou distribution and population growth rates within the Athabasca Landscape area. Boreal [northern woodland] caribou will not persist for more than two to four decades without immediate and aggressive management intervention. Tough choices need to be made between the management imperative to recover boreal caribou and plans for ongoing bitumen development and industrial land-use [Athabasca Landscape Team 2009:i; **bolding omitted**].

The authors of this report - which did not include any First Nations representatives - continued to support the killing of wolves as an essential device in the recovery plan, ideally by killing over 67 per cent of wolves present in caribou ranges (*ibid.*:59).¹³ The federal government has just released its own recovery plan for woodland caribou across northern Canada (Environment

¹³The Government of Alberta's policy statement of June 2011 softened the terminology by referring simply to "effective management of wildlife populations (e.g., predators and other prey species)" (Govt of Alberta 2011b).

Canada 2011). The report states that “the primary threat” to most caribou is “unnaturally high predation rates as a result of habitat loss, degradation, and fragmentation,” which conflates predation with habitat loss and does not address the problem of expanding industrial activities that destroy critical habitat. The provincial and federal plans have been heavily criticized, mostly on the grounds that they have been politicized rather than science-based in not restricting industrial expansion and relying almost exclusively on predator control, and the end result will almost certainly be the disappearance of many populations of woodland caribou, including those in northeastern Alberta (e.g., Alberta Environmental Network 2011). Not only do Athabasca Chipewyans hunt these woodland caribou for food and consider themselves to enjoy a special relationship to them, they have also traditionally considered wolves to be of special spiritual significance, making the provincial and federal recovery plans problematic on at least two levels.

10. What role did bison play in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, when Wood Buffalo National Park was established, and after?

Northern bison (“wood buffalo,” or *Bison bison athabascae*) were important to Chipewyans in the late 18th century and during the 19th century for both subsistence and for food provisions to sell to traders. Samuel Hearne described Chipewyans hunting bison and preparing the skins in 1772: “Of all the large beasts in these parts,” he wrote, “the buffalo is easiest to kill” (Hearne 1958:163, 161-4). Controlled burning by Aboriginal people was an important factor in maintaining the grasslands upon which the bison relied (McCormack 2007). By the early 1840s, overhunting to provision the fur trade combined with some difficult winters led to substantial decline in bison numbers. In 1894, following the extinction of the plains bison, the federal

government passed the *Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act* to try to prevent the same fate for the northern bison.¹⁴ This act was not enforced in northern Alberta until the first North-West Mounted Police patrols in the late 1890s and especially in the early 1900s.

The prohibition on hunting bison and other big game was a matter of contention at the time of Treaty No. 8. Chipewyans and other residents were willing to stop hunting the bison for a time so that their populations would recover, but they also expected bison to be made available to them again for hunting once that occurred. Not only did that never happen, but in the 20th century the park staff conducted their own bison hunts to provide meat to the missions and for welfare purposes, and after World War II the park engaged in bison hunts and invested in considerable infrastructure to sell meat commercially, a “northern development” initiative by the federal government (McCormack 1984:chp. 7). The 20th century history of bison management in Wood Buffalo National Park was marked by many bad decisions by various federal agencies that greatly interfered with traditional land use practices by Aboriginal people, resulted in the introduction of diseases (tuberculosis and brucellosis) into the bison herds and gene flow between northern and southern populations, and may even have contributed to later outbreaks of anthrax.¹⁵

The only free-ranging bison located outside the park that are accessible to Athabasca Chipewyan are found in the vicinity of Ronald Lake, just south of the southern boundary of the

¹⁴For the bison, the legislation was intended to help the bison recover, much as current management plans address the possible extirpation of the woodland caribou.

¹⁵The extensive practice of controlled burning by Aboriginal in the bison range may have destroyed anthrax spores, which otherwise are remarkably hardy and persistent. Aboriginal burning largely stopped in the early 20th century, prohibited by federal Forestry officials (McCormack 2010:247-249).

park west of the Athabasca River. As with caribou, bison have a spiritual quality for Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation members, so hunting them is important for both subsistence and cultural reasons (e.g., Candler *et al.* 2011:89). However, fears that disease found in park bison may be transmitted to bison and especially to domestic animals outside the park (and outside a special bison management zone in northwest Alberta) has led the Government of Alberta to develop a disease management plan in which these bison "...are assumed diseased and have been classified as non-wildlife. As a result, they are not protected and can be hunted year round..." (Govt. of Alberta 2011a:8; see Mitchell and Gates 2002:9) by non-Aboriginal hunters as well as by Athabasca Chipewyans.¹⁶ This hunting puts considerable pressure on this bison population, even though these animals remain very important to Athabasca Chipewyans (Candler *et al.* 2011:59, 90). Access to the Ronald Lake bison is contingent on having adequate waterways, which is increasingly problematic, and/or overland trails or access corridors, which are increasingly provided by activities related to local industrial development (see Candler *et al.* 2010).¹⁷

¹⁶The summary of the plan identifies three surveillance areas. Oddly, the region where the Ronald population is located is not included in any of these (Govt. of Alberta 2011a:8, 9). The 2002 status report by Jonathan Mitchell and Cormack Gates shows bison in the Ronald Lake area but does not identify them name (2002:8).

¹⁷In the report prepared by Candler *et al.* in 2011, these bison are called "wood bison," and they are commonly considered a distinct subspecies (e.g., Mitchell and Gates 2002:4), despite some conflicting genetic and habitat evidence. All the bison in Wood Buffalo National Park, and especially those in the southern part of the park, hybridized with plains bison imported to the park in the 1920s. Some scientists have considered the northern and southern bison to have been/be separate sub-species, although the evidence is equivocal, and the categories have become politicized. Hybrid bison can be farmed and hunted, while in the past, legal protection was afforded the so-called wood bison. Today, bison which leave the park can be hunted. This distinction among the different bison populations has had considerable importance for government policies about bison management, but it is not of importance to local First Nations. What to do with the diseased bison has been a highly contentious issue about which there is no consensus.

11. What role did moose play in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, when Wood Buffalo National Park was established, and after?

Moose were a highly valued resource to Chipewyans in the past (see Hearne 1958:161, 165-6), and they continued to be the most important large game animal throughout the 20th century for Chipewyans who lived in the Fort Chipewyan region and did not travel regularly to the barren grounds. They were needed for both meat and hides; the latter, of fundamental importance for the manufacture of moccasins, mitts, jackets, and other items. White trappers contributed to a reduction in the overall moose population, along with all the other animals they killed.

In late 1945 or 1946 the park adopted a regulation "...providing a bag limit of one male moose for each hunter annually" (memo from M. Meikle to Cumming, 12 Feb. 1947; see McCormack 1984:297-301). This regulation was imposed despite the knowledge that it would create serious economic problems for the Indians. Nevertheless, park Indians were still not allowed to hunt bison on even a limited basis, although a few years later the park would implement a commercial bison slaughter program. Some park Indians began to hunt for moose outside the park, which put additional pressure on those Chipewyans of the delta and Athabasca River who were restricted to lands outside the park.

Today, moose meat remains a highly desired and valued food by Athabasca Chipewyans. It is a high quality food that is nutritionally superior to meat that can be purchased commercially, especially in the stores in Fort Chipewyan, with their limited stocks. It is highly desirable for community dinners and feasts and other events that are culturally significant to Chipewyans. Moose skins are still in demand for moccasins, mitts, and jackets, all visible markers of

Chipewyan identity. In summer, moose are hunted from boats along waterways, so access to lakes and rivers is especially important at that time but increasingly problematic due to low water levels (Candler et al. 2010:12-13).

Chipewyans consider the right to hunt moose to be a treaty right, and they resent the killing of moose by sports hunters who do not need it for food. Hugh Brody (1981) has discussed how the building of roads and seismic lines in northeastern British Columbia by industries opened up the back country and its resources to people who could not have accessed them in the past, resulting in very large hunts of moose, a finite resource, by outsiders. Statistics on the respective hunts of resident First Nations and Métis compared to the hunts of outsiders now living and working in the oil sands development area are lacking, but this history supports a policy measure that would restrict access to the bush by non-Aboriginal people when new roads are constructed in areas of traditional land use.

12. What role did fish caught from Lake Athabasca, the Athabasca River, and waters connected to the Athabasca River have on the ACFN way of life and economy at the time of Treaty, and after?

Fish have always been a subsistence mainstay of Chipewyans, both before and after the treaty. They had an extensive fishing technology and knowledge of fish stocks and their locations, and they exploited fish along with caribou and moose. Residential locations for the local bands were typically in areas where fish could be caught, because it gave Chipewyans at least two different options for food. If meat was in short supply, they probably had fish to eat. Reserve 201D was intended specifically for Chipewyan fishing, which speaks to the significance

of fishing as part of the local Chipewyan economy. Fish increased even more in importance after the development of dog teams in the 19th century, to provide food for the dogs, although dogs were also fed meat when it was available (until that practice was outlawed in the 20th century).

Different species of fish have their own preferred habitats and spawning and movement patterns, which means that they were/are not uniformly distributed in all local lakes and rivers. However, all waterways - the Athabasca River, smaller rivers, and lakes - had populations of fish. Lake whitefish were the mainstay of the fur trade for both people and sled dogs, and they were normally taken in large numbers in fall and winter from Lake Athabasca. Lake trout were and are also available in Lake Athabasca, but the largest populations are farther up the lake. Goldeye were particularly common in the waterways of the delta. These species were also found more widely. Other local species included northern pike (known locally as jackfish), walleye (locally, pickerel), ling cod, grayling, and suckers (see ACFN 2003:chp. 8). By the 20th century, the Athabasca Chipewyans relied mostly on nets, as they still do today for subsistence fishing. While nets could be set anywhere in a lake, Chipewyans were able to fish in the fast-flowing Athabasca River (and any other fast-flowing river) by setting nets near the banks of the river.

Despite the local importance of fish for food, commercial fishing operations by fishermen from outside the region were allowed on Lake Athabasca from the 1920s onward. There was almost no scientific study of fish populations. As was the case with land-based animals, most outsiders assumed that animal resources in the northern “wilderness” were virtually limitless, while in fact northern fish tend to grow far more slowly than in the south, so fish stocks take longer to recover (McCormack 1984:chp. 4). Correspondence from the local Indian Agent and park officials pointed to the decline of fish numbers in Lake Athabasca (McCormack 1984:420).

Eventually, McInnes Corporation, the major company involved, moved to the eastern end of the lake and then abandoned Lake Athabasca for several years to fish the previously unexploited waters of Great Slave Lake (*ibid.*:255-6).

In 1948, the McInnes Corporation was finally able to expand its commercial fishing operation from Lake Athabasca into Lake Mamawi and Lake Claire within Wood Buffalo National Park to fish for goldeye, over strong opposition from residents, including the First Nations. While the company used as one of its arguments that it would provide jobs for local people, it soon sought to bring in its own workers, exerting pressure on government officials that continued while the company was involved in the park. The overall consequence was that fish stocks declined in the park just as they had in Lake Athabasca, in exchange for which Aboriginal fishermen received some short-term financial benefits. It was not a satisfactory industry (see McCormack 1984:418-434). The decline in fish stocks was one more factor that contributed to the serious difficulties Chipewyans and others had in continuing their bush-based livelihoods, complicated greatly by the low water levels caused by the Bennett Dam since 1968. Today, Chipewyans point to water pollution stemming from industrial expansion along the Athabasca River as causing some fish to taste bad and to show deformities.¹⁸ Athabasca Chipewyans are now reluctant to eat fish from these waterways, because they fear for the safety of this traditional food and the negative consequences for their own health.¹⁹

¹⁸A document comprising several photos of fish with deformities and tumors was submitted in 2010 by Mikisew Cree First Nation to hearings for the Total's Joslyn North Mine project, entitled "Deformed Fish Removed from the Athabasca River" (MCFN 2010).

¹⁹Concerns about the quality of the water and air and the impacts of pollution on the fish and animals that Athabasca Chipewyans regularly consume(d) are frequently heard in personal conversations and public fora. I heard many comments about this subject in 2010 and earlier in 2011 when I attended several meetings in Fort Chipewyan with Athabasca Chipewyan First

13. What role did migratory birds have in the ACFN way of life/economy at the time of Treaty, and after?

Migratory waterfowl were always a tremendously important food source in the Fort Chipewyan region for everyone - Chipewyans, Crees, other Aboriginal people, and traders. The fall hunt provided a substantial amount of rich food for both fall and winter, and many birds were eaten and preserved for later consumption. The spring waterfowl hunt could mean the difference between life and death, because late winter and early spring were times when food sources were often in short supply. Bird eggs were also eaten in the spring.

The Province of Alberta allowed commercial market hunting for waterfowl, for which it sold licences. Protection for migratory birds was eventually provided by the Migratory Birds Convention Act of 1916. After, migratory birds could not be hunted between 10 March and 1 September, and eggs could not be collected. There was a continuous closed season until 1926 for several species of migratory game birds, including swans and cranes. Little or no thought was given to Indian subsistence needs, which were considered less important than broader wildlife conservation imperatives (see McCormack 2010:246-7). To some extent, Aboriginal people continued to hunt migratory waterfowl in defiance of this convention, partly because they needed the birds for food and partly because these birds are traditional and highly valued foods. The result has been that a traditional activity considered by Chipewyans to be a treaty right was criminalized to accommodate outside interests and concerns. Today, access by boats to

Nation members and members of other community groups. These concerns have also been publicized in a variety of media, such as the *Edmonton Journal* (e.g., “Alberta natives slam oilsands in American newspaper,” 18 Feb. 2009:B4; “First Nations take oilsands concerns to U.K., 28 Aug. 2009:B2) and on-line media (e.g., CBC News 2006). Members of the Mikisew Cree First Nation and Métis residents also share and have spoken about these fears.

waterfowl for spring or fall hunts is dependent on water levels.

Presentation of Topics

Following a short description of my own background as an anthropologist, ethnohistorian, and Native Studies specialist, I will address the questions in detail by presenting information and analysis of the information for the following broad topics:

- Who are the Athabasca Chipewyan? Issues of terminology and origins
- Early post-contact Chipewyan history
- Ethnography of the people who now form the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation
- Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation traditional territory
- 20th century restrictions imposed on Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation traditional lands and land-based activities
- Athabasca Chipewyan population growth and relocation to Fort McMurray
- Maintaining traditions: passing on Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation values and cultural practices
- Competing for territory

A General Note on Terminology

In discussing the peoples of the Subarctic in this report, I utilize historically-rooted and often-ambiguous terminologies. The history of terminologies found in northern usages is complex and little studied. Preferred formal terms today in Canada are “First Nations” instead of “Indian,” and “Métis” for “Half-breed.” These terms often bear little correspondence with the

plethora of terms people living in Aboriginal communities use for themselves and others, and they often differ greatly from terms used in the past. They also misrepresent formal ethnic identifications and cultural situations. The terminology employed in this report endeavors to respect documented historical usages, especially in the use of the term “Indian,” which was the normal term used to refer to Aboriginal people in both Canada and the United States until the late 20th century and was therefore the term used in Canada’s *Constitution Act 1982*. Since that time, it has been virtually replaced in Canada by the term “First Nation(s)” in both popular and scholarly writing. At times, I still use “Indian” as a collective noun when speaking about First Nations of the past and about more than one group of First Nations, such as Chipewyans and Crees together.

Culturally specific terms are used when applicable, such as “Cree” or “Chipewyan.” “Athapaskans” refers to those Aboriginal people of the western Subarctic who speak Athapaskan languages. “Dene” has become a common equivalent that has been replacing “Athapaskan” in common parlance. “Algonquians” refers to those Aboriginal people who speak Algonquian languages. They are found in the eastern Subarctic, including its interface with the western Subarctic, and also in the northern Plains and Parkland.²⁰ More will be said about these terms later in the report.

“Métis” is another collective term that usually signifies people formerly called Half-breeds. While Métis was used in the north, typically for people of mixed ancestry, it was far less common and did not enjoy the same sense of distinctiveness as it did in some parts of the south, such as at Red River. In the north, Métis may also be identified or self-identify as Athapaskan or

²⁰Athapaskan- and Algonquian-speakers are also found in other parts of North America, but those distributions are not relevant to this report.

Dene people; the divisions drawn in southern Canada between First Nations and Métis are not as clear-cut or firm in the north, especially in the past (even in southern Canada, they were often less clear-cut than they are represented today). “Aboriginal” and “Native” may be used interchangeably as terms for the totality of Aboriginal peoples in the region.

“European,” “Euro-Canadian,” “non-Native,” and “White” all indicate non-Aboriginal persons, most of whom have European ancestry. I normally reserve the term “Euro-Canadian” for non-Aboriginal persons present after Confederation.

2. Personal Qualifications and Areas of Expertise

As I understand what I have been asked to do in preparing this report, I am to provide ethnographic and historical information about the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, formerly known as the Chipewyan Band of Fort Chipewyan, with particular reference to their cultural and economic practices, their traditional lands, and the impacts they experienced after entering into Treaty No. 8 in 1899. While there is a large literature about Fort Chipewyan, the history of its First Nations and other Aboriginal occupants and neighboring Aboriginal people and the cultural changes they experienced over time are largely unknown to the general public and managers of government programs and industries. Their knowledge has been governed by a set of stereotypes about the nature of the Aboriginal society and what happened to the structure of that society after those people became involved with Europeans, first through the fur trade and later through other forms of involvement with Euro-Canadian agents representing Canadian federal and provincial governments. I will address these stereotypes and beliefs in the course of this report, because they are important to understanding the impacts on the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation of

their history of contact with Europeans, especially in the 20th century and into the 21st century.

My experience and research have led me to concur with what Hugh Brody wrote in 1981 about the Indians of northeastern British Columbia in his book *Maps and Dreams*: “The Indians’ use of the land, like every other aspect of their way of life, is little known and less understood by outsiders” (1981:146). And, “...the succession of frontiers [fur trade, agricultural, industrial] has not yet proved fatal to the life Indians regard as traditional. There is a strong Indian economy in the region, but it is hidden” (1981:211).

This report will explain how the people known today as the Athabasca Chipewyan came into being. It will construct a picture of the way of life, economy, and pattern of land uses that were part of the life of the ancestors of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation at contact with Europeans and that have persisted, though not unchanged, until today. It will address the impacts of different government jurisdictions and population changes on the First Nation’s pattern of land use. It will also outline the various ways in which First Nation members learn about their traditions.

My background for addressing these issues is long-term (45 years), extensive experience in northern and western Canada. My research has comprised field work in communities in northern Alberta, the Mackenzie Valley of the Northwest Territories (NWT), and the Yukon, and related research in archives, museums, and libraries. Northern Alberta and the Mackenzie Valley are covered by Treaties No. 8 and No. 11. I have also done research in regions encompassed by Treaties No. 6 and No. 7, working with both First Nations and Métis topics in the dual contexts of the European fur trade and the expansion of the Canadian nation-state into the Northwest. The formal products of this research are detailed in my *curriculum vitae*, submitted separately.

Especially germane to this report is my lengthy history of research and “lived experience” in Fort Chipewyan itself, a community I first visited in 1968. I have spent time on the land with various individuals and families, including two trips down the Athabasca River, one of them by canoe in 1975, at a time when some families were still living in small settlements along the river and the oil sands industries were in very early stages of development. I have also done some research in the Chipewyan communities of Black Lake (Saskatchewan), Janvier (Alberta), and Cold Lake (Alberta). I have visited Churchill, Manitoba, another community with Chipewyan residents, though I did not do research there.

My research has always been conducted with respect for the oral and written traditions of both community members and other people who have left some record about Fort Chipewyan. My primary goal has been to conduct scholarship of the highest caliber, which means that my own interpretations and understandings are ultimately my own, not dictated by community members, other scholars, or the people for whom I have undertaken related contracts. Conducting anthropological and ethno-historical research as an academic is a privileged position, and my personal philosophy is that I can best serve everyone’s interests by attaining to scholarly excellence; that is, by striving to achieve the highest possible standard of scholarship in the ways I present and interpret historical and ethnographic information. Such interpretations may differ from community knowledge or the “conventional wisdom,” whatever its source.

The products of scholarship are not fixed, because the “business” of scholarship is an open-ended and on-going process. Scholars “discover” or produce new knowledge in the process of working with materials such as this report contains. My own interpretations about the history of Fort Chipewyan and its diverse inhabitants have become more sophisticated over time as new

information has become available and as I have thought about old problems in new ways. This report is another step in narrating the history of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation in the broad context of the history of the Fort Chipewyan region, and its content relates directly not only to earlier publications and reports but also to two books. The first is a major study about Fort Chipewyan (ethno)history that was published in 2010 by UBC Press, entitled *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788-1920s* (McCormack 2010). A second book that continues this story is nearing completion; it considers the years from the end of World War I until the 1970s; much of its content derives from my 1984 Ph.D. thesis (McCormack 1984). This two-part case study contains information related to the questions I have been asked to address for this report. Appended to this report is a list of my publications and exhibits directly related to some dimension of Fort Chipewyan history (Appendix 1). Many of the other publications and papers listed in the larger *curriculum vitae* have helped me to think about Fort Chipewyan history and the cultures of its various members in new ways.

In the past, anthropological research among northern Athapaskan and Algonquian peoples relied primarily on both short-term (survey) and long-term fieldwork in communities to learn about the cultures of Aboriginal peoples at or prior to contact and later. Anthropologists used “participant-observation” - learning by living in the community being studied - and interviews. They heard and sometimes collected formally-narrated accounts by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people, although narratives from the latter were rarely acknowledged as a source of data. Such observations and narratives were supplemented by what they learned from published literature; sometimes, but less commonly, they studied archival sources. I am probably the first generation of anthropologist not only to use these traditional approaches but also to make

extensive use of archival documents, which has greatly expanded and transformed the field of historical analysis for Aboriginal people.

This approach to anthropology as a discipline is broadly *ethnohistorical*. Multiple definitions of ethnohistory abound, but basically ethnohistorians work in an interdisciplinary fashion, utilizing a wide range of resources and methodologies to produce ethnohistorical narratives, especially (but not exclusively) about groups of people who have been marginalized or excluded from the standard histories of nations. This report is an example of an ethno-historical narrative, and it relies on diverse ethnographic and documentary evidence to understand the history and evolving culture of people now known as the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation within the contexts of the European fur trade, the nation-state of Canada, and the Province of Alberta.

Some of the questions I have been asked to answer for this report also relate to subjects about which I teach at the University of Alberta, including: what were the cultural and economic structures of Aboriginal peoples prior to contact with Europeans, how did contact change those Aboriginal people (e.g., what transformed and what persisted), what was their relationship with fur traders and later with agents of the federal and provincial governments, what do we mean when we talk about traditional societies and traditional lands, why do stereotypes about Aboriginal people still persist today, and what impacts did those these stereotypes have/continue to have on policy development?

3. Who are the Athabasca Chipewyan? Issues of Origins and Terminologies

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) has a complex set of origins. The

history of the people who comprise this First Nation reaches back thousands of years to the histories of Athapaskan-speaking and Algonquian-speaking Aboriginal peoples whose lives intersected in the region that is now northeastern Alberta and other points to the east in the northern parts of the prairie provinces.²¹ Beginning approximately 300 years ago, these separate peoples also met and became involved with Europeans, first at two locations (York Fort/Factory and Fort Churchill [also, Fort Prince of Wales]) on the west coast of Hudson's Bay and later at numerous sites in the Saskatchewan River and Mackenzie River basins.²² European fur traders first reached the Churchill River (formerly, English River) in 1774 under the Frobisher brothers, but they did not meet with Athapaskan-speakers until 1776, when two groups of Indians (probably Chipewyans but possibly Beavers) from the Athabasca country braved their Cree enemies to travel over the Methye Portage (also, Portage la Loche) to the Churchill River to trade (Henry 1809:320-327; Innis 1964:152, 195). The European trade finally arrived at the Clearwater River, lower Athabasca River, and Lake Athabasca in 1778, under Peter Pond (*ibid.*:152). From there, traders for the North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company rapidly explored and established posts at Great Slave Lake and along all the northern rivers: the Peace, the Slave, the Mackenzie, and the Liard (see, for example, Innis 1964; Masson 1889;

²¹These constitute different language families, each of which has speakers in other parts of North America.

²²French fur traders began to trade on the Saskatchewan River in the 1740s, intending to obtain both local fur and furs from more distant areas that would otherwise be carried to York Factory. Their posts reached nearly the length of the North Saskatchewan River but do not seem to have reached the Churchill River basin to the north. They traded successfully with Crees, Assiniboines, and other Indians in the northern plains, the parkland, and the southern fringe of the boreal forest (Innis 1964:95-99). This report does not attempt to provide comprehensive citations and references to the very large literature about the expansion of the French and succeeding English and Scottish fur traders into the Northwest. A recent, popular account with solid scholarship is Michael Payne's *The Fur Trade in Canada* (2004).

1990; Keith 2001; Morrison 2009). Over time, the constituent peoples of the region included:

- Chipewyans, now also known as *Dene Sųtiné*
- Other Athapaskan-speaking or Dene people, including Beavers and Yellowknives
- Western Crees
- People of mixed Aboriginal-European ancestry (sometimes but not always known as Métis or Half-breeds)
- Other Aboriginal people (e.g., Iroquois)
- European fur traders (French, English, Scottish, Orcadian)
- Miscellaneous others

Archaeological Evidence for Chipewyans and Crees

The histories of the different Aboriginal peoples who met in this region are complex and only partially known, both for the very lengthy period prior to the arrival of Europeans and their influences and for the early post-contact era. Archaeologists have used the physical evidence of former human occupations to construct plausible portraits of sequences of Aboriginal occupation. The most recent summary of this work is provided by a massive two-volume work, a detailed review of *A History of the Native People of Canada*, by J. V. Wright (1999; 1995), based primarily on archaeological information, and more immediately for northeastern Alberta by John W. Ives (1993). Wright discusses three broad regions that are relevant for the Athabasca Chipewyan: the Northwest Interior, the Western Shield, and the Plains. This material is presented briefly, supplemented by Ives and other sources, to indicate the enormous span of time for which one can speak about Athabasca Chipewyan history and the depth of their ancestry in

the lands that were included by Treaty No. 8 in 1899 and in 1905 became the northeastern corner of the new Province of Alberta.

Wright's "Northwest Interior Culture" includes part of the Mackenzie Basin and extends into modern-day Alberta. Wright argues for at least 6,000 years of cultural continuity in this region by people who would eventually become "the historically documented northern Athapaskan-speaking peoples of the region" (Wright 1995:390, 389). They included the people who later became "Chipewyans." What he terms the "Late Northwest Interior Culture" was characterized by the Taltheilei archaeological complex. In Wright's summation:

...the Taltheilei complex was the product of an exceptional eastward movement of people, likely coming out of northeastern British Columbia and the adjacent Yukon Territory via the Peace River and the Liard River.... This population movement extended 1,500 km east of the Mackenzie River nearly to Hudson Bay, north to the coast of the Arctic Ocean and south into the northern reaches of the Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba [Wright 1999:978-9 and cultural distribution map pp. 568-9].

People with the Taltheilei complex appeared in the Barren Grounds of the Keewatin District (lands now divided between the Northwest Territories and Nunavut) about 2,700 years ago (700 BC), at a time when the climate had warmed. This date was approximately the same time by which the modern boreal forest biome had developed in northeast Alberta, although Ives does not believe that the evidence points to occupation there by Taltheilei people until a later date, between 500 and 1,500 BP (Ives 1993:7, 17). At the same time, Ives has pointed out that archaeological research in northern Alberta has been limited; "only a handful of archaeologists have ever taken an interest in the region," "making it difficult to lay out a chronological framework for human prehistory in the boreal forest" (1993:7).²³

²³Despite the importance of understanding the northern human occupations that were a major chapter in the peopling of North America, archaeological research in the western boreal forest has occurred at a "sluggish pace," which means that major questions remain unanswered

Much of the Taltheilei tradition was associated with the distribution of barren ground caribou (*Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus*) and seemed to have somewhat distinctive tool kits associated with summer (barren ground) and winter (boreal forest) subsistence strategies (Elias 2002:14; Wright 1999:990–1). Wright lists a variety of mainly lithic tools, including bipointed biface knives, chi-thos (a distinctive type of scraper), a wide range of types of scrapers (especially end scrapers), linear flakes, hammerstones, and wedges (1999:991). Artifacts fashioned from bone, antler, other organic materials, and copper are rare, even though they are all known to have been part of northern tool kits in this region.²⁴ Organic artifacts do not preserve well, and copper items were probably so highly valued that people curated them carefully.

Because Taltheilei artifacts are widely considered to constitute the distinctive material culture of the Athapaskan-speaking people who lived in the northern parts of the prairie provinces and east of the Mackenzie River in the Great Slave Lake and Great Bear Lake regions

(Arundale *et al.* 1989:87). It faces serious methodological difficulties, which include problems of northern travel and preservation of organic materials. Ives remarked that “...a significant proportion of the archaeological work that took place was driven by the impact assessment and mitigation provisions of the Historical Resources Act of Alberta,” which meant that when industrial development slowed in the 1980s, archaeological research also diminished (1993:7-8). Assessments increased substantially in the late 1990s and especially in the current decade (Table 8.6-1 in Shell Canada Limited 2007:8-176-179). At the same time, expanding the industrial footprint of oil sands extraction projects means, inevitably, the nearly complete destruction of archaeological sites and the evidence they contain. The methodology outlined in Shell Canada Limited’ “Environmental Impact Assessment” (2007) raises questions about whether or not historical or post-contact sites are being adequately identified. Meticulous archaeological investigation is critical to ensure that *all* the information from these areas will be identified and salvaged, both for earlier eras and for the post-contact period, because it is the evidence of the past history of the Athabasca Chipewyan and that of neighboring Aboriginal groups that is being destroyed. Despite the extensive record of archaeological research, it seems that little is being published about the findings (but see Younie *et al.* 2010 and Ives 2006 for articles about early, pre-Taltheilei microblade and burin technology).

²⁴Artifacts made from copper were not present everywhere; they were found mainly among people to the north.

and adjacent barren grounds or tundra, the presence of such artifacts has been commonly interpreted as evidence for the presence of Athapaskans.²⁵ This area is also the traditional territory of First Nations known today as Chipewyan, Yellowknife, and Dogrib, which suggests that the presence of Taltheilei artifacts here also indicates occupation by these specific Athapaskan peoples. Chipewyan and Yellowknife were linguistically so close that it is not clear whether or not they should be considered different dialects, while there may be some mutual intelligibility with Dogrib, the other main Athapaskan group in the area (Krauss and Golla 1981:80).²⁶ Taltheilei artifacts have been found as far south as the northern fringes of the boreal forest, including portions of the Churchill River drainage (see Meyer and Russell 1987:12). Peter Douglas Elias' analysis of the distribution of Taltheilei sites indicated a broad correlation between the location of these sites and climate: people expanded their range northward during periods of improving climate and associated advancing treeline, and they contracted their range southward when the climate deteriorated (2002:vii).

They were bordered to the southeast and southwest by peoples with two different archaeological traditions, Western Shield Culture and Plains Culture respectively. On the

²⁵David Morrison considers the “western third of the Mackenzie District of the Northwest Territories, exclusive of the Delta and Great Slave and Great Bear lakes,” to constitute “a single cultural area” that is different from Taltheilei (although both share the distinctive chi-tho) (Morrison 1984:195, 208). The historic descendants of this tradition are Athapaskan-speakers known today as Slavey, Hare, and Mountain Indians (not to be confused with the designation of “Montagnais” for Chipewyans) (*ibid.*:195). These people were the western neighbors of the people who became the Chipewyan. The close historic association among them is supported by close linguistic similarities among them, while Chipewyans and Dogribs deny mutual intelligibility with Slavey-Hare (Krauss and Golla 1981:79-80).

²⁶Linguistically, talking about separate Athapaskan languages and dialects is problematic. Much of the linguistic variation among speakers occurred in speech communities (Richmond 1970).

margins, their bearers interacted with one another and with the Taltheilei people to the north. Wright's "Late Western Shield Culture" developed from the "Middle Shield Culture" and its own complicated origins in what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and the Great Lakes. It was found throughout much of Manitoba and distributed into east-central Saskatchewan. This tradition has very deep roots, the product of *in situ* development and a continuation of the first human occupation of the Canadian Shield as it became suitable for human occupation following the melting away of Pleistocene glaciers (Wright 1995:261). It "led directly to the northern Algonquian-speaking peoples who still occupy the territory" (Wright 1995:263). Linguistically, it correlates with the fact that Cree and Ojibwa are considered to have developed independently in this region from ancestral Proto-Algonquian (Rhodes and Todd 1981:52). David Meyer and Dale Russell provided a detailed review in 1987 of the "Selkirk composite," the material culture of these people (1987).²⁷ Basically, they argued that there were broad archaeological similarities across the northern landscape from the Churchill River to northeastern Alberta that differed mainly in local ways. These localized differences probably reflected regional populations of Algonquian people whose material culture changed in somewhat unique ways, due to local innovations and to their varying involvements with people to the south and west with Plains traditions. Meyer and Russell considered the lithic and bone technologies to be "very similar"

²⁷Archaeologists use a wide range of classificatory units that have changed over time. Meyer and Russell (1987:4) followed a system defined by Leigh Syms in 1977, in which there are three levels of analysis: the assemblage, the complex, and the composite. An assemblage comprises "the surviving materials, features, and evidence of activities of a single residential group over a short period of time at one site." They can be grouped into a complex, which is "the total expression of a number of assemblages left by the same group over a sufficiently narrow time period that the cultural expressions undergo only minor changes." In turn, complexes can be grouped together into a composite when they "share a set of traits...that may be conceived as being sufficiently different that microevolutionary changes have taken place," but not major changes that would be considered macroevolutionary.

across this range; the distinctions relate mainly to different styles of ceramics (clay pots) (1987:4). Tools include side-notched points, a variety of scrapers and biface knives, and adze blades (including ground blades). Bone tools are more widely represented and include a range of items for producing other tools, working hides, and manufacturing snowshoes (though evidence of bone tools diminishes in the most northerly locations due to preservation problems). Ceramics were found widely throughout the region, except in northern Alberta (Ives 1993:17). Ceramics are considered diagnostic, so their presence or absence is significant. At the same time, the lack of ceramics, which are heavy to transport, cannot be considered definitive evidence of the *lack* of an Algonquian presence, especially short-term visits, because Algonquian peoples were known to have raided into and occupied portions of northeastern Alberta and regions to the north, at least from the late 17th century.²⁸

West and south of the Western Shield Culture were people with a “Plains Culture,” who also occupied or exploited southern portions of the boreal forest, including the Peace River region of British Columbia (Wright 1995:299). Wright argues that when moist, cool weather between 3,500 and 2,500 years ago led to the expansion of the boreal forest southward and westward, the Middle Plains Culture populations abandoned territory that was probably already marginal for them to begin with and were replaced by Late Western Shield people who had a more successful boreal forest adaptation (Wright 1999:726). However, evidence of the Late Plains Culture in the form of diagnostic projectile points continued to be found in the Athabasca drainage of the boreal forest and at least as far north as Lake Athabasca (Wright 1999:837). Late Plains Culture included people who spoke both Algonquian and Siouan languages and were the

²⁸See Hearne’s references to the Athapuskow Cree (1958), discussed below.

ancestors of the populations known after contact from the Saskatchewan River basin, including the northern Plains and parkland. Wright points out that the relationship between Late Plains culture and Late Western Shield culture (Selkirk) is “poorly understood” (1999:790). The same can be said for the relationship between Late Northwest Interior Culture (Taltheilei) and Late Plains Culture, which could have been highly influential for Athapaskans who lived in or expanded eastward along the Peace River corridor (see Wright 1999:837).

In short, prior to the arrival of Europeans, the archaeological record indicates millennia of occupation by Athapaskan-speaking peoples to the north and Algonquian-speaking peoples to the south in the area associated today with Chipewyans - a broad swath of the Canadian north extending from the eastern side of Great Slave Lake through a large portion of the Keewatin barren grounds and the northern part of the prairie provinces to Churchill, Manitoba (Figure 3). The interface between these two broad regions probably fluctuated and may have involved some buffer zones, but it seemed to have been very roughly defined by several rivers, which were highways between north and south, west and east: the Churchill River, the Clearwater River, and lower stretches of the Athabasca River.²⁹

Chipewyan-Cree Relationships Before European Arrival

There are two standard beliefs about the historic nature of Chipewyan-Cree relationships. The first is that there was little territorial overlap between them, thanks to very different patterns

²⁹Beryl Gillespie (1975:353, 356), relying on works by Alexander Mackenzie and other fur trade sources, proposed the Seal River, located north of the Churchill River, as the pre-contact Chipewyan-Cree boundary. However, the archaeological evidence suggests that pre-contact boundaries may have fluctuated and possibly were permeable, more an interface than a strict boundary.

of resources use, what James G. E. Smith called “distinctive econiches” (1981b:135; see also Elias 2002:ix). In that case, they may have had little to do with one another. The second is that their early encounters were characterized by bitter raids and warfare by Crees against Chipewyans and that this enmity has persisted over time in the form of “interethnic tensions” (J. Smith 1981a:282; see also 1981b). In fact, the Chipewyan word for Crees is *'ená*, or enemy (J. Smith 1981a:271; see also ACFN 2003a:37).

However, some evidence suggests that this picture of original ethnic segregation and a state of original hostility has been exaggerated and that the relationship between these two peoples was more complex (see J. Smith 1981b:133). The sources of potentially relevant evidence include archaeological investigations, oral traditions, analogies drawn from other ethnographic situations (especially among other Athapaskans), and “upstreaming” from early post-contact eye-witness accounts. Unfortunately, the archaeological evidence is weak, due to lack of good diagnostic information that can be dated and correlated with social identities, and it will not be considered here. Analogies from other ethnographic situations and early post-contact accounts are helpful only in small ways, largely because early European observers in the western Subarctic rarely if ever spoke Athapaskan languages (Cree was more common and served as a *lingua franca*), and what they saw and recorded were occurrences long after fur trade-initiated conflicts had begun. They did not and probably were unable to distinguish the warfare of the day from the state of affairs in a pre-contact era.

It is oral traditions that are especially helpful. Some early versions of Chipewyan oral traditions were recorded in French translations by Oblate Father Émile Petitot and published in several books in the late 1800s. Two of these have just been republished by the Champlain

Society in an important new English translation and single volume, *Travels around Great Slave and Great Bear Lake 1862-1882* (2005). It makes Petitot's work easily available to readers lacking fluency in French. For reasons of accessibility, it is used here rather than the French originals. Father Petitot's *Traditions Indiennes du Canada Nord-Ouest* (1886) compiled some oral traditions for Chipewyans and other Athapaskan groups as well as "Esquimaux" or Inuit, Crees, and Blackfoot. He also included Chipewyan stories in other publications (e.g., 1883, 2005). The two earliest collections published in English were prepared by Robert H. Lowie, based on a field trip to Fort Chipewyan in 1908, and by Pliny Earle Goddard, from his trip to the Chipewyan of the Cold Lake Reserve in 1911, both published by the American Museum of Natural History in 1912. Lowie's principal informant, or possibly his informant and interpreter, was Francis (François) Fortin, whose "mother was of pure Chipewyan stock," according to Lowie (1912:174), possibly a woman named Shanielzaze. If this is the correct Fortin, he was baptized in 1859 and may have been about 50 years of age when Lowie met him (McCormack n.d.b). Lowie also noted that he "had spent some time with the Beaver Indians" (Lowie 1912:174). Goddard was a linguist as well as an ethnographer; the translations he provided reflected the bilingual abilities of his interpreter, Jean Baptiste Ennou, "...a man of about thirty-five years of age who speaks good English" (1912:4). While the 20th century stories from Fort Chipewyan and Cold Lake are not identical, there are strong parallels between them, and some of them reflect stories that Petitot heard in the 19th century. Finally, there is a collection of stories told to linguist Li Fang-kuei in 1928 by 50-year old François Mandeville.³⁰ Ronald Scollon, who

³⁰François Mandeville was probably the grandson of Baptiste Le Camarade de Mandeville, a man of mixed French-Indian ancestry known to Petitot (2005:51-52). While Petitot called him a "French Metis," he also said that his children were all "...true Dènè savages, not understanding a word of French (*ibid.*:52, see note 12). However, these children, and their

was Li's student, worked with these stories for over 30 years and also did research in Fort Chipewyan in 1976-77. In 2009 he published a new translation of these stories. In Scollon's analysis, Mandeville chose a core group of 16 stories "as a way of guiding Li Fang-kuei in his understanding of the Chipewyan people"; Scollon calls them "a narrative ethnography" (2009:13). Taken together, these four collections of stories provide us with oral traditions that date back to the earliest days of contact and probably to the time before contact.³¹ They show remarkable persistence of story-lines and themes.

Lowie's stories include several about a powerful culture-hero named Crow-head, which include multiple references to relations with Crees, typically with reference to moral transgressions by Chipewyans themselves and to their repercussions. For example, in one story Crow-head was described as a dwarf who took care of an orphan, whom he called his grandchild. Crow-head wore a special cape made from a crow skin, which was his part of his medicine power. When two girls made fun of this garment, Crow-head was offended and decided to make a canoe and leave the band. While he and his grandchild were getting the bark, some "bad Indians, who were Crees," threw snowballs at them, but they were unharmed. Meanwhile, those same Crees had killed all the Chipewyans at the camp Crow-head had left. Crow-head caused those Chipewyans to return to life, except for the girls who had made fun of him. He also caused the Crees to return to another place where they were all killed (Lowie 1912:175-6). In another

grandchildren, learned all the local languages, which would have included the "rababou" or language mix that would not have been true French to Petitot (see Scollon 2009:14; McCormack 2010:279 n. 1). François Mandeville himself spoke Chipewyan, Slavey, Dogrib, Hare, Gwich'in, English, and presumably the local French dialect (Scollon 2009:14).

³¹The most important collections are used here; there are other stories that can be found in the Chipewyan literature.

story, Crow-head thought that someone had handled his crow-skin cape and was upset:

“Someone has counted every feather on it and has been laughing at it. I will go away and let the Cree kill the people. ... That night the Cree killed all the Chipewyan, but Crow-head and his grandmother escaped” (Lowie 1912:178). It is unclear whether or not Crow-head simply knew that the Crees were coming or used his power to bring them to the camp for his vengeance. The same ambiguity exists in Goddard’s version of these stories, where Crow-head said: “‘Because they laughed at my blanket, may the Cree get them all!’” That night, the Crees killed everyone in the camp, including his grandmother, but Crow-head brought her back to life (Goddard 1912:54). Goddard also described Crow-head fighting with other Chipewyans: “Crow-head used to fight with the people and kept killing them” (1912:54-55). In Scollon’s version and translation of Mandeville’s stories, the hero was called Raven Head and “...was known to have the strongest powers” which he used to fight Dogribs and Slaveys (2009:62).³²

Edward Curtis’ account of the Chipewyan at Cold Lake contains a single Crow-head story that is slightly different from the one told by Goddard. It contains some informative details.³³ Crow-head’s mother was “a captive Cree,” and Crow-head himself

...was a great leader in the border country between the Cree and the Chipewyan along the

³²Mandeville’s stories about warfare may have been conflated with Yellowknife stories; in the early 19th century the Yellowknives were very aggressive toward Dogribs and Slaveys. However, there are two other stories in which Mandeville named Yellowknives specifically (Scollon 2009:177-179). It is surprising not to see any stories about enmity with Crees, which certainly existed in Fort Chipewyan at that time, and one wonders why Mandeville elected not to tell such stories. Perhaps he chose to focus on stories about Chipewyans (and probably Yellowknives) before European arrival. The important and commonly-known Thanadelthur story does not appear here. Unfortunately, Scollon did not provide any interpretation about the selection of stories or the order in which they were told, both determined by Mandeville.

³³For one thing, the name given by Curtis is a slight variation of the others, translating to “beak excrement [raven] head” (1928:129).

line from Athabasca lake to Cree and Caribou [Reindeer] lakes. He sometimes associated with the Cree, sometimes with the Chipewyan, but mostly with the latter. Fighting was a mania with him. All feared him, but none could kill him [Curtis 1928:129].

Crow-head's brother, Spread-wings, was also a man with great power.³⁴ Stories told about him include one in which he was traveling with his sons when "They found the tracks of a band of Cree. The younger brother did not want to follow on account of the strong smell, and kept behind his father and brother. After some time they got to the Cree. ... The elder brother wished to get married, and with his father's consent he married a Cree woman in the fall" (Lowie 1912:181).

Other stories resonate with stories of warfare, of Chipewyans killing Crees. According to Curtis, the Chipewyans "...were stubborn fighters when attacked.... They are said to have been without fear, undaunted by the death of a few, and the Cree commonly called them 'bad people' in reference to their reckless, headlong attack" (1928:9-10). This bravado is reflected in the oral traditions. For example, Lowie recorded the story of Marten-Axe, who "...used to travel among his friends. Whenever he found Cree, he would always kill them. He was in the habit of staying with the Chipewyan. Once he started out to travel, and came to a band of Cree. He knew all languages. So he told the Cree that he was a Cree himself and that the Chipewyan had killed all his friends." He killed all the Crees that night while they were sleeping (Lowie 1912:189).

Goddard recorded the complex story of Ebedaholtihe/Ebedaxoltihe in which Chipewyans

³⁴In a story told by François Mandeville, not only could Spread Wings transform himself into a wolf, but "After he has been a wolf, when he becomes a man again, he becomes a young man. ... Three times he has lived to be an old man" (Scollon 2009:157). Henry S. Sharp reports a contemporary tradition from Black Lake about possibly the same spiritual figure, but named "Lived-with-the wolves," who could be reborn in human form (2001:80-81). According to Sharp, "...wolves are frequently referred to as the most powerful of the animals..." and "significant figures of inkoze," or spiritual power (*ibid.*:79).

and Crees found themselves at the same fishing place and fought until only one man of each side remained. They were unable to kill each other. “After that, the Chipewyan went to live with the Cree.” His former Cree antagonist gave him a wife and became his brother-in-law. He lived with his new Cree relatives long enough to have older children. Later, he found his Chipewyan relatives again, and they came raiding and killing the Crees. They spared his own family (which had a distinctive tipi), except for his son, presumably because the son had gone to fight on the side of the Crees. “The Chipewyan [man] was about to kill some of his own people because of it but they gave him a young man of the same age in the place of his son who had been killed. Then he was satisfied and went with the Chipewyan and afterward lived with them” (1912:55-56).

Yet another group of stories is a distinctive genre of northern Athapaskan oral traditions, “stolen women” stories, in which women are kidnaped by raiders and strive to escape, with the women relying heavily on their skills and men on their medicine or spiritual power (McCormack 2003:353-4; see also Cruikshank 1983, among others). Lowie included a classic example of an Athapaskan stolen woman story (1912:193-4): some Crees stole two Chipewyan women - sisters - while their men were away hunting. The brother of these women was a “medicineman,” a person with spiritual power. In Chipewyan, this power is known as *iⁿkoⁿze* (see D. Smith 1973; Sharp writes it as *inkoze*). He followed the Crees in order to rescue his sisters; animals helped him to track them. When he finally found the Crees, his sisters had evidently both been married to the same Cree man, whom he referred to as their Cree “husband.” In the end, he was able to rescue only the younger sister, and he had to use his spiritual power to fight the medicine that the Crees were using in turn to prevent the escape of their captives (Lowie 1912:193-4).

None of these stories involved firearms, although there was a Spread-wings story in which he was hunting toward the barren grounds, armed only with spears, when he used his medicine to make the Crees “stupid, so that they passed by his canoe without noticing it” (Lowie 1912:179). The specific reference to his spears is suggestive; perhaps he used his medicine to avoid them rather than to kill them because the Crees possessed guns. There was also a Crow-head story that spoke more generally to warfare, not to conflict between Chipewyans and Crees: “Long ago the Indians did a great deal of fighting” (Lowie 1912:178).³⁵

Several themes relevant to this report can be extracted from these stories:

- Chipewyans are fierce warriors who kill Crees, with the help of their medicine or spiritual power. They marry captive Cree women.
- Crees kill Chipewyans. They have medicine, but it is not as strong as Chipewyan medicine.
- Chipewyan men occasionally marry Cree women, peacefully. They become relatives. Relations between them are not always hostile.
- Crees capture Chipewyan women and marry them. They become relatives.

These oral traditions can be used in tandem with the account provided by Governor James Knight in the York Fort journals of 1714-1717 to provide additional insights into early Chipewyan-Cree relations. Knight took command of this post from the French in 1714, following the Treaty of Utrecht (HBCA B.239/a/1-3; McCormack 2003). He recorded much information about the Northern Indians and their neighbors that he learned from Thanadelthur, a

³⁵Chipewyans had similarly complex relationships with Inuit, ranging from warfare to peaceful interactions (Janes 1973; Smith 1981b). Inuit were *otel'ena*, or enemy of the lowlands (Smith 1981b:143-4).

famous young Athapaskan woman captured by Crees c.1712 whom he called the “Slave Woman,” and from his discussions with other Northern Indians who visited the post with her. The story of Thanadelthur is a classic example of an Athapaskan “captured woman” story that still exists in Chipewyan oral traditions.³⁶ Petitot published the earliest written version of this narrative, which he heard at Fort Chipewyan and possibly at other locations, and it was recorded by Edward Curtis in the early 20th century at Cold Lake (Petitot 1883:650-651; Curtis 1928:8-9; see McCormack 2003). Today Thanadelthur is typically identified as Chipewyan in the modern sense, but her exact geographic origin and how she would have identified herself are unknown. From her own remarks, we know that she did not come from country where copper was available, which indicates that she was not a Yellowknife Indian or any of the other northern Athapaskan “nations” identified as having access to copper (27 July 1716, HBCA B.239/a/2:fo. 48; HBCA B.239/a/3:23). However, she could have come from as far northwest as the Lake Athabasca-Great Slave Lake region. She told James Knight that there were “11 Great Nations as was there friends as understood each other [spoke the same language or closely related languages] and that their [there] is 5 Great Nations bordering upon their friends that does not understand each other but does marry amongst another” (4 Feb. 1717, HBCA B.239/a/3:fo. 23). These nations were evidently widely distributed; Knight heard from other Northern Indians that four of these nations lived in country where copper could be found (30 May 1716, HBCA B.239/a/2:fo.34d). Elsewhere, he distinguished between the “Yellow Mettle Indians” and the

³⁶Versions of her story told at Fort Chipewyan by Victoria and Josephine Mercredi call her Ttha'naltther (Coutu and Hoffman-Mercredi 2002:126; ACFN 2003a:38-9).

“Copper Indians” (12 July 1716, HBCA B.239/a/2:fo. 45).³⁷ It seems likely that the nations were what today would be called regional bands, not the larger entities referred to today as “Chipewyan,” “Dogrib,” and so forth.

Had Thanadelthur stayed with her Cree captors, eventually she would have become a wife to one of them, and there are other examples of that in Knight’s account, even though Knight called all captured women “slaves.” Early European explorers such as Alexander Mackenzie wrote about the great nervousness of local people when strangers appeared, fearing for their own safety and especially fearing the loss of their women, though not necessarily just to Crees (e.g., Lamb 1970:182, 212; see Hanks and Winter 1991:49). At the same time, inter-marriage is also part of a common pattern of localized alliance that fluctuated over time, which is what the oral traditions suggest. Marriages were a typical and important vehicle to building bridges between strangers, turning enemies into kinsmen, in order to facilitate peaceful interaction and trade.

Adoption, also in the oral traditions, was an alternative route to alliance. It could occur by capture or by formal arrangement. As an example of the former, J. M. Bell, who visited Great Bear Lake for the Geological Survey of Canada, recounted a Dogrib or Hare story about an enormous man, Naba-Cha, who had once gone raiding to the south and returned with “a young Wood-Cree boy” (1903:80-1).³⁸ An example of the latter is found in a detail of the peace made

³⁷No evidence exists to clarify the identification of these two different groups. Historically, the name “Copper Indian” is equated with “Yellowknife,” who have often been considered a sub-group of Chipewyan. See below for more on terminological problems. Knight’s remarks were all based on what he was told by Indian visitors to York Fort, and it seems likely that Athapaskan languages were interpreted imperfectly for him. Some of his Athapaskan visitors drew maps for him that showed the rivers, but none of those maps have survived.

³⁸Although about a Cree youth, it is not surprising that this story seems to be told in an Athapaskan way, with traditional themes. The boy, who became known as Ithenhiela, the

between the Cree trading captain with whom Thanadelthur was traveling and “her people.” As part of the peace process, the man who seemed to have been the most influential Chipewyan leader gave up his 18 year-old son for adoption by the Cree trading captain (31 March 1717, HBCA B.239/a/3:fo. 38d). Other parts in the process for making peace were the giving of gifts and smoking what Knight called “the friendly pipe” (7 May 1716, 9 May 1716, HBCA B.239/a/2:fo. 27d, 28d).

None of this discussion is intended to mean that warfare was absent, but to indicate that it was not always with Crees. If the oral traditions are correct, much warfare may have been with other Athapaskans, possibly even internal. This situation of more generalized antagonism is not surprising, given that people living in band societies tend to be nervous of and may engage in conflict with people to whom they are not related. The Northern Indians who had returned to York Fort with the Cree trading captain and the peace party told Knight that “there is 3 Nations that borders upon them that they are perpetually at Warr with and they speak 3 Different Languages as they do not Understand a word they Say” (30 May 1716, HBCA B.239/a/2:fo. 34d). But, they did not identify those “Nations” as Crees, which suggests that at least some of these enemies were likely other Athapaskan speakers or Inuit. Knight also heard from the Athapaskan visitors that they were at war with the Indians who had access to copper, “...but they made peace with them last Summer as likewise with other Indians to the Westwards to Join all against there common Enemy that Destroys them all[,] w.ch is our Indians [Crees] those Rogues that come to trade with us and getts guns, for they Poor people have none...” (8 May 1716 HBCA B.239/a/2). This passage, more than any other, suggests that the Chipewyans may not have

Caribou-Footed, was treated badly by his captor. He eventually escaped, in the process creating the mountains west of the Mackenzie River and having other adventures (Bell 1903:81-84).

engaged in warfare with Crees in any greater way than with other people on the fringes of their lands until the arrival of firearms, which changed the balance of power in the north.

This interpretation is supported by the oral traditions surrounding Thanadelthur, all of which begin by talking about firearms, in contrast to the traditions discussed above, where firearms are not mentioned and the main weapons are spears and bows and arrows. While the firearms of the day were not particularly reliable, they were nevertheless fearsome and desired weapons. Groups that had previously been more or less equal from a military standpoint were now unequal. As Nicolas Jérémie, the French commander at Fort Bourbon (the French fort that temporarily replaced York Fort), reported about the Chipewyans in the Seal River country, “As they have no experience with firearms, ...as soon as they hear a few shots fired they all run away...” (Douglas and Wallace 1926:20, also in Gillespie 1975:356).³⁹ Crees and other Indians who engaged in direct trade with Europeans seized the advantage. Not surprisingly, the peace made between the Cree trading captain and the Northern Indians and mediated by Thanadelthur did not endure. While Gillespie thinks that warfare between Chipewyans and Crees lasted for only about 30 years in the eastern area served by Fort Churchill (the last recorded instance occurred in 1729) (1975:360), to the west occasional warfare may have continued until approximately the 1760s-1770s.

Terminologies

Chipewyans The discussion above has referred to Chipewyans, Crees, and other named people from this region. It is this terminology that ultimately led to the present name,

³⁹Jérémie did not identify the source of his story, whether Crees or Chipewyans enslaved by Crees. He may have heard it from both.

“Athabasca Chipewyan.” It is therefore ironic that this term is Cree in origin. It presumably originated with the Woods Cree located west of Hudson’s Bay in northern Manitoba and into Saskatchewan who spoke a /th/ dialect (Rhodes and Todd 1981:53, 55). “Athabasca” means “there are reeds here and there” (Smith 1981c:269). “Chipewyan,” which appears in multiple spellings,⁴⁰ usually is translated to mean “those [people] who have pointed skins or hides,” a reference to either the preparation of clothing and/or hides (Smith 1981a:283).⁴¹

However, confusion abounds in the terminology for Athapaskan-speakers. It has complicated the culture histories of individual groups; a terminological history to sort out these usages is badly needed but has not yet been undertaken. The very term “Chipewyan” (in various spellings) was commonly used as a general term for all Athapaskan-speakers (Smith 1981a:283), a usage that persisted, though not consistently, until the end of the 19th century. For example, J. M. Bell, who worked for the Geological Survey of Canada in 1900 at Great Bear Lake in the company of Charles Camsell, who was himself from the north and should have been highly knowledgeable, called *all* the people of the Mackenzie valley speakers of “...the language of the Chippwyans of the Athapascan stock,” who are divided into numerous tribes” (1903:73; see Camsell 1954). As a name, “Chipewyan” does not seem to have gelled for the people to whom it applies today until the 20th century. The communities where Chipewyan is spoken are shown in Table 1.

⁴⁰The earliest written record from the Fort Chipewyan region refers to “Achibawayans” (Duckworth 1990:9).

⁴¹Note that other translations exist. James Smith (1981a:283) considered the possibility that the term related to Cree dismissal of Chipewyans as “not true humans,” which he heard from the people he knew at Brochet, Manitoba (the Barren Lands Band). He probably heard it as part of the Thanadelthur story; versions exist with this theme (see McCormack 2003:351).

Table 1. Chipewyan Speakers (Krauss and Golla 1981:80)

Province/Territory	Settlement
Northwest Territories	Lutsel K'e (formerly, Snowdrift)
	Fort Resolution
	Fort Smith/Fort Fitzgerald
Alberta	Fort Chipewyan
	Fort MacKay/Fort McMurray
	Janvier
	Cold Lake
Saskatchewan	Fond du Lac
	Black Lake/Stony Rapids
	Hatchet Lake
	Peter Pond Lake
	English River
Manitoba	Brochet
	Churchill

There is evidently a dialect division between the eastern groups, from Hatchet Lake to Churchill, and the western groups, but the antiquity of this division is unknown. James Smith believed that it corresponded to regional bands and their uses of distinctive caribou populations (Krauss and Golla 1981:80). Yellowknife has been also considered a dialect of Chipewyan. In the 20th century, Yellowknife as a distinctive identity was supplanted by a Chipewyan identity. This process may have been hastened by the terrible mortality caused by the influenza epidemic in the Northwest Territories of 1928 (Gillespie 1981:286, 288). The impact on the form of Chipewyan spoken by people with Yellowknife ancestry is unknown.

“Dog Rib” is another term that is similarly confusing. While after 1850 it was understood to refer to those Athapaskan people located between Great Slave and Great Bear Lakes, earlier it was used for a wide range of Athapaskan speakers, including people now known as Chipewyans, probably due to a common or similar origin story and originating with the Cree *atimospikay* or “dog rib” (Smith 1981a:283; Helm 1981:293, 305, see 303-309; see Douglas and Wallace 1926:20).⁴² Beryl Gillespie suggested that it may have been a derogatory term used by Crees for Athapaskans (1975:355). According to June Helm, one consequence of the lack of terminological precision was that the Dogrib identity was “elusive” before 1850 (1981:293).

Other than variants of Chipewyan and Dogrib, “Northern Indian” was the most common term used for the Athapaskans closest to Fort Churchill; it distinguished them from the “Southern Indians,” who comprised the Cree and Assiniboin trading at York Fort (later, York Factory) (J. Smith 1981a:283). Today, scholars often tend to equate Northern Indian with Chipewyan, while Athapaskans farther from Hudson’s Bay are called by other general terms, such as the “Far Away Indians.” More specific groups names, such as the “Red-knife Indians” or “Copper Indians” (Gillespie 1981:289), sometimes were used early in the literature, while others tended to emerge as traders came into contact with new people.

Chipewyans as they are understood today had and still have their own names for themselves. *Dene* means “people”; various spellings and pronunciations exist in the historic literature. The spelling used here - Dene - is the one used today. It has become widely equated to “Athapaskan speaker” in the Canadian Subarctic. In the 19th century, named social divisions

⁴²Yerbury (1980:21) has interpreted that to mean that Dogrib people were actually located wherever their name is used, but that implies far more dislocation of groups after contact than the evidence supports.

were recorded, which we presume were names for regional bands; that is, broad identities of people who lived in the same general area and tended to intermarry and follow the same population of caribou (see discussion below). James G. E. Smith, who wrote the summary article about Chipewyan for the *Subarctic* volume of the *Handbook of North American Indians*, divided Chipewyans into four broad groups (1981a:271):

- T'atsan ottiné = Yellowknife⁴³ = the people east of Great Slave Lake
- Kkrest'aylékkè ottiné = dwellers among the quaking aspen, the people of the Slave River⁴⁴
- Thi-lan-ottiné = dwellers at the top of the head, the people of the upper Churchill River drainage
- Ethen-eldèli = caribou-eaters, the people along the forest edge west of Hudson Bay.

In the 1860s, Father Petitot recorded multiple identifications of this kind. By this time the Chipewyans had experienced devastating epidemics and become involved in the fur trade. It is therefore important to caution that even Petitot's divisions may not have corresponded in part or in whole to pre-contact or early-contact divisions – the “Great Nations” about which Knight heard in the early 1700s. Smith's divisions are different from those made by Petitot in the 1860s and by Curtis in the 1920s (1928:3-4); it is beyond the scope of this report to reconcile or account for the differences in what was reported.

⁴³Not all scholars agree that the Yellowknife should be subsumed under the Chipewyan heading. Evidently the Yellowknives themselves did not consider themselves to be Chipewyan; they entered into Treaty No. 8 in 1900 under their distinctive name (Govt. of Canada 1966).

⁴⁴In his 1975 description of Chipewyan, Smith called these people *Desnedekenade*, or “great river people,” or Athapaskans proper (1975:396). He evidently came to prefer the term *Kkrest'aylékkè ottiné* but did not explain why.

In the past, there does not seem to have been a collective term for all Chipewyans or a sense of unity among all the different Chipewyan populations within their extensive homelands. Today, however, many Chipewyans prefer to call themselves *Dene Sųliné*. The term implies unity of language, culture, and identity among Chipewyans in widely scattered communities, as well as a political sense of nation-hood, fostered by recent gatherings of Chipewyans from different communities to meet one another and discuss common concerns.

Crees The collective term “Cree” is equally problematic. It is an historic extension of a name for one group of Algonquian-speakers to many other groups of people with closely related languages or dialects. The post-contact population now called Crees in northeastern Alberta probably reflected the coalescence at Fort Chipewyan and other locations of people from different Cree populations. There is evidence for three Cree dialects spoken in the past at Fort Chipewyan itself: /t/, /th/, and /y/. The Cree spoken there today is the /y/ dialect, now known as Plains Cree.

Burley and Meyer have proposed that at contact there were many distinctive named groups that today would be called Cree regional bands (1982:159-60). The term *Keiskachewan* was often used for all of them, while it was also sometimes used for a specific group of Cree-speakers (*ibid.*:161). Dale Russell has termed them all “Parkland Cree” and argued that four or five of these groups – the Plains, Swampy (Muskego), Rocky, and Thickwoods Cree – occupied the area from what is now Dauphin to just west of the Alberta-Saskatchewan border. He noted that they were not homogeneous, as indicated earlier by the distinctive pottery traditions associated with different regions (in Burley and Meyer 1982:187-9). Burley and Meyer also note

two consequences of the 1781-82 smallpox epidemic that swept northward from the plains through the parkland and into the boreal forest. First, "...the pre-1781 named groups are no longer apparent in the historic documents" (1982:vi). Second, although "the bands appear to have been stable over at least several generations back to the 1720s," after the epidemic "they collapsed," reducing their presence in the boreal forest and opening up space for Chipewyan expansion southward (1982:26).

Subgroups within the Cree regional populations were also named. James Smith claimed that they "...were usually called by the name of the lake or river from which they came" (1981c: 269). In their own language, Crees called themselves *ne·hiyawak* (singular *ne·hiyaw*), or "those who speak the same language" (*ibid.*). The specific term used varies vary with the dialect of the speakers.

4. Early Post-contact Chipewyan History

In 1682, the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Nelson at the mouth of the Nelson River on the west coast of Hudson's Bay (Innis 1964:48). It initiated a period of approximately 100 years during which European influences reached the Athabasca region but before Europeans actually arrived on the scene - the difference between "protocontact" and "contact." This distinction is significant, because the first European observers on the scene often interpreted what they saw as evidence of "pristine," unchanged Aboriginal people and culture, whereas in reality there had often been multiple changes stemming from influences in the protocontact period. As well, recent research on travel narratives as a distinctive literary genre has revealed the many influences on their writing and publication. They were once used uncritically as primary sources,

but researchers now understand that the information and interpretations they contain cannot always be taken at face value and must be carefully assessed.

Fort Nelson was later replaced by nearby York Fort (later, York Factory) at the mouth of the Hayes River. These early posts were in lands used and controlled by Crees, whose proximity to European traders gave them the advantage of location and preferential access to trade goods, including firearms. Crees from this area, probably joined by more westerly Cree-speakers as well, began to undertake distant trading and raiding trips to Lake Athabasca and beyond. Jérémie reported that while he was at Fort Bourbon, the French post operated by the Compagnie du Nord that temporarily replaced York Fort until 1714, Crees were raiding into lands where copper was available, which means at least as far as Great Slave Lake: “I have seen this copper very often, as our natives always bring some back when they go to war in those parts” (Douglas and Wallace 1926:20). This period, which continued to the 1780s, was one of active warfare and hostility. Chipewyan and other Athapaskan groups apparently retreated northward and westward to escape the incursions of Cree warriors armed with firearms.

By the time that Samuel Hearne made his epic trip with Matonabee across the barren grounds in 1770-72 (Hearne 1958), Algonquians-speakers (Crees?) whom Hearne called the Athapuscow Indians had occupied the southeastern shore of Great Slave Lake, which he called Athapuscow Lake (not to be confused with what is now Lake Athabasca), and “the grand Athapuscow River,” now the Slave River (1958:172, see 173-4, 226). Hearne described how the “fine level country of the Athapuscows” was bounded by the “stony mountains or hills” of the Northern Indians (Chipewyans) (1958:180). The corollary is that the area surrounding the west end of Lake Athabasca and the lower Athabasca River - the avenue into this region from the

south - was also controlled by Crees at this time. The archaeological evidence and some of the early fur trade narratives suggest that this strong Cree presence so far north was a consequence of fur trade-related dynamics, although Gillespie raises the possibility that Crees were “original” occupants of the Lake Athabasca region until Chipewyans began to move there (1975:354). The Cree families in the region when Europeans first arrived six years later almost certainly included some of these early residents.

Hearne’s narrative also provides evidence that Southern Indians were still going on raids and stealing women at this time (1958:168). His traveling party encountered a former captive who told Hearne’s companions that her people, located “far to the Westward,” had heard about the “useful materials” which were available from the English, but that “they were obliged to retreat farther back, to avoid the Athapuscow Indians [Crees], who made surprising slaughter among them, both in Winter and Summer” (1958:172). Similar accounts were told by people on the Peace and Mackenzie Rivers about Cree aggression prior to the establishment of European trading posts. However, by this date these Crees may have been raiding more remote Athapaskans, not Chipewyans. Samuel Hearne described Matonabee’s role in negotiating “...a lasting peace [and]...a trade and reciprocal interest...” between the Chipewyans and Athapuscow Crees at some time before 1770, which was when the two men began to travel together (Hearne 1958:227). Gillespie has interpreted these events, combined with efforts by the Hudson’s Bay Company officers to encourage Chipewyans to move into the forests to trap, as indicating that Chipewyans were starting to expand their traditional lands to the south and west. Thus, by the 1770s the Slave River was an area where both Chipewyans and Crees might have been resident, though in separate camps or bands (1975:369-374).

Chipewyan oral traditions portray their ancestors as successful warriors who fought back, and in this regard Alexander Mackenzie recorded an oral tradition about a major alliance or peace that Crees made with Beaver Indians at “Peace Point” on the Peace River (Lamb 1970:238), possibly about the same time (mid-1700s). However, Cree raids continued into the 1780s, though perhaps not up the Peace River. In 1789, Alexander Mackenzie saw evidence of Crees near what is now Fort Providence; he thought it was a Cree war party from the previous year (Lamb 1970:227). Later, he himself encountered a Cree party near Fort Chipewyan that was returning from war “...in the Enemies Country...” (*ibid.*:233). Crees seem to have utilized the major water routes on these raids. There is no suggestion that they went inland from these rivers to conduct raids deep into the lands of the Canadian Shield, nor did Hearne report Crees in any other location than Great Slave Lake or Slave River. Overland travel to the north to raid Chipewyans was more likely from the Churchill River.⁴⁵ However, the location of the boundary or interface boundary between lands controlled by Crees and Chipewyans remains unknown.

The story of trade with Chipewyans was nearly as long but took a somewhat different path. Hudson’s Bay Company traders did not succeed in contacting Athapaskan-speakers directly, excepting the occasional Chipewyan “slave” taken captive by a Cree raiding party, until Thanadelthur, having escaped her Cree captors and arrived at York Fort in 1714, became James Knight’s emissary on the peace mission to her people that was actually led by a Cree trading captain. They finally returned to York Fort in 7 May 1716 in company with ten of the Northern Indian men they had met during the winter (McCormack 2003:333, 337). While the Chipewyan

⁴⁵Meyer and Russell (2007) reported on the complex network of overland trails used by Crees in central Saskatchewan to travel through the boreal forest, many of great antiquity. Similar trails existed in Alberta, although little research has been done to identify them.

and Cree leaders had made peace at that meeting, it was tentative at best and did not persist.

In 1717 the Hudson's Bay Company established Fort Churchill (later, Fort Prince of Wales) at the mouth of the Churchill River for the Chipewyan trade, although some Crees went there to trade as well (McCormack 2003:344-5). There is a lengthy record in the Hudson's Bay Company journals of Chipewyans and other Athapaskans trading at Fort Churchill, with Hearne's expedition a rare inland trip of exploration. At least some of the people who came to trade were from the Athabasca region, although it is not always clear whether they were Crees or Athapaskans or exactly where they lived.

European traders did not move north of the Saskatchewan River or into the interior west of Hudson's Bay until after the fall of Quebec in 1760. English and Scots merchants took over the fur trade operating from Montreal, while their labor force continued to be French-Canadian, often the same men who had worked earlier for French traders.⁴⁶ Alexander Henry's memoir, *Travels and Adventures in Canada and the Indian Territories between the Years 1760 and 1770* (1809), describes the first trade expedition north of the Saskatchewan River basin. In the fall of 1775, Henry traveled to Beaver Lake, north of Cumberland House, in the company of Thomas and Joseph Frobisher and a party of 40 men. They arrived in November and constructed a "house" or "fort" (1809:260-1). In April 1776, Thomas Frobisher and six men were sent to the Churchill River, also called the English River and the Missinnipi, to build a fort there "...and inform such Indians, as he might see on their way to Hudson's Bay, of the approaching arrival

⁴⁶Some of these men were of mixed Aboriginal-Indian origin, though it would be premature to call them "Métis" (for example, see Peterson 1985). While a tendency exists in older and especially contemporary literature to call all people of mixed ancestry Métis, Métis-ness did not develop everywhere in the Northwest as a distinctive cultural condition and identity. It is another problem of historical terminology and identity that has not been widely addressed by modern scholars.

of his partners” (*ibid.*:317). Henry and his own party followed when the rivers opened in May and reached the new post - English River - on 15 June 1776 (*ibid.*:319). Henry was determined to intercept Indians from “Lake Arabuthcow” heading to Fort Churchill to trade, even if he had to go as far as Lake Arabuthcow to find them (*ibid.*:320).⁴⁷ It is not clear whom he thought he would meet: Crees or Athapaskans.

He finally met these remote Indians at Isle à la Crosse Lake (Innis 1964:195). In Henry’s description, these Indians were “Chepewyans” who came in “a number of canoes” holding both men and women. There were two parties, one led by the Marten and the other by the Rapid (1809:321-2, 325). “They had joined for mutual defence, against the Cristinaux, of whom they were in continual dread. They were not at war with that nation, but subject to be pillaged by its bands” (*ibid.*:322). They told Henry that they themselves made war with other Indians, those at “the bottom of the river, where the water is salt,” and “on the people beyond the mountains,” a passage that indicates that by this time, the Chipewyans with access for trade goods at Fort Churchill were themselves middlemen to and raiders of more remote peoples. They had two captives with them (a woman and a boy), who spoke a different language; Henry bought them for a gun each (*ibid.*:324). While they may have feared the Crees, they nevertheless sent a single, vulnerable canoe to Cumberland House, through the heart of Cree lands, to trade with the Hudson’s Bay Company for items they badly wanted that Henry could not supply (*ibid.*:327).

Two years later, in 1778, Peter Pond and a company of 25 men in five canoes journeyed

⁴⁷In a footnote, Henry noted that the name of the lake was also rendered as Athapuscow and Athabasca (1809:320). These different terms suggest that Crees from widely separated areas were working together with European traders.

via the Methye Portage to the Clearwater River, Athabasca River and Lake Athabasca. It was the first European trade party to reach the Athabasca region.⁴⁸ He established a post on the Athabasca River about 40 miles south or upriver from Lake Athabasca and passed the winter there, trading furs. Pond was a Montreal-based free trader. This initiative, which was sponsored by six other “pedlars” on the Saskatchewan, would contribute to the creation of the Northwest Company when Pond returned in 1779 from the Athabasca country with his fine haul of winter furs with an estimated value of 8,400 “Made Beaver” or £8,400 (Innis 1965:196; Parker 1987:6, 9).⁴⁹ Unfortunately, no account of this important first trade venture exists.

A single canoe of traders returned again in the fall of 1782 to the Athabasca country, which was still administratively part of the English River district. Duckworth claims, following Alexander Mackenzie, that they found “...that the natives had been decimated by smallpox” (1990:xvi), although evidence for the spread of this disease to Lake Athabasca is lacking. Mackenzie was referring to the terrible smallpox epidemic of 1780 and 1781 that spread from interior tribes northward to the western plains and parkland in 1780. Relatively little

⁴⁸At least two European men, Jacques Beaulieu and Baptiste Le Camerade de Mandeville, had traveled into this region before Pond’s arrival, probably spin-off from the earlier French trade along the Saskatchewan. Virtually nothing is known about their early history, but it is reasonable to surmise that they had become socially involved with Crees and possibly even accompanied northern Cree raiding parties to Great Slave Lake. Both men married Athapaskan women, and they and their families were embedded in northern Athapaskan societies. They are often called Métis because of their mixed ancestry, but their identifications were undoubtedly more complex. For example, François Beaulieu, Jacques’ son with his Chipewyan wife, became a Yellowknife chief. The Beaulieus later established a settlement at Salt River. There are many references to these men, especially the Beaulieu family, in exploration literature for the Northwest Territories. For example, see, Petitot 2005:50-52 and Neatby 2000.

⁴⁹The trade was so successful that Pond was unable to bring all the furs out with him in the spring. The furs that had been placed *en cache* were retrieved in 1780 (see Duckworth 1990:xv; Innis 1965:196).

information is available about this epidemic, because few European observers were present. The best information is provided by the accounts of Hudson's Bay Company officers William Tomison at Cumberland House and Matthew Cocking at York Factory (summarized by Houston and Houston 2000; see also Decker 1988; Ray 1974:105-6). While measures to prevent smallpox at York Factory seem to have been largely successful, the disease was said to have "...ravaged the interior" (Houston and Houston 2000:113). Hearne claimed that it carried off "nine-tenths" of the Chipewyans, the result of "annually visiting their Southern [Cree] friends" (1958:115 nt.). However, James Smith argued that this terrible mortality occurred only among the eastern Chipewyan, the ones most likely to trade at Fort Churchill, not among those to the west (1975:4276). After fur traders returned to the western Lake Athabasca region in 1782, both Crees and Chipewyans seem to have been living comfortably there, which suggests that if smallpox did extend into this country, its impact was minimal compared to elsewhere. Cuthbert Grant's 1786 journal does not mention any evidence of the disease having been in the area, except for the name of one man, "Grand Piccotté" (the tall pock-marked), that suggests he was a smallpox survivor (Duckworth 1990:131). When Alexander Mackenzie traveled down the Slave River and "River Disappointment" (later, Mackenzie River) in 1789, he did not remark on faces disfigured by pox marks or other signs of smallpox, so it seems unlikely that the epidemic reached those regions (Lamb 1970).

The Cree population seems to have been harder hit very hard overall, suffering high mortality, with two important consequences for Chipewyans. First, the greatly reduced number of Crees diminished their military ability and meant that the lands they had occupied were left

with far fewer residents.⁵⁰ Second, Chipewyans had increasingly more reliable sources of firearms, due first to their trade at Fort Churchill and then to the trading posts built closer to their lands, thereby re-establishing the pre-contact balance of power. Some Chipewyans began to move south and west, gradually occupying the lands where they live today. These lands are mostly shown in Figure 3, but note that the figure does not show the western expansion of Chipewyans.

Beryl Gillespie (1975) has discussed the process whereby Chipewyans greatly expanded the boundaries of their traditional lands, although the full details will probably never be known (also see Lamb 1970:125; Simpson 1938:355-6; McCormack 1984:164-7). By the 1780s and especially the 1790s, they were using or had become established in lands considered part of the true boreal forest rather the transitional tree line area along both sides of the Slave River and south of Lake Athabasca, presumably the ancestors of James Smith's *Kkrest'aylékkè ottiné*. They could be found as far south as Lac La Biche, Janvier, Cold Lake, and Isle à la Crosse, occupying the Churchill/English River. Those who remained there were the ancestors of Smith's *Thi-lan-ottiné*. The Fort Chipewyan and Isle à la Crosse posts became major trade centers for Chipewyans.

A permanent settlement or post was maintained in the Athabasca region from 1783 to 1788, when it was moved to the south shore of Lake Athabasca by Alexander Mackenzie's cousin, Roderick Mckenzie. The new post was the first Fort Chipewyan; today that location is

⁵⁰Another factor whose impact cannot be weighed easily was the attraction of the developing horse and bison culture of the northern plains, which drew many Crees southward.

known locally as “Old Fort.”⁵¹ A separate “trading house for the Crees,” built by Paul Saint-German, a North West Company employee, was maintained on the Athabasca River near the confluence with the Clearwater River (Tyrrell 1968:392; see also Duckworth 1990:168). There is not enough evidence to decide whether these separate posts reflected Cree and Chipewyan locations or were attempts to keep members of the two groups separate, or both.

The earliest information about the trade during these years is provided by a journal kept at “Arabasca” by Cuthbert Grant for the period 1 April to 17 May 1786 (Duckworth 1990). Peter Pond was back in the Athabasca District at this time, and Grant was his second-in-command (Duckworth 1990:xix). He had established a short-lived wintering post - “Grant’s House” - on the north side of Lake Athabasca in 1785-86, presumably to counter competing traders (Duckworth 1990:xix). It seems that he began this particular journal after he closed down the lake post and returned to the home post on the Athabasca River. This journal is particularly important because it provides the first daily eyewitness evidence of Chipewyan, Beaver, Cree, and trader people and behavior in the region. Some of these Chipewyans were probably the ancestors of the Athabasca Chipewyan of today, so it is worth examining this journal in detail. Table 2 lists the Aboriginal names found in the English River Book.

⁵¹Fort Chipewyan is the oldest, permanently occupied settlement in Alberta. The post was eventually relocated to the north shore of Lake Athabasca. The original post is now on one of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation reserves.

Table 2. Aboriginal Names From the English River Book, 1786 (Duckworth 1990:129-133)

Chipewyan	Cree	Beaver	Unknown
Big Chief	Le Bras Cassé	The Tittons [breasts; Chief of the Beaver Indians] Captn. Too-toose	Le Gendre [the son- in-law, fort hunter]
Big Chief's So-in-L	The Carcajeau		The Hand
Boudar	The Chantair [chanteur, singer] [asso. with Old Bras Cassé's son - Cree affiliation?]		L'Original [moose, fort hunter]
The Chief Cancre [Le Fou?]	La Grain [fort hunter]		
The English Chief [Mis-ta-poose]			
The Grand Piccotte [big pock-marked one]	L'Homme de Castor		
	The Old Blind Woman (member of the Shining Rock's band)		
	Le Peccant [the marten]		
	Le Petit Original [Cree fort hunter]		
	The Shining Rock [La Roche qui reluit]		

Journal entries indicate that Peter Pond wanted the Chipewyans to trade at a new post he planned to establish that year at Great Slave Lake. When “the Bigg Chiefs Band” arrived on 1 April 1786, “Mr Pond had told them not to Come any more to this Fort that Derry Should go this Summer and build a fort at the lack des Esclave and that I [Grant] would go there next fall with the goods” (Duckworth 1990:9). However, in the absence of such a post, Chipewyans came to Pond’s Athabasca River post that spring in large numbers, along with some Beavers. Crees also came to trade, “...two of which is of the Beaver River Indians [but Crees, not Beavers] and has never been here before...” (*ibid.*). The largest numbers of Chipewyans seem to have been located on the north side of Lake Athabasca and did not visit the post but were represented by their leaders. However, there are some interesting references to Chipewyans south of the lake. For example, on 5 April 1786, two Chipewyans arrived from “Lack de Brochet [nearby Richardson Lake, known locally as Jackfish Lake] with two trains of meat” (*ibid.*:10-11). Some Chipewyans were described as arriving “from above,” or upriver from (south of) the post. One Chipewyan was described as coming “from Behinde” the post (10 April 1786, *ibid.*:11), but not enough context is given to identify that as east or west of the post.

While the journal mentioned more Crees by name, there seem to have been fewer Crees than Chipewyans, and they appear to have been widely distributed. Some came to the post from “above,” including the Clearwater River, others from Peace River, and even a few from north of Lake Athabasca, which was where the Chipewyans were encamped. These comments suggest that by this time that the Crees and Chipewyans of this region had begun to establish more localized territories of use near one another, an ethnic intermingling that is a hallmark of the Aboriginal occupation of the region. However, it is probably not possible to unravel the

complex early history of Chipewyan (and Cree) movements in the Fort Chipewyan region, given the lack of detailed information in fur trade accounts.

A 1824-25 report for Fort Chipewyan, nearly 40 years later, distinguished between Chipewyans who were “more settled” and those who were “migratory” (HBCA B.39/e/8:fo. 28). This distinction may have been between the two groups of Chipewyans identified by Smith as “Chipewyans” proper and “Caribou Eaters,” who made “frequent visits” to Fort Chipewyan both to trade and to visit relatives but who lived elsewhere (HBCA B.39/e/6:fo. 5), especially in the lands surrounding the east end of Lake Athabasca. Later, those Caribou Eaters were identified as the Fond du Lac and Black Lake bands (J. Smith 1975:432). Chipewyans in the immediate Fort Chipewyan region maintained family connections with both “Caribou Eater” Chipewyans (especially those at Fond du Lac) and Chipewyans farther south in the boreal forest, connected by travel routes of lakes, rivers, and especially overland trails.

There were no barriers to movement by either Chipewyans or Crees over extensive regions. Among Chipewyans, it was a source of personal prestige to have done long-distance travel. The traveler saw new lands, met new people, established new kinship ties, and explored new opportunities for alliances and livelihood. Chipewyans and other Athapaskans (Dene) considered such first-hand, experiential knowledge to be the most important and reliable form of knowledge, with knowledge learned by observing others and hearing stories from others vying for second place (e.g., Goulet 1994; 1998; Sharp 2001; Scollon and Scollon 1979).⁵² For instance, in 1717, Thanadelthur attested to the importance of a “Northern Indian” man who had entered into an alliance with Crees by calling him the “Greatest Traveller in ye Country” (31

⁵²Even today, Athabasca Chipewyans still greatly value experiential knowledge.

March 1717, HBCA B.239/a/3:fo. 38d).

Cuthbert Grant's journal and especially the related account book are also significant for what they revealed about the North West Company employees at the Athabasca River post. While the company was dominated by Highland Scots at Montreal, its labor force comprised Scots, French-Canadians, and people of mixed-ancestry, many of them from fur trade marriages in the Great Lakes. As part of the process of editing the journal, Harry Duckworth provided a useful appendix with biographies of all the voyageurs and traders for the Athabasca and English Rivers. About 41 men were with Pond and Grant; the majority had French-Canadian names. Notable on this list for their connections to the Fort Chipewyan region are the following:

- Pierre Bellanger, hired on 9 April 1786 for three years and considered “the first to stay in the Country” (Duckworth 1990:136).
- François and Jean-Marie Bouché (elsewhere called a “half-breed”) (*ibid.*:137), probably ancestral to the Boucher family of the region, which has members in both Fort MacKay and Fort Chipewyan.
- François Laviolette (*ibid.*:156), an ancestor to the Athabasca Chipewyan Laviolette family.
- Pierre Marcille, still at Athabasca in 1800 and possibly father or grandfather to Charlo Marcille (*ibid.*:158-9) - of the Athabasca Chipewyan Marcel family?
- François Piché, dit La Mesette, who was said to have “fled to the Chipewyans, where he remained three years,” after killing trader John Ross at Athabasca in 1787 (*ibid.*:163; see Tyrrell 1968:394).
- Paul Saint-Germain, who was the “principal Guide into the Athapescow Country ever

since its first establishment” and by 1804 had been in the country for nearly 40 years.

He was married to at least one local woman (Duckworth 1990:168-9).

- Joseph Preux and François Raimond, both with “women” or wives, presumably from the local Aboriginal population (*ibid.*:165).

Many of these men as well as later fur trade employees married local Aboriginal women, especially Chipewyan women, who were numerically dominant. These marriages provided alliances between fur traders of French ancestry and the ancestors of many families of today’s Athabasca Chipewyan. They may even have contributed to decisions of some Chipewyans to remain in the Fort Chipewyan region, to remain near relatives who continued to be directly connected to the fur trade and live at the post or its vicinity. Over time, descendants of these marriages typically assimilated to the Aboriginal tradition, whether it was Chipewyan or Cree. These marriages also began a process that generated a local “Half-breed” population; Half-breed was a term commonly used in the past in the north for people of mixed Aboriginal-European ancestry, though its meaning did not necessarily refer to cultural distinctiveness. It seems to have been used in particular for people of mixed-ancestry working with the fur trade and less so for mixed-ancestry people living in Aboriginal local bands in the bush. Although today the term is considered pejorative, it does not seem to have been used in that way in the past. While the term “Métis” is commonly used today for and by that group of mixed-ancestry people who are not First Nation (i.e., not on a Treaty No. 8 pay list), they should not be confused with Métis of the Red River region or the parkland and plains to the south. Instead, they emerged as a distinctive population of people who typically constituted part of the fur trade labor force but who also remained closely connected to their Chipewyan and Cree relatives. In fact,

commentators at the time of Treaty No. 8 remarked that the distinction between Indian and Metis as such did not exist until created by the treaty itself (see McCormack 2010:22-23; Leonard and Whalen 1998:53).

5. Ethnography of the People who now form the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

This section focuses on Chipewyans, but with some consideration of Crees, for the following reasons that will be discussed in more detail later in this report:

- In the mid 19th century, if not earlier, Chipewyans and Crees began to intermarry, which made them kinsmen to one another and provided them with access to the lands that each was using, following ties of kinship (these lands included as well those lands they had used in the past and that they might reasonably use in the future).
- In 1899, Treaty No. 8 was negotiated with Aboriginal people of northern Alberta.⁵³ Legal Indian Bands under the Indian Act were created at multiple locations in northeast Alberta and adjacent regions.⁵⁴
 - At Fort Chipewyan, a Chipewyan Band and a Cree Band were created, many

⁵³While negotiations were conducted at each location, the framework of the treaty was set by the federal commissioners; the term “negotiation” is not meant to imply that the written agreement was satisfactory to the First Nations who signed.

⁵⁴In a 1994 paper, Neil Reddekopp called these bands “the fundamental administrative units through which the federal government carried out its functions with regard to Indian people.” “The characterization of Bands and Band membership in the [Indian Act] legislation was incorporated into the numbered Treaties” (1994:2). While “the Treaties presumed the pre-existence of Bands” (*ibid.*:3) with formal leaders and that were ethno-culturally homogenous, the Indian Act required its legal bands to have a minimum membership. In northern Alberta, where numbers of people with specific cultural affiliations were sometimes too small to meet that requirement, people with different cultures or identities were cobbled together to construct legal bands, as they were at Fort McMurray and Fort Vermilion.

members of which had mixed Chipewyan-Cree ancestry (see the point above).

The contemporary names of these bands are the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and Mikisew Cree First Nation, respectively.

- At Fort McMurray “and the country thereabouts,” a band was created that contained both Chipewyans and Crees, later known as the Cree-Chipewyan Band.
- At Fort Vermilion, a band was created that contained both Beavers and Crees.
- At Smith’s Landing, a Chipewyan Band was created.
- At Fond du Lac, a Chipewyan Band was created.
- In 1946, about half the members of the Chipewyan Band of Fort Chipewyan were removed from the Chipewyan Band List and added to the Cree Band list, thereby becoming legal members of that band. That means that the membership of the Mikisew Cree First Nation - the renamed Cree Band - includes many people who were (and may still be) Chipewyan by culture and identity.⁵⁵
- Some traditional adoptions moved Crees into the Chipewyan Band, and some Chipewyans may have become Crees in the same way.

The broad structures of Cree and Chipewyan life were the same. I find it useful to discuss them by using an analytical approach called *mode of production*, which is one way to talk about the internal workings of the Chipewyan and Cree societies, both before and following their integration into the northern fur trade. It includes “...at the most fundamental level both

⁵⁵The extent to which they and their descendants may still self-identify as Chipewyan is unknown. At least some of these individuals now consider themselves to be Crees, despite their Chipewyan ancestry.

the ‘physics’ of production and the social relationships human beings enter into in order to motivate (or operate) the technical dimension of production.” It is “a structure of material reproduction [that] incorporates both technical and social components” (Asch 1979:88-89). It encompasses the *forces of production* and the *social relations of production*.

The forces of production are the manner by which natural resources are transformed into products for personal use or for exchange and acquire value. They comprise three sets of factors: the raw materials necessary for production; technology, including the infrastructure of production and circulation; and labor, or the organization of labor in the productive process. Resources plus technology are jointly termed the *means of production* (Asch 1979:89).

The social relations of production represent this same set of traits as relations of appropriation between persons. Humans work together in the productive process, but their relationship to the means of production and their control over their labor and their production vary considerably. The relations of production are concerned with ownership and control of the means of production and of labor and its products. They provide the framework for the network of power that determines who benefits from productive efforts.

The other side of the equation is those institutions collectively termed the *superstructure*, which provides for the reproduction of the system as a whole: “juridico-political and ideological relations that suppress, displace, or misrepresent basic conflicts” (O’Laughlin 1975:349). Superstructural elements enter into people’s *consciousness* or awareness about their situation and are often expressed as *ideology*, or “an articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as [the] ‘worldview’ of any social grouping” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:24). Such structures are the vehicles by which

members of the society recognize the legitimacy of their institutions. They undermine support for challenges from other sectors of the society. In short, the reproduction of a system of relations of production requires the support of and acquiescence to the status quo by the members of the society.

Over time, the Athabasca Chipewyan have lived by means of three distinct modes of production: the first two, which are discussed in this section of the report, are the domestic mode of production of pre-contact times and a fur trade mode of production that developed once they became involved in the European fur trade. After World War II, many Chipewyans began shifting to the capitalist mode of production that characterizes the Canadian political-economy, although this transition is arguably not yet completed. That change will be discussed later in the report.

The Domestic Mode of Production

Before they became engaged in the fur trade, Chipewyans and other Aboriginal peoples of the Mackenzie Basin had a use-oriented or “domestic” mode of production, in which the primary goal of production was family survival. Asch’s description of this mode of production for the Mackenzie River Dene (1979:90-91; 1977:47-49) can be applied to both Chipewyans and Crees. The forces of production were based on the resources or raw materials comprising the flora and fauna of the boreal forest and transitional tree line biomes (see Table 3). There was considerable diversity of animal populations regionally and seasonally, and some animals were always considered more important for food as well as for spiritual reasons. For example, caribou and moose were particularly significant species, and they remain so to this day. Some

species also fluctuated in number over time. Aboriginal technology was dominated by apparently simple tools for snaring and entrapment and for processing of raw materials. Useful discussions of this technology are found in Samuel Hearne's and Peter Fidler's accounts of their travels with Chipewyans in the early 1770s and early 1790s, respectively (Hearne 1958; Tyrrell 1968:Journal 8), and in secondary sources such as J. G. E. Smith's summary of Chipewyan ways of life (1975). Chipewyans were clearly masters of their environment and confident in their abilities to survive in northern lands that to Europeans were hostile and forbidding. While they adopted some European tools, their material culture was still dominated by tools and other items they made for themselves from materials at hand. Their successful use of their technology, including European manufactures, was predicated on a rich knowledge of animal behavior and appropriate uses of tools and spiritual power, what Robin Ridington calls "artifice" as well as artifacts (1982:470). People also had the capacity to create and manage landscapes by using fire, another technology requiring extensive, detailed knowledge of ecosystem relationships (Lewis 1977; 1978; 1982; McCormack 2007; see ACFN 2003a:98).⁵⁶ Travel was by foot and canoe, with limited use of dogs as pack animals, which meant that transport capacity was restricted. People solved the "problem" of the variable availability of game, combined with their limited transportation abilities, by traveling through their lands in search of game, rather than by moving game killed to a central camp. Finally, there was a simple division of labor based on gender and generation, though such a statement overstates the differences between the activities of men and women.

⁵⁶The use of controlled burning, which was a strategy for landscape management unsuited to caribou habitats, was probably not used by Chipewyans until they moved into more heavily forested regions.

Table 3. Major Faunal Resources (McCormack 2010:19)

Large game	Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>
	Woodland caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>
	Barren ground caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus</i>
	Bison	<i>Bison bison</i>
Small game	Snowshoe hare	<i>Lepus americanus</i>
	Red squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
	Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>
	Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>
Carnivores	Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>
	Grey wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>
	Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>
	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
	Black bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>
	Pine marten	<i>Martes americana</i>
	Fisher	<i>Martes pennanti</i>
	Ermine	<i>Mustela erminea</i>
	Least weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>
	Mink	<i>Neovison vison</i>
	Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>
	Skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>
	Otter	<i>Lontra canadensis</i>
	Lynx	<i>Felis lynx</i>
Upland birds	Spruce grouse	<i>Falciennis canadensis</i>
	Ruffed grouse	<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>
	Sharp-tailed grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>
	Willow ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>
	Rock ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus rupestris</i>
Migratory waterfowl	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
	Greater white-fronted goose (grey wavey)	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
	Lesser snow goose (white wavey)	<i>Chen caerulescens caerulescens</i>
	Trumpeter swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>
	Sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
	Whooping crane	<i>Grus americana</i>
	Ducks, multiple species	
Fish	Lake whitefish	<i>Coregonus clupeaformis</i>
	Lake trout	<i>Salvelinus namaycush</i>
	Northern pike (jackfish)	<i>Esox lucius</i>
	Goldeye	<i>Hiodon alosoides</i>
	Walleye (pickerel)	<i>Sander vitreus</i>

The social relations of production were broadly egalitarian. The unit of production and consumption was the local band, a group of related people who lived together as a co-residential unit or in the immediate vicinity. Henry Sharp called the local band a “hunting unit” (1979:21), and other terms exist in the literature. While this group varied in size over the course of a year and its social history, in the subarctic local bands are typically small, face-to-face social units of approximately 25-50 people, all related to one another by kinship ties. According to James G. E. Smith, there was no fixed rule for band organization; the core of a band could be a father and his sons, siblings (such as a pair of brothers), or a father-in-law with his sons-in-law (1975:431, see 440).⁵⁷ Members of Chipewyan local bands gathered periodically into larger local bands to construct, maintain, and operate caribou pounds, such an efficient procurement strategy that Hearne reported that “...many families subsist by it without having occasion to move their tents above once or twice during the course of a whole winter...,” a way of life he deemed “indolent” and inimical to the European fur trade (Hearne 1958:50-51). When Thanadelthur found over 400 of her people in the depths of winter on her trip into the interior with the peace party, they were probably living on caribou they had killed in pounds (McCormack 2003:338).

The members of each local band normally produced only what they needed for their own use and were “collectively responsible” for their own physical survival (Asch 1979:90). Together they “owned” and controlled the means of production: the land and its resources, the technology necessary for production, and all crucial basic knowledge. Henry Sharp points to the portability of such knowledge: “Knowing a territory is not memorizing where things are but

⁵⁷Sharp, who did research among the “Mission Chipewyan,” those of Black Lake, Saskatchewan, approached group formation somewhat differently. He pointed to the key role of the father in a hunting unit and to the importance of the relationship among brothers-in-law (1979:21, 31).

understanding how things relate to each other” (2001:38). Mechanisms of reciprocity and sharing, as well as expectations that all persons would learn basic life skills and knowledge, prevented any individual or family from monopolizing crucial resources or products (see, for example, J. Smith 1975:442; ACFN 2003a:34). Even today, it is clear that sharing remains an important Chipewyan cultural value (e.g, ACFN 2003a:88).

Leadership reflected an on-going demonstration of personal competence, authority, and supernatural powers, but it did not confer coercive power. Leaders led because people chose to follow them (e.g., J. Smith 1975:443; 1981a:276; MacNeish 1956; Goulet 1998:36; Preston 2002:78-9). As James Keith described the Chipewyans in 1825, there were few who warranted the title of “Chief”: “their influence & authority being little known beyond the circle of their own Family” (HBCA B.39/e/8:fo. 28). Little had changed in this regard by the time of treaty in 1899, as the treaty commissioners remarked: “The chiefs and headmen are simply the most efficient hunters and trappers” (Govt. of Canada 1966:8). Every local band had its own leader. Leadership was not hereditary. When that leader died or became unable to fulfill that role, either another member of the local band would become the new leader or the families constituting the band would separate, establishing new bands or joining other bands. Each leader enjoyed personal autonomy; each local band made its own decisions about every aspect of life. People who were unhappy with leadership in any way were free to relocate to other local bands or establish their own bands. There was no paramount “chief,” although there would have been a hierarchy of sorts of influential and highly respected people. This hierarchy would have changed over time as young people acquired appropriate leadership skills, became older, and demonstrated their worth, and their elders passed away.

Local bands were tied to one another by multiple bonds of kinship, creating social and political interconnections which afforded them a safety net for dealing with variability in resource availability (e.g., Jarvenpa 2004).⁵⁸ The regional network of local bands, which was also the usual marriage universe, comprised what has been termed the “regional band.” While their members occasionally assembled temporarily for seasonal hunting, fishing, or socializing, it was a co-residential unit only briefly. Neither large local bands nor regional bands formed cohesive social groups, nor were boundaries drawn between local bands in one regional band and those in another (J. Smith 1981a:276; 1975:439; n.d.:11; Helm 1968; Rogers and Smith 1981:141).⁵⁹ More important was the network of kinship ties, which reached out in every direction. Marriages could and would occur among members of local bands from different regional bands, especially those whose members met occasionally or regularly.

Asch (1979:91) has summarized the superstructural elements that contributed to the reproduction of this system:

These relations of production were expressed juridicially by a kinship system that, through the use of lateral extensions, incorporated the rights of local production group membership to all Slaveys (and indeed all Dene); an inheritance system that forbade the transmission of land, raw materials, technology, and, indeed, “special” hunting knowledge from one generation to another; and a marriage system that required for its operation the continual outmovement of members of each local production group.

Children were expected to seek their own sources of power and personal ties to the spiritual

⁵⁸Sharp (1979:8) has pointed out that each local Chipewyan band would kill more caribou than it needed, which ensured that enough food would be available to give food to other bands that had not been successful in the hunt. That is basically a form of social insurance, not the production of surplus for exchange.

⁵⁹This section does not attempt to review the ample literature describing the social structures of Chipewyans and Crees.

world, acquiring spiritual power and knowledge independently. This quest for greater knowledge continued through one's life (e.g., D. Smith 1973; Sharp 2001; Preston 2002; Ridington 1982; Goulet 1998:chps. 2, 3; Asch 1979:91).

The Fur Trade Mode of Production

When Chipewyans, Crees, Beavers, and European peoples met at posts along the Athabasca, Peace, and Slave Rivers and at Lake Athabasca, they had to build bridges between their separate systems of production and meaning, to create a new space that would allow them successfully to negotiate exchanges of furs, foods, and goods. Europeans introduced a mode of production that was capitalist, in which the primary goal of production was the creation of wealth (capital). In a capitalist mode of production, the forces of production include a wide range of raw materials, not necessarily local; specialized technology and associated knowledge; and a more complex division of labor. The social relations of production are characterized by the fact that the means of production (resources and technology) are owned and/or controlled by individuals, families, or other unitary entities (e.g., corporations). The people lacking access to the means of production must sell their labor in order to survive. The result is that hierarchical class relations exist between owners and producers, and the society is stratified into social classes.⁶⁰

European traders were merchant capitalists, and mercantilism persisted as the dominant form of capitalism in northern Alberta and the rest of the Mackenzie Basin until after World

⁶⁰The concept of social class today is more complex than in the past. In the early days of emerging global capitalism, social class was tied directly to whether or not one had access to the means of production and to what extent.

War I. Its goal was to produce profits for the owners of the trading companies. Merchants are traders, agents of the marketplace. They buy goods from a vendor and sell them to a buyer. They do not engage in direct production and therefore cannot increase the value of the commodities which they buy and sell (Kay 1975:65, 86). Instead, they realize profit by engaging in unequal exchange with producers. At least one transaction “must take place at a price that is not equal to value” (*ibid.*:87).

It was merchant capitalism that “created the framework of the world market and laid the foundations of underdevelopment as well as development” (Kay 1975:94). Merchants broaden their investment possibilities by fostering the expansion of markets and commodity production. In the fur trade, they encouraged the people with whom they traded to expand their production of commodities and their consumption of imported goods, and they also encouraged more people to become involved. The ways in which they did so are discussed below. In northeast Alberta and elsewhere in the Northwest, an ever-enlarging number of Indians who had formerly produced strictly for their immediate needs also began to produce surpluses of meat, fish, and furs for exchange, to acquire items imported from other parts of the world. These new objects supplemented and replaced much of their pre-contact material culture repertoire. Merchants made their profits by manipulating rates of exchange, all expressed in the fur trade standard, “Made Beaver.” The result was inter-regional integration, the hallmark of a world system and today’s globalism.

According to Kay, such developments “corrode” the pre-capitalist social formations and open “the way for the reorganization of production upon a capitalist basis” (1975:95, 155). But, in northeast Alberta, the reorganization of production along capitalist lines would be the result

of state intervention after 1899 and is still not completed more than a century later, as evidenced by persistent use of bush resources by Chipewyans and other Aboriginal people, even those working full-time for wages. While Chipewyans and Crees altered their domestic mode of production to accommodate their new trading interests, that did not mean they adopted a fully-capitalist mode of production or greatly altered other aspects of their cultures.

Indian involvement in the fur trade has often been conceptualized as the rapid adoption of European manufactures and consequent Indian “dependence” on Europeans. Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría (2008) has called this the “quick replacement model” of presumed inferior and static Indigenous technologies by presumed superior European ones. Yet dependence was a two-way street. Europeans relied almost exclusively on Aboriginal men and women to produce fur, to produce food provisions to sell (especially fresh and dried meat and pemmican), and on occasion to sell their labor to help with transport, work at the post, and manufacture persistent and highly adaptive items of “Indian” technology, such as snowshoes, moccasins, and other items of clothing suitable for long, cold winters (for example, see Ray 1984:10; Bellman and Hanks 1998:59-60). Jennifer Brown has described much of this work as “a woman's industrial revolution” (1993:83). Brown (1980) and Van Kirk (1980) have written extensively about European reliance on the labor and knowledge of Indian and Métis women. This dependence on local people was inevitable, given Indian knowledge of the resource base, which gave them economic control, and the sovereignty they exercised over their lands, which gave them political control. Europeans who came into the country learned crucial skills and local customs from other employees who had already mastered them and from their Indian and Métis associates. Ironically, to the extent that Europeans and Métis learned how to survive locally and were

socially integrated into Indian bands, they themselves became independent, in varying degrees, from direct control by the traders, much as were the Indians themselves. It is telling that one term for Métis who were no longer under contract to a trading company was “freeman” (*gens libres*).

As long as Chipewyans and Crees produced furs and food for trade, European traders did not need to control the labor process directly. They nevertheless sought some measure of control over the producers, trying to keep the Indians focused on producing desired commodities and to ensure that furs came to specific trading posts rather than to competitors or to other posts of the same company. For instance, in April 1827, John Franklin (1969:304) described how the Hudson's Bay Company had developed new regulations “respecting the trade with the natives. The plans now adopted offer supplies of clothes, and of every necessity, to those Indians who choose to be active in the collection of furs.” At the same time, Indians sought some control over the terms of trade, the quality of goods available to them, and the extent to which economic relations needed to be mediated by social relations (e.g., Ray 1974; Innis 1964:373).

This discussion suggests several points of articulation between the domestic mode of production and the (merchant) capitalist mode of production at Fort Chipewyan and other posts in the Mackenzie Basin. Chipewyan and Cree men and women were willing to produce furs and provisions to exchange for imported commodities and increasingly to work directly for the traders on an occasional basis, especially as post hunters and fishermen. They were willing for their daughters and sisters to marry European traders and employees. These marriages established bonds of kinship that facilitated and channeled economic exchanges, created a female labor force at the post, and produced children who became part of the local labor force.

The result was that Chipewyans and Crees added two new components to their economy: independent (petty) commodity production and wage labor, although reimbursed by exchange credits, not cash payments until the 20th century (Innis 1964:161, 240; Mandel 1968:66). Thus, the new mode of production was a *mixed economy*, one with three different sectors: domestic production, independent commodity production, and wage labor. It was oriented in many ways to, but not dominated by, capitalist exchanges. It was this mixed economy that constituted the fur trade mode of production that characterized the way of life for the Athabasca Chipewyan in 1899, when they entered into Treaty No. 8.

For their part, Europeans were willing to enter into a range of social relations or transactions with the Indians which transcended the purely economic aspect of exchanges. Europeans also needed to provide most of their own food and much of their technology from local resources. Costs incurred in doing so (e.g., ammunition and rations for men who were hunting; axes, saws, and rations for men who were building boats) were part of the overhead of doing business. The distinction between commercial and subsistence food production narrowed when European and Métis employees lived and hunted with their Indian allies and kinsmen. Such activities were a reversal of the trend among Europeans toward a fully socialized labor force (that is, a labor force that lived strictly by means of wages).

While Indians certainly wanted a wide range of European manufactures, which became part of their means of production, it is simplistic to claim that their involvement in the trade as regular producers of fur and food was due primarily to a “seemingly insatiable appetite” for these goods (Murphy and Steward 1968:400). The fur trade literature contains numerous examples of northern Indians, including Chipewyans, who were discerning consumers and in

some instances had little use for most of the trade goods they were offered (e.g., Hearne 1958:50-51, 176; Murray 1910:29; Ray 1980). Arthur Ray has pointed out that Indian demand for goods was relatively “inelastic.” If prices paid for furs increased, Indians often trapped less, not more (1974:68-69; 141-2).

This lack of reliance on trade goods was particularly marked for Chipewyans. In early years, many of the furs they traded at Fort Churchill were the furs they obtained from more distant people, sometimes by seizure, in addition to those they trapped themselves (e.g., Hearne 1958:79, 114, 134-5). Living by hunting caribou was an easier and more reliable way of life than trapping. While as a fur trader he wanted the Chipewyans to trap, Samuel Hearne remarked that those who did trap “...are always the most unhappy...” and risk starvation, for “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...” (*ibid.*). He also pointed out that the areas where caribou wintered “...are almost destitute of every animal of the furr kind...” (*ibid.*:51). Many Indians had to be induced to produce goods for trade, especially in the volume desired by the traders, and it was an on-going concern at Fort Chipewyan throughout the 19th century. Eventually, all Chipewyans began to trap, although there appear to have been differences in the extent to which they committed to trapping as an important part of their economy and way of life. For the Chipewyans who moved westward to establish themselves in the fur-rich Fort Chipewyan region, the ancestors of the Athabasca Chipewyan, trapping became a significant component of their economy.

The methods used by European traders to encourage Aboriginal people to make this change were related to changes in the social formation of the region that occurred as traders and

their employees entered into the relations of production of the Indian bands, in two ways. First, traders and their employees entered into “country marriages,” or marriage *à la façon du pays*, with Aboriginal women (Van Kirk 1980; Brown 1976; 1980). As Sylvia Van Kirk explained (1980:4), “The marriage of a fur trader and an Indian woman was not just a 'private' affair; the bond thus created helped to advance trade relations with a new tribe, placing the Indian wife in the role of cultural liaison between the traders and her kin.” Trappers and traders thus became affinal kinsmen, people related to one another by marriage.⁶¹ Their new relationship brought with it expectations of mutual assistance and reciprocal exchanges. The discussion in the previous section named some of the North West Company employees who married local women. Fur trade employees continued to make such marriages, thereby linking themselves to the local bands and linking the members of the local bands to the post. It encouraged members of the local bands to visit the posts, to trade, to trap, and to produce provisions for sale.

Indians and Europeans were also linked together by the extension of credit, or debt, to individual trappers, a financing system that became extensive in the 19th century in the fur trade country and persisted in the Fort Chipewyan region until the 1940s, although diminished in the 20th century (cf. Ray 1974:137-8, 196-7; 1984; Morantz 1990; Tanner 1965). To Rosemary Ommer (1990:9), credit was “the mechanism whereby merchant capital delegated the power of production to ‘independent’ operators on certain terms, with certain strings attached, in order to generate the flourishing of individual enterprise and the expansion of the whole economy.”

⁶¹The terms “affinal” and “consanguineal” do not fit Chipewyan or Cree kinship systems as neatly as the literature makes it seem. For example, a trader who married a Chipewyan woman would acquire a set of in-laws or affinal kin, but through the logic of the kinship system he would also acquire a set of consanguineal kin, or relatives he would call brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers, even though he was not actually related to them by “blood.” It is beyond the scope of this report to elucidate the historic Chipewyan kinship system.

Tanner has discussed how credit both defined and mediated the trade relationship:

The obtaining of credit marked an important change in the economic life of a trapper. It indicated a long-term commitment to trapping as the major winter productive activity, and to dealings with a single trader, in order to exchange the results of this activity for some valued end [1965:46].

While credit was extended to group leaders in the early years of the fur trade, in the Athabasca country it seemed to have been often an individual matter from the earliest record (Duckworth 1990). Several trappers, each representing his immediate family group or local band, dealt personally with the trader in the credit relationship, rather than being represented by a trading chief or other Aboriginal middleman.

Post managers kept account books that tracked each trapper's sale of furs and provisions and purchases of goods at the post. A trapper who accepted credit became linked to a particular trading post and was required to travel there at least twice yearly, once to obtain his fall trapping "outfit" on credit and a second time to trade his furs and pay off his debt. Credit stabilized a trapper's relations with the trader and allowed the trader to plan his business. In 1860, a Fort Chipewyan report remarked, "Debts are given to Indians who are faithful in paying them" (HBCA B.39/e/10:fo.1). From the trapper's point of view, it was a way to capitalize the coming winter's trapping, by providing the goods he needed from the post, while at the same time it allowed him to trap when and how he pleased (Tanner 1965:47; Morantz 1990:221). On a pragmatic level, it stimulated trapping because trappers had to pay for their purchases in order to obtain more credit, despite the Hudson's Bay Company policy of periodically writing off bad debts. More broadly, it accorded with Chipewyan and Cree ideologies of reciprocity, the need to repay those who have assisted you (e.g., Ray 1984:11; Morantz 1990:221). The trader could use credit to limit the sorts of goods available to trappers:

By allowing only certain goods to be purchased on credit a trader was able to do more than just influence the buying habits of Indians along what he thought to be more prudent lines. He was also able to stress the importance of trapping as an activity, allowing only those supplies needed for a trapping expedition on credit. In this way he ultimately could increase the fur harvest of his district, on which most of his profit could be made [Tanner 1965:49].

Credit established personal relations between the trader and his trappers, and gave the trader the advantage of having the trappers under an obligation to him. Through this relationship he was able to directly influence their economic life by personal intervention, and discourage activities which conflicted with trapping [*ibid.*:47-8].

At the same time, some Aboriginal people were reported as taking advantage of the lack of easy communication between posts to take their debt at one post and then avoid paying it off by trading their furs at another post. This practice required them to travel great distances.

Another explanation was that after taking credit, they had spent the winter trapping (and living) in an area far from the post that issued the credit, and they wanted to trade at the nearest post.

Both explanations probably apply; the lack of barriers to long-distance travel was mentioned above. While it was usually to the trader's advantage to have a stable number of clients who sold furs and provisions to and bought goods at his particular post, the Aboriginal people balanced their ties to the trader with their personal interests. Periodically, local posts would "write off" debt that they believed could not be collected.

To summarize, country marriages and creditor-debtor relations established social ties which transcended the purely economic aspect of exchange. As Sahlins suggests, it was "social relations, not prices [that] connect up 'buyers' and 'sellers'" (1974:298). As Indian involvement in the fur trade became regularized, Indians relied more on transactions that appear to be individual, although the goods they acquired in trade were used to benefit their entire local bands. While they may have been listed on the account books as individuals, their trade

represented production by their immediate families and the larger social groups of which their families were members - the local bands. The Chipewyan and Cree bands were no longer marginal or outside the world system but integrated into it as a periphery. This transformation occurred at Fort Chipewyan after the establishment in 1821 of a monopoly on trade by the Hudson's Bay Company (McCormack 1984a). By the second quarter of the 19th century, the Chipewyans and Crees who had become permanent occupants of the Fort Chipewyan region and traded there regularly could no longer be characterized by a "total economy." The new mode of production had the following configuration.

Forces of Production: Resources While the total resource base was initially unchanged, Chipewyans and Crees developed different patterns of resource exploitation, which can be inferred in part from records of fur and food production. They emphasized some fur and game resources that previously would have been little utilized or utilized differently, thereby affecting regional ecosystems in often-significant ways. From the earliest days of the Athabaskan fur trade, provisions were important trade items, especially fresh and dried meat (Duckworth 1990). Bison became an important resource for sale, hunted so intensively to provision the posts that by the 1840s, they were in serious decline (Ferguson 1993). New resources included garden crops introduced by fur traders and missionaries: potatoes, carrots, turnips, cabbages, onions, beans, and cucumbers (ACFN 2003a:79). However, when Chipewyans began to plant gardens is not known; it probably coincided with the construction of small settlements with log houses as centers of bush activity, in the late 19th century.

The Chipewyans who relocated to the western end of Lake Athabasca and other points in

northeast Alberta shifted to some extent from the resources of the transitional tree line zone to those of the boreal forest. While they still traveled often-long distances to hunt barren-ground caribou in winter, they also hunted all the local big game - bison, moose, woodland caribou - and a different configuration of smaller animals (see ACFN 2003b). For example, in 1791-92, Peter Fidler described Chipewyans hunting bison and beaver in the Little Buffalo River west of Slave River, beaver in the Taltson River, and moose in the vicinity of the Slave River itself (Tyrrell 1968:Journal 8). The resources available in the biome of the Fort Chipewyan region were rich, especially given the role played by controlled burning in managing habitats for game and fur animals. In the late 18th-early 19th centuries, before bison numbers diminished, substantial herds ranged as far as north as Great Slave Lake and east of the Slave River and were plentiful in the Peace River country (e.g., Hearne 1958:161-4; Tyrrell 1968:370-411, Journal VIII; Van Zyll de Jong 1986) . Samuel Hearne pointed out that “Of all the large beasts in those parts the buffalo is easiest to kill” (1958:163). Barren-ground caribou continued to migrate occasionally to the Fort Chipewyan region, woodland caribou lived in the Birch Mountains and elsewhere in the region, and the Peace-Athabasca Delta supported a rich resource complex.⁶² Even deer and elk were reported in the region (HBCA B.39/e/7:fo. 5). The 1823-1824 post report remarked, “The hunting grounds of the Indians in that locality are well stocked with large animals” (*ibid.*:fo. 3). Fish were also widely available. The following year, the report commented that the Chipewyans feed off the “fat...of the land & water of the first of which they

⁶²Anthony Gulig (2002) has discussed how forest fires set by prospectors in northern Saskatchewan in the 1920s and 1930s burned off so much barren-ground caribou winter habitat that the animals shifted their long-standing migration routes eastward. They were thereafter far more difficult to hunt for people in the western Lake Athabasca region, due to the distances involved. Local Athabasca Chipewyans were forced to rely more heavily on local game, including woodland caribou.

are seldom destitute” (HBCA B.39/e/9:7).

Chipewyans and Crees continued to travel to areas suitable for hunting, trapping, and other land pursuits and also for visiting families in order to arrange marriages for their children. Chipewyans were described as relatively independent of Europeans and their goods, despite their “numerous Population,” because of their “wandering habits, great attachment and frequent Visits to their lands” (HBCA B.39/e/8:fo. 8). Crees, on the other hand, had a “more Ltd. Population, stationary habits, & dependent situation on Europeans” (*ibid.*:fo. 7). However, such statements have to be read with care. Neither Chipewyans nor Crees restricted themselves to specific locations but were typically on the move over the course of the year, as they took advantage of different resources that were available in different regions. In the post journals, they are typically described as associated with specific regions, such as Birch River or Jackfish Lake (now, Richardson Lake) for Chipewyans, but those are general comments that do not address even the complexity of the annual cycle of activities and the lands required for them, let alone the complexity of a broader pattern of rotating or shifting land usage.

Strategic Chipewyan-Cree marriages began by the mid 19th century, if not earlier; the dates available may reflect only the beginning of relatively reliable missionary records. Such marriages paved the way for peaceful interaction between the numerically dominant Chipewyans and minority Crees, who were now living in the same broad region. It was especially common for Cree men to marry Chipewyan women, though the reverse did occur. Cree and Chipewyan men thereby became linked as brothers-in-law and partners, important supportive relationships. Typically, a man lived with and was expected to provide support for his wife’s parents, especially in the early years of marriage (so-called matrilocal residence).

That meant that Cree men who married Chipewyan women would now live and work with their in-laws, traveling to, using, and learning new regions. As a result, members of local bands that were formerly ethnically distinctive began to live in local bands that might be ethnically mixed, even if they were not identified in that way, and to construct a new multi-ethnic regional band centered about Fort Chipewyan, as the place where local bands came together briefly each summer.

Forces of Production: Technology The most striking feature of the fur trade mode of production, and the one most obvious to Europeans, was that an increasingly large portion of Aboriginal technology was obtained through trade. Chipewyans and Crees enjoyed access to a wide inventory of imported manufactures, including guns and ammunition, metal goods, textiles, and decorative items. The post blacksmith made gun repairs, which encouraged reliance on firearms. Some theorists have argued that Chipewyan relocation to this region was possible only because of the new fur trade goods they could obtain, especially guns, which facilitated their hunting of large, solitary animals rather than herds of caribou. However, the frequent references in Cuthbert Grant's 1786 journal to hunters bringing moose meat to the post to trade indicate that by this early date, Chipewyans as well as Crees were hunting moose quite capably, although it is unknown whether or not they relied on firearms as opposed to snares or other traditional hunting techniques (Duckworth 1990).⁶³

⁶³Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation elders associated with Old Fort told Nicole Nicholls that in their own language, the place name for this location comes from "before the time of the White men" and translates to "chasing a moose out to the point," because people would drive a moose from the bush onto a narrow sand spit where it could be killed by men with bows and arrows (Nicole Nicholls, personal communication, 23 June 2011). Pat Marcel's contemporary description of how to hunt moose reflects the knowledge of a modern hunter who uses a rifle, yet

By 1823, the Chipewyans who were “more accustomed to whites” were reported to be copying them in manner and dress (HBCA B.39/e/6:3). By mid century, all Indians had evidently replaced much of their material culture inventory. Father Taché, writing at Ile à la Crosse in 1851, noted that Chipewyan “Men's clothes are quite similar to those of our peasants; they obtain their clothing in the stores of the Company where it is received ready made from England” (Taché 1978:146). In 1859, Robert Campbell, the Hudson's Bay Company factor at Fort Chipewyan, wrote to the director of the new Industrial Museum of Scotland:

You will perhaps be surprised to learn, that even in this Northern District, the “Indians” appreciate the convenience of the articles of civilised usage so much, that hardly a trace now remains of their former dress, domestic utensils, or weapons of war, or the chase; all have already fallen into disuse among them [Royal Museum of Scotland, 5 May 1859].

Such comments support the popular notion that Indians peoples had become “dependent” on the fur trade. As “trappers,” they were believed to have “lost” their original autonomy. Ray referred to Indians as “increasingly caught in the trap of having to buy the tools that they needed” (1984:4), at a time when the resource base was, he believed, increasingly unstable. Such an interpretation involves a material culture-focused concept of “autonomy” that is not usually applied to non-Aboriginal peoples. “Dependence” has become established in academic and popular discourse as a term connoting a special kind of Aboriginal subordination. In fact, all peoples who became part of the capitalist world system were (and are) “dependent” on exchanges in the market place. Among their ranks were British workers, but the term dependence is rarely used to characterize them. Ironically, British workers were probably more

it also has deep cultural roots, learned by hearing oral traditions and by personal experience. It would have been familiar to moose hunters of the late 18th century, because it rests on an understanding of basic moose behavior (ACFN 2003b:104).

dependent on the goodwill of company owners than were northern Indian trappers and hunters, who maintained considerable independence and had to be courted and enticed by Company traders throughout the 19th century.⁶⁴

There is no evidence that the less visible aspects of Aboriginal technology were replaced. As Father Taché wrote in 1851: “All the Indians are better naturalists, not only than our country people, but even than the most learned elements of our populations” (1978:138). In her memoir of the Fort Vermilion region a half century later, Mary Lawrence stated that to the Indians, “the sheer stupidity of the white man in the bush was something beyond belief” (Fort Vermilion Ag. Soc. 2008:16). “[W]hen he comes into this country he’s like a child. He doesn’t know anything and he does things that even a child would be ashamed of” (*ibid.*:172). Indians maintained their knowledge of local ecosystems, animal behavior, and the use of fire to manipulate plant and animal populations. Controlled burning, or “domesticated fire,” was an important tool to create and maintain the prairies and other early successional habitats on which most species of fur trade and subsistence importance relied (Lewis 1977; 1978; 1982; McCormack 2007; ACFN 2003a:98). It had very different consequences than did wild fires. In fact, one of the benefits of regular and extensive controlled burning was to reduce the potential for holocaust fires. While Crees, with their origins in the fire-adapted parkland habitats of the Saskatchewan basin, were undoubtedly familiar with the principles of fire management and could easily apply them to their new northern homeland, it may have been a new technology to

⁶⁴Elsewhere, Toby Morantz has argued that the Crees of James Bay were neither controlled by debt nor dependent on the Hudson’s Bay Company, but “fully in control of their own hunting strategies” (1990:221).

Chipewyans, who would not have used it in the caribou ranges of the transitional tree line.⁶⁵

Presumably they learned its use by observing other residents, including the Beaver Indians they displaced, by working with their new Cree relatives, and by trial and error.

An important addition to their technology, and crucial to the development of trapping as a regularized activity, was the dog team, probably in the 19th century. Dogs were hitched in a single line to a toboggan or sled, facilitating winter travel among residential settlements, trapping areas, and the fur trade post. While the idea of driving dogs may have been introduced, perhaps by example, the implements were homegrown, a synthesis of pre-existing sleds, local dogs, and the carriages and dog harnesses used by traders and their employees (Hearne 1958:213; Lamb 1970:154; McCormack 1988:48, 55; McCormack 2009; ACFN 2003a:49). People fashioned their own sleds and harnesses from wood and leather. People also continued to use dogs for “packing” furs and other items when sleds could not be used (McCormack 1988:49, 57; see ACFN 2003a:76-7). When dog teams were adopted by Indians in northeast Alberta is not known, but it may have been related to some measure of increased sedentariness; keeping dogs required their owners to stock meat or fish for their feed.

Forces of Production: Labor Labor allocation was similar to that of the domestic mode of production, in that men and women undertook different and complementary fur trade and subsistence activities. Both men and women trapped, though generally for different species and in different localities. Women's trap lines were usually in the vicinity of their settlement,

⁶⁵Fire in that area would have destroyed slow-to-grow lichens, which were important winter caribou foods. Athabasca Chipewyans say that it was a forest fire in northern Saskatchewan in 1951 that resulted in the barren-ground caribou no longer coming as far as the western end of Lake Athabasca (2003a:100-1).

whereas men used their dog teams to trap at a greater distance, thereby increasing the overall productive capacities of the local band. However, some women also ran their own dog teams, and the division of labor was not as strictly gendered as it has sometimes been made out to have been. The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation's two volumes about its traditional land uses (ACFN 2003a; 2003b) contain information on the seasonal round of labor and productive activities: winter hunting and trapping; the spring muskrat hunting season and waterfowl hunt; summer fishing, hunting, gathering, and gardening; and fall berry and garden harvesting and hunting. Activities were conducted not only to support life at those times, but to prepare for the coming seasons.

There was also a new regional division of labor represented by the concentration of some Aboriginal peoples in trapping and subsistence pursuits and others in wage labor. While the former have often been characterized as Chipewyans and Crees, and the latter, as Half-breeds and Métis, these identities were influenced by occupational choices and the social communities to which people belonged. Such specialization was rarely exclusive. People who worked directly for the traders and, in the second half of the 19th century, for missionaries, typically lived in town and supplemented their wages by hunting, fishing, cultivating small gardens, and acquiring food from their bush-based relatives, thereby reducing both the costs incurred by traders in maintaining the labor force and their otherwise dependent position as laborers. People living in the bush occasionally performed wage labor (until the 20th century, paid for in-kind by Made Beaver credits). The concept of a regional division of labor, with occupational specialization occurring within immediate social networks - the local bands and their later outgrowths within the town of Fort Chipewyan itself - also marks the mixed economy of the fur

trade mode of production.

Social Relations of Production The primary goal of Chipewyans and Crees was still survival. That meant that trapping and wage labor were undertaken only to provide themselves with enough exchange-value to purchase the items they needed.⁶⁶ Not surprisingly, there were few changes from the pre-existing relations of production. The major change was the intervention of the European trader and his employees in the relations of production, paralleling the intervention of imported manufactures in the forces of production. It was the traders who solicited and encouraged Aboriginal participation in the fur trade and employed them as occasional laborers. They drew upon their social ties with Aboriginal peoples and their control over exchange rates, although not without considerable negotiation and occasional resistance by Aboriginal producers. For example, on October 2, 1868, the Chief Factor at Fort Chipewyan, William McMurray, “had a conference with the Indians & explained to them his intentions concerning their debts furs &c during the ensuing Winter” (HBCA B.39/a/46:fo. 41). Traders did not seek otherwise to alter Aboriginal use of or access to bush resources. All Indian participants had to provide themselves with food and other subsistence items, thereby underwriting their own reproduction costs, which reduced costs that the traders would otherwise have been forced to cover and enhanced the value appropriated by the traders.

Ray has argued that one role of the traders was to encourage Indian trappers to rely upon

⁶⁶The reasons were probably both ideological and pragmatic. Aboriginal people tended to “make do,” an appropriate tactic when everyone had the knowledge necessary to make all items of technology. This approach can be seen even today among local residents. As well, it was difficult for people who moved around a great deal to carry many items with them, which in turn undermined any tendency to consumerism.

a less reliable resource base, by relying instead on assistance from the Hudson's Bay Company during times of privation (1984:7-8). The Company stocked food stuffs for distribution at such times. This practice, he said, reduced Indian self-sufficiency even further. Indians were therefore vulnerable to low fur returns and shortages of food (*ibid.*:10). They turned to the Company for relief at such times, a situation that Ray has interpreted as a fur trade-based “welfare system” (*ibid.*:16-7). However, Ray himself has pointed out that assistance provided to Indians was drawn from the “excess profits” made by the Company. Conceptualizing it as welfare supports an interpretation of Indian “dependency.” It may be better thought of as a return of a portion of the excessive surplus value appropriated by fur trade merchants. Occasional assistance provided by the trading companies was a way of helping the Indians make a “living wage,” not equivalent to government support in the second half of the 20th century for peoples displaced from the production process. Moreover, the region surrounding the western end of Lake Athabasca, anchored by the rich Peace-Athabasca Delta, may have provided a resource base that was more reliable than at most posts, and there is little evidence to support the notion that the Company regularly put up extra supplies in case Indians went hungry. Instead, the post journals recorded complaints or resignation if Indians had to be fed from post stores during intervals of starvation.

The bottom line is that the structure of control within Chipewyan and Cree societies during the fur trade was still vested in the members of the local bands. What was distinctive about the fur trade mode of production was the addition of the production of furs and provisions for sale and of wage labor to the former economy. It marked the beginning of a mixed economy that would provide additional flexibility for livelihood. At the same time, Aboriginal peoples

were vulnerable to any constraints that might be imposed on their access to the resources of the bush, to changes in the availability of the species they exploited, and to changes in the structure of the fur trade. While involvement in the fur trade is often seen as making Aboriginal economic structures more fragile and less certain, at the same time the existence of a mixed economy evened out some of the problems, by offering new ways of livelihood.

Superstructure Superstructural elements were an outgrowth of those of the originating modes of production. There is no evidence that Chipewyans or Crees who committed to trapping changed their fundamental value systems in any significant way, or that they came to accept the legitimacy of lineal authority, whether by outsiders or their own members. Traders insinuated themselves into the relations of production by manipulating exchange relationships, not by imposing any measure of formal authority. However, more subtle changes may have resulted from the roles played by Métis and European employees in the fur trade relations of production. Especially in earlier days, they were often sent out to winter with Indian bands, to encourage production of furs and provisions and also to support themselves. As discussed above, many men married local women and began families. Fathers transmitted their values to their children, even when those children were raised in their mother's culture and with her cultural identity. These values may have supported an acceptance of trapping and trading as legitimate and worthy activities. Roman Catholic Métis and Protestant Scots also taught their families some aspects of their Christianity, paving the way for the Christian missionaries who would arrive in the mid 19th century (see Podruchny 2006). These men were a less formal but highly important influence in the relations of production.

6. Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Traditional Territory

The discussion to this point has been about Chipewyans and Crees living their lives in the vast lands of northeast Alberta and adjacent lands of Saskatchewan and the North-West Territories. This section addresses the concept of “traditional territory,” with specific reference to how the traditional territory of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation was and is constituted, conceptualized, and defined. As the earlier discussion explained, that traditional territory actually comprises the combined traditional territories of the Chipewyans and Crees who historically joined together through marriages as the founding peoples for this modern First Nation.

The term “traditional territory” has been widely used but rarely defined, and in fact no universally accepted definition exists.⁶⁷ It is understood differently by Euro-Canadians and Aboriginal people, just as Aboriginal land use and concepts of land have been poorly understood by Europeans/Euro-Canadians. Euro-Canadians have an intellectual framework for understanding and thinking about land and territory that derives from the system of land ownership introduced in Canada by British and French immigrants. That involved “the concept of *property*, in which pieces of territory are viewed as ‘commodities’ capable of being bought, sold, or exchanged at the market place” (Soja in Elden 2010:805). Canada’s development as a nation-state went hand-in-hand with the creation of an overarching system of individual

⁶⁷Indeed, Stuart Elden claims that there has been little investigation of the term “territory,” either “conceptually or historically” (2010:800). The reason is that the term “...is often assumed to be self-evident in meaning,” mainly through its relationship to the defended and bounded territory of a state (*ibid.*). Many geographers and anthropologists today are examining fundamental concepts such as “space,” “place,” “land,” “landscape,” and striving to consider how these relate to indigenous issues and concepts, especially in contexts of contemporary globalism (e.g., Castree 2004; Escobar 2001).

ownership and control of land and resources, under the sovereignty of the Crown, which set the ground rules for how the land could be occupied and parceled out. When the new Dominion of Canada expanded after 1870 into the lands newly-acquired from the Hudson's Bay Company, the Dominion Land Survey was the federal agency responsible for surveying the Northwest. Its goal was to impose a grid of Base Lines and Meridians, followed by Townships and Range Roads, respectively, anticipating settlement by non-Aboriginal people who would take up homesteads and invest in industries. It provided then and still does provide for "ownership" of a clearly defined piece of land and for control over the land within its boundaries, subject to whatever rules are in place for land ownership and use by the jurisdiction making the land available or having some input into its governance (e.g., the federal or provincial Crown, municipality, a rural subdivision). Each piece of land has a surveyed boundary, and the land-owner's formal control extends to that boundary and no farther. The land-owner has no control over his neighbor's land. Persons (including corporate persons) who are given leases of either land (e.g., grazing reserves) or a resource on those lands (e.g., a timber berth for tree-cutting or oil sands for mining) have similar though not identical powers, depending on the terms of the lease, and they too have surveyed boundaries, which define the geographic limits to their formal activities.⁶⁸

This apparently straight-forward system does not work when attempting to discuss Aboriginal land uses or their intellectual framework for thinking about and understanding their

⁶⁸Impacts of these activities may extend beyond their legal boundaries of operation. For example, smoke emissions from oil sands plants do not stop at an artificial boundary, although they may be regulated by the issuer of the licence. Fences erected to enclose an excavation, especially if they lie on traditional travel routes, may prevent Aboriginal users from accessing more distant areas. It may not be feasible to "go around."

“traditional lands.” When Aboriginal people are asked today to identify their traditional territory, what they are really being asked to do is to identify boundaries in order to define where their legitimate interests in the land stop and start. That is an interesting position, for it contradicts the belief by Europeans about former land uses by northern Aboriginal people, which is that Aboriginal people who lived by hunting, fishing, and gathering were *nomadic*, a problematic term which meant, to Europeans, that they did not truly occupy the land but simply “roamed over” it, having no specific land they could call their own. For example, when Alfred von Hamerstein testified about the Athabasca District before the Select Committee of the Senate in its 1906-07 hearings, he tried to distinguish between “‘white half-breeds’ and ‘Indians’” on the basis of whether or not they were permanently settled. He said: “Some of the half-breeds live a white man's life, and others live like Indians; that is, they are on the move all the time” (Chambers 1907:43). Even today, the *Canadian Oxford Dictionary* defines a “nomad” as a “member of a people roaming from place to place for food or fresh pasture,” or “a wanderer” (Barber 2001:987). “Roaming” and “wandering” both connote randomness.

The tendency by some social scientists today to contrast Aboriginal societies to so-called “settler societies” when talking about incoming Europeans denies implicitly that Aboriginal people themselves “settled” the land.⁶⁹ At issue is a European concept of settlement that means a sedentary life lived on a bounded piece of land, with an agrarian base. It posed a problem for Charles Mair, who accompanied the Half-breed Scrip Commission to northern Alberta in 1899

⁶⁹To Philip Arnold, occupation of land “...is not only the mechanics of how a land is settled by human beings, but refers to the all-encompassing, ongoing interpretive labors required to live in a place” (2001:18). Such a concept allows us to move beyond the narrow concept of settlement to a more useful concept of occupation, of which agricultural settlement would be only one type.

and observed the parallel Treaty No. 8 Commission at Lesser Slave Lake Settlement. Mair compared many “white settlers” he had seen unfavorably to the “Indians” he saw at Lesser Slave Lake, whom he considered superior “in sedateness and self-possession” (1908:54). He looked for but did not see “some savage types of men” among the Indians and indeed expressed disappointment at the ordinary scene before him (*ibid.*:54-55). They were, instead, “commonplace men” (*ibid.*:55), which surprised him “for there was, as yet, little or no farming amongst the old ‘Lakers’” (*ibid.*: 73). It has been difficult for Euro-Canadians to come to grips with a system of territory and occupation that was not based on sedentary settlement but on “wandering.”

Associated with the concept of Aboriginal nomadism and their lack of permanent residences in the past was the idea that the boreal forest, including the lands of northern Alberta, was a “tractless wilderness,” a vast expanse of wild lands. In 1899, the treaty commissioners found it difficult to contemplate that Indians would or even could be displaced from such lands anytime soon. In fact, in their report they said that they did not expect the Indians in the Athabasca and Slave River areas to take up the provisions in the treaty to support farming, because “It does not appear likely that the conditions of the country on either side of the Athabasca and Slave Rivers or about Athabasca Lake will be so changed as to affect hunting or trapping, and it is safe to say that so long as the fur-bearing animals remain, the great bulk of the Indians will continue to hunt and to trap” (Govt. of Canada 1966:7). That is, they equated the persistence of the intact boreal forest landscape with the exercise of rights to hunt and trap under Treaty No. 8. They also pointed out that “the extent of the country treated for make it impossible to define reserves or holdings” (*ibid.*). Charles Mair, who was part of the Half-breed

Commission, wrote about “primeval masses of poplar and birch foliage” (1908:41); the word “primeval” implies untouched wilderness. As recently as 1997, a brief survey of Canadian Indian culture areas described the western Subarctic as a bleak, forbidding land “of dark forests, barren lands and the swampy terrain known as muskeg” (Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 1997:9), a specific kind of wilderness.

Yet to Chipewyans and Crees, northern Alberta was neither “tractless” nor “wilderness.”⁷⁰ In addition to the better-known water routes, it was covered by a network of overland trails that were well-known to local people.⁷¹ At least some of these trails were maintained by controlled burning. These travel routes were their grids. While they revealed the ways by which people traveled in the country and the lands they knew and used, they were not boundaries that restricted where they could live or how they could use the land. It is true that most Chipewyans and Crees did not have permanent, year-round settlements until recently, but they does not mean they were “nomads” in the “random use” sense of that term.⁷² First Nations used and occupied the land and its resources in an orderly and methodical manner, based on their highly detailed knowledge of specific landscapes and plant and animal behavior and interaction, their ability to predict ecosystem dynamics, their practices of environmental

⁷⁰The word “wilderness” does not even have direct Chipewyan or Cree linguistic equivalents.

⁷¹For example, Athabasca Chipewyans know and still use a trail that goes from the Athabasca River to Ronald Lake and into the Birch Mountains (Candler *et al.* 2011:80). There are many other trails that provide overland connections across the entire region. Some of these can be found marked on old maps, but most of them can be known only through the oral traditions, and knowledge about these trails is disappearing.

⁷²“Nomad” is a good example of a term frequently used even today for Aboriginal people of an earlier day that we should either redefine or stop using.

management through controlled burning, the rules of their societies, and their spiritual beliefs and practices

To the Chipewyans who traveled on them, trails were more than simply access routes to resource areas. Trails and travel were intimately involved with the production of Chipewyan knowledge. According to David Turnbull, “We make our world in the process of moving through and knowing it,” and he points to the “‘topokinetic’ nature of knowledge through movement” known from many cultures, including those of North American Aboriginal people (2007:142). This approach is evident among the Dakelh First Nations in British Columbia, who were formerly known as the Carrier, another Athapaskan-speaking group. Their term for territory is *keyah*, a word that means “within the feet,” which could also be translated as “the area in which one walks” (Larsen 2006:316). Many Dakelh place names, or toponyms, were “...mnemonic devices for detailed family stories of events that connected the family to the area in question” (*ibid.*:317), just as they are for other Athapaskan/Dene peoples, from the Subarctic to the Southwest. The idea of trails and walking as a source of knowledge relates directly to Chipewyan values about the benefits of travel; as Thanadelthur explained to Knight, a great traveler was also a great leader. Travelers were able to learn first hand about other people and landscapes, and it afforded them opportunities for a wide range of spiritual experiences related to particular places. Travel was related directly to the generation and expression of their oral traditions, which encapsulated their cultural knowledge:

Paths, tracks and trails are inherently performative; the cognitive connections, the social interactions, and the relationships that they bring into existence, are themselves marked by trails and movements and actions along them. For this reason they are deeply

intertwined with songs, stories and narratives [Turnbull 2007:143].⁷³

Knowledge about the land involved more than simply the physical features that can be empirically discovered and charted. It was knowledge of “landscape,” which is “how people meaningfully occupy land” in order to survive (Arnold 2001:17). That entails an important interpretive role, much of it articulated through ritual relationships between Chipewyans and spiritual entities present on and under the land. Chipewyan statements about how the land is “sacred” relate to these relationships. Henry Sharp has provided the most recent discussion about this knowledge and these relationships, with specific reference to the Chipewyans of Black Lake (which he called Mission Lake).⁷⁴

Animals, ordinary animals that The People hunt, trap, and eat, have a simultaneous dual reality - existence - as both natural and supernatural beings. As animals, they are the physical beings upon whose bodies the Dene depend for their own subsistence and survival. As supernatural beings, animals participate in *inkoze*, and it is in that realm that they have their “true” existence. This duality of being dominates traditional Dene thought, experience, and interaction with animals and is one of the root paradigms of Chipewyan culture [Sharp 2001:58].

Inkoze is a greater realm that contains human life and experience within it. Its nature is dynamic, convoluted, and beyond human understanding” [*ibid.*:50].

At times it seems as if the Dene recognize that the physical universe we experience is only part of a greater connected universe(s) we are unable to perceive” [*ibid.*:172].

[It is]...the system of causality and being from which the Dene emerged as human beings” [*ibid.*:58].

⁷³See also work by Bettina Koschade and Evelyn Peters about indigenous knowledge and the environment with respect to Algonquin concepts of jurisdiction over land. The land used and occupied by the Ardoch Algonquin First Nations and Allies is “...the embodiment of their indigenous knowledge of the land” (2006:304).

⁷⁴David M. Smith provided an earlier summary of Chipewyan “magico-religious beliefs” based on his research with Chipewyans at Fort Resolution; he used the term *i'ko'ze*, which people explained as “to know something a little” (1973:8). There is a wide literature about such beliefs among northern Athapaskan peoples that is not reviewed here.

The Dene know that the homes of the giant beings beneath the lakes and rivers of Dene country are pathways between the realms maintained by the power/knowledge of those beings of inkoze [*ibid.*:173].

People themselves can acquire the power and knowledge that is part of inkoze through dreams, visions, and direct encounters with animal-persons (also, non-human persons) (*ibid.*:79). They have *relationships* with these animal-persons that involve an on-going reciprocity in which the spiritual figures continue to provide power and knowledge and the people who have been granted these gifts observe whatever rules and food restrictions are required to maintain their relationships. In turn, people with such power can use it to help (or harm) other people, actions which in turn binds them into inter-human relationships that must be reciprocated with gifts (*ibid.*:79-80; see D. Smith 1973:9).

These are not just beliefs of the past, but ongoing parts of Chipewyan awareness, spirituality, and religion. Work by Philip Arnold has been helpful in thinking about the relationships between Aboriginal people, including Chipewyans, and the land as shaped by an understanding of the land as “...an autonomous living being” (Arnold 2001:17). Just as humans have relationships with other human beings, they must also have relationships with the land. They achieve such bonds through “ritual,” which is “...a performative process by which meaningful orientation to the landscape is promoted and sustained” (*ibid.*:15). That is, people do not just think about the land, but they visit it and do things on it which relate to the reciprocity between themselves and the spiritual entities that inhabit the land. The set of beliefs and rituals involved in “...the human interaction with an exterior material world...” can also be construed as a religion (*ibid.*:19).⁷⁵

⁷⁵Arnold (2001) distinguishes this approach to religion from those of more narrowly-based European Christianities, which at the time of European contact with Aboriginal people in

Sharp and Smith have provided some evidence for how these rituals work among Chipewyans. Events involving mythical or spiritual figures could occur at any place or time (Sharp 2001:92).⁷⁶ Hunting is of paramount importance, in that “a hunt is a ritual encounter between a Dene seeking the life of an animal/person whose power/knowledge is greater than his own. Any encounter with an animal/person is precarious. ... Beyond the peril of dealing with a being of greater power/knowledge is the never-absent chance that the animal/person may be a being of inkoze” (Sharp 2001:63). Inkoze also enters into the gathering of medicinal plants, which “...must be given a return in the form of a gift slipped into the ground among its roots...” (*ibid.*:79-80). In fact, an animal spirit might show the person the place in the bush where medicinal plants could be found. “When gathering this medicine, a person was always very careful to ‘pay the ground.’ Shaving a little tobacco on the spot where roots were taken, for instance, was a proper ‘payment’” (D. Smith 1973:8-9). Inkoze is the reason that people and animals can both be reincarnated (*ibid.*:68), and reincarnation provides another level of connectedness among human and non-human persons. Finally, people with inkoze still act as curers, which connects those being healed with the animal-persons who provide the power (e.g., see D. Smith 1973:10-14).

Sharp has worried that this approach to Chipewyan spirituality may lead some people to

the Americas were based primarily on written texts (various versions of the *Holy Bible*) and promoted a utopian ideology - a better world or God’s world - largely removed from specific places. This freeing of religion from place was part of the process of “modernization.”

⁷⁶These experiences were and are not talked about publicly but could be learned about by others by close observation of a person’s behavior (D. Smith 1973:8). In my experience, people are reluctant and even unwilling to speak about such things. It is considered dangerous to do so, may pose a risk of losing one’s powers, and requires special protocols. Hence, it is highly unlikely that such information would appear in traditional land use studies, even when spiritual encounters are related to particular places identified in such studies.

think of them as “...going off the deep end toward the mystical and the romantic” (2001:177).

Chipewyans and other Aboriginal people are highly aware that their beliefs have been marginalized and denigrated as “superstitions” or worse by Euro-Canadians, not seen as equivalent to Christian beliefs. Their beliefs were strongly opposed by the Oblate priests and Anglican ministers who evangelized them, and their reliance on traditional curing practices was opposed by missionaries (when they involved spiritual curing methods) and Canadian medical personnel (when they involved herbs and roots) (e.g., D. Smith 1973:20). It is therefore not surprising that Chipewyans fear disbelief or ridicule if they talk about their beliefs to outsiders and are often unwilling to do so. Yet both Sharp and Smith consider Chipewyan beliefs to be fundamentally “pragmatic” (D. Smith 1973:19):

The Dene are an eminently practical and empirical people who do not run around in a romantic fog seeing spirits, auras, or mystic forces in every action they take or in every thing they observe. The relationships between Dene thought about inkoze and about animals are much more subtle than that [Sharp 2001:176].

Men may dream how to accomplish the task they have in mind, but they carefully observe the results of their efforts and incorporate those results into their future efforts [ibid.:97].

Collectively, this pragmatic and spiritual knowledge about land and landscape is today called “traditional environmental knowledge,” “traditional ecological knowledge,” “indigenous knowledge,” or simply “local knowledge.” Fikret Berkes defines such knowledge as “a cumulative body of knowledge, practice, and belief, evolving by adaptive processes and handed down through generations by cultural transmission, about the relationship of living beings (including humans) with one another and with their environment” (1999:8; italics removed). It is “both cumulative and dynamic, building on experience and adapting to changes” (*ibid.*). For Athabasca Chipewyans, implicit but unsaid is that their traditional knowledge includes elements

related to inkoze.⁷⁷ Thus, contributing to the decisions they made about land use were factors generated by the forces of production - the kinds of resources they needed or wanted at specific times of the year; the social relations of production - social factors that motivated people to use certain places and resources rather than others; and the spiritual dimension - beliefs about inkoze.

The hallmark of the domestic mode of production and the successor fur trade mode of production was that no one could control critical resources, which were available to everyone in the local society. That included access to spiritual power, which was available to anyone who could establish a connection with a spiritual being, but which also required regular access to the bush. Animal-persons might be anywhere, and the more travel one does in the bush, the more likely it is that one will have the kinds of encounters that will enable the individual to engage with power. In this vein, it is a common aspect of northern Aboriginal discourse in northern Alberta for people to say that they do not own the land, but rather use and look after it, which speaks to their sense of relationship, reciprocity, and stewardship vis-à-vis the land and its resources.

Aboriginal people have always been opposed to attempts to break up and subdivide the vast expanses of land upon which they depended for livelihood, although such statements have normally been framed to Euro-Canadians as related to the physical, not the spiritual, dimension of the land. In 1899 and 1900, when they talked to the treaty commissioners about what entering into treaty would mean for them, they made it clear that they would refuse the treaty if

⁷⁷The extent to which spiritual beliefs are part of traditional knowledge has been an unresolved point of conflict over how and when to use traditional knowledge to affect policies about land uses and animal management policies.

it meant that their freedom to use the land would be restricted in any way, by being forced either to live on reserves or to obey game regulations. Aboriginal resistance to such potential changes in the land appeared even earlier, however, when the first surveyors came onto their traditional lands. For example, on 7 February 1883, W. T. Thompson, who was surveying in the Lesser Slave Lake area:

...was interviewed by the head man of the Indians (self elected), his sons and grandsons following in the wake, who informed him that they were perfectly aware that he was passing through the country to spy out the nakedness of the land, intending next summer to take this land to himself, and that he [the head man], as lawful possessor of the soil, forbade Mr. Thompson to proceed any farther [EB, "Slave Lake," 17 March 1883:3].⁷⁸

Alexandre Laviolette, who later became the first chief of the Chipewyan Band at Fort Chipewyan, issued a similar challenge in 1897 on the occasion of the first patrol by North-West Mounted Police to Fort Chipewyan and points beyond. He wrote a letter, stating: "Who told you to come out here. I would like to know that. Am sure it is'nt [sic] God. God let this country [be] free, and we like to be free in this Country. I don't want any of you people; to come a[nd] bother us in this Country" (3 Feb. 1897, typed copy in LAC RG18 v. 128; full quote in McCormack 2010:95).

During negotiations for Treaty No. 8 in 1899 and 1900, the question about whether or

⁷⁸While Treaty No. 11 was not negotiated along the Mackenzie River until 1921, land surveys occurred there before World War I which seem to have been just as contentious as the survey near Lesser Slave Lake in 1883. In 1914 at Fort Simpson, Indian Agent Thomas W. Harris wrote to the Assistant Deputy and Secretary of Indian Affairs that local Indians wanted to know why the surveys were being undertaken. "I have answered that so far as I know it is to protect the rights of the settlers who may come in at a future date. This does not seem to satisfy them and all sorts of absurd rumours are current, and a certain amount of dissatisfaction is expressed" (in Fumoleau 1975:117). Harris, along with many other government agents, tended to dismiss the legitimacy of Indian concerns when they did not accord with his own understandings.

not Indians would find their land uses restricted after entering into treaty arose over and over again. The treaty commissioners assured them that they would not have to live on reserves and that “...they would be as free to hunt and fish after the treaty as they would be if they never entered into it” (Govt. of Canada 1966:6), an assurance predicated on the idea of an intact land base. As well, “...we had to solemnly assure them that only such laws as to hunting and fishing as were in the interest of the Indians and were found necessary in order to protect the fish and fur-bearing animals would be made...” (*ibid.*). Evidently they did not anticipate that such land uses would impinge in any major way on Indian uses of the land and its resources.

They offered such assurances, which treaty signatories considered to be promises, despite explicit provisions in the written version of the treaty that specified:

And Her Majesty the Queen HEREBY AGREES with the said Indians that they shall have right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered as heretofore described, subject to such regulations as may from time to time be made by the Government of the country, ... and saving and excepting such tracts as may be required or taken up from time to time for settlement, mining, lumbering, trading or other purposes” [*ibid.*:12].⁷⁹

Pierre Mercredi, a long-time Hudson’s Bay Company officer who interpreted Chipewyan for the treaty discussions at Fort Chipewyan in 1899, later said that he did not interpret any clause ““which said they [Indians] might have to obey regulations about hunting”” (ACFN 2003a:59). He claimed that it was added subsequent to the negotiations in Fort Chipewyan. ““It was not there before. I never read it to the Chipewyans or explained it to them”” (*ibid.*).

Aboriginal stewardship over the land was both ideological and practical. To the extent

⁷⁹At the time, lands used for the purposes named in the treaty - settlement, mining, lumbering, trading - were small and localized. “Lumbering” had not even begun, mining was in its infancy in the north, and the Canadian oil industry did not develop in a major way until the 20th century. Neither the treaty commissioners nor the Indian representatives anticipated the expanding industrial presence that is found on treaty lands today.

that people practiced controlled burning, which was a widespread practice, they were actively managing habitats to produce the conditions that supported the animals they hunted and trapped. They handled animals and plants in culturally-defined ways that were intended to manage the availability and abundance of game. Even their spiritual powers were recruited to manage animals; people with *inkoze* were reported to be able to dream about the animals that they then hunted successfully or directed others to hunt. Such beliefs were and are not only part of the spiritual systems of Aboriginal people, they have been part and parcel of their empirical ecological practices and land management. Their very lives depended upon their being able to feed themselves at all seasons of the year, and for the most part, they were highly successful. As well, these landscapes contained a wide range of culturally important sites, such as preferred residential sites,⁸⁰ burials, and sites with spiritual associations, mostly linked together by the system of overland trails and water routes. These places would have been named. People learned the place names and their associated stories by hearing the oral traditions about them, especially when they traveled across the land. They also visited places that would today be thought of as archaeological sites and about which the original stories had been lost. “These places...are noted by the Dene and treated with respect for the power/knowledge that has flowed

⁸⁰Residential sites ranged from temporary over-night camp sites to longer-lasting settlements. By the late 19th century, many people had begun to build log cabins at those important locations as a base of operations for winter and other seasons. Settlements along the Athabasca River were described by travelers, such as Inspector A. M. Jarvis, who made the first North West Mounted Police patrol to northern Alberta in 1897 (McCormack 2010:94-95). The locations of some of these settlements are discussed in McCormack 1984:338-347; see also ACFN 2003:51. I was able to visit some bush settlements when I conducted research in Fort Chipewyan. Many settlements had associated cemeteries, although burials still occurred in the bush when people were traveling. As industries expand their operations into the Athabasca Chipewyan traditional lands, the safety of these isolated burials are a source of concern for the First Nation members.

between human and nonhuman within them” (Sharp 2001:41). Some of these sites became “...the loci of worship and communion with the sources of power/knowledge that animate this land” (Sharp 2001:41). In short, Chipewyan history, culture, and religion are both encoded and demonstrated in the geography of their traditional territory.⁸¹

Ironically, the same Europeans who relied on Aboriginal assistants and guides when they traveled on the land and on Aboriginal production of food provisions to survive at the posts commonly belittled Aboriginal beliefs as “superstitions.” Euro-Canadians government agents and scientists spent virtually no time on the land and had little real knowledge about boreal forest ecosystems and the dynamics of animal populations, yet they were confident that the land-use regulations they devised and imposed were appropriate. Aboriginal protests were almost always dismissed. Euro-Canadians prided themselves on their rational science, while historically the regulations for hunting, fishing, and trapping, both federal and provincial, were in fact based on poor science overall (for examples, see McCormack 1984; 1992; 2010; Sandlos 2002; 2003; ACFN 2003a:99).

While the lands under Aboriginal stewardship were broad, the specific practices of stewardship were implemented on the particular places where members of local bands lived and worked during the course of each year. Their traditional lands comprised the lands they were using actively, lands they had used in the past and that were known to have been used by their ancestors, and the lands they might wish or need to use in the future. This knowledge seems to have been largely addressed in general terms, presumably for the reasons stated in the

⁸¹The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation has not yet done a place name inventory, although the diversity of the locations that are culturally-significant are suggested by their traditional land use surveys.

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Traditional Land Use Study, which stated simply:

In the context of the large nomadic territory likely occupied by the Chipewyan people, and the context of the continually evolving culture and adaptations of these Aboriginal people, it is inappropriate to speak of boundaries. It may however, be appropriate to look at the likelihood of territorial occupation at any particular time [ACFN 2003b:147].

In a parallel publication, *Footprints on the Land*, former chief Archie Cyprien wrote, “The core area of the traditional lands of the ACFN is identified in the map presented on the opposite page,” which is shown in Figure 1. The core lands he identified were those lands that members of this First Nation had come to use regularly as a result of their involvement in the fur trade. They continue to be important today because “the land is the essence of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) culture, values and spirituality” (ACFN 2003:5).⁸² This map encompasses the lands surrounding much of the north shore and most of the south shore of Lake Athabasca, as well as lands west of the lake as far as Peace River and west of Athabasca River into the Birch Mountain (*ibid.*:4). Chief Cyprien added that “ACFN land use was not limited to this area...” (*ibid.*: 5).

Clearly, Chipewyan traditional territory has a dynamic quality that parallels the dynamic quality of their traditional knowledge.⁸³ It seems unlikely today that the northern-most extent of the traditional territory of pre-contact Chipewyans, now located in Nunavut, would be considered part of the traditional territory of modern Athabasca Chipewyans, which indicates

⁸²To a large extent, Athabasca Chipewyans equate loss of the land-based experience with loss of their cultural traditions and traditional knowledge. As elder Alex Bruno said, “Today, a lot of the kids don’t have the slightest idea of what living out on the land is all about. You want your children to know all about their culture and traditional way of life” (ACFN 2003:89).

⁸³Koschade and Peters (2006:300) prefer to use the term indigenous knowledge rather than traditional knowledge. They argue that “...the word ‘traditional’ can be misleading” because it can often imply “...a static and nonadaptive form of knowledge.” In contrast, “indigenous knowledge” is seen as “diverse and malleable.”

that the traditional territory can shift. Pre-contact Chipewyans probably did not use the lands of the Clearwater River or the Birch Mountain, while Athabasca Chipewyans now use those areas, which indicates that their traditional territory has expanded southward and westward. The core areas of the different Chipewyan groups across their entire range will differ from group to group, though always overlapping from one group to the next.

The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation statements and understandings about their traditional lands are echoed in the statements of other First Nations who are facing similar intrusions into their own lands. For example, the Cowichan First Nation of British Columbia explain in a website, “Our traditional territory is the geographic area occupied by our ancestors for community, social, economic, and spiritual purposes” (Cowichan Tribes 2005). That definition speaks to a breadth of landscape that extends beyond any specific region occupied by a set of families at any one time.

The Katzie First Nation, a Salish First Nation in the Fraser River region of BC, has taken two different approaches to defining traditional territory. First and foremost, it is “that territory granted by the Creator, to the descents of Oe’lecten and Swaneset - the Katzie people.” This meaning resonates with the Cowichan definition. The second definition, intended to meet “the purposes of the BC Treaty Commission process,” defines Katzie traditional lands as encompassing “all those lands, waters, and natural resources used and occupied by the Katzie First Nation, and owned by the Katzie First Nation, according to Katzie customary law” (Katzie First Nation 2002; bolding removed). This definition seeks, unsuccessfully, to distinguish between lands that are considered to be “shared territory” with other first nations” and lands that are exclusively those of the Katzie First Nation. It notes that some members may consider

those shared lands “to be properly Katzie territory.” Similarly, with respect to the idea of overlapping territories, other First Nations may have “rights and interests” in the Katzie Nation lands, and Katzie Nation members may have rights and interests in the lands of other First Nations. The First Nation points to its “long-standing ties within this larger [Coast Salish] cultural family. The ambiguities in this definition stem from an attempt to reconcile an Aboriginal concept of territory that is broad in nature with a Euro-Canadian concept of territory that is intended to erect boundaries and confer restricted rights of ownership and use, the difference between lands “we use” and lands “used by others,” when the “we” versus “them” opposition is itself a consequence of government definition rather than First Nation cultures and understandings. In its website, the Katzie First Nation addresses this problem indirectly by noting the existence of important cultural differences in articulating the concept of traditional territory:

At the outset, it is important to state that aboriginal concepts related to title, rights and territory do not easily conform to European or Canadian terms such as “territory” and “boundary.” This difficulty is apparent in misunderstandings such as the existence of apparent ‘overlapping claims.’”

Discussions with Katzie elders clearly show that the English language and European concepts are limited in their ability to articulate the nature of the Katzie First Nation’s traditional view of “ownership” [*ibid.*].

The traditional territory of the Aboriginal people who constitute the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation is geography defined by social networks -their long-standing ties with other Chipewyans and with some non-Chipewyan Aboriginal people, especially Crees. It did not in the past nor does it now have clear boundaries that can be surveyed. The multiple kinship relations that existed among members of the local bands of northeast Alberta and adjacent areas - the on-the-ground co-residential groups - defined the extent of on-going and potential land use

by members of those groups. In these societies, any person was entitled to move to and join any group to which he or she could demonstrate or establish a primary kinship tie. This “custom” or practice was part of what today would be called Chipewyan customary law. The kinship system was a flexible one that easily accommodated new people by extending terms of primary kinship to both more distant kinsmen and non-kin.

That can be seen even from Charles Mair’s narrative about Treaty No. 8 negotiations at Lesser Slave Lake. When talks began, Keenooshayo, an important Cree leader and spokesman, challenged the claim by the treaty commissioners that they were “brothers” (Mair 1908:59). As negotiations moved forward, Moostoos, the other major Cree spokesman, extended kinship terms to the commissioners: “You have called us brothers. Truly I am the younger, you the elder brother. Being the younger, if the younger ask the elder for something, he will grant his request the same as our mother the Queen” (*ibid.*:60). While the commissioners may have considered such terms to be simply flowery oratory, the Crees took them seriously as defining formal relationships with attached rights and duties, which Moostoos explained when he instructed the commissioners in their behavioral meanings.

Even today, Aboriginal people living in northern communities talk about how everyone is related, and that is true. Newcomers who enter these areas and become engaged in the local Aboriginal social network will eventually find themselves defined as various kinds of relatives. The Euro-Canadian emphasis on actual biological ties or “blood” is not significant in traditional Chipewyan and Cree kinship systems. As relatives, they have rights and duties vis-à-vis one another. In the past, those rights included the right to join a local band if they had a kinship connection to that band and wished to do so. That meant that they had the right to enjoy all

land-based activities - hunting, fishing, gathering, trapping - on those lands. They had a right to share the food that was produced by the other families with whom they lived, and those families enjoyed similar rights in the production of the newcomers. Mutual cooperation and sharing in production and consumption were fundamental to the local bands. While local bands, as land-based entities, do not exist in the larger residential centers where virtually everyone lives today, the network of kinship ties still functions in these towns and affect how people work together, assist one another, and share material possessions and bush foods.

These relationships were not restricted to the local bands that constituted a regional band but extended to the members of all local bands with whom one might have contact. As June Helm pointed out (2000:10), the regional band was an amorphous entity which:

...lacks continual nucleation of camp or settlement. Its members are commonly scattered over its range in smaller groups. The dimensions of the regional band's range are defined in terms of its "roads," the main routes of movement for its constituent groups. The regional band's zone of exploitation thus has axes rather than boundaries or edges. We may speak of a regional band's traditional range as its territory, but it is territory without territoriality. Ties of amity and kinship bring people from one regional band to another, free to use its resources.

Before fur trade posts entered the region and became a focus of interaction, said Helm (2000:18), there would have been "flows of personnel between regional and supraregional populations and, sometimes, shifts of exploitative ranges of groups."

These "flows of personnel" did not stop once people were involved in the fur trade or even after they entered into Treaty No. 8. Throughout the 20th century, members of neighboring local bands were engaged with one another along a variety of what Helm termed "axes," the major orientations to travel that channeled human interaction throughout the region. The large rivers - Peace, Slave, and Athabasca - comprised three significant axes that linked together the

members of the local bands along these routes or in their vicinities. Settlements occupied by local bands were located along all of these rivers as well as on lakes and smaller rivers of the region. The Birch River was a significant axis for Chipewyans, along with Lake Athabasca, which extended west to east. The major overland trails or “roads” constituted additional axes. One of the most important of these was the system of trails from the Birch River over the Birch Mountain and to the Athabasca River that linked together people from the Fort MacKay and Fort Chipewyan regions. People regularly walked across the Birch Mountain to visit one another and use the resources in these different regions, just as they traveled by boat along the Athabasca River. Namur Lake and Gardiner Lake on the Birch Mountain were important locations for people from both Fort MacKay and Fort Chipewyan in the past, just as they are today, and from those lakes people could travel easily to Birch River or the Athabasca River (see Figure 5). Trails also linked Birch River and Lake Claire to the Peace River, and the Peace River to the northern bison range and Great Slave Lake, as well as to Slave River on the east and the Caribou Mountain on the west.⁸⁴

It was not uncommon for people who occupied settlements that were often far removed from one another to be related in some way. These kinship ties can be seen in genealogies and treaty pay list information (McCormack n.d.b; LAC RG10 Treaty Pay Lists). It was this network of kinship that tied together the local bands and provided the vehicle for people to change their band affiliations.

⁸⁴I first learned about the overland trails from stories told to me by local First Nations residents at Fort Chipewyan and other northern Alberta Aboriginal people. They are poorly documented overall, but evidence exists in older maps, travellers’ accounts, and interviews done for traditional land use studies of both Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree First Nations. This diverse information has yet to be compiled.

A good example is the Piché family. When North West Mounted Police Inspector A. M. Jarvis made the first police patrol into this portion of northern Alberta, he stopped at the Little Red River settlement on the Athabasca River, where he spoke with residents, one of whom was a local leader, Chrysostom Pische (Jarvis 1898:158) (Chrysostome Piche in the Oblate genealogies; McCormack n.d.b).⁸⁵ The founder of this family, and probably Chrysostome's grandfather, was François Piché, the man who had fled to live with the Chipewyans in 1787. He later worked at a number of trading posts, including Fort Chipewyan (Duckworth 1990:163-4). He took at least one Chipewyan wife and founded a large Piche family with a Chipewyan identity. Descendants lived in the Fort McMurray, Fort MacKay, and Fort Chipewyan regions. Members of this family married into both Chipewyan and Cree families. For instance, Charlot Piche, Chrysostome's brother, married Josette Martin in 1862. Josette was the daughter of Job Martin and Anne Iyisaskew, the second generation of one of the biggest Cree families in the lower Athabasca, and probably one of the Cree families for which the fur traders had continued to maintain a separate post. Job Martin appears to have married all of his children strategically, to both Chipewyan and Cree men and women, thereby gaining access to all those lands for all of their families and the local bands in which they lived. The linkages of the Martin family just at that generation included Grandjambes, Wabistikwans (Whiteheads), and Gibbots - all Crees - and Bouchers, Egus, and Dzenk'as (Ratfats) - all Chipewyans, along with Tourangeaus - usually considered to be Métis. One of Job Martin's sons, and Josette's brother, was Justin Martin, who in 1899 became the highly respected first chief of the Cree Band, due to his age, his

⁸⁵This settlement should not be confused with Little Red River on the Peace River, in the Fort Vermilion vicinity. In 1912, Little Red River on the Athabasca was renamed the MacKay River. It is situated near the Fort MacKay hamlet (Heritage Community Foundation n.d.).

connectedness to other families (both Cree and Chipewyan), and his great spiritual power. Similar ties can be traced among other families of the first chiefs and headmen (McCormack 2010:179-182; n.d.b).

Neil Reddekopp (1994) has traced some kinship connections of two other families - Grandjambes and Bouchers - from the perspective of their ties to the Fort McMurray-Fort MacKay area. The earliest Grandjambe in the Fort Chipewyan genealogical records was Siyakwatam *dit* (called) Grandjambe. The marriages of this family seem to have been made primarily with other Crees for at least the first two generations of descendants. Reddekopp looked at the history of Albert Grandjambe, who was born at Fort Chipewyan in 1893, and whose father Baptiste (Jean Baptiste) entered into treaty there as an original member of the Fort Chipewyan Cree Band. Baptiste moved around, working for the Hudson's Bay Company at Little Red River, where he married Caroline Sakiskanip, from an old Cree family now known as Gibbot. Several of Jean Baptiste's brothers and one sister married into families at Tallcree and Little Red River. By 1919, Albert, then about 26 years old, was at Fort MacKay, where he married Marie Rosine Kokan; they made their home there for the rest of their lives. The descendants of this family are intermarried with members from Athabasca Chipewyan families (Nicole Nicholls, personal communication, 23 June 2011).

Carolyn Sakiskanip had two brothers, Adam and Joseph, who both married Chipewyan women. Adam Sakiskanip's family line is particularly interesting, because he was reputed to have had a dispute with other Crees and made a decision to join his Chipewyan relatives (McCormack 1989). The family name became "Adam," and the marriages of his children were all to Chipewyan men and women. They joined the Chipewyan Band at the time of treaty.

Boucher is another family with French origins. Several Bouchés appear in the Athabasca region, working for the North West Company (Duckworth 1990:137-8). Joseph Boucher was born about 1851 and later married Madeleine Piché, joining him to this large Chipewyan family. Their children found both Chipewyan and Cree husbands and wives. Family members can be found from Little Red River/Fort Vermilion to Fort McMurray.

Reddekopp also named five women from the Cree Band at Fort Chipewyan who married into the band at Fort McMurray and who subsequently were transferred to that band's treaty pay list, following the Indian Act requirement prior to 1985 that a married woman's legal status derive from that of her husband (Reddekopp 1994:37). That speaks to sufficient movement within the area that such marriages could be arranged, and in fact travel between Fort McMurray and Fort Chipewyan was frequent. Men traveled to the areas where the women lived, for work, to visit, or even to look for wives, or families with marriageable daughters visited places where these men were living to the south. Both possibilities are likely.

Tracing the kinship connections of these apparently different families shows that dividing the world of Aboriginal people into Chipewyans and Crees is misleading in terms of social connections and traditional territory. These extended families provide examples of how kinship ties connected the local Chipewyan and Cree bands (and also Métis families) across the vast landscape of northeast Alberta and beyond, into northern Saskatchewan and the southern North-West Territories.

In short, "traditional territory" for the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation constitutes the totality of the lands used by the ancestors of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and those lands used by their descendants over time. They included not only lands actually in use, but lands abandoned for a period of time because the resources had diminished there or because

other lands were seen as more attractive, or because a social reason had led a family to relocate. They included all those lands that were not only used but *potentially* might be used by its members as a result of their kinship ties.

There were reasonable limits, but no clear boundaries, to this traditional territory. The fringes of the traditional territory in the past were governed solely by the desire and ability of Chipewyans and Crees to travel to areas where they had or could establish kinship ties. While people at Fort Chipewyan could travel to more remote locations, such as Edmonton, those were special trips, done rarely, and therefore those locations would not be part of their traditional lands. The extent of the Athabasca Chipewyan traditional lands presented here is based on accounts in their oral traditions about travel and residence, the location of Chipewyan settlements, the extent of kinship connections, and some documentary information. Their lands extended south to at least to Fort McMurray and possibly as far south as Janvier. They encompassed the Birch Mountain and the lands between the Birch Mountain and the Athabasca River. They extended west to encompass the areas around the Peace River to at least Jackfish River and probably to Little Red River. They extended into the lands of the Northwest Territories north of Peace River and included at least the eastern edge of the Caribou Mountain. Finally, they extended east into Saskatchewan at least as far as the Fond du Lac-Black Lake region. People had multiple possibilities for the lands they chose for their subsistence and trapping activities; they operationalized certain possibilities according to their own personal and family strategies and the resources available to them.

People changed the lands they used for many reasons. The most obvious reason was that resources had grown scarce, and people using those lands would move to other areas where they hoped to find an adequate resource base. To some extent, once people began to trap, they seem

to have rotated their use of the land, a strategy that was practical as long as people were not displaced from the land and there were no competing land uses. I have heard Chipewyan, Cree, and Métis men talk about trapping an area for a period of time, then leave enough animals to provide “seed” so that the animal populations would grow, while they moved to other areas to hunt and trap.

People also moved for a variety of other culturally-defined reasons. Marriage was a typical reason, in that marriages normally occurred between a man and woman from separate local bands. That meant that one party - usually the new husband - left his natal band and joined that of his wife (contrary to the practice embodied in the *Indian Act* membership provision). The husband thereby learned first-hand the details of the landscape and resources of an area that may have been new to him. Another reason to move was to deal with conflict or potential conflict. A person who was uncomfortable with or not getting along with someone in the local band might choose to move as a way to deal with the problem; direct confrontations were not considered appropriate behavior. Chipewyans placed a high value on travel, in large measure because it increased one’s personal knowledge about other places and people and opportunities to access new sources of power. Those individuals who traveled widely enjoyed enhanced personal prestige. If they found wives or adopted children from different localities, these relationships provided the formal links that allowed them access to those lands. People also placed a high value on visiting, which was not only enjoyable but also important for sharing information and arranging marriages. They might live with distant relatives for a lengthy time. Finally, people often left an area after a family member had died there. People have talked about being “too sad” to continue to live in those places. For example, the Chipewyan communities at Birch River were abandoned as residential sites in the early 20th century due to

disease epidemics that claimed many lives there. While by the end of the 19th century Chipewyans and Crees living in the bush were erecting wooden houses, they did not live in them year-round, and the existence of these houses was not enough to keep people from leaving for a time, or permanently, for another part of their traditional lands, for any of the reasons given above.

When Treaty No. 8 was negotiated in 1899, the treaty party never bothered to identify the lands used by specific bands. There was no discussion that suggested that individuals might have to restrict their treaty rights of hunting, fishing, gathering, and trapping to areas surrounding the communities where they took treaty and that the commissioners had used as the locus for each band. In fact, there is nothing in the treaty literature to suggest that the commissioners knew much at all about Aboriginal land use or felt they needed that information in order to negotiate the treaty. The lands available for use were all considered to be encompassed in the broad treaty lands shown on the map that accompanied the treaty (Figure 4).⁸⁶ However, the division of the collective Aboriginal population into several specific legal bands in the vicinity of fur trade posts suggests that the treaty commissioners believed that a territorial reality underlaid each band. To some extent, that was true - in 1899. The newly-created bands may have been a fuzzy snapshot of the social arrangements among the Aboriginal people and their economic links to particular posts in that year. Each band list was oriented to a particular post; the lists themselves created the fiction of a band that enjoyed a real identity, instead of an identity constructed at one moment in time by a representative of the Department

⁸⁶It is a weakness in the system of numbered treaties that the Treaty Commissioners never addressed: determining the lands used by peoples of specific regions and the areas of potential overlap with other peoples with whom they had not yet negotiated treaties.

of Indian Affairs. By creating legal Indian Bands - bands defined by the rules of the *Indian Act* - and then drawing up band lists, the Department of Indian Affairs set in place a legal structure that presumed a relatively static system of land use and that was expected eventually to be realized in reserves.

Reddekopp (1994:2) has contrasted what he calls “the relationship between the well-ordered world of Band membership as envisaged by the *Indian Act* and the demographic realities of the Treaty 8 area.” The demographic and social reality was that people moved around a lot and did not necessarily stay in the vicinity of specific posts. If the treaty had been negotiated five years earlier or five years later, the configuration of people on each band list would have differed. The way the Indian Agents dealt with such changes after the fact was to remove those individuals from the pay lists of their original bands and add them to the pay lists of the bands in the land where they were now living. Reddekopp (1994) pointed to many such changes, and I saw them when I had an opportunity to review Treaty No. 8 pay lists from the Northwest Territories as well as the pay lists for the two Indian Bands at Fort Chipewyan. For example, Isadore Simpson was originally on a band list at Fort McMurray (presumably the Cree-Chipewyan Band), but he was living in the Peace River region by the time Wood Buffalo Park was created in 1922. In 1930, he was formally transferred to the Chipewyan Band. In 1934, he became one of the band’s two headmen, representing the Chipewyans from the band who lived in the south part of the park (LAC RG10 Treaty Pay Lists). By permitting these inter-band transfers, the Department of Indian Affairs was recognizing the reality that people moved to lands other than those they had used earlier; band territories were not fixed.

Useful evidence for such movements in the 20th century exists in the oral traditions about past and present land use documented in six Traditional Land Use Studies commissioned by the

Mikisew Cree First Nation, discussed and assessed by Peter Douglas Elias (2010). It is directly relevant to a discussion of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation members because many of the Mikisew Cree members were Chipewyan culturally, members of the Chipewyan Band who lived in Wood Buffalo National Park and who did not become part of the Cree Band until 1946. At least initially, the shift in band affiliation was strictly a legal development; those Chipewyans did not suddenly assume a Cree identity. I identified several people who were interviewed for these land use studies as having Chipewyan backgrounds, based on their surnames and my personal knowledge. The discussion that follows outlines some of this information, drawn from the Mikisew Cree First Nation Traditional Land Study that was done for the Total Joslyn North Mine Project by the Calliou Group (2009), one of the projects reviewed by Elias. The data collected from interviews done for this study were added to the land use data from the other studies to construct maps showing collective land use by people born in the decades 1920, 1930, 1940, 1950, 1960, and 1970. These maps were presented in Elias' report. He proposed that people would normally begin serious land use in the second decade of life, in their teens, so these maps show collective land uses from the 1930s to today. It is not surprising, but expected, for Elias' map 7 to show heavy land use within Wood Buffalo National Park, especially oriented to the rivers, and in the area surrounding the west end of Lake Athabasca, much of which was the resource-rich Peace-Athabasca Delta.

Figures 3 and 4 in Elias' report were drawn from that collective body of data to focus on land uses from the Birch River and mouth of the Athabasca River to the south. Figure 3 shows information about travel routes taken from the Calliou Study and the PAC Team Study. Figure 4 shows landscape use south of Wood Buffalo National Park.

Much evidence exists for the great water highway and traditional use corridor that was

and still is the Athabasca River. It can be found in reports done for Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and Mikisew Cree First Nation and in a recent report prepared for both First Nations, “As Long as the Rivers Flow. Athabasca River Knowledge, Use and Change” (Candler *et al.* 2010). There is year-to-year evidence in the Chipewyan Band treaty pay lists, which show that band members were often paid at other locations, especially Fort McKay, Fort McMurray, Fort Fitzgerald, and Fort Smith (LAC Treaty Pay Lists). There were several Chipewyan settlements along the Athabasca River: Jackfish (Richardson) Lake, Poplar Point, Point Brûlé, Lobstick Point, and Little Red River (about 35 miles north of Fort McMurray).⁸⁷ Some of these settlements later became part of Chipewyan Band (now, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation) reserve lands. Most of the people who were interviewed for both sets of projects spoke about the historic and on-going importance of the Athabasca River for travel, hunting, fishing, and gathering. The river was a way to access lands both west and east. However, with the expansion of industrial projects, participants in the Calliou study also spoke about how they have had to travel further inland to hunt, due to a shortage of game close to the river, a decline in the quality of the remaining resources, and their fear of “diseased or polluted resources” (Calliou Group 2009:38). A further complication today is that many areas people used in the past are leased areas that may restrict access. The Athabasca River was identified as an important corridor that “should be protected from further industrial development,” but “it may already be too late” (Roy Campbell, *ibid.*:36).⁸⁸

⁸⁷The settlement of Embarras was also located on the Athabasca River, but it was mainly a Cree settlement.

⁸⁸Chipewyans have always considered themselves to enjoy a close relationship to caribou and wolves, symbolically as well as behaviorally. Such statements about it being “too late” for Aboriginal people to be able to continue to use these lands resonates with fears about the future

An “Integrated Knowledge and Land Use Report and Assessment for Shell Canada’s Proposed Jackpine Mine Expansion and Pierre River Mine” (Candler *et al.* 2011) provides information about Athabasca Chipewyan land uses west and east of the Athabasca River based on studies and interviews conducted in 2002, 2007, 2008, and 2010 (Candler *et al.* 2011:40-42). The report contains a series of maps that extend the information provided by the Mikisew Cree studies about land use by the collective body of Chipewyans and Crees.

The Calliou study identified two other major harvesting corridors that was and is important to both Chipewyans and Crees: one is the corridor from Fort MacKay westward to Namur and Gardiner Lakes, which includes the important Ells River. The second is the corridor east from the Athabasca River to Marguerite River Wildlife Provincial Park. Figures 5 and 6 shows the collective information from all studies about land use by Mikisew Cree First Nations people in these areas, as far north as the Birch River; this region is traditionally Chipewyan territory and is part of the Athabasca Chipewyan Cultural Protection Areas. Elias’ maps 8 and 9 provide greater detail (Elias 2010:29, 30), which is supported and enhanced by the study, “As Long As the Rivers Flow” (Candler *et al.* 2010). All studies done for the Athabasca Chipewyan and Mikisew Cree First Nations show that their members continue to use extensive areas on both sides of the river for hunting, fishing, and gathering, although only people with Registered Fur Management Areas are allowed to trap, and only in those specific areas (Govt. of Alberta 2010a). They are all concerned about increased difficulties they face in finding or accessing areas for hunting, fishing, and gathering. They express the same fears about declining quality and quality of resources, including medicinal plants. There are at least three kinds of problems

of the caribou and the government plan to kill wolves in caribou ranges.

with access: some areas are restricted by fences and gates, others are so distant that they take a long time to reach, and still others can no longer be reached due to low water levels. A fourth problem with access relates to fears by Aboriginal people for their own safety when they are in the bush, as a growing non-Aboriginal population in the Fort McMurray region goes hunting in lands now available to four-wheel drive vehicles, quads, and snowmachines by roads and survey lines built to support industrial expansion. I have heard some First Nations members talk about how they avoid some areas for this reason. They are also worried for the integrity of burial sites that are distributed throughout the entire area as non-Aboriginal people move across the land and the industrial footprint increases.⁸⁹ Yet these lands south and east of Wood Buffalo National Park are not diminishing in importance for the Athabasca Chipewyan or Mikisew Cree First Nations. Instead, they are becoming more important, as many First Nation members now live at Fort McMurray and Fort MacKay and are still looking to use the resources of the land for food, medicines, and spiritual reasons. The land is important culturally and spiritually in that it continues to connect First Nations members to the land and to one another.

7. 20th Century Restrictions Imposed on the Traditional Lands and Land-based Activities of the Chipewyan Band/Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation

The *extent* of the traditional lands of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation has been obfuscated by a series of events that occurred in the 20th century, especially the creation of

⁸⁹Burial sites may be marked by grave markers, fences, and items left by mourners and family members. I have heard accounts by First Nations people in Fort Chipewyan about pilfering by Non-Aboriginal people as they encounter Aboriginal occupation sites on the land and have seen what I considered to be evidence of grave-robbing in the Arctic by a highly-placed provincial government official. It happens.

Wood Buffalo National Park in the 1920s, the setting aside of lands for a Chipewyan reserve in the 1930s, the creation of a system of registered trap lines in the 1940s, and more broadly, the expansion by federal and provincial governments of an overall and increasingly complex regime of regulation of land-based resources. It has also been complicated by the transfer of a significant proportion - about 40 per cent - of Chipewyan Band members - to the Cree Band in 1946. Collectively, these events represent a century of progressive dispossession from their traditional lands, sanctioned and/or mandated by federal and provincial governments. The *nature* of those lands and the resources they contain have been harmed by activities of White trappers in the 1920s and 1930s, by some former policies of Wood Buffalo National Park, by the W.A.C. Bennett Dam in 1968 and the years that followed, by industrial expansion and pollution since the 1970s, and arguably by modern global warming.⁹⁰ The beginnings of these events are outlined in *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788-1920s* (2010:chps. 5, 9). The later sequence and impacts of these events (excluding recent industrial expansion) are detailed in my Ph.D. thesis, in an article published in *Arctic* in 1992, and in two unpublished works currently in preparation: a paper on controlled burning and a second book that takes Fort Chipewyan history to the 1970s (McCormack 1984; 1992; 2007; n.d.a).

The single event that made these events possible and opened the door to new and competing economic activities in northern Alberta was the signing of Treaty No. 8 by First Nations people (then known solely as “Indians”) with representatives of the federal government in 1899 (see McCormack 2010:chp. 8). Before the treaty, the federal government was unsure about the extent of its authority in lands not yet ceded by Aboriginal occupants. As late as 1898,

⁹⁰ Reliable data on the local impact of global warming are unavailable. Whether or not global warming is in fact affecting the region is a debated issue.

following the first Northwest Mounted Police patrol into the north, Indian Commissioner A. E. Forget acknowledged that the federal government still exercised only “some measure of authority” in the region (Forget to J. D. McLean, Sec. DIA, 12 Jan. 1898, LAC RG 10 v. 3848).

After the treaty was made, the government treated the lands involved as fully under Canadian sovereignty, which greatly exaggerated Canadian control at the beginning of the 20th century but would eventually become the northern reality. In 1905, the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were created, with jurisdiction over wildlife but not over other lands and resources.⁹¹ Although the federal government retained jurisdiction over status Indians, confusion or grey areas existed as to the extent of provincial authority vis-à-vis wildlife with regard to status Indian trappers (McCormack 2010:216-221).⁹² Both the federal and provincial governments created systems of regulations that restricted and constrained Chipewyan and Cree hunting and trapping practices and land use practices. Key developments are summarized in this section.

In the 20th century, the first major interference with Aboriginal access to their resource base was Section 28 of the Alberta *Game Act*, which prohibited the killing of beaver and several other species (McCormack 2010:219).⁹³ When provincial officials sought to enforce this section

⁹¹For many years, the Province of Alberta exercised this jurisdiction through its Department of Agriculture.

⁹²Although the federal government was bound by the treaties and the *Indian Act*, it appears that no serious thought was given to jurisdictional issues regarding status Indians and treaty promises.

⁹³The *Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act* of 1894 (S.C. 1894 [57-58 Vict.] c. 31) had prohibited hunting bison, although it was not enforced until NWMP officers began to make northern patrols. None of its other provisions seem to have been enforced locally. Aboriginal people believed that when bison populations increased, hunting bison would again be allowed, but that has never happened in Wood Buffalo National Park. Recently, the prevalence

in the Fort Chipewyan region, the First Nations there interpreted it as a violation of the treaty. It contributed to “destitution” and outright starvation in the Fort Chipewyan region (McCormack 2010:219, 252-3). Chief Alexandre Lavolette of the Chipewyan Band challenged this law in 1912 by breaking the law. He was fined a nominal amount of one dollar and refused to pay the fine for a very long time. He followed up on 2 January 1913 with a written letter of protest to the Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs. The reply from Ottawa was that while the Indians had to follow the provincial regulations - actually not a clear-cut matter at that time - they were nevertheless allowed to kill beaver for food, a weak response that did not address the fundamental issue over treaty raised by the chief (McCormack 2010:253-4).

Other restrictions were imposed by the federal government at about the same time. They included fires prevention measures to protect timber resources, which eventually ended the practice of controlled burning; a continued prohibition on hunting bison and the beginnings of a bison warden service; and the international Migratory Birds Convention Act of 1916 (McCormack 2010:chp. 9).

Wood Buffalo National Park

Wood Buffalo (National) Park was created in two steps, in 1922 and 1926. The impetus for the park was the invasion of northeast Alberta and other northern areas by White trappers after World War I. Fur prices soared at the same time as a post-war depression in prairie

of disease in park herds and the likelihood of neighboring bison carrying disease outside the park has led the Province of Alberta to introduce a measure to control disease by allowing uncontrolled hunting of bison outside a specific bison management zone in northwest Alberta. These bison are not considered to be “wildlife” in the Alberta *Wildlife Act* (Govt. of Alberta 2011a:8; Mitchell and Gates 2002:8, 9).

agriculture occurred. Many of the White trappers were immigrant homesteaders, who were hoping quite literally to capitalize on the fur boom, to help support their farms and families located elsewhere. They left their families behind when they went trapping in the north to make as much money as they could. In short, they operated as capitalists, even though they were trapping. On the surface, it might appear that they were living off the land much as Aboriginal people were, but this appearance was deceptive. They invested in the tools of production, especially traps, and have been described as mining the land for fur, with little or no regard for conservation. They were unconcerned about whether or not they would leave behind any animals, and they either disregarded or tried to intimidate the Aboriginal people already living in the north. Chipewyans remember that the White trappers violated game laws and sometimes even removed traps set by Aboriginal trappers (ACFN 2003a:63). White trappers did not go to areas no one was using but set up their trap lines in the most productive fur regions they could find, which were the same regions used by Aboriginal hunters and trappers. In the eyes of local Aboriginal people, they were trespassers (*ibid.*). Some White trappers were reported to have been very aggressive in trying to prevent Aboriginal people from operating on lands that White trappers now considered to be “theirs.” No restrictions were placed on their activities by the provincial government. It was culturally very difficult for local Aboriginal people to oppose them directly, and they were mindful that when they took treaty they had promised to live peacefully with newcomers (McCormack 1984:chp. 4; 1992:369). However, the arrival of White trappers led to on-going protests by members of both First Nations, channeled through their Indian Agent.⁹⁴

⁹⁴At the same time that White trappers began to enter the region, so too did several Métis families from the Lac La Biche region. While Chipewyans initially objected to their presence,

The federal government was worried that these White trappers would poach bison, and it finally decided to create Wood Buffalo Park in 1922 in lands north of the Peace River, to provide protection for the last surviving wild bison in North America (Figure 7). Although the federal government would have preferred forcing all people out of the park, Treaty No. 8 Indians were allowed to remain, but all other people were forced to leave, including mixed-ancestry people who were not First Nations (i.e., came under the treaty and were on the Indian Register) but who may have had a long history of use in that region. For a brief period, any Treaty No. 8 Indian was allowed to enter the park as a user (McCormack 1984:chp. 4; 1992:368).

The following year, the federal government began to import plains bison from the Wainwright Bison Park to what it considered to be relatively empty bison lands in Wood Buffalo Park. This decision was a political one, made over the objections of biologists. When the bison moved outside the park boundaries, the federal government expanded the park, annexing land south of the Peace River in 1926 (Figure 7). A different access rule was used, presumably responding to pressure from residents of the settlement of Fort Chipewyan, who lived on the edge of the new park and used those lands, but mostly did not have treaty status. It allowed anyone who was in the “new” park or “annex” in 1926 to remain thereafter, which included treaty Indians, Métis, and White trappers. If someone was not resident in the new park in 1926, even if he had used the park the previous year or his family had a history of park use,

these Métis were operating by means of a fur trade mode of production, they established permanent residences with their families that were basically local bands, they began to marry into the local Indian bands, and eventually they were integrated into the social formation of the community. They never posed the same threat to the resource base that White trappers did (see McCormack 1984:108-111).

he could not gain entry to the park (McCormack 1984:chp. 4; 1992:369-370). Women's access was governed by their fathers or husbands; they were not allowed to hold park permits in their own names unless they were holding them on behalf of a son (i.e., a future trapper).

Virtually all the Crees on the Fort Chipewyan Cree Band list must have been in the park at this time, because they were allowed to continue in the park. However, the Chipewyan Band membership was divided in half: approximately half of its members were living in the park, and they were therefore allowed to stay in the park. They were the Chipewyans with settlements at Birch River and on the Peace River. The other half - those living at places such as Old Fort and settlements along the Athabasca River - were denied access to park lands in the future.⁹⁵ Thus, the creation of the park divided the Chipewyan Band into two segments, which I call the park Chipewyan and the delta Chipewyan, that henceforth would face different regulatory systems and different social, economic, and political pressures. As a direct result, in 1946 the Chipewyan Band membership would lose about 40 per cent of its members, who joined the Cree Band in that year, generating a new regional dynamic between the two First Nations (McCormack 1989).

⁹⁵There are strongly-held beliefs in Fort Chipewyan that when the park was created, one of two things happened to the Chipewyans living in the area of the park. One belief is that all Chipewyans were forced to leave the park; the other is that all Chipewyans were forced to become Cree when the park was created (a version of this story can be found in Candler *et al.* 2011:29). The first belief probably relates to the fact that many Chipewyans were not allowed to enter the park after 1926; the second, to the fact that the decision to transfer band members from the Chipewyan Band to the Cree Band in 1946 seems to have been made by the Indian Agent and the two chiefs, with the involvement of local Oblate priest Father Picard. The chiefs presumably consulted at least their headmen and some respected members of their respective bands, but possibly not widely. In Fort Chipewyan, knowledge about this transfer is marked by its absence. Even local people whose band membership had been changed seemed unaware of what had happened. My impression has been that the change was done quietly; if so, that was probably because it had serious implications for strategizing by the chiefs and the Indian Agent for a reserve within park boundaries.

This important provision for access to park lands meant that people in the park, including Chipewyans, were largely protected from the exploitation of the resource base by White trappers outside the park. There is some evidence to show that annual incomes of people within the park were markedly better than those outside the park. Given the climate of intense competition by White trappers for furs and meat, the park boundary was a device that encouraged park users to restrict their land uses to the park lands. Despite this situation, Aboriginal people from the park still traveled south across the Birch Mountain, and there were some Aboriginal people from the south of Birch Mountain who entered the park, albeit illegally.

Chipewyans outside the park still considered lands within the park to be part of their traditional lands, and they continued to ask for access to those lands, which would have afforded them some economic assistance from the economic competition posed by White trappers. A test application was made in 1928 by Jonas Laviolette, the new chief of the Chipewyan Band. He was refused a park permit, presumably because his name did not appear on a list of treaty Indians eligible for park permits that had been prepared for the park by the Department of Indian Affairs. He applied again in December, 1932. Park Warden Mike Dempsey expressed his fears:

There is no doubt that at Richadson [*sic*] Lake [Jackfish Lake] where Jonas Lavoilette [*sic*] lives there are a large number of treaty indians who are in the same position as Mr. Laviolette as to having at some time trapped or hunted in the areas which is now the park, whose applications would follow closely upon the granting of a permit to Jonas Laviolette [letter from M. J. Dempsey to J. Milner, 1 March 1933, LAC RG 85 v. 1213 file 400-2-3 pt. 2, in McCormack 1984:190].

Another applicant, also refused, was Isadore/Isidore Voyageur, who wrote: "I was a small child when my parents died and I have lived at Jackfish Lake with different people. Fur is scarce over there and I am now old enough to look after myself." His uncle, Fred (Pedlic) Takaro, a man with park privileges, was one of his references (LAC RG 85 v. 845 file 7744 pt. 1, in

McCormack 1984:191). Isidore was baptized in 1910, which means that he was only about 16 years old when the new park was created (McCormack n.d.b). He became Chipewyan by customary adoption and was later transferred to the Chipewyan Band list. Today Voyageurs are still members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and have a firm Chipewyan identity, despite their Cree origins.

A man could not become eligible for a park permit through marriage to a woman who was herself in a park family, although marriage was a traditional means of establishing a tie with the spouse's band, and in the Chipewyan culture the husband was normally expected to live with his wife's family, at least at the beginning of a marriage. The park access rule meant that such a marriage would force the wife, even if she were very young, to leave the park in order to live with her husband (and his family), denying her the security of being surrounded by her own close relatives as a new wife and new mother. As a result, women in the park may have been reluctant to marry men without permits, and such men would not have been preferred sons-in-law, because they could not fulfill their customary duties to their wives' families. In short, the park's access rule severed the usual marriage universe of the Chipewyan Band, while at the same time it contributed to closer ties between Chipewyans and Crees in the park, who now shared common interests (McCormack 1984:192; see 1989).

The exclusion of approximately half of the members of the Chipewyan Band from the park meant that over time they became increasingly impoverished, due to the heavy competition they faced from White trappers throughout the 1920s and 1930s. Their economic difficulties were not eased by the eventual provision of a series of small reserves, with the biggest one in

the Athabasca Delta.⁹⁶

The Chipewyan Reserves

The arrival of the White trappers led to the first Chipewyan and Cree requests for reserves. As Indian Agent Gerald Card explained the circumstances:

...I wish to report that at the council, or pow wow, preceding treaty [i.e., the paying of treaty annuities], on the 23rd of June [1922], the chief, headmen and Indians brought before me a fact, of which I was previously cognizant, that a serious encroachment had be[en] made on their main trapping and hunting grounds, by a rather poor type of white man, a considerable number of them are reported to be Americans and people of foreign extraction. The influx is a possible [*sic*] result of unemployment and the general economic conditions “outside”. These men got together money enough to get to the end of the steel, at McMurray, and float down the river until they come to a location among the Indians that suits them, put up a log shack, and begin their operations, without any apparent regard to the prior rights of the Indians. The latter sought my advice, and I told them, that, in my opinion, the only effective way to protect their interests would be to apply for a hunting and trapping Reserve in that district in which they have their houses and have always lived [Card to DIA, 5 July 1922, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1].

Card called these newcomers “trespassers” and wanted them to be prosecuted by the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. “I say the R.C.M.P. because the Alberta Provincial Police seem to lack interest in matters pertaining to Indians” (*ibid.*).

Card wrote that a request was made by the approximately 300 members of the Cree Band and “...some 50 members of the Chipewyan Band, living at the mouth of Birch River” (*ibid.*). It seems that the two different groups were asking for the same broad area as a reserve, which makes sense, because they were both using the same broad land base. Card proposed providing a much larger area than allowed for by the treaty, because it was mostly “...swamp and marsh

⁹⁶When I first went to Fort Chipewyan in 1968, Chipewyans, but not Crees, were pointed out to me as being very poor. That means that the impoverishment that began in the 1920s had not abated 40 years later, despite having reserves.

ground, not suitable for farming or grazing” (*ibid.*). He called it a “trapping” reserve and attached a map that contrasted the two amounts of land.

Card also received a written request, dated 1 July 1922, from the chiefs and headmen of both bands for a “hunting reservation, according to the size of the population of the two tribes at the present time.” They specified the land that it should include: “From the old Fort on the Athabasca River, to Jack Fish Creek, on the Peace River, down to the Junction of the Peace and Athabasca River, from there to Big Bay on the north shore of Athabasca Lake, and across the Lake to the south shore, and up to the boundary, and back to the old Fort” (LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1). As with the other request, the asked-for land included areas they were using in Alberta (but not land they used in Saskatchewan), but it far exceeded what had been promised by Treaty No. 8. This request was also directly linked to the disruptive presence of White trappers: “There are lots of white men who are trapping during the closed Season, we want them stoped [sic]” (*ibid.*).

No action was forthcoming immediately from the federal government, although it appears that discussions about the reserve began. On 20 October 1924, Card wrote a letter to Charles Stewart, the Minister of the Interior, advising that he had spoken about setting aside “a hunting and trapping preserve” for the Chipewyan and Cree Bands at Lake Athabasca with Mr. Hoadley of the provincial Department of Agriculture, the department responsible for wildlife. Evidently Hoadley told him that the province had not yet received any formal request for a reserve or preserve. Card wisely recommended that steps should be taken prior to the “Natural Resources question” being decided (Card to Stewart, 20 Oct. 1924, LAC RG10 v. 6732 file 420-

2B).⁹⁷ He followed up with a letter to Duncan Campbell Scott, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, in which he explained that he had discussed the matter with Stewart, that he still recommended a larger area than allowed under the treaty, and that if nothing were done, "...in a short time it [the land] will be useless for this purpose and the Indians will have to be wholly maintained by the Government, if a Preserve for them is not set apart before the white trappers exterminate the game" (Card to Scott, 28 Oct. 1924, LAC RG10 v. 6732 file 420-2B).

Once the park was in place (by 1926), the federal government would no longer contemplate carving out a reserve from park lands. To government officials, the Chipewyans and Crees living in the park were considered to be beneficiaries of the protection provided by park boundaries and therefore no longer in need of reserves. As well, they still hoped that one day all Indians and others living in the park would be removed, in order to turn the park into a complete game sanctuary.

Outside the park it was a different matter. Chief Jonas Laviolette wrote directly to the Department of Indian Affairs on 20 Feb. 1927, bypassing Agent Card. He outlined the on-going plight of the Chipewyans who lacked park access. The existence of the park meant that White trappers who might have used park lands in the past now crowded onto the lands in the Athabasca Delta - the lands of the Chipewyans: "...they stop in my country and try to crowd my people out," wrote Chief Laviolette (Laviolette to DIA, 20 Feb. 1927, LAC RG10 v. 6732 file 420-2B). He wrote convincingly about their plight, about how "poor and miserable" they were.

⁹⁷Card was talking about the negotiations that would result in the transfer of other resources from the federal to the provincial government in 1930 through the *Natural Resources Transfer Agreements*. The federal government had a great deal of power over disposition of Crown lands in Alberta prior to this legislation, and it could have chosen to provide more lands than specified in the treaty. After, it would be forced to negotiate with the Government of Alberta, which was not always cooperative in providing land for reserve purposes.

He referred to letters of support provided by the Hudson's Bay Company and the Roman Catholic Mission. He ended with a plea: "This makes five letters I have had my interpreter [*sic*] write for me and I do hope and pray that this one is going to the right place..." (*ibid.*). On 27 June 1927, Card met with Chief Laviolette and the headmen. He reported that they had decided to ask the government to create reserves at Jackfish Lake (10 families), Big Point (5 families), Old Fort (3 families), and Poplar Point (13 families), in order to protect their homes - that is, the log cabin settlements - although they needed and wanted a much larger hunting and trapping reserve, which they considered a separate issue.⁹⁸ "They are asking for the former first as they feel that, it being a Treaty obligation, the Provincial Government cannot rightly object, nor delay action" (*ibid.*).

However, it was not until 1931 that H. W. Fairchild, a "surveys engineer," was dispatched to lay out a reserve (various correspondence, June 1931, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1). When Fairchild finally got down to the task, he added Point Brûlé (3 families) to the list of reserves (Fairchild to A. F. MacKenzie, Sec. DIA, 13 July 1931, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1). The land total allowed for reserves was 42,240 acres, based on the population of the entire Chipewyan Band in 1930, when 330 people were paid annuities (Report of H. W. Fairchild for Season 1931, 16 Dec. 1931, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1). That is, this figure included the Chipewyans who were resident in the park, who still wanted their own reserve

⁹⁸According to *Footprints on the Land*, Jackfish was the most important center, because it was "...located close to excellent fishing and is a convenient base for trapping muskrats during the spring," not just for those living there, but also for other Chipewyans from Old Fort Point and the Athabasca River who went there to carry out spring muskrat hunting (ACFN 2003a:73, 75). Old Fort Point was "...close to good fishing and waterfowl as well as being close to trap lines" (*ibid.*:73). However, each settlement would have had its own unique constellation of features and significance to the families who lived there.

within park boundaries. The land initially set aside for reserves 201A-G in Fairchild's report totaled 1,857 acres. The report was annotated by an unknown hand to add an additional 967 acres to 201G, the land at Poplar Point that was considered to be potentially valuable for agriculture, despite Fairchild's statement that "any additional lands to these two reserves [including 201F, Point Brûlé] would be practically valueless...."⁹⁹ Other hand-written annotations are difficult to decipher; by my arithmetic, 39,415.3 acres were still owing for reserve 201, whose boundaries were not yet fixed. Fairchild asked for more land than what was provided by treaty, which he considered to be too limited.

Requests for reserve land were complicated by the fact that John Baptiste Flett was acting - Fairchild said "posing" - as the headman of the people living at Point Brûlé and Poplar Point, which were about 75 miles up the river from Richardson Lake.¹⁰⁰ While Flett did not attend the meeting where the reserve land was discussed, Fairchild was told that he wanted "the entire acreage due these families being laid out at these points." Perhaps it was that consideration that resulted in the increased acreage assigned to Poplar Point.

⁹⁹The additional acreage was probably added by a bureaucrat in Ottawa. The same annotation appears on a letter by T. R. L. MacInnes, Acting Secretary, to John Harvie, the Deputy Minister of the Alberta Department of Lands, advising him of the lands selected for the Chipewyan reserves (12 Jan. 1932, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1).

¹⁰⁰Jean Baptiste Flett was living at Poplar Point at least as early as 1920, when his first wife, Marie Saturnin, died. He remarried in 1921 to Celine Laviolette, daughter to Alexandre Laviolette's and niece to Jonas Laviolette, so he was strategically placed vis-à-vis other leaders. His eldest daughter died at Point Brûlé in 1934 at the age of 30 years, which suggests that she and her husband continued to live nearby, which was a traditional Chipewyan residential choice. Other children born in the 1920s and 1930s also died at Point Brûlé before growing old enough to marry, which indicates that Flett himself also lived there, perhaps moving between the two locations (McCormack n.d.b). Flett should be considered a traditional Chipewyan leader of the local bands at these two locations. However, the *Indian Act* provisions for headmen did not allow every leader to be named a formal headman.

Another complication concerned the proposal for reserve lands at Big Point. In a memorandum of 14 November 1932, Fairchild wrote:

I am informed that some of the half breeds at Big Point own a few head of cattle and depend upon the lands between the above mentioned channels for hay [“the Easterly boat channel...and the shallow channel”?]. In view of this fact these lands should not be included in the reserve as there [are] not other hay lands within reach of these half breeds as the adjoining lands to the east are ranges of sand hills covered with small Jack pine and brule [LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1].

While Chipewyans had a long history of residency at Big Point, they were not given priority in the selection of their reserve lands over the recently-arrived Métis from Lac La Biche. In the end, the Chipewyan abandoned Big Point as a place to live, even though they developed social ties with the Métis who settled there.

Table 4. Proposed Chipewyan Reserves, 1931

(Report of H. W. Fairchild for Season 1931, 16 Dec. 1931, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1)

Number	Location	Acres	Occupation	Terrain
201	The Delta	Not decided; about 39,415		"...lies wholly within 'the Delta' and is without a doubt the best revenue producing tract in the North country, as it is a natural breeding ground for fur bearing animals and game birds...."
201A	Old Fort Point	54	5 houses & a cemetery	"The land is covered with jackpine, poplar and a few spruce; is of little value for farming purposes but the location affords good fishing."
201B	Unnamed	48	4 Indian houses & gardens	"...covered with small poplars, willows and jackpine. The soil is light and sandy but produces good garden roots and vegetables."
201C	Unnamed (Big Point?)	45	Former chief's house (Antoine Laviolette), several gardens, & a cemetery	"There is a poplar ridge running through this reserve...which affords good garden plots, the remainder being low lying swampy land."
201D	Unnamed	10.7	None	"...desired by the Indians for camping purposes, as it adjoins their summer fishing grounds. There is a narrow strip along the shore, wide enough for camping purposes, the remainder being low and swampy."
201E	Unnamed	240	Present chief's house (Jonas Laviolette) & a cemetery	"There is good fishing at the mouth of the river where it flows into Richardson [Jackfish] Lake. ... The soil is light and sandy and is covered with jackpine and poplar, with swamps."

201F	Point Brule	190	4 houses	“...East of the Athabasca River, ...which includes some very fine spruce and birch timber. ... The soil is light and sandy and is principally jackpine ridges burnt over.”
201G	Poplar Point	2237 (initially, 1270)	5 families	“The central part...is sparsely covered with small poplars and affords some good hay. About 300 acres could be broken with little difficulty, the soil in this area being light clay and sandy loam.”

By 1935, the final selection of lands was still on-going. Apparently the province was willing for the Chipewyans to have a “somewhat larger area” for the reserve, because so much of the reserve was not only “marsh and reeds” but was “under water the greater part of the open season,” a circumstance not envisioned by Indian Affairs for reserves. H. W. McGill, the Deputy Superintendent General of Indian Affairs, still thought that the province was doing well in terms of the amount of land it would have to relinquish, and he reminded John Harvie, the Deputy Minister for the Department of Lands, that the Chipewyans could have elected to take their land in severalty, which would have been a substantially larger area (19 June 1935, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1).¹⁰¹

Yet another problem was identified in 1936: because much of the land was under water, trespass onto the reserve “...would be practically impossible to prove” (letter from H. W.

¹⁰¹In 1934, there were 362 people in the Chipewyan Band. That number entitled them to 70.4 square miles if the reserve was taken as land in common (based on 128 acres per person), or 90.5 square miles if taken in severalty (160 acres per person) (memo from Chief Surveyor to Dep. Supt. Gen. DIA, 3 July 1935, LAC RG10 v. 7778 file 27134-1).

McGill, Dep. Supt. Gen. DIA, to Minister C. C. Ross, Dept. of AB Lands and Mines, 4 Jan. 1937, DIAND 779/30-1, vol. 1). In 1940, Indian Agent P. W. Head at Fort Chipewyan wrote that “non-treaty trappers...claim they have full rights on the river banks, on the reserve side, for a distance of sixty six feet back from the top of the bank. Some have even built on this strip of land and claim that we cannot evict them” (Head to F. H. Peters, Survey Branch, Dept. Mines and Resources, Ottawa, 21 Aug. 1940, DIAND 779/30-1, vol. 1).

The reserves were finally confirmed by Orders in Council P.C. 1954-817, 3 June 1954, and P.C. 1954-900, 17 June 1954. It took more than 20 years of negotiations and surveys to reach this point.¹⁰² By this date serious damage to the land base and the Chipewyan economy had occurred, with virtually no protection provided by either government, and ironically trapping was also in decline in the region.

Registered Trapping Areas

The creation of registered trapping areas or trap lines was the next important step in restricting large blocks of traditional lands to Aboriginal residents by both the provincial and the federal governments. In 1940, the Province of Alberta introduced a system of registered trapping areas (McCormack 1984:260-264). While it was intended to foster conservation of fur and accommodate all the trappers using the land, White and Aboriginal alike, it did not reflect Aboriginal traditions of land use and management. The new registered trapping areas were set up as a kind of non-owned, individual property analogous to a lease of resources to an industry, but with no security of tenure. Only the person in whose name the line was registered, along

¹⁰²Documenting the full history of the creation of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation reserves is beyond the scope of this report and would require additional research.

with his partner or assistant, were allowed to trap fur bearing animals on that land. In theory, treaty Indians were allowed to hunt anywhere, but in reality hunting and trapping were activities that occurred in tandem during late fall and winter. That meant that the registered trapping areas erected some inadvertent boundaries to Chipewyan subsistence hunting.

The provincial regulations provided that people who had park privileges would not be eligible for trapping permits in non-park Alberta, nor could they become partners with Alberta registered trappers, even if they were close relatives. The process of registration is largely unknown, but in 1940 Bishop Breynat informed provincial Game Commissioner W. H.

Wallace:

When visiting Fort Chipewyan, I was surprised of [*sic*] the number of complaints made regarding the attribution of trap lines. It seems that your representative at that post [the Game Guardian] has perhaps favored too much some of his friends and this to the detriment of the Indians [letter to Wallace, 17 April 1940, Archives of the OMI].

His assessment was supported by a letter from Indian Agent P. W. Head at Fort Chipewyan, who wrote in August that “non-treaty trappers” were claiming some of the best trapping lands for their own (Head to F. H. Peters, Survey Branch, Dept. Mines and Resources, Ottawa, 21 Aug. 1940, DIAND 779/30-1, vol. 1). Although Wallace claimed that Breynat had been “...wrongly informed with regard to the issuance of permits for registered trap-lines in the Chipewyan area” and that the government “...is extremely anxious that these permits be issued in a fair and just manner...,” Breynat replied that his sources were reliable and a problem *did* exist (Wallace to Breynat, 24 April 1940; Breynat to Wallace, 11 May 1940, Archives of the OMI). Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation members recall that they suffered “...severe hardship as a result of the game regulations and the often biased enforcement of the regulations in favour of white trappers” (ACFN 2003a:67). Many non-Aboriginal trappers not resident in the region

obtained trapping areas, and they did not welcome Chipewyans on their areas to hunt, even though that was a right that Chipewyans retained through treaty.

The possibility of registered trapping areas in the park was first raised with Chipewyans and Crees in 1944. According to Dewey Soper, a biologist who assisted with the discussions, the Indian bands at Fitzgerald-Fort Smith, Fort Resolution, and Hay River were “definitely opposed,” but “Fifth Meridian and Chipewyan bands were, eventually, after much discussion, in favour of group trapping areas” (letter from J. Dewey Soper to J. Smart, Controller, Nat. Parks Bureau, 18 July 1945, LAC RG85 v. 1214 file 400-2-3 pt. 3). However, without knowing details of the discussions, which have not yet surfaced in archival documents or interviews I did with either Dewey Soper or Fort Chipewyan residents, it seems unlikely that the bands at Fort Chipewyan and Fifth Meridian were genuinely “in favour” of group trapping areas. They would have been especially troubled when the final division of land was made, because a large number of individual trap lines were carved out of the most productive area for hunting muskrats. Originally, it had been “verbally agreed that the Delta area would be left as a reserve open to all to hunt rats on...” (PAA Stewart 30 Jan. 1947), but park officials began to assign land as private lines to trappers mostly (though not entirely) resident in Fort Chipewyan itself (McCormack 1984:288-9). The total body of treaty Indians was divided into group trapping areas. While Indians did tell park officials where they wished their trapping areas to be located, it was clearly not a happy solution, and they continued to protest the imposition of this new system. At the June treaty meeting with the Cree Band in 1947, the Crees “...were very definite about not wanting group areas in the Park” (PAA Stewart 19, 23 June 1947). By this date, “Crees” included the Chipewyans who had been transferred to the Cree Band the previous year. These protests were futile, and on 17 September 1949, the park was officially divided into group and

individual trapping areas (McCormack 1984:289).

The introduction of registered trap lines in Alberta and its restrictive regulations, park policy for punishing violations of its wildlife regulations by cancelling the trapper's park licence, and the desire by Chipewyans and Crees in the park for their own reserve within the park were some of the circumstances that led the Chipewyans living in the park to transfer their membership to the Cree Band (see McCormack 1989; 1984:277-9). On 12 June 1944, the new Indian Agent Jack Stewart, formerly a park warden, reported that he met with the Cree Band, and "Part of the Chipewyan band was also here and they put in an application for a transfer to the Cree band" (PAA Stewart 12 June 1944). The transfer occurred in 1946, when it showed up on the treaty pay lists for both First Nations (LAC RG 10 Treaty Pay Lists).

Elaborating Land Use Regulations and the Introduction of New Industries

The fourth area of restrictions on Chipewyan land use is all-encompassing, the expanding regulatory regime for land-based resources enacted by both federal and provincial governments. These two governments developed elaborate systems of policies, laws, and regulations for access by Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people to the resources of northern Alberta. It is beyond the scope of this report to discuss them all (see McCormack 1984). Aboriginal people were never consulted about any of these initiatives, despite the assurance they had been given by the treaty commissioners that "only such laws as to hunting and fishing *as were in the interest of the Indians* and were found necessary in order to protect the fish and fur-bearing animals would be made, and that they would be as free to hunt and fish after the treaty as they would be if they never entered into it." They had also been assured "that the treaty would not lead to any forced interference with their mode of life" (Govt. of Canada 1966:6;

emphasis added). Chipewyans and Crees regularly protested measures to which they objected, but their objections seem never to have been considered seriously by senior officials.

These regulations allowed for, protected, and even encouraged new commercial industries. The first of these was commercial fishing, which was allowed in Lake Athabasca in the 1920s, depleting the lake's fish populations. At this time, fishing in Alberta was governed by federal regulations. After World War II, the federal government allowed and promoted three industries in Wood Buffalo National Park - commercial fishing, bison slaughters, and logging - in the interest of post-war "northern development," and secondarily to provide employment for local people. For the most part, these industries were opposed by Aboriginal people, who benefitted mostly, if at all, from short-term, poorly-paid employment (see McCormack 1984:chp. 7).¹⁰³

Industry was slower to come to northeastern Alberta outside park boundaries, despite a history of early hard-rock mining exploration and development on the Saskatchewan side of Lake Athabasca. There is a long history, not reviewed here, of attempts to develop an industry to extract oil from tar sands, now usually called oil sands. The first provincial oil sands policy was announced by the Government of Alberta in 1962, followed by the first plant in 1967, operated by the Sun Oil Company (later, Suncor). Syncrude Canada began production in 1978. The expansion in the number of companies and the geographic extent of their operations that are seen today has occurred within the past decade and a half (Syncrude Canada Ltd. 2010; Energy

¹⁰³Briefly, Aboriginal people in the park were worried that commercial fishing would devastate the fish stocks on which they relied, and they believed that they should be allowed to begin hunting bison themselves. While the lumber industry provided the most real benefits to local Aboriginal people, they eventually wanted to operate it themselves and garner all the economic benefits, something that never happened.

Resources Conservation Board 2011). These industries are now provincially and nationally important.

What is remarkable, when one juxtaposes the 20th century history of the region with the maps produced by the traditional land use studies, is that Chipewyans (and Crees) never stopped using their traditional lands, including the Birch Mountain region and lands both west and east of the Athabasca River. By the 1950s, people who lived in local bands in bush settlements in the park had begun to move to Fort Chipewyan for permanent residence (see McCormack 1984:chp. 8), yet hunting, fishing, gathering, and trapping continued to be important activities for both subsistence and income. Chipewyans living outside the park tended to relocate to Fort Chipewyan somewhat later, especially in the 1970s, with the difference in dates related to the proximity of their reserves to the town, the very existence of their reserves, and the erosion after 1968 of their ability to support themselves from those lands, due to the impacts of the Bennett Dam (see below). For both park and delta First Nations people, the Athabasca River remained an important route for travel to locations where they would access bush resources.

Aboriginal residents experienced a devastating blow to their resource base in 1968, which was the year that the W. A. C. Bennett Dam on the Peace River in British Columbia began to impound water for its massive reservoir. The loss of water and the subsequent pattern of water releases by the dam interrupted the traditional hydrological regime of the Peace-Athabasca Delta, which is affected by three rivers: the Peace, the Slave, and the Athabasca. Traditionally, these rivers flooded the low-lying lands and perched basins of the delta regularly enough that they maintained highly productive wetlands. The Peace-Athabasca Delta is one of the largest, inland freshwater deltas in the world. In 1982, the delta, which extends beyond the boundaries of Wood Buffalo National Park to include the lower Athabasca River Delta region,

and the Whooping Crane nesting site in Wood Buffalo National Park were formally recognized as Ramsar sites, which mark “Wetlands of International Importance” under the Ramsar Convention (Ramsar Convention n.d.; Parks Canada 2009). The following year, in 1983, Wood Buffalo National Park was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site, at that time only the eighth site in Canada to receive that designation (Parks Canada 2009; UNESCO 1992-2011b). The short “Statement of Significance” lists three broad reasons for this designation:

The great concentrations of migratory wildlife are of world importance and the rare and superlative natural phenomena include a large inland delta, salt plains and gypsum karst that are equally internationally significant.

Wood Buffalo is the most ecologically complete and largest example of the entire Great Plains-Boreal grassland ecosystem of North America....

Wood Buffalo contains the only breeding habitat in the world for the whooping crane, an endangered species brought back from the brink of extinction through careful management of the small number of breeding pairs in the park. The park’s size..., complete ecosystems and protection are essential for in-situ conservation of the whooping crane [UNESCO 1992-2011b].

Under the UNESCO World Heritage Convention, a designated site means that it is considered to be “part of the world heritage of mankind as a whole” and that its “deterioration or disappearance...constitutes a harmful impoverishment of the heritage of all the nations of the world” (UNESCO 1992-2011a).

Sadly, Wood Buffalo National Park and delta lands beyond park boundaries suffered considerable loss from the Bennett Dam, which put an end to regular spring flooding. Local people found their ability to travel by water greatly impeded, and the productive lands of the delta have dried and changed greatly, jeopardizing waterfowl, fish, muskrats, and other animals. Moose and bison benefitted, but only temporarily (McCormack 1984:491-494; Prentice *et al.* 1998). Despite concerns by some federal and Alberta officials about the deleterious impacts of

the Bennett Dam, there were no attempts to prevent the dam, and there seemed to be no political will by either the province or the federal government to address its socio-economic impacts on Aboriginal users. Park attempts to mitigate the hydrological problems were only partially successful and caused other problems in turn. Not only have the problems caused by the dam not disappeared or been resolved, there are now proposals for new dams on the Peace River and the Slave River. Meanwhile, there are disputes about how much water can be safely withdrawn from the Athabasca River for industrial purposes before the delta ecosystem will be harmed. Local Aboriginal people as well as Aboriginal people farther down-river are also worried about water pollution stemming from ever-increasing upriver industrial uses. An altered hydrological regime, reduced water levels, and pollution are all circumstances that could threaten the integrity of the Peace-Athabasca Delta.

In the local Athabasca Chipewyan tradition, the disappearance of muskrats due to the drying of the delta "...was the beginning of the end of trapping" (ACFN 2003a:85). It was after that time that people living in the bush settlements of Reserve 201 began to relocate to Fort Chipewyan; that is, in the 1970s and later. While they continued to hunt, fish, trap, and gather, wage labor became more important than it had been in the past (*ibid.*:86-7; see McCormack 1984:chp. 8). Increasingly, it was men who went to the bush, not families. The ways in which Athabasca Chipewyan talk about living in town make it clear that they do not consider this change to have been desirable or beneficial: the very important and traditional patterns of sharing have largely broken down, individual families are isolated, diets have deteriorated, new diseases have developed, and adults are no longer able to enjoy the same control over how their children are raised as they did in the past. They trace current social problems to town life (ACFN 2003a:88-9).

Most recently, the need for cash income by Aboriginal people living in Fort Chipewyan, combined with industry support for Aboriginal involvement in the oil sands industry as both labor force and entrepreneurs led many people from Fort Chipewyan to participate in fly-in, fly-out employment with Syncrude or to move to Fort McMurray or Fort MacKay for employment. That does not mean, however, that wage-earners abandoned the land-based activities of hunting, fishing, and gathering. People living in these southern centers now turned to lands in those areas to exercise their traditional treaty rights.

Steven High has written about Aboriginal wage labor in what he terms the “era of irrelevance,” by which he means the time after the decline of the fur trade and the rise of capitalist production, the situation that exists today in northern Alberta (1996:243). He claims that the Aboriginal person “...has sometimes appeared as a helpless victim of forces outside of his or her control” (*ibid.*:246), or as someone who either refuses or is unable to find wage labor. These perceptions reflect both common stereotypes about Aboriginal people and the lack of serious study of Aboriginal participation in capitalist economies. However, closer scrutiny has shown that Aboriginal people who became wage laborers did not necessarily abandon “...their traditional way of life” (*ibid.*:252). Many Aboriginal people continued to live by means of a mixed economy, albeit one that now emphasizes wage labor far more heavily than was the case when people lived in the bush and trapping was an important part of their income. High concludes that many Aboriginal people “...not only participated in the capitalist economy (as wage earners and independent producers)...but did so selectively in order to strengthen their traditional way of life” (*ibid.*:263). His analysis fits the situation of the Athabasca Chipewyan, who have survived a century of hardships and marginalization while striving throughout to be active participants, not passive victim. Today, they continue to emphasize the importance of

maintaining their own culture and values, while at taking advantage of new opportunities that they consider to be beneficial. That requires access to *both* their traditional territories and to employment.

8. Athabasca Chipewyan Population Growth and Relocation

An earlier part of this report discussed the various factors that led to the modern Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation. This section samples some of the demographic information available. When Treaty No. 8 was signed at Fort Chipewyan in 1899, 410 Chipewyans and 186 Crees entered into treaty (Govt. of Canada 1966:10). Additional people were added to the treaty pay lists in the years that followed. Despite large numbers of death from epidemic diseases in the years that followed for the first half of the 20th century, by 1940 the treaty pay lists had grown to 269 Chipewyans and 273 Crees (LAC RG10 Treaty Pay Lists). In 1946, the mass transfer of those Chipewyan members of the Chipewyan Band who were living in Wood Buffalo National Park to the Cree Band occurred. The Chipewyan Band dropped substantially in number as a result.

Aboriginal populations began to grow markedly all across Canada after World War II. In addition to natural increase, the size of the Chipewyan Band increased after 1985 due to Bill C-31, passed by the federal government to end the involuntary enfranchisement of Indian Status women who had married out of their bands. Not only did Bill C-31 end that practice, it also provided a means for bands to establish their own membership codes. In 1987, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation developed an “inclusive” membership code, which means that they welcomed back persons who had been forced to leave the band through involuntary enfranchisement of themselves or an ancestor. The size of the First Nation nearly doubled, from

about 300 to 600 persons. In the same year, the Chipewyan Band formally adopted the name Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, in line with a trend by other Status Indian bands to choose their own names (e-mail message from John Rigney, Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation office, 11 April 2011).¹⁰⁴

Statistics Canada reported that the Aboriginal population grew six times faster than the growth rate for the non-Aboriginal population of Canada for the years 1996-2006 (Statistics Canada 2009). In August, 2011, the population of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation was listed as 923. About 26 per cent (236 people) live in Fort Chipewyan itself, with only 12 people on the Chipewyan Reserve. The remainder live on a variety of other lands (e.g., other reserves, other forms of crown lands) (e-mail message from Nicole Nicholls, 26 Aug. 2011; Indian and Northern Affairs Canada 2011). There are 351 people of “employable working age,” defined as between 18 and 55 years, divided as follows: Fort Chipewyan, 121; Fort McMurray, 114; Fort MacKay, 12; Anzac, 1; Fort Smith, 33; Edmonton, 70 (e-mail message from Nicole Nicholls, 26 Aug. 2011).¹⁰⁵ These figures indicate that while wage labor is obviously an important reason for living at Fort McMurray or Fort MacKay, in the heart of the oil sands industries, a large number of Athabasca Chipewyans still wish to continue to hunt, fish, gather, and trap on their traditional lands, which are now more likely to be accessed from this southern area.

¹⁰⁴Within the larger Chipewyan or *Dene Sų́liné* community, the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation is known as *K'ái tailé Dene*, the Flat Willow or Delta Dene (ACFN 2003a:27, 45; also, e-mail message from John Rigney, ACFN office, 11 April 2011).

¹⁰⁵Figures for the total numbers of Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation members now resident in Fort Chipewyan, Fort McMurray, or Fort MacKay are lacking.

9. Maintaining Traditions: Passing on Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Values and Cultural Practices

People from Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and many other First Nations talk with great sadness about the loss of their traditional languages and other cultural practices. Much of the history of their involvement with Europeans (including Euro-Canadians after the sale of the Hudson's Bay Company territories in 1870) involved attempts by those Europeans to undermine Aboriginal practices and beliefs and replace them with those of Europeans, often through legally-enforced policies and programs.¹⁰⁶ This approach has been called assimilation, in that it was intended to allow Aboriginal people to be absorbed into the Canadian citizenry, which was populated largely by people of European ancestry. In northern Alberta, it was both facilitated and directed by processes of internal colonization, which involved the seizure of control over Aboriginal people and their lands by the federal government, which then established a formal system of colonial administration tailored to the "national" interest (see McCormack 2010:58-61). The provincial government played a similar role after its creation in 1905. The people who ran the institutions of the Canadian nation-state, supported by the citizens of Canada with European origins, believed that through colonization, they were "civilizing" Aboriginal people by reshaping "...their family lives, work habits, land ownership practices, and ways of handling conflicts" (Merry 1992:362).¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶Christian missionaries played a role in this process from the mid 19th century on, but until the 20th century they did not have the power of the Canadian nation-state behind them.

¹⁰⁷Much has been written about colonization, both external and internal (see McCormack 2010 for a discussion about internal colonization at Fort Chipewyan). Canadians should not think that their nation did not engage in this process, just because it is unpalatable to many of us today. First Nations were not allowed to vote until 1960, which meant that they could not participate politically in the process that created and supported the colonial structures to which

Today, much discourse in Fort Chipewyan, as in other Aboriginal communities, is highly critical and accusatory about damage caused by the local residential school. At the same time, it is important to remember that it was the federal and provincial governments that allowed and even facilitated competing land uses and undermined the traditional mixed economy to such an extent that it became difficult to impossible for people to continue living their former way of life on the land in the local bands. Ironically, in the 20th century it was often the missionaries who stood up for the rights of their Aboriginal parishioners.

People have struggled to balance their need for wage labor for livelihood with the loss of localized social communities that accompanied first the move from the bush settlements to Fort Chipewyan, and then the relocation of Fort Chipewyan residents to other centers, such as Fort McMurray and Edmonton. Although some information about local traditions is taught in the schools, the provincial curriculum still teaches what is basically a Euro-Canadian centered history that marginalizes Aboriginal people (see McCormack 2005). More and more, it falls to parents and grandparents to try to teach their children and grandchildren aspects of their traditional culture, but in non-traditional settings and in a compartmentalized manner.

In the past, such learning occurred easily and naturally, as children lived on the land with their families. Boys and girls, young men and women learned the basics of living on the land from family members. They went on hunting trips and were instructed in the proper ways to interact with animals, including the ones they killed. They learned how to tie and set nets; they learned how to make and set snares and traps, to prepare furs and hides, and to cut the meat; and

they were subjected. Although the 1970s saw the beginning of more substantial changes that led Aboriginal peoples to regain some measure of control over their lives, true de-colonization has not yet occurred for First Nations such as those at Fort Chipewyan, where First Nations must still fight over issues such as control of land and the way they wish to live their lives.

they learned about medicines. While they did these everyday things, they also learned physical landmarks and the stories associated with them, which are an important and culturally relevant way of talking about Chipewyan history. They learned how to “read” the land so that they could travel across it safely at all times of the year. They learned about animal behavior and ecosystem relationships by observing them firsthand. They learned oral traditions, both family stories and sacred stories, and they learned how to look for the manifestation of spiritual power. They learned important values, such as the critical importance of generosity and sharing and the theme of non-interference with another person’s decisions. An underlying pedagogical principle seemed to be that children should model themselves after capable people of the past. According to Chipewyan elder François Mandeville, “The old men and old women taught the children. ... It was thought that you should tell the children now about what people had done in the past. If they would act like those who were very capable, then these children could become like those earlier people” (Scollon 2009:199).¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Henry Sharp has explained that “each senior adult is a conduit for the aspirations and judgments of the dead into the lives and actions of the living” (2001:134). The land is implicated in this process. It is “...the living memory of all that has gone before in the living experience of each Dene who sojourns here as well as being the received memory of the stories and experiences of each of those known to them *and* the setting of all that is to come to and for The People” (*ibid.*:41). The so-called “past” is not over and forgotten; knowledge of their history continues to lead Athabasca Chipewyan today and into the future. When people talk about teaching their traditions today, they often speak about hunting,

¹⁰⁸Mandeville talked about education in Fort Chipewyan to linguist Fang-kuei Li in 1928. Ron Scollon did a new translation of the original text. See Scollon (2009:199-294) for the entire text about education.

but “hunting” is also a metaphor for a much bigger cultural package - “place-based cultural knowledge” - that continues to be very important (see ACFN 2010:27).

This knowledge is closely related to their traditional territories; it is not transferable to other parts of the northern forests. In fact, the very government regulatory systems that alienated Chipewyans from much of their traditional territory have over time contributed to a diminished ability by Chipewyans to learn about new lands by personal experience, the most important source of this knowledge. When people no longer use lands (or no longer are allowed to use them), eventually even the oral traditions may not be adequate to maintain some measure of knowledge about them. Thus, on-going land use is critical to the transmission of the historic stories, to understanding the relationship of these stories to specific places, and to maintaining the spiritual relationships between people and the land. In turn, these are all crucial for the maintenance of Chipewyan identity and culture. Thus, when land-based knowledge is lost without being replaced by equivalent new knowledge, it amounts to a loss of critical aspects of Chipewyan identity and culture.

While some teaching through oral traditions still occurs in the home, parents and their children face the same barrage of influences as do children elsewhere in Canada, from that of their peers to influences from television and the Internet. That makes time spent on the land especially precious, because it may be the only way in which First Nation members can help their children learn the values of their Chipewyan culture. Today, teaching culture is done deliberately, on weekends and special trips. Yet both Chipewyans and Crees have reported that it is hard to take a child into the bush if it involves traveling much distance and that they are worried about doing so if the food or water they ate there might be tainted (Candler *et al.* 2011; Calliou Group 2009). I have heard the same fears expressed many times from members of both

First Nations members, who are concerned about the safety of taking children into the bush even in the vicinity of Fort Chipewyan itself. In short, the right to transmit their culture to their children relies not only on access to their traditional lands, but also on knowing that those lands are safe for travel and use.

10. Competing for Territory

Philip Morris and Gail Fondahl have discussed how social space is altered as societies with different approaches to space and to territory come together. “Multiple influences on the production of social space will produce a hybrid space - in the sense that it is the combination of influences, and also in the sense that it is something new created from their interaction” (2002:109). In northeast Alberta, lands that were “Aboriginal space” were converted over time into what Morris and Fondahl call “government space” by a series of building blocks: land surveys, a treaty that promised reserves, the creation of Wood Buffalo National Park, and the development of a restrictive regulatory system, one component of which was the registered trap line system. Later, leases of rights to companies to exploit oil and gas and forestry resources continued this process.

It is ironic that in the end, registered trap lines came to be seen by most First Nations as lands that were/are still theirs, even though they enjoyed/enjoy no true “ownership,” only use rights.¹⁰⁹ But as Elizabeth Lacorde pointed out, having a trap line is useless for trapping if no animals remain there due to industrial disturbance (Calliou Group 2009:45).

Hugh Brody (1981) has written about how the Aboriginal people of northeastern British

¹⁰⁹Such use rights have always been considered secondary compared to rights accorded incoming industries such as oil sands or logging companies.

Columbia tended to move away from the people who moved onto their traditional lands and competed with them for resources. The First Nations who entered into Treaty No. 8 agreed to share their land with newcomers. They could work around a few blocks of land removed from the totality of their traditional lands. Blanketing an entire landscape with industrial lands is a different matter entirely, a kind of industrial clearcutting.¹¹⁰ As industries in northeast Alberta have expanded their collective “footprint” and built roads to access oil, gas, forestry, and other resources, they have opened the door to additional people moving onto even those lands that First Nations have managed to preserve for their own uses. If this expansion continues unabated, they will run out of lands to which they can move.

There is no evidence that these changes will or even can be compensated for by the provision of wage labor. Government officials have assumed for many years that at some point in the future Aboriginal people will no longer support themselves by “primitive” land-based activities such as hunting and trapping (e.g., Asch and Smith 1993). That does not mean that Aboriginal people hold the same belief about their own future or are willing to abandon activities at their heart of their self-identity as a people. The reality in the north is that even today, there are many people to whom hunting and other land-based activities are important parts of their livelihood and values. Hunting and fishing still provides high-quality food in addition to other cultural and spiritual benefits. People still gather and use medicinal plants. The members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation have not given up on the bush, even though their persistent and extensive uses of it today are not easily seen by outsiders.

¹¹⁰Current maps showing the extent of industrial activity in northeast Alberta show that the land is covered by a mosaic pattern of claims and leases for petroleum, natural gas, forestry, bitumen, coal, and minerals.

Nevertheless, the default position by governments setting policies for industrial expansion across much of northern Canada is that it is inevitable that northern hunters will or must one day stop hunting and move fully into a capitalist mode of production as wage laborers or business owners.¹¹¹

J. E. Windsor and J. A. McVey (2005) have written a troubling account about the Cheslatta T'En, or Carrier, of British Columbia, who were displaced by the Bennett Dam when their traditional lands were destroyed by flooding to create the reservoir. In the process, they were treated differently from Euro-Canadians in terms of the notification and financial compensation they received, their intact economy was destroyed, their graveyards were damaged and even destroyed, and overall they suffered greatly as a result of the forced relocation. Before, they were largely self-sufficient hunters and trappers; after, they were forced to rely on social assistance and experienced profound social dysfunction. Windsor and McVey concluded (2005:158):

The displacement of the Cheslatta was, we believe, the result of a *lack* of sense of place of the part of Alcan, the federal and provincial governments and their agents. Additionally, the displacement of the Cheslatta and especially the relative ease with which it was effected (as well as the seeming unwillingness of governments - especially the federal government - even to accept that harm has been done), can be seen as a result of power imbalances in society and differing attitudes as to what constitutes progress. The Canadian government and its corporate supporters have always been much better at dam construction than at understanding the consequences of such projects.

Federal and provincial governments of Canada expect that the labor force is willing to be mobile. The federal government has policies to bring in temporary workers from other parts of the world, and even within Canada people will move great distances to look for work or begin

¹¹¹Notably, in the oil sands area First Nations are expected only to engage in businesses that are auxiliaries to the major corporations. They are not expected to own oil sands projects.

new jobs. Clearly the concept of rootedness has little relevance for managers of oil sands projects who utilize a highly mobile labor force, with people coming from as far away as Newfoundland and even from international locations for employment. At best, these managers may wish to create a sense of place for these workers in Fort McMurray or Fort MacKay itself. But as other single-industry towns have experienced, once the industry closes, the workers and their families are expected to move elsewhere, as evidenced by the shutting down of Uranium City in northern Saskatchewan after the uranium mines closed in the early 1980s.

Such mobility of labor has been part of the process of modernity, and one consequence has been to dismantle the kinds of social communities that have been characteristic of Fort Chipewyan and its outlying settlements. As Arturo Escobar has said, "...for some, placelessness has become the essential feature of the modern condition, and a very acute and painful one in many senses..." (2001:140). The Cheslatta T'En would probably agree. Escobar connects a lack of place to globalization: "the transnational flows of people, media, and commodities characteristic of global capitalism mean that culture and place become increasingly deterritorialized" (*ibid.*:146).

The processes of globalization are directly challenged today by many indigenous peoples. Not only do they *not* want to become placeless, they want "...to reverse long histories and geographies of dispossession. They are struggling for differential geographies: that is, the right to make their own places, rather than have them made for them" (Castree 2004:136). They want to reclaim what has been taken away from them, which usually includes at least some measure of renewed control over their traditional lands. Noel Castree points out that while governments have been willing to acknowledge the existence of distinct peoples, "...they have been resistant to...those groups' right to redistribution of economically valuable resources and

assets,” which are of real or potential national and even international significance (2004:160).

Castree could have been writing about the dilemmas confronting the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, who have been trying to find some reasonable compromise or middle ground between their own concerns and the economic agendas of the provincial government and the corporations operating in the oil sands region. If the members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation are forced to give up the use of their traditional lands, the source of their distinctive culture and identity, they may have no choice but to become a mobile labor force along with all the non-Aboriginal workers who now flow into the oil sands projects. It will be a form of forced assimilation little different from the assimilation of an earlier time when the Canadian government unabashedly restricted Indians to small reserves and required Indian children to attend residential schools. One wonders if the “existing aboriginal and treaty rights” of Aboriginal people that are enshrined in the *Constitution Act 1982* (Sec. 35.1) include the right to make their own decisions about the extent to which they must transform their culture, including the nature and expression of their spirituality. And, Treaty No. 8 promised that the Indians “...shall have right to pursue their usual vocations of hunting, trapping and fishing throughout the tract surrendered...” (Govt. of Canada 1966:12), as well as documented the assurances made by the treaty commissioners “...that the treaty would not lead to any forced interference with their mode of life...” (Govt. of Canada 1966:12, 6).

In 1899, Keenooshayo at Lesser Slave Lake had tried to ensure that what they agreed to verbally was also what was included in the written treaty: “We want a written treaty, one copy to be given to us, so we shall know what we sign for” (Mair 1908:62). After the treaty was finalized, copies printed on parchment were sent to each official chief for his band. The original typed treaty text was identical to the printed document. What the Indians believed were other

“promises” appear only in the Commissioners' report and in the oral traditions as verbal assurances made to the Indians. Given this immense gulf in understanding, it is not surprising that Indians continue to view the imposition of game regulations and other regulations impeding their access to land and resources and the degradation of the resource itself as violations of treaty promises.

It is tempting to speculate that most government officials responsible for the region of Treaty No. 8 were themselves unfamiliar with the terms of the treaty. Even those familiar with it - mostly Department of Indian Affairs officials - either did not take it seriously as a legal, enforceable document or were relatively powerless vis-à-vis other government agents, such as those in Alberta. With some exceptions, there is little evidence that anyone in government thought about how its “spirit and intent” clashed with federal and provincial laws. There is little evidence that high level Indian Affairs bureaucrats made much effort to support treaty Indians in their dealings with hostile or indifferent provincial governments, which is why today the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, along with other First Nations, is forced to resort to the courts and to environmental assessment tribunals to address these issues and to recruit legal assistance for interventions into industrial initiatives to which they are opposed.

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Figure 1. Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Core Lands (ACFM 2003a)

Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation Traditional Lands This map presents the core area of the traditional lands of the ACFN which has been used by the Athabasca Chipewyan people for hundreds, if not thousands of years. While ACFN land use was not limited to this area, the map represents a reasonable estimate of the more intensively used lands.

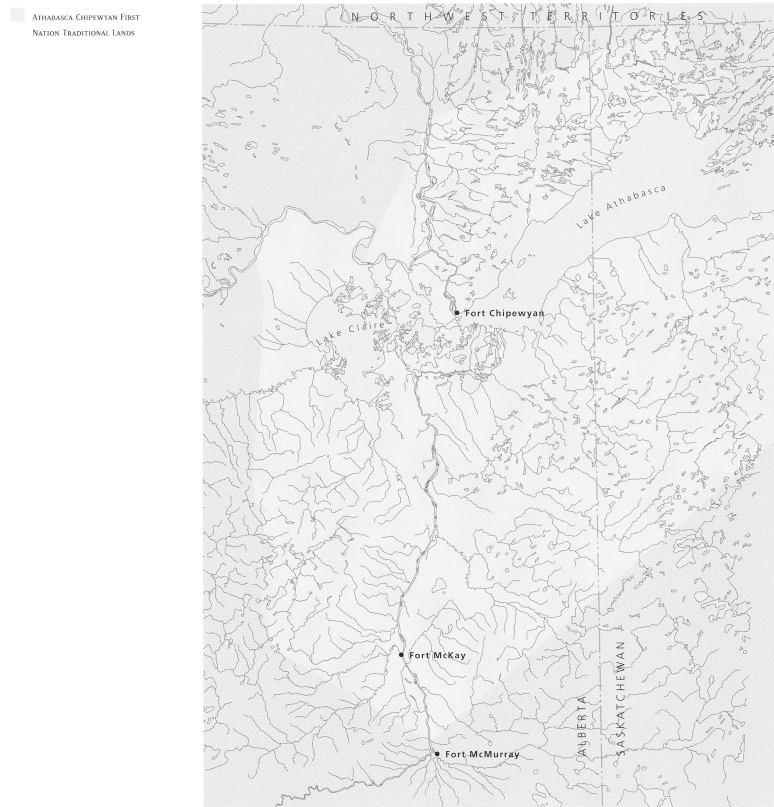


Figure 3. Chipewyan Lands (Gillespie 1975:381)

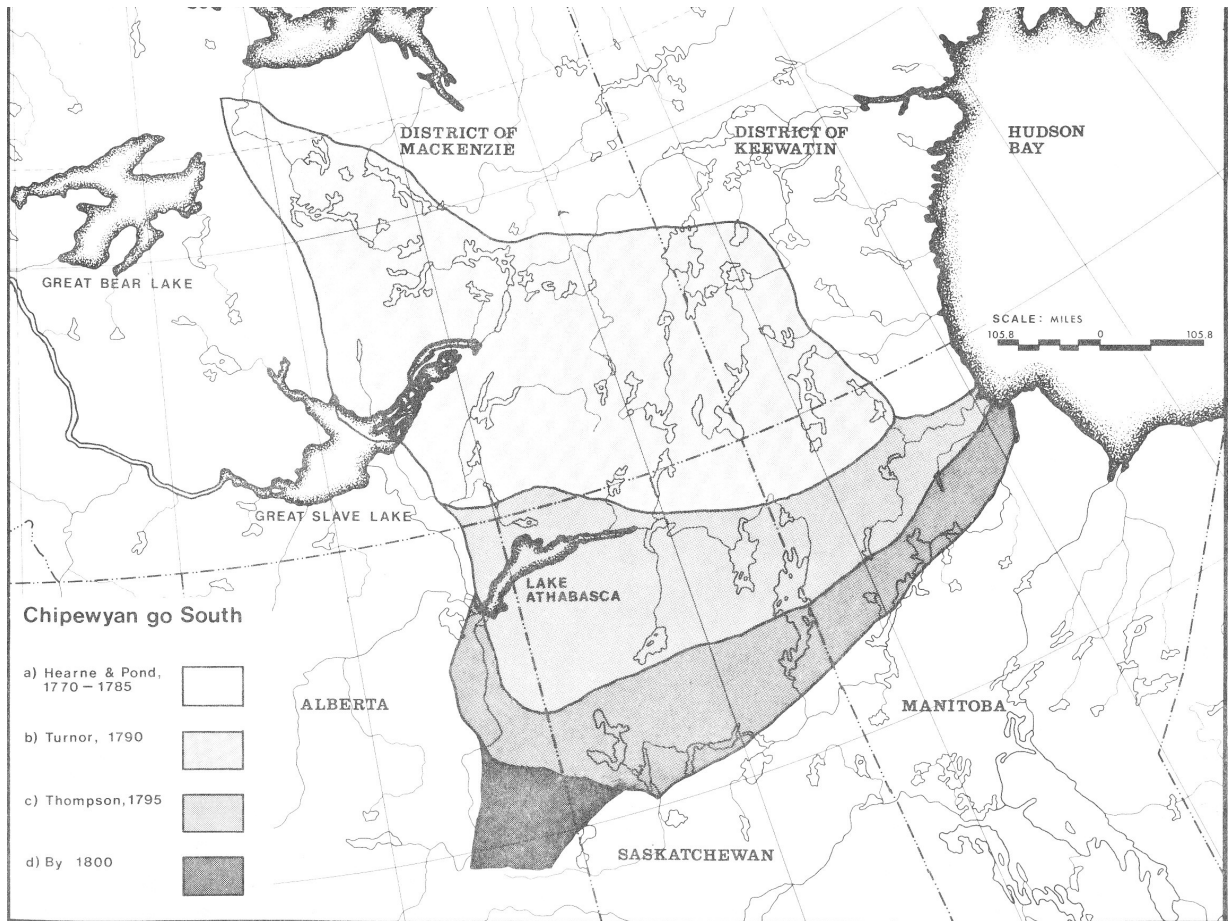


Figure 4. Treaty No. 8 (Govt. of Canada 1966)



2

Dave Leonard photo

Figure 5. Travel Routes South from Birch River and Lake Athabasca

(Based on the Calliou Study and PAC Team Study)

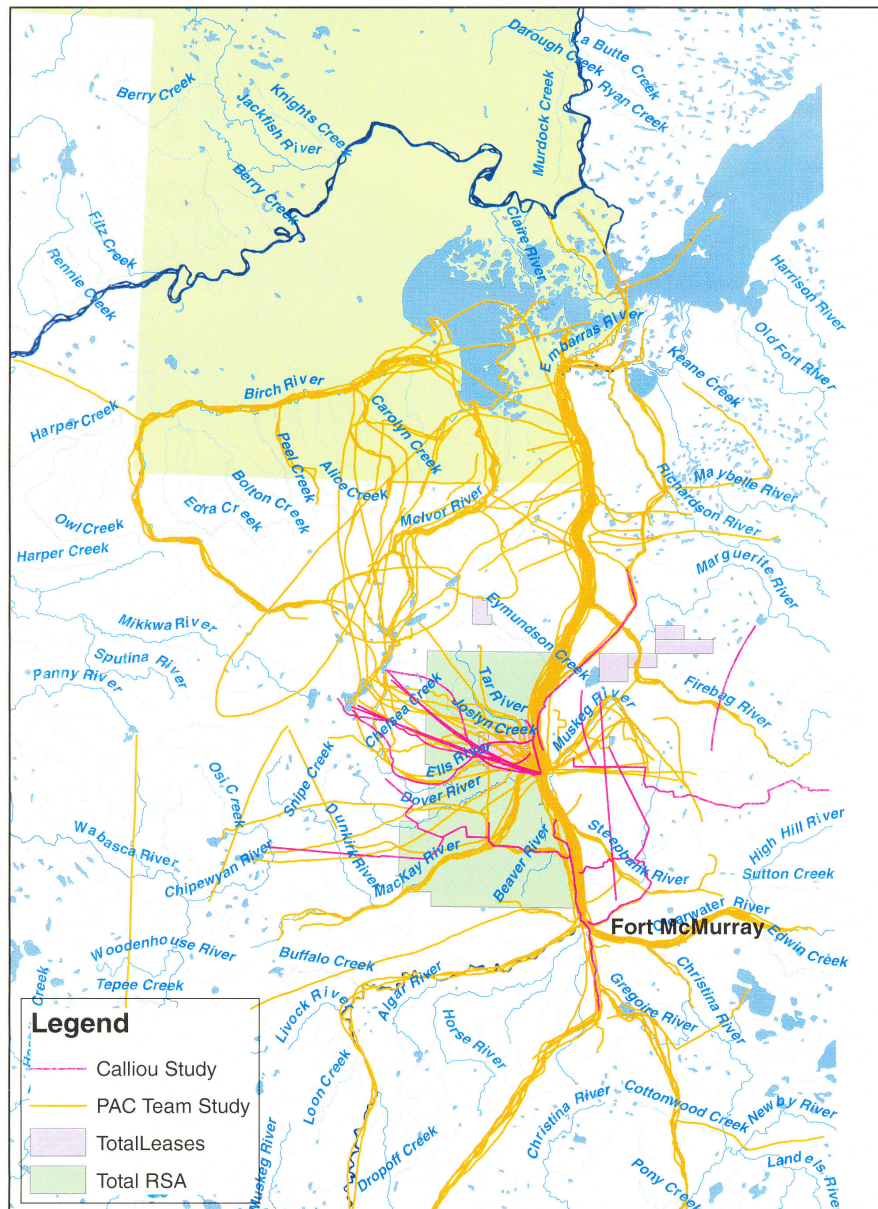


Figure 6. Land Uses South of Wood Buffalo National Park

(Based on Deer Creek Study Cohort Group)

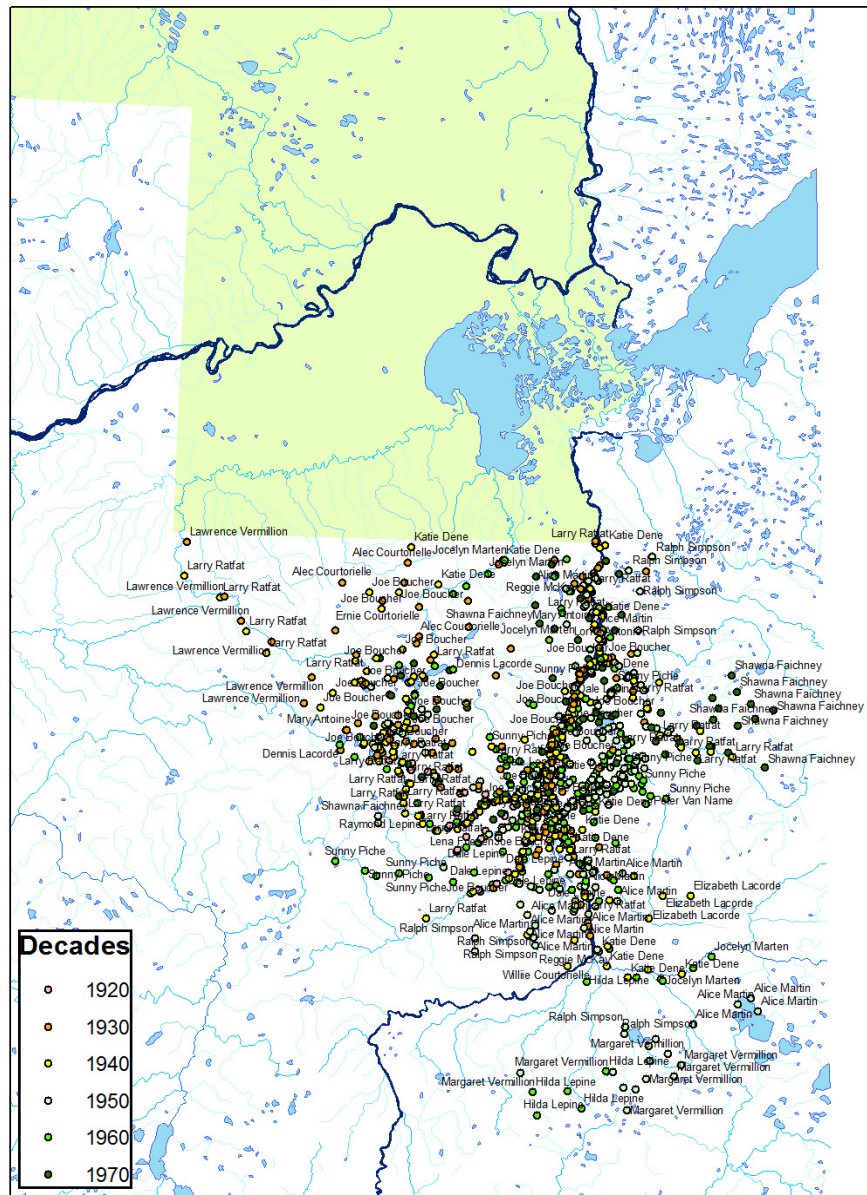
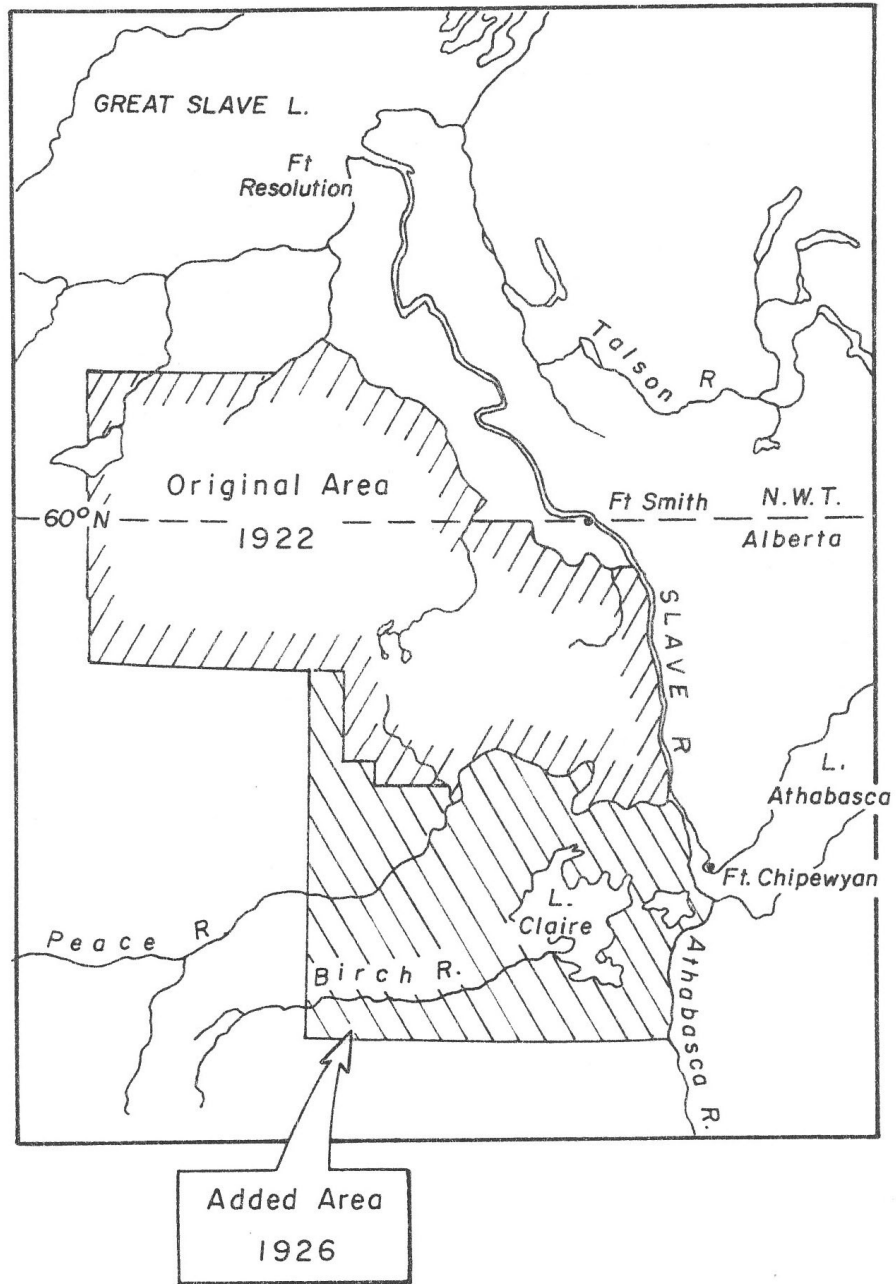


Figure 7. Wood Buffalo Park (McCormack 1992:370)



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2010 Little Pond: a microblade and burin site in northeastern Alberta. *Arctic Anthropology*. 47(1):71-92.

Appendix 1.**List of Publications, Papers, and Exhibits about Fort Chipewyan****Refereed Publications**

- 2010 Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788-1920s: "We Like to be Free in this Country." Vancouver, BC: UBC Press.
- Lost women: Native wives in Orkney and Lewis. *In* Sarah Carter and Patricia A. McCormack, eds., *Recollecting. Lives of Aboriginal Women of the Canadian Northwest and Borderlands*. Pp. 61-88. Edmonton, AB: AU Press.
- 2000 Overcoming the differences of treaty and scrip: the Community Development Program in Fort Chipewyan. *In* Duff Crerar and Jaroslav Petryshyn, eds., *Treaty 8 Revisited: Selected Papers on the 1999 Centennial Conference*. *Lobstick*. 1(1):277-295.
- Northern Metis and the treaties. *In* *Picking Up the Threads; Metis History in the Mackenzie Basin*. Pp. 171-201. Yellowknife, Metis Heritage Association of the Northwest Territories.
- 1996 The Canol project at Fort Chipewyan. *In* Bob Hesketh, ed., *Three Northern Wartime Projects*. Pp. 183-199. CCI Occasional Publication No. 38. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta, and Edmonton & District Historical Society.
- 1994 Linking bush and town: the mixed economy of the Aboriginal peoples of Fort Chipewyan. *In* *Proceedings of the 8th International Abashiri Symposium on Peoples and Cultures of the Boreal Forest*. Pp. 21-33. Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples, Abashiri City, Hokkaido, Japan.
- 1993 Romancing the northwest as prescriptive history: Fort Chipewyan and the northern expansion of the Canadian state. *In* Patricia A. McCormack and R. Geoffrey Ironside, eds., *The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies*. Pp. 89-104. Circumpolar Research Series No. 3. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta.
- Co-editor with R. Geoffrey Ironside. *The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies*. Includes the "Introduction" and "Conclusion." Circumpolar Research Series No. 3. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta.
- 1992 The political economy of bison management in Wood Buffalo National Park. *Arctic*. 45(4):367-380. Nominated for the Eleanor B. Leacock award.
- 1991 "That's a piece of junk": issues in contemporary subarctic collecting. *Arctic Anthropology*. 28(1):124-137.

1989 Chipewyans turn Cree: governmental and structural factors in ethnic processes. *In* K. S. Coates and W. R. Morrison, eds., *For Purposes of Dominion: Essays in Honour of Morris Zaslow*. Pp. 125-138. North York, Ont.: Captus Press.

Working with the community: a dialectical approach to exhibit development. *Alberta Museums Review*. 14(2):4-8.

1987 Fort Chipewyan and the Great Depression. *Canadian Issues*. 8:69-92.

1984 Becoming trappers: the transformation to a fur trade mode of production at Fort Chipewyan. *In* *Rendezvous, Selected Papers of the Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1981*. Pp. 155-173. St. Paul, Minnesota: North American Fur Trade Conference.

Other Publications

2002 Introduction: "A promise by any other name..." Treaty No. 8 and taxation. P. 283. With Gordon Drever. Imposing tax: taxation in the Northwest Territories and Aboriginal fears in the Treaty Eight region. *In* David G. Malaher, compiler, *Selected Papers of Rupert's Land Colloquium 2002*. Pp. 309-315. Winnipeg: Centre for Rupert's Land Studies, University of Winnipeg.

2001 Genealogical studies in community-based research. Proceedings, Canadian Indigenous/Native Studies Association Annual Conference. CD ROM.

1996 The Athabasca influenza epidemic of 1835. *Issues in the North*. CCI Occasional Publication No. 40. Pp. 33-42. Edmonton: Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta.

1995 Revision of the entry on "Chipewyan" for the *Canadian Encyclopedia*, originally written by James G. E. Smith (deceased); revised version carries both names as co-authors.

1990 Government comes to Fort Chipewyan: expansion of the state into the heart of the fur trade country. *In* Patricia A. McCormack and R. Geoffrey Ironside, eds., *Fort Chipewyan-Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference Proceedings*. Pp. 133-137. Edmonton: Boreal Institute for Northern Studies.

1988 Northwind Dreaming: Fort Chipewyan 1788-1988. Exhibit catalogue. Provincial Museum of Alberta Special Publication No. 6. Edmonton: Provincial Museum of Alberta.

Exhibits

1999 *Treaty No. 8 and the Northern Collecting of Dr. O. C. Edwards*

500 square foot centennial commemoration exhibit developed in cooperation with NS480 students. Designed by Bernd Hildebrandt. School of Native Studies and Museums and Collections Services, University of Alberta.

- 1989 *Northwind Dreaming: Fort Chipewyan 1788-1988*
500 square foot traveling exhibit, for venues in Alberta, NWT, Yukon, B.C., Sask., and Manitoba, 1990-94. Designed by Vic Clapp. Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton.
- 1988 *Northwind Dreaming: Fort Chipewyan 1788-1988*
3,000 square feet feature exhibit commemorating the bicentennial of the founding of Fort Chipewyan, Alberta's oldest, permanently occupied community, and celebrating the lives of the Indian, Metis, and non-Native peoples who have made their homes there for 200 years and longer. Developed in collaboration with community residents. Contained over 400 artifacts, many borrowed from collections in Canada, U.S., and Scotland. Designed by Vic Clapp. Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton.
- 1986 *Trapping in Transition: Native Trapping in Northern Alberta*
1,000 square feet exhibit depicting the roles of trapping in Aboriginal economies in northern Alberta in the years before World War II and in the present. Designed by Shelby Craigen. Provincial Museum of Alberta, Edmonton.

Selected Papers

- 2010 Research report. An ethnohistory of the Mikisew Cree First Nation. Prepared for Janes Freedman Kyle and Mikisew Cree First Nation, for a submission to the Joslyn North Mine Project Hearing.
- 2007 Deconstructed Canadian subarctic grasslands. Prepared for the European Environmental History Conference, Amsterdam, 5-9 June 2007.
- 2004 The economic history of the Mikisew Cree First Nation, late 19th century to c.1970. Prepared for Rath & Company and Mikisew Cree First Nation.
- 2002 Imposing tax: taxation in the Northwest Territories and Aboriginal fears of the state in the Treaty Eight region. Co-authored with Gordon Drever. Prepared for a book about the Benoit case.
- 2001 Expanding the boundaries: studying Dene kinship. Presented as part of "Dene Kinship and Ethnohistory," at the 100th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropology Association, Nov. 28-Dec. 2, 2001, Washington, D.C.

Canadian nation-building: a pretty name for internal colonialism. Presented at "Nation Building," British Association for Canadian Studies 25th Annual Conference, April 11-14, 2000, University of Edinburgh, Scotland.

- 1998 Smith's Landing/Fort Fitzgerald: an economic history. Prepared for the Smith's Landing First Nation, October 23, 1998.
- 1994 James and Isabella Thomson: a Lewis family in the Canadian fur trade. Presented at the Sixth Biennial Rupert's Land Research Centre Colloquium, Edmonton, May 25-27, 1994.
- Two solitudes: museum displays and Indians in the fur trade. Presented at *Inventing Fur Trade Traditions*, a session organized by Patricia A. McCormack and Robert Coutts for the Fifth Biennial Rupert's Land Colloquium, Winnipeg, Feb. 6-9, 1992.
- Expanding state regulatory systems and their impacts on northern and Native peoples. Presented at *Symposium on Contemporary and Historical Issues in Legal Pluralism: Prairie and Northern Canada*, organized by the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, Law in Society Program, Winnipeg, Nov. 7-8, 1992.
- The Canadian fur trade: the Orkney connection. Presented at *Focus on the Forks*, a conference on the historical significance of the forks region, Winnipeg, April, 1991.
- 1990 Northern boats: Native lake skiffs and their possible Orkney origin. Prepared for the Orkney Museum Service and presented in Orkney, Scotland, September, 1990.
- The Orkney Islands and the Canadian fur trade and Native communities. Presented at *Partnerships: Museums and Native Living Cultures*, Alberta Museums Association Professional Development Series, Edmonton, Dec. 3-4, 1990.
- 1989 From their labor: a material slant to ethnohistorical research. Presented at the American Society for Ethnohistory Conference, Chicago, Nov. 2-5, 1989.
- Reviving contemporary collecting: the Fort Chipewyan collection at the Provincial Museum of Alberta. Presented at *Collecting the Objects of Others*, a special session of the 88th Annual Meeting of the American Anthropological Association, Washington, D.C., Nov. 15-19, 1989.
- Hub of the North: Fort Chipewyan 1788-1988. Presented at the Rupertsland Colloquium, Winnipeg and Churchill, June 29-July 3, 1988.
- 1986 Rooted in the past: the modern community of Fort Chipewyan. Presented at the Boreal Institute for Northern Studies 25th anniversary conference, *Knowing the North*.
- 1982 Fur trade society to class society: the development of ethnic stratification at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. Presented at the Canadian Ethnology Society meetings, Vancouver, B.C.
- 1979 The Cree Band land entitlement in Wood Buffalo National Park: history and issues. Presented at the Edmonton Chapter of the National and Provincial Parks Association of

Canada.

Expert witness reports

- 2001 Treaty No. 8: rebuttal report. Co-authored with Gordon Drever. Prepared for Karin Buss, Ackroyd, Piasta, Roth & Day, in conjunction with *Benoit et al v. the Queen*. 20 March 2001.
- 1999 Treaty No. 8 and issues of taxation. Co-authored with Gordon Drever. Prepared for Karin Buss, Ackroyd, Piasta, Roth & Day, in conjunction with *Benoit et al v. the Queen*. 30 April 1999.

Fort Chipewyan
and the Shaping of Canadian History,
1788-1920s



We like to be free
in this country

Patricia A. McCormack

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“We like to be free in this country”

PATRICIA A. MCCORMACK



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- Dear friends Elsie (Bourke) and Carl Granath, Ken and Marvalie (Ritchie) Ewing, and Leita Lawrence

- My cousin Leslie Cameron and her husband, Bob Simpson
- My faithful companions in Fort Chipewyan for much of my research were Zhu-Zho, Injie, and Chinook, sled dogs all. Injie mothered two Fort Chipewyan kittens in 1977, and years later my gentle golden retriever, Logan, adopted another kitten who returned with me from a trip to Fort Chipewyan. This book was completed from my office overlooking the bush of the Sturgeon River Valley, where I work surrounded by dogs, cats, and horses.

Fort Chipewyan and the
Shaping of Canadian History,
1788-1920s

I

Writing Fort Chipewyan History

The truth about stories is that that's all we are.

– *Thomas King, The Truth about Stories*

In 1899, government commissioners travelling through northern Alberta to negotiate Treaty No. 8 and issue Métis scrip were perplexed by how un-Indian the Aboriginal people appeared.¹ While the physical setting at Lesser Slave Lake Settlement was “all sweet and primeval, and almost untouched by civilized man” (Mair 1908:54), the cultural setting was not: “The crowd of Indians ranged before the marquee had lost all semblance of wildness of the true type ... Instead of paint and feathers, the scalp-lock, the breech-clout, and the buffalo-robe, there presented itself a body of respectable-looking men, as well dressed and evidently quite as independent in their feelings as any like number of average pioneers in the East ... One felt disappointed, almost defrauded. It was not what was expected, what we believed we had a right to expect” (54-55). The commissioners could not even distinguish Indians from Métis, or Half-breeds, as they were commonly called. Charles Mair (1908:72) referred to the “primitive people” of the region as “Lakers,”² and the following year Dr. O.C. Edwards noted in his journal: “It seems absurd to classify the dark skinned people of the north under the separate heads of Indians and half breeds. I have not seen an Indian as he is popularly known or depicted since I left Calgary. These so-called Indians of the north are all half breeds

... If they choose 'treaty' then they are written down Indians, if they select 'scrip' then they are called half breeds" (Leonard and Whalen 1998:53).

If the commissioners were bewildered by the lack of congruence between the people they saw and their own understandings of Indian-ness and Métis-ness, it did not stop them from conducting the government's business as if the Aboriginal peoples *were* those familiar to them. Government policies that had developed in response to Aboriginal situations in the Plains and Prairies of western Canada were imposed virtually unchanged in the North, a region where the Aboriginal ways of life and issues of the day were quite different.

The actions of the treaty and scrip commissioners exemplify how the particularities of place, time, and culture were overridden by a master narrative, a dominant account or story, about the history of Canada as a nation and the place within it for Aboriginal peoples (McCormack 2005). In its broadest construction, that narrative spoke of a process of homogenizing culture change driven by an expansionary global capitalism. It presumed that indigenous peoples drawn into interaction with Europeans would come to resemble them. In the twentieth century, it came to be called "modernization" and involved "the privileging of scientific and technological explanations of the world" (McLeod 2002:37). Europeans and European-derived peoples during the nineteenth-century heyday of global colonization defined themselves as modern peoples, those "most advanced in technological, political, economic, and social development" (Black 1966:6; see also Blaut 1993:1-2). As J.A. Hobson wrote from Great Britain, "We represent the socially efficient nation, we have conquered and acquired dominion and territory in the past: we must go on, it is our destiny." Britons had a "mission of civilization" to the rest of the world (Hobson 1948[1902]:156-157; see also Merry 2000:7). Indigenous people who became civilized (or modern) were expected to abandon their own less rational and less efficient traditions. In Canada's Northwest, as in many other parts of the world, the so-called modern era began with the imposition of a form of internal colonization after Confederation, as the new nation-state of Canada began to expand into Rupert's Land and other Hudson's Bay Company territories.

In Canada, modernity translated into a derivative narrative about progress, a Canadian manifest destiny that held that Canada developed as a country and achieved its destiny to greatness through the agency of explorers, government agents, and homesteaders – all Europeans – who steadily pushed backward the frontiers of civilized lands into the western

and northern wilderness occupied by primitive people – “Indians” and, in the far northern reaches, “Eskimos” – who must either disappear or themselves become civilized, at which point they would no longer be Indians (or Eskimos). Métis, as Indian descendants who were already biologically and culturally transforming into non-Indians, played a marginal role in this story.

This Canadian narrative was more than ideological history (see Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:19). It prescribed a course of action vis-à-vis Aboriginal peoples and the land that was elaborated in an evolving set of federal and provincial policies, legislation, and regulations. When narratives have direct behavioural implications, and especially when they mandate action, it is useful to call them paradigms, in this instance, the paradigm of progress. The narrative is the textual aspect of a paradigm, and the pattern for behaviour is its operational aspect.

The concept of paradigm is approached somewhat differently in the social sciences than in the physical sciences, where it was developed to account for revolutions in scientific thought and related directly to experimental testing (Kuhn 1962). In the Kuhnian view, “science is characterized by the existence of a ruling dogma which exercises hegemonic control for lengthy periods” (Hassard 1993:79). Occasionally, there are “upheavals in which accepted wisdom is replaced by a new way of seeing” known as paradigm shifts (Kuhn 1962). In this approach, paradigms are incommensurate, having “separate sets of standards and metaphysical beliefs”: “rival paradigms cut up the world with different standards, different assumptions, different language” (Hassard 1993:78). In short, they involve different narratives and discourses, or ways of thinking and talking about a particular subject.

The social sciences do not fit neatly into the Kuhnian framework but are poly-paradigmatic, which means that more than one paradigm may be operating at any one time (see Barnes 1990; Hassard 1993). Because they are derived more from close observation than from experimentation, social science paradigms are always mediated by culturally influenced human perceptions, including the interests of “elite groups outside of the scholarly field itself” (Blaut 1993:37). And when social scientists interact with diverse human populations, they are likely to encounter competing narratives and paradigms held by the populations being studied (McCormack 1998a). In situations of power differentials, some paradigms will dominate, although that dominance may not be evident. The nature of hegemony is that the dominant interpretation has “come to be taken for granted as the natural, universal, and true shape of social being ... It consists of things

that go without saying: things that, being axiomatic, are not normally the subject of explication or argument” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:28-29; Gramsci 1971:12; Merry 2000:14).

John Hassard (1993:86-87) has argued that people can be “trained into” new paradigms, just as they can learn new languages and how to translate between them. Moreover, multiple paradigm research offers multiple lenses for its “analytical scrutiny” (88). We can take advantage of this diversity rather than striving to prove one right and another wrong. Part of the process of being trained into multiple paradigms is learning how to deconstruct them and understand their implications for political decisions and policy and program development. Such training also entails a stance of respect and appreciation for what the concepts mean to their respective holders.

This approach is particularly useful for addressing issues of Aboriginal history as a component of Canadian history. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples have very different historical narratives (McCormack 2005). Most Euro-Canadian narratives have revolved around a concept of conquest and rule of “superior” peoples over “inferior” ones.³ These narratives are easy to find in the mainstream historical literature, because they are how Canadian historians have commonly explained the growth of Canada as a nation. Aboriginal narratives have emerged in Aboriginal oral traditions; in accounts by Aboriginal scholars such as Harold Cardinal (*Indian Chiefs of Alberta* 1970), Neal McLeod (2002), and Taiaiake Alfred (2005); and in testimony to various commissions, most recently the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (e.g., *Royal Commission* 1996:4-18). Aboriginal accounts are particularly concerned with a people’s relationship to their traditional lands, their willingness to coexist with European newcomers, their consequent suffering, and their resistance to Euro-Canadian impositions and injustices. These accounts can be summarized briefly as a belief in equality of people within their homelands, to which they remain strongly linked, and their expectation of persistent autonomy, both individually and as nations. The narratives mandate respect for individual and community choices but opposition to imposed policies and especially any attempt to interfere with Aboriginal access to and control over their homeland and its resources. It should not be surprising that Aboriginal people rarely behaved as Europeans expected them to do. Aboriginal narratives have been marginalized and even dismissed until recently because of the intellectual and political hegemony exercised by Euro-Canadians. But they endured, and today they flourish.

A century after the signing of Treaty No. 8, neither Indians nor Métis have disappeared. Although they live very different lives than they did in

1899, they have not become modern in the meaning above, despite regulatory structures imposed by federal and provincial governments that forced restricted forms of cultural and economic change on Aboriginal people. What is particularly unsettling is that the master narrative about Canadian history, Aboriginal people, and their place within Canadian history still prevails in mainstream discourse about the region and its peoples, little changed in its essentials from the narrative of 1899.

The intent of this book is to decentre these dual narratives of modernity and progress, to challenge the hegemony of the paradigm of progress, and to present interpretive alternatives through the lens of the history of Fort Chipewyan, the most famous and best studied of the Treaty No. 8 communities. Fort Chipewyan is over two hundred years old. It was founded by Roderick McKenzie in 1788 at the west end of Lake Athabasca (see Map 1.1) to support the Athabasca fur trade as well as the explorations of his famous cousin, Alexander Mackenzie. Its original occupants were a conglomerate of Europeans, including Scots, Orcadians, English, French Canadians, Métis, and other mixed-ancestry workers, more colourfully known as “voyageurs.” They traded and engaged in other exchanges with Algonquian people, who spoke one or more variants of the Cree language, and with Athapaskan or Dene people, who were the ancestors of groups now known as Beaver and Chipewyan.

The lifeways and peoples of this community have reshaped themselves many times since 1788. The Fort Chipewyan region became integrated into the emerging world-system through the European-operated fur trade.⁴ As part of the Hudson’s Bay Company’s North-Western Territory, it was acquired along with Rupert’s Land in 1870 by the new Dominion of Canada. Its global integration then came to be mediated by agents and policies of the nation-state and an emerging industrial economy.

Fort Chipewyan is still famous as a fur trade community, and some people still trap, yet the local economy has not been dominated by the fur trade for nearly half a century. In many ways, it resembles other rural northern Alberta towns. While Fort Chipewyan is often thought of as an isolated Native community, in fact it has always been a plural society, based on the co-residence and interaction of people of many ethnic and cultural affiliations, whose economy has increasingly been integrated into a global capitalist economy. These facts are paramount in understanding the local history and the community’s place within a larger Canadian history. They also help us view Canadian history from a northern locale, where the story of the evolving Canadian state takes a decidedly different form.



MAP 1.1 The Fort Chipewyan region

The Fort Chipewyan described in this book no longer exists. It is a place of the past, and so too are all the Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian people who once lived there or in the surrounding smaller communities, or who played some role in the course of local events. That means that all the histories of it are stories about its past that have been constructed by individuals based on their own personal and intellectual histories and the narrative traditions within which they operate. They convey multiple and partial truths, yet, as Thomas King (2003a, 2003b) has reminded us, “The truth about stories is that that’s all we are.” The stories of this book are based on information drawn from two primary and typically divergent storylines: those told and inscribed by Europeans and Euro-Canadians, mostly representatives of external agencies and the Canadian nation-state, and those told and inscribed by resident Aboriginal people. I have brought together these two storylines, but not in a seamless narrative. Instead, I tell a new story that draws upon my own history of involvement with Fort Chipewyan and other research endeavours over four decades and that strives to maintain the distinctiveness of its diverse sources and voices. The in-text citations themselves are a subtext that conveys part of the story. This book has a precise intellectual genealogy as a result.

My life became intertwined with Fort Chipewyan in 1968, when I first went there as a young anthropology student to do a service project. Although I no longer remember the stereotypes I must have brought with me, I was eager to learn about the realities of the land and the people. The town, and much of its surrounding bush, is a place I came to know well. I have travelled to the community by air, canoe, river barge, and winter road. I have gone “up the lake” and along local waterways, visiting sites where people lived, worked, and were buried. I lived for many months in a log cabin without power or water, and at other times I stayed with local families. Much of my research was conducted as visits with friends and acquaintances over endless cups of tea and coffee, although I also did formal interviews. Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal residents alike generously invited me into their homes and shared stories from their own lives. I began as a young stranger with no relations and ended as a peripheral member with (fictive) kin and long-term friends and acquaintances, both community Elders and others closer to my own age. David Smith (1995:124) has pointed out that for Chipewyans, a story is a gift: “a life-enhancing present and a gesture of respect and love.” I came to understand that through their stories, I was being taught aspects of local culture and history, conferring a moral responsibility to use the stories well.⁵

This way of learning conforms to Aboriginal approaches to the production and transmission of knowledge. Scott Rushforth (1992), Jean-Guy Goulet (1982, 1994, 1998), Henry Sharp (2001), and, for Fort Chipewyan itself, Ronald and Suzanne Scollon (1979) have written convincingly of how, for the Dene (Athapaskan-speakers), true knowledge is based on personal experience. The next best way of learning is by observing others “who know how to do things” and “by hearing mythical, historical, or personal narratives” from people whose claim to knowledge is authoritative (Rushforth 1992:488). Similarly, Richard Preston (2002[1975]:76) explains that for Crees, “Judgments of credibility are based on whether the person has seen the event himself, or whether he gets the information from someone known to him who has seen the event. Less credibility would be attached to information given by strangers or to reports of events that reach one at third or fourth hand.” I was privileged to hear many stories from people born early in the twentieth century who lived what is considered a traditional life on the land, as well as from younger people and from non-Aboriginal people who held often-pivotal positions in government departments affecting Fort Chipewyan.

The term “oral tradition” refers to knowledge transmitted through oral narratives, comprising “personal stories generated from the experiences of the teller as well as accounts that have been passed on from generation to generation” (Morrow and Schneider 1995:6n1).⁶ While the term is frequently used with reference solely to Aboriginal narratives, the scope of oral traditions is much broader, comprising all accounts told by individuals with first-hand knowledge or knowledge derived from the stories of others. To study the histories of a plural society and of diverse Aboriginal peoples encapsulated within a dominant nation-state, it is crucial to seek out the recollections of a wide range of people, including those in positions of power, to “examine the dialogic space” between them (Harkin 2004:xxvi). Each person will construct his or her own personal story and tell about particular episodes based on his or her own positioning (Cruikshank 1990). Not only are the oral traditions not homogeneous, they are also often contradictory and conflicting. The emphasis on discourse in this book is one way to respect the integrity of the different stories, not to reconcile the differences among them but to reveal them and thereby to decentre the dominant discourses.

During my years in Fort Chipewyan, I conducted formal and informal interviews that relied upon oral traditions of both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Some of the formal interviews elicited life histories. I have also been fortunate in being able to use interviews conducted by

others, most notably interviews conducted in 1974 by the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research (TARR) program of the Indian Association of Alberta, by Jim Parker for the Oral History Component of the Alberta Oil Sands Environmental Research Program, and in 1988 by Patrick Moore about Native dance in northern Alberta (see Appendix). These collections of interviews, some of which were conducted with the same Elders but about different topics, are an impressive body of recorded oral documents.⁷

Set against the oral traditions is another stream of evidence, the extensive body of written documents concerning Fort Chipewyan and the surrounding region. In these documents we can hear the voices of the Euro-Canadians living in Fort Chipewyan and elsewhere who shaped the regulatory structures that governed many aspects of community life. The vast majority of these documents are letters, memoranda, reports, and diaries. While there is a tendency to associate written documents solely with Euro-Canadians, many contain testimony by Aboriginal people. Sometimes these take the form of accounts by government officials or missionaries, but many are authored directly by Aboriginal people themselves, typically in the form of letters and petitions about their situations, and more rarely as personal memoirs or life history narratives.⁸ Like the oral traditions, the written documents vary widely in content. Goulet (1998:251) has pointed out that “experientialist ethnographers emphasize ... their connectedness in the field to particular individuals, in specific places, at a given point in time, for it is in interaction with other individuals that one gains knowledge of particular forms and processes of social life.” To Johannes Fabian (1991:87, 104), this “quality of active participation in communicative interchanges” is the trademark of fieldwork, and it is what produces “ethnographic objectivity” and new ethnographic knowledge. To this I would add that immersion in detailed archival accounts is also deeply personal, a form of communication with distant people no longer available for personal meetings. Both allow us to move beyond our estrangement from these people of the past to reveal the fundamental humanity of all the “Others” we encounter in the community or in the archives.

Such personal experiences can and should be powerful, life changing. They impose a moral burden to make sense of the stories, including – and especially – their diversity, and to follow the research leads that they provide. Over time, Fort Chipewyan has become my personal centre for knowing something about Others of all sorts, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike. For years I have travelled through this history, struggling to hear what these diverse voices were telling me about representation and interpretation, about the confusions of understanding that dominate

popular discourses about Aboriginal peoples and nation building in Canada, and about Fort Chipewyan history in particular. The story of Fort Chipewyan has been an evolving one, shaping and reshaping itself in my head and in my writing.

My first research question about Fort Chipewyan was posed in an honours thesis written the winter following my first summer in the community (McCormack 1969). I asked: what shaped contemporary Fort Chipewyan? I refined this question in my doctoral dissertation (McCormack 1984b), which sought to explain why Aboriginal people who had formerly lived in bush communities abandoned them after World War II and relocated permanently to Fort Chipewyan. In the following years, I drew on the dissertation as I worked with community members to develop a major exhibit at the Provincial Museum of Alberta, where I was the curator of ethnology, and an associated conference to commemorate the bicentennial of Fort Chipewyan in 1988 (McCormack 1988; McCormack and Ironside 1990, 1993).⁹

This endeavour drew me into the often overlooked but highly productive realm of material culture. As I worked at the museum, and especially in the context of a research project with Blackfoot Nations, a new question emerged: how can we explain why modern Indians (First Nations) should still be seen as “real Indians” – a problematic term at best – when they opt for aluminum boats over birchbark canoes, or pickup trucks instead of horses, and adopt a host of other modern technologies in their patterns of daily life? What does it mean to be a modern Aboriginal person? This question had never occurred to me in the past, tutored as I was by northern people who had no doubt of either their Aboriginal identities or their modernity. In the museum realm, and later as a professor at the Faculty of Native Studies at the University of Alberta, I learned to appreciate the power of racialized stereotypes about Aboriginal people and the difficulties most non-Aboriginal – and even some Aboriginal – people have in seeing past them. These explorations also led back to how the history of Fort Chipewyan relates to larger regional and national questions and a still largely unformed northern history.

As a history, this book is itself a historical document in that it speaks to my engagement with these issues from my own personal and theoretical contexts. It is intended to move my interpretive project forward by showing how people who lived in a linked set of communities with one way of life at the time of Confederation transformed into a single community with a different way of life in the late twentieth century.

I focus explicitly on how Fort Chipewyan modernized in the years after Treaty No. 8 was signed. But I reject the earlier definition of what being modern means. This book argues that Aboriginal – and all – people can and do become modern without relinquishing the beliefs and practices that are important to them. Becoming modern does not mean that people's cultures will be, somehow, less authentic. As Betty Duggan (1997:31) has written, "An authentic culture is not one that remains unchanged ... but one that retains the ability to determine the appropriateness of its adaptations."¹⁰ The emerging conflict between the people of Fort Chipewyan and the expanding state of Canada from the late 1800s onward concerned who would set the rules for the process of modernization and how self-determination by Fort Chipewyan people – especially Aboriginal people – was undermined.

Five premises underlie the analysis of this book.

First, Fort Chipewyan is and has always been a complex plural society, never a homogeneous community. Its residents have been a variety of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who collectively constitute the Other, or a series of diverse Others, all part of the same social formation. Each party brings to the telling of Fort Chipewyan history different narratives, with different understandings of what happened and why.

Second, Fort Chipewyan did not automatically become part of Canada after 1870, except in a strictly formal sense. The process of state building that ensued was simultaneously a process of colonialism that played out within the national arena of nation building and the international arena of expanding global capitalism. Therefore, the history of Fort Chipewyan is also Canadian and Alberta history, though seen from the periphery – the northern edge – rather than the centres of power.¹¹

Third, Aboriginal peoples never relinquished their own narratives or attempts to control their own circumstances and destinies. When the state imposed increasingly restrictive legislation and regulatory structures, both encouraging and forcing Aboriginal peoples to abandon their own ways of belief and thought, local people always tried to mitigate such initiatives and, when necessary, opposed them. In short, Aboriginal people had agency.

Fourth, none of this analysis is intuitive or obvious. To most Canadians, the master narrative of modernity and progress explains how Aboriginal people became part of Canada and the world-system. The power of these narratives is such that it is difficult for most people to comprehend that there are other ways to approach and comprehend the issue. They became

“common sense,” part of the popular culture of Euro-Canadians. From this perspective, the non-Aboriginal people who were the agents of the colonial process were at the same time victims of their own narratives.

Fifth, a consideration of Fort Chipewyan history that uses these perspectives can point the way to a New Northern history analogous to the New Western History of the United States. Both are framed by a broader comparative colonialism, by an emphasis on multiple perspectives, by the realization that national histories are the outcome of complex interactions among diverse peoples within and beyond regional boundaries, and by attempts to deconstruct the historical ideas about those regions and peoples who live there and the roles of these ideas in nation-building mythology (e.g., Limerick 2001; Perry 2005; Clifton 1989; Szasz 2001[1994]).

In discussing the people of Fort Chipewyan, I utilize historically rooted and often ambiguous terminologies. The history of northern usages is complex and little studied. Preferred formal terms today in Canada are “First Nations” instead of “Indian,” and “Métis” for “Half-breed” (e.g., Communications Branch 1998; Sitarski 1992).¹² However, these terms misrepresent former ethnic and cultural situations. The terminology followed here respects documented historical usages, especially in the use of the term “Indian.” Culturally specific terms are used when applicable: “Cree,” “Chipewyan,” “Half-breed,” and “Métis.” The term “Indian” is used as a historical referent for Crees and Chipewyans together. “Métis” signifies both Half-breeds and Métis, and “Aboriginal” and “Native” are terms for the totality of Aboriginal peoples in the region. Similarly, specific European/Euro-Canadian ethnic terms (Scots, Orcadian, French Canadian or *Canadien*) are used where appropriate. “European,” “Euro-Canadian,” and “White” all indicate non-Aboriginal persons of European ancestry.¹³ The term “Euro-Canadian” normally is reserved for non-Aboriginal persons present after Confederation. One historical problem is how Aboriginal people learned to consider themselves to be “Indian” in addition to being “Cree” or “Chipewyan,” which are themselves problematic terms. This book will address some of the issues involved in this developing ethnic awareness.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

The development of the book proceeds in the following way. Chapters 2 and 3 explore the position of Fort Chipewyan as a social formation situated at the intersection of the global economy and Aboriginal domestic

economies. Chapter 2 outlines the founding peoples of the plural society of Fort Chipewyan, both those living in the settlement and those in the surrounding region, Aboriginal and European alike. Chapter 3 considers the historical shift from domestic and capitalist modes of production to a new fur trade mode of production that defined the internal dynamic of the new plural society. The fur trade mode of production proved to be remarkably elastic and resilient. Even today, it persists in Fort Chipewyan and many other northern communities.

Yet, in the second half of the twentieth century, the fur trade ceased to dominate local and regional economies. Much of this book examines why and how the local economy began to shift to a social formation embedded in the Canadian industrial state. While Canadians have tended to take this change for granted and naturalize the process as part of the evolution of the nation, it was not inevitable.

Chapters 4 to 6 set the stage for understanding the roots of this change. Chapter 4 provides the international and national contexts for the late-nineteenth-century events impinging on the Fort Chipewyan region, outlining changes in the world-system and global capitalism, the consequent creation of the Canadian nation-state, and its expansion into the Northwest and the far Athabasca District, newly acquired from the Hudson's Bay Company. It was in this period that the Athabasca District became a trading hinterland oriented to the new city of Edmonton. Chapter 5 focuses on the local impacts of these developments, in two directions. First, renewed competition in the northern fur trade followed the termination of the company's monopoly. Second, toward the end of the nineteenth century, Canada began to take its first tentative steps in the long process of expanding its control into the North, which opened the door for Treaty No. 8 in 1899 and 1900 and a twentieth-century process of internal colonialism. Chapter 6 discusses the roles played by Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries, present in Fort Chipewyan since the mid-nineteenth century, who provided support for these endeavours in addition to their primary role of converting people to Christianity.

Chapter 7 discusses the cultural baselines or ways of life for people who lived at Fort Chipewyan and in settlements in the bush at the time of treaty. Fort Chipewyan was then a small centre for industrial activities and market exchanges, populated by both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people who were engaged in a broad range of activities, only some of which related directly to the fur trade. Northern Aboriginal life was not the same as Aboriginal life in the south, although the differences were little appreciated by government policy makers in Ottawa.

Chapter 8 follows with a detailed examination of Treaty No. 8 and the related issuance of Half-breed scrip, events that occurred in 1899 and 1900. Treaty No. 8 was one of the so-called numbered treaties, legal devices used by the Canadian government to acquire land from the people it called Indians. Scrip was a parallel device to satisfy Half-breed or Métis claims. Together, they constituted a set of paradigms for dealing with Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest south of the Arctic. The treaty was the legal device that produced rigid identities of Indian and Métis. It created the Chipewyan Band and the Cree Band of Fort Chipewyan, now the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation and the Mikisew Cree First Nation, respectively. These are legally established bands, and their members have a formal legal identity as Indians under the British North America Act (the Constitution Act, 1867), the Indian Act and its amendments, and the Constitution Act, 1982. Those people who chose not to enter into treaty and instead applied for scrip were identified as Half-breeds, a more ambiguous identity legally. Treaty and scrip together had impacts on a host of community factors that are still important one hundred years later. To treaty signatories and their descendants, the treaty is a living document, one with ongoing relevance and redefinition, though for much of the twentieth century it was more ignored than honoured.

Once Aboriginal people had either entered into a treaty relationship with the federal government or become ordinary citizens in the eyes of the Canadian government by applying for scrip to settle their Aboriginal claims, the way was open for federal and provincial governments to build legal structures of occupation in the Fort Chipewyan region and other Treaty No. 8 areas. Chapter 9 uses the rich documentary record to trace the beginnings of government regulatory regimes in the region, both federal and, after 1905, provincial. However, until the end of World War I, neither government had much regulatory *power*, and life continued much as it had before for local residents.

This situation changed, not for the better, following World War I. Chapter 10 points to the chasm between an era of on-the-ground Aboriginal sovereignty and autonomy and a new era of internal colonialism by the Canadian nation-state that was marked by the war, a series of horrifying epidemics, and a singular watershed event, the invasion of the Fort Chipewyan region by White homesteaders turned trappers, along with some Métis trappers and their families from the Lac La Biche area. The pattern for peaceful appropriation of power by outside agencies had been created, and its consequences would be marked by the violation of promises made

by the Crown under Treaty No. 8, the creation and expansion of Wood Buffalo Park in 1922 and 1926, and a continually evolving regulatory regime devised by the federal and provincial governments from the 1920s through the 1970s that steadily eroded Aboriginal political and economic control and contributed to the people's marginalization and poverty in their own homeland.

The concluding chapter summarizes the threads of this story and points to how it will be taken up in a second volume that will analyze the next fifty years of this history of local underdevelopment – the time when underdevelopment really began.

THE PHOTOGRAPHS

Historical photographs depicting aspects of Fort Chipewyan and its residents are numerous in Canadian archives. They date from the late nineteenth century and increase in number in the early twentieth century. Surveyors with the Geological Survey of Canada and the Dominion Lands Survey were responsible for most of the early photos, thanks to their mandate to explore and document. But there were other travellers with cameras, almost all of whom took pictures of the imposing Hudson's Bay Company establishment. Next in popularity were pictures of the town as seen from the lake and of the Roman Catholic mission. Archives also contain photos of other buildings, residents of town and bush, and some activities. A selection of photographs is included in Chapters 4-10. In keeping with the theme of this book, pictures have been included of some of the people and places to which Fort Chipewyan was linked historically.

Building a Plural Society at Fort Chipewyan: A Cultural Rababou

*On parle le rababou.*¹

– *Ronald Scollon and Suzanne Scollon*, *Linguistic Convergence: An Ethnography of Speaking at Fort Chipewyan, Alberta*

This book is not a traditional ethnography or ethnohistory of the Cree, Chipewyan, or Métis people of Fort Chipewyan, although aspects of their cultures and ways of life are essential considerations. None of these Aboriginal peoples existed in isolation from the others, and even to speak of “the Cree,” for example, is problematic. Such artificial analytical boundaries imply an idealized homogeneity that misrepresents real-life complexity, cultural and otherwise.

Instead, the ethnographic focus is the plural society centred on Fort Chipewyan, “at the intersection of local interactions and relationships and the larger processes of state and empire making” (Roseberry 1988:163, emphasis omitted). To Mary Louise Pratt (1992:4, see also 6-7), such a locale is a “contact zone,” a social space “where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often [but not necessarily] in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination.” She prefers this concept to that of the “frontier,” which in Canada is a term that privileges Canadian nation-building narratives. The emphasis in this book is historical as well as ethnographic. It is presented as ethnohistory and simultaneously as a study of the developing modern world order (see Comaroff and Comaroff

1992:x). The trading post provided a place in which all the people of the region could interact and jointly create a kind of intersubjectivity. This term refers to a shared, mutual space, analogous to Richard White's "middle ground," produced through a process of dialogue and communication and characterized by a set of meanings that properly belong to none of the interacting cultures (Fabian 1991:92; McCormack and Sciorra 1998; Salisbury 1976:42; White 1997:93; Bredin 1993:304-305). This shared space was represented in a new fur trade mode of production. The social and physical community developed as a complex entity with multiple ancestries and meanings, encompassing numerous subcommunities.

Physically, the social community was originally dispersed spatially, revolving around the trading post at Fort Chipewyan, which grew into a small town after 1870. Most members resided in small settlements in "the bush," the common term for the subarctic lands surrounding residential locales.²

The spatial patterns reflected the social community and the local ways of life. Although a primary cultural division at Fort Chipewyan could be drawn between European and Aboriginal peoples, from the beginning its ethnic and cultural profile was a conglomerate of people with diverse affiliations who occupied the region during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. The next chapter introduces the concept of mode of production, a useful theoretical tool for understanding both the interplay that followed and the creation of intersubjectivity, which was realized in the development of a new fur trade mode of production. An outgrowth of the meeting of peoples with domestic and capitalist modes of production, it involved a complex mixed economy comprising domestic production, commercial production, and wage labour. While its features were unique to the particular circumstances of the northern fur trade, as a mode of production it was comparable to that of other indigenous economies penetrated by capitalism and integrated into the world-system.³

The establishment of Fort Chipewyan was a northern instance of the vast transformations set in motion by the arrival of Europeans in the Americas and their encounters with the Aboriginal occupants. In the North, these meetings occurred within the context of a developing fur trade tailored to join European merchants with the Aboriginal people who would become producers, consumers, traders, and workers in a new economy and social world.

Fort Chipewyan began as a fur trade "factory," a fur production and service centre for Europeans trading in the Athabasca country, known after 1821 as the Athabasca District in the Hudson's Bay Company trading system.⁴ Centred on the western end of Lake Athabasca, this region was

distinguished by a rich concentration of subarctic fur and food resources, especially in the Peace-Athabasca Delta, an area of possibly unparalleled resource concentration. In addition to the entire range of subarctic furbearers, small game, carnivores, upland birds and migratory waterfowl, and fish, at least four ungulates were available locally: bison,⁵ moose, woodland caribou, and barren ground caribou (see Table 2.1).

European trade with peoples of the region began in the late seventeenth or, more likely, early eighteenth century, conducted by Aboriginal traders – commonly called “middlemen” – and by Athabasca residents who were willing to pack their furs all the way to Fort Churchill or York Factory on Hudson Bay, a long and hazardous journey (A. Mackenzie 1970:73).⁶ Direct trade locally between Aboriginal people and European agents began in 1778, with the arrival of Peter Pond and his entourage via the Methye Portage, which linked the Mackenzie and the Saskatchewan drainage basins. In 1788, Fort Chipewyan was founded for the North West Company by Roderick McKenzie, who had been recruited by his famous cousin, Alexander Mackenzie (Mackenzie 1970:73, 129; McKenzie 1889:27-28; McCormack 1984a:162; Parker 1987:6-11; Keith 2001).

From 1788 to 1870, the fur trade was virtually the sole point of articulation between the Aboriginal people of the Athabasca country and a larger social, political, and economic landscape: the developing world-system of global capitalism and its manifestations within particular core countries, especially Great Britain. During that time, global capitalism continued to evolve, and both the Canadian fur trade and the social formation of the Athabasca District moved through periods of conflict, change, and consolidation. The Montreal-based North West Company amalgamated in 1821 with the London-based Hudson's Bay Company after a period of agonizing struggle, much of it in the Athabasca District. The Hudson's Bay Company then enjoyed a monopoly on trade until 1870, when it sold its Canadian territories to Great Britain for transfer to the new Dominion of Canada. After Treaty No. 8 was signed in 1899, processes of state building became determinative in the history of the region.

The founding populations of Fort Chipewyan were established along with the post and continued to evolve over the next century (McCormack 1988:7-11). Each population segment had a distinctive history, culture, and one or more languages that it contributed to the plural society of Fort Chipewyan.⁷

Those people known collectively to Europeans as “Indians” experienced major changes in their local population dynamics because of their own strategies for participating in the fur trade, complicated by recurrent disease

TABLE 2.1 Major faunal resources

Large game	Moose	<i>Alces alces</i>
	Woodland caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus caribou</i>
	Barren ground caribou	<i>Rangifer tarandus groenlandicus</i>
	Bison	<i>Bison bison</i>
Small game	Snowshoe hare	<i>Lepus americanus</i>
	Red squirrel	<i>Tamiasciurus hudsonicus</i>
	Beaver	<i>Castor canadensis</i>
	Muskrat	<i>Ondatra zibethicus</i>
	Porcupine	<i>Erethizon dorsatum</i>
Carnivores	Grey wolf	<i>Canis lupus</i>
	Coyote	<i>Canis latrans</i>
	Red fox	<i>Vulpes vulpes</i>
	Black bear	<i>Ursus americanus</i>
	Pine marten	<i>Martes americana</i>
	Fisher	<i>Martes pennanti</i>
	Ermine	<i>Mustela erminea</i>
	Least weasel	<i>Mustela nivalis</i>
	Mink	<i>Neovison vison</i>
	Wolverine	<i>Gulo gulo</i>
	Skunk	<i>Mephitis mephitis</i>
	Otter	<i>Lontra canadensis</i>
	Lynx	<i>Felis lynx</i>
Upland birds	Spruce grouse	<i>Falci pennis canadensis</i>
	Ruffed grouse	<i>Bonasa umbellus</i>
	Sharp-tailed grouse	<i>Tympanuchus phasianellus</i>
	Willow ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus lagopus</i>
	Rock ptarmigan	<i>Lagopus mutus rupestris</i>
Migratory waterfowl	Canada goose	<i>Branta canadensis</i>
	Greater white-fronted goose (grey wavy)	<i>Anser albifrons</i>
	Lesser snow goose (white wavy)	<i>Chen caerulescens caerulescens</i>
	Trumpeter swan	<i>Cygnus buccinator</i>
	Sandhill crane	<i>Grus canadensis</i>
	Whooping crane	<i>Grus americana</i>
	Ducks, multiple species	
Fish	Lake whitefish	<i>Coregonus clupeaformis</i>
	Lake trout	<i>Salvelinus namaycush</i>
	Northern pike (jackfish)	<i>Esox lucius</i>
	Goldeye	<i>Hiodon alosoides</i>
	Walleye (pickerel)	<i>Sander vitreus</i>

Source: McCormack 1975a discusses the plant and animal species and ecosystems of the boreal forest and adjacent barren grounds or tundra. Current Latin designations for these animals were provided or confirmed by staff of the Royal Alberta Museum: Dr. Bruce McGillivray (Executive Director), Mark Steinhilber (Head of Life Sciences and Curator of Ichthyology and Herpetology), Dr. Jocelyn Hudon (Curator of Ornithology), and Bill Weimann (Assistant Curator of Mammology). And they were drawn in part from McGillivray and Hastings 1988.

epidemics resulting from the European presence.⁸ The original Beaver occupants retreated or were driven westward out of the region by incoming Crees and Chipewyans by the early nineteenth century (A. Mackenzie 1970:238; Ridington 1981:357; Wright 1975; McCormack 1984a:165; see also Smith 1987).

Chipewyans were newcomers to the Fort Chipewyan region, at least as permanent residents.⁹ They established themselves there in response to the fur trade, moving southwest from their former ranges in the transitional treeline bordering the barren grounds (Thompson 1962:72-73; Mackenzie 1970:125; Simpson 1938:355-356; Gillespie 1975; McCormack 1984a:164-167). Their occupancy was initially tentative, but an 1824-25 report about Fort Chipewyan distinguished between Chipewyans who were “more settled” and those who were “migratory” (Hudson’s Bay Company Archives [HBCA], B.39/e/8:28). This distinction might have been between Chipewyans and “Carribou Eaters,” who made “frequent visits” but lived elsewhere, especially at the east end of Lake Athabasca (HBCA, B.39/e/6:5). Many Chipewyans maintained family connections with Caribou Eater Chipewyans and with Chipewyans farther south in the boreal forest, connected by travel routes of lakes, rivers, and overland trails. Some segments of the local Chipewyan population were highly mobile, living for a time in the Fort Chipewyan region and at other times in the Fond du Lac–Black Lake region at the east end of Lake Athabasca. Until the mid-twentieth century, Chipewyans dominated the Aboriginal population of the Fort Chipewyan region (e.g., HBCA B.39/e/6:3; Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], Acc. 70.387, A.245/1; McCormack n.d.; Canada 1966).

The people who became known as Crees might have had a toehold in the region for a long time, though whether they were resident that far north prior to the advent of the fur trade is disputed because of limited and ambiguous archaeological and documentary evidence (Mackenzie 1970:132; Thompson 1962:72-73; Smith 1981b, 1987; Wright 1975).¹⁰ They probably reflect the coalescence at Fort Chipewyan of people from different Cree-speaking populations. Crees have a long history of residency in north-central Saskatchewan, and their territories might have extended at least to the Lac La Biche and Clearwater River area of northeastern Alberta (e.g., Russell 1991; Pollock 1978:134). They had an early presence – though not necessarily pre-fur trade – on the lower Athabasca River, where a post was maintained for their trade long after Fort Chipewyan had been established. They made trading and raiding trips to Lake Athabasca and beyond during the “proto-contact” period, a lengthy period during which European influences reached the region, but before Europeans actually arrived on

the scene. Cree oral traditions, first recorded by Alexander Mackenzie (1970:238), spoke of a peace they had made with Beaver Indians at “Peace Point” on the Peace River.¹¹ In the nineteenth century and continuing into the twentieth century, some Crees who had settled in the Lesser Slave Lake region moved farther north to the Little Red River vicinity of the Peace River. They intermarried with and contributed some members to the Fort Chipewyan Cree population (Little Red River Cree Nation members, pers. commun. 1997; McCormack n.d.; Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 10, Annuity Paylists).

Peter Pond named Lake Athabasca on his maps “Lake Araubaska,” suggesting that original or incoming Algonquian speakers may have spoken the *r* dialect (Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library). Cuthbert Grant referred to “Arabasca” in his 1786 journal (Duckworth 1990:11 and passim), and in 1874 Father Lacombe (x, xv) wrote that the “Cris d’Athabaskaw” spoke the *r* dialect. Yet in his 1801 publication, Alexander Mackenzie (1970) used “Athabasca,”¹² the *θ* dialect, which to Father Lacombe was the dialect spoken by almost all the other Wood Crees. The *γ* dialect persisted in the Fort Chipewyan region, and it was also spoken by the Crees who moved onto the Prairies. While linguists today call this dialect Plains Cree, it is spoken throughout northern Alberta (Rhodes and Todd 1981; Smith 1987:439-440; Lacombe 1874:xv).

The newly arrived Europeans – virtually all men¹³ – were similarly diverse. The North West Company was dominated by Highland Scots from Montreal. Some were emigrants to North America escaping social and economic pressures in Scotland, others were Loyalists from the United States, and still others had received seigneuries in Quebec for their military service. The North West Company’s labour force was Scottish, French Canadian, and mixed-ancestry people who might already have been developing the identities that eventually became “French-Métis.”¹⁴ The Hudson’s Bay Company recruited heavily in the Orkney Islands. Although the Orkney Islands had become part of Scotland by that time, Orcadians had a distinctive Norse history and did not consider themselves to be Scots in identity or culture (McCormack 1987, 1992a, 1996b). After 1810, the Hudson’s Bay Company also recruited from Stornoway on the Island of Lewis and elsewhere (McCormack 1992a, 1992b; Goldring 1979, 1980a, 1980b, 1982; Clouston 1936, 1937a, 1937b; Wonders 1993; J. Nicks 1980). These men even spoke different languages: Orcadians spoke Norn and, after being colonized by Great Britain, adopted a Scots English, while Highland Scots spoke Gaelic. In Canada, Orcadians and Highland Scots often assimilated to a common Scottish identity (Brown 1988; McCormack

1996b, 2003a), which obscures their distinctive origins and contributions to the fur trade. It is intriguing to contemplate the possibility that the first language that a man from Stornoway (Lewis) and a man from Stromness (Orkney) may have had in common was Chipewyan, Cree, or French, not English.¹⁵

In the mid-nineteenth century, fur traders were joined by new groups of Europeans: Anglican and Roman Catholic missionaries. Anglican missionaries were mostly Englishmen recruited by the Church Missionary Society. If they were married, they brought English wives with them to their mission posts. Roman Catholic missionaries were priests of the order Oblats de Marie Immaculée from France or Belgium and a parallel European Oblate order of lay brothers, joined later by French Canadian men from Quebec. They recruited a Quebec-based order of nuns to assist them, French Canadian members of the Sisters of Charity, more commonly known as the Grey Nuns (Soeurs Grises).

Historically, the term “Half-breed” often referred to people of mixed Aboriginal-British ancestry, and “Métis” to people of mixed Aboriginal-French ancestry.¹⁶ In 1868, however, Bishop Taché (1870:97-98) called all mixed-ancestry people “Half-breeds,” distinguishing between French or Canadian Half-breeds and English Half-breeds solely on the basis of their language.¹⁷ Similarly, in 1899 and 1900, “Half-breed” was the term used for all mixed-ancestry people by officials associated with the Treaty No. 8 and Half-breed Scrip Commissions (Canada 1966; Mair 1908; Leonard and Whalen 1998). This usage was affirmed by Lacombe in his *Memoirs* (1901). In 1906, Elihu Stewart (1913:36) claimed that “no offence is taken in applying the term ‘half breed’ to one who by nationality deserves the name, while he will bitterly resent the epithet ‘breed.’”

Such populations had been developing since the seventeenth century in the Great Lakes area (Peterson 1985; see also Mackenzie 1970:93). Some of their descendants might have ended up at Fort Chipewyan in the service of the North West Company and, later, the Hudson’s Bay Company. But many of these mixed-ancestry people were born at Fort Chipewyan itself, where mixed marriages began with the fur trade. Most local Half-breeds had Chipewyan mothers or grandmothers. While some family connections and communications existed between the mixed-ancestry people of Fort Chipewyan and better-known Métis centres such as Red River, that does not mean that Red River Métis culture or identity was exported to Fort Chipewyan (Slobodin 1966, 1981; Payment 1998; Bird 1991:xxiii, 5, 7).¹⁸

Instead, the Half-breed population of Fort Chipewyan, as elsewhere in Alberta and the Northwest Territories (Foster 1994; Nicks and Morgan

1985; Nicks 1987; Hanks 2000), is characterized by an independent genesis and lineage. The Fort Chipewyan Half-breeds began to evolve distinctive non-Indian identities even before Red River was founded. While many mixed-ancestry individuals were assimilated into Chipewyan bands and today bear a Chipewyan identity, others founded families who are now considered to be Métis. Two common French-Métis surnames in Fort Chipewyan today, with very old fur trade roots, are Tourangeau and Lepine (see Duckworth 1990).¹⁹ The name Mercredi is found in both Métis and Chipewyan family lines but is a modification of the original “Macardi or McCarthy”; men with this surname were identified as “Irish [half] breeds” in the 1901 census of Canada (LAC). Other local surnames derive from Highland Scottish and Orcadian ancestors, such as Fraser, Mackay, Flett, Loutit, and Wylie.

At the same time, it is important not to overemphasize the historical distinction between Indians and Half-breeds at Fort Chipewyan.²⁰ There is no evidence that the people themselves drew such firm boundaries. Such an emphasis reflects a European racial consciousness, fostered by political situations at Red River and in the Saskatchewan basin, where in the nineteenth century Métis became politically and militarily powerful. The ethnic distinctions imposed in northern Alberta by government policies at the time of Treaty No. 8 were consequences of these developments elsewhere (McCormack 1998b). In fact, while much is known about northern European-Indian intermarriage (e.g., Slobodin 1966, 1981; Smith 1982; McCormack 1989, n.d.), little is known of the development of a Métis consciousness or distinctive identity at Fort Chipewyan or elsewhere in the Mackenzie drainage.

We also know little about the Aboriginal evolution or adoption of a distinctive concept of Indian-ness, in addition to individual Beaver, Chipewyan, and Cree identities. At least two processes were under way, probably quite early. At some point, Chipewyans and Crees began to move beyond an internal focus on their own societies, a consciousness of themselves as “the proto-type of humanity” (Turner 1991:296) expressed by George Back’s quotation in 1820 of a Chipewyan statement, “we are people and there are none others” (Houston 1994:63), to a broader focus on their place in relation to other peoples with contrasting cultural ways, many of whom were not formerly known to them.²¹ In short, they began to accept the European concept of distinct groups of Indians, each bearing a culture, and they also created terms in their own languages for Europeans they perceived as distinct, especially English and French (see Goulet 1998:101-103).²² At the same time, the underlying meaning of ethnic distinctiveness

also began to shift, in that “the inventory of distinct traits” defining each group was being “produced to a significant extent through interaction with other sectors of the society” (Jackson 1989:128) – the collective space of the evolving plural society at Fort Chipewyan. These processes intensified in the twentieth century as local Aboriginal people came to define themselves within the framework of the encompassing Canadian society. For now, it is enough to know that by the end of the nineteenth century, all of these terms were firmly in use and contributed to the intersubjectivity of the fur trade world and its distinctive mode of production. No matter what people called themselves in their immediate families and communities, they recognized the common meanings of terms such as “Chipewyan,” “Cree,” “Indian,” “White,” and “Half-breed.” They were part of the lexicon of the fur trade and of that new space of common interaction.

3

The Fur Trade Mode of Production

The historic encounter between two social worlds ... is always dialectical; that is, each works to transform the other, even as they are being joined in a new order or relations.

– *John Comaroff and Jean Comaroff*, *Ethnography and the Historical Imagination*

The fact that several very different groups came together in a joint endeavour at Fort Chipewyan, with some kind of collective commitment, does not imply that it meant the same thing to all parties. Jennifer Brown (1993) has pointed out how the “fur trade” has become an entrenched field of study in Canadian history, so universalizing that the fur trade appears to have been the preoccupation of Aboriginal as well as non-Aboriginal participants. That misconception results in large measure from the telling of the story first by European fur traders and later by historians telling the national story of Canada, never by the Aboriginal peoples who shared equally in that story but had differing views of what was occurring. The fundamental tool used here to inform our interpretation of these two centuries of history is not how the fur trade contributed to the creation of Canada, but what June Nash has termed the “paradigm of integration of all people and cultures within a world capitalist *system*” (1981:393, emphasis in original).

Aboriginal and European peoples brought distinctive modes of production and cultural understandings to their interaction in a common social

formation at Fort Chipewyan. These became linked through the fur trade, driven by both British capital and the imperatives of Aboriginal cultures. All the partners were shaping the new space they now shared and contributed to the transformation of all of its members in the dialectical process discussed by the Comaroffs above: “each works to transform the other” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:97). The transformations may not be equal. But “local social and cultural forms invariably mediate the direction of historical movements, even when they are being radically altered by them” (97). Writing a history of Fort Chipewyan requires attention not only to the internal dynamics of the “local worlds” of the Athabasca District, but also to their articulation with the regional and global structures and agencies that composed their total environments (98). As Ann Laura Stoler (2006b:41) and others have pointed out, metropole and colony, core and periphery constitute a single analytic field.

The internal dynamics of these local worlds are presented through the theoretical structure of mode of production: an analytical frame that includes “at the most fundamental level both the ‘physics’ of production and the social relationships human beings enter into in order to motivate (or operate) the technical dimension of production” (Asch 1979:88; see also, e.g., Kay 1975:22; O’Laughlin 1975:346; Terray 1972:98-99). The mode of production is “a structure of material reproduction [that] incorporates both technical and social components” (Asch 1979:88-89; see also Roseberry 1989:156). It encompasses the forces of production and the social relations of production.

The forces of production are the manner by which natural resources are transformed into products for personal use or for exchange, thus acquiring value. They comprise three factors: the raw materials necessary for production; technology, including the infrastructure of production and circulation; and labour, or the organization of labour in the productive process. Resources plus technology are jointly termed the “means of production” (Asch 1979:89; Kay 1975:13-21; O’Laughlin 1975:351, 350-351).

The social relations of production represent the same set of traits as relations of appropriation between persons. Humans work together in the productive process, but their relationship to the means of production and their control over their labour and their production vary considerably. The relations of production are concerned with ownership and control of the means of production and of labour and its products. They frame the network of power that determines who benefits from productive efforts.

While it is often useful to consider forces and social relations of production as analytically separate, they are nonetheless “two conjoint forms of one

and the same process" (Terry 1972:99). The social relations of production "engender ... the different forms of material production" (22), and in turn the forces of production impose limits on the productive capacity of the society (Asch 1979:90). The mode of production is sometimes considered the base of a society, in that it provides for its material reproduction.

The other side of the equation is those institutions collectively termed the "superstructure" that contribute to the reproduction of the system as a whole: "juridico-political and ideological relations that suppress, displace, or misrepresent basic conflicts" (O'Laughlin 1975:349). Superstructural elements enter into consciousness and are often expressed as ideology, or "an articulated system of meanings, values, and beliefs of a kind that can be abstracted as [the] 'worldview' of any social grouping" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:24). Such structures are the vehicles by which members of the society recognize the legitimacy of their institutions. They undermine support for challenges from other segments of the society. In short, the reproduction of a system of relations of production requires members of the society to support and acquiesce to the status quo.

THE DOMESTIC MODE OF PRODUCTION

Before they became engaged in the fur trade, the Aboriginal peoples of the Fort Chipewyan region had a use-oriented or domestic mode of production, in which the primary goal of production was family survival. Asch's description of this mode of production for the Mackenzie River Dene (1979:90-91, 1977:47-49) can be applied to the Chipewyans and Crees of Fort Chipewyan. The forces of production were based on the resources or raw materials comprising the flora and fauna of the boreal forest and transitional treeline biomes. Animal populations were diverse regionally and seasonally. Some species also fluctuated in number over time. Aboriginal technology was dominated by apparently simple tools for snaring and entrapment and for the processing of raw materials, whose successful use was predicated on a rich knowledge of animal behaviour and appropriate uses of spiritual power, what Ridington called "artifice" as well as artifacts (1982:470).¹ People also had the capacity to create and manage landscapes using fire, another technology requiring extensive, detailed knowledge of ecosystem relationships (Lewis 1977, 1978, 1982, 1990). Travel was by foot and canoe, with limited use of dogs as pack animals, which meant that transport capacity was restricted. Given the variable availability of game, people travelled through their lands in search of game rather than moving

killed game to a central camp. Finally, the division of labour was based simply on gender and generation, though such a statement overstates the differences between the activities of men and women.

The social relations of production were broadly egalitarian. The unit of production and consumption was the local band, a group of related people who lived either together or in the immediate vicinity. While this group varied in size over the course of a year and its social history, it was typically a small, face-to-face social unit of approximately twenty-five to fifty people.² The members of each local band normally produced only what they needed for their own use and were “collectively responsible” for their own physical survival (Asch 1979:90, see also 1977:47). Together, they “owned” and controlled the means of production: the land and its resources, the technology necessary for production, and all crucial basic knowledge. Sharp (2001:38) pointed to the portability of such knowledge: “Knowing a territory is not memorizing where things are but understanding how things relate to each other.” Mechanisms of reciprocity and sharing, as well as expectations that all people would learn basic life skills and knowledge, prevented any individual or family from monopolizing crucial resources or products. Leadership reflected an ongoing demonstration of personal competence and authority but did not confer coercive power. Leaders led because people chose to follow them (e.g., MacNeish 1956; Goulet 1998:36; Preston 2002[1975]:78-79).

Local bands were tied to one another by multiple bonds of kinship, creating social and political interconnections that afforded them a safety net for dealing with variability in resource availability (e.g., Jarvenpa 2004). The regional network of local bands, which was also the usual marriage universe, constituted what has been termed the “regional band.” While their members occasionally assembled temporarily for seasonal hunting, fishing, or socializing, the regional bands did not form cohesive social groups (Helm 1968; Rogers and Smith 1981:141; Smith 1981a:276, 1975:439, n.d.:11).³

Asch (1979:91) has summarized the superstructural elements that contributed to the reproduction of this system:

These relations of production were expressed juridicially by a kinship system that, through the use of lateral extensions, incorporated the rights of local production group membership to all Slaveys (and indeed all Dene); an inheritance system that forbade the transmission of land, raw materials, technology, and, indeed, “special” hunting knowledge from one generation to

another; and a marriage system that required for its operation the continual outmovement of members of each local production group.

Children were expected to seek their own sources of power and personal ties to the spiritual world, acquiring knowledge independently.⁴ This quest for greater knowledge was lifelong (e.g., Smith 1973; Sharp 2001; Preston 2002[1975]; Brightman 2002[1973]; Bird 2005; Ridington 1982; Goulet 1998:chs. 2, 3; Asch 1979:91).

THE CAPITALIST MODE OF PRODUCTION

The European men who founded Fort Chipewyan had an exchange-oriented, capitalist mode of production. Their primary goal was financial profit. When this mode is fully developed, a specialized labour force produces commodities, goods destined to be exchanged or sold, not consumed directly by the workers. Workers, or producers, do not own or control the means of production, neither resources nor technology. Often termed a “proletariat,” they have no way of earning a living or supporting themselves other than by selling their own labour in the marketplace. Labour itself has become a commodity, with its value, like that of other commodities, based on the costs of its reproduction (hence the term “living wage”). The means of production are monopolized by the capitalists or bourgeoisie, who thus stand in opposition to the producers in a class relationship. The relations of production are hierarchical class relations between the owners and the producers (e.g., Mandel 1967, 1968; Bottomore and Rubel 1961; Kay 1975; Roseberry 1989:153-154). Contractual obligations and wages replace personal obligations (Marchak 1988:19). This classic understanding of class has been muted and is debated in the late twentieth century (e.g., Marchak 1988), but it fits nineteenth-century capitalism very well.

In this system, surplus production “takes the form of surplus value, is appropriated by capital as profit and systematically ploughed back into production, for it is the nature of capital to expand” (Kay 1975:56). Immanuel Wallerstein (2004:2) called it “the imperative of the endless accumulation of capital.” Capital is continually reinvested in profit-making enterprises. In merchant capitalism, capitalists invest their profits in distribution infrastructure, such as ships, while in industrial capitalism, profits are invested in productive technology itself, the tools and the factories in which production occurs. Over time, owners strive to reduce their labour costs in order

to increase the value they can realize. For example, they can improve the efficiency of their technology, which allows them to economize on labour, or they can move production sites from a region with high wage rates to another with lower rates. These “circuits of capital” fuelled the expansion of the capitalist mode of production. In the nineteenth century, they were responsible for the ascendance of industrial over merchant capital, the enlargement of the working class at the expense of other forms of labour and production, and the development of a global division of labour.

Superstructural elements include the institutions that contribute to the creation and maintenance of restricted access to the means of production and continued capitalist production, as well as ideologies affirming the legitimacy of relationships of inequality, both among social classes and among regions. Antonio Gramsci (1971:12) recast these ideas as “social hegemony,” or “the ‘spontaneous’ consent given by the ... population to the general direction imposed on social life by the dominant fundamental group.” The concept of modernization is part of this hegemonic ideology, attending the emergence of capitalism from earlier European feudal structures and accompanying its export to other parts of the world.

Because the capitalist mode of production was (and is) inherently expansionary, it was the driving force behind the joining of European and Aboriginal worlds, the reason that Europeans came to northern Canada. It was implicated in the development and expansion of European nation-states and derivative states, including Canada. Capitalist investment beyond European borders began to structure a new global economy and world-system, based on a set of economic relations characterized by “internationalization of production” (Wolfe 1977:615), an integrated, worldwide division of labour and structures of unequal exchange (e.g., Wallerstein 1974, 2004; Kay 1975; Nash 1981). Immanuel Wallerstein has pointed out that, for states, “The ability to expand successfully is a function both of the ability to maintain relative social solidarity at home ... and the arrangements that can be made to use cheap labor far away” (1974:85-86, emphasis omitted):

This division is not merely functional – that is occupational – but geographical. That is to say, the range of economic tasks is not evenly distributed throughout the world-system. In part this is the consequence of ecological considerations, to be sure. But for the most part, it is a function of the social organization of work, one which magnifies and legitimizes the ability of some groups within the system to exploit the labor of others, that is, to receive a

larger share of the surplus ... The division of a world-economy involves a hierarchy of occupational tasks, in which tasks requiring higher levels of skill and greater capitalization are reserved for higher-ranking areas. [349, 350]

These different regions have been conceptualized as the core, the semi-periphery, and the periphery (e.g., Wallerstein 1974, 2004; Nash 1981; Smith 1978).⁵ The core was situated originally in western Europe. Industry in core areas tended to be highly capitalized and involved secondary processing rather than primary processing of raw materials. Labour was fully socialized, which meant that workers had become separated from the means of production and relied completely on the sale of their labour. They were well rewarded for their productive efforts, at least compared to workers elsewhere. The core area was able to accumulate and invest capital profitably because of its relations with peripheral (and semi-peripheral) areas. Indeed, “the productive ability of the periphery usually is the means by which the development and competitive organization of the core comes into being” (Smith 1978:581). “Lower-ranking goods” were produced in the periphery, where labour was “less well rewarded” (Wallerstein 1974:302).

Such economic and geographic distinctions were not natural; they had to be created. Initially, Europeans entered into trade with people in an “external arena,” based primarily on the exchange of luxury goods (302), not essentials, which would lead to interdependency. Weak economic links meant that Europeans could not dominate their new trading partners. As the capitalist mode of production expanded and entrenched, and as global capitalism expanded, these marginal areas were transformed into peripheries, semi-peripheries, and even cores, according to the manner of their incorporation into the world economy and their subsequent growth and development. To naturalize these distinctions, Europeans developed ideologies that revolved around theories of geographic determinism and racial and cultural superiority and inferiority, with the latter often expressed as “primitiveness.” Ideas about Indians and Indian-ness were part of these European systems of belief.

While the capitalist mode of production was the vehicle for these regional and global shifts and for a new global economic integration,⁶ non-European peoples did not necessarily reorganize along capitalist lines. At Fort Chipewyan and elsewhere, indigenous peoples were willing to produce commodities to trade, but they did not adopt a capitalist mode of production. They could enter into economic relations with Europeans that were satisfactory to both sides without becoming a fully socialized

labour force separated from the land and from essential technology. It is this adaptation that is presented below as the fur trade mode of production. Ironically, such independence facilitated capitalist expansion. By continuing to live much as they had formerly, people also continued to support their own costs of reproduction, whereas those who lived completely by selling their labour had to be adequately reimbursed for their living costs, which reduced surplus value.

In short, the world-system that was driven by the capitalist mode of production became a complex mix of sovereign states that exercised legal control over immediate territories and subjects, investors and corporations, and the producers of the surplus value that was the basis of the system. Some producers were citizens of states, while others were members of smaller socio-political entities, such as tribes and bands. Some were fully socialized as a labour force, while many were not. The integration among these entities and individuals at an international level was fundamentally economic, not political, although it was “reinforced to some extent by cultural links and ... political arrangements” (Wallerstein 1974:15).

Global capitalism in the nineteenth century is often considered synonymous with colonialism, and for many regions that was true. Integration could and would be forcibly imposed through colonial political and economic domination. However, for northwestern Canada in general and Fort Chipewyan in particular it is useful to separate the two institutions. Later chapters will develop the argument that true colonization in most of what would become western Canada did not begin until after 1870, and in the Fort Chipewyan region, after 1899.

Some theorists have tried to distinguish between colonization and imperialism.⁷ The former entailed the migration of people from a nation “to vacant or sparsely peopled lands” (Hobson 1948[1902]:6), where they established “settlement colonies” (Fieldhouse 1966:372; see also Said 1994:9). Imperialism has been conceptualized as a process of European rule over non-European peoples (Fieldhouse 1966:372; Said 1994:9), a relation of “empire ... in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society” (Doyle 1986:45). In Hobson’s turn-of-the-century description, imperialism occurred mostly in tropical or subtropical areas,

in which white men will not settle with their families ... Nearly all the lands were thickly peopled by “lower races” ... The “occupation” of these new territories was comprised in the presence of a small minority of white men, officials, traders, and industrial organisers, exercising political and economic sway over great hordes of population regarded as inferior and as incapable of

exercising any considerable rights of self-government, in politics or industry. [Hobson 1948[1902]:27]

The most profitable use of the hired labour of inferior races is to employ them in developing the resources of their own lands under white control for white men's profit. [249]

It is now known, however, that no settlement colonies were established in unpopulated lands. All colonies displaced indigenous occupants, who were then either brought into the labour force as slaves or lower-class workers or forcibly removed and subjugated by the colonists.⁸ Both forms of colonization – establishment of settlement colonies and imperialism – fall within the definition of colonization used in this work: “economic exploitation based on the seizure of political power” (Balandier 1966:37).

THE FUR TRADE MODE OF PRODUCTION

When Aboriginal and European peoples met at Fort Chipewyan, they had to build bridges between their separate systems of production and meaning, to create a new space that would allow them to negotiate successful exchanges of furs, foods, and goods. Marriages between Aboriginal women and European men, which Stoler (2006b:24) has called “the intimate frontiers of empire,” were crucial to this process, along with cultural mediation accomplished by newcomers of mixed ancestry and mixed cultural experiences (see Van Kirk 1980; Brown 1980, 2001; Szasz 2001[1994]:3; Clifton 1989:28-31).

European traders introduced merchant capitalism (mercantilism), which persisted as the dominant form of capitalism at Fort Chipewyan until after World War I. Merchants are traders, agents of the marketplace. They buy goods from a vendor and sell them to a buyer. They do not engage in direct production and therefore cannot increase the value of the commodities that they buy and sell (Kay 1975:65, 86). Instead, they realize profit by engaging in unequal exchange with producers: at least one transaction “must take place at a price that is not equal to value” (87).

Merchant capitalism “created the framework of the world market and laid the foundations of underdevelopment as well as development” (Kay 1975:94). Merchants broaden their investment possibilities by fostering the expansion of markets and commodity production. In the fur trade, they encouraged the people with whom they traded to expand their

production of commodities and their consumption of imported goods, and they also encouraged more people to become involved. In the Fort Chipewyan region and elsewhere, an ever-enlarging number of Indians who had formerly produced strictly for their immediate needs also began to produce for exchange, in order to acquire items imported from other parts of the world. These new objects supplemented and replaced much of their pre-contact material culture repertoire. Merchants made their profits by manipulating rates of exchange, all expressed in the fur trade standard, "Made Beaver." The result was inter-regional integration, the hallmark of a world-system.

According to Kay (1975:95, 155), such developments "corrode" the pre-capitalist social formations and open "the way for the reorganization of production upon a capitalist basis." In the Fort Chipewyan region, however, the reorganization of production along capitalist lines was the result of state intervention after 1899 and is arguably still not complete more than a century later. While Chipewyans and Crees altered their domestic mode of production to accommodate their new trading interests, they did not adopt a fully capitalist mode of production or greatly alter other aspects of their cultures (see Bibeau 1984).

Indian involvement in the fur trade has often been conceptualized as the rapid adoption of European manufactures and consequent Indian "dependence" on Europeans. Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría (2008:33) has called this the "quick replacement" model of presumed inferior and static indigenous technologies by presumed superior European ones. Yet dependence was a two-way street. Europeans relied almost exclusively on Aboriginal men and women to produce fur⁹ and food provisions (especially fresh and dried meat and pemmican), and also on occasion to help with transport or work at the post. They also manufactured persistent and highly adaptive items of technology long used in their regions, such as snowshoes, moccasins, and other items of clothing suitable for long, cold winters (see Ray 1984:10; Bellman and Hanks 1998:59-60).¹⁰ Jennifer Brown (1993:83) has described much of this work as "a woman's industrial revolution." Brown (1980) and Van Kirk (1980) have written extensively about European reliance on the labour and knowledge of Indian and Métis women.

This dependence on local people was probably inevitable, given Indian knowledge of the resource base, which gave them economic control, and the sovereignty they exercised over their lands, which gave them political control. Europeans who came into the country learned crucial skills and local customs from others who had already mastered them and from their Indian and Métis associates. Ironically, to the extent that Europeans and

Métis learned how to survive locally and were socially integrated into Indian bands, they themselves became independent, in varying degrees, from direct control by the traders, much like the Indians themselves. It is telling that one term for Métis who were no longer under contract to a trading company was “freemen.”

As long as Chipewyans and Crees brought in furs and food to trade, the traders did not need to control the labour process directly. They nevertheless sought some measure of control over the producers, to keep their attention focused on producing desired commodities and to ensure that furs came to them rather than to a competitor. For instance, in April 1827, John Franklin (1969[1823]:304) described how the Hudson’s Bay Company had developed new regulations “respecting the trade with the natives. The plans now adopted offer supplies of clothes, and of every necessity, to those Indians who choose to be active in the collection of furs.” At the same time, Indians sought some control over the terms of trade, the quality of goods available to them, and the extent to which economic relations needed to be mediated by social relations (e.g., Ray 1974; Innis 1964[1956]:373).

This discussion suggests several points of articulation between the domestic mode of production and the (merchant) capitalist mode of production at Fort Chipewyan. Chipewyan and Cree men and women were willing to produce furs and provisions to exchange for imported commodities and, increasingly, to work directly for the traders on an occasional basis, especially as post hunters and fishermen. They were also willing to marry their daughters and sisters to European traders and employees. These marriages established bonds of kinship that facilitated and channelled economic exchanges and created a female labour force at the post. The children they produced became not only part of the local labour force but also the glue that helped integrate the local plural society. To James Clifton (1989:29), these children were “culturally enlarged” men and women, capable of moving seamlessly among the different cultures of the region.

The result was that Chipewyans and Crees added two new components to their economy: independent (petty) commodity production and wage labour, although reimbursed by exchange credits, not cash payments (Innis 1964[1956]:161, 240; Mandel 1967:30, 1968:66). Thus, the new mode of production was a mixed economy with three different sectors: domestic production, independent commodity production, and wage labour. It was oriented in many ways to, but not dominated by, capitalist exchanges.

Europeans were willing to enter into a range of social relations or transactions with the Indians that transcended the purely economic aspect of exchanges. Europeans also needed to provide most of their own food from local resources. Costs incurred in hunting and fishing to support the post were part of the overhead of doing business. The distinction between commercial and subsistence food production narrowed when European and Métis employees lived and hunted with their Indian allies and kinsmen. Such activities were a reversal of the trend in Europe toward a fully socialized labour force.

While Indians certainly wanted a wide range of European manufactures, which became part of their means of production, it is simplistic to claim that their involvement in the trade as regular producers of fur and food was due primarily to a “seemingly insatiable appetite” for these goods (Murphy and Steward 1968[1956]:400; see also Bibeau 1984). The fur trade literature contains numerous examples of northern Indians who were discerning consumers and in some instances had little use for most of the trade goods they were offered (e.g., Hearne 1958[1795]:50-51, 176; Murray 1910:29; Ray 1980; Rothney 1975:63-65). Ray (1974:68-69, 141-142) pointed out that Indian demand for goods was relatively inelastic: if prices paid for furs increased, Indians often trapped less, not more. Many Indians had to be induced to produce goods for trade, especially in the volume desired by the traders. Encouraging production was an ongoing concern at Fort Chipewyan throughout the nineteenth century.

Changes in the social formation of the region occurred as traders and their employees entered into the relations of production of the Indian bands in two ways. First, traders and their employees entered into “country marriages,” or marriage *à la façon du pays*, with Aboriginal women (Van Kirk 1980; Brown 1976, 1980). As Sylvia Van Kirk explained (1980:4), “The marriage of a fur trader and an Indian woman was not just a ‘private’ affair; the bond thus created helped to advance trade relations with a new tribe, placing the Indian wife in the role of cultural liaison between the traders and her kin.”¹¹ Trappers and traders ideally became affinal kinsmen, a relationship entailing expectations of mutual assistance and reciprocal exchanges.

Indians and Europeans were also linked by the extension of credit, or debt, to individual trappers, a financing system that became extensive in the nineteenth century in the Fort Chipewyan region and persisted until the 1940s, although it diminished in the twentieth century (see Ray 1974:137-138, 196-197, 1984, 1990b; Morantz 1990; Tanner 1965; Rothney 1975:85-86; McCormack 1977-78).¹² To Rosemary Ommer (1990:9), credit was “the mechanism whereby merchant capital delegated the power of

production to ‘independent’ operators on certain terms, with certain strings attached, in order to generate the flourishing of individual enterprise and the expansion of the whole economy.” Tanner (1965:46) has discussed how credit both defined and mediated the trade relationship: “The obtaining of credit marked an important change in the economic life of a trapper. It indicated a long-term commitment to trapping as the major winter productive activity, and to dealings with a single trader, in order to exchange the results of this activity for some valued end.”

Although credit was extended to group leaders elsewhere in the early years of the fur trade, in the Athabasca country it seems to have been an individual matter from the earliest record, which is Cuthbert Grant’s 1786 journal of spring activities at the Athabasca River post (Duckworth 1990). Each trapper, representing his immediate family group or local band, dealt personally with the trader in the credit relationship, rather than being represented by a trading chief or other Aboriginal middleman. As James Keith described the Chipewyans in 1825, there were few who warranted the title of chief: “their influence & authority being little known beyond the circle of their own Family” (Hudson’s Bay Company Archives [HBCA], B.39/e/8:28). Cuthbert Grant distinguished between Indians paying their credits and trading furs or provisions; the latter referred to transactions that occurred after the fall debts had been settled (Duckworth 1990:180n12 and *passim*). He described Indians “selling” meat, clearly considering it a market transaction (e.g., 12).

Post managers kept account books that tracked each trapper’s sale of furs and provisions and purchase of goods at the post. A trapper who accepted credit became linked to a particular trading post and was required to travel there at least twice yearly, once to obtain his fall trapping “outfit” on credit and a second time to trade his furs and pay off his debt. Credit stabilized a trapper’s relations with the trader. The author of an 1860 report remarked, “Debts are given to Indians who are faithful in paying them” (HBCA, B.39/e/10:1). From the trapper’s point of view, getting credit was a way to capitalize the coming winter’s trapping by providing the goods he needed from the post, while allowing him to trap when and how he pleased (Tanner 1965:47; Morantz 1990:221). On a pragmatic level, it stimulated trapping because trappers had to pay for their purchases in order to obtain more credit, despite the Hudson’s Bay Company policy of periodically writing off bad debts. More broadly, it accorded with Chipewyan and Cree ideologies of reciprocity, the need to repay those who have assisted you (e.g., Ray 1984:11; Morantz 1990:221). The trader could use credit to limit the sorts of goods available to trappers:

By allowing only certain goods to be purchased on credit a trader was able to do more than just influence the buying habits of Indians along what he thought to be more prudent lines. He was also able to stress the importance of trapping as an activity, allowing only those supplies needed for a trapping expedition on credit. In this way he ultimately could increase the fur harvest of his district, on which most of his profit could be made. [Tanner 1965:49]

Credit established personal relations between the trader and his trappers, and gave the trader the advantage of having the trappers under an obligation to him. Through this relationship he was able to directly influence their economic life by personal intervention, and discourage activities which conflicted with trapping. [47-48]

Country marriages and creditor-debtor relations established social ties that transcended the purely economic aspect of exchange. As Sahlins suggests, it is “social relations, not prices [that] connect up ‘buyers’ and ‘sellers’” (1974[1972]:298; see also Terray 1972:149; Barnett 1975:199). As Indian involvement in the fur trade became regularized, Indians relied more on these individual transactions, although it appears that the goods they acquired in trade were used to benefit their entire local bands. While they might have been listed on the account books as individuals, their trade represented production by their immediate families and larger social groups. The Chipewyan and Cree bands were no longer marginal to or outside the world-system but integrated into it as a periphery. This transformation occurred at Fort Chipewyan after the establishment in 1821 of a monopoly on trade by the Hudson’s Bay Company (McCormack 1984a). By the second quarter of the nineteenth century, the Chipewyans and Crees who had become permanent occupants of the Fort Chipewyan region and traded there regularly had replaced their “total economy” with a new mode of production.

Forces of Production

Resources

While the total resource base was initially unchanged, Chipewyans and Crees developed different patterns of resource exploitation, which can be inferred in part from records of fur and food production. They emphasized some fur and game resources that previously would have been little utilized or utilized differently, thereby affecting regional ecosystems in often significant ways. From the earliest days of the Athabaskan fur trade,

provisions were important trade items, especially fresh and dried meat (Duckworth 1990). Bison became an important resource for sale, hunted so intensively to provision the posts that by the 1840s they were in serious decline (Ferguson 1993).¹³

The Chipewyans who relocated to the western end of Lake Athabasca shifted from the resources of the transitional treeline zone to those of the boreal forest. While they still hunted caribou, especially in winter, they also went after bison and moose and a different configuration of smaller animals. For example, in 1791-92, Peter Fidler described Chipewyans hunting bison and beaver in the Little Buffalo River west of Slave River, beaver in the Taltson River, and moose in the vicinity of the Slave River itself. No caribou were mentioned (Tyrrell 1934:Journal 8). Ray (1984:9) has suggested that food resources were less plentiful than in their former territory and that Indian economic specialization was accompanied by reliance on a more restricted and less variable resource base, which made their new economy more unstable. Both points are debatable. There is no reason to believe that the resources available in the biome of the Fort Chipewyan region were impoverished compared to those of the transitional treeline region, especially given the role played by controlled burning in managing habitats for game and fur animals. In the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, before bison numbers diminished, substantial herds ranged as far as north as Great Slave Lake and east of the Slave River, and were plentiful in the Peace River country (e.g., Hearne 1958[1795]:161-164; Tyrrell 1934:370-411; Van Zyll de Jong 1986). Samuel Hearne (1958[1795]:163) pointed out that "of all the large beasts in those parts the buffalo is easiest to kill." Barren ground caribou continued to migrate occasionally to the Fort Chipewyan region, woodland caribou lived in the Birch Mountains, and the Peace-Athabasca Delta supported a rich resource complex. Even deer and elk were reported in the region (HBCA, B.39/e/7:5). The 1823-24 post report stated, "The hunting grounds of the Indians in that locality are well stocked with large animals" (HBCA, B.39/e/6:3). The following year, the report stated that the Chipewyans fed off the "fat ... of the land & water of the first of which they are seldom destitute" (HBCA, B.39/e/9:7).

While both Chipewyans and Crees established themselves as distinct socio-territorial groups in the Fort Chipewyan region, they continued to travel to areas suitable for hunting and trapping. Chipewyans were described as relatively independent of Europeans and their goods, despite their "numerous Population," because of their "wandering habits, great attachment and frequent Visits to their lands" (HBCA, B.39/e/8:8). Crees,

on the other hand, had a “more Ltd. Population, stationary habits, & dependent situation on Europeans” (HBCA, B.39/e/8:7). Beginning in the mid-nineteenth century, strategic Chipewyan-Cree marriages began to erode the restrictive territorial boundaries of particular bands and optimize land-use possibilities (McCormack 1989:128).¹⁴ Members of ethnically distinctive local bands thereby began to construct a new multi-ethnic regional band centred on Fort Chipewyan as the point where local bands came together briefly each summer.

Technology

The most striking feature of the fur trade mode of production, and the one most obvious to Europeans, was that an increasingly large portion of Aboriginal technology was obtained through trade. Chipewyans and Crees enjoyed access to a wide inventory of imported manufactures, including guns and ammunition, metal goods, textiles, and decorative items. The post blacksmith made gun repairs, which encouraged reliance on firearms. Some theorists have argued that Chipewyan relocation to this region was possible only because of the new fur trade goods they could obtain, especially guns, which facilitated their hunting of large, solitary animals rather than herds of caribou. However, the frequent references in Cuthbert Grant’s 1786 journal to hunters bringing moose meat to the post to trade indicate that, by this early date, Chipewyans and Crees were hunting moose quite capably, although it is not clear whether they relied on firearms as opposed to snares or other traditional hunting techniques (Duckworth 1990).

By 1823, the Chipewyans who were “more accustomed to whites” were reported to be copying them in manner and dress (HBCA, B.39/e/6:3). By mid-century, all Indians had evidently replaced much of their material culture inventory. Bishop Taché (1978:146), writing at Île-à-la-Crosse in 1851, noted that Chipewyan “Men’s clothes are quite similar to those of our peasants; they obtain their clothing in the stores of the Company where it is received ready made from England.” In 1859, Robert Campbell, the Hudson’s Bay Company factor at Fort Chipewyan, wrote to the director of the new Industrial Museum of Scotland: “You will perhaps be surprised to learn, that even in this Northern District, the ‘Indians’ appreciate the convenience of the articles of civilised usage so much, that hardly a trace now remains of their former dress, domestic utensils, or weapons of war, or the chase; all have already fallen into disuse among them” (Royal Museum of Scotland).

Such comments support the popular notion that Indian people had become dependent on the fur trade. As trappers, they were believed to have lost their original autonomy. Ray (1984:4) referred to Indians as “increasingly caught in the trap of having to buy the tools that they needed” at a time when the resource base was, he believed, increasingly unstable. Such an interpretation involves a material culture–focused concept of autonomy that is not usually applied to non-Aboriginal peoples. “Dependence” has become established in academic and popular discourse as a term connoting a special kind of Aboriginal subordination. In fact, all peoples who became part of the capitalist world-system were (and are) dependent on exchanges in the market place. Among their ranks were British workers, but the term “dependence” is rarely used to characterize them. Ironically, British workers were probably more dependent on the goodwill of company owners than were northern Indian trappers and hunters, who maintained considerable independence and had to be courted and enticed by company traders throughout the nineteenth century.¹⁵

There is no evidence that the less visible aspects of Aboriginal technology were replaced. As Bishop Taché (1978:138) wrote in 1851: “All the Indians are better naturalists, not only than our country people, but even than the most learned elements of our populations.” In her memoir of the Fort Vermilion region a half-century later, Mary Lawrence stated that, to the Indians, “the sheer stupidity of the white man in the bush was something beyond belief” (Fort Vermilion 2008:16). “When he comes into this country he’s like a child. He doesn’t know anything and he does things that even a child would be ashamed of” (172). Indians maintained their knowledge of local ecosystems, animal behaviour, and the use of fire to manipulate plant and animal populations. Controlled burning was an important tool to create and maintain the prairies and other early successional habitats on which most species of fur trade and subsistence importance relied (Lewis 1977, 1978, 1982; McCormack 1975b, 1976, 2007). While Crees, with their origins in the fire-adapted parkland habitats of the Saskatchewan basin, were undoubtedly familiar with the principles of fire management and could easily apply them to their new northern homeland, it might have been a new technology to Chipewyans, who would not have used it in the caribou ranges of the transitional treeline. Presumably, they learned its use by observing other residents, including the Beaver Indians they displaced, and by trial and error.

An important addition to their technology, probably in the late eighteenth century, and crucial to the development of trapping as a regularized

activity, was the dog team. Dogs were hitched in a single line to a toboggan or sled, facilitating winter travel along narrow trails among residential settlements, trapping areas, and the fur trade post. While the idea was introduced, perhaps by example, the implements were homegrown, a synthesis of pre-existing sleds and the carioles and dog harnesses used by traders and their employees (Hearne 1958[1795]:213; Mackenzie 1970:154; McCormack 1988:48, 55). Sleds and harnesses were fashioned locally from wood and leather. People also continued to use dogs for packing furs and other items when sleds could not be used (McCormack 1988:49, 57). When and why dog teams were adopted by Indians at Lake Athabasca is not known, but it might have been related to some measure of increased sedentariness; keeping dogs requires owners to stock meat or fish for their feed. An entry in Cuthbert Grant's journal from the Athabasca River fort, dated 5 April 1786, referred to two Chipewyans arriving from "Lack de Brochet" (Jackfish or Richardson Lake) with "two trains of meat," the first local reference to dog-sled use (Duckworth 1990:11). In 1801, Alexander Mackenzie (1970:135) described Cree women making "their journies [sic], which are never of any great length, with sledges drawn by dogs." However, his reference was not specific to the Crees of the Lake Athabasca region.

Labour

Labour allocation was similar to that of the domestic mode of production, in that men and women undertook different and complementary fur trade and subsistence activities. Both men and women trapped, though generally for different species and in different localities. Women's traplines were usually in the vicinity of their settlement, whereas men used dog teams to trap at a greater distance, thereby increasing the productive capacities of the local band. Dog teams provided transport between kill sites and winter settlements.

There was also a new regional division of labour represented by the concentration of some Aboriginal peoples in trapping and subsistence pursuits and others in wage labour. While the former have often been characterized as Chipewyans and Crees, and the latter as Half-breeds and Métis, these identities were influenced by occupational choices and the social communities to which people belonged. Such specialization was rarely exclusive. People who worked directly for the traders and, in the second half of the nineteenth century, for missionaries, typically enhanced their wages by hunting, fishing, cultivating small gardens, and acquiring food from their bush-based relatives, thereby reducing both their otherwise

dependent position as labourers and the costs incurred by traders in maintaining the labour force. A regional division of labour, with occupational specialization occurring within immediate social networks – the local bands and their later outgrowths within the town of Fort Chipewyan itself – also marks the mixed economy of the fur trade mode of production.

Relations of Production

The primary goal of Chipewyans, Crees, and most Métis was survival. That meant that trapping and wage labour were undertaken only to provide enough exchange-value to purchase the items they needed.¹⁶ The major change was the intervention of the European trader and his employees in the relations of production, paralleling the intervention of imported manufactures in the forces of production. It was the traders who solicited and encouraged Aboriginal participation in the fur trade and employed them as labourers. They drew upon their social ties with Aboriginal people and their control over exchange rates, although not without considerable negotiation and occasional resistance by Aboriginal producers. In many ways, they were like “big men,” able to motivate but not dictate Aboriginal subsistence activities.¹⁷ For example, on 2 October 1868, the chief factor at Fort Chipewyan, William McMurray, “had a conference with the Indians & explained to them his intentions concerning their debts furs &c during the ensuing Winter” (HBCA, B.39/a/46:41). Traders did not otherwise seek to alter Aboriginal use of or access to bush resources. All Indian participants had to provide themselves with food and other subsistence items, thereby underwriting their own reproduction costs, which reduced costs that the traders would otherwise have been forced to cover and enhanced the value appropriated by the traders.

Ray (1984:7-8) has argued that one role of the traders was to encourage Indian trappers to rely upon a less secure resource base, in the form of assistance from the Hudson’s Bay Company during times of privation. The company stocked foodstuffs for distribution at such times. This practice, he said, reduced Indian self-sufficiency, leaving Indians vulnerable to low fur returns and shortages of food (10). They turned to the company for relief at such times, a situation that Ray has interpreted as a fur trade-based “welfare system” (16-17). However, Ray himself has pointed out that assistance provided to Indians was drawn from the “excess profits” made by the company. Conceptualizing it as welfare supports an interpretation of Indian dependency. It may be better thought of as a return of a portion

of the excessive surplus value appropriated by fur trade merchants. Occasional assistance provided by the trading companies was a way of helping the Indians make a living wage, not equivalent to twentieth-century government support for people displaced from the production process. Moreover, at Fort Chipewyan the resource base might have been more reliable than at most posts, and there is little evidence that the company regularly put up extra supplies in case Indians went hungry. Instead, the post journals recorded complaints if Indians had to be fed from post stores during intervals of starvation.

Despite the changes stemming from fur trade involvement, the structure of control within Chipewyan and Cree societies was still vested in the members of the local bands. However, the groundwork had been established for individualized production of and control over furs, provisions, and goods, potentially conflicting with persistent values about sharing. Aboriginal peoples faced new contradictions related to a mode of production based on a mixed economy comprising production for subsistence, production for exchange, and wage labour. There were potential contradictions between internal and external leadership and control and between individual and communal activities in the productive process.

In short, the fur trade mode of production reflected the addition of trapping, production of provisions, and wage labour to the former economy. It was the beginning of a mixed economy that provided additional flexibility for livelihood. At the same time, Aboriginal people were vulnerable to any constraints that might be imposed on their access to the resources of the bush, to changes in the availability of the species they exploited, and to changes in the structure of the fur trade. While involvement in the fur trade is often seen as making Aboriginal economic structures more fragile and less certain, the existence of a mixed economy also evened out some economic problems by offering new means of livelihood.

Superstructure

Superstructural elements were an outgrowth of those of the originating modes of production. There is no evidence that Chipewyans or Crees who trapped changed their fundamental value systems in any significant way, or that they came to accept the legitimacy of lineal authority, whether it was exercised by outsiders or their own members. Traders insinuated themselves into the relations of production by manipulating exchange relationships, not by imposing any measure of formal authority. However, more subtle changes might have resulted from the roles played by

Métis and European employees in the fur trade relations of production. Especially in earlier days, they were often sent out to winter with Indian bands, to encourage production of furs and provisions and also to support themselves. Many men married local women and began families. Fathers transmitted their values to their children, even when those children were raised in their mother's culture and with her cultural identity. These values supported an acceptance of trapping and trading as legitimate and worthy activities. Roman Catholic Métis and Protestant Scots also taught their families some aspects of their religions, paving the way for the Christian missionaries who arrived in the mid-nineteenth century (see Podruchny 2006). These men were an informal but highly important influence in the relations of production.

Métis and Europeans in the Fur Trade Mode of Production

While most of this discussion has focused on Indians, it is useful to speak explicitly of a shift by many Europeans to a fur trade mode of production as well, and of the special place occupied by mixed-ancestry people, who were born of, and into, the fur trade (e.g., John Foster 1985:73; Bellman and Hanks 1998:29). The heart of the fur trade mode of production was a highly flexible, mixed economy. There was a continuum of choice and involvement, ranging from relative isolation to intense engagement with the world-system, but marked always by a combination of commercial production and unimpeded access to and control over bush resources, subject only to traditional socio-territorial arrangements. In the Fort Chipewyan region, people who became known as Half-breeds (Métis) tended to emphasize the wage labour side, although their economic activities were far broader, especially for the men who were not regular employees of a post or mission. After the fur trade stabilized in the nineteenth century, many European traders spent their adult lives as middle managers living in communities such as Fort Chipewyan, marrying local women, raising children, and largely alienated from the European capitalist sphere. Lower-level employees, whether Indian, Métis, or European, even if they received a full-time wage, were never completely separated from the means of production.

New company employees learned essential skills from long-term employees and from their Aboriginal partners and kinsmen. Even if they began as true proletarians from Britain or Quebec, in the fur trade country they were able to achieve considerable independence.¹⁸ They learned how to live and travel in the bush, they had social ties to Indian bands, and through

their jobs and their kinsmen they enjoyed access to the bush-based means of production and were involved in the kinship-oriented relations of production. For example, at Fort Chipewyan several men spent considerable time each winter living with their families at fishing camps, putting up fish for post provisions and feeding themselves at the same time, mostly quite well. These camps were conveniently situated for occasional visits from Chipewyans and Crees, and there was virtually no supervision by company officers. It is not surprising that Bishop Taché (1870:108) referred to the “unbounded liberty” enjoyed by Half-breeds living in the Northwest.

In terms of superstructure, the flexibility of the mixed economy comprising the fur trade mode of production meant that it could incorporate people with diverse values. There is no evidence that Europeans who embraced a new-found independence abandoned their own fundamental acceptance of lineal authority, although they might have held it in abeyance at times and worked around it when it suited them to do so. This is suggestive of tendencies of European wage labourers to resist unfair treatment and the worst excesses of industrial development, while accepting the legitimacy of the underlying system.

The Fur Trade Mode of Production: Resilient and Long Lasting

Sylvia Van Kirk (1980:5) has written about fur trade society as combining “both European and Indian elements to produce a distinctive, self-perpetuating community.” To the extent that the fur trade society was expressed within the plural society of each post and its surrounding region, it reflected different modulations of the same basic fur trade mode of production, in which local people controlled most of the means of production they utilized and were involved in face-to-face social relations and obligations. At the same time, this distinctive society was vulnerable to changes in opportunities to produce and sell commodities and labour, and especially to changes in bush resources and unfettered access to these resources.

The fur trade mode of production was remarkably stable. It persisted at Fort Chipewyan for well over a century, until after World War II. It was virtually unchallenged until the end of World War I – the period of this book – although the 1920s and decades that followed brought serious threats to the mode of production but without alternatives available for Aboriginal people. Nevertheless, as a mode of production, it afforded the region’s residents considerable resilience in coping with the dramatic

changes forced upon them after Canada was created as a nation-state and embarked on a program of economic development in the Northwest, the Fort Chipewyan region. At the same time, it articulated with a capitalist mode of production that was engineering radical political and economic changes in Britain and Britain's Canadian colonies. The next two chapters explore these new circumstances and their impacts.

4

The Creation of Canada: A New Plan for the Northwest

In their search for a frontier, Canadians discovered a nation.

– *Morris Zaslow, The Opening of the Canadian North,
1870-1914*

As the people of Fort Chipewyan became engaged in the fur trade, they also became integrated into the world-system. Changes that occurred internationally in the second half of the nineteenth century were refracted locally in the Fort Chipewyan region through a series of political developments in eastern Canada. In 1867, the Canadian colonies coalesced into the Dominion of Canada, which immediately sought to acquire the Hudson's Bay Company territories – Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory – and developed a policy for realizing its national ambitions. The expansion of Canada was a process of internal colonization directed at the Aboriginal peoples of the Northwest and their lands. Canada was able to follow a previously established template for acquiring land from Indians and managing their affairs, but it had to fashion a new pattern for dealing with Métis. These developments led to shifts in the northern fur trade and anticipated the expansion of the new nation-state directly into the heart of the Athabasca District at the end of the nineteenth century. This expansion was facilitated by the arrival in mid-century of Christian missionaries, who introduced not only new religious beliefs and practices but also limited forms of linguistic and cultural colonialism.

CANADA AND THE WORLD-SYSTEM

The nineteenth century saw the expansion and development of European capitalism, which fed on economic opportunities at home and in other parts of the world. Of particular significance was a shift in the relationship between merchant and industrial capital. Merchant capital was originally an independent form of capital that realized profits at both the Aboriginal and European ends of its circuit. As industrial capital developed and consolidated its resources, industrialists invested in mercantile operations. After about 1850, merchant capital lost its autonomy in Europe (Kay 1975:99-123; Hobsbawm 1975). Yet industrialists did not seek at that time to establish industrial relations of production in the peripheries, regarding such regions primarily as markets for their manufactures and sources of raw materials, not as locations for direct investment (Kay 1975:100-101). Merchant capital became the agent for industrial capital in this enterprise. But because mercantile businesses had been absorbed by industrial capitalists, merchants had lost their source of profits at the European end of their exchange circuit and relied on surpluses extracted elsewhere, increasing their profits "through ever-more unequal exchange: an initiative experienced in the underdeveloped world as a decline in the terms of trade" (123). Merchant capital, which does not control labour productivity directly, is limited in its ability to increase the rate of exploitation indefinitely. This contradiction between merchant capital acting on its own behalf and on behalf of industrial capital touched the Canadian colonies in the 1850s and eventually led to industrial investments in regions formerly dominated by the fur trade.

At mid-century, a new emphasis in Britain on free trade saw Canada look to the United States for markets to replace formerly protected British markets. The Reciprocity Treaty of 1854 began to shape a trade strategy that forged closer ties between Canada and the United States. At the same time, the colonies were developing a system of railways, the basis for a new Canadian industrialism (Creighton 1972[1944]:268-269; Careless 1970:210-212; Pentland 1981:131-146; Owrarn 1980:44). These developments rested on a strong agricultural base and labour force (Pentland 1981:ch. 5). After 1850, "a revolution in transport swept up local markets into national and world ones, and produced a 'modern' structure and outlook": "Its stock in trade was built around concepts like progress, 'science' and invention," embodying "the spirit of capitalism" (160, 180; see also Hobsbawm 1975:4).

These developments coincided with a new movement in Canada West (formerly Upper Canada), which in 1841 had acquired a measure of responsible government as part of the United Province of Canada, to expand into the Hudson's Bay Company territories. Canada began to consider itself "the trustee of the North-West in the name of the British Empire and civilization" (Owram 1980:56). A multifaceted expansionary campaign involved attacks on the company's monopoly and its alleged despotic control of Indians, reassessment of western potential for agriculture, concerns that Canada needed new lands to ensure its future prosperity and growth, and fear of US aggression (Cooper 1985; Owram 1980; Creighton 1972[1944]:ch. 6; Mitchell 1953:220; Myers 1975[1914]:ch. 9; Zaslow 1971:2-3). Canadians came to see expansion into the Northwest as "an irresistible force over which man had little control" – Canada's own manifest destiny (Owram 1980:102).

The Hudson's Bay Company was the focus of these nationalist and economic pressures. In 1857, it was the subject of a parliamentary inquiry and report, which proposed that Canada acquire lands then under the company's control (Rich 1960:796-798; Creighton 1972[1944]:276). By this time, the company was evidently willing to dispose of its interests in exchange for suitable compensation, a position confirmed in 1862 by the company's overseas governor (Mitchell 1953:222, 228). In 1863, Edward Watkin, who envisioned resolving the financial problems of the Canadian Grand Trunk Railway by opening up the Hudson's Bay Company's western lands to railway construction, engineered the purchase of a controlling interest in the company by the International Financial Society, a London-based financial group (Mitchell 1953; Rich 1960:815, ch. 29; Careless 1970:241; Innis 1964[1956]:397). Anticipating Confederation and the transfer of company lands, the new board of governors expected that the company would increase the value of its holdings by capitalizing on its Canadian operations, although this move would undermine the company's traditional mercantilism. A harmony of British and Canadian political and financial interests is suggested by the appointment of Sir Edmund Head, lately the governor general of Canada, as the new governor of the reorganized Hudson's Bay Company (Mitchell 1953:241; Rich 1960:838). In 1863, Head began to negotiate with the Colonial Office for the eventual sale of the company's territories to Canada (Rich 1960:854 and *passim*).

These negotiations were implicated in the establishment of the Dominion of Canada as a nation-state by the British North America Act, passed in 1867, which became Canada's constitution (Rich 1960:870-872).¹ In

Zaslow's words (1971:3), "In their search for a frontier, Canadians discovered a nation." Its founders intended that the new sovereign nation would create and maintain the conditions necessary for capitalist expansion and development in regions previously dominated by the fur trade. Canada would be "a great holding company" (Hutcheson 1973:170) for merchants wanting to expand markets and production. It would create structures to foster trade from coast to coast and support eastern industrialism. The Dominion's first major achievement was to acquire the Hudson's Bay Company territories in 1869. The formal transfer of jurisdiction took effect in 1870. The establishment of a provisional government under Louis Riel at Red River and armed resistance to Canadian expansion were responsible for the creation of the Province of Manitoba in 1870, but the rest of the land remained the North-Western Territory (e.g., Rich 1960:ch. 31; Dickason 1992:ch. 18).

Canada's strategy to assimilate its new territories was predicated on tariff protection for Canadian industry, the construction of the transcontinental Canadian Pacific Railway, and European immigration to western Canada, where the new residents would produce raw materials to ship to eastern buyers and provide a market for imported goods. These features were collectively framed in 1879 as the National Policy (Careless 1970:276-278; Pentland 1981:173; Creighton 1972[1944]:ch. 7). To this triad, Canada added a systematic process to acquire clear title to western lands from their Aboriginal occupants. These measures were all intended to build a "new order that was to arise from the wilderness" (Owram 1980:125), modelled on British institutions, producing a safe and inviting West for investors and immigrants.

FEDERAL ABORIGINAL POLICIES: TREATING WITH INDIANS AND MÉTIS

Canada dealt with Aboriginal peoples in one of two ways, depending upon whether they were construed as "Indian" or "Métis," terms that are semantic markers for European discourses about Aboriginal identities (McCormack 1998b).² An image of Indian-ness began to develop at contact in eastern North America and has continued to evolve to the present. By the mid-nineteenth century, it was increasingly modelled after a Plains Indian cultural ideal in both Canada and the United States (Ewers 1965; Francis 1992; Berkhofer 1978). All Indians were believed to be organized into homogeneous cultural units with a land-based, subsistence-oriented,

nomadic lifestyle. In circular fashion, Indians were sometimes defined simply as people living the lives of Indians. To the extent to which Indians incorporated other activities into their economies, such as wage labour, and substituted purchased, commercially manufactured commodities for items of their pre-contact material culture, they were seen as abandoning their cultures and compromising their status as “real” Indians.

Canada has a long history of legal dealings with Indians, stemming from early colonial legislation and policy and confirmed in the Royal Proclamation of 1763, which established provisions to protect what is now known as Aboriginal title, or Indian interest in their lands in regions not yet defined as colonies, and to extinguish that interest when desired. Section 91(24) of the British North America Act gave the federal government jurisdiction over “Indians and lands reserved for Indians.” The Rupert’s Land Order of 1870, or Deed of Surrender, which transferred the Hudson’s Bay Company lands to Canada, required that Indian claims be formally settled and that Indians be compensated for lands required for settlement (Reiter 1965:II-49; see also Tough 1992a).³

Following pre-Confederation precedents, Canada used treaties as its vehicle to extinguish Aboriginal title as the need arose. Treaties were “the cornerstone to the Crown-Indian relationship” (Reiter 1996:v). Canada negotiated eleven “numbered treaties” between 1871 and 1921 with Indians from northern Ontario to the Mackenzie River (see *inter alia* Cumming and Mickenberg 1972; Dickason 1992:ch. 19; Reiter 1996; Lambrecht 1991:5-8; Talbot 2009). Treaty No. 8, negotiated in 1899 and 1900, is the subject of Chapter 8. When they negotiated treaties, government officials were doing more than simply honouring a legal process. The treaties were instruments of social policy that had its roots in the colonial program to promote Indian “civilization” that had developed in the early nineteenth century. This program involved segregating Indians in permanent villages on reserves where they could be Christianized and taught how to be farmers, a stepping stone to their eventual integration into Canadian society as full citizens. Subsequent legislation in Upper and Lower Canada to facilitate this process was ancestral to the post-Confederation Indian Act. All the treaties provided for reserves, which concentrated Indians into small enclaves, thereby removing the Indian population from most of the land and freeing their former territories for other uses by other people. Indians who entered into treaty became “status Indians,” a legal status defined by federal legislation whose origins lay in colonial enactments.⁴ Canada easily transformed its colonial governance of Indians into new legislation enacted in 1868 governing Indians and their lands. After 1876,

this was known as the Indian Act, and amended frequently (e.g., Surtees 1988; Tobias 1976; Dickason 1992:258-260). The complex administrative structure that administered the Act, the Indian Affairs Branch, was also a colonial outgrowth. This branch was placed within the Department of the Interior in 1873, when that department was created. Although the branch was renamed the Department of Indian Affairs in 1880, it remained under the jurisdiction of the minister of the interior (Spry and McCardle 1993:139; Zaslow 1971:17). Spry and McCardle (1993:139-141; see also Lambrecht 1991:7-8) have pointed out that serious conflicts of interest existed between the Departments of the Interior and of Indian Affairs at both operational and constitutional levels. Rarely were they resolved in favour of Indian interests.

“Métis” was a novel Aboriginal identity without a US parallel.⁵ It was forced upon Canada in 1869-70 by the resistance at Red River of people who self-identified as Métis and the subsequent requirement to obtain a surrender of their claims from those same people. The new Dominion had to acknowledge and treat with a group of people who were not Indian, but who were defined partly by their mixed Indian-European ancestry and partly by distinctive adaptations, cultures, and identities.⁶ These people possessed claims to land through their Indian mothers and grandmothers.

While the concept of Métis-ness is ambiguous, it has usually implied some measure of cultural sameness, complicated by an acknowledgment of an incipient Métis class structure. Despite recent scholarship about the cultural and economic complexity of the Red River Settlement and its relationship to a wide range of Métis peoples and occupations from Lake Winnipeg to Lesser Slave Lake (e.g., Pannekoek 2001, 1991; Coutts 2000; John Foster 1985, 1994; Nicks and Morgan 1985; Nicks 1987; Ens 1996, 2001; Devine 2004), the southern Métis – those occupying the Red River region and the plains and parklands of the North-West Territories – tend to be represented as homogeneous, with a “cohesive sense of nationality” (Zaslow 1971:20). Often identified as people of French, Algonquian (especially Cree and Ojibwa), and Roman Catholic origins, they are sometimes referred to as “Red River Métis” or a derivative, “Plains Métis.” An important part of this discourse is that there was a dispersal of Red River Métis that spread their distinctive Métis culture into more remote areas.

Métis were people usually considered to have lifestyles, cultures, and identities distinct from those of either their Indian or European ancestors, though the degree of distinctiveness varied enormously from region to region. Most importantly, they constructed new social identities for themselves, which were almost always expressed through a biological

idiom of hybridization (see John Foster 1985:75). A biological definition of Métis-ness was, in fact, incorporated into the 1873 Dominion Lands Act, which defined the children of “half-breed” heads of families as “all those of mixed blood, partly white and partly Indian” (S.C. 1873 [36 Vict.], c. 38).⁷ However, the dominant trait of Métis-ness was their special relationship to fur trade and post-fur trade economies, especially as wage labourers, provisioners, freighters and, in some areas, trappers (e.g., Knight 1978; John Foster 1985; Nicks 1987; Bellman and Hanks 1998).

Alexander Morris (1971[1880]:294) distinguished three “classes” of Métis based on their dominant economic pursuit: farming, buffalo hunting, or hunting and trapping. The last of these was conducted by “those who are entirely identified with the Indians, living with them, and speaking their language,” and he dismissed them from consideration as Métis. They were taken into treaty “and have passed into the bands among whom they reside” (295). This distinction persisted into the twentieth century. When Alfred von Hamerstein testified about the Athabasca District before the Select Committee of the Senate in its 1906-07 hearings, he distinguished between “‘white half-breeds’ and ‘Indians.’ Some of the half-breeds live a white man’s life, and others live like Indians; that is, they are on the move all the time” (cited in Chambers 1907:43). Curiously, Morris (1971[1880]:294) never singled out the important Métis occupation of freighting or carting, though he referred to Métis who were expected to “continue to make their living by farming and trading.” Perhaps he considered such employment to be ancillary to the primary occupation of farming or buffalo hunting.

The Manitoba Act of 1870 was the first Canadian legislation to acknowledge special Métis rights. It provided for grants of land to Métis families (S.C. 1870, c. 3, s. 31, in Cumming and Mickenberg 1972:200; see also Lambrecht 1991:8). In 1874, new legislation was enacted to settle Métis claims in Manitoba by issuing “scrip,” a document certifying that the recipient was entitled to receive a later payment, usually land but sometimes cash (Cumming and Mickenberg 1972:201; Hardy 1980:12; Lambrecht 1991:9). This pioneering legislation was extended to Métis in the North-West Territories by the Dominion Lands Act of 1879 (Lambrecht 1991:9), which confirmed the broad approach the government would follow in the future. The government would not negotiate treaties with Half-breeds or Métis but instead would offer them scrip, normally for land. Métis were expected to acquire land as individuals, not collective communities. They could be provided with lands or their cash equivalent as a “once and for all” settlement of their Aboriginal title. Métis were considered to be people closer in economy and lifeways to Europeans than were Indians and there-

fore in no need of special protective legislation; the federal government never passed a “Métis Act” analogous to the Indian Act, governing Métis peoples and their lands. The enabling legislation for extinguishing Métis Aboriginal title appeared in the Dominion Lands Act and its amended versions.

EXPANSION OF CANADA INTO THE NORTH-WEST TERRITORIES

The western expansion of Canada has often been represented in Canadian histories as a remarkable, courageous achievement. While that might have been so for immigrants from eastern Canada and Europe, the story is very different when seen from Aboriginal perspectives and when looking at Canada as a *state*. Canada used a regulated frontier approach – “authoritarian and centralizing methods” (Zaslow 1971:281) – to extend and reproduce its own political, economic, and social structures in the West. These did not evolve independently in the West as part of a populist movement. In fact, Owrain (1980:ch. 9) has argued that in the 1870s historians believed that real western history began with the annexation of the region by Canada, a strategic writing of history in the interests of acceptance of the state.

Morton Fried has defined a state as a level of socio-political organization based on “the differentiated rights of access to basic resources” (1967:191, see also 186), a system of hierarchically ranked social classes (235, 238-239; see also Keesing 1981:60), and a set of characteristic institutions that function to maintain “general social order”: “And at the heart of the problem of maintaining social order is the need to defend the central order of stratification – the differentiation of categories of population in terms of access to basic resources” (230). Even when its ideals state otherwise, as in a democracy, the institutions of the state operate to maintain and reproduce a system of inequality, not overturn it. The vertical class structure divides “those who produced from those who controlled the means of production, those who worked from those who ruled” (Keesing 1981:61). It does so through institutions controlled by members of the upper classes relating to definitions of state membership, definitions of acceptable behaviour, sanctions for violating this code, maintenance of sovereignty, and mechanisms for the generation, appropriation, and redistribution of surplus production (Fried 1967:236-239; Keesing 1981:50). These “bureaucratic and repressive structures” extend horizontally from their origin and concentration in urban centres into the countryside (Keesing 1981:61). Fried

(1967:240) concluded, “More than any form of human association, the state is devoted to expansion – of its population, of its territory, of its physical and ideological power.”

Nation-states emerged in western Europe as part of the development of the capitalist mode of production, funded by colonial enterprises. Canada was created as a new nation-state with the expectation that it would immediately expand its own frontiers into the Northwest. The expansion of the Canadian state was simultaneously the unabashed expansion of its dominant capitalist mode of production. The state acted as capitalism’s agent by creating conditions favourable for the production of surplus and the accumulation of capital.

The institutions that allowed Canada to pursue these goals imposed the constraints with which Aboriginal peoples had to contend. In Ralph Miliband’s conception (1969:49), the state is actually an abstraction from six institutions, or sets of institutions, which collectively compose the “state system”:

- 1 The government is the political mediator and legislative arm of the state. It controls land and resources, conditions of work, and levels of immigration. In a capitalist state, it creates the conditions that enable and support capitalism, thereby providing for the production of profits.
- 2 An administration element includes the state bureaucracy and other regulatory agencies.
- 3 The state’s directly coercive apparatus consists of military and police forces. The military is usually responsible for maintaining the integrity of the state’s boundaries and for extending its sovereignty over new areas, while the police maintain sovereignty internally.
- 4 A judiciary interprets laws and regulations and imposes negative sanctions on persons who have violated them.
- 5 The central government has local extensions, which articulate the interests of the peripheries in which they exist.
- 6 Representative assemblies revolve around the government and are not truly independent. In western Canada, the provincial governments have evolved from such assemblies into entities more like sub-states, exercising a diminished form of state authority over a restricted domain defined by Canada’s constitution.

The persons who occupy leading roles within each set of institutions, typically “men of high state and great influence,” make up the state elite

(Miliband 1969:52; see also Hutcheson 1973:153; Armstrong 1984). Committed to the “national interest,” defined essentially as the maintenance of the status quo (Miliband 1969:130, see also 129-137), they are normally “well represented in the political executive and in other parts of the state system as well” (55, see also 55-66). The tendency toward interchangeability of personnel at the upper levels of business and government ensures a meshing between the state and the corporate structure.

Canada did not approach the Northwest in a disinterested manner but in the interests of members of the privileged classes. As a capitalist state, Canada tried to create and maintain conditions favourable to the capitalist mode of production and to the growth of the state. Government agents provided entrepreneurs access to resources that could be individually controlled, physically and legally. They ensured an adequate supply of workers. They developed markets. They maintained law and order by fostering an acceptance of its legitimacy when possible, but by force when necessary. The expansion of the state was accomplished by the expansion of each of its crucial institutions, underwritten by a legal system based in Canada’s constitution and articulated in legislation and derivative regulations.

Fried has argued that each state has “an ideology that consecrated its power and sanctioned its use” (1967:238; see also Gramsci 1971). To Keesing (1981:295), “a dominant class or group holds political power over a subordinate class or group because historical and economic circumstances have given them the means to do it. The very legitimacy of its authority is an ideology created by the politically powerful and imposed on the powerless: the notion of consent becomes meaningless. Legitimacy is not a social contract, but an instrument of power.” Ideology and legitimacy are embodied in the state’s system of law: “Law is no longer only a mode of social control; it is also a constitutive system that creates conceptions of order and enforces them. Moreover, law as an ideology contributes to the social construction of the world as fair and just” (Merry 1992:360, see also 2000:8). The extension of Canadian law and order into the Northwest represented a new consciousness that was shaped by state control over knowledge and representation and the naturalization of “categories and systems of meaning” that supported the Euro-Canadian narrative of modernity (Merry 1992:362, 365). This consciousness facilitated a general “acceptance of a capitalist social order and of its values, an adaptation to its requirements, a rejection of alternatives to it” (Miliband 1969:182). Legitimation was a function shared by the institutions of the church, family, schools, and the media (Miliband 1969; Drover and Moscovitch 1981:16;

Owram 1980:145). Their representations and their “humdrum rituals and routines” played important roles in shaping both the daily lives and the consciousness of the state’s subjects (Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:35, 1991).

Legitimation occurred easily for immigrants to the West from eastern Canada or the British Isles. They were preferred because of their fundamental compatibility of beliefs and values. Their disillusionment by the mid-1880s (Owram 1980:ch. 8) stemmed from economic disappointments, not rejection of the basic principles of Canada’s state organization.

Aboriginal peoples, on the other hand, consistently rejected the authority of the Canadian state and the imposition of its institutions. Processes of legitimation and attempts to reshape Aboriginal beliefs and values were important state-building vehicles, and cost-effective as well. They prevented the need in western Canada for the expensive military campaigns then occurring in the western United States.⁸ Viewed from the position of Aboriginal peoples, the expansion of the Canadian state was a process of internal colonialism. The first minister of the interior even referred to his position as the “Secretary for the Colonies” (Thomas 1978:61).

Most of the literature about colonization has addressed European colonization in other parts of the world, especially Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Pacific – the so-called third world. Since the late eighteenth century, such colonization had entailed exploration and exploitation of continental interiors, as Europeans seized people and land for their own uses (e.g., Pratt 1992:23–24). Internal colonization occurred in the building of new nation-states, in which colonizers and the colonized were distinct populations that now occupied the same territory, joined together by relations of “domination, oppression, and exploitation” (Wolpe 1975:231; see also Merry 1991:895, 1992:357).

The basic processes of colonization were unchanged. They still involved political and economic control in the interests of the colonizer, who established a formal system of colonial administration tailored to the “national” interests (Merry 1991:895). Talal Asad’s version of the colonial narrative moves this understanding beyond issues of governance: “It tells of European imperial dominance not as a temporary repression of subject populations but as an irrevocable process of transmutation, in which old desires and ways of life were destroyed and new ones took their place” (Asad 1991:314; see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:5; Merry 1991:890).

For Merry (1991:890), colonialism entailed “the large-scale transfer of laws and legal institutions from one society to another,” thereby regulating and legitimating processes of domination. The imposition of European law was part of the process of civilization, considered a great gift to people

suffering from tyranny or anarchy. It “was typically expected to ‘civilize’ colonized peoples: to reshape their family lives, work habits, land ownership practices, and ways of handling conflicts” (Merry 1992:362, see also 2000:8).

Jean and John Comaroff have explored colonialism in its more subtle dimensions as a reshaping of awareness: “The essence of colonization inheres less in political overrule than in seizing and transforming ‘others’ by the very act of conceptualizing, inscribing, and interacting with them on terms not of their choosing; in making them into pliant objects and silenced subjects of our scripts and scenarios; in assuming the capacity to ‘represent’ them, the active verb itself conflating politics and poetics” (1991:15; see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1992:211). Their approach is echoed in Stoler’s insistence that colonialism operates in personal or “intimate” and domestic domains, drawing on fur trade historian Sylvia Van Kirk’s “tender ties” of human relations and on Foucault’s concept of “biopolitics”: “governing techniques” based on “the disciplining of individual bodies” (Stoler 2006b:25, 1995, 2006a; Van Kirk 1980).

These theorists ask critical questions about how colonial relationships were constructed: “How, precisely, were structures of inequality fashioned during the colonial encounter, often in the absence of more conventional, more coercive tools of domination?” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:6; see also Merry 1992:358). And how did those who were subordinated resist, “subvert or evade” those in power (Merry 1992:358, 2000:11-12; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:xi, 6, 31)?

The imposition of internal colonial relations did not mean that a capitalist mode of production and its related class structure were immediately imposed on the colonized population, any more than they were in other global colonial contexts. This point follows the argument made earlier about the development and persistence of a non-capitalist, fur trade mode of production to accommodate the market demands of people with a capitalist mode of production. Wolpe (1975:242-248), writing of South Africa, theorizes that two related processes were ongoing. On the one hand, the way was being cleared for fully developed capitalism, by removing control over the means of production from the producers. On the other hand, some non-capitalist modes of production were conserved, which reduced the need to pay a living wage to workers, who continued to support themselves to some degree. However, people with non-capitalist modes of production were transformed and subordinated to the dominant capitalist mode of production by means of state intervention. Blaut (1993:163) has called this stage “proto or incipient capitalism.” Wolpe (1975:249) argued that in Africa

“the conservation of the non-capitalist modes of production necessarily requires the development of ideologies and political policies which revolve around the segregation, and preservation and control of African ‘tribal’ societies.” There are close parallels between these situations and those in western Canada. In both, “a vast superstructure of administrative control” developed to govern indigenous peoples (249). Colonizers approached the organization of indigenous labour with the idea that, while all labour needs to be managed, indigenous labour required “particular techniques of management” because of its essentially “lazy and unwilling” nature (Barnett 1975:201, 204).

Most non-Aboriginal Canadians⁹ are uncomfortable with the idea that expansion of Canada into the Northwest was a form of internal colonization comparable to the colonialism that shaped third world countries. Historian Sarah Carter has claimed that even historians have been reluctant “to consider that what took place here was part of a global pattern of intensified conflict over land and resources” (1999:101; see also Morantz 2002:5; Treaty 7 Elders et al. 1996:191; Blaut 1993:ch. 1; Asad 1973:111; Cairns 2000:19).¹⁰ From 1870 to the present, non-Aboriginal Canadians have believed that they were helping Indians and Métis by offering them a modern, Euro-Canadian way of life that was innately superior to Aboriginal primitive ways. By making “civilization” available, they “resolved the moral difficulty inherent in the removal of the native from his land” (Owram 1980:132; see also Berger 1970:ch. 4; Carter 1999:4; Treaty 7 Elders et al. 1996:192; Berkhofer 1988:358; Hobson 1948[1902]; Merry 2000:7; Trigger 1985:ch. 1). Moreover, by following the treaty process, they believed they were behaving honourably and generously, in contrast to the often disgraceful and expedient behaviour of the United States toward western Indians during the same decades. Forcible assimilation was for a noble cause. Such beliefs were the Canadian version of Eurocentrism, “the colonizer’s model of the world” (Blaut 1993:10).

Even today, many non-Aboriginal Canadians find it difficult to believe that Aboriginal peoples were not better off as a result of Euro-Canadian interference and that Euro-Canadian prosperity in western Canada was achieved at the direct expense of Aboriginal peoples. They prefer instead to believe that Indians and Métis have not achieved economic success because their “maladaptive” cultural beliefs have persisted, not because government regulatory structures have systematically undermined Aboriginal initiatives (e.g., Carter 1999:12, 1990; Treaty 7 Elders et al. 1996).

Key to understanding the colonial process is understanding who benefits. By definition, colonialism is established to benefit the colonizer,

who defines and largely controls the process.¹¹ Andre Gunder Frank, who pioneered much of the work on dependency theory, pointed out the structural link between development and underdevelopment (Frank 1969, 1970; see also Roseberry 1988). Joseph Jorgensen (1971, 1978) provided detailed examples of those relationships at work in Indian communities in the United States, where non-Indians were the primary beneficiaries of the so-called development of tribal resources, not the Indians whose lands and bank accounts made such initiatives possible. While Indians have typically been blamed for the failure of initiatives intended to build their economies, Jorgensen and others have pointed to the fundamental and persistent difficulties posed by ongoing control by federal bureaucracies. For example, Sarah Carter blamed the failure of Indian agriculture on the Canadian prairies directly on interference from Indian Affairs bureaucrats, in part to benefit neighbouring farmers who complained that Indians had become too successful and competitive (Carter 1990; see also Fisher 1974).¹² While many North Americans are now aware that Native Americans were displaced, they have not reconciled this fact with their understanding of national history, nation building, and the contemporary impoverishment and marginalization of Native peoples.

EXPANSION OF THE STATE: REACHING TOWARD THE ATHABASCA

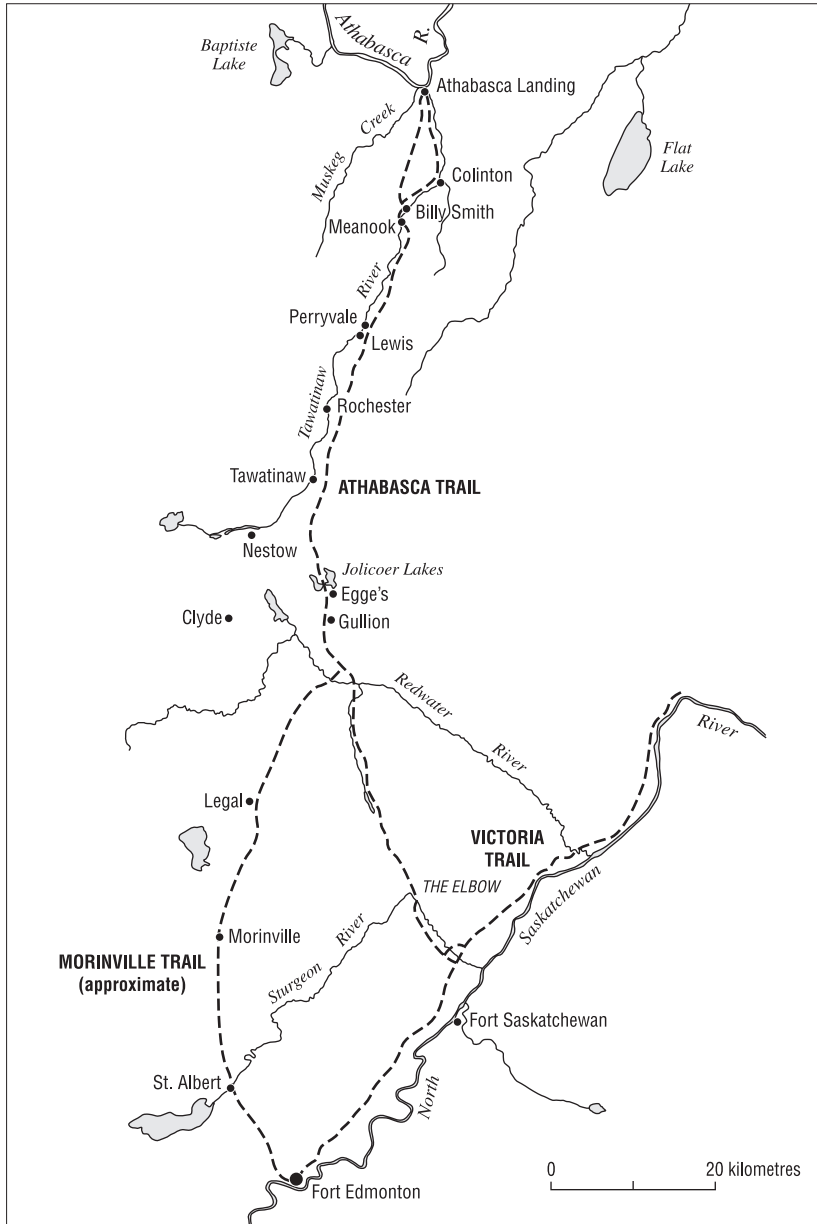
The expansion of the state, the imposition of Canadian political and economic control, and the reshaping of consciousness involved initiatives in multiple domains. While this book cannot describe the expansion of the state into the West in its full character, this discussion will touch on five features that were particularly influential in bringing the state to the doorstep of the Athabasca District. Chapter 5 will then consider more specifically northern developments following from the sale of the Hudson's Bay Company territories and nineteenth-century state expansion into the Northwest.

First, infrastructure development along the North Saskatchewan corridor was crucial, because it allowed physical access by outsiders to territories formerly dominated by Aboriginal peoples and the fur trade mode of production. Without reasonable access, state imposition would be more theoretical than real. In the 1870s, the Hudson's Bay Company modernized its river-based transport to reduce its transportation costs, adding the *Northcote* in 1874 to navigate the North Saskatchewan River to Fort Edmonton (Innis 1964[1956]:343). This transport system was already being

overtaken by freighters from Red River, many of them Métis, and it was surpassed in the 1880s by the advent of railways (Innis 1964[1956]:296; den Otter 1983).¹³ The Canadian Pacific Railway, built with generous government support, arrived in Calgary in 1883, and a spur line to Strathcona – south Edmonton – was completed in 1891 by the Calgary and Edmonton Railway.

Meanwhile, in 1876 the Hudson's Bay Company completed an overland trail from Edmonton to Athabasca Landing (Wonders 1995:58; Athabasca Historical Society [AHS] 1986:16-18; see Map 4.1). Athabasca Landing emerged in the mid-1880s as an important transshipment point and trading post (AHS 1986:29-30; Leonard et al. 1981:ch. 3; McCormack and Drever 1999).¹⁴ The Hudson's Bay Company described the town as its "headquarters of northern transportation" (AHS 1986:41), and many independent traders either located there or used it as a point of travel. One of the most notable was Richard Secord, who operated there from 1888 to 1890, when he sold out to the Hudson's Bay Company and relocated his main office to Edmonton (Leonard et al. 1981:21-27). Secord continued to run a fur trading operation and established posts as far north as Great Slave Lake. Furs from those posts were sent to Secord at Athabasca Land. "Independent Métis boatmen" transported his goods (AHS 1996:41). The ninety-mile road to the landing was improved in 1885 and again in the 1890s, and local homesteading began in 1886 (30-31, 41). The settlement continued to grow throughout the 1890s. Independent freighters, many of them Métis from St. Albert, operated between the landing and Edmonton with horses and wagons in the 1880s and 1890s.¹⁵ The trip took three to four days. By 1898, it was so routine that a weekly stage left the Edmonton and Athabasca Stage Company office in Edmonton every Tuesday morning at 7:30, arriving at Athabasca Landing on Thursday (*Edmonton Bulletin [EB]*, 27 June 1898:5). In 1897, the Athabasca Trail was surveyed by Dominion land surveyor McLean, and in 1898 it became a public road (AHS 1986:64; *EB*, 21 April 1898:1 and 12 May 1898:1).

These improvements allowed overland routes originating at Fort Edmonton to supplant the cumbersome northern river routes in Saskatchewan (see Map 4.2). In 1882, the first flotilla of scows left Athabasca Landing, heading north on the Athabasca River, and Métis freighters hauled goods overland along the Athabasca Trail from Edmonton to the landing (AHS 1986:24-25).¹⁶ While a few travellers were still going north via Methye Portage in the late 1880s, most travel shifted to the Edmonton–Athabasca Landing–Fort McMurray route (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.39/

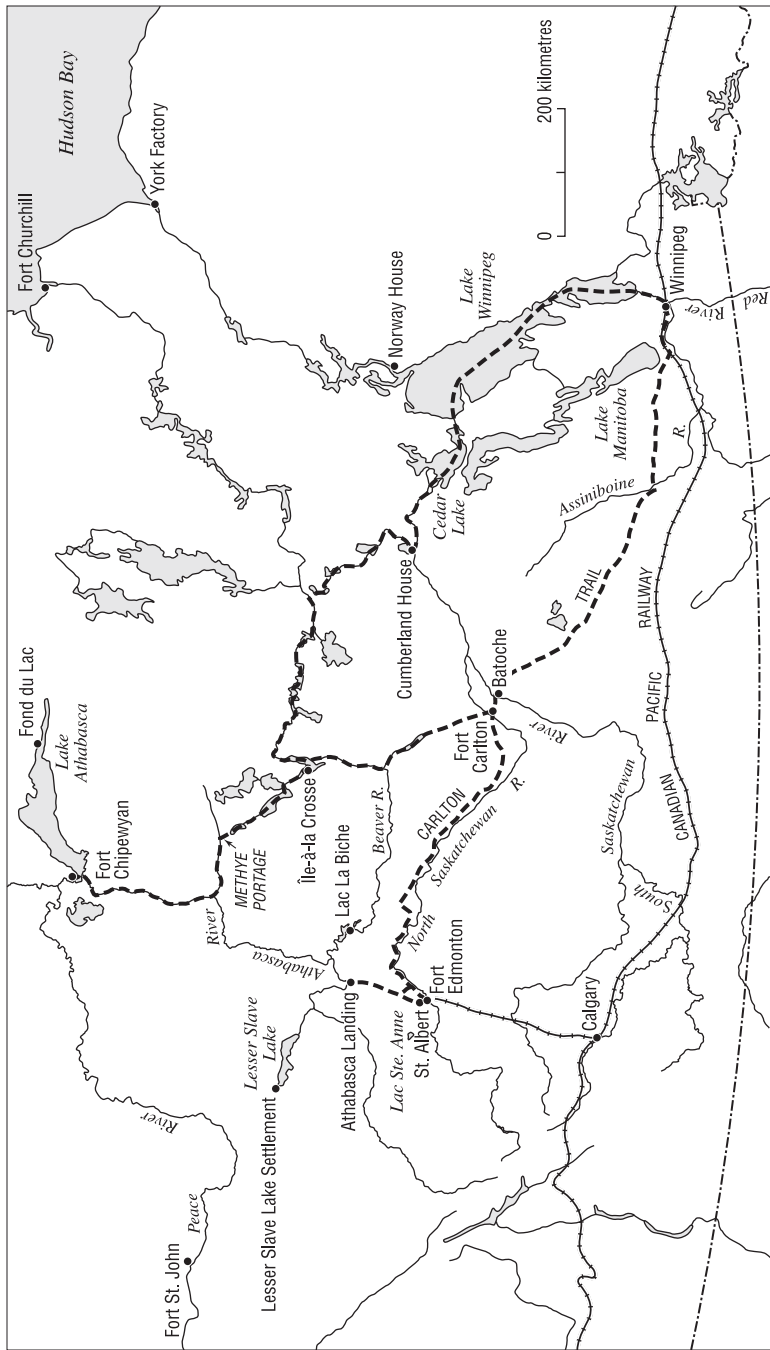


MAP 4.1 The Athabasca Landing Trail

a/56; *EB*, "New Freight Route," 16 June 1883:3; Innis 1964[1956]:33-34). Fort Edmonton, already "the most important company outpost west of the Red River" (Gilpin 1984:18), became the primary point of trade for the western Subarctic.

Second, state institutions were created immediately to provide a government for the North-West Territories, building on the 1869 "Act for the Temporary Government of Rupert's Land and the North-Western Territory when United with Canada" (S.C. 1869, c. 3) and the 1870 "Act to Amend and Continue the Act 32 and 33 Victoria, chapter 3; and to Establish and Provide for the Government of the Province of Manitoba" (S.C. 1870 [33 Vict.], c. 3). In 1870, the federal government appointed a lieutenant-governor of Manitoba and the North-West Territories to act in an executive capacity, and two years later it established the North-West Territories Council (Thomas 1978:46, 54), the forerunner of territorial government and eventual responsible government in the North-West Territories. In 1872, the Dominion Lands Act (S.C. 1872 [35 Vict.], c. 23) provided the structure for dividing up the western lands and a bureaucracy to do so. Two important developments occurred in 1873. A special paramilitary force, the North-West Mounted Police (NWMP), was created to impose Canadian law and order in the West ("An Act Respecting the Administration of Justice, and for the Establishment of a Police Force in the North West Territories," S.C. 1873 [36 Vict.], c. 35).¹⁷ It was assigned numerous administrative responsibilities and empowered to fulfill some of the functions of a judiciary. The NWMP arrived in the West in 1874 and in short order became an integral part of the Canadian frontier tradition as the embodiment of British law and justice (Macleod 1976:ch. 2; Ooram 1980:139-141; Thomas 1978:59; Creighton 1972[1944]:359). The other development was the creation of the long-lived Department of the Interior, which replaced the Secretary of State for Canada and brought together all the government agencies dealing with the North-West Territories ("An Act to Provide for the Establishment of the Department of the Interior," S.C. 1873 [36 Vict.], c. 4; Thomas 1978:60; Spry and McCardle 1993:1).

Third, the federal government began to fulfill its obligations toward Aboriginal peoples. Between 1871 and 1877, it negotiated a series of seven treaties (see Map 4.3). Treaty No. 6 was negotiated in 1876 at Fort Carlton and Fort Pitt with Cree, Stony, and Chipewyan Indians of the parklands that would later become central Saskatchewan and Alberta, and Treaty No. 7 was negotiated in 1877 at Blackfoot Crossing with Blackfoot, Sarcee, and Stony Indians of southern Alberta. The NWMP played a



MAP 4.2 Routes to Lake Athabasca via Methye Portage and Edmonton

strong role in dealings with Indians. Not only was it typically the first institution in the Northwest to represent the Canadian state, its officers also assisted with treaty negotiations and annuity payments and compelled Indian obedience to federal legislation and regulations (Macleod 1976:27; Lin 2007).¹⁸ Métis scrip was first issued in 1875 in Manitoba, and the amended Dominion Lands Act of 1879 extended this model to Métis of the southern North-West Territories. Increasingly repressive government dealings with the Indians, left destitute by the extermination of the plains buffalo and flawed programs administered by the Department of Indian Affairs, and Métis fears about the security of their land holdings led to a series of armed conflicts in 1885, collectively if inaccurately termed the “Northwest Rebellion.”¹⁹ Military engagements occurred between federal forces and the Métis of the Batoche area under the joint leadership of Louis Riel and Gabriel Dumont and some Plains Cree. Louis Riel and eight Cree men were hanged, and others were imprisoned (e.g., Dickason 1992:ch. 21; Stonechild and Waiser 1997; Tobias 1983). In the years that followed, amendments to the Indian Act introduced a “system of increased administration of human relationships” in whatever areas the authorities could reach (Medicine 1993:129). Indians were prevented from directing their own economies, political systems, and even personal affairs.

Fourth, while European settlement and investment did not develop as quickly as their proponents had envisioned, they did happen. The Department of the Interior was responsible for the provision of lands for agriculture and ranching, first through Orders-in-Council in 1871 and then through its administration of the various versions of the Dominion Lands Act, first enacted in 1872 (Bond 1966:22; Spry and McCardle 1993:3). The area targeted for settlement was the “fertile belt,” or the parkland (Lower 1983:ch. 6; Owrarn 1980:68-69, 113-114). Homestead policies were modelled after those of the United States, providing quarter sections of 160 acres per homestead (Brown and Cook 1976:56; Owrarn 1980:103; Spry and McCardle 1993:3; Lambrecht 1991:11, 22). Two sections in every township were set aside as “school lands,” which would eventually be sold or leased to generate revenue to support local public education (Spry and McCardle 1993:3; Lambrecht 1991:14-15). This provision indicates the importance placed by the federal government on education as part of the settlement process. Lands were also provided for the Hudson’s Bay Company and the Canadian Pacific Railway. Surveys had to be done before residents could obtain title to land, even if they had been living on it, and before potential homesteaders could gain entry to homesteads (Spry and McCardle 1993:4). The Dominion Lands Survey conducted its work mainly northwest from



MAP 4.3 Treaties Nos. 1-11

Manitoba along the fertile belt, although it also did some explorations to the south (Owram 1980:114, 150). While immigrants were relatively few until Wilfrid Laurier’s Liberal government took power in 1896, structures were already in place for their arrival, although homesteads were too small for effective commercial agriculture (Owram 1980:118-119; Creighton 1972[1944]:410-417; Brown and Cook 1976:54-68). In addition to individual

homesteading sponsored by the federal government, “colonization companies” acquired land that they sold to settlers. Many of these companies were owned by US investors (Brown and Cook 1976:60-61; Lambrecht 1991:27).

Fifth, a variety of taxation regimes developed in the new North-West Territories. Collecting taxes is the way a state transforms basic resources into more fluid kinds of wealth to pay for its activities. Three levels of government had the power to impose taxes of different kinds. Through the 1890s, the Dominion government’s main sources of revenue were excise and customs duties. Fees charged for fishing licences, while they are usually thought of as an administrative fee, may also be considered a form of federal taxation, administered in the 1890s by the Department of Marine and Fisheries.²⁰ Licences became a serious point of contention between Aboriginal people and the agents of the Canadian government. While the government of the North-West Territories had jurisdiction over local government, schools, roads, and other areas until the creation of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan in 1905, it was not empowered to tax property or income until the North-West Territories Amendment Act of 1891, and even then it was reluctant to do so. Most taxation was local, imposed by municipal and school district authorities, which had broad powers to tax real estate, personal property, and income (McCormack and Drever 1999:15-31).

5

Local Impacts: State Expansion, the Athabasca District, and Fort Chipewyan

*Civilized men must eventually come in contact with those
Indians; you cannot resist the tide of emigration.*

*– Report of the Select Committee of the Senate Appointed
to Enquire into the Resources of the Great Mackenzie
Basin, 1888*

By the 1890s, Edmonton had become a major economic and residential centre and northern entrepôt. Its fur trade economy had been superseded in the 1880s by a diversified local economy based on regional trade, commercial agriculture, and new industries, especially mining, all accompanied by significant population growth (Gilpin 1983:184, 1984:37-40, 49-53). The arrival of the railway in 1891 provided a major economic boost, both locally and in the town's relationship to a vast northern trading territory (Gilpin 1983, 1984). In 1892, Edmonton was incorporated (Wonders 1995:58). For the next century, it served as the departure point for travellers of all sorts heading to the Athabasca and points farther north.

The Athabasca and Mackenzie districts also experienced significant change in the three decades between the sale of the Hudson's Bay Company territories and the negotiation of Treaty No. 8. The fur trade, monopolized by the Hudson's Bay Company for fifty years, was rejuvenated and transformed by new, unregulated competition. At the same time, Canada

was beginning to reach into the North, sending agents to explore its new possessions and take the first tentative steps in imposing Canadian law and order, all of which provoked considerable anxiety on the part of the Aboriginal residents. Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries, present since mid-century in a highly competitive quest to evangelize the Indians, played a range of other “civilizing” roles as well, the subtext to their missions (discussed in Chapter 6).

In the mid-to-late 1900s, anthropologists subsumed northern Aboriginal history for this period under the rubric of the “contact-traditional era,” lasting from 1821, the end of the first period of fur trade competition, to 1945, when the so-called modern era began and the Canadian government “began to accept direct responsibility for native health, education, and welfare needs long neglected” (Helm, Rogers, and Smith 1981:148-149).¹ They claimed that the contact-traditional era was characterized by “incremental and untraumatic” social and technological change, caused by contact between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that was presumed to be “extremely restricted.” Therefore, “Indian experience with Western culture and its institutions was channeled selectively and narrowly” (149, 150).

This ethnohistorical narrative changed significantly in the 1980s and after. Researchers now recognize that contact with Euro-Canadians and other outsiders was extensive and consequential after 1870. Newcomers entered the North in increasing numbers as travellers, entrepreneurs, trappers, miners, settlers, and agents of the state, all of them elements in joint processes of internal colonization and nation building (McCormack 1993:91-92). This chapter begins to detail the extent and impacts of that contact, joining together two strands. One is the unremitting expansion of institutions and agents of Euro-Canadian cultures, bringing their own cultures, values, and agendas into the North.² The other is the determined opposition by Aboriginal people to threats to their autonomy, the measure of their sovereignty. Their resistance can be read in their attempts to define and understand the changes confronting them and to oppose or mediate those changes in order to retain as much control as possible over their own lives and territories. While they were quick to take advantage of perceived opportunities, more and more they came to be engaged in what today is called damage control. When Euro-Canadians construed such behaviour simply as intransigence, typically framed and explained as some dimension of Indian culture or personality, they marginalized Aboriginal understandings and agency.

FUR TRADE COMPETITION

As the Hudson's Bay Company long-standing monopoly ended, the economic climate was shifting, undefined, and unregulated.³ The company, competing traders, and Aboriginal people all sought to maximize their benefits and reduce their losses. Free traders began to move into the area even before 1870. In June 1865, James Lockhart wrote unhappily from Fort Resolution:

People are coming here to oppose us from all sides next winter, we hear. The Yankees have found out the road over the mountains to St. John's in Peace River. Last winter several wintered at St. John's, Dunvegan and Vermillion. Next winter they are to cross over to the Liards they say. This morning one of my Indians arrived here from Vermillion, he tells me that there is a large party of Longknives [men from the United States] on Peace River, they have many boats and many masters, but one is at the head and conducts all their movements. I wish to goodness that I could get out of the district ere opposition comes in to disturb us. [Lindsay 1991:190]

Traders took advantage of improved access to Edmonton and the Athabasca District. Their numbers included Métis for whom trading was an extension of their role as freighters. Some of these Métis were former residents of the St. Albert area, near Edmonton, who relocated to Lesser Slave Lake in the 1880s and especially the 1890s.⁴

Indians were reported to be eager to take advantage of the new competition and unwilling to sell their furs at the rate of the old tariff (Hudson's Bay Company Archives [HBCA], B.200/e/13:1, 1d, 3). William Hardisty, writing from Fort Simpson in 1875, was outraged at what he perceived to be lack of Indian loyalty: "I scarcely know what to say, so thoroughly am I disgusted with the conduct of the Indians in refusing to deliver up their furs after the length of time that I have resided among them" (HBCA, B.200/e/13:3). In 1884, Roderick Macfarlane at Fort Chipewyan summed up: "Progress and the advance of civilization and opposition have created artificial and new wants, which even high prices cannot meet in an equally corresponding ration, and the result is discontent, which is intensified by the insinuations of Freetraders that but for them the Company would still be paying former rates" (HBCA, B.39/e/11:5d). In 1891, William Ogilvie claimed that competition in the trade was "demoralizing" the Indian, which meant to him that Indians spent everything they obtained in trade

(i.e., saved nothing) and spent much of their time “loafing around a Post begging or gambling” (Ogilvie 1893:37). However, he pointed to an entrepreneurial spirit:

Some of the Indians in the country are beginning to realize that outside markets pay more for furs than the local ones, and in one instance at least took advantage of it. Last summer many of the Chipewyan Indians joined together, constructed a scow, employed a guide, and started up the Athabasca River with their wives, families, and season's catch of fur, intending to make their way to Edmonton. This they succeeded in doing and sold their fur to such advantage that they will likely repeat the experiment and induce others to do so unless they are paid as much in the local market as they got at Edmonton. [*Edmonton Bulletin [EB]*, “Lesser Slave Lake,” 5 Jan. 1899:38]

While the corporate leaders of the Hudson's Bay Company planned to expand a retail trade to profit from the new commercial opportunities of settlement, they realized that the fur trade was still a viable industry, especially if they could improve its profitability by reducing transport and labour costs (Zaslow 1971:54-55; Ray 1990a:ch. 1; HBCA, B.239/k/18:101). At Fort Chipewyan, Roderick Macfarlane advised them in 1873 “that no time be lost in putting *steam* on the Athabasca and MacKenzie Rivers” (in Zaslow 1971:55; HBCA, B.200/e/13:3d). He was echoed in 1875 by William Hardisty at Fort Simpson, who realized that the Hudson's Bay Company would have to import extra goods to pay for furs. However, the company intended to place “as high a Tariff as possible in valuing for sale any supplies which have recently been imported for the first time into their Districts, such as fancy goods and other articles of a similar description” (HBCA, B.239/k/18:101). The final measure would be reducing the costs of post “servants” as much as possible (HBCA, B.239/k/18:101). In short, the company responded to competition by manipulating exchange rates and calling for more efficient transportation and utilization of personnel to reduce overhead and maintain an acceptable level of profit.

More immediately, competitive measures were taken as well. In the Athabasca District, Fort McMurray was established in 1870 not only for the convenience of Crees and Chipewyans of the Athabasca River region, but also as “a frontier or guard station against incursions of opposition traders from the south” (HBCA, B.39/e/11:2d, 3; see also Moberly and Cameron 1929:141). Fort Smith was transferred in 1874 to its present location “with the view of ultimately doing away with the Boat system, and the introduction of Steam into Athabasca and Mackenzie River Districts” (HBCA,



PHOTOS 5.1 & 5.2 After selling its lands to the Dominion of Canada, the London-based Hudson's Bay Company increasingly came to administer its Canadian operations from Hudson's Bay House in Winnipeg, where it developed a modern business operation. | *Top:* Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, 363-H-100-3; *bottom:* Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, NI-2896



PHOTO 5.3 The Hudson's Bay Company continued to be the economic centre of Fort Chipewyan, despite heavy competition after 1870. | C.W. Mathers photo | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B.2952



PHOTO 5.4 Interior view of the old Fort Chipewyan office showing records, most of which are now at the Hudson's Bay Company Archives in Winnipeg. | Guy H. Blanchet photo, 1923 | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys, PA-020219



PHOTO 5.5 The Hudson's Bay Company's SS *Grahame*, a wood-burning sternwheeler, was built in Fort Chipewyan in 1883. | William C. Rackham had many positions with the Hudson's Bay Company. In 1911, he was visiting and reporting on the Athabasca posts, and for a short time he was the accountant at Fort Chipewyan, also supervising the Fond du Lac and Fort McKay posts. He served as purser on the company ship SS *Grahame*. In 1912, he purchased a "#4 Panorama Kodak in partnership with Mr. Fugl, who will take it on this summer's trip. Hope we get some good negatives" (13 May 1912; HBCA E.392/1). The photographs in the Hudson's Bay Company Archives are attributed to Rackham, but at least some of them may have been taken by Fugl. | William C. Rackham photo, c. 1912 | Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, Rackham No. 2

B.39/e/11:1; see also Mackinnon 1980:24). In 1884, Roderick Macfarlane's year-end report from Fort Chipewyan proposed that the company "meet and fight the opposition with their own weapons." The company should follow the standard rates on furs and goods where they were unopposed, "but wherever Opposition appeared, I would establish alongside, and, while closely watching all their movements, I would outbid them if necessary, paying for the furs with goods exactly similar to theirs." Debts "should be given only to trusty & honest Indians" (HBCA, B.39/e/11:4d).

The Hudson's Bay Company launched the *Grahame* at Fort Chipewyan in 1883 for service on the Athabasca, lower Peace, and upper Slave rivers (Innis 1964[1956]:8; Ray 1990a:19; see also *EB*, "The Athabasca," 24 Feb.



PHOTO 5.6 Kathleen Shackleton sketched this portrait of William Cornwallis Loutit at Waterways in 1937. Born at Fort Chipewyan in 1877, he piloted many of the Hudson's Bay Company ships. | Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, P-262

1883:3 and "Ft. Chipewyan," 21 June 1884:3). This ship could carry 140 tons (Ogilvie 1893:6). According to the *Edmonton Bulletin*, "The Indians were terribly astonished at their first sight of a steamboat" (*EB*, "Ft. Chipewyan," 1 Nov. 1884:3).⁵ It ran from Fort McMurray to Smith's Landing, up the Clearwater River to the Methye Portage, and up the Peace River to the Vermilion Chutes (see Map 1.1; Innis 1964[1956]:344-345).⁶



PHOTO 5.7 Thanks both to competition and improved transportation, the northern stores stocked a large inventory of goods. This store interior, c. 1912, and possibly at Fort Vermilion, would have been similar to the store at Fort Chipewyan. | William C. Rackham photo | Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, Rackham N1-2891, Rackham No. 15

A sixteen-mile portage between Smith's Landing and Fort Smith was initiated at the same time, replacing a series of smaller portages (Mackinnon 1980). In 1885, the *Wrigley* was launched on the north end of the portage to provide steamboat access to communities along the lower Slave and Mackenzie rivers (Innis 1964[1956]:345; Ray 1990a:19). These developments ended the company's reliance on York boats and scows, with the exception of the Grand Rapids on the Athabasca River. (Scow brigades hauled freight over those rapids until a railroad was completed to Waterways, near Fort McMurray, after World War I.) Labour requirements in transport diminished, while a new industry of wood cutting flourished to supply the fuel for the steamers.

Trapping intensified in the new competitive era (e.g., HBCA, A.74/2:5). Aboriginal consumers were enticed by an attractive array of manufactures newly imported for the trade. As well, men who were displaced from their employment as fur trade labourers, especially men who had worked in transport, turned to trapping (HBCA, A.74/2:10). At Fort Chipewyan, it appears that most of those men and their families remained at the post, rather than relocating to bush settlements. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported: “A number of discharged H.B.Co. employees, now called freemen, are settled at the [Roman Catholic] mission and they also cultivate small patches of ground and have a few horses and cattle” (*EB*, “Ft. Chipewyan,” 21 June 1884:3). Today, these families would probably be labelled “French Métis.” They continued to be available as a casual labour force for the traders, the mission, and whoever else needed temporary assistance.

The Hudson’s Bay Company was not always successful in retaining their loyalty. The Annual Report for Outfit 1891 (1891-92) noted the difficulties faced by the company in the Northern Department:

The bugbear of competition has caused changes in the Tariffs both for selling Goods and buying Furs, the creation of a number of small Outposts with consequent increase of Expenses, and the giving of Indian advances with a view to keeping out competitors. In few cases does this policy appear to have been successful ... In addition to this, there has been a natural increase of Expenses through demands for higher salaries, and the greater use of imported provisions. [HBCA, A.74/1:9]

The time has evidently now arrived when competition almost everywhere must be recognized and met in the Fur Trade as in the Salesshop business. This must be done by relying upon and properly applying the Capital and power of the Company, and by keeping down Expenses in proportion to possible business. [HBCA, A.74/1:10]

The company attributed the decline in its returns from the Athabasca District to higher prices paid for furs because of competition and to failure of muskrats (HBCA, A.74/1:18). It recommended that unprofitable posts be abandoned (HBCA, A.74/1:10).

The company also faced that it was going to need to start paying cash for furs, which would reduce its profits (HBCA, A.74/1:14; Ray 1990a:76). Although Father Clut testified at the 1888 hearings of the Select Committee of the Senate (162) that “money is not known there [Fort Chipewyan] at all,” by the 1893-94 season, the Hudson’s Bay Company’s competitors had

begun buying some furs with cash (HBCA, A.74/3:12).⁷ The amounts might have been considerable. Richard Secord reported buying Zet (Eusèbe) Mercredi's furs for \$734, a sum that purchased 125 beavers, 80 martens, 20 minks, and 4 otters (Leonard et al. 1981:48). Company officers realized that many Indians who received cash for their furs would spend it at the company's stores and expected that "profits almost as good as those in barter [would] be thus secured" (HBCA, A.74/3:13). At the same time, the company believed that cash payment "generally leads to higher prices being paid for the Furs, and is therefore not encouraged on the part of the Company" (HBCA, A.74/3:13). Yet the trend was irreversible, as shown in the Report for Outfit 1895 (1895-96): "It is of importance to note that the collections made in the Fur-Trading Districts themselves are diminished by \$23,189, while the Furs Purchased for Cash are increased by \$30,882. This demonstrates the increased competition which, in consequence of the comparative plentitude of Furs, and the gradual opening up of the Country, has existed in almost all parts" (HBCA A.74/5:2). The apparent loss from Indian debts "represents the selling value of the goods, and not the actual cost to the Company" (HBCA, A.74/5:3).⁸

In the Athabasca District, where competition was "general & active," prices paid for furs increased: "the Traders now go into the District as soon as navigation opens, and compete for the Spring hunts before the Company's goods for the new outfit are received" (HBCA, A.74/5:16). Fort Chipewyan was a cosmopolitan trading centre: "Goods from Winnipeg by way of Carlton, from the States by way of Edmonton and British Columbia, by way of Peace River on their way to Mackenzie river are stored and distributed here, the four routes of travel coming together at this point" (*EB*, "Ft. Chipewyan," 21 June 1884:3). By 1887, Edmonton merchants were supplying most of the outfits to independent traders operating from Lac La Biche and Lesser Slave Lake northward (*EB*, "Local," 21 May 1887:1). The *Edmonton Bulletin* contains numerous reports of fur buyers in Edmonton, presumably agents of international fur merchants, who purchased most of the furs brought out from the North not sold to the Hudson's Bay Company (see also Ray 1990a:66-67).

The ebb and flow of commerce at Fort Chipewyan in the late nineteenth century can be tracked through irregular reports in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, references in Hudson's Bay Company and missionary records, entries in Richard Secord's diaries (Leonard et al. 1981), and Colin Fraser's memoir (1938). In 1887, inspired by the excellent trade of the previous winter,⁹ at least four independent trading operations at or near Fort Chipewyan offered competition to the Hudson's Bay Company (*EB*, "Northern News,"

28 July 1888:4; W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 29 Dec. 1887, Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], A.281/225). George Elmore of Elmore Bros. was trading at Fort Chipewyan through his agent, J. Favel, the first pilot of the *Grahame* (*EB*, “Local,” 16 July 1887:1; *EB*, “Ft. Chipewyan,” 1 Nov. 1884:3; *EB*, 29 June 1893:1).¹⁰ Long-term free trader Colin Fraser first arrived at Fort Chipewyan in 1887, in company with Charles Stewart (of Stewart and Bannerman of Winnipeg), who continued on to Fort Smith:¹¹ “They were 30 days getting there from the Landing, about three times as long as they should have been, owing to a lack of knowledge of the river ... Mr. Fraser has bought a house near Chipewyan for \$20 and will reside there, but may come to Edmonton this winter” (*EB*, “The North-West,” 13 Aug. 1887:4; Fraser 1938:3). Fraser described his mother as a Cree Indian, and therefore he himself “was almost born to the use of the Cree tongue and this too had been a wonderful asset to me” (Fraser 1938:1).¹² A third party was Peter Pruden and Villeneuve, or “Shot,” both Métis men from Lac La Biche (*EB*, “Local,” 31 March 1888:1, and “Northern News,” 28 July 1888:4).¹³ Finally, James Hislop and Ed Nagle spent the winter on the Athabasca River about thirty miles south of Lake Athabasca (*EB*, “Northern News,” 28 July 1888:4; see also Innis 1964[1956]:366). The traders employed local men to go tripping, visiting Indian settlements and camps to purchase fur. Pierre Mercredi was working for the Hudson’s Bay Company, Antoine Lavolette for Shot, and William Hoole (Houle) for Colin Fraser (HBCA, B.39/a/56:61d).¹⁴

In the spring of 1888, Richard Secord also began business at Athabasca Landing with two loads of freight (Leonard et al. 1981:21, 23), and Elmore Bros. began building a warehouse there “for the goods for their Athabasca trade which are being brought in from Calgary by McPherson’s train.” The six men hired to do the work would do double duty as the boat crew, taking the goods downriver once it was open for travel (*EB*, “Local,” 28 April 1888:4). Additional boats were built at Athabasca Landing to freight goods down the Grand Rapids to Fort McMurray (*EB*, “Local,” 31 March 1888:1).

The number of traders had dropped by the winter of 1889-90, when the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that only Colin Fraser, Peter Pruden, and the Hudson’s Bay Company were trading at Fort Chipewyan. Fraser’s merchandise was supplied by Richard Secord (Leonard et al. 1981:26). Trade was evidently better than the previous year, thanks to fewer traders (*EB*, “Lake Athabasca,” 25 Jan. 1890:4). By August 1890, Colin Fraser had sold out to the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the only remaining competition was Pruden’s small outfit (*EB*, “Local,” 2 Aug. 1890:4). Some Indians



PHOTO 5.8 Colin Fraser's trading post at Fort Chipewyan, 1899. | Glenbow Archives, NA-949-51

travelled to Edmonton to sell their fur for better prices (*EB*, "Local," 4 July 1891:1; Ogilvie 1893:38).

The winter of 1891-92 saw Ed Nagle trading again at Fort Chipewyan, helped by John Secord, Richard's brother (*EB*, "Local," 14 July 1892:1). On 6 July 1893, the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that "R. Secord returned on Monday from lake Athabasca with a part of the past winter's trade of fur at his posts in that region. He was accompanied by Peter Luted [Loutit], and two Chipewyan half-breeds, who also brought some furs. Mr. Secord's furs are probably the largest and most valuable lot ever brought to Edmonton for sale" ("From Lake Athabasca":4) He also brought out wood buffalo skins and six wood buffalo heads to be mounted. Colin Fraser returned to Fort Chipewyan, possibly in 1892 but certainly by the 1893-94 season, to trade for Richard Secord (*EB*, "Local," 6 July 1893:1).¹⁵ In 1895, Fraser sold to Secord "the largest lot of fur ever brought in to Edmonton. The price paid was \$20,000. The lot was not only large, the fur was of extra



PHOTO 5.9 The annotation on the photo reads: “Colin Fraser sorting his black fox skins from his lot of 35000 dollars worth of fur.” Most furs had already been baled for shipment, but not the pile of muskrat skins in the foreground. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B.10018

fine quality. It included 36 silver foxes, 78 cross foxes, 124 red foxes, 41 fisher, 72 otter, 812 beaver, 582 mink, 115 lynx, 7 wolf, 3100 rat and 48 lbs., of castorum” (*EB*, “Local,” 22 July 1895:1).

The Hudson’s Bay Company strengthened its own competitive position by stocking a larger inventory of goods at Fort Chipewyan than previously (HBCA, A.74/5:16). It also reduced the credit it provided to its trappers. Company records indicate that comparatively small “Indian Debts” were issued in the Athabasca District (HBCA, A.74/2:9-11). However, Ray (1990a:84-88) has cautioned that post managers might have continued to issue debt while hiding it with creative accounting.

By this time, some Aboriginal people from Lake Athabasca were travelling to Edmonton to trade directly, instead of relying on the local traders. For instance, on 8 July 1895, the *Edmonton Bulletin* noted that

eight Chipewyans from Lake Athabasca had sold their furs to four buyers in Edmonton for a total of \$913.50 (*EB*, "Fur Sales," 8 July 1895:1). These were probably the same Chipewyans who accompanied Joseph Boileau and J. Lafleur from the Smith Portage; these Indian boat crews "brought small lots of fur ... which are now being sold" (*EB*, "Local," 4 July 1895:1). Ray (1990a:91) pointed out that Aboriginal people were "sensitive to price differentials, and they were willing to go great distances to obtain better prices." Hudson's Bay Company journals from Fort Chipewyan indicate that March was a popular time to travel to Edmonton by dog team. The coldest part of the winter was over, but trails and river crossings were still reliable. Daylight hours were lengthening, often with brilliant sunshine, and men had their winter furs to sell. The *Edmonton Bulletin* regularly published brief notes on the comings and goings of people from the North. Some men travelled on their own, and others took advantage of short-term employment opportunities.

Increased production of furs in the late nineteenth century might have contributed to greater instability of animal populations. Many fur-bearers, especially muskrat and hares, have cyclical populations and are inherently unstable (see also Ray 1990a:25). Several witnesses appearing before the Select Committee of the Senate in 1888 commented on the depletion of fur-bearers and large game because of over-hunting and the use of poison (13, 84, 158, 163). As Aboriginal people turned to independent traders, they lost their formerly close relationship with the Hudson's Bay Company, which further destabilized the trade.

These factors in combination with severe weather conditions resulted in terrible famine in the North in the winters of 1886-87 and 1887-88 (Fumoleau 1975:37-38; Select Committee 1888:165, 195; Zaslow 1971:59; Munro 2006:212, 218, 227).¹⁶ The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported: "Starvation is reported throughout the northern country last winter [1886-87]. Fish, rabbits and reindeer were all a failure and the Indians were reduced to eating hides and skins." Twenty-six people were reported to have died at Little Red River, and cannibalism was also reported (*EB*, "Local," 16 July 1887:1; see also *EB*, "The North-West," 13 Aug. 1887:4; Munro 2006:216). The Hudson's Bay Company journal from Fort Chipewyan began mentioning starvation in November 1887 (HBCA, B.39/a/56:59). The Reverend W.D. Reeve wrote to Bishop Young at New Year's: "The weather has been unusually cold for the time of the year, & I am afraid it is going to be another hard winter for the Indians. There are scarcely any rabbits, the fisheries are poor, & news has just come from Fond du Lac that there are no deer [caribou] there" (29 Dec. 1887, PAA, A.281/225; see

also W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 1 March 1888, PAA, A.281/226). The Nativity Mission diary noted the considerable cold, the poor fisheries, and the lack of food for dogs. By March 1888, the Hudson's Bay Company reported that nineteen people had starved to death, while the mission diary claimed that at least thirty people had died at Lac Brochet (Jackfish or Richardson Lake; HBCA, B.39/a/56:59, 71d, 72; Archives Deschâtelets, *Mission de la Nativité Codex:6*; see also Fumoleau 1975:35).¹⁷

Just when local people needed assistance so badly, the Hudson's Bay Company was no longer willing to provide assistance to all (e.g., Fumoleau 1975:31). The federal government began, very reluctantly, to provide some modest relief to "sick and destitute Indians," distributed through the Hudson's Bay Company and the missionaries, but it was unwilling to do more for people in an area not yet covered by treaty, nor did it want its assistance known, for fear of setting a precedent "for the Government affording relief to the Indians with whom it has had no Treaty relations" (Order-in-Council 1888-1714, approved 11 July 1888, Privy Council Minutes, Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 2, series 1, v. 398; L. Vankoughnet to E. Dewdney, Supt.-Gen. of Indian Affairs, 8 March 1892, and letter from E. Dewdney to Sir Donald A. Smith, both in LAC, RG 10, v. 1109; Fumoleau 1975:35-39; Ray 1990a:25).

These disastrous years intensified calls for government assistance and a treaty. The earliest proposal for a northern treaty might have been made in 1884 by Hudson's Bay Company official Roderick Macfarlane, who argued that if the government was not prepared to negotiate a treaty, then it "had better be prepared to assist many of these Indians ... with liberal supplies of twine for nets, ammunition, and other necessaries to aid them in eking out a living when the usual years of scarcity come shortly round" (in Fumoleau 1975:32). His sentiments were echoed by others, including Rev. John Gough Brick from Peace River in his testimony to the 1888 Select Committee of the Senate (195).

STATE INITIATIVES

Despite its unwillingness to accept responsibility for the well-being of the northern Aboriginal population, the federal government wanted to discover the dimensions and economic potential of the lands on which they lived. As it had done in the south, it sent agents to explore the Athabasca basin, spearheaded by geologists working for the Geological Survey of Canada (GSC) and surveyors working for the Dominion Lands Survey (DLS),

both part of the Department of the Interior. Their work built upon earlier fur trade maps (see also Ruggles 1991). Surveyors delineated baselines and meridians, and geologists mapped rock formations. Both documented natural and human history in the course of their explorations (see also Owram 1980:150; Zaslow 1971, 1975). Their job was to make “Canada’s resources known abroad to powerful capitalists and men in public life” (Zaslow 1971:81). The act of mapping the northern lands was foundational in the expansion of the Canadian nation-state.¹⁸ It located the frontier, identified the lands to which Canadian law would apply, and provided – literally – the on-the-ground framework for settlement.

The first man to visit Fort Chipewyan on the government’s behalf was Professor John Macoun, a botanist who accompanied Alfred Selwyn of the GSC in 1875 on a trip down the Peace River (Selwyn 1877a, 1877b; Macoun 1877a, 1877b, 1882). The two parted company at Fort St. John, and by accident Macoun eventually reached Fort Chipewyan. Astonished by the agricultural capacities of the northern settlements he visited, he rhapsodized about the wheat and barley grown at Fort Vermilion and at the “French Mission” at Fort Chipewyan, where he collected samples of grain that were exhibited at the Philadelphia Exposition in 1876.

Thereafter, a steady stream of geologists and surveyors visited the Lake Athabasca region.¹⁹ The first geologist was A.S. Cochrane, who surveyed the north shore of Lake Athabasca and the “Governor’s Portage” from Fort Chipewyan to the Athabasca River in 1881, part of a larger exploratory trip that was never published, unlike most surveys. Cochrane used guides throughout, but he did not identify them, though they supplied the names he noted for rivers, lakes, islands, and other features (LAC, RG 45, esp. field notebook 1171; see also Tyrrell 1896:6). Robert Bell drew upon Cochrane’s field books when he visited the Athabasca Basin in 1882, travelling the lower Athabasca River to Lake Athabasca (Dept. of Interior 1883:4-5). R.G. McConnell spent 1889 and 1890 exploring portions of the Peace-Athabasca region (Dept. of Interior 1890; McConnell 1893; *EB*, “The North Country,” 26 April 1890:2). Joseph Burr Tyrrell spent 1892 and 1893 working in and around Lake Athabasca, in company with his brother James W. Tyrrell and D.B. Dowling, who prepared the maps from the survey.

Two parties, one led by Charles Camsell, later the deputy minister of mines, and the other with James Tyrrell and C.C. Fairchild, passed through Fort Chipewyan in the fall of 1900, waiting till colder weather to continue south. They joined in the social life of the community (*EB*, “Chipewyan Notes,” 10 Dec. 1900:5; Camsell 1966[1954]:137). Canoe races were held,

and football and crib games played. The highlight came on 26 October, when “the members of the exploring party treated the inhabitants of our town to a ball ... in the clerk’s quarters at the H.B. Co’s post. The ball and supper rooms were tastefully decorated with bunting, assumption belts, &c., and an exceedingly pleasant and well conducted evening was spent. The hosts appeared in Indian costume much to the amusement of the guests, about 80 of whom were present” (*EB*, “Chipewyan Notes,” 10 Dec. 1900:5).

Agents of the Dominion Lands Survey had already begun a systematic survey of the fertile belt to the south, but in 1874 they were authorized to conduct a “special survey,” exploratory surveys in areas not yet ready for subdivision, delineating baselines and meridians (Dennis 1892; Bond 1966:22; Owsram 1980:150; Larmour 2005:20). In 1882, a portion of the North-West Territories was divided by Order-in-Council into four districts: Assiniboia, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and Athabasca. William Ogilvie and W.T. Thompson both undertook survey work in 1882 in Alberta, but in 1883 they moved into the Athabasca District. Ogilvie surveyed the fifth meridian from Edmonton to the Athabasca River. Thompson worked on the fifth and sixth meridians, and some township lines were run to the Peace River country (Dept. of Interior 1883, 1884; *EB*, “Local,” 23 Sept. 1882:3, “Slave Lake,” 27 March 1883:3, and 10 Nov. 1883:3). The Dominion Lands Survey then decided it was too expensive to continue this level of surveying, given the small number of settlers, and instead sent “explorers” into the North. William Ogilvie was one of them. He returned to the Athabasca District in 1884 to investigate the Peace and Athabasca rivers. He also outlined some townships in “the prairie region, to give settlers who are in it now, and those who may come previous to sub-division surveys here, a chance to locate themselves with something like a certainty” (Dennis 1892). Ogilvie returned in 1891 for a third time, making a great circuit from Athabasca Landing to Fort Chipewyan and returning by way of the Peace River and Lesser Slave Lake (McConnell 1893; Ogilvie 1893).

A special survey was undertaken in the summer of 1898 by George A. Bayne, a Dominion lands surveyor working for the Hudson’s Bay Company, to help the company gain title to the last reserves of land to which it was entitled under the Deed of Surrender for Rupert’s Land. Before that date, only southern Hudson’s Bay Company post sites had been surveyed. With northern gold rush fever growing, Hudson’s Bay Company commissioner C.C. Chipman in Winnipeg reminded the governor and committee that it still had claims to lands around its northern posts. Appended to the memo was a list of the amount of land allocated for each



PHOTO 5.10 Zenith telescope set up for observing the northern boundary of Alberta, 1924. | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys, PA-019667



PHOTO 5.11 Surveying in northern Alberta was enormously difficult; all the instruments had to be carried on one's back or on horseback. The big zenith telescope is being carried across the Salt River in the box, 1924. | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys, e00844315

post. At Fort Chipewyan, it was ten acres (Comm. to Wm. Ware, Sec., 1 Feb. 1898, HBCA, A.12/L 121/1). Bayne, with the assistance of Mr. Livock, subsequently surveyed all the posts in the districts of Athabasca, Peace River, and Mackenzie River, submitted a brief report, and prepared corresponding maps. Fort Chipewyan, which he surveyed in August, was so extensive that he surveyed 17.24 acres, with a lake frontage of 2,465 feet. On Dr. Mackay's request, he also surveyed the adjoining land occupied by the Anglican mission and claimed by the Church Missionary Society, an additional 2.69 acres with 335 feet of frontage (Geo. A. Bayne to C.C. Chipman, Comm., HBC, 25 Nov. 1898, HBCA, A.12/L 121/1; 16 Aug. 1898, HBCA, B.39/a/60:40).²⁰

While these geologists, surveyors, and other explorers who travelled in the North after 1870 benefited from the extensive knowledge and experience of Aboriginal residents and guides, Aboriginal knowledge was typically uncredited and reframed to accord with Euro-Canadian configurations of science and narrative traditions (see also Pratt 1992:ch. 2-3; Boocking 2005:217-218). The spiritual contexts for Aboriginal knowledge were simply dismissed. A pattern was established for the next century that sought out and accepted knowledge about the North articulated by Euro-Canadians and largely ignored or denied the validity of the knowledge of local Aboriginal peoples.²¹

This approach was validated and summarized in 1888 in the *Report of the Select Committee of the Senate Appointed to Enquire into the Resources of the Great Mackenzie Basin* (Select Committee 1888). The list of men who were approached to give oral or written evidence to this committee was a veritable who's who of non-Aboriginal people with some interest in the North. Both Bell and Macoun testified in person. The report listed ninety questions posed by the committee (19-23). Committee members wanted to know about the ease and costs of travelling in the North – what infrastructure was already available and what could or should be constructed to make access easier. They wanted to know about the extent of “arable and pastoral land” and to determine how far north agricultural settlement was feasible. They even sent an assortment of seeds to Fort Chipewyan and other northern posts for testing.²² They inquired about other resources, including fur, under the broad heading of “fisheries, forests, and mines.” Finally, they asked questions about Indian cultures and economies, and how they might be affected by the arrival of “civilization”:

- 89 What effect would the opening up of the Mackenzie Basin to civilized men have upon the Indians of the region?

- 90 Could their labor be employed much to the advantage of the employers and employed, and how far would such employment tend to civilize and make them self-supporting? [23]

One of the points that emerged from testimony was how little people knew about the North. Some witnesses called to testify had little first-hand knowledge, yet they were encouraged to speak about things they had only heard about the North as well as from their own personal experience. The committee concluded that “development of the country” would benefit rather than “demoralize” the Indians (Select Committee 1888:11), although they had heard a contrary opinion from a former inspecting chief factor of the Hudson’s Bay Company, William Christie.²³ Reflecting on the importance of the fur trade, the committee recommended: “it is expedient, that, without unduly interfering with the rights of settlers or the usual privileges of Indians, this great fur trade should be fostered and even made a source of direct revenue to the Dominion” (13). To protect fur resources and at the same time generate revenue, the government should make “a measure of protection a source of revenue by the leasing of certain fur districts with a limitation as to the catch of certain kinds of its furs” (13).²⁴ While ahead of its time, this recommendation indicated the regulatory direction that governments would follow in the twentieth century.

Zaslow (1971:78-79) and Fumoleau (1975:40-41) have both pointed to the importance of the Select Committee’s report for encouraging further northern investigations and laying the groundwork for a reassessment of the timing for making a treaty in the region. There was considerable southern interest in potential northern petroleum and mineral wealth, “the development of which may add materially to the public weal” (Order-in-Council, 26 Jan. 1891, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848). On 26 January 1891, the Privy Council of Canada recommended that a treaty be negotiated during the “ensuing season” (Order-in-Council, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848; see also Fumoleau 1975:41-42). However, it did not proceed as planned because of the confusion that followed the death of Prime Minister John A. Macdonald in June 1891 and the slower-than-anticipated commercial developments of the 1890s (Fumoleau 1975:43).

Nevertheless, the question of a northern treaty emerged as a public issue in the Athabasca District. It provided a new focus for Aboriginal discussion and debate about the implications of post-1870 government and private initiatives.²⁵ Aboriginal resistance to these initiatives was widespread but surprisingly non-violent and often subtle. Resistance may assume a wide variety of forms, as the Comaroffs noted for colonial Africa: “Just

as technologies of control run the gamut from overt coercion to implicit persuasion, so modes of resistance may extend across a similarly wide spectrum. At one end is organized protest, explicit moments and movements of dissent that are easily recognizable as ‘political’ by western lights. At the other are gestures of tacit refusal and iconoclasm, gestures that sullenly and silently contest the forms of an existing hegemony” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:31).

Aboriginal people were fearful about the presence of Canadian government officers, and sometimes they challenged them publicly.²⁶ For example, on 7 February 1883, W.T. Thompson, who was surveying in the Lesser Slave Lake area, “was interviewed by the head man of the Indians (self-elected), his sons and grandsons following in the wake, who informed him that they were perfectly aware that he was passing through the country to spy out the nakedness of the land, intending next summer to take this land to himself, and that he [the head man], as lawful possessor of the soil, forbade Mr. Thompson to proceed any farther” (*EB*, “Slave Lake,” 17 March 1883:3).

The tentative initiatives of the North-West Mounted Police, first sent into the North in the late 1880s, also excited local debate. In the fall of 1887, the NWMP assigned two men to deal with a reported *wihtikôw* killing at Lesser Slave Lake. *Wih̄tikôw* is represented alternatively in the anthropological literature and in community traditions as a form of northern psychosis or as spirit possession, sometimes the result of sorcery, in which the afflicted person has a craving for human flesh, thereby placing all the members of his or her band in jeopardy (e.g., Carlson 2005, 2009; Hay 1971; Brightman 1988; Marano 1982).²⁷ The NWMP officers arrested Michel Courtereille and his son, who were accused of killing Michel’s wife, Marie. In the *Edmonton Bulletin*’s report, Marie Courtereille “became deranged and believed that she had become possessed of an evil spirit which irresistably [sic] compelled her to murder and cannibalism. This form of insanity is not uncommon among the Indians and the law among them is that the person so afflicted shall be killed, their nearest relatives at hand being expected to perform the deed. In this case the woman is said to have demanded that she be killed to prevent her from doing injury to her friends ... The prisoners do not conceal their connection with the affair and justify themselves on the grounds that they acted according to Indian law and that they knew no other” (*EB*, “Arrest at Slave Lake,” 1 Oct. 1887:4). The use of the terms “law” and “Indian law” in this passage are striking. Although the two men were found guilty of manslaughter and sentenced to six years’ hard labour (*EB*, “Supreme Court,”

22 Oct. 1887:4), there was much discussion on all sides of the applicability of Canadian law in territory not yet ceded by treaty. Fifty-three Aboriginal families at Lesser Slave Lake sent a letter to the *Edmonton Bulletin* stating that they “did not acknowledge the control of the government over them, and did not wish to make any treaty with the Canadian government. They were satisfied as they were and desired no money from or intercourse with the government on any terms” (*EB*, 22 Oct. 1887:1). There were other positions. Later that winter, the *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that, according to Métis trader Louis Hamelin of Lesser Slave Lake, another meeting of Aboriginal people had concluded that “the issue of scrip to Indians as well as half-breeds would be more acceptable to all parties than an ordinary Indian treaty with the Indians and an issue of scrip to the half-breeds alone” (*EB*, “Slave Lake,” 21 Jan. 1888:4).

Frank Oliver, territorial councillor and editor of the *Edmonton Bulletin*, wrote an article in 1887 about “The North” that acknowledged the lack of Canadian sovereignty: “Whatever the intentions of the government may have been, or are, regarding the formal assumption of authority in the great Mackenzie River basin – no part of which is covered by Indian treaty – late events show that matters cannot much longer be left ... The recent arrest of the Slave Lake murderers was effected without difficulty, but it must be remembered that the arrest was only possible with their full consent which was given in the belief that they were not amenable to Canadian law, or at any rate that they would not be punished” (*EB*, “The North,” 29 Oct. 1887:2). Oliver accepted that the NWMP was acting “beyond its rights.” While he called upon the government to extend its full authority in the North, he recognized that a special arrangement would need to be made with the Indians in order to do so, because no treaty was yet in place. The following spring, the *Bulletin* reported that the police had received instructions not to assert their authority in unceded territory (*EB*, 21 April 1888:1; memorandum from Comptroller, 30 Sept. 1896, LAC, RG 18, v. 128). A decade later, the federal government acknowledged that it still exercised only “some measure of authority” in the region (A.E. Forget, Indian Commissioner, to J.D. McLean, Sec. DIA, 12 Jan. 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848).

In 1892 or 1893, the federal government removed the prohibition on liquor from southern districts but maintained it in the district of Athabasca. It established a seasonal NWMP detachment at Athabasca Landing to intercept liquor headed for northern posts (Zaslow 1971:97). According to the *Edmonton Bulletin*, this detachment was there at the request of the

Hudson's Bay Company, to prevent its competitors from importing liquor (*EB*, "Local," 6 July 1893:1).

Increasingly, the NWMP was called upon to police miners and non-Aboriginal trappers who used poison to kill animals for fur. In 1896, the *Edmonton Bulletin* published a series of articles about this problem. Two trappers on the Athabasca River

found poison plentifully distributed for over 100 miles and in one day found nine fine cross foxes which had been poisoned. Edmonton's fox terrier [sic] which he had refused to sell for \$25, was also poisoned [sic] and several train dogs belonging to Indians were destroyed in the same way. Edmonton and Clark have determined to urge the authorities to take necessary steps to prevent these extensive fires and wholesale poisoning in future ... It is a cruelty to Indians to deprive them, not only of their means of travel by poisoning their dogs, but also to do away with their means of subsistence by driving the fur bearing animals out of the country by fire and poison. The Indians in that section of the country are self supporting and these wanton acts are calculated to cause something more serious than the present dissatisfaction in existence amongst them, unless measures are taken to preserve the game. [*EB*, "Local," 29 June 1896:1]

Aboriginal residents were fearful and angry: "The Indians are indignant at these things and look with the greatest suspicion on all strange white men, and they are even afraid to pick berries for use for fear they themselves will be poisoned ... They are also getting discontented at so many white men trapping their fur and thus depriving them of their means of subsistence" (*EB*, "Slave Lake Missions," 3 Aug. 1896:2; see also *EB*, "Local," 17 Sept. 1896:1).

In 1894, the federal government had enacted the Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act (S.C. 1894 [57-58 Vict.], c. 31) to protect wildlife resources in the Northwest outside the provisional districts of Alberta, Assiniboia, and Saskatchewan. This legislation and the accompanying regulations prohibited any hunting of the endangered northern or wood bison (buffalo), prohibited the use of poison, and established closed seasons for several other species. Preventing the extinction of the sole remaining wild bison, a remnant population of once-numerous herds, was an important goal of the legislation. By the 1890s they were estimated to number approximately three hundred to six hundred animals, mostly west of Slave River in the Salt River region (e.g., Ogilvie 1893:39; Jarvis 1898:171).

The NWMP dealt with this assortment of problems – white trappers, poison, diminishing bison numbers – by beginning to enforce the 1894 Game Act. In the fall of 1896, the NWMP made plans to send an officer on a winter trip from Edmonton to Lake Athabasca “to prepare the way for the extension northward of general Police supervision” (Comptroller to the Commissioner, NWMP, 18 Dec. 1896, LAC, RG 18, v. 128). In addition to enforcing the law, the goal of this survey was “to collect information likely to be useful to the Government in their future dealings with that Territory,” paying particular attention to the liquor trade and abuses of alcohol, the use of poison, fires, fisheries, fur, game (especially bison), lumber, hay supplies, and possibilities for settlement (L.W. Herchmer, Commissioner, to Inspector Routledge, 21 Dec. 1896, LAC, RG 18, v. 128). At the same time, the NWMP also contacted the Hudson’s Bay Company, inquiring about company officers who could be appointed justices of the peace and also act as game guardians.²⁸ Chief Factor William Mackay at Fort Chipewyan was one of the men proposed for this role (C.C. Chipman, HBC, to Lt. Colonel Herchmer, Commissioner, NWMP, 14 Dec. 1896, LAC, RG 18, v. 128).

In January 1897, Inspector A.M. Jarvis and Sergeant Hetherington, with two dog teams and drivers (one of them Peter Loutit, from Fort Chipewyan), left Fort Saskatchewan on a long winter patrol to Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution, returning by the Peace River to Lesser Slave Lake (Jarvis 1898; see also *EB*, “Local,” 19 Nov. 1896:1, “Local,” 25 March 1897:1, and “The Police Patrols,” 19 April 1897:4).²⁹ Superintendent Griesbach, who commanded G Division at Fort Saskatchewan, called Jarvis’ trip “a new departure in police work and duties” (NWMP 1898:81), presumably because of its fact-finding aspects and the new lands travelled. Commissioner Herchmer advised Jarvis to remember “that many of the Indians and small traders may be ignorant of the law, and therefore may have offended unwittingly” (Herchmer 1898b:156; see also Comptroller to Commissioner, 18 Dec. 1896, LAC, RG 18, v. 128). In this spirit, Jarvis explained the game, fire, and poison ordinances at each stop and distributed printed notices about them, mostly “cautioning the delinquents” and making arrests only in “glaring cases when the parties were well aware of the law” (Herchmer 1898a:2; see also Jarvis 1898). For the most part, he found “that no one in this country is aware that the Game Laws are in force” (A.M. Jarvis, Fort Chipewyan, to L.W. Herchmer, 31 Jan. 1897, LAC, RG 18, v. 128).

Jarvis reported that the “half-breeds” at Little Jackfish Lake, between Lac La Biche and Fort McMurray, were “much pleased” with the police for “the suppression of laying out poison” (Jarvis 1898:158). At Little Red River, a



PHOTO 5.12 In January 1899, Inspector Routledge made a winter patrol to Fort Chipewyan and points beyond. He also made a census of inhabitants to help the government plan for Treaty No. 8. | Glenbow Archives, NA-949-49

small settlement thirty-five miles north of Fort McMurray, “The Indians requested that a chief might be appointed, and named Chrysostom Pische for that position” (160).³⁰ Community members have been taking their own steps to formalize a relationship with the federal government in the absence of treaty. However, Jarvis and the police authority he represented were not welcomed by the Chipewyans trading at Fort Chipewyan. His assistant, Hetherington, received an angry letter from “Alicksand Levillot” (Alexandre Laviolette):

Who told you to come out here. I would like to know that. Am sure it is'nt [sic] God. God let this country [be] free, and we like to be free in this Country. I don't want any of you people; to come a[nd] bother us in this Country. We don't care how miserable we are in this Country. The Company was here from long ago and can stay as much as they like. Because we here about the wrough[?] about the Country we dont [sic] want any of

that business out here. About that rifle you brought it is not for people and there is no mutton in this Country. I think myself a man same as you, and I would not step back for your gun. Nor you will scare me. It is not because [I] am down on you. I suppose you want to hear about our Country. If you want to see the People you should come here in the Spring not in the Winter and it is no use to stop us to kill [from killing] anything in this Country. It is not you that grows anything in this Country. I dont care if I dont have a cent in my hand. God never made money for me, anything alive, that is my money in this Country for just now. I can't say very much. I want you to leave a word of what you think of this few words. The best time to see the people is in the Spring.³¹ [3 Feb. 1897, typed copy in LAC, RG 18, v. 128]

Hetherington called Lavolette a “Chipewyan minor chief” and dismissed his letter as “insolent.” It was not addressed, but Hetherington presumed that it was intended for the officer commanding the NWMP Athabasca Detachment and forwarded the letter to him (25 Feb. 1897, LAC, RG 18, v. 128). Given his emerging role as a leader and his strong sentiments, it is not surprising that Lavolette played a key role when Treaty No. 8 was negotiated at Fort Chipewyan two years later.

Jarvis discovered that poison was in use everywhere he travelled. He reported that Chipewyan and Cree Indians “are in mortal dread of the poison” (Jarvis, Fort Chipewyan, to L.W. Herchmer, Commissioner, 31 Jan. 1897, LAC, RG 18, v. 128): “Indians complained bitterly of the use of this poison put out by white men and half-breed trappers with whom they are unable to compete, and think it hard that people who are not owners of the country are allowed to rob them of their living” (Jarvis 1898:170). In addition to his formal policing duties, Jarvis reported on the resources of the country. He recommended that detachments be established at Fort Chipewyan, with outposts at Little Red River (probably the Athabasca River Settlement) and Lesser Slave Lake.

Later that year, Inspector Snyder reported on his patrol of a portion of the Peace River country. He had

several long talks with natives who came to see me in bodies, and seemed greatly alarmed at the advent of the police and the prospect of a wagon road being opened through their country. They are also very jealous of white trappers trespassing upon their hunting grounds and wanted them forbidden to do so. Another thing they were particularly troubled about was that they should be compelled to take treaty and live on reserves. I informed these Indians that they would not be compelled to take treaty and that their

freedom would in no wise be interfered with, that the police were there more for their protection than for any interference with their ways, but that the police would prevent the white trappers setting out poison and fires, and the traders from trading liquor. [Snyder 1898:178-179]

The reports of both NWMP officers indicate that northern Aboriginal people were seeking to engage representatives of the government in discussion about issues of concern. NWMP actions may have been reassuring, in that they seem mostly to have been directed at White trappers, but Aboriginal people were aware of the coercive function of the police. According to articles published in the *Edmonton Bulletin* in 1897:

The Indians of Athabasca are satisfied to have the police amongst them to prevent or punish for the setting out of poison, or the setting out of fires, but they object strongly to enforcement of the game laws passed some years ago at Ottawa. If the attempt is made to enforce these laws there will be trouble. As to the wood buffalo the Indians do not object to them being protected provided white men are not allowed to hunt them. If white men are not absolutely prohibited the Indians will not submit to being stopped. [EB, "From Lake Athabasca," 12 July 1897:1]

Three policemen and an interpreter have been sent to [Lesser] Slave Lake to take care of parties who set out poison or bush fires, or who trade whiskey. Owing chiefly to an idea that the police are being sent in to enforce the game laws against the Indians, the Indians are said to object to their presence. But it is not expected that their objections will take serious shape if the game laws are not enforced. This is a time when the utmost care is needed in establishing the authority of law in the vast new country of the north. Matters have reached a pitch when the assertion of authority on the part of the government is absolutely necessary throughout the Mackenzie Basin. It is to be hoped that the mistakes which proceeded [sic] '69 and '85 will not be repeated and that the successful tactics of '74 to '78 will be intelligently copied. [EB, "Lesser Slave Lake," 15 July 1897:1]

On 25 May 1897, a large party of NWMP officers and interpreters left Fort Saskatchewan to establish four outposts at Athabasca Landing, Lesser Slave Lake, Grand Rapids, and Fort Smith. The headquarters were located at Lesser Slave Lake under Staff Sergeant Hetherington. In brief, their purpose was to introduce "a little law and order into the north land" (extract from Fort Saskatchewan weekly report, 31 May 1897, LAC, RG 18,

v. 128; *EB*, “Local,” 3 June 1897:1). Shortly after arriving at Fort Smith, which was the choice of Frank Oliver, Constable Trottier instead proposed establishing the outpost at Fort Chipewyan, which he considered to be a more suitable location: “Chippewyan is quite a large village which is composed of free traders, Half-breeds and Indians. Those traders there I am told are in the habit of smuggling whiskey in, and giving it to the Indians in order to get from them cheap bargains in furs. I have also been told that most of the poisoning done by trappers and Indians is between Fort Smith and the Athabasca Landing” (extract from Trottier’s report, Fort Smith Detachment, 30 June 1897, LAC, RG 18, v. 128, file 37).

These developments were not uncontested. In 1897, Sergeant Hetherington advised that the “large number of half-breeds” in the Peace River–Lesser Slave Lake region “are much opposed to Police being established in Peace River District especially at Lesser Slave Lake. I understand that meetings have been held and petitions signed and forwarded from Smoky River, Lesser Slave, Sturgeon and Whitefish Lakes, asking that Police be withdrawn from the District and that they (the Half-breeds) have so incited the Indians that a great number have also signed the petitions in question, and the reason given is that no treaty having been made with the Indians the Police have no right in the District” (Hetherington, Lesser Slave Lake, to Officer Commanding, Fort Saskatchewan, 31 July 1897, LAC, RG 18, v. 128).

Yet, the following year, Inspector Routledge observed that “the Indians in the north have a wholesome dread of the police” (Routledge 1899:96). By 1898, the NWMP had built a substantial northern presence, with outposts at Lesser Slave Lake (the headquarters, with two constables, one interpreter, and three pack ponies), Peace River Landing (one non-commissioned officer, two constables, one interpreter, and four pack ponies), Athabasca Landing (one constable), Grand Rapids (operated only in the summer, with one non-commissioned officer, one constable, and one interpreter), and Fort Chipewyan (one non-commissioned officer and one interpreter) (Griesbach’s report in NWMP 1899:42). Chapter 8 shows that Aboriginal fears were not assuaged by the apparently protective role played by the NWMP and were strongly expressed at the time of Treaty No. 8 negotiations.

6

Christian Missions

Too often people forget the great force of national importance exerted by a few missionaries scattered over a large extent of country ... In their efforts to save souls they are indirectly advancing the nation's interests.

– H.A. Cody, *An Apostle of the North*

Missionaries were not formally agents of the state, and they established their northern missions in the mid-nineteenth century, well before the arrival of representatives of the state. Yet their presence complemented and contributed to an acceptance of later state initiatives. This discussion returns to issues raised earlier about the nature of internal colonialism, which involves the appropriation not only of economic and political control over subject populations but also of their hearts and minds – the transformation of their cultures and values, the *oeuvre civilisatrice* of nineteenth-century colonizers (Fabian 1991:135 and passim).

In northern Canada, the burden of effecting such transformation fell to Christian missionaries. The men and women who came to live at Fort Chipewyan and other northern posts as missionaries clearly understood that they were there to bring the Christian religion and European civilization as a single package to Aboriginal peoples (e.g., Huel 1996:xxv). That fact was not lost on observers of the day. In 1895, the *Edmonton Bulletin* reminded its readers that “the work of the missionaries has a very important bearing

on the future of the region" (*Edmonton Bulletin*, "Athabasca-Mackenzie," 21 Oct. 1895:2).

Even though missionaries sought to transform the lives of people for the better, the Comaroffs, studying missionaries in Africa, concluded that missionary actions "conducted to something quite different: an empire of inequality, a colonialism of coercion and dispossession" (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:12). Yet missionaries could not enjoy such influence acting alone. As Peter Pels (1997:172) has noted, "the combination of religious teaching, massive involvement in colonial education, and relative autonomy from the practice of colonial control gave missionaries a special position at the juncture of colonial technologies of domination and self-control." The relationship at Fort Chipewyan between missionaries and agents of the law was celebrated with some irony in Agnes Deans Cameron's journalistic account from the early twentieth century (1910:94): "In among the half-breed populace stalk policeman and priest, red jacket keeping the dark-skinned people straight in this world and black robe laying out conditions for the world to come. So is Chipewyan fate chequered with the *rouge et noir* of compulsion and expediency."

Raymond Huel has pointed out that the missionary endeavour is not held in high esteem today. The missionary is seen as "an unwanted and troublesome intruder attempting to subvert the society, culture and religion of those whom they were evangelizing" (1996:xxv; see also Goldring 1984; Grant 1984:205-206, 215).¹ Much contemporary Aboriginal discourse about missionaries focuses on the negative, often destructive experiences of children in mission-operated residential schools, thereby conflating a lengthy and complex history by defining missions solely as they operated after they had become fully institutionalized as an arm of the state. Missionaries have become scapegoats for a wide range of community problems that may in part be laid more properly at the feet of state agents and agencies.

Indeed, the "evangelical encounter" was multidimensional at Fort Chipewyan and elsewhere (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:7). Johannes Fabian (1991:155) suggested the value in considering the formative, "precarious" period of missionary involvement, rather than the missionary role within a fully realized operation. Both Fabian and the Comaroffs (1991) have provided provocative models for examining missionaries in colonial and pre-colonial domains, with case studies of a Roman Catholic religious movement in the Congo and Methodist missionary work among the Tswana of South Africa, respectively. Missionaries in northern Canada were involved in multiple discourses: with secular agencies, with Aboriginal

peoples, and with their own missionary orders and funders. That meant considerable jockeying for position by individual missionaries and their bishops with Hudson's Bay Company trading post personnel and senior administrators, other local traders, various agents of the state, funding agencies and, not least, the hoped-for Aboriginal parishioners.

What the missionaries wanted to achieve was a process of true conversion by indigenous people, narrowly defined by Comaroff and Comaroff (1991:249) as "a transfer of 'private religious identification'" that involved the adoption of new religious beliefs and practices. Yet their dilemma was that they could not see into the hearts and minds of the people they tried to convert. Conversion could be known only by its public face, the actions and statements of the converted. Missionaries struggled to understand the beliefs of Chipewyans, Crees, and other Aboriginal people so that they could decide how to approach their evangelizing mission and assess whether the people had changed in the directions that missionaries deemed essential.

MISSIONARY ARRIVALS

Northern missionary work was part of what John Webster Grant (1984:216) called the "great century" of Christian missions." It was an outgrowth of the development of Protestant and Roman Catholic denominations at Red River. Roman Catholics began their first mission at Red River in 1818, and Anglicans arrived in 1820 (e.g., Grant 1984:ch. 5; Peake 1989:8). Their "fierce denominational rivalries" (Zaslow 1971:64) were carried into the Northwest and marked their histories.² However, it was the Methodist Wesleyans, with their primary interest in Native missions, whom the Hudson's Bay Company invited in 1839 to establish missions at Norway House and Fort des Prairies (Edmonton), after the Reverend James Evans assured Governor George Simpson that they would not interfere with company activities.³ Evans was assigned to Norway House in 1840, and in 1842 he became the first missionary to visit Île-à-la-Crosse and Fort Chipewyan. The next year, he applied to establish permanent missions in 1844 at Fort Chipewyan and other locations but was refused permission by Simpson, who feared the possible impacts of sedentary missions. Worse, Evans accidentally shot and killed his Chipewyan interpreter, Thomas Hassall, in 1844, effectively quashing any chance of his developing missionary work in Chipewyan territory (Archives Deschâtelets [AD], Taché n.d.:1-2; McCarthy 1995:30, 32; Abel 1993:115).

The Wesleyan initiative encouraged Bishop Provencher to expand the Roman Catholic missions beyond Red River. Father Jean-Baptiste Thibault established a mission in 1842 at Lac Ste. Anne, west of Fort Edmonton, and in 1844 the bishop invited the Oblates of Mary Immaculate to undertake missionary work in the Northwest. Father Alexandre Taché and Father Pierre Aubert, both from Quebec, were the first Oblate priests to arrive, in 1845 (AD, Taché n.d.; McCarthy 1995:30-31; Huel 1996:15-17, 2003).⁴ In the same year, Father Thibault was invited to visit Île-à-la-Crosse by Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie, who hoped to prevent local trappers from being lured to the Plains. Thibault, who also travelled to Methye Portage, was received enthusiastically by the Chipewyans (McCarthy 1995:32; AD, Taché n.d.:2). The Anglicans had established a northern mission at The Pas by 1844, and in 1849 Bishop David Anderson planned additional Anglican missionary initiatives (McCarthy 1995:31, 34; Peake 1989:10).

Despite an official policy of support, Hudson's Bay Company officials were leery of any missionary presence, fearing it would be costly and interfere with the trade. Missionaries had to obtain company permission to establish permanent operations (Huel 1998:441; Abel 1993:116; McCarthy 1995:32).⁵ Yet the community at Fort Chipewyan was predisposed to welcome them. The Hudson's Bay Company factor or post manager was typically a Protestant Scot or Englishman who conducted Sunday services for his men, many of whom were also Protestants, and their families.⁶ He also conducted Christian funeral services. Employees who were French from Quebec or French Métis laid the groundwork for Roman Catholicism through religious instruction they had received in Quebec or Red River or through what McCarthy called a remnant "folk-knowledge" of Roman Catholicism (McCarthy 1998:114, see also 1995:ch. 8; Podruchny 2006:ch. 3). Bishop Taché himself referred to the *Canadien voyageurs* as a source of some knowledge, albeit faulty, about the Catholic religion among the Indians (AD, Taché n.d.:2, 6; see also Abel 1993:140-141). European and Métis men who married local women conveyed some version of their religious views and practices to their families and presumably influenced and even determined their subsequent formal conversions.

Northern Aboriginal people sought out European missionaries for the new resources they offered, spiritual and otherwise. For example, a locally influential Dene-Métis man, François Beaulieu II (in later life, "Le Patriarche"), travelled to Île-à-la-Crosse in 1845 to meet with Father Thibault and have his children baptized. After additional instruction at Portage La Loche and Fort Chipewyan, Beaulieu was himself baptized by Father Taché

in 1848 and thereafter supported the adoption of Catholicism by Indians and Métis alike (McCarthy 1998:118, 1995:32, 109-112; Smith 1995:127-128; Huel 2003:30). There are numerous references to Chipewyans and other Dene people travelling similarly great distances to meet missionaries and extending invitations to these men to visit them in their own country (e.g., AD, Taché n.d.; Faraud 1866:112, 122-123; Abel 1993:115), responding to what McCarthy (1995:37) has called the “enormous magnetism of the priests.”

Although historians have speculated about why Indians were so interested in missionaries and willing to convert, what these early conversions actually meant to the newly baptized is difficult to determine. The missionaries themselves agonized over this point. Christianity has been theorized as gaining a foothold because of the variety of troubles that faced many Aboriginal communities as they encountered and integrated into a wider world (e.g., Leacock 1980; Blackburn 2000:ch. 5; Grant 1984:ch. 11). Christianity was perceived as offering new spiritual powers to its converts to help them deal with ecological and social disruptions and with infectious diseases. For example, in 1864 Father Isidore Clut wrote from Fort Chipewyan to Bishop Taché that an epidemic of scarlet fever “has had its good side for the Religion. Never since I have been here have I found so much fervour among our savages. Even the indifferent ones have become fervent” (1 July 1964, AD, HE2221.T12 Z37, my translation).⁷

Neal McLeod (2002:37) has speculated about the “narrative holes” that emerged after contact, when the oral traditions could no longer fully “explain the world.” Joel Robbins (2007) conjectured that conversion to Christianity might have involved a philosophical rupture with the way things were in earlier times. At Fort Chipewyan, Christian missionaries arrived only thirty years after a brief-lived millenarian movement with cargo-cult features. According to John Franklin (1969[1823]:305), “The Northern Indians had cherished a belief for some years that a great change was about to take place in the natural order of things.” A prophet had predicted “that there would soon be a complete change in the face of their country; that fertility and plenty would succeed to the present sterility; and that the present race of white inhabitants, unless they became subservient to the Indians, would be removed” (152). There were rumours at the post of “a conspiracy ... to massacre all the whites of Fort Chipewyan and Big Island, in the Peace River, as well as Moose Deer Island Establishment at Slave Lake” (Wentzel 1889:109). In 1863, Father Clut reported with dismay a similar movement at Fond du Lac, in which Chipewyans claimed to see God directly and behaved as if they were priests.⁸ To these

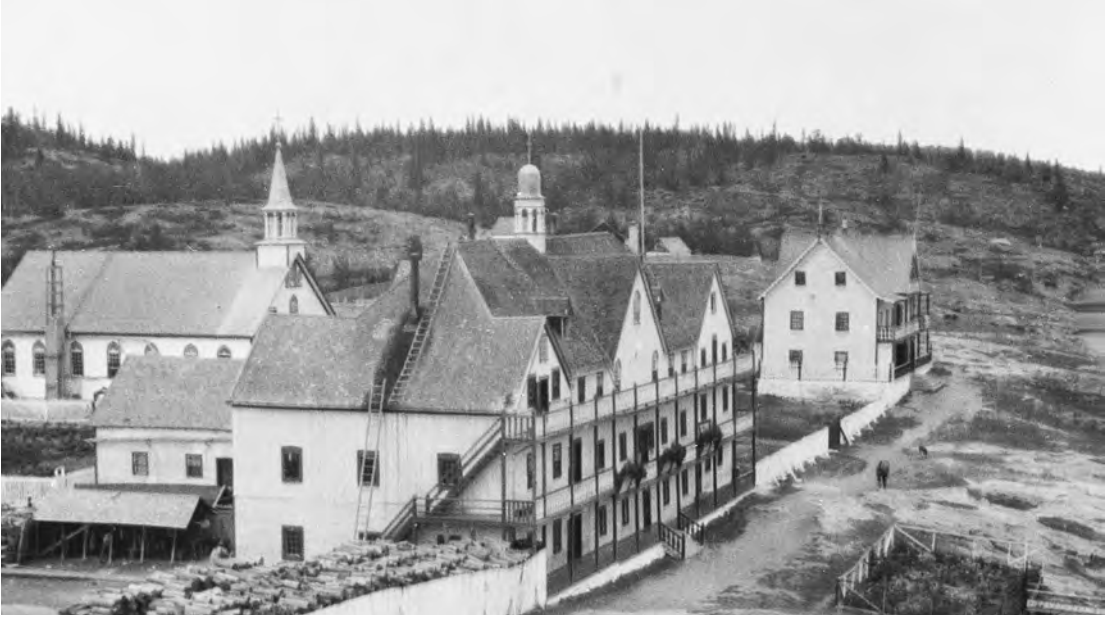


PHOTO 6.1 The Roman Catholic Nativity Mission at Fort Chipewyan, 1927. The Holy Angels Convent is the large building, with its large stack of cordwood. Farther along the fence is the Oblate Fathers' house. The church can be seen in the background. | Guy H. Blanchet photo | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys, PA-020224

pioneering priests, such men were heretics, but recently their actions have been interpreted as efforts to incorporate Christian beliefs and practices into Aboriginal cultural traditions (AD, Clut to Bishop Taché, 15 April 1863, HE2221.T12Z32, and 2 July 1863, HE2221.T12 Z33; Huel 1992; Abel 1993:129-131; Grant 1984:116).⁹ They represent the beginnings of “vernacular” or indigenous Christianity that may itself have been a form of cultural revitalization (Harkin 2004:xxviii). However, Jean-Guy Goulet (1982) has also theorized the existence of “religious dualism,” the persistence of two distinct religious systems.

While the obviously millenarian aspect seems to have largely disappeared as the fur trade became more regularized, prophets did not (e.g., Goulet 1998:ch. 8; Moore and Wheelock 1990). Chipewyan and Cree religious and philosophical traditions persisted, while at the same time people found ways to build bridges to Christian beliefs, rituals, and ceremonies. The missionaries, too, surely contributed to building these bridges, though it is difficult to limn the extent of their accommodation. As a very young

Father Émile Grouard – still a novice – wrote in 1862, the Indians were “spiritual in their way” (AD, Grouard to Mgr. Taché, 14 Sept. 1862, HE222I. T12 Z105). The priests seemed to be content with a level of behavioural compliance and did not expect theological correctness.¹⁰

Roman Catholics and Anglicans both established substantial missions at Fort Chipewyan. Father Taché, who arrived in Rupert’s Land in 1845, was sent in 1846 to Île-à-la-Crosse to evangelize the Chipewyans. In 1847 and 1848, he took his mission to Fort Chipewyan (AD, Taché n.d.:3; Huel 2003:ch. 2, 1996:22; Grouard 1923:28; McCarthy 1995:xvii, 33, 36-37).¹¹ Duchaussois credited French Métis influence at Fort Chipewyan with the great success Taché appeared to enjoy with Chipewyans and Crees (1921:227-228, 1937b:179; see also AD, Taché n.d.). Father Henri Faraud established a permanent mission at Fort Chipewyan in 1849, despite misgivings by Chief Trader James Anderson, who feared additional pressure on limited food resources. However, in 1850-51 Anderson allowed his men to help Faraud build a house on a site west of the post, where the church is still located today. Faraud named it the Nativity of Mary, because the new mission buildings – a house and chapel – were completed on the feast day of 8 September 1851 (Faraud 1866; McCarthy 1995:37-38; Huel 1996:22; Grouard 1923:30; Ortolan n.d.:223-224; Petitot 1884-85:47). Other priests who came to Fort Chipewyan, some permanently and others for short periods, included Fathers Isidore Clut, Émile Petitot, Émile Grouard, and Marie-Germain-Émile Eynard. The mission at Fort Chipewyan not only served local needs but also supported missionary outreach to the Dene of Great Slave Lake and the Mackenzie River (McCarthy 1995:38, 45).

Anglican missionaries were sent by the London-based Church Missionary Society. Boon (1962:81) claims they had been invited by the Indians in 1848, when a Chipewyan named “Tripe de Roche” in the Athabasca region sent a message to Archdeacon Hunter at The Pas, asking for a teacher.¹² However, no Anglicans ventured north until Hudson’s Bay Company employees of the Mackenzie District asked for an Anglican minister, responding to the news that a Roman Catholic mission might be established at Fort Simpson. Archdeacon Hunter joined the Mackenzie District fur brigade at Norway House, having been granted permission by Simpson to establish a mission.¹³ He met Bernard Ross, the officer in charge at Fort Simpson, at the Methye Portage, and they continued together to Fort Resolution. There, Hunter tried to negotiate a division of missionary territory with Father Grollier, who would not consider such a compromise, and the two rivals continued on to Fort Simpson. A few years later, the Reverend William Kirkby established a permanent Anglican mission at



PHOTO 6.2 The beautiful interior of the Nativity Mission church was inspired by French churches and painted by Father Grouard in 1886. The church is now a Provincial Historic Site. | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Interior, PA-040740

Fort Simpson (Peake 1989:34-41; Bompas 1888:27; Boon 1962:81; Cody 1908:53-54; Crawley 1940:167; McCarthy 1995:46-49; Abel 1993:116).¹⁴

It was not until 1867 that an Anglican minister, William Carpenter Bompas, spent several months in Fort Chipewyan itself, encouraged by the Hudson's Bay Company (Cody 1908:65).¹⁵ He "pleaded earnestly for a man to take up work at Fort Chipewyan," where "the small Protestant community here needs the rites of baptism, marriage, and burial performed for them" (66).¹⁶ He left for Fort Vermilion in January 1868 (Peake 1989:88). Although Reverend Crawley (1940:167) considered this visit the beginning of St. Paul's Mission, the first permanent missionary, Arthur Shaw, did not arrive until 1874, the year after the Diocese of Athabasca was created under a newly consecrated Bishop Bompas.¹⁷ Shaw was joined over the winter by twenty-six-year-old Alfred Campbell Garrioch, a teacher from Red River whom Bompas recruited for the northern mission service. Garrioch (1929:13) recalled:

The first mission building erected at Fort Chipewyan was a log house fifteen by twelve, daubed within and without with mud [which he built with assistance from the Hudson's Bay Company]. It stood about fifteen rods west of the house occupied by Mr. [and Mrs.] Shaw, on a piece of land donated by Mr. McFarlane, acting for the Hudson's Bay Company. In this interesting little structure I spent a happy winter baching it, and instilled into the minds of my twelve pupils [all boys] a respectable knowledge of the three R's – Reading, Writing and Arithmetic, and that without overlooking the fourth R – Religion.¹⁸

Presumably, it was Shaw who began the Register of Births, Deaths, and Marriages. The first baptisms, of Jane Mary and Sarah Mowatt, were recorded on 3 June 1875 (Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], A.13/1). While Shaw and Garrioch constructed some modest mission buildings, Shaw despaired of the time and cost involved in building a church, mission house, and proper school (Arthur Shaw, Fort Chipewyan, to the Committee of the Church Missionary Society [CMS], 2 Jan. 1875, Church Missionary Society Records [CMSR], reel 25). Shaw, who came from Sheffield and was accustomed to industrialized England, found the mission inefficient and proposed installing a small steam engine for sawing wood (Peake 1989:95, 155). He was joined briefly in 1876 by Allen Hardisty, an Aboriginal catechist (Cody 1908:182). Shaw returned to England in 1876.

Bompas then moved to Fort Chipewyan to take over the mission. He recruited Thomas Bunn from Red River for his assistant, to be both



PHOTO 6.3 St. Paul's Anglican Church is now a Provincial Historic Site. A small cemetery is located next to the church. | F.H. Kitto photo, 1920 | Library and Archives Canada, PA-101611

“Schoolmaster and Catechist” (Peake 1989:98). Bompas was replaced by Garrioch, who remained until the Reverend William Day Reeve arrived in 1879 (Peake 1989:117).¹⁹ The Church of Saint Paul the Apostle was eventually completed and consecrated on Easter Day 1880 under Reeve, who remained at the mission until 1891, when he left to become bishop of Mackenzie River (Peake 1989:117; Cody 1908:217; Crawley 1940:167; Black et al. 1987). To Bompas, “The house of God is the chief visible sign which we are still allowed to retain of God’s presence amongst us, and I take it to be of great importance that the heathen should be reminded, by this constant memorial before their eyes, that the introduction of Christianity into their country by the missionaries is a reality, and more than a mere tale” (in Cody 1908:185). Reeve’s successor was James Richard Lucas, from 1891 to 1898, followed by A.J. Warwick (Peake 1989:118; McCrum 1976:32).



PHOTO 6.4 The Reverend Warwick and his family, 1901. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B.4028

MISSIONARY OPERATIONS

Much has been written about Oblate-Anglican competition at the northern missions (e.g., McCarthy 1995:45; Choquette 1995; Huel 1996:38-39; Abel 1993:116-117; Mishler 1990). The Oblates held the upper hand in the Athabasca–Great Slave Lake regions because of their ability to muster support for larger, more self-sufficient missions than the Anglicans could realize. They also had over a decade of northern experience before the first

Anglican missionaries arrived.²⁰ The Oblates enjoyed the backing of L'Oeuvre de la Propagation de la Foi and L'Oeuvre de la Sainte-Enfance, lay societies that financially supported French missionaries (McCarthy 1995:7; Huel 1996:69). The Oblate priests, mostly from France and Belgium, were assisted by an associated Oblate lay order (Duchaussois 1937a). Most of the brothers also came from Europe, and they were eventually joined in the late nineteenth century by men from Quebec (McCarthy 1995:62; Huel 1996:64-65; Grouard 1927:415). The Oblate brothers, along with hired Aboriginal people, provided the essential manual labour for the mission.²¹ Bishop Grouard (1905:184) called them “les pères nourriciers” – foster fathers – of the missions. They supplied their own food by fishing and hunting and growing large gardens. John Macoun observed that “everything planted or sown around the Mission seemed to flourish.” He supposed that the only reason there was so little cultivation at the post was that “most of the inhabitants are flesh-eaters, and look with contempt on vegetables and vegetable eaters” (1877b:165, see also 1882:139). At the Senate Committee hearings in 1888, Bishop Clut testified about the Fort Chipewyan mission garden, with its “fine wheat,” barley, potatoes, turnips, carrots, beets, and radishes (Select Committee 1888:138, 140).²² The brothers built and maintained increasingly substantial mission buildings. Partly freed from these time-consuming labours, the priests could get on with their religious work, though Grouard (1910:44-45) complained that they still had too little time to devote to the intellectual and religious duties that should have been their primary concern.

Anglican ministers tended to rely on the unofficial assistance of the Hudson's Bay Company, whose first responsibility was the fur trade and which was officially neutral toward the competing missions.²³ Sometimes they lamented their difficulties compared to the Oblates: “The Romanists have an immense advantage over us in the matter of labourers. The Brothers who receive only their clothes and food and who work as only those can who work for Salvation, accomplish all their work in building, cattle keeping, tripping, & bringing the moose & fish home & in many other ways [at] the mission work. There are three Brothers at the R.C. Athabasca Mission” (letter from Rev. Shaw to the Committee of the CMS, 23 Jan. 1875, CMSR, reel 25). Nor could they count on much other help: “the Indians are roaming from place to place & consequently cannot give any time to the mission even if so disposed, provision &c is dear & so European labour is very expensive” (Rev. Shaw to the Committee of the CMS, 23 Jan. 1875, CMSR, reel 25). Anglican ministers often had wives and families, and they expected financial support for trips “outside” for



PHOTO 6.5 Bishop Lucas conducting divine service with a makeshift pulpit at the Grand Rapids, 24 May 1914. | Francis Harper photo | Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, 29833

medical care and family visits, all of which added substantially to the costs of their missions.

Despite these significant organizational differences, Anglican and Oblate missionaries worked in parallel ways as evangelists. They recognized that it was impractical in the North to expect Aboriginal people to live in sedentary agricultural villages (Huel 1996:13-14; Abel 1993:118-119), which meant that this key aspect of southern Christian missionary work was omitted in favour of linguistic and educational endeavours. Missionaries visited their “Christian hunters” (Abel 1993:119) in their bush communities, required them to come to the missions for special services, and developed

residential and day schools for their children. They also emphasized “good works,” providing assistance in times of sickness and famine. This role had previously been the sole domain of the Hudson’s Bay Company, which began to divest such responsibilities after 1870. As the missionaries assumed increasing social responsibilities, they simultaneously assumed some measure of the influence and authority formerly exercised solely by company managers.

MISSIONARIES AND ABORIGINAL LANGUAGES

Linguistic work and education occupied considerable missionary time and effort from the earliest days of the missions (e.g., McCarthy 1995:79; Huel 1996:29-33; Abel 1993:ch. 6). It was of the utmost importance to the missionaries that they be able to convey Christian theological concepts in the Aboriginal languages, to ensure genuine conversion and to create written materials for religious study and use.²⁴ Each new missionary stationed at Fort Chipewyan had to learn to speak the Chipewyan language if he was going to enjoy any success; some missionaries also learned Cree. When Father Taché visited the post in 1847, he was keenly aware of his linguistic limitations and was forced to teach prayers in French. It was hardly ideal for the complex business of teaching a new religion (AD, Taché n.d.:3; Huel 1996:30). Much of Father Faraud’s account (1866) of his northern experiences focuses on his conversations with Indians about theological issues, which reflected his growing competence in Chipewyan. Huel (1996:30, 32) describes him as the Oblates’ “undisputed linguist” because of his eventual proficiency in Cree and several Dene languages. He even learned some Inuktitut.

While the French-speaking Oblates have enjoyed a reputation as the missionaries who were most successful at mastering Aboriginal languages, in the nineteenth century both Oblates and Anglicans appear to have been equally adept at language acquisition and preparation of dictionaries, grammars, and religious materials in Chipewyan and Cree.²⁵ Reverend Shaw at St. Paul’s Mission made a determined effort to learn Chipewyan. In 1875, he wrote optimistically: “I have secured a good competent instructor in the language, and hope in a few months to be able to speak it and make the glad tidings known to the Indians in their native tongue” (letter to the Committee of the CMS, 2 Jan. 1875, CMSR, reel 25). More realistic was the experience of the Reverend James R. Lucas, stationed at Fort Chipewyan for much of the 1890s. He wrote at length to Bishop Young about

his difficulties in learning Chipewyan.²⁶ His first attempts to study the language were unrewarding because of poor instructional materials. In December 1893, he wrote:

The past year has not been a very eventful year, humanly speaking ... The chief difficulty has been the acquirement of the Chipewyan language, & this has occupied most of my time. The Indians always seem very pleased to visit this Mission, & very quickly make their way to it in cases of sickness. This opportunity of speaking to them, while attending to their bodily wants is a grand one, & has assisted me greatly in picking up the language. Most of them listen very attentively & will stay for hours, listening to what I am able to say, & correcting the many mistakes in words & construction which a learner inevitably makes in acquiring a new language. [Lucas to Bishop Young, Dec. 1893, PAA, A.281/189; see also 17 Aug. 1891, PAA, A.281/187; 8 March 1894, PAA, A.281/190]

When he was able to obtain a Chipewyan copy of the Roman Catholic Prayer Book in 1894, he finally began to master the syllabics and the lexicon for “religious truths” (30 Dec. 1894, PAA, A.281/190; 17 Feb. 1896, PAA, A.281/192). By 1897, he had begun work on a Chipewyan dictionary with five thousand words (13 Jan. 1897, PAA, A.281/193).

Each new missionary devoted a great deal of time to applying his new linguistic skills to preparing written materials.²⁷ They translated the Gospels and eventually the entire Bible, as well as other religious instructional texts, into Cree, Chipewyan, and other Aboriginal languages. Models for this work had been developed elsewhere. Of special significance was the pioneer work of James Evans, who by 1836 had devised a system of syllabic writing for Ojibwa. He easily extended this new orthography to Cree when he was at Norway House (Walker 1996:174). The Reverend William Mason, who succeeded him at Norway House but then went over to the Anglican Church, eventually translated the New and Old Testaments into Cree, in collaboration with his partly Cree wife and two other assistants. It was published in 1861 under Mason’s name as sole author (Walker 1996:174-175; see also Evans 1985:30-31). In 1899, Albert Tate, a fluent Cree speaker at Lesser Slave Lake, assessed Mason’s Cree Bible as “superior to any translation he has seen” (Rev. Geo. Holmes, St. Peter’s Mission, Lesser Slave Lake, to Bishop Young, 8 Dec. 1899, PAA, A.281/148; see also Albert Tate to Rev. Holmes, re: Mason’s translation, 17 Dec. 1899, PAA, A.32/20). Many other works in Cree were available very early, including grammars, dictionaries, and a variety of religious materials (see also Evans 1985).

Syllabics were adapted, though less easily, to Athapaskan languages, including Chipewyan, by both Oblates and Anglicans (Moore 2007; Walker 1996:176-177; McCarthy 1995:80).²⁸ Baptiste St. Cyr at Fort Chipewyan assisted Fathers Taché and Faraud in preparing the first Chipewyan catechism for the Nativity Mission (McCarthy 1995:81). Faraud later prepared a detailed study of the Chipewyan language and a book of Chipewyan hymns (McCarthy 1995:223n44; Huel 1996:30).²⁹ Although Reverend Shaw had arrived in Fort Chipewyan with primers, he complained: “They are useless because they are not in Syllabic Characters” (annual letter, July 1875, CMSR, reel 25). The Reverend William Kirkby, who had begun his career at Fort Simpson as a schoolmaster, published a syllabic system for Chipewyan in 1881 (Walker 1996:176-177) and translated the New Testament (Kirkby 1881; Cody 1908:54, 55, 79).³⁰ In his annual letter, Bishop Bompas commented about their importance to Anglican work: “We have now received the four Gospels in the Chipewyan Dialect as translated by Mr. Kirkby & I think that these if patiently taught to the Chipewyans will have a good effect on them & may gradually wean them by Gods blessing from the instruction of the Romish priests this is the best way by substituting truth for errors” (20 July 1880, CMSR, reel 30).

The missionaries laid the groundwork for the literacy of Aboriginal people in their own languages. For example, when Father Faraud visited Fort Resolution in 1850, he taught four people to read and write in Chipewyan syllabics, using the *Pater* as his primary text. Joseph Touzaé, one of the four, taught more than fifteen other people to read (Faraud 1866:155, 161). When Faraud returned to Fort Chipewyan, he noted that most of the hunters who arrived at the post by the end of September to receive their winter outfit already knew how to read, having taught one another (Faraud 1866:164). That Aboriginal people so readily took on the responsibility for their own literacy indicates how useful they found the ability to read and write (e.g., Goldring 1984:46; see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:233). Yet because most of the written materials were Christian texts, those who taught others to read were effectively “lay missionaries” (McCarthy 1995:80, 156; Walker 1996:174).³¹

Missionary linguistic works were not neutral activities but forms of “linguistic colonization” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:215; see also Fabian 1991:133). Especially important in this process was the development of grammars, dictionaries, and other written materials. Originally constructed with the assistance and guidance of Aboriginal and other indigenous people, these aids became “prescriptive,” as “concern with spreading the content of the message became overshadowed by attention to formal and

normative matters, such as the exact classification of languages, standardization of writing, and teaching of correct grammar” (Fabian 1991:141). The standardization of indigenous languages paralleled the nineteenth-century standardization of European languages.³² Linguistic efforts were also “a prerequisite of the symbolic incorporation involved in colonialism ... of reducing the lower order diversities of the non-European world to the universalistic categories of the West” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:221).³³ While missionaries found it difficult to control Aboriginal people without the support of state authorities, by standardizing languages through the use of written texts they could promote the “modernization” of Aboriginal languages and govern how those languages were represented and transmitted in formal school settings, thereby gaining some influence over the semantic practices of the Aboriginal peoples (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:221, 223, 1992:236; Fabian 1991:143).

Both the business of translation itself and the conflicts between missionaries may have heightened Aboriginal awareness of the cultural differences between themselves and the French and English. Aboriginal people associated the Roman Catholics with the French Métis, calling Roman Catholicism the French religion. Anglicanism, associated with the Scots and English, was the English religion (McCarthy 1995:53; Huel 1996:38-39).

MISSION SCHOOLS

Linguistic and educational initiatives came together in the mission schools, where the instructional focus was not adults but children. Schooling and conversion were reflections of each other: “Each aimed at the systematic, moral reconstruction of the person in a world in which individuals were increasingly viewed as capable of being formed and reformed by social institutions” (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:233). Seventeenth-century Jesuit missionaries in eastern Canada had established the precedent of education as a key evangelical tool (Leacock 1980), and both the Oblates and Anglicans were expected to open schools as soon as their resources allowed. Indeed, parents at the fur trade posts wanted their children to receive a formal education, and most of the early “scholars” were Métis children who lived in the settlement with their parents and probably already spoke two or more languages (see also McCarthy 1995:157).

The first northern mission school was founded at Fort Providence in 1867 by four Grey Nuns (Duchaussois 1928:60, 1959:77; McCarthy 1995:159). In the same year, Bishop Clut began teaching children and adults at Fort

TABLE 6.1 The first children in Holy Angels Convent, Fort Chipewyan, 1874

Name	Date registered	Birth year	Age at entry
Pierre McCarthy*	20 July	1862	12
Sophie Tourangeau	26 July	1869	5
Alexandre McCarthy	27 July	—	—
Eusèbe McCarthy	27 July	1864	10
Isidore McCarthy	27 July	1868	6
Pauline McCarthy	27 July	1866	8
Adélaïde McDonald	29 July	1871	3
Sara McDonald	29 July	1869	5
Catherine Tourangeau	3 Aug.	1869	5
Jonas Tourangeau	3 Aug.	1867	7
Lucie Esintchuze	18 Oct.	1869	5
Severin Esintchuze	18 Oct.	1868	6
Julie McCarthy	18 Oct.	—	—

* Pierre McCarthy, later known as Pierre Mercredi, attended the Grey Nuns' school at Fort Providence until the new school opened in Fort Chipewyan (Mercredi 1962:1).

Note: Figure 6.1 shows the kinship ties that existed between most of these children.

Source: Bishop's Archives, Entrées des enfants au Couvent des Saints Anges, Mission de la Nativité, 1874-1917; McCormack n.d.

Chipewyan, instructing in Cree (McCarthy 1998:128-129).³⁴ In 1874, fearing that the Anglicans were going to establish a school at Fort Chipewyan, Bishop Clut bypassed official channels and asked the Grey Nuns at Fort Providence to open a second school there. The sisters complied, though without obtaining permission from their superior in Montreal. They sent Sister Adeline Lapointe, Sister Saint-Michel des Saints, and Domithilde Letendre, a lay worker, who together established the Couvent des Saints Anges (Holy Angels Convent) (Duchaussois 1928:114-115; Brady n.d.:66; McCarthy 1995:160; Petitot 1884-85:47).

The school register lists thirteen students who enrolled between 20 July and 18 October 1874 (see Table 6.1). Although they were children from six separate families, it may be more appropriate to consider them as coming mainly from two related family units in Fort Chipewyan, the McCarthy (later Mercredi) and Tourangeau families (Joseph McCarthy was married to Marguerite Tourangeau; McCormack n.d.). These relationships are

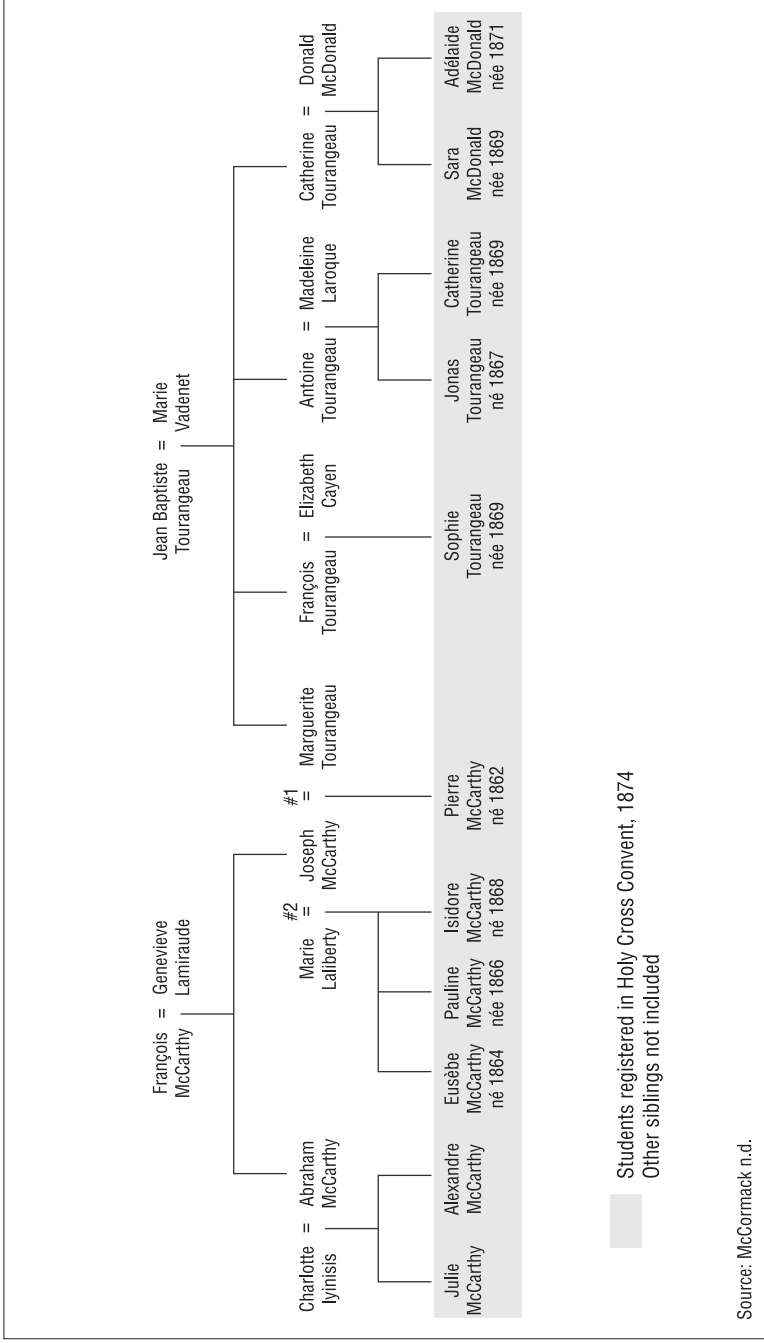


FIGURE 6.1 Kinship ties between the McCarthy and Tourangeau families

diagrammed in Figure 6.1. It was surely no coincidence that four children were from the family of Joseph McCarthy, who had accompanied Father Taché to Fort Chipewyan in 1847 and was his assistant at Mass (McCarthy 1995:116), and that some of the Tourangeau men were employed directly by the mission (various correspondence, AD, HE2221.T12Z).³⁵ These families were all French Métis, which anticipated the trend for the mission school to educate primarily children of post residents, with a secondary emphasis on orphans (see also Abel 1993:120; McCarthy 1995:157; Grouard 1923:108). Only two children were enrolled from what was probably a Chipewyan family. Not surprisingly, families sent only some of their children. The ages of the children ranged from twelve to three, with six and a half the average age. All the children lived in residence, which was a modest log building used originally as a warehouse (Brady n.d.:66), within easy access of their parents.

The following year, Father Grouard travelled to the Grey Nuns' mother house in Montreal, where he obtained formal permission for the Grey Nuns to remain at Fort Chipewyan. Sisters Brochu, Fournier, and Virginie Bernier were sent out in 1875. Sister Brochu taught the girls, Sister Fournier taught the boys, Sister Virginie cooked, and Sister Saint-Michel des Saints became the superior. The other sisters returned to Fort Providence (Duchaussois 1928:117-118).

Missionary education in the North during the nineteenth century differed in some important ways from common notions held today about such schooling. Residential school education was voluntary and sought out by the parents, especially Métis parents.³⁶ The missions looked after orphans and illegitimate children, who might otherwise have faced difficult times.³⁷ While children were taught Christian religion and values, practical skills, and some basic academic skills, they were not being prepared to live in permanently settled agricultural communities, which did not exist in the region.³⁸ Aboriginal languages were not forbidden, and catechism at Fort Chipewyan was often taught in Chipewyan (McCarthy 1995:162; Huel 1996:103). Lessons were taught in French, and eventually English instruction was added.³⁹ Agnes Deans Cameron, who visited Fort Chipewyan in 1908, reported that "the kiddies are taught one day in French and the next day in English," but they talked to one another in Chipewyan (1910:100; also Bird 1991:13).

Arthur Shaw and Alfred Garrioch both taught school in Fort Chipewyan, but to different students. On 1 January 1875, Shaw observed: "We are getting on very nicely. There is a little school house erected on the sight [site] of the mission, & the few scholars are progressing rapidly



PHOTO 6.6 The Nativity Mission had a complex provisioning operation and operated its own boat, the *St. Joseph*, built in Fort Chipewyan in 1893. | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Interior, PA-040746

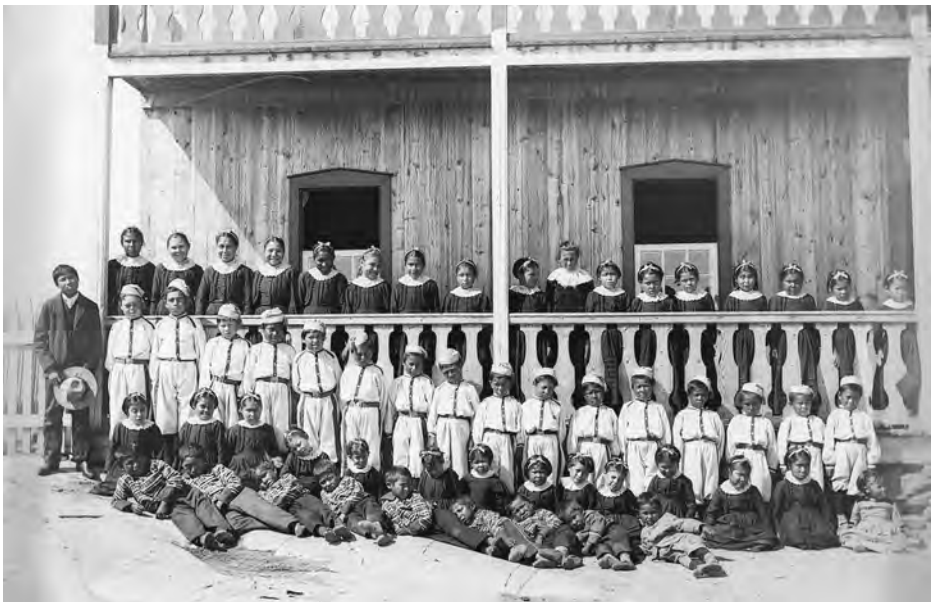


PHOTO 6.7 Children at the Nativity Mission are carefully posed for a picture taken in connection with a special celebration, perhaps performances for visiting dignitaries. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B.3730



PHOTO 6.8 Children attending the Church of England school, c. 1912. | Glenbow Archives, NA-2974-15



PHOTO 6.9 Children who lived at the mission had to help with daily chores. These girls are cleaning fish. | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys, PA-020225

under Mr. Garriochs tuition. I hold night classes 5 times a week and the other men attend regularly & are very anxious to learn & understand the Scriptures" (CMSR, reel 25). His annual letter the following summer noted that the scholars had made "considerable progress on the different subjects" (July 1875, CMSR, reel 25). Five years later, Reeve wrote: "My time is occupied chiefly in teaching school. There are 15 scholars in regular attendance including 3 of our own children" (letter to Rev. H. Wright, 5 March 1880, CMSR, reel 30). The Anglican school at Fort Chipewyan was not a residential school, but it was common for a few children to live with the minister if their parents lived elsewhere. Some instruction was in an Aboriginal language, and in 1889 Reeve advised the bishop: "Since the Synod & in accordance with one of its minutes I have been teaching some of my elder scholars to read Cree" (W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, Easter 1889, PAA, A.281/227). The Anglican school emphasized what Reeve called "a sound Christian education," a combination of religious education and academic skills.

Both missions turned to the federal government for financial support for these programs. In 1877, Father Henri Faraud requested funding for the residential schools at Forts Providence and Chipewyan but was turned down on the grounds that the government could not provide assistance to Indians in areas not yet ceded by treaty.⁴⁰ Renewed requests for aid were made in the 1880s by Oblate priests and Grey Nuns and by Bishop Young for the Diocese of Athabasca (Huel 1996:110-112; Peake 1989:119). Eventually, the North-West Territories government made limited funding available for special grants to support the education of Indian children. At Fort Chipewyan, the grant increased from \$62.50 to \$100 per quarter in the 1880s but then decreased in 1892 to \$80 because of the growing number of schools competing for the same funds. Once the treaty was signed by the end of the century, the grant was \$60 per capita (W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 23 Feb. 1889, PAA, A.281/227; Sec., Board of Education, Lieutenant Governor's Office, Regina, to Rev. Cowley, 25 May 1892, PAA, A.281/97; annual letter from Geo. Holmes to Bishop Young, 26 Dec. 1899, PAA, A.281/148).⁴¹ In 1888, a special grant of \$200 was made to the (Anglican?) schools at Fort Chipewyan and Dunvegan for text books, which Reeve credited to his "application to Mr. Dewdney last winter for maps & school material" (W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 1 Oct. 1888, PAA, A.281/226).

In return, the government expected some measure of accountability from missionary educators, a tentative step toward control of northern Indian education. School officials had to complete returns for the Indian

children enrolled at the school, on forms supplied by the government. These caused some concern to the Anglican missionaries, because they were based on a restricted definition of “Indian”:

According to the Instructions at the back they are useless because it states emphatically that none but Indian Children’s Names are to be entered! [W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 16 Feb. 1886, PAA, A.281/224]

If they are going to be particular in requiring the names of only Indian children on the registers it will be rather difficult to comply with their conditions. [W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 5 Jan. 1887, PAA, A.281/225]

In 1894, the Indian commissioner provided Reverend Lucas with a reference copy of “Revised Programme of studies recently adopted,” presumably a curriculum, and he asked the school to post a timetable. Lucas was also invited to submit to the Department of Indian Affairs “specimens of handwriting, composition, dictation or other class work done by the pupils *in our Indian school*” (James R. Lucas to Bishop Young, 8 March 1894, PAA, A.281/190, emphasis in original).

MISSIONARIES AND MEDICAL AID

The other area in which the missionaries played a growing role was in the provision of charitable and medical services. McCarthy and Abel have argued convincingly that the Dene, who believed in close links between spiritual power and health, were attracted to the missionaries for the medicine (in both senses of the word) that they were believed to bring. They regarded them much as they would a shaman who had demonstrated his power by his ability to heal or to cause illness or death (McCarthy 1995:ch. 9; Abel 1993:136-137).⁴² Baptism, the Roman Catholic confessional, prayers and music, and crucifixes and other paraphernalia were equated with aspects of traditional Aboriginal religious practice (Abel 1993:131-134). The fact that the missions were established during a time when the Aboriginal people experienced often devastating epidemics and other illnesses not amenable to their traditional medicines might have contributed to the enthusiasm with which they sought out the missionaries.⁴³

Aboriginal people visited both the Catholic and Anglican missions for medical aid. However, the remedies employed by the missionaries were

not necessarily any more successful than Aboriginal ones (Abel 1993:136; see also McCormack 1996a:36-38), and both were probably ineffectual against new infectious diseases. Some Oblates and Anglicans embraced homeopathy, and the Oblates obtained kits of medicines, complete with instructional booklets, to treat common illnesses (McCarthy 1995:124; see also Abel 1993:136). In 1871, both Father Petitot and Reverend Bompas vaccinated hundreds of people for smallpox, preventing the spread of an epidemic from Fort Edmonton and the Plains (McCarthy 1995:126). Bompas estimated that he himself vaccinated about five hundred people, presumably at Fort Chipewyan, Fond du Lac, and along the Peace River, the areas where he travelled in the spring (Cody 1908:131-132).

The Anglicans also kept regular stocks of medicines, which they reordered when supplies ran low. For example, in 1875 Reverend Shaw requested a lengthy list of drugs, including “the best medicine for Small Pox – chicken Pox – Scarlatina & Scarlet fever, with a manuel [manual] treating of these diseases, and the use & administration of the medicines” (1 Jan. 1875, CMSR, reel 25).⁴⁴ When Reverend Lucas arrived at Fort Chipewyan to take over the mission, he contrasted the emptiness of the “medicine cupboard” to his “splendid medicine chest fitted up by Burrough & Welcomes ‘Tabloids’” (James R. Lucas to Bishop Young, 17 Aug. 1891, PAA, A.281/187), which constituted state-of-the-art medicine at the time. Lucas had prepared for his mission with eighteen months of medical training before he left England (Waldo 1923:67). Both the Grey Nuns and the missionary wives played roles in medical care and nursing (Arthur J. Warwick to Bishop Young, 13 Nov. 1899, PAA, A.281/308). Mrs. Warwick was described as “a trained nurse” (McCrum 1976:32). Even Charlotte Bompas arranged to take a course in nursing when she was in her fifties, after spending her first years in the North (Garrioch 1929:57).

Though their medical assistance and other good works brought them few converts in Fort Chipewyan, the Anglicans considered it a long-term moral investment.⁴⁵ As Reverend Reeve commented:

A good many Indians have visited us, most of them requiring medicine. These I have endeavoured to direct to the Great Physician. Unfortunately our stock of medicine is getting low. It would be a great boon if a good supply could be sent to us. I feel sure administering to the bodily ailments of these poor people will be one of the surest ways of gaining their confidence & affection, & of leading them to Him. [W.D. Reeve to Mr. Wigram, Nov. 1881, CMSR, reel 30; see also Cody 1908:174]

I did not always attempt to preach, or exhort, or “say a word” when administering relief. I thought it as well, in some instances, to let the act speak for itself so as to do away with any idea of bribery ... but even though not one individual leave the Romish Communion & profess himself a Protestant, yet there is reason to believe that our teaching has not been in vain. These poor Indians cannot, perhaps, reason clearly enough to understand the differences between Romanism & Protestantism, but they can understand something of the meaning of our Lord’s words. [Reeve to Bishop Young, Easter 1889, PAA, A.281/227]

By the end of the nineteenth century, virtually all Aboriginal peoples of the Fort Chipewyan region were Christians. Chipewyans, Crees, and French Métis were Roman Catholic, and Scots Métis and most Euro-Canadians were Anglicans. Church affiliation did not necessarily mean that the different Christian theologies had been carefully weighed. When James Lucas treated Indians for “La Grippe” (influenza) in 1896, they explained why they did not convert: “nearly all of them told me that the priests across were the first to pray for them, & so they must listen to them. ‘What you tell us & what the priests tell us is nearly the same’ said many” (Lucas to Bishop Young, 24 June 1896, PAA, A.281/192). Warwick was less forgiving in 1899, when he wrote that the Indians were “as bigoted Romanists as the French half breeds” (Warwick to Bishop Young, 13 Nov. 1899, PAA, A.281/308).

Although the missionaries did not try to change the Aboriginal economy, they were responsible for other changes in Aboriginal people’s lives. They contributed to some reconstruction in family units and personal and family identities by insisting on monogamous marriages and patrilineally transmitted surnames.⁴⁶ To be baptized and married in the church, a man had to choose one wife and relinquish all others, a matter of great distress to the wives who were abandoned and to their families (e.g., Faraud 1866:156; McCarthy 1995:90–91; Huel 1996:87–91). The missionaries gave “Christian” names to people as part of the baptismal process and assigned family surnames, although the use of other names, including nicknames, persisted. Surnames could be a French or Scottish name deriving from a European father, a transcription or translation of a Chipewyan or Cree name, or an entirely new name.⁴⁷ The parish records of births and marriages was one vehicle to regularize the transmission of these surnames, and school enrolment was another (see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1991:219).

Schools, with their European-based curricula, were important locales for the teaching of cultural values, which constituted an educational subtext,

a hidden curriculum in that it was embedded in the organization of the school itself (see also Le Compte 1978). While school attendance in the nineteenth century does not seem to have carried with it the trauma of the southern residential schools or schooling later in the twentieth century, it nevertheless required of students a considerable measure of personal reorganization or discipline, especially with regard to the organization of time on a daily and seasonal basis⁴⁸ and personal submission to external authority. These students, taught to respect the authority of the church, constituted a cadre of Aboriginal people who were nominally prepared to accept the authority of the Canadian state and the new northern order that it would strive to impose in the twentieth century.

The Ways of Life at Fort Chipewyan: Cultural Baselines at the Time of Treaty

Here were men ... plainly on the high road to comfort.
– Charles Mair, *Through the Mackenzie Basin*

The fur trade mode of production, generated by the circumstances of the early-nineteenth-century fur trade, provided a flexible framework for lifeways that were continually remodelled and modernized as northern residents, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal alike, accommodated to changing economic, social, and political conditions in the last decades of the century. By the time of treaty in 1899, residence choice – whether people lived in Fort Chipewyan or in the surrounding bush – had become a marker of a broad cultural orientation and related way of life and occupations. This difference was at least as important as ethnic or cultural designations. In turn, occupation and way of life influenced the identities that people embraced, including the generation of new Half-breed or Métis identities.

The people of the town and those of the bush lived separate but connected lives. Fort Chipewyan was the major point of trade for the six to seven hundred “Indians and half-breeds” who lived mostly in the bush but travelled to Fort Chipewyan at regular intervals to trade their furs, collect their outfits, and visit the missionaries (Jarvis 1898:161).¹ It was both an economic and a social centre. While people of bush and town were linked by their joint participation in the Fort Chipewyan fur trade, their lives were

not necessarily centred on the fur trade. This distinction might not have been appreciated by government officials in Ottawa. For example, in 1887, deputy superintendent-general of Indian affairs, Lawrence Vankoughnet, wrote: "The Indians of these regions live by trapping fur-bearing animals the skins of which they sell to the traders" (in Ray et al. 2000:15). Yet as Jennifer Brown has reminded us, "Native people often had many other priorities and activities on their mind besides the fur trade" (1990:17, see also 1993). This was true of many non-Aboriginal residents as well, especially the missionaries.

People of town and bush were also joined by ties of kinship, marriage, and friendship. They were two halves of a regional population, and then, as now, nearly every person could trace a genealogical relationship to virtually everyone else. Fictive kinship ties articulated other relationships. For example, the men who worked together on the boats called one another *nistow*, the Cree (male-speaking) term for brother-in-law, which implies a cooperative relationship. Agnes Deans Cameron (1910:56) observed, "it is the vocative used by the Cree in speaking to anybody he feels kindly toward." Mary Lawrence, who moved to Fort Vermilion with her husband, Fred, in 1898, recalled many instances when Aboriginal people called her by a kinship term: "You see, the Indian considers it bad manners to address anyone by his actual name and avoids this by using some term of family relationship" (Fort Vermilion 2008:20). But this practice was more than good manners; every kinship term denoted a status and an associated role or behaviour.

Religious affiliation was a further mechanism for regional integration. Fort Chipewyan was an important religious centre. All the Chipewyans, Crees, and French Métis were Roman Catholics and members of the Nativity Mission congregation. People living in the bush arranged their visits to town so that they could attend special Christmas and Easter services, and they often stayed with relatives and friends, especially in the winter (McCormack 1977-78; Bird 1991:74; Moore 1990:267; Charles [Shall] Marten, interview in Moore and Gibot 1988). These diverse bonds, both diffuse and specific in character, mediated between different sectors of the regional population and integrated the plural society.

This chapter presents these two broad configurations of daily life as the cultural baselines at the time of treaty, against which will be plotted the post-treaty developments of the early twentieth century. They also afford some insight into the local circumstances and choices made by local residents when Treaty No. 8 was negotiated in 1899, issues discussed in the following chapter.

FORT CHIPEWYAN AND LIFE IN THE TOWN

By the end of the nineteenth century, Fort Chipewyan had outgrown its roots as a simple fur trade post to become a small town, spread along the northwest shore of Lake Athabasca for easy access to the water, the main route for travel and communication for three seasons of the year. John Macoun (1877b:166) called it “the Capital of the North.” Town life was characterized by a more complex layering of ethnicity, culture, and division of labour than was bush life. In 1908, Robert Lowie (1959:33) described Fort Chipewyan as “polyglot and socially multi-faceted.”

However, as the economic centre for people who made their living by means of the fur trade and associated bush-based subsistence practices, Fort Chipewyan was still conceptualized as a fur trade post, a term implying a unique municipal status owing to reliance on an economic sector perceived as backward, in “a natural and inevitable state of decline,” and which would one day be superseded by a more “modern” economy (Asch and Smith 1993:149-151). Even Charles Mair (1908:73), who visited the northern fur trade posts in 1899 as a member of the Half-breed Scrip Commission, pointed to the apparent contradiction between a modern community and its fur trade economy in his reflections about Lesser Slave Lake Settlement in 1899: “The place, in fact, surprised one – no end of buggies, buckboards and saddles, and brightly dressed women, after a not altogether antique fashion; the men, too, orderly, civil, and obliging ... One lost, indeed, all sense of remoteness, there was such a well-to-do, familiar air about the scene, and such a bustle of clean-looking people. How all this could be supported by fur it was difficult to see, but it must have been so, for there was, as yet, little or no farming amongst the old ‘Lakers.’” In the south, a modern economy was defined as having an agrarian foundation, and where farming was not feasible in the North, it was expected to be primarily industrial, based on resource extraction. Yet Fort Chipewyan was structurally no different from southern towns that serviced farmers. There was no reason to consider it less modern or vigorous – or to be surprised when it was. Because of its continued productive importance, merchants wanted to do business there and competed for the favour of their customers.

The Earl of Lonsdale called Fort Chipewyan “a pretty place” when he passed through in May 1888 (Krech 1989:39). To Charles Mair (1908:105-106), the town had “the quaint appearance of some secluded fishing village on the Gulf of St. Lawrence.” John Smith, captain of the *Grahame*,

provided the *Edmonton Bulletin* with the information for the following portrayal in 1884:

The [Hudson's Bay Company] fort is not one in the proper sense of the word having no stockade around it, but comprises a number of large hewed log buildings, including a trading store, chief factor's house and a number of storehouses shops and dwellings. These buildings are all arranged in a line along the shore of the lake and look like the street of a small town ... The force of officers and employees comprise a chief factor, clerk, accountant, half pay officer, boat-builder, carpenter, blacksmith, and three or four laborers ... The company cultivates a large field of barley and potatoes both of which crops do well and most of the men have small garden patches ... Cows, horses and hens are kept by chief factor McFarlane and do well. Next adjoining the H.B.Co. buildings along the shore of the lake to the north are the church of England mission buildings and include a church, school house, and missionary's house. Rev. Archdeacon Reeves is in charge and he conducts a Protestant school in connection with his mission, which is well attended and is very useful. It is attended principally by the children of officers of the company. About a mile farther north still, along the lake shore is the Roman Catholic mission establishment in charge of Pere Paschal. There is a neat chapel, school-house and a home for the sisters of charity, who conduct the school. The mission raises good crops of barley and potatoes every year, and wheat raised on this field took the bronze medal at the Philadelphia centennial exhibition. A number of the discharged H.B.Co. employees, now called freemen, are settled at the mission and they also cultivate small patches of ground and have a few horses and cattle. At the Quatre Fourche on the opposite side of the lake from the fort and about seven miles distant three families are settled and they also farm a little ...

Although farming is carried on to a small extent the dependence of the half-breed and Indian population is chiefly on game and fish ... Nets are used for the fishing at all times. The fish are of large size, in unlimited numbers and of the finest quality. Of large game the reindeer [caribou] is the most plentiful ... There are a few wood buffalo still existing in the Athabasca country, but they are very scarce. Moose and cariboo exist but are not plentiful ... Fur bearing animals are of course plentiful. Large quantities of reindeer dried meat and pemmican are made for the use of the fort. A great deal of dried fish is also used. [*Edmonton Bulletin* (EB), "Ft. Chipewyan," 21 June 1884:3; see also Macoun 1877b:166]



PHOTO 7.1 The personnel of the Hudson's Bay Company remained the focus of Fort Chipewyan society, 1899. | Glenbow Archives, NA-949-47

The townscape was dynamic, as traders, missionaries, and other residents changed and upgraded their establishments and dwellings. It was framed by two imposing institutions: the Hudson's Bay Company at the east end on a high point of land and the Roman Catholic Nativity Mission at the west end. Colin Fraser's post was slightly west of the mission, and the other free traders lived at points between (see Map 9.1, p. 231).

Many commentators described the Hudson's Bay Company, the largest and most imposing enterprise of Fort Chipewyan. This post was actually the third installation, situated at its present location after 1821.² The buildings described at the end of the century were the product of a building program begun by Factor Roderick Macfarlane in 1871 (Forsman 1993:47). In 1897, NWMP Inspector Jarvis (1898:16) reported that the company depot "comprises three large store houses, one of which is a depot for the Mackenzie and Peel River districts. There is a residence for the chief factor, also quarters for the clerks, a large recreation hall, offices, stables and some

other buildings, all inclosed by a stockade. The servants occupy a row of buildings outside the fort, and together number with the freemen, about 150 souls" (Jarvis 1898:16).³ Alexis Victor Mercredi, a Métis man born at Fort Chipewyan in 1886, described the site in his memoir. In addition to the chief factor's residence, also known as the Bourgeois' House (Forsman 1993:47), he named four buildings: "Building No. 1 was the H.B. Depot. Building No. 2 was partitioned in half. One part was the general store for Indian trade only. The other half was for storing flour, bacon and fresh meat and dry fish. Building No. 3 was a general store for the H.B. staff and employees only. Building No. 4 was the old frame building down the hill for the boat equipment, such as ropes, block and tackles, jack screws" (Mercredi 1962:25).⁴ Alexis' father, Pierre Mercredi, went to work for the company in 1879 at age eighteen as Macfarlane's protege and was a "yearly servant" for fifty-two years.⁵ He and his family occupied one of the houses beside the post (Mercredi 1962:1). There were eight of these houses in 1875 (Macoun 1877b:166), and by 1898 their number had increased to eighteen or twenty (Tyrrell 1908:45), reflecting the population growth that occurred after 1870, as well as an increasingly independent labour force.⁶ Madeline Bird (1991:8) described her family's house: "Our log cabin was warm and comfortable. There was a hook from the ceiling for the meat roasting ... The floors were clean. We washed them with lye and a scrubbing brush made of spruce boughs covered with cloth ... Everybody had a fireplace in their house." Most of the buildings in town were whitewashed, which was not only attractive but also helped seal the walls from drafts.

The imposing Roman Catholic Nativity Mission was also frequently described; the most precise descriptions are found in twentieth-century government and church reports. By 1895, it had a new two-storey convent, seventy-six feet by twenty-five feet in size, built on a stone foundation with log walls covered inside and out by whipsawed lumber. The interior was divided into galleries along the front and four dormitories, two each for boys and girls (*EB*, "Athabasca-Mackenzie," 21 Oct. 1895:2; extract from Report of Inspector H.A. Conroy, on the Boarding Schools in Treaty No. 8 and Mackenzie District, 18 Nov. 1911, Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 10, v. 6354). In 1897, it housed forty-five students, twenty-seven girls and eighteen boys, described by Inspector Jarvis (1898:161) as "clean and healthy looking children." They were supervised by four Grey Nuns and four lay sisters.⁷ The mission had a large vegetable garden and buildings for a few farm animals. It also possessed a printing press, a sawmill, and its own steamboat, the *St. Joseph*, which was built at the mission and launched in 1893 (Jarvis 1898:161; Huel 1996:60; McCarthy 1995:70). Three priests

PHOTO 7.2 Long-time Hudson's Bay Company employee Pierre Mercredi, a student in the first class at the Nativity Mission school. | Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Archives of Manitoba, N13634



PHOTO 7.3 Dr. William Mackay (with the white beard), a long-time employee of the Hudson's Bay Company, was posted to Fort Chipewyan from 1895 to 1899. He is shown with his family and some of his employees. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B.6988



were stationed there in 1897, including Bishop Grouard, supported by four lay brothers, for a total of fifteen religious personnel (Jarvis 1898:161).

The trading posts and missions had European and Euro-Canadian managers and workers, with a residual labour force drawn from the local Aboriginal population. The Hudson's Bay Company posts were typically run by a Scot.⁸ While the company maintained a permanent labour force comprising men both imported and local, over time their number declined and the number of casual labourers increased, creating a reserve of labourers available not only to the company but also to other traders, who relied on knowledgeable local people. The Anglican mission was normally a one-man operation, operated by its English minister and his family and socially affiliated with the Hudson's Bay Company. Occasionally, a separate schoolteacher was part of the mission. The free traders were of diverse origins, and both they and the Anglican missionary hired local men to assist them. At the head of the Roman Catholic mission was an Oblate priest who directed a complement of French and French Canadian priests, lay brothers, and nuns, all of whom were there because of their vocation for missionary work, and a supplementary labour force drawn from local residents who were hired seasonally to work for the mission. The remaining residents were virtually all Aboriginal – French and Scots Half-breeds (Métis) and Chipewyan and Cree Indians.

Fort Chipewyan had always been more than just a trading post and transhipment point. From its earliest days, it had also been a local industrial centre, where craftsmen, some of them skilled tradesmen, and other residents manufactured items for post use and for sale to Aboriginal hunters. In its organization, it was much like a scaled-down version of York Factory. Michael Payne (1989:51-53) has argued that the patterns of work at York Factory were more like those of pre-industrialized Britain than of late-eighteenth- and nineteenth-century mill and factory work. Labour relied primarily on human and animal power, not steam power, much of the work involved little division of labour, workers enjoyed considerable control over their time and effort, and the pace of work was irregular. On the other hand, Jennifer Brown (1993:83) has highlighted some of the difficulties in the language used to discuss such operations, arguing that when historians conceptualize the harvesting of bush resources and, by extension, related fur trade tasks as “pre-industrial,” they tend “to overlook or trivialize the labour, time, skills, and organization that went into these resource activities (industries).” In turn, such connotations contribute to the notion that the fur trade was not a modern economic sector and that the people who operated it were not modern people.

Ironically, even as the European labour force was being “rationalized” in the late nineteenth century, and tribal peoples elsewhere were being incorporated into new colonial domains as workers, the Aboriginal peoples of Fort Chipewyan, many of whom had been employed full-time, were increasingly marginalized as workers, in large measure because improved transportation infrastructure was linking the community to the expanding southern economy. Especially in the twentieth century, local traders took advantage of new opportunities to import goods and provisions that had been previously produced locally, thereby reducing their local labour requirements. The process whereby industrial production was consolidated in economic cores was characteristic of capitalist development.

As well, because the labour force was now divided among different employers, it was no longer the collective entity it had been earlier in the century. Families lived in individual dwellings. Hudson’s Bay Company employees, especially the Scots Half-breeds and freemen, occupied the line of houses fronting the lake next to St. Paul’s Anglican Church, while many of the French Half-breeds lived near the Nativity Mission or the other traders. The segregated districts for different trading and church establishments and associated workers or affiliates contributed to the modern appearance of the town.

Sites of production “at” Fort Chipewyan included both the post and the bush, in an annual rotation of activities that was oriented to trading furs and goods in the winter and spring, transporting these same furs and goods in the summer and fall, and producing food and firewood during all seasons of the year.⁹ Small groups of men were sent as task groups to specific localities in the bush to obtain the raw materials that were then used for production in the town. For example, in order to manufacture a wooden boat, or skiff, in Fort Chipewyan, men had to visit multiple sites to cut the trees for the planks and to collect the roots for the ribs and pitch to seal the boat. The lumber was cut in town, where the boats were built. To prepare whitewash, they visited places where they could quarry limestone, which was then burned in a kiln in the town.

Competing traders, missionary establishments, and independent labourers or freemen all provided most of their own food by fishing, hunting, berry picking, and gardening. The production of food was an essential component of each year’s work and had been highly regularized by the Hudson’s Bay Company, which had established some posts, such as Fond du Lac, as provisioning posts to supply foods to other posts, part of a regional division of labour. The company and others also purchased

food from independent Aboriginal producers. Some anecdotal information is available to supplement company records. For example, in 1888 Reverend Reeve wrote his bishop about the price and availability of the fish and berries he purchased: "Blue berries & cranberries are plentiful, but the Indian women want such a price for them that not many have been traded. I have, however, got enough at a reasonable figure to make upwards of 30 lbs. jam."¹⁰ He refused to buy dried fish because of its high price: "The Indians up the river had a good many when I passed them a fortnight since, but as they wanted to sell only 10 for a skin I would not buy; 25 used to be the quantity, then it came down to 20, & latterly 15" (W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 1 Oct. 1888, Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], A.281/226). The community's reliance on local provisions continued through the first half of the twentieth century, despite a steady increase in the amount of imported provisions.

The Hudson's Bay Company organized each year into an outfit, which technically began 1 June of one year and ended 31 May of the next year. In June, furs were transported to collection points, and goods were picked up to bring back to the posts. When the boats arrived in the summer or fall, the workers unpacked the bales, and the post manager equipped the Chipewyans and Crees for the winter, a process sometimes called "debting" (e.g., 6 Oct. 1868, Hudson's Bay Company Archives [HBCA], B.39/a/46:41d). After 1870, the expanded trade and frequent trips between Fort Chipewyan and southern centres meant that the Hudson's Bay Company and other traders could keep on hand a larger inventory of goods, and debt or credit could be issued at other times, such as when hunters wanted to travel earlier in the season. For example, on 20 August 1906, "Wayakiss & crowd got Debts for the winter and started off[f] to Birch Mountain for hunting up there" (HBCA, B.39/a/64:39).

In addition to organizing the winter trade in the fall, Fort Chipewyan residents were busy preparing their winter provisions. They dug potatoes, butchered a few beef cattle, and hunted ducks and "waveys," geese that were salted in great numbers. Cameron noted that by 17 August 1908, the Loutit "boys," who hunted for the Hudson's Bay Company, had salted down 1,600 waveys (1910:325; see also Mason 1946:19). Salt was imported from the naturally occurring deposits at Salt River, a tributary of the Slave.

The most crucial food was fish, which fed people and sled dogs all winter. John Macoun (1882:139) reported that the post needed at least twenty-five thousand whitefish each winter. The fall fisheries began in August. Nets were prepared before the fishing season by making additional

nets as needed from imported twine, “backing” the nets with line and attaching floats carved from local wood and weights or “sinkers” made from stones collected near the post. For example, in August 1881, Valentine Mercredi established a fishery at Lake Mamawi (see also 15 Sept. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/54:2d), and at the end of the same month James Thomson established another, taking one assistant and two women, presumably their wives, “to make dry fish” (31 Aug. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/53:42).¹¹ Thomson had cut fifty-five poles for the fishery, probably “stabbing sticks” for hanging the fish (30 Aug. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/53:42; McCormack 1988:64, 66). On 10 September, the wives of company employees began another larger fishery at Quatre Fourches, just west of Fort Chipewyan: “Lots of women, went in this boat [the boat going to Lac Clair for a load of limestone] to establish the usual fall fishery vz Mrs. Wylie, Mrs. Loutit, Mrs. Villebrun, Mrs. Marteau, Mrs. St. Cyr, Mrs. Daniel, Mrs. Jerome Beaulieu, Mrs. P. Laviolette, with their families and attendants without number” (10 Sept. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/54:1d-2).¹² William Wylie, the post blacksmith, and Marteau¹³ accompanied their wives to help them get the fishery under way, and the next week “Francis [probably Villebrun] got permission to go to his wife’s fishery to make a fish stage” (17 Sept. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/54:2d). This fish was used not only at the post but also to support the families of the men. The fisheries therefore served the post both directly and indirectly. On 21 September, some men transported 3,650 dry fish back to town: 1,550 from Thomson’s fishery, 1,000 from Valentine Mercredi’s, 300 from Quatre Fourches, and 750 from another location (leaving 50 fish unaccounted for; 22 Sept. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/54:3).

Valentine Mercredi returned home at the end of September “to establish the usual fall fishery at Goose Island” (28 Sept. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/54:3d). However, because he married Marie Laviolette on 2 October, he did not leave for the fishery until the following day, presumably with his bride (2-3 Oct. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/54; McCormack n.d.).

The late fall and winter fisheries were established at traditional locations at the west end of Lake Athabasca, especially Goose Island and Big Island. Men and their families lived at customary fishery camps. They began fishing in earnest in October, although scheduling was contingent upon the weather. Ideally, a hard freeze would leave the lake solidly frozen and safe for travel. Valentine Mercredi was lucky when he went to Goose Island in 1881. By 12 October, men at Goose Island were able to return to the post by walking on the ice (HBCA, B.39/a/54), in contrast to other years in which the lake froze later or stormy weather made it difficult to set nets or destroyed nets already in place. These fisheries produced thousands

of fish, which were preserved by being threaded on a stabbing stick and suspended from a stage, where they went through a natural process of freeze-drying,¹⁴ and later by simple freezing.

Men also made other preparations for winter. When needed, they replastered or “mudded” their own houses for the winter. When Macoun (1877b:166) described the “well plastered” clerk’s house, he noted that it “was so warm last winter, (1874,) from the heat of two stoves, that water did not freeze in it,” although the men’s houses might not have been as snug. The houses were painted with locally produced whitewash, an activity that also occurred in the spring. If they needed additional whitewash for sealing the houses, they would build limestone kilns during this season. The Reverend Reeve was the beneficiary of one season’s fall mudding, when Hudson’s Bay Company men did his house along with their own (21-27 Oct. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/54:6-6d). Men repaired dog harnesses and sleds or made new ones for both dogs and oxen or horses to transport fish back to the post and to visit the Chipewyan and Cree settlements. Finally, they hauled in firewood for the post and their individual dwellings, sometimes collecting driftwood but also cutting large quantities of “dry” and “green” wood.¹⁵ Collecting wood was an essential activity carried on year round.

Winter was devoted both to surviving the rigours of the subarctic weather and to trading furs. Employees of the trading companies transported fish to the town, and they travelled to the bush to collect meat cached for them by Chipewyans and Crees or to purchase furs. This tripping became crucial after 1870 in the race to prevent competitors from acquiring furs: “The rivalry between the traders induced them to visit the Indian camps to procure furs and meat. During the winter preceding my visit each establishment kept men and dog teams ready to start at a moment’s notice, whenever the hunters sent in a report that they had some ‘fur’” (Russell 1898:58). Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962:16) recalled, “During the months of February and March and April 1909 with my dog team I kept going around the Indian camps buying furs for the H.B.Co. and hauling goods for the Indians into their camps.”

The winter highlight was the Christmas and New Year’s Day celebrations. Participants included Chipewyan and Cree visitors who came to town to sell some fur and attend church services. Although in earlier times Christmas had been a quiet, religious occasion, the Anglican missionaries introduced an elaborate Christmas celebration, complete with decorated tree and school concert, inspired by developing Victorian practices.¹⁶ Arthur Warwick described one special Christmas: “We have got through our Xmas festivities having had our share of good & gladness. We had a Xmas Tree

& entertainment on exactly the same lines as Vermilion. A cup of tea & cakes, Recitations, songs & carols by children, followed by Xmas tree & games till 10 o'clock. All this is new to many & so was heartily enjoyed. We have the church decorated & very nice it looks. This is also new, only having been done once before, I believe" (Arthur J. Warwick to Bishop Young, 30 Dec. 1899, PAA, A.281/308). These celebrations were widespread and often elaborate in the North, which contributed to their institution-alization, and they were described by the *Edmonton Bulletin* in considerable detail, (e.g., *EB*, "Christmas at the Landing," 11 Jan. 1901:6, and "Lesser Slave Lake," 1 Feb. 1901:5). Barbara Kelcey (2001:46) observed: "The ritual procedures of European Christmas customs represented the definitive endeavour to impose European culture on the indigenous population ... This meant creating memories of Christmas present – a task attacked with some relish and a certain amount of zeal."

Madeline Bird described the Christmas concerts that the children put on at Holy Angels Convent in the early twentieth century:¹⁷

First, the concerts were given for the sisters, brothers and priests. Then, the second time for all the people in town. They used to gather in the playroom which was the biggest room in town and it was set up with a stage, like a theatre. Concerts were better than movies. There were soldier drills, marches, singing and plays. We became movie stars overnight and the parents and relatives were so proud to see their kids on the stage. It was just as if they were being given a promotion or special honour of some kind. Those concerts were something that nobody ever forgot. People use[d] to talk about them nearly all year and then they started to talk about those to come next. [Bird 1991:24-25, see also 22]

The Roman Catholics at Fort Chipewyan gave gifts to the children from *le petit Jésus* on New Year's Day (Bird 1991:22, 24, 28), which was the main midwinter holiday by fur trade custom. On a typical New Year's Day, guns were fired, then the men visited the Hudson's Bay Company factor and clerk, who offered them liquor, cakes, and plum pudding. In 1868, "All Hands at the Fort having received their usual New Years Rations last night they immediately retired to their houses. The festivity of the day was however closed with a Dance in the Bourgeois House which was kept up to a late hour" (1 Jan. 1869, HBCA, B.39a/46:59d). People danced square dances, reels, and jigs, accompanied by a fiddler (see also *inter alia* Bird 1991:28, 34, 70).¹⁸ After the establishment of free traders, the New Year's dance was not always held at the Hudson's Bay Company post. An entry



PHOTO 7.4 These men are travelling home to Fort Chipewyan from Fort McMurray with heavily laden sleighs. The dogs are decorated with fancy “tapis” and standing irons. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B.5741



PHOTO 7.5 The dogs of Fort Chipewyan were essential to winter travel, and at other times of the year they carried packs. | E.J. Whittaker photo, 1919 | Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, 45337

in the company's post journal for 2 January 1906 reported: "The men are not doing much to day, after a dance all night at the Traders" (HBCA, B.39/a/64:6).¹⁹ Dances were also held in private homes at other times (Bird 1991:34), which reflected the growth of discrete population segments at Fort Chipewyan. For example, on 26 November 1881, the freemen had their own dance "for about 4 hours" (HBCA, B.39/a/54:11). Such dances were often part of marriage celebrations.

Spring in the Fort Chipewyan region may be said to begin in March, with increasing daylight and warmer sunshine. Employees of the traders continued to visit the bush settlements to buy fur. Men began to repair boats and built new skiffs in April, and they made more fishnets, anticipating open water in May. As the ice on rivers and small lakes began to melt in late April and early May, migratory waterfowl returned and were hunted heavily. In May, gardens were ploughed and planted with potatoes and other crops.

Open water ushered in summer. Hunters travelled to Fort Chipewyan both before and after breakup to trade their furs and pay their debt. This early summer ingathering was a festive occasion of heightened social interaction marked by large dances called tea or drum dances (e.g., Bird 1991:34). Tea dances, which are discussed in more detail below, represented "a measure of community spirit and participation" (Moore 1990:270, see also 1993; Asch 1988:93). The persistence of distinctive Chipewyan and Cree dance styles until the mid-twentieth century (Moore 1990, 1993) suggests, however, that even when Chipewyans and Crees came to town at the same time, they maintained discrete social spheres and might have held separate tea dances.

People also played hand games. As Robert Lowie observed in 1908, these competitive guessing games, often spiced by wagers, were "played by everyone, with wholehearted, unremitting enthusiasm" (1959:32, 1909:11). Widely known in North American Aboriginal cultures, they were played by Chipewyans and other northern Dene peoples, Crees, and northern Half-breeds (e.g., Hearne 1958[1795]:215; Lowie 1909:11; Helm and Lurie 1966; Mandelbaum 1979:129). June Helm and Nancy Lurie (1966:77) called them games "of intellectual skill and judgment tempered with luck." Among the Dogrib, opponents typically came from different regional bands (81-82). Such a display of group affiliations and intergroup boundaries within the broader social community undoubtedly characterized Fort Chipewyan hand games as well, while tea dances demonstrated higher-level intergroup unity.

The winter's fur was packed for shipment out as soon as the waterways would permit. Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962:16) recalled that in 1909, "We made many bales and sewed them up, marked and weighed and kept working around the post to the end of the month of May." As soon as the Athabasca River opened in May, people at Fort Chipewyan eagerly awaited the arrival of the first scows from Athabasca Landing. Madeline Bird (1991:17) reminisced: "When the first boats arrived in the spring, everybody rushed to the wharf to buy some fruit, like apples, oranges and bananas." The *Grahame* and *St. Joseph* were launched for the season. The flotilla of steamboats and scows at Fort Chipewyan and Athabasca Landing made it possible to import a plethora of attractive trade goods and reduced the back-breaking labour associated with transporting furs upriver to Athabasca Landing, at least for the Hudson's Bay Company.

Fishing continued all summer. June was often a time to operate coal kilns, manufacturing coal for the blacksmith's forge. In July, gardens had to be weeded, and large quantities of wild hay were cut at meadows in the bush. The hay was transported by boat to Fort Chipewyan after it dried.²⁰ The children in the mission went on picnics (Bird 1991:23). In late summer and early fall, picnics were pleasurable occasions for picking berries, especially cranberries and blueberries, which were preserved in the form of a watery jam (65). Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962:5) remembered being taken in September with the other school children to Goose Island for a picnic: "We picked many pounds of berries."

While improved transportation made it feasible to import more staple foods to Fort Chipewyan, these foods do not appear to have replaced the basic provisions that came from the land, neither for people living in town nor those in the bush. As Asch (1990:27) has pointed out, where bush resources are plentiful and valued, it is reasonable to expect that people will continue to rely upon them rather than pay for expensive imported foods, often of lesser quality. Imported foods were supplementary. In one letter, Reeve listed some of the foods he had ordered: "Flour, Bacon &c, Sugar, Dried Apples, Lard ... Lard you will find useful for the fish &c., as it is almost impossible to buy grease here now" (W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, 1 Oct. 1888, PAA, A.281/226). Imported foods were also used to provide occasional aid to people in need. To the Chipewyans and Crees, who were unable or unwilling to transport much food to their remote homes, such foods would have been mostly luxuries.

Trade with Edmonton merchants expanded after 1870. Merchants struggling for a trade advantage stocked a diverse array of merchandise



PHOTOS 7.6 & 7.7 In 1914, Francis Harper photographed the Daniel family, affording a rare glimpse of three generations of post residents. He called James (“Jamy”) Daniel a “Saulteaux half-breed,” pictured above with his wife Julie (néé Kisopweyittam), just back from visiting their nets. It was a second marriage for each. His son Frederick married Victoire Villebrun (below) in 1908 in Fort Chipewyan. In 1914, their family included a five-year-old son, Frederick William, and a year-old daughter, Marie Albertine. | Francis Harper photos | *Top*: Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, 30166; *bottom*: Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, 30168



that could not be manufactured locally.²¹ The need for locally based tradesmen contracted. It became cheaper to ship goods by rail to Edmonton and then by cart and boat via Athabasca Landing to Fort Chipewyan than to retain skilled tradesmen to produce them locally. The number of full-time, permanent workers decreased, and the sophistication of their work declined. More and more, employment tended to be part-time and occasional. For example, in October 1885, twenty-eight-year-old Alexandre Tourangeau, the nephew of men who had been permanent, full-time employees in earlier years, was hired to work at Quatre Fourches in the fishery for one month, and at the end of that engagement he was rehired as a “Temporary engaged Servant” (10 Oct. 1885, HBCA, B.39/a/56:3; 11 Nov. 1885, HBCA, B.39/a/56:6d).²² Much of Alexis Victor Mercredi’s narrative (1962) is a detailed account of his complex work history. Although his father, Pierre, had worked steadily for the Hudson’s Bay Company for fifty-two years, Alexis worked for multiple employers – the Hudson’s Bay Company, the Nativity Mission, and free traders – as well as engaging in trapping and part-time work when he was between jobs. The arrangements with his employers varied from formal contracts to casual hire.

Fort Chipewyan society reflected a measure of the solidarity that can emerge from shared life in a small town, especially one that may face periodic hardships. Entries in one post journal suggest the informal, sometimes documented, sharing of resources among community members. A 1905 memorandum recorded the number of fish owed by the company to the Royal North-West Mounted Police (100 fish), the Nativity Mission (50), and three individuals, E.B. Jewels (25), Wabistun (probably Frederick or Pierre Wabistikwan [Whitehead] – 16), and George Loutitt (210) (HBCA, B.39/a/64:n.p.). On 10 February 1906, the “Nativity Mission lent the HBCo the following ... 1 Cod Line 2nd hand (one to be replaced later on), 1 Ice Chisel, Stones for 10 nets to be taken to Goose Island” (HBCA, B.39/a/64:n.p.). In turn, the Hudson’s Bay Company provided assistance of various kinds to both churches, demonstrating an institutional neutrality toward opposing religious sectors despite the formal affiliation of its officers with the Anglican Church.

Community unity was challenged by two sets of oppositions, between Roman Catholics and Protestants and between the Hudson’s Bay Company and competing traders. Antagonisms between the two Christian denominations were paramount and continually abetted by the competing missionaries. They coincided with the pre-existing division between people of French and Scots/Orcadian ancestries. The consequent social cleavages were demonstrated publicly and extended beyond church attendance. For

example, Hudson's Bay Company employees who were Roman Catholic did not work on feast days. At least some of the time, Roman Catholic and Protestant workers participated in separate feasts after major bush-based activities. On 11 November 1880, "All hand[s] returned from the wood cutting. They each (party) had a good supper both Protestants & Catholics, eat separate" (HBCA, B.39/a/53:4d). Similarly, on 24 December 1881, "All the Fishermen came home this evening to the grand feast, all the Catholics dinned [sic] at Villebrun's & the Protestants at Wylies" (HBCA, B.39/a/54:14d).

While competition between the traders was felt strongly by them, it does not seem to have affected social affiliations to the same extent as did missionary competition. This difference was probably due to the reduced dominance of the Hudson's Bay Company coupled with increased worker independence and mobility and shifting allegiances of trappers. Also moderating the impact of competition among traders were the company's decreased willingness to look after the welfare of its clients and the greater importance to workers of the network of other non-employment relationships, including their religious affiliations. Formerly, workers had enjoyed broad-based relationships with the Hudson's Bay Company that were simultaneously economic, social, and political. The local maturation of capitalist and church structures led to the shedding of at least some of the non-economic dimensions. Opposing tendencies toward unity and division were persistent tensions in the community's responses toward issues of the twentieth century.

LIFE IN THE BUSH

Just as Fort Chipewyan was a modern town whose modernity was obscured by its northern location and reliance on a trade in furs, the Aboriginal peoples who lived in the bush were similarly modern peoples, whose modernity was obscured by their apparently primitive economy and by powerful Canadian notions of the overriding nature of an Indian identity. Structurally, they produced use-value or necessities that they consumed directly and exchange-value or commodities that they sold in their role as independent commodity producers. They were consumers of commodities that they purchased. Many of them worked for wages. In short, they participated in the capitalist economy in the same way as did homesteaders on small farms to the south.

Descriptions of Chipewyans and Crees written at the end of the century commented on how the people who lived in the bush had a remarkably “modern” appearance in their way of life. According to an *Edmonton Bulletin* correspondent, at Fort Vermilion: “The Cree head-man and his brother are both ... the finest samples of healthy and strong men that I have seen and no one would, without being told, take them for Indians. They are well dressed and have mou[s]taches and slight whiskers well combed. The H.B. Co’s agent, Mr. Wilson, told me they were good hunters and had as high as 800 skins worth of fur each year. A skin here is worth 33c so they derive quite an income, higher than many a white man round Edmonton” (*EB*, “Treaty Commissioners at Fort Chipewyan,” 17 Aug. 1899:3).

Charles Mair (1908:117) believed that the favourable changes in “Chipewyan characteristics” since Franklin’s time were due to “eighty years of contact with educated, or reputable, white men ... There was now no paint or ‘strouds’ to be seen, and the blanket was confined to the bed.” In contrast, Mair’s observations about the Klondikers and their behaviour were often disapproving (e.g., 1908:119). The treaty commissioners made similar observations about Indians: “The Indians with whom we treated [in 1899] differ in many respects from the Indians of the organized territories. They indulge in neither paint nor feathers, and never clothe themselves in blankets. Their dress is of the ordinary style and many of them were well clothed. In the summer they live in teepees, but many of them have log houses in which they live in winter ... All the Indians we met were with rare exceptions professing Christians” (Canada 1966:8).

Nevertheless, the sheer fact of their Indian-ness and their reliance on trapping and bush-based subsistence activities, economic sectors that were considered evolutionary backwaters in the Canadian narrative of progress, challenged and overrode the logic of such observations. The commissioners concluded: “Although in manners and dress the Indians of the North are much further advanced in civilization than other Indians were when treaties were made with them, they stand as much in need of the protection afforded by the law to aborigines as do any other Indians of the country, and are as fit subjects for the paternal care of the government” (Canada 1966:8).

Yet the Chipewyans and Crees they wanted to protect did not live in the bush as nomadic people. In winter, they lived much as homesteaders did, in permanent residences, though grouped into small communities, sometimes called all-Native hamlets or settlements (Helm and Damas 1963;

Helm 1981; Parker 1980:27).²³ Inspector Routledge (1899:86) described the Chipewyan settlement at Point Brûlé, about eighty miles up the Athabasca River from Lake Athabasca, in 1898: "At this place there is a small settlement of Chippewyan Indians, seven families, 52 persons in all, living in well built, comfortable log cabins much superior to any I have yet seen occupied by Indians, each house being provided with stools, chairs and bedsteads, and all very clean."²⁴ These bush settlements were the territorial embodiment of the local bands and were situated in areas of traditional land use. Each band constituted a kinship cluster of interrelated families, with a good hunter and respected person leading the band and sometimes referred to as its "chief" or "headman."²⁵ The bands were ethnically segregated into Chipewyan and Cree bands, with Chipewyans numerically dominant, as they had been since the earliest days of the fur trade. J. Alden Mason (1946:7) described Fort Chipewyan in 1913 as "a principal rendezvous for the Chipewyan Indians," with no mention at all of the Cree population. Each local band had its own set of intra- and extra-regional ties. For example, the Chipewyans of the lower Athabasca River were linked through kinship and marriage to the Chipewyans of Birch River and Peace River and to the Caribou Eater Chipewyans who occupied the east end of Lake Athabasca. Similarly, the Cree communities of the Peace-Athabasca Delta and Fort Vermilion/Little Red River were linked to one another and to some extent to more southerly Cree groups, though they seem to have had a smaller extra-regional network than did the Chipewyans (McCormack 1977-78, n.d.).

Enmity between Chipewyans and Crees persisted as one element of social and political organization in the bush. Chipewyan Elder Salomon Sepp said flatly: "They used to hate each other" (interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). One Cree-Métis man who grew up in and around Fort Chipewyan in the early part of the century described how Cree and Chipewyan children would fight one another: "That was our fun," he recalled (McCormack 1977-78). Duchaussois (1937b:344) commented on relations between Chipewyan and Cree children: "In the Indian school in which there are both Cree and Montagnais [Chipewyan] children, no greater penance can be inflicted on a little Cree boy than to put him next to a Montagnais girl, nothing more humiliating can be said to a little Cree girl than to tell her she will have to marry a Montagnais."²⁶ More generally, Duchaussois asserted: "There is a great difference of character between the Dénés [Chipewyans] and the Crees ... He [Cree] is less simple than the Montagnais, less fickle, and less easy to convince ... If the Déné is timid and always ready to run away from that traditional 'enemy' who

is never seen, the Cree, on the contrary, is bold, overbearing, quarrelsome, and not unusually spoiling for a fight" (1937b:344). These passages are not intended to support his assessments, simply to indicate that in local discourse considerable cultural difference between Chipewyans and Crees was believed not only to exist but also to be important. The category "Chipewyan" at Fort Chipewyan included many individuals who were part of a developing Métis ("Half-breed") population, which may have led to variation in Chipewyan behaviour that could have contributed to different reports about Chipewyan character.²⁷

Despite the Chipewyan-Cree division in the regional population, the cultural distinctions between them appear to have diminished in the nineteenth century as "functional ethnic differences" collapsed, producing a "bush culture" that contrasted with the "settlement culture" of the people living in Fort Chipewyan (Scollon and Scollon 1977, 1979; Scollon 1979; see also Jarvenpa 1982). The differences between Chipewyans and Crees by this time might have been primarily emblematic, markers of the boundary between their two identities.

This process of cultural convergence was facilitated by linguistic convergence among the four languages spoken in the region – Chipewyan, Cree, French, and English – enabling "a pragmatic multilingualism" (Scollon and Scollon 1977:38, see also 1979; Scollon 1979).²⁸ Cree became a regional *lingua franca*.²⁹ Convergence was also supported by marriages between Chipewyans and Crees in the second half of the nineteenth century (see also *EB*, "The North and Its Inhabitants," 11 Sept. 1899:4; McCormack n.d.). These marriages were not contracted at random but were intended to create strategic alliances between the numerically weaker Cree and stronger Chipewyan, to foster peaceful relations and provide access to each other's territories. Typically, Cree men married Chipewyan women (McCormack 1989:128). The oral traditions of people from such families suggest that Chipewyan-Cree antagonism was, for them, disappearing.

The members of the local bands, whether Chipewyan or Cree, controlled and "owned" hunting territories and trapping areas, although such ownership did not confer an exclusive right to game resources. Ernest Thompson Seton, who travelled through the region in 1907, observed: "By an ancient, unwritten law the whole country is roughly divided among the hunters. Each has his own recognized hunting ground, usually a given river valley, that is his exclusive and hereditary property; another hunter may follow a wounded animal into it, but not begin a hunt there or set a trap upon it" (1911:150-151, see also 278). One man born in 1904 recalled that wherever a trapper "built" his "track," it would be respected by the other trappers



PHOTO 7.8 Members of a Chipewyan local band at their winter settlement, posed in front of their winter supply of fish. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, A.5473

(Parker 1979). Similar information from Father Jean Marie Pénard, based on his knowledge of Chipewyans in the Île-à-la-Crosse area, indicated the connection between band leadership and territorial control. Bands formed around good hunters who had established themselves in specific territories “when some one proved that he was a good hunter, others made requests of him to join him and to hunt with him in his territory. Thus small bands were formed, and the owner of the territory obtained the position of chief, indicating to each one where he was to hunt. The furs taken by trap or rifle or arrow, as well as the pelts of moose and caribou, belonged to the one who had taken or killed the animal. The meat, however, belonged to the whole band and the chief made distribution of it” (Pénard 1929:21-22).³⁰ Individuals and families were free to re-affiliate with other bands, or to establish new bands, where the resources of the bush would support it. Band membership was a matter of personal and family decision making.

People preferred to be back at their bush settlements with their fall outfits before freeze-up. They then harvested their potatoes and prepared their winter equipment.³¹ They netted fish, especially for dog food. During the winter, they hunted and fished for their own food, and they trapped fur-bearers for commercial and subsistence needs. Both men and women hunted and ran traplines. As Agnes Deans Cameron (1910:126) remarked:

“The man sets his trap, and if the couple is childless his wife makes an independent line of snares.” One local resident remembered that the Indian women in the bush all trapped “like men” (Parker 1979), and I heard similar stories about “tough old ladies.” Women also did most of the processing of fur and game: “In the woods as in the camp, the laborious work falls to the women. Lordly man kills the animal, and that is all. With her babies on her back or toddling by her side, the wife trails the game home on the hand-sled, and afterwards in camp she must dress the meat and preserve the skin” (Cameron 1910:124). Women helped one another in the arduous process of “making hides” – the preparation of hand-tanned leather. As one Elder jokingly remarked, “The hunter would kill the moose in the morning, and by evening the moccasins would be ready” (McCormack 1985-88). Women’s important productive roles contributed to the considerable control they exercised over the foods and hides they prepared: “The Chipewyan wife is the New Red Woman. We see in her the essential head of the household. No fur is sold to the trader, no yard or pound of goods bought, without her expressed consent. Indeed, the traders refuse to make a bargain of any kind with a Chipewyan man without the active approbation of the wife. When a Chipewyan family moves camp, it is Mrs. Chipewyan who directs the line of march” (Cameron 1910:132).

Chipewyans and Crees sold food to the traders anytime they had a surplus, and they might have hunted for commercial purposes when there was ample game. Typically, someone would notify the Hudson’s Bay Company or a free trader that meat was available, and a man with a dog team would be sent to haul the meat to town. Local band members sold their furs when they visited town, usually at Christmas and in May or June, after breakup, but also at irregular intervals when traders came to their settlements.

When spring arrived, the women would prepare the hides from the winter hunts: “The moose hide used to be like papers as far as you could see, where the ladies were working on them” (Bill Vermilion, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). People hunted beaver, muskrat, and migratory waterfowl, a critical spring food. They dried and cached moose meat for summer provisions: “We had to store it somewhere in the bush to have it to live on all summer. We put the dry meat in one of those bent willow shelters, on the top” (Bill Vermilion, interview).

They began to live in conical tents or tipis again when travelling. Seton (1911:149) noted that most of their tipis were made of cotton, to save them from the dogs, while Mason (1946:20) observed that “a canvas wall tent is often added to one side of the lodge when prosperity permits.” They used birchbark canoes or travelled on foot, with their dogs packing some

of their belongings (e.g., Mercredi 1962:28; Bill Vermilion, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988; McCormack 1977-78, 1985-88).³²

After breakup, Chipewyans and Crees went to Fort Chipewyan “to dance and trade; then they leave” (Salomon Sepp, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). It was the one time of year when virtually all the members of the local bands assembled into the two regional Chipewyan and Cree bands. While no special integrative structures operated at this time, it was a singular occasion for political discussions and social interactions, marked by tea dances and hand games.

Patrick Moore has called the tea dance the “main ceremony for Native people in northern Alberta” with explicitly religious and social functions (Moore 1990:267, 1993). It is reminiscent of the drum dance described by Michael Asch (1988:93), whose purpose was “to epitomize the collective unity of the community.” An interview with Pierre Mercredi described a time when he proposed a tea dance to the Eagle (Mikisew) Cree chief Justin Martin to overcome conflict about the trade. People danced all night, “before daylight all hostile feelings were gone,” and Mercredi was “given the privilege of selecting from the best remaining pelts” (Anonymous 1923:338). At Fort Chipewyan as elsewhere, the tea dance was characterized by the metaphor of the circle, reflected in the circular drum and the circularity of reciprocity and sharing (Moore 1990:267-268, 270). It was conducted by recognized spiritual leaders, known as prophets or singers (Moore 1993:173; Goulet 1998). In Fort Chipewyan, Pierre Wandering Spirit (Tewanokowis, called O Pamatchakwew or Pamatsago, also known as Napisis) was the leading singer for the Crees (Moore 1990:269, 1993:173; Snowbird Marten, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988; McCormack n.d.).³³ A man from Birch River, Joseph Djiskelni, baptized in 1876, was a leading singer for the Chipewyans (Bill Vermilion, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). Ernestine Gibot recalled that the “older people” would talk “about important things before they started to dance” (Victorine Mercredi, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988).³⁴ Ceremonial aspects included “prayers, addresses by the religious leaders; offerings of meat, fat, and tobacco which are placed in a central fire, communal meals, and dances” (Moore 1993:173). One dance might last for three nights or even as long as ten days (Victorine Mercredi and Salomon Sepp, interviews by Moore and Gibot 1988; Moore 1990:270).

Chipewyans and Crees danced in different ways. Chipewyans used an individual style of dancing in which the dancers danced in place, “with expressive gestures of the hands and arms” (Moore 1993:180, 176). According to Salomon Sepp, “The Dene as I still remember them dancing when



PHOTOS 7.9 & 7.10 These rare early photos of a Cree tea dance in 1914 feature four drummers and women dancers, probably at Fort Chipewyan for treaty meetings. | Francis Harper photos | *Top*: Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, 29863; *bottom*: Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, 29865

I was a child. They danced in place before they joined the Cree, moving their hands and arms” (Moore 1990:270; also interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). Crees, on the other hand, danced in a circle, although individual dancing might have been an older form that had to do with “spiritual ways,” according to Cree Elder Snowbird Marten (Moore 1993:177; interview by Moore and Gibot 1988).³⁵ The songs, the singing styles, and their functions were also different (Snowbird Marten, interview; Petitot 1889; Pat Moore, pers. commun., 1988).³⁶ These distinctions persisted until about 1940, when Chipewyans adopted the Cree style of dancing in what was apparently a rapid transition (Moore 1993:181; also Charles [Shall] Marten, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). Both Chipewyan and Cree Elders agreed about this shift. Chipewyan Elder Victorine Mercredi remembered: “In those days everyone used to know how to sing. It’s not like that today ... Even your dad [Joseph Fortin] and my dad [Albert Marcel] used to sing of course. They didn’t know how to dance for fiddle dance or square dance in those days. They only used the drum and they used to start dancing in the same place, that was the Chipewyan people. They were the ones who were dancing in the same place. Then finally they were with Cree people, then they started to dance in a circle, holding hands” (interview by Moore and Gibot 1988; also in Moore 1990:270; see also Charles [Shall] Marten, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988; McCormack n.d.).

Several Elders commented on the tea dances at Fort Chipewyan and the vicinity. Snowbird Marten, born in 1903, remembered: “All around the bay there used to be Tea Dances here and there, and sometimes they had dances here in Fort Chipewyan, by the old Hudson’s Bay Company store” (interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). Cree Elder Charles (Shall) Marten, born in 1909, remembered tea dances held in Dog Head, west of the Nativity Mission, and at Quatre Fourches: “We heard him [Pierre Wandering Spirit] singing plainly here in Fort Chipewyan all the way from Carte Fourchette [Quatre Fourches], seven miles away. He’s calling the people with his drum” (interview by Moore and Gibot 1988). Solomon Sepp, a Chipewyan Elder, also talked about Chipewyans dancing at Quatre Fourches (interview by Moore and Gibot 1988).³⁷

By the turn of the century, many families of Chipewyans and Crees were related to one another, as well as to the Half-breeds living in Fort Chipewyan. It seems likely that these ethnically distinct relatives participated in one another’s tea dances, at least on some occasions. If so, they might well have known and followed the appropriate dance style. However, Ernestine Gibot, after remarking that Chipewyans and Crees did not get

along well, stated, “Therefore us Chipewyan, we stayed in our own area. We did what we wanted, if we wanted to keep our spiritual ways, we did that. The Crees did that too” (Gibot’s comment in the interview with John James Marten, by Moore and Gibot 1988).

Chipewyans and Crees held tea dances at New Year’s and other times in the bush to mark meetings and reunions. “It was like holidays, when they came together they would start to drum ... Even if there weren’t many people they still sing in a little teepee, tent or log house” (Boniface Trippe de Roches, interview by Moore and Gibot 1988).

People also played hand games when they got together. These gambling games were played by teams, to the accompaniment of drums, with items such as matches, tobacco, or shells exchanged according to the fortunes of the game. Hand games might be played during the day, with the tea dance held at night (Victorine Mercredi and Boniface Trippe de Roches, interviews by Moore and Gibot 1988). If social diversity was displayed by opposition in hand games and social unity by universal participation in the tea dance, this order of events was itself symbolic of a cultural premium on social harmony, supporting Asch’s interpretation (1988) of the role of the drum dance.

Chipewyans and Crees also had the shaking tent, a complex ceremony in which a leader calls his spiritual helpers to visit him.³⁸ Salomon Sepp recalled:

In those times they concentrated with the spiritual ways, not the Catholic ways, but their own ways. They were communicating with songs. They made their own place where people (spirits) could go in there (shaking tent). They used spirit power ...

Those days, they used to help each other with shaking tent. The spirits came. I went there myself and heard the spirits but now there is nothing. I used to sit outside as a kid. I heard them (the spirits) talking, not quite understanding what was going on. For Chipewyan they spoke Chipewyan. [Interview by Moore and Gibot 1988]

Not surprisingly, the missionaries were opposed to such dances and ceremonies. According to Chipewyan Bill (Magloire) Vermilion:

The priest said it was no good, and that he [Magloire’s grandfather] should pray for Jesus instead of doing these things. He did turn around and went to pray for Jesus. Since he started to pray that way everything died. He prayed

and prayed until everything was gone. Finally he got sick and died himself, grandfather Thi Gulaze (Tthi Gule) [Edouard Tthigule, born c. 1860]. [Moore and Gibot 1988; McCormack n.d.]

It is improbable that spiritual leaders such as Tthigule abandoned their traditions, as this account suggests, but more likely that they embraced Christianity as a powerful tool to add to their spiritual repertoire.³⁹ The fact that tea dances, hand games, and shaking tent ceremonies continued into the twentieth century indicates the persistence of non-Christian forms of Aboriginal spirituality. However, the shaking tent eventually disappeared, possibly by the 1930s, and the tea dance became increasingly secularized after World War II (McCormack 1977-78, 1985-88; Moore 1993:173, 180-181).⁴⁰

After the Chipewyans and Crees had finished their business at Fort Chipewyan in early summer, they went back to the bush, again travelling by canoe or on foot with their dogs, setting up temporary camps that they used as bases for fishing, moose hunting, and berry picking. As J. Alden Mason commented:

Except for the few semicivilized sedentary natives at the forts the Indians keep continually on the move, seldom spending more than two weeks in one spot. [1946:17]

Even when travelling, the camp is generally pitched at a good spot so that the catch of fish may insure a food supply in event of failure in the chase. [1946:18]

When travelling on foot, they used cross-country trails, at least some of which were maintained through the use of controlled burning (Lewis 1982:39-40; McCormack 2007). In the bison area, they followed bison trails, which Graham (1923:9) described as “the easiest and shortest way through forest and muskeg and between the heads of rivers.” Many of these trails were ancient, reflecting land use that predated the fur trade. For instance, a trail connected the bush communities near the mouth of the Birch River to Peace River and from there to Salt River. Other trails led from the major rivers into the interior. There were trails across the Birch Mountains to the communities of the Fort McKay and Fort McMurray region. Trails originating in the Fort Vermilion–Little Red River region tied the Peace River communities to those of Lesser Slave Lake and were probably the route for the northern migration of some Crees.

Historical trails such as these are poorly known today, for two reasons. First, most descriptions of travel were written by outsiders, who travelled by boat in summer rather than on foot in the bush. Second, Aboriginal land use changed considerably in the second half of the twentieth century, when people no longer lived in the bush year round or maintained the trails.⁴¹ Both the trails themselves and local knowledge about them are disappearing.

The close connection between the local bands and their land-use areas suggests the intimacy of the relationship that the local Chipewyans and Crees enjoyed with their homeland, which to them was their backyard and larder, not a wilderness. They did not simply hunt, fish, and gather the foods it provided but actively managed the landscapes they occupied, using controlled burning as a simple but highly effective tool to propagate grasses and other early succession plants and thereby increase the number of animals in their hunting and trapping territories. Early descriptions of the bison range describe extensive grasslands and parklands bounded by the Peace River, the Slave River, Great Slave Lake, and the Caribou Mountains. Such habitats could have been maintained only by frequent and deliberate burning. Thus, Aboriginal occupants created and maintained the habitats of desirable species, as well as utilizing delta lands that were frequently flooded. With the exception of caribou, marten, and squirrels, nearly all animal species exploited (then and now) by local hunters flourish on such vegetation (McCormack 1975a, 1975b, 2007; Lewis 1977, 1982). The evidence for controlled burning includes early landscape descriptions and photographs, occasional comments about Indian burning practices, and oral traditions of community residents.

The persistent reliance on the food resources of the bush led some observers, such as Mason, to believe that the fur trade was of little importance to the Indians (1946:21; see also Seton 1911:149):

The method of subsistence has probably differed in no important feature since the time before white invasion. Small amounts of flour, raisins, and other commodities are issued at posts in return for fur, but these are generally regarded as luxuries and quickly consumed, leaving the native again dependent on his hunt. Tea and tobacco only are made to last until the return to the fort. [Mason 1946:15]⁴²

It is impracticable, however, to lay by a considerable supply of meat, and even a week's rations are seldom on hand. The living is from hand to mouth and yet there is seldom want or privation at the present time. [16]

The idea that Indians did not plan for the future but lived from day to day reflected a widespread stereotype about Indian improvidence, which was contradicted by other commentary. For instance, according to Cameron (1910:124): “The Chipewyan trapper eats at once, or dries for the future, every ounce of flesh he traps.” Residents recalled that meat and fish surpluses were procured in the summer and fall; processed by drying, salting, or freezing; and cached for later use (McCormack 1977-78). The preparation of food surpluses was an intrinsic part of the seasonal round.

Mason was misled about the importance of the fur trade to the Indians of the Fort Chipewyan region by his emphasis on trade for foodstuffs. Indians relied on the fur trade and the wage labour it offered to purchase not food but the manufactured goods that had become part of their means of production: the guns and ammunition, metal goods, netting twine, sewing machines, fabric and clothing used in hunting, fishing, trapping, and processing furs and other raw materials. As well, competition among traders introduced to the area what MacGregor called “impractical luxuries” such as gramophones, watches, cheap jewellery, hats, and “senseless geegaws” (1974:142; see also J. Anderson 1961). Another source of this merchandise was mail order catalogues. The Timothy Eaton catalogue, introduced in 1884, would have been available at Fort Chipewyan at least occasionally before the end of the century, offering as wide a range of merchandise as people could find anywhere in Canada. People who could not read English could study the illustrations added to the catalogue by 1887 (Library and Archives Canada 2004).⁴³ The Hudson’s Bay Company countered with its own catalogue in 1896. Its Introduction noted that the catalogue was published “in response to a wide and general demand, issued to the Public in the hope that whilst accomplishing its object in increasing the volume of the Company’s trade, it will also prove of no little advantage to those living at a distance from a large commercial centre” (quoted by Marcia Stentz, HBCA, e-mail to author, 13 Sept. 2004). Calling such items “trade goods” is misleading. The patterns of consumption in the Fort Chipewyan region appear similar to those of any farmer or small-town resident elsewhere in Alberta.

When the fur yield was poor, or fur prices were low, trappers faced economic difficulties. For example, NWMP superintendent C. Constantine (1908:26) commented about the winter of 1906-07, when even good fur prices “will not compensate the Indian, who relies to so great an extent on his annual fur catch for the necessities of life, and unless this coming season makes up for this, I fear there will be much distress among quite a number ... An Indian in his way will feel the grip of poverty equally as

strong as his more enlightened and possibly more fortunate brother does in the centre of some large city” (Constantine 1908:26). This economic crunch may explain Lowie’s observations (1909:13, 31) about Indian poverty in Fort Chipewyan in 1908. He noted that the Indians traded “peltries” “for clothing and provisions; but, even with these supplies, considerable hardship is often encountered during the long winters.” He called the Chipewyans “miserably poor.” Scarce fur in the Mackenzie River region in 1909 led the Hudson’s Bay Company to reduce the credit it issued, which in turn made it difficult for Indians to obtain nets or ammunition, resulting in increased privation (Royal Northwest Mounted Police 1909:182).

Despite these reports, the picture that emerges of Aboriginal life in the bush at the time of treaty reveals that, with the exception of some difficult winters, the Aboriginal bush-based way of life was highly successful. It was based on an economy that was in no danger of disappearing and included a wage labour component. The complexity of this economy is often overlooked in discussions of “traditional” subsistence and lifestyle. However, Chipewyans and Crees never restricted themselves to a European notion of a pure bush existence if other opportunities existed, as they did in the late nineteenth century with the renewed competitive fur trade.

The mixed economy afforded them multiple options. They could trap, hunt, fish, and berry-pick for subsistence or commercial exchange, or both. They could use the products of these activities to manufacture items such as moccasins and snowshoes for their own use or for sale. This flexible strategy was predicated on a rich but variable resource base, a human population that was relatively stable in size, and an exploitation strategy that to outsiders appeared to underutilize the productive potential of the local game and fur-bearing animals. They could and did work for wages, but there is no indication that Chipewyans or Crees wanted to become full-time wage earners, even had that been possible. Except for those men who were employed full-time at Fort Chipewyan and produced their own food as part of their duties, wages were not high enough to support a family, and the stores did not stock the necessary groceries. Wage employment would have interfered with the production of essential food and hides. As well, it often meant working under the personal direction of someone who was a non-Aboriginal person and a non-relative, which compromised the value Chipewyans and Crees set on their personal freedom, a cultural theme that carried over into their treaty negotiations in 1899.

In Mair’s opinion (1908:55), the Aboriginal people he saw in 1899 were “plainly on the high road to comfort.” Their situation contrasted sharply with the experience of Aboriginal peoples to the south who signed Treaty

No. 6 in 1876 and Treaty No. 7 in 1877. Their primary economic resource, the buffalo, was nearly extinct at the time of their negotiations, lending a certain desperation to their dealings with government officials. This contrast set negotiations for Treaty No. 8 in 1899 on a rather different path.

8

Treaty No. 8 and Métis Scrip: Canada Bargains for the North

Settlement is now going into that region and the government does not wish to take possession of the land which has been looked upon by the Indians and half-breeds of that vast country as their undisputed possession, without paying over some money to the inhabitants and arriving at an amicable arrangement.

– *Edmonton Bulletin*, “New Indian Treaty,” 2 May 1898

Although a northern treaty had been anticipated for over a decade, it was the great Klondike gold rush of 1897-98 that forced the government's hand. Gold was discovered on the creeks of the Klondike River in August 1896. When news of this rich find reached the outside world, it triggered an “astonishing rush of miners and prospectors” (Mair 1908:22), mostly men, travelling north to the goldfields. A steady stream of Klondikers used Edmonton as the staging point for two overland routes, one by way of Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River and the other following the traditional fur trade river route from Athabasca Landing. In December 1897, Commissioner Herchmer reported, “The country between the Peace River and Edmonton is now dotted with small parties of prospectors numbering in all several hundred souls, who are camped waiting for spring” (NWMP 1898:3). By the following April, six to seven hundred people were camped at Athabasca Landing waiting for spring breakup, and the *Edmonton Bulletin* forecast the arrival of another two thousand in May and June (*EB*, “Athabasca Landing,” 18 April 1898:1).¹ Miners passed steadily

through Fort Chipewyan from May through August 1898 (Hudson's Bay Company Archives [HBCA], B.39/a/60:28-39).²

These men arrived in the Athabasca District at a time when local Aboriginal people were deeply troubled not only about outsiders trespassing on their lands, hunting and trapping their resources, and using poison but also about the steps being taken by agents of the federal government to establish their authority over land and people. The Klondikers added another unwelcome element. Superintendent Griesbach predicted: "a great number of these travellers are of all countries and of a mixed class, and going as they are through an unorganized and Indian country, fully armed, trouble may ensue" (NWMP 1898:81). These fears were borne out, as Mair (1908:23) explained later: "The gold-seekers, chiefly aliens from the United States, plunged into the wilderness of Athabasca without hesitation, and without as much as 'by your leave' to the native. Some of these marauders, as was to be expected, exhibited on the way a congenital contempt for the Indian's rights. At various places his horses were killed, his dogs shot, his bear-traps broken up. An outcry arose in consequence." Yet there was little or no evidence of any armed resistance by local inhabitants. On the contrary, Mary Lawrence, who arrived in Fort Vermilion in the summer of 1898, recalled that along the trail from Grouard to Peace River, "The Indians had spent much of the summer keeping a careful guard over that strange horde of adventurers so that they in their ignorance or carelessness might not leave a fire to spread and devastate the country, destroying not only timber and grazing fields but the fur catch of the coming winter" (Fort Vermilion 2008:21-22).

The federal government negotiated Treaty No. 8 to extend Canadian authority over the region in a peaceful manner and to prevent the escalation of conflicts between Aboriginal people and outsiders (e.g., Irwin 1999:9; Fumoleau 1975:49-51; Zaslow 1971:225). Bishop Grouard (1905:181) called it the "annexation" of the Athabasca by Canada. As a government report explained, "it was considered that the time was ripe for entering into treaty relations with the Indians of the district, and so setting at rest the feeling of uneasiness which was beginning to take hold of them, and laying the foundation for permanent friendly and profitable relations between the races" (in Fumoleau 1975:50). Half-breed scrip was issued at the same time, for the first time in conjunction with a treaty.

The joint processes of treaty and scrip were watershed events for the Aboriginal peoples of the region, and for Canada too. By the end of the nineteenth century, the institutions of the state and the Euro-Canadian settlement frontier had reached the southern fringes of the Athabasca

District. As an expanding frontier, it was also an encroaching line of intrusions that alarmed northern Aboriginal peoples who were familiar with events and problems in the Treaty No. 6 area to the south. Although people in the region had lived under a condition of remote Canadian sovereignty – more theoretical than real – since 1870, Treaty No. 8 moved Canada's project of establishing effective sovereignty throughout the Northwest one step further. It provided the charter for the twentieth-century relationship between these northern Aboriginal peoples and the nation-state, by creating new rules for a northern region that would draw it directly into Canada's political economy. Whether they realized it or not, when they entered into treaty, Aboriginal people relinquished "all their rights, titles and privileges" to their homeland. They promised that they would "conduct and behave themselves as good and loyal subjects of Her Majesty the Queen" and "obey and abide by the law" (Canada 1966:12, 14). Their signing of the treaty made it possible for federal, territorial, and provincial governments to extend their administrative and regulatory structures into the North for the first time.

This chapter details the particulars of the negotiation of Treaty No. 8 and the issuance of Half-breed scrip in 1899 and 1900, focusing on these events at Fort Chipewyan. It ends by considering the impacts and implications of treaty and scrip, which brought one group of Aboriginal people, now known as "status or treaty Indians," under the purview of the Indian Act and identified the remaining Aboriginal people as "Half-breeds" or Métis, transforming them into full Canadian citizens. Canada thereby erected a legal and administrative border between status Indians and others, and it organized status Indians into legal bands that bore scant resemblance to the local bands. Thus, Canada used the treaty process to establish a legal regime that affected all other developments in the region for the next century and that even today continues to shape the issues challenging Fort Chipewyan and other communities in the Treaty No. 8 region.

TREATY NO. 8 AND THE ISSUANCE OF HALF-BREED SCRIP: DEPARTURES

The formal text of Treaty No. 8 reads like all the other numbered treaties, with only minor differences in specific terms. This treaty was nonetheless a departure in the evolution of treaty making in Canada (see also Reddekopp and Bartko 1999-2000:213-214). First, although the proposal for a northern treaty had originally focused on the potential energy and mineral

wealth of the Athabasca District, in 1899 this interest was secondary to concern about the safety of Klondikers travelling through the lands of the Athabasca and Peace rivers on their way to the distant Yukon.³ Second, unlike southern regions, the area to be acquired was not expected to fill up with agricultural settlers, although the Peace River country did offer possibilities for farming.

Third, Treaty No. 8 was negotiated twenty-three years after Treaty No. 6 and fourteen years after the Northwest Rebellion. During this interval, northern Aboriginal people had learned a great deal about how the Government of Canada dealt with treaty Indians and Métis. Many had personal experience through their own travels to Edmonton, St. Albert, and other southern locations.⁴ They also learned about conditions in the south from the Métis freighters who travelled regularly between north and south. The *Edmonton Bulletin* was another source of information. It was eagerly read in northern communities, providing people with ready information about a wide range of international, national, and local events and issues (Aasen 1999-2000:134-139).

Northern Aboriginal people knew the terms of Treaty No. 6, whose northern fringe bordered their homeland, as many were personally acquainted with people in that treaty region. Indian Commissioner Forget reminded his superiors: "It was the practice to give a present of Seven dollars (\$7.00) per head on the completion of the Treaty, in addition to the annuity of five dollars. This was given as a tangible expression of the goodwill of the Crown and *as the Northern Indians are well aware of this having been done*, it is more than probable that if the same course is not pursued in their case they may make it a ground for refusing to treat" (A.E. Forget to J.D. McLean, Sec. DIA, 23 April 1898, Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 10, v. 3848, emphasis added). Similarly, J.A. Macrae wrote: "But the wood Crees and halfbreeds about Lesser Slave Lake who are closely connected with some of the Edmonton Indians may be found imbued with an intention to demand all those things which the Crees from the South always claim they were promised, and blame the Government for not embodying in the written Treaty, asserting that they were amongst the terms" (J.A. Macrae to J.A.J. McKenna, 8 Dec. 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848).

In particular, northern Aboriginal people were familiar with how Indians in the Treaty No. 6 region had become restricted to reserves. Indeed, one of their greatest fears about entering into treaty was that they, too, would be forced to live on reserves. At Fort Resolution, David Smith (1982:114) heard: "Old people talk of the establishment of a reservation as being 'chained-up like dogs.' They learned of some of the deplorable conditions

on reservations in southern Canada from Cree and Métis people working in the fur trade transport who visited Fort Resolution during the summer months.” They would have known about the deteriorating economies of Treaty No. 6 Indians not only from their personal contacts but also from reports in the *Edmonton Bulletin*. For example, on 7 January 1883, chiefs from seven Treaty No. 6 bands wrote to the minister of the interior: “We have never yet been supplied with one-half of what was promised in the treaty” (*EB*, “To the Minister of the Interior,” 3 Feb. 1883: 3). In 1888, Samuel Cunningham, who later lived at Lesser Slave Lake and was one of the interpreters for the treaty in 1899, interpreted for a delegation of three chiefs to Frank Oliver at the *Edmonton Bulletin* office. They told Oliver about destitution and starvation among their members and their expectation about government aid: “The government promised that in years of failure such as this they would help us more, but instead of doing so in this year of scarcity they have lessened the usual supply of food by more than one half” (*EB*, “Indians,” 25 Feb. 1888:3).

Northern Aboriginal people also knew about problems encountered by Métis in the south. Many Métis from the St. Albert–Lac Ste. Anne area, including Samuel Cunningham, relocated in the 1880s and 1890s to Lesser Slave Lake, partly because of the political problems they experienced in the south (McCormack and Drever 2001:10–14; Drever 2002). These Métis had become part of the northern Métis community by 1899 but remained in regular contact with their relatives in the St. Albert–Edmonton area.

In brief, northern Aboriginal people knew what problems they could expect as the frontier enveloped them. Their fears of what treaty and scrip might mean were reflected in the questions they raised at the time of treaty and in the years that followed, when they contested government interpretations of the treaty and government failures to live up to the terms of the treaty, as they understood them. Further, although they had experienced some difficult winters, their economy was basically stable, and they were confident about its future. In fact, the market for furs expanded at the end of the century, and fur prices increased accordingly (Ray 1990a:50, 64). As they assessed their needs and entered into negotiations for treaty or scrip in 1899, they did so from a position of strength and assurance, not destitution and supplication.

The treaty process of the 1870s had developed to accommodate Indians on the Prairies and Plains who were understood by Indian Affairs officials as having a societal form not shared by the northern Indians and who were expected to become farmers or ranchers in a land dominated by an agrarian economy. Similarly, the scrip process was oriented to Métis of the

Prairies and Plains, who were believed to have moved some distance along the path to an agricultural way of life. J.A.J. McKenna, one of the Treaty No. 8 commissioners, wrote in April 1899 to Clifford Sifton, the superintendent general of Indian affairs, that these differences in ways of life and future expectations should be recognized in the terms of the forthcoming treaty:

It might be desirable to give the Commissioners a freer hand. We can scarcely rely on the experience of the past in dealing with the Indians now to be treated with. When the Government negotiated for the surrender of the Indian title to the land in the organized territories it had to deal with Indian nations which had distinct tribal organizations. The communal idea was strong and made necessary the setting apart of reserves for the continuance of this common life until the Indians could be gradually weaned from it.

The most that can be said in favour of the reserve system, however, is that reserves made it easier for the Government to control and feed the Indians in a country where it was necessary to do so. Experience does not favour the view that the system makes for the advancement of the Indians. We should not be anxious to extend it for its own sake, and the conditions of the country to be treated for are not such as make its extension necessary ...

From what I have been able to learn of the North country, it would appear that the Indians there act rather as individuals than as a nation, and that any tribal organization which may exist is very slight. They live by hunting, and by individual effort, very much as the halfbreeds in that country live. They are averse to living on reserves, and as that country is not one that will ever be settled extensively for agricultural purposes it is questionable whether it would be a good policy to even suggest grouping them in the future. [McKenna to Sifton, 17 April 1899, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848]

With the government's own officials posing such questions, one might expect that the treaty would have been significantly amended. But in fact only small changes resulted in process and terms. As Robert Irwin (1999-2000) has argued, the federal government wanted to ensure that the treaty was in accord with its civilization policy, and the clauses of earlier treaties provided a precedent that amounted to a prescriptive formula for Treaty No. 8.

The complex, incremental steps that led to Treaty No. 8 and the issuance of Half-breed scrip have been discussed by many authors, although a comprehensive history has yet to be written.⁵ Presenters at the Treaty No. 8 Centennial Conference, held in 1999 at Grouard, near the site of the first signing of the treaty, addressed a wide range of related questions,

and their papers were published in *Treaty 8 Revisited* (Crerar and Petryshyn 1999-2000). From 1999 to 2001, preparations for *Benoit et al. v. The Queen*, a court case arguing the interpretation of a statement in the 1899 report of the treaty commissioners, resulted in numerous expert reports about the historical background to Treaty No. 8, the process of making treaty, and oral traditions about the treaty (Irwin 1999, 2001; McCormack and Drever 1999, 2001; Asch and Aasen 1999; Ens 2000; Flanagan 2000; Maguire Group 2000).⁶ This spate of intense public, scholarly, and legal scrutiny highlights diverse and conflicting interpretations about the terms of the treaty and its spirit, defined by Richard Price as its “true intent or meaning as opposed to outward formal observance” (1979:xiii; see also Treaty 7 Elders et al. 1996).

At the heart of these disputes is a fundamental argument over master narratives, which reflects recent scholarly interest in how the stories of history are constructed and their events interpreted. The Western history tradition finds its stories primarily in written documents. Yet to ethno-historian Raymond Fogelson (1989:134), “Recovery, reconstruction, and revivification of the past requires particular forms of consciousness,” meaning that we need to look beyond written sources. Most of the people who entered into treaty or took scrip were marginally literate at best. They did not write their own detailed reports about the negotiations. To recover their interpretations of what happened, or what they believed the treaty meant, one cannot rely solely on the documentary record of treaty negotiations but must turn to oral traditions and other relevant documentary sources (see also Cardinal and Hildebrandt 2000:50). Both can shed light on the contexts within which treaty was made and on issues raised after treaty, which suggest how each party regarded the undertaking.⁷

Given their cultural differences and other impediments to understanding, it would be surprising indeed to discover that government officials and Aboriginal people present at the negotiations agreed about the event of treaty. Instead, they had what Fogelson (1989:142, 135) termed a “differential recognition of events,” stemming from the fact that “events may be recognized, defined, and endowed with meaning differentially in different cultural traditions.” While negotiations may proceed as if both parties share the same concepts and procedures for negotiation, their realities may be distinctive. When the words are the same but mean different things, apparent similarity “may mask deeper cultural disagreements” (Morrow and Hensel 1992:38, 42).

Such discord seems to have been ignored, discounted, or misunderstood by the non-Aboriginal officials and observers who provided the written

version of the treaty and the corpus of written commentary about the discussions held with Aboriginal peoples throughout the Treaty No. 8 region. These people included the treaty commissioners (Canada 1966), Charles Mair (1908), police escorts to the Treaty Commission (diary of Sgt. K.F. Anderson, Glenbow Archives [GA], Kristjan Fjeldsted Anderson fonds, M19/f.5), Hudson's Bay Company personnel (the journals kept at each post and the Treaty No. 8 tour journal kept by H.B. Round, HBCA, E.26/1), Roman Catholic and Anglican missionaries (e.g., Grouard 1900; Geo. Holmes to Bishop Young, 24 June 1899, Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], A.281/148), and newspaper correspondents (numerous *Edmonton Bulletin* articles; also *Voyageur* 1999-2000). When negotiating parties are of unequal power, "the politically powerful participants in the dialogue ... supply the vocabulary in which the debate will be framed" and thereby control the representation of reality (Morrow and Hensel 1992:38). Inter-subjectivity – a shared set of meanings – may not develop.

The fact that the Euro-Canadian participants wrote copiously and the Aboriginal participants not at all has imbued the written accounts with an authority they may not deserve. Yet Tom Flanagan (2000:30) has urged that the text of Treaty No. 8 be accepted as definitive, even arguing that "The text of the treaty is ... in its own right a record of the oral discussions as well as the basis of those discussions." He has referred to court challenges of the treaties, such as the *Benoit* case, as "guerrilla warfare in the courts" (Flanagan 1999-2000:59). His claims, however, are at odds not only with current analytical trends in anthropology and history, but also with recent court decisions, especially *R. v. Badger*. The judgment of the Supreme Court of Canada in this Treaty No. 8 case referred to "uncertainties, ambiguities or doubtful expressions" in treaties, which "did not always record the full extent of the oral agreement" (*R. v. Badger*, [1996] 1 S.C.R. 771:18). The discussion in this chapter points to alternative interpretations of the event of treaty that are embodied in the oral traditions and the recorded versions of Aboriginal statements, which provide counterpoints to the treaty document. Chapter 9 will explore a third kind of evidence, claims by Chipewyan and Cree Indians that their treaty rights were violated by regulatory structures imposed in the twentieth century by Canada and Alberta.

TREATY NO. 8

The impetus for a northern treaty was renewed in 1897, with recommendations that a treaty be negotiated to forestall conflicts between Aboriginal

peoples and the unwelcome travellers through their lands (L.W. Herchmer, Commissioner, to the Comptroller, NWMP, 2 Dec. 1897, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848). By 12 January 1898, A.E. Forget, the Indian commissioner for the North-West Territories, in Winnipeg, was already considering the territory the treaty might encompass, possible terms, and the need to extinguish both Indian and Half-breed title:

I think it would be well to consider whether it would not be advisable to take them [Half-breeds] into Treaty with the same privileges as the pure blooded Indians, rather than pursue the course hitherto adopted of extinguishing their title by the issue of scrip once and for all and leaving them henceforth to their own resources. Experience has shown that it would have been better for the halfbreeds and probably also for the country, had many of the halfbreeds of the Saskatchewan been included in Treaty No. Six and in this way have had their interests safeguarded and the introduction of intoxicants into their settlements prohibited. [Forget to J.D. McLean, Secretary, DIA, 12 Jan. 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848]

The federal government planned to send a treaty commission that same year, until Forget advised that there was insufficient time to make the necessary arrangements. A one-year delay would allow Indians to be notified and Parliament to vote the necessary funds in the 1898-99 fiscal year (Forget to J.D. McLean, 23 April 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848). Forget continued to worry about the northern Half-breeds, and he urged the government to allow the same commission to treat with the Half-breeds

and accord them the same treatment as has been granted other Halfbreeds throughout Manitoba and the North West Territories in the extinguishment of their aboriginal title to the soil. This is a matter which I would respectfully suggest should be dealt with at an early date by the Government as unless the Halfbreeds are treated with simultaneously with the Indians it may be confidently expected that the former will use their powerful influence over the latter to retard negotiations for the ceding of the territory. [Forget to J.D. McLean, 23 April 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848, file 75,236-1]

Clifford Sifton agreed. He pointed out to the governor general that

it is practically impossible in instructing the Commissioners to draw a hard and fast line between the Halfbreeds and the Indians, as some of them are so closely allied in manners and customs as to the latter that they will desire to

be treated as Indians. As to those, the undersigned [Sifton] is disposed to believe that it would be more conducive to their own welfare, and more in the public interest to take them into treaty, than to give them scrip: and hence, he is of opinion that it should be left to the judgment of the Commissioners to determine what Half-breeds, if any, should be dealt with as Indians. [Sifton to Gov. Gen. in Council, 18 June 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848]

Meanwhile, the *Edmonton Bulletin* announced the forthcoming treaty and explained its general intent: “Settlement is now going into that region [Athabasca and Peace River districts] and the government does not wish to take possession of the land which has been looked upon by the Indians and half-breeds of that vast country as their undisputed possession, without paying over some money to the inhabitants and arriving at an amicable arrangement” (*EB*, “New Indian Treaty,” 2 May 1898:2). As reports about the treaty circulated in the North, Aboriginal people began to articulate their fears and resistance. They might have been encouraged by the traders, whose knowledge of the treaty was no greater and who themselves might have feared that the flourishing fur trade would suffer if northern Indians – the primary fur producers – were restricted to reserves.⁸ Charles Mair (1908:53) dismissed resistance to treaty as the work of outside agitators, implying that any Aboriginal resistance and challenges should be attributed to others:⁹ “The wiseacre was not absent, of course, and agitators had been at work for some time endeavouring to jaundice the minds of the people – half-breeds, it was said, from Edmonton, who had been vitiated by contact with a low class of white men there.”

The NWMP officer at Fort Smith reported that the Indians “do not seem to understand the nature of the treaty at all” (extract from report by the NWMP Corporal at Fort Smith, 31 Oct. 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848). One man was even afraid that if he took a written notice about the treaty, he was thereby binding himself to accept treaty. The corporal explained: “On several occasions I attended some of their meetings by special request, and tried to explain and point out to them the nature of the treaty and the benefits which they would derive by accepting of it, and particularly cautioned them not to pay any attention or take any notice of what they hear from others in this section of the country, for that they were trying to do them injury in every sense of the word.”

Aboriginal people in other localities also sought advice from men they considered to be knowledgeable and rightly understood to be in contact with people on the “outside.” On 1 March 1899, the Reverend George

Holmes wrote to Bishop Young from Lesser Lake (PAA, A.281/148): “Going to visit Mustus’ Camp, across the Lake; from where I have received a special invitation to go & talk to the people re the treaty, and baptize some children. I shall, as you advise be most careful in what I say. My object is to try & prepare the way for the Govt. by disabusing their minds of all their suspicions they entertain. At the same time, being careful to show that we have no connection with the Govt” (Holmes to Young, 1 March 1899, PAA, A.281/148).

One can only surmise what the missionaries and police officers said at these public meetings and in private conversations. Presumably, they put a positive slant on the benefits of treaty rather than addressing specific terms, which were not known to them and were still being debated in Ottawa. The Reverend Charles Weaver wrote to Clifford Sifton:

We have received notices of the Government representatives coming through the District next summer. And we and the traders are publishing it in all the outlying districts. The people there are very ignorant and preduced [prejudiced] and they ask various questions that we can not answer. So if you will kindly give us information on one or two points we shall be able to tell the people and thus facilitate matters for next summer. For instance

- i Will there be a headman chosen by the people here?
 - ii Will Game and Fishery laws be enforced here as in Alberta?
 - iii Will they be free after taking treaty money to roam about the country hunting or will they have a reserve allotted [sic] them?
 - iv Will these traders or English speaking men who have got illegitimate children by Indian women be given the custody of those children?
- [Weaver to Sifton, 26 Dec. 1898, RG 10, v. 3848]

The last question was undoubtedly posed not by the Indians but by Weaver, who added that he hoped these men would “be given the custody of their children and compelled to bring them up and educate them as it is a shame for them to grow up like bush Indians as many of them are doing.” The first three questions reveal not ignorance, but considerable sophistication about the implications of treaty.¹⁰

The Department of Indian Affairs finalized the geographic extent and basic terms of the treaty during the winter of 1898-99. It was to encompass the northeastern corner of British Columbia, which required some legal footwork with that province, and all the lands reaching to Great Slave Lake, although the commissioners were expected to travel only as



MAP 8.1 Treaty No. 8 map

far as Fort Smith in 1899 (see Figures 8.1 and 8.2). Inspector Routledge prepared a detailed census of Indians and Half-breeds of the region to help the government with its financial planning (W. Routledge to Officer Commanding “G” Division, Ft. Sask., 5 April 1899, LAC, RG 18, v. 1435, no. 76, pt. 2). Annuities would match those paid in Treaty No. 6, despite some resistance among government planners both to the ongoing nature of annuities and their amount (e.g., David Laird, memorandum respecting Indian Treaty No. 8 and Halfbreed claims, 7 Jan. 1899; J.A.J. McKenna to Clifford Sifton, 17 April 1899, both in LAC, RG 10, v.3848). The treaty would provide for reserves, based on the formula of one square mile for each family of five, as well as small plots of 160 acres each for individuals who “may prefer to live apart from band reserves,” called “land in severalty” (Canada 1966:12). Half-breed claims would be handled at the same



MAP 8.2 Treaty No. 8 region (shown with modern provincial and territorial borders)

time, but by a separate commission. The commissioners were to “have a pretty free hand for the conditions in the Athabasca country are much different from those that have yet been met with in the extinguishment of the Indian title” (Clifford Sifton to David Laird, 10 Feb. 1899, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848). Yet as Irwin (1999-2000:50) has pointed out, their flexibility was constrained by the “the parameters of the Indian policy.”

Three treaty commissioners with impressive credentials were appointed. They would be the first representatives of the Canadian state to meet formally with the northern Aboriginal peoples and their leaders. In Aboriginal eyes, the event of treaty was their first nation-to-nation encounter, and they were embarking on the serious business of negotiating their future relationship.¹¹ Chief Commissioner David Laird had previously been the minister of the interior and the lieutenant-governor of the North-West Territories, and he had negotiated Treaty No. 7 in 1877. In 1899, he was the Indian commissioner in Winnipeg. Charles Mair (1908:25) praised



PHOTO 8.1 The Treaty No. 8 party in 1899 was large and diverse. J.A. McKenna, Inspector A.E. Snyder, and the Honourable James H. Ross (left to right) were the members who negotiated the treaty at Fort Chipewyan. | Glenbow Archives, NA-949-2

his “tact and sagacity.” James H. Ross was not only the minister of public works in the North-West Territories government, the previous summer he had also travelled the overland trail from Edmonton to Lesser Slave Lake, giving him some northern experience. J.A.J. McKenna was the private secretary and “trusted representative” of Clifford Sifton, minister of the interior and superintendent general of the Department of Indian Affairs (*EB*, “Athabasca Treaty,” 6 March 1899:2; *EB*, “Slave Lake Trail,” 28 July 1898:4; Mair 1908:21-22, 25; Leonard 1995:19).

Because most of the Indians were Roman Catholic, Father Lacombe was invited to join the commission as a special advisor (Order-in-Council, 3 May 1899, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848; Mair 1908:25; Grouard 1923:358). The

North-West Mounted Police supplied a medical officer, Dr. Christopher West (Canada 1966:9; GA, Christopher and Alice West fonds).¹² Administrative personnel included two secretaries, a camp manager, and an accountant, H.A. Conroy, who served as the Indian commissioner for the Treaty No. 8 region in the early twentieth century and in 1921 negotiated Treaty No. 11. One of the secretaries might have been H.B. Round, a Hudson's Bay Company man who travelled with the party, arranged its transport, and kept a diary (Treaty No. 8 tour journal, HBCA, E.26/1).¹³ Given the importance of good interpretation to the success of the commission, it is perplexing that only one interpreter, Pierre Deschambeault, was hired to travel with the treaty party. He was a long-time employee of the Hudson's Bay Company from the Île-à-la-Crosse region hired presumably for his ability to speak Chipewyan. However, the only community where he provided this service was Fond du Lac (Canada 1966; Mair 1908:26; *EB*, "Treaty Commissioners," 25 May 1899:1).¹⁴ The commission relied at other points on local interpreters, not all of whom were named formally in the treaty. Father Lacombe might have done double duty on occasion as an advisor and Cree interpreter.¹⁵

The commissioners travelled to Lesser Slave Lake Settlement in the company of the Half-breed Commission and a NWMP escort under Inspector A.E. Snyder. The NWMP had the care of the treasury chest, which contained \$32,400 in cash for the annuities and \$500 worth of silver medals to be distributed to the new chiefs (A.E. Snyder to Officer Commanding "G" Division, 8 Sept. 1899, LAC, RG 18, vol. 160, file 71-73). At Lesser Slave Lake, they had lengthy meetings with the Aboriginal peoples, determined the final form that the treaty would take, made one typed copy of the text, and decided that the remaining negotiations would simply be "adhesions" to this original signing.¹⁶ As Bishop Breynat later observed, "Il y a bien eu des discussions plus ou moins longues avec chaque bande intéressée, mais la formule à signer avait été rédigée à Ottawa *ne varietur!*" (Breynat 1948:205).¹⁷ The first signing of the treaty occurred on 21 June 1899 (Canada 1966:6).

In addition to the formal terms of the treaty relating to the land base and annuities, Treaty No. 8 specified economic assistance to accommodate the variety of northern lifeways, current and anticipated. Ammunition and twine would be given to Indians who "continue to hunt and fish for a livelihood," while tools and stock would be available for Indians who wanted to "take to farming." The treaty also promised that the government would pay the salaries of teachers. Presumably, some of these clauses

reflected the discussions at Lesser Slave Lake, and all were well in line with Indian Affairs policies.

The treaty text was accompanied by a report by the commissioners that provided some sketchy detail about concerns raised by the Indians and the government responses:

We assured them ... that the Government would always be ready to avail itself of any opportunity of affording medical service ... We had to solemnly assure them that only such laws as to hunting and fishing as were in the interest of the Indians and were found necessary in order to protect the fish and fur-bearing animals would be made, and that they would be as free to hunt and fish after the treaty as they would be if they never entered into it.

We assured them that the treaty would not lead to any forced interference with their mode of life, that it did not open the way to the imposition of any tax, and that there was no fear of enforced military service. [Canada 1966:6]

Whether these “assurances” should be considered additional or “outside” treaty promises is a disputed issue. Bishop Breynat, who observed the treaty discussions at both Lesser Slave Lake and Fort Chipewyan, distinguished between the “definite terms of the treaty” (the formal text) and the “indefinite clauses” (the assurances) but he considered them all to be binding promises (Fumoleau 1975:382). James Kennedy Cornwall, who was present at treaty negotiations at both Lesser Slave Lake and Peace River Crossing, stated in a formal affidavit in 1937 that the commissioners had agreed “that what the Indians suggested was only fair and right but that they had no authority to write it into the Treaty, but felt sure the Government on behalf of the Crown and the Great White Mother would include their request and they made the following promises to the Indians” – the so-called outside promises (Breynat 1937). The federal government’s position has been to restrict the promises to the formal terms of the treaty. The *Benoit* case on Treaty No. 8 taxation was the first time that a court was asked to adjudicate this question for this treaty.¹⁸

After finishing at Lesser Slave Lake, the commissioners divided their forces to visit as many settlements as possible. People entered into treaty at Peace River Landing, Dunvegan, Fort Vermilion and Little Red River, Fort Chipewyan, Fond du Lac, Smith’s Landing, Fort McMurray, and Wapiscow (see Table 8.1). The commissioners’ report identified about 57 percent of the Indians as Dene (Chipewyan and Beaver), 35 percent as Cree, and 8 percent as Cree and Dene (Canada 1966:10-11).

TABLE 8.1 The signing of Treaty No. 8

Date	Location	Signatories
21 June 1899	Lesser Slave Lake	Crees of Lesser Slave Lake region
1 July 1899	Peace River Landing	Crees of Peace River Landing region
6 July 1899	Dunvegan	Beavers of Dunvegan
8 July 1899	Fort Vermilion	Beavers and Crees of Fort Vermilion region
13 July 1899	Fort Chipewyan	Chipewyans and Crees of Fort Chipewyan and Slave River region
17 July 1899	Smith's Landing	Chipewyans of Slave River region
25 and 27 July 1899	Fond du Lac	Chipewyans of Fond du Lac region
4 August 1899	Fort McMurray	Chipewyans and Crees of Fort McMurray region
14 August 1899	Wapiscow Lake	Crees of Wapiscow region
30 May 1900	Fort St. John	Beavers of Upper Peace River region
8 June 1900	Lesser Slave Lake	Crees of Sturgeon Lake region
23 June 1900	Fort Vermilion	Slaves of Hay River region
25 July 1900	Fort Resolution	Dogribs, Yellowknives, and Chipewyans of the south shore of Great Slave Lake region

Source: Canada 1966.

THE TREATY COMMISSION AT FORT CHIPEWYAN

Commissioner Laird went to Fort Vermilion, Little Red River, and Fond du Lac, leaving Commissioners Ross and McKenna, in the company of Inspector Snyder, to treat with the Chipewyans and Crees at Fort Chipewyan. Bishop Grouard, who had been in attendance at Lesser Slave Lake, rejoined the party at Fort Chipewyan. Also present were Father Breynat and Reverend Warwick. While the written record from Fort Chipewyan is shorter than that from Lesser Slave Lake, most observers made brief notations about the treaty discussions and related events. They included the treaty commissioners (Canada 1966:6); Inspector Snyder (A.E. Snyder to Officer Commanding "G" Division, 8 Sept. 1899, LAC, RG 18, vol. 160, file 71-73); Sergeant Anderson (diary of Sgt. Anderson, GA, Anderson fonds, M19/f.5); Bishop Grouard (1900:89); Reverend Warwick (letters to

Bishop Young, PAA, A.281/308); the diary of the Nativity Mission (Archives Deschâtelets, Mission de la Nativité Codex:126-127; Fumoleau 1975: 76-77); Hudson's Bay Company post manager George Drever, or possibly his clerk (HBCA, B.39/a/60); and company agent H.B. Round, who looked after the transport for the two commissions and kept a daily diary (Treaty No. 8 tour journal, 13-15 July 1899, HBCA, E.26/1:44d-45; Mair 1908:27). The correspondent for the *Edmonton Bulletin* arrived at Fort Chipewyan with Commissioner Laird's party after treaty had been concluded, but he wrote warmly about the hospitality extended to the treaty party by Colin Fraser and the Nativity Mission, where Laird was given a pair of moccasins and a decorated tobacco pouch (*EB*, "Treaty Commissioners at Fort Chipewyan," 17 Aug. 1899:3).¹⁹

A series of later texts about the treaty also exists. Bishop Grouard and Bishop Breynat both wrote about what happened at Fort Chipewyan in their memoirs and articles (Grouard 1923:374; Breynat 1948:ch. 19; Breynat in Fumoleau 1975:app. 15, pp. 379-389). Breynat (1937) also collected a set of affidavits from signatories and witnesses to treaty at Fort Chipewyan: Wiyakis Martin (also named Justin Martin, the second Cree chief and the son of the original signatory, thirty-nine years old in 1899), Thomas Gibotte (one of the original Cree headmen, and still a headman in 1937), Jonas Laviolette (the younger brother of the first Chipewyan chief and himself the second Chipewyan chief, twenty years old in 1899), Pierre Mercredi (one of the treaty interpreters), Colin Fraser, and John Wylie (appointed a justice of the peace in the early twentieth century) (see also Fumoleau 1975:264, 277-278, 340).²⁰ There is also a set of English transcripts of interviews conducted in Chipewyan and Cree in 1974 with eight Fort Chipewyan Elders by the Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research (TARR) unit of the Indian Association of Alberta (see Appendix).²¹

By 6 July 1899, many people were already encamped at Fort Chipewyan, waiting for the treaty party to arrive. On 7 July, "More Indians arrived from Lac Brochet [Jackfish or Richardson Lake] to wait for the Comr. as the date given for the arrival of the Indian Comr. was tomorrow the 8th as stated in the Public Notice received here last summer" (HBCA, B.39/a/60:105). The Hudson's Bay Company distributed "rations" of flour and bacon, noting that "the Coy is spending from 10 to 11 Sacks Flour for every 2nd day" (HBCA, B.39/a/60:106).

The treaty party arrived at Fort Chipewyan at 11:30 a.m. on Thursday, 13 July (Treaty No. 8 tour journal, HBCA, E.26/1:44d; HBCA, B.39/a/60:106). It was greeted by a fusillade (Grouard 1900:89), which was repeated the following day at 8:00 p.m., when Commissioner Laird's

party arrived at Fort Chipewyan: "Our arrival here was greeted by a general firing of guns by the Indians and half-breeds as well as the free-traders on shore, and it looked from the boats in the dark, as if a battle were raging, judging by the flashes seen in all directions. The shore for about a mile was literally ablaze" (*EB*, "Treaty Commissioners at Fort Chipewyan," 17 Aug. 1899:3; see also 14 July 1899, diary of Sgt. Anderson, GA, Anderson fonds, M19/f.5; Grouard 1923:374).²²

The commissioners erected a tent at Hudson's Bay Point (Salomon Sepp and Francis Bruno, interviews by TARR 1974). The negotiations were brief: "they all assembled at 4 o'clock P.M. & the treaty was concluded & signed" (HBCA, B.39/a/60:107).²³ The Nativity Mission journal recorded that "the Treaty was read" (in Fumoleau 1975:77), which suggests that the commissioners used a second copy of the treaty or written notes that have not survived. The official interpreters for this meeting were Pierre Mercredi, for Chipewyan, and George Drever, for Cree (Canada 1966:17; Fumoleau 1975:77). "The Cree were placed at right hand & the Chips on the left, the address was immediately & simultaneously interpreted thus saving much time" (Treaty No. 8 tour journal, 13 July 1899, HBCA, E.26.1:44d). Mercredi has already been described as a long-time resident and Hudson's Bay Company employee. Francis Bruno attested to his fluency in Chipewyan (interview by TARR 1974), and Felix Gibot (1979:158) recalled that "he could understand the Cree language clearly." George Drever was the Hudson's Bay Company post manager who had arrived the previous November from Green Lake (HBCA, B.39/a/60:57; Whyte Museum, Lamarque fonds, M81/1:21). James Lucas said about him: "The Indians like him very much. He speaks good Cree & treats them like human beings" (Lucas to Bishop Young, 1 Jan. 1899, PAA, A.281/195). According to Felix Gibot, a priest also interpreted, perhaps Father Breynat, who witnessed the document (Gibot 1979:156; Canada 1966:17).

The commissioners created two Indian bands, one for the Chipewyans and one for the Crees, which reflected the large numbers of each population as well as their ethno-cultural distinctions.²⁴ They paid "Annuity and Gratuity Moneys" to 410 Chipewyans and 186 Crees (Canada 1966:10).²⁵ The treaty named the new Chipewyan chief as Alexandre Laviolette, with headmen Julien Ratfat and Sept Heezell. The Cree chief was Justin Martin, with headmen Antoine Taccaroo and Thomas Gibbot.²⁶

While the commissioners were certainly unaware of their social backgrounds, these men represented distinctive Chipewyan and Cree populations within the Fort Chipewyan region, presumably reflecting Indian efforts to ensure some measure of balanced regional representation in the

new political order. The Fort Chipewyan genealogies (McCormack n.d.) combined with informed guesswork about birth dates and additional information about historical locations of specific family groups (McCormack 1977-78) afford us some insight into the people's choice of leaders. This information points out the lines of communication and cooperation among the different bands of the region. Inter-band and inter-regional ties, or alliances, were created and maintained through marriages, which were arranged by senior family members until the mid-twentieth century. Marriage was too important to be left to personal whim or inclination. The substance of the alliances was articulated through kin relationships (see Figure 8.1).²⁷

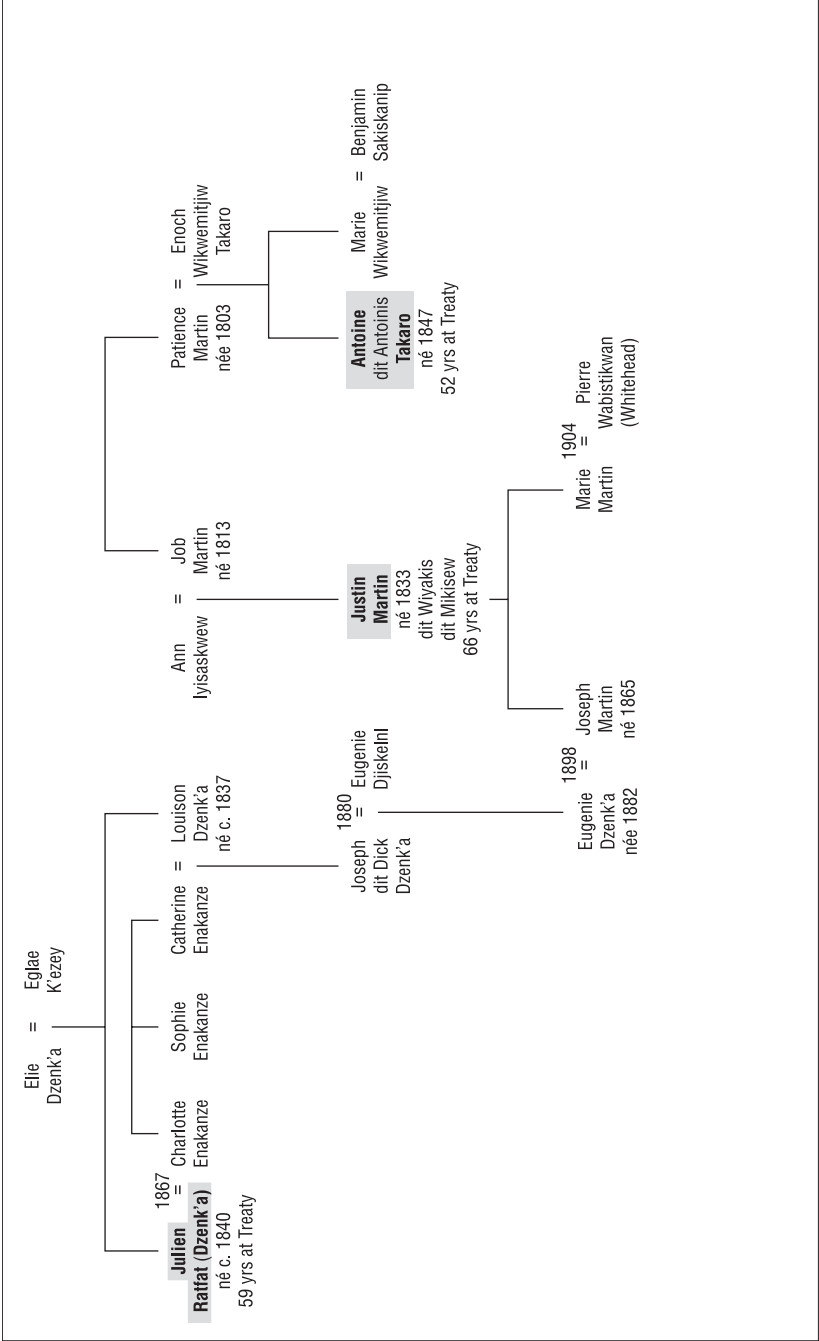
Laviolette is an old fur trade name at Fort Chipewyan (Duckworth 1990:156). Alexandre Laviolette, the Chipewyan chief, was a third-generation descendant of a voyageur and son of Antoine Laviolette and his wife, Madeleine Piche. He was baptized in 1867.²⁸ In 1887, he married Delphine Dzendettsel, from a Chipewyan family with traditional occupancy in the Birch River country. Given this ancestry and marriage, he was probably well versed in Chipewyan language and culture, despite reports to the contrary. In 1897, when he issued his strongly worded challenge to Inspector Jarvis (quoted in Chapter 5), he was described as a minor chief. In 1899, at thirty-two years of age, he was the youngest of all the new leaders, presumably chosen for his acumen and verbal skills as well as his family connections. The treaty commissioners commented on the hard negotiating by the Chipewyans and in particular by their chief (Canada 1966:5, 6). His younger brother, Jonas, was twenty years old at the time of treaty and later succeeded him as chief. The Laviolettes were from the Chipewyan bands on the south shore of Lake Athabasca.

The first Chipewyan headman was Julien Ratfat, a name that is a direct English translation of the Chipewyan name Dzenk'a. His Chipewyan family was very old in the region and traditionally associated with the Birch River–Birch Mountain country. Two Juliens appear in the Fort Chipewyan genealogies, but the man who became the headman in 1899 was probably the son of Elie Dzenk'a and Eglae K'ezey, born about 1840. He was married in the church in 1867 to Charlotte Enakanze. His common-law marriage in about 1891 to her sister Sophie suggests that he followed the traditional custom of marrying his deceased wife's sister. He would have been about fifty-nine years of age in 1899. A woman he would have called "granddaughter" (his brother's granddaughter) was Cree chief Justin Martin's daughter-in-law, married to Justin's son Joseph.

Headman Sept Heezell was actually Eusèbe or Seth Hinzell, called Seb or Sep, a Christian name that over time became a family surname.²⁹ He was baptized in 1848 when he was one year old, so he was fifty-two when he signed the treaty. The Hinzell family occupied locations on the Slave and lower Peace rivers. Salomon Sepp, the headman's grandson, recalled that they were associated with a settlement on the Slave River (interview by TARR 1974). Some marriages took place between Laviolettes and Hinzells, including one in 1896 between Eusèbe Hinzell's son Jean-Baptiste and Genevieve Laviolette, whose father, Catholique Laviolette, was a brother to Alexandre's father, Antoine. This marriage meant that Jean-Baptiste would have called both Catholique and Antoine "father-in-law," and he would have enjoyed a male cross-cousin/brother-in-law relationship with Alexandre Laviolette. In turn, Alexandre Laviolette would have called Eusèbe Hinzell "father-in-law."³⁰

Justin Martin, known as Wiyakis and Mikisew (Eagle), was a logical choice to be the Cree chief. Even today, he is remembered as a leader with great spiritual power (pers. commun., Matthew Whitehead, e-mail, 4 April 2009). Felix Gibot (1979:156) described him as "a man who was in charge of trappers." Born about 1833, he was the oldest child of Job Martin and Anne Iyisaskew. He was about sixty-six in 1899, the oldest of the new treaty leaders. His father's sister and his own brothers and sisters had married strategically into Cree and Chipewyan families, securing the position of the numerically smaller Crees in the Gull Lake–Lake Mamawi area by allying them to the more powerful surrounding Chipewyan bands, while at the same time maintaining ties to other Crees within the region. His three oldest sons also married Chipewyan women from different families. His first son, Martin (baptized in 1860), also called Wiyakis and later also known as Justin, succeeded his father as the second Cree chief in 1909, when he was forty-nine. In 1898 Justin's third son, Joseph (baptized in 1865), married Eugenie Dzenk'a, the granddaughter of headman Julien Ratfat (Dzenk'a). Justin's daughter Marie (baptized in 1884) married Pierre Wabistikwan, or Whitehead, in 1904. Pierre Whitehead (called Pierre Guillaume), thus Martin's brother-in-law, later replaced Martin as the third Cree chief. Justin Martin was closely connected to the two Cree headmen in a pattern that suggests an internal political dynamic mediated by kinship.³¹

Headman Antoine Taccaroo, or Takaro (today Tuccaro), was similarly descended from what appears to be one of the oldest Cree families, situated on the lower Peace River. His mother was Patience Martin, who was Justin Martin's father's sister, making the two men cross-cousins, structur-



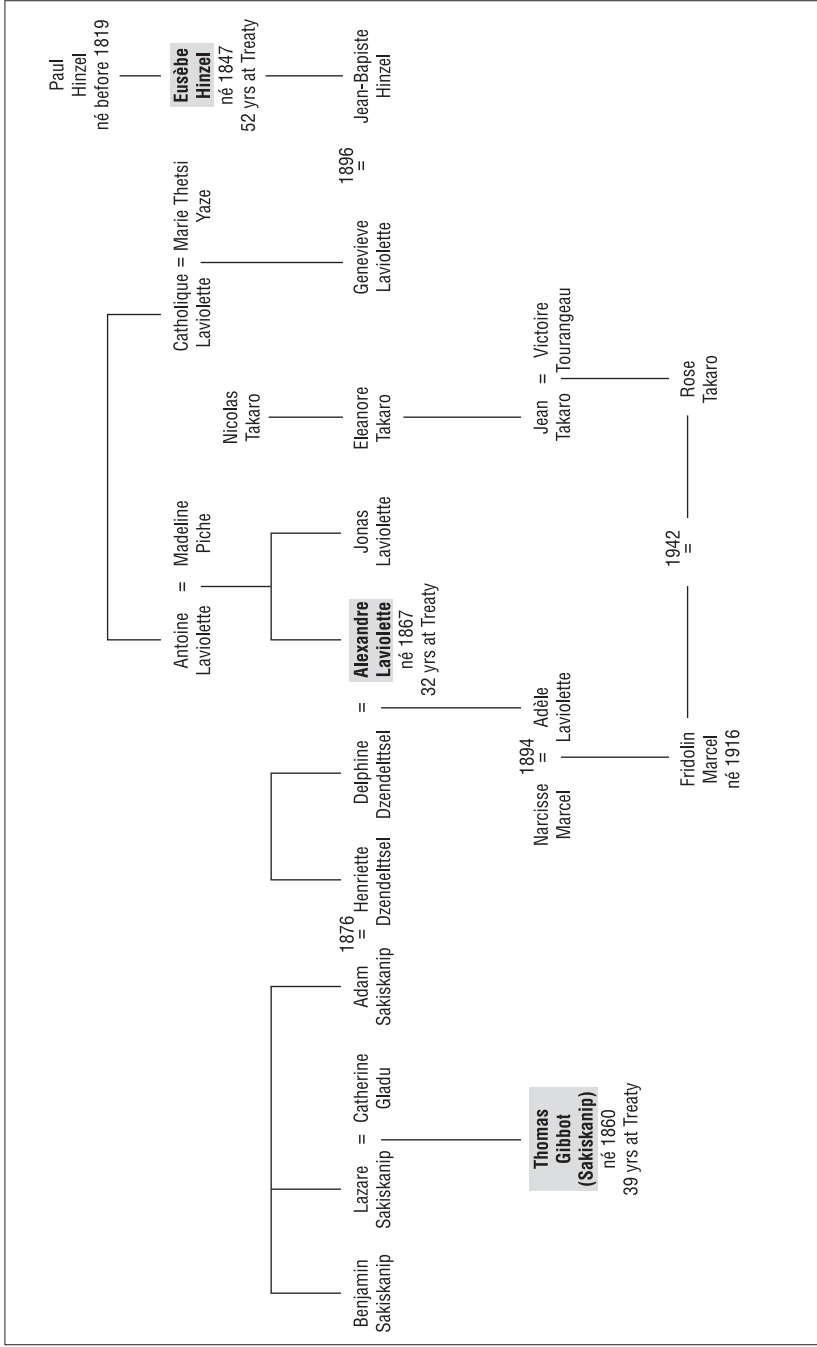


FIGURE 8.1 Kinship ties among Chipewyan and Cree chiefs and headmen

ally the same as brothers-in-law. Antoine Takaro was born about 1847, making him junior to Justin and fifty-two years old in 1899, which might have been one reason that Justin emerged as the chief. His first marriage was in 1866 to Marie Enaskedhe, a Chipewyan woman, and he married a second time in 1877 to Josette Wabikuman (Whiteknife), who was Cree. His children were married to Cree and Chipewyan men and women. Some of these marriages provided alliances to the Crees of the Little Red River region. The Kaskaman and Antoine families of Fort Chipewyan are both descended from Antoine Takaro and have ties to the Peace Point area.

The second Cree headman, Thomas Gibbot, was the son of Lazare Sakiskanip and Catherine Gladu. He was baptized in 1860. Antoine Takaro was his father's brother-in-law, and Thomas would have called him "father-in-law."³² This relationship, and his youth – he was only thirty-nine in 1899 – were probably why he signed last. He was also related to the Lavoiettes. In traditional kinship reckoning, Thomas might have called Chief Alexandre Lavolette by a term meaning "father's brother," because of the intermarriages that linked them. He was married successively to two Grandjambe women, in 1886 and 1892, and his brothers and sisters were married into a variety of mostly Cree, but some Chipewyan families. His sister Bonne was married to the powerful singer Paul Tewanokowis. Thomas Gibbot was associated with Peace Point, while his nephew, Felix Gibot, was traditionally associated with Moose Island, in the Slave River (Anonymous 1923:337; TARR 1974). Thomas Gibbot represented Cree bands in the region of the confluence of the Slave and lower Peace rivers.

Both Father Grouard and Reverend Warwick claimed that the people accepted the treaty without difficulty (Grouard 1923:374; Warwick to Bishop Young, 31 July 1899, PAA, A.281/308). The commissioners noted that people at Fort Chipewyan asked for "the services of a medical man" (Canada 1966:5). They praised Chipewyan Chief Lavolette for his "considerable keenness of intellect and much practical sense in pressing the claims of his band" (5). They were clearly impressed that he "asked that the Government should undertake to have a railway built into the country, as the cost of goods which the Indians require would be thereby cheapened and the prosperity of the country enhanced" (6; Mair 1908:65). Requests for railways and speculation about new lines were common at the time; on 22 May 1899, the *Edmonton Bulletin* had reported that a railway to be surveyed in June was planned "from Edmonton to Athabasca landing and then by way of the north shore of Lesser Slave lake to Peace River Crossing" (cited in Aasen 1999-2000:144n35). Lavolette's request might have surprised the commissioners only because it was made by an Indian. It

revealed the knowledge and sophistication of people who were supposedly isolated and primitive.

Given the widespread fears about treaty in earlier years, it was to be expected that the Chipewyans and Crees would engage the commissioners in discussions about what treaty would mean for them if they signed.³³ J.A. McKenna wrote to Charles Mair, “Those Chipewyans lost no time in flowery oratory, but came at once to business, and kept us, myself in particular, on tenterhooks for two hours. I never felt so relieved as when the rain of questions ended, and, satisfied by our answers, they acquiesced in the cession” (in Mair 1908:65-66).

Trying to uncover details of those discussions is difficult at best. The Nativity Mission diary summarized one set of key issues:

The Chief of the Crees spoke up and expressed the conditions on which he would accept the Government’s proposals:

- 1 Complete freedom to fish.
- 2 Complete freedom to hunt.
- 3 Complete freedom to trap.
- 4 As himself and his people are Catholics, he wants their children to be educated in Catholic schools.

In his turn, the Chipewyan spokesman set the same conditions as the first speaker. [Fumoleau 1975:77]

According to Salomon Sepp, the commissioner “pointed to the sun, the river and the hills looking west, that you can see from the Hudson Bay Point ... that we will never have any laws, that will prevent you from your way of life, like hunting, fishing, trapping” (interview by TARR 1974; see also Magloire Vermilion and Francis Bruno, interviews by TARR 1974).

The 1937 affidavits collected by Bishop Breynat reiterated the promises made by the commissioners as they were remembered by the signatories and observers:

The following promises were made to the Indians by the Royal Commissioner, in the name of the Crown:

- 1 They were promised that nothing would be done or allowed to interfere with their way of making a living as they were accustomed to and as their antecedents had done.

- 2 The old and destitute would always be taken care of, their future existence would be carefully studied and provided for, every effort would be made to improve their living conditions.
- 3 They were guaranteed that they would be protected in their way of living as hunters and trappers from White competition, they would not be prevented from hunting and fishing, as they had always done, so as to enable them to earn their own living and maintain their existence.
[Breynat 1937; see also Fumoleau 1975:340]

Although these affidavits were signed individually, the text has been standardized and therefore lacks community-based distinctions. However, it accords with local traditions about the continued freedom people would enjoy in pursuing their livelihood after entering into treaty. Billy Simpson interpreted the third promise to mean that the government would provide a game warden to protect the game for the Indians and a policeman to protect the people from trouble (interview by TARR 1974). It is useful to remember that these affidavits, taken after nearly forty years had passed, were commentaries about the treaty promises in light of the way the individuals believed the promises had been broken. As Salomon Sepp explained, “You know our grandfathers never told us much about how the treaty was signed. The only time they mentioned the treaty was when it interfered with our way of life” (interview by TARR 1974).

If the treaty was read to them, as the Nativity Mission diary stated, then they would have been told about the provision for reserves and land in severalty and been reassured by the commissioners that they would not be forced to stay on reserves, a point reported by John Kaskamin (interview by TARR 1974). The system of annuities would also have been explained, though perhaps not clearly enough to distinguish between the one-time present of \$12 that each person received when the treaty was signed and the subsequent annual payment of \$5 (Canada 1966:13).³⁴ Two Elders pointed out the difference in these amounts (Salomon Sepp and Louis Boucher, interviews by TARR 1974; see also Fumoleau 1975:107). Some people might have expected to receive the larger sum as their usual annuity. They were told about the clothing awarded to chiefs and headmen, and the chiefs received silver medals (McCormack 1988:36, items 19, 20). The commissioners would have explained the ongoing economic benefits for hunting and fishing and for farming.

David Smith (1982:113) has suggested that people at Fort Resolution were influenced to sign the treaty in 1900 not only by the assurances they received but also by being shown the rations that they would receive. The

gift of rations was an important symbol. Pierre Friezie, who was fourteen years old in 1900, testified before the 1973 Morrow Inquiry about the government largesse: “They brought everything in, like nets, shells, flour, and they told the people they were going to do this to the Indian people all the time and they were going to help them out this way” (Paulette 1973:304). These accounts match traditions at Fort Chipewyan about why the government was making the treaty. In Felix Gibot’s words (1979:156), “Stories have reached the government that Indians have been dying of starvation in the bush. The government would like to take control of the Indian people and care for them.” Louis Boucher phrased it as Queen Victoria’s desire “to care for us like we were her children” (interview by TARR 1974; see also John Kaskaman, interview by TARR 1974). The treaty commissioners themselves drew upon such idioms of kinship. For example, at Lesser Slave Lake David Laird referred to Queen Victoria as the “Great Mother” and to the Indians as “Red Brothers” (Mair 1908:56). Moostoos explained to the commissioners what such a kinship relationship meant: “You have called us brothers. Truly I am the younger, you the elder brother. Being the younger, if the younger ask the elder for something, he will grant his request the same as our mother the Queen” (Mair 1908:60; see also McCormack 2001a:7-8). Such representations of kinship would have resonated with the Chipewyans and Crees gathered at Fort Chipewyan, who lived their lives within the strictures of kinship-based societies, but might have been little more than negotiation rhetoric to the commissioners.

The treaty was formally concluded when the two chiefs were paid their treaty money, at nine o’clock that evening (Fumoleau 1975:78). The Nativity Mission donated two cows for a feast, which was followed by a “pow-wow,” presumably a tea dance (Salomon Sepp and Francis Bruno, interviews by TARR 1974). The following morning, on 14 July, two tables were set up to pay the treaty money to the remaining band members. Mr. Ross made payments at one table to the Chipewyans, and Mr. McKenna paid the Crees at the other table (Treaty No. 8 tour journal, 14 July 1899, HBCA, E.26/1:45).³⁵ H.B. Round acted as secretary; presumably, he constructed the first Chipewyan and Cree Treaty Pay Lists while the payments were being made.³⁶ At Fort Smith, he described himself as “Secretary and Ticket issuer” (Treaty No. 8 tour journal, 14 and 17 July 1899, HBCA, E.26/1:45, 45d).³⁷ The commissioners’ report noted that \$4,884 was paid to the 410 newly registered members of the Chipewyan band, and \$2,196 to the 186 members of the Cree band (Canada 1966:10).³⁸ Additional provisions and supplies were distributed, comprising flour, bacon, tea, tobacco,

shot, and powder (Francis Bruno, Billy Simpson, and Magloire Vermilion, interviews by TARR 1974). This official business was concluded by 1:00 p.m., and the party “left after dinner” (HBCA, B.39/a/60:107; Treaty No. 8 tour journal, 14 July 1899, HBCA, E.26/1:45; Fumoleau 1975:78).

The newly minted status Indians began to spend their annuity money immediately. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported: “Mr. Fraser has also come in for his share of the \$1 bills, your correspondent today [18 July] counting not less than 2,500 of them on the carpet in Mr. Fraser’s home. He told me that he expected at least \$1,000 more before another couple of days and I feel sure that such will be the case as Mr. Fraser seems to have great influence amongst the native population” (*EB*, “Treaty Commissioners at Fort Chipewyan,” 17 Aug. 1899:3).

Mary Lawrence described the reactions of Indians and traders to the cash payments at the signing of treaty in Fort Vermilion in colourful prose that might have exaggerated an initial naïveté by the Beavers and Crees:

Their immediate consternation and then amusement at the dollar bills counted into their hands was even more amusing to watch. So this was the reward of the Queen Mother! They sat with the bills in their hands and laughed. What could they do with them? Eat them? Wear them? What was the use of this peculiar paper?

The white man supplied the answer with a breath-taking swiftness ... The Indians had money? Hurrah! Now for the slaughter! Every conceivable commodity was offered for quick sale. Suddenly the Indian understood ... He became at once the crafty trader ... as shrewd as any Cape Cod Yankee. [Fort Vermilion 2008:73-75]

HALF-BREED SCRIP

As David Laird was preparing for his duties with the treaty party during the winter of 1898-99, he was also considering how the government should handle the northern Half-breed claims. On 7 January 1899, he recommended that the treaty commissioners be given powers similar to those of the Half-breed Commission of 1885, empowered by the Dominion Lands Act of 1883, which built on precedents in the 1879 Act (sec. 81e) (memorandum by Laird, 7 Jan. 1899, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848, file 75236-1). On 3 February 1899, he issued a circular letter, advising Half-breeds that they would receive scrip for land in the same way as had the Half-breeds of Manitoba and Saskatchewan (LAC, RG 18, v. 1435, no. 76, pt. 1).

The difficulty was that this legislation allowed scrip – a certificate normally entitling the bearer to receive land – to be granted only to Half-breeds and their children born before 15 July 1870, an arbitrary date based on the date that Rupert's Land had been acquired by Canada. Therefore only people aged twenty-nine or older would have been eligible to apply for scrip in 1899 (see also J.A.J. McKenna to Clifford Sifton, 17 April 1899, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848; Métis Association of Alberta et al. 1981:ch. 4). McKenna was impatient with this restriction, pointing out: "It is ... clear that whatever rights the halfbreeds have, they have in virtue of their Indian blood [not because of the transfer of land from the HBC]. Indian and halfbreed rights differ in degree, but they are obviously coexistent. Halfbreed rights must exist until the Indian title is extinguished, and they should properly be extinguished at the same time" (McKenna to Sifton, 17 April 1899, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848).

Frank Oliver, member of Parliament and *Edmonton Bulletin* editor, spoke in the House of Commons on 15 May 1899, encouraging the government to allow scrip to be paid to all "the half-breeds living at the time of the issue of the scrip" (*EB*, "Rebellion Claims and Half-breed Scrip," 25 May 1899:3). Government correspondence shows that the commissioners would also have the discretion to include Half-breeds within treaty (McKenna to Sifton, 17 April 1899, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848). By early May, the matter of applicability was just being finalized. The minister of the interior recommended the Half-breed claims be settled by an independent commission acting under David Laird's direction. Its terms provided:

That every Halfbreed occupier of land in the said territory be confirmed in possession to the extent of one hundred and sixty acres.

That scrip – redeemable in land – to the extent of Two hundred and forty dollars, or at the option of the grantee, scrip entitling the grantee to two hundred and forty acres of land of the class open to homestead entry be granted to each Halfbreed found to be permanently residing in the said territory at the time of the Indian Treaty and not to have previously received scrip in extinguishment of his claim. [Memorandum to Gov. Gen. in Canada from Min. of the Interior, 29 April 1899, LAC, RG 2, v. 3329, f. 1999-2002, 3-10 May 1899]

These recommendations were confirmed by Order-in-Council 918, signed 6 May 1899 (LAC, RG 2, v. 778, 2000C, v. 526).³⁹ The Dominion Lands Act was amended on 11 August 1899 to provide for "grant lands in satisfaction of claims of half-breeds arising out of the extinguishment of the



PHOTO 8.2 The Half-breed scrip commissioners followed in the wake of the treaty party. Here, they are taking applications at Lesser Slave Settlement. *From left to right:* Mr. Prudhomme, Major Walker, Mr. Coté, and Mr. Mair. | Glenbow Archives, NA-949-18

Indian title” (S.C. 1899 [62-63 Vict.], c. 16, s. 4). Two commissioners were named: James Walker, a retired NWMP officer living in Calgary who had commanded the police at the Treaty No. 6 negotiations at Fort Carlton in 1876, and Joseph A. Coté, an employee of the Department of the Interior. J.F. Prudhomme and Charles Mair were the secretaries (Mair 1908:26-27; *EB*, “Half-breed Scrip,” 1 June 1899:2).

The Half-breed Commission could undertake its work only after treaty had been concluded at each location. Commissioner David Laird explained the parallel treaty and scrip processes to the assembled people at Lesser Slave Lake Settlement. After outlining the provisions of the treaty, he continued:

Commissioners Walker and Coté are here for the half-breeds, who later on, if treaty is made with you, will take down the names of half-breeds and their children, and find out if they are entitled to scrip. The reason the Government does this is because the half-breeds have Indian blood in their veins, and have claims on that account. The Government does not make treaty with them, as they live as white men do, so it gives them scrip to settle their claim at once and forever. Half-breeds living like Indians have the chance to take the treaty instead, if they wish to do so. They have their choice, but only after the treaty is signed. If there is no treaty, scrip cannot be given. After the treaty is signed, the Commissioners will take up half-breed claims. [Mair 1908:58-59]

Laird explained further that scrip would be issued to Half-breeds for land valued up to \$240. In his judgment, “the half-breeds of Athabasca are being more liberally dealt with than in any other part of Canada” (62).

Ironically, the system that the government had intended to use to redeem the scrip was intended “to protect half breeds as much as possible from scrip speculators” (*EB*, “Negotiable Scrip,” Supplement, 20 July 1899). But the Half-breeds did not meekly acquiesce in the arrangements made for them by the government. At Lesser Slave Lake, most Half-breeds were unwilling to accept land scrip and insisted on being paid with money scrip, which was payable to the bearer and could be “readily turned into money” (Mair 1908:68).⁴⁰ Recent inquiry has sought to unravel the reasons behind these decisions, mostly considering the regulations governing the different types of scrip, especially the difficulties in redeeming land scrip (e.g., Tough and McGregor 2007; Métis Association of Alberta et al. 1981; Breynat 1948:218). It could be used to locate land only in the name of the grantee, and land had to be chosen from lands already surveyed and open for homesteading, far from the northern communities.⁴¹ After the land was located, it took at least a year to realize its value. As Ens has noted, Métis who wanted to farm had other ways to get land. Most simply, those who already occupied land could be confirmed in their possession of up to 160 acres. Money scrip, on the other hand, was considered personal property, not real property or real estate. Being transferable, it enjoyed fewer restrictions on its use and was more desirable to speculators (Métis Association of Alberta et al. 1981:96, 103-104; Ens 1999-2000:232-249; *EB*, “Half-breed Scrip,” 27 July 1900:2).⁴²

It is perplexing, given professed government disapproval of widespread public scrip buying and concern for the long-term well-being of Métis people, that federal officials did not find some way either to make land

scrip easily redeemable for locations where people were already living (rather than requiring it to be exchanged for land already opened for homesteading) or to pay cash directly instead of issuing negotiable scrip.⁴³ Frank Oliver rightly claimed: “In regard to the scrip buyers who follow the commission let it be understood that it is these men and the money which they pay for the scrip, that alone makes it valuable in the eye of the half breed. If the half breed cannot turn the scrip into money, he does not want the scrip” (*EB*, “Athabasca Scrip,” 24 July 1899:2). The commissioners should have anticipated these problems, which were hardly new. They had not brought sufficient funds with them to pay cash directly in 1899, but they could have arranged to make payments later in the winter or the following summer, or perhaps proposed a combination of negotiable scrip for adults with later cash payments for dependent children, thereby providing the Half-breeds with the full value of their settlement. Métis have taken a darker view of federal policy: that money scrip “was expressly designed to facilitate speculation” (Métis Association of Alberta et al. 1981:90, 92), aiding the transfer of capital from Métis persons to Euro-Canadian entrepreneurs.

Eventually, the commissioners agreed to issue money scrip in addition to land scrip, and they began the laborious work of taking declarations from applicants and checking the records of previous scrip issues. Charles Mair (1908:69) was surprised by “the never-ending stream of applicants.” In all, 1,843 scrips were issued in 1899, with only 48 for land (145).

Mair also noted the presence of men from Winnipeg and Edmonton, “well supplied with cash,” who purchased the scrip “at a great reduction, of course, from face value” (1908:68; see also Leonard et al. 1981:77-79). Charles Alloway of Winnipeg accompanied the Half-breed Commission, and Richard Secord of Edmonton bought scrip at several locations, as did other local purchasers. According to the *Bulletin*, “at scrip time money flowed like water down a spout” (*EB*, “Lesser Slave Lake,” 11 Sept. 1899:3). Most commentators agree with Fumoleau (1975:75) that “the decision cost the Metis dearly” and that “scrip buyers made an easy fortune.” The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that the first scrip had been sold on 24 June 1899, for \$75 at Lesser Slave Lake (*EB*, “With the Commissioners: The Landing to Slave Lake,” 6 July 1899:2). Prices paid for scrip ranged from \$130 at Athabasca Landing to \$70 or even \$50, the amount paid at Fort Vermilion and Fort Chipewyan (*EB*, “Scrip Commission,” 25 Sept. 1899:2; diary of Sgt. Anderson, GA, Anderson fonds, M19, file 9, transcripts, 1956; Breynat 1948:218). Father Breynat reported that at Fort Chipewyan scrip



PHOTO 8.3 The Merchants Bank of Canada in Winnipeg, Manitoba (c. 1908), was the base of operations for Charles V. Alloway, one of the scrip buyers in 1899. | Archives of Manitoba, N13922



PHOTO 8.4 Caricature of C.V. Alloway, 1909. | Hay Stead caricature | Archives of Manitoba, N22964

might sell for “much less when there was a present of a bottle of rum or of whisky” (1948:218, my translation). Yet the Métis were not simple victims; many used the opportunity to buy things they needed: “The money realized from the sale of the scrip was in most cases put to good use. Cattle, wagons, mowers, farm implements generally, clothing and provisions were purchased in large quantities” (*EB*, “The North and Its Inhabitants,” 11 Sept. 1899:4).



PHOTO 8.5 Father Gabriel Breynat attended the Treaty No. 8 negotiations in 1899 at Fort Chipewyan. In later years he sought to force the government to live up to its obligations under the treaty. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B9531

THE HALF-BREED COMMISSION AT FORT CHIPEWYAN

Charles Mair (1908:ch. 8) was enchanted by Fort Chipewyan's colourful history, but he had nothing to say about the work there of the Half-breed Commission. Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962:3), in contrast, remembered

“a long discussion” before scrip was issued. The party arrived on Saturday, 5 August. Scrip applications were taken, and scrip was distributed from Monday to Thursday, 7-10 August (HBCA, H.39/a/60:111-112). The commissioners used the printed form originally prepared for Half-breeds who were North-West Territories residents on 15 July 1870, simply replacing that date with “13 July 1899,” an eligibility date based on the signing of treaty at Fort Chipewyan. Each applicant had to provide personal information: address, birthplace, birth date, parents’ names, places of residence, occupation, name of spouse, children living and deceased and their dates of birth and birthplaces, and whether the applicant had applied previously for a homestead or scrip or received annuities.

At Fort Chipewyan, as elsewhere, most applicants (approximately ninety) wanted money scrip (LAC, RG 15). However, about ten members of several different families applied for land scrip. Typically, one or two individuals applied for land scrip, while the remaining members of the family applied for money scrip. Families with large numbers of dependent children stood to gain considerable cash from scrip. For instance, a couple with four children applying for scrip at \$240 should have received \$1,440, though the family would realize only about 30 percent of this amount, or \$432, after discounting by scrip buyers.

A few people entered into treaty then changed their minds when the Half-breed Commission arrived.⁴⁴ For example, David Tourangeau, married to Suzanne Tutsinnae, a Chipewyan woman, entered into treaty on 14 July at Fort Chipewyan, along with their son Leon. They returned their annuity money to David Laird and applied for money scrip on 8 August (LAC, RG 15, v. 1369). Perhaps they were lured by the prospect of a windfall, because Tourangeau listed his occupation as “boatman,” not a well-paid occupation. William Lepiné, who was working as a pilot on the Hislop and Nagle river steamer, took treaty in 1899 as a member of the Chipewyan band at Smith’s Landing. In 1900, he applied to Commissioner Macrae for money scrip for himself and his five children. He explained: “Commissioners told me last year to take treaty for one year & if I did not like it to change this year. I desire to refund the money & change.” It must have been former commissioner McKenna who annotated his application: “No such statement was made either by Mr. Ross or myself.” However, Macrae approved his application and discharged him and his children from treaty (LAC, RG 15, v. 1356).

Some women applied for scrip because they were married to Half-breeds or White men. For instance, in 1899 Philomene Cooper (née Kisikopimoteo or Sakiskanip) applied at Fort Chipewyan for scrip for herself and her

daughter. She was married to Bathurst Francis Cooper, a non-Aboriginal man (LAC, RG 15, v. 1342). While her daughter was eligible for scrip because of her mixed parentage, Philomene had no known European ancestry and, technically, might not have been eligible (McCormack n.d.). Presumably, it was convenient to qualify her because, under the Indian Act, she could have been enfranchised because of her marriage to a non-status man. Similarly, Victorine Mandeville declared that both her parents were Chipewyan Indians, yet she applied for scrip (LAC, RG 15, vol. 1357).

The scrip applications are particularly interesting for the labels they elicited from people about ethno-cultural status. People identified themselves and their parents as Chipewyan Indian, Cree Indian, Half-breed, Whiteman, or Scotchman. Applications were made in Chipewyan, Cree, French, or English, and the witnesses used as many languages, not always the same ones as the applicants. No information about interpreters was provided.

Men listed the following occupations: trader, clerk, engineer and pilot, steersman, boatman, fisherman, labourer, employee, trapper, and hunter. Mostly, they were listed singly, though some men listed two occupations.⁴⁵ Sometimes they specified that they were employed by the Hudson's Bay Company.

For a woman, the question about occupation was normally answered by stating that she was the "wife of" a named man. While almost every adult woman was married (in comparison with the large number of widows on the treaty pay lists), a few applications came from single women. Sophie Tourangeau and Anne Mercredi, both Sisters of Charity (Grey Nuns), applied for money scrip. One unusual applicant, Caroline Thompson, applied for land scrip. She identified herself as a "servant," having worked for both Pierre Mercredi and Colin Fraser after she left the Holy Angels Convent in 1897 at the age of seventeen.⁴⁶ She made her application in French, which she would have learned in the convent (LAC, RG 15, v. 1369).

Gerhard Ens (1999-2000) has argued that there were Métis in the Treaty No. 8 communities who either did not apply for scrip or whose applications were rejected because they or their parents had already received Half-breed scrip elsewhere. It is impossible to substantiate this claim for Fort Chipewyan, but the scrip applications I examined suggest that most were approved.

Virtually all of the approximately one hundred scrips issued at Fort Chipewyan in 1899 were purchased immediately. Sergeant Anderson reported: "HB Co and C Fraser buying scrip at \$70 each – Alloway also buying some" (8 Aug. 1899, diary of Sgt. Anderson, GA, Anderson fonds,

M19/f.5). The scrip records list the agents, or present owners, of the scrips. The majority seem to have ended up in the hands of the Merchant's Bank of Canada in Winnipeg, with another sizable number owned by the Imperial Bank of Canada in Edmonton. A few were held by the Bank of Ottawa. Scrips were also held by individuals: Clement and Clement, Barristers (Brandon); Mulock & Roberts, Barristers (Winnipeg); J.P.J. Jephson (Calgary); John Grerar (Melita, Manitoba?); Ross Brothers (Edmonton); McDougall and Secord (Edmonton). Caroline Thompson apparently managed to hold onto her land scrip, later listed in her married name, Caroline Arnott (LAC, RG 15, v. 1369, 1529).

THE TREATY AND HALF-BREED COMMISSION OF 1900

Little attention has been paid to the events of treaty and scrip in 1900, when a joint Treaty and Half-breed Commission completed the work begun in 1899. This commission paid annuities, added new individuals to the bands established in 1899, took formal adhesions from Indian bands at communities not visited the previous year, and accepted additional applications for scrip. No problems were expected in conducting this business. Indian Commissioner David Laird did not "anticipate even the slightest hesitation on the part of those tribes to accept the treaty as they have had the word of the surrounding tribes to tell them that the white men of the government have treated them well and there was no fraud in the treaty" (*EB*, "Northern Treaty," 16 March 1900:3). A single commissioner, James Ansdell Macrae, was appointed (Canada 1966:20-21; *EB*, "Athabasca Treaty," 5 March 1900:3). One wonders at the choice, for Macrae was an Ottawa-based inspector of Indian agencies with no northern experience (Leonard and Whalen 1998:x). Moreover, a letter he wrote in 1898 to J.A.J. McKenna, arguing against annuities in Treaty No. 8, indicated a contemptuous attitude toward Indians, though one probably common at the time. Macrae believed that they would not benefit from such payments, for an Indian's "intelligence and providence being so limited that he not only depends unduly upon the small annuity, but squanders in advance of receipt that which he unduly depends upon" (Macrae to McKenna, 8 Dec. 1898, LAC, RG 10, v. 3848). Accompanying Macrae on the treaty party were Sergeant Anderson, who had been second-in-command to Inspector Snyder in 1899, and a detail of NWMP officers. James O'Donnell, an experienced northern river man, looked after transport arrangements.⁴⁷ Dr. Oliver Cromwell Edwards accompanied the party

as its medical officer (Leonard and Whalen 1998). Dr. Edwards' personal diary is an important primary source about this treaty trip.

Commissioner Macrae travelled as far north as Fort Resolution, where Chipewyans, Yellowknives, Dogribs, and Slaves from Hay River entered into Treaty No. 8. He provided for two small reserves for Crees at Lesser Slave Lake and took fifteen or sixteen applications for land in severalty for Indians who were engaged in agriculture "to some extent," although in his report he remarked that it was wiser for these northern peoples to persist in hunting and fishing than to adopt agriculture (Canada 1966:21).

It was clear that the Aboriginal people had debated their previous decisions about treaty and scrip over the winter. Macrae reported: "At nearly all the important points the chiefs and more intelligent men who were present at the making of treaty last year, asked for extended explanations of its terms, in order that those of their bands who had failed to grasp its true meaning might be enlightened, and that those who were coming into treaty for the first time might fully understand what they were doing" (Canada 1966:21). In particular, they asked about game regulations. Bison hunting had been formally prohibited since 1894, when the federal government passed the Unorganized Territories Game Preservation Act (S.C. 1894 [57-58 Vict.], c. 31), and by the end of the century NWMP officers had begun to enforce the legislation locally. Hunters who traded at Fort Smith and Fort Chipewyan were particularly affected. In 1900, Chipewyans at Fort Resolution nearly refused treaty because they feared that other animals might be closed to them in the future (e.g., Jean-Marie Beaulieu in Paulette 1973:320-323). Also, a closed season for moose was evidently enforced on the Athabasca River in the vicinity of Fort Chipewyan in 1900. According to John S. Edmonton, a trader who had spent three years there, "the treaty commissioners on their northern trip last year [1899] told the Indians that as the close season for moose had expired the natives could now kill as many of these animals as they required or could secure. Acting on this the Indians hunted the moose, but just previous to Mr. Edmonton's departure, the police visited the camps, confiscated the meat and hides, and arrested the Indians who had hunted this game. This the Indians ... consider as a great hardship" (*EB*, "From the North," 23 July 1900:6). Macrae himself acted as a magistrate and dealt with "nineteen cases of crime and misdemeanour" (Canada 1966:20).

After he returned to Ottawa, Macrae wrote to J.D. McLean, the secretary of the Department of Indian Affairs, with questions about land in severalty that must have arisen on his trip. He inquired about the amount of land available, since it differed from the amount of land per person for reserves,

and asked how the distribution of farm implements and other benefits under the treaty would be handled for those families not on reserves (J.A. Macrae, Office of the Inspector of Indian Agencies and Res's, to McLean, 27 Nov. 1900, LAC, RG 10, v. 3564, file 82, pt. 21). McLean's response makes it clear that the treaty provision for land in severalty had not been well thought out: "The paragraphs in the Treaty as to the rights of those taking land in severalty to receive implements, stock ... are not quite as clear as they might have been ... There may be some difficulty about bulls, as these are furnished to the Chiefs alone; but the Treaty should not be interpreted too strictly in that regard" (Indian Commissioner to Sec. DIA, 5 Dec. 1900, RG 10, v. 3564, file 82, pt. 21).

Commissioner Macrae had to explain the processes of treaty and scrip to Aboriginal people who had not been visited in 1899. However, despite Laird's earlier assurances, the later testimony of people who were there and the oral traditions about treaty indicate that there was no meeting of minds about what each side was promising (e.g., Pierre Friezie, in Paulette 1973:304-305, Johnny Jean-Marie Beaulieu, 322-325). In an interesting bit of detail, Macrae evidently required each chief to kiss the Bible and put them "under oath" to tell the truth (Johnny Jean-Marie Beaulieu, 322-325).

A remarkably frank passage in Dr. Edwards' diary, written while he was at Fort Resolution, questions Commissioner Macrae's honesty: "He is not truthful – will lie when it so suits him – has carried himself with an inflated pomposity in all this trip that, to one built after my style, is simply nauseous. He is the great and only Commissioner; the men up here last year, Mr. Laird, Mr. Ross and MacKenna, were babes in swaddling clothes compared to the sample sent up this year" (Leonard and Whalen 1998:97).⁴⁸ While one must be careful not to accept this passage at face value, it raises a question about what promises Macrae might have made in order to persuade Indians to enter treaty. In later years, they regularly challenged restrictions on hunting and trapping on the grounds that they were violations of the terms of the treaty.

Commissioner Macrae was evidently more hard-nosed about his discretionary powers than the commissioners of 1899 had been. At Fort Resolution, he refused to allow into treaty people who were identified by the resident priest as Half-breed. One of these men was Pierre Beaulieu, whom the Chipewyans wanted for their chief (Smith 1982:113-114).

Macrae also took new scrip applications. For example, at Fort Chipewyan on 6 July, Roderick Ross Flett applied for scrip to Macrae, who approved his application. For reasons unknown, Flett applied for scrip again

at Lac La Biche, on 23 August 1900, to a separate North-West Halfbreed Claims Commission, headed by J.A.J. McKenna and James Walker (LAC, RG 15, v. 1347).⁴⁹ A few of the new applications were from people who had entered into treaty in 1899. It is not clear whether Macrae simply accommodated their requests or decided for them. Some notations on scrip applications read “disallowed in treaty,” suggesting the latter. Baptiste Lepiné at Fort Chipewyan was one man who changed his mind. Commissioner Macrae wrote “Discharged from Treaty” on his application and indicated that Lepiné had refunded the annuities he had received (LAC, RG 15, v. 1356). Dr. Edwards believed that these new applicants were motivated by avarice: “Quite a number of Indians took treaty last year at Lesser Slave Lake and, improvident as their nature is, no sooner did they see their neighbor immens[e]ly rich and purchasing everything they saw, then they came back to the Commissioner and desired to be taken off the treaty list and placed on the scrip list” (Leonard and Whalen 1998:52-53). The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that “competition in the buying of scrip was keen in all places, owing to the fact that local traders had made large advances to the claimants” (*EB*, “Returned from Lac La Biche,” 5 Oct. 1900:3).

THE 1900 COMMISSION AT FORT CHIPEWYAN

A snapshot of the commission at Fort Chipewyan in 1900 can be pieced together from a variety of sources, especially Dr. Edwards’ diary. The treaty party arrived at Fort Chipewyan on the *Grahame* on Thursday, 5 July at 8:30 a.m., and was greeted by the customary fusillade (Leonard and Whalen 1998:79). Reverend Warwick, Fathers Le Doussal and Chambreuil, George Drever of the Hudson’s Bay Company, Colin Fraser, and others immediately boarded the *Grahame* for a visit. Edwards wrote, “Then along the shore from the Chipewyan came the Indians, Chipewyan and Crees, headed by their chiefs and carrying their flags, and the pay tent having by this time been put up, each and every Indian shook hands with us as he came up. This is the universal custom in this north country – a solemn proceeding which has always to be gone through with whenever we land” (79-80). “Sergeant Anderson began paying the Indians as soon as he got here,” amounting to about \$3,000. It was not until Saturday (7 July) that “The Indians had a Council with the commissioner” (HBCA, B.39/a/60:188, 189; *EB* “Fort Chipewyan,” 13 Aug. 1900:6; Leonard and Whalen 1998:80).

The commission did not leave Fort Chipewyan until Tuesday, 11 July.³⁰ It was a leisurely pause in their travel. Dr. Edwards commented about their pleasant campsite (Leonard and Whalen 1998:80, 82). They would have attended Sunday church services and been entertained by local residents, and they paid the obligatory visit to Holy Angels Convent. Commissioner Macrae gave the sister superior \$10 “to be divided between the boy and girl who worked the best during the year,” and Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962:4) remembered that he and Hermine Plat Côté were the two lucky children. On its return from Fort Resolution, the treaty party revisited the convent. The children at the mission “gave us a very nice entertainment – choruses – dialogues – drills and music” (Leonard and Whalen 1998:101).

In his report, Commissioner Macrae singled out Dr. Edwards for special notice: “Dr. Edwards ... gave advice and dispensed medicine to a large number of Indians and vaccinated many. Great appreciation of his services was manifested” (Canada 1966:21). Thanks to Dr. Edwards’ diary, we know that he vaccinated for smallpox and treated people for a variety of ailments at every stop. Presumably, these included “indigestion,” which he opined was the “trouble of troubles among Indians” (Leonard and Whalen 1998:66). He probably pulled teeth, a common service rendered by general practitioners. He came prepared to re-operate on Mr. Wilson at Fort Vermilion, using chloroform, with Commissioner Macrae serving as anaesthesiologist. The surgery was required because, he claimed, Dr. West had not done the amputation properly the previous year (Leonard and Whalen 1998:68). He tried to treat Antoine Begueur, a deckhand on the *Grahame*, for pneumonia, with “delicate preparations of Nyeth’s Beef Juice and Boveril which I had supplied him,” but the young man died (76-78; see also HBCA, B.39/a/60:188). It was probably a complication of influenza; the Hudson’s Bay Company journal noted that “The crew of the Steamer Grahame have la Grippe, and a bad one, Most of the crew laid up with it” (HBCA, B.39/a/60:188).

Dr. Edwards was “kept busy every day” at Fort Chipewyan, seeing sick people, both on the trip north and on their return. He praised the efforts of the Grey Nuns: “I visited the R.C. convent and met the good sisters of the Grey order and rendered what medical aid I could to their sick and also contributed some of my drug supplies to them to give to the Indians. I think highly of the work of these devoted ladies” (Leonard and Whalen 1998:80, 101). Nevertheless, “a doctor is much needed here” (101). He advised the sisters and the Anglican minister about drugs they would find useful and was responsible for providing them to Fort Chipewyan and elsewhere by that fall. In September, Warwick informed the bishop that

**TABLE 8.2 Medicines ordered for Holy Angels Convent,
Fort Chipewyan, 1902**

3 Bot.	Iron Pills
2 "	Cough medicine [sic], Brown mixture Dysmenorrhoea pills (To provoke the menses)
Pills	To produce sleep
"	For palpitation of the heart
"	Colomel & Soda
Tablets	Socium Salicylate
"	Phenacetinum
"	Potassium nitrate
"	Santonin worm lozenges
2 doz.	Strengthening plasters
3 doz.	Mustard "
	Carbolic ointment
	Tar
	Ointment for hemorrhoids
1000	Enteritis J. J. P.D. & Co*

* This last item was added in Dr. Edwards' hand to the list sent by the convent.

Source: LAC, RG 10, v. 6354.

he had just received "a case of medicine from the Ind. Dept. through Mr. Burman. I think the same amount has been sent to each mission in the Treaty district of Athabasca" (Warwick to Bishop Young, 27 Sept. 1900, PAA, A.281/309).

Dr. Edwards accompanied the treaty party again in 1901. That winter, from his new station at the Blood Reserve, he wrote to Indian Commissioner David Laird: "I have received the attached list of medicines [see Table 8.2] required for the convent of the Holy Angels Chipewyan. When I was there last summer I advised the Lady Superior to forward to me a list of what might be required for the medical treatment of the Indians. Would you please place it in the hands of the medical officer who may visit Chipewyan at Treaty time" (Edwards to Laird, 6 July 1902, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354). This request ended up in the hands of H.A. Conroy, the inspector for Treaty No. 8 (Sec. DIA to Conroy, 27 Feb. 1902, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354).

THE AFTERMATH OF TREATY AND SCRIP

The dual processes of treaty and scrip were legal devices to legitimize Canada's assumption of full sovereignty in the Athabasca and Peace regions.

In the solemn language of the treaty, Indians who entered into treaty acknowledged that they relinquished their claims to the land. Application for scrip by Half-breeds was an equivalent, if implicit, recognition that they, too, had given up their special interest in the land. The *Edmonton Bulletin* noted that the northern lands “are now open to the enterprise of civilization, under the full legal administration of the government of Canada” (*EB*, “Athabasca Treaty,” 31 Aug. 1899:2).

After 1899 and 1900, the government proceeded under the assumption that it had acquired the clear cession and control of the land in the treaty region. Where federal agents had once walked cautiously, they were now empowered to introduce the full weight of the Canadian legal and political systems. This took some time to accomplish. For nearly two more decades, Aboriginal peoples retained effective control of the land and its resources, and they remained locally autonomous. Few full-time government agents were present to monitor local behaviour and enforce Canadian law. Yet, as the institutions of statehood were extended into the Treaty No. 8 region and then fully developed, the North eventually became fully integrated into the political economy of Canada. The foundation had been provided for the elaboration of the institutional frameworks that were at the heart of Canadian statehood, and for new legislative and regulatory structures that would accommodate a fully capitalist mode of production in the North. Later in the twentieth century, the northern economy and the fur trade mode of production were transformed by these developments.

The decision by Aboriginal people to enter into treaty or take scrip had several important consequences for their subsequent history. Before the treaty, the collective community of Aboriginal people had enjoyed equal rights in and access to the land and its resources. They were free to determine their own identities, statuses, and cultural traditions. Treaty erected social, economic, and political barriers. By signing treaty or taking scrip, people were partitioned into two groups: one that had signed away all rights to the land and any special benefits (received scrip), and one that had retained some rights to resources on unoccupied Crown lands and on lands to be reserved for their use (taken treaty). The two groups henceforth enjoyed differential access to the land and resources that provided the basic means of production for *all* the peoples of the region. The second group, known as status or treaty Indians, was further subdivided into a “Cree band” and a “Chipewyan band.” These legal bands constructed under the provisions of the Indian Act were unrelated to the socio-political entities of the local bands.

The new bands and their members were governed by the Indian Act, although the Act seems not to have been discussed at the time of the treaty. While the Act provided registered Indians with some benefits, it was also restrictive. The treaty specified that each band was legally entitled to a land base. However, once reserves were established, they were managed under the provisions of the Indian Act.⁵¹ While the creation of two bands at Fort Chipewyan reflected, albeit imperfectly, the social and ethnic situation of 1899, the band form was a rigid structure that caused later difficulties for many Chipewyans and Crees, especially following the creation of Wood Buffalo Park in the 1920s. Moreover, the provisions of the Indian Act were developed to accommodate Indians to the south who were making a transition to an agrarian economy and, the government hoped, to a new way of life on a restricted land base. The Act had not been written with the needs and circumstances of northern peoples in mind.

The newly imposed legal divisions and structures had long-term implications for personal and communal identities. Although local people demonstrated remarkable ingenuity in overcoming restrictions they considered inappropriate, the “Chipewyan,” “Cree,” and “Métis” identities were inevitably reinforced and channelled by the new regime. Government attention to Aboriginal peoples focused on status Indians, not Métis, despite a persistent commonality of interests, especially in this northern country where many southern Indian issues were only marginally relevant. Issues of concern to all Aboriginal people were typically phrased as “Indian” issues and negotiated, at least in public, in arenas involving Indians, not Métis, as formal participants. For instance, treaty Indians typically discussed their grievances with the Indian agent or other government representative during the annual summer “treaty days,” when annuity payments were made. Métis had no parallel forum, and at times they might have found it expedient to address their concerns through their Indian relatives and neighbours. One consequence is that Métis issues have been obscured historically, and Métis have appeared to outsiders as being passive while Indians seemingly are active participants (see also McCormack 1998b:189-191).

The Chipewyans and Crees of Fort Chipewyan and other Treaty No. 8 Indians argued about the terms and meaning of the treaty throughout the twentieth century. They maintained that they were never asked to sell or cede the land. According to Felix Gibot (1979:159), “The white man never bought the land. If he had bought it, there would have been large sums of money involved in order for him to claim the land.” Justice W.G.

Morrow stated in his judgment regarding the caveat lodged by chiefs in the Northwest Territories that there was a reasonable case to be made “that the two treaties [8 and 11] are not effective instruments to terminate their aboriginal rights” (Morrow 1973:44) because of the overwhelming evidence he heard that the Indians believed that they had been given assurances “in perpetuity” “that their traditional use of the lands was not affected” by their signing of the treaty (45), despite the unequivocal wording of the document itself. Most importantly, they believed they had retained the freedom to determine their own livelihood, normally phrased as the right to hunt, fish, and trap as freely as if they had never signed the treaty. However, such promises were never added to the formal text of the treaty.

In 1899, Keenooshayo at Lesser Slave Lake had tried to ensure that what they agreed to verbally was also what was included in the written treaty: “We want a written treaty, one copy to be given to us, so we shall know what we sign for” (Mair 1908:62). After the treaty was finalized, copies printed on parchment were sent to each chief for his band (McCormack 1988:36, 38). That text was identical to the printed document. What the Indians believed were other promises did not appear in the text of the treaty but only in the commissioners’ report as assurances they made to the Indians. They also became part of the Indians’ oral traditions about the treaty (see also Breynat 1948:208; Fumoleau 1975:79). Given this immense gulf in understanding, it is not surprising that Indians viewed the imposition of game regulations as a violation of treaty promises.

It is tempting to speculate that most government officials responsible for the Treaty No. 8 region were themselves unfamiliar with the terms of the treaty. Even those familiar with it – mostly Department of Indian Affairs officials – either did not take it seriously as a legal, enforceable document or were relatively powerless vis-à-vis other government agents. With some exceptions, there is little evidence that anyone in government thought about how its “spirit and intent” clashed with federal and, after 1905, provincial laws. A much later Indian Affairs file includes a request by the Fort Chipewyan Indian agent for a copy of the treaty, so evidently he did not even possess a copy himself. Rather than the treaties with Indians, it was the Indian Act – that one-size-fits-all document – that underlay federal Indian policies. And the Indian Act was fashioned to accommodate issues in southern Canada, where most Indians were segregated on reserves and whose special needs rarely were considered in broader contexts.

The Half-breeds who had applied for scrip were restricted in other ways. Once it had given them scrip, the government assumed it had no further obligations toward them. Henceforth, they were legally considered

ordinary Canadian citizens with no special entitlements. While they had the potential to acquire a land base, few did. Interestingly, some Métis families believed that they, like treaty Indians, would receive yearly annuities (Sawchuk 1979:97-98; McCormack 1977-78). It is probably safe to say that northern Half-breeds did not anticipate the difficulties they would experience once the government began dividing up the land base and imposing restrictions on access and use.

Before treaty was signed, McKenna had tried to argue that less compensation should be provided than in the south, on the grounds that northern lands were less valuable than land in the south and that future development would not “seriously disrupt” Indian economies, because “mineral exploitation would not be as land-extensive as the expanding agricultural frontier had been” (Ray et al. 2000:162-163). While the government eventually decided to maintain the same levels of compensation as for Treaty No. 6, it was not because it disagreed with his argument. McKenna might have been unaware of the problems Indians already experienced with White miners and prospectors.

The problems posed by newcomers and their land-based activities intensified in the years after World War I, when increased homesteading combined with improved transportation into northern Alberta resulted in serious and intense competition for the resource base by White trappers. To some extent, it paralleled the situation described by Hugh Brody (1981:230-237) in northeastern British Columbia, where new exploration-related roads opened up the Interior for access to sports hunters who competed with Aboriginal hunters for game. Extraction of other resources did not become a major issue in northeastern Alberta until after World War II, when it was linked to new government development policies in the Northwest Territories.

9

The Government Foot in the Door

All now hinges on the manner in which promises made are fulfilled in the future.

– *Edmonton Bulletin*, “*The North and Its Inhabitants*,”
11 Sept. 1898

In 1899, when the treaty commissioners envisioned the future of the Aboriginal occupants of the Treaty No. 8 region, they predicted that “the great majority of the Indians will continue to hunt and fish for a livelihood ... It does not appear likely that the conditions of the country on either side of the Athabasca and Slave Rivers or about Athabasca Lake will be so changed as to affect hunting or trapping, and it is safe to say that so long as the fur-bearing animals remain, the great bulk of the Indians will continue to hunt and trap” (Canada 1966:7).¹ A century later, we wonder at their naïveté. Yet as Merry (2000:7) has pointed out, “From a distance, the changes appear predictable and inevitable, but close at hand the process was an uncertain groping toward a dimly perceived future.”

Edmonton commentators foresaw an “indefinite and almost unlimited expansion in the future” into “the far north regions from which such a large part of our trade comes” (*Edmonton Bulletin [EB]*, “As to Northern Mails,” 7 Jan. 1901:2). With minor adjustments to accommodate the circumstances north of the fertile belt, it was the same vision that had inspired Canadian expansion into the West thirty years earlier. Homestead

settlement in the promising Peace River country and industrial development of promising geological formations, combined with the ongoing fur trade, would expand the market for Edmonton-based merchants. To make it happen, the *Edmonton Bulletin* called for improved transportation and communication infrastructure: "Now that treaty has been made with the Indians of the district, the half breed claims satisfied, and policy authority definitely assumed, the time has come for the fixing of responsibility for the opening and keeping up of trails" (*EB*, "Peace River Portage," 21 Dec. 1900:4) and a proper postal service (*EB*, "As to Northern Mails," 7 Jan. 1901:2).

Northern Aboriginal people were not expected to be the pioneers in northern development any more than they had been in the south. In principle, the treaty process of 1899 had fitted northern Chipewyans, Crees, and other signatories into the same subordinated, administered template as those in the parkland and on the Prairies. An implacable and unpalatable racism tainted Canada's northern initiatives for much of the twentieth century.²

Indians were not considered to be suited for farming (e.g., Carter 1990), and by the terms of Treaty No. 8 they were expected eventually to live on reserves, not take up homesteads.³ Those would be allocated to the European immigrants attracted by Canada's re-energized 1896 immigration policy. Nor were Indians considered to possess the same initiative and vigour as Europeans. Indians were never expected to own the industries that would "develop" the North. At best, they might become a somewhat inadequate labour force.⁴ Moreover, if northern Indians were unable to engage in farming because of the hunting and trapping that supported them (in whole or in part), it was not clear to government administrators how they would ever advance culturally.⁵

Sentiments about Half-breeds or Métis and their place in the new North emerge less clearly in the literature. Half-breeds had been vilified since Confederation as troublemakers, and as the last chapter showed, this accusation was levelled at them in connection with Treaty No. 8. Their mixed biological ancestry was sometimes seen as degrading them (the Indian side) and at other times as elevating them (the White side). Those who were closely associated with the bush-based sectors of the mixed economy were conceptually linked to Indians and Indian-ness. This association intensified over time, as Métis were displaced from the northern labour force and marginalized economically, a process that had begun before the end of the century and intensified in the post-treaty era.

In the twentieth century, the social and personal identities of Indians and Métis evolved in response to the new legal statuses of Chipewyan and Cree Indians, reified by the two legal bands at Fort Chipewyan and their membership lists. Métis status became contingent in part upon the unfolding Indian statuses and a new distinction of “insider” or local resident versus “outsider.” James Clifford (1988:5) has described this situation on a broader scale: “Something similar occurs whenever marginal peoples come into a historical or ethnographic space that has been defined by the Western imagination. ‘Entering the modern world,’ their distinct histories quickly vanish. Swept up in a destiny dominated by the capitalist West and by various technologically advanced socialisms, these suddenly ‘backward’ peoples no longer invent local futures. What is different about them remains tied to traditional pasts, inherited structures that either resist or yield to the new but cannot produce it.”

A corollary is that northern Aboriginal peoples were peripheral to the writing of histories of Canada, northern Canada, and Alberta for most of the twentieth century. These histories celebrated the Euro-Canadian presence and tended to be constructed as heroic epics: “The central figure was the pioneer, energetic and self-reliant, dissatisfied with conditions at home, enthralled by the lure of free land, buoyed by the vision of a new and hopeful tomorrow ... He helped tame a frontier. His kind helped build the Canadian West” (Archer 1970:x, xiii; see also Furniss 1997-98; Moyles and Owram 1988:ch. 2). The tragic flaw in this classic narrative of western Canadian history was that homesteaders could succeed only because the government had removed Aboriginal users from the land to make cheap, even free, land available to newcomers. Immigrant triumphs built directly on the subjugation and dispossession of Indians and Métis.⁶

The signing of treaty and the issuance of scrip did not themselves open the floodgates to settlement or industry. What they did was change the rules of power, about who could compel the behaviour of others, even though Canadian sovereignty was still more theoretical than real. As the *Edmonton Bulletin* observed about the agricultural and mining potential of the region, “All are now open to the enterprise of civilization, under the full legal administration of the government of Canada” (*EB*, “Athabasca Treaty,” 31 Aug. 1899:2).

Treaty No. 8 became the charter for the twentieth-century relationship between one group of northern Aboriginal people and the Canadian nation-state. Both written and oral traditions about the treaty can be usefully thought of as origin myths or founding stories. From the point of view of state officials, the treaty empowered Canada to expand its array

of institutions northward, accompanied by the expansion of its dominant capitalist economy, which would draw the local region more directly into the Canadian political economy. To Chipewyans and Crees, the treaty was their primary source of rights and obligations vis-à-vis Canada. They expected state officials, whom they considered representatives of the Queen, to protect their interests. These mismatched readings of the treaty-as-charter persisted for the next hundred years. The conflicts they embody are meaningful today, as issues once disputed by band chiefs with Indian agents and other government officials are now sent to negotiating tables and courtrooms for resolution.

Yet nowhere have these differing understandings of the meaning of Treaty No. 8 been accorded equal weight, not even in today's judicial proceedings. To challenge the government's interpretation is simultaneously to challenge a century of government policies and initiatives not only in the Fort Chipewyan region but also in other regions where similar treaties were made.

After 1899, government correspondence, memoranda, and reports – a formal, written textual record – moved front and centre as the documentary evidence that presented and interpreted the putative facts of history at Fort Chipewyan and elsewhere in the North, as well as representing Aboriginal thoughts, motives, and behaviours. The partial realities they depict supported the Canadian nation-building narrative as it explained how the North became part of a developing Canada, rather than remaining a primitive, fur trade-dominated world on the margin of modernity.⁷ Morris Zaslow (1990:20), widely considered the dean of northern Canadian history, has reiterated this position, arguing that “Canadians accepted without question that developing the natural wealth of the country was the surest most proper path to national greatness.” Northern Aboriginal objections and resistance to government initiatives, which can easily be found in government documents, were typically dismissed in the past as Indian obstinacy or ignorance, just as they were in the south. Zaslow himself has complained about Aboriginal lack of appreciation for the history of northern development, claiming that their “unrelenting propaganda often makes it difficult for many Canadians to appreciate the vital role that resources have played in the making of this country” and in the alleviation of primitive “Stone Age” conditions of Aboriginal peoples (20). He was apparently unaware that even a century earlier the Aboriginal peoples of the Treaty No. 8 region had been described as surprisingly modern, “on the high road to comfort” (Mair 1908:55, see also ch. 4), not the primitive peoples of the Canadian imagination.

The first two decades of the twentieth century were in some ways a lull before the great changes that followed World War I. Fort Chipewyan was still insulated by the lack of easy transport around the Grand Rapids of the Athabasca River from the settlement and economic initiatives encroaching upon Lesser Slave Lake and the Peace River. The local economy continued to be strong and prosperous.

But Canada was already operating in the Northwest on multiple levels. Canada was everywhere building the “nation” part of the state, getting down to the serious business of transforming a highly diverse citizenry – culturally, ethnically, racially, and linguistically – into Canadians.⁸ Canada took concrete measures to implement and extend its sovereignty in the North. It already had a small, permanent federal presence there in the North-West Mounted Police, and geologists and surveyors had started to build a knowledge base out of the “trackless wilderness” (see also Pratt 1992:30-33). In the early 1900s, federal and provincial government officials introduced new measures of control related to wildlife and fire prevention. Thus began a multi-faceted regulatory regime that broadened and intensified throughout the twentieth century. It consisted of legislation, regulations, and formal and informal policies, often revealed in correspondence as decisions about how to handle specific problems. As a dimension of the state’s political process, northern regulatory structures were sometimes less perceptible than more familiar institutions of the state, yet they were crucial in implementing the “legitimate coercive powers of the state” (Doern 1974:8, 11) in the North. Over time, theoretical sovereignty became real sovereignty (see also Merry 2000:8), and an edifice of internal colonization was constructed.⁹

Canada was joined in 1905 by the newly minted provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, whose lands were carved out of the North-West Territories. They began their own trajectories as mini-states, with restricted jurisdictions that did not include control over the land base or status Indians, although Alberta contested Ottawa in its attempts to control some aspects of Indian economies. Each province initiated its own northern expansion strategy. The governing structures of the North-West Territories, on the other hand, were reduced for a time. The peoples and lands of the Fort Chipewyan region were thereafter affected by the policies of both Alberta and the North-West Territories. Saskatchewan’s northern initiatives were of minor importance to most people of Fort Chipewyan in the years before World War I.

Aboriginal people in Fort Chipewyan did not placidly accept the developments of the post-treaty decades. In 1897, Alexandre Laviolette

wrote that “we like to be free in this Country” (3 Feb. 1897, Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 18, v. 128), and Bishop Grouard (1905:181) pointed out more than once that “our Indians love their liberty and their independence.” They did not welcome the rule of Canadian law when it conflicted with their own traditions, and they did not consent to many of the restrictions that were imposed in the twentieth century.¹⁰ Yet as systems of regulations expand, “a gradual process of transformation takes place in which the force of the state is brought to bear on ordinary people to induce them to go along. The subjects of surveillance and correction learn to comply or to conceal their behavior from the law. Thus, law plays a critical cultural role in defining meanings and relationships, but it does so in the context of state power and violence” (Merry 2000:17). Local residents resorted to a variety of strategies and tactics to evade features of the new federal and provincial regimes that were unwelcome and sometimes threatened their well-being.¹¹ Much resistance was couched in the very language of the law that now governed them, especially the language of the treaty.

In times past, the complexities of Aboriginal reactions to the expansion of the state largely escaped notice by outside observers.¹² Early anthropological studies focused on putative pre- or early-contact cultures of Indians and mostly ignored Métis experiences.¹³ They describe the “contact-traditional era,” a period extending through the first half of the twentieth century, as one in which “social and technological change ... was generally incremental and untraumatic” (Helm, Rogers, and Smith 1981:149). Indians such as the Chipewyans and Crees at Fort Chipewyan are described as “adapting” to situations such as the one that confronted them in the twentieth century by “adopting” new material culture, behaviours, and values. At the same time, William Koolage (1975) has pointed to an interpretive canon that concluded that Chipewyans (and, by extension, other northern Indians) mostly failed to adapt well, losing Aboriginal (read: pre-contact) cultural traits that were either not replaced (“deculturation”) or replaced by dysfunctional behaviours (“disorganization” or “disintegration”).¹⁴ More recently, hunters-gatherers have sometimes been portrayed as subaltern or subordinate peoples analogous to peasants or emerging proletarians in their relationship to the states that contain them.

None of these approaches works for Fort Chipewyan. Chipewyans and Crees did not fit neatly into traditional measures of cultural classification or culture change. They were not strictly hunters and gatherers, although, for most, bush production remained an important part of their livelihood. They were not culturally isolated people. They intermarried and interacted

with one another and with Europeans in a complex regional social community that had produced a multitude of mixed-ancestry peoples, including so-called Half-breeds or Métis people. They all had complex histories, both before and after contact with Europeans and with one another (see also Lee 1993; Myers 1988; Bétéille 1998; Headland and Reid 1989; Pelto and Pelto 1975). The anthropologist's model of tribal cultural homogeneity – “the crystalline patterns of a whole culture” (Rosaldo 1989:209) – may never have applied to any of them, Aboriginal or European.

From this viewpoint, Aboriginal cultures are not simply objects that might either persist or change (adapt): “By contrast with cultural systems seen as entities handing down traditions from the past, these same cultures are now viewed as socially constructed, reinvented anew in each generation by its own members, or in more radical deconstructions, by powerful outsiders such as colonial states, missionaries, or even ethnographers” (Lee 1993:2). It was easier when we could use trait lists to define Aboriginal cultures and speak simply of culture change and acculturation, still the stuff of popular discourse. Yet this newer analytical approach highlights the persistent agency of Aboriginal peoples (and all other peoples) in shaping their own identities, ways of life, and ways of thought, and in engaging with others.

As people produced and reproduced their cultures, they engaged in what Pratt (1992:6) has termed “transculturation,” a process of cultural appropriation in which they drew upon “materials transmitted to them by a dominant or metropolitan culture,” which they used as new ingredients, along with other, more familiar materials. Both sets of materials constituted the building blocks of material and ideational culture. Aboriginal people transformed the alien and reformed the familiar in accord with their own interests, agendas, and needs (Pratt 1992:6; Kehoe 1994; Escobar 1992:399).¹⁵ Thus, they expressed core values in new ways, providing “a new vehicle for old meanings” (Fienup-Riordan 1990:121).¹⁶ For example, James Taylor Carson (1999:3) looked for “the straight bright path” in his analysis of Choctaw history, rather than focusing on “a story of progress and decline, of resistance and survival, or of persistence and change.” Similarly, Morris Foster (1991) traced innovative ways in which Comanches demonstrated their Comanche identity to one another over time. To Ann Fienup-Riordan (1990:xviii), as Yup'ik redefined their cultural practices, especially building on points of apparent congruence between their former values and ways of doing things and newly introduced ones, “they have successfully transformed what was brought to transform them.” Such approaches are

instructive in helping us look for innovative behaviours by the peoples of Fort Chipewyan, as they spent the twentieth century striving to maintain a viable economy and the autonomy they believed they were promised by the treaty, a critical core value.

Their own creative practices constituted “practical criticism” of what the state sought to impose (see also Corrigan and Sayer 1985:9). Their very discourse about what happened to them was (and is) simultaneously a process of resistance and the construction of personal and cultural identities. Conversely, Aboriginal initiatives forced the agents of the Canadian and provincial states to address issues of local concern – though not always with happy results for Aboriginal peoples – and at times even constrained state policy options (see also Scott 1985:36). In short, though the Aboriginal people of Fort Chipewyan became colonized once the agents of the federal and provincial states – government officials – moved directly into their homeland and imposed systems of economic and political control over both the people and the land, that does not mean that Aboriginal occupants were passive or completely at their mercy. Instead, they played compelling roles in the process of state expansion into the North.

THE CREATION OF THE CANADIAN NATION

Since Confederation, Canadians have spoken of the French and English (or British) “founding nations.”¹⁷ These political and ethnic fictions were invoked in Canada (as elsewhere) to build something called a nation, the social complement of the state, by shaping “groups of people who shared a common culture, language, and heritage and somehow belonged together (or thought they did)” (Robbins 2002:107). Engineering this kind of national identity required dismantling ethnic and cultural distinctiveness.

Canadian nation building paralleled initiatives ongoing in Britain and France at the same time, in which distinctive regional identities were conflated into British and French subjects, which were new ethnic and political identities (McCormack 2003; Corrigan and Sayer 1985; Colley 1992; Weber 1997[1976]; Robbins 2002).¹⁸ To Ernest Gellner (1983), what has been called nationalism enhanced the political legitimacy of the state by aligning individual identities and state loyalties.

It was a relatively simple task for Canada to gloss its English, Irish, and Scottish immigrants as English or British, Canada’s “pivotal charter group” (Houston and Smyth 1990:6, 8), even if they might actually have had a

strong Scottish element quite different from the Englishness of the home country. Yet at the end of the nineteenth century and throughout the twentieth century, Canada was faced with the daunting task of assimilating waves of non-British immigrants into the Canadian citizenry. Considered a necessary evil in the early course of nation building, immigrants were initially marginalized and had to be either assimilated to a new Canadian identity (e.g., Galicians, now Ukrainian Canadians) or heavily controlled and limited (e.g., Chinese Canadians, not admitted to full citizenship until 1947 and even then viewed with suspicion). The ideal of Canadian social policy was “anglo-conformity”: “the obligation of new arrivals to conform to the values and institutions of Canadian society – which were already fixed” (Palmer 1998:127).

Canada’s primary mechanism to assimilate newcomers was a state-controlled, centralized system of education, which removed educational control from the local community and placed it in the hands of the state officials who defined the curriculum and the modes of instruction. Government-appointed school inspectors “acted as guardians of the state’s ideological hegemony” (Mahé 2001:31). Schools were primary sites for the production of new identities and cultural values, a form of moral regulation and cultural revolution that Corrigan and Sayer consider essential to state formation (1985:2, 4; Gellner 1983:29-30; Palmer 1998:128). The North-West Mounted Police and, later, the Alberta Provincial Police backed up the education system by enforcing the School Attendance Act, in addition to the broader role they played in educating immigrants about the requirements of the Canadian legal system (Lin 2007:ch. 4; Macleod 1976:ch. 11).

State control over education was also a key element in Canada’s assimilation policy for Indians. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported edifying instances of schooling reshaping Indian children. For example, at St. Bernard’s Mission in Lesser Slave Lake, a “public examination” of the students led one man to comment that “he could hardly believe them to be the same children now able to read, write and speak English and French” (*EB*, “From the Far North,” 28 June 1897:3). In 1913, Henry Bury assumed that all northern Indian children would be taught to be good citizens: “The question of paramount importance in respect to the education of the Indian boy or girl, is whether they are to be moulded into a prototype of the present day product of civilization and take their place with every other Canadian citizen, or whether they are to be equipped with merely sufficient education to fear God, honor the King, and respect the laws of the country” (Report, 7 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042).

Celebrations of Empire Day and the Queen's birthday (Victoria Day) on or about 24 May, Dominion Day (now Canada Day) on 1 July, Thanksgiving in October, and Christmas on 25 December were visual demonstrations of Canadian-ness, especially in the North (e.g., *EB*, "St. Matthews – Athabasca Landing," 2 Nov. 1900:3). The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported these displays as well. For instance, "The first sports held at Fort Chipewyan were on 2nd of July, 1900, the amount of \$68.50 being raised for prizes" (*EB*, "Fort Chipewyan," 13 Aug. 1900:6). Men, women, and children competed in races and other games, and in the evening baseball and football were played.¹⁹ The Christmas Eve celebration at Athabasca Landing in the same year involved not only religious songs but also Mr. Von Hammerstein singing "The Maple Leaf" (*EB*, "St. Matthew's – Athabasca Landing," 24 Jan. 1901:4). At the Roman Catholic mission at Lesser Slave Lake, boys, "dressed neatly in sailor jackets ... with a Union Jack flag apiece," sang a chorus and march "entitled Patriotism" (*EB*, "Lesser Slave Lake," 1 Feb. 1901:5). The death of Queen Victoria in 1901 was a special occasion for praising the British Empire and its accomplishments, including "the expansion of human liberty" (*EB*, "God Save the Queen," 24 Jan. 1901:2).

A more sombre demonstration of immigrant and Aboriginal assimilation was willingness to serve "their" country in wartime.²⁰ An important moral message of the literature surrounding Canadian participation in World War I is that the collective sacrifices made by Canada's soldiers and their families generated national unity.²¹ The Great War was the time when the country came together as a nation.

THE CREATION OF ALBERTA AND ITS NORTHERN INITIATIVES

Everything that Canada did in the Fort Chipewyan and Treaty No. 8 region after 1905 was conditioned by the creation of the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan, a consequence of western population increase and the growth of responsible government in the North-West Territories in the 1890s (e.g., Palmer 1990:129-134; Friesen 1984:239-241; Brown and Cook 1976:76-79; Thomas and Thomas 1979). Creating new provinces in the North-West Territories was controversial, even among westerners. Public opinion was divided, largely out of fear that provincial status would result in direct taxation (McCormack and Drever 1999:25-28; Thomas 1978:256). Although at the turn of the century neither Prime Minister Wilfrid Laurier nor Minister of the Interior Clifford Sifton believed that the territories

were ready for provincial status, in 1904, facing another election, Laurier promised that he would create provinces if he were returned to power. He made good on his promise on 21 February 1905, introducing the Alberta Act and the Saskatchewan Act (Thomas and Thomas 1979:275). Alberta's boundaries extended from the US border in the south to the sixtieth parallel in the north, and from the fourth meridian on the east (Saskatchewan's new western border) to British Columbia, thereby giving much of the Peace River country to Alberta, as well as most of the remainder of the Athabasca District (277, 341-342). To the great disappointment of its citizens, Alberta was not given power over its public or Crown lands. These were retained by the federal government, which provided annual financial compensation to the province (273, 278-280, 291-292, 346). The Alberta Act, 1905, came into force 1 September 1905. Edmonton, the "gateway to the north," became the capital (385).

The new Province of Alberta immediately began building its own system of state institutions.²² Premier Alexander Rutherford (1905-10) and his government colleagues, all of whom had significant business interests, sought to generate provincial wealth by expanding Alberta's population and entrepreneurial opportunities, which in turn would provide tax revenues (Klassen 1999:71-72). "Whether moved by a desire to get ahead or by the profit motive, Albertans favoured a world of economic growth," and they supported cooperation between government and business to make it happen (163).²³ While the province did not control public lands directly, the important provincial Department of Agriculture was responsible for agriculture, ranching, and wildlife. The department also had the mandate for "immigration and colonization," which dovetailed with ongoing federal initiatives, and for public health (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1907).²⁴ Agriculture was the first provincial department to extend its administration into what today is deemed the "provincial north," although for at least the first decades of the twentieth century the northern portion of the province was simply considered undeveloped, not a special region requiring special policies (see also Weller 1984; section on "Colonization" in Henry J. Bury's report on the territory covered by Treaty No. 8 and the District north of Fort Simpson, 7 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042).

Wildlife Regulation

The branch of the department concerned with wildlife or game was organized in July 1906 (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1913a:141) and administered for many years by Benjamin Lawton, the chief game and fire guardian.



PHOTO 9.1 On Dominion Day, 1 July 1905, Alberta became a province and a new actor in the life of Fort Chipewyan. | City of Edmonton Archives, EA-10-791



PHOTO 9.2 The new Alberta Parliament building was built to house the new provincial government and its civil servants. | Provincial Archives of Alberta, B.3392

Its enforcement activities were concentrated in the south but reached into the North. The federal Game Ordinance remained in force until 15 March 1907, when Alberta passed its own Game Act (Statutes of Alberta 1907 (7 Edward VII), c. 14; Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1908:98, 102). Lawton solicited a network of local volunteer game and fire guardians, a cheap if somewhat ineffective approach to enforcement. By 1908, William Biggs was listed as a game guardian based at Fort McMurray, joined in 1910 by Peter Loutit from Fort Chipewyan (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1910a:110, 1911:144). Both men were provincial game guardians for many years. Royal North-West Mounted Police were also game guardians for the province.²⁵

Most of the department's annual reports discussed the revenue value to the province of its wildlife resources, especially from the sale of licences: "The people of this province should benefit by the protection of game not only indirectly but directly by insisting on a revenue from those sources which are at present being monopolized by a very small percentage of the population. In this connection it is suggested that a license be imposed on every person who hunts, traps, or deals in the flesh or skins of any game or fur-bearing animal whether protected or not" (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1908:101). In 1908, Lawton proposed adding to these licences "a very small tax on every skin or pelt of game or fur-producing animals" (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1910a:105). Market hunting of big game and birds produced income both for the province, which issued the licences, and for the hunters who sold the meat. Game was also financially important because it provided food "for trappers, prospectors, and settlers in the north"²⁶ (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1910b:97): "North of the 55th parallel ... the residents are permitted to take game at any season of the year for the use of themselves and family [except protected species]. This privilege is also extended to parties travelling through that portion of the province ... in the event of their requiring the flesh of big game or game birds for the purpose of food" (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1913a:141; from Game Act, s. 28, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A).

From the first, provincial officials planned to regulate hunting by status Indians. Lawton did not envision any exemptions related to Indian treaties and expected all Indians to buy resident hunting licences (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1908:100). "The question is often asked are the Indians subject to the provisions of the Game Act?" In his opinion they were, because "an Indian is a person, consequently the Act is intended to apply to all persons meaning Indians as well as white men and halfbreeds." Lawton quoted from Treaty No. 7 to argue that Indians who had signed treaties had agreed

to abide by “such regulations as may from time to time be made” (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1910a:109-110).²⁷

On the one hand, this position seems to have been supported by the Department of Indian Affairs. Section 66 of the 1906 Indian Act (R.S.C. 1906, c. 81), which had been amended as a result of the creation of provinces the previous year, allowed the superintendent general of Indian affairs to make status Indians subject to provincial game laws at his discretion.²⁸ Yet jurisdiction was a grey area between Alberta and the Dominion. From the first, it was unclear whether Indians had to comply with provincial regulations.

Section 28 of the Alberta Game Act prohibited the killing of beaver and several other species. Nevertheless, in the summers of 1907 and 1909 Inspector Conroy told Treaty No. 8 Indians that they could kill beaver if they needed them for food but not sell the pelts. Conroy reasoned that the Game Act had not yet been made applicable to Indians in that treaty area by means of section 66.²⁹ The provincial attorney general, on the other hand, took the position that the Game Act was binding upon all persons in the province, including treaty Indians, who were expected to observe the closed season on beaver and acquire hunting permits. Neither the Department of Indian Affairs nor the attorney general’s office was willing at this time to address the constitutional issue involved (LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2; Kaiser and Aubrey 2006:106-107).

In 1910, Justice Stuart reasoned in *Rex v. Stoney Joe*, “I see no reason why such a law should not be binding upon Indians resident within the Province just the same as upon ordinary citizens, unless it conflicted with federal legislation” (LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A). The federal government sidestepped the implications of his judgment by still refusing to invoke section 66. The assistant deputy of Indian affairs informed the provincial minister of agriculture in 1911 that “owing to the very stringent provisions of the Game Laws of the province ... it would not be advisable to have them applied to the Indians by proclamation [s. 66] for the present” (5 April 1911, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A). In 1912, he wrote Benjamin Lawton: “I regret to find that the Legislature of your Province is not acting very generously towards the Indians who were the original owners of their country, and who in the past made their living by hunting and fishing, and in the North do so still to a large extent. The Game Act as it now stands places the Indians in no better position than that of farmers residing on their land” (Ass. Dept. and Sec. to Lawton, Chief Game Guardian, 6 May 1912, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A).

Indian Affairs officials used section 66 to lever concessions for Indians from the province.³⁰ For nearly a decade, provincial officials tried to persuade Department of Indian Affairs officials of their goodwill toward Indians and the accommodations they were willing to make. Lawton replied to Indian Affairs that despite the complaints his department heard “continually” from settlers about Indians hunting off-reserve, “It is our intention in the future as in the past to treat all Indians very liberally in every respect ... It is not my intention to treat any person, not even an Indian, unfairly in the future” (Lawton to Sec., 18 May 1912, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A).³¹ Eventually, the province agreed to refund licence fees to any treaty Indian whose agent furnished a certificate attesting to his identity as “a treaty Indian on the Reserve under which the Agent exercises control” and then to issue them licences free of charge (letter from Benj. Lawton, Chief Game Guardian, to Dep. Supt. Gen., 4 March 1919; LAC, RG 10, v. 6731).

In 1917, Duncan Campbell Scott weighed in on the side of the provinces: “the Treaty rights of the Indians in the matter of hunting, trapping, and fishing are held by the provincial governments to be subject to such game laws as may from time to time be passed” (Scott, memorandum to Hon. Dr. Roche, Supt. Gen. of Indian Affairs, 31 Jan. 1917, LAC, RG 10, v. 6731; see also Titley 1986:52; Tough 1992b:65-66). This position shocked George Bradbury, a member of Parliament from Manitoba, who wrote to William Roche, superintendent general of Indian affairs:

I have always been under the impression that the rights of the Indian to hunt was thoroughly protected under his Treaty. If this is not so it is certainly a very serious matter for the Indians living in outlying districts where the land is not fit for farming purposes ... I think the Indian ought to be protected even if they go to the Supreme Court against Provincial Governments. They ought not to be allowed to step in and take away the hunting right from the Indian ... If the Indians are not allowed to hunt for a living they will certainly become a charge upon the Government of Canada. [Bradbury to Roche, 6 Feb. 1917, LAC, RG 10, v. 6731]

W. Stuart Edwards of the Department of Justice advised Scott that “it is for your Department to determine, having regard to the terms of the Indian treaties or otherwise, to what extent the Indians should be immune from the Provincial Game laws and then that immunity should be provided by legislation” (Edwards to Dep. Supt. Gen. [Scott], 5 Oct. 1917, LAC, RG

10, v. 6731). Edwards recommended that Indian Affairs enter into negotiations with the provinces.

The compromise proposed in 1919 by Alberta's chief game guardian, and accepted by federal officials, was to exempt Treaty No. 8 Indians from the Alberta Game Act but make it applicable to Indians in other treaty areas (Benj. Lawton to Dep. Supt. Gen., 4 March 1919, LAC, RG 10, v. 6731).³² Public notice was finally given that by virtue of section 66 of the Indian Act, "on and after the first day of July, 1919, the laws respecting the protection of game in force in the Provinces of Manitoba, Alberta, and Saskatchewan shall apply respectively to all Indians and Indian Reserves within the said Provinces, except to the Indians and reserve situated in those portions of the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan comprised within what is known as Treaty No. 8" (10 March 1919, LAC, RG 10, v. 6731).

Railway Construction

Attracting immigrants and tracking the consequent growth of the provincial population was another responsibility of the Department of Agriculture. Alberta's population doubled between 1906 and 1911. In 1912 and 1913, the province received nearly 13 percent of all the immigrants to Canada (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1913b:232; 1914:205). The Department of Agriculture relied on federal efforts to attract immigrants but also developed its own advertising strategies. In 1906-07, a select committee of the Senate investigated the natural resources of northern Canada to provide the public with information that would attract settlers to northern Alberta (Chambers 1907, 1910). Even the Athabasca Landing Board of Trade published its own optimistic brochure in 1910, promoting the region for homesteading and investment. As lands available for homesteads began to fill up in the Edmonton region, Alberta was eager to open more remote regions to homestead settlement and resource exploitation.

Railroads were the traditional vehicle for such development in Canada, and a northern rail line was an old idea. In 1881, the Saskatchewan and Peace River Railway Company had considered building a railroad from Edmonton to Dunvegan, with a branch to Lake Athabasca.³³ When the Calgary and Edmonton Railway Company was incorporated as a "colonization railway" – intended to open up a region not reached by the Canadian Pacific Railway – it was given the authority to extend the line to the Peace River. In 1895, there was a proposal to link Edmonton by rail to the Athabasca River (Christenson 1967:54, 66-67, 149-150). These



PHOTO 9.3 In 1910, when he was travelling north to survey Fort Smith and the border between Alberta and the Northwest Territories, Carl Engler photographed these settlers heading north to locate homesteads. | Library and Archives Canada, PA-018755

initiatives were all reported by the *Edmonton Bulletin*. It was not surprising that Chief Lavolette at Fort Chipewyan asked the government in 1899 “to have a railway built into the country, as the cost of goods which the Indians require would be thereby cheapened and the prosperity of the country enhanced” (Canada 1966:6).

However, northern railway construction was not practical until the population and economy had grown. Even then, it required government support. In 1909, Premier Rutherford saw the merit of investing public money in strategic business endeavours. His Liberal government assisted railway construction and railways by guaranteeing the interest on bonds issued by three northern railway companies to finance their projects (e.g., Zaslow 1971:212; Schneider 1989:7, 12; Boothe and Edwards 2003:37). These railways had direct and indirect impacts on the Fort Chipewyan economy and plural society after World War I.

The Edmonton, Dunvegan, and British Columbia Railway was constructed as far as the Athabasca River in 1913 and reached McLennan in 1915 and Grande Prairie in 1916. The Central Canada Railway was an offshoot line that reached Peace River Crossing in 1916 (Schneider 1989:pts. 1, 2).³⁴ These new lines opened the door to an influx of homesteaders, contributed

to the growth of an increasingly important internal market, and provided a transportation link between the North and markets beyond provincial borders (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1917:165; Annual report of Supt. McDonell, Appendix G in RNWMP 1915:139-140; Klassen 1999:ch. 3; Wood 2006).³⁵ They also offered an alternative route from Edmonton to the northern river system via Peace River. In 1917, 1,459 homesteads were filed in the Peace River country, 58 percent of the new homesteads in Alberta (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1918:148). This trend continued after the war's end, with homesteaders joined by returning soldiers taking advantage of special land grants (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1920:118). They were encouraged by government publications that promoted the Peace River country (Chambers 1916b; Kitto 1918).

The history of the Alberta and Great Waterways Railway reaches back to 1905, when James Kennedy Cornwall obtained a charter for the Athabasca Railway Company to build a railway connecting Edmonton to Fort McMurray and his new steamboat operation (Kelly 1972:5; Schneider 1989:67).³⁶ Premier Rutherford and his Liberal successors, Arthur Sifton (1910-17) and Charles Stewart (1917-21), believed that this railway would help develop the agricultural potential of the region, facilitate mineral and oil exploration and development, and benefit merchants in Edmonton.³⁷ It might also have been considered a way to maximize the economic potential of northern wildlife resources, by making it easier for outsiders to enter the region to trap and by helping to "modernize" the Indian trapping economy. An *Edmonton Bulletin* article in 1899 had suggested that a railway would free northern Indians from having to support themselves by hunting, allow them to behave like "White trappers," and produce more fur (*EB*, "Edmonton's Fur Trade," 11 Dec. 1899:3).

The line for this railway was originally surveyed in 1909-10 and resurveyed in the winter of 1913-14. It allowed builder J.D. McArthur to access useful sand deposits and timber berths north of Edmonton, and it began to attract homesteaders. The Alberta and Great Waterways Railway reached Lac La Biche in 1915.³⁸ The following year, an inviting overview of the Athabasca River region was published by the Department of the Interior (*Evening Journal* [Edmonton], "A. & G.W. Location to be Complete Before Spring," 29 Nov. 1909:1; Chambers 1916a; see also Kitto 1919). Wartime difficulties, the challenges of building through the boreal forest north of Lac La Biche, and the lack of significant sources of revenue further north delayed the completion of the railway until 1924.³⁹ The end of the line was at the new town of Waterways, six miles south of Fort McMurray (Schneider 1989; MacGregor 1974:117, 148; Kitto 1930:60).⁴⁰

THE FIRST FEDERAL REGULATORY STRUCTURES

Federal Agents

The North-West Mounted Police stationed in Fort Chipewyan and other northern detachments were the sole officials representing the Dominion government in northern Alberta immediately after treaty and enforced both federal and provincial laws. Alberta arranged for the Mounted Police to act as its provincial police force until the end of 1916, when the federal government cancelled its contract.⁴¹ The Alberta Provincial Police took over policing in the province until 1932, when the Royal Canadian Mounted Police, by then a national police force, once again became Alberta's provincial police force (Lin 2007; Moir 1992; RCMP 1995, 2004).⁴² Not only were many Alberta Provincial Police former RNWMP/RCMP officers, but the Mounted Police also continued to have a major presence in Alberta, focusing on internal security issues and administering federal statutes such as the Indian Act (Lin 2007).

The federal presence grew steadily under various arms of the Department of the Interior, one of which was the "semi-autonomous" Department of Indian Affairs. Spry and McCardle (1993:139) remarked on the conflict in having "the office responsible for administration of Indians ... closely attached to the offices responsible for disposition to non-aboriginals of the same common lands and resources which originally supported the aboriginal peoples." While southern Indians were displaced from their lands through the treaty and reserve system, northern Indians were not, at least not directly. Northern Aboriginal peoples experienced different forms of displacement. Northern lands continued to support their Aboriginal residents for most of the twentieth century, but in increasingly problematic ways. For the first half of the century, government agents in separate departments sought to accommodate traditional Aboriginal land use while at the same time facilitating competing land uses by non-Aboriginal newcomers. Except for the Department of Indian Affairs, all government agencies gave priority to economic activities that involved the exploitation of northern resources by outsiders. Even Indian Affairs had as its long-term agenda the eventual assimilation of northern Aboriginal peoples into a new and profitable Canadian north, a vision that was supported by testimony heard by a Select Committee of the Senate of Canada in the 1906-07 session (Chambers 1907). Support for "traditional" land-based economies was considered an interim measure that saved the government money in the form of welfare costs until the North was "developed" as "an agricultural



PHOTO 9.4 Indians arrived in early summer for treaty payments and discussions in 1914. | F. J. Alcock photo | Natural Resources Canada, Geological Survey of Canada, 28494

and industrial country” (7). Most government agents never envisioned hunting and trapping as part of the future of the North.⁴³

The first new federal government agent after treaty was H.A. Conroy, who in 1901 at the age of fifty was appointed the pay officer for Treaty No. 8 and in 1902 became the inspector for the Treaty No. 8 region (Richardson diary, 1902, LAC, MG 27; Secretary to Conroy, 27 Feb. 1902, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354; Civil Service 1912:325; Fumoleau 1975:106).⁴⁴ He was based in Ottawa, but until his death in 1922 he travelled north every summer to meet with Treaty No. 8 Indians and pay their annuities. These yearly meetings were the origin of the modern Treaty Days. Bishop Breynat thought highly of him: “He knows the Country and thoroughly understands the Indians ... I never heard a complaint uttered against him” (Breynat to Hon. F. Oliver, Min. of the Interior, 27 Dec. 1909, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042). From time to time, Conroy was instructed to visit the Mackenzie River District to assess the situation of the Aboriginal people there, who were not yet included in a treaty.⁴⁵

The federal presence became more prominent in 1911, the result of a trip made by Minister of the Interior Frank Oliver from Edmonton down the Athabasca and Mackenzie rivers in 1910.⁴⁶ In his own account, “Mr. Oliver



PHOTO 9.5 In 1910, surveyor Carl Engler photographed the treaty proceedings at Fort Smith. Annuities were paid by Minister of the Interior Frank Oliver. Note the treaty tent with its Canadian flag on the left; payments were made in the tent. | Library and Archives Canada, Dept. of Mines and Technical Surveys, PA-018768

thought that he was perhaps the first person to go through the north and look upon it as the future home of a great population” (*EB*, “Peace River Will Make Edmonton a City Fully as Large as Winnipeg,” 19 April 1911:1). Oliver was back in Edmonton in 1911, speaking out about the resources of the Mackenzie River basin and its promising development, especially as free homestead land in the Edmonton vicinity became exhausted (*EB*, 19 April 1911:1). He optimistically believed that agricultural production was possible as far north as Fort Good Hope. To stimulate and facilitate settlement, he announced that the Department of the Interior “was about to establish two Indian agencies, at Fort Smith and Fort Simpson respectively” (*EB*, “Railway into Peace River,” 17 April 1911:9). Each agency would establish a “northern experimental farm,” with its own farm instructor, livestock, and steam-driven sawmill.

The Indian agent at Fort Smith – the first resident non-Mounted Police agent – was forty-year-old Arthur John Bell, appointed by the Department of the Interior in 1911 as an all-purpose “Dominion Government Agent” at Fort Smith, just within the North-West Territories border (e.g., Bell to the Director of Forestry, 25 Feb. 1913, LAC, RG 85, v. 660; Civil Service 1912:330; Reddekopp 1998:42).⁴⁷ He was to develop a “Demonstration and

Experimental Farm," complete with sawmill, "to hold up to the northern Indians the manner of life lived by men in civilized communities" (cited in Parker and Tingley 1980:86; LAC, RG 10, v. 3944; Geo. Mulloy to R.H. Campbell, 11 May 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; Fumoleau 1975:139). Twenty-eight-year-old Robert Swaine Salmon, an immigrant from England, was hired to develop the farm; he was also Bell's clerk (DIA 1912:129; DIA 1913:129).⁴⁸ The newly created Fort Smith agency included the Treaty No. 8 bands of Fort Chipewyan, Fond du Lac, and the North-West Territories. Bell also directed northern fire protection activities for the Forestry Branch, supervised the measures afforded the northern bison, recorded mineral claims, and made meteorological observations ("Indian Agencies" in Bury's report, 7 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042; R.H. Campbell, Supt. Forestry Branch, to G.A. Mulloy, 30 March 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; *EB*, "Two Priests," 29 March 1915:6; Parker and Tingley 1980:86). Bell served nearly four years at Fort Smith, leaving in February 1915.⁴⁹

Bell's counterpart at the newly created Fort Simpson agency was Gerald Card, a former Anglican minister, appointed a decade before Treaty No. 11 was negotiated along the Mackenzie River.⁵⁰ E.J. Pearce, formerly a grain buyer in southern Alberta, was appointed head of the experimental farm. Card served at Fort Simpson from 1911 to 1913, when he left the government service.⁵¹ Sometime during the winter of 1914-15, apparently before Bell left the North, it was arranged that Card would replace Bell at Fort Smith. He was formally re-engaged on 1 May 1915 and probably travelled north with the first boats that left Athabasca Landing (LAC, RG 10, v. 7997; Civil Service 1917:426; Card 1939; Mackenzie 1993:38; Fumoleau 1975:139-140).⁵²

The duties of these men vis-à-vis their Indian charges were greatly reduced from what they would have been on a southern reserve, where Indian agents supervised farming or ranching activities by band members and exercised other administrative powers. In the Athabasca and Mackenzie regions, where farming was not contemplated as a serious enterprise for Indians and no reserves existed, it is not surprising that agents at Fort Smith and Fort Simpson had multiple responsibilities (see also H.J. Bury, memorandum to Asst. Deputy and Secretary, 5 Oct. 1916, LAC, RG 10, v. 7997; P. Mackenzie 1993:39). In 1920, on the eve of Treaty No. 11 and a North-West Territories development boom, Gerald Card was not only the Indian agent, but also the agent for the Canadian National Parks Branch, the mining recorder, the recorder of vital statistics, the coroner, the justice of the peace, and the issuer of marriage licences (excerpts relating to Indian



PHOTO 9.6 Dominion and Indian Agent Gerald Card was photographed in the middle of a wheat field in 1921, probably the government's experimental farm. | D. L. McKeand photo | Library and Archives Canada, Indian and Northern Affairs, 6009444312

Affairs from F.H. Kitto's report re Mackenzie District, 1920, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042; also Fumoleau 1975:139).

Northern Surveys

Anticipating settlement and mineral and oil sands exploration, in 1910 Dominion land surveyors began to survey northern townsites. Shortly after Treaty No. 8 was signed, Bishop Grouard foretold the important economic and ideological roles of land surveys. Before, while the rights of property holders had been respected, no one had had legal title to the land. After, the surveys and the maps they produced indicated "to everyone the extent of these rights and allowed a civil administration to guarantee them in perpetuity. Thus we leave the state of nature, society becomes organized, and this transformation is a prelude to many others" (Grouard 1902:254, my translation).

In 1910, Carl Engler surveyed the settlement of Smith's Landing (later Fort Fitzgerald; Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], Engler 1910).⁵³ This survey might have been instigated by a query from Corporal Mellor at

Smith's Landing, asking whether Fort Smith was in Alberta or the North-West Territories, a law enforcement issue (Mellor to the Officer Commanding, 1 Jan. 1909, and other correspondence, LAC, RG 18, v. 369, file 132).⁵⁴ A photo taken by Engler shows the survey mound locating the boundary between Alberta and the North-West Territories (LAC, Acc. TS4497, box 1428, PA 18782). The properties that Engler located were the first private properties assigned in the region other than those of the Hudson's Bay Company. This survey marked the beginning of individually owned resources.⁵⁵

In 1911, H.S. Day and a crew of eight men surveyed the "Settlement of Chipewyan" for the Dominion Lands Survey (PAA, Day 1911).⁵⁶ Removing the "Fort" from the name augured a different kind of settlement in the future, and from the specifics of his survey it seems Day believed that "Chipewyan" would grow considerably. Presumably, he built on the survey conducted in 1898 by George Bayne. Lots extended from what is now Fraser Bay, far to the east of Fort Chipewyan, to Dog Head on the west (see Table 9.1 and Map 9.1). Day identified residents of each lot by name, unless they were treaty Indians, perhaps not believing that Indians would be eligible for private lots.⁵⁷ He provided detail about the vegetation cover and a brief sketch of the economy. Before sending his field book to the Department of the Interior, he swore an affidavit (in Vancouver) attesting that he had "faithfully and correctly executed the survey shown." In 1912, another team under E.A. Neville "mounded" the settlement, completing the markers for lots by erecting stone markers and planting wooden and iron posts (PAA, Neville 1912).⁵⁸

In 1912, J.B. McFarlane surveyed townships 106-115. Fort Chipewyan itself is located in township 112 (Abstract of Reports by Surveyors 1912). Geologists for the Geological Survey of Canada also continued working in the region. In 1914, Charles Camsell led a geological party to explore the Taltson River north of Lake Athabasca, while A.G. Haultain mapped the shores of Lake Athabasca (Camsell 1966[1954]:220).

Prospectors had already begun staking mining claims in the Fond du Lac region by 1911. Serious interest in nickel and silver deposits occurred from 1914 to 1917, spearheaded by prospecting, staking, and drilling done by the Harold Victor Dardier expeditions, sponsored by Vickers Ltd., a British armament company.⁵⁹ In 1915, the Fond du Lac silver rush brought about 150 prospectors into the North, many travelling north by dog team in February. In the same year, Charles Camsell travelled to the east end of Lake Athabasca to assess the worth of their claims (LAC, RG 36; Neufeld 1984, 1985; *EB*, "Two Priests," 29 March 1915:6).

TABLE 9.1 Lots of the Settlement of Chipewyan, 1911

Lots 1-11	Unoccupied [east of the settlement]	Lot 24	H. Bertrand
Lot 12	Hudson's Bay Company	Lot 25	Vital Mercredi
Lot 13	Louis Tourangeau and Church of England	Lot 26	No occupant
Lot 14	Wm. Wylie*	Lot 27	F. Heron
Lot 15	Peter Loutit	Lot 28	Thomas Loutit
Lot 16	John Flett Sr.	Lot 29	Colin Fraser
Lot 17	Ed. Wylie	Lot 30	David Evans
Lot 18	Vacant house	Lot 31	Saunderson
Lot 19	Daniel Tourangeau and Treaty Indian	Lot 32	Mrs. Bird
Lot 20	Mrs. Wylie	Lot 33	Smith
Lot 21	I. Mercredi	Lot 34	Vacant house
Lot 22	Cooper's house	Lot 35	Baptiste Forcier and Treaty Indian
Lot 23	Victor Mercredi†	Lot 36	R.C. Mission
		Lots 37-42	Unoccupied [west of the settlement]

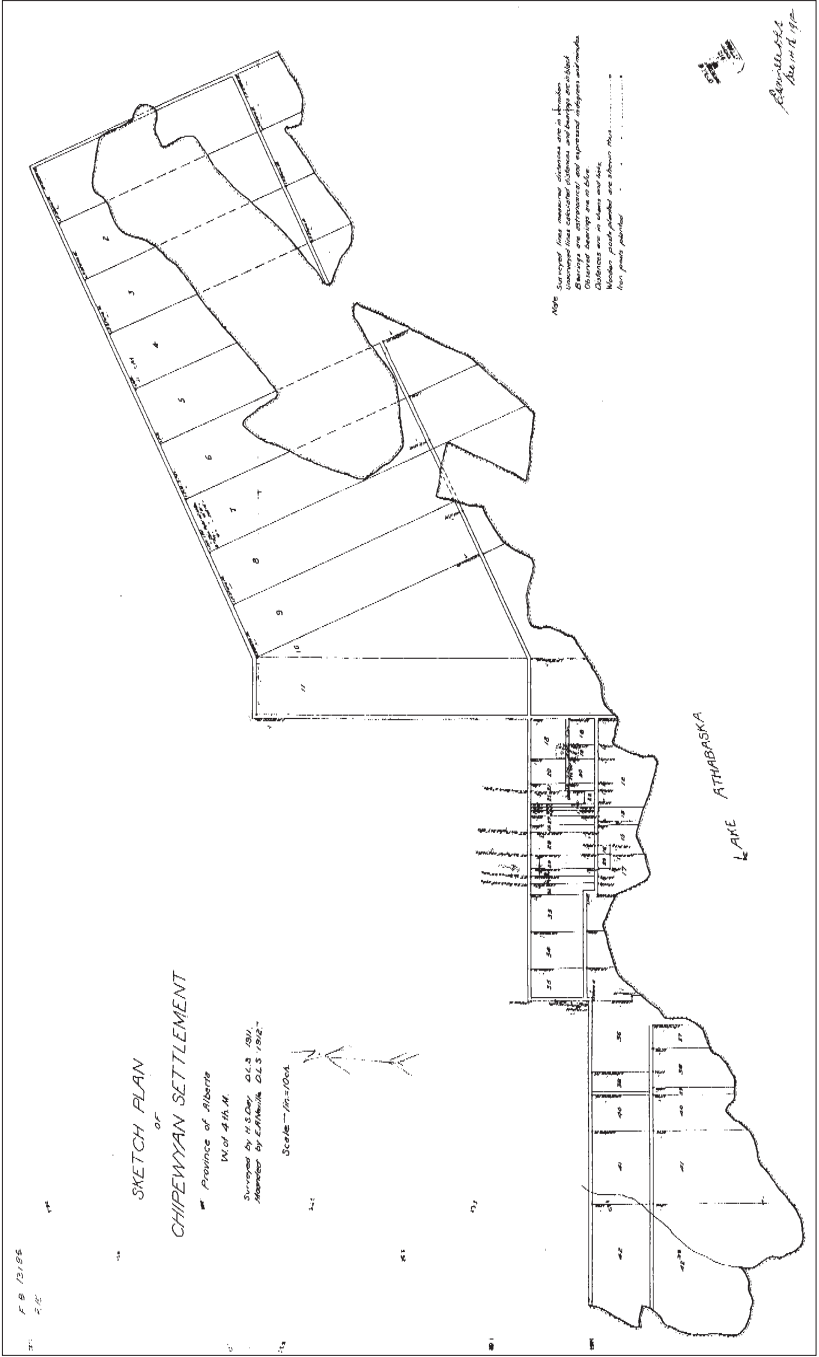
* Presumably, it was William Wylie to whom Bishop Lucas referred when he claimed possession of this lot: "this Lot was a small portion adjoined the [Anglican] Mission Lot which I had (in an evil moment) lent to an old man many years ago when the land question was not acute" (Jas. R. Lucas, Bishop of Mackenzie River, Chipewyan, to O. S. Finnie, Dir., NWT Territories, 23 March 1923, LAC RG 85, v. 578, file 419-14).

† In his memoir, Victor Mercredi (1962:18) wrote that he built a log house in August 1911, which would have been on this lot.

Source: PAA, Day 1911.

The early surveys were not restricted to lands ceded by treaty. Chief Surveyor Fawcett did a contentious survey in 1913 of the Mackenzie District trading posts (Thomas Harris, Indian Agent, Fort Simpson Agency, to Asst. Dep. and Secretary, DIA, 12 Feb. 1914, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042). Bishop Breynat asked that the land on which Indians had settled be respected: "A few Indians have erected, at different times, rather convenient houses from which it would be hard to eject them when the survey of these posts is made. There are no reserves, and there will not be any for a long time. Would it not be possible to reserve indefinitely for the use of these Indians the lands upon which they have squatted?" (in Fumoleau 1975:115).

Treaty with the Indians of the Mackenzie River would not be made until 1921, but Frank Pedley, deputy superintendent general of Indian affairs, was already contemplating future Indian reserves. The federal government was advancing its institutions into the North at a faster pace than it had in northern Alberta in the late 1890s, thanks to improved transportation infrastructure, advanced institutional development, active



MAP 9.1 1911 survey of Fort Chipewyan | Provincial Archives of Alberta, 83,376, item 3889

geological exploration, and perhaps also the lack of a distinctive, activist Métis population.⁶⁰ It had legally empowered itself to do so by the definitions of “non-treaty Indians” and “irregular bands” in the 1906 Indian Act. A non-treaty Indian was “any person of Indian blood who is reputed to belong to an irregular band, or who follows the Indian mode of life,” while an “irregular band” included all groups of “persons of Indian blood ... who have not had any treaty relations with the Crown” (*Indian Act*, R.S.C. 1906, c. 81, s. 2[c][g]). Government officials wrote about Mackenzie River “Indians” long before legal Indian status was created by Treaty No. 11. The federal government had thereby assumed control under the Indian Act even of persons who might later choose not to enter into treaty and possibly to apply for Half-breed scrip.

The surveyor general wanted to group together northern Indians on blocks of land – the southern reserve model – rather than issuing separate lots (Fumoleau 1975:115). The discussions he had with Frank Pedley of Indian Affairs led to Mr. Fawcett being instructed “to lay out lands which he finds used or occupied by Indians in the same manner as he does for White men” (115). For Fawcett, it seems to have been a simple matter: if they were “non treaty” without reserves, “they were entitled to the land on which their houses were built” (116).

What happened to lands assigned to status Indians in settlement surveys is unclear. By the end of 1913, W.W. Cory, deputy minister of the interior, had written to Minister Roche about the need for a policy to protect Indians living on such lots and was wrestling with the form it would take:

Provision was made in Treaty No. 8 for the allotting of lands to Indians in severalty. Of course, there is no way in which a homestead entry could be granted to an Indian [prohibited by *Indian Act*, R.S.C. 1906, c. 81, s. 164], but I think that it would be quite proper when subdividing lands in the northern districts to protect the claims of Indians who may be endeavouring to maintain themselves individually. This can be done by having the lands so occupied by Indians noted in our books as being reserved for them in such a way that they may be protected against trespassers during their occupation. [W.W. Cory to W.J. Roche, 21 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 7997]

It has now been decided to have all claims to land in the northern districts of Alberta and Saskatchewan preferred by individual Indians, through occupation prior to survey, duly noted in the records of the Department in the same way as the claims of white squatters ... It is understood, of course,

that the Indians concerned will not have the privilege of making [homestead] entries for their holdings, but as they are permitted ... to hold land in severalty, there is no doubt that the proper recording of their claims in our registers will sufficiently protect them in their occupation. [W.W. Cory to D.C. Scott, Dep. Supt. Gen. of Indian Affairs, 26 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 7997, emphasis added]

Government officials never resolved this grey policy area. In 1915, D.M. McLean, the assistant deputy and secretary of Indian affairs, wrote to A.J. Bell at Fort Smith, asking for information about three lots occupied by Indians. He wanted to know whether or not their “claims should be constituted Indian Reserves. If not should they be granted to each Indian in fee” (McLean to Bell, 25 Jan. 1915, LAC, RG 10, v. 7997). The lots were neither made into formal reserves nor assigned as lands in severalty, nor was ownership confirmed in the name of the resident. They were not transferred to the control of the Department of Indian Affairs (N.O. Coté, Controller, Land Patents Branch, Dept. of the Interior, to J.D. McLean, Assistant Dep. and Sec., DIA, 19 Aug. 1922, LAC, RG 10, v. 7997). Notations about occupancy were added to land records, affording protection only as long as the Indian “owners” were actually in residence. Once the lands were vacated, the Department of the Interior was willing to cancel the “reservation” – the notation – and sell the land to other parties. In short, Indians enjoyed no security of tenure.⁶¹

Land surveys made Indians suspicious of government intentions.⁶² They interpreted surveys as attempts to place them on reserves, a violation of Treaty No. 8 promises (Fumoleau 1975:117, 119). John Piché, a northern prospector, reported in 1914: “The Indians around Fort Smith, Smith Landing, Fort Chipewyan and Fond du Lac are being told that the Government is about to put them onto reserves and deprive them absolutely of their right to hunt ... The Half-breeds are agitating the Indians by telling them that ... the Police will herd them like cattle and will not let them go to hunt” (117). Contributing to their fears were new initiatives to protect the northern bison, discussed below.

Wildlife and Timber Protection and Fire Prevention

Federal officials under separate branches of the Department of the Interior developed three regulatory systems that affected northern Alberta and the adjacent North-West Territories in the years leading up to World War I.

The first two targeted wildlife and were intended to protect the endangered northern or wood bison (a local issue) and migratory birds (an international issue). The third was a system of fire prevention to protect timber. Together with provincial restrictions, they wove a regulatory mesh that began to constrict Aboriginal land uses and habitat management.

The idea that Indians not only used resources rationally but also managed the lands that generated those resources was unfathomable to Euro-Canadians until late in the twentieth century. Government regulations developed by non-Aboriginal officials were predicated in part on the notion that Aboriginal peoples were “naturally improvident” (extract from Gerald Card’s report, 31 March 1912, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A). They were believed to kill wildlife wantonly and set wildfires thoughtlessly. Naturalist Ernest Thompson Seton (1911:20) concluded, based on his 1907 northern trip, “The mania for killing that is seen in many white men is evidently a relic of savagery, for all of these Indians and half-breeds are full of it.” Maxwell Graham, on the other hand, attributed this behaviour to contact with white men: “Authorities all agree that Indians after they have been in contact, as these Indians have, with white men, are wantonly destructive to animal life. An Indian with a gun will shoot any thing he sees until his ammunition is gone” (Graham, Dom. Parks Branch, to Mr. Harkin, 7 Dec. 1912, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1).⁶³ Although the earliest management programs in northern Alberta were mostly unable, because of enforcement difficulties, to change what people actually did on the land, they set precedents for regulatory development in the decades after World War I. Aboriginal people were never allowed to be managers of the programs that were supposed to protect the resources on which they relied, and their roles as guides and auxiliary staff to the non-Aboriginal men who were hired were undervalued.

Buffalo Guardians and Rangers

The first regulatory system put men known as “guardians” or “rangers” in residence on the edge of the bison range to enhance the protection afforded to these endangered animals. The northern bison had been legally protected by federal legislation since 1894, and both the federal Northwest Game Act of 1906 and the Alberta Game Act of 1907 prohibited killing bison. But government officials knew little about the animals or the country they inhabited. Charles Camsell (1966[1954]:150), who explored the country southwest of Fort Smith in 1902 for the Geological Survey, later wrote that the Little Buffalo and Jackfish rivers “had not been surveyed or even travelled by any white man.”

As part of their duties, the Royal North-West Mounted Police took the lead in trying to identify the extent of the bison range and determine what protection the animals required. In 1907, Inspector Jarvis and Seton made three attempts to see the bison, touching on the edge of their range west of Fort Smith (RNWMP 1908:11, 122-129; Seton 1911). They saw only thirty-three animals and some old tracks, but Seton nevertheless estimated a population of about three hundred animals. These instant experts rejected Indian explanations about wolf predation, which included an account of incursions of wolves from the barren grounds, pointing instead to what Seton reported as an ample amount of pemmican made from neither moose nor caribou. Jarvis concluded, "the constant cry of 'wolf' is a ruse" (RNWMP 1908:124): "The Wolves are indeed playing havoc with the Buffalo, and the ravenous leaders of the pack are called Sousi [Joseph Beaulieu], Kiya, Kirma, and [Chief Peter] Squirrel" (Jarvis, paraphrased by Seton, 1911:39; see also Godsell 1946[1934]:187).

This conclusion was discounted by the RNWMP commissioner, who commented that Jarvis' "opinions have been formed somewhat hurriedly as the reports I have received from time to time for some years back do not agree with his, especially as regards the wolves" (RNWMP 1908:11). Other police reports for these years are unanimous about the law-abiding nature of Indians and Half-breeds in the Treaty No. 8 region. As Superintendent Constantine reported for "N" Division in the same year: "Crime is still in its infancy in these districts ... The Indians are exemplary in their conduct always and whenever one does get into trouble he is almost sure to be the victim of others. It would indeed be hard to come across a more law-abiding and peaceable lot of Indians than those in these districts" (RNWMP 1908:28; see also Routledge in RNWMP 1909:121).

Jarvis was not even sure that local people knew bison were protected. Chief Squirrel told Seton (1911:320), "When our people made this treaty, there was nothing said about reserving the Buffalo. If you are going to take that hunting from us, we want a better treaty, more compensation, for that is part of our living." Jarvis acknowledged the ineffectiveness of trying to police Indians who hunted and trapped "in a region where Police or white man never go, and over 100 miles from any Police detachment. When these people are hungry and their children crying out for food[,] and moose and caribou not being obtainable, what is to prevent them killing all they want?" (320).⁶⁴ He recommended installing "resident guardians" (RNWMP 1908:125).

Inspector Routledge and Sergeants Field and McLeod made additional buffalo patrols in 1908. Although they were unable to find any poachers,

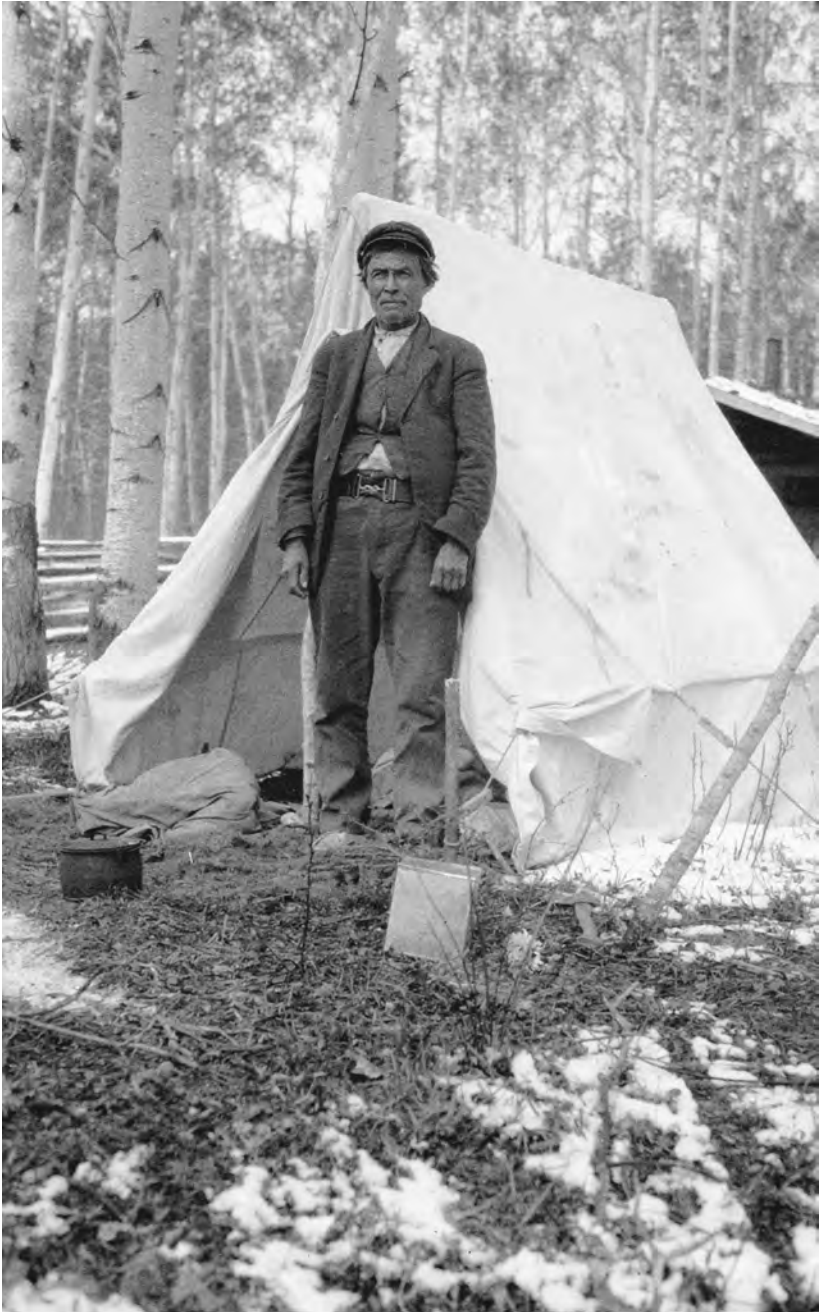


PHOTO 9.7 Chief Squirrel's band had traditional territory in the bison range. | Library and Archives Canada, PA-101681

Routledge nevertheless recommended that a reserve be created to protect the bison, with hunting and trapping allowed only by permit (RNWMP 1909:11-12, 129-133). A new RNWMP detachment was established at Smith's Landing on the eastern edge of the bison range (McCormack 2007).

In 1910, Superintendent Sanders "interviewed many of the best hunters" about the buffalo: "I found ... that few had ever seen these animals and that very little hunting is done by Indians in that part of the country where the Buffalo range ... I entered into negotiations with one Pierre Gladu with a view to employing him as a Game Guardian for the Buffalo, but on account of his being undecided could not complete the arrangements before my departure for Smiths Landing, this was subsequently done by Sergt. Field" (Supt. Sanders to RNWMP Commissioner, 6 Aug. 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 1643, file 125, pt. 2). A second local man, Antoine White Knife (Wabikuman), was also hired to protect the bison.

The fact that these men were Aboriginal made them singular appointments for the very first "Buffalo Guardians." On the surface, Pierre Gladu was a Métis man who received scrip in 1899. But he had a Cree grandmother, and his mother's name (Julie Gibot) indicates that she was from a local Cree family (Sakiskanip).⁶⁵ His father later married Caroline Wabikuman, or Whiteknife, another Cree woman, who became his mother when Pierre was ten years old (Cree kinship terms do not distinguish a biological mother from a stepmother). In 1899, his occupations were "Trapping and boatman." He was also known as Mustus, or "Buffalo." When he was hired in 1910, he was a mature forty years old and presumably a highly experienced bush man (McCormack n.d.; LAC, RG 15, v. 1350). Antoine White Knife (Whiteknife) was Pierre Gladu's uncle, his (step)mother's brother, and a much older man. This close relationship almost certainly meant that the two men had spent much time in the bush together. It may even have been Antoine's willingness to travel with his nephew that led Pierre to accept the job.⁶⁶ After more than a decade and a half of the prohibition on hunting bison, one can speculate that these two men might have felt pleased, even proud, to be employed by the Mounted Police to investigate the bison and contribute to their protection. Perhaps they even felt that it was the first step in being allowed to hunt bison again.

Gladu and White Knife left Fort Chipewyan on 2 July 1910 for Peace Point and then journeyed north of the river, looking for bison and wolves, which they had evidently been asked to report on and kill if possible. Remarkably, Pierre Gladu's account of this trip was translated from Cree into English by local justice of the peace John Wylie and published as a short report in the 1910 Report of the Royal North-West Mounted Police.

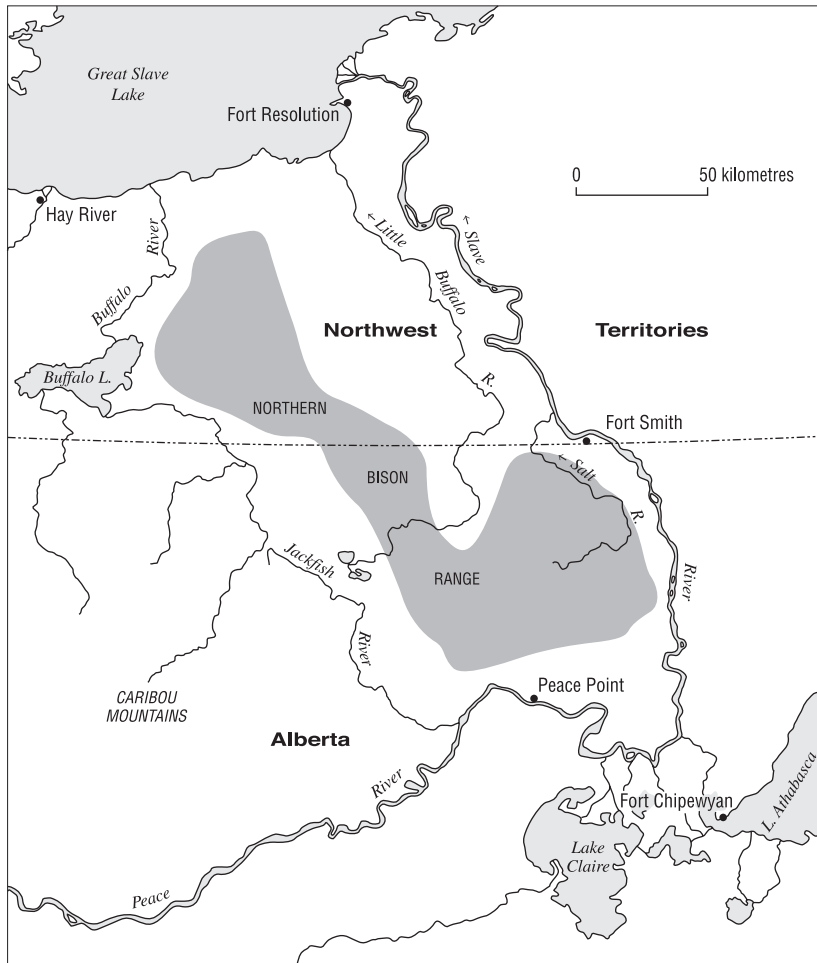
He reported that bison were not found as far west as Jackfish River. It was this report that formally labelled Gladu a "Buffalo Guardian" (RNWMP 1910:195).⁶⁷

While Gladu and White Knife were looking for bison in the southern part of the range, Sergeant Mellor was patrolling the south shore of Great Slave Lake, also looking for bison. He saw none, thus "bearing out the Indian statement that the buffalo never come close to the Great Slave Lake." Similarly, along the Big Buffalo River, the lack of bison confirmed "the Indian statement, that for many years the buffalo have not come within two days' journey of Buffalo lake" (RNWMP 1910:197). According to Mellor, the bison range was bounded on the west by the Caribou Mountains, on the south by the Peace River, on the east by the Slave River, and on the north "by an imaginary line drawn from the Caribou mountains ... to the Slave river ... touching the latter at about Point Ennuyoux, and the former about 50 miles south of Buffalo lake" (200; see Map 9.2).

That winter, Frank Crean was in Fort Chipewyan on behalf of the Department of the Interior to survey a proposed buffalo reserve (see also W.R. Caldwell to Frank J.P. Crean, N.W. Exploration, 9 Feb. 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 2). Bill Waiser (1993:29) called the information from this expedition "vague and circumstantial," and no reports have yet been located, although two photos in the Saskatchewan Archives showing scenes at Fort Chipewyan (S-B 9111, S-B 9112) purport to be from Crean's trip.

Harry Radford, a private citizen, wrote an insightful report about the "Wild Wood Bison" the following year. He had been issued a locally contentious permit to kill two bison for scientific reasons. Based on his observations and discussions with local Aboriginal people, he concluded that bison numbers had *not* been declining for the past decade and might even be increasing: "The Indians ... generally respect or at least obey, the law forbidding the killing of Bison at any season ... Beyond a doubt, the Indians of the North respect the game laws (not always wise ones), imposed on them by the Whites, far more scrupulously and uncomplainingly than do the white hunters of any American district I have visited ... These police are well able to control the Indians ... as the natives have a great fear of arrest" (20 June 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1).

Radford's assessment of the Indians supported Mounted Police observations and was confirmed in 1913 by George Mulloy, who claimed that the government had little to fear from the Indians: "They are all too much afraid of the North-West Mounted Police. The Chippewyans as a class are rather cowardly and superstitious [sic]. They have come to know that any transgression of the law is speedily followed by punishment" (Mulloy



MAP 9.2 The northern bison range in the early twentieth century [based on a hand-annotated map of the Mackenzie Basin, 1890, in LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911 pt. 2]

to R.H. Campbell, Supt. of Forestry, 9 July 1913, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3912).⁶⁸ Radford argued that a national park would only attract unwanted attention to the endangered bison. Greater protection could be provided by withdrawing the area from White settlement, which in his mind constituted a serious threat to the bison. At the time of his visit, “there are no white hunters or trappers in this district” (“Wild Wood Bison,” 20 June 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1).⁶⁹

Also in 1911, the federal government hired two new men to protect the bison and investigate the bison range, under the jurisdiction of the

Forestry Branch (correspondence in LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; Parker and Tingley 1980:85). Pierre Gladu and Antoine White Knife, the local Aboriginal men with knowledge about both the bison and the country, were dismissed, apparently at the direction of Minister of the Interior Frank Oliver (R.H. Campbell to Geo. Mulloy, 20 May 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; see also Foster 1978:109). From this beginning would develop a system of Buffalo Rangers and, in the 1920s, a formal warden service.

Oliver set the ball rolling on his 1910 trip down the Mackenzie River. In Fort McPherson on 2 July 1910, he wrote a letter to Peter McCallum of Fort Norman, asking whether he would want “to live on the buffalo range in the north district and spend his time in killing the wolves, with another man who would be selected for the purpose” (R.H. Campbell to Minister of the Interior, 22 Feb. 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 660). Peter McCallum was hired at \$100 per month “to take up the work of poisoning wolves in the country west of Fort Smith. Your headquarters would be Fort Smith where we will have an Indian Agent [A.J. Bell] who will be instructed in regard to the matter and to whom you would report. A young man, inexperienced, will accompany you as assistant, and you will be expected to teach him so that he can do efficient work” (F. Oliver to Peter McCallum, 28 March 1911, and memorandum for the Establishment Book of the Dept. of the Interior, both in LAC, RG 85, v. 660; also R.H. Campbell, Supt., Forestry Branch, to McCallum, Fort Norman, 28 March 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). The “greenhorn” was George A. Mulloy of Toronto, who was hired at the same salary on a two-year contract “to assist in the protection of the buffalo and the destruction of the wolves,” which were considered the main threat to the bison (Campbell to Mulloy, Toronto, 30 March 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). As “a young man of some education and surveying experience,” Mulloy was expected to provide the department with better information about the bison and their range (E.H. Finlayson, Forestry Branch, to Mr. Campbell, 9 March 1914, LAC, RG 85, v. 664, file 3910, pt. 1). He was also supposed to provide information about timber based on what he saw as he travelled about the buffalo range. McCallum and Mulloy both reported to A.J. Bell.

Mulloy joined Bell’s party in Edmonton at the end of April and travelled north with the company. At Athabasca Landing, he was interviewed by the RNWMP superintendent, who told him about the “two good trappers [Gladu and White Knife] who have been looking after the Wood Bison for the last year. They [RNWMP] are in a dilemma whether to continue their operations or not. Of course I don’t want to clash with them and will work

in unison with them until they receive instructions that the whole affair has been handed over to me” (Mulloy to Campbell, 11 May 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). Campbell advised Mulloy: “The intention is, not to take the matter of the protection of the buffalo out of the hands of the Mounted Police entirely, but merely to provide an organization for looking after the protection of the buffalo which will relieve the Mounted Police from the complete responsibility which they have had in this respect in the past” (Campbell to Mulloy, 19 May 1911, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). Mulloy was under the impression that Peter McCallum would not be available that year and planned to hire a local man to assist him. When Mulloy reached Fort Smith in June, he immediately got on with his new job, hiring Lawrence Boyd, a “packer,” and David, an “Indian guide.” The party headed out with horses on two trips into the bison range (correspondence, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). McCallum arrived in late July. The two men did not hit it off. It might not have helped that Mulloy had been on his own for nearly two months and had been told by “many people” that McCallum “would be a difficult man to get along with.” In May 1912, he wrote a private letter to R.H. Campbell, director of forestry, about McCallum’s officiousness and deficiencies in the bush (31 May 1912, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). For his part, McCallum complained he was “handicapped by the companionship of a sick man” (E.H. Finlayson to Peter McCallum, 26 July 1913, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). Mulloy worked the second year of his term separately from McCallum, providing reports on the bison herds with the assistance of a guide, while McCallum was supposed to devote himself to trapping and poisoning wolves (F.H. Byahe to Mr. Drake, 22 Aug. 1912, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1).⁷⁰ When Mulloy resigned on 8 June 1913, he was not replaced.

Although McCallum’s ability to do his job was questioned regularly from at least 1914, he continued to work for the government until 1918 (correspondence in LAC, RG 85, v. 660; memo to W.W. Cory, 2 July 1918, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 2). On 8 January 1914, McCallum swore an oath of allegiance and was appointed to the office of buffalo guardian, signed by A.J. Bell as justice of the peace (LAC, RG 85, v. 660). He was a single-handed bison protection force until 1 March 1916, when William (Billy) McNeil was hired as his “active helper” (Maxwell Graham to Mr. Cory, 18 Feb. 1913, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; Campbell[?] to Mr. Cory, 27 March 1917, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 2; Hewitt 1921:128).⁷¹ The government might have been acting on Henry Bury’s 1915 recommendation for a larger and more effective “scheme of protective

patrol as soon as possible, including the erection of log huts, and having for its immediate object a systematic survey of the territory with a view to laying out an inclosed part in a suitable locality” (Report on the game and fisheries of northern Alberta and the Northwest Territories, 6 Nov. 1915, LAC, RG 85, v. 664, file 3910, pt. 2; see also Bury supplementary to report, LAC, RG 85, v. 666).

The increase in bison protection was linked to attempts to have the bison range declared an animal sanctuary, possibly even a national park. Mounted Police had already recommended more protection be provided for the bison. In 1912, Maxwell Graham urged the government to create a game preserve to protect the bison, with no hunting or trapping allowed except for “noxious animals.” Indians (or at least “half-breeds”) should be relocated elsewhere (Graham to Harkin, 7 Dec. 1912, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1).⁷² In 1913, Henry Bury proposed fencing the bison into a six-hundred-square-mile region: “the buffalo would be actually always under observation; wolves could be practically exterminated, and the reserve itself be easily accessible to tourists” (LAC, RG 10, v. 4042).⁷³ Department of Indian Affairs officials objected, on the grounds that Indians using the bison range could not easily relocate and that the fur industry was good business that should be supported. J.D. McLean opined, “I think that the setting apart of as large a tract as proposed for a game preserve was scarcely contemplated in the Treaty” (McLean to J.B. Harkin, 23 July 1914, LAC, RG 85, v. 664, file 3910, pt. 2; other correspondence, LAC, RG 85, v. 664, file 3910, pts. 1, 2).

In 1916, Minister of the Interior Roche sent Bury to try to obtain from the Indians of the Fort Smith area “a signed statement specifically waiving any fancied rights they think they may possess to hunt and trap in the area in question” (Chief of the Animal Division to Harkin, 28 April 1916, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; also J.B. Harkin to Mr. Cory, 18 April 1916, LAC, RG 85, v. 664, file 3910, pt. 1). Bury was unsuccessful, and in 1917 Maxwell Graham asked that Indians be “at least restrained from hunting or fishing in the buffalo range from June 1st to October 1st,” on the grounds that all they were doing during those months was hunting moose unsuccessfully (Chief of the Animal Division to Harkin, 28 April 1916, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1). He reasoned that because most men were not successful moose hunters, they would not suffer much from being kept out of the region during the summer and fall. Even Seton would have understood the weakness of this argument (see also Seton 1911:ch. 17). No wonder local Indians were fearful about being herded onto reserves.

In 1917, the protection of northern wildlife was transferred from Forestry to the Parks Branch. Rangers McCallum and McNeil became employees of Parks, and John Stark of Fort Resolution joined them as an assistant to McCallum. Their instructions would in future come from J.B. Harkin, the commissioner of Dominion parks (R.H. Campbell to Gerald Card, Govt. Agent, Fort Smith, 16 March 1917, LAC, RG 85, v. 660). In an attempt to professionalize and monitor their work, they were sent monthly diaries to record their daily activities, the beginning of a formal record created by the buffalo rangers that continued when a warden service was implemented in the 1920s (correspondence in LAC, RG 85, v. 660; W.W. Cory, Dept. Min., to Mr. Campbell, 5 March 1917; Commissioner, Dom. Parks Branch, to Gerald Card, Govt. Agent, 16 May 1917, both in LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 2). These diaries were sent to Ottawa, where they were closely scrutinized by government officials.⁷⁴ Once the Parks Branch acquired this new jurisdiction, Maxwell Graham proposed reorganizing the Buffalo Patrol Service. He wanted to dismiss McCallum, make John Stark the chief ranger, keep Billy McNeil, and add Mike McVeigh of Fort Fitzgerald (at \$60 per month plus rations) and John Broomfield of Fort Smith (at \$40 per month plus rations) as Stark's assistants (memo to Mr. Harkin, 6 Oct. 1917, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 2; memo to Mr. Cory, 2 July 1918, LAC, RG 85, v. 660). The Civil Service Commission of Canada confirmed McVeigh and Broomfield as temporary employees (LAC, RG 85, v. 660). McCallum was notified by letter on 26 June 1918 that his employment was terminated and finally received the bad news in person from Gerald Card on 15 July (G. Card, Govt. Agency, to J.B. Harkin, Commissioner, 30 Nov. and 19 Dec. 1918, LAC, RG 85, v. 660).

Stark resigned in April 1919. He was replaced by Billy McNeil as "Chief Herder," at \$80 per month, a permanent government appointment that was confirmed by the Civil Service Commission. McVeigh resigned in May and was replaced by Broomfield, also a Civil Service appointment, but as a "temporary" herder, at \$60 per month. A second temporary herder, J.A. McLean (\$40 per month), and another "qualified man" (at \$50 per month) were also approved (memo to W.W. Cory, Dep. Min., 14 Nov. 1919; Commissioner to Gerald Card, 14 Nov. 1919, both in LAC, RG 85, v. 659, file 3939). Broomfield had been hired in 1918 for the "Wood Buffalo Patrol," but the involvement of the Civil Service Commission points to a new level of bureaucratic complexity in the filling of these positions. This would almost certainly have prevented status Indians from being considered for these positions.⁷⁵



PHOTO 9.8 Buffalo rangers patrolled the bison range by horseback in summer, dog team in winter. They were able to use horses because traditional Indian burning maintained the open parkland and trails. | F. H. Kitto photo, 1920 | Library and Archives Canada, PA-101697

None of the men hired could be considered local. They could travel in the bush, learn the local geography, and master bush craft, tutored by the local Aboriginal men they hired as guides or who became their in-laws. Yet as newcomers they were hardly the equals of Pierre Gladu and Antoine White Knife. Nevertheless, the racism of the day meant that neither Indian nor Half-breed men were hired for these jobs, except as ancillary staff supervised by outsiders. The early buffalo rangers were expected to work on trails, build cabins for shelter, provide maps and reliable information about the bison and their predators, ensure by their very presence that no one hunted bison, and especially kill timber wolves, considered the prime bison predator, in line with the province's own anti-wolf policy (report from Doucet, Inspector WB patrol, to E.H. Finlayson, Distr. Inspector of Forest Reserves, 11 Dec. 1916, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3912; other RG 85 correspondence; Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1913a:142; Baker 1976:46).⁷⁶ In short, they were the first government employees who were expected to

be resident in the heart of Aboriginal lands on a full-time basis, providing surveillance over the people as well as the animals. They were the solution to the problem posed by Jarvis in 1907, when he asked how Indians could possibly be policed when they lived in area “where Police or white man never go.”

This northern initiative, as important as it was in the Fort Chipewyan–Fort Smith region, was a minor footnote to more prominent federal conservation initiatives. Game guardians had originated in the late nineteenth century in the Rocky Mountain parks (Burns 2000:2-4). By 1907, a federal guardian was hired at Elk Island Park to protect its bison (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1908:98). In 1909, Canada established a Commission of Conservation to inventory Canada’s natural resources and promote their conservation and use (Parker and Tingley 1980:89; Janet Foster 1998:38). Early conservation initiatives in both Canada and the United States were directed at protecting desirable species such as bison and elk and eliminating their predators, especially wolves, one of a long list of “varmints” (Dunlap 1990). Leslie Bella has pointed out that the concept of conservation of the day meant “maximizing future profits through good management today” (1987:45; see also Tough 1992b:62; Sandlos 2002). A new bureaucratic framework for the national parks also developed. The fire and game guardians at Banff and other parks were the forerunners of a professional Warden Service (Burns 2000:6-7). In 1911, the Dominion Forest Reserves and Park Act created the Dominion Parks Branch within the Department of the Interior and shifted the emphasis in Canadian parks from economic exploitation to recreation. James B. Harkin, the first Dominion parks commissioner, played a leading role in supporting conservation initiatives, supported by Dr. Maxwell Graham, who directed the Animal Division of the Parks Branch (Parker and Tingley 1980:89; Janet Foster 1998; Burns 2000:7).

The Commission of Conservation sponsored annual conferences from 1910 to 1919, which evolved after 1922 into the Dominion-Provincial Wildlife Conferences (Tough 1992b:61; Janet Foster 1998). It was within this framework that legislation and policies for wildlife across Canada were developed, mostly at odds with treaty and Aboriginal rights. Frank Tough (1992b) has shown that most government officials involved with wildlife policy believed that Aboriginal hunters – a kind of human “varmint” – were a threat to wildlife, which was saved from complete destruction only by an inherent Aboriginal laziness, and that Aboriginal hunting had to be restricted to protect the resource base, for their own support but also for uses by non-Aboriginal peoples. Consequent “wildlife

management” practices controlled not the animals but the users, based on “the principles of bureaucratic control, legal codes, and efficient exploitation” (Sandlos 2003:396; see also Ferguson 1990:299). Yet information about animal populations and ecosystem relationships that should have been considered in this system was weak everywhere and virtually lacking for the North. Aboriginal knowledge, which was extensive and richly detailed, was mostly ignored, overridden by assumptions about Indian tendencies, as when Inspector Jarvis dismissed Aboriginal explanations about bison decline. In short, what government officials thought was going on – in other words, their stereotypes about Aboriginal hunters and about about animals – informed the development of policies in the bison range as well as elsewhere in Canada.

Migratory Birds Convention Act

The other major wildlife management initiative during these decades was the development of an international convention to protect migratory birds, whose numbers were in serious decline due to habitat loss as North American farming expanded and market and “sports” hunting (Gottesman 1983:69-70; Janet Foster 1998). Provincial Department of Agriculture reports show that market hunting was widespread and uncontrolled in Alberta and therefore implicated in the decline in bird numbers (*pace* Gottesman 1983:70). Government reports bemoaned the devastation to game while happily reporting the proceeds from the sale of licences. In 1913, the Alberta Department of Agriculture (1914:77) reported: “The Game Act ... permits the indiscriminate sale of these birds [ducks, geese, swans] by any person who chooses to pay the price for the market hunter’s license. Never before in the history of Alberta were so many licenses of this kind sold as in 1913, nor were so many birds sold as during the past season.” Alberta Department of Agriculture annual reports show that market hunting continued to expand over the next few years, a consequence of immigration from the United States.

Protection for migratory birds was led by the conservation movement in the United States, which presented a draft treaty to Canada in 1914. The convention was signed in 1916 by the “High Contracting Powers” – the president of the United States and his Britannic majesty (for Canada) (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1917:125; Gottesman 1983). Internally, Canada created the Advisory Board on Wild Life Protection, an interdepartmental group that drafted the Migratory Birds Convention Act passed by Parliament in 1917. The advisory board also developed the regulations for the Act, with Gordon Hewitt, the Dominion entomologist, playing the lead

role (Hewitt 1921:ch. 11). Migratory birds could not be hunted between 10 March and 1 September, neither nests nor eggs could be collected, and there was a continuous closed season until 1926 for several species of migratory game birds, including cranes and swans (Alberta Dept. of Agriculture 1917:125-126; Janet Foster 1998:ch. 6, appendix). Duncan Campbell Scott, representing Indian Affairs, sat on the advisory board, but his narrow view of the treaties and Indian rights to hunt and fish meant that he did little to protect Indian interests. At Fort Chipewyan alone, thousands of “waveys” (geese) and other migratory birds were killed each year in spring and fall hunts by all segments of the community, but neither the Department of Indian Affairs nor anyone else gave any thought to the effect on the food supply of an absolute prohibition on spring hunting and a fall hunt curtailed by a shorter season.⁷⁷ Indian subsistence was sacrificed to broader wildlife conservation imperatives (Gottesman 1983:75-76, 80).

Fire Prevention

The third federal regulatory system developed around attempts to protect forests from fire. Originally, fire prevention legislation was enforced by the police. For example, in 1908 Indians at Smith’s Landing were convicted of not extinguishing their campfires. Inspector Routledge had a notice drafted about the fire regulations in Chipewyan and Cree syllabics that he asked to have printed and distributed (RNWMP 1909: 122). The Forestry Branch of the Department of the Interior, which began its operations in the forest reserves of southern Alberta, expanded into northern Alberta in 1913 (Parker and Tingley 1980:93), perhaps nudged by surveyor J.B. McFarlane’s 1912 report on the destruction of timber on the south shore of Lake Athabasca “by forest fires which appear to burn regularly and systematically” (Abstract of Reports by Surveyors 1912:7).⁷⁸ Henry Bury, the supervisor of Indian timber lands, commented in 1913 on the “considerable quantities of logs and cordwood” cut annually on public lands by the Hudson’s Bay Company and other commercial enterprises, with no regard to preserving timber suitable for lumber. He recommended imposing timber dues, which fire rangers would collect (LAC, RG 10, v. 4042).

Forestry Branch correspondence (LAC, RG 39) attests to the steady growth of a government bureaucracy operating during the warmer months, beginning with the employment in 1913 of fire rangers to patrol the lower Athabasca River, Lake Athabasca, and the rivers north of the lake to Slave River, all by canoe.⁷⁹ One ranger was Peter Loutit, a Fort Chipewyan Métis man who was already a volunteer game guardian for the province and who had been recommended by Treaty Inspector Henry Conroy. Loutit was

assigned to patrol from Fort Chipewyan to Point Brûlé (letter of appointment for Peter Loutit, 4 June 1913, LAC, RG 39).

A letter written in December claimed that Loutit was “not at all satisfactory as a Fire Ranger” (J.M. Hill to R.H. Campbell, 13 Dec. 1913, LAC, RG 39). The lower Athabasca was considered a difficult area to patrol, and Loutit, an experienced northern traveller, might have been using his own measured judgment but reporting it differently to satisfy his superiors. He would also have understood how local people used fire to shape landscape. By 1916, “serious fire danger” was reported for the lower Athabasca River, and Ranger Robillard, another Métis man, was paid \$100 a month to work there, \$20 more than he had been earning on the Clearwater River, a bonus for the hazard involved (J.M. Hill to R.H. Campbell, 1 Feb. 1916, LAC, RG 39). By this date, the Forestry Branch also had the SS *Rey* to help the men on the northern rivers of the McMurray District.

For bush-wise Aboriginal men, fire ranger positions could have provided alternative paid employment during the season when they had often worked in the transport industry. While the Forestry Branch hired Aboriginal men as fire rangers or, more commonly, assistant rangers, that hardly speaks to an enlightened mentality. Government correspondence speaks about Aboriginal people with frank ambivalence, if not outright distrust. For example, Philip Mercredi’s mixed ancestry was an issue in 1917 when he was considered for the position of chief ranger at Fort Fitzgerald. Wrote Inspector J.A. Doucet: “Philipp Mercredi has a very good reputation all over the District, he is energetic and intelligent. However, he has Indian blood, and, on that account, his appointment to the chief ranger-ship of the District might raise a little jealousy [sic] in some quarter[s] ... Notwithstanding that, I sincer[e]ly believe that Mercredi would do good” (J.A. Doucet to E.H. Finlayson, 11 June 1917, LAC, RG 39).⁸⁰

Over time, there was an informal policy of replacing Aboriginal men with Euro-Canadians, completed in 1922 under Chief Fire Ranger A. Rafton-Canning. In 1920, he wrote that he had difficulty hiring staff because of the local availability of high wages and good trapping: “I need three or four intelligent white men badly. The Indians and half-breeds make fairly good fire rangers, except when it comes to enforcing the laws or a knowledge of the rules & regulations, the latter they don’t bother about” (to R.H. Campbell, 26 March 1920, LAC, RG 39). He preferred hiring outsiders new to the region rather than local Aboriginal men and recommended recruiting “returned soldier students, from the Universities in Edmonton, during their vacations ... As a rule they are a superior class of men and are reliable” (Rafton-Canning to Campbell, 6 May 1920, and

to C.H. Morse, 31 Dec. 1920, LAC, RG 39). Aboriginal assistants were paid less than non-Aboriginal assistants. In 1912, two Métis men hired as assistants earned \$60 and \$80 per month, compared to the \$90-110 per month paid to White assistants (Parker and Tingley 1980:107), and in 1915 two “half-breeds” were hired to work on “the difficult Athabasca River ... at a much reduced wage” (Simon Nelson to R.H. Campbell, 8 June 1915, LAC, RG 39).

Just as government officials blamed Indians for killing game irresponsibly, forestry managers blamed Indians for setting fires, although they also pointed the finger at surveyors, travellers, prospectors, and new industries (J.M. Hill to R.H. Campbell, 10 Aug. 1915; extract from J.A. Doucet’s report of inspection 1916; Rafton-Canning to C.H. Morse, 31 Dec. 1920; all in LAC, RG 39). In 1916, J.A. Doucet wrote, “I learned from an Indian coming from that direction [south shore of Lake Athabasca near Old Fort] that this fire had been started by Indians” (extract from report of inspection of McMurray and Slave Fire Ranging Districts, 1916, LAC, RG 39). It might have been one of many spring fires set by local Chipewyans to manage landscapes, but this dimension of Aboriginal knowledge was beyond the ken of Euro-Canadians until the publication of pioneering research conducted in the 1970s in northern Alberta by H.T. Lewis, which even now is still not completely known or accepted by all scientists or the general public (H.T. Lewis 1977, 1978, 1982, 1990; see also McCormack 2007; Ferguson 1979). In 1918, as rangers patrolled the Athabasca River delta and Lake Athabasca:

The Indians and breeds were stopped and warned against the practice of setting out fires in the early summer in the willows and rushes on the delta so as to enable them to collect the wildfowl eggs. There is not much valuable timber around that part, but in the past it has been the starting point of fires that have run into good timber. Aside from that it is bad policy to allow the Indians and breeds to think even that they can spread fires at any time or any place.

We have also warned them against the very bad habit of carrying smoke torches, whilst travelling during fly time on the trail ...

Along the northeast shores of Athabaska Lake ... fires have been set in past years by the “Caribou Eaters” in order to deviate the travel of the vast herds of caribou during the winter. [Progress Report for Dec. 1918, LAC, RG 39]

The new regime for wildlife protection and fire prevention targeted the land use practices of Aboriginal peoples. They had to observe hunting and

trapping restrictions imposed by outsiders with little knowledge of local conditions, and they began to abandon traditional – possibly ancient – practices of fire-based land management. When local men were hired to enforce these regulations, they could interpret their duties with local circumstances in mind, which seems to have been one fear of senior officials. Outsiders who were hired to work in the North were not required to possess an understanding of local complexities, yet they became the agents on-the-spot who enforced the law and advised the senior staff who drafted new policies and regulations. As “intelligent White men,” they trumped Aboriginal knowledge and advice.

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Fort Chipewyan and the New Regime

*I am the Chief of the Chipewyan Band of Fort Chipewyan,
and wish to ask you, if a Treaty Indian is liable to be fined as
a White man, for killing Beaver ... which is altogether contrary
to our agreement with the treaty Commissionners, when we
signed the treaty at this place.*

– Alexandre Laviolette, 1913

The discussion in the previous chapter has painted a picture of a region in the early decades of the twentieth century that was beginning to be burdened by federal and provincial regulations, mostly intended to restrict access to wildlife and administered by non-Aboriginal agents whose everyday discourse betrayed their deep-seated racism vis-à-vis Aboriginal residents. Such governance was the very heart of Canada's new northern colonial order.

This chapter outlines some aspects of life for the residents of Fort Chipewyan and the surrounding settlements during these decades. It considers the impact of the new government regulations for local people, especially if, as Inspector Jarvis observed, people lived far from police or ranger scrutiny and could essentially do as they pleased. People's lives and the local economy were complicated by changing fur prices, especially the rupture in normal fur trade practices at the onset of World War I.

THE FUR TRADE AND STARVATION YEARS

Between 1904 and 1909 there were several poor trapping seasons, compounded by a serious decline in fur prices in December 1906, an unwillingness by trading companies to issue credit to anyone other than the best hunters, and the nadir of the ten-year rabbit cycle. Seton (1911) reported that no snowshoe hares were to be found in 1907, and lynx were starving as a result. Fur was in short supply for the winters of 1906-07 and 1907-08, although there seemed to be enough meat and fish to prevent starvation (RNWMP 1908:26, 1909:121, 133-134). In the spring of 1908, Inspector Conroy was asked to investigate a report “that the fur bearing animals have to a large extent disappeared ... and that as a result there will be, in all probability, much destitution next winter amongst the Indians of that district” (J.D. McLean to Inspector H.A. Conroy, 27 April 1908, Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A; Conroy to ?, 7 Jan. 1908, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2). He was also instructed “to tell the Indians that they cannot kill beaver, because there are provincial laws against the killing of beaver” until 1915 (memorandum to Mr. Pedley, 8 April 1908, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A). However, faced with the prospect of northern starvation, the province was willing to allow Indians to trap beaver for food. Not all bands heard the news in time, and famine occurred. In March 1909, Inspector Jennings informed his superiors:

There are some cases of destitution in each locality, but the Indians are making out the winter better than was expected. The permission to kill Beaver has been of immense help. I have just learned from Mr. Colin Fraser of Chipewyan that the Indians living between Chipewyan and Resolution did not learn of the authority to kill Beaver until the end of December and at that time many were sick from actual starvation. Mr. Fraser stated that up to the time of his leaving to come out *67 Indians had died from weakness and disease owing to lack of food*. I understand that a petition has been sent to the Indian Dept. asking that a physician be stationed. [Monthly report, Insp. Commanding “N” Division, Athabasca Landing, 9 March 1909, LAC, RG 18, v. 369, file 131, emphasis in original]

By April, Jennings reported that over a hundred deaths had occurred between Fort McMurray and Fort Resolution (monthly report, Athabasca Landing, 5 April 1909, LAC, RG 18, v. 369, file 131).¹ Two of those deaths were Chief Justin Martin and his wife, then in their late seventies. Their

oldest son, Martin Justin, also called Justin Martin Jr. and Wiyakes, replaced his father as chief in 1910, at age fifty (McCormack n.d.; LAC, RG 10, Cree Band Annuity Paylists).²

With both treaty discussions and starvation fresh in their memories, Treaty No. 8 Indians challenged the province's right to impose its Game Act. Conroy and Inspector Routledge both reported in 1908 that they had heard complaints about the prohibition on selling beaver skins (Conroy, 7 Jan. 1908, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2; RNWMP 1909:133). Whitefish Lake Chief James Sennum wrote to Minister of the Interior Frank Oliver demanding to know "if the Provincial Government has the power to pass laws which would annul this treaty right" (3 May 1909, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A). The issue arose at treaty meetings, even after circumstances eased in 1910 (e.g., report from Supt. Sanders, Commanding "N" Division, Athabasca Landing, to RNWMP Commissioner, 6 Aug. 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 1643, file 125, pt. 2).³

In 1912, Chief Alexandre Laviolette challenged the law by breaking it, framing his action as a treaty right. To Sergeant Mellor, it was a test case that would force the government to clarify whether the provincial Game Act applied to Indians. He charged Chief Laviolette, and the case was heard in Fort Chipewyan by a reluctant justice of the peace, T.W. Harris. Harris fined Chief Laviolette \$1. Mellor reported:

I may say that the Indians are very angry about the whole business, as they claim that at the time they took treaty they were distinctly informed by the Treaty Commissioners that they would not be interfered with in any way regarding their killing food or fur animals, and the beaver of course is used for both. The chief in particular was very defiant in his attitude and for a long time declined to pay a fine, which would have left me in a somewhat awkward quandary, as the Justice had informed me that he would in no case inflict imprisonment. [Mellor, Fort Chipewyan, to the Officer Commanding, "N" Division, Athabasca Landing, 31 Dec. 1912, LAC, RG 18, v. 444]

Although Chief Laviolette paid his fine "after a lengthy and somewhat heated discussion, joined in by many of the Indians," Justice of the Peace Harris advised him to protest to Ottawa (Mellor, Fort Chipewyan, to the Officer Commanding, "N" Division, Athabasca Landing, 31 Dec. 1912, LAC, RG 18, v. 444).

Chief Laviolette laid out his complaint to the superintendent general of Indian affairs:

Sir,

I have the honor of writing you a few lines, to let you know that I am the Chief of the Chipewyan Band of Fort Chipewyan, and wish to ask you, if a Treaty Indian is liable to be fined as a White man, for killing Beaver, my reason for asking you this question, is, that I was compelled to pay a fine to the Police the other day for killing a few Beaver by [for] my BAND, which is altogether contrary to our agreement [sic] with the treaty Commissioners [sic], when we signed the treaty at this place, would you be good enough to let me know, which Government are we to obey, whether we got to follow the Dominion Laws or the Provincial ... The Provincial laws are very awkward to us. Because we were told by the treaty Agent, that we were not forbidden to kill a few Beaver for eating, now we do not kill them to play with, if we do kill some it is mainly for food, I am asking you as a favour, to let me know by the first convenient change what we have to do about this beaver question which has been very very unsatisfactory to us since good many years. and at the same time I hope you will be kind enough to cause the R.N.W.M.Police to refund me my money, and to give back the beaver that were seized [sic] from my Chipewyan Band. [2 Jan. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A]

J.D. McLean, the assistant deputy and secretary for Indian affairs, replied on 13 February 1913 that the treaty itself bound the Indians to follow regulations that may be made, and “It is clear that the regulations laid down by the Provincial authorities must be adhered to.” However, he also advised that it was “allowable to kill beaver for food when none other is obtainable,” although the beaver skins could not be marketed (McLean to Laviolette, c/o H.B. Co., 13 Feb. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A).⁴

Dominion and Indian Agent A.J. Bell at Fort Smith interpreted the local situation differently, on the grounds that the superintendent general had not yet seen fit to invoke section 66 of the Indian Act. He pointed out that Indians in the North-West Territories could legally kill beaver and that prohibiting beaver hunting “works a hardship upon the Indians ... The Country in which they occur is of enormous size, and thinly populated by Indians, there is little fear of the Beaver being killed off” (Bell to the Supt. Gen., 9 Jan. 1914, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A).

Chief Laviolette’s anger was palpable, but his tactic was reasoned, a letter demanding redress, justified by the treaty. Other commentary from the North in this period reflects the privation of starvation years and resentment that outsiders could direct local affairs. When Seton (1911:22-23)

travelled down the Athabasca River, he had much to say about the Indians and Half-breeds who crewed the boats:

Gratitude seems an unknown feeling among these folk; you may give presents and help and feed them all you like, the moment you want a slight favour of them they demand the uttermost cent ... Among themselves they are kind and hospitable, and ... their attitude toward us is founded on the ideas that all white men are very rich, that the Indian has made them so by allowing them to come into this country, that the Indian is very poor because he was never properly compensated, and that therefore all he can get out of said white man is much less than the white man owes him.

When he met with four Chipewyan men, as a member of a Royal North-West Mounted Police party looking for guides into the buffalo country, "Sullen silence greeted us ... we could feel their covert antagonism" (36). We should be surprised if it were otherwise, in the wake of privation and what northerners saw as broken promises only a few years following the solemn agreement of Treaty No. 8. Chief Pierre Squirrel told Seton: "You see how unhappy we are, how miserable and sick. When I made this treaty with your government, I stipulated that we should have here a policeman and a doctor; instead of that you have sent nothing but missionaries" (94). The following year, ethnologist Robert Lowie (1959:31) reported "that these Chipewyan were miserably poor."

The immediate difference between these and earlier cycles of difficulty was that, for the first time, government agents now sought to impose wildlife regulations that restricted options (hunting bison and beaver) that had once been freely available to local hunters. However, the ability of the fur trade and the mixed economy to provide an adequate livelihood never fully recovered, as it had following earlier episodes of privation. This critical shift was set in motion by the onset of World War I in 1914. The British government suspended its fur auctions, and the Hudson's Bay Company instructed its traders not to buy fur or to extend credit in the winter of 1914-15.⁵ While many officers extended some credit clandestinely, recording it in a secret "Purgatory Ledger," Indians felt betrayed by this violation of a long-standing tradition, according to trader Philip Godsell (1946[1934]:148-151; see also Ray 1990a:98, 105, 212, 1990b:197, 199). J.K. Cornwall wrote a memo in which he claimed that "the gratuity system and secret bookkeeping on the part of Post Managers to cover up their debt ... thoroughly undermined the reputation of honesty of all traders ... with the Indians" (British Columbia Archives [BCA], Blanchet fonds).

Police predicted that Indians would face a “hard winter” (RNWMP 1915:135). Sergeant Mellor, in charge of the Fort Chipewyan detachment, reported first-hand on what happened:

The system of giving credit to the Indians in the Fall, has been entirely stopped this winter by all the trading concerns in the country, and consequently the Indians find themselves unwontedly hard up. Practically the whole of the hunters were at Fond du Lac, awaiting my arrival, and after careful consideration I considered it necessary to give them each a couple of boxes of cartridges, on behalf of the Indian Department ...

The prices for fur are so extremely low this winter, that even the best hunters are unable to kill enough to purchase even the bare necessities of life, and without Government assistance a condition of semi starvation would undoubtedly ensue. The Fond du Lac Indians did not believe that these conditions were caused by the War, and considered the whole thing a put up job of the fur traders, and consequently were very bitter against them. [Report, 6 Jan. 1915, LAC, RG 18, v. 1817]

In February, travelling between Fort Chipewyan and Fort Smith, he reported: “No Indians were seen along the river, as in former years; they are all far in the bush rustling a living in these hard times” (patrol report by A.H. Mellor, 1 Feb. 1915, LAC, RG 18, v. 1817).⁶ By March, Indians were reported to be faring well overall:⁷

Most of the Indians at Fort Chipewyan are away hunting and fishing. In the beginning of the winter they were hard up. The N.C.O. I/C. at that point issued them some nets enabling them to go fishing. At the present destitute rations are issued to four Indians, all deserving cases. Besides this there is practically no destitution in the district at the present time, but in the spring the Police on behalf of the Indian Dept. may have to come to the assistance of some Cree Indians at both Fort Chipewyan and Fort McMurray as the spring is always “hard times” for this tribe. The Chipewyans have made a good hunt and are quite well off.

Fur bearing animals are still fairly plentiful at Fort Chipewyan. Some Indians who have made a good hunt are holding their fur hoping that they will receive higher prices later on. On account of the present European War the fur traders are paying very low prices. The Cariboo is found in large numbers at 3 or 4 days out of Chipewyan, especially at Fond du Lac where the natives live almost entirely on Cariboo meat ... At Fort Chipewyan during May waxies migrating North will be killed by hundreds which will

assist the people living at the fort. [Patrol report from Inspector Rheault, 24 March 1915, LAC, RG 18, v. 1818]

Superintendent McDonnell saw a moral lesson for the Indians in this tough experience: "The Indians are not a provident race and possibly the inexorable terms under which they are obliged to trade now, 'nothing for nothing,' may teach them the value of laying by for a rainy day. If this is once driven into them I see no reason why any of them should be really hard up, as the resources of the country are practically limitless" (Appendix G, 1 Oct. 1915, in RNWMP 1915:145).

Competing traders took advantage of the vacuum left by the temporary withdrawal of the Hudson's Bay Company from active trade. J.H. Bryan, an Edmonton-based trader, obtained funding in New York to open posts at Fort Chipewyan and other northern locations. J.K. Cornwall claimed that Bryan "landed at Chipewyan with considerable cash" and "found the North ready for his cash ... He had agents everywhere and trusted his money in a most reckless manner to every Tom, Dick and Harry who laid any claim to fur buying" (BCA, Blanchet fonds). Lamson and Hubbard Corporation of Boston bought out Bryan in 1918 and reorganized the operation as Lamson and Hubbard Canadian Company Ltd. They expanded their posts and invested in a transportation system (Ray 1990a:103-104). Another strong competitor was Colonel James Cornwall's Northern Trading Company of Edmonton, which in 1913 purchased Hislop and Nagle.⁸ This company also invested in transport, expanding its Northern Transportation Company (104). More boats meant that freight rates began to drop, which encouraged smaller buyers and cash fur buying. Colin Fraser was still operating as an independent trader, and Charles Largent entered the community as another independent at the end of the war (Mercredi 1962:20). All companies began to buy fur with cash (Ray 1990a:196).

A rich source on the conduct and attitudes of these independent traders are the letters home written by Claire Dawson, who worked for the Northern Trading Company in Smith's Landing from 1912 to 1915. In 1912, he was still buying fur with food or goods, not cash (letter to Folks, 24 June 1912, Glenbow Archives [GA], Claire Dawson fonds). He had a personal trade on the side: "I have cleaned up \$235 since I left Edmonton, besides my salary [sic] I came up in this country to make money, and if everything goes as it has I will surely do it, for I am buying and trading for myself as well as for the Company" (letter to Folks, 11 July 1912, GA, Claire Dawson fonds). His comments about the Indians show disdain without social conscience:

The Indians are great beggars [sic], and they know pretty well the price of fur, so they take the fur to the one that will give them the most stuff for nothing. They are the biggest [sic] liars on earth, they have got a white man beat a mile. After you get their fur and give them a lot of stuff for nothing they will beg for debt ... and when you give them debt, you have a h-- of a time getting it out of them. [Letter to Folks, 28 Dec. 1912, GA, Claire Dawson fonds]

Of course we do not let the Indians know what fur is worth on the outside, that is part of our business to keep them from finding out. [Letter to Folks, 24 Feb. 1913, GA, Claire Dawson fonds]

I do not attend the Indian dances, or play cards with them. I do not have any thing more to do with them than I really half [sic] to, for if a white man mixes with them they get to thinking that they are just as good as he is, and try to rub it in. [Letter to Folks, 24 July 1913, GA, Claire Dawson fonds]

A person has to understand how to handle these natives, to keep on the good side of them. If one of them gets it in for you they all have it in for you ... I have managed to get in just fine with them ... All the rest of their traders are Englishmen and Canadians, and they are to[o] slow to be good traders. A fellow to trade with these Natives, wants to keep telling them how much you think of them, and that he is the best hunter in the North etc., and all the time you are telling them that you want to be skinning them all you can ... It would not do for a "good Christian" to be a trader. [Letter to Wayne Dawson, 6 March 1914, GA, Claire Dawson fonds]

Arthur Ray (1990a) has pointed out that the competitive and more highly capitalized fur trade contributed to an expanded market for furs that proved attractive after the war to White trappers, who had been mostly absent in this region before the war. The provincial and federal governments accommodated the postwar invasion of White trappers by imposing new, more severe, and more closely supervised restrictions on land use.

RELIEF EFFORTS AND HEALTH CARE

When necessary, the government channelled some relief through local traders and missionaries, already powerful actors in the community. For

example, in 1907, basic foods, ammunition, and netting twine valued at \$1,727.68 was supplied by Revillon Frères to the Indian Affairs Department for use in Fort Chipewyan to relieve destitution (Auditor General 1908:45; see also RNWMP 1909:134).⁹ Henry Bury criticized this kind of arrangement. He questioned the impartiality of traders and missionaries and accused traders of fraudulent practices, “unloading ... his inferior goods on the unsuspecting Indian, at a stiff price to the Government” and billing the government for Indian indebtedness without eliminating the debt. He also claimed that the government’s role in providing relief was not understood, because Indians believed that the charity came from the Hudson’s Bay Company. He recommended that government officials distribute future relief directly, “so as to impress upon the Indians the exact source from which assistance emanates,” and suggested the job be given to the Royal North-West Mounted Police (report, 7 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042).

The missionaries also issued some relief on their own accord. The Oblate priests provided “goods to natives in distress and they expect those helped to repay them when they are in a position to do so. In most instances those natives assisted by the missions are also in debt to the traders and after a successful hunt settle their accounts with the mission first and the regular trader has to wait” (report from Supt. Sanders to RNWMP Commissioner, 6 Aug. 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 1643, file 125, pt. 2). To Hudson’s Bay Company and other managers, this practice was unwelcome competition.

Most medical aid was provided by the missionaries and by local residents themselves, as it had been in the days before treaty, although the government now paid for some medicines on what seems to have been a regular basis. For example, in 1907, the Indian Affairs Department purchased “medicines and medical appliances” for twelve northern posts valued at \$447.24 (Auditor General 1908:45). However, these medicines were largely ineffective against any of the illnesses present in the community.

Table 10.1 lists some of the epidemics that hit Fort Chipewyan during these decades, but the record on health and disease is unclear and incomplete. In 1900, Dr. Edwards described adults among the Beavers as having necks “scarred where the glands have suppurred [from scrofula], and those of the younger generation show active evidence of the disease [tuberculosis]” (Leonard and Whalen 1998:55).¹⁰ While Principal Sister McDougall reported that the boarders at Holy Angels school in Fort Chipewyan enjoyed good health, one boy died of tuberculosis in the 1906-07 year (in DIA 1908:361). Inspector Conroy, in company with Dr. McDonald on his 1910 treaty trip, reported that at Fond du Lac Indians

were very healthy, but at Fort Smith, “These people are infested with tuberculosis” and at Fort Resolution, “tuberculosis and scrofula are largely the cause of the deaths” (DIA 1912:190). Police reports for 1907 and 1908 also indicated that people were mostly healthy, with no cases of infectious diseases (RNWMP 1908:29, 1909a:121). Yet Seton (1981:93-94) reported: “It seems that very few of these people are well. In spite of their healthy forest lives they are far less sound than an average white community. They have their own troubles, with the white man’s maladies thrown in. I saw numberless other cases of dreadful, hopeless, devastating diseases, mostly of the white man’s importation.” Bury reported that the “most common diseases are consumption dysentery and scrofula.” He attributed the high incidence of illness and mortality to “inter-marriage, mode of living, neglect, and ignorance” (report, 7 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042). In 1915, Dominion Agent A.J. Bell, newly returned from Fort Smith, called tuberculosis “the plague of the north” and pleaded for a sanatorium and other preventative measures (*EB*, “Two Priests,” 29 March 1915:6). Today, the wide range of diseases afflicting people would be treated by supportive care, sanitation measures, and antibiotics, and ideally they would be prevented by vaccination.

A provincial Public Health Branch was part of the first Department of Agriculture and became a separate department in 1919. The first annual report of the new department was self-congratulatory: of all the provinces, only Alberta and New Brunswick had departments devoted to public health (Alberta Dept. of Public Health 1920). Yet both the branch and the department concentrated their efforts in more populous regions of Alberta and were greatly concerned with the health of immigrants. Despite the illnesses afflicting northern peoples and their requests for medical help, by 1918 officials for the Public Health Branch travelled only as far north as the hospital at Athabasca Landing. There was no widespread campaign to vaccinate for smallpox, although public health officials wrote about how the growing population was vulnerable to the disease. Both H.A. Conroy and Mounted Police officers reported cases of smallpox in the Athabasca District, including Athabasca Landing and Grand Rapids. It was well known that tuberculosis was common in the province, but treatment efforts were just beginning (Alberta Dept. of Public Health 1920:9). In 1918, the province adopted a policy of “free vaccines and sera,” though “free” may have meant “at cost price” (Alberta Dept. of Municipal Affairs 1919:9; Alberta Dept. of Public Health 1922:8). There was no organized system for distribution. Statistical information about mortality among the Indian population did not appear until the 1927 annual report of the Vital

TABLE 10.1 Epidemics and illnesses in Fort Chipewyan and vicinity

Date	Illness	Source
Spring 1899	Influenza epidemic	AD, Mission de la Nativité Codex, p. 123
Summer 1900	Chickenpox epidemic at Smith's Landing	Leonard and Whalen 1998:86
Summer-Winter 1900	Influenza epidemic	<i>Edmonton Bulletin</i> , "Chipewyan Notes," 10 Dec. 1900:5; HBCA, B.39/a/60:188
Summer 1901	Epidemic of "la grippe" (influenza)	AD, Mission de la Nativité Codex, p. 138
Summer 1902	Measles	Mercredi 1962:7; Arthur J. Warwick to Bishop Young, 16 Sept. 1902, PAA, A.281/309; Camsell 1966[1954]:152
Winter 1908-09	"An epidemic of grippe" at Fort Chipewyan	Conroy in DIA 1910:187
Spring 1909	Polio or stroke? "Paralysis of the legs and arms" in the Hay River area	Letter from R.W. McLeod, Sgt. in Charge Ft. Vermilion, to Officer Commanding, "N" Division, 12 March 1909, LAC, RG 18, v. 369, file 131
Summer 1910	Two cases of smallpox, at Athabasca Landing and Grand Rapids; tuberculosis and scrofula at Fort Smith and Fort Resolution	Conroy in DIA 1912:188, 190
Winter 1911-12	"Numerous cases of severe colds and some accidents"	A.J. Bell in DIA 1913:128
Fall 1913	"Considerable sickness"	Report by Corp. La Nauze, 14 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 18, v. 1717
January 1917	"LaGrippe"	14, 15 Jan. 1917, PAA, A.13/11
July 1918	"Much sickness about"	15 July 1918, PAA, A.13/11
September 1919	Whooping cough	5 Sept. 1919, PAA, A.13/11
February 1920	Influenza	Feb. 1920 entries, PAA, A.13/11
March 1921	Smallpox	1921 entries, PAA, A.13/11
Spring 1922	Influenza	1922 entries, PAA, A.13/11
Winter 1923-24	Diphtheria	Oct. 1923 and Jan. 1924 entries, PAA, A.13/11
July 1928	Influenza	July entries, PAA, A.13/11

Statistics Branch, which points to a lack of provincial concern in earlier years (Alberta Dept. of Public Health 1929).

The Department of Indian Affairs did send medical officers such as Dr. Christopher West, Dr. O.C. Edwards, and Dr. A. McDonald on the annual treaty parties, but they could do little on such brief trips (Edwards to David Laird, Indian Commissioner, 6 July 1902, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354; RNWMP 1908:27, 1909:121; Fumoleau 1975:110). Dr. Edwards provided smallpox vaccinations at the posts and also dispensed vaccine to the nursing sisters (Leonard and Whalen 1998). The medical reports of Fort Chipewyan men who served in World War I (see below) also indicate that many people at the post, though perhaps not people living in the bush, were vaccinated during the prewar years.

Other travellers brought their own medical supplies and were often called upon for aid. Seton, for instance, had come “equipped with a ‘pill-kit,’ an abundance of blisters and bandages, and some ‘potent purgatives.’” He did a considerable amount of “doctoring” on his trip, boasting that “I was a medicine man of repute” (Seton 1981:14). His occasional genuine attempts to help people must be balanced against his unseemly jocularly about the naïveté of Indians who so desperately needed cures that they would trust to his remedies.

Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962:7) remembered that in 1902, when he left school, “There was only one sister who had trained for nursing and she was the only one taking care of all the sick.” In 1910, the boarding school or convent at Fort Chipewyan was described as having “hospital accommodation,” although that seems to have been only “a special room ... kept for cases of sickness” (note for file, 5 Dec. 1910, and extract from Inspector Conroy’s report, 18 Nov. 1911, both in LAC, RG 10, v. 6354).

Dr. Donald was the first Indian agent appointed to the Treaty No. 8 area, posted to Lesser Slave Lake in 1908 (RNWMP 1909:121), too far away to help Fort Chipewyan residents. Dr. A. McDonald became the first resident physician in the region, arriving at Fort Smith in 1913 and staying on when St. Ann’s Hospital opened in 1914, under the Grey Nuns (Fumoleau 1975:114). Madeline Bird (1991:48-49) remembered when the hospital opened:

We hear that the sisters were taking care of people. The people trusted the sisters, so it was easier in their minds to go there when they had to. When the very sick people were taken there and then came back cured, the people thought big miracles were happening. Some people went only when they were really sick – just about dying, and the hard trip was very difficult on

them. When some of them died and had to be buried in Fort Smith, that also scared the people a lot. No matter what, there was still lots of suffering of different kinds.

The Department of Indian Affairs provided the hospital with “two large tents ... for the treatment of consumptive patients” (report of Gerald Card in DIA 1917:57). Fresh air and sunshine were considered good treatments for tuberculosis.

The Anglican missionaries also continued to provide some medical aid. In 1917, when “nearly everybody [was] down with a form of LaGrippe,” the minister was dispensing medicine of some kind (14, 15 Jan. 1917, Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], A.13/11). When Reverend Gibson and his wife arrived in Fort Chipewyan in June 1918, Mrs. Gibson, who might have been a practical nurse, took an active role in caring for the sick and delivering babies until she left the community in 1930, quite ill with an unspecified illness, to die not long after in Edmonton (Jan. entries, PAA, A.13/11; Crawley 1940:168).¹¹

Local people themselves had a considerable repertoire of knowledge about diseases, treatments, and childbirth. Some people were known for their detailed knowledge of herbal and spiritual medicine. Madeline Bird (1991:70-73) remembered “good medicine women,” mostly Cree, who were specialists, but she also pointed to her own knowledge of effective medical plants. Jenny Flett (2005), a Scots Métis woman who provided local nursing services, herself sought the assistance of “Cree medicine,” which she found efficacious.¹² Most people had remedies they could employ, as they do today. In the early twentieth century, such medicines should have been at least as effective as most European medicines, in some instances superior, and probably less harmful. Women were assisted in childbirth by other women, some of them skilled midwives.¹³ Remembered in the community are Eliza (Loutit) Fraser, whose daughter Jenny (Fraser) Flett also became a renowned community midwife, and Esther (Dadzene) Adam, a Chipewyan midwife.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLING

The years after treaty saw the gradual upgrading of the mission’s school and the Holy Angels residence (the convent). The Department of Indian Affairs provided an annual grant of \$72 for each treaty child in a mission school (Fumoleau 1975:107). Although at the time of treaty Bishop Grouard



PHOTO 10.1 Eliza (née Loutit) Fraser was a community midwife and nurse. This photo shows her with her husband, Roderick Fraser, in the early twentieth century. | Trudy Ann Plamondin, private collection

had asked that Holy Angels be recognized as a boarding school for one hundred Indian children, which would have realized a government grant of \$7,200 (108), Inspector Conroy reported in 1911 that the convent could accommodate only fifty-four pupils, with average attendance about forty-five children (extract from report, 18 Nov. 1911, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354). The very fact that Conroy made this report indicates that Indian Affairs had begun to bring the northern residential schools within its jurisdiction. Department of Indian Affairs annual reports included reports by the schools it funded, including Holy Angels school at Fort Chipewyan. Department correspondence shows attempts to monitor the facilities and education provided for status Indian children at Fort Chipewyan and elsewhere.

In 1911, Inspector Conroy included a detailed description of the boarding school and an overview of the classwork, which “follows pretty closely the regulations of the Department” (extract from report, 18 Nov. 1911, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354). Bury thought that the quality of schooling was good. Children learned “such essential features as religious knowledge, French or English, reading, writing, arithmetic, cleanliness and domestic duties

such as cleaning fish, making moccasins, wood-chopping, &c. analagous [sic] to household science" (report, 7 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042). Yet he wondered if this education truly benefited boys, the eventual "breadwinner or wage-earner in embryo." In the mission school, "he has had no opportunity to develop his natural instinct for hunting and trapping, by which he would be able to more easily earn his livelihood, and the result is he is to all intent and purpose, a loafer and apt to become a burden on the State. In addition to this, he has not been educated to such an extent as will enable him to procure a position with the trader of the North" (Report, 7 Nov. 1913, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042). He recommended that a boy should leave the school at twelve rather than fifteen, while he still had several "receptive" years to "develop his instinct for woodcraft," or be given training in fishing, trapping, and woodcraft to prepare him for a later life on the land.

The government maintained its concern for the mission facilities and the well-being of resident students. Conroy reported on the mission's garden, which in 1911 produced eight hundred bushels of potatoes and other vegetables, and its livestock, comprising eight cows, four heifers, and a bull. He recommended that the department provide "two blackboards, a dozen desks, some wall maps of the Dominion and the north country, and a globe" (extract from report, 18 Nov. 1911, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354). A later report recommended that a proper well be dug, although Conroy did not support this proposal until 1918 (H.A. Mackie to Robert Rogers, Min. of Public Works, 8 Sept. 1915 and H.A. Conroy to Mr. Scott, 20 Nov. 1915 and 1 Nov. 1918, all in LAC, RG 10, v. 6354).¹⁴ In 1917, the department paid for two sewing machines for the mission, which earned a letter of thanks from Victorine Lepine and Clementine McKay (Sec., Northern Trading Co., to Sec. DIA, Edm., 6 Sept. 1917, and letter to Supt., 10 Nov. 1917, both in LAC, RG 10, v. 6354).

A.J. Bell's report for 1913-14 claimed that both Chipewyans and Crees were "anxious" to have their children educated. Some of the Crees, he wrote, sent their children to Holy Angels. The Chipewyans he considered to be "most capable business men," and presumably they too considered formal education useful to their children (DIA 1914:54). From his report, the Aboriginal population seems to have viewed the local schools positively at this time. Today, it is often forgotten that Aboriginal people asked for schools when they negotiated their treaties, including Treaty No. 8. They believed that formal education would give their children the skills they needed to take their place as equals in the new Northwest.

WAR AND PESTILENCE

World War I

For Fort Chipewyan, World War I and its aftermath of disease constituted a symbolic dividing line between a world of local autonomy and self-sufficiency and a persistent, if episodic, decline that followed the war's end. As World War I got under way, a number of non-Aboriginal men who seem mostly to have been from "outside" volunteered for service, beginning in 1915.¹⁵ In 1916-17, Canada introduced a system of national registration, anticipating conscription to feed the war's appetite for young men. Many northern Indians living in remote settlements might not have registered until they met with Inspector Conroy in June 1917 to receive their annuities, but presumably the men of Fort Chipewyan registered during the preceding winter. Treaty No. 8 Indians and those of other regions believed that freedom from conscription was a treaty right and strongly protested enforced military service. While the federal government nevertheless initially planned to include Indians under the Military Service Act of 1917, in the end they were exempted (Dempsey 1999:36-41; Canada 1966:5, 6). During the 1918 trip to pay Treaty No. 8 annuities, conscription was discussed at Forts McMurray, Chipewyan, and Fitzgerald. Indian Agent Gerald Card assured people that "the Government was not conscripting Treaty Indians" (extract from Sergt. A.H. Joy's report, 25 July 1918, LAC, RG 10, v. 6921).

At least five Métis men from Fort Chipewyan were drafted under the Military Service Act: Napoleon Lepinie (age twenty-four), Colin Henry Loutit (twenty-nine), James Flett (twenty-five), Joseph Victor Mercredi (twenty-five), and Henry Sanderson (twenty-two).¹⁶ The Anglican Journal entry for Saturday, 20 July 1918, reads: "Men depart for Calgary to be trained for the front" (PAA, A.13/11). The first four men travelled together and on 10 August 1918, enlisted in the Canadian Expeditionary Force. Their regimental numbers are in sequence. They were initially assigned to the 1st Depot Battalion Alberta Regiment. Colin Henry Loutit, Joseph Victor Mercredi, and probably Napoleon Lepinie served only in Canada, but James Flett was transferred to the 21st Reserve Battalion and shipped out from Quebec on 26 September 1918. He contracted influenza either while awaiting transport or on the ship, developed pneumonia, and was admitted to the military hospital in Devon "in a dying condition." He died the same day and was buried in nearby Plymouth Cemetery. This unfortunate young man might have been the only person from Fort Chipewyan

TABLE 10.2 World War I casualties from the Fort Chipewyan region

Name	Date of death	Place
James Flett	12 October 1918	England
R.B. Garfit	Unknown	Unknown
Henry Loutit	26 April 1915	France
Lawrence (Larry) McDermot	22 August 1917	France
Hugh MacPherson (identity unclear)	Unknown	Unknown
Frank H. Minchin	30 May 1918	Somme, France
Robert Swaine Salmon	2 June 1916	Ypres, Belgium
W. Hodson Stewart	25 September 1915	Belgium
Lieutenant Stuart Fowden Trotter	6 July 1917	France

Source: Names taken from the plaque in St. Paul's Anglican Church, Fort Chipewyan, courtesy of Oliver Glanfield. Dates found in LAC, RG 150 files.

to die in 1918 from the infamous Spanish influenza (LAC, RG 150, boxes 3151-1, 5585-2, 5752-10, 6125-33, 8635-37). Henry Sanderson, who shipped out at the same time as James Flett, also contracted and was hospitalized for influenza, but he survived. While he never saw military action, he was awarded the British War Medal for serving in the Canadian army before the armistice. He returned to Fort Chipewyan after he was discharged in 1919 (LAC, RG 150, box 8635-37).¹⁷

A plaque in St. Paul's Anglican Church in Fort Chipewyan memorializes Flett and eight other men who died, many at battles that still resonate with Canadians, including Vimy Ridge, the Somme, and Ypres (see Table 10.2). Because two of these men were working in the Fort Smith region – Larry McDermot as a teamster around the Slave River rapids (his parents lived in Fort Fitzgerald) and Robert Swaine Salmon at the government farm – it seems that the church named all the men from the region who were killed (see also LAC, RG 150, boxes 6690-12 and 8617-47). Henry Loutit was born in Fort Chipewyan, but in 1914 he was working as a tinsmith in Edmonton, where his mother also lived. He enlisted on 21 September 1914 at Valcartier, the military centre established in Quebec to serve the early war effort, sailed from Canada in October, served in France over the winter, and was killed in action on 26 April 1915 (LAC, RG 150, box 5752-12).

At home, the Anglican Church supported the war effort by taking collections at its services “for the Red Cross Society and for Prisoners of War in Germany” (Dec. 1916, 31 Dec. 1917, PAA, A.13/11). On 2 December 1918,

Reverend Gibson wrote in his journal, “News came in from McMurray that the War had come to an end. The Flag was unfurled to the breeze, and the children given half day’s holiday, to celebrate this glorious event” (PAA, A.13/11). The following Sunday, a special thanksgiving service marked this welcome news.¹⁸

The Great Flu and Small Pox

The happy news about the end of the war was shadowed by “News ... of a terrible epidemic – *Spanish influenza* – otherwise known as the ‘Flu.’ People becoming a little scared. It seems to be affecting the whole of the North American continent” (2 Dec. 1918, PAA, A.13/11). The epidemic spread across Canada with the returning soldiers; in Edmonton, the epidemic and its first deaths occurred in October 1918 (Alberta Dept. of Municipal Affairs 1919:9, 56). Amazingly, it might not have reached Fort Chipewyan during the 1918-19 winter, as Sergeant Joy explained:

Luckily the disease did not penetrate any further north than the latter place [Ft. McKay], thanks to the precautionary measures taken by the postal authorities for disinfecting the mail, and those who attended to the disinfecting of all travellers and other matter coming into the north ...

The warning given by the Agent and others to the Indians throughout this Agency against remaining at the settlement and coming in while there was a chance of the Spanish Influenza spreading through this part of the country proved effective, and in a large number of cases beneficial, for as soon as those who are generally in the habit of staying in the settlements were advised, they immediately left for the bush and did not return to the settlement only under circumstances of necessity until mid-summer and through this paid more attention to hunting with good results. [9 July 1919, LAC, RG 10, v. 6921]

Timing was another helpful factor. By mid-October, most Chipewyans and Crees would have already obtained their winter outfits and gone to their bush settlements, safely removed from travellers who might bring the disease into the North.¹⁹

What was probably a second course of the same influenza hit the community the following winter (6 Feb. 1920, PAA, A.13/11). The Alberta Department of Public Health (1921:9) reported a large number of cases of influenza in the province in the spring of 1920, attacking people who had

not been ill the previous years. Sister Dufault, the principal at Holy Angels, reported that “at the end of our epidemic [in 1920], we led our children to Goose Island,” evidently for convalescence, “the touch of influenza on their constitutions having left them pale and weak” (Sr. M.Z. Dufault to the Secretary, DIA, 30 Dec. 1922, LAC, RG 10, v. 6354).²⁰ This epidemic may have caused the death of Alexandre Laviolette, the Chipewyan chief. He was replaced by his younger brother, Jonas Laviolette, aged forty-one (LAC, RG 10, Chipewyan Band Annuity Paylist; McCormack n.d.).

In March 1921, a case of smallpox was reported in Fort Chipewyan, followed by an epidemic that lasted until August. In 1918, smallpox had been reported on the increase in southern and central Alberta, and it spread northward in the absence of a systematic vaccination campaign. Smallpox in Alberta doubled from the 536 cases reported in 1920 to 1,043 in 1921 (Alberta Dept. of Public Health 1922:12). In Fort Chipewyan itself, about thirty-seven people contracted smallpox, with additional cases in the bush settlements (O.S. Finnie to W.W. Cory, 18 July 1921, LAC, RG 85, v. 585; G. Card to the Assistant Dep. and Sec., DIA, 16 Aug. 1921, LAC, RG 10, v. 6921). Although it was described both provincially and in Fort Chipewyan as a mild form of the disease, Chipewyans were described as severely affected (PAA, A.13/11).

The community was quarantined by the police (Flett 2005; 13 July 1921, PAA, A.13/11). Passengers continuing downriver on the SS *MacMurray*, a steamboat, were not allowed to land at Fort Chipewyan, nor would the captain take on any passengers there. Some other locations, including Fort McKay, Fort Fitzgerald, and Fort Resolution, were affected nonetheless. Fond du Lac seems to have escaped (G. Card, Agent’s Diary 1921, LAC, RG 10, v. 6921; PAA, A.13/11; Godsell 1946[1934]:245; Godsell 1959:63).

Nursing duties fell to Mrs. Gibson, Mrs. Eliza Fraser, and the Grey Nuns. By 1 June, Mrs. Gibson was busy vaccinating residents (PAA, A.13/11). The Alberta Board of Health sent a nurse, Mrs. Jackson, to work with Mrs. Gibson for a few days. She arrived on 3 June and stayed with the Gibsons. Also in attendance “to investigate” and possibly to vaccinate community members was Wilbur W. Bell, described as a fourth-year medical student but probably a newly graduated physician from the University of Alberta. Last, Gerald Card asked Dr. Inge to join his summer treaty party and “investigate” on behalf of the Department of Indian Affairs (March-July entries, PAA, A.13/11; Alberta Dept. of Public Health 1921:11, 1922:12; Evergreen and Gold 1921:42; Agent’s Diary, LAC, RG 10, v. 6921). Jenny (Fraser) Flett, Eliza Fraser’s daughter, was thirteen at the

time. She remembers the quarantine and the arrangements for the sick, who were kept in three tents, about five to six people to a tent. Edward Flett's mother, Adèle, cooked for them (Flett 2005). Some of the sick were also quarantined on Bustard Island (Duchaussois 1928:127). Those who died were wrapped in grey blankets and buried in the lakeshore cemetery (Flett 2005).

People were afflicted by a tragic influenza epidemic in spring 1922, from its virulence perhaps yet another variant of the virus of the 1918 pandemic (30 March 1922, PAA, A.13/11).²¹ It was described in all its horror by one of the Grey Nuns at the mission:

Since April, influenza mowed [down people] everywhere. Almost all at the convent were attacked. Beyond, at distances that the missionaries and sisters were unable to cross in time, it was terrible. A hundred of the Indians are dead. They didn't know how to look after themselves. They no longer had the means, poor things. Mgr. Jousard brought help to the Chipewyans, and Father Jaslier, to the Crees. They found almost everyone lying among the dying. Famine added to the sickness: they go hungry in all the camps. The missionaries came back looking for all available provisions to distribute. The Chipewyan chief and his family were very far away when he was hit by the epidemic. They moved laboriously for several days, but soon the living were giving out and the dogs dying. They were given the skins to eat that they were bringing: it was not enough, several perished and the people arrived here half dead. One of our former students, Marguerite, succumbed on the trip.²² [Duchaussois 1928:119, my translation]

The original Chipewyan headmen, Julien Ratfat and Sept Hezell (also Helzell or Hinzell), probably died in this epidemic.²³ Some victims who died in the bush were buried on traditional scaffolds, an option for families too weak to dig graves in frozen ground (McCormack 1985-88).

Madeline Bird (1991:23-24) recounted the suffering in Fort Chipewyan:

The people were dying right and left. The healthy men were busy digging graves. About six to eight were buried in one grave rolled up in canvas ... At last, mass was said in the convent chapel, because only a few people could make it to church. Some people were sick only for a few hours and died. Some went to bed at night and never woke up the next morning ... Some people lost all their families in that flu ... I don't think the sisters rested and slept much during that influenza. When everybody was in bed, the sisters

carried up big jars of hot drinks for the kids to drink and prevent sickness and complications. They boiled some roots and made healthy drinks and soups.

People in Fort Chipewyan still have traditions about these epidemics, though the individual epidemics have been conflated and are typically represented as Fort Chipewyan's encounter with the "great Flu." Disease continued to shadow the lives of residents until the second half of the century and might have contributed to current fears about illness and tar sands industrial projects.

Epilogue: Facing the Future

It will be like a log that has started from the middle of the lake. With a breeze behind it, the log will eventually make its way to the shore. This is how I can foresee the laws of the white man in the future. I will not see them myself, but the people who will be alive in the future will see this taking place.

– Justin (Mikisew) Martin, as recalled by Felix Gibot,
5 February 1974

The dual tragedies of the Great War and frightening epidemics were emblematic of the disasters that would affect Fort Chipewyan in the years to come. Following on the heels of game restrictions, supervision by law enforcement agents, and the invasion of White trappers that began immediately after the war, it must have seemed that the prophecy of the first Cree chief recalled in the epigraph above was being fulfilled.

What none of the chiefs – Chiefs Martin, Laviolette, or Squirrel – might have anticipated was the way in which their people and way of life, their knowledge, and their treaty rights would be dismissed by those with power over them. From the very beginning, they sought assurances that the promises made at the time of treaty would be respected. Yet the Department of Indian Affairs was an ineffectual champion of treaty rights as they were understood by Chipewyans, Crees, and other signatories to Treaty No. 8. The concept of “the honour of the Crown” lay well in the future.

Aboriginal people were marginalized further by the attitudes of the Euro-Canadians in positions of authority. They were presumed to abuse the very resource base that supported them, and they were considered either unsuitable or at least undesirable as government employees. From Fire Ranger Rafton-Canning's quest for White men to hire for local jobs to the outright racism of Ernest Thompson Seton and others, we can see in the northern documentary record the collective Canadian narrative about nation building and the lack of place within the Canadian nation for unassimilated Aboriginal people. The very real concerns of Chipewyans, Crees, and Métis of the Fort Chipewyan region were largely disregarded when they clashed with initiatives intended to "develop" the North. When Peter Loutit was hired as a fire ranger, and Pierre Gladu and Antoine White Knife as buffalo guardians, it seemed that perhaps things might turn out differently. They did not. Local people worked as guides and auxiliary labour but were rarely placed in positions of authority, and never over Euro-Canadians.

In the nineteenth century, Chipewyans, Crees, and mixed-ancestry people had adjusted successfully to a permanent commodities trade (the "fur trade") that linked them to a broader, developing global economy. They had accommodated the challenges posed to their cosmologies by Europeans and especially missionaries. The fur trade mode of production was what Michael Harkin (2004:xxiv) has called a "creative reformulation" of their previous way of life, a form of revitalization in response to the enormous changes brought to the region by the European presence. It was simultaneously attractive to many Europeans who found their way to this region during the nineteenth century. Rather than being assimilated, Aboriginal people living in the Fort Chipewyan region tended to assimilate the outsiders who came to live among them. But Aboriginal people found it far more difficult to adjust to the post-treaty regime, premised as it was on the hegemony of the nation-state and its Euro-Canadian managers, the subordination of Aboriginal people and their economy, and the imposition of a capitalist system of individual ownership and control.

The patterns that appeared in these early decades of the imposition of White authority over Aboriginal people, the disregarding of treaty rights, and efforts to generate capital from northern resources persisted and intensified in the half-century that followed. State institutions – both federal and provincial – continued to expand, as did the legislative and regulatory frameworks that governed all residents but were aligned with the cultural values of non-Aboriginal Canadians, not Chipewyans, Crees, and Métis. These measures eventually fully integrated the Fort Chipewyan region

into the political economy of Canada. Like other northern regions, it was governed as a periphery in Canadian capitalism, a location for resource extraction but not ownership.

The first serious challenge to the capacity of the fur trade mode of production occurred in the 1920s, when the North was flooded by White trappers who trapped within a capitalist framework, mining the bush for fur. This invasion was the first in a series of crises that tested the stability and resilience of the fur trade mode of production. The autonomy and control sought by Aboriginal residents steadily eroded, and they became economically impoverished. By the 1950s and 1960s, the competing capitalist mode of production that had been supported by federal and provincial government regimes since the signing of the treaty had led Aboriginal people to abandon a century-old bush-based way of life. The alternative sources of employment that were available were few in number and inadequate for livelihood. The plural society of Fort Chipewyan itself transformed with the arrival of non-Aboriginal newcomers committed to Canada's system of class-capitalism, most of whom enjoyed some measure of control over various Aboriginal clients. Yet Aboriginal people never lost sight of the basic principle articulated by Alexandre Laviolette in 1897: "We like to be free in this country." His angry challenge to the North-West Mounted Police was echoed in the terms of Treaty No. 8, as they were understood by Aboriginal signatories, and in all the negotiations and stratagems by Chipewyans, Crees, and Métis in the years that followed.

Chief Martin's prophecy was a story about his fear for the future that was still remembered over half a century later. This important oral tradition was fostered by a fifty-year period of "development" of Canada and the North and "underdevelopment" of the people of Fort Chipewyan, intertwined processes marked by a series of crises and forced adjustments. This account will be told in a second volume that traces the history of the Fort Chipewyan region from c. 1920 to the 1970s. Only after the 1970s and the beginning of a new era of decolonization supported by the Canadian courts did the residents of Fort Chipewyan and members of the two Fort Chipewyan First Nations at last begin to acquire the tools they needed to negotiate their economic and political freedom.

Appendix

Personal Testimony from Fort Chipewyan Residents and Related Persons – Memoirs and Interviews

1962 *Alexis Victor Mercredi: Life History Narrative, Fort Chipewyan*

1974 *Treaty and Aboriginal Rights Research (TARR): Interview transcripts (Restricted)*

Louis Boucher, 6 Feb. 1974, by Richard Lightning

Francis Bruno, 7 Feb. 1974, by J. Deranger

John James Courteoreille, n.d., by Richard Lightning

Felix Gibot, 5 Feb. 1974, by Richard Lightning (published in
Price 1979:155-160)

John Kaskamin, 7 Feb. 1974, by Richard Lightning

Salmon [Salomon] Sepp, 6 Feb. 1974, by J. Deranger

Billy Simpson, 7 Feb. 1974, by J. Deranger

Billy Simpson, n.d., by Charlie Blackman and J. Deranger

Magloire Vermilion, 13 Feb. 1974, by J. Deranger

1977-80 *Patricia McCormack: Taped interviews and partial transcripts (Personal files and University of Alberta Archives; access restricted)*

Ray and Therese Albert, 1979

Robert J. Allan, 1978

Sister Archange J. Brady, 1977

Warren Dahl, 1976

Pat Dixon, 1979

Stu Foster, 1978
 Alan Hamdon, 1978
 Paul Nieman, 1980
 Fred Pinnell, 1978
 Roy Schlader, 1978
 Dr. J. Dewey Soper and Mrs. Soper, 1978
 Madeleine (Tourangeau, Vermilion) Tuccaro, 1977
 Maria (Ennadue Aze) Vermilion, 1977
 Allan Wahlstrom, 1978

1978 *Jim Parker: Alberta Oil Sands Environmental Research Program: Oral history (University of Alberta Archives; available)*

R. Allan
 Ethel Bird
 R. Fraser
 Rosene Grandjambe
 Isabel MacKay
 N. MacKay
 Ben Marcel
 Father Patrick Mercredi, OMI
 Victor Mercredi
 Victoria Mercredi
 R. Schlader

1988 *Patrick Moore: Dance in Northern Alberta; Ernestine Gibot, interpreter; August 1988 (Personal files; excerpts used in Moore [1990, 1993]; access only by permission)*

Snowbird (Napoleon) Marten
 Charles (Shall) Marten
 John James Marten
 Victorine Mercredi
 Salomon Sepp
 Boniface Trippe de Roches
 Bill (Magloire) Vermilion

1991 *Madeline (Mercredi) Bird: Life history narrative, told to and organized by Sister Agnes Sutherland; published in Bird (1991).*

Notes

CHAPTER 1: WRITING FORT CHIPEWYAN HISTORY

- 1 Today, “Treaty No. 8” is often written as “Treaty 8.” I prefer the formality of the former usage, which signifies the ongoing significance of this important alliance.
- 2 Mair was a secretary to the Half-breed Scrip Commission who wrote an extensive memoir about his experience (1908).
- 3 European hierarchical systems treated members of their own society and those of foreign societies in parallel fashion. Internally, the class system mystified objective economic relationships as expressions of personal superiority and inferiority. Externally, Europeans considered themselves superior to the “primitive” peoples they colonized in other parts of the world, despite ambivalence toward and regrets over the loss of so-called simpler, more innocent ways of life, the Rousseauian counter-critique (e.g., Berkhofer 1978:74-77; Brantlinger 2003).
- 4 The Hudson’s Bay Company was originally licensed to trade in Rupert’s Land, which included all lands that drained into Hudson Bay. It later acquired trading rights in more distant regions. Those lands not in Rupert’s Land or British Columbia were named the North-Western Territory in 1859. “The Northwest” is a broad descriptive term for lands north and west of Lake Superior (Prince of Wales Northern Heritage Centre n.d.).
- 5 My ethnographic research was done almost entirely in a time before the contemporary business of formal consent protocols and procedures. Prior to beginning my PhD fieldwork in 1977, I approached the chiefs of the Chipewyan and Cree bands to discuss it with them, but they simply welcomed me to the community without conditions, perhaps because I had been visiting the community since 1968. Chief Fridolin (Fred) Marcel usually called me “my girl,” an English translation of a Chipewyan kinship term for daughter, extending the inclusiveness of a traditional kinship system, and reminiscent of Mary Lawrence’s experience in the late nineteenth century (Fort Vermilion 2008). The two chiefs and the people with whom I worked most closely all strongly held a traditional value that one does not tell someone else what to do, which would be interfering in another’s autonomy or

self-determination. Even when I asked directly for advice, I was normally told, “It’s up to you,” although people often found indirect ways to help me negotiate my dilemmas. The onus rests on individuals, including researchers, to behave with integrity and in culturally appropriate ways if they are to be held in esteem and if people are to be willing to engage with them.

People in the community came to know me as a researcher who visited regularly. They saw the results of the study in copies of the dissertation and papers returned to Fort Chipewyan, and in two exhibits about Fort Chipewyan, one of which was developed as a small traveller and eventually donated to the Fort Chipewyan Museum. Many of the cases from the much larger *Northwind Dreaming* exhibit, containing photos and interpretive text, were also later given to the museum and are still on display there. With the exception of cases in which sensitive personal information is involved, I have used people’s names with discretion, rather than trying to disguise identities, thereby pointing to their authority as sources of knowledge about their community’s history and as my teachers.

In 1999, when I began work on this book, I prepared a detailed ethical proposal that was submitted to and approved by the School of Native Studies, University of Alberta, where I had become a faculty member.

A complex plural society such as Fort Chipewyan has no more homogeneity of peoples nor commonality of interests than elsewhere in Canada. Research could easily privilege or support the agendas of certain groups and conflict with those of others. Yet, ethically, we are bound to try to protect them all and to respect their dignity as human beings, while promoting excellence in scholarship. I have addressed these issues in this book in part by striving to show the positions of different actors in Fort Chipewyan history, stressing the structural conditions within which their actions were embedded. Multivocality, an inherent dimension of a postmodern analysis, is useful here. This book weaves together different threads, resembling in many ways a Métis sash, in which the colours remain distinct.

- 6 Many theorists prefer to distinguish the personal recollections of individuals from the collective body of such recollections that have been transmitted over time. But because both types are found in the broad Fort Chipewyan memory archive, the definition used here is similarly broad.
- 7 The Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation has published two volumes of a traditional land use study relying heavily on oral testimony from their Elders, although much of the discussion is in summary form, not attributed to specific persons (Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation 2003; Tanner and Rigney 2003).
- 8 Two of these narratives exist from Fort Chipewyan, one written by Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962), and the other dictated by Madeline (née Mercredi) Bird (1991) and prepared for publication by Sister Agnes Sutherland. Mary Louis Pratt calls these autoethnographies (1992:7).
- 9 The conference included a complementary focus on the historical community of Fort Vermilion, a centre for Cree and Beaver First Nations.
- 10 Thanks to former Native studies student Karla Moir for bringing this article to my attention.
- 11 At an earlier time, I proposed the subtitle “A History of Canada from the Edge” for this book.
- 12 These terms often bear little correspondence with the diversity of terms people within Fort Chipewyan and other Aboriginal communities use for themselves and others. For instance, many First Nations people, especially older people, refer to themselves as “Indians” or

"Natives." In Fort Chipewyan, members of the Mikisew Cree First Nation sometimes call themselves "Indians" but use "Chipewyans" for members of the Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation, and vice versa. These distinctions are paralleled by correspondence in Hudson's Bay Company and government records that names Chipewyans as "Indians" and Crees as "Crees," reflecting the numerical dominance of the Chipewyans through the first half of the twentieth century (e.g., 8 July and 25 Sept. 1886 entries, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, B.39/a/56:23d, 27d; Library and Archives Canada, RG 10 documents). So even the terms used in this book may be ambiguous.

- 13 The term "white" has been used for a long time to refer to Europeans and Euro-Canadians. When it is used as a proper noun for an ethnocultural identity – equivalent to "Indian," "French," and other proper nouns – I prefer to capitalize it.

CHAPTER 2: BUILDING A PLURAL SOCIETY AT FORT CHIPEWYAN

- 1 Mrs. Elsie Yanik heard this idiom from Mrs. Flett and reported it to Ronald and Suzanne Scollon, who were conducting linguistic research in Fort Chipewyan in the mid-1970s. They saw it as emblematic of the linguistic and cultural convergence that had characterized the community since the nineteenth century (Scollon and Scollon 1979:231). But *le rababou* can also be a broader metaphor for the creation of a plural northern society.

Le rababou was used by Father Albert Lacombe (1874:236, 560) in relation to a *ragoût* or stew made from pemmican (*pimikkânâbiy*), which was itself a mixture of dry, pounded meat and melted grease or fat, sometimes with dried berries. The term does not appear in most dictionaries of Canadian French. Gaston Dulong's *Dictionnaire des canadianismes* (1989:428) spells it *rabadou*, identifies it as an American term, and defines it as a type of stew based on pounded dry bison mixed with grease, i.e., pemmican. A recent Internet site calls it *une fricassée métisse* (Société historique de la Saskatchewan n.d.). Reverend Watkins' dictionary of Cree terms (from the Hudson Bay region) also translates *pimekanapoo* as "pemican soup," with the additional insight that *pimekâo*, an intransitive verb, translates as "He makes pimecan, he mixes them up together" (1865:151, 366).

It must have been an easy step to use *rababou* to signify the mixture of languages spoken in the North (James 1942:82-85; Lindsay 1991:96; Scollon and Scollon 1979:231). At Fort Chipewyan, for instance, it is common to hear people draw on English, French, Cree, and Chipewyan words and grammar. Douaud (1985) has summarized some of the literature about language mixing among Métis and discussed its persistence among older Métis at Lac La Biche, and I heard and participated in this phenomenon at Fort Chipewyan.

- 2 While "bush" is common parlance, its meaning differs considerably for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal people. Europeans and Euro-Canadians tend to equate the bush with "wilderness," a word semantically linked to "Indian," while Aboriginal peoples have considered it their homeland (McCormack 1998a). In Anne Anderson's *Plains Cree Dictionary*, the term for "bush" is *sakâw*, a wooded area, while "wilderness," *pukwa'chuskê*, is an uninhabited land (1975:17, 139, 225, 228).
- 3 By "indigenous" I mean any people who would traditionally have been deemed tribal in the broadest sense, meaning that they are kinship-based and rely upon ties to the land for some measure of their subsistence. The uses and nuances of this term are currently being re-examined and challenged (e.g., Bêteille 1998; Kuper 2003).
- 4 While the term was also used by the North West Company, it may not have denoted a formal administrative region (Keith 2001:212n9).

- 5 These bison are popularly known as “wood bison,” *Bison bison athabascae*. Elsewhere, I have argued against this subspecies designation on the grounds that these bison populations, which extended as far north as Great Slave Lake, were not reproductively isolated from bison of the Great Plains (McCormack 1993) and do not display marked genetic differences (Strobeck 1991). Geist (1991:283) called the designation a “phantom subspecies.” In the mid-nineteenth century, the northern bison were simply called the Strong-wood buffalo (Bernard Ross to Spencer Baird, Fort Simpson, 15 April 1861, in Lindsay 1991:110). This debate continues. Strobeck (1991) and Wilson and Strobeck (1991) have assessed the complex genetic variation among diverse bison populations.
- 6 Men who met with Governor James Knight at York Fort in the summer of 1716 described the dangers they faced, such as the possibility of starvation (Hudson’s Bay Company Archives [HBCA], B.239/a/2).
- 7 This discussion of population briefly summarizes a large literature about the origins and movements of Aboriginal and European peoples and the local impacts of newly introduced diseases.
- 8 It is unclear whether the people of this region experienced the devastating 1780-82 smallpox epidemic, but it appears unlikely (Innis 1964[1956]:152; A. Mackenzie 1970:149; Decker 1988).
- 9 Such familiar names need to be used with caution, because it is not clear to whom they applied in the pre-contact and early contact eras. In 1716, the Athapaskan-speaking or Dene peoples who visited York Fort told James Knight about eleven or twelve “Great Nations,” but it is not possible to link their names with ethnographically known peoples (30 May 1716, HBCA, B.239/a/2:34d; 5 Feb. 1717, HBCA, B.239/a/3:23-23d; McCormack 2003). Based on his travels in the mid-nineteenth century, Father Émile Petitot provided a list of eight broad divisions of Athapaskan peoples from Alaska to Hudson Bay, each subdivided into multiple groups with highly detailed names. Chipewyans were one of his regional divisions (1891, 2005:211-214). “Chipewyan,” represented by diverse phonetic spellings, was actually a Cree term for “Northern Indians,” perhaps all the Athapaskan-speaking peoples that Crees encountered to the north (see also Rich 1949:309-312; Duckworth 1990:10). Beaver Indians also spoke an Athapaskan language.
- 10 The name “Cree” is historically problematic. Cuthbert Grant referred to Crees on the lower Athabasca River in 1786 (Duckworth 1990), and Alexander Mackenzie called them Knisteneaux in his 1801 account (1970:131). Father Lacombe (1874:ix) agreed that *Cris* (Cree) probably derived from *Kinistinok*, which he claimed was a name given to the Cree nation by Sauteaux (Ojibwa) and then adopted by early voyageurs. *Kirištino* was in common use by 1658, derived from “an obscure band” south of James Bay (David H. Pentland’s synonymy in Honigmann 1981:227; see also Thompson 1971:109; Smith 1981b; Rhodes and Todd 1981). But David Thompson asserted that *Na-hath-a-way* was their “native name,” their name for themselves, which suggests that it derives from Western Cree speakers with the *θ* (th) dialect, while *y* dialect speakers (today called Plains Cree) render the name as *nehiyâw* (Anderson 1975:196). *Nehiyâwewin*, translated “the Cree languages” by Anderson (196), is called “collective memory” by McLeod (2002:35), suggesting how Cree values and traditions are embedded in the language.
- 11 In 1932, Warden F.C. Dent reported an Indian trail in Wood Buffalo Park south of Peace River between McIvor and the Athabasca Rivers that passed by “a series of lakes called locally by the Indians Chipewyan Fighting Lakes” (Dent to M.J. Dempsey, 29 March 1932, LAC, RG 85, v. 152, f. 420-2, pt. 2). The name may refer to early battles between Crees

- and Athapaskan peoples, although Athapaskan speakers also battled among themselves in the period before contact with European traders.
- 12 Mackenzie used “Arthebaska” in his 1805-06 journal (Keith 2001:211), a curious conflation of the two dialects.
 - 13 One notable exception was Isabella Thomson, who travelled in 1881 from Stornoway to Fort Chipewyan to join her husband, James. Mrs. Thomson bore three children at Fort Chipewyan and probably worked in the same way as any other woman of the community. In 1885, the family retired to a croft in Tong, on the Island of Lewis (McCormack 1994a).
 - 14 The North West Company also recruited Iroquois and occasionally other Indians (e.g., T. Nicks 1980). Those who remained in northern Alberta assimilated to local Indian cultures and did not remain ethnically distinct, although knowledge of this ancestry persists in the traditions of many families.
 - 15 Similarly, Elihu Stewart (1913:264), who travelled down the Mackenzie River in 1906, reported hearing Father Lazaret and Archdeacon Holmes talking to one another in Cree, the only language they shared.
 - 16 Other terms found in the historical literature include *bois brûlés*, *gens libres* or “freemen,” and *apehtâw kosisân* (e.g., Payment 2001:662; Anderson 1975:48).
 - 17 Father Émile Petitot, on the other hand, referred to “Métis français et Métis anglais” in his 1891 book (74), written with his knowledge of the Métis at Red River.
 - 18 Robert Kennicott, writing from Fort Simpson in 1859, called some workers “Red River French half breeds,” but he did not similarly distinguish Half-breed women, who were presumably local, not immigrant, mixed-ancestry people (Lindsay 1991:28).
 - 19 The community’s population includes another group of French-Métis who moved to the region after World War I from the Lac La Biche region. Their Métis roots are southern.
 - 20 The Beaulieu family history suggests the ethnic complexities involved. John Franklin (1969[1823]:142) identified François Beaulieu II, a sometime resident of Fort Chipewyan, as “a half-breed, who had been brought up amongst the Dog-ribbed and Copper-Indians.” While he may have considered himself Métis, at least in his earlier life he was also a Dene trading chief (Hanks 2000; Smith 1995). Many of the people who settled at Salt River, historically considered a Métis community that Beaulieu founded in 1856, were actually Yellowknives, which followed logically from the kinship ties binding the Beaulieus to these Dene people (Smith 1995:129; Hanks 2000:118).
 - 21 For example, the term *Dene* in its various spellings translates as “people” or “human beings.” This process of learning what John Ewers (1997:23) called an “ethnocentric concept” continued into the twentieth century. Goulet (1998:102) quoted Slobodin, who claimed that when he lived with the Kutchin (Gwich’in) in 1938, “they were not aware that they were Indians.” A Chipewyan man born c. 1954 explained: “The concept of Indian and white became a reality in my early years of school. I was taught that I was an Indian, at the same time being a Dene, [which] was a very confusing experience for me for a long time. I started to understand the concepts of the various names that were attached to us by government and churches such as Indian, Métis, Dene, and the various ethnic groups of Aboriginal people” (Métis Nation of Alberta 2004:20).
 - 22 The term “White” was in use by Europeans for themselves by the end of the nineteenth century, although I have not tried to determine how common such usage was. Bishop Taché (1870:96) wrote that the Indians always referred to the members of the North West Company as “the French” and those of the Hudson’s Bay Company as “the English,” despite the diverse ethnicities of their personnel. Anglican minister George Holmes,

stationed at the Lesser Slave Lake mission, wrote a letter to Bishop Young in which he referred both to the “White man” and a Cree equivalent, “moneyoweyenewa” (28 May 1899, Provincial Archives of Alberta, A.281/148). Anne Anderson’s *Plains Cree Dictionary* (1975:17) translates “Canadian” as *mooniyaw*, a Cree term for “White person” widely used in Fort Chipewyan. It may originate in the word “Montreal” (Jennifer Brown, pers. commun., 2008). “English[man]” is translated as *akayawiw* or *akaysew*, and “English woman” is *akaya’sew iskwew* (34, 42, 146). While the term for “English man” is very old, appearing in both Lacombe’s and Watkins’ dictionaries, Watkins defined *mooneas* as “a novice, ‘a green hand’” (1865:280, see also 57; Lacombe 1874:21). “Frenchman” is *mistik’osiw* in Anne Anderson’s dictionary (1975:42), and *wemistikojiw* in the Lacombe dictionary (1874:154; “men with wooden boats,” Jennifer Brown, pers. commun., 2008) but *pakwaies* in the Watkins dictionary (1865:72). Given the different places where contact occurred, homogeneous terminology would be unexpected.

CHAPTER 3: THE FUR TRADE MODE OF PRODUCTION

- 1 Rodríguez-Alegría (2008) contrasts a “standard” or narrow view of technology to such an expanded “anthropological” view.
- 2 Given the fluidity among local band units, I do not find it structurally useful to distinguish between local bands and the apparently smaller unit of an extended family lodge or hunting group (e.g., Rogers and Smith 1981:144). Even James Smith has agreed that, to the Chipewyan themselves, the distinction “was possibly a matter of indifference” (n.d.:16, see also 1981a:276).
- 3 This section does not attempt to review the ample literature describing the social structures of Crees, Chipewyans, and other Dene groups.
- 4 Gendered distinctions occurred cross-culturally. While men and boys typically sought spiritual sources of power, the situation was more variable for women and girls. For example, David Smith recognized that both Chipewyan men and women at Fort Resolution could have “power,” or *inkonze*, while in northern Saskatchewan, Sharp found *inkoze* only among men (Smith 1973:10; Sharp 2001:79; the spellings of this term follow those of the authors cited). Women always had recourse to more ordinary, practical powers (Cruikshank 1983). Among Omushkego Crees, boys rather than girls were actively trained to seek out medicine power, or *mi-tew* (Bird 2005:ch. 3).
- 5 Wallerstein reminds us that although we typically link cores and peripheries to specific regions, “core-periphery is a *relational* concept, not a pair of terms that are reified, that is, have separate essential meanings” (2004:17-18, see also 28-29).
- 6 Pratt (1992:15) argued that events of the eighteenth century brought about a new European-generated “planetary consciousness”: “a version marked by an orientation toward interior exploration [versus maritime] and the construction of global-scale meaning through the descriptive apparatuses of natural history.”
- 7 These terms are often used without much consistency, and their meanings have changed over time.
- 8 The first settlement colony in the Northwest was the Selkirk Settlement at Red River. Selkirk’s agents were unsuccessful in controlling the Métis or First Nations residents, and the colony eventually developed as a partially autonomous community quite different from the colonies in eastern Canada and the thirteen colonies along the Atlantic seaboard.

- In 1869 its members challenged the right of Canada to move into western Canada. An extensive literature interprets this history.
- 9 Contrast this situation to the western fur trade in the United States, where there were many White trappers or “mountain men.”
 - 10 Even today, it is hard to improve upon wood and babiche snowshoes, paired with moc-casins made from hand-tanned leather, for subarctic winter travel.
 - 11 However, Brown (2001:61, 62) has reminded us that what has been called “marriage” in the fur trade is a term applied with the benefit of hindsight and “implies a misleading degree of uniformity and consensus.” Especially in the earlier years of the developing fur trade, the partners who entered into these relationships undoubtedly shared little understanding of one another’s expectations.
 - 12 Although theoretically synonymous in the fur trade, the two terms – “credit” and “debt” – differ considerably in their connotations and etymologies. “Credit” is a positive term, implying that an individual is trustworthy, whereas “debt” is negative, a state of obligation. These terms thus represent the duality of credit relationships between traders and trappers.
 - 13 Another explanation found in some historical accounts is that, in the mid-nineteenth century, winter rain covered the bison range with ice, and many bison died of starvation. However, Surveyer William Ogilvie pointed out that such an explanation would not account for the decline of bison over the entire traditional range (Dept. of Interior 1893:39). The diminished bison herds undoubtedly created economic difficulties by removing a formerly important source of food and revenue. However, the maintenance of the grasslands on which bison relied into the early twentieth century suggests that the bison range was not abandoned (McCormack 2007).
 - 14 It is not yet clear how these marriages related to pre-contact Chipewyan-Cree marriages, known from oral traditions and some fur trade records. In the early eighteenth century, Crees raided northern Athapaskans for women and children, but other marriages might have occurred in an earlier, more peaceful social situation in which at least some Chipewyans and Crees established alliances between their respective bands. Plural societies predated the arrival of Europeans.
 - 15 Toby Morantz (1990:221) has argued that the Crees of James Bay were neither controlled by debt nor dependent on the Hudson’s Bay Company but “fully in control of their own hunting strategies.”
 - 16 The reasons were probably both ideological and pragmatic. Aboriginal people tended to “make do,” an appropriate tactic when everyone had the knowledge necessary to make most items of technology. This approach can be seen even today among local residents. As well, it was difficult for people who moved around a great deal to carry many items with them, which in turn undermined any tendency to consumerism.
 - 17 Melanesian “big men” are the classic instances in the anthropological literature (e.g., Sahlins 1974[1972]:135-139, 208).
 - 18 John Foster (1985:81) suggests that in the French Canadian tradition, men expected eventually to evolve from “servant” to “master,” which in the fur trade context was equivalent to moving from *engagé* to “freeman.” Hudson’s Bay Company employees were not passive workers but at times were willing to contest the conditions of their employment or bargain for higher wages (e.g., Belyea 2007:102-106; Burley 1997:ch. 6). In their labour revolts, they were surely encouraged by the independence they saw all around them.

CHAPTER 4: THE CREATION OF CANADA

- 1 Since 1982, when Canada patriated its constitution from Britain, the British North America Act has been known as the Constitution Act, 1867 ([U.K.], 30 & 31 Vict., c. 3, reprinted in R.S.C. 1985, app. II, no. 5).
- 2 Much of the development of this discussion of “Indian” and “Métis” was done on behalf of the Métis Association of the Northwest Territories, which commissioned the article cited here (McCormack 1998b).
- 3 Michael Payne (2004:84-85) has pointed to the huge discrepancy between what the Hudson’s Bay Company was paid for selling its interests in Canadian lands and what Aboriginal peoples realized through the treaties.
- 4 During the period covered by the numbered treaties, it appears that, with rare exceptions, the only way in which Aboriginal peoples could acquire legal Indian status was by entering into treaty. Indians who refused treaty were not added to the Indian Register provided for by the Indian Act. That is, in an area covered by a treaty, Indians could not reject the treaty and still register as Indians. This possibility never appears to have been considered. Later, in areas lacking treaties, status Indians were created simply by adding their names to the Indian Register. Those Indians were assigned to bands, which were legal entities created by the Indian Act, and some were even provided with reserves.
- 5 However, ideas about “race,” “racial” mixing, and “half-breeds” were a common part of nineteenth-century discourse in Canada, the United States, and other nation-states (e.g., Stoler 1995:41-50, 2006b:56; Clifton 1989:26-28; Smedley 1999).
- 6 Europeans essentialized ethnicity as a racial identity: “One belongs to a group because one is a bearer of a substance common to other members, irrespective of how one lives” (Friedman 1992:839).
- 7 The federal government passed the first Dominions Land Act, formally “An Act Respecting the Public Lands of the Dominion,” in 1872.
- 8 In the 1870s, the annual Canadian budget was less than the amount the United States spent each year waging war against Indians in the West (Macleod 1976:3).
- 9 The term “Canadian” is problematic even today. While First Nations and Métis people are today Canadian citizens, in the late nineteenth century, “Canadian” was, and in many ways still is, typically used to refer to people with European origins, especially from the British Isles. A synthesized and transplanted British culture became Canada’s cultural referent, and British descendants were ethnically neutral (see also Berger 1970:ch. 2).
- 10 The editors of *BC Studies* (1997-98:4) wrote, “For most of us, colonialism happened elsewhere, and the recognition of it here, and of ourselves as its agents, suddenly qualifies our fulsome accounts of the progress and development of an immigrant society while connecting us with a much less comfortable past.” Historian Robert Berkhofer Jr. (1988:538) stated flatly: “Historians have generally adopted the prejudices of their countrymen in favor of national White progress and policies and hence a view of the Indian as deserving of his fate before the onslaught of civilization.” These views were part of Turner’s frontier thesis. The US New Western History rests, in part, on a deconstruction of national mythology *cum* history about the western frontier.
- 11 Merry (1992:348), the Comaroffs (1991), and Roseberry (1988:166-172), among others, have a great deal of interest in the agency of the colonized, rightly pointing out that relations of power are rarely simplistically linear. Andrea Smith (1994:383) has suggested that colonizers were themselves brutalized by their involvement in the colonial process and has called for more study of how “colonist cultures and mentalities” developed.

- 12 J.M. Bumsted's history of post-Confederation Canada (1992:138-139) claimed that Indian agriculture failed because of inadequate "useful practical assistance." He drew on Carter's analysis (1990) but neglected her crucial argument.
- 13 Travellers to Fort Chipewyan were still using the Methye Portage route in the 1870s, and even into the 1880s, but going by cart to Fort Carlton and Green Lake and thence by boat, rather than using the all-water route via Cumberland House (e.g., Garrioch 1929:10).
- 14 Articles in the *Edmonton Bulletin*, which began publishing in 1882, are a rich source of information about the growth of Athabasca Landing and other aspects of northern Alberta history. Gordon Drever (2001) has prepared a very useful index to the nineteenth-century issues of the *Bulletin*.
- 15 Until railways were built into the Peace River country in the early twentieth century, Métis freighters continued to operate north of Lesser Slave Lake, especially on the road from Lesser Slave Lake Settlement to Peace River Crossing (e.g., Kaiser and Aubrey 2006:31). They also developed the portage route around the Slave River rapids.
- 16 In 1892, William Ogilvie reported that the Hudson's Bay Company sturgeon-head boats, specialized freighters named for their blunt bows, each crewed by ten to twelve men, could carry ten tons (4-5; see also Cameron 1910:41). Later, he reported on improvements made by the company to Grand Rapids, consisting of a channel for the steamboat and a tramway to facilitate transporting freight over the rapids (Ogilvie 1893:4-5).
- 17 The NWMP was modelled after the London Metropolitan Police and the Royal Irish Constabulary. John A. Macdonald had originally intended to recruit Métis for the NWMP, to serve under British officers, a distinctive model of internal policing. After the 1870 conflict at Red River, however, Métis were not considered reliable enough for the NWMP (Lin 2007:6-11; Macleod 1976:8-9; Dickason 1992:281).
- 18 Part of the mythology surrounding the NWMP is that it established itself as an impartial and professional police force and thereby established its legitimacy with Aboriginal people (see also Lin 2007).
- 19 Calling the events of 1885 a "rebellion" valorizes a hegemonic Euro-Canadian definition of what happened. Other names exist. For example, they are known in the Métis communities of Lac La Biche and Fort Chipewyan as "Riel's War" (term from Pete Ladouceur). Crees in Saskatchewan call them *ê-mâyikamikabk*, "Where it went wrong" (McLeod 2002:35). Cree elders at Frog Lake in Alberta refer to the so-called Frog Lake Massacre as *maya kamakow*, "the terrible event," and deny any involvement by Cree people from their community (Fred Fiddler, pers. commun. 1992; translation by Donald Quinney).
- 20 The Canadian government extended its regulation of fisheries to the North-West Territories in 1891. The 1892 Annual Report of the Department of Marine and Fisheries (1893) contains the first discussion of the North-West Territories fisheries. That report made reference to "close seasons," mesh size and illegal nets, and domestic licences and free permits, all aspects of the fisheries regulation. In short, by 1891 the infrastructure of inspection and penalties was already well established.

CHAPTER 5: LOCAL IMPACTS

- 1 Anthropologists were almost exclusively concerned with the people they deemed Indians, not with Métis. Elsewhere, Helm and Leacock (1971:349) called these two stages of contact the "stabilized fur and mission stage" and the "government-industrial stage."
- 2 The broad sweep of this history was capably summarized in Morris Zaslow's 1971 history, *The Opening of the Canadian North, 1870-1914*. His pivotal work was the first serious

- northern history that delineated the joint processes of northern nation building and the development of a northern industrial economy. Coates and Morrison (1989) have discussed his historiographical significance.
- 3 Fur trade competition was opposed by Oblate missionaries. Though officially neutral, they believed that it harmed the Indians and the missions and destabilized the economy (Huel 1998:454-457). To Father Grouard, free traders were a “plague extending against the country” (454).
 - 4 The emigration of these Métis from St. Albert and nearby Lac Ste. Anne can be explained in terms of both push and pull factors (McCormack and Drever 2001:10-14). The push was the ongoing marginalization of the Métis in their old settlements – the perceived threats to their land base in the 1880s and the local decline of economic opportunities. The pull was the opening of opportunities in the Athabasca District: “Freighting as a business will flourish here as it did in the early days around Edmonton, as the surrounding country is tapped by trails suitable for wheels” (*Edmonton Bulletin* [EB], “Lesser Slave Lake,” 5 Jan. 1899:2).
 - 5 Mary Lawrence, who moved to the Fort Vermilion region with her husband, Fred, in 1898, remembered how scared she herself was the first time she heard a steamboat. At first she thought it was “the noise of a huge swarm of bees” (Fort Vermilion 2008:194).
 - 6 Smith’s Landing was named after Captain John Smith, who built the *Grahame* at Fort Chipewyan (EB, “Ft. Chipewyan,” 21 June 1884:3). Also known as Grahame Landing, Smith’s Landing was later renamed Fort Fitzgerald after RNWMP Inspector Fitzgerald, who died in 1911 on a mail run from Fort Macpherson to Dawson City (Mackinnon 1980:24).
 - 7 The use of cash was reinforced in 1899 and after by the Treaty No. 8 annuity payments and the purchase of scrip.
 - 8 Ray (1990a:ch. 3) has discussed some of the difficulties in determining real rates of profit and loss, increases and declines, for the Hudson’s Bay Company during this period.
 - 9 The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that the previous winter’s trade had been “not less than \$100,000 outside the H.B. Co.” (EB, “Local,” 21 May 1887:1).
 - 10 Only two years earlier, Elmore was described as based in British Columbia, presumably at Fort St. John, and trading down the Peace River only as far as Fort Vermilion (Garrioch 1929:189).
 - 11 This association probably resulted from Fraser’s long friendship with Richard Secord, who in turn enjoyed a long friendship and business relationship with John McDougall. J.M. Bannerman and Charles Stewart were Winnipeg financiers who backed McDougall’s merchandising operation in Edmonton until 1886 (Leonard et al. 1981:17, 35; MacGregor 1963).
 - 12 Fraser was married to Flora Rowland, born at Carlton House and daughter of John Rowland (transcript of Flora Fraser’s obituary (*Edmonton Journal* 1941).
 - 13 Peter “Peachy” Pruden had been a free trader in the late 1870s at Lac La Biche, where there was strong opposition to the Hudson’s Bay Company (McCullough and Maccagno 1991:135-139). He was associated mainly with Lac La Biche.
 - 14 William Houle was named by free trader William Fletcher Bredin (1971:14) as the “half-breed” he hired in 1896 to pilot his outfit down the Athabasca River.
 - 15 Fraser remained in Fort Chipewyan until his death at ninety-one years in 1941 (transcript of his obituary in the *Edmonton Journal*, 3 Feb. 1941).
 - 16 While today it is believed that the northern hemisphere has been warming since the mid-nineteenth century (e.g., Weart 2007), some years were warmer or colder than the norm, complicated by local circumstances of wind and precipitation. Willie Traill blamed the

- famine in these winters on “want of snow & wind,” which made it very difficult to hunt moose (Munro 2006:212).
- 17 This winter was the worst since 1877-78, when moose, hares, and caribou were scarce, and Indians trading at most posts were starving (Glenbow Archives, Richard Hardisty papers; see also Cody 1908:201).
 - 18 See Edney (1997) for similar work in India.
 - 19 Zaslow (1975) summarizes this history of geological exploration.
 - 20 Bayne surveyed the lands around northern posts in other regions in the years that followed.
 - 21 Rare statements about the value and accuracy of indigenous knowledge do exist, such as Frank Conibear’s statement that “I have seen what I believe to be proof that the Indians, with centuries of beaver lore behind them were, *as always*, right” (1951:37, emphasis added). Conibear trapped in the Fort Smith region and was the inventor of the famous Conibear trap. Recognition of indigenous knowledge or traditional environmental knowledge at official levels and attempts to build bridges between it and Western science began in earnest only in the 1990s. These efforts relate to contemporary issues about intellectual property and co-management of traditional lands and resources. In 1993, the government of the Northwest Territories adopted an informal Traditional Knowledge Policy that required all future legislation and regulations to consider and incorporate indigenous knowledge (Northwest Territories 1993, see also 1991, n.d.; Abele 1997). The government of Nunavut is pursuing a similar policy. See Bocking (2005) for a recent discussion of changes in the regard for indigenous knowledge.
 - 22 Seven varieties of seeds were distributed: Onega spring wheat, Saxonka wheat, Ladoga spring wheat, Petchora barley, Polar barley, Polar winter rye, and Onega oats (Select Committee 1888:106-107).
 - 23 In a remarkable conflation of negative stereotypes, William Christie, himself of partly Cree descent, testified that the opening up of the Mackenzie Basin would harm the Indians: “When the Indian comes in contact with the white man he suffers. He seems to take readily to the vices of the white man without copying his good traits of character, and becomes lazy and idle. If an Indian can get food with very little exertion he will not work. In the old times, if they had received better prices for their furs than they got they would not have been a bit better off ... Of course, civilized men must eventually come in contact with those Indians; you cannot resist the tide of emigration” (Select Committee 1888:102). Christie believed that while Indian labour was unreliable, it was nevertheless essential, because “You could not get white people to go in there years ago as long as they could get employment in the civilized world.” In short, he did not believe that civilization would make “these Indians self-reliant” (102).
 - 24 William Ogilvie, who undoubtedly read the Senate committee report, echoed this idea in a later report, proposing that fur-trapping districts might be placed “in the names of individuals or companies” to conserve fur (1893:38-39).
 - 25 Much of this discussion is drawn from McCormack and Drever (2001), which relied on the excellent research into these themes in the *Edmonton Bulletin* conducted by Gordon Drever (2001).
 - 26 Their worries about surveyors might have been heightened by stories they heard from Métis from the St. Albert region and from Treaty No. 6 people, whose reserves were being surveyed.
 - 27 Although *wihtikōw* and related terms are Algonquian words, Ridington has described a parallel belief among the Dunne-Za (Beaver), and Fang-Kuei Li recorded a Chipewyan

- wihtikôw* story at Fort Chipewyan in 1928, probably the result of long-term Chipewyan-Cree association and intermarriage (Ridington 1990:160-181; Li and Scollon 1976). While Robert Lowie did not include a *wihtikôw* story in his 1912 “Chipewyan Tales,” he must have heard such stories during his brief stay in Fort Chipewyan in 1908, because he later wrote a fanciful short story, “Windigo, A Chipewyan Story” (1991[1922]). Nathan Carlson (2005, 2009, 2010) has documented multiple *wihtikôw* stories from northern Alberta.
- 28 Kerry Abel (1989:74) stated that in 1874 commissions as justices of the peace were offered to Hudson’s Bay Company officials, one of whom was Roderick Macfarlane of Fort Chipewyan. Perhaps there had been a hiatus in service during the long intervening period.
- 29 Jarvis was not the first choice for this mission. Inspector Routledge, then based at Maple Creek, was originally designated, although this choice was questioned: “In view of the fact that our future policy in the establishment of posts &c., and generally extending Police supervision to the Athabasca District will be much influenced by the report which will be made as the result of the trip, don’t you think it would be better to detail a senior officer, and a man of large and more general experience, than Routledge” (Letter to L.W. Herchmer, 28 Oct. 1896, Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 18, v. 128). The author of this letter (perhaps the comptroller) recommended Inspector Allan, whom he described as “fond of adventure and [who] thoroughly understands the ways and resources of the trappers, both white and Indian.” Nevertheless, the job went to Routledge who was briefed exhaustively in November. At the last minute, illness prevented him from making the trip. Jarvis, his replacement, was hastily given “full instructions” the day before he left (telegram, 3 Jan. 1897, LAC, RG 18, v. 128). Inspector Routledge finally made the trip the following year (Routledge 1899).
- 30 This settlement should not be confused with Little Red River on the Peace River; Jarvis visited both on his trip.
- 31 This declaration is strikingly similar to the reaction of a Dogrib leader at Fort Rae in 1923 to the establishment there of a Mounted Police detachment (Bourget 1938:121). Both leaders were indignant, even outraged, and fearful of police interference.

CHAPTER 6: CHRISTIAN MISSIONS

- 1 Joel Robbins (2007) has accused anthropologists of clinging to a theoretical emphasis on cultural continuity and neglecting the transformative role of Christianity in indigenous societies.
- 2 Raymond Huel (1992:98) argued that rivalries between Roman Catholics and Protestants paralleled those between French and English: “To French-speaking clergy in Canada, Protestantism implied a double loss in the form of eventual assimilation into the English community.” Grant (1984:209, 229) suggested that these rivalries persisted until the Second Vatican Council of 1962-65, which also opened the door to greater acceptance of indigenous forms of Christianity (Huel 1992:116-118).
- 3 According to Martha McCarthy (1995:30), the company also hoped that the missionary presence would prevent Indians in those regions from relocating to Red River.
- 4 While most Oblate missionaries came from Europe, Father Taché was from a well-established Quebec family (Huel 2003:ch. 1).
- 5 Support for Christianity was part of the Hudson’s Bay Company mandate. In 1823, its Northern Department formally passed a number of measures to support organized religion

at its posts. "Divine Service" had to be read at least once each Sunday, "at which every man woman and child must attend, together with such of the Indians who may be at hand, as it may be found proper to admit" (in Peake 1989:8). The company was officially neutral toward the different religious orders and eventually was willing to assist missions as long as they did not interfere with business (8-9).

- 6 For example, one Fort Chipewyan resident told Reverend Crawley that Roderick Macfarlane, chief factor at Fort Chipewyan from 1871 to 1885, held services for his employees in his house each Sunday, "nor was any excuse for non-attendance tolerated, for one of the men was sent around the houses to call all the people to 'Church'" (Crawley 1940:167).
- 7 Kerry Abel (1993:122-123) has argued that such commitment might have been short-lived, for the missionaries could not live up to the expectations the Dene had of them.
- 8 To northern Aboriginal people, spiritual knowledge was, like all resources, potentially available to anyone who had the personal skills to access it, while to Europeans it was a limited resource, mediated by religious specialists. Part of Christian instruction involved explaining why only priests and ministers and their delegates could serve as religious intermediaries.
- 9 For a similar movement on Hudson Bay, see Long (1989) and Brown (2004).
- 10 The growing body of literature on this subject warrants a more serious investigation of this topic at Fort Chipewyan. Additional sources exist beyond the ones cited here.
- 11 We often picture these priests as old men, but they were young when they set out. Huel (2003:30, 33) discusses how Taché's youth was a disadvantage and includes a portrait of the newly consecrated and very young-looking Taché in 1851, when he was only twenty-eight. Perhaps that was one reason the men in the field took pride in the beards they grew.
- 12 The Trippe de Roches family (originally Thetsi) is still associated with Fort Chipewyan (see also McCormack n.d.). By 1846, James Hunter was planning missions at Île-à-la-Crosse and Fort Chipewyan, following the routes used by the fur brigades (Peake 1989:34). Perhaps he sent emissaries to test the waters.
- 13 Hunter was well connected, having married Jean Ross, the daughter of Donald Ross, chief factor at Norway House, after the death of his first wife. He learned to speak Cree, and Mrs. Hunter was a fluent speaker (Peake 1989:12-13).
- 14 Elizabeth McCrum's history of the Diocese of Athabasca (1976) is a useful summary of developments.
- 15 Bompas had joined the missionary service in May 1865 (Cody 1908:30, 2002:xli) and immediately journeyed to Canada. He passed through Fort Chipewyan in October 1865 on his way to Fort Simpson and spent the next two years in the Mackenzie River region (Cody 1908, 2002).
- 16 Although the community might have lacked a minister, it did not lack church life under the direction of Hudson's Bay Company factor Roderick Macfarlane, whom Crawley (1940:167) called "the real builder of the church."
- 17 Bompas had returned to England and was consecrated bishop of Athabasca on 3 May 1874. He married his cousin, Charlotte Selina Cox, on that trip and returned immediately to Canada with Mr. and Mrs. Shaw in his party (Cody 1908:144, 157; Peake 1989:90-92). Frank Peake (1989:91), no admirer of Bompas, has argued that Robert McDonald would have been a more suitable bishop but was bypassed because he was "country-born." See Patrick Moore (2007) on McDonald, especially his work among the Gwich'in.

Shaw was recruited by Bompas. He was reported to be "undeniably below our English standards of education for Holy Orders & we have thought it quite fitting to employ him

- [for a time] unordained – but Mr. Bompas seemed to think it of much importance that he should be ordained from the first. Of [his] piety and stability we have no doubt. He will take a wife out with him” (in Peake 1989:49).
- 18 In 1875, Bompas took Garrioch to Fort Simpson, where Bompas spent the winter instructing him in Greek, theology, and the Beaver language (Garrioch 1929; Peake 1989:98-99). In 1876, Bompas sent him to Fort Vermilion, where he established the Unjaga Mission, after the Beaver name for the Peace River (*Oon-cha-ga*) (Garrioch 1929). His memoir is richly detailed about his northern experiences.
 - 19 Reeve had been based at Fort Simpson since 1869 (Cody 1908:107), which seems to have been the training ground for many northern Anglican missionaries.
 - 20 Abel (1993:ch. 6, esp. 141-142) discusses additional factors that might have influenced Dene preference for the Oblates.
 - 21 Madeline (Mercredi) Bird, born in 1899, remembered that the brothers “just worked and worked; dirty and hard work all the time” (1991:77).
 - 22 An oft-cited indication of the quality of this wheat was that it won the bronze medal at the 1876 Centennial International Exhibition in Philadelphia (e.g., *Edmonton Bulletin [EB]*, “Ft. Chipewyan,” 21 June 1884:3). The Free Library of Philadelphia has a brief awards report for the “Mission of Chipegan,” in “Lake Alataska, British Columbia.” The report states, “Fine samples of wheat and barley raised in 58 degrees, 42' north latitude” (Allen Merry, reference librarian, e-mail to author, 13 Sept. 2004). The mission garden remained a point of pride throughout the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The last brother and gardener was Louison Veillette, who remained at the mission until ill health forced him to leave Fort Chipewyan in the early 1990s.
 - 23 After the terrible famine of 1877-78, Bishop Bompas tried to establish a more secure food supply by enlarging the farm at Fort Vermilion and establishing mission farms on the “grassy slopes” of the Peace River at Dunvegan, under the direction of Thomas Bunn and George Garrioch (brother to Alfred Garrioch), and at Smoky River (Cody 1908:201-203; Garrioch 1929:63).
 - 24 Mary Lawrence claimed with some exaggeration that William Bompas “had constructed his whole work about the general theory that if you could teach an Indian to spell ‘cat’ you could lead him to Christ that much easier” (Fort Vermilion 2008:33).
 - 25 At his Fort Vermilion mission, Alfred Garrioch prepared a 3,400-word dictionary of English, Beaver, and Cree, and he translated the Gospel of St. Mark into Beaver (1929:154, 158, 164, 211).
 - 26 On 18 October 1884, Bishop Richard Young was assigned to the Athabasca Diocese, reduced in size when the Mackenzie River Diocese was created. Bishop Bompas took over the Mackenzie River Diocese (Cody 1908:226-229; Peake 1989:116-117). According to Garrioch (1929:164), who liked him, Young was “a Cambridge man and an Englishman. For a number of years he had been rector of St. Andrew’s, Manitoba, and latterly had held the position of local secretary to the Church Missionary Society.”
 - 27 The Oblates at Nativity Mission even had a printing press, with which they printed religious books translated into the Aboriginal languages (*EB*, “Athabasca-Mackenzie,” 21 Oct. 1895:2).
 - 28 Moore (2007) has pointed out that Robert McDonald developed a syllabic writing system for the Gwich’in, which they themselves rejected in favour of an alphabetic system.
 - 29 Huel (1996:30) noted that Oblate linguistic efforts were supported by the classical training that priests received in Greek and Latin, which provided them with linguistic paradigms.

- 30 This translation was presumably available to Rev. Lucas at Fort Chipewyan, whose comments about the materials available to him suggest that Kirkby's translations were inaccurate: "from the words I know it is easy to see that it is another dialect – in fact – the books are adapted for use amongst the *Slavi Indians*" (Lucas to Bishop Young, 8 March 1894, Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], A.281/190). Fort Simpson, where Kirkby was based, was Slavey country (McCarthy 1995:49).
- 31 The messages they conveyed, however, might not have been the same as those of the European missionaries.
- 32 The difficulties in such standardization become evident when one considers that the Northern Athapaskan language family was characterized by band or community dialects with a high degree of mutual intelligibility between neighbouring speech communities. It was not divided into distinctive dialects or languages, although it is often represented this way, partly because of a European model of language difference (Krauss and Golla 1981:68-69; Richmond 1970:142-144).
- 33 Patricia Limerick (2001:19), who has recently reappraised western US history in the light of a broader comparative colonialism, notes, "The project of translating the Bible into African languages ... was an important part of the enterprise of defining, identifying, and even creating 'tribes' out of loosely affiliated peoples with related languages," an observation that applies also to northern Canada.
- 34 In 1868, Bishop Bompas temporarily replaced Mr. Kirkby at Fort Simpson as the local schoolmaster, "schooling about a dozen children, all of them natives of this country, about half of them children of white men, and the other half pure Indians" (Cody 1908:79-80).
- 35 The Fort Chipewyan genealogies (McCormack n.d.) identify Joseph Mercredi/McCarthy and his brother Abraham, presumably Madeline (Mercredi) Bird's grandfather. In her memoir, she recalled that he came from Manitoba with "one of his cousins" (Bird 1991:5). According to Hudson's Bay Company employment records, Joseph was employed at Fort Chipewyan from 1885, and Abraham, from 1853. However, this family was not new to Fort Chipewyan; there are records of "Macardis" employed there in the 1820s. While the Oblate genealogies wrote "McCarthy" as "Mercredi," the name by which the family became known, the school register attests to the persistence of "McCarthy" until at least the 1870s. Therefore this spelling is used in Figure 6.1.
- 36 Father Vital Grandin believed that the Métis were socially more developed and would help the Indian children advance (Huel 1996:104). However, the Métis parents at Fort Chipewyan might have believed that schooling would provide their children with advantages.
- 37 Madeline Bird (1991:11) recalled: "There were lots of pitiful kids in those days. The orphans were more pitiful than everybody else because they were badly treated by the people and even by the relatives sometimes." "Orphans" were children who had lost one or both parents. Madeline herself was placed in the convent in 1909 when her father died, because her widowed mother could not support the children (9). With respect to illegitimate children, some evidence suggests that at least some men were unwilling to raise children fathered by others. There are also stories about children who were treated badly by their stepmothers.
- 38 For the girls, practical skills included sewing and needlework, including floral embroidery (McCormack 1988:67; Duncan 1989:56; Hail and Duncan 1989:32; Thompson 1994:70-71). The Grey Nuns are considered a major source of this new northern decorative tradition, though other influences can be identified.
- 39 Dr. William MacKay, factor at Fort Chipewyan, wrote to Bishop Young in 1894 that his children were all in the school operated by the Anglicans, "but Louise goes every morning

- to the Sisters for French & music, and I teach her history at home" (20 Aug. 1894, PAA, A.281/170).
- 40 The missionaries also tried to persuade the government to exempt from customs duties the items they imported to use in the schools and in their charitable work with Aboriginal people. Shortly after Faraud's request for aid, a short-lived exemption from customs duties was made for items that were to be used in the schools (Huel 1996:111-112, 177; see also Abel 1989:75-76). The missionaries persisted in lobbying for this benefit and, by the end of the century, they were once again exempt from customs duties, if the goods were intended for Indians (Rev. Geo. Holmes, Lesser Slave Lake, to Bishop Young, 17 April 1899, PAA, A.281/148).
- 41 Ironically, despite its chronic need for funding for local programs, St. Paul's Anglican Church made an annual collection to support the Church Missionary Society, especially its missionary endeavours elsewhere. For example, on 27 November 1887, fifty-five dollars was collected from thirteen individuals who had listened to Reeve's service "dwelling chiefly on our duty to the heathen" (W.D. Reeve to Bishop Young, Easter 1889, PAA, A.281/227).
- 42 While the term "shaman" is used by these authors, it does not adequately represent the concepts and pervasiveness of spiritual power among northern Athapaskan and Algonquian peoples.
- 43 As well, much traditional knowledge might have perished with the elders who died in those epidemics. The fur trade posts also provided medical assistance. For example, in 1868 the Hudson's Bay Company sent Dr. Mackay to Fort Simpson "chiefly for the purpose of investigating the diseases of the Indians, with a view of recommending remedial measures" (Cody 1908:80). Dr. Mackay remained with the company and later became the factor at Fort Chipewyan.
- 44 Bishop Bompas relied on the "standard medical books" he possessed (Cody 1908:174).
- 45 At Fort Vermilion, where he (1929:33) described the "wretched physical condition" of the Beaver Indians in the 1870s and 1880s, Alfred Garrioch reported hearing something along these lines: "After what we and our congeners [the Beavers] have suffered from yours [the Whites], don't talk to us about spiritual health until you have applied an antidote to that 'white peril' which is carrying us off like rabbits." The Anglicans had evidently been directed by the Church Missionary Society "Not to do ag[g]ressive work amongst the followers of Rome," although Arthur Warwick was impatient with this constraint (Warwick to Bishop Young, 13 Nov. 1899, PAA, A.281/308).
- 46 Sarah Carter (2008) has written about the relationship of monogamous marriage to Canadian nation building after Confederation.
- 47 In 1977, Father Picard told me that "Martin," the surname of many Cree families in Fort Chipewyan, was assigned in honour of St. Martin of Tours. That spelling is found in the Oblate records and treaty pay lists. Today, it is spelled "Marten" – like the animal – suggesting that the name has been assimilated by local Crees.
- 48 For instance, Christmas emerged as a major religious and secular festival, reflecting the late Victorian development of the Christmas holiday. Schoolchildren typically participated in Christmas celebrations beyond the immediate religious rituals of the day. This point is elaborated in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 7: THE WAYS OF LIFE AT FORT CHIPEWYAN

- 1 Jarvis (1898:161) also reported "30 lodges of Chippewyans and 12 of Crees" in the vicinity of the post in the winter of 1896-97, perhaps as many as 250 people. They might have been

- Indians who were taking advantage of assistance issued by the Hudson's Bay Company and Colin Fraser at a time of starvation. Fraser himself had written to John McDougall and Richard Secord about the poor trade he was making that winter because the Indians were "all starven" and unable to trap (Leonard et al. 1981:63). Census information is highly variable for the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In Inspector Routledge's report (1899:76) for the following winter, he listed 400 Indians who had resorted to Fort Chipewyan, with 36 Whites and 170 Half-breeds living at the post itself. The report suggests that he considered all people living in the bush to be Indian and those at the post to be Half-breeds, a different conception from Jarvis. The 1901 Canadian census (Library and Archives Canada [LAC]) listed 194 people in residence at Fort Chipewyan itself, mostly identified as Scotch Breeds, French Breeds, or Irish Breeds. Hugh Richardson, who kept a diary of his Treaty No. 8 annuity trip with Inspector Conroy in 1902, estimated that about 250 people lived in Fort Chipewyan permanently and that about 1,250 came in for treaty (LAC, MG 27:20).
- 2 The first Fort Chipewyan was situated at "Old Fort Point" on the south shore of Lake Athabasca. The second Fort Chipewyan was established before 1800 at a point farther west along the north shore, near the Nativity Mission site (see also *inter alia* Forsman 1993:45-47).
 - 3 There have been several archaeological studies of these buildings, whose foundations are still visible in Fort Chipewyan (e.g., Forsman 1993, 1990). The site was designated a National Historic Site in 1930 and was commemorated in 1939 by a plaque fastened to a prominent stone cairn. Locally, the site is today called Monument Hill. The Fort Chipewyan Bicentennial Museum, a community bicentennial project, was modelled after one of the old buildings and is located at the foot of the hill.
 - 4 In April 1939, the Hudson's Bay Company gave Mercredi the contract to demolish these buildings. Only the factor's house was spared; it was demolished in 1964 (Mercredi 1962:25; Forsman 1993:47, 51).
 - 5 Pierre Mercredi, as Pierre McCarthy, was the first child enrolled at the new school in Fort Chipewyan in 1874 (see Table 6.1).
 - 6 Three McCarthy families (Joseph, Vital, and Narcisse, all sons of Abraham) lived in houses on Potato Island, facing the post. Madeline Bird (1991:8) remembered that "My grandfather Mercredi [Abraham McCarthy] did not want to live with lots and lots of people when he came north from Manitoba so that's why he and his sons lived and built on Potato Island. Just his family lived there." His brother Joseph's family must have lived on the mainland, where his son Pierre later lived.
 - 7 These lay sisters were probably a second order of nun known as the Little Auxiliary Sisters. They were less educated, had somewhat different duties, and could be identified by their distinctive bonnets. It seems that most of the Aboriginal women who became nuns were in this order. In 1946, the Little Auxiliary Sisters were brought into the Grey Nuns order as regular sisters (Bird 1991:117, 119n29).
 - 8 The Hudson's Bay Company Archives' summary sheet for Fort Chipewyan lists the following post managers for the last three decades of the nineteenth century (HBCA, Fort Chipewyan file):

1867-71	William McMurray
1871-85	Roderick Ross Macfarlane
1885-92	?
1892-95	Julian S. Camsell
1895-99	Dr. William M. Mackay
1899-1903	George Drever

- 9 The late-nineteenth-century Hudson's Bay Company post journals from Fort Chipewyan contain detailed information on a daily basis about the work done at Fort Chipewyan by its labour force. This discussion draws upon that information but does not attempt an analysis of labour patterns.
- 10 Fort Chipewyan residents use the term "jam" to describe berries preserved in jars or sealers in a light sugar syrup, not a thick compote.
- 11 James Thomson had arrived in Fort Chipewyan only two weeks earlier with his wife, who had travelled from Stornoway, in Lewis, to join him (17 Aug. 1881, HBCA, B.39/a/53:39d; McCormack 1994a).
- 12 This evidence of female economic competence is at odds with a complaint by post employee George Cumming, who in 1879 wrote that once the boats had left in June for Portage La Loche, "I am again alone once more with a *hell* of a lot of wives & children to feed, with very little prospect of getting plenty of Fish, which I will require to get, to keep them alive" (Cumming to James Spencer, 30 June 1879, Provincial Archives of Alberta, PR1977.42, no. 135).
- 13 Marteau was the common name or nickname for Joseph McCarthy or Mercredi (McCormack n.d.).
- 14 In 1977, I fed my two dogs on whitefish preserved in this way, known locally as "stick-fish" or "hang-fish." Payne (1989:138) has described "hung fish" from York Factory.
- 15 Dry wood is cut from a dead tree; green wood from a living tree. Green wood must then be dried before it can be burned.
- 16 The first northern Christmas tree might have been the one erected in 1874 at Fort Simpson by Mrs. Selina Bompas, who also made presents "for the Indian and white children of the officers of the fort" (Cody 1908:171). Willie Traill, the Hudson's Bay Company trader in charge at Fort Vermilion, erected a Christmas tree in December 1888 (Munro 2006:233).
- 17 Madeline Bird, née Mercredi, was born in 1899 and resided in the mission c. 1908-17. A modern-day Christmas concert in Fort Chipewyan was filmed by Tom Radford for his 1975 documentary film, *The Man Who Chooses the Bush*. The film also provides a glimpse of the annual Christmas Eve service at the Roman Catholic church, a provincial historic site.
- 18 Radford (1975) featured the fiddle music of Modeste Ladouceur and his son Frank, from Fort Chipewyan, and jigging by members of this Métis family at the New Year's holiday. *Fiddlers of James Bay* is an evocative film about the connections between the fiddle music of Rupert's Land and the Orkney Islands (Rodgers 1980; see also Wilson 1997).
- 19 Fort Chipewyan still maintains its tradition of a New Year's dance.
- 20 At least some hay meadows were burned to maintain or increase their productivity (McCormack 1975b, 1977-78, 2007). Katherine Hughes provided a rare glimpse of haying in 1909 on one of the small rivers draining Lake Athabasca near Fort Chipewyan. One party was cutting hay for the Hudson's Bay Company; the other, for the Roman Catholic mission (Kaiser and Aubrey 2006:89-90).
- 21 In 1902, Hugh Richardson, speaking about the merchants in Fort Resolution, observed: "It would surprise anyone to see the stock of goods they carry" (LAC, MG 27:25).
- 22 William Butler saw "Antoine Larungeau [Tourangeau], a solitary 'Freeman' from the Quatre Fourche," on his 1872 trip (1873:146, see also 1903:143). It might have factored into the employment offered to Antoine's nephew Alexandre.
- 23 As Sarah Carter (2008:75) has pointed out, the Dominion Lands Act not only imposed a model of the nuclear family but was also designed to distribute these families across the

- western landscape. Even homesteaders who might have preferred to live in a communal settlement had little choice in the matter.
- 24 It is not clear exactly when people living in the bush began to build cabins. Bompas reported in the later 1860s that “Many of the Indians have erected wooden log-houses, after the fashion of the whites, which they are quite competent to do, but they seldom inhabit these long. Their fondness for roving, or an increasing scarcity round their fixed abode, soon drives them again to their tent” (Cody 1908:90). About ten years later, based on his rapid traverse through the region, Macoun claimed that “the Chipewyans are the only Indians east of the mountains who build houses and have fixed abodes” (1877b:177, see also 1882:562, 563).
 - 25 The treaty commissioners commented on this form of leadership: “The chiefs and headmen are simply the most efficient hunters and trappers” (Canada 1966:8). According to Mary Lawrence, “Our Indians [Crees and Beavers] never had a single chief over them all; each camp ruled itself” (Fort Vermilion 2008:75).
 - 26 Historically, Chipewyans were called “Montagnais” by the French (Petitot 1876:xix; Smith 1981a:283), but they should not be confused with the Montagnais (Innu) of the eastern Subarctic. The usage persisted into the twentieth century in Oblate writings.
 - 27 The confusion between ethnicity and culture in the region was evident in the person of Alexandre Lavolette, “d’origine canadienne incontestée” (Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée 1911:484). He was Madeline Bird’s grandfather: “My mother use[d] to tell me he was French Canadian. I saw him. He looked just like a white man. He was fair and had brown hair” (Bird 1991:7). In another description, he was blond, with a beard, and married to a Chipewyan woman. He was said to speak French and virtually no Chipewyan, although that point is hard to believe (Parker 1979). His genealogy indicates that he had Chipewyan ancestors (McCormack n.d.) and that he was raised in a Chipewyan-speaking community. There is no reason to believe he did not consider himself anything other than Chipewyan. This French Chipewyan “Half-breed” was confirmed as Chipewyan chief by the treaty party in 1899 (Canada 1966:17).
 - 28 Only some individuals were bilingual, though it is difficult to assess the degree of linguistic comprehension and use that marked a bilingual person. Suzanne Scollon (1977:68) suggested that people in the region have a greater tolerance of lack of comprehension than do outside English speakers and that the ability to speak the local languages is sometimes attributed to people who do not have this ability. As recently as the 1940s, there were Chipewyans who could not speak Cree. For example, a Chipewyan woman who married a Cree man in 1942 said that, before she married, she spoke only Chipewyan and understood very little Cree. It took three years before she felt she had mastered Cree. Her husband understood Chipewyan, she said, but spoke only Cree (McCormack 1977-78). By community accounts, it was uncommon for Crees to be able to speak Chipewyan, which both Chipewyans and Crees consider a harder language.
 - 29 Father Lacombe, who accompanied the treaty party in 1899, reported that he found “the Crees and their languages spreading everywhere” (*Edmonton Bulletin*, “The North and Its Inhabitants,” 11 Sept. 1899:4). However, Crees had been part of the Fort Chipewyan regional population since before the post was founded in the late eighteenth century.
 - 30 Although Pénard claimed the chief had distributed the meat, it was probably the chief’s wife, along with other women, who had done the butchering.
 - 31 Most bush dwellers had extensive gardens at their winter settlements, with potatoes the usual crop. The earliest reference I have found to these gardens is a brief mention about

- a few Chipewyan families who grew potatoes at Point Brûlé on the Athabasca River in 1883 (Dept. of Interior 1885:53). Gardens were planted in early summer, harvested in the fall, and visited irregularly during the growing season (Gibot 1979:160; McCormack 1977-78).
- 32 Although wooden skiffs were being built and used in Fort Chipewyan before the end of the nineteenth century, I have not yet determined when most Chipewyans and Crees adopted these boats. Bompas reported in 1870 that "Some of the Indians can build well-modelled, substantial boats, though they prefer canoes" (Cody 1908:127). Mair (1908:101-102) saw Chipewyans at Quatre Fourches making birchbark canoes in 1899, and in 1908 Lowie (1959:31) reported Chipewyans still using canoes. Perhaps widespread use of heavy wooden skiffs followed the introduction of outboard motors in the 1920s.
 - 33 Pierre Wandering Spirit is not named in the Fort Chipewyan genealogies (McCormack n.d.), but there is a Paul Wandering Spirit, who was born c. 1870 and for whom no baptismal date is indicated. Presumably, he was baptized elsewhere, because his marriage was recorded. Charles (Shall) Marten said that Pierre Wandering Spirit was his father's uncle, and he named Pierre's three sons, who were the same as Paul's sons (interview by Moore and Gibot 1988; McCormack n.d.). Pierre and Paul were, therefore, the same man.
 - 34 Ernestine Gibot not only acted as interpreter in both Chipewyan and Cree but also participated actively in the interviews (Moore 1993:182; Moore and Gibot 1988).
 - 35 Although Snowbird Marten was Cree, he had Chipewyan relatives and spoke some Chipewyan. His comment might reflect the coexistence of Chipewyan and Cree traditions in bands where he was raised or spent time, rather than a different Cree form of dance.
 - 36 Some songs and dances were shared; according to Pat Moore (pers. commun., 1988), Slaveys were singing Cree songs at least a hundred years ago.
 - 37 When I first went to Fort Chipewyan in 1968, tea dances were still held occasionally in Dog Head. Brothers Fred and John James Courteoreille and John James Marten, Crees who were all married to Chipewyan woman, were the singers.
 - 38 Lowie included a shaking tent ceremony in his "Windigo" short story (1991[1922]:330), which suggests he either saw or heard about one while he was at Fort Chipewyan.
 - 39 Alexis Victor Mercredi told a story about a Cree tea dance he saw at Little Red River on the Peace River in 1903, led by Seewepikahan (Siwepekaham), "a great medicine man." Although Father Dupin had told him a story of the man's conversion to Christianity, Siwepekaham is still known and respected today as a great spiritual leader who did not relinquish his Cree traditions, but simply added Christian ones to them (Mercredi 1962:8; Jim Webb, pers. commun., 2001).
 - 40 In the 1980s, Elder Sammy Tuccaro told me that the last shaking tent had occurred about fifty years earlier.
 - 41 I once heard Snowbird Marten, a highly respected Cree Elder, express sadness about how few young people were willing to walk in the bush to hunt moose but would hunt only from their boats.
 - 42 Katherine Hughes, who travelled through northern Alberta in 1909, was told that people like flour only when "they are starving. When they have fresh meat etc., they do not value it much – and when they are sick they do not care for it at all" (Kaiser and Aubrey 2006:88).
 - 43 Madeline Bird (1991:37) believed that the catalogue came to Fort Chipewyan in the early 1920s, when she was a young married woman, though that date seems late.

CHAPTER 8: TREATY NO. 8 AND MÉTIS SCRIP

- 1 Discussions about the gold rush through Edmonton include MacGregor (1970), Wonders (1995), Zaslow (1971:107), and Gilpin (1984:78-79). The *Edmonton Bulletin* is a rich source of information.
- 2 On 15 August 1898, the keeper of the Hudson's Bay Company journal commented on "a good few Miners returning back being sick of the trip" (HBCA, B.39/a/60:39).
- 3 Ironically, Chief Jim Boss, representing Aboriginal people of the Lake Laberge area of southern Yukon (now the Ta'an Kwäch'än First Nation) unsuccessfully requested a treaty. On 13 January 1902, Whitehorse lawyer T.W. Jackson wrote a letter on his behalf to the superintendent general of Indian affairs (and letter from Donna Darbyshire, Yukon Archives, 4 July 2001; Yukon Archives, Acc. 92/130; and Shannon Olson, pers. commun.). Although no treaties were ever negotiated in Yukon, in the twentieth century the Department of Indian Affairs organized Yukon Indians into legal bands and assigned them legal Indian status. These bands, now the Yukon First Nations, negotiated comprehensive land claims with the federal and territorial governments after 1973.
- 4 There is an oral tradition in the Little Red River Cree Nation that the ancestor of one of their respected families attended the signing of Treaty No. 7 in 1877 at Blackfoot Crossing before moving to northern Alberta (Jim Webb, pers. commun., 2001).
- 5 These authors include Fumoleau (1975:ch. 1, 2), Daniel (1979), Leonard (1995:ch. 1), McCormack (1998b), Murray (1998), Wetherell and Kmet (2000:ch. 3), and Ray et al. (2000:ch. 10).
- 6 This case focused on a point in the commissioners' report, which was not included as a formal treaty term, that the treaty "did not open the way to the imposition of any tax" (Canada 1966:6). It was heard before the Honourable Mr. Justice Douglas R. Campbell in the Federal Court of Canada, Edmonton, in 2001. Justice Campbell ruled in favour of the plaintiffs (*Benoit et al. v. The Queen* (2002) F.C. 243), but his decision was overturned by the Federal Court of Appeal ((2003) F.C. 236). The Supreme Court of Canada refused to hear the case.
- 7 For example, to discover what concerned Aboriginal peoples who asked about treaty and taxation in 1899, Gordon Drever and I reviewed information about the extensive taxation regime in the Edmonton area at the end of the nineteenth century and how knowledge about taxation could have reached Athabasca Landing, Lesser Slave Lake, and other northern points (McCormack and Drever 1999).
- 8 From Lesser Slave Lake, someone reported that "no two natives tell the same story and no two seem to understand what treaty means. The different traders here try to enlighten them, but it is not in their line exactly they do not succeed any too well. I don't know much about this treaty business myself" (*Edmonton Bulletin [EB]*, "Lesser Slave Lake," 27 Oct. 1898:4).
- 9 A century later, Tom Flanagan (2000:17) similarly dismissed Aboriginal concerns about the 1899 treaty as a "campaign of rumours," implying a calculated program of disinformation. Denying Aboriginal people the ability to determine their own interests is an old tactic to undermine the legitimacy of their objections.
- 10 Beliefs about Indian ignorance have not disappeared. In a recent court decision, Alberta judge Donald Demetrick said that the ancestors of the Treaty No. 6 defendants were "ignorant, illiterate, impoverished individuals naive in the ways of the governments" (*Edmonton*

Journal, “Sport Fishing Not a Native Right – Court,” 6 July 2003:A6). The Treaty No. 8 literature does not support this position, and it seems equally unlikely for Treaty No. 6, unless one considers it naive to believe that the government would have sufficient integrity to keep the promises it made – today called the “honour of the Crown.”

- 11 Although the NWMP had established a presence in the Athabasca District, until the treaty was signed, Aboriginal peoples clearly did not acknowledge the authority of the Canadian legal system over them, only over non-Aboriginal interlopers.
- 12 Little is known about Dr. West’s work as a member of the treaty party. The *Edmonton Bulletin* reported that he performed an amputation on the Hudson’s Bay Company manager at Fort Vermilion and put a cast on the ankle of another company man, Mr. Livock, at Fort Chipewyan (*EB*, “Treaty Commissioners at Fort Chipewyan,” 17 Aug. 1899:3; Treaty No. 8 tour journal, 8 July 1899, HBCA, E.26/1). From a letter written by Father Lacombe, it appears that the minister of the interior, who had recruited Lacombe for the party, “promised me in Ottawa that the doctor of the Commission will be always in the party, where I would be, in account of my infirmities” (Rev. Albert Lacombe to Dr. C.H. West, Fort Chipewyan, 15 July 1899, Glenbow Archives [GA], Christopher and Alice West fonds, M655).
- 13 In 1876, Rev. Garrioch had married H.B. Round, then a Hudson’s Bay Company clerk, to Miss Wheelright, a companion to Mrs. Bompas at Fort Simpson. The Garriochs and Rounds later found themselves together at Fort Dunvegan (Garrioch 1929:22, 137). Round was clearly an experienced northern man and presumably a good choice for the job.
- 14 Even at Fond du Lac, two other men helped interpret.
- 15 The matter of interpretation for Treaty No. 8 warrants additional research to shed light on the competence of interpreters at each settlement. Twenty different people are listed in the treaty reports as interpreters in 1899 and 1900, and additional interpreters are named in accounts of negotiations at some locations. Initial work has been done by McCormack and Drever (1999:46-48, 2001:34-37).
- 16 Although the treaty party divided into up to three different groups, the commissioners might have prepared only one typed copy, which was carried by Laird. It is not known what the other commissioners used: possibly handwritten copies that were not preserved, or perhaps they relied upon handwritten notes and their memories in presenting the terms of the treaty to Aboriginal peoples at the locations they visited, including Fort Chipewyan. This compounds the issues about consistency raised by the use of multiple interpreters.

There is a tradition that “Kee Noo Shay Oo” (or Kinosiw), who was the primary signatory at the first signing at Lesser Slave Lake, was mandated by Aboriginal groups from other Treaty No. 8 areas to sign on their behalf, and it makes sense that people would have tried to attend such meetings to acquire all the information they could. For example, according to Sergeant Anderson, the Beavers who attended the signing at Peace River Crossing “did not sign treaty but will go to Dunvegan and sign there,” perhaps so they could hold their own councils prior to the arrival of the treaty party (1 July 1899, Diary of Sgt. Anderson, GA, Anderson fonds, M19/f.5). However, it seems improbable that all bands, especially the ones farther from Lesser Slave Lake, sent representatives, especially in light of the often difficult discussions that occurred later in settlements such as Fort Chipewyan and Fond du Lac. Northern Chipewyans and Crees did not believe that a single leader had the authority to negotiate the treaty on behalf of all. Therefore, each group of bands negotiated the treaty for its own members and signed independently. From their points of view, each was negotiating the treaty independently, not simply taking an adhesion. In later treaty

- disputes with the government, they always refer to their own bands entering into treaty, not to the first signing at Lesser Slave Lake or promises made to Kinosiw.
- 17 “There were indeed discussions of different lengths with the concerned bands, but the treaty document that had been drafted in Ottawa could not be modified!” (my translation, with assistance from Jennifer Brown and Nathalie Kermaol).
 - 18 In *R. v. Badger*, the Supreme Court addressed the need to interpret the words of the treaty “in the sense that they would naturally have been understood by the Indians at the time of signing” (*R. v. Badger*, [1996] 1 S.C.R. 771:18). The decision referred to “oral promises” that were “recorded in the Treaty Commissioners’ Reports and in contemporary affidavits and diaries of interpreters and other government officials who participated in the negotiations” (19). This approach to Treaty No. 8 is so recent that its implications have not yet been realized.
 - 19 When Laird travelled through Fort Chipewyan, he visited the Holy Angels Convent. Alexis Victor Mercredi (1962:3), thirteen at the time, remembered: “I read the address to him and presented him the copy of the address and was very pleased. He complimented all the pupils for our good work at school and he gave us a holiday.”
 - 20 Richard Price generously provided me with a set of these affidavits in 1987.
 - 21 The TARR interviews were undertaken in the 1970s with Elders in all three Alberta treaty areas “in an attempt to pin down what might be termed as an Indian understanding of treaty” (Hickey et al. 1979:103). The Fort Chipewyan interviews were conducted in Chipewyan and Cree; the transcripts are English translations. Only one of these interviews, with Felix Gibot, Thomas Gibot’s nephew, has been published (Gibot 1979).
 - 22 The treaty party was greeted at Lesser Slave Lake, and possibly other posts, by similar fusillades (e.g., *EB*, “With the Commissioners: The Landing to Slave Lake,” 6 July 1899: 2).
 - 23 Some local Elders tell stories about longer negotiations (Hoffman-Mercredi and Coutu 2002:251).
 - 24 At Fort Vermilion, while two new Indian bands were established for the Beavers and the Crees, only one chief was allowed, assigned to the numerically dominant Beaver (Ambrose Tete-Noire’s band), which was also represented by one headman. The Tall Cree band was allowed only one headman, Kuis Kuis Kow Ca Poohoo, who signed on behalf of nine families (Canada 1966:10, 15; 8 July 1899, diary of Sgt. Anderson, GA, Kristjan Fjeldsted Anderson fonds, M19/f.5).
 - 25 Routledge’s census had identified 537 Indians at Fort Chipewyan (Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 18, v. 1435, no. 76, pt. 2). The additional 59 who took treaty might have been persons not counted by Routledge, persons from his list of Half-breeds who decided to enter into treaty, or persons from other locations.
 - 26 Spellings of names vary greatly. I have not attempted to impose consistency on the historical usages, although I usually follow the spellings used by the Oblate priests in their genealogical records (McCormack n.d.).
 - 27 A closer reading of Hudson’s Bay Company documents would provide additional information about these families and their traditional land-use areas.
 - 28 The Oblate genealogies provide baptismal rather than birth dates, which might not have been known with precision (McCormack n.d.). No baptismal date was provided for Antoine Laviolette, but his family history suggests he was born c. 1840, in the same generation as Julien Ratfat. His was the fourth name on the Chipewyan Treaty Pay List, suggesting he was a person of influence in the treaty negotiations, though he never held a formal position.

- 29 Many surnames evolved in this way at Fort Chipewyan.
- 30 These terms are structural and did not necessarily denote biological relationships. In the Chipewyan and Cree kinship worlds, everyone other than grandparents or grandchildren were assigned to either parallel or cross relationships. This provided a simple way to incorporate outsiders into local kin groups.
- 31 At Fort Vermilion, Mary Lawrence described the process of selecting the treaty chief as highly competitive: "Our Indians had never had a single chief over them all; each camp ruled itself ... Yet now they were told to choose such a chief from among themselves. If there had been no disputes before, there surely was a heated one now. Of course every old man in the tribe wanted the honour and contested excitedly for it" (Fort Vermilion 2008:75). This interpretation is unlikely, given the reserved nature of leadership that was the cultural norm and the traditional patterns of respect that existed internally. That does not mean that people did not talk about the men who were chosen, which would speak to internal political dynamics probably unknown to Lawrence.
- 32 Thomas Gibbot would probably have called Justin Martin by the Cree term for "father's brother."
- 33 Mary Lawrence, who witnessed similar discussions at Fort Vermilion, claimed: "Of course no amount of talk, however friendly, could ever make the Indians wish to have the white men in their territory, but they were philosophic and willing to bow with a grace to the inevitable" (Fort Vermilion 2008:73).
- 34 Chiefs received a present of \$32, with the annuity set at \$25, while headmen received \$22 with a \$15 annuity (Canada 1966:13).
- 35 Bishop Breynat claimed that most of the local Métis entered into treaty "on the advice of their missionaries, choosing to continue the life of hunters" (1948:217, my translation). He was here equating mixed ancestry – presumably Indian-French – with a Métis identity.
- 36 Harry Barrington Round identified himself as the "Paying Agent" in a formal statement appended to the newly constructed Chipewyan Treaty Pay List.
- 37 Much of interest in these pay lists is beyond the scope of this book. There were 111 treaty numbers on the Chipewyan list and 52 on the Cree list, each assigned generally to a man as the head of a household. His wife and children came under his number but were not named. Numbers were also assigned to widows and their children and to single men or women. A few orphans who were still children also received their own numbers. The pay lists broke down the number of family members receiving annuities into men, women, boys, girls, and other persons associated with the family.
- 38 The Hudson's Bay Company tour journal records different figures: payments of \$4,564 to Chipewyans and \$2,248 to Crees (21 July 1899, Treaty No. 8 tour journal, HBCA, E.26/1:46d).
- 39 The same Order-in-Council provided for a free grant of land to any "white persons who have in good faith settled therein prior to the date of the Treaty" and who were actually in possession, to a maximum of 160 acres.
- 40 Mair pointed out that Father Lacombe encouraged them to accept land scrip, perhaps thinking of a plan he had devised in 1895 to establish concentrated Métis settlement areas in the parkland (A philanthropic plan to redeem the Half-breeds of Manitoba and the NWT, Annex "B" to P.C. 3723, 28 Dec. 1895, An application to the DIA by Father A. Lacombe, 27 March 1894, LAC, RG 10, v. 1109; Lacombe 1901).
- 41 Lambrecht (1991:11-27) has discussed settlement issues, including homestead legislation.

- 42 Spry and McCardle (1993:101) have argued that “the regulations and departmental practice treated Métis scrip in most periods as freely transferable – as ‘personal’ rather than ‘real’ property – which resulted in widespread sale of the scrip by grantees to non-Natives.”
- 43 When Treaty No. 11 was negotiated in 1921, Half-breed claims were settled with cash, not scrip, although it took two years before the cash was provided (LAC, RG 85, v. 338).
- 44 In Breynat’s eyes (1948:217), they were “victims of misplaced pride” who wanted to have the same privileges as whites, including the right to obtain liquor. He would have preferred to see all Métis enter into treaty.
- 45 Ens (1999-2000:241-242) found that “very few” applicants in the Treaty No. 8 region listed single occupations alone, which reflected the economic opportunities and the employment flexibility of workers in northern Alberta. However, his data were dominated by the large number of applications from Lesser Slave Lake, whose economy was probably the most diverse of all the northern locations visited by the commission. The data from Fort Chipewyan suggest a more “traditional” economy, and some of the occupation labels are old fur trade terms, such as “steersman,” “boatman,” and “fisherman.”
- 46 This woman is of special interest because she claimed to be the illegitimate daughter (born 1880) of James Thomson, whose wife, Isabella, joined him from Lewis in 1881, and a Chipewyan woman, Louise Encore (McCormack 1994a). Caroline took his surname, though he never acknowledged her. She was raised in the convent. The 1901 Census of Canada (LAC) listed her as the “Scotch breed” wife of John Arnott, a forty-eight-year-old Englishman, who was a returned Klondiker. They had one daughter, Alberta, then a year old. Caroline Arnott was described as “Crippled (Lame).” Her husband froze to death in a snowstorm in March 1902 (report from Corporal Field to the Officer Commanding, NWMP, 31 May 1902, LAC, RG 18, v. 238).
- 47 James O’Donnell was one of the witnesses to Colin Fraser’s scrip application, testimony to their prior acquaintance, presumably because both were working in the northern trade (LAC, RG 15, v. 1348).
- 48 Sergeant Anderson, who was in charge of the NWMP detail that accompanied Commissioner Macrae, was also unhappy with his character. Macrae expected members of his police escort to undertake freighting duties without additional compensation. Some men refused to do so, and Anderson himself would have left the party if he could have done so (undated entries, diary of Sgt. Anderson, GA, Anderson fonds, M19/f.5).
- 49 Commissioner Macrae used the forms of the previous year, while Commissioners McKenna and Walker had new forms printed specifically for their commission, which had a different mandate: to accept applications in Alberta and Assiniboia from Half-breeds born between 15 July 1870 and 1885 who had previously been denied scrip as a result of the eligibility rule in effect prior to 1899. This commission travelled as far north as Athabasca Landing and Lac La Biche. A parallel commission was appointed for Saskatchewan (*EB*, “Payment of Scrip,” 9 March 1900:2; *EB*, “Half-breed Scrip,” 28 May 1900:4; *EB*, “Half-breed Scrip,” 27 July 1900:2; Frank Tough, pers. commun., 2001).
- 50 Local trader Colin Fraser delayed his trip to Edmonton to sell his furs until after the treaty party had left (*EB*, “Fort Chipewyan,” 19 Aug. 1900:6).
- 51 Treaty No. 8 also provided for the selection of land in severalty as an alternative to a reserve. The application of the Indian Act to such lands was not laid out in the Act, and because few such applications were made, the Act was never amended to accommodate this new form of landholding by status Indians. See McCormack (2001b: 19-29) for more discussion of land in severalty.

CHAPTER 9: THE GOVERNMENT FOOT IN THE DOOR

- 1 The commissioners for Treaty No. 10, who compared the Indians of northern Saskatchewan to the Chipewyans and the Crees of the “Athabaska country,” made a similar prediction in 1907: “It does not appear likely that the conditions of that part of Saskatchewan covered by the treaty will be for many years so changed as to affect hunting and trapping, and it is expected, therefore, that the great majority of the Indians will continue in these pursuits as a means of subsistence” (in Reiter 1996:193).
- 2 Duncan Campbell Scott, the architect of Indian policy in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, was an unabashed racist, believing in a genetic basis for behaviour and culture. In his view, the Indians living in the northern forests were the most primitive of all. Cultural progress occurred slowly, because all Indians “harboured primitive instincts that would take generations to eradicate,” but it could be hastened by interbreeding with Europeans (Tittley 1986:34, see also 31-36, 203). Scott’s views about Indian inferiority were widely shared, as the discussion in this chapter will show. Such views were typical during the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, and they have not completely disappeared even today.
- 3 The “lands in severalty” provided by Treaty No. 8 were not homestead equivalents. Few were ever awarded, so they were never clearly defined as a land base. In 1906, an amendment to the Indian Act explicitly prohibited either status (treaty) or non-status (non-treaty) Indians in the Prairie provinces and the northern territories from acquiring homesteads (S.C. 1906 [3 Edward VII], c. 81, s. 164). In 2000, when the McLeod Lake Indian Band took an adhesion to Treaty No. 8, provision was made for members to take land in severalty as part of their entitlement. In 2002, the Supreme Court of British Columbia ruled that these lands would come under the jurisdiction of the federal government, under section 91(24) of the Constitution Act, 1867 ([U.K.] 30 & 31 Vict., c. 3, reprinted in R.S.C. 1985, App II, no. 5), but not the reserve system administered under the Indian Act (*Chingee v. British Columbia (A.G.)* (2002) 8 B.C.L.R. (4th) 149). The decision was appealed. In *Chingee v. Canada (A.G.)*, 2005 BCCA 446 the judges ruled that the lands should be private property because they were located within a province. In short, the legal status of lands in severalty is still ambiguous.
- 4 When industrial developments loomed along the Mackenzie River in 1920, F.H. Kitto advised the government: “With the influx of prospectors it is urgent that the Indians should be located on reserves with as little delay as possible” (excerpt from Kitto’s report, Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 10, v. 4042).
- 5 Since before Confederation, Canada had been committed to the ideology that agriculture was the key to eventual Indian assimilation and civilization, to the end of Indian-ness. Yet farming was not an option for most northern Indians, despite the award-winning grains from Fort Chipewyan and the small gardens many cultivated. Instead, they retained a special relationship to the land as hunters and trappers, the hallmark of their “Indian” way of life.
- 6 In theory, Métis could also acquire title to land, but the failure of the scrip system meant that they often ended up as squatters. In southern regions, they have been called the “road allowance people” (e.g., Campbell 1973:13).
- 7 Critical examinations of written records and archival collections are still in their infancy. For example, see work by Terry Cook (1989).

- 8 The notion that biological distinctiveness or “race” underlies behaviour is an old understanding that still exists today. In fact, no genetic evidence supports the concept of biological race for humans; it is *always* a social category.
- 9 Joseph Jorgensen (1978:5-7), writing about similar issues in the United States, prefers the term “domestic dependency” to “internal colonialism,” although structurally they are identical. He distinguishes the two on the basis of the treaty relationships that developed between Indians and the federal government.
- 10 To Gramsci (1971:112), a state maintains itself in two ways: by the “spontaneous consent” of the majority of its citizens to its internal arrangements, and by the coercive apparatus it can impose on those who fail to give consent, which in the Fort Chipewyan region included Aboriginal people.
- 11 We should not be surprised by Aboriginal resistance, any more than we are by non-Aboriginal efforts to evade troublesome or inconvenient laws and regulations.
- 12 For example, in 1913 J.A. Mason, one of the first anthropologists to do fieldwork in the western Subarctic, journeyed down the Athabasca and Slave rivers to Fort Resolution and beyond. He wrote, “Although a very slow trip, few opportunities for anthropological investigation presented themselves en route” (1914:375). Compare this observation with the rich detail – even “thick description” – provided by journalist Agnes Deans Cameron (1910). A more forward-thinking Mason might have written “An Ethnography of a Boat Crew.”
- 13 Slobodin’s *Métis of the Mackenzie District* (1966) is a notable exception.
- 14 Most of the development literature from the 1960s was premised on the notions that Indians generally adapted badly to new conditions and that their cultural systems were “maladaptive” when confronted with a modern world (e.g., Chance 1968:17-18).
- 15 Pratt (1992:6) restricts transculturation to something done by “subordinated or marginal groups,” yet all humans transform the raw materials presented to them by other peoples.
- 16 Students in my Native Studies 300 and 400 classes have examined several of these studies and engaged in stimulating discussions about what constitutes Aboriginal “traditions” and how these change and persist over time.
- 17 In the 1970s, some added a third entity, the other immigrant peoples. First Nations have most recently been called an “aboriginal pillar” of Canada (Saul 2002).
- 18 Even apparent regional identities, such as Scots in Britain or Bretons in France, misrepresent the diversity within those regions (McCormack 2003).
- 19 Nearly seventy years later, baseball was still played most summer evenings in Fort Chipewyan.
- 20 James Dempsey’s *Warriors of the King* (1999) discusses the involvement of Indians in World War I, both as soldiers and in other ways at home. The Reverend John McDougall, who wanted to see Indians recruited for service, claimed that they were “united in loyalty in the empire” (cited 20), but there were many reasons for Indian participation in the war effort.
- 21 In fact, World War I was marked by troubling disputes at home (e.g., Brown and Cook 1976:ch. 13).
- 22 Eric Hanson claimed that “the chief function of a province is to serve as an agency of self-government on all matters which are not of direct Dominion importance,” although he pointed out that grey areas existed in the division of powers, the source of “many disputes” between Alberta and the federal government (Boothe and Edwards 2003:20). He outlined the growth of multiple provincial departments from the original six (20-21).
- 23 Klassen’s *Business History of Alberta* (1999) demonstrates the historically close relationship between government and business leaders in Alberta, with government basically a vehicle to deliver business opportunities.

- 24 The provincial medical officer of health, head of the Public Health Branch, reported to the minister of agriculture until 1918, when the office passed to the Department of the Provincial Secretary and then to the Department of Municipal Affairs. In 1919, an independent Department of Public Health was created (Alberta Dept. of Municipal Affairs 1919; Alberta Dept. of Public Health 1920; Bow and Cook 1935). It was especially concerned with infectious diseases, often linked to immigrants. Its annual reports reveal little concern for the health of Aboriginal peoples, whether status Indians or Métis.
- 25 The “Royal” was conferred on the North-West Mounted Police in 1904 by King Edward VII.
- 26 These sentiments were echoed by Gordon Hewitt, a federal civil servant active in fostering wildlife conservation across Canada in the 1910s, who believed that northern game animals could supply meat for northerners, support development of northern mineral resources, and even be exported to the south (Hewitt 1921; see also Rutherford et al. 1922). John Sandlos (2002, 2003, 2007) has explored the government policy that linked northern wildlife conservation to an agricultural model for the economic production of bison and caribou.
- 27 The Province of Alberta also sought to bring status Indians under its system of vital statistics, to which the Department of Indian Affairs agreed. In practice, that meant that Indians “must be married in the same manner as any other race, that is either by license or banns. Their marriages, births and deaths should be registered in the usual manner” (Donald Mackie, Deputy Registrar General, Bureau of Vital Statistics, Edm., to Rev. Jos. Portier, Lac Ste. Anne, 1 May 1922, LAC, RG 10, v. 4057). No one under the age of fifteen was allowed to marry. However, it is not clear from the annual reports whether such information about status Indians was reported to the province.
- 28 This amendment followed from an 1890 amendment to the Indian Act that allowed the federal government to make game laws in the Province of Manitoba or the North-West Territories apply to Indians (Calliou 1999-2000:178). However, an 1890 report by the minister of justice argued that applying game legislation to Indians “is a violation of the rights secured to them by the Treaties” (Cumming and Mickenberg 1972:211). After 1930, section 66 of the 1906 Act morphed into section 88 of the current Act, but with a difference (thanks to section 12 of the Northern Resources Transfer Agreements, now the Constitution Act, 1930). Section 88 provides that “*Subject to the terms of any treaty ... all laws of general application from time to time in force in any province are applicable to and in respect of Indians in the province*” (*Indian Act*, R.S.C. 1985, c. I-5, emphasis added; see also Cumming and Mickenberg 1972:209-215).
- 29 In 1910, RNWMP Superintendent E.C. Sanders, commanding “N” Division from Athabasca Landing, supported Conroy’s position that the Indians were not subject to the provincial game laws and could therefore hunt beaver and all other animals. He reasoned that if they were hunting legally, they should also be able to trade their furs from those animals legally. He proposed establishing an open season when the furs would be prime as a conservation measure (report from Sanders to the RNWMP Commissioner, Regina, 6 Aug. 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 1643, file 125, pt. 2). The conflict between the provincial Game Act and section 66 of the Indian Act was articulated carefully by Sergeant Mellor at Fort Chipewyan in 1912, as he tried to figure out exactly which laws he was supposed to enforce (Mellor to the Officer Commanding, Athabasca Landing, 31 Dec. 1912, LAC, RG 18, v. 444). Mellor might have been trying to walk a fine line between enforcing an ambiguous law that was locally resented and maintaining positive relationships with Fort Chipewyan residents; by this date he might already have been married to Colin Fraser’s daughter, Mary Jane (see also *Edmonton Journal* 1941).

- 30 Federal officials seemed less concerned about hunting rights for Indians in the south, who were expected to remain on their reserves and support themselves by farming or ranching, than for those in the North, who might become a charge on the government if prevented from supporting themselves by hunting and trapping.
- 31 Indian Agent Waddy at Morley distrusted Chief Game Guardian Lawton. He wrote to Duncan Campbell Scott that Lawton “is a pretty shifty individual and will not keep his word under any circumstances if it suits his purpose to change it” (23 April 1915, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A). It is hard to assess the validity of this comment, but this file does seem to contain a lot of “trust me” discourse from provincial officials.
- 32 This exemption might have been modelled on the earlier exemption of Treaty No. 8 Indians from the Game Ordinance of the North-West Territories (David Laird, Indian Commissioner, to the Deputy Commissioner, Provincial Dept. of Agriculture, 5 Dec. 1905, LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A).
- 33 To Regehr (1976:39), most of these proposals were “paper railways.”
- 34 In 1909, the provincial government appropriated funds to build a road from Lesser Slave Lake to “the Grand Prairie” to facilitate homestead settlement (*Evening Journal* [Edmonton], “Opening Road into Grand Prairie,” 29 Nov. 1909:1).
- 35 Homestead agriculture, even in the Peace River country, was not primarily subsistence agriculture but directed at commercial production. Leonard (1995) has discussed agricultural growth in the Peace River country. The first “carload of wheat” arrived in Edmonton from Peace River on 25 March 1915 (*Edmonton Bulletin* [EB], 25 March 1915:4).
- 36 Controversy surrounding the government’s financial role in this railway led Premier Rutherford to resign in 1910 (see multiple reports in the *Edmonton Bulletin*; Schneider 1989:71-73).
- 37 Parker and Tingley (1980:21) and Zaslow (1971:211-212) pointed to the excitement generated by a short-lived tar sands boom in 1907-12. In 1914, Superintendent McDonell predicted that this railway “will open up a large tract of good farming land” (in RNWMP 1915:125).
- 38 To inspire later development, fifteen miles on either side of the railway from Lac La Biche to the Fort McMurray end of the line was set aside for post-World War I soldiers’ settlement (Kitto 1919:8-9).
- 39 While some freight was transported, as before, by scow down the Athabasca River to Fort McMurray, from 1915 to 1921 much northern freight was shipped via the Peace River rail routes to the Peace River. 1914 was the last year for the big scow brigades (Chambers 1916a:16; Parker and Tingley 1980:37, 43).
- 40 The Ryan Brothers, famous northern entrepreneurs who later developed the Slave River Portage, organized transport between the end of steel and Fort McMurray until the railway was completed (Schneider 1989:87, 90).
- 41 While Alberta and its sister province Saskatchewan had the power to create their own police forces, it was simpler and cost-effective to continue using the well-established RNWMP. Both provinces negotiated agreements with the federal government to do so. While Palmer (1990:176) claimed that the RNWMP ended the agreements because it was unwilling to enforce prohibition, voted in by Albertans in 1915, Lin (2007:35-41) made a convincing argument that wartime policing needs were more important.
- 42 Federal policing was a bargain for the province. It paid \$75,000 in 1916 to support the RNWMP, while in 1920, the cost of the Alberta Provincial Police was \$493,000 (Boothe and Edwards 2003:70). Returning to RCMP service in 1928 saved Saskatchewan \$200,000 (Lin 2007:147). Alberta and Saskatchewan each contracted to the federal government for \$175,000 annually, plus the cost to maintain and transport prisoners (Boothe and Edwards

- 2003:153). The RCMP service was so much cheaper in part because its officers were paid far less than the provincial police had been (156).
- 43 Gordon Hewitt (1921:11) was an exception. He believed that with adequate conservation measures and management, the Canadian north could become “one of the chief fur-producing areas of the world,” with trapping a complement to industrial development.
- 44 Hugh Richardson, from the Office of the Attorney General, accompanied Conroy on his 1902 trip to pay Treaty No. 8 annuities. They began with a horrendous cross-country trek by horse. The party included Dr. Hislop, a cook, a packer, and two assistants. Richardson’s diary of this trip is long on details of their travel but short on details of their meetings with Indians (LAC, MG 27).
- 45 From 1902, when he first travelled north of the Treaty No. 8 region, to 1920, Conroy advocated taking the northern Dene peoples into Treaty No. 8 as an adhesion. When the government decided to make Treaty No. 11 in 1921, Conroy was appointed the treaty commissioner (LAC, RG 10, v. 4042; Richardson diary, 1902, LAC, MG 27).
- 46 Oliver might have been influenced by a report in 1905 by Robert Evans Young, with the Department of the Interior, who proposed opening up northern homestead lands because he believed that the southern areas open for settlement would soon be filled (Waiser 1993:7). The arrangements for the minister’s trip were made at the last minute, at great inconvenience to the Royal North-West Mounted Police who had to assist him. He did not decide to make the trip until 10 May. The police would have preferred that he travel with the Hudson’s Bay Company boats down the Athabasca River and return by way of the Peace, but Oliver chose to continue north down the Mackenzie River and across to the Yukon Basin by way of the Porcupine River (A.B. Perry, RNWMP Commissioner’s Office, to Lt. Col. Fred White, Ottawa, 10 May 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 392). Oliver travelled with his secretary, Mr. Forbes. They arrived at Athabasca Landing on 3 June and left by canoe the same day (D.M. Howard, Inspector, Athabasca Landing, to the Commissioner, RNWMP, Regina, 4 June 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 392). They arrived at Fort Chipewyan on 13 June, and the post journal noted: “This is the first time a Minister of Interior paid a visit to this part of the world” (HBCA, B.39/a/68). He continued downriver in the *Keewatin*. Unfortunately, the file provides few details of Oliver’s activities en route. He evidently met up with Mr. Conroy and the treaty party on the Slave River, where Carl Engler, then surveying the Fort Smith townsite, photographed him paying treaty (LAC, Acc. 1960-125, PA-018769).
- 47 Bell’s appointment was with the Department of Indian Affairs, dated 8 February 1911, and his reports were published in the annual reports for the Department of Indian Affairs. His initial salary was \$1,400 (Civil Service 1912:330). He had been employed as an Indian agent since 1907 (Lorraine St. Louis-Harrison, LAC, e-mail to author, 23 Feb. 2006).
- 48 Salmon stayed until 8 January 1915, when he “walked out” to Edmonton in sixteen days, so eager was he to contribute to the war effort. He enlisted in Edmonton with the Alberta Regiment of the Canadian Infantry and died in France on 2 June 1916 (LAC, RG 150, box 8617-47; *EB*, “Two Priests Working among Great Bear Lake Indians and Eskimos Reported Missing,” 29 March 1915:6). Note that the title of the *Edmonton Bulletin* article does not reflect the scope of news items covered, which was not uncommon for articles about the North.
- 49 Bell and his family left the North in considerable haste near the end of February 1915, requiring nine trains of five dogs each. One wonders about the urgency that prevented him from waiting for the summer boat season. They reached Edmonton by the end of March,

- where the *Edmonton Bulletin* made much of the fact that it was the “Longest Dog Trip for White Woman,” with three children in tow, one only eight months old. From there, they planned to move to Prince Albert (*EB*, “Two Priests,” 29 March 1915:6; patrol report by Inspector Rheault, 24 Feb. 1915, LAC, RG 18, v. 1818).
- 50 Gerald Card and his wife, Anna, began their religious service in West Virginia, then moved to Alberta, first to Innisfail, then to Vermilion, and finally to Vegreville in 1906. His wife recalled that the Anglican congregation in Vegreville was small, so it might have been a relief to be offered a federal government position in 1911. This new job might have been engineered by his brother-in-law Peter Talbot, a former Liberal member of Parliament who was appointed by Laurier to the Senate in 1906. Not coincidentally, Senator Talbot was a friend of Minister of the Interior Frank Oliver, who was driving northern development in 1910 and 1911 (LAC, Census 1906; *Edmonton Journal*, “Edmonton Artist, Mrs. Gerald Card,” 22 Feb. 1956:28 [courtesy of Ken Tingley]; various articles, *EB*, March-April 1911). Though Card’s name does not appear in the Civil Service List for 1911, his date of appointment to the Department of Indian Affairs was 22 May 1911. He was forty-four years old (Civil Service 1913:390). He apparently left this position in the summer of 1913, probably when it was possible to travel on the river, because his replacement – Thomas W. Harris – received a temporary appointment as Indian agent at Fort Simpson on 3 July 1913 and permanent appointment on 1 September 1913 (Civil Service 1914:432, 1915:248).
- 51 Thomas William Harris replaced Card at Fort Simpson in 1913. His interesting history is beginning to emerge from isolated references. The 1906 Canada Census (LAC) listed him and his family at Fond du Lac in northern Saskatchewan, probably as a trader. By 1911, he was in charge of the Hudson’s Bay Company post at Fond du Lac, and that summer he transferred to Fort Chipewyan. By 1912, he was the justice of the peace at Fort Chipewyan. In 1913, he was the purser on the company’s steamship *Grahame* and was being considered as a replacement for George Mulloy, the first man from the “outside” appointed as a buffalo ranger (DIA 1916:55; memo from R.H. Campbell to W.W. Cory, Dep. Min. of the Interior, 11 Feb. 1913, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; HBCA, E.392/1; HBCA, B.39/a/69).
- 52 Dr. A. McDonald at Fort Smith was the acting Indian agent until Gerald Card arrived in June (Report of Henry Conroy, DIA 1917:57).
- 53 Although Engler’s notebook was transferred to the Provincial Archives of Alberta, I discovered that he had taken photographs that are still in the collection of Library and Archives Canada and provide some additional information about his trip.
- 54 As well, Bishop Breynat had lobbied the government for a survey in each community to recognize the property rights of Indians living around the posts (Abel 1989:81). He accompanied Frank Oliver on at least part of his 1910 trip, so he had ample opportunity to discuss his views in person.
- 55 I do not know when the Hudson’s Bay Company finally patented its northern reserves.
- 56 Clara Rogers Vyvan (1998:29), who journeyed down the Athabasca and Mackenzie rivers in 1926, wrote that Fort Fitzgerald and “other inhabited places of the North” were all called “settlements.”
- 57 The 1906 Indian Act is unclear on this point. While section 164 prohibited Indians from applying for homesteads, no Indian was to “be disturbed in the occupation of any plot on which he had permanent improvements prior to his becoming a party to any treaty with the Crown” (*Indian Act*, R.S.C. 1906, c. 81).
- 58 Thanks to Hal Janes, president of the Canada Land Surveyors Association, for information about what mounding entailed (phone conversation, 19 Nov. 2004).

- 59 Dominion Agent Bell in Fort Smith told the *Edmonton Bulletin* that he had recorded “a number of claims” before he left his post in 1915 (*EB*, “Two Priests,” 29 March 1915:6). In 1981, the mining camp established by Dardier in 1915 was surveyed and artifacts recovered in what David Neufeld called the “first true industrial archeology project” in Saskatchewan (1984:103; 1985).
- 60 In 1920, Conroy wrote: “It is a curious thing that the half-breeds in this country are either whites or Indians and that there is no medium course such as we find in other provinces” (letter stamped 13 Dec. 1920, LAC, RG 10, v. 4042).
- 61 Neil Reddekopp (1998) has provided detailed histories of some of these lots.
- 62 They had other fears as well. For example, Indians at Fort St. John blamed a measles epidemic in 1911 on “stakes set up by the land companies to mark their claims” (*EB*, “Seventy Indians Died of Measles at Fort St John during Winter,” 10 April 1911:1).
- 63 John Sandlos (2003:395-396) has argued that all early sport hunters and naturalists who travelled in the North hoped to see “a pristine natural landscape” and were therefore critical of Aboriginal hunting methods.
- 64 As late as 1910, the RNWMP admitted that there were places in northern Canada that were “long distances” beyond its jurisdiction (Comptroller to Maurice Fitzgerald, Ireland, 9 May 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 392).
- 65 I have not been able to locate Julie Gibot in my genealogical records. In 1860, a Sakiskanip man married a Gladu woman, indicating an affiliation between the two families. Pierre Gladu identified her as a “Halfbreed” on his 1899 scrip application, but that probably meant only that she had a European ancestor.
- 66 In 1927, Pierre Gladu’s daughter married Antoine White Knife’s much older son, who was Gladu’s cross-cousin. This marriage, which was governed by a traditional Cree marriage practice, also indicates the long-term, close relationship between these men and their families (McCormack n.d.).
- 67 Thanks to Carol Wagner for locating this important and unusual record.
- 68 It is ironic that Chipewyans who obeyed the law would be called cowards, given that such compliance was desired by government agents. Perhaps they expected that “real Indians” would demonstrate the kind of resistance that in 1885 had landed Crees and Métis of central Saskatchewan in great trouble.
- 69 Similarly, RNWMP officer G.E. Sanders at Fort Vermilion reported in 1910, “There are no whitemen in this part of the country ... except the traders ... and Clema Paul who has a small cattle and Horse Ranch” (letter from Sanders to the Officer Commanding, “N” Division, 5 Feb. 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 1643, file 125, pt. 1). To Philip Godsell (1946[1934]:116), who first travelled into the Peace River country in 1911, the region “was still a paradise for the fur trader, the coming of settlers being looked upon only as a distant possibility.” But the northern non-Aboriginal population was already starting to grow. Superintendent E.C. Sanders noted, “The large influx of Settlers into the Peace River Country and other parts of my district, the indications of a settlement at McMurray and the fact that prospectors and travelers are moving in all directions” (report from Sanders to the RNWMP Commissioner, 6 Aug. 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 1643, file 125, pt. 2). J.K. Cornwall reported that “about 1,000 families” travelled by sleigh during the winter of 1910-11 in a “spectacular trek” to the Peace River country, and the 1911 *Edmonton Bulletin* contains many references to later immigration to Peace River (e.g., *EB*, “Peace River,” 1 April 1911:1). Philip Godsell (1946[1934]:117) called families from the United States the “vanguard of the last great mass movement of white people into the unoccupied lands of the Canadian Northwest.”

- 70 Mulloy was disdainful of local Indians; his correspondence contains some highly racist language. Shortly after he arrived in Fort Smith, he described them as “the most unreliable lot of people I ever saw.” After a year of disagreement with McCallum, he had tempered his opinion somewhat. While he told Campbell that he knew the country “Probably better than any white man up here,” he needed the help of “a strong hardy Indian” (Mulloy to Campbell, 30 June 1911 and 31 May 1912, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1).
- 71 Billy McNeil came to Fort Smith in 1912 as one of the herders for reindeer brought from Labrador, an unsuccessful federal scheme to establish a local reindeer population (see also Rutherford et al. 1922, esp. app. 7). He probably met Peter McCallum when McCallum was assigned to help bring the herd from Fort Chipewyan to the Fort Smith area (app. 7; E.F. Drake to A.J. Bell, 12 Aug. 1912, LAC, RG 85, v. 665, file 3911, pt. 1; Lambrecht 1991:54; Grade Six Students 1979:49; Waldo 1923:87). McNeil married a local woman and stayed on. He applied in 1915 to be transferred to the “Buffalo patrol,” along with another herder, John Broomfield, which R.H. Campbell supported because only one reindeer had survived from the original herd of fifty animals (Campbell to E.H. Finlayson, Dist. Inspector of Forest Reserves, Calgary, 16 Sept. and 19 Oct. 1915, LAC, RG 85, v. 660).
- 72 Ironically, the closed season for bison in the North-West Territories expired on 1 January 1912. Bison were not legally protected again until the summer of 1914, when this lapse appears to have been finally noted by government officials. The temporary open season was not brought to the attention of the local people (Commissioner of Parks to Acting Dep. Min., Interior, 23 July 1914, LAC, RG 85, v. 664, file 3910, pt. 1).
- 73 With the expansion of northern homesteading in the second decade of the twentieth century, one memorandum in 1914 pointed out that a bison sanctuary would need to exclude some of the southern range of the bison, “as it is necessary to in no way conflict with the future settlement of the Peace River valley” (Chief of the Animal Division to J.B. Harkin, Comm. of Dom. Parks, 22 July 1914, LAC, RG 85, v. 664, file 3910, pt. 1). That is, bison protection came second to white settlement, although first in importance when compared to Aboriginal land uses.
- 74 Reading this correspondence nearly a century later, I was amazed to discover that senior bureaucrats and even ministers of government departments not only read such low-level reports but also responded with detailed questions about their contents.
- 75 In the philosophy of the Department of Indian Affairs, encoded in the Indian Act provisions for enfranchisement, Indians who “advanced” sufficiently on the road to “civilized” behaviour could have their Indian status terminated and acquire the rights and privileges of full Canadian citizenship. In theory, they could then have applied for civil service jobs.
- 76 Alberta Department of Agriculture annual reports detail the provincial program that paid wolf bounties and encouraged the killing of wolves. Poison was not only allowed but endorsed. Royal North-West Mounted Police annual reports include information on wolf bounties paid by their officers (e.g., RNWMP 1915:135).
- 77 The Migratory Birds Convention Act was enforced by game wardens, police, and buffalo rangers. In 1919, at least one buffalo ranger was appointed as “a Game Officer with the powers of a police constable in Alberta and the Northwest Territories under the Migratory Birds Convention Act” (Commissioner to J.A. McLean, 22 Dec. 1919, LAC, RG 85, v. 659, file 3939). Charles Camsell, who as a young man had spent some weeks at Fort Chipewyan hunting waterfowl for the Hudson’s Bay Company, disagreed with this aspect of the legislation: “I have always thought it was unreasonable to expect them [Natives]

- to refrain from shooting ducks and geese as they flew north during the spring break-up" (Camsell 1966[1954]:112, 36).
- 78 The 1910 Regulations for Dominion Forest Reserves applied only in such reserves, not other areas (LAC, RG 10, v. 6732, file 420-2A). Unless the forests of the Treaty No. 8 region were collectively considered such a reserve, it is not clear what authority allowed the federal fire guardian system to operate in the North.
- 79 The director of the Forestry Branch, D.F. Finnie, himself toured the Athabasca country near Fort McMurray that first year (Parker and Tingley 1980:92). Jim Parker generously made his notes on the RG 39 file available to me. He used these notes for his 1980 report (92-112). The notes have been verified against the original file.
- 80 This man was likely the same Mercredi discussed in 1923 by District Agent John A. McDougal, who wrote to the director of the Northwest Territories and Yukon Branch, asking who is "sending these *false reports* about Mercredi being appointed Buffalo Ranger 'with powers of inspection over the rangers' ... It was not my intention to employ this party with any powers over whitemen" (14 Dec. 1923, LAC, RG 85, v. 659, file 3741).

CHAPTER 10: FORT CHIPEWYAN AND THE NEW REGIME

- 1 Jennings strongly recommended sending an Indian agent for the Treaty No. 8 bands, perhaps contributing to Oliver's fact-finding trip and his subsequent decision to establish northern agents for the Department of the Interior in 1911.
- 2 He also appears in later government files as Joseph Martin (Library and Archives Canada [LAC], RG 10, v. 6731, file 420-1-4).
- 3 Judging from a number of reports, the economy at Fort Chipewyan seemed to have re-stabilized somewhat after the 1909 starvation. Inspector Conroy reported that the spring muskrat hunt was good, with muskrats bringing high prices, and that there was "good living around Lake Athabaska" (Report by H.A. Conroy to Frank Pedley, 30 Dec. 1909, in Dept. of Indian Affairs [DIA] 1910:187). But in 1910-11, they "suffered considerably during the winter; and would have known severe starvation, had it not been for the exceptional catch of muskrats" (DIA 1911:189). In early 1914, Corporal LaNauze reported, "All Indians seem well off and no destitution reported. They have all made good fur hunts" (7 Jan. 1914, RG 18, v. 1753).
- 4 RNWMP Superintendent Sanders was of the opinion that Indians were not subject to the provincial game laws because no public notice had been given under section 66: "In the absence of such public notice the Indians can therefore legally hunt beaver or any other animal at any time and any fur thus legally obtained could be ... legally traded" (report from Sanders to the RNWMP Commissioner, 6 Aug. 1910, LAC, RG 18, v. 1643, file 125, pt. 2).
- 5 The *Edmonton Bulletin* carried a story that, while furs were sold in London in October 1914 and January 1915, prices were "generally fully one-half less than last March [1914]." The market for furs had dried up because the public was unwilling to buy "costly furs" during wartime, and the lucrative market of Germany and Austria was now unavailable (*Edmonton Bulletin* [EB], "London Fur Sale Is Disappointing," 27 March 1915:1).
- 6 Sergeant Mellor was himself a tough traveller. On this trip in February 1915, the coldest part of the winter, he wrote with considerable understatement: "I had the misfortune to get into the water nearly up to my waist, which is most remarkably inconvenient in cold weather" (patrol report, 1 Feb. 1915, LAC, RG 18, v. 1817).

- 7 Elsewhere in northern Saskatchewan, a Mounted Police officer reported that the Indians and Half-breeds he met on patrol were all doing well by focusing on hunting moose and caribou rather than trapping. “Naturally they are not living so high as usual nor does one see the female element bedecked in so much finery, which is the outward sign of prosperity amongst the native element” (patrol report from A.H. Haudcold[?], Isle a la Crosse Decht, Sask., 18 April 1915, RG 18, v. 1818).
- 8 In the 1920s, Cornwall wrote a memo about the fur trade that was highly critical of all his competitors (BCA, Blanchet fonds).
- 9 Revillon Frères had begun fur-buying operations in Edmonton in 1899. In 1903, the company purchased a Peace River fur trade business from J.K. Cornwall and Fletcher William Fletcher (Ray 1990a:92). The company did not operate directly in Fort Chipewyan.
- 10 Tuberculosis, also commonly known as consumption, can develop both pulmonary and extrapulmonary forms. Scrofula is tuberculosis of the cervical lymph nodes (Taber’s 2001:456, 1859). Alfred Garrioch (1929) described consumption and scrofula among the Beavers at Fort Vermilion in the 1880s. Philip Godsell (1946[1934]:4) saw “terrible scars” on the Beavers from scrofula much later, though he wrongly attributed them to “close intermarriage.” Infection with tuberculosis does not always result in an active case of the disease. People with good immune systems are able to maintain the infectious agent (*Mycobacterium tuberculosis*) in a state of latency. As Dr. Edwards observed in 1900, “I notice that where a good meat diet prevails there is an absence of scrofula, that curse of the Indians in other places, and where we find it is where they have ceased to live on wild meat and have taken to bacon and flour which is not a good food for these people” (Leonard and Whalen 1998:87).
- 11 Mrs. Gibson might have acquired some formal training in nursing, anticipating her role as a missionary wife, as did many women involved in Anglican missionary endeavours (Rutherford 2002:18, 24). Her husband first wrote about her illness to the bishop on 10 Feb. 1925, explaining, “She is suffering quite a lot from Prolapse and at times she can hardly stand on her feet.” He wanted her to leave for Edmonton by the first boat (Gibson to Bishop Lucas, 10 Feb. 1925, General Synod Archives, James R. Lucas papers).
- 12 Flett’s full maiden name was actually Ellen Elizabeth Jane Fraser. She was always known in Fort Chipewyan as Jenny.
- 13 At Fort Vermilion, Mary Lawrence described how “Old Nokum Julie,” a noted midwife, helped her deliver her first child. When she had her third child, “I gave birth to the child as an Indian woman would have done, kneeling,” a method she found superior (Fort Vermilion 2008:88, 159, 228).
- 14 Lacking a well, the mission hauled its water from Lake Athabasca.
- 15 A.J. Bell reported on 29 March 1915 that seven men had already enlisted, twenty-five more had declared they were ready to serve, and an additional hundred men between Athabasca and Fort Smith could be recruited for active duty (*EB*, “Two Priests,” 29 March 1915:6).
- 16 Evidently, other men had been called up who chose not to go. On 13 August 1918, the “Dominion Police” and returned soldiers arrived in Fort Chipewyan, “searching for slackers” (Provincial Archives of Alberta [PAA], A.13/11).
- 17 My warm thanks go to Alan Cameron, ex-Canadian army and a long-time volunteer at Canada’s War Museum, for researching Sanderson’s file for me.
- 18 The bishop chose 5 Judges and 7 Revelation as the Biblical texts for his lessons at this service (8 Dec. 1918, PAA, A.13/11). Both offer strong messages about war and deliverance.

- 19 Similarly, Ann Herring (1994) found that the 1918 influenza epidemic did not affect all communities equally in northern Manitoba.
- 20 Community members already used Goose Island as a base for hunting and fishing. After 1920, the mission decided to have the children living in residence spend their summer vacations there.
- 21 Incredibly, the 1922 annual report of the Alberta Department of Public Health makes no mention of influenza anywhere in the province.
- 22 Gerald Card's diary entry for 24 June 1922 indicated that twenty-seven status Indians had died, mostly from the "Flu" (LAC, RG 10, v. 6921). This figure is surprisingly small, given the descriptions of this epidemic. The Anglican journal claims that the flu epidemic at Fond du Lac killed 45 people out of the population of 150 (30 percent mortality), with probably more deaths in the bush (15 May 1922, PAA, A.13/11).
- 23 These men had both resigned their positions in 1921, claiming that they were too old. Julien Ratfat (then eighty) was replaced by Ambelle Piche, and Sept Hezell (seventy-three), by Edward Redhead (Agent's Diary 1921, LAC, RG 10, v. 6921; LAC, RG 10, Chipewyan Band Annuity Paylist).

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