An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land

An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land

Unfinished Conversations

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AU PRESS

Alberta Government   Canada

Contents

Acknowledgements

This collection of essays became a book thanks to the warm support and encouragement afforded to me by Athabasca University Press, and particularly by Pamela MacFarland Holway, senior editor, and Megan Hall, acting director of the press. Their interest in the project was manifest in the assistance they rendered with converting my older texts into digital form through optical character recognition treatment, since several articles predated the computer age or were in outdated formats. Their consistent help, good advice, and enthusiasm have been deeply appreciated throughout the project. I am grateful also to the publishers and editors who responded promptly and cordially with permission to reprint those articles for which they held copyright; publication credits and copyright information appear at the end of this volume. My warm thanks also to Joyce Hildebrand, a most meticulous copy editor; to Weldon Hiebert, who produced the maps of Rupert's Land and of places mentioned in the text; and to Renée Fossett, who provided the comprehensive index for the book.

The articles gathered here came into being with the help and support of professors, friends, colleagues, and, in many cases, peer reviewers, across the decades from the 1960s onward. Several are cited and thanked in the introduction or in specific chapters, and I will not try to name them all here. Some of them, however, have contributed in one way or another to more than one chapter and to my work over a period of years. Patricia McCormack had important roles in helping chapters 3, 4, and 5 see the light of day. Chapters 4 and 5 first appeared in 1976 in the *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, a small journal that Pat edited as a graduate student in anthropology at the University of Alberta. As a graduate student myself at the time, I was happy to bring out two of my first fur trade writings in that venue, while completing my dissertation, which found publication four years later (Brown 1980). Then in 1988, as co-organizer of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference, she invited me to be a plenary speaker—an opportunity that led

to the writing of "The Blind Men and the Elephant" (chapter 3). Sylvia Van Kirk, early in our respective careers, was another important player, both as a colleague and as the scholar who first discovered the remarkable papers of fur trader George Nelson in the Metropolitan Public Library of Toronto. Even as we followed rather different paths, her work had a formative influence that may be seen in chapter 6 (with its focus on Nelson) and in the story of our friendship (chapter 11) dating back to the 1970s.

In the 1990s, my research on A. Irving Hallowell and the Berens River Ojbwe was much facilitated by working collaboratively with Maureen Matthews, whose CBC Radio documentary projects took us to several Berens River communities to gather stories and memories. Chapters 17 and 18 build, in part, on that collaboration and owe much to her journalistic skills, experience, and dedication. The Canada Research Chair that I held at the University of Winnipeg from 2004 until my retirement in 2011 provided critical research support in those years, including the means to support the research activities of my CRC associate, Susan Elaine Gray, and Anne Lindsay, my research assistant, both in collaboration with my projects and to aid some of their own scholarly undertakings. I am grateful for all their contributions to the work on Hallowell and Chief William Berens and for their research in other spheres as well. The Centre for Rupert's Land Studies in the university library was my valued home base for a good many years of scholarly work, teaching, and relationships with a wide network of people whose conversations and exchanges of ideas and information have been an immeasurable resource and inspiration.

As ever, my family has been a source of affectionate support and encouragement. My father, Harcourt Brown, set me on an academic path through his example, good practice, and confidence that I would succeed; chapter 12 says more about him. Wilson Brown, my husband, knew what he was getting into over fifty years ago when we got engaged. He and our son, Matthew, have been fellow travellers and pillars of support throughout.

An Ethnohistorian in Rupert's Land

HUDSON

Lake
Athabasca

Port Nelson

York
Factory

Fort
Severn

Île-à-la-Crosse

Nelson River

Hayes River

Cumberland
House

Saskatchewan River

Severn River

Winisk River

North Saskatchewan River

Norway House

Rocky Mountain
House

Lake
Winnipeg

Poplar River

Albany River

Berens River

Pauingassi

Poplar Hill

South Saskatchewan River

Dauphin River

Little Grand
Rapids

Pikangikum

Fort Pelly

Assiniboine River

Jackhead

Selkirk

Lac Seul

Lake Nipigon

Winnipeg

Rainy River

Rainy Lake

Manitou Rapids

Red River

Fond
du Lac

Bad River

- - - -   Rupert's Land boundary

0   250   500 km

BAY

Cape Henrietta
Maria

JAMES

BAY

Ekwan River

Akimiski Island

Charlton Island

Rupert River

Fort Albany

Waskaganish

Moose Factory

Moose Fort

Moose River

Longlac

Lake
Superior

Introduction

This book brings together eighteen essays that were written for varied audiences and appeared in scattered places over a span of forty years. Its chapters explore diverse topics, events, and interactions among Indigenous inhabitants, fur traders, and, in later periods, missionaries and anthropologists. Yet they are connected in several ways. Geographically, they all relate to the region formerly known as Rupert's Land, the territory chartered to the Hudson's Bay Company by King Charles II of England in 1670. Encompassing the lands whose waters drained into Hudson Bay, Rupert's Land endured as a curious fur-trade-based colony for two hundred years until its annexation to Canada in 1870. The essays I have selected relate mainly to those years, with excursions back into the early 1600s (chapter 1) and into the century after Rupert's Land became part of Canada (chapters 16–18).

Some chapters highlight stories about, and sometimes told by, Cree and Ojibwe people whose homelands from Hudson Bay to the eastern plains were unilaterally declared by Charles II to be "one of our Plantacions or Colonyes in America." Others feature traders and missionaries who, like the people they met, sometimes tried and often failed to communicate across linguistic, cultural, and social divides and (in part 6) introduce an anthropologist, A. Irving Hallowell, who did better than most of them. The stories come to us through documents, memories, and sometimes retellings by different people from different angles. Some of them emerge in fragments through close study of place names, kinship terms, and the shifting or contested labels that people gave to themselves or to others in different times and places; others survive as whole cloth (such as Settee's Cree tradition, in chapter 15). Taken together, they offer insights into the dynamics of people's lives, their world views, their means of survival and adaptation in northern climes, and their complex and evolving ways of relating to one another across the centuries.

The flow of these relationships over time brings to mind the image of a braided river in motion. Northern rivers sometimes flow in deep valleys and sometimes in meanders, like the Red River in Manitoba. But some waters flow in shifting, complicated channels, sometimes parallel, sometimes intersecting and merging, sometimes separated by islands and sandbars, with the channels varying in speed and in the weight of sediments they carry. The human history of Rupert's Land flowed through time in similar fashion. Scholars have drawn static lines on maps to mark borders between language groups, tribes, and confederacies, but the people never stayed still or entirely apart from one another; they might remain for a long time in distinct channels isolated from one another by islands and sandbars, but then some of them would meet again, sometimes conversing peacefully, sometimes absorbing others, sometimes clashing in conflict, just as braided rivers mingle or divide, varying in their power and intensity.[1]

When newcomers began to arrive in the 1600s, they came first as small tributaries, swallowed up in the larger flows. Then they formed new channels, both separate and merging, adding to the mix their own increasingly weighty sediments—cultural and material baggage—as well as their cross-currents of influence, their eddies and diversions. The braided rivers of Rupert's Land history were animate, casting diverse peoples into midstream or into side channels, sometimes forming barriers, sometimes merging the waters, for better or worse.

Sometimes, the rivers themselves underwent more drastic changes. In the 1870s, the Saskatchewan River near Cumberland House experienced an avulsion, a sudden shifting of much of the river's flow from its old track into a huge floodplain with an area of more than five hundred square kilometres, forming a complicated belt of small channels, lakes, and other features.[2] Then, in the next hundred years, hydroelectric developments irrevocably changed many northern waterscapes as well as the lives of the people who relied on them.[3] These cataclysms could stand as a riverine metaphor for what happened to Rupert's Land and its Indigenous peoples after 1870—their annexation to

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1 Palaeoanthropologist Lee Berger (my source for this metaphor) finds the concept of a braided river most useful as a way of thinking about the interpretive challenges posed by the finding of *Homo naledi* deep in a South African cave. Human evolution is best mapped, he says, not as "a tree branching from a single root" but rather as "a braided stream: a river that divides into channels, only to merge again downstream" (cited in Shreeve 2015, 15).

2 Cree historian Keith Goulet of Cumberland House first told me of this event and its effects; for its scientific analysis, see Smith et al. (1998).

3 Amid the many works on the consequences of hydro projects in the north, see Chodkiewicz and Brown (1999) and Long and Brown (2015) for studies pertaining to northern Manitoba and eastern James Bay, respectively.

Canada, the hiving off of old homelands into ceded treaty areas and reserves, and the influx of Indian agents and the powerful new structures of governance that came with them, all creating an avulsion in the region's history, yet one that left some areas (such as the upper Berens River Ojibwe homeland—see chapters 17 and 18) in relative peace for decades to come.

ETHNOHISTORY: DEFINING AND DOING

The chapters in this book are tied together by some long threads of interest and concern. They come from one source, an author whose perspectives have evolved over the decades yet who finds, looking over her shoulder, that her work has also exhibited a certain consistency. They share a focus on the close study of texts—a word that derives from the old Latin verb *texere*, to weave, and the related noun *textus*: literally, that which is woven, a web (*Oxford English Dictionary*). I have always been interested in weavings of words—particularly, original and edited writings that have been generated by encounters between Indigenous peoples and outsiders. For me, texts also include spoken words, images, artifacts, and other cultural expressions that may be "read" for their content and that require a scope that stretches the mind beyond the confines of any one discipline. In short, what I have been doing all these years is best described as ethnohistory.

Several practitioners have tried to define the somewhat nebulous term *ethnohistory*, even though the uses and value of the field emerge more in the doing of it than in bookish definitions. Pauline T. Strong recently offered a succinct description: "Ethnohistory is an interdisciplinary approach to indigenous, colonial, and postcolonial culture and history. . . . [It] encompasses both particularistic and comparative scholarship and embodies productive tensions among historical, anthropological, and indigenous perspectives on cultural and historical processes" (2015, 192). Raymond J. DeMallie, reflecting on his doing of Sioux ethnohistory, defines it more personally, based on long experience:

> I developed the habit of thinking ethnohistorically by bringing together diverse material: documents, some written in the distant past that were gleaned from archives, others written more recently, such as the field notes of anthropologists who preceded me, and even my own field notes, which . . . should be treated like any other historical documents: books; newspapers; drawings, paintings, photographs; sound recordings; artifacts; and linguistic data. My preoccupation has been looking for connections among them, how one thing explains or contextualizes another, always with the goal of understanding the past.

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> By thinking ethnohistorically it is possible to see in the record of the past the evidence of social structures, of cultural symbols, of linguistic patterns. (2013, 234)

In 1989–90, I had the privilege of being president of the American Society for Ethnohistory for a year. One of my duties was to give a presidential address, which our journal published the following spring. In "Ethnohistorians: Strange Bedfellows, Kindred Spirits" (1991), I didn't try to define the field, since I was talking to converts, but I think my discussion of the challenges, opportunities, and rewards of doing ethnohistory offered an implicit definition. I took the occasion to recount how I got into this line of work, thanks to the distinguished Andean scholar John V. Murra. Murra was working in Peru in 1963–64 when my husband and I arrived—he to do research for his dissertation and I to learn what I could about Peruvian archaeology.[4] In Lima, however, Murra offered me a new opportunity, enlisting me to assist with transcribing and analyzing Spanish documents concerning the Quechua and Aymara people in the sixteenth century. I had been quite well schooled in history and in Latin and Greek literature, but, as I recalled in 1991, "I had never learned to study and see through historical texts, to read between the lines, in the way that Murra taught me. The originality of his questions, his way of opening up worlds beyond the conscious or explicit intent of these old Spanish writers, the revelation of the ways that their records could illuminate domains and people whom they scarcely knew—these discoveries gave me a new direction" (1991, 114). The interdisciplinarity of his work was also exciting—the attention to language and the need to understand both sixteenth-century Spanish words and categories and the handwriting of the time. I gave myself a crash course in palaeography. Just as challenging was the need to interpret the indigenous terms that kept turning up in the documents. Archaeology was a necessary handmaiden to these projects, one of many tools I could now see as serving a larger purpose—but I had discovered the joys of working with primary documents.[5]

The Peruvian experience also taught me that ethnohistory, at its best, involves making connections among different fields, assembling a varied

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4 In 1963, I had just completed a master's degree in classical archaeology at Harvard University, but I found the fine arts orientation of the program uncongenial. I decided to continue towards a doctorate in archaeology under the aegis of the anthropology department, which evidently had to let me in since I was already a Harvard graduate student, but issues of gender and other factors discouraged that pursuit. John Murra opened another path.

5 This work led to my first publication, a "transcripción paleográfica" of "Padrón de los mil indios ricos de la Provincia de Chucuito y de los pueblos, parcialidades y ayllos que son y la cantidad de ganado de la tierra [llamas] que cada uno tiene," in *Visita hecha a la Provincia de Chucuito por Garci Diez de San Miguel en el año 1567*, 301–63 (Lima: Casa de la Cultura del Peru, 1964).

toolkit to approach texts and other sources of information, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, critically and from different angles. It is all about "the crossing of boundaries, of time and space, of discipline and department, and of perspective, whether ethnic, cultural, social, or gender-based." As we work to understand and to tell the stories of "others" who lacked the means, power, and privilege to write down their own histories, "we have a heightened sense of being outsiders ourselves. . . . We become (I hope) very conscious of reading those others largely through the words of outsiders of another era—a kind of triple jeopardy in which we need all the help we can get" (Brown 1991, 117).

Ethnohistory is not just a congeries of research tools or methods. It also, as I argued in 1991, affords a common ground where kindred spirits can meet and communicate, not only to share findings but also to sharpen our understandings and interpretations by asking new questions that we might never think of if we were confined within a particular discipline or if we conducted our research without attending to Indigenous perspectives and knowledge. Anthropologist Bernard Cohn took the notion of common ground seriously with reference to his work on British colonial India. He believed that researchers combining anthropology and history should go beyond teamwork or consultations among specialists and opt, where possible, for "biculturality—that is, a thorough immersion in the culture and work ways of another discipline" (Cohn 1987, quoted in Brown 1991, 118). His approach influenced my own. In 1970, on the strong recommendation of John Murra, I entered the doctoral program in anthropology at the University of Chicago, where Bernard Cohn and George W. Stocking, Jr., became two of my principal advisors. Living examples of Cohn's biculturality, they both held cross-appointments in anthropology and history. They helped prepare me, unwittingly, for my twenty-eight years (1983 to 2011) of teaching in the Department of History at the University of Winnipeg in Manitoba.

The Winnipeg offer was unexpected but attractive, given the university's downtown location three blocks from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, in the Archives of Manitoba. The department wanted me mainly to teach about the fur trade and to handle a course that in 1983 was still called "Indians of Canada"; I was also sometimes called upon to teach Canadian history survey courses. Of special appeal for me was the opportunity to teach honours- and master's-level seminars that met in the HBC Archives and to take on the supervision of master's theses and, later, several doctoral dissertations at the University of Manitoba.

The move to Winnipeg began a new adventure. As I had never taken courses in any of the subjects I was now expected to teach, the learning curve was steep but instructive. I was also somewhat unprepared for university settings

in which departmental and disciplinary boundaries were taken fairly seriously. When the University of Winnipeg historians hired me, their chair got a message from the chair of the anthropology department asking them if they realized that they were hiring an anthropologist, but they went ahead with my appointment anyway. Later, my proposals to cross-list certain of my courses with (unsurprisingly) substantial ethnohistorical content remained on hold until some personnel changes occurred. When supervising several master's theses in the Joint Masters Program run by the history departments at the universities of Winnipeg and Manitoba, I drew a few raised eyebrows when I urged students to read anthropological as well as historical source materials and to think across disciplines. Having welcomed the cross-fertilization of ideas and methods that ethnohistory offered, I was bemused to find that there seemed to be some concern about contamination—hence my reference to "strange bedfellows" (from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*) in the title of my 1991 presidential talk.[6]

Meanwhile, I greatly enjoyed historicizing anthropology and merging the disciplines. In the late 1980s, I began work on the papers of anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell, who spent several summers in the 1930s with Ojibwe communities along the Berens River, from Lake Winnipeg to northwestern Ontario.[7] In 1992, I had the pleasure of bringing into print his long-lost monograph, *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba*, and took the liberty of adding my own subtitle: *Ethnography into History* (Hallowell 1992). The anthropologist himself became part of the historical record, just as he held a place in the oral histories of Berens River people who, sixty years later, well remembered him and Chief William Berens, the interlocutor who made his work possible. History and anthropology came together as I worked with documents of all sorts—Hallowell's research files and photographs at the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, the holdings of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, and the United Church of Canada archives in Winnipeg and Toronto. Fur trade and mission sources complemented those of Hallowell, since their authors were often writing about the same people, or their relatives. The work became multidimensional in the early 1990s, when CBC Radio journalist Maureen Matthews and I made several trips to Berens River Ojibwe communities, meeting with

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6 In The Tempest, act 2, scene 2, in the midst of a storm on a lone island, the jester Trinculo comes upon Caliban, who is lying flat, hoping not to be noticed. To escape the storm, Trinculo decides, "My best way is to creep under his gabardine. There is no other shelter hereabout. Misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows" (Shakespeare 2006, 66).

7 One often sees "Ojibwa," but the spelling "Ojibwe" best elicits the correct pronunciation of the word. "Saulteaux," a term often used by Hallowell, is a synonym still common in Manitoba: it refers back to Sault Ste. Marie, where the French first met Ojibwe people. Ojibwe people now generally prefer the name Anishinaabe, which means "human being," although they sometimes use "Ojibwe" or "Indian" in speaking to white folk.

elders who still remembered Hallowell, Berens, and Fair Wind (Naamiwan), an old man whose drum ceremony was famous across the region (see chapters 17 and 18). In Winnipeg, we discovered that a remarkable collection of artifacts from Fair Wind's community was housed in my own university's anthropology museum, and we worked to reconnect those materials with the people from whom an archaeologist had purchased them in the early 1970s.[8] This sort of triangulation—bringing together documentary, material, and Indigenous oral sources, each demanding its own methodology and skill set—is endlessly challenging and rewarding and lies at the heart of ethnohistory.

READING VOICES

As noted earlier, one of the threads that winds through these essays concerns the close reading of texts—looking not only at the pages before our eyes and the often thorny question of authorship but also at how texts journey from conversations to writing to copying, editing, and publishing, if they go that far, while attending to what is lost in the different stages and why. Close reading involves, at base, engaging with such practical matters as comparing and evaluating different versions of oral, archival, and published texts and deciphering obscure and historically specific words and categories. Two other threads, woven together with close reading, have to do with issues of voice and power.

In 1991, I had the chance to weave these threads together in a talk to the Champlain Society, Canada's venerable publisher of a long series of documentary volumes. In "Documentary Editing: Whose Voices?" (Brown 1992), I explored the roles, activities, and powers of editors of such works. Documentary publications in older times typically presented and annotated the papers of great men of the past, increasing the attention that they received, while the editors themselves, who made the books possible, lingered on the sidelines. J. M. Bumsted once described documentary editors as "the poor stepchildren of Clio." Their work is "always useful and often essential," but involves "long hours out of sight in the scullery. . . . To edit—even brilliantly—a lengthy manuscript or a collection of papers is regarded by most followers of the Muse as uncreative hackwork" (1980, quoted in Brown 1992, 8). Yet editors hold unheralded power over their deceased subjects. They are arbiters at least as much as mediators, making critical decisions about what to publish (or not). They clarify or interpret texts; they may silently modernize style and spelling, if allowed—and some editors read more attentively than others. Their introductions and annotations

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8 In Naamiwan's *Drum: The Story of a Contested Repatriation of Anishinaabe Artefacts*, Maureen Matthews (2016) recounts how a good many of those artifacts were secretly taken from the University of Winnipeg in the late 1990s, setting off an unexpected chain of events.

set the stage for how their subject will be viewed and which facets of his (or, more rarely, her) life and character may be spotlighted.

Issues of close reading, voice, and power arise in all documentary editing, but as I noted in my talk, some voices have been almost absent from the Champlain volumes—those of "women and Indians."[9] Margaret Arnett MacLeod's editing of *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave* (1947), a Scottish HBC wife at York Factory in the 1840s, stands out like a red petticoat. As for "Indian" authors, the sole example is *The Journal of Major John Norton*, edited by Carl F. Klinck and James J. Talman for the society in 1970; Norton, sometimes known as "Teyoninhokarawen, the Mohawk Chief," was the son of a Cherokee and a Scotswoman and was adopted as a nephew by the Mohawk leader Joseph Brant. In fairness, the editors of several Champlain Society volumes—on Father Joseph-François Lafitau, Pierre-Esprit Radisson, Champlain, and a few others—have paid close attention to the Indigenous people with whom their subjects interacted. But to find documentary texts that present the words and stories of Indigenous people, we must turn mainly to the works of anthropologists—whose efforts, however, sometimes pose their own problems.

In 1988, H. David Brumble III catalogued over five hundred American Indian "autobiographies," most of which had been published since the late 1800s. Most came from anthropologists working with non-literate or semi-literate subjects or with scribal texts recorded by others from persons since deceased. The original speakers, if living, were often monolingual in their own language and often far away; they were rarely available to review these texts—even if those who recorded them wished they could do so. Brumble also noted another important issue: the genre of autobiography is itself a Western literary convention. Indigenous storytellers usually describe their life experiences in episodes, not necessarily connected or in chronological order. When editors (anthropologists or sometimes literary folk) rework such texts, they commonly adapt them to European-based literate conventions about how such narratives should be constructed—linear, chronological, beginning with childhood, with gaps filled in from other data—to fulfill Western readers' expectations. In doing so, they position themselves, whether unthinkingly or deliberately, as what Brumble calls "Absent Editors," editing "in such a way as to create the fiction that the narrative is all the Indian's own" (1988, 75). They present to unsuspecting readers an elder's words as if they were direct quotations, despite challenges of transcription and translation. The best known example may be

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9 Some years ago at the University of Winnipeg, one waggish student commented that our history department was visibly divided between those who did "maps and chaps," and a small minority, those who did "women and Indians" (Brown and Vibert, xix). We're still a minority but our numbers have grown.

poet John Neihardt's *Black Elk Speaks* (1932)—a text rendering the words of a famed Lakota Sioux elder as his own—which stood unchallenged and poorly understood until Raymond DeMallie's careful exegesis in *The Sixth Grandfather* (1984). Through DeMallie's meticulous research and his attention to language and translation, Black Elk's original stories became more intelligible and the contexts of his narratives and his life are now far more deeply understood.

DeMallie's work and that of several other distinguished scholars—Julie Cruikshank (1990) and Keith Basso (1996) among them—set standards that I and fellow editors kept in mind as we published the oral traditions and memories of Cree storyteller Louis Bird (Bird 2005), and Ojibwe chief William Berens (Berens 2009). Their approaches and concerns with voice and power also have relevance for the editing of texts by non-Indigenous authors, and I have worked with both. In the mid-1980s, the Hudson's Bay Company withdrew support for its Hudson's Bay Record Society series, which, beginning in 1938, had published thirty-three volumes of HBC records distinguished by careful research, editing, and annotation. I and others saw a need to revive the series in some form—with a wider scope including both North West Company documents and Indigenous texts. In 1990, the Centre for Rupert's Land Studies at the University of Winnipeg co-published with McGill-Queen's University Press the first book in what is, to date, a fourteen-volume documentary series on fur trade and Indigenous history, under my general editorship. Four of the volumes focus entirely on Cree and Ojibwe stories and memoirs that range in time from the late nineteenth century to recent decades, and the other books pay close attention to the newcomers' relations with Indigenous people.[10]

The Rupert's Land volumes have been useful for scholars and advanced students, but for the growing numbers of undergraduates enrolling in Indigenous history courses, something more was needed. In 1996, Elizabeth Vibert, of the University of Victoria, and I published a collection of original writings, *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, by scholars who shared our interest in these matters; a second revised edition appeared in 2003. We looked for authors who were making original contributions to knowledge and understanding by using a full range of sources—textual, oral, and other—and who would also communicate concerns with language and epistemology: How do we know what we think we know? Writing for students and general readers, authors analyzed a variety of Indigenous-European encounters and interactions as case studies that offered both substance and tools for inquiry, to encourage students towards making their own critical investigations and analyses. Our title invited readers to go beyond words on pages, no matter how authoritative

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10 For a full listing, see Rupert's Land Record Society Series under "Our Series," *McGill-Queen's University Press*, 2016, http://www.mqup.ca/our-series-pages-178.php.

they seemed.[11] Our subtitle, *Contexts for Native History*, opened another door for discussion. "Contexts, like rivers," we wrote, "are always in motion, always diverse and differently witnessed."

> Documents and authors exist in multiple contexts, even when they don't cross cultural borders or survive through long periods. Their viewers define and interpret those contexts differently: some widely, some narrowly, some with an emphasis on cultural factors, others nonsocial, political, or economic ones. In doing so, observers cannot help but refract their lines of sight through their own context, and through the lens of contemporary concerns and priorities. (Brown and Vibert 1996, xix)

Scholars write about the contexts of documents (broadly defined) based on their syntheses of research and evidence. But contexts are always imperfectly known, often assumed, and may be badly misunderstood, even by ethnographers who were "there," as Johannes Fabian (1996) discovered from his own experience. Descriptions of contexts are themselves constructed and must be critically assessed. Yet we have to try to write about them too, and then subject them to close study. As Fabian notes, "mistakes can in turn be communicated only when they have been turned into texts" (1996, 44)—which can then be shared in new and sometimes corrective contexts. Feedback is critical; closure gets us nowhere.

THE CHAPTERS

In preparing this book, I looked back over several dozen articles that I had published over four decades in a wide variety of venues, as well as the texts of some talks I had given. The eighteen selected for inclusion are those that have retained the greatest interest and use, not only for me but for others who have requested them. Several were long out of print, not available on the Internet or in most libraries. I have worked through them with an editorial eye and a concern to update and recast where appropriate. The texts, then, remain largely in their original forms, but they are not simply reprints. Seven of the essays first appeared in published conference proceedings; seven began life as invited chapters published in multiauthor books, some in the United States and some in Canada; and three derive from small or defunct journals. Chapter 10, "Mrs. Thompson Was a Model Housewife," is a new addition, exploring

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11 These kinds of efforts have some parallels with the goals and concerns of a US organization, the DBQ [Document-Based Questions] Project, which, on a much larger scale, prepares curriculum materials and works with schoolteachers to help them engage students in critical historical thinking and analysis. For details, see "About the DBQ Project," *The DBQ Project*, 2015, http://www.dbqproject.com/what-is-the-dbq-project.php.

the life of Charlotte Small, the Cree fur trade wife of explorer and mapmaker David Thompson, who in 2007 was recognized by the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada as a person of national historic significance. A list of publication credits and copyright information for the chapters appears at the end of this book.

Some essays were written for anthropological venues and others for historians; accordingly, both styles of referencing appear. The terminology that they employ also varies, reflecting changing usages across the decades and also the fact that a few were written for American publishers and audiences.[12] Some ethnonyms widely used in recent decades in Canada (Aboriginal, First Nations) are not in the American lexicon, while, in contrast to Canadians, American writers (including American Indians) freely use the term "Indian." I have adapted my usages with a view to considering conventions and sensibilities on both sides of the border. Whenever a group can be precisely identified, I use its specific name. In my most recent writing, when a general term is called for, I have shifted towards using "Indigenous" (or "indigenous," in the sense of "autochthonous"). Ethnic terms, however, are always in motion. They need to be situated historically (as discussed in chapter 2) and evaluated, but they cannot be dictated for all.

Each of the six parts of the book begins with a short summary of the chapters therein, including their themes and how they are connected. While the chapters, overall, appear in linear and more or less chronological sequence, they encompass several cross-cutting themes. Historiographic issues arise in all the essays, inviting readers to think in different ways about approaches to research as we search not only for answers but for questions that we may have failed to ask in the first place. Attention to words and language is a feature of part 1, but it recurs in chapters comparing Cree and Ojibwe kinship and generational terms with those of anglophone newcomers (chapters 8 and 12). A focus on the complex familial and marital relations that developed between fur traders and Algonquian women and on some of the implications and consequences of those relations runs through both parts 2 and 3.

Part 4 focuses particularly on women. Chapter 10 tells about Charlotte Small and her long life in the shadow of trader-mapmaker David Thompson, and chapters 11 and 12 recount the trajectories of two scholars who began to uncover the stories of such women and their families and experiences—the parallel yet often intersecting tracks of Sylvia Van Kirk and myself. Reflecting on our work over the years, I am reminded of the life stories of a good many

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12 For the purposes of this collection, Canadian spellings have been adopted throughout. Also, ellipses in quotations from primary sources represent my omissions: they are not features of the original texts.

women scholars I have known; we began our work in a period when women professors were as rare as hens' teeth and when women, named or otherwise, scarcely appeared in the pages or indexes of scholarly books about the fur trade or anything else. Even though we, like Oliver, still ask for more, the shifts that have occurred over two generations have been quite remarkable.

Parts 5 and 6 shift their focus to Cree and Ojibwe people themselves, reflecting trends in my main interests as well as research openings that have come my way. Opportunities to work in the HBC Archives, in the archives of the United Church of Canada in Toronto and Winnipeg, and with the papers of Methodist missionary Egerton R. Young and his family allowed me to trace the stories of Cree and Ojibwe individuals through a variety of records. My research into the A. Irving Hallowell papers in Philadelphia and with Berens River people who remembered him was marked by a succession of turning points. The opportunities to work with Cree and Ojibwe linguists and storytellers such as Louis Bird, Keith Goulet, and Roger Roulette allowed me to read further beyond the words in fur trade and mission documents than I had before.

In recent years, as these chapters show, I have tended away from fur trade studies and have become, if anything, more of an ethnohistorian: Indigenous stories, memories, and voices in the documents are my principal interests these days. I and a good many colleagues (Indigenous or not) are taking the multiple Indigenous sides of the stories seriously, along with the others, and finding new meaning and significance in historical records of all kinds—written, oral, and material. Just as Rupert's Land history may be visualized as a braided river, so too the flow of our research and scholarship involves shifting currents of understanding and perspective—parallel, diverging, merging, always fresh and challenging. Along the way, communication and sharing bring renewed energy and life as the currents eddy and shift. Hence the subtitle of this book—"Unfinished Conversations"—borrowed from Paul Sullivan's powerful study of Mayas and foreigners across a century (1989).

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Finding Words and Remembering

The three essays in part 1 have to do with matters of language, translation, and terms and names and their meanings. Chapter 1, "Rupert's Land, *Nituskeenan*, Our Land: Cree and European Naming and Claiming Around the Dirty Sea," looks at first encounters between Cree people and English and French visitors in Hudson and James Bay during the 1600s. Europeans, through their writing and publishing, have long dominated discourse about their explorations. Captain Thomas James, for one, penned a vivid account of searching for the Northwest Passage to the "South Sea" and Japan, getting thoroughly lost, and wintering in "James his Baye," as he named it on his map. European sailors and mapmakers created their own universe of place names, surrounding what they called Hudson Bay with names that memorialized themselves or their homelands or that honoured royal patrons and other memorable individuals—names that have endured for four hundred years. Yet unbeknownst to the intruders, Cree people maintained a far older parallel universe of names that echoed a very different world view; their sense of place was grounded in stories and descriptions of geographical features that carried memories and told travellers what they needed to know. The juxtaposition of European documents and Cree names and stories reveals the roots of centuries of misunderstanding on several fronts—the use and ownership of land, notions about trade protocol, means of surviving in the subarctic environment, and, not least, the contrasting linguistic structures that set Algonquian and European languages so far apart that accurate translations could not be achieved for a great many years.[1]

Chapter 2, "Linguistic Solitudes and Changing Social Categories," is broader in scope, looking at words and labels in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Rupert's Land from the Hudson Bay Lowlands to the Red River region. By the late 1700s, a good many fur traders had formed unions with Indigenous women, and the numbers of their children were growing. The written records of the times reveal shifts and variability in terminology as traders and others looked for ways to describe these new relationships and the emerging groups of people of mixed descent, whom they labelled and categorized with borrowed and invented terms. This essay began life as a paper for the third North American Fur Trade Conference in Winnipeg in 1978. Like chapter 1, it reflects my long-term interest in the broader subject of ethnonyms—the evolving and revealing words that groups, whether Indigenous or European, have used to describe both themselves and others.

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1 For a recent overview of these issues that discusses the sources for and dynamics of early encounters in eastern and western Canada, see Jennifer S. H. Brown and Frieda Esau Klippenstein, "Reading, Writing, and Speaking of Contact: Explorations from Both Sides," in *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016), 227–41.

"The Blind Men and the Elephant: Touching the Fur Trade" (chapter 3) reflects on the varied angles from which scholars and others have approached the fur trade. The questions we ask and the answers we seek are directed by our preconceptions, our different disciplinary backgrounds, and the particular research resources that come our way, just as the blind men "read" the elephant differently if they first grab the trunk, tail, tusks, or other parts. No single person can objectively encompass the whole. This old Asian story teaches us that we do well to recognize and acknowledge our limitations; we always approach our subjects from particular angles. Focusing on one part, we may miss others and fail to grasp the whole beast. The text first took form as a plenary session talk for the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Conference held in Edmonton in September 1988.

Rupert's Land, *Nituskeenan,* Our Land

Cree and European Naming and Claiming Around the Dirty Sea

Rupert's Land—or the Hudson's Bay Company Territory, as it was sometimes called—is not widely known even in its Canadian homeland. Most Americans have never heard of it, even though it reached into what are now four US states and six Canadian provinces and territories and was much larger than any of the thirteen British American colonies. In Great Britain, it is even less known. Prince Rupert (1619–82), Hudson's Bay Company founder and nephew of King Charles I, remains famous in the United Kingdom as leader of the royalist forces in Cromwell's time and as a naval commander against the Dutch after the Restoration. But historians whom I met at the University of Oxford while visiting in 2002 were unfamiliar with his namesake territory in North America and his role in founding the HBC.

When the HBC was chartered in 1670, Rupert's Land became the English term for the entire region, approximately the northern third of North America. It existed as a colonial oddity, largely uncolonized, for two centuries, until 1870, considerably longer than Canada (founded in 1867) has existed as a country. But it is almost invisible in most North American histories and even in histories of European colonization.[1] Its obscurity is doubtless due, in part, to its northern, largely subarctic location; its relatively small, dispersed populations; its distance from major North American settlements and theatres of war; and the fact that its name faded from the scene when it was annexed to Canada

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1 A widely used text, *The Making of the West: Peoples and Cultures*, vol. 1, *To 1740*, by Lynn Hunt et al. (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2001), for example, includes a map captioned "European Trade Patterns, c. 1740" (map 18, p. 648) and showing the lands around eastern and southern Hudson and James bays as a part of British North America, but the entire area westward from present-day Manitoba is anachronistically labelled "Canada."

in 1870. Another factor may be that much of its history was stored for a long time in relatively closed archives and in scholarly boxes packed away in certain rather specialized fields of study. The Canadian fur trade box, built by Harold A. Innis (1930) and his followers, traced the expansion of the trade westward from the St. Lawrence and Great Lakes and beyond, offering a novel view of Canadian history at the time. Its contemporary was the HBC history box, framed by such writers as William Schooling (1920) and Douglas MacKay (1936) and fitted out in great detail by E. E. Rich (1958), along with thirty-three Hudson's Bay Record Society documentary volumes and much other work.[2] Somehow, the rich contents of these boxes did not get displayed on the larger historical stage; their interest and scope remained limited, and Rupert's Land remained in the shadows.

In 1974, however, Arthur J. Ray published a book that opened those boxes and explored their contents in new ways. *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660–1870* was a seminal work for the history of Rupert's Land and its peoples. The work of Ray and others in the 1970s laid out new paths for fur trade history.[3] These writings still relied on the documents conventionally used by older authors but mined them by asking new questions, directing attention towards the dynamic interactions of Aboriginal people with the fur trade. They provided interpretive frames in which researchers began to inquire about and take seriously, at long last, the multiple and evolving perspectives of the Native people whom the European traders and explorers met. Ever since the 1970s, these and many other studies have generated new ways to look at Rupert's Land and at the terrain beneath that label, bringing fresh approaches to an old subject.

This essay explores early English (and some French) constructions of the Hudson Bay region before Rupert's Land was invented and compares them to Cree perspectives on its geography and places and on the newcomers themselves, as expressed through naming. It then looks at Cree concepts of lands and watersheds, as contrasted to those held and asserted by the founders of the HBC and its rivals from 1670 through the two decades immediately following. As the HBC struggled to become established in the midst of intense English-French

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2 Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930; repr. 1970); William Schooling, *The Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Trading into Hudson's Bay During Two Hundred and Fifty Years, 1670–1920* (London: Hudson's Bay Company, 1920); Douglas MacKay, *The Honourable Company: A History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1936); E. E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1870* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1958).

3 Ray's *Indians in the Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974) was reprinted with a new introduction in 1998.

conflicts over Rupert's Land, its various gestures of possession and naming (along with those of the rival French) met Aboriginal ways of thinking and naming that reveal fundamentally different frames of reference still enduring in language and thought.

WHAT'S IN A NAME? PEOPLE AND PLACES IN CREE AND ENGLISH

The lands and waters of Hudson Bay were "discovered" many times before the HBC received its royal charter in 1670. After the Ice Age glaciers retreated, Aboriginal people spread northward as the landscape, vegetation, and animal populations recovered. The earliest occupants of the Hudson Bay Lowlands have been dated to about four thousand years ago. [4] Judging by the later predominance of the Cree language across the region, they were probably ancestral to the Cree, and their lifestyles would have been similar. They were river and shore people, never far from fresh water and its resources. For countless generations, they harvested the fish, furred animals, migratory birds in spring and fall, and larger game—notably, the woodland caribou herds that migrated across their lands and rivers in the spring and fall. [5]

The Hudson Bay Lowland Cree whose ancestors met the first Europeans on the bay shores describe themselves as Omushkegowuk, "people of the muskeg" (sing. Omushkego). Such descriptors evoking home area and environment are typical of Aboriginal people's ways of naming themselves in their own languages, as expressed, for example, in the local Native names that HBC men recorded in the 1700s. "Cree" is an outsiders' label that came into general use in the nineteenth century, as observers became aware of the linguistic unity of the region. [6]

The Omushkegowuk travelled principally on inland waterways and along the old beach ridges along the Hudson Bay coast—and on the muskeg when it was frozen. From their perspective, the bay itself was unattractive and dangerous. The Cree name for Hudson Bay is Winni-pek, "the sea of dirty (salt) water." This distinguishing characteristic is explained by an old legend. Omushkego

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4 Victor Lytwyn, *Muskekowuck Athinuwick: Original People of the Great Swampy Land* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002), 39, citing Kenneth Lister on radiocarbon dates from the Shamattawa River.

5 Ibid., 82–85.

6 Lytwyn lists the old local names (*Muskekowuck Athinuwick*, 12–15). The term "Cree" is an abbreviated form of kiristinon, which the French recorded in the 1600s as the name of a little-known Algonquian group south of James Bay; they then broadened that term to include all Cree speakers. David Pentland, "Synonymy [of 'Cree']," in *Subarctic*, ed. June Helm, 227, vol. 6 of *Handbook of American Indians*, William C. Sturtevant, gen. ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981).

(Cree) storyteller Louis Bird of Peawanuk, Ontario, relates how, long ago, the Giant Skunk, Mishi Shiikaak, was threatening and terrorizing the other animals. They combined to kill him and enlisted Wolverine to hold his bum so they would not be sprayed during the attack. But after the job was done, Wolverine had to let go and was hit by the smell. He was not allowed to wash in fresh water because he would pollute it; he had to make a great dash all the way to the sea (Hudson Bay), where he plunged in to clean himself off. The sea has been dirty ever since.[7]

Not only is the saltwater undrinkable, but the coastal shallows are tidal, extend great distances, and become very rough in storms. Aboriginal people in birch canoes avoided the open water. For example, rather than venture onto the bay around Cape Henrietta Maria, Omushkego travellers used inland waterways to get from the Winisk River on Hudson Bay to the mouth of the Ekwan River on James Bay (see the map at the front of this book). Louis Bird translates Ekwan as "the preferable way to go." Given their caution about Winni-pek, they would have found the efforts of the first European ships to navigate this inland sea memorable for the sailors' bravery or rashness, as well as for their strange activities and sounds and the appearance of the ships themselves. The noise and flashing of the guns, the cries of the sailors hoisting the sails ("Heave ho! Heave ho!"), the ropes and anchors, the hardtack or ship's biscuit that the sailors ate—all are subjects of remark in the stories told by Louis Bird.[8] These first impressions made by the newcomers are epitomized by the term that James Bay Cree speakers still use for "white men": *wemistigosiwak*, the literal meaning of which refers to men with wooden boats.[9]

The old stories offer insights into how those terms got established. The European ships sometimes got stranded, driven ashore by rough seas and high tides. Louis Bird tells a story of how some Omushkego people made their first contact with newcomers. A ship became grounded on Akimiski Island in James Bay, and when the people cautiously approached, the sailors clearly were hoping for help to haul the ship back to the water. They all prepared a channel and rollers and refloated the ship when a high tide came with the next full moon, and the people received some of their first European goods in thanks for their help. This memorable occurrence may well date back to the 1600s, although it

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7 Louis Bird, *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay* (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2005), chap. 2.

8 Ibid., chaps. 5 and 6.

9 This etymology from linguist Douglas Ellis is cited by John S. Long, "Treaty No. 9 and Fur Trade Company Families: Northeastern Ontario's Halfbreeds, Indians, Petitioners and Métis," in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), 162n62.

is impossible to link it with a specific ship or date—which, in any case, is not the point of the Omushkego narrative. The story has been retold over three hundred years or more to explain what a first meeting with these men in a strange wooden vessel was like, how some of the first new goods arrived, and also how some Omushkegowuk found ways to deal peacefully with strangers in ways expressing their own values: caution, circumspection, and finding means to set up a reciprocal relationship.[10]

"JAMES HIS BAYE": EARLY IMPRINTS ON OMUSHKEGO SPACES AND
ON ENGLISH MAPS

In the early 1600s, in and around James Bay, the wooden-boat sailing men were in fact specifically English. And just as the Omushkegowuk were observing and naming the new arrivals, so the first English explorers and mapmakers began naming Winni-pek and the Aboriginal lands and waters around it in accord with their own values and priorities. The first two English expeditions to winter in James Bay left traces not only on the land (and probably in Omushkego memories) but also on maps. Although Henry Hudson and Thomas James failed in their goal of finding a Northwest Passage around North America to Asia, their travels permanently imprinted their respective surnames, originally in possessive form (Hudson's Bay, James his Baye), on maps of northern North America.[11]

The tragic fate of Henry Hudson and some of his crew, set adrift on James Bay after a mutiny on his ship, is well known in English histories, as is his meeting with a lone Cree man in the spring of 1611. Although more famous than Thomas James, Hudson left a slim legacy of English place names in Hudson and James Bay compared to that of James, who wintered on Charlton Island in James Bay twenty years later. James never met or saw an Aboriginal person during that year, although Cree people surely observed his expedition and its tracks, but his nominal traces on maps are numerous. Over a dozen place names that he assigned in honour of royalty, expedition sponsors, and his home area of

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10 Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, chap. 5. The old Omushkego stories teach and reinforce values and world view implicitly rather than prescriptively. The ship story also does not answer outsiders' historical questions about who and when. Louis Bird noted in telling the story that, with hindsight, we know the newcomers were Europeans. But the Omushkegowuk had no way of identifying their language or home country; the impression made by the strangers in their striking wooden vessels was epitomized in the new ethnonym, *wemistigosiwak*.

11 In 1625, English mapmaker Henry Briggs was the first to place the name Hudson's Bay on a map; see Derek Hayes, *Historical Atlas of the Arctic* (Vancouver: Douglas and McIntyre, 2003), 27, caption. "James his Baye" appeared on Thomas James's map of 1632; see Wayne K. D. Davies, *Writing Geographical Exploration: James and the Northwest Passage, 1631–33* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2003), fig. 5.1.

Bristol and south Wales made it onto his and other charts of the region, some only for a time and others permanently.

The names that James chose, like those of other European explorers, sometimes expressed nostalgia for home but often had a strong colonizing and appropriative tenor. They contrast strikingly with indigenous names, which typically encode key local features that serve as essential visual cues for travellers. On 20 August 1631, James named the whole southwestern Hudson Bay coastal region rather vaguely as "the new Principality of South Wales," and later on his map, as "New South Wales," a territorial creation that complemented fellow Welshman Thomas Button's 1612–13 designation of the upper west coast as "New Wales."[12] These names were eventually subsumed under the name Rupert's Land. Then, on 26 August, coasting along western Hudson Bay, James reached the mouth of a large river whose spreading estuary reminded him of home; he named it the New Severn after the river that flows through Bristol, England. The Omushkego name for it is Washaho-wi-zi-pi, "big bay river." Both James and the Omushkegowuk were impressed by its size near its mouth; James's name evoked the river that flowed through his home city, while the Cree name points to the distinguishing feature of the river itself.

James's next major landfall was the cape that marks the entrance to western James Bay. He named it after royalty—the queen of King Charles I. On 3 September 1631, he wrote, "We knew we were at a Cape Land, and named it Cape Henrietta Maria, by her Majesties name, who had before named our Ship."[13] The Omushkego name again offers contrast: Ki-ni-ki-mooshwaaw signifies "barren or treeless headland," a visual image of a landscape that surely would not have delighted the queen. Cree speakers retain that name when speaking their own language, although in English they use the English name. As with many of these toponyms, English speakers need to make an effort to learn the original names—which are not translations but distinct terms that are functional for Aboriginal life and travel and expressive of connections with places.[14]

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12 James, on his map, converted Button's New Wales to "New North Wales" and inscribed it on the region northwest of present-day York Factory, Manitoba. Davies, *Writing Geographical Exploration*, 197, 202–3.

13 Thomas James, quoted in Miller Christy, ed., *The Voyages of Captain Luke Foxe of Hull, and Captain Thomas James of Bristol, in Search of a North-West Passage in 1631–32* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1894), 88–89, 490.

14 Paul Carter, in *The Road to Botany Bay: An Exploration of Landscape and History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), 327, comments with reference to Australia on the disjunctions between English and Aboriginal place names and on the larger consequence of English linguistic dominance: "From the beginning of white occupation, the Aborigines were made to speak a language which was not theirs. . . . Consequently by a deadly irony, it is the attempt of the Aborigines to speak English which consigns them to historical silence."

Continuing south "in a most miserable distresse, in this so unknowne a place," James then came upon a large island, which he christened after another patron, "my Lord Westons I[s]land."[15] This was Akimiski Island, whose Cree name has endured despite a series of English renamings from James onwards. Akimiski means "the land across," so named because it is a large presence when viewed from the mainland across a channel. It is a traditional destination for hunting caribou and waterfowl.[16]

From Akimiski, James continued on to what became his wintering place for 1631–32, Charlton Island. Its English name derives from the small habitation that James and his men built for their shelter and named Charles Town, after King Charles I. In eastern Cree, its name, like Akimiski, reflects a view from the mainland and is a related word: Kaamischii, or roughly, "island across the sea." But in this instance, the English name won the contest for recognition, doubtless because the HBC later used the island as a depot for many years, whereas Akimiski Island remained a seasonal Cree hunting domain.[17]

The names left on maps in the wake of Thomas James's voyage of 1631–32 were more than honorifics and evocations of home. They arose from a literate sea captain's deliberate choices on particular occasions, recorded in a ship's log and in memoirs with a view to making history. Paul Carter, in his study of Australian exploration, expresses the point well: "By the act of place-naming, space is transformed symbolically into a place, that is, a space with a history. And, by the same token, the namer inscribes his passage permanently on the world, making a metaphorical word-place which others may one day inhabit and by which, in the meantime, he asserts his own place in history."[18] It is safe to say that James, intent on making history and never meeting a local resident, never imagined that these places already had names. Likewise, Omushkego people learned only much later that the strangers in wooden boats had imposed foreign monikers on their places and on maps, erasing local descriptive names that had meaning and practical value for them and were embedded in stories and long community associations.[19]

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15 Christy, *Voyages*, 493.

16 Bird, *Telling Our Stories*, chap. 6.

17 On the Cree name for Charlton Island, thanks to Kreg Ettenger, email, 24 January 2005. On Akimiski, see Lytwyn, *Muskekowuck Athinuwick*, 97, 153.

18 Carter, *Road to Botany Bay*, xxiv.

19 This sort of disjunction is vividly evoked for the Dene in the book Dehcho: *"Mom, We've Been Discovered!"* (Yellowknife, NT: Dene Cultural Institute, 1989). Dehcho ("Great River") is the river that was renamed after Alexander Mackenzie "discovered" it in 1789.

NITUSKEENAN AND RUPERT'S LAND: WHOSE LAND?

As noted, Omushkego place names tend to be concrete and specific, focused on such features as rivers, capes, and islands; the Cree had no call for naming (or defining) broad territorial entities such as James's New South Wales. Similarly with Rupert's Land: there is no ready way to translate that name or concept into Cree. Louis Bird once told me that, growing up on Hudson Bay, he had never heard the name Rupert's Land until some years ago when he was talking with a young surveyor about the history of the region. When I asked about a way to express the concept in Cree, he suggested, after some consideration, two terms. One refers to the land sloping down, *ka-i-shi-chi-wa-ki-si-pi-ya*, and the other evokes lands where the waters run down, *shik-ka-shi-muk*.[20] But his people named only those places or features that were useful and meaningful to travellers or others on the ground. They were also not in the early modern European business of filing claims and counter-claims to large territories they scarcely knew or naming lands as possessed by an absent prince or in honour of an individual.

The question of possession presents not only historical issues but also some basic translation problems when we move from English to Cree. Cree and other Algonquian languages have two varieties of "we" and "our," inclusive and exclusive, depending on the parties being addressed. Keith Goulet, a Cree from Cumberland House, Saskatchewan, has compared Cree ways of speaking about land to European usages. The term *kituskeenuw*, "our land," is, he says, "one of the most important concepts in the Cree Nehinuw language." It is inclusive in the sense that it covers the lakes and rivers on the land that a community occupies and over which its people claim some shared authority. But it is also inclusive grammatically: a speaker using this form of "our," with the prefix *ki-*, is including all the persons he or she is addressing. It would be the term used by a Cree speaking to other Cree people using and occupying that land. Cree usage is different, however, if one is speaking to outsiders. Here, the exclusive "our," with the prefix *ni-*, is correct: *nituskeenan*. Cree speakers would have used this term in speaking of land to, say, explorers and fur traders; their reference group would have included only their own people.[21] The early Europeans they met had no grasp of these grammatical nuances or of the understandings and implicit claims that were lost in translation.

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20 Bird, pers. comm., 28 September 2003.

21 Keith Goulet, "The Cumberland Cree Nehinuw Concept of Land," paper presented at Indigenous Knowledge Systems Conference, Saskatoon, Saskatchewan, May 2004, 3, 12, 18; Goulet, email, 18 April 2006. This text follows Goulet's transcriptions of the Cree terms. Thanks also to David Pentland (email, 17 November 2006), who made the same points and included examples of this distinction from other Algonquian languages.

These Cree possessive markers, whether inclusive or exclusive, also do not define a bounded or enclosed space or outright ownership in European terms; rather, they allude to the lands and waters that people know and use, radiating out from their core settlements and camping spots. As Keith Goulet says, the Cree of Cumberland House (an HBC name that arrived in 1774) have long called their core settlement near that spot Kaministigo-minuhigoskak, or Spruce Island. It was their major traditional summer gathering place, and *kituskeenuw* in that context would be the familiar lands and wintering grounds that they used in that area. Goulet also contrasts the non-possessive root form *uskee* (land) in these words with another term, *uskeegan*, "land that has been divided up and parceled off." *Uskeegan*, a term much needed once the newcomers settled in, refers to any land that has been surveyed or fenced, made private, by the drawing of lines on maps or on the ground. The suffix *-gan* denotes artificiality or something that is substituted as opposed to what is real or genuine. A parallel example is *ogimagan* (substitute or artificial leader), which is the standard word for a treaty or Indian Affairs chief, as opposed to *ogimaw*, a real chief.[22]

In light of these insights, was Rupert's Land the first *nituskeegan* in north-western North America, representing the first European effort in the region to create a bounded proprietary entity? Yes, in the sense that it was a colonial construct, a territory called into being, along with the HBC, through a royal fiat of 1670. But no, in the sense that as of 1670, it was not clearly bounded or "parceled off" by lines on maps or on the ground, or in the HBC royal charter itself; that process began with the Canadian surveyors and treaty commissioners of the 1870s. In modern times, mapmakers have no trouble defining it; they simply trace the heights of land around the Hudson Bay watershed. The authors and signers of the charter, however, not only lacked knowledge of the North American continental interior; they even lacked the term and concept of "watershed," a word that, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, did not enter the English language until 1803. Accordingly, the HBC charter struggled with defining this new territory.

Conferred by King Charles II, the HBC charter of 2 May 1670 named its prime grantee as "Our Deare and entirely Beloved Cousin Prince Rupert Count Palatyne of the Rhyne Duke of Bavaria and Cumberland &c." Prince Rupert and his fellow "Adventurers" received rights to "the sole Trade and Commerce of all those Seas Streightes Bayes Rivers Lakes Creekes and Soundes . . . that lye within the entrance of the Streightes commonly called Hudsons Streightes together with all the Landes Countryes and Territoryes upon the Coastes and Confynes of the Seas Streightes Bayes Lakes Rivers Creekes and

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22 Goulet, "Cumberland Cree Nehinuw Concept," 17, 12.

Soundes aforesaid which are not now actually possessed by any of our Subjectes or by the Subjectes of any other Christian Prince or State."The charter further declared "that the said Land bee from henceforth reckoned and reputed as one of our Plantacions or Colonyes in America called *Ruperts Land*."[23] But it had, at the time, no words to express where the borders of this land might lie.

Germaine Warkentin has described Rupert's Land as "a concept as much as a place," a "great unimagined space" with "vague immense boundaries."[24] Her description seems apt; in fact, the charter's broad allusion to the lands along the coasts and confines of Hudson Bay and connecting waterways could be compared in its fluidity to the open-ended Cree concept of land as described by Keith Goulet. The attitudes underpinning the charter, however, were significantly different. The text also named Prince Rupert and his seventeen fellow "Adventurers" (investors) "the true and absolute Lordes and Proprietors of the same Territory lymittes and places aforesaid."[25] And Rupert's Land, at the end of its existence in the 1870s, did become defined by borders and lines on maps; the surveyors who began to arrive in 1869–70 converted vast portions of the watershed to *nituskeegan*. The Cree now found that, as with wooden ships and treaty chiefs, they needed a new form of an old word to express a foreign concept.

CROSSES AND HABITATIONS: GESTURES OF POSSESSION

Both before and after 1670, the English left certain kinds of markers to mark their arrival and presence in local settings around Hudson Bay, as in other parts of the world where they claimed possession. Patricia Seed has highlighted the English habit of making de facto claims by building houses and fences; their small settlements declared possession with physical structures rather than words, with much less public ceremony than was practised by their French and Spanish rivals. The English and French both erected crosses or plaques, but the English did so with little fanfare and usually with no Indigenous audience to witness their claim, whereas the French, from Jacques Cartier on, placed great value on the presence of Indigenous audiences and appearances of assent.[26]

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23 E. E. Rich, ed., *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1671–1674* (London: Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1942), 5:131–32, 139.

24 Germaine Warkentin, ed., *Canadian Exploration Literature: An Anthology* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), xii.

25 Rich, ed., *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company*, 5:139.

26 Patricia Seed, *Ceremonies of Possession in Europe's Conquest of the New World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), chaps. 1 and 2. On French concerns with Aboriginal responses and consent to ceremonial erecting of crosses, see the record of Jacques Cartier's meeting with Iroquoian leader Donnacona in 1534 (Ramsay Cook, ed., *The Voyages of Jacques*

English installations of crosses are attested from the expeditions of Thomas Button, Luke Foxe, and Thomas James in search of the Northwest Passage, although none are mentioned in surviving records of the Henry Hudson voyage. In 1612–13, Button led an expedition to seek the Passage and also to try to learn the fate of Hudson. He wintered at the mouth of the Nelson River, which he named after his ship's master, who died there. Button's journal has been lost, but when Captain Luke Foxe visited the site in August 1631, he found a cross that Button had evidently erected as a sign of possession. He recorded, "I caused the Crosse which we found to be newly raised, and this inscription of lead nailed thereon: 'I suppose this Crosse was first erected by Sir Thomas Button, 1613. It was again raised by Luke Foxe, Captain of the Charles, in the right and possession of my dread Soveraigne Charles the first, King of Great Brittaine, France and Ireland, Defender of the Faith, the 15 of August, 1631.'"[27]

Captain Thomas James expressed his sovereign's claims to the land through building and naming his winter settlement of Charles Town on Charlton Island in 1631, but he also used crosses for two other more explicit gestures. On 24 June 1632, before leaving Charlton Island, he made a cross from "a very high tree" and fastened to it pictures of King Charles I and Queen Henrietta Maria "drawne to the life and doubly wrapped in lead," the arms of the king and of the city of Bristol, and a shilling and sixpence. He and his men then "raised it on the top of the bare Hill where we had buried our dead fellows [three men who had died during the winter]; formally by this ceremony, taking possession of these Territories to his Majesties use." Then, heading out of James Bay, they landed at Cape Henrietta Maria on 22 July. Here, too, a cross was fitted out with the arms of the king and the city of Bristol and erected "upon the most eminent place."[28] The weary expedition then limped home to Bristol. In none of these instances did local people show themselves to observe or express their views, although Foxe and James sensed the likely proximity of the "Salvages." As Foxe wrote, "It cannot be thought also but that we were seene by them, although they were not seene by any of us . . . and although they might see us, whether they durst come or no, I know not, having, as I suppose, never seene ship in their lives before."[29]

In 1633, Thomas James published a vivid account of his arduous voyage, entitled in part *The Strange and Dangerous Voyage of Captaine Thomas James, in His*

Cartier [Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993], 26–27) and the vivid accounts in the *Jesuit Relations* and elsewhere of the 1671 ceremony to claim the lands beyond Sault Ste. Marie.

27 Christy, *Voyages*, 348.

28 Ibid., 559, 571.

29 Ibid., 336.

Intended Discovery of the Northwest Passage into the South Sea Wherein the Miseries Indured, Both Going, Wintering, Returning . . . Are Related. This dramatic narrative of his hardships and the failures of James and his rival seeker, Luke Foxe, to find the Northwest Passage discouraged further Hudson Bay expeditions for almost another four decades.

A LITTLE HOUSE ON THE RUPERT RIVER: HBC BEGINNINGS

In 1668, a new phase of English enterprise began around the "dirty sea." In the summer of that year, the men who were to found the Hudson's Bay Company sent two ships to trade in James Bay, each carrying one of the French instigators of the enterprise. A storm forced the *Eaglet*, with Pierre Radisson aboard, to turn back, but the *Nonsuch*—with Zachariah Gillam as captain and carrying Medard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers—landed at the mouth of the (newly named) Rupert River. The men built a house to winter in, which they called Charles Fort after their king. Radisson later wrote that they built "upon the ruins of a House which had been built there above 60 yeares before by the English."[30] These were surely the remains of Henry Hudson's wintering house of 1610–11. Word of the new arrivals must have spread quickly, for in the spring of 1669, they had a highly successful trade with about three hundred Cree people, and they sailed home with a rich supply of furs.

In the fall of 1670, equipped with their new HBC charter, the traders returned to Charles Fort, which served as their base in southeastern James Bay until it was destroyed by the French in 1693. In 1776, the company rebuilt on the site, starting with what was described as a "log tent."[31] The new post, called Rupert House, thereafter became one of the more important and long-lived fur trade settlements on James Bay. In current usage, the settlement is known as Waskaganish (an abbreviated version of the Cree name, Waskahiganish), translated as "little house."[32] Cree speakers also apply this name to the Rupert River. The Cree name may possibly date from Henry Hudson's time or from the

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30 Grace Lee Nute, *Caesars of the Wilderness: Médard Chouart, Sieur des Groseilliers and Pierre Esprit Radisson, 1618–1710* (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 1978), 349. For the full source, see Radisson's "Narrative in Reference to the Answer of the Commissioners of France, 1697," in *Pierre-Esprit Radisson: The Collected Writings*, vol. 2, *The Port Nelson Relations, Miscellaneous Writings, and Related Documents*, ed. Germaine Warkentin (Toronto: Champlain Society, 2014), 224. Warkentin's two-volume opus on Radisson's writings is now the definitive work on the subject.

31 Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600–1870* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), 22–24, 30.

32 Richard Preston, *Cree Narrative: Expressing the Personal Meaning of Events*, 2nd ed. (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 21.

building of Charles Fort in 1668; the use of the name was probably reinforced by the appearance of the log tent in 1776. The Cree name loses meaning in translation, however, since Cree speakers lacked a word for the European concept of "house."

Brian Craik observes that *waska* means "confined to a certain area" while *higan* signifies an instrument or means of doing something and *-ish* is a diminutive: in sum, the term signifies a means of enclosing or confining a small space with walls. He adds, "I believe that this word was created when the Crees first saw that the European houses, unlike their own, allowed for people to move around more and had spaces devoted to different tasks that were quite separated from one another."[33] The Cree name, more descriptive and far less pretentious than the royal names invoked by the Company, takes note of some key features of the carpentered world of the English: their squared, enclosed, rigid structures, with parts walled off from one another and from outsiders. Compared to the round and flexible forms of Cree dwellings and their open interiors, such buildings were as novel to the local residents as were the timbered ships that brought their creators.

The Cree of the Rupert River area maintained long oral traditions, reinforced by place names, about their early contacts with the English. But "first contacts" repeated themselves as new strangers on both sides met each other and reflected on the event. The old stories might receive various interpretations even from the same person, as in one HBC instance. Andrew Graham was a prolific writer and observer who wrote at two different times about a Cree story he heard regarding first contacts around the Rupert River. In 1775, he wrote simply that the Cree in that area "were the first people who saw Europeans in the Bay and we have heard them relate the arrival of the first Ships as deliver'd to them by the tradition of their ancestors."[34] Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz read this statement as referring to the building of Charles Fort in 1668.[35] Graham, however, later rewrote and elaborated on some of his "Observations." In 1791, he changed this sentence, declaring that these Cree "were the first people who saw and traded with Europeans in Hudson's Bay; and they relate the arrival and wintering of the unfortunate Captain Henry Hudson, as handed down to them by the tradition of their ancestors."[36] Hudson and his men, as Radisson noted, did leave a house on the landscape at Rupert River, and even though

33 Craik, email, 3 February 2005.

34 Graham, "Observations," in James Isham's *Observations on Hudsons Bay, 1743*, ed. E. E. Rich and A. M. Johnson (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1949), 315.

35 Francis and Morantz, *Partners in Furs*, 22.

36 Glyndwr Williams, ed., Andrew Graham's *Observations on Hudson's Bay, 1767–1791* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1969), 204.

they met only one Cree person, who traded a few goods in the spring of 1611, they certainly were observed. The Cree had no occasion to learn or remember Hudson's name. But by 1791, if not before, Graham had heard Cree stories about the old house and its occupants, and he enhanced the interest of his text by projecting into it a name known to the English but not to the Cree. The injection of Hudson also served as an implicit reminder that the English had frequented and claimed Hudson Bay for nearly two centuries.

Such reminders were not much needed in 1791, but one century earlier, they had assumed tremendous importance for the English and for the HBC. A look at English and French naming and claiming in the 1670s and 1680s reveals the disjunctions between the two contending European powers, as well as the much deeper and largely unarticulated disjunctions between European and Cree values and understandings about land and possessions, about Rupert's Land and *nituskeenan*. Rupert's Land presented serious problems of definition for both the English and their French rivals because its edges and most of its interior were unmapped and ambiguous. No boundary markers informed the French explorers and traders when they were entering Rupert's Land, or the English when they were leaving it. Nor could mapmakers give much help: as HBC governor John Nixon commented in the 1670s, "our patent is verry darke in that it is not bounded with any line of latitude or longitude."[37] European names that got printed on published maps, crosses, plaques, and European structures or settlements, however modest they were (the HBC *waskahiganish* impressed the Cree as small, even if it was novel), therefore assumed grand importance as means of claiming dominion.

A GREAT HOUSE, MOOSE RIVER, AND STRONG CURRENT: THE SECOND DECADE

After Charles Fort, the company made three other major efforts to settle in the bay in the 1670s. Their founding stories somewhat amplify the picture of HBC–Cree relations, or lack thereof, in the company's first decade. HBC settlement at and around Port Nelson (the name derived from Thomas Button's ship captain) began slowly near the site of what became York Factory. In September 1670, Governor Charles Bayly and several men made a first effort, landing near the mouth of the Nelson River "with a considerable Cargoe to make a Settlement and carry on a trade." Meeting no local people, they spent a night "in an Indian Tent, they found there . . . and the next day the said Governor Baily . . . took possession of Port Nelson and all the Lands and Territoryes thereof, for his Ma[jest]ie, and in tocken thereof nayld up the King's Armes in Brasse on a

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37 E. E. Rich and A. M. Johnson, ed., *Copy-Book of Letters Outward &c 1679–1694* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1948), xxv.

small Tree there, and afterwards returned on board againe." Almost immediately, his ship was driven out of the river by a storm. Finding it impossible to return, the HBC men decided to sail to Rupert House. The company made no further real effort to settle there until the fall of 1682, by which time interlopers from New England, and Radisson and Des Groseilliers (now on the French side), were also settling in; seven different short-lived posts were built in the vicinity in the next five years.[38]

In 1684, on the north side of the Hayes River, just south of the mouth of the Nelson River, the HBC established the post that became York Fort (later York Factory). It was named after James, Duke of York, governor of the company from 1683 (following the death of Prince Rupert) to 1685, when he succeeded to the throne on the death of King Charles II. Its growing size and prominence, compared to other more transitory posts, is expressed in its Cree name, Kih‑ciwaskahikan, or "great house," a contrast to Waskahiganish, the "little house" at Rupert River.[39]

Two other posts of eventual significance date to this decade. Charles Bayly, the HBC's first overseas governor, oversaw the beginning of trade on the Moose River, where a small house was built in the summer of 1673. That summer, according to E. E. Rich, "a treaty was made with the Indians, giving the English trading rights and possession of the soil."[40] Moose Fort (later Moose Factory) was the only major bay post to retain a Cree name (in translation), derived from the name of the river.

At the new post, Governor Bayly met people he called "Shechittawams," who had come fifty leagues to trade. In July 1674, he briefly visited their home river, variously spelled Schettawam, Chichewan, or Chechechewan, render-ings of the Cree term *kisechiwun*, "strong current."[41] Here Bayly "treated with the King, and his Son made them a Promise to come with a Ship and trade with them the next Year"; in turn, the Indians promised a "Store of Beaver, and [to] bring the *Upland* Indians down." Details are scant, but the company had a building there by 1679.[42] The company renamed the post Albany Fort in

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38 Ibid., 363–64.

39 Rich, *History of the Hudson's Bay Company,* 1:105, 165; Flora Beardy and Robert Coutts, eds., *Voices from Hudson Bay: Cree Stories from York Factory* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996), xi.

40 Rich, *Minutes . . . 1671–1674*, 211. We lack the treaty's text and specific terms, if any, and "treaty" is Rich's term.

41 Ibid.; Richard Faries, ed., *A Dictionary of the Cree Language as Spoken by the Indians in the Provinces of Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta* (Toronto: General Synod of the Church of England in Canada, 1938), 51. The Cree term survives in Kashechewan, the name of the modern community across the river from Fort Albany.

42 Rich and Johnson, *Copy-Book*, 345–46.

1683, in honour of the HBC governor's secondary title—James, Duke of York and Albany, the latter being an old name for the region of Scotland north of the firths of Clyde and Forth. John Nixon, who in 1680 succeeded Bayly as governor in the bay, worked to cultivate trade there, although he was frustrated at being stationed at the company's depot on Charlton Island in James Bay, isolated from the mainland and river-travelling Cree. His report of 1782 recorded his visit to "Chechecheawan" in summer 1681 and how he "stopped 4000 skins that was a going away, for want of goods to purchase them, and for want of victuals to mentaine them till the goods came, which I prevented in good time." Logistical problems were endemic: while he was visiting, "there came doune ane ould Indian, that never sawe yeuropians before, the discreetest salvage that ever I heard. Which promised me to come doun this summer [1682] with ane hundered Cannow's to trade, but oh my grief that I am not there to encourage him, and to treate him. For want thereof, and men and goods in the factorie."[43] The company struggled to maintain a presence there, as at Charles Fort and Moose, but in 1686, the French, under the Chevalier de Troyes, captured Charles Fort, Moose Fort, and Albany, and the most severe period of competition was underway.[44]

LEAGUES OF FRIENDSHIP AND TALLIES OF WOOD

The English-French contest, both diplomatic and military, over Hudson Bay was intense from the early 1680s until the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713, which asserted English dominion over the bay. Verbal claims and counter-claims intensified as forts were attacked and prisoners taken. Both sides embellished and enlarged upon their previous acts of possession in extensive adversarial correspondence. In doing so, they helpfully generated documents that richly reveal their values and assumptions about such acts and their significance. For example, James Hayes, HBC deputy governor, responded to French claims in January 1683 with a letter addressed to King Charles II. He stated that the king's subjects, unlike the French, "have for above 100 yeares last past Discovered and frequented the said Bay & the Rivers Islands & Territorys thereabouts and from time to time in the reignes of severall of your Royall Predecessors have taken possession of severall places there."[45] He then declared that Captain Zachariah

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43 E. E. Rich, ed., *Minutes of the Hudson's Bay Company 1671–1684: First Part, 1679–1682* (London: Champlain Society for the Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1945), 281.

44 Rich and Johnson, *Copy-Book*, 346–47.

45 The reference to "above 100 yeares last past" alludes to the voyages of Martin Frobisher to Baffin Island in the 1570s, as well as to the visits of Hudson, Thomas Button, and others. On 19 July 1577, Frobisher and forty of his men climbed a high hill near the mouth of what became Frobisher Bay, "on the top whereof our men made a Columne or Crosse of stones

Gillam of the *Nonsuch*, on the 1668 expedition to Rupert River, having "met with the Native Indians & having made a league of Friendship wth. the Capt. of the said River & firmely purchased both the river it selfe & the Lands there aboute, he gave it the name of Rupert River . . . and built [Charles] Fort, & tooke possession of the said River & all the Land & Territory there aboute in the name of your Majesty."[46] This account tells us very little about Gillam's actual proceedings, and it certainly does not convey Cree perspectives on the event. But it does suggest an effort to build ties with real people—unlike the earlier raisings of crosses by Button, Foxe, and James. We have no clue about Gillam's "purchase price," but here, as in the following two centuries elsewhere in North America, the English newcomers gave implied recognition to Indian land entitlement by their efforts to extinguish it.

The instructions given to Captain Gillam have not survived, but those given by the HBC in the 1680s do outline the steps its traders were to take to secure the company's proprietary rights (against other Europeans) as they established various other posts in the bay. In May 1680, the London Committee instructed Governor John Nixon to forestall French incursions by taking possession of Port Nelson and New Severn (later the approximate locations of York Factory and Fort Severn), and also of any other rivers and harbours on either side of the bay that were likely to serve the "designs of our Enemies." In all places where Nixon settled, he was to "contrive to make compact wth. the Captns. or chiefs of the respective Rivers & places, whereby it might be understood by them that you had purchased both the lands & rivers of them, or at least the only freedome of trade" (an ambiguous phrasing). Furthermore, he was to "cause them to do some act wch. by the Religion or Custome of their Country should be thought most sacred & obliging to them for the confirmation of such Agreements." Similar instructions were given to those in charge of establishing posts in 1682 and 1683.[47] The records do not tell us what acts the Cree considered "most sacred & obliging," but the London Committee, for its part, made an interesting choice, devising a secular ritual borrowed from an old method sometimes used to make binding contracts in England. A postscript to the instructions of May 1680 spelled out in more detail what John Nixon was to do with all the Indians he met, to "ascertain to us all liberty of trade & commerce and a league of friendship & peaceable cohabitation":

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heaped up togither in good sorte, and solemnly sounded a Trumpet, and said certaine prayers . . . and honoured the place by the name of Mount Warwicke" after a noble patron. Some Inuit watched from a distance but did not participate. Robert McGhee, *The Arctic Voyages of Martin Frobisher* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2001), 68, 31.

46 Rich and Johnson, *Copy-Book*, 69–70.

47 Ibid., 6, 7, 9; 36, 79.

So wee have caused Iron marks to be made of the figure of the Union Flagg, wth. wch. wee would have you to burn [brand] Tallys of wood wth. such ceremony as they shall understand to be obligatory & sacred, The manner whereof wee must leave to your prudence as you shall find the modes & humours of the people you deal with, But when the Impression is made, you are to write upon the Tally the name of the Nation or person wth. whom the Contract is made and the date thereof, and then deliver one part of the Stick to them, and reserve the other. This wee suppose may be sutable to the capacities of those barbarous people, and may much conduce to our quiet & commerce, and secure us from foreign or domestick pretenders.[48]

While the English compiled and recited their discoveries and acts of possession on the bay, the French replied with claims going back to the time of Cartier and Champlain. For example, an edict of King Francis I in 1540 authorized the Sieur de Roberval "to take possession of all the Lands which the said King had caused to bee Discovered [by Verrazzano and Cartier] . . . in which Comission the Bay on the North of Canada Since called Hudson is included." After citing other royal edicts, "The French Answere to the English Title to Hudson's Bay" (1687) asserted that in 1661, Indians from the bay "came expressly to Quebeck to confirme that they would Continue to live under the Dominion of the French and to desire a Missionary." In 1663, a M. Couture and five men went to James Bay "pursuant to the Desire of the Indians." Couture "Caused a New Crosse to bee affixed on the Lands at the Bottome of the Bay, and the Kings Armes Ingraven upon Copper fixed betweene two peeces of Lead at the Bottome of a Greate Tree." Furthermore, when the French gathered "all the Nations for above 100 Leagues round" at Sault Ste. Marie in 1671, and M. de St-Lusson erected a cross and the king's arms, the lands of which he took possession were said to include all those to the north "and of the Bay of Hudson."[49]

In 1671–72, Father Albanel, a Jesuit priest, and Paul Denis, Sieur de St-Simon, travelled down the Nemiskau or Fish River (adjacent to and sometimes

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48 Ibid., 12–13. The London Committee minutes of 24 May 1680 (Rich, *Minutes . . . 1679–1684*, 73) include a drawing of these "marks" showing the crosses of England and Scotland superposed (the focal motif of the "Union Flagg"); an order for iron stamps bearing these marks was placed on that day. From the 1400s to the 1600s in England, tallies of wood were used to record debts or payments, or as receipts. Notches marking the transactions were inscribed on a stick or rod, which was then split lengthwise, with each party retaining one half (see "Tally," *Oxford English Dictionary*). Presumably, the tallies bearing the brand marks were to be split in a similar way. No record appears to survive of the implementation of this procedure, or of Cree responses to it.

49 Rich and Johnson, *Copy-Book*, 275–78.

confused with the Rupert River) to "where the savages doe ordinarily assemble to Sell their Furrs." St-Simon noted the unimposing appearance of Charles Fort; as no HBC expedition came that year, its two houses, built of upright logs and thatched roofs, were unoccupied, lacked windows and doors, and were in disrepair.[50] Exploring along the bay, the Frenchmen found a Cree encampment. There they "planted a Crosse and left the Kings Armes upon a Tree by Consent of Capt. Kias Kow cheife of all the Savages which Inhabite the North Sea & Hudson's Bay," a grand claim indeed, as no Cree leader would have asserted such vast authority.[51]

The English, in turn, rebutted the French claims over such vast regions and noted that the French had scarcely or never visited most of the Hudson Bay area. The naming of places was among the issues they raised, pointing out that even on French maps of the bay, the English place names introduced by Button, James, and others predominated.[52] Although each party could point to the slender presence of the other, the English observed that no French claimants had ever settled in the bay until Pierre Radisson, on their behalf, took over the HBC post at Port Nelson in 1682.

ESTABLISHED RIGHTS AND A PIPE OF TOBACCO

In May 1687, Thomas Pinfold, a judge writing on behalf of the HBC, went a step further in its defence than previous protagonists had. He argued that the English, having priority in claiming possession, did not have to settle everywhere to secure their dominion: "The English possessing the Bay and Streights, it's not necessary that a particular factory bee settled in every River and Creeke in order to give a Title to the whole, noe more then the possessing of every particular Spott of Ground in Virginia or New England . . . is requisite to give his Ma[jes]tie. a Title to the said plantation, for it's Sufficient to exclude any other Prince by possessing any One part." As for "How farr the rightfull Occupant of any river and Shore in an infidel Country may Clayme the District and Lymitts of such possession," Pinfold wrote, "The Rightfull Occupant of a River or Shore hath right soe far into the countrey until they meete with the confines of some other Prince."[53]

Pinfold's statement of claim went beyond the language used by the HBC men of the 1670s and 1680s, invoking, as a given, the right of Christians and their princes to claim an "infidel Country." This took the argument into a

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50 Nute, *Caesars*, 149.

51 Rich and Johnson, *Copy-Book*, 288.

52 Ibid., 297–99, 281.

53 Ibid., 257.

domain familiar to the French, invoking the concept of *terra nullius*, or lands considered "uninhabited" because their people were migratory and not subject to a Christian ruler.[54] This line of thinking raises a question about what standing the HBC agreements with Indians—tallies of wood and the like—actually had in English (or French) legal and political discourse of the time. The HBC London Committee and their men in the bay seemed to take them seriously. Committee instructions, as seen above, firmly directed their traders to carry out acts of purchase, and the early HBC governors Charles Bayly and John Nixon knew that their success relied on building and legitimizing their relationships with Aboriginal trading partners. But Pinfold implicitly dismissed the existence of any Aboriginal land right (and hence, of any need for purchase); "infidels" lacked such a right.

In the same year, 1687, Richard Graham, Viscount Preston, a privy councillor and Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of France during the 1680s, went further, granting no validity to any agreement (French in this instance) made with Aboriginal people or to rights claimed on that basis. Not only were the Indians unreliable, but their acts were ineffectual in any case, in the face of established claims:

> All that are acquainted with the nature of the Indians well know their wandring and variable Dispositions and it is easy to produce on his [French] Ma[jes]ties part Submissions & Capitulations of those People. Which doe very much Effect the French Intrest & pretentions in those parts but it is enough to say that noe action or Resolution of those Savages can Alter an Established right.[55]

In 1697, Pierre Radisson, living in England and lending support to the HBC in its arguments with the French, was also critical of the import of agreements with Indians, but without invoking established right. In a rather cynical vein, he wrote of the "savages" that "as to their acknowledging the Soveraignty, they have no more then [than] a propriety for [desire to possess?] the presents they have need of. They would give themselves up this day to God if they had knowledge of him and tomorrow they would give themselves to the devill for a pipe of Tobacco, & they would even deliver up their inheritance for the like things. And they *received* at each place where the English have been settled their

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54 Olive P. Dickason, "Concepts of Sovereignty at the Time of First Contacts," in *The Law of Nations and the New World*, ed. L. C. Green and O. P. Dickason (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1989), 141–295.

55 Rich and Johnson, *Copy-Book*, 292. E. E. Rich, in his *History of the Hudson's Bay Company* (1:63), misleadingly attributed this statement to the company.

presents for takeing possession. Whosoever hath known those savage nations doth understand the Same thing."[56]

This was a different line of argument from that of Pinfold or Viscount Preston. Radisson did not say that Native people lacked rights; rather, he suggested that they did not acknowledge (or understand?) the Europeans' acts of taking territorial possession and that they simply chose to gain the best material return that they could on these occasions. But he overlooked or chose to ignore, at least in this passage, the Native understandings about reciprocities that could be inferred from his words. The Cree, in accepting "presents," were establishing a relationship in their terms. If they did not acknowledge European notions of dominion over territory, their acceptance of gifts would still express, from their perspective, a giving of permission for the HBC traders to settle, build a post, and share resources. Furthermore, Radisson's remark about "a pipe of tobacco" sidestepped the meanings that the smoking of the pipe probably had in such meetings. We cannot be certain about its significance for the Cree at the bay posts in the late 1600s, but forty-four years after Radisson's comment, James Isham, at York Fort, wrote at length about the importance of the pipe or calumet ceremony in conducting trade at that centre.[57] Pipe smoking at ceremonial gatherings had both spiritual and social significance, affirming mutual bonds of trust and responsibility, even if the ceremonies were not as elaborate as those that Isham described at York.

The verbal contests between the English and French in the late 1600s generated documents that articulated ways of thinking on both sides, since the parties were obliged to defend their positions and explain their actions and assumptions. Unsurprisingly for this early period, the English, at least, did not have a fully developed or consistent position or consensus on issues of land rights and claims. The HBC, working from a common law or common sense perspective, took the view that some act of purchase or treaty was called for: hence, for example, its introduction of tallies of wood that could be used to certify a kind of contract. For their part, judges and diplomats invoked the right of Christian princes to appropriate infidel lands without consent, on the basis of formal gestures of possession. And then there was Radisson, who, independent from the rest, seemed to dismiss such agreements on two counts. First, he said, the "Savage Nations" did not acknowledge European sovereignty, whether because they resisted it or could not even fathom the concept. Second,

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56 Rich (*History*, 1:63) abbreviated this quotation, reducing intelligibility and providing no context. Thanks to Germaine Warkentin for directing me to the entire document (Radisson's "Narrative in Reference to the Answer of the Commissioners of France, 1697"), now published in Warkentin, *Pierre-Esprit Radisson*. The quotation is on p. 223.

57 Rich and Johnson, *James Isham's Observations*, 82–85.

Radisson, perhaps jaundiced by a life of fur trade bargaining, asserted that the Indians simply used occasions of "takeing Possession" to take what presents they could get. In both these instances, treaties would be amiable but meaningless instruments, if for different reasons.

CONTESTATIONS AND CONVERSATIONS CONTINUED

The early agreements made between the HBC and the Cree around Hudson Bay ultimately did not gain standing as binding treaties that either recognized or extinguished Aboriginal land titles. Yet in acknowledging an Aboriginal interest that required attention, they did begin to present that potentiality during the heated debates of the late 1600s over claims to Rupert's Land. The adversarial exchanges between the English and French read remarkably like harbingers of modern court cases over treaty issues and land claims, except that the contesting parties were both European and Aboriginal voices were absent. Also, of course, those who spoke for the plaintiffs and defendants of the 1600s did not include witnesses who, in Arthur Ray's words, were "expert" in the sense of providing the court "with knowledge that lies beyond the realm of ordinary judgment and experience . . . to serve the court rather than act as an advocate for one of the litigants."[58] Rather, they were steeped in developing contesting arguments about what constituted European land title and possession, French versus English.

The Canadian numbered treaties that were negotiated from the 1870s onward took negotiations over land to new heights, papering most of Rupert's Land with formal documents in the name of Queen Victoria. But they left new legacies of ambiguity and contested understandings. Some old themes soon resurfaced—for example, in the legal disputes of the 1880s between the Canadian federal government and the Province of Ontario over the St. Catharine's Milling case and the issue of whether Indian treaties constituted real cessions of land (implying recognition of a prior Indian title) or gestures of friendship to keep the peace.[59] As Ray has noted, seventeenth-century English ideas about Indigenous societies' lack of political organization and lack of legitimate claims to land have continued to influence contemporary legal and scholarly thinking into present times.[60]

What has changed profoundly, however, is the extent to which Aboriginal voices are speaking and being heard. The *Delgamuukw* case, tried and lost in

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58 Arthur J. Ray, "Native History on Trial: Confessions of an Expert Witness," *Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 2 (2003): 254.

59 Olive P. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, 3rd ed. (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2002), 323–26.

60 Ray, "Native History on Trial," 261–62.

British Columbia in 1991 and then won in the Supreme Court of Canada in 1997, is the best known, setting precedents across the country and giving new weight to oral history testimonies. Many other cases on land and resource issues have followed. On 22 May 2003, seven James Bay Mushkegowuk Cree First Nations filed a lawsuit in the Ontario Superior Court of Justice "to find Canada accountable for promises made in 1869 and 1870 when Rupert's Land . . . was transferred to Canada."[61] Their claim (lately in abeyance) made a number of valid points going back to the seventeenth century. First, in the HBC charter of 1670, Rupert's Land was "very vaguely described . . . but did purport to include the Mushkegowuk Territory." Second, the charter "created no political or legal or governmental rights" over the Mushkegowuk nations (true enough, as indeed it did not mention Indigenous peoples). Third, "at some point prior in time to 1867, the King or Queen of Great Britain claimed sovereignty over the lands and people of Mushkegowuk Territory," the people being "unaware at the time (whatever time it was) that such a claim was being made." The statement of claim pointed out: "The Plaintiffs are still unaware of when, how and on what basis that claim of sovereignty was made."[62]

Three centuries after the Treaty of Utrecht, in 1713, conferred the Hudson Bay region on England, the Cree and other Aboriginal people of the old colony of Rupert's Land are playing their part in the political and legal discourse of Canada and in the making of both their own and Canadian history. Of course, they have been there all along, speaking their languages; living in and using places that they named for their own purposes; observing and making choices about their relations with European newcomers; and developing new words, concepts, and methods for dealing with the strangers and assimilating them into their own worlds. The early HBC governors and London directors did not control or rule over them, despite the English statements of claim to their homelands; they largely maintained their autonomy and self-governance throughout the history of Rupert's Land, quietly and without high visibility. As Keith Goulet puts it, the land remained *nituskeenan*, our land, even as the surveyors and treaty commissioners moved north and west laying out the lines and boundaries that imposed a new land form, *uskeegan*. Louis Bird and others express these ideas in different dialects of Cree or in other Aboriginal languages, but the concepts are there, even if the words vary.

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61 Mushkegowuk Council, *Press Kit: Rupert's Land Protection Pledge Lawsuit* (Moose Factory, ON: Mushkegowuk Council, 2003). The press kit cited the ruling that when Rupert's Land was transferred to Canada, it became "the duty of the [Canadian] government to make adequate provisions for the protection of the Indian tribes whose interests and well-being are involved in the transfer" (10).

62 Ibid., 6.

The English and French protagonists of the seventeenth century lacked the mindset, knowledge, perspectives, and opportunities to learn from the Aboriginal people they met. In the present day, we can aim higher, whether in the courts or in academe, or amid Cree conversations on Hudson Bay. One of the most fortunate aspects of the work and discourse of Louis Bird, Keith Goulet, and growing numbers of other Aboriginal thinkers is the fact that some real conversations have been taking place among Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal scholars who care about achieving the highest possible levels of mutual understanding and knowledge. We have the opportunity to rise above the partisanship and ethnocentrism endemic in the older sources. We can aim to look beyond the blind spots that so clouded the vision of the old visitors to Hudson Bay.

Linguistic Solitudes and Changing Social Categories

> *No single word exists, within Canada itself, to designate with satisfaction to both races a native of the country. When those of the French language use the word* Canadien*, they nearly always refer to themselves. They know their English-speaking compatriots as* les Anglais. *English-speaking citizens act on the same principle. They call themselves Canadians; those of the French language French-Canadians.*
>
> Hugh MacLennan[1]

Canadians have long differed in their names for the various "native" groups of their country, whether of European or Aboriginal descent. The solitudes go back a long way and number more than two. Eighteenth-century fur traders agreed more than do present-day Canadians on some usages: for them, all "French" (or later, "Canadian") traders sprang from the Montréal fur trade (even if many were Scotsmen), while the "English" encompassed those of the Hudson's Bay Company, whether English-born or not. Since then, the picture has become more complex. "French Canadian" is a more recent anglophone term, which in English speakers' usage parallels the persistent francophone term *les Anglais*, as Hugh MacLennan observed in the foreword to his novel *Two Solitudes*. But ne'er the twain shall meet, or so it seems. The eighteenth-century consensus on who a Canadian was has faded; now "we" are the Canadians and "they" are marked as other.

Students of language are accustomed to thinking in terms of linguistic communities, and of course, language is a social phenomenon. But communities

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1 Hugh MacLennan, *Two Solitudes* (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1945), foreword (using "race" in an older sense).

imply boundaries and a degree of isolation and separateness from others. When changes, intrusions, or dispersals break the fabric of a community, its members, jarred from their former collective solitude, may confront stereotyping, disparagement, and worse by outsiders who classify and objectify them as a category and who take perspectives very different from those of the community itself.

The land that became Canada has lived with this kind of process for a long time. In fur trade country (the region that HBC men knew as Rupert's Land and that the Montréal traders called "Indian country" or the *pays d'en haut*—the country above or beyond the Great Lakes), its dynamics were vividly highlighted in changing social and ethnic categorizations, particularly in the stressful years from the late 1700s to the mid-1800s. For these decades, the presence or absence of particular terms, the contexts in which they were used, and their changing connotations are subtle yet valuable indicators of the processes by which certain groups became identified as distinct, stereotyped, and ranked within a rapidly changing and diversifying social setting. One useful way to track the history of these emerging social groups—of the processes by which they acquired identities in both the minds of their members and the minds of others and found or were assigned a place in a broader social context—is through language, by paying attention to the names they received and to their shifting meanings.

My interest in this matter developed from observing certain problems in terminology that I and other writers on the fur trade have faced with reference to the mixed Native-European population that arose in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in the Canadian Northwest. We have often not been very sensitive to the traders' own shifting vocabularies as indicators of cultural differences and social change. Yet HBC and North West Company (NWC) documents reveal some vivid contrasts between the two companies' linguistic usages and some interesting changes from the period when the "English" and "Canadian" traders were separate and competing to the decades following their merger in 1821. The English terms that the HBC used for its employees—"servant" and "chief factor," for example—contrasted with the heavily French-influenced vocabulary used by the Montréal-based Nor'Westers, such as "bourgeois" (the man in charge of a trading district), "commis" (clerk), "engagé" and "voyageur." And some contrasts reflect old structural differences between the companies: long after the firms merged, some Nor'Westers persisted, to some extent, in using their own organizational terms. Chief Factor George Keith, who served the combined company for many years after 1821, still evoked his NWC background in his 1858 will by describing himself as a "retired Wintering partner,"

evoking the days when nwc partner-shareholders (unlike hbc London direc-tors) did service in the Indian country as well as in Montréal.[2]

Other contrasts or shifts in word-use patterns reflect differing and changing perceptions of both "Indians" (standard usage for all in those times) and the progeny of Indian-European unions in the two companies, and these usages will be the main focus of this discussion. Consider, for example, the words "half-breed" and "squaw" (the latter in the English lexicon, not as the widely distributed Algonquian root word from which it derives). By the 1770s, persons who might readily have been described as squaws and half-breeds (traders' Native wives and the children of the same) were numerous in the social orbits of both the hbc and the Montréal firms. But these terms, which became common late-nineteenth-century labels in western Canada, were rare in the eighteenth-century records of both fur trade groups. The Montréalers were the first users of the term "squaw," and hbc traders the occasional borrowers. hbc men before 1821 did not describe their own Native female companions as squaws, using instead the terms "woman" or "wife." James Sutherland of that company, however, after a year of trading in opposition to Nor'Wester Duncan Cameron, used the term once in 1791 in reference to the Nor'Westers' women, observing that at a spring rendezvous of these traders, "the Indian Squaws are drest in Scarlot, Callicos, and Silk rib-bands."[3] The journal of Nor'Wester Donald McKay, from Temiscaming, in the years 1799 to 1806 provides a few other early examples of the use of "squaw" among the Nor'Westers: McKay occasionally used the term to describe his Native companion and those of some of his colleagues.[4]

The *Oxford English Dictionary* documents the history of the term "squaw." This eastern Algonquian word entered English-language written records as early as the 1630s in New England, with the meaning of "Indian woman" or "wife." Its earlier appearance among Nor'Westers than among hbc men may reflect the formers' proximity to New England and the influence of the num-erous Loyalists who left the northern American colonies to settle in Canada during the American Revolution; several men of Loyalist background later joined the nwc. In contrast, the ties of the hbc men were directly to Britain; most were hired there and sailed straight to Hudson Bay, having few or no cultural and linguistic contacts with anglophones in the northeastern colonies.

By the 1840s, "squaw" had become a more common and sometimes more pejorative term. The correspondence of Scottish-born James and Letitia

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2 Will of George Keith, 1858, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) A. 44/4, 45, Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

3 James Sutherland, Red Lake Journal, June 1791, HBCA B.177/a/1, 31.

4 Journal of Donald McKay (microfilm), Archives of Ontario, Toronto.

Hargrave from York Factory on Hudson Bay suggests a shift towards negative connotations. (Letitia was the first European woman to reside at York Factory.) To a holiday dance, Letitia wrote on 20 February 1841, there came "forty squaws young and old with their hair plaited in long tails, nothing on their heads but their everlasting blankets smelling of smoke and everything obnoxious . . . nursing their babies in the face of everyone."[5] The use of this term appeared to shift from its occasional neutral appearance in NWC (and other) contexts in the 1790s to its more frequently pejorative use a few decades later, by Europeans setting themselves at a distance from women identified as Indian, whether or not they were traders' wives.[6] Changing attitudes among the fur trade literati were reflected in their shifting terminology.[7]

The term "half-breed" (with or without hyphen) was also a nineteenth-century usage; it was absent from the northern fur trade in the 1700s. Like "squaw," it appeared earlier in NWC contexts than in HBC traders' vocabularies. Its geographic path probably paralleled that of "squaw," since the earliest uses of the term in reference to the offspring of whites and Indians occur, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, in writings about Florida and Carolina in 1775 and 1791, respectively. Like "squaw," "half-breed" did not appear at first to have the derogatory connotations it acquired in later years; Nor'Westers such as John Macdonell and David Thompson were using it between 1809 and 1812 as a neutral descriptive term.[8]

The earliest usage of the term "half-breed" that has been found in HBC records to date appears in the post journal of Carlton House (Saskatchewan) in November 1814, where Englishman John Peter Pruden began to differentiate "half-breeds" from "freemen" among his NWC rivals.[9] In May and June of the

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5 Margaret Arnett MacLeod, ed., *The Letters of Letitia Hargrave*, Publications of the Champlain Society, vol. 28 (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1947), 94.

6 The term persisted, however, as descriptive rather than pejorative in some quarters. For example, Elizabeth Bingham Young used "squaw" (paralleling Cree *iskwew*) while residing as a missionary's wife among the Norway House Cree in the years from 1868 to 1873. See Elizabeth Bingham Young and E. Ryerson Young, *Mission Life in Cree-Ojibwe Country: Memories of a Mother and Son*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press, 2014), 25 (and, for examples, 48, 55, 69, and 74).

7 In this connection, the absence or rarity in nineteenth-century Canada of the American phrase "squaw man" to describe a white man with an Indian wife is of interest; Canadian and American terminologies in this period reflect some contrasts between their respective western social histories.

8 John Macdonell to brother Miles, 27 June 1812, Miles Macdonell Papers, MG 19, E4, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa (hereafter LAC); J. A. Myers, "Jacques Raphael Finlay," *Washington Historical Quarterly* 10 (1919): 163–67.

9 This reference was found by Theresa Schenck, with whom I co-authored an article of broader scope on terms for people of mixed descent; see Jennifer S. H. Brown and Theresa

following year, HBC clerk Peter Fidler was embroiled in the intensifying struggle between the new Red River Colony (founded under HBC auspices in 1812) and the Nor'Westers. Writing at the HBC post of Brandon House, he began referring to some of the men working for the opposition as "half-breeds" and "half-breed Canadians," and in the Brandon House journal of 20 July, he wrote that some HBC property had been burned or stolen by "Canadians and half-Breeds, [Bois] Brulees ["burnt wood" men, probably referring to complexion] or Mitifs [Métis]." These terms appear to have been very new to Fidler; he seemed uncertain which to use.

Terms for persons of mixed descent were not yet standardized in NWC usage, either. In July 1815, the Nor'Westers sent Fidler a document proposing "articles of agreement" between the "halfbreed Indians of the Indian Territory on one part and the Honorable HBC on the other." The articles were signed by "the four chiefs of the half Indians by the mutual consent of their Fellows." Fidler recognized, however, the handwriting of a certain NWC partner and observed that of these "chiefs," "the two former are the sons of Partners and now serving their apprenticeship, and the other two are the sons of Partners of the North West Co. and are acting as interpreters."[10] For political purposes and with the aim of driving the Red River colonists away, the opposition was emphasizing the independence and Indianness of its mixed-descent members with accompanying shifts in terminology; "half Indians" is not a typical term. As competition heated up, these events fostered a sense among these NWC sons (encouraged by their parent company) of their own distinctive political identity and shared interests as a group—an experience not undergone by the HBC native-born sons of this period.

Besides introducing the term "half-breed," the Nor'Westers of the time also drew upon French terms—specifically, *métis* and *bois-brûlé* or simply *brûlé* (as in Fidler's "Brulees," above), which derived from the older French fur trade. After Peter Fidler borrowed them, these words too began to find their way into HBC records—in the writings of Colin Robertson, for example. Robertson, who had been a Nor'Wester for several years before 1810, was, from 1816 until the 1821 union, aiding the HBC against his former colleagues by outfitting and leading expeditions from their own Montréal base into the interior to oppose them there. His letters of this period incorporated Canadian usages then current to describe persons of mixed parentage. On 12 November 1816, he reported to his HBC employers, "Your European Servants and Metiss are in many places deserting over to the North West Company." Another letter of

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Schenck, "Métis, Mestizo, and Mixed-Blood," in *A Companion to American Indian History*, ed. Philip J. Deloria and Neal Salisbury (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2002), 321–38.

10 Peter Fidler, Red River Journal, July 1815, HBCA B. 235/a/3.

June 1820 referred to his employers' opponents as the "whole breeds and half breeds of the North West Company."[11] Where HBC men met Nor'Westers or, like Robertson, had prior connections with them, their vocabularies showed the influence of their opponents.

Where such close contacts had not occurred, HBC writers employed quite different ways of referring to the descendants of European traders and Indian women, revealing significant contrasts in terminology with writers of Montréal and NWC origin. Conspicuous in HBC writings before 1814 is the absence of any term specifically or exclusively denoting persons of mixed parentage. Company historians have sometimes unwittingly obscured this absence by implying the presence of later usages in periods (and places) where they were in fact not in use. E. E. Rich, for example, in his comprehensive history of the company, used James Isham's *Observations on Hudson's Bay*, written in 1743 at Fort Prince of Wales, as a basis for the comment: "The English half-breed was therefore becoming a feature of life at the posts, and domestic ties to some extent explained the willingness with which men spent year after year at the posts," and added that "Isham wrote of the half-breeds . . . that he would 'Venture to say . . . that they are pretty Numerous.'"[12] The comments were true enough. But "half-breed" here is Rich's term. Isham himself never used it, and his son Charles, born of a Cree mother in Hudson Bay, was never so described in the records documenting his company service from the 1760s to 1814. Having had an English education, which qualified him for the charge of inland posts, Charles was later known as Mr. Isham, was implicitly ranked among the "Englishmen" (a category that also subsumed Scots and Orkneymen), and eventually retired to England.[13] The York Factory servants' lists provided a column to list each employee's parish of origin: for Charles Isham and others of like parentage, the column, if filled in, carried the simple entry "Hudson's Bay."[14]

Those Hudson Bay offspring who did not receive English educations and contracts for company employment usually remained among their maternal relatives and connections and were commonly categorized as Indians. On 7 February 1801, for example, John Ballenden, at York Factory, recorded a meeting with one of these youths, describing him as "the Indian Lad that came

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11 E. E. Rich, ed., *Colin Robertson's Correspondence Book, September 1817 to September 1822* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1939).

12 E. E. Rich, *History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670–1870* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1959), 1:604–5.

13 HBCA B.239/a/101, 99, Archives of Manitoba; Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Isham, Charles Thomas," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5:450–51.

14 HBCA B.239/f/3, 11.

yesterday (and who is the Son of an Officer that holds a very high Station in Your Honours Service)."[15] A fairly extensive scanning of HBC records suggests that such children were typically categorized according to a binary system: they were "English" or "Indian," according to the cultural characteristics and social and occupational affiliations that they exhibited. Terms that made explicit reference to their mixed ancestry as such were absent.

The HBC records also show, however, the presence of another term, one that was non-racial in meaning and broad enough to be of wide use. Both Indians and the offspring of fur traders and Indian women could be subsumed under the rubric "native," and the absence of European women at the posts assured that all "natives" were either Indian or part Indian. On 14 February 1800, John Ballenden wrote in the York Factory journal of sending away about fifty "Invalid natives . . . necessity both on my side and theirs induced me to send them from the Factory to make a help to support themselves." Conditions the next winter again being arduous, Ballenden noted on 19 December, "The numbers of English and Natives that at present depends upon the Factory are far too many for what Provisions I have to support them."[16] "Native," from what is known of traders' numerous Cree family connections by that time, certainly covered persons of both Indian and mixed parentage, as did the term "Indian" itself.[17]

Figure 2.1 compares ethnic terminologies of the HBC and NWC in the period between the late eighteenth century and 1821 and depicts the range of meaning of the HBC term "native." While broader in scope than the Nor'Westers' "half-breed" or "métis," "native" in HBC usage sometimes referred only to men of mixed parentage, distinct from "Indians." At York Factory in the 1821–22 season, for example, Governor George Simpson compiled a list of all clerks in the Northern Department, with brief notes on the origins and attributes of each. Among them were nine men whom he described as "native."[18] Here, Simpson, recently arrived from England, was using the term in this restricted sense. He was soon to replace it, however, with the narrower, more race-oriented NWC-derived term "half-breed," which, as applied in his later descriptions of HBC employees of mixed ancestry, became increasingly derogatory.

The spread of this narrower term was already in evidence in the new colony of Red River at the time Simpson was compiling his first list of clerks. In 1820, the English Anglican clergyman John West arrived there to establish the first

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15 John Ballenden, York Factory journal, 7 February 1801, HBCA B.239/a/105, 28.

16 John Ballenden, York Factory journal, 14 February 1800, B.239/a/104, 24, and 19 December 1800, HBCA B.239/a/105, 20.

17 For some examples of persons of mixed Cree-HBC descent who became known as Indian or Cree in the 1800s, see, "James Settee and His Cree Tradition," chapter 15, this volume.

18 George Simpson, list of HBC clerks, 1821–22, HBCA B.239/f/12.3–8.
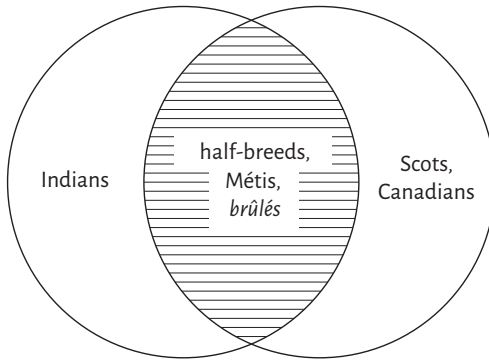
Hudson's Bay Company
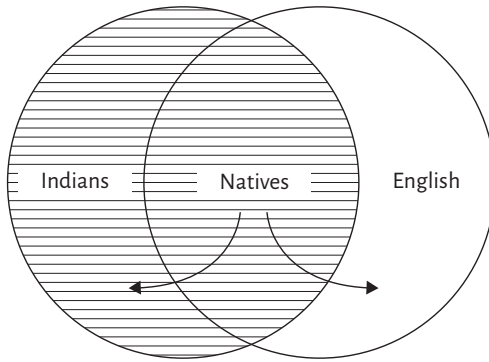
North West Company

Figure 2.1. Two ways of classifying people according to their parentage prior to the merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821. The arrows in the upper circles denote the possibility of "natives" of mixed ancestry passing over into either the "English" or "Indian" category on the basis of cultural and social criteria.

permanent Protestant church ministry in Rupert's Land. This event, as well as the 1821 union of the two companies, had a considerable social impact, which was reflected in the terms by which West described the local population. By October 1820, the second month of his work in the country, West was using the term "half-breed" in his baptismal register to refer to traders' wives of mixed descent. Many entries read like number 16, the baptism of John, "son of William Hall and a Half Breed Woman." West and his successors assumed that such mothers, given the previous lack of clergy in the fur trade country, were

unmarried as well as unbaptized, and as incoming ministers, they were not inclined to grant Christian recognition to any marriage they had not sanctified. The registers thus generally left the women nameless (unless or until they got baptized) and described them only as "half-breed," or sometimes "Indian." These usages reduced the identities of women who were, for the most part, known and nameable (and to whom their offspring often had strong personal ties) to a generic class and racial category—an objectification reflecting the advent of new attitudes that were to dismay numerous fur trade families who came into this new sphere of influence.

With baptismal entry 257, on 5 June 1823, an interesting variation in terms appeared: "half-caste" replaced "half-breed." From that date until entry 298 (in October 1823), by which time West had been replaced by the Rev. David T. Jones, the term "half-breed" was not used. "Half-caste," however, was an intrusive term on the northern fur trade scene; the *Oxford English Dictionary* derives all earlier examples of its use from British writings about Asia and cites the earliest known date of its occurrence as 1789. It was evidently in the vocabularies of West and Jones as recent arrivals from England. But it failed to catch on; from October 1823 on, "half-breed" again became the usual term to designate those of mixed descent in the church records, as it was becoming elsewhere.[19] The history and background of "half-caste" may parallel those of another term used by some later clergy of Red River—"country-born," describing people of mixed descent born in the Northwest. "Country-born" was also a term used in the British Asian context.[20] It did not, however, become widely established in Rupert's Land.

The entrenchment of "half-breed" in Governor Simpson's administrative records in the mid-1820s, along with the governor's evolving attitudes, may readily be traced in the dossiers that Simpson compiled on his HBC employees. As the term "native" was displaced, his negative references to "half-breeds" became more frequent. "Half-breed" failures were increasingly seen as predictable; conversely, any successes seemed matters for surprise. Under Simpson, the fur trade social order during the 1820s became markedly more stratified and prone to racial (descent- or "blood"-based) discrimination. Along with this change emerged a complex of character traits that Simpson regularly assigned to these people as a category: they were likely to be conceited, unsteady, untruthful, or lacking in propriety. Men of European descent were also subject to the increased stratification of company ranks that showed up in, for example, the sharpened lines drawn between gentlemen and servants and between clerks

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19 Red River Anglican baptismal registers, Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

20 Louise E. Sweet, pers. comm., 1978.

and "postmasters."[21] Simpson's "characters" of white employees were also fre-
quently laced with strong criticisms. But although these men might share some
of the same vices as those of mixed descent, they did not have to contend with
the racial innuendoes and stereotypes that characterized Simpson's judgment
from about 1827 on. They could escape being described in such terms as a
"steady sober man although a halfbreed," or "a Halfbreed but steady correct and
confidential," or "most steady and best conducted halfbreed I ever knew"—
back-handed praise suggesting the obstacles facing these men who sought to
follow their fathers into the fur trade.[22]

Such developments as these amply explain why the term "half-breed," given
such pejorative connotations in this period, fell into disrepute. "Half-breed,"
in nineteenth-century usage, also may have become more derogatory because
of the spinning out of logical possibilities in the term itself. Colin Robertson,
in 1820 (as quoted above), played on the halfness or incompleteness that the
word suggests in his phrase "whole breeds and half breeds." And occasionally a
trader, perhaps unwittingly, would substitute for it another similar English word:
"half-bred."[23] This adjective, according to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, has two
unflattering meanings, both older than "half-breed." The first, going back to
1701, is "of mixed breed; born of parents of superior and inferior strain; mon-
grel." The second, now obsolete, is dated 1732: "imperfectly acquainted with
the rules of good breeding; underbred." "Half-breed" as a category may have
acquired more negative connotations from a word so similar to it; its semantic
suggestiveness could have influenced its changing meanings and connotations.

Overall, the records suggest that "half-breed," like several other social cat-
egories in fur trade country, was not a static term. Its use patterns changed
considerably from the time of its introduction, and its spread corresponded to
the dissemination of new value judgments and stereotypes that ranked people
of mixed descent at a low level within a more highly structured and stratified
social order than the fur trade country had previously seen; persons labelled as
"half-breeds" were taken by the labellers to be of the lower classes.[24]

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21 For example, in Simpson's "character book," HBCA A.34/2, 52–53.

22 Simpson's comments on his HBC clerks and postmasters are found in his "character
books" from 1823 to 1832 (HBCA A.34/1).

23 For example, Rich, *Robertson's Letters*, 65; and Donald McIntosh to Clarke, 20 July 1836,
Duncan Clarke Papers, MG 19, A39, LAC.

24 Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*
(Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press), 204–11. In "'Halfbreeds': The Entrench-
ment of a Racial Category in the Canadian Northwest Fur Trade" (a paper presented at
the Central States Anthropological Society meetings in St. Louis, spring 1973), I compiled
in tabular form Simpson's increasingly negative assessments of ten "halfbreed" clerks in the
years 1823 to 1832.

In sum, the semantics of social categories in the fur trade deserve attention. E. E. Rich's inclination (noted above) to generalize social and racial terms that originally were fairly specific and/or localized (and absent in older HBC contexts) obscured important features of the documentary record that close reading can reveal. The word "country-born" is also problematic; although a term seldom used in nineteenth-century Red River, it has sometimes been applied broadly to persons of mixed descent in general in the Northwest, implying the existence or spread of some group self-labelled and labelled by others under that rubric.[25] The term "Métis" is also at times overgeneralized and carries much cultural and political baggage. It is best reserved for those who elected it themselves and were (or are) thus known to their contemporaries. It is a controversial term now as in the past; its social and political connotations are potent, both for those who espouse Métis identity and those who do not.[26]

Semantic problems also arise with fur trade terms used to describe Indian groups. As noted earlier, numerous Hudson Bay "Indians" were, by the late eighteenth century, of mixed descent and were defined as Indian on the basis of their social and cultural attributes rather than strictly on the basis of race or "blood." Even persons of European descent could be described as Indian by persons passing judgment on their character, behaviour, or affiliations; Samuel Hearne misled numerous writers regarding his fellow HBC officer Moses Norton's parentage—which was English despite Hearne's slurs dismissing him as "Indian."[27] Correspondingly, the HBC category "Home Indians" (referring to the largely Cree people clustered about the major Hudson Bay posts) was a cultural and social rather than racial category, comprising both Indians and persons of mixed descent. Once defined as "Indians," they were not numbered among those who could be hired contractually among the company's "English" and "native" employees. Only those men defined as English or native received continuing contracts from London; Indians served mainly as seasonal tripmen or hunters, or in other temporary capacities.

The question of what labels to apply to the offspring of white and Indian parents has been one of the more vexing problems facing fur trade historiography.

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25 For example, by Frits Pannekoek in "The Rev. Griffiths Owen Corbett and the Red River Civil War of 1869–70," *Canadian Historical Review* 57 (1976): 133–49.

26 Amid the large and growing literature on the Métis, two books, one older and one newer, may convey the evolving dynamics of the field across three decades: *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America*, ed. Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985), and Chris Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014).

27 Sylvia Van Kirk, "Norton, Moses," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1979), 4:583–85.

There is no single answer to this problem. It may be helpful, however, to keep in mind the fact that we commonly find ourselves using, and sometimes confusing, terminologies appropriate to two distinct levels of analysis. At one level, it seems appropriate to try to use precise, dispassionate terms that describe rather than obscure or that weigh down our subjects with historical baggage. When we are speaking of the mixed-descent population of the Northwest as a whole, for example, existing through time over broad areas, ordinary words that carry no strong connotations and are hence not heavily culture bound may be most useful. "Native-born," for instance, is a term that, in the context of Rupert's Land, does very well for describing unambiguously the mixed white-Indian fur trade population, at least until the 1830s or 1840s, when significant numbers of native-born whites began to mature in the Northwest. Terms such as "of mixed ancestry" or "of mixed descent" will also do; "mixed-blood" is arguably a less attractive alternative.

At another level, we need to come to grips with the question of how to interpret and apply "the natives'" own categories. A useful litmus test is to imagine ourselves as members of the group or category in question and inquire how we would then respond to being designated in a particular way. How would Charles Isham, George Gladman, Jr., George Atkinson's HBC descendants, or Nor'Wester Cuthbert Grant's offspring react to being called Métis, half-breed, Indian, or country-born—with puzzlement, anger, acceptance, pleasure? Their reactions would diverge, and we cannot always know what terms would have been intelligible, acceptable, or offensive. In instances of uncertainty, the only course is to apply to individuals those terms we judge most appropriate to their period, company background, or social affiliations—or, more concretely, to identify their specific parentage where possible.

The Canadian fur trade was complex linguistically, not simply because of the presence of diverse Aboriginal and European languages but also because of the changing and different vocabularies of the fur companies, their followers and descendants, and the social groups surrounding them. In a quite real sense, fur trade documents are written in a "code" that we must study and decipher. We realize that we must consciously translate the technical, obsolete, or foreign terms we encounter in these records. But the trickiest terms to decode may be those we assume we understand.

We find ourselves, with respect to the past, in our own linguistic solitude—which requires a conscious recognition of our need for empathy with and understanding of past people and conditions if that solitude is to be overcome. This situation recalls the anthropologists' ever-present need to place their data in context in the process of interpreting them—or, in simpler terms, to "listen to the natives." We are all "natives," culture bound, as we attempt to understand

the past through its always incomplete written records with their own subjec-tivities. Some sense of Hugh MacLennan's solitudes, of social groups isolated yet co-existing today, as in the often stressful conditions of the fur trade, is helpful in these studies—and particularly in examining the potent terms that various groups applied to themselves or to others as the population of the Northwest grew and diversified.

The Blind Men and the Elephant

Touching the Fur Trade

Most of us are familiar, these days, with the debates over Native "dependency" on the fur trade, and with the various problems of defining and documenting dependency in different regions and periods.[1] Less attention has been paid, however, to a rather different sort of fur trade dependency that has existed for quite a long time. Canadian history itself is, to some extent, dependent on the fur trade, as are many academic historians and popular writers. To take "dependency" in its literal etymological sense, we hang our history around the fur trade; we suspend it from that hook, as a kind of fixed point from which we can proceed to more "modern" times. Once our general history texts cover the fur trade, they can proceed to other things. But the subject must be treated in an early section, even if in recent works it is modified into a doublet—Aboriginal people in the fur trade or women in the fur trade—thus accommodating two significant constituencies that used to be neglected. Whatever the quality of these textual presentations, they agree that soon after Canada's history (in terms of European contact) begins, the fur trade is at least a phase that must be covered.

If a certain number of historians and their textbooks exhibit elements of fur trade dependency, so too does our national historical mythology. The fur trade is embedded in it as a critical social evolutionary stage; in fact, there is a good deal of social evolutionism in the writing of national histories generally. American history, thanks to Frederick Jackson Turner, has its venerable frontier thesis.[2] Canada has its fur trade thesis (or theses, if we allow for the multiple

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1 Dependency and other issues in fur trade historiography are well covered in the bibliographic essay "The Indian and the Fur Trade: A Review of Recent Literature," by Jacqueline Peterson and John Anfinson (in Swagerty 1984).

2 For a useful retrospective look at Turner and his thesis, see Ridge (1988).

elaborations by historians and others from Harold Adams Innis onward). The fur trade has stood like a great height of land, a divide or middle era between ancient and modern Canada. The frontier imagery of the American West is often complemented, in Canadian fur trade writings, by medieval images. Among Canadian writers, Peter C. Newman, although he did not invent this rhetoric, carried medieval as well as frontier imagery to the greatest extremes. Thus, in Newman's *Caesars of the Wilderness* (1987, 3), we have the Nor'Westers compared to the "crusaders of the Middle Ages," building "capricious castles" in Montréal. "These knights of the forest," he tells us, "regarded themselves as inheritors of that mantle of esteem once worn by gladiators and noblemen, or, more appropriately, Highland clan chieftains" (7).[3] As sometimes happens with his writings, it is difficult to determine exactly what he means, but clearly he had reason to believe that his medieval images were apt and would resonate with his readers among the general public.

The fur trade has stood not only as a Middle Age but also as a threshold between wilderness and agriculture, between primitive and civilized, and between communalism and the coming of industrial capitalism, as writers have variously conceived of it. Among Canada's ethnic communities, the Métis have often been taken to personify that transition zone, being so strongly identified, as they have been, with the final phases of the pre-Confederation fur trade era (Giraud 1945).[4] As a symbolic complex, then, the fur trade (commonly imbued with highly charged imagery and symbolism) has mediated between opposites that are themselves laden with meanings and values. People of European heritage have variously seen the transition from primitive to civilized or from small communal societies to industrial technology as progress or as degradation (Leacock and Lurie 1988; Hickerson 1988), but those polar opposites are never neutral. Thus, the fur trade itself is not neutral ground but bears the weight of an ulterior significance. It is an act in a historical drama, setting the stage for subsequent acts or phases that follow more or less inexorably towards modern Canada as their culmination. Conrad Black's *Rise to Greatness: The History of Canada from the Vikings to the Present* (2014) is the most recent manifestation of this pattern.

If we have trouble escaping the evolutionary, progressivist mode that so often has characterized national(ist) historiographies, we have equal trouble avoiding

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3 For commentary on Newman's historiography, see (among others), Robin Fisher's review of *Caesars* (1988) and my detailed critical overview in Brown (1986).

4 The extent to which the distinguished Canadian historian W. L. Morton shared the views of his French contemporary, Marcel Giraud, on Red River and the Métis as the meeting ground of savage and civilized is clear in Morton's 1950 review of Giraud in *The Beaver*, outfit 281: 3–7 (reprinted in McKillop 1980).

the fundamental error of "presentism." Fur trade history, like any other, is at risk of being jammed into a mould that bears the shape or imprint of our own current concerns, interests, or even vested interests: we all belong to one or another interest group, whether political, cultural, ethnic, genderbased, or all of the above.

In sum, whosoever approaches fur trade history (or any history) does so as the proverbial blind men approached the elephant—each one having certain preconceptions, mental images, intentions, and interpretive resources to apply to whichever part he touched or grasped first. And having grasped, it is hard to let go. Especially if you do not see very well, you tend to cling to whatever you are already holding and to base your general impressions and conclusions on that part. There is no doubt that in the fields of both fur trade and Native history, we "see" a tremendous amount more than we used to see; the past decades have produced a voluminous body of research incorporating innovative approaches that have greatly changed and amplified our views of these subjects. James Parker's master's thesis of 1967 (published 1987) on Fort Chipewyan was, in its scope and depth, a harbinger of these developments. Yet there is still room for questions and even discomfiture at the extent of our knowledge and understanding. My comments are directed particularly at fur trade history, but they have ramifications as well for the doing of Native history in regions whose past is largely treated as belonging to fur trade studies.

As the blind men (and women) who do fur trade history gain increased sight and vision—the two are not quite synonymous—will they eventually see a whole elephant? Indeed, some, having discovered the tusk or the trunk, will continue to maintain that the fur trade was epitomized by hard-nosed, aggressive capitalists piercing the flank of Canada's north, or that it was an octopus or snake insinuating itself into every corner of northern life. Others, touching the velvet ears or the soft undersides, will keep to a gentler view of the fur trade as a setting for communication, intercultural partnerships, and new social or even tender ties. What if, however, when the scales are lifted from our eyes, we find there is no elephant at all, or perhaps a rather smaller creature of a quite different order?

I am not prepared to say what that creature might be, but my point is that in order to restudy the fur trade in some new ways, we might start by deconstructing it. Deconstruction, despite its modern currency, does not appear in my middle-aged dictionaries; however, I think my usage of the term will make clear what I have in mind. We might re-examine, for example, the oft-used term "fur trade society" and consider to what extent and in what senses such an entity ever existed. "Society" itself is a term with many different meanings that may or may not apply, or may apply only partially to the multiple, complex,

and changing social spheres that intersected in the fur trade. We might learn much from testing those meanings and defining our terms more clearly.

A still larger question lurks in the shadow of the elephant. What do we miss and what do we lose sight of when we subsume so much of the history of northern North America from the 1600s to the mid-1800s under the rubric "fur trade history"? What if, for a moment, we try removing the elephant entirely—or at least looking carefully around, beyond, and through it? (Insofar as it is an image of our minds, it has a ghostly quality.) By this suggestion, I do not mean simply returning to the periods before European-Native contacts. Rather, I propose revisiting the fur trade "era" as if the fur trade were only one of countless things going on while those intermittent and often widely dispersed contacts were occurring.

We also need to remain keenly aware of the nature and biases of our documentary sources, attending as well to the editing and mediating processes that they have gone through (Brown 1992). A key problem with these sources is that, with rare exceptions, they all spring from people of European origin who, even if they were not themselves traders, were enmeshed in the dynamics of trading post life and saw their surroundings from very particular angles. Their biases have been well recognized—and even overstated, in some instances. But there is a deeper difficulty, one that goes beyond the moral ethnocentrism often found in these writings. Their authors had great trouble imagining that any history was being made or that anything significant was happening outside the orbits of the traders' posts and outposts.[5] When we rely too much on these men as sources, keeping the same reference points, we risk being too narrowly focused on relationships between the European traders and the Indians and fail to look beyond the palisades as much as we should.

I am hardly about to disavow the uses and interest of these studies, for I am one of those academics who have had a professional dependency on the fur trade. But as I have read, researched, and taught about the fur trade, I have become more aware of what we do not know, of what is not in the books (even the good, newer ones) and not in our usual frames of reference.

Perhaps a modern analogy, even if a bit extreme, may help in reassessing the limits of fur trade history. Today, McDonald's hamburger restaurants and competing chains are widely distributed across North America, as trading posts once were. They are pervasive and predictable in their appearance, their personnel and offerings, and in the economic transactions and social activities that go on inside. Suppose that some future historian decides to designate a

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5 Thus, for example, the HBC traders at York Factory said nothing (if they knew of it) about the great gathering of Cree people for a feast at the nearby mouth of the Nelson River in September 1823 (see chapter 15, this volume).

part of North American history as "the hamburger era." Surely, anyone doing so (we must hope) would have missed a vast range of other contemporary cultural, social, and economic activities. A similar danger exists for the history of the fur trade. We often focus on the major companies, especially the Hudson's Bay and North West companies, whose leaders, skilled in the rhetoric of power, never neglected to tell us how important they were. But if we do so, what do we miss?

We most certainly miss Native perspectives, which, when looked for, remind us that Native people often had many other priorities and activities on their minds besides the fur trade. A careful look at various sources indicates, for example, that Chipewyans, well into the twentieth century, regularly set other concerns aside for the sake of the caribou hunt. European traders from Anthony Henday on were often disgusted at Plains people's lack of interest in lugging furs to the posts. When commercial fishing on Lake Winnipeg opened in the late 1800s, the HBC at Berens River was reminded that the local community was not "locked into" the fur trade. All over the north, across two centuries, Europeans complained of "lazy" Indians who, however, were not sitting around; rather, they were working at things of more interest and value to them than piling up furs to exchange for excess goods for which they felt no need.[6]

The subsuming of northern Native people's history under the heading of "the fur trade era" has other effects than the missing of Native perspectives. It also tends to restrict Native history to the confines of certain rather specialized "Indian-White relations," to use an older term, rather than paying serious attention to what was happening among Native people themselves. In recent decades, some scholars of Plains ethnohistory have furnished good models to follow in doing Native history in "fur trade country." Among several examples, Loretta Fowler (1987) traced the history of relations between the Assiniboine and Gros Ventres and their views of one another, and Raymond DeMallie (1984) examined the Sioux elder Black Elk in his complex relationships with his own people and not just as a remarkable old man discovered by the Nebraska poet John Neihardt.

As on the Plains, I and others have found that the old fur trading region along the western coast of Hudson Bay affords Native histories that cannot be fully known or appreciated through the European traders and their records

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6 Parker has a good discussion of the Fort Chipewyan fur traders' accommodations to Chipewyan values and priorities (1987, chap. 5). On Lake Winnipeg, Chief William Berens, in conversations with anthropologist A. I. Hallowell in 1940, described his youthful career in the fishing industry and elsewhere; fur trading was only one of numerous occupations (Brown 1988). On European traders' idiosyncratic terminology for Indian behaviour ("lazy," as "not hunting furs," etc.), see Mary Black-Rogers (1986).

alone. In the early 1840s, for example, a Cree prophetic leader, Abishabis, estab-
lished a religious movement that, within a few months, covered the enormous
area between the Churchill and Albany rivers. Influenced by dreams and by
an encounter at York Factory with the Methodist missionary James Evans,
Abishabis acquired a wide following before his excesses led some disaffected
countrymen to execute him at Severn Factory in August of 1843 (chapter 13,
this volume). The HBC traders and the missionaries of the period never assem-
bled the whole story; individuals writing about these events missed the scope
and depth of the movement. The juxtaposition of various widely distributed
sources, however, shows that Cree channels of communication functioned
much more efficiently than European ones to carry reports of the new beliefs
and that up to the present, Cree oral traditions about the movement afford
useful correctives to the understandings conveyed by the European sources. The
Cree, although maintaining thematic continuities, were religious innovators and
borrowers; their creeds and practices were not fixed in stone. Their perspec-
tives, past and present, helped me to take the Abishabis movement seriously as
a cultural and religious development among at least semi-autonomous people.
Fur trade sources were essential in tracing its history, but a holistic view only
became possible through consulting a range of Cree stories and memories
about it.

   The fur trade era, of course, will not go away from Canadian history, and for
a long time to come, we shall surely have the HBC Archives and many other fur
trade records safely preserved for use. But it is a good exercise for us blind or
one-eyed ones to consider that there may not be an elephant out there. At the
least, we need to think around and beyond the fur trade, no matter what sort
of creature it turns out to be. Back in 1967, British historian E. E. Rich impres-
sively described Fort Chipewyan as that "new and imposing establishment"
founded in 1788, which, he wrote, was to "control" the trade of Athabasca
(179). We have since been learning, however, to look at the histories of posts
and traders from different angles and to listen for other voices than those of
Alexander Mackenzie, his peers, and their sometimes uncritical biographers.
The offerings of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermilion Bicentennial Con-
ference in 1988, where an early version of this essay was presented, exhibited a
breadth of vision and a scope that have extended the range of both our studies
and our perceptions, attuning our ears to a polyphony of voices rarely heard in
the older history books. As we listen, we may be able to see with more depth
and clarity, allowing our formerly privileged ethnographies and histories to be
"invaded by heteroglossia"—diverse tongues or voices—a process that, as James
Clifford has observed, can bring fundamental advances in understanding. Fur
trade and Native studies both can gain from what he termed (with reference

to ethnography) "the breakup of monological authority" (1988, 51, 52). The elephant emerges as a more confusing, complex, and interesting creature than any of its blind handlers could have fathomed.

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"We Married the Fur Trade"

Close Encounters and Their Consequences

Part 2 gathers three papers that focus on the dynamics of fur trade families and on relations between traders and Indigenous women—relations that were sometimes stable, sometimes transient, and often unpredictable, given the constraints of fur trade life. Sometime in the 1980s, a Dene woman, describing her people's involvement with incoming traders, made the expressive comment, "We married the fur trade," encapsulating how intimate and personal that connection often became on a community basis, even as individual unions with traders followed many different paths.

Chapter 4, "A Demographic Transition in the Fur Trade," grew out of my early efforts to track close to two hundred fur trade families across a century (approximately 1750 to 1850), looking at their formation and growth and comparing their situations in the two companies with which they were mainly connected—the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. The families started small, reflecting the instability of early trading conditions and probably also Algonquian nursing patterns, which tended to extend intervals between births of offspring. By the early to mid-1800s, in contrast, a good many traders' families numbered five to ten or more offspring. In tandem with broader social and economic changes in the region, mothers of mixed descent began having large families on the scale of those in other North American colonies. The records have gaps; numbers of children surely went uncounted. However, available statistics trace a quiet demographic transition occurring over four generations—one that fostered the rise of the Métis people in the west, even though many offspring of mixed descent never joined their ranks but matured as "Indians" or, more rarely, passed into white communities.

"Challenging the Custom of the Country" (chapter 5) is a close study of James Hargrave, a Scottish fur trader whose voluminous correspondence from 1826 to the 1840s, written mainly at York Factory, reveals his relations with his colleagues and his personal views about his and their relations with the women of the country—both Cree and of mixed descent. His letters also express his overall views of "the sex" (female) and of marriage in general, along with his ambition for personal advancement. With great frankness, he declared his intent to remain clear of romantic entanglements until he could get home and find a respectable Scottish bride—as indeed he did in 1840, marrying the niece of a senior colleague. In the meantime, he was free with his advice to other junior men, counselling them against country marriages, which would hurt their career prospects. Yet he was no advocate of sexual abstinence. His letters plainly show how well-placed men of his views could, on one hand, criticize the women of Rupert's Land for lacking the respectability of "their fairer sisterhood" in Britain while, on the other, taking advantage of their hopes that relations with traders of good standing might actually lead to marriages

that, with the advent of clergy in Red River, could become "real." Chapters 4 and 5 both originated as articles published in 1976 in the *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, an excellent but short-lived graduate journal based in the Anthropology Department at the University of Alberta.

Chapter 6, "Partial Truths," explores traders' marriages by means of looking at some well-documented examples—notably, those of fur trade clerk George Nelson. Traders' relationships with Indigenous women were always works in progress; they might grow and flourish or they might end on the initiative of either or both partners. The phrase "the custom of the country," which came into use to describe such unions, meant different things to different people. Unions might be formed with the sanction of a woman's older relatives, or with the encouragement of a trader's colleagues, or simply on an individual basis, as the diverging testimonies in the Connolly court case of the 1860s amply showed. The "custom" might become binding and even achieve legal recognition as marriage. But in the case of trader William Connolly's Cree marriage, recognition came too late; Connolly had left Suzanne for a white wife in Montréal and then had died, years before a Québec court affirmed his first marriage as binding. This essay first appeared in 1988, in a volume honouring historian John Elgin Foster for his contributions to fur trade and Métis studies.

A Demographic Transition in the Fur Trade

Family Sizes of Company Officers and Country Wives, ca. 1750–1850

Early in the course of my research on Hudson's Bay and North West Company social and family organization in the Canadian fur trade, I found that the ample records of these two companies, along with other related sources, could also serve another purpose—that of demographic analysis. French and British fur trade occupation of the region variously called Rupert's Land, the Indian country, and the *pays d'en haut*, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, led to uncounted unions between traders and Aboriginal women and, in turn, to the rise of a considerable population of mixed European-Indian descent. A detailed study (where documents allowed) of 176 fur trade officers' Native families from the 1750s to the mid-1800s provided some indication of the sizes, birth-spacing patterns, and other characteristics of some of the families from which this group originated.

To be sure, these documents sometimes appeared to be a demographer's nightmare rather than a dream. Almost no census lists, baptismal registers, or other vital records were created in fur trade country before the colony of Red River became established in 1812. Nevertheless, when I persisted in collecting and compiling scattered nuggets of family information from the varied sources available, it became possible to set forth certain demographic conclusions, duly qualified but with important social and cultural correlates, and to achieve some family reconstitution of certain sectors of the fur trade population over the span of about a century.[1]

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1 Most of the research files that I compiled on these families are now housed in the University of Manitoba Archives in Winnipeg. They are paper records, since compiling a computer database was not an option in the 1970s.

Demographers have a name for the kind of compilation that these records allowed. Certainly this was not aggregative or "macro-" demography; the populations and scale of analysis involved were both small, and the data often too limited for extensive quantitative analysis. But the sources did permit me to undertake a fair amount of "micro-," or what Michael Drake called "nominative," analysis. This technique involves "the linking together of various pieces of demographic information using the names of individuals as the linking device" (Drake 1972, 61), and it has been impressively applied by E. A. Wrigley and others to English historical data (see, e.g., Wrigley 1966; Wrigley et al. 2005).

The sources that I used in this work were diverse. For the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, my major sources were post journals and correspondence, the wills of traders themselves, travellers' accounts, and, occasionally, church and other records generated by traders and their family members when they travelled outside the fur trade country. When Anglican clergymen first came to the new Red River Colony in 1820, they began to register baptisms, marriages, and deaths. Their Roman Catholic counterparts of the time did the same, although many of their records were lost by fire in the 1860s. Other missionaries—Anglican, Roman Catholic, and Methodist—reached numerous fur trade posts beyond Red River by the 1840s and left useful records. At Moose Factory in James Bay, a valuable register was begun by HBC officer John Thomas in 1808, over three decades before missionaries arrived there. Eventually continued by clergymen, it recorded many dates of births, deaths, and marriages in that community.[2] Such sources as these provided bits and pieces of information on many persons of all origins and ranks in the fur trade—Europeans, Aboriginal people, persons of mixed descent (variously defined; see discussion below)—but in particular, on families of company officers who were most likely to contribute to this record keeping.

The local records from particular fur trade enclaves have limitations, however. Up through the early 1800s, traders drew their female partners mainly from among women of Cree and Ojibwe descent living around established fur trade centres from the Great Lakes to the central subarctic, but their geographical mobility while in company service might be very great. Nominative demography in the fur trade context, then, often meant following particular families across the Northwest and looking at the records of the multiple posts where particular individuals served. A trader's marriage or the baptisms of certain of

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2 Moose Factory, Register of baptisms, marriages, burials, MS 161 (microfilm), Archives of Ontario, Toronto. Thomas began the registry by listing the names and ages of his nine children; lacking power to baptize them himself, he left a blank space in each entry for a "Christening" date, when or if that event should occur, and other HBC officers followed suit. See Brown (1982, 59–60).

his children might be recorded at Red River or some other important centre, but many other family events—births, marriages, deaths—occurred at remote outposts and might or might not be matters of written record.

In cases where written company or mission records were lacking or had gaps, a family history attained relative completeness only if the trader himself left behind personal records such as a will or correspondence. My studies of particular families by the nominative method soon reached a dead end if these kinds of records were not available, although oral histories have sometimes provided critical clues.[3] And of course, the need to rely on such records led to bias. Literate traders with properties that required a will to regulate their distribution after death were generally masters of posts and officers, or else clerks aspiring to those higher ranks. Their families were the easiest to trace through the nominative technique, since they left the most extensive records and were most likely to be mentioned by others. Yet even their records were incomplete, or sometimes lost. Few traders were as precise record-keepers as HBC man Peter Fidler, who recorded the exact date, hour, and place of birth of the fourteen children of himself and his Cree wife (Brown 1980, plate 15), or David Thompson (see chapter 10, this volume).

For practical reasons, then, my study focused largely on the demographic patterns of the higher-ranked families in the Hudson's Bay and North West companies. The results of this limited sampling were nonetheless interesting and suggestive. To summarize, I compared two broad periods of northwestern fur trade history: the decades from the mid-1700s to 1800 and from 1800 to the 1840s. These two periods contrasted in several social and demographic respects. Before the 1790s, the numbers of traders residing in the Indian country were fairly low and their posts widely scattered, even though their explorations and distribution of trade goods had begun to extend their range of influence a long distance inland. In 1772, the HBC reportedly had only 181 servants in the trade to man not only their half-dozen permanent Bay posts but also their new inland ventures towards what is now northwestern Manitoba (Rich and Johnson 1951, xxxvii n1). The numbers of Montréal traders in the Northwest at this time were probably not much greater. The old French Montréal fur trade had diminished in scale in the years around 1760, the time of the British conquest of Canada, and in the 1770s, the early North West Company (NWC) partnerships were only beginning to combine effectively against (or with) other newly organized Montréal trade rivals. In the first decades after conquest, however, Montréal received a large influx of migrants, particularly highland Scots,

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3 See, for example, Brown (1980, 71), on Norton descendants, and chapter 15 (this volume), on James Settee's antecedents. Websites such as www.redriverancestry.ca have now compiled much family data from both written and oral sources.

who, as a new entrepreneurial class, displaced older French fur trade families and eventually built up new trade alliances and organizations. The threat that they posed to the survival of the HBC because of their growing numbers and effectiveness became most conspicuous from the 1790s on.

The few hundred British and Montréal traders of the mid- to late 1700s found themselves among a range of northern Aboriginal groups who, although already showing influences of fur trade contacts, still maintained their social, cultural, and political integrity. Particularly important among these trading partners were the Cree of the regions from Hudson Bay west to the Saskatchewan country. While other groups also became prominent in the records, the interactions between the traders and the Cree are among the best documented during these years.

As the HBC and Montréal traders set up posts in the country of the Cree and in other regions, they and their companies were obliged to adapt to certain distinctive features of fur trade social life. First, it was not feasible for them to bring white wives or families to the Northwest, whether by canoe from Montréal or by ship from Britain. The HBC, in fact, after one troublesome experience with allowing an officer to bring a wife and maidservant to the bay in the late 1600s, was relieved to ship this "parcel of women" home and ruled against any further such experiments (Rich 1945, 2nd ser., 230).

Second, traders found it difficult to maintain a family life at home while absent for long periods in their companies' service. Early HBC directors found that married men often asked to cut short their Bay service to tend to family matters and that their wives at home frequently petitioned for their husbands' returns. Marital breakdowns could occur; one wife was reported to have had "several Bastards" in her husband's absence (Rich 1945, 1st ser., 151). The company therefore began to favour the hiring of bachelors and young apprentices whose weaker ties to Britain would allow them to serve longer and more faithfully (Brown 1980, 25–26). Numerous Montréal Nor'Westers also delayed marriage until they returned home from the fur trade country and could maintain a household. This delay did not, however, entail abstinence from sexual relationships, and the status of these relationships and of the offspring they produced introduced complex new dynamics into fur trade social life (see chapter 5, this volume).

Related to this point, traders soon learned that their Cree and other trading partners, bemused by these men's odd lack of women, regularly offered them wives in what loosely came to be called "the custom of the country," variously defined. In Aboriginal views, reliable trading relations entailed establishing trust and reciprocity through kinship ties and alliances, and marriage customs were flexible, not bound by the formal legal and religious baggage that they carried in Europe. Officers and masters of posts, whose importance

and influence were recognized, were particularly subject to these offers and were under great pressure to take a wife as long as they remained bachelors, as Philip Turnor, Daniel W. Harmon, Alexander Henry the Younger, and others recorded. The temptations of these proposals were considerable, and a good many traders accordingly accepted women partners from their own personal motives as well as to assist their trade, thereby also gaining the support of the women's practical skills in translation, securing and preparing food, making leather clothing, and so on. These patterns of action had important long-term social and demographic consequences.

During most of the eighteenth century, the trader-Indian sexual alliances that resulted from these circumstances were commonly covert or transient in character. The HBC London directors laid down strong rules against allowing Aboriginal people into the bay posts. The directors were concerned about security, about theft of trade goods, and about the danger of misunderstandings and damaging conflicts if their men became personally involved with Aboriginal people and particularly with women—a danger that materialized at Henley House in the 1750s (Brown 1980, 62). Recurrent efforts were made to restrict these relationships.

But London rules were unevenly enforced in Hudson Bay. Some officers applied them strictly, others did not, and certain chief factors, such as Moses Norton, stirred complaints from their subordinates for enforcing the rules on others but not on themselves (Brown 1980, 54–55). The net result was that several eighteenth-century HBC men, notably officers, acquired female partners—some transient, some more enduring—in the face of company rules and restrictions, testing their employer's limits of tolerance. One officer, Robert Pilgrim, upon retirement in 1750, went so far as to bring his Cree wife and child to England (Craig 1974, 520–21). Upon his death a few months later, the company was burdened with the cost and responsibility of returning her to her relatives in Hudson Bay. It thereupon ruled against giving passage to England to any other native-born families—another rule that later proved to be unevenly applied.

The Montréal Nor'Westers, in contrast, were not subject to the moral regulation of London directors; instead, their leaders had considerable autonomy as codirectors or partners of their own concern. They were also heirs to French Canadian fur trade and coureur de bois traditions that had long been permissive toward trader-Indian sexual alliances. It was accordingly commonplace for eighteenth-century Montréal traders to take female companions in the *pays d'en haut*. Perhaps because the Montréal traders also tended to have greater geographical mobility than their HBC rivals, their sexual relationships frequently seemed more informal and transient than those of the relatively confined HBC

men. Nonetheless, in both companies, some men, by the early 1800s, had come to consider their fur trade mates as their wives, to whom they would genuinely remain committed.[4]

The demographic impact of these country unions was limited in the years before 1800. Inland fur traders were relatively few and scattered. Some HBC coastal establishments held several dozen men, but their personal lives and activities were fairly restricted. Neither the British nor the Montréal firms were interested in promoting or recognizing settled domestic units that would require costly support and distract their employees from company business.

Continuity of traders' alliances with Native women was also affected by the fact that both traders and their partners led fairly mobile lives. A trader's mate and children might rejoin their own relatives when provision stocks were low, when trade was not in progress, or when he was absent on leave or to take furs down-country for transport to Montréal or Britain. And if a trader retired from the country or died, his family usually rejoined its home network of kin. These alliances, then, even when long-lived, were frequently interrupted by separation and by the geographical mobility of the parties involved or ended before the natural end of the partners' fertility. In this context, until about 1800, fur trade native-born families were predictably small, as figure 4.1 indeed shows them to be. The known offspring of thirty-six trader officers' alliances with Native women numbered only sixty-seven in these years, an average of fewer than two children per family.

Even if some alliances before 1800 were characterized by more regular cohabitation, as began to be the case in the late 1700s, the influence of Aboriginal child-rearing patterns could still have served to depress the birth rates of these unions. Several writers from the 1600s onward observed that in Aboriginal families, substantial intervals between births, associated with long nursing periods, tended to restrict numbers of children born. In New France in the late 1600s, Intendant Jean Talon complained that Aboriginal women's nursing patterns limited their production of offspring, lowering their suitability as settlers' wives in this colony, which was so anxious for population growth (Diamond 1961, 9). In the 1700s and early 1800s, various observers in the fur trade country also saw a link between nursing and birth interval patterns—an association that research has confirmed, lactation being a depressant of fecundity (Frisch 1975; Nerlove 1974, 212–14) and probably also of the nursing mother's sexual activity.[5]

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4 Notable instances, documented in Brown (1980), Van Kirk (1980), and elsewhere, include Daniel Harmon, David Thompson, George Nelson, John Lee Lewes, and George Gladman, among others.

5 The technical term for this suspension of fertility is "lactational amenorrhea," the temporary cessation of the menstrual cycle when breastfeeding is constant for an extended period.

HBC man James Isham, based at York Factory in the 1740s, commented that the arduous and mobile lifestyle of the local people, in combination with nursing practices, lowered fertility. He claimed that Cree women along the west coast of Hudson Bay were likely to produce, at most, one child every three years, a rate he thought low compared to Britain: "their not having or Bearing Children Every Year as some Europians does, is on the account of their Suckling all their own children, being obligd. to Carry them on their backs in moving from place to place over the Country, therefore are not able to bring more than one up at a time" (Rich 1949, 104).

Figure 4.1. Average size of fur trade officers' families, 1790–1850. The dates refer to the point at which the family was apparently complete, as no records exist of the birth of further children. The total sample size was 176 families. Of these, 23 were complete in the period prior to 1790: 13 in the period from 1791 to 1800; 22 in the 1801–10 range; 22 in 1811–20; 41 in 1821–30; 33 in 1831–40; and 22 in 1841–50.

Somewhat later in the century, William Falconer at Severn House, south of York Factory, also was struck by Cree mothers' nursing of children for a long period, in contrast to the European pattern:

> They suffer their Children to suck their Mothers till three or four years old. For they say, were they to be weaned young, they must drink much water, which would cause them to have large bellys. . . . When they hear of the Europeans being wean'd at 12 months old, they say that is the cause of so many of them having large bellys. (Falconer 1768–76, 56)

Andrew Graham, too, remarked on Cree women's long nursing of children, "for one, two or three years and afterwards" (Williams 1969, 178). And, in 1819, a medical member of John Franklin's first Arctic exploring expedition, wintering at Cumberland House (Saskatchewan), drew conclusions that went further. Dr. John Richardson noted that while the Cree women of the Cumberland area tended to marry young, they "have a custom of suckling their children for several years, and are besides exposed constantly to fatigue and often to famine; hence they are not prolific, bearing upon an average not more than four children, of whom two may attain the age of puberty" (Franklin 1823, 60). It appears, then, that Aboriginal women's nursing patterns, combined with the patterns and constraints of subarctic life, tended to restrict the numbers of offspring produced in fur trade families during most of the eighteenth century.

Beginning in the 1790s, however, several new developments began to foster a rapid growth of populations of mixed descent in the Indian country. For one thing, the absolute numbers of European traders increased. By 1799, the HBC posts contained a total of 529 employees, 348 more than in 1772 (Rich and Johnson 1951, xxxvii n1). This increase was needed to keep pace with the growing numbers of traders from Montréal, who indeed soon outnumbered HBC men. In 1805, NWC man Alexander Henry the Younger reported a population of 1,610 fur trade employees in the "departments" of the Northwest in which the Montréalers were active (Coues 1897, 282).

Most of these men were canoe men and others of non-officer rank whose offspring were not reliably enumerated. Their contribution to population growth in the Northwest, while undoubted, is hard to measure.[6] Documentation is considerably better, however, for the literate clerks and officers of these years. Nominative analysis has shown that their families in the early 1800s made impressive leaps in completed size quite unmatched in the 1700s (see figure 4.1), and that the growth of these families continued unabated through the 1840s, the latest decade sampled here. By the 1840s, they were averaging from seven to nine children apiece.

There were several reasons for this marked increase. From the late 1700s onward, it was becoming increasingly accepted for traders, despite company rules and other obstacles, to take and keep women of the country; in the early 1800s, Nor'Wester Daniel W. Harmon and others described this as the common practice (Brown 1980, 104–5). Sylvia Van Kirk concluded, perhaps with some optimism, that "marriage according to the custom of the country" had its own

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6 The Montréal fur trade also generated large numbers of "freemen," *canadien* and of mixed origin, who stayed in the northwest and made their own livelihood after their contracts expired. The stories of these often large Métis families have lately become much better known through the work of scholars such as Heather Devine (2004).

social forms, was generally monogamous, and came to be viewed by many as binding, although unregistered and unsanctioned by European authorities (Van Kirk 1976).[7] Those traders who became committed to their families made a case for taking these relationships seriously. Looking beyond their desires for female companionship, they matured as fathers seeking to place and provide for their native-born daughters.

This concern led numbers of traders to arrange or encourage customary marriages between such daughters and junior company colleagues, while on the HBC side, they also supported the founding in 1812 of the colony at Red River as a haven for their families (Brown 1980, 168). The growing acceptance of fur trade marriage and domesticity fostered the more constant cohabitation of traders and Native wives and the more regular conception of children. Additionally, when a woman became a permanent trading post resident, she probably received a more constant food supply and better shelter, resulting in greater fecundity and possibly a longer lifespan than normal in subarctic conditions. Researchers have found positive associations between nutritional and health levels and fecundity (Krause 1973, 175–77; Frisch 1975). A more secure food supply may also have encouraged fur trade mothers to wean their children earlier, thus fostering renewal of sexual activity and a decrease in intervals between births. And traders as husbands may have applied pressure against long nursing periods as interfering with their own sexual desires and foreign to what they considered proper European practice.

Whatever the relative importance of these various factors, the early-nineteenth-century growth of fur trade family sizes was conspicuous, to judge from the figures available. In 1819, Dr. John Richardson of the Franklin Expedition was explicit on the matter. He observed that "a singular change takes place in the physical constitution of the Indian females who become inmates of a fort; namely, they bear children more frequently and longer" (Franklin 1823, 83). Even allowing for a certain number of unrecorded births for the families sampled in each decade, the early decades of the 1800s—and particularly the first decade (to 1810), when completed family sizes nearly doubled—ushered in a period of growth in the numbers of people of mixed descent. This growth rate and the shrinking birth-interval patterns that fostered it compare more closely with rates known from certain European colonies such as New France and from some parts of Europe (Shorter 1973; Krause 1973) than with Aboriginal patterns insofar as they are known. The large families of Peter Fidler (Brown 1980, plate 15) and of David Thompson (listed in chapter 10, this volume), with children born every two to four years, are among the best documented.

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7 "The custom of the country" meant different things to different people, as highlighted in the 1860s legal case of *Connolly v. Woolrich*; see chapter 6, this volume.

The trend also gave a boost to "Indian" populations around the larger HBC posts, as increasing numbers of fur trade offspring returned to their maternal relatives. Charles Bishop noted some years ago that the Cree population around Albany Factory grew from about 190 persons in 1793 to 259 in 1829 and continued to increase thereafter (1972, 64). He attributed this growth to subsistence problems and the people's need to be within range of the fort in order to secure supplies. Another less visible factor, however, was surely the growth of a younger generation of Cree people with kinship ties to trader fathers and grandfathers.[8] Having been born in or around the forts, they could make claims of connection through the English and Scottish surnames that they had inherited. More tangibly, some offspring came regularly to collect annuities that their retired or deceased trader fathers had designated for their support.[9]

Significantly, the first years of the nineteenth century were also years in which people of mixed descent first began to be distinguished terminologically from whites and Indians. The Nor'Westers from Montréal were the first to apply the racialized terms *métis* and "half-breed" to this increasingly numerous population; these are nineteenth- rather than eighteenth-century terms. Previously, HBC writers had classified persons of mixed descent as "English" or "Indian," or sometimes by the inclusive term "native," on the basis of their cultural attributes and social affiliations. Now a distinct group with its own social and "racial" characteristics began to be identified—and commonly consigned to a lower rank. (On the various terms that evolved to describe people of mixed descent, see Brown and Schenck [2002], and chapter 2, this volume.)

The rapid growth of families and offspring of mixed descent was a demographic fact with wide-ranging social, cultural, and political implications for the fur trade country by the mid- 1800s. Fur trade company operations did not expand to provide livelihoods for all the rising generation, nor did the community of Red River, despite its rapid growth. Many native-born sons of officers, in particular, possessed of whatever education their fathers had been able or had chosen to supply or afford, found few outlets for their aspirations once the Hudson's Bay and North West companies merged in 1821. Those who remained in the company faced the hardening racial prejudice that Governor George Simpson was expressing by the late 1820s. Daughters might fare better through marriage to white men, taking on their husband's status and identity.[10]

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8 Cree Anglican clergyman James Settee and his wife, Sarah Cook, for example, both had ties to HBC grandfathers reaching back three or even four generations; see chapter 15.

9 One example of this support is Matthew Cocking's annuities for his three daughters (Brown 1980, 70–71).

10 Sylvia Van Kirk (1997–98) explored gender as a factor in the diverging fates of the sons and daughters of Fort Victoria's founding fur trade families in the mid- to late 1800s.

Some few, by means of paternal aid and connections and their own level of education, became members of British or Canadian white society.

But numerous others grew up to challenge the new HBC trade monopoly and government, to support Métis campaigns for free trade, and to join in ventures against established authority, such as the Dickson Expedition of 1836 and the Riel resistances of 1869 and 1885 (Arthur 1970; Howard 1970). The relatively constricted and company-dominated social order of the Northwest in these decades had few niches for these fur trade sons; the period from the 1820s to the 1850s appears to have been particularly difficult for those seeking company employment and upward mobility (Brown 1973).

Correspondingly, both sons and daughters of the fur trade, with their distinctive origins and backgrounds, frequently fell victim to the racial and social prejudices of the white newcomers who began to reside in and seek to civilize and Christianize the Northwest from the 1820s on. Rapidly accelerating demographic processes had, in a few decades, generated a new and conspicuous group born of the fur trade, with its own separate identity and challenges. The techniques of nominative demography and family reconstitution help to document a critical period in the formation of an important segment of this group—the early years of the 1800s, in which company officers' Native families averaged ever larger with each passing decade.

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CHAPTER 5

Challenging the Custom of the Country
James Hargrave, His Colleagues, and "the Sex"

By the early 1800s, large numbers of Hudson's Bay and North West Company men were involved in relationships with Aboriginal women or with women descended from trader–Aboriginal relations of earlier generations. These unions, of varied length and quality, often came to be described collectively as "marriages according to the custom of the country." It is not clear, however, when that phrase came into use. The label also obscured divergent and changing understandings about what the custom entailed and even about how it might be defined.[1]

After the Hudson's Bay and North West companies merged in 1821, and as missionaries and other newcomers began to penetrate the Northwest with freshly imported moral, religious, and educational values, older fur trade ways were subject to new examination. Traders' informal unions with women of the country faced challenges on several fronts. The clergy who arrived to establish churches in Red River were eager to consecrate the marriages of those traders who proved willing and to baptize their wives and offspring, casting long shadows over the fur trade unions that they did not get to validate. And within the merged company itself, certain officers of a new generation brought negative views of older ways that heightened tensions among the traders themselves. In particular, George Simpson, a Highland Scot who took over as governor of the HBC Northern Department and then of the whole concern from 1820 until his death in 1860, became notorious for his treatment of women of Aboriginal descent with whom he had relationships before his marriage to his English cousin Frances Simpson in 1830. His example influenced the views and actions of those traders who shared

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1 For more extended discussion of the phrase, see chapter 6.

his values and sought his favour.[2] The decades of the 1820s to 1840s were accordingly a period of uncertainty and strain in fur trade social and domestic life, as traders and their Native families encountered new colleagues, clergy, and others who challenged fur trade customary marriages and sometimes discountenanced the idea of intermarriage itself.

One company newcomer who responded to Simpson's leadership in both business and personal affairs was James Hargrave, a Lowland Scot who migrated to Lower Canada in 1819, following other family members. He joined the North West Company (NWC) shortly before its merger with the HBC, at the age of twenty-one, in April of 1820—the same month in which Simpson, aged about thirty-four, arrived in Montréal to begin his regime (Galbraith 1985). Hargrave, as Helen Ross has written, quickly recognized "the absolute necessity of pleasing his employer if he wished to avoid either dismissal or banishment to some remote and lonely outpost" (2009, 23–24). Accordingly, he was "extremely deferential" to Simpson, in both his correspondence and behaviour. Simpson, in turn, rewarded him with warm appraisals in his "Character Book," which privately reviewed HBC officers' performance. In 1832, the year before Hargrave was promoted to chief trader, Simpson wrote that this clerk had "every reason to calculate on early promotion" (22).

Hargrave's writings are a principal source for the social dynamics at play during his and Simpson's decades in the fur trade. Hargrave recorded his observations, activities, attitudes, and biases frankly and forthrightly in a unique body of outgoing correspondence with other traders and with relatives and personal friends. He was an indefatigable letter-writer and copyist; his letterbooks contain over thirteen hundred letters and memoranda. Because he served mainly at York Factory on Hudson Bay, a principal communications centre and trans-shipping point between Europe and Rupert's Land, he personally knew and corresponded with many of his fellow officers. The letters are rich in fur trade news and gossip, often including family matters and expressions of views on a wide range of private and domestic concerns. They reveal his responses to other traders' relationships, his views of the women of the country, and, more broadly, his opinions about marriage and "the sex" (female).[3] Of most interest are the letters from 1826 (when the series begins) to the early 1840s, the first

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2 Simpson's conduct, dismissive and worse, towards the women with whom he had relations in the fur trade country is well documented; see, for example, Van Kirk (1980, chap. 7) and Brown (1980, chap. 5).

3 Hargrave's letterbooks (R7784-0-9-E) are in the James Hargrave and family fonds, MG 19, A21, Library and Archives Canada, Ottawa. The letterbooks are the sources for the letters quoted here, unless otherwise attributed. His letters to family members and non-HBC friends, 1826–40, are published in Ross (2009). Hargrave sometimes used the term "the sex" in reference solely to the female sex, a usage now defined as rare (*Oxford English Dictionary*).

years of Hargrave's marriage to Letitia Mactavish, niece of HBC Chief Factor and former Nor'Wester John George McTavish. They document his values, sentiments, conduct, and counsels to others in those years, as well as those of numerous of his colleagues.

By late 1826, Hargrave had spent one season at Sault Ste. Marie, a second at York Factory, and three years in the lower Red River district; he had become good friends with several men who, like himself, had joined the new concern from the NWC. Probably influenced by advice from Simpson and associates and by what he viewed as the poor examples set by some older traders, he had already resolved not to marry in the fur trade country. To an uncle in Selkirk-shire, Scotland, he wrote that he was saving his money for

> when I return an old & weather beaten Bachelor to Scotland some 10 or
> 15 years hence. A Bachelor I yet am,— and till I see the fair haired lasses
> of Scotland again a Bachelor I am determined to remain,— tho' when
> that time comes I fear these giddy nymphs that skip about my native
> vallies will be apt to turn up their pretty noses and tell me my day for
> catching their fancies is gone bye—that I scent of the Indian Wigwam
> and have forgot how to court them in Broad Scotch. (6 September 1826
> to James Mitchell, in Ross 2009, 64)

In other letters, Hargrave declared himself as the "sworn disciple of celibacy," although admitting the attractiveness of a certain fellow trader's daughter (5 December 1826, Fort Garry [Red River] to John McLeod). Hargrave also commended his own example to others. Writing on the same day to clerk Donald McKenzie (who was some dozen years his senior and serving at the northern outpost of Oxford House), he advised him in patronizing tones against renewing and consecrating his country marriage with Matilda Bruce:

> The report is quite current here that you have sent your late cara sposa
> an invitation to assume her old position in thy bed and a legal union is
> to be the result of her compliance. Good. I only wish for your own sake
> that you had a view of the end of these things before you run your head
> in the noose. As sure as you get astride of a half breed *in a manner approved*
> *of by the Clergy* so sure will Red River be the houf [?] to which she will
> canter away with you when misfortune or age closes your present avoca-
> tions. . . . Such is the present fate of many here who once held our rank
> in the country and to which matrimony alone had paved the way. Weigh
> this alternative my good fellow and consider whether such an end is not
> paying too dear for your whistle.

Like numerous other men of HBC origin, however, McKenzie remained with his country family and did eventually settle in Red River with his wife and

increasingly numerous children (two having already been baptized in Red River by 1826).[4] McKenzie was not a convert to Hargrave's advice, and the two went separate ways in their personal lives.

Aside from his distaste for Red River (which he shared with other NWC men retained in the merged company, almost none of whom retired to that place), Hargrave cited other reasons for avoiding fur trade entanglements—and indeed, for delaying any marriage until a later date.[5] In a letter to his parents, he stated that his "ruling object" was "to provide a competency for old age," so that by "prudently regulating" his conduct, he could gain the means "to revisit my land in a creditable manner." These goals were, he observed, inaccessible to those who had "formed connections in the country in their younger years which they find themselves incapable of breaking when the time arrives that they could retire." And if a man "entangled in this manner" did in fact manage to gather sufficient assets to live comfortably in Canada or Britain, his family's adjustment to a foreign way of life posed severe problems. No "man of principle" would leave them behind: "The leaving abandoning of a family, of whatever color they may be, is a severe trial to the feelings." Yet "to bring them with him especially the wife to the civilized world will lay him open to almost as painful sensations" (29 January 1827, to "My dear Parents," in Ross 2009, 82–83).

Related to Hargrave's desire for a "competency" and comfortable retirement in the civilized world was a strong motivation towards upward mobility, both in the company and in the world at large. In the same letter, he assured his parents that his advancement was likely, since "I am now generally known in the country, and I may say without vanity my character is respected by everyone whose good opinion I value in it." In 1833, six years later, when he was promoted from clerk to chief trader, he enthused to his sister that the HBC territory was a place where men such as he could rise.

> [In Scotland] I especially never could have hoped for anything beyond a bare subsistence attained by much toil of mind & body, being without friends to aid me forward or the advantage of birth to bring me into notice.— In this land where man is measured with man & mind with mind, instead of observed merit being kept down through the influence

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4 The website www.redriverancestry.ca is an excellent source on McKenzie's and many other traders' families.

5 Many upper-level Nor'Westers were Scots or Scottish Canadians with strong kinship and friendship ties to Britain, the Montréal region, or Glengarry, Upper Canada (Brown 1980, chap. 4). Upon retirement, most headed back east to communities where they already had business connections and some social standing. In contrast, numerous old HBC men, more isolated from their home societies and with little to gain from returning to them, retired to Red River more willingly.

of birth and patronage I have had a field opened to me for putting to the test the value of the education and honest principles our worthy parents instructed us in. (18 July 1833 to Mary Ross)

Hargrave knew well enough, however, that cultivation of merit alone was no guarantee of advancement. Other letters show that he fully recognized the importance of choosing proper friends and gaining patrons who would guide, support, and use their influence for him (e.g., 22 July 1830 to J. G. McTavish; 6 June 1839 to Letitia Mactavish [Ross 2009, 184, 344]; 1 February 1840 to J. D. Cameron; 1 March 1840 to D. Finlayson).

In his quest for upward mobility, Hargrave saw marriage as an important means of social and career advancement that should be undertaken with care and deliberation. Conversely, marriage too early or to the wrong party would be a burden and an effective bar to a man's upward progress. But he was not unsympathetic to those of his friends who did yield to the temptations of marriage to women of the fur trade country, accepting their defections from celibacy with good grace. Clerk George Barnston's new country wife, Ellen Matthews, received "a pound or two of sweeties &c" as a present to "the young *lassie* who I hear accompanies you . . . to show my regard to a young female who under all the disadvantages of country has had merit to touch the heart of my friend" (28 June 1831 to Barnston.) And Hargrave wrote to John Bell that he was "gratified to hear that since you must marry you have made such a judicious and respectable choice [Nancy, daughter of Nor'Wester Peter Warren Dease and his Métis wife, Elizabeth Chouinard]: much happiness my dear fellow may you reap from the union. I sincerely feel for a young fellow left to his own meditation at the lone posts of this Country and am never surprised to hear that they try to highten their pleasure by adding to them the comforts of a family" (6 July 1830).

Whenever opportunity offered, however, he campaigned against what he deemed to be hasty or unsuitable unions, reaffirming his resolves against them and citing changing social standards in the fur trade. In 1833, when clerk Richard Harding seemed "inclined to ~~plunge into the gulph~~ lapse off in that direction," Hargrave asked him to "attend . . . first my dear fellow whether you could pass your life with a native of this land—for all [?] alliances nowadays are out of date,— or whether by a little longer abstinence you may not be enabled in a few years to match yourself creditably in old England" (31 July 1833 to Harding). In a later case, Hargrave took direct action, transferring clerk Richard Grant to York Factory from the inland post of Oxford House to put an end to his attachment to a Cree or Ojibwe woman known as Sarah. As Hargrave reported to John George McTavish, "the silly fellow got enjoué last winter of an indian wench, took her to his bed, to his table, and the worst [?] called her

his wife. I stood unmoved against his struggles to get back, and now hope that a separation has been made, which will prevent the matter from getting more blazoned" (24 July 1838 to McTavish).[6]

Those colleagues who did resist country alliances received praise. In 1838, Hargrave assured his fiancée, Letitia Mactavish, that her brother William, who had joined the company in 1833 (Ross 2009, 251n9), was not attracted to such involvements:

> Her [your mother's] anxiety about Willies taking a fancy to any of the Brown Faces I think quite groundless. I have observed him closely and can perceive no traces of any penchant in that direction. In fact the days for such escapades are past: a different tone of feeling on these matters has gradually come around,— & a young Gentn from Britain would as soon think of matching himself with the contemporary of his grand-mother as with a pure Squaw. True it is some few tempted by money now & then give their hand to the daughter of an Officer & some few from kinder motives. But William I feel convinced is too noble minded for the first— & has too good a taste to be attracted by the latter feeling. (24 July 1838 to Letitia Mactavish, in Ross 2009, 333–34)

Hargrave's sentiments towards his siblings' and his own courtship dovetailed closely with the opinions he expressed about his colleagues' relationships. In 1832, he urged his brother John to choose a wife with care: "Be prudent dear Brother in the choice of her who is to bear your name,— one raised in your own sphere of life is best, as near your own age as may be, and what is *never to be overlooked*, the *decent industrious* daughter of serious steady parents." As for his sister Jane, "nothing would please me more than to hear of you making a respectable connection for life," that being "the important hinge on which the happiness, aye use, of female existence depends." Speaking of his own marital intentions, he assured his mother that she might yet see him with a wife, "but she will be one from the Old Country, & one which your own partiality will consider worthy of me;— or else I remain as I am" (2 July 1832 to John Hargrave; 1 July 1828 to Jane Hargrave; 16 July 1835 to mother; in Ross 2009, 219, 112, 275). When finally he could tell a friend in Scotland of his engagement to Letitia Mactavish, he celebrated his fortune and the joy and benefits that marriage would bring:

> The Young Lady . . . belongs to a name and a rank in society far superior to the original lowly option[?] of the border Shepherd. I had long

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6 Richard Grant had several "connections in the country," the best known being with Marie Anne, daughter of freeman Pierre Breland. She died in 1835. Sarah and Richard had one son before he was pressed to end the tie and she was married off to another HBC man of lower status (Ens 2008, 377).

known branches of it in this land & have ranked them among my warmest friends and benefactors. . . . her conduct as a daughter & as sister has ever been of the 1st order, her education carefully finished. . . . I have every season many gentlemen & sometimes Ladies to entertain [at York Factory] & a bachelor is not quite the character to fill the position I hold. I also feel myself alone, & . . . these wilds require a companion of taste whose talents for reading, conversation, Music &c will raise a paradise within my own home. (8 September 1838 to William Lockie, in Ross 2009, 341–42)

At the age of forty-one, then, after close to twenty years in the fur trade, Hargrave fulfilled his marital hopes. Mrs. James Hargrave followed Mrs. George Simpson, Mrs. John George McTavish, Mrs. James McMillan, Mrs. Duncan Finlayson (sister of Mrs. Simpson), and a few other British women into the fur trade country to establish new enclaves of civilized domesticity at certain favoured spots.[7] Women such as these, with their finished educations, literacy, music and pianofortes, and general respectability now set the standards by which the daughters of the fur trade would be measured. It was high praise for a certain daughter of Red River merchant Andrew McDermot and his Scots-Cree wife when Hargrave could write to her father "that in good sense, instinct & . . . self possession in company she reminds me more of our British Ladies than any other I have met in this land" (26 July 1839 to McDermot).

The few white wives of the HBC elite of the 1830s and 1840s provided highly visible models for general morality and wifely virtues, as well for their cultivation and demeanour. A scandal involving a trader's daughter attending a seminary that Anglican clergyman David T. Jones established in Red River in 1832 caused Hargrave to reflect on the "morality of the Half-caste Race" in a letter of 20 February 1833 to Governor Simpson. All those who knew its low level "must be persuaded that absolute purity cannot be attained in one generation,— much time and long continued care will yet be required to raise even their youngest children to an equality in morals with their fairer sisterhood." Some months later, Hargrave congratulated the Reverend William Cockran on founding a "new school of Industry" in Red River:

The sex especially will be benefited by it, as the household duties performed to the wishes of the labouring classes elsewhere are almost unknown among the half breed caste of this land. A great proportion of them are naturally careful cleanly industrious and docile,— and want only to be taught the labours of a good housewife, to be placed on a par,

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7 See references to these wives in Brown (1980) and Van Kirk (1980); biographies of the husbands are in the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, available online.

at the farthest in 1 or 2 generations hence, with their fairer sisterhood at home. (4 August 1833)

These sentiments in favour of education and the inculcation of virtue and domestic skills in the offspring (particularly female) of the fur trade were doubtless real. But when Hargrave's own record is juxtaposed to that of Simpson and certain of their associates, sharp contradictions appear between these men's public and generic support for the advancement and elevation of fur trade daughters and the pressures and consequences of their own sexual inclinations. These contradictions tended to place Aboriginal women and traders' female offspring in a double-bind situation. On one hand, they were increasingly judged by the strict standards for British female morality promulgated by the newcomers. On the other, they might be solicited as sexual partners by traders taking advantage of the presumed low morality of their "race"—a term and concept gaining ascendancy at the time. A woman attracted by the attentions of a rising young officer such as Simpson or Hargrave (sanctioned by common understandings about "the custom of the country") might accept his advances—thereby confirming his low opinion of "half-caste" or "Indian" morals and later finding herself cast off as a fallen woman, left perhaps with one or more children with no prospects for legitimacy.

Although James Hargrave is not known to have fathered any children in the fur trade country before his marriage to Letitia Mactavish, his declared celibacy was not matched with sexual abstinence. While based in Red River in 1826, he wrote to his fellow clerk Richard Grant that the recent terrible flood had caused many settlers to leave and complained that "entre nous among these my female acquaintance was entirely centered, and now since their desertion, a willing wench is scarcely to be found for love or money" (5 December 1826, in Ross 2009, 35). The next year, Hargrave was obliged to write a "private and confidential" letter to ask a friend's help in straightening out a misunderstanding with a daughter of a former Hudson's Bay man (George Taylor) who had hoped that his attentions to her were serious:

> From some silly report or other it appears Miss [Mary] Taylor has got it into that pretty head of hers that I purposed last spring to take her into keeping, & that she still has a notion she will be sent for hither this fall. My information adds that influenced by this expectation she has refused an opportunity of a favorable offer. Will you oblige me by undeceiving her in the smoothest manner you may devise. With a view of returning again to my native land without burden or encumbrance I purpose if possible to keep clear from all matrimonial fetters in this country. Had I an eye towards picking up a play-mate, between ourselves, I have scarcely seen a young woman of her Caste I should have preferred before her; but

looking at the consequences I have had resolution to forbear, and with your kind assistance this mistake will be quietly set to rights. (12 July 1827 to John MacLeod, in Ross 2009, 36)

Mary Taylor was subsequently taken up by Chief Factor John Stuart in what became a fraught relationship expressive of the ambiguities and tensions around such unions in this era (Brown 1980, 134–36; Barman 2016, 126–48).

It may be that Hargrave thereafter confined his sexual ventures to less visible local Cree women whose attentions were loaned without expectation of permanent attachment. So suggests a letter marked "Secret and confidential" written on 20 April 1837 at Norway House to John Rendall at York Factory:

> Being inclined to do a little left hand charity just now I wish you would be my almoner. . . . I have been obliged now and then (any port in a storm) by the wife of the poor indian who died at the Factory 2 years ago. . . . This of course must be to you—*no great news*. . . . I wish you would take out on my account a striped blanket of 2 ½ points and give it to her from me, with strict injunctions to keep her mouth shut about the person who has been *so charitable*. . . . Keep all this to yourself my good fellow—burn this letter.

While Hargrave in his later years was better than George Simpson at avoiding visibility in such ventures, some younger relatives of Simpson whom he counted among his friends left open proof of their liaisons—children sometimes described in the records as "natural" or "reputed." After Thomas Simpson's death in 1841, Cree clergyman Henry Budd had his two natural sons under his care at The Pas mission in northern Manitoba (Charles Napier Bell Collection, file 3, Budd to Donald Ross, 8 June 1843). Alexander Simpson (whose will listed no Native legatees) left two children at Moose Factory, born in 1837 and 1839 to different mothers (Hudson's Bay Company Archives, officers' and servants' wills; Moose Factory, Register of baptisms, marriages, burials).[8]

Another trader, Hector McKenzie, who was to become a Simpson relative through marriage, drew Hargrave's attention by his rash behaviour in Red River. Although Hargrave had, in 1838, praised Hector's self-control amid the "brown faces" of that settlement (23 July 1838 to John McKenzie), he found that by 1842, his "young friend" had gotten himself into conspicuous difficulties that made it wise for him to be transferred from the place. As Hargrave put it to John Rowland, "He had been I hear amusing himself in a way that you and

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8 Alexander had been appointed chief accountant at the HBC head office at Lachine, but late in 1834, Chief Factor James Keith told George Simpson that Alexander's intoxication and general behaviour had caused him to send the young cousin to the Moose Factory district to avoid "more unpleasant notoriety" so near to Montréal (Brown 1980, 122).

I used to think a very meritorious one—but those days have changed and our lives and manners must change with them" (24 August 1842). The "conspicuous difficulties" are on record in the Anglican register of Red River, wherein is noted the baptism of Mary, daughter of Hector McKenzie and Mary Bird, on 4 August 1842 (no. 1334), the mother being no doubt a daughter of HBC Chief Factor James Bird. The situation led Hargrave to send Hector a reproving letter on 10 December 1842, noting that he had heard hints of scandal but did not wish to "cast a stone at the frailty of a friend." Besides, he added, "I have no doubt . . . that none can condemn you more severely that you yourself have already done." Hargrave then offered his "soundest advice"—to find a proper wife "so soon as you can do so prudently. . . . No Halfbreeds mind, but a genuine nymph of our own native mountains must be the choice . . . so soon as a slip of parchment [promotion] rewards . . . your solid and steady labors in this country." Duly directed, McKenzie, in 1851, married a cousin of Governor Simpson's wife (Macleod 1947, 99n).

The Hargrave letters indicate, along with other evidence, that changes with broad consequences were occurring in the fur trade social world between 1821 and 1850. The most visible agents of change were specific individuals and groups—Simpson and his friends, on one hand, and the clergy, on the other—who in their own ways, by effort and example, sought to revise fur trade morality and marriage practices. Their various efforts for change met mixed success; many officers continued to maintain their fur trade marital ties and loyalties. Nevertheless, in this small world, even those men whose patterns of action remained unchanged could not ignore the new pressures, influences, and alternative styles of personal conduct now present, particularly when those influences came from their own governor and certain of their senior colleagues. Officers who maintained old loyalties, consecrated their country unions, or found new brides among the mixed-descent women of the fur trade did so with a new awareness that now they were choosing or being shunted among alternatives rather than following old ways of finding love and companionship in the Indian country. Increasingly, they realized that their choices—past, present, and future—could have important effects upon their relationships with influential male colleagues and could affect their career prospects.

The forces for change in these matters were, of course, not solely the few individual agents identified above. The influences of Simpson, Hargrave, and others were reinforced and strengthened by several other factors. On the company level, there was an evident commonality of values and background among numerous Scots-Canadian former Nor'Westers and the new governor and his relatives. Nor'Westers, with their overlapping family and business connections to their home communities and to a company that had been built on personal

partnerships and alliances (Brown 1980, chap. 4), were sympathetic to allowing instrumental socioeconomic considerations to carry over into their personal relations, including marriage, and were responsive to Simpson as a leader. His sexual liaisons in the fur trade followed by his open rejection of them, his highly respectable marriage, and his bringing of a British bride into a country formerly beyond the reach of civilized domesticity encouraged others to choose and persist in such courses of action with similar boldness. His example served to legitimize behaviour that, while not unknown before, had previously been constrained by the fact that a good many traders had made lasting commitments to their country wives and families before the advent of clergy and the coming of strict views about marriage, divorce, and legitimacy.

Before the establishment of Red River and the merger of the companies in 1821, the fur trade country had been relatively insulated from the "civilized world" of Britain and Canada. By the 1820s, however, Rupert's Land, no longer a zone of conflict between two companies with differing origins and structures, was laid open to strong new cultural influences emanating both from Britain itself and from eastern Canada. The merger of 1821 itself facilitated this process, as the fur trade became one unified economic, social, and communications sphere. New efficiencies of travel helped to multiply the numbers of contacts between the Indian country and the outside world; now traders could share channels of communication through both Hudson Bay and the Great Lakes. Choices of travel routes and of locations to spend furloughs and retirements were broadened. Private correspondence to and from the country became easier and more frequent, as did the transport of books and newspapers.

At the same time, the British and Canadian social worlds that now impinged more directly on fur trade life were themselves undergoing change, bringing increased opportunities for social and geographic mobility and for the diversification of possible jobs and careers. Aspirants for the new careers in business and industry were, in turn, likely to be better educated, reflecting rising literacy rates in Britain. Most importantly, those young men who found their way into the fur trade now represented a nineteenth-century Britain in which social patterns, values, and ideas later to be known as distinctively Victorian were already becoming visible. With improved communications, these new recruits were far less isolated from British society than their predecessors, facilitating the infusion of late pre-Victorian and Victorian ideas and patterns of conduct into the fur trade social field.

Among the values of nineteenth-century British society that increasingly penetrated the fur trade social field from the 1820s on, one of the most significant was the importance attached to men's upward social and economic mobility (Houghton 1957, 4–7). This emphasis on personal advancement

encouraged a corollary adherence to certain broader values. Respectability and progress towards a civilized life became highly regarded, both as personal goals and as broader aims for society in general. Governor Simpson, James Hargrave, and several other traders were persistent supporters of this complex of values. With the help of friends and relatives as patrons, they made deliberate upward progress, surpassing less well-advised and less well-organized rivals. As they rose, they placed increasing value on the accoutrements and amenities of civilization for themselves and for others, to improve their lives and enhance their social surroundings.

This emphasis led them to support, among other things, organized religion and its missions and schools, although sometimes they were privately skeptical of the prospects of the latter for success. Hargrave, on 12 November 1830, wrote to his father that he much regretted the "absence of a Church Establishment" at York Factory. However, he added, even where clergymen were present, their efforts were hampered by the limited understanding, prejudices, and superstition of the Indians:

> An Indian grown to maturity can never be brot to comprehend the doctrines of the Gospel,— his mind is too narrow—his understanding too limited & prejudiced by his own superstitions. . . . The attempts at conversion must commence from Childhood, Civilization in all the departments of a settled life must lend its aid, and even under this slow & gradual advance, several generations must pass away before the native Savage can be transformed into the enlightened and pious Christian. (in Ross 2009, 190)

Hargrave's views reflected his own narrow perspective. George Simpson, in 1832, noted, amid his praise, that Hargrave had not had "any experience in the Indian Trade" and "can speak none of the Native Languages" (22). This was a pattern. Despite spending twenty-four years at York Factory in Cree country from the 1820s to 1858, Hargrave was entirely focused on business and accounting; he never learned the language and never got to know Aboriginal people as friends or mentors.

As rising young men of business, whether in Britain or in the fur trade, delayed their marriages and focused on advancement, they experienced personal consequences of their decisions. Hargrave eventually discovered the problems and costs he incurred in waiting so long to found a family; as he told a friend in 1853, "Like most of the *overwise*, I remained single, through the prime of my days, in order to secure the means of providing for a family before I had one:— my children are therefore still young . . . while their number is as yet unlimited; and the education of the whole . . . will require for some years the lions share of my independent income" (3 February 1853 to Edward

Ermatinger, Ermatinger correspondence). But he had seen good reasons for so delaying. By 1835, the case of his friend George Barnston was illustrating the pitfalls of early marriage: "His family is sprouting up poor fellow like many others before his fortunes are secured" (10 December 1835 to Richard Grant).

As men delayed their marriages until they had established a "competency," whether in Britain or in the fur trade, there were broader consequences beyond the personal ones that Hargrave noted for himself in 1853. The presumed celibacy of upwardly mobile males was not associated with sexual continence. In Europe, the seekings of these men for non-marital sexual partners probably contributed to the rising nineteenth-century rates of prostitution and illegitimacy observed by various scholars—trends that appear to have been widespread. Edward Shorter (1971) traced conspicuous jumps in illegitimacy rates in various parts of continental Europe from the eighteenth to late nineteenth centuries, and Houghton (1957, 365–67) noted high levels of illegitimacy and prostitution, accompanied with much anxiety about these problems, in mid-nineteenth-century Britain.

While these trends were cause for concern in Britain, the arrival in the fur trade country of rising young gentlemen who sought sexual outlets until they could make late and prudent marriages had particular potential for harm. Customary fur trade relationships were challenged as many women were placed in new, uncertain, and ambiguous social positions and as these women faced unfavourable comparisons with their "fairer sisterhood." A rise in births that came to be seen as illegitimate was a new and spreading phenomenon in this period, and Hargrave and others expressed shock at its apparent correlate, a rise in infanticide—without reflecting, however, on possible causes. In April of 1837, Hargrave recorded that in Red River, "the Courts of Justice have of late had full employment in cases of infanticide—a crime which of late has made its appearance to an alarming extent" (20 April 1837 to John Charles). On 20 June 1837, he elaborated to Thomas Simpson that "the crime of infanticide seems to have taken possession of the poor frail ones of the place, 16 different cases we are informed having been discovered in course of the season. The unnatural mothers have I believe in few cases been found out. This is a dreadful state of things." In fact, the records of Red River's Quarterly Court of Assiniboia show no sign of dealing officially with any such cases in Hargrave's time, but in February 1852, a case of infanticide did reach the court. Widow Jane Heckenberger, a daughter of former HBC chief factor William Hemmings Cook, was convicted of contriving and concealing the death of her daughter's natural child. The prisoner "appeared sorry" but "said she was not well used, and that people did not think well of them" (Brown 1980, 150). Under the "Laws of England," her sentence was death; however, the jury recommended

mercy and she was sentenced to two years in prison.[9] Red River people had some sympathy for the case.

The values expressed by Hargrave and his colleagues regarding the subordinate position of women echoed those of their home society. In the fur trade context, the introduction of these values and the conduct accompanying them diminished the standing of Native women whose contributions had often been essential to traders' livelihood and even survival. Some women in fur trade outposts carried on their economic and domestic work in the old style, as did Jane Ballenden, the wife of Chief Factor John Lee Lewes, in the 1840s at Fort Simpson in the Mackenzie River district. Writing on 29 April 1844, visiting scientist John Henry Lefroy described Jane as "much more of the squaw than the civilized woman, [she] delights in nothing so much as roaming about with her children making the most cunning snares for Partridges, rabbits, and so on. . . . She is moreover very good natured and has given me two pairs of worked moccasins . . . she also gives me lessons in Cree" (Brown 1980, 140–41).

But at the other extreme, some Aboriginal women after 1821 lost their former roles and social positions as new social standards and codes intruded themselves in larger centres. In 1843, Letitia Hargrave sympathetically recorded the plight in Red River of the former mate of an NWC clerk, Kenneth McKenzie, who had gone to St. Louis in the 1820s to rise high in the American Fur Company. The two McKenzie daughters had been taken from their mother and placed in John Macallum's Red River Academy, which imposed strict moral standards:

> If the mothers are not legally married they are not allowed to see their children. This may be all very right but it is fearfully cruel for the poor unfortunate mothers did not know that there was any distinction and it is only within the last few years that anyone was so married. . . . [The father of the McKenzie sisters] left the service and their mother . . . some years ago. The two girls were sent to school and of course prohibited from having any intercourse with their mother who is in a miserable state of destitution. The poor creature sits in some concealment at MacCallums with deers head or some such Indian delicacy ready cooked for her daughters and they slip out and see her, and as she is almost naked they steal some of their own clothes and . . . give them to her. . . . At 13 years old taking them from her and placing them where they heard her

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9 For details of the case, see Dale Gibson (2015, 2:191–92). Gibson (2015, 1:358) found that from 1852 to 1869, the court dealt with four infanticide cases. In 1840, Mrs. Gladman, a trader's native-born wife, told Letitia Hargrave that "the ladies in this country have a fashion of smothering their babies" (Macleod 1947, 83).

called anything but genteel cannot be a very good plan. (Macleod 1947, 177–78)

Between Mrs. Lewes and this extreme were numerous women who largely lost their familiar roles gathering and preparing country foods, processing furs, making leather clothing and the like, yet escaped the debasement described by Letitia Hargrave. Some acquired European domestic skills and a modest education, found loyal fur trade husbands, and could begin to claim the respectability so esteemed by Hargrave and others, even if they were not seen as equals of "our British Ladies." Eventually, some traders began to consider Red River Settlement itself, earlier looked down upon by Hargrave and others, as a place where company officers might find suitable and respectable marriage mates (Brown 1980, 215). Company leaders now viewed women drawn directly from Aboriginal groups as unacceptable wives. But numbers of women schooled in Red River had now been exposed to sufficient "civilizing" influences to make them into suitable wives for mid-nineteenth-century officers while retaining their adaptability to the climate and country. In the 1840s, Simpson himself, after seeing the numerous problems of European wives (including his own) who were thrust into fur trade life, began to admit the suitability and even superiority of the locally born women as marital choices for fur traders.[10] In the mid-1850s, when Hector McKenzie—who, as noted above, had been recently wed to a Simpson connection—was mentioned as a prospective officer for the Mackenzie River district, Chief Trader James Anderson of that place quickly dismissed the idea: "As he is married to an European Lady, it would be a sentence of death to send her here" (Brown 1980, 215).

Whether white or of mixed descent, however, traders' wives, wherever they and their husbands were sent, were increasingly consigned to the subordinate, protected positions of their counterparts in Britain, subject to rigorous moral standards, and were expected to be "frail" (an oft-used word) and properly domestic and loyal. Expressive elements of love and affection entered into these relationships to varying degrees, but the respectability and social utility of a proper wife might sometimes be quite frankly articulated, particularly by men with links to the circle of Simpson and his friends and with NWC backgrounds. Donald McKenzie, governor of Red River, writing to Wilson Price Hunt in St. Louis about his new wife, the Swiss-born Adelgonde Droz, graphically expressed his notions about the characteristics of an ideal woman:

> People here [Red River] are very rigid in such particulars [about chastity] and it became me to hold a good example. I therefore possess

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10 See Sylvia Van Kirk (1980, 1985) on the difficult life led by Frances Simpson as the wife of the HBC governor.

a piece of very valuable live furniture upon my premises. The lady is a person out for this country by reason of a series of reverses . . . the daughter of a Swiss gentleman on the commissary department. . . . She is well informed and possesses strong intellects, but you are not to think she *is* a muse for wit. Much thought of as to looks but is anything except a paragon for beauty, of mild and easy simplicity of manners . . . expert with her hands in all that females are accustomed to perform on the continental parts of Europe from the bonnet to the slippers. She is strict and exemplary in her conduct, the acknowledged model of the sex in this quarter, industrious, studious, devout, never missing a sacrament by any chance . . . sings psalms, gets whole strings of hymns by heart and prays and meditates by herself in lonely places by moonlight. She is going on twenty years of age. She has gained upon the estimation of everyone and for my own part I esteem her also in consideration of her habit taci-turnity for you may rely upon it that nothing can give greater comfort to a husband than the satisfaction of having a wife who is nearly mute. (McKenzie to Hunt, 25 June 1827, Wilson Price Hunt papers)

Company wives, whatever their origins, were to be judged by conservative European standards of the time that had reached Red River and beyond with increased rapidity and force and were likely to be subject to close scrutiny. Aboriginal women and their cousins of mixed descent were most at risk, however. Brought up to rely on older understandings, they learned that "the custom of the country," in all its informality and ambiguity, provided little protection from prejudice and mistreatment, and even exploitation and abuse, under the new regime.

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Partial Truths

A Closer Look at Fur Trade Marriage

In 1980, Sylvia Van Kirk and I each published a book on family relations in the fur trade. Van Kirk's *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670–1870* focused particularly on the roles of women, and mine, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*, on the changing situations of the traders' marital relations and their Native offspring.[1] They seemed appreciated at the time and were part of a broader turn towards the social history of Rupert's Land and Red River, along with the dissertations of John Elgin Foster and Frits Pannekoek in 1973.[2] But we could not have predicted the extent to which those topics have come of age. Since that time, huge numbers of people have discovered their ancestral roots in the fur trade. New information, oral histories, and documents uncovering these old families and the links among them appear constantly and spread quickly on the Internet. Our books are still in print, but now they simply provide beginnings—clues, contexts, and connections for people who are retrieving and telling their family stories from all kinds of sources, including written, oral, and pictorial.

This essay, written in 2001 in honour of John Elgin Foster's work in fur trade and Métis history, gave me a chance to take a new look at fur trade marriages through the story of a relatively obscure North West Company (NWC) clerk, George Nelson, whose writings Sylvia Van Kirk discovered in Toronto in the

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1 Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties"* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980). We completed our dissertations in 1975 and 1976, respectively.

2 Michael Payne cited our four dissertations together in his "Fur Trade Social History and the Public Historian: Some Other Recent Trends," in *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991*, edited by Jennifer S. H. Brown, W. J. Eccles, and Donald Heldman (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 494n1.

1970s. His papers are valuable for the study of many topics, but of special interest are his unusually full records of and reflections on the multiple, contested, and sometimes elusive meanings of his two successive fur trade "connexions" (as he sometimes called them) as he lived through and later reminisced about them.

Nelson's experiences as viewed through his writings generate questions as well as answers. Our understandings of "marriage according to the custom of the country" (*à la façon du pays*), as these relations were commonly described, are partial in two senses of the word: they are both incomplete and biased. The source materials are never as complete as we would wish for the distant, other worlds of the fur trade. And just as partiality, in the sense of interest, conditions our sources, so too it affects our outlooks in both constructive and limiting ways, as we look backwards from our current historiographic concerns with women's and Native history and, more broadly, with the uncovering of culture and social order in hidden places.

History and anthropology face some parallel issues in these areas. In a critique of ethnographic writing, James Clifford wrote,

> Even the best ethnographic texts—serious, true fictions—are systems, or economies, of truth. Power and history work through them, in ways their authors cannot fully control.
>
> Ethnographic truths are thus inherently *partial*—committed and incomplete.[3]

Similarly, Simon Ottenberg, a senior Africanist scholar, has urged scholars to be more reflexive and retrospective about their work. In an essay titled "Thirty Years of Fieldnotes: Changing Relationships to the Text," he ponders the fact that the anthropological field notes that underpinned his publishing and teaching never existed in a vacuum; they are enmeshed in the intangible "headnotes" or recyclings that the notes have undergone in his mind in the years since he recorded them.[4] Scholars, silently or unawares, all accumulate mental headnotes that get entwined with the paper notes and files that fill their offices over time. These selective memories (and forgettings), impressions, constructs, and conclusions take root and grow in different directions as we teach, think, and tell stories about our work and as we age and move through life's experiences. Historians need to admit that such problems are endemic in both documentary sources and their own writings.

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3 James Clifford, "Introduction: Partial Truths," in James Clifford and George E. Marcus, eds., *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 7.

4 In Roger Sanjek, ed., *Fieldnotes: The Making of Anthropology* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990), 139–60.

Among my headnotes on fur trade "marriages" are thoughts not only about the diversity they show when compared across time and space but also about the degree of internal complexity that these relationships exhibit when we examine just a few of them more closely. Anthropologist Marilyn Strathern has borrowed images from the field of fractal graphics with regard to the mapping of irregular coastlines to illuminate problems of complexity and scale in ethnographic writing, and her metaphorical point is useful for this analysis. As she notes for coastlines, "Whether one looks at a large-scale map or investigates every inlet and rock on a beach, the scale changes make no difference to the amount of irregularity. . . . We may think of the amount of irregularity as an amount of detail. . . . Despite an increase in the magnitude of detail, the quantity of information an anthropologist derives from what s/he is observing may remain the same." In essence, she observes, "similar information is reproduced in different scales" and coastal corrugations "present the same involute appearance from near or far."[5]

Fur trader George Nelson's two "marriages according to the custom of the country" serve in this essay as Strathern's rocks on a beach. Closely examined, their details yield quantities of information comparable to those gained from mapping the convoluted marital coastlines of large numbers of fur trade families from more aerial perspectives. They also provide critical depth and insight; sometimes close-up views actually broaden our vision. Nelson's journals and reminiscences are also outstanding sources for Ojibwe/Cree history and culture in the regions of Wisconsin, Lake Winnipeg, and Lac la Ronge (Saskatchewan); they repay close study.[6] From 1802 to 1823, Nelson served almost continuously as a clerk in three successive companies. In the spring of 1802, he left his hometown of Sorel (then called William Henry) in Lower Canada for Grand Portage on Lake Superior, marking his sixteenth birthday on the voyage. A relatively well-educated son of a schoolmaster, he served the XY Company, otherwise known as Sir Alexander Mackenzie and Company, until the 1804 merger of the XY and North West companies brought him into the Nor'Westers' employ. Then in 1821, when the North West and Hudson's Bay companies merged, he lasted a further two years until he was found redundant under the new economizing regime of HBC governor George Simpson.

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5 Marilyn Strathern, *Partial Connections* (Savage, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 1991), xx–xxi, 122n9.

6 See, in particular, Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, *The Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988). Its introduction includes a detailed biography of Nelson and is the main source for information given here.

Nelson's two fur trade relationships were both with Ojibwe women. The first lasted for about nine months and the second for twenty-three years, until his wife's death in Sorel. He wrote in different ways at different times and places about them, and his alternate versions pose a variety of questions. How do we define these "connexions"? In what senses and at what stages were they marriages, and in whose views? Nelson's writings let us look at them in some depth because they offer intimate, almost photographic views of what happened at particular moments. He openly set down his perceptions and his partial or expanded memories of how these ties came about (he too suffered from headnotes). The zones of silence are also interesting.

"Custom" is a term needing some discussion. European and EuroCanadian traders' unions with Native women began, functioned, and ended in many different ways. The phrase "the custom of the country" implies a degree of uniformity and consensus—a shared set of forms and rituals legitimated by widespread recognition and repetition among all parties involved. If such a unitary marriage custom had indeed prevailed across Rupert's Land and beyond, it would simplify research and analysis. Any time that we came across a trader's Native family, we could make assumptions about how it got started and evolved and about what patterns and norms guided it, even in the absence of documents on particular cases. But such assumptions are just that—assumptions. What if there were multiple customs? Or custom in the mind of one partner and opportunism or indeterminacy in the mind of the other? Were traders often coping in various ad hoc ways with immediate personal situations, needs, and demands rather than sharing a practice widely valorized and a ritual based on common moral understandings? If they partook of "Indian custom," to what extent did they know or care what it was or what it entailed from a Native perspective? Or did their awareness of that perspective come later, if at all?

I suspect that, in fact, "the custom of the country" was a relatively late construct born of hindsight, as nineteenth-century traders and twentieth-century scholars brought retrospective symbolic order to a receding social world. It would be interesting to track its conception and (re)formulations in detail from the early nineteenth century forward. Looking back, we can certainly find fur trade unions that became characterized by serious lasting loyalty and mutual affection. These examples evoke HBC chief factor James Douglas's phrase of 1842, "the many tender ties, which find a way to the heart," and Van Kirk's conclusion that "in spite of its many complexities and complications, 'the custom of the country' should be regarded as a bona fide marital union."[7] Yet even

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7 Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties,"* 36, 51.

these unions did not necessarily begin with any visible ritual or contractual agreement; we often have no clue about how they began, though some of them evolved into long-term ties. In any case, these examples do not cover the territory. As Van Kirk and I also found, HBC governor George Simpson, in the 1820s, and a good many others before and after him acquired "tender ties" that they did not view as marriages. Scholars looking at the more negative aspects of the matter have found ample grounds to argue that abuse of women, neglect, prostitution, family breakup, and other social problems were also part of fur trade life.[8]

George Nelson's writings offer insights into both the European and the Native sides of fur trade relationships, helping us understand traders and their Native partners in their terms, in the contexts of their own times and places. When Nelson and other traders first came together with their Native companions, many of them, both male and female, were still teenagers. Crossing profound gulfs of culture, language, and experience, they could not have had a clear sense of what sorts of unions they were getting into. Nor did they know at the outset what would happen to their relationships; indeterminacy was the order of the day. And of course, they are not around to tell us what "really happened." When we tell their stories for them, the dead cannot contradict us if we misrepresent, oversimplify, or misjudge them. We have to read attentively the incomplete and subjective sources that we have, and we can only imagine and try to allow for all that we have lost.

Nelson's stories of his first fur trade connection survive in two accounts written twenty-five years apart. They tell, in somewhat different ways, how he was led into it in the fall of 1803 in what is now northern Wisconsin, and then how the relationship ended. What can we learn from his accounts, putting them together? Was his union an example of what Van Kirk has called "an indigenous marriage rite which evolved to meet the needs of fur-trade society"?[9] For whom was it marriage, sanctioned by whom, and on what models? In the fur trade, as in our own times, definitions of marriage and its meanings were issues that partners rarely discussed openly.

The first version of Nelson's Wisconsin connection comes from his journal of 1803–4, which he rewrote in 1811 while stationed on Lake Winnipeg and then sent to his father in Lower Canada. We do not have his original journal,

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8 See Edith I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770–1879* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1997), 123–27, and, for a stronger view, Ron G. Bourgeault, "The Indian, the Métis and the Fur Trade: Class, Sexism and Racism in the Transition from 'Communism' to Capitalism," *Studies in Political Economy* 12 (1983): 45–80.

9 Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties,"* 28.

or as anthropologists would say, the "field notes," written on the spot. Nelson was impressively frank in all his writings, and he emended the 1811 version with useful annotations. But he clearly also recast and amplified this text (on the basis of an original with headnotes added) to make it intelligible and to make his past actions defensible. After all, his schoolteacher father was to be its prime reader.

The journal starts at Grand Portage on Lake Superior. On 13 July 1803, Nelson, aged seventeen, left that place for the Sauteux River (Wisconsin) with three men and an interpreter under his charge. He was still a novice, with one difficult winter behind him. His superior in 1803–4 was Simon Chaurette, who was to be based up the Montreal River, south of Lake Superior. Nelson described Chaurette as actively looking out for his own well-being. He encouraged Nelson to give his men whatever they asked for, "as it was for his interest that they should take up their wages & even more in Goods liquor, tobacco or any other such articles as we had on board our Canoes"; that is, Chaurette would profit from their being in debt to him (15 July 1803).[10]

A week later, at Fond du Lac (the west end of Lake Superior), Chaurette, Nelson, and the others met an Ojibwe man whom they called Le Commis because, as Nelson explained, "formerly, traders would give him about a 9 Gallon keg of rum & other things & send him trading among or with the other indians; he was always sure to make good returns." (This French word is related to "commission" in English; it is often translated as "clerk," a meaning that does not apply here.) Le Commis had a large family, and Nelson observed,

> Here I beleive I may date the beginning of my troubles for this year. Among the rest of his Children he had a daughter who was about 15 years old (but was not here at the time being with her other relations at a few leagues from here). This old fellow either took a fancy for me, or Chaurette took a fancy for my little wages [i.e., if Nelson took a wife, his expenses would put him in debt to Chaurette]. I beleive both to be the case. But as for myself, it never came the least into my thoughts to take a woman & I beleive that I should never have perceived this meanness—if I had not been told—but a long time after this.[11]

On 23–24 August, while encamped on the way to his wintering ground, Nelson had "frequent visits & conversations with old Commis. But [I] not being able to understand him Chaurette told me that the old *fellow* wanted to give me his daughter." Nelson was upset at this proposal: "I told Chaurette

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10 George Nelson, *My First Years in the Fur Trade: The Journals of 1802–1804*, edited by Laura Peers and Theresa Schenck (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002), 97.

11 Ibid., 99.

that it was impossible; that if my father was to know it he would be in the Greatest rage with me; that besides I was yet only a boy; & that the Knight [Sir Alexander Mackenzie] would never endure the sight of me . . . but all this would not do, he always had ready answers which he was Good enough to tell me the indian made." He finally started avoiding Le Commis and told Chaurette categorically that he refused the offer. Soon, however, he was obliged to backtrack: "At last to pacify them I told [Chaurette] to tell the old man to keep his daughter 'till next year when I would have wherewith to cloth[e] [her] at least for a time. This appear'd to quieten him a little—but I am sorry to say that it was not so intirely."[12]

After Chaurette departed for his wintering place, Nelson was on his own, dealing with Le Commis, whom he badly needed as a guide. His problems continued. As of 3 September,

> There has not passed a single day since Chaurette left me . . . that I have not been teased & troubled on every side—sometimes to take his (Commi's) daughter & other times [he] menaces to leave me if I did not give him rum— He drank much of my rum . . . but was setting off as soon as he seen the men arrive. This troubled me, particularly, as I could not find any others [to] guide me to my Wintering ground—, being afraid that if I prevailed upon him to remain with me he might perhaps leave somewhere on the road & . . . I might starve . . . particularly as my provisions were now exceeding short . . . & [with] the men & every one else after me I at last was prevailed upon to take *her*. I did not much relish the thought; & was sure that the Knight would be enraged at me (as it did not fail to happen). . . . I do not or have I any intentions whatever of screening myself from censure when I write this: . . . I know tho', that if I had known as much of [the] manners & customs & trade of the country as I do at present [1811]—this should never have happened me.[13]

In 1836, Nelson again wrote about these events. Having left the fur trade in 1823, he was living a life of poverty and struggle in his home town of Sorel, Lower Canada. In 1825, he began keeping a desultory record of his activities. On page 21 of this intermittent diary, however, a remarkable change occurred. A chance meeting with an old fur trade friend, Dominique Ducharme, on 12 September 1836, released a flood of memories of his former life, and suddenly the text became a reminiscence of those times. These recollections complement Nelson's rewritten journal record of 1811 in important ways.

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12 Ibid., 103–4.

13 Ibid., 105.

Nelson, in 1836, opened his account of 1803–4 this way: "About the 12th August 1803 I was shipped off for Riviere des Sauteux on the S. side of Lake Superior, & the next Post east of where I had wintered the preceding year. A Canadian by the name of Chaurette, a very harmless and peaceable little man, had taken an outfit upon his own account for the Rivr des Sauteux & Lac Du Flambeau. I was sent as his clerk."[14] Chaurette was not the only personage to change character in this memoir. Le Commis, in this account, was first mentioned not at Fond du Lac but when Nelson and Chaurette were encamped at the Rivière Mauvaise (Bad River, east of Ashland, Wisconsin), and he too became a more benign and appealing figure. Nelson, now aged about fifty and no longer writing for his father, also modified his rendering of himself, admitting that he had been attracted to Le Commis's daughter:

> As none of us had ever been in that quarter, an old indian who had been very frequently employed as guide, clerk &c. and who well deserved the confidence reposed in him, was detained by Chaurette to guide me in to my winter quarters. He had a very nice young daughter that both he & Chaurette wished me much to take as wife! A whelp, not yet 18 to marry! Whatever might have been my own bent, which, to tell the truth, was far from averse to it, yet the respect for my fathers injunction . . . & the dread of the Knights censure were so powerful as to effectually curb and humble my own dear Passions. Fear prevailed for a long time. The old father became restless & impatient: frequently menaced to leave me, & at last did go off. I sent out my interpretor to procure me another guide. In vain—my provisions being very scanty, my men so long retarded, fear of not reaching my destination; and above all the secret satisfaction I felt in being *compelled* (what an agreable word when it accords with our desires) to marry for my safety, made me post off for the old man. He was already several miles on his way. I think I still see the satisfaction, the pleasure the poor old man felt. He gave me his daughter! He thought no doubt that it would be the means of rendering him happy & comfortable in his old days. What a cruel disappointment! It is strange how our passions, our desires, do blind our reason and pervert our understanding![15]

This account diverges from the earlier one in its tone as well as in its character sketches. It outlines more clearly Nelson's relation to Chaurette and admits to his own desire and temptation. It also reflects, doubtless after the fact, Nelson's improved understanding of Ojibwe culture or, more specifically, the motives of Le Commis in pursuing this alliance. Ojibwe marriages commonly started

out as matrilocal: that is, a new son-in-law would at first stay with and assist his wife's family and assume a range of kin-based roles and obligations. Nelson, in retrospect, after a later lengthy experience with Ojibwe familial ties, appreciated what Le Commis must have expected or hoped from him and realized how he had fallen short.

The 1836 text also exhibits interesting omissions. It makes no reference to translation difficulties or to Chaurette's meddling and self-interest, and the main actors are reduced to two: Nelson and a rather more dignified Le Commis. The events of the moment are condensed and polished with a light sheen of romance and nostalgia—a general stylistic feature of these late reminiscences. The earlier (1803/1811) version conveyed a vivid picture of Nelson "teased & troubled on every side"; anyone familiar with the Ojibwe sexual joking behaviour that classically surrounds potential marriage mates can imagine both the humour he was exposed to and the embarrassment and culture shock this young English Canadian must have felt. The voyageurs did not spare him either: "the men & everyone else [were] after me [until] I at last was prevailed upon to take her." But all this pressure from his companions disappeared in the 1836 account. In other respects, however, the versions are similar. Both leave entirely to our imaginations whatever ritual may have marked the occasion, once Nelson consented, and in both, silence surrounds the voice (and name) of the young girl involved. Yet both accounts contain clues about the importance of Le Commis and his family in the following months and confirm that for Nelson, that Ojibwe kinship tie was of critical aid for both subsistence and survival. They also reveal Le Commis's views of the importance of the matter.

We also have two accounts of how Nelson left this relationship, again from the 1803–4 journal rewritten in 1811 and from the reminiscence of 1836. As before, the earlier account is the fuller one. Nelson and his people returned from their wintering grounds to Grand Portage on 29 June 1804. Negative gossip about Nelson had preceded his arrival; that night, he "was sorry, & troubled . . . to hear the men say that they had heard that the Knight said, he was quite displeased with a young Fondulac Clerk for taking a woman." Nelson feared "a severe set down from the Knight upon that account." The next day, he met with Mackenzie:

> I had no need of a Telescope to see what was the matter with him. He only asked me a few Cross Crabbit questions in a Crabbit manner which I answered as well as I could: he did not make the least mention to me about the woman; & I am quite sorry for it, for I am found [fond] enough yet of myself to think that he would not have been quite so displeased with me as he was; & . . . would not have said of me what he

did; at least not so much [that is, if Nelson had had a chance to explain himself].[16]

During the rest of Nelson's time at Grand Portage until 22 July, "the Knight," who had been as kind as a father the previous summer, scarcely spoke to him. Nelson's account ended on a gloomy note, describing how he at last clumsily detached himself from the company of Le Commis's daughter:

> It is a very true Proverb in my humble opinion, "that he who hears only one side of the story hears nothing"—but the worst of it was there was more than half a proof against me; that is she being Yet with me, altho I often tried to get her to take a dislike to me— I often sent her away & . . . I would not put up my own tent but slept in Chaurette's & under this pretext I sent her to her father's lodge—but even when I had my tent pitched in the fort with the other Clerks she yet came twice to me; but at last I got rid of her, for an interpretor took her.[17]

The 1836 telling of Nelson's return to Grand Portage offers some different perspectives.

"We were no sooner arrived than I was congratulated upon my *fine choice* of a wife!—a brat of just 19 [18] indeed, the age I had attained or completed a few days before our arrival." As in the first version, Nelson anticipated reproof from "the Knight." This account added a new element, however: Mackenzie's reproof was intensified by false reports of Nelson's behaviour passed on by another trader with whom he had previously had trouble. This man, intent "to *curry* favour, & to show a devotion [to his superiors] always pretended and never sincere," spread stories about Nelson's "unfortunate sickness of the preceding year [a result of an injury], when I passed blood in my urin . . . in corroboration of my corrupt morals! Wretch—and that *wretch* has injured me more than once since."[18]

As for Alexander Mackenzie, Nelson wrote in 1836, "he should have called me & examined me, he would have discovered the truth: but his intercourse with men had afforded him [so] many opportunities of seeing wickedness. . . . I suppose he considered it useless." After a time, Mackenzie did send for Nelson. "He reprimanded me in a true fatherly manner," Nelson recalled, "and told me to prepare to go in to the North Lake Winnipick. I thanked him as was my duty. . . . The word *north* passed through my soul like a sword . . . *Lake Winnipick* too, where all our people suffered so much every year, where so

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16 Nelson, *My First Years*, 170–71.

17 Ibid., 171.

18 Nelson, Sorel journal and reminiscence, 55.

many had died of hunger in all its most frightful shapes—was not calculated to reassure me."[19] The next paragraph sees Nelson on his way to the Lake Winnipeg region, where he would spend the next decade of his life. The text of 1836 is silent about Nelson's severing of his tie with Le Commis's daughter; she disappears without remark. But the implication is clear that Nelson's posting to Lake Winnipeg was the penalty for his getting entangled with her, as well as a consequence of false and malicious reports that he was not allowed to refute.

Nelson's versions of this relationship raise two points for contemplation. First, they suggest how much we lose whenever an event is described in only one document from one time and place. History is like a patchwork quilt; we construct it from partial truths, bits of fabric that reveal only snippets of patterns, people, and events. Or, to invoke another metaphor, we must apply the land surveyor's technique of triangulation, taking sightings on our subjects from several angles and perspectives in time and space. Nelson lets us view his life from different angles in his writings, and it is worth exploring them all, for we learn something from each.

Second, they pose questions about interpreting Nelson's experience in 1803–4. Did it involve both "marriage" and "custom"? And if so, in whose terms? To answer these questions, we need to look at his relationship not only from the angles he provides but from the vantage points of both his fellow fur traders and the Ojibwe people involved, Le Commis and his family.

The xy Company traders of 1803–4, including Nelson, left no evidence that they viewed Nelson's connection as a true marriage. Alexander Mackenzie did not want Nelson to get involved with a woman at all and had evidently warned him not to; his attitude must have been a key factor leading Nelson to end the relationship. Mackenzie's stand on this matter was probably a harbinger of a policy put in place just two years later: in 1806, the nwc, by then recombined with the xy Company, published its ruling that no trader should take a woman from among the Indians (not that the new rule was to be closely obeyed by Nelson or his superiors).[20] Nelson did not view the relationship as meeting either his parents' or his notions of a proper marriage. The views of Simon Chaurette, Nelson's superior, in 1803–4, are not on record. Chaurette had an Ojibwe family, but his overall approach seems to have been highly opportunistic, emphasizing such things as selling many goods to his men to secure their wages as debt. In the end, Nelson had no choice but to be opportunistic himself. He badly needed Le Commis's help in the fall and winter of 1803 and

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19 Ibid.

20 Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 96.

felt that he had no other option (1811 version), while also allowing (by 1836) that the imposed opportunity held some personal attraction.

On the Ojibwe side, Le Commis was surely not innocent of opportunism for himself and for his "large family." But Nelson's 1836 account suggests there was more to it than that. From an Ojibwe perspective, trading was not hived off as a domain separate from alliance, friendship, and kinship ties.[21] Nelson proposed to winter in Le Commis's lands, among his people. Although he would not have understood Le Commis's expectations until much later, and no one explained them to him, he thereby took on an obligation to offer gifts and hospitality such as rum. And the Ojibwe would have had in mind the aim of making him into a kinsman who would take on the responsibilities and reciprocities of a relative rather than remaining a stranger. Nelson—as a young, unattached, male outsider—fitted easily into the Ojibwe cross-cousin category of eligible mate.[22] And, as Nelson himself noted in 1836, Le Commis must have had some hope that this callow and serious son-in-law would be helpful with trade goods and support for some time into the future. In sum, this relationship was a marriage in Ojibwe terms.

As for its ending in 1804, the fact that at Grand Portage, Nelson both wished to leave the girl and was under pressure to do so without further obligation suggests again that neither he nor the other traders considered the connection to be a marriage in their terms, even though they sometimes casually used such terms as "wife" and "father-in-law." There is no sign that Nelson followed any formal custom of "turning off" such as Van Kirk has identified in a number of instances.[23] He recorded no role in providing for her or finding her another mate.

On the other side of the cultural divide, however, Nelson's ending of the tie was compatible with the Ojibwe definition of marriage as a relationship that could break up. Within their frame of reference, Le Commis and his daughter could still have viewed the connection as a marriage, just as the fur traders carried on with their view that real marriage was something else. Of course, the traders and the Ojibwe did not sit down together to study the issue but carried on with their own distinct values and outlooks.

To what extent, then, can we speak of a custom or a "fur trade society" encompassing these parties? A group of Euro-Canadian men based at Grand

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21 For valuable context, see Bruce White, "Give us a Little Milk: The Social and Cultural Meanings of Gift-Giving in the Lake Superior Fur Trade," *Minnesota History* 48 (1982): 2.

22 On the significance of the cross-cousin category and the scope of Ojibwe familial relations generally, see Laura Peers and Jennifer S. H. Brown, "'There Is No End to Relationship Among the Indians': Ojibwa Families and Kinship in Historical Perspective," *The History of the Family* 4, no. 4 (2000): 529–55; see also chapter 8, this volume.

23 Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties,"* 50–51.

Portage shared and fostered certain interests and values, enforcing a degree of conformity on its members. But the Ojibwe men who traded with them and the women who (in Ojibwe terms) married them had no occasion to be familiar with or to share those values. No missionary had yet introduced them to marriage as a Christian rite and a lifelong relationship, and the traders' own actions did not present such a model. Native people of the time also kept largely to their own ways; they were not becoming Europeanized any more than the traders were "going Indian." Accordingly, I have found it helpful to think of the fur trade not as a society but as a semi-autonomous "partial or incomplete social sphere," intersecting with both the traders' home societies that supported it and with the Native communities (still largely autonomous) that made it possible.[24]

Nelson's second Ojibwe marriage took place in 1808, two years after the nwc partners, meeting at Fort William on Lake Superior, had set their hands to a resolution against the further taking of women from among the Indians. The expenses of the traders' domesticity were a growing concern. But so too was the problem of finding suitable mates for their own numerous daughters. The resolution therefore stipulated, "It is however understood that taken the Daughter of a white Man after the fashion of the Country, should be considered no violation of this resolve."[25] This ruling represented recognition of these relationships as being a common pattern, but it offered no guidelines for the forming or maintenance of these ties and no definition of their status. On the ground, Nelson and his fellow traders continued to cope with or make the best of their immediate situations, options, and constraints.

For Nelson's 1808 "marriage," as for his relationship in 1803–4, we have both a journal (original, this time) and later reminiscences. The contrasts between these two texts are striking. In early September 1808, Nelson was at Bas de la Rivière (Fort Alexander) near the mouth of the Winnipeg River, where he and many other Nor'Westers were readying themselves for travel to their winter outposts. The nwc partner or "bourgeois" of the district, Duncan Cameron, arrived on 1 September to winter there. Nelson's journal was mainly business; he noted, however, that on 3 September, everyone stopped work early to "prepare for a dance (which is now the third) on honour to Mr. Seraphin's wedding—Mr. McDonald played the violin for us and Mr. Seraphin played the flute alternately." His entry for 9 September affords the only hint that another dance had been held that week for Nelson himself and a new partner. That day, several groups departed for their winter quarters. They included a party of six

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24 Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, xvi–xvii.

25 Ibid., 97.

bound for Nelson's post on River Dauphine (the Little Dauphin River): four voyageurs and "myself & woman," unnamed and unexplained.[26]

The almost total silence of Nelson's journal on this topic contrasts remarkably with the vivid recollections about it that he set down perhaps thirty years later:

[September 1808] I must here mention an event, perhaps the most momentous in the life of man—"taking a wife." There was a young woman, a cousin of Mr [Duncan] Cameron's wife, living with the family. She was an orphan, about 20 years of age, & in whom C. took great interest, he wanted to provide for her, & pitched upon me! He had thrown out many hints when we met in the Spring. I carefully avoided her; & all my conduct & conversations sufficiently showed how very averse I was to connexions of that sort. I considered them in the light of "open, or public Adultery," & the dread I had of that was vastly increased by "what will my father (& mother) say to this, a man so stern & unyielding in his morality?— my mother! how she will fret!" The very idea of living with a woman, in adultery was intolerable—my spirits were prostrated, & my heart so pinched it hardly throbbed. "How can I after this pray to God! Surely his malediction will follow me wherever I may go or whatever I may undertake!" My prospects were blasted; my hopes of prosperity at an end. I saw but penury, want & wretchedness staring me for the remainder of my days! I told Mr C. my scruples but he derided them. I was alone, friendless, & no one to advise with. I had not that energy of character that make some rise above every diffi-culty; & absolutely lacked that clear perception & sound judgement the result of good common sense. In short, I had not been taught to *think*; I had indeed been taught to read & cypher but had not been instructed how to apply these essentials to the purposes of morality & human actions—these were to be developed of themselves according to their circumstances. I was then (& ever have been) the child, the mere tool of natural impulse & circumstance, as water poured on the ground seeks or runs into hollows & holes where it is lost, or of no benefit but to its immediate localities & the advantages of which it often destroys or injures. I was not, however, better than my neighbors; the Sex had its charms for me as it had for others. But there always remained a sting, that time only wore away.

I gave way, & went as the ox to the Slaughter. A ball was given on the occasion by Mr C.— I had to go and see them two or three times; but my heart overflowing I had to retire to give vent to my feelings. It was a time (if not a subject) of gayety to the others, who, to serve craving

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26 George Nelson, journal, River Dauphine, 1808, Nelson Papers, Metropolitan Toronto Public Library.

lusts, thought nothing, & cared nothing for the consequences, of the poor creatures who they took from [as?] young indians with whom they would pass their lives with their children & families, to cast them off afterwards with those to whom they had given birth to linger in want & wretchedness. But I must leave this subject, for quires of paper, nay reams, would be required to write all the painful, sad & sorrowful results. There is surely a Providence ruling, or at least watchful of the ways of man; &, notwithstanding his perverseness averts the woes that he so blindly; & often wantonly; works for his own misery.— *Yes! there is!* for I have too often seen it.[27]

From the Christ Church (Anglican) registers of Sorel, we know that the woman who thus came into Nelson's life was an Ojibwe of the Loon clan, from north of Lake Superior. Nelson brought her and their children to Sorel in the summer of 1816, when he took leave of fur trading for two years. She was baptized Mary Ann on 29 July 1818, and she and Nelson were married by Anglican rite in 1825. She died in Sorel in November 1831, having borne eight children, of whom one daughter survived to adulthood. The union endured for twenty-three years, including a period from 1818 to 1823 in which Mary Ann and their children must have lived with Nelson's family in Sorel while he returned west to resume his fur trade employment.[28]

These records—along with the journal, the reminiscences, and other clues—allow us to look at this relationship as a process, the meanings and patterns of which evolved over time. Its beginning, to judge by the silence of the journal and the outburst in the reminiscences, was traumatic. Nelson liked and respected his bourgeois, Duncan Cameron, and showed some sympathy for the latter's concern to support his Ojibwe wife's young cousin. Yet the personal crisis he had faced over his first Ojibwe connection and its ending was still vivid to him, both in 1808 and when he recalled it about three decades later. During his long service, he saw other fur trade familial problems and abuses that distressed him; by 1808, he probably knew, too, of his employers' official stance against alliances with Indian women. His terminology suggests that he remained deeply ambivalent about these unions. His journal of 1808 spoke of Mr. Seraphin's "wedding" and his reminiscences referred to Mr. Cameron's

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27 Nelson, reminiscences, 206–7, Nelson Papers. Nelson's description, in the opening paragraph of this passage, of the young woman as an orphan as of 1808 does not accord with his 1815 journal description (see below) of receiving news of her parents' deaths. It was common for Ojibwe offspring to be taken in by other relatives even if their parents were alive; this appeared to be the case in 1808. Writing about three decades later, Nelson confused the sequence of events.

28 Brown and Brightman, *"Orders of the Dreamed,"* 13, 20.

"wife." His own companion, though, was "woman," not wife, and "connexions of that sort" were "open, or public Adultery."

Nonetheless, the tie, over the years, became a significant part of Nelson's life despite the "sting, that time only wore away." As he became increasingly familiar with Ojibwe culture and language, he learned that, for better and worse, his marital connection enmeshed him in a wide network of kin extending from Lake Superior to Lake Winnipeg; as he wrote some years later on being accosted by an Ojibwe kinswoman near Fort William, "there is no end to relationship among the Indians."[29] At any moment across the region, encounters with his wife's relatives might occur. Perhaps the most dramatic came while Nelson was stationed at Manitounamingan Lake (near Longlac, Ontario). On 30 April 1815, Nelson recorded, "Two strange indians from Nepigon [Lake Nipigon] peep in, they are brothers to the woman I have—it is a rencounter pleasing to both, but a little reflection ought to render it *sorrowful*; 'for here are my brothers'—'here is my sister; but where are our Parents?'" The brothers brought news of the brutal stabbing murder of their father some time before and of their mother suffering the same fate a year or two later, "leaving several very young children to the care of *their* murderers & their abbettors, who a short time after made food of some of them. This has been a remarkable unfortunate family."[30] Trade relations were fostered by kinship, but with those ties came obligations to offer aid and support.

From 1816 onward, the evolving status of the relationship is traceable mainly in entries appearing in the registers of Christ Church, Sorel; Nelson's own references to it were few and often oblique. On 10 October 1816, the rector baptized Mary and Jane, "daughters of Mr George Nelson a Clerk in the North West Company by an Indian Woman." Six of Nelson's own kin signed as godmothers and godfathers (a hint of their moral support), but the unnamed mother did not sign. She herself was then baptized as Mary Ann on 29 July 1818. On 17 April 1819, three more daughters were baptized in Nelson's absence. This time, Mary Ann was listed as "an Indian Woman of what is called the Loon Tribe," and she signed with an X under the name "Mary Ann Perusa," which appears nowhere else.[31] A speculative guess is that the rector might have heard her say the Ojibwe word *binesi* (bird), a common personal name, without

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29 Peers and Brown, "There Is No End to Relationship," 1.

30 Nelson, journal, Manitounamingan, Nelson Papers, Metropolitan Toronto Public Library.

31 "The Loon Tribe" refers here to the Ojibwe Loon clan, which was one of five clans that trader Duncan Cameron mentioned as present in the Lake Nipigon region by the early 1800s. See A. Irving Hallowell, *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba: Ethnography into History*, ed. with preface and afterword Jennifer S. H. Brown (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), 24. For more on clans, see chap. 8.

benefit of Nelson's interpretive fluency at hand. Finally, on 16 January 1825, a year and a half after Nelson's retirement from the fur trade, he and Mary Ann were "Married by License" in a ceremony witnessed by his father and several of his sisters.[32] He left no evidence about why this act came so long after her 1816 arrival in Sorel.

The records of George Nelson's second marriage recall some conclusions drawn earlier about his first one; they also allow some further analysis and comparison because of the length of the union. First, it seems clear that in Ojibwe terms, this one too was a marriage. Nelson also learned, as Duncan Cameron had before him, that such a relationship brought him many kin who ranged from being helpful trading partners and allies to those making claims for aid and support.

For the Euro-Canadian traders of 1808, however, the status of these ties was more open and indeterminate. Those who defined them as without moral standing ("adulterous" in Nelson's terms) might either exploit them opportunistically or try to avoid them, as Nelson did. Those who became entangled anyway, yet remained attached to Christian backgrounds and church-going families, may have gone through a long series of doubts and decisions before admitting their unions as marriages; Nelson and one of his NWC contemporaries, Daniel Williams Harmon, are two well-documented instances of this in the period from 1800 to the 1820s.[33] Yet even these two men offer only occasional small bursts of introspection and few explanations of their motives and actions. We can only guess, for example, why Mary Ann lived for almost nine years in Sorel without the church recognition of her union that Sorel's Anglican community and Nelson's upright English father might have expected, and why, for that matter, the church marriage did come about in 1825.

In fact, to judge by a later court decision concerning a similar union, Nelson and Mary Ann's marriage could eventually have been found legal in Québec once they settled together in Sorel, even with no church rite. In 1867, eight years after Nelson's death, the Québec Superior Court ruled that the marriage of a former NWC trader, William Connolly, and a Cree woman "according to the usages and customs of the country" was valid in Québec, Connolly having brought her to Montréal as his wife by Indian custom.

The Connolly case parallels George Nelson's story in that Connolly was Nelson's immediate contemporary; he joined the NWC in 1801. (Unlike Nelson,

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32 Christ Church (Anglican), Sorel, Québec, registers of baptisms and marriages, Montréal, Archives of the Synod of the Diocese of Montreal.

33 On Harmon, see Daniel Williams Harmon, *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800–1816*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1957), and summary in Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 103–7.

however, he was commissioned a chief trader when the NWC combined with the HBC in 1821.) Their fur trade marriages are comparable too, up to a point. In 1803, while in charge of the post of Rat River near Nelson House (Manitoba), Connolly took a Cree wife, Suzanne. He left no record of how that union began, but it lasted twenty-nine years. In the summer of 1831, after several years in charge of the district of New Caledonia (BC), Connolly returned to Montréal with Suzanne and their six children. In May of 1832, however, he left Suzanne and married Julia Woolrich, securing a dispensation from the Roman Catholic Church—which the church required of him not because of a prior marriage but because Julia was his second cousin. Connolly then took Julia to his new posting at Tadoussac. Suzanne and her family continued in Montréal until 1841, when she was sent to live out her days in the Grey Nuns convent in Red River.[34]

Connolly died in Montréal in 1848. In 1864, Connolly's and Suzanne's eldest son, John, sued for his share of his father's estate, all of which was willed to Julia. The case went through several courts until John won the suit in 1867. The testimonies arguing both sides of the issue are fascinating. They echo the ambiguities and cross-currents that surrounded Nelson's relationships, as various witnesses found themselves obliged to give evidence to support or dismiss the validity of such marriages. Ultimately, the judges concluded that the marriage met the tests specified in clause 6 of their final ruling: "That a marriage contracted where there are no priests, no magistrates, no civil or religious authority, and no registers, may be proved by oral evidence, and that the admission of the parties, combined with long cohabitation and repute will be the best evidence."[35]

The 1867 majority decision from the Superior Court in Montréal, while it upheld John Connolly's claim, was not, however, a vindication of traders' Indian marriages as binding in all circumstances: indeed, the Québec courts in the 1880s rejected the validity of former Nor'Wester Alexander Fraser's fur trade union.[36] Rather, it was a recognition of Indian custom as *ius gentium* (law of the people): that is, as customary law valid in a region where more formal legal structures were absent. In clause 8, the court explicitly acknowledged Cree marriage customs as having legal status for all who practised them in Cree country: "That an Indian marriage between a Christian and a woman of that [Cree] nation or tribe is valid, notwithstanding the assumed existence [among the Cree] of polygamy and divorce at will, which are no obstacles to

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34 Bruce Peel, "Connolly, William," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988) 7:204–6; see also Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 90–92, 94–96.

35 For the full report of the case, see *Connolly v. Woolrich and Johnson et al.*, Superior Court, 1867, Montréal, 9 July 1867, *Lower Canada Jurist* 11: 197–265.

36 Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 90–93.

the recognition by our Courts of a marriage contracted according to the usages and customs of the country." That is, traders could marry Cree women on the principle of *ius gentium*. But the next clause went one step further to reveal a key reason for the court's support of John Connolly's claim. Clause 9 stated: "That a Christian marrying a native according to their usages, cannot exercise in Lower Canada the right of divorce or repudiation at will, though … he might have done so among the Crees."[37]

The decision would have surprised William Connolly, as it did the Woolrich family in 1867. Connolly, in 1832, had clearly decided that his Cree marriage was not binding, and evidently the Catholic clergy agreed when they granted his dispensation for cousin marriage and consecrated his marriage to Julia Woolrich. But in fact, from the court's concluding perspective, he unknowingly made a grave mistake in bringing Suzanne to Lower Canada and putting her aside while they resided in that jurisdiction, if he had no intent to recognize her as his wife. As the final court opinion pithily concluded, Mr. Connolly could not "carry with him the common law of England to Rat River in his knapsack, and much less could he bring back to Lower Canada the [Cree] law of repudiation in a bark canoe."[38] Separation under country custom in Cree territory would have been legal; a Cree-style divorce in Lower Canada was not.

When Connolly left Suzanne in 1832, however, he unquestionably saw his actions as sanctioned not only by the church but by the similar actions of two of his respected superiors, Governor George Simpson and Chief Factor John George McTavish, in 1829–30. Their setting aside of Native partners to bring white brides to Rupert's Land—and in particular, Simpson's repudiation of Margaret Taylor—brought strong censure from some colleagues. Connolly, however, evidently drew encouragement from their actions in 1832, even though he had earlier stated that it was "a most unnatural proceeding" to "desert the mother of one's children." Simpson and McTavish acted in blatant defiance of the views of those who considered "the custom of the country" as a "bona fide marital union."[39] Yet paradoxically, if the court had tested Simpson and McTavish by the criterion applied to Connolly's marital separation, it would probably not have held their unions as still valid, since their repudiations occurred within the limits of "custom" in Cree country. Unlike Connolly, they had not tried to bring Cree *ius gentium* to Lower Canada "in a bark canoe."

To conclude, it seems useful to reassess "the custom of the country" by looking closely at individual instances of Native-fur trader unions where sources

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37 *Lower Canada Jurist* 11: 197.

38 Ibid., 215.

39 Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties,"* 188, 51.

allow, exploring their dynamics and their different trajectories over time, in both Rupert's Land and beyond. Their definitions and meanings were commonly not fixed, or even articulated or agreed upon by the participants of either gender or by their contemporary observers. In mapping these rocks on the beach (fractal graphics again), our attention turns to the fine points of texture, nuance, negotiation, and process in these relationships and to the ambiguities and indeterminacies facing those who entered into them. The sources never offer more than partial truths, but analysis and understanding advance considerably if we take into account all the texts and clues we have.

Families and Kinship, the Old and the Young

Part 3 brings together some discussions of Cree and Ojibwe perspectives on women's and men's roles and relationships as seen through stories and kinship structures (chapters 7 and 8) and, in chapter 9, through an account of the impact that trader fathers had on the lives of several dozen native-born children who were carried off from "the Indian country" to be baptized as Presbyterians in Montréal. The theme of gender runs throughout; being male or female made a great difference in the paths travelled by the people enmeshed in these webs of relationships. "Older Persons in Cree and Ojibwe Stories" (chapter 7) looks at a number of stories that centre on older women's relations with powerful men. A recurring theme in these stories involves old men who use their gifts to harass, abuse, or even kill others, though they may eventually be defeated by an orphan boy or some other good person with unexpected powers. Older women, in contrast, often make efforts to restrain or circumvent men's actions; in numerous cases, they offer good and sensible advice, which is often ignored but sometimes saves lives. The men, of course, make the headlines, but the women's quiet interventions are just as interesting and significant, and their roles deserve more attention.

Chapter 8, "Kinship Shock for Fur Traders and Missionaries," calls attention to some fundamental differences between Algonquian and European kinship systems—differences grounded in language itself. Specifically, Cree and Ojibwe speakers distinguish between two types of cousin that in English are subsumed in the term "cousin." Parallel cousins are the descendants of same-sex siblings (say, two brothers or two sisters), and the terms for them are the same as those used for brother and sister; accordingly, they are not allowed to marry. Cross cousins, being descendants of siblings of different sexes, belong to different patrilineal lines and are defined as eligible, indeed preferred, marriage mates; they also, at any age, may engage in joking and ribald behaviour that would not be allowed with any other cross-sex relatives. European newcomers, thinking of first and second cousins and the like, had much difficulty grasping these distinctions and customs, and churchmen with rules against cousin marriage imposed their own definitions. Christianity and the growing dominance of the English language have led to the fading of the old terms and distinctions, even among many Algonquian people themselves.

"Fur Trade Children in Montréal" (chapter 9) examines a cluster of offspring whom North West Company trader fathers brought from the Indian country for baptism in the St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church in Montréal—surely a cultural and linguistic shock for many. A look at these eighty-one children, born to traders and Indigenous mothers from the 1790s to the early 1830s, reveals some interesting patterns. Their mothers were typically absent and unnamed in the church register, and two-thirds of the children presented for

baptism were males. In these instances, fathers (or sometimes father surrogates, if fathers had died or left the country) publicly recognized certain of their sons who would bear their names, become educated, and perhaps find success in a fur trade career. The full stories of most of these children's lives remain largely unknown, but this set of church registers catches them far from their homeland at a critical turning point in their lives, formally named and defined as Christians. This essay first appeared in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (1985), edited by Jacqueline Peterson and myself. These children, fathered mainly by Presbyterian Scotsmen, were not, however, Métis as the term was understood in their times; they were not of Roman Catholic or *canadien/*francophone heritage, and their subsequent life paths diverged widely.

Older Persons in Cree and Ojibwe Stories

Gender, Power, and Survival

The legends and histories gathered by Omushkego (Swampy Cree) historian and storyteller Louis Bird and by anthropologists Regina Flannery, A. Irving Hallowell, and others often focus on interactions of older men and women with each other and with junior relatives and on the roles of these older people and the conditions of their lives. The stories have benign and sometimes humorous elements, but they also include strong tensions, sometimes between spouses or generations and often between in-laws. Survival and the overcoming of adversity and threats from various sources are prominent themes. These storytellers implicitly taught and reinforced values. They also often warned about risks and consequences of actions and behaviour—particularly those of powerful older men. They offer valuable perspectives on the roles and situations of older people in these communities in past times and possibly in the present.

This paper was written for an Algonquian Conference session (2005) honouring Regina Flannery Herzfeld (1904–2004), whose Cree research enriched our fields of study for many decades. In turn, Dr. Flannery honoured and respected, through her writings and hard work, the lives and stories of the older people she knew in James Bay in the 1930s. In 1995, she published a modestly titled book, *Ellen Smallboy: Glimpses of a Cree Woman's Life*. That book gave us more than glimpses; it took us deep into the life of a woman whose memories extended from the 1850s to the 1930s. Reading it, we are carried back for a century and a half through stories shared and recorded together by Ellen and Regina. They both walked this world for a long time. Their life-years, added together, totalled almost two centuries; Ellen died in 1941 at the age of about eighty-eight.

Reflecting on long lives well lived, I found myself thinking about the range and complexities of older people's roles in Cree and Ojibwe families and

communities. As researchers, whether we work inside our own cultures or across boundaries, whether we are Aboriginal or not, we are bound to seek out these old people as did Flannery, Hallowell, and others, because they have so much to tell and we have so much to learn. We learn great respect for them and often share with them a sense of urgency: too many lives are cut short too early before all the stories can be passed on, and time is always scarce and fleeting.

In the last generation or so, since the 1970s, such sentiments have found more explicit formulation in certain widely shared rituals of respect in working with elderly Aboriginal people. The use, in English, of the term "elder," often capitalized, and the elaboration of formal protocols for interaction—the giving of gifts, notably tobacco, along with honoraria, ethics reviews, and consent forms—are very much a feature of the last three decades; so too are debates over who is an "Elder"—how to validate that term and, as it were, control entry and set limits to that status. Sometimes, the newer protocols still surprise older "consultants" (that vocabulary too has changed) in northern communities remote from urban Aboriginal ceremonies. In 1992, when I offered tobacco to an old man on the upper Berens River, he accepted it politely with some puzzlement and the comment, "But I don't smoke." I was reminded that in A. Irving Hallowell's Berens River field notes on the 1930s, and in older people's recollections of him in the 1990s, the offering of tobacco was never mentioned; instead, people remembered Hallowell bringing gifts of clothing, canned food, and other practical items.[1] So protocols of respect and gift giving have shifted, and they also vary among communities in the forms that they take, although there is continuity in the underlying values placed upon respect, generosity, and reciprocity.

Many Cree and Ojibwe stories reinforce these values. But in doing so, they often express diverse perspectives on older people's roles, characteristics, and interactions with others; in particular, they offer critiques and cautions about powerful older males. Old people are not all "elders," and some of them (as in any society) may be highly problematic figures. Of course, older Aboriginal people have lived out their lives in many diverse ways not subject to stereotype or generalization. On looking through and listening to the Omushkego (Swampy Cree) stories collected by Louis Bird, however, I have been struck by some images of older men—and of older women, too—that seem deeply

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1 Hallowell's photographs of Fair Wind (Naamiwan), the elderly medicine man whom he met at Pauingassi, Manitoba, in the early 1930s, show him wearing a new-looking checked shirt. When his descendants looked at the picture in the early 1990s, they recalled that the shirt was a present from Hallowell. Hallowell later gave Fair Wind a copy of the photo, and Fair Wind's grandson, Charlie George Owen, had it hanging on his living room wall in 1992–93, when Maureen Matthews and I recorded his memories of both Fair Wind and Hallowell.

rooted. The stories raise some interesting questions about their roles and characters and also about gender relationships in past times.

In this essay, I focus mainly on the elderly personages who appear in the stories published by Bird in his book *Telling Our Stories: Omushkego Legends and Histories from Hudson Bay* (2005a). The stories were not selected for the book because they spoke of old people but for other reasons. When the book came together as a whole, however, the prominence of older men and a few older women, and the roles that they played, were conspicuous features in many of them. The stories discussed here all appear in that book unless otherwise noted; some of them (along with many others told by Louis Bird) may also be found on the website www.ourvoices.ca. This discussion follows the stories in the order in which they occur in the book and notes some patterns and questions that they present. It then turns to some comparable Cree stories from other sources and to a few Berens River Ojibwe stories offering similar themes.

At the end of chapter 1 in *Telling Our Stories*, Louis Bird provided a brief example of what he called a "quotation story"—one with an embedded phrase that, like a biblical quotation, expresses the essence of the whole tale to those who already know it. The quotation "It Is Your Thigh Bone That You Hear" serves as the title. The story tells of a woman waiting for her husband to return from a winter hunting trip while she looks after her old father-in-law in their lodge. The old man complains of how she lets in the cold night air every time she goes out to listen for her husband and to bring in firewood. She tells him of her fears that some cracking noises she hears in the distance are *wih-ti-go-ma-hi-ka-nak*, cannibalistic (*wihtigo*) wolves that are gnawing on bones. He dismisses her and her warning with the rude and implicitly sexual comment ("very nasty," said Louis) "It is your thigh bone that you hear." She concludes from the sounds that indeed the wolves have killed her husband, and she climbs a tree as one of them approaches. The wolf enters the lodge and devours the old man (Bird 2005a, 55–57). This story, like others when Cree and Ojibwe people tell them, does not conclude by preaching an explicit lesson to be learned. But listeners may readily draw the implicit conclusion that the old man's fate was related to his disrespect and his crossing of bounds of proper behaviour with a daughter-in-law, as well as his ignoring of her concern.

The next old man in these stories (chapter 4) is We-mis-shoosh, a personage known through various versions.[2] In Louis Bird's telling, We-mis-shoosh is a

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2 In the mid-1950s, Simeon Scott at Fort Albany told C. Douglas Ellis the story of "Memishoosh" (Ellis 1995, xviii, 68–77); it has many elements in common with Bird's telling. Jeremiah Michel (Rock Cree, northern Manitoba) told Robert Brightman a story about "Wimisosiw" with some interesting variants; in this telling, the powerful young son-in-law was identified as Wisahkicahk (Brightman 1989, 23–26). See Brightman (1989, 73–74) for a

father who has dreamed he can extend his life by taking the lives of others; he renews his power and life force by systematically killing the young sons-in-law his daughters bring home (Bird 2005a, 108). The rest of the community keep their distance and are glad when a young man with extraordinary powers appears to deal with the situation. Presenting himself initially as an orphaned baby boy to the old *mi-tew* (or shaman, as Louis would say in English), he is taken into the family and grows up to marry one of the daughters, setting off a series of contests with his father-in-law, who tries to kill him by various means. Ultimately, the young man triumphs, sending the old shaman out on the water in a magical canoe. The old man ignores instructions for handling the canoe and is drowned in a terrible storm. He ends up as a bug, a *we-mis-shoosh*, or caddis fly larva, on the beach. The distinctive feature of these larvae is the portable case that protects them as they mature; the story ends with the image of a shrunken *we-mis-shoosh* wrapped in his canoe "because of the mistake he has made" (123–24; see also 123n5 for Mark Ruml's discussion of this aquatic insect and its identity).[3]

A second story of a *mi-tew* contest appears in the same chapter. It has a similar theme but also a historical location; it is more history than legend. At the mouth of the Ekwan River on western James Bay, in the old days, the Omushkego people used to have large spring gatherings with games and ceremonies. The story tells of how a much-feared shaman decides to enter a young people's ball game, show his powers, and skew the results. A young orphan (orphans may possess unheralded powers) tackles and overcomes the old man and recovers the ball, but everyone is alarmed for the boy, for "that shaman has been totally insulted" (Bird 2005a, 127). The boy's guardian aunt and uncle are sure he will die. Indeed, that night, the boy is attacked from afar by sharp quills and other bad medicine, but he retaliates by throwing from a distance his aunt's beading needles and awl, which he had asked her for, and the shaman is struck dead in his canoe. The lesson, as Louis Bird says, is that the old man was so proud and thought himself so powerful that he forgot that power could come to an orphan boy, "the most humbled person" (130).

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broader comparative discussion of the distribution of stories of Wimisosiw (or cognates of the name) across the Algonquian subarctic. Brightman cautions that his malignant character should not be read as stereotypic of fathers-in-law, as "most such relationships appear to be characterized by reciprocal respect and often affection" (74).

3 The orthography of Omushkego Cree words here follows Louis Bird's usage; since he also writes Cree using syllabics, he often uses hyphens between syllables when using the roman alphabet. A Cree story with similar themes—in this instance, a conflict between father and son—is the tale of I-yas or Ayas, a young man whose exploits begin when his father abandons him on an island (see Simeon Scott, in Ellis 1995, 45–59).

A fourth powerful story in the book, "Grand Sophia's Near-Death Experience" (chapter 8), tells of a conflict not quite so deadly but nonetheless dangerous. This story is personal to Louis Bird's family: Bird is relating an event that happened three generations earlier and was passed down to him by his mother and grandmother. Bird's great-grandmother, Grand Sophia, and her husband, an Oji-Cree, were both Catholics of the first generation converted by the Oblate missionaries who arrived in the area in the late 1800s (Fulford and Bird 2003). Late one winter, they went inland to look for caribou and lived for a time with an old man and his wife, sons, and daughters. The old man decided to celebrate a successful hunt with a shaking tent ceremony, but since Grand Sophia was singing hymns and praying, the tent would not shake and his invocations would not work. He became very angry and threw her prayer book into the fire, threatening to kill her if she interfered again. He then told his wife he was going to kill Sophia and have her husband (a great hunter whose help he wanted) marry one of their daughters. But the old lady was a kind person, fond of Sophia and her family. She warned them of the danger so they could escape, which they did. The Grand Sophia story draws attention to a quiet but salient theme in some of the stories—the roles and actions of older women. Here, the old wife rescues the young family from her husband's murderous intent. In the We-mis-shoosh story, in contrast, at least in Louis Bird's version, the wife and mother had died, so there was no older woman around to moderate the husband's violence.

Another story, "The Wailing Clouds" (chapter 6), powerfully portrays an old woman in a similar role. At the Ekwan River gathering place, the site of one of the *mi-tew* stories just mentioned, a spring celebration got out of hand one time as people got exceedingly caught up in a tug of war. A blind old woman who was the scorekeeper could no longer control the game; the rope was lengthened, more people joined in, the fire in the teepee where the game had started was knocked aside, and the teepee itself fell down. The old lady crawled into a corner and called to the rowdies to stop, telling them that they were committing what Louis calls "a blaspheme act," but they were so excited and having so much fun that they replied, "Let us *paa-sta-ho*"—that is, sin against nature, lose control (Bird 2005a, 182). The story goes on to tell in detail of a great sickness that followed upon their actions. What stands out here is the old lady's effort to advise and control the younger people. Her warning that their behaviour would have consequences was a foreshadowing of impending tragedy.

A legend with an element of time travel that foreshadows coming events features a woman as an older sister, unnamed, who acts as advisor and guide to her younger brother, Cha-ka-pesh, a personage who figures in Cree and

Ojibwe stories told from Québec to Manitoba.[4] He is always described as very small, a midget, yet a man nonetheless with strong *mi-tew* powers. In all the Cha-ka-pesh stories, his sister warns him, usually in vain, about the risks he is taking in his adventures (see also Simeon Scott's stories in Ellis [1995, 14–33]). In "Omens, Mysteries, and First Encounters" (chapter 5), Louis Bird tells of Cha-ka-pesh hunting along the shore of Hudson Bay and hearing strange sounds out on the water—voices saying something like "ho-hee, ho-hee." He goes home and tells his sister, who cautions him that he could be travelling into the future and that this could be dangerous. That night, she has a dream about a sailing ship and receives intimations about what the sounds signify. The next morning, she warns him strongly not to go there again.

Of course, this only fuels his curiosity. Having promised his sister he would not risk time travelling again, he enters the body of a seagull on the shore and flies out to find and land on a ship. The sailors are chanting "heave ho, heave ho" as they raise the sails—the sound he had heard. They throw some hardtack, or ship's biscuit, to the seagull, who flies off with it. When Cha-ka-pesh returns to his own body and goes home, his sister finds the strange food in his bag, along with the rabbits he has caught for her, and she knows he has disobeyed. She is distressed: "Sometime," she says, "you will lose your life and I will never find you." He apologizes, as he always does, and that's the end (Bird 2005a, 157). The story foreshadows the coming of strangers to Hudson Bay and the great changes that are to come with them. But the sister's role, acting as an older woman who tries to advise, control, and moderate male actions and behavioural excesses, finds parallels in the other stories described above.

These stories suggest that it is a good idea to listen to older women: the blind old lady who tried to stop the tug-of-war game and the old wife who warned Grand Sophia and her family to escape her husband's evil designs knew the dangers that people were in. And these women may have special powers of their own. The sister of Cha-ka-pesh has a vision dream about the sounds her younger brother has heard but does not understand. She is the one who provides an explanation as well as a warning, even though the story (like others) features the male because he is a much more dramatic character. But whatever their powers or insights, a common thread of the stories is that the older women are not listened to or are not in a good position to change the course of events except by avoidance or circumnavigation, as in the instance of Grand Sophia's rescuer.

The roles and behaviours exhibited in these stories point to patterns that appear worthy of further study. The Wi-sa-kay-jak stories told by Louis Bird

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4 See Brightman (1989, 140–42 and table 4) for an overview and tabulation of sources for and themes found in this cycle of stories.

(2007) and many others repeat the theme of a male figure whose excesses make trouble for himself and for others, and Wi-sa-kay-jak has no mother, wife, or older sister to keep him in line. The stories are cautionary tales; they teach listeners in general how they should behave by providing examples of how not to behave. But they also seem to be directed at powerful older males as particularly in need of attention. They warn listeners about the possible excesses of feared *mi-te-wuk*, or shamans, but they also warn these men themselves about the dangers of pride, meanness, showing off, and making assumptions about how much power they have. These men may be powerful but they are not idealized; it is younger men such as the ones who defeat We-mis-shoosh—or An-way, the cannibal exterminator (Bird 2005b)—who may acquire heroic dimensions.

The stories further remind everyone that power may lie in unexpected places (see also Black-Rogers 1977). The humble orphan or baby boy may be much more than he appears. Old men may appear ordinary, yet they can prove dangerous if provoked. A couple of autobiographical stories that Ojibwe chief William Berens told to A. Irving Hallowell in the 1930s illustrate this point. One time, when William was a young man working in the HBC store at Berens River, he refused an old man's request for a pipe and tobacco and talked back to him. Everyone in the store got quiet. "One old fellow told me I had made a mistake. . . . But I did not give a damn. I did not think he could hurt me." Shortly afterwards, William and his wife were camping on an island near Poplar River when he began to feel great fear—"even my body was quivering." At sunset, a horrific thunderstorm arose, with lightning striking the rocks, "running all over like snakes—fearful." Finally the storm passed, and Berens recalled, "I jumped up and walked out then. . . . I said, 'This old fellow did not kill us yet'" (Brown 1989, 216).

In another instance of an old man's powers, revealed after a seemingly innocuous event, William Berens told Hallowell of a frightening dream, very real, that he had had as a youth. He was taken into a huge "conjuring tent" and was told he could not leave. Then he saw his own head rolling about and people trying to catch it. Finally, he caught it: "As soon as I got hold of it I could see my way and I left. Then I woke up." Both Berens and his father, Jacob Berens, believed that a medicine man whose humpback son William had insulted in a game had tried but failed to kill him (Hallowell 1992, 87, 98n1).

The stories teach many things about how and how not to behave. But more specifically, to what extent do they tell something about observations of and experience with the roles and character tendencies of older men and women? A cluster of messages emerges in the stories when they are considered together. The two stories told by William Berens, and some of Louis Bird's stories as well, point to themes of foreshadowing and hindsight. People need to be alert to

events and the omens leading up to them and sensitive to the consequences of events and actions that may seem innocent enough at the time—for example, the joyous game at the Ekwan River. Respect and restraint are highly advisable, particularly when a powerful medicine man is involved.

Some stories could also be taken as warnings to older men themselves, especially powerful ones (if they would take heed), about the risks of pride in and overdisplay or abuse of their power; the costs and dangers of their anti-social behaviour; and the pain or risks they may bring to themselves and others through anger, carelessness, excessive competitiveness, and hasty and ill-considered action.[5] The example of Abishabis, an Omushkego prophet who, in 1842–43, acquired a considerable following as a spiritual figure and then overstepped his bounds with violent, anti-social actions speaks to this theme; he was ultimately defined as *wih-ti-go*, a being with dangerous, cannibalistic tendencies. He was executed with an axe and his body burned in the manner reserved for such beings (chapter 13, this volume).

The stories warn listeners that the powers that individuals possess vary and are unevenly distributed. Serious consequences may result from challenging or causing offence to persons (medicine men, called "shamans" in Louis Bird's English usage or "conjurors" in the older literature) whose powers were either not respected or not recognized in the first place. Of course, the powers of such men are not absolute either. They may fail or be destroyed when they go on the offensive; they may meet their match in younger challengers whom they underestimated.

The stories also caution that younger male protagonists who defeat powerful older shamans may themselves need to be careful and exercise restraint later in their lives, as they grow older and more confident, or even arrogant, about their powers. Cha–ka–pesh is a younger male compared to the others; he has no family of his own and still lives with his older sister. For the most part, he gets away with testing the limits, and his stories are not as dark. But finally, ignoring his sister's advice, he gets caught up into the moon (Simeon Scott, in Ellis 1995, 28–33) and can never return. For him, too, the advice and cautions of an older woman have a place and convey qualities of her personal role and character.

The stories show, however, how often these women are ignored and over-looked despite their knowledge and prophetic powers. The older sister, like the blind old woman in "The Wailing Clouds," has little real influence on males and their actions. She tries to guide but does not control, and eventually, she loses her younger brother. In other stories, women are not in a position to exert control but must simply take evasive action, escaping from insults, threats, or

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5 Compare also Johnny Bighetty's story of Manicow in Brightman (1989, 152–53).

violence, as Grand Sophia does, or going quietly behind the back of a *mi-tew* husband with dark intentions, as does Sophia's rescuer. Women have their own values, strengths, and means of coping and solving problems, but there is no trace of matriarchy in these stories.

Overall, the stories point to some interesting themes to watch for in exploring older men's and women's social and gender roles in northern Algonquian families and communities. (I use "community" and not "society" advisedly, as Louis Bird has cautioned us about the small scale of traditional social life in the North and about how the construction of a larger society is a recent phenomenon [2005a, 235].) They provide windows into face-to-face social life and interactions in these small-scale settings. They are an implicit index of people's observations, values, and experience, and storytellers offer them as subtle means to guide, critique, or sanction interactions and behaviour. They tell us quite a lot about generational and gender relations and roles—and tensions, too—that have been deeply embedded in people's lives for a long time. They repay closer listening and reading—in whatever medium we have available.

Regina Flannery knew something about listening to older women's stories when she spent all those hours with Ellen Smallboy, and in a quiet way, she gathered a wealth of history and insights that she treasured and brought forward sixty years later in *Glimpses*. That little book probably resonates more with current generations than it would have in the 1930s; for many reasons, we are more ready to appreciate such works now for the voices that speak through them so directly and personally. What pays off in the long run, as Louis Bird and his works have demonstrated, is the faithful gathering of stories at first hand. Then we need the means to hold dear and bring forward the voices of the tellers in the best possible way, as well as good listening and deep study to understand their messages. We are much in debt to Regina Flannery Herzfeld for her remarkable work on that front, and for a great deal more.

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Kinship Shock for Fur Traders and Missionaries

The Cross-Cousin Challenge

Anthropologists have long used the term "culture shock" to describe what happens when people are plunged into living among others who have entirely different languages, world views, and ways of doing things. One form of culture shock is what we might call kinship shock—when newcomers meet people who greet, classify, and relate to their kinfolk in ways that are radically different from what the new arrivals take as normal. In northern North America, as elsewhere, newcomers and the people they met each had their own ingrained understandings and assumptions about the meanings of terms like father, mother, and cousin. They took them "at face value" and translated them accordingly. But without knowing it, they suffered from what James Lockhart, writing about the Nahuas (Aztecs) and the Spanish, has called "double mistaken identity," and they got some basic things wrong.[1] Fur traders, missionaries, and translators all faced this problem. In turn, Aboriginal people, steeped in their own languages, didn't realize what the outsiders didn't understand or what they themselves didn't know about the newcomers' categories. Wherever English displaced Aboriginal languages, it displaced those kinship categories that didn't match English-language terms, as well as the structures and values that went with them.

Anthropologists encountered these issues early as they tried to grasp how other societies worked. In 1888, the British social anthropologist Edward B.

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[1] "Each side takes it that a given form or concept is essentially one already known to it, operating in much the same manner as in its own tradition, and hardly takes cognizance of the other side's interpretation." James Lockhart, *The Nahuas After the Conquest: A Social and Cultural History of the Indians of Central Mexico, Sixteenth Through Eighteenth Centuries* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1992), 445.

Tylor added a new term to the English language. He was the first to use the term "cross-cousin marriage." In an article in the *Journal of the Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland*, he discussed twenty-one peoples in the world who, he found, "would not allow the marriage of the children of brothers, or the children of sisters, but did allow the child of a brother to marry the child of a sister."[2] In other words, these societies made a basic distinction between the sons and daughters of opposite-sex siblings (whom Tylor called "cross cousins"), who could marry, and those of same-sex siblings ("parallel cousins"), who could not. One reason was that people in these societies called their parallel cousins by the same terms that they used for "brother" and "sister," so the incest taboo applied. But a deeper structural reason was that such societies are unilineal: that is, they trace descent through either the mother's (matrilineal) or the father's line (patrilineal). Descendants of same-sex siblings all belong within that family line, but a man's sister's children, for example, will marry out. A patrilineal clan system such as that of the Ojibwe reinforces such marrying out (exogamy); people are not to marry within their own clan.

These cross- and parallel-cousin terms, which are seldom found in English dictionaries, were invented because the English language had no words to express them. This mode of classifying cousins lies well beyond the conceptions of English speakers unless they have confronted it in the kinship vocabularies of other languages or in a cultural anthropology class (or one of my history classes). A further challenge is that the cross-cousin category extends beyond cross-sex siblings' children (what English speakers would term "first cousins"). Their respective grandchildren are cross cousins to one another, and ditto for their great-grandchildren, along with others of the same generation who are related by marriage (at least in Ojibwe reckoning, although this doubtless varies).

This issue matters when we do history. When fur traders and other outsiders came among Cree and Ojibwe people in Rupert's Land, they encountered kinship systems that they tried to equate with their own linguistic categories and kin universe (and notions about "blood"). Few of them realized that the people they met classified their relatives in a very different way, and very few began to understand how these classifications worked. It wasn't just a question of learning another vocabulary. Kinship terms in any society are tied to a whole set of relationships among relatives and come with roles people are expected to play. They are loaded with meaning, and tied in with value systems involving

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2 Edward B. Tylor, quoted in George W. Stocking, Jr., *After Tylor: British Social Anthropology 1888–1951* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1995), 7. Tylor's article was titled "On a Method of Investigating the Development of Institutions, Applied to Laws of Marriage and Descent."

proper behaviour, mutual obligations, reciprocities, familial standing linked to age and gender, and so on.

Among the rare traders who began to understand these matters, I have found only one who described a personal experience with what Tylor called cross-cousin relations. North West Company (and later briefly HBC) clerk George Nelson married an Ojibwe woman, Mary Ann, in 1808; by then, he had already had six years' exposure to the language (chapter 6, this volume). In July 1822, Nelson and some other traders were travelling east from Lake Winnipeg to Fort William on Lake Superior. When they stopped to buy some dried sturgeon, an old woman he did not recognize spoke to him "in a most vociferous manner," saying, "Tut, tut, you are cheat, & a *dog*; you always cheat the Indians by that fair & insinuating manner of speaking . . . but you shall not *cheat me* I know you too well; . . . I know you; Say no more." Nelson was astonished: "I was completely Silenced, & did not answer a syllable." On meeting her again at Fort William, he made inquiries and found she was a relative through his wife. She therefore, he found, "claimed this abuse as a previlige: 'are you not so & so &c well! & and what have you got to say? Am I not to speake to a relative?'" The old woman was a "cousin of a woman that through courtesy to her husband used to stile me 'Nee-nim'—brother-in-law; & as there is no end to relationship among the Indians, *she* also calls me thus!"[3]

Nelson was right that "Nee-nim" (*niinim*) was a woman's term used in the Ojibwe language to refer to her brothers-in-law. (One feature of many Aboriginal kin systems is that men's and women's terms of reference and address may differ along gender lines.) He was also right that in the Ojibwe social universe, there was "no end to relationship"; everyone could be classified in one or another kinship category. But he probably did not understand the precise range of relatives to whom the term could apply. The Ojibwe, in fact, had no distinct "in-law" category. As anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell later found and explained in a 1937 article, "there are no specific terms for relatives by marriage" because everyone was already related in some way. So this category also simply subsumed the woman's "male cross cousins," in anthropologists' terms.[4] Nelson did realize, however, that males and females related to each other by these broad cross-cousin terms had customary ways of expressing that relationship by teasing, bawdy joking, and mock verbal abuse. Most Ojibwe verbal

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3 Laura Peers and Jennifer S. H. Brown, "'There Is No End to Relationship Among the Indians': Ojibwa Families and Kinship in Historical Perspective." *The History of the Family* 4, no. 4 (1999): 529–55.

4 A. Irving Hallowell, "Cross-Cousin Marriage in the Lake Winnipeg Area," in A. Irving Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies: Essays, 1934–1972*, ed. and intro. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010), 73.

interaction was restrained and circumspect. But cross cousins (especially older ones) could tease, mock, make bawdy jokes, and generally be more outrageous to each other than they could be with other classes of relatives.

In the decades after Tylor invented cross cousins as an English-language category, numbers of anthropologists began watching for cross-cousin marriage and debating its distribution and significance. Hallowell, in the late 1920s, found some evidence in old Algonquian dictionaries that cross-cousin marriage had once existed in some eastern Algonquian groups, while W. D. Strong found it still operative among the Nascapi (Innu) in Labrador. Hallowell suspected that the pattern persisted among other northern Algonquians and decided to investigate. In the summer of 1930, he embarked on the *S. S. Keenora* to travel up Lake Winnipeg to research the question among the Cree and Oji-Cree of northern Manitoba. At Berens River on 1 July, partway up the east side of the lake, he briefly met Chief William Berens, who generously invited him to visit on his way south in August and offered assistance with his research—an offer that influenced both their lives for the next decade.[5]

At Norway House, he got his first answer about cross cousins: "When I asked an English-speaking [Cree] Indian (Alfred Settie) at Norway House whether it was possible to marry *ki-tim* [lit., our cross cousin, male speaking], he replied, 'You bet your life. That's what they all do here!'" Later that summer, speaking with William Berens, who became, as he recalled, "my closest collaborator," Hallowell "hesitatingly asked him whether a man could marry a woman he called *ninam*. His reply was, 'Who the hell else would he marry?'" As Hallowell wrote, "In a sense, the problem I had come to investigate was solved: the Ojibwa of Berens River did practice cross-cousin marriage and used the appropriate terminology." Hallowell also learned that both women and men applied the same term both to their cross cousins of opposite sex and to their siblings-in-law of opposite sex.[6] The key term for reference here is *niinim* (sometimes rendered *ninam*, as above). It is both the men's and women's term for a cross cousin of sex opposite to themselves.

Hallowell soon learned that *ninam* had another nuance: it also regularly signified "(my) sweetheart." (Ojibwe and Cree kin terms always carry an obligatory possessive prefix: my [*ni-*], our [*ki-*], etc.) Reflecting that meaning, cross cousins of different gender exhibited a certain licence in their interactions, even with other people's spouses, although bounded by convention, it only went so far. When William Berens told Hallowell about a cross-cousin episode from his

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5 William Berens, *Memories, Myths, and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader*, as told to A. Irving Hallowell, ed. and intro. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 5–6.

6 Hallowell, *Contributions*, 73, 6, 73.

earlier life, he shared the humour of the situation but also explained that there were limits:

> When working at the H.B. post at Poplar River he [Berens] got into a camp early one winter morning with a dog team. Nobody up yet. Found out the tent where his *kinim* was sleeping (with her husband and other relatives) under a rabbit skin blanket. Went in quickly and threw himself down at her side and put his arms around her. She woke up, and when she found who it was, started laughing. So did her husband and everyone else. They had a good laugh. W. later joked about being under the blanket with her. His *kinim*, of course, denied it and he would insist on it.

As Berens went on to say, "A man's *kinim* may joke him sometimes by hiding his pants so he can't get up in the morning. [He] can also joke about going into the bush with her. Can 'rough house'—pinch or tickle her. Be suggestive in conversation in a light way but not really smutty. Can joke before and after she is married. If [the] latter, her husband will often enter in." To this, Hallowell added a comment: "Joking of this sort is not possible with any other female relative."[7]

When Hallowell travelled up the Berens River with Chief Berens, he saw the elderly chief's cross-cousin joking in action:

> At one encampment [Berens] began bantering an old woman about sneaking into her tent at night. She was one of his *ninamak* [-*ak*, plural] whom he had not seen for perhaps twenty-five years. On another occasion, a married woman much younger than himself said to him, "Do you think you can make your way through?" The answer was, "The older you get the stiffer the horn."

Hallowell added, "I have heard such talk again and again, by people of all ages." Between siblings (including parallel cousins), such joking was actively discouraged; relations were much more circumspect.[8]

On one of his visits up the Berens River to Little Grand Rapids, Hallowell had his own experience with being cast in the role of *niinim* (or *ninam*, as he usually spelled it). The chief of the band asked his advice about what to do about a teenage girl, Shabwan, who seemed to have "gone crazy"—"moaned, yelled, laughed, and talked in a silly fashion"—and had to be restrained. Hallowell, at the time (late 1930s), was greatly interested in psychological analysis; the article that he wrote about the incident is titled "Shabwan: A Dissocial Indian Girl" and was published in the *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*. But for our

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7 Berens, *Memories, Myths, and Dreams*, 97.

8 Hallowell, *Contributions*, 332.

purposes, what is of most interest is how Hallowell's relationship with the girl developed once he began to visit her and see if he could help. He tried to calm her and engage her attention through questions, comparing his wristwatch with hers, giving her some cigarettes, saying he would give her a can of pears, and so on. Over the next days, her episodes lessened and she began to engage in flirtatious behaviour, teasing and throwing little sticks at Hallowell. Then, after visiting Hallowell's camp with her family, she left him some folded pages from her school copybook, in which she had written her name and that she was his girl and his "sweethard." A similar message came the next day; "my sweethard" was "written on many lines" on refolded paper tied with purple silk thread.

When Hallowell left Little Grand Rapids, Shabwan's relatives thanked him for helping make her better and reference was made to "the old custom that makes it the prerogative of a medicine man who has cured a woman, to take her in payment as his wife or mistress." Clearly, that did not happen, but what is most interesting here is the process by which an outsider became cast as a cross cousin and, correspondingly, as *niinim*, or "(my) sweetheart." Shabwan's flirting was well within the bounds of convention, whatever designs she may have had on her visitor, and so was her classing of him as "my sweetheart."

When Hallowell researched these patterns in historical sources, he found a parallel in what NWC trader Peter Grant wrote in the early 1800s about Ojibwe courtship:

> Their manner of making love is not only singular, but rude and indecent, according to our ideas of good breeding. The lover begins his first addresses by gently pelting his mistress with bits of clay, snowballs, small sticks . . . if she returns the compliment, he is encouraged to continue the farce and repeat it for a considerable time. After these preliminaries, some significant smiles and witticisms are exchanged, but of such a nature as would make our more delicate fair ones blush.[9]

There is no sign in Grant's account, however, that he grasped the kinship system or the conventions surrounding cross-cousin behaviour—which could be flirtatious and joking without any marital intent.

So, I return to the title of this chapter: "Kinship Shock for Fur Traders and Missionaries." The mental baggage of kinship that traders and missionaries brought with them gave them no clues about the different modes of kin classification, roles, and interaction that they would encounter in Rupert's Land (or elsewhere), but it did give them plenty of biases about what they saw as rudeness and indecency versus "good breeding." George Nelson realized that distinctive patterns and conventions were involved and could be understood

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9 Hallowell, *Contributions*, chap. 14. Grant is quoted on pp. 267–68.

upon inquiry. Most other outsiders, however, had no idea of the questions to ask, never mind what the answers might be. Their views of Aboriginal women and courtship were coloured accordingly. Fur traders, seeing cross-cousin joking behaviour, might have seen it as a symptom of a sexual licentiousness of which they could take advantage—though in fact, as Hallowell found, Ojibwe sexual behaviour was hedged about by strong norms and prohibitions.[10] In turn, missionaries with a European view of cousinhood saw a great need to restrain and prohibit an apparent freedom that they found shocking. "Double mistaken identities" flourished as each side peered through the thick lenses of ingrained kinship assumptions that clouded and obscured their vision of the other.

I want to close with a point about language loss and kinship. Once again, Hallowell gives us some key insights. In his 1937 article on cross-cousin marriage, he noted that in some quarters where missions and the English language had gained influence, anglicized kin terms such as *nimama* (my mother) and *nipapa* (my father) had come into vogue. There was also a deeper change: "In one's own generation the distinction between parallel and cross-cousin is no longer rigidly maintained, the tendency being to group these together as against full brothers and sisters. *Ninam* can therefore be used for cousins in the English sense. . . . Only the diminutive of this term conveys the sense of 'sweetheart.' Evidence of such a radical change . . . suggests a broader problem."[11]

Hallowell did not elaborate on this problem, but we see its results today. A few years ago, my colleague and former student, Anne Lindsay, and I were working with some Cree people doing a history of their community. They had Cree-language transcripts from elders, some of which were translated into English. The term "cousin" had been interpreted to represent first, second, and so on, as in English usage, so we asked about what the Cree terms really meant. When our friends went back to the elders to ask, and when we showed them Hallowell's article, the lights went on. Indeed, the elders were thinking of cousins in Cree terms. The English text had assumed a rule against marrying first cousins—a category absent from the Cree language.

In this instance, as for countless other Aboriginal people of middle and younger generations, the superposing of English vocabulary, along with other pressures (e.g., Catholic strictures on cousin marriage) is not just a matter of language loss. The "broader problem" that Hallowell mentioned lies in how the process has supplanted older systems and structures of kinship and their associated roles, values, and interactional patterns, along with the vocabulary that gave them meaning. In 1932, anthropologist Ruth Landes was working

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10 See, for example, Hallowell, *Contributions*, chap. 17, "Sin, Sex, and Sickness in Saulteaux Belief" (first published 1939).

11 Hallowell, *Contributions*, 81.

with Maggie Wilson, a bilingual Ojibwe woman, in Rainy River (Ontario), an area where Methodist and, later, Catholic missionaries had long been active. Landes received a truncated view of cross cousins, reflected also in the women's stories that Maggie Wilson later sent her.[12] In this view, they were classified only as first cousins, and it was emphasized that they were not eligible marriage mates. The shifts that Hallowell was observing in parts of Manitoba in the 1930s were also occurring in northwestern Ontario where Landes was working.[13]

Historians have also found it difficult to understand how the category functioned within Aboriginal communities whose language remained strong. A recent and otherwise excellent book generalized that "marriage was central to the kinship systems of Aboriginal societies, as relatives were divided into two basic categories: those related by marriage and those related by birth."[14] As Hallowell found, however, the Ojibwe cross-cousin category crosscuts that dichotomy.

I'll close by editorializing for a moment. We are surrounded by relatively invisible yet continuing losses of languages, cultures, world views, and histories that still reside in people's heads; in documentary, visual, and oral records; in unprocessed museum collections; in landscape and place names; and in the ground. We need to listen better to the still, small voices that speak from these resources. We need not only to seek the best means of finding answers but also to think of asking questions that may not even have been formulated. Contemporary human rights museums and truth and reconciliation projects draw millions of dollars, but will they help us go beyond present-day agendas to find a place for deeper historical understandings and insights from peoples of the past? History and language are key to the defence of human rights and can contribute to truth and reconciliation through the insights they offer, yet too many communities have seen their intellectual heritage slip away under the pressures they have faced. The cross-cousin challenge brings its own object lessons, exemplifying the utility of close listening to and reading of stories, words, and documents that illuminate the complex and diverse ways in which people have lived and thought and related to one another.

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12 Maggie Wilson, *Rainy River Lives: Stories Told by Maggie Wilson*, ed. and intro. Sally Cole (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009), 83, 88, 215.

13 Landes, writing to her mentor, Ruth Benedict, in August 1932, cited in Sally Cole, *Ruth Landes: A Life in Anthropology* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), 72. Landes believed she had evidence to counter what Hallowell was saying about cross-cousin marriage, but her writings do not indicate that she studied and grasped the Ojibwe kinship categories and usages that prevailed before the advent of missions.

14 Sarah Carter, *The Importance of Being Monogamous: Marriage and Nation Building in Western Canada to 1915* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press and Athabasca University Press, 2008), 105.

Fur Trade Children in Montréal

The St. Gabriel Street Church Baptisms, 1796–1825

The first version of this essay appeared in *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (1985), a volume of papers arising from the 1981 Newberry Library (Chicago) Conference on the Métis in North America. The conference, which I helped to organize, took place in a period in which interest in ethnic roots, history, survival, and political and economic rights began to be widely shared.[1] Among the Métis in Canada and elsewhere, such concerns have strengthened greatly, as witnessed by the intensity of political, organizational, and publishing activity since the 1980s.[2] Speakers at the Métis conference of 1981, the first such conference to be held, met to explore the histories of diverse communities, ranging from those who historically identified themselves as Métis to those who came later or followed other paths

My contribution to *The New Peoples* looked at the story of several dozen fur trade offspring whose Presbyterian fathers, mainly of Scottish North West Company (NWC) background, brought them to Montréal to be baptized in the years 1795 to 1835. Its original title was "Diverging Identities: The Presbyterian Métis of St. Gabriel Street, Montreal." Here, it is changed for two reasons. First,

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1 See, for one of many examples, Karen I. Blu, *The Lumbee Problem: The Making of an American Indian People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980). The Lumbee of North Carolina, being of mixed descent, have faced issues parallel in some ways to those faced by the Métis in the last century.

2 These trends found expression early in, for example, Duke Redbird, *We Are Métis: A Métis View of the Development of a Native Canadian People* (Willowdale, ON: Ontario Métis and Non-Status Indian Association, 1980); Joe Sawchuk, *The Métis of Manitoba: Reformulation of an Ethnic Identity* (Toronto: Peter Martin Associates, 1978); and Alberta Federation of Métis Settlement Associations, *Métisism: A Canadian Identity* (Edmonton: AFMSA, 1982). For a range of recent essays on historical and current issues, see *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

the term "Métis," as used in Rupert's Land in the 1800s, referred particularly to Roman Catholics of French Canadian paternal origin. Second, the fur trade children baptized in the St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church cannot be subsumed under any one label; they dispersed in a number of different directions, often unknown.

Whenever historical work is done in response to present-day perspectives and concerns, some risks arise. It is a challenge to try to understand people of the past on their own terms in all their complexity and variability. The viewpoints and interests of the living are readily projected onto the dead, who regrettably refuse to answer our queries and questionnaires or to dispute our interpretations. Native-born descendants of Hudson's Bay and North West Company fur traders are cases in point. We can only infer their views (or lack of them) about their identities from the incomplete records that they and others have left and avoid co-opting them into groups or categories that were irrelevant to their own lives and communities. Many offspring of northern fur trade families in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries were nudged or scattered into multiple social settings, too shifting and variable to allow the assigning of a unitary identity to all.[3]

In fact, in counterpoise to the centripetal tendencies of much modern ethnic historiography, the fur trade of these centuries often acted as centrifuge, spinning persons and groups into diverse social and ethnic niches and categories. The fur trade was a network of crossroads of numerous Native communities and two major groups of ethnically diverse, often transient European traders— the HBC men with their English royal charter, remote directorship, and salaried "servant" status and the Montréal-based Scottish and French entrepreneurs and *canadien* employees who coalesced into the predominantly Scottish NWC after 1784. Given their trade and fur-extraction aims, neither company tried to build a stable new society in the Northwest; neither undertook any sponsorship of settlement and colonization until the HBC support of Lord Selkirk's founding of Red River in 1811–12. Before Red River, fur traders, whatever their degree of commitment to the family connections they acquired during their careers, were given no option for permanent, secure retirement in the places where they had served. HBC men were shipped back to England with an occasional family member, perhaps a son, in tow, unless they found their way to the

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3 See also chapter 2, this volume, and, for examples, Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," in *Essays in the History of Canadian Childhood*, ed. Joy Parr (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1982), 44–68. For a broader view, see Theresa Schenck, "Border Identities: Métis, Halfbreed, and Mixed-Blood," in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, ed. Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 233–48.

Montréal region to retire, as a few did between 1810 and 1820 (some of which are mentioned below). Among the old Nor'Westers of the Canadian-based trade, numbers of low-ranked employees, usually of French descent, stayed in the Indian country as "freemen" (*gens libres*) after their contracts expired and formed their own settlements apart from the posts where they had worked.[4] Most Scottish Nor'Westers, however—the higher-ranked partners (bourgeois) and clerks—sooner or later withdrew to eastern Canada or Scotland, perhaps with some of their children but usually without the children's Native mothers.

The effects of these centrifugal forces on fur trade families were considerable. No company sanctions kept parents and children together in long-term co-residential units. Often, in fact, the demands of fur trade life imposed strong pressures against their maintenance; such was the case for HBC men whose familial ties (until the late 1700s) violated company rules in the first place and for men sent on long exploring journeys or to remote posts far inland. Unions with Native women found wide informal acceptance, but the seriousness with which traders treated these ties varied with their individual moral stances, as did the priority that they gave them when business and practical considerations intervened.[5]

As a consequence, the trajectories of fur trade offspring varied greatly as they matured. Numerous HBC descendants were absorbed into the Cree "home-guard" bands that took shape around the major HBC posts and were classed as Indians. Others who took low-level jobs around the posts were often known as "natives of Hudson's Bay," a category of persons who, although possessing interlocking familial ties, did not coalesce as a distinct political entity and who, before about 1815, lacked (or were spared) distinguishing labels such as "half-breed" or "Métis" to give focus to their uniqueness. Still others, in smaller numbers, faded into white society outside the Indian country.

A comparable diversity of paths awaited the progeny of the Montréal Nor'Westers and Native women. Some disappeared into Indian communities, and some into white. Most distinctive were the offspring who, like some of their *canadien* fathers, left company employ and led a semi-independent life as "freemen" in the Indian country. In this group, more or less connected with the NWC as the context of its most rapid growth and maturation (both demographic

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4 A fine study of some of these families is Heather Devine's *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660–1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004).

5 For more details on HBC and NWC families in these situations, see Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Fur Trade as Centrifuge: Familial Dispersal and Offspring Identity in Two Company Contexts," in *North American Anthropology: Essays on Society, and Culture, ed. Raymond J. DeMallie and Alfonso Ortiz* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1994), 197–219.

and political), lay the genesis of the nineteenth-century Métis (or, to use the nineteenth-century English term, "half-breed") sense of identity and pride, the ramifications of which are still spreading among modern Métis in the northern United States and Canada and among collateral groups whose ancestors would have found the concept of Métis identity unfamiliar and foreign.[6]

The registers of the St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church in Montréal provide a core of data on one overlooked NWC subgroup among the diverse descendants of the fur trade.[7] Several dozen offspring of Nor'Westers' unions with Native women were cast, at least temporarily, by their Presbyterian trader fathers into a new urban world remote from the scenes of their early childhoods. For forty years, from 1796 to 1835, the church hosted a distinctive and continuing influx of young strangers of mixed descent. During these years, its clergy baptized and/or buried eighty-one children whose fathers were connected with the NWC (or, after 1821, the HBC, with which it merged in that year) and who had lived or were still living in what the Canadian traders called the Indian country. A further ten baptisms were of Native offspring of old (pre-1821) HBC employees who retired to the Montréal area between 1812 and 1820.[8]

These individuals had several traits in common. With two exceptions among the fur trader baptisms, all were of Native maternal descent, reflecting the almost complete absence of white women in the Indian country before the 1820s.[9] All were born to parents whose unions either were never regularized in accord with British law or Christian ritual or received only belated church and legal recognition. Although the fathers' names were invariably entered in the registers, the mothers' names were lacking in over 85 percent of cases (table 9.1), with the exception of the pre-1821 HBC entries, which, as we shall see, must be treated separately. Their namelessness (most were described simply as "a woman of the Indian Country") reflected both the lack of standing of these women and the fact that most were not present at the baptismal or burial rites of these

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6 I explore "Métis" as a category, especially with regard to transborder perceptions, in "Métis, Halfbreeds, and Other Real People: Challenging Cultures and Categories," *The History Teacher* 27, no. 1 (1993): 19–26.

7 This church, founded in 1786, was the first Presbyterian church in Montréal. For its history, see Robert Campbell, *A History of the Scotch Presbyterian Church, St Gabriel Street, Montreal* (Montréal: W. Drysdale, 1887).

8 St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church registers, MS 351, microfilm, Archives of Ontario, Toronto.

9 The exceptions in question were Frederick (baptized 1818), son of Nor'Wester Charles Grant and Lizette or Elizabeth Landry (who, strikingly, was identified [disguised as a man?] as a former engagé in the company), and Ann, whose mother, Ann Foster, presented her for baptism in 1828 and named HBC governor George Simpson as the father—a claim evidently accepted without question, his reputation being known.

offspring.[10] Enduring residency with both parents was not a typical feature of most of these children's lives, particularly during their Montréal sojourns.

Table 9.1. Baptismal and burial entries, fur trade offspring, St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church, 1796–1835

Years	Baptismal entries					Burial entries		
	Father present	Mother present and/or named	M	F	Total	M	F	Total
1796–1805	13 (of possible 17; 1 deceased)	1	15	10	25	2	0	2
1806–1815	9 (of possible 27; 1 deceased)	5*	27	11	38	3	3	6
1816–1825	5 (of possible 15; 1 deceased)	1	11	5	16	6	1	7
1826–1835	0 (of possible 2)	2	1	1	2	2	1	3
Total	27	9*	54	27	81	13	5	18

* Three of these entries pertain to David Thompson's wife and children.

Notes: These data exclude entries concerning pre-1821 HBC families. Because more than one child at a time was sometimes presented for baptism, the total of possible occasions on which a father might have been present is lower than the total number of children baptized. Ten burials were of individuals who were previously baptized in the church.

The register shows some interesting temporal variations. The numbers of fur trade offspring appearing in its baptismal and burial entries rose during the decade from 1796 to 1805, peaked in the years between 1806 and 1815, declined somewhat between 1816 and 1825, and fell sharply between 1826 and 1835. From the late 1700s to the early 1800s, a proportion of both NWC and HBC traders became more committed to and open about their family ties in the Indian country and acknowledged paternity of their children, and, beginning in 1796, the St. Gabriel Street Church gave Presbyterian Nor'Westers their own setting for doing so. (HBC fathers had no such option; their closest parallel was a register begun at Moose Factory in 1808.)[11]

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10 One early exception stands out. On 25 July 1796, Charles Phillips, "Indian Trader" and former Nor'Wester, presented two sons and a daughter for baptism. Their mother was "Jenny the Red Bird of the tribe of the Hurons," whom he married that day. Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," 53.

11 In 1808, HBC factor John Thomas began keeping a register of baptisms, marriages, and burials at Moose Factory (available in the microfilm collection MS 161, Archives of Ontario,

In the 1820s, the St. Gabriel Street Church registers saw a slow and then sharp decline in fur trader entries, probably for several reasons. Missionaries became active at Red River and beyond, and some children who might otherwise have joined their siblings in the Montréal registers were instead baptized in the Northwest—for example, offspring of John George McTavish, Alexander McKay, Angus Bethune, and John Dougald Cameron (Red River Anglican entries 215, 294, 582, 285, 392, and 580, Archives of Manitoba). The schools that opened in Red River may also have kept more offspring there, although most British Nor'Westers themselves preferred to settle in eastern Canada, where they had roots, social standing, kinsmen, and friends. Additionally, the rising number of high company officers taking white wives around 1830 may have made some of their colleagues more reluctant to acknowledge their Native offspring, particularly in an eastern urban setting. The St. Gabriel Street Church parish itself was also growing and changing; entries after 1820 indicate a membership active in a variety of trades, with a good many new immigrants and fewer old fur trade families.

Who were these St. Gabriel Street fur trade offspring, both individually and as a category of children dropped into this new and strange environment? Names, statistics, and information regarding their fathers' positions and interconnections provide some answers. Close to three-quarters were fathered by men of known Scottish ancestry—a proportion not surprising in a Presbyterian church founded in good part by the Scots who, after the British conquest of New France, had taken over leadership of the Canadian fur trade. A few trader fathers were of other European backgrounds (e.g., Norwegian-born Willard F. Wentzel and Charles O. Ermatinger, son of a Swiss trader).

Ages at baptism ranged from one year and under (notably, three successive children of English explorer and mapmaker David Thompson, born after his retirement to Terrebonne) to thirteen, averaging about six years. The burial register indicates that they were a vulnerable population, doubtless reflecting the fact that so many were sent at early ages on long, stressful journeys from various parts of the Indian country and became exposed to new germs and ailments. Close to one out of every eight children baptized at the church was buried there within a few days to three or four years later, and the burials of a further eight traders' children not baptized there are also on record in the years from 1796 to 1835.

Toronto) in response to a company request for a list of names and ages of employees' children at the posts. He recorded more information than was asked for, beginning with a list of his own nine children and their birthdates from 1780 to 1807, with spaces left for christening dates—which shortly began to appear as HBC men started to conduct their own baptisms. Brown, "Children of the Early Fur Trades," 59–63.

The ratio of males to females baptized and buried is striking (see table 9.1). Twice as many boys as girls were baptized, and the proportion of male to female burials was still higher. This evidence, along with data from other sources, clearly shows that more sons than daughters were sent down to Montréal. Trader fathers were more willing and anxious to invest their energies and funds in the placing and advancement of boys than of girls; the father-son bond took priority over those of father to mother or father to daughter.

For numerous Scottish Nor'Westers, this filial tie was also integrated at their sons' baptisms with other male-dominated kinship or friendship ties; fathers (or their surrogates) persuaded brothers or other male associates to take these young strangers from the Indian country into their charge and to witness their baptisms. On 17 October 1815, Alexander McKenzie and Roderick Mackenzie of Terrebonne were among the baptismal witnesses for four boys aged six or seven, the sons of their associates Alexander McKay (deceased), Robert Henry, Edward Smith, and Thomas McMurray by women "of the Indian Country." Duncan McDougall fathered a son, George, and a daughter, Anne, in the James Bay area between 1804 and 1807. On 26 October 1812, while McDougall was at Fort Astoria on the Pacific coast (temporarily working in the American fur trade), his uncle, Alexander McDougall, presented George for baptism; the daughter remained in James Bay. On 7 November 1798, James, son of Cuthbert Grant, was baptized, the witnesses being merchants James Laing and James Grant, and on 12 October 1801, his younger brother, Cuthbert, was presented by Nor'Westers William McGillivray and Roderick Mackenzie, the father having died in 1799. The boys' three sisters remained unbaptized in the Indian country.[12]

For the Grant boys, as for other sons, the trip to Montréal was not made solely to be baptized; that rite of recognition was a prelude to their being educated—particularly, as some fathers and patrons hoped, for a career in the upper echelons of the fur trade.[13] Such hopes were usually in vain or only partially fulfilled. Cuthbert Grant, Jr., became the most noted; having attended school for several years, probably in Scotland, he returned to the Indian country as a nineteen-year-old NWC clerk in 1812. After the 1821 merger, he was kept on, as Governor George Simpson put it in 1832, "intirely from political motives" for "the benefit of his great influence over the half breeds and Indians of the neighbourhood [of Red River]."[14]

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12 Margaret MacLeod and W. L. Morton, *Cuthbert Grant of Grantown* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1974), 2. See also Jennifer S. H. Brown, "McDougall, Duncan," *Dictionary of Canadian Biography* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 5:525–27.

13 The girls who were baptized are harder to trace; they probably received some schooling too, in hopes of their marrying respectably.

14 MacLeod and Morton, *Cuthbert Grant*, 7; Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 210.

Simpson's assessments of other sons who had been baptized in Montréal reflected his general bias against men of their "breed." Roderick, son of Daniel McKenzie, was baptized at age six in 1804 and entered the NWC in 1818; in 1832, he was said by Simpson to be "tolerably steady considering his breed, but a man of poor abilities and of very limited education." Alexander William, son of William McKay, was baptized at age seven in 1809 (witnesses being his uncle Alexander McKay and Simon and Catharine Fraser) and acquired sufficient education to serve the HBC as a low-level clerk from 1823 to 1843. Simpson, in 1832, had "a very poor opinion" of him, although admitting that he "manages a small Trading Post satisfactorily." Benjamin, son of Chief Factor Roderick McKenzie, was baptized at age ten in 1815, witnesses being Daniel and Roderick McKenzie. He joined the company in 1827, became a clerk in 1833, and died in 1837. Simpson, less dyspeptic on his character than on that of other "half-breed" employees, admitted that he "had the benefits of a tolerably good Education and had made a good use of the advantages he has had. . . . Promises to become a useful Man."[15]

Little is known about many of the other offspring named in the registers. Most sons and daughters disappeared into various niches in eastern Canadian society; unlike the fur trade clerks and postmasters just mentioned, their names do not recur in records of the Indian country. Yet the fur trade as centrifuge did not destroy the fragile unity of all its families. Nor'Westers John Thomson, John Dougald Cameron, and a few others who visited the St. Gabriel Street Church retained their Native wives, as did Charles Phillips in 1796. Nor'Wester and former HBC man David Thompson and Charlotte Small were married in October 1812 by the church minister, who also baptized six of their children (see chapter 10, this volume).

Another distinct fur trade cluster, the retired HBC families of Robert Long-moor and his son-in-law, James Halcro, occupied ten spaces in the baptismal register. When Longmoor settled in Vaudreuil in 1813, he brought with him his wife, Sally Pink, said to be about forty, from Hudson Bay; she was baptized on 1 July 1813.[16] The Longmoor daughters, Catharine, Jane, and Phoebe, were baptized earlier that year, as were Catharine and James Halcro's four children, whose presence in the registers reflect their prior long informal union. The church minister also married Catharine and James on 1 July, the same day that Catharine's mother was baptized. If her father, Robert Longmoor, had

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15 Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany*, 219–33.

16 Sally's father was surely William Pink, HBC labourer and inland traveller from 1765 to 1770 when he went home, presumably to England; she was born by 1770, probably to a Cree mother. "Biographical Sheets: Pink, William," HBCA, 27 April 1995, https://www.gov. mb.ca/chc/archives/hbca/biographical/p/pink_william.pdf.

not died by that date, he and Sally Pink probably would have been married as well. The unity of this family and the presence of both parents contrast, as does Thompson's family configuration, with the fragmentation along sex lines that was typical of most Nor'Westers' families represented in the registers.

The children baptized by the St. Gabriel Street Church clergy were participants in a ritual that carried two sorts of significance. To the ministers, its significance was religious; they were making Christians, claiming the youngsters for the Church. For the children's fathers and their surrogates, the baptisms were acts of naming and recognition that affirmed fatherhood and their paternal links through the conferring of their surnames. The parents' lack of formal marriage bonds must have stirred questions about the children's legitimacy in an eastern Canadian context, but the fathers' public claiming of the children as their own (and the ministers' assent to their actions) surely conferred respectability and opened doors for the children to be educated and for the boys to find reputable employment.

But what happened after the baptisms? The children's travels, largely untraced, continued in different directions—perhaps back to Red River or points beyond, possibly to see their mothers again or to enter eastern schools under the auspices of their fathers' relatives. For some, their journeys ended in churchyard graves. The fact of their being born in the Indian country and baptized in the same church did not set them all on the same path. The sons who found HBC employment were a small minority—and had mixed results, as we have seen. Only one rose to become conspicuously identified with the new Métis communities growing in the Red River region: Cuthbert Grant, Jr., became by far the best known.

Yet amid the diverse experiences of these offspring, some patterns emerged. The gender disparity in the baptismal records carried significance. The tendency, shown in the St. Gabriel Street Church registers and other data, of more daughters than sons to remain in the Indian country would have increased the proportional numbers of mixed-descent women around the posts. Concern about these young women being unattached was surely one factor urging the NWC partners to rule, in 1806, that their employees should marry daughters of white men rather than Indian women.[17]

Another result of daughters remaining in the Indian country would have been to maintain mother-daughter (and grandparent) bonds. There are some signs that these linkages were an important base for family building and identity formation in the Métis communities that grew up in the nineteenth-century Northwest. (Louis Riel wrote, "It is true that our savage origin is humble but

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17 W. S. Wallace, ed., *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), 211.

it is meet that we honor our mothers as well as our fathers.")[18] Additionally, where maternal ties between Indian and mixed-descent women bonded them to Indian as well as white communities, such women could act as important intermediaries in dealings with the white man's world. Charles Bishop and Shepard Krech have called attention to the wide distribution of what they term "matriorganization" in subarctic Algonquian and Dene societies, noting how a high frequency of matrilocality (husbands residing with their wives' families) reinforced women's centrality among their kin. Women of mixed descent who brought husbands into their familial circles could consolidate their influence among their Native kin and in related Métis communities as well, reinforced by the other factors noted above.[19]

While strong maternal ties were a factor in the genesis of a Métis identity among fur trade children, they were not a sufficient force. Those offspring who experienced lasting bonds only with maternal kin and whose fathers or other white male associates played no role in their lives tended to be drawn back into their mothers' communities. Charlotte Small, for example, whose Nor'Wester father, Patrick Small, left the fur trade when she was very young, grew up Cree, and her skills and language were of great benefit to David Thompson when they later married (chapter 10).

For those offspring, however, who did not become identified as Indians or remain in Montréal or other parts east, there lay a large and fertile ground in which Métis identity-building could flourish sooner or later. Numbers of NWC sons combined roots in the Indian country with a limited and perhaps frustrating exposure to life in eastern Canada or Europe. Nineteenth-century Métis political activity and self-consciousness arose in good part from men who were in a tension between two worlds—Cuthbert Grant, Jr.; the NWC sons involved in the Dickson Liberating Army on the Great Lakes in 1837; and Louis Riel himself, schooled as a youth in Montréal before leading the Red River Resistance of 1869–70.[20] In the Northwest, as elsewhere, a recipe for ethnic political awareness was to be cast between worlds, having had enough experience of each to realize that life could be different and better. NWC sons who visited Montréal but lacked enduring paternal ties and returned to

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18 Joseph Kinsey Howard, *The Strange Empire of Louis Riel* (Toronto: Swan, 1965), 46.

19 Charles A. Bishop and Shepard Krech, III, "Matriorganization: The Basis of Aboriginal Subarctic Social Organization," *Arctic Anthropology* 17, no. 2 (1980): 34–45; see also Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Woman as Centre and Symbol in the Emergence of Métis Communities," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 3, no. 1 (1983): 39–46. Bishop defines matriorganization succinctly as "involving matrilocality always and matrilineality sometimes" (email, 20 March 2015).

20 On the Dickson Liberating Army, see Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 190–92.

the Indian country experienced a distinct back-and-forthness in their abrupt removals from maternal bonds, along with intermittent or lasting isolation from fathers whose attempts to place the boys with eastern relatives or friends were often unsuccessful.[21] Such familial fragmentation could spawn alienation and disillusionment, and it was particularly an NWC phenomenon; far fewer sons of the old HBC, given its policies and travel restrictions, could travel from Hudson Bay to England or Canada and then return to interact and combine with others of similar experience.

In conclusion, the familial data gleaned from the St. Gabriel Street Church registers and elsewhere suggest the value of looking for the roots of fur trade children's identity formation first in the microcosm of parental, parent-child, and gender roles and relationships. The political and economic conditions of the children's adult lives carried great influence, but the early years of growth and experience were formative. The relative importance and consistency of paternal and maternal ties and the nature and strength of the sons' and daughters' attachments to the communities in which they were enmeshed in early life set the courses that they would follow, moving outward from the variable contexts of their fur trade origins. The telling of the full story of *métissage* as a sociocultural and political phenomenon in northern North America involves the study and understanding of a wide range of individual and group experiences in and beyond the fur trade country—both those that led to *la nation métisse* and those in which Métis identity was irrelevant, denied, unrecognized, or left unfulfilled, perhaps to be discovered some generations later.

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21 See Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, chap. 8, "Patterns and Problems of Placing."

PART IV

Recollecting

Women's Stories of
the Fur Trade and Beyond

The following three chapters focus on individual women with special relations to the fur trade. Chapter 10 recounts the story, insofar as it can be recovered, of Charlotte Small, daughter of a Cree woman and a Scottish trader and wife of North West Company trader and mapmaker David Thompson. Most unusually, she was present when the St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian minister baptized her children (chapter 9); she was also baptized and formally married to Thompson at about the same time. Her life was unusual in other ways as well. After her extensive travels with Thompson across the Northwest from 1799 to 1812, she moved far away from the fur trade, living with her family in Upper Canada until her death in 1857, after fifty-eight years of marriage. The shortage of sources presents problems in tracing her story, and, as is usual in such cases, her own voice is lacking. But it is possible to say some things about her life and to note that she does not fit easily into the "Métis" category that some writers have assigned to her. She might even have appreciated a later historian's labelling of her as a "model housewife."

"All These Stories About Women" (chapter 11), written in recognition of the work of Sylvia Van Kirk on women in the fur trade, offers some personal reflections on developments in fur trade and women's history over the last four decades. Van Kirk and I took part in a great sea change in fur trade studies, as "women and Indians" began to receive long overdue attention in historical writings. In the 1970s, many families of Indigenous and fur trade descent were still very conscious of the prejudice they had experienced; given their sensitivity, oral history was rarely an option, in contrast to the interest that it now receives. However, as we both discovered, the documentary record itself had been so underused with regard to women and families in the fur trade that we had more than enough to do in the archives; the field was wide enough for us both. We were a collegial pair, I coming from anthropology and Sylvia from history, overlapping yet complementary in our research areas and writings and in our often extended conversations. Across the decades, we have both had the good fortune to carry on our studies in times when our research interests have become increasingly widely shared, finding appreciation in academic circles and beyond.

Chapter 12 was originally written as an afterword to *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories* (2010), edited by Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers. Since the essays they collected in the book intersected in various ways with much of my work, they invited me to write an afterword, which gave me an opportunity to reflect on my own background and training in fur trade and ethnohistorical studies and to express some thoughts about how the increasing engagement of women and Indigenous people in research and scholarship has changed our fields of of study almost beyond recognition over the last decades.

The Cree-Ojibwe concept of generations, quite different from that expressed in English or French, gave me a way to frame these ideas and a means to make some points, once again, about the importance of language and mutual understanding—unfinished conversations, yet again.

"Mrs. Thompson Was a Model Housewife"
Finding Charlotte Small

In 2006–11, mapmaker and fur trader David Thompson received a stream of attention as fur trade enthusiasts, scholars, and other interested people celebrated several bicentennials of his explorations in the far west. Thompson had attained national recognition eighty years before when, in 1927, the Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada (HSMBC) commemorated him as a Person of National Historic Significance—but his Native wife, Charlotte Small (1785–1857), had lingered in the shadows. Now, however, the Thompson bicentennials stirred new curiosity about her. Board members were already realizing that the list of historical figures they had commemorated over past decades was conspicuously short of both women and Aboriginal persons. The board, along with Parks Canada, decided that it was time to recognize Charlotte, the Cree woman who played a huge role in Thompson's achievements and faced her own great challenges as the couple and their growing family travelled across North America and then left the fur trade country to settle in Upper Canada in 1812.

Accordingly, early in 2006, the board asked me to prepare a research report about her—a necessary step to make the case for her recognition. With my assistance and that of Scott Whiting of Parks Canada, they drew up the following terms of reference:

> The paper will provide the HSMBC with sufficient information to assess the national significance of Charlotte Small. Born in 1786 at Île-à-la-Crosse, Charlotte was the daughter of a Scottish North West Company trader and a Cree mother. Her family and life, insofar as they can be known, offer both intrinsic interest and important case study materials on the range of roles played by Aboriginal women and their offspring of mixed descent in the fur trade and beyond. Married at the age of 13 to North West Company trader and mapmaker David

Thompson, Charlotte grew to be a mother to a large family, and a valued colleague and travelling companion, integral to Thompson's successes. . . . The report will examine the significance of Charlotte Small both in her relation to the work and success of David Thompson, and as an unusual and outstanding figure among Aboriginal women who lived a fur trade life and then passed into colonial society as well.[1]

I completed the report late in 2006 and settled down to await its progress through several layers of federal bureaucracy.[2] In the meantime, I was invited to give several talks on Charlotte. This text began life as a presentation for a symposium at the Glenbow Museum, Calgary, in October 2007, titled "David Thompson: New Perspectives, New Knowledge." The program organizers chose as the title of my talk "The Unknown Charlotte Small." They were too pessimistic, I thought. I had begun to find Charlotte, and I wanted to talk about how much we can learn if we dig down, tracking both the subject herself and the contexts of her life and allowing a place for careful surmise and speculation.

In this sort of enterprise, it sometimes helps to engage in what an ethnohistorian friend, Frederic W. Gleach, called "controlled speculation"—the method he used to figure out what might really have gone on in the famous encounter between Pocahontas and Captain John Smith near Jamestown (Virginia) in December 1607. Gleach proposed that rather than look at that event in isolation, we should seek analogies in related and neighbouring communities that could shed light on it from other angles. He found that what John Smith thought was his "rescue" by Pocahontas had some close parallels with certain life-transforming adoption ceremonies that were practiced among neighbours of her people, the Powhatans. The event was probably a ritual of assimilation, meant to change Smith's identity from English to Powhatan, even if Smith didn't get the message (or want to hear it). Controlled speculation helped Gleach to go beyond Smith's account and make sense of how the Powhatans were trying to deal with this problematic outsider.[3]

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1 HSMBC Project Description Worksheet, "Charlotte Small, Historical Significance: Research Report," June 2006, leading to my report, "Charlotte Small (1785–1857)," Historic Sites and Monuments Board of Canada Submission Report 2007-13.

2 The board took up the nomination in July 2007; they were unable to meet earlier as they lacked a quorum and a chair. Their decision and its upward progress were secret until April 2008, when John Baird, minister of the environment, announced that he had designated Charlotte Small Thompson as a Person of National Historic Significance. Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Seeking Charlotte Small Thompson: Identities in Motion," *Rupert's Land Newsletter* 24–25 (2008): 14–18 (Centre for Rupert's Land Studies, University of Winnipeg).

3 Frederic W. Gleach, "Controlled Speculation and Constructed Myths: The Saga of Pocahontas and Captain John Smith," in *Reading Beyond Words:* Contexts for Native History, 2nd ed., ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press,

There's a line, of course, between controlled speculation and making things up (between getting blood from a stone and giving it a transfusion, as a former student recalls me writing on her paper!). If we work carefully with the limited sources, however, Charlotte, like Pocahontas, emerges as a real human being who resists stereotypes. Following Gleach's advice, we can understand her better by looking as well at the lives and experiences of other Aboriginal wives of fur traders, just as her husband had much in common with other traders. But she, like Thompson, was also unique in several respects. Her experience and accomplishments stand out in three ways. First, she probably travelled farther across northern North America than any other woman, Native or non-Native, of her time—including Sacagawea, the young Shoshone guide and interpreter made famous by the Lewis and Clark Expedition of 1804–6. Second, her fifty-eight-year marriage to David Thompson is the longest surviving union of a fur trader and his Aboriginal wife known in the history of Rupert's Land. And third, she played a major role in facilitating Thompson's travels and his relations with Cree and other Indigenous people.

In the past few decades, the Aboriginal women who became companions, wives, and mothers to countless fur traders from the 1600s onward have become better known as scholars, heritage researchers, and, increasingly, their own descendants have retrieved their stories from documentary, oral, and material sources. We now understand pretty well how reliant the traders were on the women who became their partners and on the networks of Native kin whom they gained as relatives through these connections. As noted, David Thompson's accomplishments have been well recognized in the past century and, especially, in the recent bicentennial celebrations.[4] But most of Thompson's writings left a zone of silence around Charlotte, and many recent works have not done much better.[5]

2003), 39–74. In the first draft of my report for the HSMBC, I cited Gleach's method but was advised to remove any reference to "speculation."

4 Geographer J. B. Tyrrell began to bring recognition to Thompson in the 1890s as he realized the accuracy and range of his surveys. In 1916, the Champlain Society published Tyrrell's edited volume, *David Thompson's Narrative of His Explorations in North America*. In 1927, seventy years after Thompson's death, the Canadian Historical Association conferred further recognition, raising a monument over his unmarked grave in Mount Royal Cemetery in Montréal (CHA, "David Thompson Monument," *Annual Report,* 1927, 9–16). In 1957, the centenary of Thompson's death, an artist's image of him appeared on a commemorative postage stamp. In 1962, the Champlain Society published a new expanded edition of the *Narrative*, edited by Richard Glover (*David Thompson's Narrative, 1784–1812*). The Society and McGill-Queen's University Press are producing a new three-volume set of Thompson's journals and notes, edited by William Moreau; volume 1 appeared in 2009, and volume 2 in 2015.

5 My article "Seeking Charlotte Small Thompson: Identities in Motion" (cited in note 2) offers a critical review of writings on Charlotte from Tyrrell's time onward.

ORIGINS: A FATHER IN NAME ONLY

Charlotte Small is said to have been born on 1 September 1785, at Île-à-la-Crosse on the upper Churchill River in present-day northern Saskatchewan. This date, however, was written down much later; the family probably wanted to fix a date to celebrate and maybe also to make a legal record. Her father, Patrick Small, a Scottish North West Company (NWC) partner, left no record of her birth. She and her sister (or half-sister), Nancy, went unmentioned in his two wills, and his second will referred only obliquely to his son Patrick. We cannot even be sure that Small was the giver of the children's Christian names. His younger colleague, William McGillivray, who came into the area when Small was close to leaving the fur trade and took a hand in shaping his son's future, may have undertaken to replace the children's Cree names (unrecorded) with English given names and their father's surname. Small left North America in 1791, before Charlotte turned six. Her mother, whose name is unknown, was Western Woods Cree.[6] Cree people were certainly not living by a European calendar at the time; they probably related her birth to its season—the end of summer, perhaps, when the geese were gathering to fly south.

Patrick Small was born in Perthshire in the Highlands of Scotland, probably in 1759. He became an NWC partner in 1784.[7] A younger cousin of Patrick, John McDonald of Garth, also became part of the family story. McDonald, born in 1774, also in Perthshire, joined the NWC in 1791.[8] He took as his fur trade

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6 For an ethnohistorical overview, see James G. E. Smith, "Western Woods Cree," in *Subarctic*, ed. June Helm, 256–70, vol. 6 of *Handbook of North American Indians*, William Sturtevant, gen. ed. (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution, 1981). The Cree of the region call themselves Nehiyawak, "those who speak the same language"; Thompson rendered the name as Nahathaway. Locally, Île-à-la-Crosse people are known as Sakittawawiyiniwok, "people of the river mouth" (ibid., 267–69).

7 W. S. Wallace, ed., *Documents Relating to the North West Company* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), 498–99. General John Small (1730–96), a Highlander and British officer in the American Revolution and later the lieutenant governor of the island of Guernsey, had two grandnephews who, through his friendship with Simon McTavish, founder of the NWC, entered the Montréal fur trade: Patrick Small and John McDonald (of Garth). A brief biography of Patrick Small appears in J. B. Tyrrell, ed., *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1934), 330. Information kindly provided by Harry W. Duckworth indicates that Patrick's parents were John Small and Ciciely Robertson; Patrick was baptized 16 July 1759. "Scotland Births and Baptisms, 1564–1950," database, FamilySearch (https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:XYQP-NYK, 2 January 2015), Patrick Small, citing Kirkmichael, Perthshire, Scotland, reference 2:17T3GKF; Family History Library microfilm 1,040,121, Salt Lake City.

8 Autobiographical Notes of John McDonald, 1791–1816 (McGill University Libraries, Department of Rare Books and Special Collections), 1. See also McDonald-Campbell genealogy in Robert J. Burns, *Inverarden: Retirement Home of Fur Trader John McDonald of*

wife Patrick's daughter Nancy Small, who was Charlotte's sister (or half-sister; see below). If Charlotte and Nancy had the same mother, their children were first cousins on the Cree side but certainly more distant cousins through their father's Small-McDonald connection.

Small travelled from Scotland to Montréal in 1779 and is said to have wintered on the Churchill River in 1779–80.[9] In 1781–82, he was working in the Mackinac fur trade on the Great Lakes. He became an NWC partner in 1784 and was in charge at Île-à-la-Crosse on the Churchill River from 1783 or 1784 to 1791, except for a year's leave in 1788–89, when he was in Montréal. In 1791, he retired to England.[10] None of his fur trade journals survive, but in 1785–87 he had a rival at Île-à-la-Crosse, a novice trader named Alexander Mackenzie, later knighted for his explorations, who wrote a great deal. Mackenzie was working for Gregory, McLeod, and Company, a firm that later combined with the NWC. In about November of 1786, Mackenzie wrote to his cousin Roderic McKenzie, who was trading at a post to the east, and gave him a vivid description of Small's close relations with the local Cree: "There are about ten men of the Crees nation at the other fort, all connections and I cannot see one of them. I have not a single one in my fort that can make rackets [*raquettes*, snowshoes]. I do not know what to do without these articles see what it is to have no wives. Try and get Rackets—there is no stirring without them. . . . I find none of my men can speak to the Crees."[11]

Patrick Small himself did not have long experience with Cree customs or language, but he evidently formed some relationships that helped his trade and enabled him to secure snowshoes; this essential footwear involved men's labour in the making of the frames and women's skills in netting them with sinew, which they also prepared. Soon after he arrived, his "connections" must have linked him with a local network of Cree traders—and with their daughters or sisters. During his six or seven years at Île-à-la-Crosse, Small fathered two daughters and a son who all carried his surname. Their Cree mother or mothers were never named in written records.

Garth (Ottawa: National Historic Parks and Sites Branch, Manuscript Report No. 245, Parks Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, 1978).

9 Donald Whyte, *A Dictionary of Scottish Emigrants to Canada Before Confederation* (Toronto: Ontario Genealogical Society, 1986), 1:391; Wallace, *Documents*, 499.

10 Tyrrell, *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor*, 330n1. My thanks to Harry W. Duckworth for documenting Small's presence in Montréal during 1788–89, when he had a will notarized by John Gerbrand Beek in May of 1789 (microfilm 2096, Bibliothèque et Archives nationales du Québec, Montréal branch).

11 W. Kaye Lamb, ed., *The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1970), 11, 424.

Charlotte, as mentioned above, was later recorded as born 1 September 1785.[12] Nancy, whose fur trade marriage with John McDonald of Garth began in 1799 at Rocky Mountain House (Alberta), was said to have been born in about 1783, but a year or two later is more likely, given that Small did not reach Île-à-la-Crosse until late in 1783 or 1784.[13] Their brother (or half-brother), Patrick Small, Jr., entered the NWC's service in 1804. Sources disagree on his birthdate. The best estimate is 1791, based on his Montréal baptismal description as "aged about five years."[14] Patrick's godfather, William McGillivray, supplied that estimate. McGillivray was presenting his own twin sons, Joseph and Simon, born in the Indian country on 1 March 1791, for baptism at the same time, 3 October 1796, so he knew what five-year-olds looked like. Since Small had left North America in 1791, possibly without ever seeing his son, McGillivray was probably responsible for bringing Patrick, Jr., to Montréal for baptism and arranging for an education that later qualified him for a clerkship in the NWC.

Whether or not Patrick Small, Jr., Charlotte, and Nancy had the same mother, she (or they) was surely related to Small's Cree male associates whom Mackenzie described in 1786. The acceptance of a newcomer among Cree and other Aboriginal people depended on establishing some sort of kinship or quasi-kinship bond with the stranger by such means as adoption or marriage or both, to build mutual trust and reciprocity. An adoptee or new spouse was then expected to take on appropriate roles and obligations among his new kin, although European traders were unlikely to have understood those expectations.[15]

Patrick Small's Cree partners, male and female, were essential to his success. His view of his relationships with Cree women, however, would have varied from theirs. For him, these were certainly not marriages, though the Cree might have interpreted them as such. The word for marriage in Cree, *wikihtowin*

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12 J. B. Tyrrell listed dates for Charlotte, David Thompson, and their children based on a family Bible: "Charlotte Small, wife of David Thompson, born September 1st, 1785, at Isle a la Crosse, married to David Thompson, June 10th, 1799." Tyrrell, *David Thompson's Narrative*, lv. This birthdate also appears on Charlotte's grave in Mount Royal Cemetery in Montréal but lacks documentation prior to the Thompson family record.

13 McDonald-Campbell genealogy, in Burns, *Inverarden*.

14 My thanks to Harry W. Duckworth for this baptismal record from the Christ Church (Montréal) Anglican register. Governor George Simpson later estimated Patrick, Jr., to be rather older, about forty-eight. Glyndwr Williams, ed., *Hudson's Bay Miscellany* (London: Hudson's Bay Record Society, 1975), 227.

15 Nor'Wester George Nelson, a Thompson contemporary, did better than most on that front. See Laura Peers and Jennifer S. H. Brown, "'There Is No End to Relationship Among the Indians': Ojibwa Families and Kinship in Historical Perspective," *The History of the Family* 4, no. 4 (2000): 529–55.

(Plains Cree dialect), simply meant "living together" and did not carry the same baggage that the term had for European clergy and other Christians. David Thompson wrote in his *Narrative* that Cree marriages were "without noise or ceremony. Nothing is requisite but the consent of the parties, and Parents." He added that "when contrariety of disposition prevails, so that they cannot live peaceably together, they separate with as little ceremony as they came together, and both parties are free to attach themselves to whom they will." If the separating couple had children, then "one, or both, are severely blamed" for separating, but Thompson mentioned no sanctions actually being applied.[16] By the mid-1800s, when missionaries had become active, the Cree needed a new term to signify formal marriage—holy matrimony solemnized by clergy—so Cree speakers add the prefix *kihci-*, "big": *kihci-wikihtowin* literally means "big living-together."

We cannot tell whether Patrick Small and the mother or mothers of his children even lived together for any period. If he had multiple mates, as is surmised here, such was permissible in Cree terms. But for Cree men, it was often not a matter of choice. David Thompson expanded on the subject in some detail: "Although Polygamy is fully allowed yet many of the Indians would take no advantage of it, but abide by one wife, yet such is the vicissitudes of their Lives, it is rare to see an Indian of thirty years of age with only one wife." One of Thompson's acquaintances was a young man, aged about twenty-three, who "prided himself in adhering to only one wife, whom he loved." When Thompson visited his tent one day, however, he was surprised to see "four fine women in the prime of life sitting on the opposite side." Thompson remarked to him, "You have changed your mind." The man took him aside and said, "I have not changed my mind." Two of the women, he explained, "were the wives of my cousin, the son of the sister of my mother [i.e., a parallel cousin], who died a few months ago, and these women he bequeathed to me, and I must take care of them." The other two "were the wives of an intimate friend whom I loved as a brother." This friend was severely wounded in war, and as death approached, "he requested me to take his two wives, as he knew they would be kindly treated by me." Now, he added, he was consumed with hunting "the Red Deer and the Bison, large animals, to maintain them."[17]

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16 H. C. Wolfart and Freda Ahenakew, *The Student's Dictionary of Literary Plains Cree Based on Contemporary Texts* (Winnipeg: Algonquian and Iroquoian Linguistics, Memoir 15, University of Manitoba, 1998), 321; Glover, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 82. Thompson's comment on Cree views of parental separations when children were involved may obliquely reference Patrick Small's desertion.

17 *The Writings of David Thompson*, vol. 2, *The Travels, 1848 Version, and Associated Texts*, ed. and intro. William E. Moreau (Toronto: Champlain Society, 2015), 102.

Patrick Small, as a newcomer, was not enmeshed in such networks of responsibility. With his status and resources as a trader, he could respond to both opportunities for and pressures towards marriage as Cree people understood it, while having no intention of making such a commitment. He thereby could gain female companionship and work skills—food production, leather and fur processing, and the like—while extending his trade networks among the women's kinsmen.[18] A clue that his three children were born to two or perhaps three different women lies in the fact that they were all born within the space of six or seven years, at most. It would have been unusual for one Cree woman to bear three children within such a short period; Aboriginal mothers usually nursed their babies for at least two or three years, and birth intervals of three or four years were normal in Cree families (see chapter 4, this volume). If Small had relations with more than one woman, they may have been sisters, since sororal polygyny was relatively common. In that case, Charlotte and Nancy would have had the same Cree maternal grandparents. In Cree kinship terminology, the children of two same-sex siblings were also themselves labelled as siblings (whereas in English usage, they would be first cousins).[19] Charlotte and Nancy, in short, could have been described to incoming anglophones by a Cree term translated simply as "sisters." (Of course, if they had different mothers, they were still half-sisters through their father.)

After Small left in early summer 1791, Charlotte's mother probably soon married a Cree at Île-à-la-Crosse, since no woman stayed alone for long.[20] (If she had married a trader, she might have turned up in the records, but no trace of her has been found.) If Charlotte and Nancy had the same mother, the two girls, somewhere between thirteen and fifteen years of age, would probably still have been together as of 1799. But when John McDonald of Garth married Nancy in that year, she was already far away, at Rocky Mountain House.[21]

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18 The informality with which Small treated these ties, and possibly the uncertainty of descendants about the mothers' identities, may help explain why Charlotte's mother's name—and, for that matter, the names of the mother(s) of Nancy and Patrick, Jr.—are unknown.

19 If Charlotte's and Nancy's mothers were sisters, then the two girls, in anthropological parlance, were parallel cousins, a concept beyond the ken of European newcomers (see chapter 8, this volume). If some of Small's voyageurs followed his example with Cree partners, numerous other undocumented offspring of mixed descent may have ended up with Cree maternal relatives; Small had thirty men in his charge at Île-à-la-Crosse. Harry W. Duckworth, ed., *The English River Book* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), xxxi.

20 Thompson, in Glover, *David Thompson's Narrative*, 82: "every woman must have a husband" (and vice versa: a lone person could not easily survive in the subarctic).

21 Burns, *Inverarden*, 13.

Perhaps Nancy's mother had followed a path into a new relationship, possibly with a voyageur, that led her and her daughter away from Île-à-la-Crosse after Patrick Small left. The existence of different mothers may explain why the two girls had become separated by the time they married.

Fur trade documents provide one last glimpse of Patrick Small in his years in the Northwest. In the winter of 1790–91, weather and health issues obliged HBC men Philip Turnor, Malchom Ross, Peter Fidler, and their men to winter at Île-à-la-Crosse, where Small lent them two houses and treated them kindly.[22] Sometime in June 1791, after his guests left for Athabasca, Small left Île-à-la-Crosse for England, leaving his Cree offspring behind. His eldest child, Nancy, was seven years old, at most. If his son Patrick was born in 1791, as suggested above, Small may not even have known him.

Whatever his Cree relatives' perspectives may have been, Patrick Small surely regarded his Cree unions as relations of convenience, probably with an element of affection and enjoyment but useful for his trade. A will that he made in Montréal in May of 1789 made no reference to the two daughters he had by that time, or to any son. When he left for good in 1791, he no doubt assumed that their Cree relatives would look after the children. As noted above, his colleague William McGillivray probably took the initiative to bring Small's son Patrick, aged five or so, to Montréal in 1796 to be baptized and educated with his own young sons, Simon and Joseph. McGillivray had served intermittently at Île-à-la-Crosse and another outpost while Small was there, so he would have been aware of Small's offspring.[23] Knowing who the boy's absent father was, he may even have been the one who made sure that this small child became known by his father's name as he was carried away from his Cree relatives.

Patrick Small's only known reference to his son used a language of distance. His English will of 16 September 1808 included a legacy for "Patrick Small an indian Boy now a clerk or apprentice in the service of the North West Compy."[24] With his ongoing company ties (he was a member of the Beaver

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22 Tyrrell, *Journals of Samuel Hearne and Philip Turnor*, 90, 365.

23 Fernand Ouellet, "McGillivray, William," Dictionary of Canadian Biography (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), 6:454–57. Simon's and Joseph's mother, known as Susan (d. 1819), was Cree or of mixed descent; in 1800, McGillivray set her aside to marry Magdeleine, sister of John McDonald of Garth. Brown, *Strangers in Blood*, 90; see also 99, fig. 4, for a chart mapping some Small-McDonald-McGillivray kinship connections. When McDonald, two decades later, set Nancy Small aside to marry an old NWC colleague's niece in Upper Canada, he had a family precedent.

24 Will of Patrick Small, Covent Garden, County of Middlesex, England, 16 September 1808, proved 6 August 1809, prob. 11/1502, fols. 338–39, Public Record Office, National Archives, Kew, UK. The words "or apprentice" were inserted above the text, suggesting uncertainty about the son's status.

Club in Montréal, even though resident in England), Small must eventually have learned that his daughters had become attached to well-placed fur traders (his second cousin John McDonald, in Nancy Small's case). But there is no sign he was ever personally in touch with them—or with his son. Patrick, Jr., lacking a father to advance his interests, did not fare as well in the company as did William McGillivray's twin sons. In the NWC-HBC merger of 1821, Simon and Joseph McGillivray were both appointed chief traders, while Patrick remained a lowly clerk.

Understandably, Patrick Small has been described as abandoning his Cree family. But on both sides, motivations went unrecorded, and his relationships scarcely seemed to coalesce into a family unit in the first place. Separations were accepted in Cree practice, and Small's relations with his Cree "connections" may have been difficult.[25] The local Cree may have said good riddance when he left. Bad feelings or a distaste for fur trade life may have been factors in his leaving the trade at the age of about thirty-two, after only twelve years in North America. But the fact that the children carried his name left open the possibility that as they grew up, they could move from Cree to NWC circles, as indeed they did. As they all left Île-à-la-Crosse at early ages and never returned or left descendants there, they evidently vanished from local memory. Thanks probably to William McGillivray and others, however, they retained their father's surname and their English given names. Subsequent traders at Île-à-la-Crosse knew them as the Indian children of a former NWC colleague, as did David Thompson and others when they passed that way.

FROM CREE DAUGHTER TO FUR TRADE WIFE

Charlotte surely lived with her maternal kin at and around Île-à-la-Crosse from childhood until her union with David Thompson on 10 June 1799. In those years, she would have followed the seasonal rounds of winter hunting and trapping and preparing animal pelts for clothing and the fur trade, and visiting Île-à-la-Crosse for summer fishing, trading, and socializing with relatives and visitors. Through observation and practice, she acquired the critical skills women needed for survival and for clothing and feeding their families in Cree country—skills she would also need in her years with Thompson. She and Nancy probably learned some English and French from the traders, but

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25 As Daniel Williams Harmon observed in 1802, marital partners remained together "as long as they can agree among themselves, but when either is displeased with their choice, he or she will seek another Partner, and thus the Hymenial Bond, without any more ado is broke asunder—which is law here." *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon, 1800–1816*, ed. and intro. W. Kaye Lamb (Toronto: Macmillan of Canada, 1957), 53.

their first language was Cree, literally their mother tongue, which was also the lingua franca of the fur trade.

In following years, Charlotte's travels with David Thompson and their growing family ranged from the upper Columbia River to Lake Athabasca, among other places, and finally to Montréal when Thompson retired from the NWC in 1812. Charlotte did not go on all of his trips; sometimes she wintered at one or another post in the regions where he was working. But the birthdates and estimated conception dates of their children (five born between 1801 and 1811) are clues, along with written sources, about when they were together. In 2006, Leanne Playter and Andreas N. Korsos mapped her known travels with Thompson from 1799 to 1812, along with her sojourns at various posts while she and her children awaited her husband's returns from the trips he made without her. They estimate that during those thirteen years, she covered more than twenty thousand kilometres by canoe, on horseback, and on foot.[26]

Charlotte made essential, if quiet, contributions to Thompson's subsistence and survival, to the manufacture of clothing and equipment, and to communication and good relations with Aboriginal people through her knowledge of Cree language and customs. Thompson's writings offer rare but significant glimpses of not only her linguistic and cultural skills but also her ability to thrive on the land. For example, while the couple was wintering at Reed Lake (Manitoba) in 1805–6 (and while she was pregnant with a daughter who was born in March 1806), she snared numerous rabbits, which provided both food and skins for the complex task of weaving rabbit skin blankets—a small one requires about forty skins. In summer 1804, Thompson noted that she and other women were gathering large amounts of *wattup*, or spruce roots, which were essential for sewing and mending birch bark canoes and containers.[27] His descriptions of Cree life and ways and his insights into their language and thought, although never as full as we would like, were richly informed by his Cree wife and companion of so many years, as well as by his other Aboriginal associates.

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26 "Moccasin Miles: The Travels of Charlotte Small, 1799–1812," map drawn by Andreas N. Korsos, 2006, research compiled by Leanne Playter, updated by Korsos by email, 8 April 2015.

27 David Thompson, Journal 17, 1805–1806, Rat River, Archives of Ontario, listed as Journal No. 17, 1805–1806, 1812 and 1828, MS 4426. In Journal 16, Thompson noted, "August 19 [1804]. . . . Made all our fat and greater part of the beat[en] meat into pemmican. The women delivered their wattup [spruce roots], Charlotte 24 bottes [French, "bundles"], Morin's woman, 21 d[itt]o. Lisette 25 do. and the Chipawyan woman 20 bottes." Journey from Lac La Cro[i]x to the Interior [Book 16], Journal No. 16, 1804–1806, MS 4426, Archives of Ontario, Toronto. Thanks to Sean Peake for these excerpts from his transcripts of the original documents. He and William Moreau have each worked through Thompson's writings for many years and generously responded to my questions.

The sparse references to Charlotte in her husband's and other contemporary (and later) writings understate her actual roles and importance; the activities of men in the trade always received more attention. Most traders' business and work-related writings of the 1700s and 1800s said little about women and children or left them unnamed if mentioned. No writings survive from Charlotte herself, although she had some degree of literacy: she signed her name on her marriage certificate in 1812. Also, we have no physical description or portrait of her beyond a verbal sketch of her appearance recorded several decades after her death, although some descendants have portraits of her relatives that may give clues to her appearance.[28]

Charlotte has misleadingly been described as Métis on Wikipedia and elsewhere. That ethnic identity and community, however, did not achieve visibility in Rupert's Land until forged in the crucible of the conflicts in Red River around 1815–16, by which time Charlotte and Nancy and their families had settled in Upper Canada. Charlotte's brother Patrick, Jr. (d. 1846), was the only sibling who, as a later HBC trader in the Saskatchewan country, became linked with the growing Métis communities of the region. He died in the Northwest, and HBC correspondence about his estate indicates that some of his children were later residing in Red River.[29]

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28 Alexander Campbell, a descendant of Nancy Small, Charlotte's sister, kindly shared his findings on family history; he possesses photographs thought to be of Nancy and possibly Patrick Small, Jr. (email, July 2006), but one can only surmise a family resemblance. Other valuable assistance came from Anne Lindsay, who combed archival and secondary sources on the Thompsons.

29 Patrick entered the North West Company as a clerk in 1804 and served mainly in the Saskatchewan department; he died on 18 January 1846. Wallace, *Documents*, 499. George Simpson described him in 1832 as "a half breed of the Cree Tribe" and an excellent trader who spoke several Native languages, was active, well liked, and respected; this was high praise compared to many of Simpson's judgments about "halfbreeds." However, Simpson added, his education was deficient, he was addicted to liquor, and his word was "not always to be depended on, so that he has no prospect of advancement." Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany*, 227. In 1814 or before, Patrick, Jr., married Nancy, daughter of James Hughes (1772–1853), an NWC partner who retired to Canada at the 1821 merger, spent all his savings, and rejoined the HBC as a clerk from 1830 to 1833. Wallace, *Documents*, 458–59; Williams, *Hudson's Bay Miscellany*, 213. Patrick and Nancy had a large family. In 1838, when Fathers Blanchet and Demers were on their way to found a mission in the Pacific Northwest, they stopped at Fort Carlton where Patrick was in charge. On 21 August, Blanchet baptized their eight children, born between 1814 and 1835. He also baptized Nancy, describing her as the "natural daughter of James Hughes, Esquire" and of "Nan-touche, native woman of one of those [tribes] beyond the Rocky Mountains." Then Patrick, described as Protestant, and Nancy, "member of the Roman Catholic Church, renewed and ratified before us . . . their mutual consent of marriage" and recognized their children "as legitimate, issue of their natural marriage." Harriet Munnick, ed., *Catholic Church Records of the Pacific Northwest*, 3, 4.

Why did David Thompson and John McDonald ally themselves with the daughters of Patrick Small? Small was absent when these events occurred, so he had no role in them. He never met David Thompson—who did not join the Nor'Westers until 1797, six years after Small's departure. It is also unclear whether Small was acquainted with his own younger cousin, John McDonald of Garth; McDonald joined the NWC in 1791, the year that Small left for England.

Affection and mutual attraction, although not topics of written discourse, seemed to play a role in these unions; the numerous children born to each couple suggest some strong attachment, even if it was finally severed in the McDonald case. The girls' possession of the surname of a senior company partner probably carried influence, and while the girls were brought up Cree, they may have appeared less "Indian" than their maternal relatives. John McDonald may have seen his choice as reinforcing a link with the Small family, if at a distance (he and Nancy Small being paternal second cousins once removed). Perhaps Nancy's Scottish connection held some appeal for a Highlander; here, as elsewhere, we can only speculate.

Thompson's motives were probably different. He lacked McDonald's familial and patronage connections with other Highland Nor'Westers. His serious, observant character may have been a factor. Besides seeking companionship, he may have seen young Charlotte as vulnerable, in need of rescue from "Indian" life or from the fur trade men around her, especially if her mother had moved on to a new relationship. With his HBC background, he would have observed, like other HBC men, that the Nor'Westers' relations with Aboriginal women could be abusive and exploitive. Although HBC efforts to regulate such relationships were commonly unsuccessful, the company did make more efforts at control than did the NWC.[30] Thompson's own earlier record was imperfect; sometime before marrying Charlotte, he had a son in the Athabasca country for whom he felt lingering responsibility.[31]

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30 See Brown, *Strangers in Blood,* chaps. 3 and 4, for comparisons between HBC and NWC behaviour towards women in this period, drawing upon both HBC and NWC testimony.

31 In March 1808, Thompson wrote to Donald McTavish at Fort Augustus on the upper North Saskatchewan River, asking him "to take my little child under your protection and if possible to get him from his mother [and] contrive some way or other to put him into my hands—at least see him well clothed and of course charge it to my account." If McTavish had contrived it, Charlotte might have acquired the care of still another child aged perhaps ten or eleven, but no more was heard of him; possibly the mother would not let him go. Jack Nisbet, *Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson Across Western North America* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 1994), 111–12.

Thompson was certainly attracted by Charlotte's skills in Cree. He had been learning Cree during his first thirteen years in Rupert's Land, but the detailed descriptions in his *Narrative* surely also reflect the aid of a companion fluent in both languages. In about 1847, he acknowledged her contributions in a manuscript account of his travels:

> I have lived several years with the Na hath a way [Cree] Indians, and speak their soft language . . . my knowledge of their religion I collected from being present at their various ceremonies, living and travelling with them, and my lovely Wife is of the blood of these people, speaking their language, and well educated in the english language; which gives me a great advantage.[32]

David Thompson and Charlotte ultimately had thirteen children, whose names, births, and the early deaths of three were recorded in loving detail in the family Bible. In *David Thompson's Narrative* (lv), J. B. Tyrrell reproduced the list:

Fanny Thompson, born June 10th, 1801. Rocky Mountain House.

Samuel Thompson, born March 5th, 1804. Peace River Forks.

Emma Thompson, born March 1806. Reed Lake House.

John Thompson, born August 25th, 1808. Boggy Hall, Saskatchewan.

Joshua Thompson, born March 28th, 1811. Fort Augustus.

Henry Thompson, born July 30th, 1813. Terrebonne Village.

John Thompson, deceased January 11th, 1814, at 7 A.M. in the Village of Terrebonne, buried in Montreal the 12th inst. No. 353 – Aged 5 years and near 5 months, a beautiful, promising boy.

Emma Thompson, deceased Feb. 22nd, 1814, at 7.25 P.M. Aged 7 years and near 11 months. Buried close touching her brother in Montreal. No. 353 – An amiable, innocent girl, too good for this world.

Charlotte Thompson, born 7th July, 1815 at 11¼ A.M. Village of Terrebonne.

Elizabeth Thompson, born 25th April, 1817, at 8 P.M., at the Village of Williamstown, River Raisin, Glengarry.

William Thompson, born 9th November, 1819, at the Village of Williamstown, River Raisin, Glengarry.

Thomas Thompson, born July 10th, 1822, at 4 P.M. Williamstown, Glengarry, Up[per] Canada.

George Thompson, born 13th July, 1 A.M., 1824, Williamstown, Glengarry, Up. Canada, died August 27th 10½ A.M. Buried August 28th, 1824. Aged 7 weeks.

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32 *The Writings of David Thompson*, vol. 2, *The Travels, 1848 Version, and Associated Texts*, ed. and intro. William E. Moreau (Toronto: Champlain Society, 2015), 6.

> Mary Thompson, born April 2, 1827, at Williamstown, 12 p.m. Glengarry, Up. Canada.

John McDonald and Charlotte's sister Nancy Small had two sons and three daughters. Both fathers had their children and the respective mothers baptized by the clergy of the St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church in Montréal. Four McDonald baptisms were recorded there in 1810 and 1812. Elizabeth McDonald, aged five, the daughter of McDonald "by a woman of the Indian Country," was baptized on 18 August 1810. On 19 October 1812, "Catharine Small [an evident misnaming of Nancy] aged about 27 years, from the Indian Country" was baptized with McDonald's and her children Agnes and Rolland.[33]

Aside from these baptisms, however, McDonald and Thompson set their families on different paths in one important respect. On 30 September 1812, when David Thompson presented four children for baptism, Charlotte, "aged about 25," was baptized on the same occasion. Then Thompson took a step that McDonald never took: he and Charlotte were married by the minister, J. Somerville, on 30 October 1812.[34] Alexander Campbell, descendant of Nancy, noted that Charlotte also signed her name in the register; in contrast, he has found no evidence that Nancy learned to write. That Charlotte possessed some literacy, surely learned from her husband, is also suggested by the fact that Thompson sometimes mentioned writing letters to her, as well as describing her as "well educated in the english language," as quoted above.[35] Unfortunately, none of his letters to her survive.

In the next decades, the fortunes of the two families diverged widely. Thompson, from the 1820s on, slipped into serious poverty; his surveying work and land speculations did not build security, and the 1830s were a time of economic depression. McDonald, in contrast, although he tended to overspend, built an elegant country home called Inverarden at Gray's Creek on the St. Lawrence River; he and Nancy were living there when their last child, Magdalene, was

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33 St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church registers, vol. 4, pp. 139, 301, Archives of Ontario, Toronto.

34 St. Gabriel Street Presbyterian Church registers, vol. 4, pp. 297, 304 (Thompson entries), vol. 4, pp. 139, 301 (McDonald entries), Archives of Ontario, Toronto. For discussion of the NWC traders' children's baptisms found in these registers, see chapter 9, this volume.

35 For example, "1837 August 1st. Tuesday. . . . left our encampment on the sandy Point of the south Christian Island. . . . Wrote to my wife." Florence B. Murray, ed., *Muskoka and Haliburton, 1615–1875: A Collection of Documents* (Toronto: Champlain Society, 1963), 85. In 1972, Elizabeth Clutton-Brock published *Woman of the Paddle Song* (Toronto: Copp-Clark), a romantic book about Charlotte. Her introduction explicitly identifies it as a novel. Inside, however, are supposedly direct quotations from letters between David and Charlotte, misleadingly presented as real. I learned about the book when I was asked if I had found these fictional letters during my research for the HSMBC.

born in 1816. He also invested in land and timber, became a justice of the peace, and maintained a respectable social standing among his fellow Scots of the Williamstown area.[36]

By May 1823, McDonald was no longer with Nancy Small. That month, perhaps for both social and financial reasons, he married Amelia McGillis, whose uncle, Hugh, was a prosperous retired NWC partner in Williamstown. Two prominent citizens of nearby Cornwall signed a bond that there was no impediment to this marriage.[37] McDonald then sold Inverarden to his and Nancy's eldest daughter, Eliza (baptized in 1810 as Elizabeth), and her new husband, retired Nor'Wester John Duncan Campbell, but he kept a neighbouring house and acreage for himself and his new wife, with whom he had four children. Amelia died in childbirth in 1830; McDonald lived until 1866. Nancy Small probably remained with her daughter Eliza Campbell and family; she died in 1856.[38] Some Thompson records show that she and Charlotte kept in touch at least into the 1830s.[39] Charlotte and David Thompson survived in growing poverty until their deaths, three months apart, in 1857. But their marriage, unlike those of Nancy Small McDonald and many others, had remained intact for an impressive fifty-eight years.[40]

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36 Burns, *Inverarden*, 16–17.

37 Contrast the Connolly case in the 1860s: the court declared William Connolly's Cree marriage legitimate on grounds that in Lower Canada, he couldn't simply leave his first wife (as Cree custom would have allowed) once he had brought her to live under Canadian laws regulating marriage and divorce (chapter 6, this volume).

38 Burns, *Inverarden*, 18–20, 39–40.

39 Alexander Campbell, a descendant of Nancy Small, kindly provided notations from Thompson's notebooks and journals of visits that Thompson, Charlotte, and family members made from Williamstown to "Gray's Creek" (Inverarden) in 1823–33. Several visits involved overnight stays at Gray's Creek to attend church services in Cornwall. Notebooks and Journals nos. 55, 64, 70a, fonds F 443-1, Archives of Ontario, Toronto.

40 Lisette Duval Harmon, if she had not been widowed in 1843, would have come close to this record. She lived until 1862 in Montréal—for forty-two years after leaving the fur trade country and fifty-seven years after her fur trade marriage to Nor'Wester Daniel Williams Harmon in 1805. Harmon, like other traders of his time, was at first ambivalent about this union; on 10 October 1805, he wrote:

> This Day a Canadians Daughter (a Girl of about fourteen years of age) was offered me, and after mature consideration concerning the step I ought to take I finally concluded it would be best to accept of her, as it is customary for all the Gentlemen who come in this Country to remain any length of time to have a *fair* Partner, with whom they can pass away their time at least more sociably if not more agreeably than to live a lonely, solitary life, as they must do if single. In case we can live in harmony together, my intentions now are to keep her as long as I remain in the uncivilized part of the world, but when I return to my native land shall endeavour to place her into the hands of some good honest Man, with whom she can pass the remainder of her Days in this Country much more agreeably, than it would be possible for her to do, were she to be

CHARLOTTE AS J. B. TYRRELL'S "MODEL HOUSEWIFE"

Charlotte's fur trade years with David Thompson have received the most atten-tion from writers interested in her. But in fact, that phase of her life lasted only thirteen years. In 1812, she and David settled in an environment that was strange to them both. They lived in eastern Upper Canada and Montréal for forty-five years, far from her Cree homeland and far from the Métis homeland that was taking form on the prairies. In eastern Canada, Charlotte and her sister (or half-sister) Nancy were *métis* only in the French, small-*m* sense of having mixed "blood" or ancestry. No Métis community existed in that area, although some Thompson descendants of later times have identified with Métis people in eastern Canada.[41] Thompson himself identified Charlotte as essentially Cree and benefited greatly from her skills as a Cree woman; he never described her as Métis. Those who know his writings best have found only one instance of his using the term—in his *Travels* (1848), describing the offspring of traders and Cree women in general terms.[42]

Sixty years after the Thompsons' deaths, J. B. Tyrrell, the first editor of Thompson's *Narrative*, presented an image of Charlotte that suggested she had left her Cree identity behind, at least in public. He emphasized how well she had adapted to her wifely role over her forty-five years in eastern Canada. In this, he was influenced by his own values and also by what he heard from a descendant. In 1917, he interviewed one of Charlotte and David Thompson's grandsons, William Scott, who had lived with his grandparents as a boy from 1845 to 1850. Tyrrell's questions tell us as much about his perspective as about Charlotte. Tyrrell was interested mainly in her domestic habits and in her appearance, perhaps seeking to know how "Indian" she was. In response, Scott said Charlotte was about five feet tall, "active and wiry," with black eyes and almost copper-coloured skin. She was "gentle and kind; very reserved in her

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taken down to the civilized world, where she would be a stranger to the People, their manners, customs & Language.

This marriage, however, like Thompson's and George Nelson's, became life long. Harmon, *Sixteen Years in Indian Country*, xiv, xvii, 98.

41 Alexander Campbell, a descendant of Nancy Small, emphasizes the Métis identity of his family line. Different branches of fur trade families have followed diverse trails with respect to identity.

42 *The Writings of David Thompson*, vol. 2, *The Travels, 1848 Version, and Associated Texts,* ed. William E. Moreau (Toronto: Champlain Society, 2015), 88–89: "The Nahathaway Indians more readily associate with the white man than any other tribe. The women are modest and graceful, finely formed and they become wives of the traders and of the men; they all become mothers, and attachments are formed, which lasts for life, and when opportunity offers legal marriages take place, of which little can be said of any other tribe. The issue from these marriages are called Metiss."

ways, and manner. . . . an excellent housekeeper" who did not socialize beyond her family. She and her husband were "very companionable," but, Scott added, "unfortunately we know nothing of the history of her family." In 1928, Tyrrell summarized his findings: "Mrs. Thompson was a model housewife, scrupulously neat and devoted to [Thompson] as he was to her."[43]

Charlotte (and David) might have been pleased and flattered by Tyrrell's description of Charlotte as a successful English Canadian housewife. But Tyrrell's portrait of her was also consonant with early twentieth-century ideas about women's proper domestic roles and about Aboriginal assimilation as a marker of success. He was writing, after all, in the 1920s, when assimilation was the goal of educators, the churches, and federal Indian policies. We shouldn't be surprised at that. People tend to prize and prioritize the values of their own times, as indeed we are doing in the early twenty-first century when we define and celebrate Charlotte as a distinguished Aboriginal woman. The challenge is to leave room for possibilities around Charlotte herself, to try to imagine her views and perceptions, which surely evolved throughout her long and often strenuous life, although she never had occasion or the means to record them. We can't simply fill in the answers we would like to hear or reject the ones that do not resonate with our times or values. But we do have some advantages over Tyrrell and other earlier scholars in both knowledge and perspectives, even as we stand on their shoulders.

Charlotte's life epitomizes those of the many Aboriginal women and wives who made the fur trade possible through their skills, knowledge, and personal ties. But the scope of her career extended further than most. By her late twenties, she had travelled almost the entire width of the North American continent. She lived through transitions from fur trade to colonial life that were formative in Canada's history, and for the last five decades of her life, she supported and raised her large family in a colonial context vastly removed from the Cree world of her youth. In the words of her relative, Alexander Campbell:

> Nancy and Charlotte are not just historical curiosities or emerging feminist role models, but my ancestors who lived most of their lives in the same vicinity that I am still fortunate enough to call home. I have many of their books, some of their furniture, and all of their blood. Our family was never ashamed of our Scots/Cree birthright and because of Inverarden's proximity to Akwesasne, we enjoyed good relations with the Mohawks right through my father's lifetime. In this one sense then, the

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43 William Moreau, email, 20 February 2006, quoting from Tyrrell Papers, Library and Archives Canada, and citing Tyrrell, "The Rediscovery of David Thompson," *Transactions of the Royal Society of Canada*, 3rd series, 22, s. 2 (1928), 246.

NWC's fur trade connections survived right until the dawn of the 21st century.[44]

ROMANCING CHARLOTTE AND DRAWING SOME CONCLUSIONS

Following upon J. B. Tyrrell's last article about the Thompsons in 1928, writers said little about them in the next two decades. From the 1950s on, however, they regained a higher profile in popular writing about the fur trade. Authors' representations of them served to maintain their visibility but also ventured into some uncontrolled speculations. Charlotte and David's marriage has been a favoured topic. Despite the lack of data about this event (we have no record of their presumed courtship, or of what ceremony, if any, marked their union, or of its witnesses), it has been fair game for later interpretations, and some writers have used their hunting licences freely. Among several examples in the literature, the two that follow received perhaps the most public attention and are the most colourful and problematic.

In 1955, Kerry Wood published *The Map-Maker: The Story of David Thompson*, which won the Governor-General's Medal in Canada that year for juvenile literature. Wood embroidered a romantic courtship for David and Charlotte. They met in the late summer of 1798, he wrote, when David, travelling the Churchill River, visited the fur trade post of Île-à-la-Crosse. The post was under the charge of "an Irishman of good family, Patrick Small," who "had taken a comely Indian woman for a wife." (The Scotsman Small had, of course, left that place in 1791, but Wood dated his departure after Thompson's visit.) When David left Île-à-la-Crosse for his winter quarters, asked Wood, "was the image of the lovely Charlotte cherished in the young man's heart?" The next June, amid the beauties of a northern spring, lyrically described, David returned, "impatient to get back to the log fort where dwelt the smooth-cheeked girl who smiled so easily." Soon he "made a terse but beautiful entry in his daily journal for June 10th, 1799: 'This day married Charlotte Small.'"[45]

D'Arcy Jenish, author of a popular biography of Thompson, *Epic Wanderer* (2003), embroidered the courtship and marriage story further: "In September 1798, while traveling to his wintering ground, Thompson stopped at a company post at Isle a la Crosse . . . and was introduced to a strong, capable Cree woman. She was the wife of a former trader named Patrick Small and worked there to provide for her three children: Nancy, Patrick Jr., who was employed in the trade [not yet, as of 1798], and bright, perky Charlotte, who had just turned

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44 Alexander Campbell, pers. comm., 13 July 2006.

45 Kerry Wood, *The Map-Maker: The Story of David Thompson* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1955), 91, 93–94.

thirteen." Although David's visit lasted only a day, Jenish continued, "he thought often of Charlotte Small that winter and was tempted to write, though he suspected she could not read. He wondered how such a fleeting acquaintance could have made such a powerful impression. They had exchanged just a few words but he had been struck by her and she by him. He was certain of that because he had seen her eyes fastened upon him and she had come down to the water to see him off."[46]

On May 20, Thompson returned to Île-à-la-Crosse "anxious and excited" at seeing Charlotte again: "He began courting her immediately, and she was taken with this man who was handsome and sincere. . . . He wanted a partner for life, not a country wife to be left behind when he retired from the trade." On 10 June 1799, they were married "without fanfare or celebration, according to the customs of the Cree. Each consented to the union, her mother approved it, and they became man and wife."[47]

Jenish provides no sources for this story, and his book contains only a general bibliography. No documents mention Charlotte's mother as being present at the marriage (or anywhere else), and her character ("strong, capable," or otherwise) can only be surmised. In his preface, Jenish notes that since Thompson rarely wrote about his wife or their children, he "avoided trying to fill this gap in the story through speculation or supposition."[48] Supposition abounds, however, in Jenish's description of the courtship and marriage in such factual prose. In fact, the story would be more intriguing if readers were told that its possible scenarios are multiple and can only be imagined. When authors purporting to write history launch into novelistic colour, warnings are needed, given how readers and the media so readily convert unsupported text into fact on the Internet, in images, and elsewhere.[49]

So what can we say about Charlotte? First, she grew up Cree among Cree maternal relatives. Implicitly, her identity shifted over time as Thompson taught her English and perhaps some reading and writing and as they produced and provided for thirteen children. But a Métis identity applies to her only if

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46 D'Arcy Jenish, *Epic Wanderer: David Thompson and the Mapping of the Canadian West* (Toronto: Random House, 2004), 108, 109.

47 Ibid., 110.

48 Ibid., 2.

49 Among the romantic images of Charlotte and David Thompson on the Internet are those found in S. Leanne Playter, "Charlotte Small, Woman of Historic Significance," *Experience the Mountain Parks*, CMI Publishing, 2016, http://www.experiencemountainparks.com/charlotte-small-woman-of-historic-significance/. This portrayal of Charlotte includes rather embroidered prose and artist Joseph Cross's painting of the marriage scene, seemingly based on Jenish's description.

defined in terms of "blood" or race, which are highly problematic criteria.[50] Charlotte was twenty-seven when she came east and gradually adapted to a long life in Anglo- and Scots-Canadian communities in Upper Canada and around Montréal. Some descendants of Charlotte and of her sister, Nancy McDonald, would later move towards Métis affiliations and identity, as did her younger brother, Patrick, Jr., and his family, who stayed in Rupert's Land. But there is no sign that she herself did so. In the end, the Thompsons probably could have lived with J. B. Tyrrell's description of her near the end of her life, based on his talk with her grandson. She was Mrs. David Thompson, a Native woman who became an Anglo-Canadian model housewife with black eyes and almost copper-coloured skin.

It is good to reflect critically on our representations of the people of the past. When we tell stories about Charlotte, we can be clear about when they are speculative, consider whether they are plausible, and use them to help interpret the clues that we do have. In any case, the real story of Charlotte, grounded in what we do know, has a strong appeal. It is a tale of a fifty-eight-year marriage that was surely based on love and attachment, even if feelings were scarcely verbalized in writing. It's the story of a woman whose Cree language and skills greatly helped her husband and family during their fur trade years and who made a major transition into an eastern Canadian society remote in every way from her homeland. We have pathos as three of their thirteen children die, as the family slips into deepening poverty from the 1830s to the 1850s, and as an outstanding mapmaker and his wife die in obscurity in Montréal—to await J. B. Tyrrell's resurrection of them both in the early 1900s.

Since the spring of 2008, when John Baird, minister of the environment, declared Charlotte Small Thompson to be a Person of National Historic Significance, Parks Canada, at its relevant historic sites, has put up plaques and has generated fresh story lines, as Thompson descendants are also doing. Charlotte will continue to generate stories. As we seek answers to the questions that remain, we can tell a range of stories that have resonance and plausibility but avoid freeze-drying Charlotte into personas and identities that she herself would not have recognized. In that way, Charlotte will receive authentic recognition that respects her complexity and the zones of silence in the historical record, while we make the best of whatever it is we are able to know.

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50 For an excellent discussion of these issues, see Chris Andersen, *"Métis": Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2014).

"All These Stories About Women"

"Many Tender Ties" and a New Fur Trade History

In May of 2007, I was privileged to be the commentator for a Canadian Historical Association (CHA) forum in honour of Sylvia Van Kirk, at the annual CHA meeting in Saskatoon. The occasion led me to look back over Sylvia's and my correspondence over the years and to reflect on our work, our mutual interests, and our long friendship. This essay was written as a contribution to *Finding a Way to the Heart* (2012), a book in Sylvia's honour that grew out of the CHA gathering.

Sylvia and I have known each other since 1972. Our association over four decades has encompassed a period in which both women's history and Aboriginal history have secured a permanent place in the study of Canada's past. Much has changed in those years. When we began to walk the historical trails we had chosen, they were narrow, and we did not have much company. Now they are broad and well-trodden by scholars of many backgrounds who are shedding light on subjects and areas scarcely thought of in the 1970s.

This essay does not attempt to review the history of these trails over the last decades. I shall try, however, to tell a small piece of their story through some of Sylvia's and my own experiences, beginning with our mutual starting points in the early 1970s. Our scholarly correspondence, begun in 1972, fuelled a friendship as we shared our research and discovered our common interests and enthusiasms. In following years, our studies were intertwined in continuing conversations, even as our careers followed different paths. This is personal history on a microcosmic scale, but any history must build on concrete particulars, well documented and well remembered. The parts of Sylvia's story told here reach beyond her students' memories and may also help her students' students to know her and her work better.

I first heard of Sylvia when I was a doctoral student in anthropology at the University of Chicago. After various peregrinations through other fields

and places, my Canadian familial roots finally exerted a pull on my academic studies, leading me to focus on the ethnohistory of northern North America with special attention to fur trade and mission sources. My dissertation became a study of fur traders and their Native families. Both fur trade historians and anthropologists looking at the Aboriginal groups involved in the fur trade had largely ignored this topic, even though trade relations "on the ground" relied greatly on these familial and kinship bonds, which themselves had broad social and demographic consequences.

In March 1972, as I was beginning my dissertation research, I wrote to the Hudson's Bay Company Archives at Beaver House, Great Trinity Lane, London, England. (The HBC Archives did not move to Winnipeg until 1974.) I asked to use the pre-1870 microfilm copies of their records that they had deposited in the Public Archives of Canada (now Library and Archives Canada) in Ottawa; at that time, formal advance permission was still required. Mrs. J. Craig, the archivist, approved my request but added, "We should mention that for the past two years Miss Sylvia Van Kirk has been undertaking research in the Company's archives for her Ph.D. thesis on the role of women in the fur trade of the Canadian Northwest, c. 1670–1850. Miss Van Kirk, registered at the University of London, is working under the supervision of Dr G[lyndwr] Williams, General Editor of the Hudson's Bay Record Society. As this study will clearly overlap with your proposed subject, you may care to contact Miss Van Kirk." She suggested I write to Sylvia c/o Dr. Williams at Queen Mary College, and I did so. On 26 April 1972, Sylvia sent me a reply addressed, "Dear Mrs. Brown"; thereafter, we went to first names. (This was before the use of "Ms." became standard; one could not address women formally without noting their marital status.) I quote from her reply at some length, since it is vintage Sylvia and it set the tone for a long friendship. She was "very interested" to hear of my topic, she said, and "would welcome a correspondence." She went on to outline her own topic and then added,

> Of course, the bulk of my thesis does concentrate on the relationships which developed between the traders and their Indian or mixed-blood wives. Evidence confirms that marriages "à la façon du pays" certainly were customary and formed an important element in fur trade society which was indeed an indigenous society combining aspects of the Indian, British and French-Canadian way of life.
>
> As an anthropologist you will likely be applying a different set of criteria to the primary source material. Although concerned with underlying trends and themes, I am more interested in the individual experiences per se than in using them to illustrate certain patterns or trends. As a Western Canadian myself, I feel quite strongly about the

dehumanized way in which our history has been written. My thesis will also say little about the mixed-bloods as a group. I am primarily concerned with the initial relationship between the White trader and his Indian wife, and will be dealing with mixed-blood women only in terms of their relationships with White men.

In closing, she wrote, "I am very pleased that you contacted me and hope that this will help you to determine the limits of your thesis. There has been so little work done in this fascinating field that I am sure there is room for both our studies and more. It seems to me that there has not been enough co-operation between scholars particularly at the inter-disciplinary level. I hope we will be able to co-operate to our mutual benefit and I look forward to hearing from you."[1]

The letter expressed both her intellectual focus and passion (in her usual understated way) and her already strong stance about cooperation and mutuality. I was much relieved when she replied in this vein. To explain this relief, it may be useful to step back for a moment and talk about being a female graduate student in the 1960s and 1970s. I cannot speak for Sylvia's experiences then, but she, like other women of our generation, probably has numerous recollections along similar lines.

While growing numbers of women were pursuing advanced studies in those years, we were still a minority. Many of us were unsure of our positions or our futures in academe.[2] One striking feature of our universities was the shortage of women professors at any level. In my entire academic career, I never had a class with a woman professor. (I believe Sylvia did have one as an undergraduate at the University of Alberta.) At Harvard University, where I began graduate studies in 1962, first in classical archaeology and then in anthropology, the admittedly small sample of women I knew felt at a disadvantage among the men, and we sensed that we were not taken very seriously. We joked about certain "fair-haired boys," as we called them, male graduate students who were the most likely candidates to go on our professors' major archaeological digs and who received other encouragement. A certain professor we knew appeared to reserve his B-plus grades for the women in his seminars. The atmosphere in seminars often tended to reward one-upmanship and to encourage territoriality

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1 Sylvia Van Kirk to Jennifer Brown, 26 April 1972. These personal letters are quoted with the kind permission of Sylvia Van Kirk.

2 I and many other women were encouraged at the time into graduate studies by the opportunity offered by the Woodrow Wilson Fellowship program. Aspiring graduate students who had excellent academic records, good references, and a successful interview could gain financial support to continue their studies at higher levels for their first year without having to face real-world issues of where those studies might lead.

rather than collaboration. In fairness, I was spared such experiences once I moved to the University of Chicago in 1970, but the Harvard legacy meant that a warm and open reception from a fellow graduate student in an overlapping field was a welcome event.

Over the next three years, Sylvia and I exchanged a number of letters, some of which delved deeply into the intricacies of the fur trade families we were both trying to trace. We came to feel at times like a pair of old gossips as we tried to sort out various relationships and to trace the children of the traders' sometimes multiple unions. Of course, the traders' own gossip was grist for our mills; women have no monopoly on that genre despite the stereotypes. We traded thoughts on the problems of organizing our materials and on issues of terminology: when and whether to use Métis/métis, half-breed, mixed-blood, and the like. Meanwhile, Sylvia's then-husband was finishing his dissertation, which she took time to help type. In the fall of 1973, she wrote me that, "after months of uncertainty," they both "landed up at Dalhousie University. It's a difficult job to secure one position let alone two—and our situation this year is that we each have what amounts to half a position."[3]

Sylvia and I finally got to meet at the CHA meetings in Toronto in June 1974, where she presented a paper on fur trade "marriages according to the custom of the country." As I recall, a senior professor introduced her as Mrs. Dowler, and we quietly raised our eyebrows.[4] But a highlight was the presence of Irene Spry as commentator—a warm and wonderful senior female scholar who greatly encouraged and inspired us both through those years and until her death in 1998.

In 1974–75, Sylvia stayed on at Dalhousie, while her husband took an improved position at the University of Toronto, Scarborough. Sylvia defended her thesis in London on 22 May 1975, a year ahead of me. "It was a real grilling," she wrote, "but nevertheless went well. The internal examiner was E. E. Rich, who seemed not entirely convinced that all these stories about women constituted 'real' history."[5]

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3 Van Kirk to Brown, 20 November 1973.

4 In the 1970s, it was still unusual for women to keep their surnames upon marriage. I had been spared this issue; I was a Brown who married a Brown. In 1976, Sylvia commented on the question to a *Globe and Mail* interviewer, admitting, "I've kept my own name professionally, but I've been schizophrenic about it. When we travel together [she and her husband], I use a passport with my married name. I just can't face the explanations at each hotel." Constance Mungall, "Course on History of Women in Canada Seen as Part of Way to Discover Identity," *Globe and Mail*, 3 May 1976.

5 Van Kirk to Brown, 17 July 1975. Rich's comment evokes a parallel with the experience of distinguished Métis historian Olive P. Dickason when she applied to do a PhD in Native History at the University of Ottawa in the early 1970s. The university "did not acknowledge

The following year, Sylvia took up a one-year position in history at the University of Toronto and became a candidate for a tenure-track position, for which she had considerable support. But it emerged that "since a small minority was critical of the thesis, they decided to give me a 2-year contract instead of a tenure-stream appointment." A certain non-Canadianist held that her thesis was only a regional study that lacked comparative material and broader generalization and needed much work before publication.[6] The situation was not very comfortable for a while. Sylvia's tenure-track position eventually came through, however, and she achieved tenure in 1980.

Our revised dissertations came out as books in the same year (1980), and we shared the Honourable Mention award for the Sir John A. Macdonald Prize in Canadian history from the CHA.[7] We became, it seemed, the Bobbsey Twins of fur trade social history, often cited in the same breath or footnote by writers who might or might not have read our books, as well as by rising generations of graduate students who were obliged to include us on their comprehensive reading lists. Fur trade history began to be seen in a new light; people began to think and write about it differently. The appearance of Sylvia's work also coincided with the rise of women's history courses and programs in many universities across North America. Her becoming established at the University of Toronto was a fortunate development for women's studies at that university, as well as for her students and herself.

In following years, Sylvia was increasingly occupied with new courses and growing numbers of graduate students and also with administrative duties, especially in women's studies. But we kept in touch. Summertime often brought chances to get together at my old family cottage on an island near Parry Sound, Ontario. We canoed and picked blueberries, and Sylvia was a devoted gatherer of pinecones for the wood stove and trimmer of island trails.

The visits also allowed time for lots of talk. In the 1980s, we became absorbed in working on the writings of fur trader George Nelson, our favourite among the many traders we had met in our archival researches. Sylvia found him first, discovering his remarkable journals and reminiscences (around twelve hundred pages), which had been sitting in the Metropolitan Toronto Public Library,

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that Indians had any history, and suggested that she take anthropology instead." However, she later recalled, "A Belgian fellow [Cornelius Jaenen], who didn't know very much about Native people, but knew a lot about discrimination, took up my cause, and the university eventually admitted me." R. John Hayes, "Historian Awarded Order of Canada," *Windspeaker*, February 1996, 8.

6 Van Kirk to Brown, 19 June 1976.

7 Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society in Western Canada, 1670–1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980), and Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).

virtually untouched, since the 1930s. We got photocopies made, and Sylvia secured grant money for an assistant to transcribe the Nelson texts onto an early computer mainframe at her university. In 1983, when I moved from Illinois to a teaching position in history at the University of Winnipeg, I was able to make contributions to the work from that new base, aided by the proximity of the Hudson's Bay Company Archives, now only three blocks away.

George Nelson was an obscure North West Company (NWC) clerk who ended his fur trade days working for the HBC after the two firms merged in 1821. He appealed to us as a fresh voice, scarcely known, who was remarkably perceptive and observant about both his peers and the people with whom he traded; some of his accounts of Ojibwe and Cree people from northern Wisconsin to northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan between 1802 and 1823 are among the most detailed we have. He was never a great explorer, nor did he assume the heroic rhetoric of an Alexander Mackenzie or a George Simpson. He listened, learned the language (Ojibwe in particular), admitted making mistakes in his actions and writings, and was open about failing to understand what he saw, as when he took part in a Cree shaking tent ceremony in 1823.[8]

Of particular interest for us were his relatively frank and reflective writings about his two Ojibwe marital ties—one early and temporary, the other longer and ultimately tragic, as his second Ojibwe wife and children all died relatively young, leaving him no surviving heirs. Nelson, more than other traders, opened a window into those relationships and into the rather fraught fur trade contexts around them (see chapter 6, this volume). Sylvia and I collaborated on his biography for the *Dictionary of Canadian Biography*, and she achieved the feat of deciphering an extensive coded journal that Nelson kept as a Nor'Wester in 1816, when he felt at serious risk of losing his post and records to the rival HBC post nearby. She published two papers on him, and we and other colleagues have continued to build on her work, finding other means to explore and bring forward his writings.[9]

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8 See Jennifer S. H. Brown and Robert Brightman, T*he Orders of the Dreamed: George Nelson on Cree and Northern Ojibwa Religion and Myth, 1823* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988).

9 Sylvia Van Kirk, "George Nelson's 'Wretched' Career, 1802–1823," in *Rendezvous: Selected Papers of the Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1981*, ed. Thomas C. Buckley (St. Paul, MN: North American Fur Trade Conference, 1984), 207–13; and "'This Rascally & Ungrateful Country': George Nelson's Response to Rupert's Land," in *Rupert's Land: A Cultural Tapestry*, ed. R. C. Davis (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1988), 113–30. See also Brown and Brightman, *Orders of the Dreamed*, and George Nelson, *My First Years in the Fur Trade: The Journals of 1802–1804*, ed. Laura Peers and Theresa Schenck (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2002). Harry W. Duckworth of Winnipeg is preparing Nelson's Lake Winnipeg journals for publication.

Sylvia and I also remember the 1980s as a time of dealing with issues around Peter C. Newman and his books on HBC history. The controversy that his books provoked is readily visible if one compares the journalistic and scholarly reviews of *Company of Adventurers* and *Caesars of the Wilderness.* A review essay on *Company of Adventurers* that I published in the *Canadian Historical Review* in 1986 covered the debate by looking at the varied responses to his work.[10] In retrospect, we were both naïve in dealing with Newman, a well-known author of trade books who received a very large advance for writing his HBC history. While preparing his books, he had approached each of us, and a number of others, for interviews, which we gladly gave him. We had hopes of seeing a high-quality popular history emerge from his project—we wanted to see good results. Unlike some of our more experienced colleagues, we asked for (and received) no compensation for our time or expertise.

The reviews and other responses (including comments to Newman himself) that we and other scholars felt compelled to write when *Company of Adventurers* was published reflected our disappointment with his work. In short, both this book and its sequel were characterized by purple prose, simplistic stereotypes, errors, and inflated claims about the author's research in the HBC Archives. Furthermore, we found ourselves cited and credited as if we had endorsed Newman's work, even though we'd had no chance for any advance review or comment. On a larger scale, it was troubling to see him dismiss his numerous historian critics as narrow, territorial, envious malcontents who couldn't write. As authors who set great store by writing well and communicating effect-ively, we were unhappy to see an artificial gulf opened between academic and popular history, as if ne'er the twain could meet, when, in fact, we have had a strong interest in bridging that gap all along.[11] Looking back, we probably allowed the issue to consume more time and energy than it should have, but it was an instructive experience.

Once I had settled at the University of Winnipeg, my involvement with the new Centre for Rupert's Land Studies engaged us both. I helped the centre begin, in 1984, as an organization to promote the use of the HBC Archives, so

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10 Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Newman's *Company of Adventures* in Two Solitudes: A Look at Reviews and Responses." *Canadian Historical Review* 67, no. 4 (1986): 562–71. Newman's books were published in 1984 and 1987 by Penguin Books, Markham, ON.

11 In fact, our two books still circulate and have been reprinted several times in Canada and the United States (University of Oklahoma Press). Sylvia has been active in public history through much of her career: examples include her *Life in the Western Canadian Fur Trade 1770–1870*, vol. 34 in the Canada's Visual History series (Ottawa: National Museum of Man and National Film Board, 1979–80), and her role as consultant on Christine Welsh's 1989 film *Women in the Shadows* (Direction Films). Her public history work has continued in connection with the old fur trade families of Victoria, BC, and with the Victoria Historical Society.

fundamental to our work. A feature of the centre's activities soon became its biennial colloquiums, which attracted scholars, students, and many other people interested in the fur trade and Aboriginal history of Rupert's Land—the HBC territory from 1670 to 1870. From the beginning, Sylvia was an active participant, helping to bring together academics and others who shared a consuming interest in fur trade and Aboriginal history.

The colloquiums also attracted a good many people who were researching their own family roots in the history of Rupert's Land. When Sylvia and I were graduate students in the 1970s, many members of the older generations of these families still denied or set aside their Native kin connections because of harsh experience with racism and prejudice. As a result, our research was largely confined to working with documents; back then, we could not have begun to do the family and oral histories that newer generations have been pursuing with pride and fascination. Among the friends who have been tracing their roots and putting them in a new and broader context are Shirley Wishart and Vernon R. Wishart, Donna Sutherland, Heather Devine, Virginia Barter, and Sherry Farrell Racette, and many others are active, too. Their research is making a difference on the larger stage of Canadian history.[12]

The present generation of students takes it almost for granted that women's history, the roles of Aboriginal women in the fur trade, and gender history are part of their undergraduate and graduate texts and courses. But Sylvia and I can tell you this has all happened in the last thirty or so years. It was not easy; there was indeed an element of risk and daring involved—as when Olive Dickason, in the 1970s, challenged convention with her doctoral work in Aboriginal history. Now, the tide has turned remarkably for both women and "Indians." I regularly had more women than men in my history courses at all levels. Sixty-five percent of students at the University of Winnipeg are women, a proportion replicated at many other universities, and the university also has lately had nine hundred or more Aboriginal students each year. The term "women" now makes it into the indexes of books as a marked category. Notably, "men" is still not indexed, being the unmarked category that is always present. Maybe that will change sometime, if (or as) males begin to suffer the neglect that women endured for so long in history.

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12 For essays by Devine, Barter, and others on these themes, see *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories*, ed. Ute Lischke and David T. McNab (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007). Vernon Wishart's *What Lies Behind the Picture? A Personal Journey into Cree Ancestry* (Red Deer: Central Alberta Historical Society, 2006) is an evocative book on his sister's and his searches for their hidden Cree roots and forebears. See also his *Kisiskaciwan (Saskatchewan): Tracing My Grandmother's Footsteps* (Clandeboye, MB: White Buffalo Books, 2012).

Sylvia's and my paths have diverged in some respects. Sylvia has focused especially, and productively, on the situations of Native wives in fur trade settings, where they were increasingly subjected to the Victorian values of Euro-Canadian men and women. While I was teaching in Winnipeg, the centre of her world increasingly shifted from Toronto to Victoria, where she now lives. There, she continued to research the Fort Victoria fur trade families whose mixed descent confronted them with challenges in that rapidly changing community in the mid- to late 1800s.[13] More broadly, her sphere of work and teaching increasingly became women's history, while mine focused more on Aboriginal history. Yet we still have much in common. We have both reacted against, as Sylvia put it in 1972, "the dehumanized way in which our history has been written." From the 1970s onward, Sylvia brought the women of the fur trade into history as real persons whose voices could be heard (or at least imagined), even if they never wrote their stories for themselves. She has always had a concern to read through and beyond the limited sources to find or envisage those hidden lives, as in her work on *Women in the Shadows*, Christine Welsh's 1989 film on which she advised. She has done those things wonderfully.

At the CHA forum in Sylvia's honour, some presenters made occasional references to theoretical concepts of recent generations that Sylvia has not used, although they did find that some of those concepts are implicit in her writing. Should she indeed have turned a page at some point, to invoke Homi Bhabha, Clifford Geertz, or other theorists of our times? Certainly, concepts such as "hybridity" and "intersectionality" have their place in analysis and have heuristic value. But taking a longer view of our historiography, I am struck by how almost all such concepts have a limited shelf life: after a while they become dated, and almost everyone moves on to something new.[14] Theoretical jargon has its uses but needs to be kept in its place.

At the same time, I am grateful that I had an early immersion in anthropological theory and models—they challenged me to question our concepts and categories. Sylvia's first letter to me compared her historical focus to my anthropological orientation, and indeed, my courses and professors directed me towards broader issues of method and theory that she did not have to face. I benefited from confronting the multiple problems around defining such

13 Van Kirk, "Tracing the Fortunes of Five Founding Families of Victoria," *BC Studies* 115–16 (1997–98): 149–79.

14 As an older example, in the 1930s and 1940s, acculturation theory and Rorschach tests had their days, and one of my favourite anthropologists, A. Irving Hallowell, bought heavily into them for a while. His work endured, however, mainly because of the quality of his research and his ethnography (see chapter 18, this volume). His later writings virtually dropped the use of those tools; they served him for a while, but he then set them aside.

categories as "marriage," "custom," and "society," which she tended to accept more as given. Many people used the phrase "marriage according to the custom of the country" in the nineteenth century, but the same words meant quite different things to different fur traders, to Aboriginal people, and to judges and courts of law when they got hold of the phrase (see chapter 6, this volume).

It is also useful to remember that Sylvia was given a solid training in historical research and documentation by Glyndwr Williams at the University of London. She was allowed to specialize early in that research; I recall her telling me of the challenges she later faced in teaching broad survey courses because she had plunged into her doctoral specialty so quickly. Pursuing that specialty, Sylvia religiously attended to the voices that spoke to her through the archives. Too much reliance on the theories of modern outsiders risks silencing those voices, a serious problem seen also by Aboriginal writers. Some postcolonial writings tend to foster a new crypto-colonialism in themselves, sometimes drowning out, with their superstructures, the very voices we should hear and to which we should be listening more attentively.

Sylvia's work has many enduring strengths. She has asked new questions. She has listened hard and carefully to the sources for voices that others had not heard, which she continues to do through her collaborations with their descendants. Her work will survive the theoretical refashionings of our fields. The fact that *"Many Tender Ties"* is still in print after almost three decades tells us that her work lives and continues to resonate.

Some final thoughts arise from contemplating the title of Sylvia's book. As her readers know, the book opens with a quotation from Chief Factor James Douglas in 1842. Referring to life in the fur trade country, Douglas wrote, in reference to traders' family bonds, that "habit makes [this life] familiar to us, softened as it is by the *many tender ties*, which find a way to the heart." The title choice is classic Sylvia. Both she and I found that fur trade unions ran the gamut from tender, enduring affection to abuse and neglect, and we recognized that in our work. But she had a devotion to the ones that worked, the relationships that proved the validity and viability of "fur trade society." I have shared that bias to a fair extent; we have both felt special affinity to George Nelson, David Thompson, James Douglas, and several others whose marriages did work. But my book title, *Strangers in Blood*, picked up on a different angle: the challenges that some traders' unions faced when British and Canadian courts charged with probate of their wills tried to assess their legitimacy and that of their children. If Native wives and children were declared "strangers in blood" rather than legitimate relatives, their legacies were subject to a higher duty, a tax assessed on non-relatives—a cruel irony for children who certainly shared their fathers'

"blood." The term highlights the enduring problematics of these relationships both within and outside the world of the fur trade.

Sylvia has strong ideals and values and tremendous empathy for her subjects of study. She is also a romantic, in the best sense. It was entirely fitting that in retirement in Victoria, BC, she celebrated her marriage to Geoffrey Hart in April 2006 with a fine enactment of a full-scale Victorian wedding in the Church of Our Lord, spiritual home to many old fur trade families. (Sadly, Geoffrey died in March 2015.) After almost two decades of being on her own, she regained for herself "the many tender ties, which find a way to the heart." Of course, in non-Victorian fashion, she remained a Van Kirk.

Aaniskotaapaan

Generations and Successions

This essay has several starting points. It received inspiration partly from the perspectives that friends and colleagues offered in *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, the book where it first appeared, as they shared their insights and research.[1] It also looks back at questions of scholarly and familial influences from previous generations, reflecting on how we organize what we learn from others through language and received categories and on how we sometimes take paths that our ancestors would not and could not follow. Across six decades of memory and experience, learning continues and revelations keep coming, through conversations with the people who spoke in *Gathering Places* and with others of the past and present. Sometimes, old words from different places open new angles of vision. Such is the case with the Cree word—*aaniskotaapaan*—that appears in my title.[2]

TRANSLATING "GENERATIONS"

A few years ago, Theresa Schenck and I had a conversation about the concept of generations in English and how that idea is expressed in Algonquian languages. That question faced her at various times during her work on Anishinaabe historian William Warren's life and writings.[3] Warren, in adapting Ojibwe history

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1 Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers, eds., *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010).

2 *Aaniskotaapaan* expresses ideas about succession and great-grandchildren as discussed below. In pronunciation, the stresses fall on the last two syllables, each of which contains *a* double (long) a. For the plural, add *-ak*.

3 See Theresa M. Schenck, *William W. Warren: The Life, Letters, and Times of an Ojibwe Leader* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2007), and William W. Warren, *History of the Ojibway*

for English-speaking readers, reckoned a generation as being forty years in length. That definition was rather different from our common sense notions of twenty-five to thirty years, the space between the births of parents and their children.[4]

It is not clear why Warren chose forty years as a unit; it is not an Ojibwe notion. It seems to have been his own idea, based perhaps on an estimate of the age at which an adult might become a grandparent. In any case, his use of that figure led him to assign much earlier dates to various events than those indicated by other sources. When, for example, he transposed the generation-based oral history that Ojibwe elders told him into Christian calendrical dates to calculate the arrival of Europeans at Chequamagon (La Pointe, Wisconsin), he arrived at a date of 1612, much earlier than that indicated by any historical documentation.[5]

When Schenck asked Anishinaabe linguist Roger Roulette for help with the concept, Roulette replied that there was no Ojibwe equivalent for the English word "generation" as a unit that refers to or implies a period of time. Ojibwe speakers use the term *aanikoobijiganag*, which evokes units of length that connect successive kin; Roulette explained it in English as "knots on a string."[6] Clearly, Warren had to bridge a conceptual gap when he moved from Ojibwe thinking to writing for an anglophone audience. Speakers of other Algonquian languages also sometimes invoke knots and string to express generational succession; the Ojibwe term parallels a Naskapi (Innu) statement that Frank Speck quoted in translation: "From great-grandparents to great-grandchildren we are only knots in a string."[7]

People, 2nd ed., ed. and intro. Theresa Schenck (St. Paul: Minnesota Historical Society Press, 2009), first published 1885.

4 The spelling "Ojibwe," with a final *e*, elicits a more accurate pronunciation of the word than spellings with a final *a* or *ay*. On defining generation length, the *Oxford English Dictionary* proposes thirty years.

5 Theresa M. Schenck, "William W. Warren's *History of the Ojibway People*: Tradition, History, and Context," in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 1996), 250.

6 Theresa Schenck to Jennifer Brown, email, 30 April 2007. John D. Nichols and Earl Nyholm, in *A Concise Dictionary of Minnesota Ojibwe* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press), 18, translate the same term as "ancestor, great-grandparent, great-grandchild."

7 Frank Speck, *Naskapi: The Savage Hunters of the Labrador Peninsula* (1935; Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1977), 245. Schenck found one example of string imagery in William Warren's own writings. In an article titled "Brief History of the Ojibways," in the *Minnesota Democrat*, 25 February 1851, he wrote, "The old men of the tribe agree in saying that it is now five generations or 'strings of lives' since their first intercourse with the white race." My thanks to Schenck for this reference (email, 23 September 2007).

Richard Faries, in his 1938 revision of E. A. Watkins's (1865) *Dictionary of the Cree Language*, offered another example of this image. He translated the Cree term *an'iskota'pan* as "a knot; a great grandchild." (His *an'isk-* corresponds to the Ojibwe cognate *aanik-*.) The corresponding verb signifies "he ties one thing to another; he has a great grandchild."[8] When I asked Cree educator and storyteller William Dumas about these terms, he explained that the noun *aaniskotaapaan* referred both to a great-grandchild and to the tying of a knot to extend length or to pull things, as "when you tie one toboggan behind another."[9]

A closer look at the morpheme *aanisko(t)-* adds another dimension. Its association with knots is connotative or implicit, for it does not explicitly refer to knots. Linguist H. C. Wolfart points out that the fuller range of entries in Father Albert Lacombe's Cree dictionary of 1874 gives the focal meaning of *aanisko(t)-* as "abutting end to end, in succession." The notion of knots is "coincidental, for all the lexical entries found with the gloss 'knot' in fact refer to the tying of two (or more) *lengths* of string or rope." The stem recurs in a series of verbs (e.g., *aaniskoostee-*, "to be extended"); these verbs "support the meaning of 'extension, succession, articulation.'"[10] Wolfart adds,

> In its linguistic make-up, the verb *aaniskotaapeew* (from which the noun *aaniskotaapaan* is secondarily derived) is ambiguous. The "tying" translation suggests *aaniskot-* "end-to-end" combined with *-aapee-* "string, rope"; thus "tie lengths of rope together end to end." The "pulling" translation, on the other hand, reflects a different analysis, with *aanisko-* "end-to-end" construed with *-(i)taapee-* "drag"; thus, "drag end to end, pull in succession." The latent presence of these two competing interpretations makes this a classical instance of homonymy: two words having the same sounds but different meanings.[11]

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8 Richard Faries, *A Dictionary of the Cree Language* (Toronto: Anglican Book Centre, 1938), 237.

9 William Dumas, pers. comm., 5 July 2007. Louis Bird of Peawanuk on Hudson Bay (pers. comm., 29 July 2007) spoke in the same vein. It is like "when you make knots," he said. "Your children are the first knot, your grandchildren are the second, and your great-grandchildren are the third." *Aaniskotaapaan* is here spelled (except when quoting) according to the orthography used by many Cree and Ojibwe linguists.

10 Wolfart summarized these points in a short unpublished text, "Adjacency, Succession and Generational Distance in Cree" (2007), with the generous advice of David H. Pentland, in response to my queries. My warm thanks to them for their assistance. Along this line, Faries also supplies the verb "*aniska'skowao*" and variants, which mean "he succeeds him." *Dictionary of the Cree Language*, 237.

11 Wolfart adds, "The verbal morpheme *-(i)taapee-* 'drag' also includes the element *-aapee-* 'string, rope,'" noting also that Cree speakers sometimes invoke the image of great-grandchildren following or being dragged behind. In a discussion with Wolfart, David

Homonyms offer scope for ambiguity and embellishment, and the image of knots in a string is one way in which this concept of generational succession can be made concrete.

In sum, *aaniskotaapaan* is not a simple word. I decided that "generations and successions" could serve in my title as a gloss of the Cree concept, while images of knots and strings as connecting great-grandparents and great-grandchildren help us to understand the central place that these links hold in the ways that Cree and Ojibwe think about and frame generational relationships. In another essay and context some years back, I invoked the metaphor of chain migration, "whereby series of relatives lead and follow one another to a new place," sometimes across vast geographical distances.[12] *Aaniskotaapaan* also emphasizes links among kin but across or down through time; it refers to the making and transmitting of kin relations through the generations but without implying the passage of any set number of years. Furthermore, the word is personalized when used as a kin term: it is subject to the possessive prefixes (*ni-*, *ki-*, etc.) that Cree speakers use to refer to or address their relatives: for example, *nitaaniskotaapaan*, "my great-grandchild." These terms carry a marker that specifies who is related to whom.[13]

How may the concept conveyed by *aaniskotaapaan* offer fresh ways to think about ourselves as well as others? For me, this concept joins a collection of other Algonquian and anthropological terms that help me to navigate my way into other frames of reference. *Aaniskotaapaan* reminds us to reflect on our intergenerational relations and their significance, and we can extend those reflections to intellectual and cultural spheres as well. In our mental formations, as in our families, we are all tied to past connections, which may be more or less salient, recognized, or remembered but are nonetheless there. We are all great-grandchildren, and we all had eight great-grandparents. We rarely think of them, and very few of us could name them all. We may not even have known them (I never met any of mine), but they are tied to us in subtle ways, as we are to them. Then, for those of us blessed with too much education, we have intellectual great-grandparents who have influenced us through those whom they taught, who in turn mentored our teachers. And of course, there are

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Pentland further noted that "*-aapee-* might alternatively be the non-initial form of the root *naapee-* 'male; male offspring.'" Wolfart, pers. comm., 2007.

12 Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Doing Aboriginal History: A View from Winnipeg," *Canadian Historical Review* 84, no. 4 (2003): 613–35.

13 As Wolfart points out, standard kin terms in Cree and Ojibwe always require these markers (e.g., one cannot simply say "grandfather" without a possessive). But some lexical sources treat the stem *aaniskotaapaan* as an ordinary noun. Wolfart ("Adjacency") suggests that it may be one example of several marginal terms that he calls quasi-kin terms.

those who come after us, as we become grandparents and great-grandparents, whether metaphorical or biological.

When we trace kinship ties and their roles in learning and identity formation, we select among the lines we follow. Some stand out in our lives, and others disappear or scarcely remain visible. Since I have had some role in knitting together lines of inquiry that are reaching into the future, it may be useful to trace some of those lines back in time, in case anyone is curious about where some of them began. Some strands arrange themselves in linear fashion; others reach out, netlike, to collateral lines, to siblings and cousins, or flow and merge like the braided river invoked in my introduction to this book. For me, a few intellectual lines have been especially important. Certain familial ones have also proved instructive and challenging and have revealed themselves to be more linked to my intellectual endeavours than I would have expected forty years ago.

In the intellectual sphere, I can trace some early strands of learning from my undergraduate days at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, to a shifting graduate trajectory (moving from classical archaeology to anthropology) at Harvard University. But the guiding line that set me on course was my research experience in Peru in 1963–64, when I had the opportunity to work with the Andean scholar John V. Murra as he mined early Spanish sources for clues to Quechua and Aymara social organization and economic life. Reading closely and listening for Indigenous voices in sixteenth-century European colonial documents, I found the sort of work I most wanted to do. A few years later, Murra, single-handedly I think, got me into the PhD program in anthropology at the University of Chicago, his own doctoral alma mater. In 1970, I began my studies with George W. Stocking, Jr., Raymond Fogelson, and others and found that, for various academic and personal reasons, my research path was leading toward studies of Aboriginal-European relations in the fur trade and mission contexts of northern North America.

Stocking and Fogelson focused on the history of anthropology and North American ethnohistory, respectively, but they were intellectual cousins to each other in one striking respect. As graduate students at the University of Pennsylvania, they were both much influenced by the same senior professor, A. Irving Hallowell. Hallowell (1892–1974) was the author of over thirty important articles on Ojibwe culture and world view, which grew out of his substantial fieldwork along the Berens River in Manitoba and Ontario in the 1930s, and he was also, in later life, a pioneer in the history of anthropology.[14] I, of course, read his work as a graduate student at the University of Chicago, but it was

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14 Most of Hallowell's articles on the Berens River Ojibwe have been gathered in A. Irving Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies: Essays, 1934–1972*, ed. and intro. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010).

in the 1980s that my studies began to focus on his research and writings to a much greater extent. Since I never got to meet him, my link to Hallowell is indirect and involves a generational succession to a descendant he never knew. But I can trace Hallowell's personal influence through George Stocking, whose recollections help to trace lines of transmission that reach from Speck and Hallowell down to the present. Stocking's descriptions of Hallowell, and of Hallowell's influence on him, demonstrate how these connections worked.

During his graduate studies in American civilization at the University of Pennsylvania in the late 1950s, George Stocking took only two courses in anthropology, both with Hallowell: Psychology and Culture, and History of Anthropology. Both courses, he recalled in 1976, "opened up new intellectual vistas: the one, as it were, of anthropology in being, the other, of anthropology in becoming." Both focused on themes to which Hallowell was devoted in the 1950s and 1960s. Psychology and Culture explored frameworks for understanding "an alien self [principally Ojibwe] in its culturally constituted behavioral environment." The History of Anthropology seminar discussed "the emergence of a particular form of scientific understanding in Western European culture." Although they covered different topics, Stocking found that as "products of the same mind," they followed much the same track. In each, Hallowell emphasized the seeking of "emic," or insider, understandings, whether held by the Ojibwe themselves or by the denizens of the anthropological past. He asked students to try to grasp the world views of "particular groups of historical actors" while looking at how various folk anthropologies arose in "different historical or cultural contexts."[15]

Hallowell's influence led Stocking to direct his doctoral dissertation toward the history of anthropology. Titled "American Social Scientists and Race Theory, 1890–1915," it was completed in 1960. In the early 1960s, Hallowell and Stocking each began to publish in the history of anthropology, the former as he capped a distinguished career and the latter as he began one. Hallowell was the leading spirit in the organization of a Social Science Research Council conference on the history of anthropology in 1963, and he saw to it that Stocking was invited to participate. In turn, Stocking—in the preface to his first book, *Race, Culture, and Evolution* (1968), comprising seven articles he had published in the years 1962–66—acknowledged Hallowell as "my anthropological godfather, who gave me many insights into both the culture concept

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15 George W. Stocking, Jr., "History of Anthropology: Introduction," in *Contributions to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hallowell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 17, 18.

and the history of anthropology and introduced me professionally to the world of anthropology."[16]

Fifteen years later, when Stocking published the first edited volume, *Observers Observed* (1983), in his new History of Anthropology series, his introduction to that volume, "History of Anthropology: Whence/Whither," again evoked Hallowell's world view and influence. The History of Anthropology series was to encourage, he wrote, "a disciplinary historiography that is both historically sophisticated and anthropologically knowledgeable." It would avoid, however, treating anthropology simply as subject matter to which the methodological orientations of history would be applied. Instead, Stocking proposed an alternative frame of reference, stating that for the historian of anthropology, the methods and concepts of anthropology "are not only the object of inquiry, but may provide also a means by which it is pursued. As Hallowell argued several decades ago, the history of anthropology should be approached as 'an anthropological problem.'" Anthropology could furnish many of the tools for analyzing its own past while at the same time situating its tools and concepts historically.[17]

Although I never got to meet Hallowell, George Stocking and Raymond Fogelson provided a sense of connection. In 1986, I started to work through Hallowell's papers in the American Philosophical Society Library in Philadelphia. Reading his writings more closely, I and a colleague, Maureen Matthews, later followed his fieldwork trail up the Berens River, meeting people who remembered his sojourns among them (see chapter 17, this volume). In doing so, I began to realize the significance of two earlier intergenerational ties that had a great influence upon Hallowell. One linked Hallowell to his academic mentor, Frank Speck, and the other to Chief William Berens, the Ojibwe advisor and guide who made his Berens River work possible.

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16 George W. Stocking, Race, *Culture, and Evolution: Essays in the History of Anthropology* (New York: Free Press, 1968), x.

17 George W. Stocking, Jr., "History of Anthropology: Whence/Whither?" in *Observers Observed: Essays on Ethnographic Fieldwork*, ed. George W. Stocking, Jr. (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983), 6–7. These three paragraphs are adapted from an unpublished paper, "'An Interdisciplined Spirit': A. Irving Hallowell, Ethnographer, Historian," which I presented in a session in honour of George Stocking at the American Anthropological Association meeting, Washington, DC, in November 1997. Raymond Fogelson, in 1976, wrote of Hallowell with equal warmth, citing his ability "to make meaningful connections across traditional disciplinary lines." Furthermore, he commented, "his work reveals discernible threads of continuity, a remarkable sense of integration, and rare authenticity. His career possesses a definite identity that is clearly generative." Raymond D. Fogelson, "General Introduction," in A. Irving Hallowell, *Contributions to Anthropology: Selected Papers of A. Irving Hallowell* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), xv.

Frank Speck (1881–1950) earned his PhD in 1908 at Columbia University, studying with Franz Boas, the founder of American anthropology. Early in his career, Speck became absorbed in the study of eastern Algonquian languages and ethnology, and he got to meet and learn much from some of the last speakers of those languages. He supervised Hallowell's graduate studies, notably his dissertation (1924) on bear ceremonialism, and the two were colleagues and friends at the University of Pennsylvania until Speck's death in 1950. Hallowell's obituary of Speck in *American Anthropologist* (1951) provides clues about the intellectual approaches and standards that his mentor passed on to him:

> The concrete and specific details which ultimately reached the written page were never put down in haste. They were evaluated against a masterly knowledge of relevant linguistic, ethnographic and historical fact covering a much wider area and often subjected to a long process of scrutiny and reflection. One never doubts that Speck knows what he is talking about, so that all his work bears the earmarks of high substantiality. He was never primarily concerned with high-level generalizations or interpretations, but rather with putting well attested facts on record. In this respect he belongs to the classical ethnographic tradition which, broadly speaking, is closely allied to the kind of work many historians have done. So it is not surprising to find throughout his career Speck made considerable use of relevant documentary material in addition to the mass of information he was constantly collecting from Indian informants. Although the term "ethnohistory" appears in some of his later writings, he was always an ethnohistorian.[18]

Hallowell, more often than Speck, did venture into high-level generalizations and theoretical discussions. His later writings, however, became more and more historically oriented, while he maintained Speck's bent for "putting well attested facts on record."[19] The works of both Speck and Hallowell consequently have "earmarks of high substantiality" that reflect their combining historical research and fieldwork to produce firmly grounded scholarship of superb quality.

Hallowell's growing historical orientation had another source in the 1930s. This brings me to the other intergenerational link that proved to be of vast importance to his work—his relationship with Chief William Berens (1866–1947). In early July 1930, when Hallowell was travelling up Lake Winnipeg for a

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18 A. Irving Hallowell, "Frank Gouldsmith Speck, 1881–1950," *American Anthropologist* 53 (1951): 68.

19 Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Preface," in A. Irving Hallowell, *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba: Ethnography into History*, ed. with preface and afterword Jennifer S. H. Brown (Fort Worth, TX: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1992), xv–xvi.

summer of fieldwork among the Cree, his lake steamer stopped at Berens River, partway up the eastern shore. Chief Berens met the boat, made Hallowell's acquaintance, and learned of his interest in meeting "un-Christianized Indians." Berens offered to take Hallowell up the river on his next visit and indeed did so in 1932 and in several subsequent summers, becoming, as Hallowell wrote in the 1960s, "my interpreter, guide, and virtual collaborator in the investigations I carried on in subsequent years." As he added,

> I have always considered it extremely fortunate that I met William Berens when I did. . . . Berens himself was bilingual from childhood and as fully acquainted with the ways of white men as Indians. Thus, from the beginning of my association with him, I became historically oriented as a matter of course because we made constant reference to the persons of past generations in the genealogical material we had collected together. This enabled me to integrate data concerning the cultural present with changes in the historic past . . . which could be checked in written documents.[20]

Berens was in his late sixties, already a grandfather several times, when Hallowell got to know him; Hallowell was in his thirties when the two men met. Berens, in a sense, may have been ready for Hallowell; the moment was right, much as it was when the poet John Neihardt, at about the same time, turned up to record and retell the stories and visions of the Lakota elder Black Elk in South Dakota.[21] Berens had been chief since 1917; he was well versed in dealing with outsiders—traders, commercial fishermen, Indian agents, and others. His family had a strong connection with Methodism—a link that had begun through his father, Jacob Berens, even before the first mission was established at Berens River in 1874. Jacob and William Berens both sent their children to school when possible, and much of the family grew up bilingual and able to relate to the encroaching outside world.

But as Hallowell learned, William Berens was also steeped in the Ojibwe heritage of his father and grandfather, which he traced back four generations to his paternal great-grandfather, the powerful medicine man Yellow Legs. Hallowell was keen to learn and hear all that the chief remembered, and Berens was ready and eager to teach this younger newcomer who, unlike most outsiders,

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20 Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 8, 6, 11. The memories and stories that Berens shared with Hallowell and that Hallowell wrote down have been gathered and annotated in William Berens, *Memories, Myths, and Dreams of an Ojibwe Leader*, as told to A. Irving Hallowell, ed. and intro. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009).

21 For a full account of this encounter and its dynamics and results, see Raymond J. DeMallie, ed., *The Sixth Grandfather: Black Elk's Teachings Given to John G. Neihardt* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1984).

was there to focus on the stories and history of Ojibwe people and was not interested in spending time with white folk. While Frank Speck linked Hallowell to his anthropological forefathers and cultural traditions, Berens became his link to the culture and history of the Ojibwe. Berens shared legends and stories, explained Ojibwe terms and practices, and took him up the river to meet his Moose clan mates—Fair Wind (Naamiwan), the old medicine man at Pauingassi, Manitoba, and many others (see chapter 17, this volume). He also told Hallowell about a Berens family missionary connection, a line that leads me back to a great-grandfather of my own.

FAMILIAL ANCESTORS

In the historical section of his ethnography on the Berens River Ojibwe, Hallowell noted the active role that William Berens's father, Jacob, had played "in bringing a resident missionary, Egerton R. Young, to Berens River in 1873."[22] Young, an Ontario Methodist who had served at Norway House from 1868 to 1873 and then for two years at Berens River, was my father's maternal grandfather. There are some reasons why a scholar of Aboriginal history in the twenty-first century might not mention the evangelical Methodism embedded in one of her family lines. But this great-grandfather is one reason for the story line of this essay.

Around 1970, as I was starting doctoral studies at the University of Chicago, my father, Harcourt Brown, Canadian-born and recently retired from teaching at Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island, was working to assemble his grandfather's papers to donate as a collection to the Archives of Ontario.[23] He had received a quantity of records from his grandmother, Elizabeth Bingham Young (1843–1934). But other materials had gone to cousins and were at risk of being increasingly separated as family lines diverged. As we looked at the papers, I realized that although my studies to date had scarcely touched on my Canadian heritage, my interest in pursuing ethnohistorical research could find rich outlets in source materials such as these, sources that documented northern Canadian fur trade and mission relations with Aboriginal people, often in remarkable detail.

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22 Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 13. In fact, Jacob's father, Bear, played an even more key role in bringing the missionary; see Elizabeth Bingham Young and E. Ryerson Young, *Mission Life in Cree-Ojibwe Country: Memories of a Mother and Son*, ed. Jennifer S. H. Brown (Edmonton: Athabasca University Press), 124–28.

23 The Egerton Ryerson Young Papers became available at the Archives of Ontario in 1978. In the early 1990s, it became evident that the United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto, would be a more suitable home, and the Reverend H. Egerton Young (my father's cousin) and I arranged for the collection to be transferred to them.

In the summer of 1972, my father took my husband and son and me on a visit to Norway House, Manitoba. It was a memorable experience for us to see the nearby Rossville mission (now a United Church of Canada parish), where the Youngs served before going to Berens River. By then, I had realized that to understand the context in which the Methodist and other northern missions functioned in the mid- to late 1800s, I needed to go back to the fur trade and the earlier history of Rupert's Land. I had decided to do my dissertation research on fur traders and their Native families, their marital patterns, and the changes they faced as their lives were increasingly affected by missions and the coming of European settlers. The work led me into the riches of the HBC Archives and also brought a realization of the greater significance that those family histories could have for research, if combined with Aboriginal oral histories and other means of documentation. At the same time, it opened new angles of vision onto my own family history, adding context and different story lines that reached beyond genealogy.

In 1983, my husband and I left the Chicago area for academic jobs at the University of Winnipeg, Manitoba. Living and working in the homeland of the fur traders and Aboriginal people I was writing about, I found also that numbers of my students were descended from those families. When Hallowell's papers became available for research in Philadelphia in the mid-1980s, I began to mine them for the information that he had gathered from Ojibwe people about their relations with fur traders and missionaries and about their own history. The papers proved rich in unpublished writings and photographs. Most outstandingly, they held the next to final manuscript of an ethnography of Berens River that Hallowell had written in the 1960s but had never published because the final manuscript was lost in transit to the press. Researching, editing, and annotating this work for its long overdue publication in 1992, I found I could bring the fields of fur trade, mission, and Aboriginal history together in a most rewarding way. This work opened the door to many other projects for me and for some of my students and colleagues, particularly as opportunities arose to meet descendants and other relatives of William Berens and to talk with older Ojibwe people along the Berens River who still warmly remembered both him and Hallowell.[24]

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24 Maurice Berens, a grandson of William, enrolled in my Métis History course in the mid-1980s. He became greatly interested in Hallowell as a source for Berens family history and undertook and shared considerable oral and documentary research on his grandfather. See Jennifer S. H. Brown, "'A Place in Your Mind for Them All': Chief William Berens," in *Being and Becoming Indian: Biographical Studies of North American Frontiers*, ed. James A. Clifton (Chicago: Dorsey Press, 1989), 223. On pursuing Hallowell and the Ojibwe people who remembered him in the 1990s, see Maureen Matthews, "The Search for Fair Wind's Drum," assisted by Jennifer S. H. Brown and Roger Roulette, *Ideas*, CBC Radio, 1993, and chapter 17,

In the meantime, my father's quest for E. R. Young's and other family papers had yielded a good many writings that had long sat unread. One of the richest was an autobiographical manuscript by Young's eldest son, E. Ryerson Young (1869–1962), who was born at the Rossville mission near Norway House during his father's mission service there. As a small child there, and later at Berens River, he was looked after by a Cree nurse whom the family called Little Mary. The first third of Young's memoir focused on his vivid memories of the Cree-style upbringing Mary gave him and on the culture shock he underwent when his family left the mission field for Port Perry, Ontario, and placed him, at age seven, in a small rural school. This document offered rich material for an essay I wrote in 1987, exploring his childhood experiences and their parallels with the lives of the children of fur traders and their Native wives, women whose values and approaches to learning, discipline, and character formation stood in great contrast to those of their European fathers. The essay closed a circle, for the Youngs and their young son. Eddie, as he was called then, developed a close friendship with William Berens's great-uncle, Zhaawanaash (see chapter 16, this volume). It was a privilege to have at hand Eddie's writings, alongside those of his father, Egerton R. Young, and Hallowell.[25] In all these instances, other voices also speak through these texts and can be heard if one listens, just as the sixteenth-century Spanish scribes in Peru told John Murra more than they ever realized, both about the Indigenous peoples of the Andes and about themselves.

This is a small sampling of the lines I can trace—academic, intellectual, and familial—and of the directions in which they have led. What was somewhat unexpected was how they came to be braided together. And yet I shouldn't have been too surprised, for my father, Harcourt Brown, a professor of French literature and the history of science, had a considerable impact on the course of my academic life. One of the professors who most influenced him at the University of Toronto in the 1920s was George Sidney Brett, whose seminal work on the history of psychology paralleled, in some ways, the contextualizing

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this volume. Susan Elaine Gray also built upon some of this work for her graduate studies and publications, notably in her book *"I Will Fear No Evil": Ojibwa-Missionary Encounters Along the Berens River, 1875–1940* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2006).

25 On Little Mary and her relations with Eddie and the Young family, see Jennifer S. H. Brown. "A Cree Nurse in a Cradle of Methodism: Little Mary and the Egerton R. Young Family at Norway House and Berens River," in *First Days, Fighting Days: Women in Manitoba History*, ed. Mary Kinnear (Regina: Canadian Plains Research Centre, 1987), 19–40. On Eddie's memories of Cree and Ojibwe people who influenced his childhood, see Jennifer S. H. Brown, "Growing up Algonquian: A Missionary's Son in Cree-Ojibwe Country, 1869–1876," in *Papers of the 39th Algonquian Conference, 2007*, ed. Karl S. Hele and Regna Darnell (London, ON: University of Western Ontario, 2009), 72–93.

approaches that Hallowell and Stocking brought to the history of anthropology (and that my father applied to his doctoral research on scientific organizations in seventeenth-century France).[26] In 1982, when my son, Matthew, was beginning undergraduate studies at Brown University, his grandfather wrote to him about how, at the University of Toronto, he had found certain "Father Figures," notably Brett, "whose minds were inexhaustible."[27] Brett was interdisciplinary, moving between psychology and history; "he used to emphasize . . . that real skill in any field can be used to enter another" (compare Hallowell moving between anthropology and history). Brett also taught his students to "find the point of view from which an author writes and thinks and [to] reconstruct his argument as fully as you can before venturing to criticize his work. That is the way to achieve a fair evaluation of whatever you are looking at, and make your remarks useful."[28]

Of course, my father's other role was in stimulating my interest in the Young papers and in what could be done with such sources. But herein lay a challenge. He and I were not Methodists, and he was an avowed agnostic. We could appreciate the many human qualities of Egerton and Elizabeth Young, their good works, and the value of their writings and the information they preserved. Yet to read the Methodistical prose of a past century required a leap into a world view that sometimes seemed as remote from our own as the traditional worlds of Ojibwe people that William Berens was trying to explain and Hallowell was trying to understand. How does one cope with a great-grandfather whose books sometimes opined about the "superstitious degradation" of the Ojibwe

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26 G. S. Brett (1879–1944) taught philosophy and ethics at the University of Toronto from 1911 to 1944 and was best known for his three-volume *History of Psychology* (1912, 1921), published in 1953 as an abridged one-volume edition by George Allen and Unwin in London. Harcourt Brown's dissertation, an important early contribution to the history of science, was published in 1934 as *Scientific Organizations in Seventeenth-Century France* (Baltimore, MD: Williams and Wilkins).

27 Harcourt Brown was sensitive to the absence of women professors in his time; he wrote in the same letter, "The chief element of a university is the faculty, the men and women—there were very few in my day." He never had women professors in his university experience, but then, neither did I in courses taken from 1958 to 1972 at three major universities. The letter to his grandson Matthew Harcourt Brown was published in 1992 to invite support for the Harcourt Brown Travel Fellowship for University College students at the University of Toronto; see Harcourt Brown, "A Letter from a Senior Scholar to His Junior," *Alumni Magazine*, University College, University of Toronto, 1992, 8.

28 Ibid. This advice reminds me of my first reading-course experience with George Stocking at the University of Chicago. For our first meeting, I prepared, in the style I had learned at Harvard, a rather slash-and-burn critique of the author he had assigned, only to be quietly rebuked for my lack of attention to the author's own outlook and purposes in writing the book in question.

bands along the eastern shore of Lake Winnipeg and about dangerous conjurors and the dire situation of the unconverted?[29]

There are ways to meet the challenge. First, the advice of G. S. Brett, quoted above, is useful: try to understand a writer's viewpoint before offering a criticism. And I would add, consider the intended readership when printed works are involved. The rhetoric of Young's mission-centred books is more generalizing and stereotypic than his mode of expression in private writings; in fact, his papers show that he had some significant conversations and friendships with "conjurors."[30] Second, there is no point in denial: we lose out if we simply ignore or suppress the things in our familial (and academic) past that we don't like. To a certain extent, we can choose among our academic ancestors the mentors whom we decide to follow, although all sorts of practical constraints enter into working with certain professors and not others. But we cannot choose or change our great-grandparents (or grandparents or parents); they are part of us. Sometimes they may influence our mental development in a reverse way; we react against aspects of their belief and practice and choose another way. But while holding true to our own views and opinions, we have to allow them theirs (which are already part of history) and try to understand their outlooks and situations.

It helps to acknowledge that as educated people in this century, we have a huge advantage over our great-grandparents, missionary or otherwise. We have imbibed the anthropological concept of cultures in the plural and are steeped in values that recognize and respect, if imperfectly, other world views. We may vary in our degrees of cultural relativism, but we are schooled in that principle to an extent that our ancestors could never have fathomed.

There is a spinoff, however, from that relativism. A secular missionary presentism can lead to an easy affixing of judgment and blame on all people of the past (particularly those of European heritage) who did not exhibit our enlightened perspective toward other cultures and world views. Of course, ancestors (whether well meaning, naïve, or evil) in positions of relative power could do great damage, as we see, for example, in colonial wars and in Indian residential schools in Canada. But we can acknowledge the problems of assessing motivation, character, and intent in our subjects of study and deal honestly and constructively with them, as did Victoria Freeman, who had to wrestle

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29 Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 29.

30 See Anne Lindsay, "Tapastanum: 'A Noted Conjurer for Many Years, Who Long Resisted the Teachings of Christianity,'" in *Papers of the Fortieth Algonquian Conference, 2008*, ed. Karl S. Hele and J. Randolph Valentine (Albany: SUNY Press, 2012), 23–40, and chapter 16, this volume.

with her ancestors' stories and perspectives in *Distant Relations*, her study of her own familial legacy.[31]

Aboriginal writers also confront these issues as they try to evaluate their ancestors' highly varied relationships with newcomers to this continent and their consequences. Heather Devine expressed the issues well when she reflected that "the practice of history, like life writing, is also a form of moral deliberation intended to establish ethical relationships to the past, present, and future. Maybe that is why I gravitated to history as a way to explore issues of personal and collective identity in the first place, because history is about trying to understand why past events transpired as they did, how the course of the past has affected our lives in the present, and how the past might influence our decision making in the future."[32]

In this light, with a view to where we are going, we great-grandchildren need to understand all our ancestors better, both the familial and academic. We are possessed by them and they by us, as those Cree grammatical prefixes make clear. Whether we translate *aaniskotaapaan* as "succession and extension across the generations" or, metaphorically, as "knots in a string," this Cree concept has helped me to organize these thoughts and reflections. It has provoked me into paying more attention to where we come from and where we are going, as I seek to do work that (quoting A. Irving Hallowell on Frank Speck) has "the earmarks of high substantiality" and as I try to help others to do likewise.

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31 Victoria Freeman, *Distant Relations: How My Ancestors Colonized North America* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 2000).

32 Heather Devine, "Being and Becoming Métis: A Personal Reflection," in Podruchny and Peers, *Gathering Places*, 182.

Cree and Ojibwe Prophets and Preachers

Braided Streams

The nineteenth century was a time of diverse spiritual encounters in Rupert's Land, with varied outcomes. Cree and Ojibwe people, as they carried on their own religious practices, increasingly met missionaries travelling their waterways and bringing new observances, books, and doctrines that sometimes found receptive audiences, and sometimes not. Both Indigenous stories and the writings of fur traders and missionaries have much to tell about how spiritual and power relations flowed in braided streams, both in the shifting cross-currents of missionary relations with prospective converts and within Cree and Ojibwe communities. Chapters 13 to 15 focus on Cree and Ojibwe prophets and preachers and their interactions with their own people, fur traders, and missionary newcomers.

"The Wasitay Religion" (chapter 13) traces a Cree prophetic movement that arose in 1843 along the western shores of Hudson Bay. Beginning in 1841, the Reverend James Evans and his assistants at Norway House, north of Lake Winnipeg, began to translate Methodist hymns and scriptures into a Cree syllabic script that proved easy for Cree speakers to learn and teach; it spread with remarkable speed. Two years later, a man named Abishabis, from the Severn River area, began making claims of receiving dreams and revelations that showed "the track to heaven." Hudson Bay Company traders complained that his followers were "singing psalms" and gazing upon "great books"—evidently texts inscribed in Cree syllabics, which the traders could not read—and were being distracted from hunting and trapping. Abishabis soon made excessive demands on his followers, committed murder, and was executed by his countrymen, who feared he was becoming a windigo, a cannibalistic being. His associate, Wasitek, however, carried the movement to the south in the James Bay area, where anthropologists in the 1930s heard stories about him. In 2002–3, Cree storyteller Louis Bird, from Peawanuk on Hudson Bay, explained in several conversations that Cree people themselves had divergent views of the prophets and their significance. The movement sheds light on how the Cree experienced and interpreted Christianity and adapted it to their own purposes, applying its beliefs and practices in ways that the traders and missionaries did not understand and considered heretical.

Chapter 14, "I Wish to Be as I See You," takes up the story of an Ojibwe Methodist missionary, Allen Salt, who kept a detailed diary of his efforts to convert his people at Rainy Lake (in northwestern Ontario) in 1854–55. Finding himself in an area where powerful Ojibwe "conjurors" and their practices flourished, he made little headway with his Methodistical preaching. Working, too, among people long accustomed to fur trade bargaining, he was beset by pressures to provide goods and benefits beyond his means in return for whatever support they might give him. Perceived as a powerful outsider who, at the

same time, should be generous to his own people, he was caught in a triangle of relationships—Ojibwe-trader-missionary—which left him no opening for success and sheds light on the complex dynamics of such contact situations.

Chapter 15 presents and tells the history of a remarkable document by the Reverend James Settee, a Cree Anglican clergyman. Late in the 1800s and late in his life, Settee wrote down his memories of a great gathering of Cree people at the mouth of the Nelson River in the fall of 1823. Its highlight was the telling of "an old tradition" about the birth and doings of six brothers—powerful beings who emerge as the four Winds, Wahpus (Rabbit), and Pewahnuk (Flint). As they mature, their strong personalities and different aims and values, destructive and benign, become dynamic forces as they compete for dominion in the world and foretell great changes to come—a story long retained in the memory of a dedicated Cree clergyman who set great store by an old "pagan" storytelling witnessed in his youth. The story of the document, its writing, and its preservation by Settee's fur trader and missionary friends is remarkable, as is the literary quality of the text; the power of Settee's language and poetics comes through, even though he had to resort to English to preserve the story.

The Wasitay Religion

Prophecy, Oral Literacy, and Belief on Hudson Bay

Ever since Anthony F. C. Wallace's seminal work on revitalization movements (e.g., Wallace 1970), the concept of revitalization has served to frame discussions of religious innovations and renewals in post-contact Indigenous societies. Yet the phrase may also become a substitute for deeper descriptions and explanations. The analysis of any religious movement presents challenges, especially when the subject matter leads us across cultural borders and into historical situations beyond our range of observation. For one thing, the writers of the documentary sources we must use were usually outsiders (fur traders and missionaries, in the events studied here). Their cultural and religious views shaped what they thought they saw—their perceptions of what was going on among the people they wrote about. We who later try to analyze what these old sources tell us are doubly removed from the events and actors in question.

Another problem is that in searching for effective ways to formulate and conceptualize prophetic movements in terms considered effective and intelligible within our academic disciplines, we risk exoticizing them, distancing ourselves from the people involved, and neglecting the historical and cultural perspectives that their descendants could offer. There is also a risk of idealizing these movements. Their themes of energy and hope, rebirth, revival, and innovation ("revitalization") in the face of deprivation or cultural loss may win favour but may obscure their negative aspects. Their success may have served some community members' needs and interests well but could be hurtful to others. Leaders may fail or become self-serving or predatory, leaving a mixed legacy that celebratory traditions about them may not capture.

The subject of this essay is a Hudson Bay Cree prophetic movement of 1842–43, which I first wrote about in 1982. Two decades later, I had opportunities to discuss the movement with an Omushkego (Swampy Cree) scholar

and storyteller, Louis Bird, who had heard stories about it. He thoughtfully reflected on it and on some questions of language and narrative that it brought to mind. His comments enriched my perspectives and encouraged me to take a new look at the topic, in conversation with other scholars studying comparable movements elsewhere. The invoking of Omushkego memories and views of these events and of narratives about them provides a reminder that the concept of "revitalization movement" is itself emic to social science and is not readily translatable into Cree or other Indigenous languages. To illuminate nineteenth-century spiritual and religious experience on the west coast of Hudson Bay, we need to consult not only outsiders' documents and anthropological models but also the rich insights that the Cree language and Omushkego stories and scholarship can provide.[1]

The main events of the prophetic movement of 1842–43 have been outlined in earlier studies (Brown 1982, 1988; Long 1989). Here, I explore the generative role played in it by a Cree syllabic writing system that had just been introduced in the region by a Methodist missionary. I then look at some intellectual and symbolic aspects of the movement as they were recorded at the time, taking particular interest in Omushkego concepts of worship, writing, and books. Finally, I discuss some Omushkego oral narratives and perspectives that provide a range of Indigenous assessments of the subject and some fresh contexts in which to view it.

THE EVENTS OF 1842–43: CONTEXT

The rise of the prophets Abishabis ("Small Eyes") and Wasitek or Wasitay ("The Light") and the spread of the novel ideas and practices that resulted began in the summer of 1842, as recorded in various fur traders' writings. By that time, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) had been trading for furs at several major posts on Hudson Bay for more than a century and a half. Numerous Omush-kegowuk (lit., people of the muskeg), known to the HBC men as Homeguard or Home Indians, were living at least seasonally around the posts, supplying them with fish, game, geese, and other waterfowl and with labour of various sorts as well as furs. These people had long acquaintance with the English

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and Scottish sojourners. Over several generations, their kinship ties with the traders had proliferated through quasi-marital unions, since Christian churches and European women were absent until the early 1800s in the Hudson Bay watershed. These connections did not mean that HBC men "went native" or that the Omushkegowuk became Europeanized; they each maintained their own communities, contrasting values and forms of governance, and distinct lifestyles. Even as the trade brought them into a shared social sphere with mutually understood exchange rituals and overlapping aims, the two parties did not live in the same society (cf. Brown 1980, xvi–xvii).

In 1842, the first Christian missions to become established in the region from Hudson Bay to Lake Winnipeg were only two years old, although they were already moving quickly to build their own webs of association with Northern Algonquian communities. In the summer of 1840, the HBC allowed several Methodist missionaries to travel from Upper Canada (Ontario) or Britain to build missions at selected fur trade posts in Rupert's Land. One of those missions was at Norway House, near the north end of Lake Winnipeg on the main water route to the Hudson Bay post of York Factory (Manitoba), and another was at Moose Factory (Ontario), just upriver from the southwest corner of James Bay. They were headed, respectively, by two English ministers: James Evans, who had already spent several years in Indian mission work in Ontario, and George Barnley, who had come straight from England. Evans, at Norway House in 1840–41, quickly began work on translating scriptures and hymns into Cree. Improvising a printing press, the first in the region, he devised a Cree syllabary, a writing system that, although unintelligible to the fur traders and even to his fellow missionaries until they could be taught it, was easily and eagerly learned and passed on among Cree speakers themselves. The use of Cree syllabics spread rapidly, paralleling in some respects the rise of the Cherokee syllabary developed by Sequoyah in the 1820s, far to the south (Fogelson 1996). Mission influence and the rise of a distinctive Cree literacy were important elements in the synthesis of ideas and practices that stimulated this prophetic movement.

Economic and environmental conditions also doubtless supplied some tinder for prophetic fervour. In 1842–43, game animals and fur returns were in a state of decline in the long-exploited fur trade regions all around Hudson Bay. HBC officer George Barnston wrote from Albany Factory to his colleague at York Factory, James Hargrave, on 23 November 1842 that the northern and southern departments seemed "to be in a dead heat—who shall decline fastest. The Albany District from one end of it to the other scarcely exhibited half a trade" (Barnston 1842). Climatic conditions appeared more severe than usual; on 25 May 1843, John Cromartie, a clerk at the Severn post on Hudson Bay, north

of Albany, recorded that he was experiencing the "most Backward Spring that I have Ever Seen for this Thirty years back" (Severn post journals, HBCA B.198/a/84, fol. 31).

Subarctic cold cycles and resource shortages in themselves, however, do not suffice to explain the rise of this movement or its nature. For one thing, these conditions were probably no worse than other similar crisis points in the boreal forests along Hudson Bay during the Little Ice Age, a cold climatic episode that extended across the northern hemisphere from approximately 1550 to the 1850s (Fossett 2001, 29). David Aberle has aptly noted the risks of assuming that deprivation in itself causes such movements and then reading the evidence accordingly: "It is always possible after the fact to find deprivations." He draws attention, however, to "relative deprivation" as a useful concept (1965, 538–39). People facing situations of change or blockage of their expectations and experiencing "the insufficiency of ordinary action" may turn to extraordinary actions and innovations and to withdrawal from the existing social order if they feel that it has failed them and "cannot be reconstituted" (540–41). They would surely be more likely to do so if, as on Hudson Bay, plausible leaders emerged in their midst, bringing a blend of old and new ideas and practices and a new sign system (here, the Cree syllabary) that seemed empowering and likely to fulfill hopes and needs.

THE RISE OF ABISHABIS AND WASITEK

In the fall and winter of 1842, HBC traders from York Factory southward to the Severn River on Hudson Bay and, later, at Albany Factory (Fort Albany, Ontario, on James Bay) became concerned about some new practices among their Native trading partners and provisioners. Hunters and trappers were neglecting their usual pursuits for other activities that the HBC men saw as harmful both for the fur trade and for survival. At the Severn post, John Cromartie wrote, on 4 September 1842, that the local Omushkegowuk were being "a pest" to him "with their psalm Singing and painting Books that has been all there occupation this three weeks back." The numbers of people gathered there increased during the next weeks, and on 23 October, Cromartie wrote that they were "making the woods to Ring today with music and at the same time they have empty stomacks and I am afraid it will be the case with them after this if they Continue as they have done all the Fall" (Severn post journals, HBCA B.198/a/84, fol. 13).

Cromartie's comments offer fascinating clues that the adherents of the movement were not only creating documents of some sort (on which, more later) but also adopting what was for them a new style of worship ("psalm singing"). Being Christian himself, however, he could not have grasped the

extent to which such singing was an innovation for the people. Such collective performances stood in radical contrast to traditional Northern Algonquian songs and rituals, which were highly individualized and personal.[2] Omushkego observers of the Europeans, as Louis Bird explained to me, found that one of the most striking things about the newcomers' mode of spiritual communication (whether of clergymen or, in earlier years, of HBC officers holding Sunday services at the forts) was how people would speak (pray) aloud or sing together under a leader, all saying the same words in unison. In Cree, worship of this new sort came to be called *uyumeha'win*, a word related to *uyumew*, "to speak" and, by extension, "to pray" (Faries 1938, 152, 179).[3] A standard (but not very illuminating) English translation of this term is "religion." Cromartie was witnessing, in a sense, the arrival of "religion" among the Omushkegowuk.

The movement spread widely during the fall and winter. In October 1842, the Reverend George Barnley, at Moose Factory, was approached by two men from Severn who had learned about the syllabics from their friends at York Factory. They asked him to help "decypher a piece of writing the work of an Indian who has not seen a Missionary till his interview with me. . . . The subject was a hymn and the characters employed those of the Rev. J[ames] Evans' invention" (Brown 1982, 58). Since Barnley was unacquainted with Evans's syllabics, he failed the test after a day's labour, doubtless elevating the standing of those Omushkegowuk who could read them.

The following spring, HBC officer George Barnston, in charge at Albany Factory on James Bay, became concerned about what he saw as the prophets' misleading influence and false claims. He decided that it was necessary to lecture the local hunters

> on the subject of the new superstitions, that have spread so generally among them concerning the two York [Factory] natives [Abishabis and Wasitek] who they believe have been in heaven and returned to bring blessings and Knowledge to their Brethren. . . . A few observations regarding the wrath of God and the wiles of the Devil excited their alarm. . . . I then saw a paper whereon there were lines drawn, some straight and many Crooked or waved, which they had conceived to be the "Track to Heaven," and thereupon I explained that the Road to

2 Lynn Whidden, in her work with Cree hunters on the east side of James Bay (where mission influences arrived much later), observed that the hunters sang individually: "In fact each had a very distinctive vocal timbre and style." An Anglican priest told her that he found it difficult to create a choir: "People just didn't sing in unison and certainly not in harmony." Whidden, pers. comm., 25 March 2001.

3 Compare these terms to the Plains Cree *ayamihawin*, the term for saying prayers, church service, religion, and for "the Roman Catholic Church" (Wolfart and Ahenakew 1998, 348).

Heaven was—to love God and each other: I observed also, that if it were my property, I should burn that paper. It was then handed to me for burning, by the priestess, an elderly woman who walked from York last fall. (Albany Factory journals, HBCA B.3/a/148, 8 June 1843)

The markings on the paper doubtless included Cree syllabics. Indeed, James Evans had preached at York Factory where the "priestess" came from (and whence came the syllabic text presented to Barnley at Moose). Barnston at Albany, several hundred miles to the south, had not seen this scribal innovation before; it was the Omushkegowuk travelling along the inland and coastal waterways who transmitted the syllabics far and wide before the traders in their posts realized what they were. All that Barnston could do, within his frame of reference, was to reject this writing intuitively as some form of heresy to be destroyed, in good Christian fashion, by fire.

At a deeper level, the idea of "heaven" itself presented challenges for mutual understanding, as Barnston's account indicates. As a Christian who held Sunday prayers for everyone at the factory, Barnston would have taught about heaven as a destination for good believers after death. The prophets could not have travelled to heaven; thus, their claims represented "the wiles of the Devil." A central translation problem was that the Christian heaven lacked an equivalent in Cree cosmology. Its elaborate English-language significance as a final destination for moral Christians was brought by outsiders, both devout British fur traders such as Barnston and the missionaries. In traditional Omushkego belief, however, the dead journeyed to a land and afterlife in the remote west, not in the sky, and to judge by limited evidence, they were buried facing west (Brownlee and Syms 1999, 40).

Where, then, had the prophets journeyed, in Omushkego terms, to learn "the Track to Heaven"? The English-language word for heaven was simply translated into Cree as *kicheke'sik*, "big sky," or *ispimik*, "above" (Faries 1938, 95). In Cree, they would have stated that they had gone up into the sky to a place where they were given blessings and knowledge. This would have struck their listeners as plausible; Northern Algonquians were quite familiar with dream experiences and narratives that featured the travels of persons or their souls through the air to visit spirit helpers. A Rock Cree of northern Manitoba, Jean-Baptiste Merasty, in the 1970s, told Robert Brightman a story about how his ancestors initially interpreted some of the teachings of the first Roman Catholic priests to reach that area in the late 1800s. At first, because the priests said that they should pray for what they wanted, "they thought they could get food and trade goods just by praying for them and without doing any work." When this failed, they selected "one man who would travel to Heaven in the sky and get all this food and all these trade goods from God." Brightman observed about this story,

"The expedient of 'flying to Heaven' appears as an additional empowerment associated with Catholicism, although the ability to fly through the air with the aid of spirit guardians figures in other narratives [notably in the shaking tent ritual] without Catholic associations" (1989, 165–66). In this sense, the sky above, as the home of a powerful new potential guardian possessed of untold resources, could readily be accommodated in the Northern Algonquian cosmos, along with the worlds and beings associated with the four horizontal cardinal directions (as in James Settee's "tradition," chapter 15, this volume).

A PROPHET'S FALL

George Barnston and other HBC men, concerned about how these leaders and the "new superstitions" distracted hunters from trapping furs and fostered "laziness" as well as heresy, increasingly pressed their followers to withdraw their support. But it was the actions of Abishabis himself that diminished his appeal in the York Factory area when he required that his followers give him "tithes of clothing, arms, and ammunition" in large amounts and even demanded some of their daughters and wives (Brown 1982, 54). Such hoarding and excessive demands on others violated Omushkego values and alienated his own community. As some followers went hungry and even starved to death, the two prophets' claims of impending benefits also began to seem empty by the empirical standards that Northern Algonquians applied to their spiritual leaders' claims and activities (Hallowell 1934).

Reduced to a state of "beggary" by July 1843, Abishabis completed his downfall when he murdered a family of four near York Factory (York Factory journals, HBCA B.239/a/157, fol. 50, entry by James Hargrave, 31 July 1843). Their supplies gave him the means to make his way to his home base of Severn, where, on 9 August, the HBC postmaster, John Cromartie, reported, "None of the Indians appear to Doo him any honor." Three days later, Cromartie wrote, "I was obliged to take the men & go Down Below and take that villan of murdrer in Custody as all the Indians was Cumming heare making Complaints that he was threatning them if they Did not Comply with his requests in Giving him food &c and in fact they was afraid to leave Place while he was hear." Cromartie then "put him in Irons mearly to frighten him So as he might Leave the Quarter when Liberatted." The next day, he escaped or was allowed to escape, but since he continued to make trouble, Cromartie took him prisoner again with a view to sending him to York Factory. On 30 August, however, three local men took the matter into their own hands: "[They] draged him out off the house and marched him down to the River Sid[e] and Knocked his Brains out with one of the mens large axes & then tumbled him in the River and fixed a Rop[e] to his feet and Toeded [towed] him across to an Island and Burnt him

to ashes & that is the End of that wicked man" (Severn post journals, HBCA B.198/a/85, fols. 5, 6, 8). They followed this procedure, as James Hargrave later wrote at York Factory, "to secure themselves against being haunted by a 'windigo'" (George Simpson correspondence, HBCA D.5/9, fol. 308, Hargrave to George Simpson, 1 December 1843). In Cree/Ojibwe belief, humans could occasionally become monstrous, cannibalistic beings who posed great dangers to others. The execution of a windigo required the use of an axe and the burning of the remains, so that the heart (which had turned to ice) would be entirely destroyed (Brown and Brightman 1988, 168–69).

The dramatic end of Abishabis had quite an effect, as far as the HBC traders could see. The movement seemed to fade in the York Factory and Severn area; numbers of its adherents began giving up or destroying their "books" and other materials. Mission and HBC sources did not relate what happened to Wasitek, the second prophet. But in 1934, Simon Smallboy, at Moose Factory, told anthropologist John Cooper that Wasitek was killed at Moose: "Wasetek got killed here and they cut him all up in pieces. Wasetek got silly over his religion" (Long 1989, 7). His fate, then, paralleled that of Abishabis. One might ask if Smallboy was confusing Wasitek's fate with that of Abishabis, but he was quite positive about the name and place, just as the HBC clerk at Severn was clear about the identity of the prophet who was killed at his post.

PROPHETS, BOOKS, AND SIGNS

The fur traders and missionaries, although they had different reasons for their concerns, agreed in their interpretations of the movement, reading it as a debased borrowing of Christianity. On 8 June 1843, for example, when trader George Barnston spoke to the hunters at Albany about Abishabis (who was calling himself Jesus Christ) and Wasitek, he tried to explain to them "the Manner in which the Imposters were assuming characters which were known to the Indians at first only by the preaching of the Missionaries, and how they were allowing themselves to be misled." Similarly, Methodist missionary George Barnley, upon returning to Moose Factory on 23 September 1843 after a short trip, "was grieved to learn that Satan had transformed himself into an angel of light [a reference to Wasitek/Wasitay, who was better known in the Moose/Albany area], and propagated among them errors of a ruinous tendency. To his distress, "The credit of the false prophets was firmly established" (Barnley 1843).

The Judeo-Christian tropes of Barnston and Barnley resonate with those still used by anthropologists (cf. Wogan 1994, 422) and with terms familiar in discussions of revitalization movements. When the traders and missionaries spoke of false prophets, Satan as an angel of light, and arcane writings, they drew on powerful constructs embedded in their own religious traditions. A prophet

was a person who spoke for the gods, telling their will, for example, as an interpreter at a Greek oracle. Millenarian prophecy dominates certain parts of the New Testament, as do accompanying caveats about imposters. The Gospel of Matthew and the Book of Revelation warned that besides true prophets, there were false ones who come "in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves" (Matthew 7:15; see also Revelation 19:20). Prophecy begins as oral communication; the word is formed from the Greek verb meaning "to speak." But in Christian tradition, it is also written in books; see, for example, Revelation 20:15 and 21:27, on the book of life, and 22:7: "Blessed is he that keepeth the sayings of the prophecy of this book." For both the traders and the clergy who wrote about these events, the power and symbolism of writing and of books were at the core of this story.

This statement, however, could also be made about the Omushkegowuk. For the followers of Abishabis and Wasitek, both written texts and the "painting" of books were at the core of their activities. As the word of Abishabis's death spread in 1843–44, Thomas Corcoran, an HBC clerk at Albany, recorded a number of observations concerning their "Great Books." Wahshellekum, for example, had been "one of the followers of the false Christ, but he tells me that he is no longer: as he has burned the *Great Book* of the imposter." Corcoran then commissioned him "to inform the Coast Indians that he may see, of the fate of the Severn false prophet: and also to burn their great Books or Charts which he tells me that they all have" (Albany Factory journals, HBCA B.3/a/149, 11 and 13 December 1843). On 3 January 1844, another follower reported to Corcoran that he had "made no effort to hunt this Winter, as his time was altogether engrossed with the new Creed. He has however given me up his *Great Book* in which he believed as firmly as any Christian does in his Bible." On 3 May, Corcoran received word of another hunter who did not survive the winter, having "depended on the Charts that he had in his possession . . . for all his wants. On these unmeaning scratches—traced on wood or paper—and that are called by Indians the Great Book he did not cease to look from the moment he pitched his tent in the fall to the hour of his death" (Albany Factory journals, HBCA B.3/a/149, 3 May 1844). On 19 June, two hunters and their families arrived at Albany "in a terrible state." Corcoran wrote, "They candidly own that, they in some degree, have deserved it for instead of looking out for their livelihood & furs, they spent their time looking at their Great or Sacred Books, which was the cause of their misery. These Books they gave up today to be burned, and were accordingly committed to the flames" (Albany Factory journals, HBCA B.3/a/150, 19 June 1844).

What precisely were these "Great Books"? The Swampy Cree term for the Bible is *kichemussinuhikun*—literally, "great book" or "great writing." Wasitek,

Abishabis as Jesus Christ, and a number of their followers were equipped with what they may have seen as their own counterparts to the Bible, as well as with syllabic writings based on James Evans's system. Missionary George Barnley provided the best clues about some of these writings in a summary report he sent to the Wesleyan Missionary Society from Moose Factory on 23 September 1843. The two men who had visited him the previous fall "had a paper which they said was a copy of one of Mr. Evan's books." Furthermore, "two hymns (printed probably by Mr Evans but certainly by some person familiar with evangelical truth, and poetic numbers) were in circulation among the Indians at York Factory, and thence found their way to Severn." As Barnley put it, while "the natives there labored earnestly to obtain a knowledge of them," one of the prophets "conceived the idea of amalgamating those portions of revelation which had come to his knowledge with the crafty fabrications of his own mind, aided by an efficient confederate." According to this conspiracy version, the two withdrew from the others and then returned to present "an extraordinary message from Heaven." Since the first of the two hymns alluded to light and the second to Jesus, they took those names for themselves (Barnley 1843).

Barnley and Thomas Corcoran also reported that the prophets produced a chart with a path branching in two directions, one to heaven and the other to hell (Barnley 1843; Albany district correspondence, HBCA B.3/b/70, p. 9, 15 January 1844), whereas George Barnston earlier had referred only to papers showing the "Track to Heaven." These paths to heaven and hell call to mind the Roman Catholic "ladder" widely used in nineteenth-century Catholic mission teaching and elaborated in the 1860s by Father Albert Lacombe on the Plains (Huel 1996, 94–95). Barnley and Corcoran may have been mistaken on this point, however. Corcoran, from whom Barnley derived some of his information, was Roman Catholic and may have simply equated the prophets' charts with Catholic two-road ladder charts familiar to him. Other writers did not mention hell (which also was not a Cree concept) or describe so literal a road map, and no Catholic priests had yet visited the region. Another possibility is that Corcoran himself had an image of the Catholic ladder and that followers of the movement might have seen and borrowed from it, but this is speculation.

The prophets also foretold a replenishing of resources to be easily secured: "a sensual Paradise" provided with deer (caribou) that were "innumerable, amazingly fat, gigantic, and delicious beyond conception" and other benefits. In his journal of 20 January 1844, Barnley described boards on which the outlines of human figures, animals, and various other markings were carved. One board "had the outline of a male figure . . . & surrounded by various animals as a cow, a goat, a buffalo, a sheep &c. [Adherents] were taught that if they

worshipped [this] figure the animals they needed would be supplied without further trouble." Barnley gave no explanation of why four animals scarcely known in the Hudson Bay Lowlands were represented; perhaps he was guessing what they were. In any case, he was told that the possessors of these pictographs "lay down in their tents gazing on the figure & of course almost starving in the midst of an unusually bountiful supply of game, expecting to find deer &c so accomodating as to bring their throats to the knife" (Barnley 1844).

BOOKS, WRITING, AND ORAL LITERACY

As the Cree word for "book," *mussinuhikun*, also simply means "writing," the term that Corcoran and others translated as "Great Books" may have constituted an expanded Omushkego definition of the English term for books. The category, it seems, freely and ambiguously included charts, maps, pages of hymnals, boards with writing and pictographs on them, and probably books themselves, bound in leather, from Evans's printing press (Brown 1982). These accoutrements challenge our common sense stereotypes not only of books but of North American Aboriginal cultures as functioning solely by oral communication. The Omushkego integration of written media, notably syllabics, into the new movement might be read as enthusiasm for a powerful and magical novelty, in line with James Axtell's (1988) thesis about the strong impact of the Jesuits' introduction of the printed word among the Native people of the northeast. But Axtell may have overstated the novelty of literacy, according to Peter Wogan (1994). Building partly on Wogan's work, Germaine Warkentin has explored these issues further and finds that Native North Americans have been "too easily classified as 'oral' cultures" (1999, 4). As she points out, historians of writing "divide sign systems into semasiographic (i.e., pictography) and phonographic (language-based)." Yet closer study shows that "native sign systems . . . elude such categorizations, problematizing the boundary between semasiographic and phonographic as Europeans have conceptualized it." One difficulty with European sources is that Europeans, in their exoticizing of Native peoples, expected them to view writing as magical. This representational problem "has obscured for us evidence suggesting that Native peoples took writing in their stride" (3, 12). Warkentin urges an expanded functional definition of books to encompass such things as Cree pictographs on wood or birch bark: "*marks made upon a material base for the purpose of recording, storing, and communicating information*" (3, emphasis in original). This definition works cross-culturally, and Warkentin, in calling attention to the multiple uses of books, suggests that "the development of a written culture may not be the production of a specific kind of object, but something like a form of behaviour" (3; see also her latest discussion of this point in Warkentin [2014]).

Certainly, the Omushkegowuk, by all reports, were not mystified by writing; they had a perfectly good Cree word for it. The syllabic system of James Evans (see figure 13.1) was new to them, but it was equally new and strange to the HBC traders and to clergy such as George Barnley, who lacked the keys to unlock this code. Compared with these outsiders, fluent Cree speakers had a great advantage when learning to read these signs; they knew the syllables (sound clusters) and could simply sound out the words that were formed by these curious hooks and triangles, without the pitfalls of spelling that beset users of the English alphabet. Furthermore, what might be called their oral literacy allowed for learning informally and socially, in settings such as "psalm singing" or collective prayer where oral and visual cues were mutually reinforcing. As John Murdoch has noted, "If a person were ever expected to read fluently and aloud from these texts, it would most often be in unison with others where one who knew a piece by heart could easily disguise any difficulty he might have in reading" (1982, 26).

Murdoch and Suzanne McCarthy have both claimed that the Cree attained high rates of literacy in the syllabic writing system in the mid to late 1800s, and McCarthy has argued that "there was a higher incidence of literacy among the Cree than among the English and French communities in Canada at that time" (1995, 59; see also Murdoch 1982, 23). The claims are hard to test, but McCarthy (1995, 61) makes the point that achieving literacy is easier with syllabics than with an alphabet; Omushkego learners, reading aloud (as they usually did) in a language with a relatively simple syllabic structure, could move easily from sign to sound to meaning. From there, it was a small step for the Cree to take up reading (or singing) together, using the syllabics to appropriate the worship practices that they saw among the traders and missionaries and performing powerful borrowed texts in their own oral and written language. And it *was* their own; few outsiders could speak Cree, and even fewer could read it using the syllabics.

There was, of course, another reason why the Omushkegowuk were at home with writing. HBC traders had been coming to their shores since 1670, and their clerks all kept accounts. The Cree root word for "writing" or "book," *mussin-uhik-*, also formed, in the context of the fur trade, the base for verbs signifying "he takes debt," "he gives out debt," and "he engages to work" and for nouns such as "clerk" or "writer," "debt," "ink," and "paper." Native people rarely joined in this writing universe, but they had observed it and had experienced its consequences for action and livelihood for a long time. The followers of Abishabis and Wasitek, perhaps with that model also in the back of their minds, now took up writing and gazing upon books of their own making.

	e	ē	i	ī	o	ō	a	ā	w
p	pe	pē	pi	pī	po	pō	pa	pā	p
t	te	tē	ti	tī	to	tō	ta	tā	t
k	ke	kē	ki	kī	ko	kō	ka	kā	k
c	ce	cē	ci	cī	co	cō	ca	cā	c
m	me	mē	mi	mī	mo	mō	ma	mā	m
n	ne	nē	ni	nī	no	nō	na	nā	n
s	se	sē	si	sī	so	sō	sa	sā	s
y	ye	yē	yi	yī	yo	yō	ya	yā	hk
sp	spe	spē	spi	spī	spo	spō	spa	spā	r l

Characters not included in the chart are:

non-final w　·　(mid-line position)

final y　˙　(high position)

aspirate　"
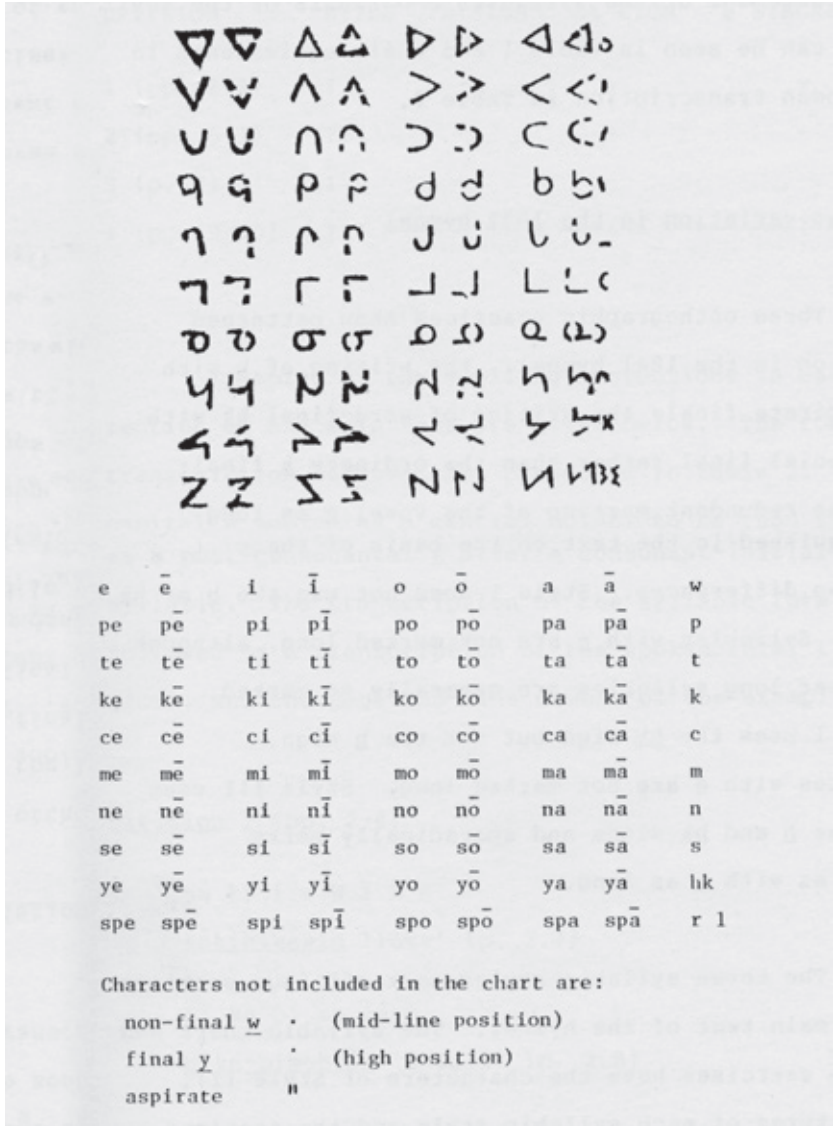
Figure 13.1.   This chart shows the Cree syllabic characters devised by Wesleyan Methodist missionary James Evans and used at Norway House in 1841. In this early version of the syllabic system, long vowels are represented by writing characters with gaps in the lines (see the character on the right in each pair). Later writers of Cree syllabics turned instead to diacritic points or dots to represent long sounds. Source: John D. Nichols, "The Compositional Sequence of the First Cree Hymnal," in Essays in *Algonquian Bibliography in Honour of V. M. Dechene*, edited by H. C. Wolfart (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba, 1984), 9. Reproduced by permission of the editor.

Among the happenings on the book front in western Hudson Bay in the 1840s, one mission innovation stands out. I have already mentioned George Barnley's report of meeting with two men who had a paper from one of James Evans's books and his observation that two hymns printed by Evans were evidently in circulation at York Factory and Severn. Evans, by 1841–42, had built his own printing press at Norway House and thereby became the first to introduce printing into the scribal culture of the Hudson Bay region—and indeed, into the whole of Rupert's Land. Printing presses came late to every region of what was to become Canada; Warkentin (1999, 4) notes that there were no presses in eastern Canada until 1751. The sight of printed books and papers was not new, as many were regularly brought from Europe. But the availability of textual materials actually printed in the region and, even more strikingly, in the Cree language was novel to everyone in the Hudson Bay Lowlands.

RETROSPECTIVES: OUTSIDERS' AND OMUSHKEGO TEXTS AND EXEGESES

The prophetic movement arose in a time of climate and resource stress, but it also occurred among Hudson Bay Lowland people who firmly retained their own language and spiritual practices and lived in communities that were strongly interconnected; they were able to spread information and new ideas rapidly, and were blessed with powerful oral memories. During the twentieth century and into the twenty-first, the movement remained a topic of unfinished and sometimes disconnected conversations and monologues, both outside and within the Omushkego community. No single version or interpretation of the events of the 1840s emerges from them. It is possible, however, to juxtapose some retrospective accounts to see what each one contributes to our understandings and perspectives and what new questions emerge.

The first scholar to mention the prophetic movement of 1842–43 in print was anthropologist John Cooper, who did fieldwork at Moose Factory in 1932–34. He pieced together the story from several oral sources, which he then found to correspond closely with details recorded by the Methodist George Barnley—an indication, he wrote, "of the reliability of the aboriginal memory" (1933, 48). In the 1980s, John Long reviewed both Wesleyan Methodist sources and Cooper's publications and field notes. He found much added information in Cooper's notes, including an important narrative written in Cree syllabics by John Fletcher about his grandfather, William Apistapesh. In 1986, Long also recorded a narrative about the prophets from Sister Catherine Tekakwitha, a Roman Catholic nun at Fort Albany.[4] His study of these oral accounts from

4 As a nun, Catherine received the name of Kateri (Catherine) Tekakwitha, a Catholic Mohawk convert of the 1600s who was known for her exceeding piety. Louis Bird states

the 1930s and 1980s and his research in Methodist missionary sources led him to a synthesis that drew the available stories together and integrated, too, the work of other scholars to date (Long 1989). John Long and I gathered much information and shared ideas on these topics over the next twenty years (Brown 1982, 1988; Long 1986, 1989).[5] We shared a natural tendency, in looking at stories about the prophets and about the coming of "religion," to seek common elements in the oral traditions and other sources, assuming that they overlapped and that, taken together, they could be woven into a single whole. As Long concluded, "The documentary and oral accounts of a syncretic Cree religious movement have been compared and found to be complementary. Each provides information which is omitted in the other" (1989, 11). We also both observed that Omushkego oral traditions not only preserved memories of the prophetic movement in detail but attributed the arrival of Christianity ("religion") itself to the prophets, Wasitek in particular, and not to the first missionaries (Brown 1988, 4).

Louis Bird, however, pointed out that these Omushkego traditions and their interpretations have been, in fact, internally diverse. While some credited the prophets as the harbingers of Christianity, as did Sister Catherine Tekakwitha (Long 1989, 9–10), others, such as James Wesley and Louis Bird himself, have had other views. Sister Catherine dramatized the story of the prophets as presaging the arrival of the priests (Bird, pers. comm., February 2001). Casting the story into a visionary mode, she told of the prophets as bright lights and messengers, angels who sang and prepared the way for the coming of the Roman Catholic Church:

> This story was told by our ancestors who lived away back
> about eight generations. . . . Joseph Chookomolin heard his
> great-great-great-grandfather tell the story to his grandfather and
> father. . . . The story is a long time ago there was a group of Indians
> living at a place up north of Attawapiskat called Ekwan. . . . Among them
> was an elder who had dreams of the future. He told them what would
> happen in the future. . . . At last what he told them came to happen, and
> now at night they waited and watched as the time drew nigh. . . . At last
> it happened. One night while they were outside watching, they saw a
> bright light shining up in the sky. They said there were two bright lights.
> They heard someone talk. . . . So the people said they were told, and
> everyone heard what was said, that religion would come to them shining

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that her family name was Nee-shwa-bit ("Two Teeth" or "Buck Teeth").

5 In 1980, two other articles on the prophetic movement appeared in the same issue of *Studies in Religion* (Grant 1980; Williamson 1980). Neither used oral sources besides those quoted in Cooper (1933), and Williamson's interpretation is idiosyncratic in several respects.

bright. . . . So they called it wasitek, religion. . . . Now these messengers started to sing. They heard them sing. One of them called himself Wasitek, which means light, and the other one . . . they didn't know who he was. He [They] called him Jesus. . . . They started to sing, and the song they sang was, "Now listen you who are living. There will be a light come to you." . . . They remembered what they were told would happen in the future. They were amazed when he called himself Wasitek and also when he talked about Jesus.

So that is when religion started. . . . It was said that later on that winter, a priest came to them, and they thought that the two shining lights they had seen were angels. When the priest told them about Jesus and the angels and also taught them about religion, they began to think back about the story told by the grandfathers. . . . They thought of that right away, when they saw the priest. [And the song that was sung will be written, so it will be easy to understand.] (Long 1989, 9–10)[6]

The story as Sister Catherine learned it had been passed down among Catholic Crees; the Chookomolin family was also Catholic. But Louis Bird, while himself a Catholic, saw the prophets quite differently from Sister Catherine and in a more negative light. He viewed them as *mitewuk*, shamans or conjurors, who used their powers to mislead and harm people under the guise of the new religion from which they borrowed. It may seem surprising that, as an Omushkego elder, he agreed with, for example, missionary George Barnley, who saw them as conjurors in 1843 (Cooper 1933, 47). Bird was not, however, condemning *mitewin*, the practice of shamanism, in itself; he has emphasized that it can be powerfully used for good purposes. The problem with Abishabis and Wasitek was that in borrowing the new religious ideas and practices and the syllabics and taking on a veneer of Christianity, they blended them with their *mitewin* powers for their own ends—a recipe for trouble. They took gifts from others in exchange for false promises, and they brought starvation and suffering. Abishabis himself became a murderer who deserved his fate, and Wasitek, too, ultimately came to a bad end, although some versions of the story feature him in a more positive light.[7]

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6 The sentence in brackets is from Long's full transcript of the story, which he recorded at Fort Albany in 1986. The first Catholic priest in the area was an Oblate, Nicholas Laverlochere; John Long notes that he "baptised or rebaptised half of the Fort Albany Indians between 1847 and 1851, causing a division which remains today" (1987, 12). On the notion of "religion," Earle Waugh (2001, 487) points out that "our word religion is not to be found in the Cree lexicon, and the closest word we find to it is specific to one religion" (relating to the arrival of Christianity).

7 In July 2001, Louis Bird noted that Toby and John Michel Hunter, brothers living at his hometown of Peawanuk on the Winisk River near Hudson Bay, agreed that Abishabis was

Sister Catherine's account, Bird suggested to me, was grounded in a devout Catholicism that led her to an uncritical acceptance of the prophets' claims. He added, however, that other stories tell of older Omushkego traditions that reach back to earlier times and could also serve as harbingers of Christianity. One example he cited was James Wesley's narrative, "What the People Used to Do Before the Coming of the White Man," learned from his grandfather, which John Long (1986, 25–29) has also quoted at length. Long noted that Wesley omitted any reference to conjuring and drumming (*mitewin*) in his account of traditional life and attributed his silence to Wesley's being a third-generation Anglican (25). Bird agreed on Wesley's Anglicanism—adding that it was accompanied by a strong aversion to Catholicism—but he also suggested that Wesley was making a somewhat different point: that even before Christianity, most people did not practice *mitewin*; they did not need it, and its activities were under the purview of certain specialists who might or might not abuse their powers. As Wesley put it, the Indians in general learned all the practical things they needed to know to survive, and "fending for themselves in this way, [they] did not credit themselves with this achievement; they believed they were helped and guided by manitu, or the Great Spirit. . . . The manitu or Great Spirit was the great provider for the Indians' needs in these early times; the people were thankful for this, and seriously kept it in mind" (quoted in Long 1986, 27).

It is a complex matter to trace the changing nuances of meaning surrounding *manitu*, "Great Spirit," and "Creator," the terms most often used in anglophone discourse to speak of a higher Aboriginal deity.[8] Louis Bird (pers. comm., February 2001) heard Wesley and others say that the people long ago sometimes heard a voice from above that spoke about the right way to live and from whom they got blessings and moral guidance, and this voice was from *manitu* or *kitchii-manitu* (Great Spirit), the term that later came to be "the Bible word for God" (Anderson Jolly, quoted in Flannery 1984, 3). John Long cites, from Cooper, three older terms used in the Moose Factory Cree dialect to address this being (for whom the simpler gloss, *manitu*, eventually took root in Christian and English usage): "Master of Food (*katibelitaman miitchim*), Master of the Means

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a *miteo* trying to imitate Christianity. They thought, however, that Wasitek was more benign, bringing news of a new religion associated with light and with a song or hymn (partially remembered by their mother, Sarah Carpenter Hunter) that spoke, as Sister Catherine did, of the coming of a Light. Sarah Hunter never mentioned Abishabis. This could be on account of his downfall or because he came from the Severn region, a long way to the north. Louis Bird, pers. comm., July 2001.

8 See the excellent discussion by Earle H. Waugh, who notes that in traditional Cree understanding, "the conceptual formulation of *manito* has to be larger and more complicated than the Christian idea of God" and that, for Cree speakers, "the context of using *manito* will determine what meaning it is to have" (2001, 478, 473).

to Life (*katibelitaman pimatisiiwin*), and Master of Death (*katibelitaman nipiiwin*)" (1987, 5). The concept parallels the Ojibwe concept of "Gaa–dibenjiged or Gaa–dibendang, which means something like 'the all–encompassing power of life'" (Matthews and Roulette 1996, 354). A. Irving Hallowell understood from the Berens River Ojibwe in northwestern Ontario that this being "is the Boss of Bosses, the Owner of the Owners" and thought that the best English translation was "Lord" (1934, 403). Louis Bird, speaking in his western Hudson Bay dialect (which differs from that spoken at Moose Factory) offered the term *katipayneejiket*, which appears related to both the Moose Factory term and the Ojibwe *Gaa-dibenjiged*, and he independently volunteered, in February 2001, that it is best translated as "Lord." In sum, the Omushkegowuk had a concept of a superior being located somewhere up above, who was a master or boss, not a maker (see also Flannery 1984, 6; and Preston, quoted in Long 1987, 5). This was not monotheism; the being was simply more remote than the numerous spirit helpers who made themselves known to human beings. But when Christianity came, people could find parallels and foreshadowings in their own traditions without invoking the two prophets whose behaviour and credibility proved so problematic. However, the prophet story, powerful in itself, served some people as a foundation story, at least for Catholicism, if, as in Sister Catherine's version, its spiritual and visionary messages were highlighted and the all–too–human downfalls of the two *mitewuk* were forgotten or set aside.

CONCLUSION

The writing of this chapter has allowed a closer look at the Hudson Bay prophetic movement than was possible when I last examined it in the 1980s. Some new sources and recent writings helped; so too did the opportunity to work with Louis Bird, who helped to situate the stories and their tellers, explained in depth the meanings of key terms and concepts, and contributed his own views and reflections. There is no such thing as a definitive analysis of a subject such as this; rather, we arrive at partial and contingent truths that reflect our knowledge, outlooks, and the questions we ask at given times and places. Louis Bird himself has continued to talk with others of his generation, gathering further stories about the prophetic movement, and his perspectives have shifted somewhat after every conversation.

The most important questions that have helped enhance my understanding of the Hudson Bay prophets are historiographic and ethnohistorical. They involve delving more deeply into the topic and texts at hand; looking at the tellers of stories, both Omushkegowuk and European; comparing what they contribute to the larger picture; and trying to grasp their concepts and vocabularies in Cree and in English, while also reviewing the documents and searching

out points of interest that I overlooked in my earlier studies. In this context, the question of whether the movement was a revitalization movement or not has become less interesting and, in fact, a distraction from deeper issues of documentation and meaning. To be sure, models are heuristically useful; they pose and frame larger questions. The revitalization model provided a starting point, an opening gambit for the study. But it does not seem particularly relevant, and its application in this instance would obscure more than it would reveal. Cree culture and language in the 1840s were not in need of revival. New ideas and modes of writing and expression were arriving, and certain prophets or *mitewuk* adapted these to their interests and purposes, creating also a residuum of stories that helped to explain Christianity (Catholicism in particular) when it arrived. But this dynamic was not new; the stories Louis Bird has collected are full of foreshadowings and foretellings of change and of individuals who manifest or claim mysterious powers and knowledge and attain temporary dominance over others.

In sum, to label the Hudson Bay movement simply as revitalization risks divorcing it from context and exoticizing it as something different, something apart from the dynamic historical and cultural processes ongoing in Hudson Bay before, during, and after its rise. We would do better to understand it as embedded in Omushkego culture and history and as continuing a storied existence among the descendants of those who knew it best. The stories will not all agree, and, as Louis Bird said, some of them seem to get mixed up. But they also express a range of Omushkego conversations and perspectives that will survive and evolve as long as the stories are told.

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"I Wish to Be as I See You"

An Ojibwe-Methodist Encounter in Fur Trade Country, 1854–55

Across much of northern North America, European contacts with Native peoples exhibited a common pattern: the opening of trade relations was followed sooner or later by the arrival of Christian missionaries, whose aims and interests were quite different from those of the traders. Such encounters became three-way contact situations, as Native groups confronted two types of specialized white entrepreneurs who were alike in certain respects yet whose divergent outlooks, values, and purposes often put them strenuously at odds with each other.

Structurally, mission and trade organizations mirrored one another in some important ways, despite their divergences. Each group was deeply involved in directing, orchestrating, and acting out what might be called its own morality play for multiple audiences.[1] For each, interactions, whether at post or mission, took place on a kind of stage where actors sought to attract, influence, and maintain sympathetic Native audiences. As well, that stage was a "theatre in the round," seen and judged both by home offices and other constituents on the European side and by Native communities who, in turn, staged their own performances for their often uncomprehending newcomer audiences.

Trading company posts were useless if Native clients and customers stayed away or otherwise rejected the traders' presentations and goods. Similarly, the traders failed if the home office was not impressed by the prospects and

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1 In a presentation at a history of education conference in Vancouver in 1983, Noel Dyck suggested that the activities of missionaries and Indian agents could be seen as morality plays, serving not just to "improve" the Natives by enacting models for them to follow but also to demonstrate to their home constituencies how they were purveying the right values and behaviour.

projections of success that they emitted along with their concrete returns on goods and capital invested. Failure jeopardized the home front as well, undermining the representations that company directors and agents could make in London, Montréal, or Paris to their shareholders, bankers, creditors, or governmental advocates of special privileges or monopoly rights, or to other prospective supporters.

Mission movements, having a parallel theatrical and communications structure, faced similar problems. An empty mission was a liability, as were hostile or non-committal Indians. Encouraging accounts of progress and of future prospects in the various mission fields were essential for transmittal, in turn, to the supporting home churches and mission organizations and to the popular audiences and prospective donors lying beyond. Communication lines reached in the other direction as well: just as Native traders spread the word about a company's behaviour to their neighbours, so mission reputations, good and bad, travelled among Native groups.[2]

The morality plays put on in both post and mission depended on persuasive and effective performance. The ability to reach out and connect with new people was especially critical in the mission field, where the teaching of Christian moral codes by precept and example was a central activity. But the notion of "morality" applied to both, in a broader sense. Each domain had its standards of fair play, value for money, and "good behaviour" for its field personnel, just as each had its notions of what constituted a "good" or "industrious" Indian.[3] Post and mission were both foci of reciprocities between the Native and European worlds; each was a central place where social as well as economic values were negotiated as the actors in those settings tried to build, maintain, or placate their multiple constituencies.

Competing theatrical acts, however, could make communication difficult. Conflicts and misunderstandings arose between fur traders and missionaries when they campaigned for the same audience. Native people, in turn, sometimes assumed that one white entrepreneur was just like another and could be bargained with in the same way. The vivid example discussed in this chapter is based on the diary of Allen Salt, a Methodist clergyman of Ojibwe descent who was discouraged by the failure of his mission at Rainy Lake, in northwestern Ontario, in 1854–55. But similar tensions played out among many other agencies of European contact and their hoped-for Native constituents wherever Europeans and Native peoples intersected.

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2 For a good historical overview of Canadian missions and their often problematic relations with Native communities, see Grant (1984), especially chapter 11, "A Yes That Means No?"

3 For a glossary of what HBC traders meant by such terms, see Black-Rogers (1986).

MISSIONARIES COME TO RUPERT'S LAND

In northwestern North America, the fur trade was almost the only mode of Indian-white contact between the 1600s and early 1800s. New France before the British conquest offers some contrasts, being a region where traders and clergy approached Native peoples early—indeed, almost concurrently, and often at cross purposes (Eccles 1969; Jaenen 1976). But after 1760 and the fall of New France, the Scottish-dominated partnerships that took over the Montréal fur trade did not foster the coming of missions to the Indian country any more than did their rival, the Hudson's Bay Company. The result was that in these areas, missionaries typically arrived at least a century later than the fur traders. Only with the founding of the Red River Colony (later Winnipeg, Manitoba) was a firm base established for both Protestant and Roman Catholic clergy to become active in the Northwest, beginning around 1820.

In the next four decades, a number of Methodist clergy worked hard to spread their messages among the Algonquian peoples in Rupert's Land and its borderlands. They had effective organizational support behind them, paralleling in broad terms the home/field connections of the fur traders. And morally, they and their peers from other churches took the high ground; the HBC, newly combined with the Montréal-based North West Company (NWC) in 1821, had experienced strong pressures from humanitarian and religious interests in Britain to facilitate their coming (Thompson 1970, 44–45).

Once the missionaries arrived, however, they faced multiple obstacles. In Rupert's Land, they were clients of the company, dependent on its permission to build their missions and on its help with their travels, housing, and supplies. Coming under its patronage, they soon found that they were intruders into trading post life, especially when their sojourns began in quarters supplied by the company. Relations became tense when, for example, they tried to insist on church sanction of the traders' more or less informal "country" marriages with Native women, or when they sought to prevent the summer fur brigades from continuing their standard practice of travelling on the Sabbath. As inexperienced and often tactless newcomers, they often alienated, or at least tested the patience of, many an HBC officer from Governor George Simpson on down. At Moose Factory on James Bay, the relations of Methodist George Barnley with his HBC hosts "reached crisis proportions" in the early 1840s (Long 1985, 43), while at Norway House, north of Lake Winnipeg, relations between Donald Ross, the HBC officer in charge, and Barnley's colleagues, the Reverend James Evans and his wife, quickly soured in the same period (Hutchinson 1977; Young and Young 2014, 102).

The clergymen also found themselves subjected to measured appraisal, bargaining, and manipulation from Algonquian communities who had their

own strong views about proper reciprocal behaviour in trade and other social interactions (see, especially, White [1982] on Ojibwe values and gift exchange patterns). Furthermore, ten to fifteen decades of trading furs with the Europeans, sometimes in the midst of vigorous competition among the outsiders themselves, had taught Native traders much about dealing with white men in a context in which material exchanges and price setting were major concerns. Cree and Ojibwe men with long trading experience disconcerted missionaries by maintaining these concerns as they evaluated the clergymen's performances and offerings. But if the fur trade tended to set the stage for missionary-Native relations, the traders and their presence also sharpened Native people's sense of their own identity and interests without making a frontal attack on their religious values and observances. Native spiritual practices actively continued and even gained in vitality as more goods became available for gift giving and sacrifice.[4]

ALLEN SALT AND THE RAINY LAKE OJIBWE

Most missionaries, in their reports to their home churches, put a good face on difficult situations, gaining much mileage out of a few converts, moving descriptions of deathbed testimonies of faith, reforms of polygynists, or the neutralizing of an Indian "conjuror." But one little-known journal from this period, that of the Reverend Allen Salt in 1854–55, stands out for its frankness about missionary-Indian relations in a fur-trading context.[5] Salt's parents (whose names have not been found) were an Englishman and an Ontario Mississauga woman. Born near Belleville, Upper Canada, he lived for a time in the home of the Reverend William Case, a leading figure in Canadian Methodism. Salt attended the Toronto Normal School in 1848–49 and taught at the Methodists' Indian school at Alderville on Rice Lake (Toronto Methodist Conference 1911; Smith 2013, 226, 238–41). He entered mission work in his forties and was ordained on 16 May 1854. He and his wife, Jane, left almost immediately for a

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4 For Cree-Ojibwe examples from Lake Winnipeg and Lac la Ronge, Saskatchewan, in the early 1800s, see Brown and Brightman (1988), and for the Rainy Lake area, see Jacobs (1848).

5 My thanks to the Rev. Murray R. Binsted, formerly of St. James Centennial United Church in Parry Sound, Ontario, for calling my attention to this diary in 1971 and providing me with a copy. The text survives only in a transcript (forty-nine single-spaced pages) typed by an unidentified party; hence, the spellings of some proper names are questionable. The Victoria University Archives in Toronto holds a fine collection of materials relating to Salt, thanks to Donald B. Smith's donation of his research files: see "Records Relating to Research of Egerton Ryerson and Allen Salt," *Special Collections, E. J. Pratt Library, University of Toronto*, 2016, http://library.vicu.utoronto.ca/collections/special_collections/f80_donald_b_smith/series_6.

mission assignment at Lac la Pluie (Rainy Lake) in northwestern Ontario, then still part of the HBC territory of Rupert's Land (Salt 1854, 1–3).

Clearly, Salt did not absorb some of his fellow missionaries' techniques of impression management, for he wrote most honestly and factually of how the Rainy Lake Ojibwe treated him and his efforts. Other Methodist missionaries (William Mason, Henry Steinhauer, and Peter Jacobs) had worked in the same place for varying periods in the 1840s. These men, however, did not leave such frank personal accounts of their difficulties, although they all found the posting a strenuous challenge.[6]

On 18 July 1854, just after Salt had arrived at the Rainy Lake HBC post where he was to reside, three Ojibwe men came to let him know that their community had already reached an agreement about how to respond to him. Having "heard that missionaries were coming to this part," they had decided at a council to tell the clergyman that "the Manitou Spirit made the white men to be as they are and likewise the Aunishenauba (Indian) to be as they are, so our council decided to retain the Indian customs and not to change our forefather's gifts, for that of the white man (meaning religion)." These visitors were skilled in confronting newcomers, explicitly affirming their own identity and views in Salt's face. Yet a door was left open. The next day, one of the men who, Salt was told, was a "conjuror" (a broad missionary term for anyone involved in "pagan" rituals) and "a principal man in the band" returned to suggest his own possible receptivity. He had spoken for the others, not for himself, since "although he was a principal man yet he could not give words of his own making." Salt's phrasing here hints ambiguously at Ojibwe leaders' latitude, or constraints, in speaking for themselves. This leader assured Salt that when the Indians arrived in the fall to get their winter's ammunition from the post, an "answer shall be given to you."

On 20 July, Salt met with an Ojibwe named Peter Jacobs, who, after conversion by the Reverend William Mason, had been associated with Mason's Methodist colleague, the Reverend Peter Jacobs, whose name he had received.[7] The man inquired if the Reverend Jacobs had sent him anything, adding, "I

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6 For detailed information on these mission efforts and further source materials on the Ojibwe of that time and area, see Angel (1986), as well as Mason (1841) and other contemporary correspondence of the Wesleyan Methodist Missionary Society in that series.

7 On 9 June 1841, at the Rainy Lake mission, Mason baptized this man, his wife, and their three children, noting, "l named them after Peter Jacobs, as he was the first who conversed with him on the important concerns of his soul. I am happy to say he still continues stedfast, amidst the scoffing, ridicule and evil insinuations and surmizes of his Bretheren" (Mason 1841). The clergyman Jacobs, like Salt, was of Ojibwe descent; for further details about him and this convert, see Angel (1986). The Methodist Church expelled Jacobs from its ministry in 1858 because of questionable financial dealings and troubles with alcohol (Smith 2013, 123).

am a poor Indian you see my appearance." Describing the problems he and his family were having in trying to grow potatoes, he too left open the possibility that he could encourage his countrymen to respond to Salt's mission, especially if the missionary exhibited generosity in the use of his presumed resources:

> You are not a common man, you have power to get tools for my children to use in planting. I have heard that some words have been said to you since you have arrived. Pay no attention to them, many of the Indians did not join in their views. I am a principal man I was not present in that council. We shall know in the spring how this will turn out. I wish you to give me a supply of tobacco to use while holding consultation with the Indians of Koo[c]hejeeng [presumably Couchiching, east of Fort Frances, Ontario].

On 19 August, another man told Salt that his countrymen rejected Christianity, in part, because they were afraid they would die off if they converted. "The Indians at Fort William are dying continually," the man added, in reference to the Roman Catholic mission at that place. Salt assured him that Indians often prospered at missions, "for where they are comfortable and have plenty of provisions they increase in numbers."

On 25 August, Salt talked to two visitors about Christianity: "One of them listened attentively." On 4 September, Salt gave tobacco to a group of men from the south shore of the lake, asking to speak in their council. They accepted but said afterwards that "not one of us has a notion of receiving Christianity." They added that the Reverend Peter Jacobs had not put such pressures on them but had instead been sociable and hospitable: "he only told us what he had seen in other countries, and the Indians loved him, and they were always full [i.e., visiting in numbers] in his house."[8]

The next encounter made clear the model of explicit economic reciprocity with which some local Ojibwe confronted the missionary. On 5 September, one man "proposed to become a learner of what I was teaching to the Indians if I would give him a suit of clothes like mine." Salt replied, "If I had clothes to give that I would do it freely, but not pay you to hear the word of God."

In the following weeks, a few individuals gratified Salt by listening "attentively" to him. But in September, one demonstrated the Ojibwes' sense of Christian exclusivism by telling a story of a Christian Indian's fate after death. God refused him entry to heaven, saying that he gave the white man his religion to bring him there but that he "gave the Indian his religion and it takes him to another place, but not here, so go away." The man then applied to the Indians'

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8 See Black-Rogers (1986) and White (1982) on the expectations and power relations conveyed in such statements.

heaven but was refused because of being Christian. His soul wandered about until it returned to his body, which revived.[9] Salt responded rather indirectly that all peoples could share the Gospel and benefit from it. Once Great Britain itself was heathen, "but the Gospel was preached to them and you see and hear what that nation is at the present time. Its wisdom, commerce, greatness and power, the sun is always seen by that nation &c." Interestingly, Salt himself was shifting his stance to accommodate his listeners' terms of reference, as when he earlier asserted the prosperity of some missions. Acceptance of Christianity was becoming linked with a promise of secular prosperity and success—a promise that Methodist ideology often itself espoused but that was usually left implicit to avoid the rhetoric of barter.

Too often, however, Salt found that his verbosity on Christianity took more time than the Ojibwe wished to grant him, given his lack of concrete rewards for them. When he attempted to address some of them "on the subject of eternity," one man replied, "When we Indians speak to God we speak only twice for fear He would get out of patience with us, but you have been talking about him now for a long time. He must be getting out of patience with you" (24 September). Salt recorded unhappily, "Surely they are degraded and stubborn."

Sometimes, the Rainy Lake Ojibwe showed, in their responses to Salt, an active sense of how social influence (or an asserted lack thereof on the part of his listeners) could be manipulated. The "principal man" who "could not give words of his own making" in public but did so in private (above, 19 July) found his analogue in the man who, on 22 October, told Salt that "the Indians were looking at one another, so that if the principal Indians would embrace Christianity, all would do so, but as for me, I have no authority." Given his Euro-Canadian training, Salt may not have fully realized that Ojibwe political structures placed firm restraints on the powers of their chiefly figures. In the same year (1854), when the great Fijian chief Thakombau declared for Methodism, church attendance on those Pacific islands increased by over eight thousand within a year (Sahlins 1983, 519). No such political or demographic potential was present at Salt's little mission.

During the fall, Salt endeavoured to maintain contact with prospective converts through offers of friendship and occasional small gifts (e.g., 24 October). Preparations for winter hunts intervened; when he spoke of the Gospel to one family on 1 November, he found them "anxious to get to their hunting grounds as they were afraid that the lakes and rivers might freeze over." More often, his shortage of material inducements discouraged his audience: "As I

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9 Various versions of this story spread widely among Native people; see Vecsey (1983, 69–70) and Grant (1984, 240).

have not anything to give the Indians when they come to see me they do not come often" (3 November).

Salt's serious manner and lack of sociability also hurt his progress. One council chief called him a "foolish man" because he failed to give the Indians provisions and clothes and never invited them to his table to eat with him (14 November; see also 4 September). In this regard, the Ojibwe compared Salt unfavourably with the Reverend Peter Jacobs (cf. entry for 28 September) and with the traders who had long known the value of a little hospitality, including rum, a commodity that Salt was, of course, committed to opposing (see, e.g., 14 November). Yet Salt, as he discovered the Ojibwes' skill at playing one party off against another, took their complaints and comparisons with caution. Finding them "very fond of flattery" and willing to bend truth, he concluded, "The best way is to discountenance their tricks with plain words to them . . . I give no encouragement to them merely to hear the word of God for 'meat'" (28 September).

December was a more promising month. On the 4th, the son of Ashgwagi-shik, who had recently arrived from Lake of the Woods, "seemed anxious to learn" and inquired whether Salt would still be there the next summer. On 9 December, a man named Kishigoka assured Salt that he respected "the white man's religion" and would meditate on what was said to him. On 20 December, Salt had just finished giving the HBC post servants a singing lesson when Gauba, a "conjuror," arrived and seemed interested in singing. He thus became "the first pagan Indian I have taught to sing a sacred tune." Gauba visited Salt again on 31 December to ask whether "any of the Indians to whom you have talked, talk like embracing Christianity?" Salt claimed the affirmative and "named several." "Well," said Gauba, "if I know one or a family embracing Christianity I will embrace it too."

On 7 January 1855, Gauba was back again, this time with material concerns uppermost in his mind. "I believe all you have told me," he assured Salt. But "if I would become a Christian I would not like to be so poor as I am now. I would like to be clean to have clothes, to have an animal that would break up the ground and tools to use in raising corn, so that the Indians could see that I was better off than they were." Salt lectured him on the impossibility of serving two masters, God and Mammon, and he "appeared to be very attentive." On 25 January, Gauba returned, this time showing an interest in learning to read. Salt took full advantage of the occasion; after teaching him the first four letters of the alphabet, he "read scripture, sang a hymn, and prayed" and then "gave [Gauba] a lesson in proper manners." Gauba, perhaps with a variety of motives, tolerated all this; he seemed keen to add the missionary's various ritual and intellectual skills to his own. But he proved a fickle supporter; the

next fall (9 September 1855), he publicly "made an insolent talk" when Salt was preaching to the Indians.

On 27 January 1855, the Ojibwe Peter Jacobs, evidently the only prior Methodist convert in the area, reappeared. He began to ask for "things such as to build a [mission] house for Indians," but Salt pointed out that he had, as yet, no basis—that is, no record of success—for requesting the Methodist Church to build a mission there. Jacobs's next remark showed again the degree to which the Rainy Lake Ojibwe viewed Indian-white relations in terms of exchange—and more particularly, in terms of an asymmetrical reciprocity, given the outsiders' access to resources: "It is because you do not give things to me [as a convert] that the Indians talk [negatively] about you," he said, going on to claim that the missionary was seen as "the cause of their not getting provisions from the fort as on previous winters." This belief, if widely accepted, would have been damaging in its linking of Salt's presence to a reduction of benefits from the HBC post, but its currency is impossible to assess.

Some weeks later, an Ojibwe called Tibishkogishik told Salt a story that succinctly conveyed a Native view of Indian-white power relations. Somewhere on the earth, there was a god who "knew that he was not alone," that there was another god too, whereupon

> these two came together and held each others hand. The first always
> proposed and the second always would agree and from these two all
> things are. After this, the first god became silver and he went up to
> heaven and that is the one we call Kishamunido, the white man's god, the
> second god became brass and he went under the earth, we call him Meda
> Munido and the Indians worship him. (2 February 1855)

Salt responded by speaking of "the great book which Kichamunido has revealed to mankind &c," but Tibishkogishik answered, "I do not consent to you." Salt replied that he had not asked for consent; he had been "telling you the word of God who now sees our minds."

"True," replied the other; "you may be right"—a response neatly echoing the theme of the story he had just told of the second god who "always would agree."

A spurt of tentative Ojibwe offers to host a mission occurred in late winter, suggesting that its potential advantages were being considered. The possibility of an establishment at the Little Fork on the Lac la Pluie (Rainy) River was raised on 12 February 1855. One man, Michinuwabinas, "spoke favourably" of the idea, "in order that their children might be taught to read and plough land, sow seed." He did not, however, "say anything about religion." On the 16th, Kishigokay (doubtless Kishigoka, mentioned on 9 December 1854) told

Salt that "he wished very much that the chiefs would allow me [Salt] to establish a mission at the Munido Rapids." On the 27th, "Ogimaubinas and another principal Indian from the Munido Rapids" (also called Big Forks and presumably the Manitou Rapids near Emo, Ontario) encouraged Salt to visit that place before sugar-making time. An answer would be given, they said, "provided, I gave them tobacco and provisions to use while holding their consultation."[10]

On 5 March, Gabanashkong (whom Salt had earlier called by his baptismal name, Peter Jacobs, until he became disillusioned with both that clergyman and his namesake follower) urged Salt to consider founding a mission on the north shore of Rainy Lake. Later that month (the 21st), "Ashquagegishik, a river Indian," said he wished to convert and would tell his relatives so, but he soon revealed "his main motive spiced with flattery" by asking Salt to give him a replacement for his old rabbit skin coat.

Salt visited the Ojibwe camp at Big Forks (Manitou Rapids) on 3–4 April to pursue the idea of a mission there and brought a bushel of wild rice, three pounds of tallow, and two pounds of tobacco as encouragement. He preached to them of Jesus, but one of his listeners, Crooked Neck, made a reply "full of insult, not fit to repeat the words." Salt concluded, "I see plainly that they wish me to give them goods so as to become Christians, in other words they wish to be purchased so as to be instructed."

Yet as had happened before, a follow-up visitor assured Salt that there were other points of view at Big Forks. Big Eshquagishik (probably Ashquagegishik mentioned above) visited on 25 April to assure Salt that the Indians would consult further in the spring. This time, he said, they would have nothing to do with Crooked Neck, the man who had spoken so insultingly, "for he always spoils our councils just as he did when you were down at the Big Forks."

HBC governor George Simpson passed by the Rainy Lake post on 2 June 1855. By then, Salt was so discouraged about his mission that he did not even attempt to put on a show of success for the governor: when Simpson "offered any assistance which might promote my object, I did not ask for any because the Indians reject Christianity."[11] On his return visit (7 July), Simpson took the initiative, making several constructive suggestions about building sites and

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10 For examples of similar requests for such gifts, see White (1982), Angel (1986), and chapter 16, this volume.

11 In a letter to the HBC Governor and Committee on 29 June 1855, Simpson reported, "At Lac la Pluie, the present missionary (Wesleyan) has been as unsuccessful as his various predecessors at that place, all of whom abandoned the field as hopeless. Mr. Salt informed me that, so far from making any impression on the Saulteaux [Ojibwe], they turned all he said into ridicule and he is consequently anxious to be recalled, considering his time thrown away" (Simpson 1855). My thanks to Victor Lytwyn for this reference.

agricultural improvements, which Salt passed on to the superintendent of missions, the Reverend Enoch Wood in Toronto.

June was the peak month for Ojibwe gatherings and "pagan" ceremonies. On the 7th and 13th, large groups were "drumming, dancing and initiating one another into the Metaisms," the Midewiwin (Grand Medicine) Society, evidently with a vigour comparable to that reported by the Reverend Peter Jacobs seven years earlier (Jacobs 1848).[12] Salt was in no position to intervene, and his argument that the initiates only pretended to be overpowered when "shot" with the medicine bags made no headway. The Ojibwe restated their sharp distinction between their own and the white man's religion on 23 June, when Crooked Neck's son told Salt, "We would like to become Christians but we are afraid that we [would] cause the displeasure of the Munido who gave different customs to the white man and the Indian." In turn, Salt made clear his firm rejection of Ojibwe spiritual practices. Commenting on a shaking tent ceremony held on 25 June, he wrote, "the poor, ignorant Indians believe that it is all supernatural work."

On 8 August 1855, Salt again talked with Michinuwabinas of Rainy River, telling him that he expected to be removed the next year "if you Indians continue to refuse to accept Christianity." Michinuwabinas gave him an interesting answer, pointing to the fur trade as a model:

> "It cannot be," he said, "that you will give up so soon, for I am sure that
> if you continue to speak to the old people, we will in the course of three
> or four years follow your ways. See the trader when he has an object in
> view to accomplish, if he fails at the first he does not give up. . . . But
> your object is a great thing. As for myself as soon as the old men give
> their consent I will embrace Christianity."

In the final pages of the diary, Salt wrote less often, reflecting his discouragement. His next two conversations with Ojibwe acquaintances were not cheering. On 10 September, Ogimaubinas of Manitou Rapids came to express regrets that Salt's visits to that band had not gone well. His people had "smoked and consulted on the message you sent." They had decided to make no answer, however, "without consulting our friends of the White Fish Lake and of the Large Plantation Island." On 3 November, their answer came. Ogimaubinas, speaking "in a friendly manner," brought word that

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12 An earlier mission report (1841) noted the importance of this locale for Ojibwe ceremonies: "Rainy Lake is one of the principal places in the country for holding the Great Indian Medicine Feasts," which could attract up to two thousand people (quoted in Nute 1950, 37).

the Indians of the Lake of the Woods would not consent to receive
your instruction. They said, that some time ago they had agreed not
to embrace Christianity and said that it would be so still . . . so . . . we
[Rainy] River Indians gave in to their views. No one sides with Eshqua-
gishik for a school. Our relative (the missionary) can remain in our fort.
He has a custom which he embraced. We gently bar our door against
him as Crooked Neck did last spring.

Salt wrote in his diary that (atypically) he had "said nothing." They shook hands,
and he was left hoping that, since they had barred the door, "I may be clear of
their blood for Christ's sake."

"I WISH TO BE AS I SEE YOU": AIMS UNFULFILLED

Allen Salt's detailed diary clearly illustrates how the Ojibwe of the Rainy Lake
area were assessing the clergyman's offerings and proposals in terms of likely
returns, much as they did on the fur trade stage. Giving and sharing were
central to the Northern Algonquians' own values. But Salt, being cast in a
white man's role, found that if the Ojibwe offered him anything, "it is selling,
for they invariably ask for something afterwards" (24 June 1855). The Ojibwe
had learned that while white men generally had access to desirable imported
resources, they could not be assumed to participate in the generalized reciproci-
ties of the Ojibwe moral universe; they had to be bargained with. If anything,
however, they probably expected more of Salt because of his Ojibwe descent;
he should have known better than to act in so penurious a manner.

Less explicit but also visible throughout Salt's narrative is a strong indication
that long contact with white men had sharpened these Ojibwes' sense of their
own identity and distinctness. They recognized the value of presenting at least
the appearance of a consensus in dealing with whites—or, in traders' terms,
establishing a bargaining position. Thus, Salt found that even before he arrived, a
preliminary decision had been taken on how to react to his presence. Northern
Algonquian methods of reaching decisions through consensus seemed alive and
well, but more than that, the Rainy Lake Ojibwe cannily used them to seize the
initiative in this case. Individuals such as Crooked Neck occasionally overstepped
their bounds in the councils, but the basic procedures continued to work.

At the same time, reliance on these procedures gave individuals much elbow
room in their utterances to Salt—or to any outsider. "Principal men" could
speak the words of others, deprecating their own authority, and then approach
him with private views and soundings whose genuineness was difficult for an
outsider to assess. Junior figures could hold out hope of support and then let
their decisions hang on the views of their peers and seniors. This process of
sounding and consensus took a long time, but, as Michinuwabinas pointed out

to Salt on 8 August 1855, the white fur traders had learned to live with it. The Ojibwe and the traders had long experience in negotiating both their material exchanges and the various social dimensions of their relationship. Regarding Salt's mission, both parties could usefully have taught him (and other mission-aries) that "the politics of conversion is no simple expression of conviction" (Sahlins 1983, 519).

For these northern groups, the fur trade environment, being free of the directed cultural and ideological pressures that missions tried to impose, had also allowed Algonquian religious practices to endure and evolve. Some traders, such as George Nelson, observed and attended the shaking tent and Midewiwin rites held near their posts (Brown 1984), while others ignored or dismissed the cere-monies, but traders were not in the business of suppressing them. Calvin Martin (1978) strongly argued that when animals became an overexploited commodity in the fur trade, basic animal-human spiritual relations began to change and disintegrate. Yet it is clear that as long as the fur trade persisted without the mission presence, Northern Algonquian ceremonial complexes also persisted openly, without the inhibitions and secrecy that later hid them from view when the churchmen came. The missionaries' confrontations with these complexes—necessary to establish the exclusive Christian identity of both themselves and their missions—soon showed Native people that these newcomers were to be sharply distinguished in ideology from the traders despite the fact that they shared the same homelands and language and a parallel entrepreneurial desire to link the Natives to themselves and their institutions in lasting ways.

Several questions about Salt and his Rainy Lake sojourn are difficult or impossible to answer. The HBC Archives unfortunately lack the relevant Lac la Pluie post journals that would furnish the resident traders' on-the-spot rec-ords and perceptions of the man and his mission. Salt's own diary breaks off on 11 November 1855, although he remained at the post for almost two more years. The annual reports of the Missionary Society of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada (1854–59) afford only glimpses (although useful) of Salt's work at Rainy Lake; his letters to the society appear not to have survived. Extensive research on Treaty No. 3, signed in the area in 1873, has shed some light on the Ojibwe people whom Salt encountered and on their skills in tending to their interests (Daugherty 1986).

The diary itself provides some bases for evaluating how Salt's personal idio-syncrasies affected the quality and fate of his mission. The Rainy Lake Ojibwe probably had high expectations about what they could gain and negotiate from Salt upon learning that he was half Ojibwe—and he evidently spoke the language well enough to get along. Their prior experience with the Reverend Peter Jacobs, who, according to what Salt was told, had exhibited a greater

sociability and empathy during his sojourn there in the 1840s, could have stirred their hopes that Salt would respond similarly to his maternal countrymen. But as the diary records, they were to be disappointed. Salt showed no ethnic solidarities with "pagan Indians" and even presented himself as all the more dour and Methodistical to obviate suspicion that his Indianness could lead him to have divided loyalties or unchristian sympathies. Salt's reservations about the strikingly informal approach taken by Jacobs, his predecessor, may have reinforced his determination to take an uncompromising stance. Furthermore, it appears that, like many white clergy, Salt knew little about Ojibwe social organization. Although helped by some knowledge of the language, he showed little grasp or acceptance of how Ojibwe patterns of leadership and decision making actually worked.

An individual missionary's character and self-presentation are difficult variables to weigh in examining his success or failure, but Salt's personality, at least in the 1850s, when he was a novice in the mission field, doubtless hindered his success. His diary records his insecurity and a strong tendency to preach rather than listen. In fairness, he did much better in the next decades, becoming a valued missionary at St. Clair, Garden River, Muncey, Christian Island, and Parry Island in southern Ontario (Toronto Methodist Conference 1911). In these places, Methodism was already strong, and he was closer to people who knew him from his earlier years as a successful teacher at the Methodists' Alderville Industrial School (Smith 2013, 238–39) and through other connections.

Salt, in his unpolished frankness, tells us more than most clergy about the conditions surrounding Christian missions operating in areas long dominated by trade relationships. His record of failure at Rainy Lake deepens our understandings of the dynamics of three-way contact situations involving Native people, clergy, and traders. Salt was not faced with the dramatic rise of Indigenous prophets such as Abishabis, the western Hudson Bay Cree who disconcerted both HBC traders and Methodist missionaries in 1842–43 (see chapter 13, this volume). But the Rainy Lake Ojibwe took the lead in dealing with Salt and other clergy, asserting their views and concerns in the light of long experience with the fur trade and pursuing the kinds of relations and reciprocities that they thought they could expect.

In 1857, the Wesleyan Methodist Church office in Toronto received from Salt, and published, a letter and the text of a speech (reproduced below) in which some Rainy Lake Ojibwe spokesmen expressed to him their interest in a mission and their hopes and expectations regarding material benefits. The texts did not elicit church support; indeed, the editor of the 1857 report in which they appeared, although finding in them "much that can be approved," also noted "evidence of a selfishness which is very generally prevalent in Hudson's Bay"

(Missionary Society 1857, xxxiii). Allen Salt left the Rainy Lake mission soon thereafter, at least partly because of his wife's illness, and the mission reports for the next several years listed no replacement (Missionary Society 1858, xxiii).[13] It is highly unlikely that his church had any deep understanding of Ojibwe perspectives or of entrenched interactional patterns in this old fur trade locale. But Salt, with his unembellished reporting, and the Rainy Lake Ojibwe themselves, articulate and assertive, managed to deflect the Methodists from further mission investment in the area for some time thereafter.

Lac la Pluie Ojibwe Texts

The Missionary Society of the Wesleyan Methodist Church in Canada published these two texts in its annual report for 1857 (Missionary Society 1857, xxxiii–xxxiv).

Letter addressed to Allen Salt, Wesleyan Missionary

FORT FRANCES, Lac la Pluie, June 30th, 1857

To our Missionary.

You have come to this part to look for us, but our relatives will not do as you wish.

Now we Indians on the British side desire you to establish a Mission at the foot of Lac la Pluie, Little Rapids, where we wish to cultivate the soil, and build our houses, where you may teach wisdom to our children, and where we may hear the word.

We are poor: we do not wish our relatives to throw us down: we wish you to use all the power you have to help us, for we need help in tools, also clothing to cover us from the heat of the sun: and may our good ways go up to the sky.

Signed by the chiefs by making their respective totems.

> GABAGWUN (Buck)
> WUZHUSHKOONCE (Turtle)
> SHINUWIGWUN
> GABAGWUNASHKUNG, Speaker. (Beaver)

Witnesses, JOHN McDONALD, P.M. [Post Master]

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13 The *Christian Guardian* of 15 July 1857 (28, no. 41) reported, "We regret to learn that the illness of Mrs. Salt has rendered it necessary for Mr. Salt to return to a warmer climate. He passed through this city [Toronto] last Monday on his way to Rice Lake" (162). Salt was probably going to the Alderville mission at the east end of the lake. He later served at other missions in southern Ontario.

NICOL CHANTELLAN, his + mark, Interpreter

*The Speech of Pauyaubidwawash, Chief of Naumakaun, to Allen Salt,
Wesleyan Missionary*

Now I speak to you, my friend. Give me that which will be useful to my
child. Give me that which Kishamunido has given you to tell. I pull you to
help me. I put that into your head.

Now I speak to you Missionary. Help me, for the white man is coming very
fast to fill my country. You who speak the word of God, I want you to see me
every time Kishamunido brings the day. Now we will listen to each other. I
desire to follow your ways, so that my children may have the benefit. I want
seed, that my children may plant and raise food.

Though my little speech is like shooting on the run passing by me on your
way home, yet listen to me. I have confidence in your person, in your high
office, and that you will help me so that I may be able to subdue the ground.

Now I desire to raise my children in one place. Now look out for the best
place for me, my friend. Now I delight in seeing the sky which Kishamunido
has made. I desire you to give me a domestic animal, for an Indian is not able
to do what ought to be done.

You missionary, have you not the means so that you might let my children
have something to cover themselves from the muskitoes.

Now my dish is stone. I wish to be as I see you. I desire to have dishes like
you. If I see according to my words, I will listen to what you say to me.

Signed by marking his totem, PAUYAUBIDAWASH, Chief

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James Settee and His Cree Tradition

"An Indian Camp at the Mouth of Nelson River Hudsons Bay 1823"

On 24 June 1827, ten Aboriginal boys from various parts of Rupert's Land and the far Northwest were baptized in Red River by Anglican clergyman David T. Jones.[1] All were pupils at the Church Missionary School in Red River, and it was hoped that they would grow up to spread Christianity among their countrymen of the Hudson's Bay Company territories. Among them was "a Cree Indian boy" who received the name of one of Jones's clerical friends in England, James Settee (Boon 1961, 59); his Cree name was not recorded. He had come to the mission school in 1824 from Split Lake, in the Nelson River region of what is now Manitoba. After his years of schooling, he became a catechist and then a deacon, and he served at a variety of missions in the regions west and north of Red River for over four decades. Settee was ordained in Red River on 1 January 1856, but like other Native clergy of his time, he suffered privations and lack of advancement.[2] On 7 January 1835, in Red River, he married Sarah Cook, who was of Cree and English descent. Her father was Joseph Cook, son of HBC chief factor William Hemmings Cook and one of his Cree wives (Thomas 1994; Spry 1988; Red River marriage register, 290).[3]

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1 The Red River baptismal register lists James Settee as no. 644; four other Cree boys were also baptized that day. Transcript by Jennifer S. H. Brown, 1972, from originals now in the Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

2 For a parallel career, see Stevenson (1996).

3 Sarah Cook was also a great-granddaughter of HBC explorer Matthew Cocking and one of his Cree wives (Spry 1988), paralleling her husband's mixed Cree-HBC ancestry, described below.

Settee's mission journals and correspondence survive in quantity in the archives of the Church Missionary Society.[4] The manuscript published in this chapter had a different history, lying undiscovered in the papers of Methodist missionary Egerton R. Young until the early 1970s. Settee's "An Indian Camp at the Mouth of Nelson River Hudsons Bay 1823" tells of a remarkable Cree feast and ceremony that he attended as a boy and relates in detail the epic legend told on that occasion. Settee wrote of the event at two different times. His first manuscript was apparently carried off by a visitor, as recounted below. Later, he felt driven to create a second version—the one that survives. He was determined to record an event that remained firmly lodged in his memory throughout his life—partly, no doubt, because it was the last Cree ceremony he was to witness before he was carried off to the mission school in Red River but also because the legend that he heard at the time was so powerful. The fact that he attended it with his father and grandfather, an important chief among the Cree, made it all the more memorable.

The text reveals how strongly Settee's Cree background and traditions remained with him throughout his mission career. It (along with other sources) also sheds new light on his antecedents. Although he was identified as and remained Cree, he, like his wife and many of his Hudson Bay contemporaries, was of mixed Cree and English descent: two of his great-grandfathers were English HBC men.[5] His precise birthdate is unknown. The Reverend David Jones thought that Settee was about ten years old when he was baptized in 1827 (Boon 1961, 59), but several sources suggest he was born earlier. In 1899, he was said to be close to the age of ninety.[6] In a letter noting Settee's death in March 1902 (see below), HBC officer Roderick Ross reported him to have reached the age of ninety-three. These sources, although late, accord better with the fact that Settee himself dated his participation in the Indian camp to September of 1823 and with the textual evidence that he was by then old enough to remember and be deeply impressed by the events that he witnessed. There seems good reason to place his birthdate somewhere between 1809 and 1812.

The quality of his recollections is, of course, difficult to assess, but he recorded his account of the feast of 1823 and the legend from first-hand experience

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4 The CMS records are available on microfilm at Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), Ottawa, MG 17, B2.

5 Great-grandparents have a special place in Cree thinking and are termed *aaniskotaapaanak*, a word referring literally to lengths of rope or string tied together and, secondarily, to pulling things along—a line of toboggans, for example—an apt image of how four generations are tied together by living memory; see chapter 12, this volume.

6 Officers' and Servants' Wills, 1899, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) A.36/5, fol. 70, Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

even if, decades later, it was in the voice of a Cree elder who surely would have preferred to tell the story in Cree. And he was said to be in good health, full of energy and activity even in his last years. The bishop of Rupert's Land, Robert Machray, writing in 1899 with respect to Settee's efforts to claim some old HBC annuity monies that he believed were owing to his wife as granddaughter of William Hemmings Cook, observed, "He has never been very successful in practical matters and I cannot say what dependance can be put on his memory. . . . Still he bears the highest character and he is a quite marvelously hale old man. All last Winter he took service twice on Sunday at a lonely post in the north of Lake Winnipeg in a small Indian Reserve" (HBCA 36/5, fol. 70).[7]

Since 1994, Settee's rewritten manuscript has resided in the United Church of Canada Archives in Toronto.[8] Its earlier history is somewhat checkered. Probably sometime in the 1890s, Settee conveyed it to HBC chief factor Roderick Ross, an old acquaintance who, like him, had strong ties to Red River and the Lake Winnipeg area and who knew the Cree language well. Attached to the back of page fifteen was an undated note to Ross, explaining what Settee called the "Tradition" and expressing a hope that Ross might improve it for publication:

> Dear Mr. Ross
>
> I wrote a copy of the Tradition before at Jack Head [on the west side of Lake Winnipeg] and an english man a traveller saw it on the table and read a part of it and it was gone, but I suspected he had take[n] it, but never publish it. You must try and make it very interesting if it was properly done as the Indians expresses himself it would please the reader—
> You have & can add good deal to it.
>
> <div align="right">yrs respectfully, JS</div>

Who was this "English traveller"? We cannot know for sure, but one strong candidate comes to mind—although he was not at Jackhead when Settee served there in the 1880s. In 1875, a Scottish peer, the Earl of Southesk, published a book about his journey through Rupert's Land in 1859–60. Its title conveys its scope: *Saskatchewan and the Rocky Mountains: A Diary and Narrative*

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7 Robert Machray, Officers' and Servants' Wills, 1899, HBCA A.36/5, fol. 70. Documents regarding Sarah Cook Settee's claim are in A.36/5, fols. 70–72, in a file of correspondence regarding Cook's estate.

8 Egerton Ryerson Young Fonds #3607, 94.030C, series 4 (literary manuscripts), box 8, file 5, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

of Travel, Sport, and Adventure, During a Journey Through the Hudson's Bay Company's Territories in 1859 and 1860. From 8 to 27 December 1859, Southesk was lodged at the HBC post of Fort Pelly (Saskatchewan) on the upper Assiniboine River. Here, he became acquainted with Settee, who, he wrote, was "a gentleman of Cree origin, who had been appointed to the spiritual charge of this district by the Church Missionary Society." The two had some extensive conversations, during which Southesk was most interested to learn of Settee's mixed paternal ancestry, notably his "relationship to the well-known [Reverend John] Newton, . . . his [Settee's] grandmother being the daughter of Newton's father, who lived near Hudson's Bay during the last two years of his life" (Southesk [1875] 1969, 323).[9]

The Reverend John Newton (1725–1807) was an English sea captain active in the slave trade; he later became a cleric and strong abolitionist and is known best for composing the hymn "Amazing Grace." His father, John Newton, Sr., was a shipmaster who, in 1748, was appointed to the charge of York Fort; he drowned there on 28 June 1750 (Craig 1974), after barely two years of service. But by then, he and an unnamed Cree woman had had a daughter. The infant was surely brought up among the Cree, yet her mother and Newton's HBC colleagues at York evidently kept alive the recollection of her father's name and identity. Settee, in turn, must have been impressed to meet someone who knew about the Newtons, and his recounting of that connection clearly aroused Southesk's interest. The Scottish aristocrat was already gathering artifacts from all across Rupert's Land, and he may well have added Settee's manuscript to his baggage, though it is not mentioned in his book.[10] Possibly, Settee misremembered the locale where he lost the first version of his manuscript.

Settee died on 19 March 1902 in Winnipeg. Just over two months later, Ross decided to pass Settee's rewritten version on to his friend, the Reverend Egerton R. Young, who was passing through Winnipeg on tour. Young had been a Methodist missionary at the Rossville mission (Norway House) from 1868 to 1873, at the same time that Ross was stationed there as an HBC clerk and

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9 Settee's grandmother, then, was a half-sister of the clergyman who wrote "Amazing Grace," a hymn first published in 1779 that quickly grew in popularity. Settee must have deduced his family connection to the hymn.

10 Southesk's original trip journal was destroyed in a fire at the family estate in 1921; Settee's first manuscript may have burned with it. The Southesk collection became famous in May 2006, when Sotheby's in New York sold thirty-nine lots billed as "the most historically significant group of American Indian art ever to be offered at auction." David Lister, *The Times*, London, 11 May 2006, 27. The Royal Alberta Museum in Edmonton was able to purchase thirty-three items; for their story, see "Stories from the Southesk Collection," *Royal Alberta Museum*, n.d., http://www.royalalbertamuseum.ca/exhibits/online/southesk/index.cfm.

junior trader.[11] By 1902, Young had written half a dozen books on Methodist mission work in the Northwest; he also travelled widely as a popular speaker to church audiences. Ross took the occasion to solicit Young's help in publishing the manuscript and in assisting Settee's widow.

West Selkirk Man.
25th May 1902
My dear Mr. Young—

I see by yesterday's Free Press that you are in Winnipeg with friend [Reverend John] Semmens—and that you intend to start for Vancouver by next Tuesday's train— So I hasten to enclose to your present address in Winnipeg the enclosed Indian legend or tradition—written by the late Indian Missionary Revd James Settee—who died this year at the advanced age of 93 years—leaving his widow to follow him to the "happy hunting grounds" of a "better land."

My object in sending this contribution to Indian literature to you is to know if you can make use of it either by incorporating it in the volume you are now engaged on called "Algonquin Indian Tales" or in any other way—so that you might consider it of sufficient value to you as to pay something for it to the poor old widow who is now living here at West Selkirk with her son James Settee Jr—not by any means sufficiently well provided for— This matter of value is left entirely to yourself in consideration of the needy circumstances in which the poor lady is placed— Hoping to be able to see you on your return from the coast— I remain

Yours very truly, Rodk Ross Sr

The quaint idiomatic Indian-English in which it is written—might be preserved if published, with just the grammatical and other technical errors corrected of course.—RR[12]

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11 On Ross's Norway House service, his career, and his retirement to Selkirk in 1889, see "Biographical Sheets," *Hudson's Bay Company Archives*, 2016, https://www.gov.mb.ca/chc/ archives/hbca/biographical/index.html?print. His tactful handling of a windigo execution case at Berens River in 1876 is discussed in chapter 16, this volume.

12 *Algonquin Indian Tales* (published 1903) was probably finished when Young received Settee's manuscript. The book, based in good part on stories the Youngs heard from Cree and Ojibwe people at Norway House and Berens River, Manitoba, relates the birth of the Ojibwe culture hero "Nanaboozhoo" as the son of the west wind and gives his alternate Ojibwe name as Mishawabus (Great Rabbit)—a spirit being who sometimes did good things for his "uncles the Indian people" but was changeable and full of mischief (75). The Rabbit (Wahpus) is prominent in Settee's story, but there is no sign that Young drew on it; the parallels derive from widely shared traditions.

Young was most interested in the manuscript and noted on the letter from Ross that he promised Sarah Settee "five dollars more if *possible*." Amid his many travels of the next few years, he tried to fulfill Settee's and Ross's wish, drafting an eight-chapter text of about eighty pages, to which he gave an appropriate title: "The Great Council and the Great Tradition."[13] Elaborating upon Settee's story and introducing a few romantic and Christian elements, he aimed to increase its appeal for English-speaking audiences. On 23 April 1907, he mailed this longer version to the secretary of the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, DC, asking for suggestions on publishing it. Writing from his home in Bradford, Ontario, he described his personal acquaintance with Settee and expressed hopes that the text could appear in some form:[14]

> When I was a Missionary among the Cree and Saulteaux [Ojibwe]
> Indians, from 1868 to 77 [1876], I met the writer, Mr James Settee. He
> was then considered to be an old man, but was still doing some work as
> a native helper in the Church of England Missionary Society. From other
> sources than his Manuscript I obtained some of the information about
> the trip as given in the earlier chapters. . . . The Manuscript in my pos-
> session is written on the old English foolscap Paper. It is turning yellow
> & bears evidence of having been written for many years. Yet to a mutual
> friend [Roderick Ross], years ago, Mr. Settee said that he had written
> out an earlier account of this great circumstance of his life, but that one
> year long ago, a distinguished white traveler, who was passing through
> the country & who stopped with him for some time & to whom he read

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13 Young's manuscript and related papers are in the Young Fonds, 94.030C, series 4, box 8, files 5–7, United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto. His typescript, as received back from the Bureau of American Indian Ethnology, is in my files. On its front page, Young wrote in pencil, "Written out from the sayings and Manuscript of Rev. James Settee, by Egerton R. Young." Young added to the text a romantic tale of the courtship and marriage of Settee's English great-grandfather, Captain Smith, and his Cree bride; he otherwise remained quite faithful to Settee's manuscript.

14 Young and Settee most likely met at Norway House in the summer of 1873 when Young's term there was ending; he left for Ontario in September. He had made several trips to the Nelson River Cree, and his success with them had led them to ask for their own missionary. When the Toronto Methodist church authorities provided none, and when the Nelson River people heard of Young's impending departure, "they came . . . and urged and besought me [Young] to go and live with them and be their Missionary" (Young and Young 2014, 271–72). Settee had old connections to the Nelson River people, and Young's departure may have led him to request permission to spend a year in that district to meet their wishes for a mission (Boon 1961, 60). He was warmly welcomed, but lacking resources, the effort failed. Settee, Norway House, to Archdeacon Abraham Cowley, 21 August 1873, Church Missionary Society, reel A100, fol. 79, MG 17, B2, LAC; thanks to Anne Lindsay for this reference.

the tradition was so pleased with it, that he took it away with him & that without permission! So after mourning its loss & becoming discouraged about its return, he, Mr Settee, set to work & re-wrote the whole story again & this is the copy which has come into my possession.

A number of literary people to whom I have read it consider it one of the finest of the many Indian traditions. . . . I have written over a dozen books.— & so could easily put this into a volume for publication but there is in my mind a haunting thought that perhaps you might consider it worthy of a place in some of the Smithsonian publications & therefore I am presuming to send it on to you for your consideration.[15]

Young's manuscript was taken seriously, for on 24 May 1907, he received a reply from William Henry Holmes, chief of the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian. Holmes returned the manuscript as unsuitable but included some positive comments:

I have gone over the manuscript somewhat hastily and have also placed it in the hands of Mr. [James] Mooney [BAE ethnologist] for more careful study and recommendation. Mr. Mooney advises that the work as it stands is hardly up to our standards but would probably be acceptable to the Folklore Journal [*Journal of American Folklore*] . . . where it might be printed in sections. The historical features of the work are extremely interesting . . . as are many of the native stories. I may say that, as a rule, the Bureau has not been printing in its reports matter of this class, save where associated with detailed ethnological studies. It is suitable, as suggested, however, by Mr. Mooney, for use in the journals.[16]

By mid-1907, Young was drafting an ambitious history of Indian missions (never published); he did not pursue publication of "The Great Council" further. He died in October 1909. After his death, his and Settee's manuscripts both passed into the hands of his son, E. Ryerson Young, and then his grandson, H. Egerton Young. In the early 1970s, through the kindness of the latter, I was able to study these materials and prepare them for publication.

Settee's text as I have transcribed it below conforms closely to his original manuscript, which was signed "J Settee." Words have occasionally been added in square brackets, and capitalization and some spellings of names have been standardized for clarity and readability, but Roderick Ross's admonition

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15 Copy of handwritten draft letter in my possession. Young's letter added some detail to the story of Settee's first manuscript—perhaps learned from Roderick Ross, who may have known more than he wrote.

16 My thanks to Raymond DeMallie, who, while working at the Smithsonian in July of 1972, located this letter in the Smithsonian archives and provided a copy.

to preserve Settee's "quaint idiomatic Indian-English" has been respected. The text speaks effectively for itself. Despite occasional hints of Christianity (surprisingly few, in view of Settee's Anglican education and career), it preserves a distinctively Cree vitality and vividness—exemplified especially in the spirited, humorous portrayals of the Rabbit, Wahpus, who survives a ferocious attack by Kewatin (North) and defeats Pewahnuk (Flint) on behalf of humankind. It is, as Roderick Ross and E. R. Young recognized in preserving it, a remarkable contribution to Algonquian literature. Its stories also have a powerful oral quality. Several passages come to life best when spoken aloud, without the distractions of the idiosyncratic spellings and grammar that catch our eye on the printed page.

A note on the location of the large gathering that Settee described: it was not at the major HBC depot of York Factory at the mouth of the Hayes River on Hudson Bay but rather just to the north, at the mouth of the Nelson River, out of the fur traders' sight. As Victor Lytwyn found in his work on York Factory, HBC records make no mention of this event, though it was not far away (Lytwyn 2002, 211n91). Without Settee, we would know nothing of it—a reminder of how much of Indian life the traders missed or simply ignored.

An Indian Camp at the Mouth of Nelson River Hudsons Bay, 1823

On the latter end of September, my grandfather wished [to go] to the spot where he was born at the mouth of Nelson River. We was at Split Lake where my grandfather had settled and made a home for his old age. He was provided [for] by the HB Company. His Father Captain Smith had placed a sum of money into the hands of the Company and this was to support [him] so much annually.[17] My father got leave to take grandfather down to the sea. We embarked in a bark canoe & followed the stream, saw plenty deer, geese, bears &c. but did not mind [pay attention to] them, we had enough of provision. We saw

A Large Camp
The whole plantation of the mouth of Nelson River was full lodges of deer skins tents as white [as] white cloth. Hundred[s] of Indians had

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17 "Captain Smith" is not firmly identified, nor have his annuities yet been found in the HBCA, but the likely candidate is Joseph Smith, HBC labourer and explorer, who made several inland journeys. He died in June 1765 as he was returning to York Factory from wintering in the Saskatchewan region, and the Cree woman accompanying him "brought his personal effects and their child to Governor Ferdinand Jacobs at York" (Thorman 1974, 595). Smith's child, supposing it was male, would have become known, in memory of his father, as the Little Englishman—Settee's grandfather (next paragraph).

assembled from Churchill, Severn and Moose Factory from James Bay [and] York Factory. All the Head men came & greeted my grandfather and took him to a large Tent prepared for us. My grandfather had been elected as the Chief of all tribes living on the seacoast. He was called the Little Englishman. The union Jack floated in the breeze alongside the big tent. The Indians or the young men had a pow-wow, the same night.

The Feast Began

A long tent had been made I cannot say how long and size the tent was but it admit some thousand of people for in those days every large river in the Country was full of Indians. In the middle [of the] tent there were three rotation of Kettles of all sizes full of the best meat, moose deer beaver the bear geese wavey, grease a large quantity.[18]

An Invitation Given

Ever[y] man had to bring his dish with him, a place assigned for the head men. Inside the tent a whole piece of print of different colours was all hanging on the tent poles & hankercheifs, gartering. The old men with the skins of all sorts on their shoulders. Deer skin robes lead [laid] for carpets, bear skin beaver wolves' skins and the polar bear skins, the faces of the young men & women all painted with vermillion in the time the stewards loading the dishes by waggon loads. My grandfather was called to invoke the gods of the aire to come and take a part of the food prepared by their children. Oh, oh, a mile long. The old mills began it was no fun to [see] a mountain demolished as an old friend would say. I saw greater eating up a couple of geese and drink pure oil from the seal or a chunk of blubber. They believe a greater [? not explained] has an evil beast in the stomack. I took notice what was going, there was a young [man] by the name Tomtit, he had his [face] low, one fellow sitting next to him looked up and looked at [the] man and said to him, "why are you cry for?" The fellow then said, "because I cannot eat up all that is before [me]." The other fellow told him, "if you eat what is before you to put it aside and eat it tomorrow." I think the fellow eat up all [th]at meat that was before him before he went to bed that night. An old woman who was called a glut[ton], ate till [she] fell

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18 In the late 1700s, HBC writer Andrew Graham described how a "long tent" (in Cree, *sa'poototowan*) was constructed—with a door at each end and two, three, or more fires in a line—to house multiple families or large gatherings (Williams 1969, 186–87). The "deer" referred to in this context were caribou—a term not in HBC vocabulary in this period. "Wavey" derives from the Cree term *wawao*, for snow goose. The Cree orthography used here derives from the dictionary of Faries and Watkins (1938).

asleep with her hands on each Kettle that was near. So[me] ones came and eat up all that [was] in kettles when she awoke she called out like a night Owl, "who ate all the meat that was in two kettles alongside of me." One good thing, there was no fire water.

The Feast continued for some days perhaps a week, at the Tom, tom, tom, dancing all nights. There being good supply of Blubber they [took] pots of iron, they filled the iron pot[s] put cotton and raised them and put torch & the flame rose up very high one could see the Camp miles from the sea, some Sloops and Whale Boat ran in to see the great doings at the Camps and see how the Indians were amusing themselves. Some nights they had conjuring tents to converse with their gods as they called [them]. I never saw my grandfather to go see them, in those conjuring every thing had a voice the wind spoke, the beasts and the birds spoke, the stone the tree the different animals in the waters also, the departed dead they also spoke, the Indians living far away also spoke. An Englishman also enters into the Conjuring lodge and say to the Conjurer, "nekanes, nekanes, I am god-like too, I can turn stone into Iron and make the fire and water to obey me and do my service and do justice to me." But the great Manito does not speak only through his representatives as the wind & thunders & the earthquake.[19] A woman never attempts to enter the Conjuring, if she does she must die through the displeasure of the gods.[20]

The End of the Feast

A general meeting is called. The head man now calls for someone to relate an old tradition to be remembered by all the Band 'till they meet again. At last one of [the] oldest man told the Band that he had heard an old story when [he] was a lad about 14, or 15 winters old, he would relate the particulars of the Story. A very [great] crowd gathered at the big tent. The old man began.

I was among the [boys] but I did [not] know what the old man was speaking about, but my father related the whole story to me. I remember when [what] the old man said.[21]

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19 Settee was noting, as have others, that the high god of traditional Cree-Ojibwe theology did not speak to or interact directly with humans and never appeared or spoke in the shaking tent ("conjuring lodge"); for a succinct discussion, see Hallowell (1992, 72).

20 This statement needs some qualification. Women were indeed subject to ceremonial restrictions, especially before menopause, but Hallowell (1942, 19–22) noted some rare instances of post-menopausal women conjuring.

21 The story about to be told would be called a legend or myth in English. The Cree term for such stories (Louis Bird's orthography) is *atanookanak*, stories about events long ago, in

There was a time when there was a man and wife living alongside of a river enjoying peace and plenty of deer and beaver to eat, the daily occupation of the man was to preparation his bow and arrows to hunt the large animal[s], out all day after a chace of Moose or a deer, but never absent from his tent at night time he would tell his wife of his success he had and kill a moose or a deer, sometimes a Beaver. He had run one day and quite fatigued he would retire to bed earlier than usual. The woman sat up [to] dress the skin of the moose or deer or other animal. She retired to bed too on one side, when morning came the man was fast asleep the woman prepared breakfast and her husband's clothes.

At last the man opened his eyes the sun was high up. The man put on his clothes and breakfast laid before him, he took a bit of meat and set his dish aside and did not speak, the woman thought that he was sick, at the last the woman said, "Dear husband are you unwell," the man said, "I am well and in perfect health." The woman [was] relieved in her mind. [Then] the man told his wife, he had a dream that troubled him, he did not understand it: the dream was about her his wife. He dreamed of a person like himself, a man, did not know where he came from, the man spoke to him, and said that he came to tell him to caution his wife when she was at her work, when she stooped to take anything from the ground, never to stoop with her back to the west, where the sun set; she could stoop to the north, east or south. "Now my wife," the man said, "be very Careful that [you] remember that injunction from that god man, don't break it in any wise," the man follow his occupation as usual; the woman never forgot what her husband had strongly advised to be careful.

One morning the man asked his wife to build her tent in a new place the tent was taking down and a clean spot selected, the woman raised the poles, arranging them in a perfect order, she saw that there was more poles on one side and one pole moving to fall she instantly laid hold on another pole that lay on the ground and she stooped down with her back to the west, just immediately after she remembered she had broken the injunction laid upon her, but she held her peace never told her husband, one morning the man said, "I have found out the secret. You have broken the injunction that was given to thee by that god man whom I saw in my night vision." "Yes, my husband," the wife said. "In erecting our tent in a new spot of ground

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which "the personages are beyond living memory and take on powerful, even mystical qualities" (Bird 2005, 22). Such stories were usually told at night and not in the summertime; late September, as winter was approaching, was a suitable time. After the gathering, most of the people would have dispersed to their inland winter hunting grounds.

one pole went wrong if it fell on the ground all the framework of the tent would [have] fallen to the ground so to keep up I snatched the pole that was moving and to hold on another the pole the frame and stooped down with my back to the west. The man said, "that settles your case." The woman began to grow very stout at last could scarcely raise herself from the ground; the man remained more closely at home the woman could not attend to her tent. At last the woman could not walk she got so big and she told her husband pains was coming upon her. The man prepared everything against the great event that coming upon his wife.[22]

The Woman's Full Time

The man said, "A new change is to take place in the world & a man is to do duties which he never knew before, must do for the best." The woman called out invoking the gods to help her. She gave birth the first a son, she still felt another a second a son, the third a son the fourth a son the fifth a son the sixth a son, six sons born at one time. The mother had her hands full to nurse these six babies, the man had now work, but he did not care, he put a mark on each child so that he might know the eldest to the youngest. The man made more snares and traps gather a large store of provision, the woman did not see the necessity so much food, but the man had a meaning in so doing.

The Naming of the Six Boys

The man had roasted lots of meat the Beaver & Bear's meat the fowls of all sort that is eaten there being only [the] man and the mother of her children she could eat very little. The man was satisfied that his [she's?] tasted the food. He made a speech asking the great Being to come partake a little of the food he made for all the guests who dwelling now known and now gods to gave [give] names to his sons. The eldest the

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22 Algonquian scholar William Jones, ca. 1903–5, recorded a Rainy Lake Ojibwe legend of the birth of Nanabushu (spellings vary), which parallels this story and its sequel in several respects. A mother warns her daughter never to sit facing westward. The girl forgets the advice, becomes pregnant by the west wind, and gives birth to several beings (not the winds). But they quarrel over who is to be born first and kill their mother in the process. The grandmother finds a blood clot that grows to become Nanabushu; he later takes the form of a hare and steals fire to help his people, also going after his older brothers for having killed their mother (Jones 1917, 3–9). My thanks to H. Christoph Wolfart for this reference. At Berens River in 1933, William Berens told A. I. Hallowell a story that begins quite differently from Settee's but offers close parallels at its core; he had heard it from his Ojibwe grandmother, Amo, who grew up in mainly Cree country around Cumberland House (Berens 2009, 127–32).

first born the gods called Kewatin, the north wind, the second, Wahpun or East day light, the third Shawan south, the fourth Nekwahpahsun west, the fifth Pewahnuk, the flint, the sixth Wahpus, Rabbit, youngest. In a short [time] the boys was very useful to father and mother, in process of time all grew to be men. The man began to find out the disposition of his sons.

The Man Assembles All His Sons

He tells them that he could [not] keep all in one place every one of them was selected where he would made it his home and arrange every thing for his comfort. Kewatin took the north quarter the Wahpun took the East, the Nekwahpahun took the west, Shawan took his stand on the south.[23] Pewahnuk flint he would remain with the parents, Wahpus would never leave his father and mother but would [remain with] them while the world lasted. "And now sons return to your place of abode so that after time you may meet again to inform to each of you what you have done or intended [and] what you wish to do." Another meeting again a time.

Kewatin engaged about conquest and have all power over his brethren and to rule all brutal & flying creation. Shawan studying to raise a large family of animals Birds of all kinds, fruit food [for] both man and beast. He feel happy that he can make all creation to rejoice. Wahpun he is engaged in takin a survey at the moon and stars but his pride is full to bring up the Sun without the shadow of a cloud. To see every creature enjoy the sun light and work for their good—and now Kekabahun [Nekwahpahun] West. He watches how his brothers are getting along. He prepares his artellery some fire arms. He means to oppose the Wahpun who knows what he will do in the latter days.

Pewahnuk and Wahpus they never trouble themselves about anything, they live happily near the tent of their parents—the man see them every day.

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23 Cree references to the Four Winds as named beings are common, but Settee's tale and the version told by William Berens give the fullest accounts of their relations and interactions. James Stevens was told a shorter story about them in northern Ontario: A woman gave birth to twins in winter. She and her husband were then attacked by the north wind, and spared when the south intervened; then east and west contended for control of darkness and daylight until finally the four agreed to share the world (Stevens 1971, 62–63). East of James Bay, Mistassini Cree beliefs and observances surrounding Ciiwetinsuu, the strong and dangerous spiritual being representing the north and cold, offer some parallels to the imagery around Kewatin (Tanner 1979, 103, 106).

The Meeting of the Brothers

It had been proposed before they would meeting & [each] relate what
he had and how he arranged his affairs to carry on their works.

Kewatin the Eldest

First speaker he said the first thing that had occupied his attention was,
how to support his superiority and establish drastic mean[s] to keep
order [in] the whole world to keep his brethren under subjection,
that he had artillery to drive the heavenly elements from the skies and
subdue the whole face of creation, the brothers did not approve the
speech. The Rabbit [Wahpus] would leap up and call out, "hear, hear," &
have a hearty laugh, the rest of the brothers was rather amused with him
but [he] being a pet & harmless [they] never minded what he did. The
rabbit shouted, "'I will rule & subdue,' humbug, that cannot take place,
I will have [my] own way." Kewatin was very much offended to be
interrupped in his speech. But he threatened to punish the Rabbit for
his insolence, the rest of the brothers smiled. Kewatin [said] he would
bind the raging of the sea like an infant is bound in a cradle. The tree[s]
would reel at his pleasure & the highest mountain would quake, the
stone would break with terror. Wahpus said "such nonsense" and then, a
hearty laugh. Here Kewatin stops.

Shawan South

He said, "you have heard the speech of brother Kewatin, what he said is
quite foreign to my ideas I am [engaged] too much in arranging plans
for the comfort and happiness of those who are to dwell on the face of
the earth, there must be provision to sustain both man and other living
creature[s] to provide for the big animal & for the fowl and to bring
warmth on the waters, to produce life in the waters, vegetation to rise
in the earth so that all living animals that moves on the earth may have
food to live upon." Rabbit cried out, "excellent, excellent. I mean to
unbind every thing that has been bound, so that there may be com-
munication even in the waters among men, I want all nature to rejoice
and to sing aloud with joy our brothers and sisters who will take their
stand in the world with [will] have a large family and they will require
all the necessaries of life, the small animals will need all the help they
can get, the flying fowl will need support to[o], all, all, will require help,
but I mean to maintain my part granted to me by our Father and by the
gods." All the brother[s] said, "well spoken." The end of Shawan's address,
he did not allude to what Kewatin said.

The Wahpun the East

Wahpun [said], "Brethren I do not altogether [forget?] the injunction lade [laid] by our Father the last moment we parted with him and our brother[s]. Father said to be Kind and live peaceably among yourselves; that is true happiness help one another. My plan is how to act to please all the moving creature on the face [of the earth]. Well, I thought best to produce a bright object to shine through the world to make your face bright and beautiful and at the same [time] to enable all creation to do their work of whatever they may be. I may make many mistakes, I hope it may not affect your concerns, I may [my] name will be in mouth of our brethren who may inhabit our Country more than your names all of you, but I will not pretend to lord over you, man will acknowledge that I am a great benefactor and great help in raising large families in the world, I do not admire at brother's [Kewatin's] speeches, but Shawan I do endorse [the] word he said, he means to raise families what is better than to see the world moving with human beings." "There it is, there it is," the Rabbit shouted. One brother told him to be quiet and not disturb the speaker; he had low laugh, but said no more. Wahpun was much displeased with the Rabbit, but he thought in his heart he would give [him] a good beating some day. "I know who [is] to succeed [speak after] me, he is no mark, he hides my work every moment." *He meant when the sun sets.*

Nekwapahun West

Nekwapahun [said], "Brothers I have sat without contradicting your various subjects which you have uttered, I have been very much interested with your remarks on various, particularly with regard to our short lives that is the principal subject for all beings who breathe the air as father used to say. To talk about power and might that cannot lodge with us, we see the world is moving with life, creature[s] they must pass away, where do they go? We cannot see, the gods say they live in different places. I did not agree with brother Kewatin with all his boast, every one of us might make a pretence and say we are gods, we beg for life for might and power. If we had [it], we might ruin all creation, passion goes from one man to another, it always do bad things, we want great things, if we had them we would abuse them perhaps or [?] smile to our brother. I ask what is the use of all the artillery I heard mention and the threatening language being employed, I might say the same myself— But one thing I must really gainsay, when it is said that I conceal and shut the eyes of the world. I do so I acknowledge because the man who is on the chace of a moose or deer is fainting and will not rest

till he accomplishes his object, when he kills the animal then he can rest comfortably because he loves his tentmates, he has food for them. Rest is good and when the great light comes into my quarter, I tell to rest so that all beings might have sleep." "Good, good," all the brothers shouted. Nekapahan continued, "I work at that time when all are at rest. I attend to plants to provide for themselves."

Pewahnuk Flint

He said not one word to the Brother who had made long speeches. He saw there was different opinion, indeed, he formed his own thoughts of Wahpus Rabbit the youngest brother, for why no one could conceive, but because he intended to remain in the land of his nativity and would try and assist his father, as matter of maintaining heat. He found out that Steel & flint could produce fire, and it was necessary to prepare what it would be when the storm would burst which he foresaw it [would] take plain [place] in the work [world]. He knew perfectly that Kewatin & the Shawan would never agree, indeed all the brothers knew this. Pewahnuk anticipated that much trouble would arise among the inhabitance in the world. Rabbit shouts, "poh, poh, nobody care about that, and as for your fire no one will care for it." Pewahnuk dispise his young brother by saying to him, he did not see how Wahpus could live and it [was] useless to take notice of him. Wahpus held his peace, he was prepared to meet him at any moment. There was discord. But Pewahnuk would trouble Wahpus.

Wahpus

The Rabbit's time came when he would address his brothers. He said, "I am the youngest and the weakest among you all, but I mean to stand before the most powerful element that can rise up against what I have prepared and mean to carry it out, is to make abode alongside my parents' lodge to look after them and provide substance such as food and warm clothing which none of you will [have] ever done." Shawan [said] "bravo." "P'shaw" says Pewahnuk, "You will starve and freeze to death." Wahpus did not listen to Pewanuk, he thought mean of him. Wahpus he took a small dance shouting out he should walk through the whole world and enter in the Palace of the great ones & be fed by the sons of the gods & by their Queens. The brothers were very amused at their young brother, but the youngest, Shawan, south, thought that he might do some thing great work yet. Wahpus told his brothers that he was entirely independent of them, and never be under control, no ruler

no master but his own will. Kewatin shut his ears, would not listen [to] such folly, here end the brothers' speeches.

The General Opinion of the Speeches Among the Brethren

Kewatin [says] "I am the oldest and must be leader," Shawan [says] "I cannot submit to such prosistion [position?]," Nekapahun *west* say[s] "I disagree with Wahpun East." Pewanuk says "I differ fom Wahpus." All agreed that there was no concord.

A Proclamation of War

Kewatin threatened Shawan, the South. Shawan said he was prepared to meet any time.

All the Brothers were troubled and afraid that war was to arise which they never heard such thing. A cry is made, that a might[y] host was visible just arising from the north. One shouted that Kewatin was to be seen riding on a storm and every one warned to prepare and put everything in order that an apprehension of danger was about to take place. The whole sky was in darkness, the wind carrying mountains of snow & hurling it to the earth & tearing & breaking the rocks & overturning the deep & laying up the water in heaps making the water as hard as a flintstone. The wild animals fleeing to shelter on rocky mountains to every den and in the thickets.

All the large animals gathered into the piles of trees where the wind had carried them to. Other small animals had prepared a place for themselves. The animals that live partly in water were well provided they had gathered food during summer. The wolf & the Fox and the Rabbit they were enjoying the fun. But Kewatin was mad to see the rabbit making a sport of him, he [his] determination was to freeze Rabbit to death. One coldest night the world ever knew, there was the Rabbit sitting in the highest peak in the world with his face near the mouth of Kewatin taking his morning lunch and having a reel, shouting, "Come on come on you wicked curse wetegoo, do your worst."[24] Kewatin could [not] touch or hurt Wahpus. Shawan was watching and ready to fly if it was necessary to save his young brother, the other brothers was astonished to see the rabbit so strong to resist against such awful storm and the cold. Kewatin could go [no] further than he went half across the world Shawan would allow him. Kewatin did what he could conquer the whole world

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24 The *wetigo* or *wihtiko* was a cannibalistic monster associated with the North, Kewatin, ice, and cold. In later Cree thinking, the creature could also be associated with the East and evils that crossed the Atlantic and arrived with the white man; see Nekwapahun, below, on Wahpun as bringing the Weedigoo (spellings vary) across the ocean.

271

but he failed. Shawan [was] highly displeased [with] what [was] done. Shawan said, "I will pay him for this which he will not like it."

Shawan

Shawan is quite prepared to attack Kewatin. These two brothers never agreed together in anything though Shawan always want matters to run well, but Kewatin wanted everything to run in [a] different direction, however matters had begun. Every thing was now in a most deploration condition every ruin that could be made the vegetable creation was Killed, even the earth was a perfect wreck, the skelitons the bones of beasts birds of all sorts who could [not] fly from the wild of Kewatin. Shawun threatened he punished Kewatin and drive [him] out of the Country.

Shawan

He peeped out to see the earth, he looks again. He put out his head, there was sparks to be seen. All the brothers saw the sparks. Kewatin asks "what is that sparks." All the brothers said, "that is Shawan." Kewatin smiles. The sparks rose up higher and higher, till it rose a yard from the earth. Shawan had covered himself with cloud until it was perfect darkness. The lightening was playing in the heaven, Kewatin wonders, and in a moment a Thunder utters a loud voice and lighting at the same time. Kewatin is quite bewildered. At another moment twenty thunders uttered their voice, this is the artillery of Shawan.[25] He [Kewatin] retires a certain distance, Wahpus advised Kewatin to go back further back, Kewatin says, "not one inch more." Wahpus calls "step back step back." Nekwapahun west [says], "Tell them brother to withdraw." Kewatin would not. The next moment, Ten thunders uttered their voices, it sooke [shook] Kewatin, he stared around, & now Twenty thousand thunders uttered forth their voices. Kewatin [moved] to a certain distance and said he would [not?] move one step more. Wahpus having his fun all the time and now an hundred thousand thunders uttered their voice, Kewatin now flies with all [his] might and Shawan pouring out hot thunder bolts after him, and [Kewatin] graving [craving?] him to have pity upon [him] and to retire in peace.

Shawan now after driving Kewatin far he returns to this earth and began to raise plants of all sorts the fruit trees, the birds of the air

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25 The Thunders, in Cree-Ojibwe thought, are huge birds that come from the south in summertime. They are fierce and dangerous but also helpful in driving away winter and attacking giant underwater snakes or water lynxes; see, for example, Hallowell (1992, 61–62, 70–71).

returned to this land and thanked Shawan in driving the great enemy, the beasts of the earth looked on Shawan as the great King of all living. It was proposed by all Creation both man & beast and fowl of the air that a concert would be made for him annually when a dance to follow in a short time the earth began to be decked with beautiful flowers & the trees waving in the air new dresses, the young birds singing beautiful songs, all nature rejoying to see the face of Creation look so pretty. (This is only one half what the old man said.)

Wahpun East

Wahpun said that he didn't intend to hold them long but merely to tell them that he had done what he could for the good of the world in general, he saw that the living on this earth, they would require light to guide them through life. All must endorse this. All the brothers agreed on this. Nekwapahun West, said to some extent that the light would very much benefit the Shawan's family. Wahpun would introduce many foreign wares from abroad to support life, food, tools & raiment. "Oh," called out the Rabbit, "yes, you will introduce many useful things such as you mention, but you will introduce the Weedigoo who will cross the Atlandic and consume humans flesh." The Indians in this Country believe that Weentigoo[s] come [from] other Country and that Wahpun brings them in this Country. Wahpun said that Kewatin had better show then [them?] Shawun [but?] the brothers all disagreed against him.

Nekwapahun West

Nekwapahun [said] "I approve all that brother Shawan did." He would not mention Kewatin north or Wahpun east but he approved one thing that Wahpun did, that is the light and the great Lights, sun moon & Stars. These are very useful, but that he had prepared and to use them, he thought it would be no use, he allude[d] to Wahpun for he would command the Weetigoos and men eaters to come into this land, but he said, that he would resist them and drive them into the deep. He would play his artillery some time to drive away the plagues that Wahpun would send in this land. It a belief among the Indians in this Country that the devil brings disease & death into the world, but the west would stand against it. How that can be done [?] Nekwapahun says no more.

Pewahnuk Flint

Flint, Pewahnuk speaks, he said, "I do not intend to speak outside this earth whereon I was born but confine myself to what I had laid up in my mind, and it is to befriend to the inhabitants of the being that will

dwell and live, I mean to devote [my] whole body to them, you will understand this hereafter. I contritic [contradict] none who spoke for they will never will [*sic*] have any thing to do with [me?], but I will establish my seat among fastnesses of the highest rocks in the world and [they will?] request me to supply them of arms for the disputes that may arise among the brethren at large. None of the brethren can touch one hair of my head, or can speak one word [with] me, but I can only say that he who will succeed me is the weakest that the world has produced, the small insects that crawls or fly in the air will put him to flight. So he will be no use in the world," the Wahpus sitting listening [to] all that is said against him. Shawun south he pities his young brother, but he always [is] to stand by him if any trouble arose against him. Pewahnuk said no more.

Wahpus, Rabbit

Wahpus rose up, all eyes up[on] him. He shouted out and said "now give me a song that I may dance a livily reel before I begin with my speech." The earth began with the song. Calling upon the world to join him with. All the heavens the cloud the lightings the snow—the beast of the earth the fowls that fly above the earth, all the grass of the earth the flowers the trees the herbs the worms and every thing that breath, wind & storms cold and heat. The water element the whale and the fishes the hills and mountains leaping and dancing with Wahpus. The whale and the Polar Bear the wolf-tribe all shouting loud, "Hurrah, hurra, for Wahpus." The brothers looking on thing [think] that Wahpus was mad out of his senses, Shawan had his fun he could not understand his young brother, Wahpus was so independant, but he loved him.

Wahpus now gave an address. He said, "I mean to live in the home where father and mother lived, I will live in the tent. I will provide food and raiment to keep the young families warm. My service will be welcomed by the whole human. I will sit with the great ones in the earth, the great tents and the strong & big men. I will not trouble with the blood thirsty characters, my hands will be clean from the blood of any creature, my babies will feed with young birds and with the young moose Deer and with lambs no quarrelling or jealousy among them. Every hand will rest on my shoulders because I mean to be good and kind to all. It will so follow I will have enemies but they will never conquer me, I will stand to the end of time."

The Wahpus went through the earth and piled up peebles in heaps ever[y]where and having done that, a battle is to take place between Pewahnuk—and Wahpus. A large number assembled to see [the] fight.

The Wahpus pelted the Pewahnuk on the side with the peebles every blow the sides of Pewahnuk would [break] from blow after blow with the peebles. Pewahnuk all sides was getting for every blow the Flint fly like glass before stone. The brothers saw that Pewahnuk was no match for Wahpus.

Pewahnuk now tooks [to] his heels and ran but Wahpus was after [him] through hills & through mountains the whole world, and Wahpus stopped and said, "Well. I have done one good thing for those who will inhabit the world wh[er]ever a man plants his tent he will find a flint to make him a fire to warm [him] and his children." Thus end[s] The Tradition.

Now the old men said, "There is a moral lesson to be drawn from this tradition and who can tell?"

One old man almost the oldest in the Band said, "I can only say what [I] think of this story. There is to be a great revolution in the world. Great differences is to arise in the world An army will first arise from the north, there will be no peace with Kewatin, he will use every means to subdue every one and take all under his power, yes he will do so. But he will not succeed for the Shawan will also oppose but he will defeat him, the others will contend too and at last join Kewatin except the Small One. The Rabbit Kingdom, he will join with Shawan the great man. Shawan & Wahpus will be united together and defeat all before them." The whole camp shook with the cheers of the Indians.

A well informed person would make a pleasant subject of this subject. Mr [Roderick] Ross you make it interest as possible to relate it in the Cree tongue it is very delightful, there is mistakes. But as you will add a sentence here and there I am satisfied the tradition will be written nicely by you who understand the Cree tongue in all its rami–figations [*sic*].

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Chiefs, Medicine Men, and Newcomers on the Berens River

Unfinished Conversations

The Berens River has been an Ojibwe homeland since the eighteenth century. Berens River Ojibwe stories and clan genealogies trace the people's movements along the waterways from the Lake Superior region to Lac Seul and onward to Pikangikum, Poplar Hill, across the Ontario-Manitoba border to Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi, and down to the community of Berens River on the shores of Lake Winnipeg. Some of the people crossed the lake to Jackhead and beyond. Others, travelling north into Cree country, acquired Cree and Hudson's Bay Company family connections as they hunted furs and worked intermittently for the company.

In the 1840s, the Berens River people had their first contacts with missionaries—mainly Methodists who traversed Lake Winnipeg to establish missions at Norway House, Oxford House, and elsewhere, just as their Methodist colleagues were reaching into the Rainy Lake region of northwestern Ontario. Around Rainy Lake, the Reverend Allen Salt in the 1850s, like his predecessors, made little headway, as noted in chapter 14. Personal relations at new missions varied considerably, however, depending on local conditions and on the personalities and preoccupations of the individuals involved on both sides. Berens River has its own mission stories.

A traditional Ojibwe chief at Berens River, Manitoba, Zhaawanaash, developed a close relationship with the first missionary to build there, Egerton R. Young and his family (chapter 16). When Young settled there in 1874, he was already acquainted with Zhaawanaash's older brother, Bear, who was the chief until his death in the winter of 1873–74. They had met several times while Young was serving at the mission at Norway House in the years 1868–73, and Young was saddened by Bear's death. At Berens River, Zhaawanaash and his son, Jakoos, became friends with the Youngs, and especially with their son, Eddie (E. Ryerson Young), who had learned Cree at Norway House and quickly adapted to Ojibwe. Young never baptized Zhaawanaash; that was left to a following minister. But the Young family papers reveal a surprising depth of connection—a friendship that Eddie set down in writing and warmly remembered through the rest of his long life.

Chapters 17 and 18 came into being thanks to an ethnohistorical wellspring—the writings of A. Irving Hallowell (1892–1974), an American anthropologist who, for seven summers in the 1930s, conducted fieldwork in Ojibwe communities along the Berens River from Lake Winnipeg to northwestern Ontario. Working through his papers, housed in the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, in the late 1980s, I learned about the people he had come to know and who made his work possible. Most important was William Berens, chief at the mouth of the river, who was a grandnephew of Zhaawanaash and

who introduced Hallowell to his Moose clan kinsmen up the river. They in turn, as relatives, offered him hospitality and shared their knowledge and stories.

In Pauingassi, close to the Manitoba border, those connections led Hallowell to an acquaintance with Fair Wind (Naamiwan), a powerful medicine man known throughout the region for his healing and drum ceremonies. Fortunately, Fair Wind's trail could be followed further—in Hallowell's writings and photographs, in Methodist mission records, and in journals and accounts kept by HBC traders. These sources and the conversations that I and CBC Radio journalist Maureen Matthews were able to have with Fair Wind's descendants and relatives in the 1990s all made possible his biography, which was written in collaboration with Matthews and appears in chapter 17.

Chapter 18 explores in more depth Hallowell's relations with the Berens River Ojibwe, looking in particular at what he learned about Ojibwe dreams and their immense power and significance for the people. Hallowell's Ojibwe research has been highly respected for decades in academe, but Maureen Matthews and I also learned that he left a highly positive legacy in the Berens River people's minds as an attentive and respectful listener who cared about what they had to say.

Hallowell's writings and research contributed substantially to all three chapters in part 6 and continue to enrich our knowledge.[1] The communities that he wrote about have become better known since the early 1990s, thanks to the research represented in these chapters and to the work carried on by others. Their histories, the strength of their Ojibwe language retention, and their profound relationship with the land have provided the foundation for a proposal to establish 33,400 square kilometres as a UNESCO World Heritage Site of both cultural and environmental significance (see www.pimachiowinaki.org). The proposal has gone through several stages, and, as I write, a final decision is still pending. The conversations continue.

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1 For example, the stories and memories that Hallowell recorded from Adam Bigmouth at Little Grand Rapids deepen our understanding of the people he met and of their lives and perspectives. These will shortly be published as *Ojibwe Stories from the Upper Berens River: A. Irving Hallowell and Adam Bigmouth in Conversation*, edited and with an introduction by Jennifer S. H. Brown (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, [2018]).

"As for Me and My House"

Zhaawanaash and Methodism at Berens River, 1874–83

When Canada's numbered treaties were signed, they named certain Aboriginal men as chiefs, giving these men a place in Canadian history. Sometimes a man who was already a leader of his community retained and enhanced his position by becoming a treaty chief, as did Tapastanum of the Cree community of Pimi-cikamak (Cross Lake) when Treaty 5 was signed at Norway House (Manitoba) in September 1875 (Lindsay 2012). In other instances, leadership changed with the treaty signing, and the men who had previously led their communities became less visible as others gained new prominence.

Such was the case for a senior Ojibwe chief when Berens River, Manitoba, and its surrounding communities entered Treaty 5. On 20 September 1875, four days before Tapastanum was designated as treaty chief at Cross Lake, the people of Berens River saw the leadership of their community pass from Zhaawanaash (He Who Soars or Flies on the South Wind) to Jacob Berens, his nephew, then entering his forties.[1] Zhaawanaash was not mentioned in the treaty and passed into obscurity. He emerges from the shadows as a complex, dynamic presence, however, if we look more closely. Several dispersed and little known documents allow us to catch glimpses of his roles and character during a brief but highly significant transitional period.

When Jacob Berens became treaty chief at Berens River, the shift was more a succession than a supplanting, for Zhaawanaash was the younger brother of his father, Bear (Makwa in Ojibwe). Zhaawanaash had succeeded Bear as leader a short time before, Bear having died during the winter of 1873–74 (Young and Young 2014, 126). Jacob, born in the mid-1830s, was Bear's eldest son. In turn, Bear and Zhaawanaash were the sons of Yellow Legs, a powerful medicine man

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1 My thanks to John Nichols for help with the orthography and meaning of Zhaawanaash, which was sometimes spelled Sowanas or Souwanas (see Young and Young 2014, 124).

who was a progenitor of the Moose clan in the region and of several family lines that later assumed different surnames, Berens and others (Brown 1998; Hallowell 1992, 12–15).

Although Zhaawanaash is much less known than Jacob Berens, the writings of the local Hudson's Bay Company employees, Methodist missionary Egerton R. Young in the 1870s, and anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell in the 1930s all tell us something of his life. Young and Hallowell, sixty years apart, also recorded details that tell us how this leader, in his last decade of life, actively engaged with the changes surrounding him in the 1870s and left some strong memories both among his own people and with the sojourners in his community.

Zhaawanaash exemplified familial continuities in leadership, being one of a chain of important men that reached from his father, Yellow Legs, down to his grandnephew William Berens, who served as chief from 1917 to 1947. William, born in 1866, worked closely with Hallowell during the 1930s as collaborator, interpreter, and guide, and he powerfully conveyed to Hallowell his ancestors' prominence and their stories (Berens 2009). Hallowell's posthumously published ethnography, *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba*, outlines the Berens genealogy from Yellow Legs to William Berens and his family, across four generations. Yellow Legs, by Hallowell's estimate, was born in the mid-1700s (1992, 11). He must have been one of the first Ojibwe people to take up residence on the west side of Lake Winnipeg. His eldest son, Bear, was probably born in the 1790s, and Zhaawanaash was born around 1800. When Zhaawanaash died at Berens River in the winter of 1882–83, he was described as the "oldest member" of the Methodist church there (Ross 1882–83).

William Berens told Hallowell a few interesting things about Zhaawanaash and mentioned him also in his reminiscences, which Hallowell wrote down in 1940. One of Berens's earliest memories, dating from about 1870–72, was of attending a Midewiwin ceremony held at the mouth of the Berens River: "I saw my grandfather [Bear] in the *Midewiwin* once. It must have been the last one ever held at the mouth of the river. My grandfather was the headman. . . . I had a small piece of dog meat passed to me that time and I ate it" (Berens 2009, 42). Zhaawanaash assisted in leading the ceremony, and Berens showed Hallowell "the spot where the lodge had been erected." Hallowell added that after Bear died, Zhaawanaash converted to Christianity "and joined the Protestant church" (1936, 49). But in fact, the course that Zhaawanaash followed in the years 1874 to 1877 was not quite so simple.

A closer look at Berens River before and during those years illuminates the complex changes with which Zhaawanaash and his kin were coping. The mouth of the river was both a natural place for Ojibwe people to settle and a regular stopping point for travellers up and down Lake Winnipeg. In

the 1700s, French and later North West Company (NWC) fur traders from Montréal, as well as HBC traders venturing inland from the Albany River watershed and from the York Factory region, all passed by and sometimes built trading posts there and upriver. Fur resources in the region were depleted by the time the Hudson's Bay and North West companies merged in 1821, and fur trade traffic in the interior diminished (Lytwyn 1986). But Lake Winnipeg was still the great inland waterway on which everyone travelled when heading north to Norway House or the Saskatchewan River and the Athabasca country. The Ojibwe became quite familiar with the newcomers, including the log and timbered structures they built, the goods they brought, and some of their curious ways.

In the 1840s and 1850s, new kinds of outsiders were increasingly seen in the area. Some of the first missionaries to Red River, arriving by York Factory, had travelled up the lake in the 1820s. But the founding of Methodist missions at Norway House and other inland posts from 1840 onward brought a new stream of churchly visitors travelling both north and south, some of whom paused at Berens River. In the summer of 1854, the Rev. John Ryerson, a Methodist from Upper Canada, paid a visit and thought the locale a favourable site for a mission. He received a mixed reception when he tried to interview some of the Ojibwe residents, however. As he recorded, "The two Indians who acted as the spokesmen for the rest, were, as I afterwards learned, medicine men or conjurors, who derive a profit from their craft, and are therefore opposed to whatever may endanger it" (Ryerson 1855, 81). In turn, the "medicine men" were not favourably impressed by their visitor.

The following year, another Methodist clergyman, Thomas Hurlburt, stopped by. The Berens River chief (probably Bear) told him bluntly that neither he nor his predecessor had followed proper Ojibwe protocol if they wished to address them seriously. "When I visited the Indians of Beerin River in the summer of 1855," Hurlburt recalled, "they thought it an unheard of indignity for me to request the privilege of speaking to them on the subject of religion without first making them a donation. The head man said to me, 'the big black coat that passed here last summer insulted us greatly by requesting to speak to us, and only gave us a piece of tobacco each about so long'—measuring on his finger about the length of half a plug. 'We expect that when anyone comes to speak to us that he will place before us a considerable quantity.'"[2] The offering and acceptance of tobacco were key symbols in establishing a mutual willingness to communicate about important matters.

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2 Hurlburt, 17 February 1858, writing from Garden River to the *Christian Guardian*; reference courtesy of Donald B. Smith.

Berens River people themselves often travelled widely around Lake Winnipeg. Those who worked as tripmen in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company frequently visited Norway House, and some of them visited the Methodists at their nearby mission village of Rossville. Successive ministers at Rossville baptized numbers of Berens River people from the 1840s to the 1870s, when Berens River acquired its own semi-permanent mission station. Most notably, Jacob Berens, son of Mahquah (Bear), was baptized by the Reverend George McDougall there on 25 February 1861, the first of his family to take that step ("Baptisms," no. 1110). We have no record of why Jacob, then in his mid-twenties, made this decision, but we do know that his senior relatives had already provided models of adaptability and flexibility, as when his grandfather, Yellow Legs, and family moved from the Lake Superior region to the west side of Lake Winnipeg. Jacob probably saw the church, at least initially, as a new and helpful source of spiritual power that could co-exist with the religious practices of Yellow Legs, Bear, and Zhaawanaash. A striking piece of advice that Jacob gave to his son William, which William always treasured, expressed his outlook well: "Don't think you know everything. You will see lots of new things and you will find a place in your mind for them all" (Berens 2009, 38).

Another factor in Jacob's life at this time may have been personal: his courtship of Mary McKay. Mary was the daughter of a Scots-Cree HBC trader, William McKay, whose father had taken him as a boy to Scotland, probably for schooling. Jacob's baptism and his taking of a Christian name could have helped reconcile McKay to his daughter's marriage to an Indian, and indeed, McKay later lived out his last years with the Berens family (Berens 2009, 41, 204n12). At Berens River, and probably in her father's eyes, Mary was defined through her paternal line as white (Hallowell 1992, 11, 15n3). Marriages of white women to Indian men in this period were rare, and people of European background saw them as more problematic than unions of white men with Indian women (Van Kirk 2002).

Around Berens River itself, both Jacob and his uncle, Zhaawanaash, were innovators in another respect. In the fall of 1870, as William told Hallowell, his father Jacob "built a little house at Pigeon Bay [just south of Berens River]. This was the first log house built there" (Berens 2009, 39). At Berens River itself, Zhaawanaash was the first Ojibwe to build a log house, in about 1874. Hallowell's map of Berens River (1992, 34, map 3), based on an 1878 survey map, locates his house on a point at the far western end of the settlement. Log structures were not new sights in the area, as the fur traders had been building them for years. But the missionaries at Norway House and elsewhere, and later the government, were promoting the idea that Indians themselves should build

and live in such structures and measured their "progress" partly in those terms. By 1883, Canada's Department of Indian Affairs reported that thirty-three log houses had been built at Berens River (Hallowell 1992, 100).

It is of interest that Zhaawanaash built his new house at about the same time as some intense mission-building activity was going forward; he surely observed the work and may have assisted, becoming familiar with the tools and techniques of log construction. In the spring of 1874, the first Methodist missionary, Egerton R. Young (formerly stationed at Norway House), arrived to take up residence. Young vividly described helping with the strenuous cutting and hauling of logs from a nearby island to build the new mission house (1890, 259–60). Zhaawanaash evidently took the initiative to build himself such a house, recognizing that the gesture conferred a certain standing and visibility, although given the seasonally mobile Ojibwe lifestyle of the times, he and his family probably did not occupy it continuously.

At the instigation of Bear, Zhaawanaash's older brother, as well as of his own volition, Young had already become involved with the affairs and needs of the Berens River people. He had previously visited the community on his trips between Winnipeg and Norway House and had met numbers of Berens River visitors to Norway House (including Bear and perhaps Jacob) during his tenure at Rossville (1868–73).[3] On 18 March 1874, when he was in Winnipeg and about to head north to take up residence at the Berens River mission, he wrote a letter to the lieutenant-governor of Manitoba, Alexander Morris, to convey the concerns that the Berens River Ojibwe had expressed to him about treaty issues and government neglect:

> The Indians of Berens River and adjoining country feel disappointed that although they were officially informed that they were included among the Indians with whom the first Treaty was made and that a period was mentioned when they were to receive a visit from the Indian Commissioner and be paid a similar sum as the other Indians included in that Treaty, they have thus far been neglected.
>
> They collected last summer [1873] at the call of the Agent and spent several weeks waiting at one place for his arrival. Fish at that period were very scarce and the result was the Indians nearly starved. No Commissioner or Agent visited them and no explanation has been sent then that they have ever received as to his non-arrival. The result is they are somewhat soured in their minds, and think they have not been dealt with in that straightforward manner which they expect from the *Great Men* who carry out the wishes of their Great Mother across the Waters. (Morris, 1872–77, Young to Morris, 18 March 1874)

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3 On Young's prior meetings with Bear, see Young and Young (2014, 124–27).

From April 1874 onward, Young was vigorously occupied in establishing the new mission. He also developed a friendship with Zhaawanaash, whose deceased brother's importance he recognized, just as he had recognized the position of Tapastanum at Norway House (Lindsay 2012). Probably with the help of Timothy Bear, a Cree from Norway House who was "as thorough a master of the Saulteaux language as he is of the Cree" (Young 1874, 103), he carried on considerable conversations with the elderly chief, hoping that he would join the church. After one of their meetings, Zhaawanaash, on 1 September 1874, enlisted an unknown party as a scribe and translator to write a letter to Young that same day. It warmly expressed his friendship but also his thoughts and misgivings about fulfilling Young's hopes:

My dear Sir,

Since my return from the visit I made to your place to day I have thought about the advice you gave to me much more than can be imagined. I have indeed made no good use of the kindness you have shown to me since you came to us: I find out that you do indeed care for me by what you said to me this day. I promise you that I will endeavour to attend your house of prayer, as often as I am able on the Lords-day, but on the week days I can hardly promise as I am engaged with my own affairs which may hinder me very often to go over & hear you tho I may not be against going.

I cannot promise you that I will become a praying man as yet. I think myself unworthy of such a profession. I am a week man & very subject to many evils. & one thing that troubles me much and it makes me ashamed & that is slander it is very bad among my friends at this small community, I would wish that they could be told & be made to understand that it is great fault.

I know very well that there is good tiddings & wisdom taught to the people at this spot! O if I could but know that the good news told to them had fruit how joyful it would be to me. I would say thank you, from my heart, that is all I wish to say.

Your friend   Shawa nas—

Three months later, on 21 December 1874, Young and Zhaawanaash shared a memorable experience when they and Young's Cree interpreter, Timothy Bear, made a mission trip by dog train, sixty miles across Lake Winnipeg, to the Ojibwe settlement at Jackhead. Young had been invited to come, and they received a remarkable welcome, which Young appreciated as honouring the

visiting missionary. Yet their hosts were also surely honouring Zhaawanaash, son of Yellow Legs; now a senior traditional leader himself, he doubtless had many relatives there. As the visitors approached, Young wrote, they heard sounds of gunfire that showed "that the Indians were on the lookout for us. . . . And very soon we were at Jack Head and among its painted and plumed inhabitants by whom we were received in a most extraordinary manner." Young continued:

> At other places where I have gone as the first Missi[onar]y who ever visited them I have had two or three hundred men women and children trying to see who could be the first to kiss me, but here as we drew near the shore I observed by the glorious light of the moon, two rows of men drawn up on each side of the narrow trail along which we must pass with our dog trains, and each man armed with a gun. When we were about a hundred yards from them they commenced firing off their guns as rapidly as possible. This "*Feu de joie*" continued until we had all reached them.

The guests were ushered into a large log house, where two chiefs, with "the young men appointed to carry out their commands," and "scores of men women and children" awaited them. Amid thick tobacco smoke, Young preached for two hours, a hymn was sung, the chiefs made speeches, and there was some discussion of conversion, of treaties, and of wanting a school. Then the head chief said, "We wish to give you the ceremony of our greatest welcome. It is our nation's custom at times of great delight or on the news of good tidings coming." Two drums were brought in, and twenty or thirty young men and boys gathered around the drummers. Young wrote at length in his copybook (100–106) about the event:

> To describe that *concert* with its monotonous drumming and its shrill songs, which they said were words of welcome, is beyond my power. Although, at times, the almost constant repetition of words seemed wearisome, still there was a weird wild beauty about the whole perform-ance that made it fascinating to me, especially when at certain parts of the ceremony, from ten to twenty of them would spring up erect and would, without moving their feet from the ground go through such strange undulating graceful motions always in unison with the song and drums. Then they went through the still more exciting Sioux welcome, and also that of the wild Crees in the Saskatchewan. These and other wild exciting things were kept up by them until long after Midnight.[4]

Young later wrote to his father (ca. December 1874–January 1875), "These ceremonies were all got up in my honor, as the head chief said, 'When we saw

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4 See also Young (1890, 240–48), which differs in some details and does not mention Zhaawanaash by name.

you far out on the Lake coming, with your dog trains, our hearts were very glad, when you reached the shore, we welcomed you with our right hands, when we fired our guns; and now these last ceremonies are to show you that our whole body is glad and that we want to say, all welcome, Missionary.'"[5] This was probably true enough, but again, the fact that Young visited Jackhead in the company of Zhaawanaash surely enhanced the warmth of their reception.

Young's next account of Zhaawanaash was dated two months later, 26 February 1875. Like the letter that Zhaawanaash had sent to Young the previous September, it was written on the same day that the event occurred:

> Sowanas (South wind) and seven other Indians came into my study this afternoon while I was writing letters, and asked to have a talk with me.
>
> Very gladly did I welcome them and asked what it was they wished to talk about. Sowanas commenced by saying: "Missionary, I want to know, why it is that you are so anxious that I should give up my old heathen religion and become a Christian. Three times now have you come to see me and talk for a long time with me about this thing and now I ask why are you so anxious about me."
>
> I replied, "Because, I love you Sowanas, I am so anxious about you. Until you become a Christian and have your sins pardoned you are in danger of eternal misery and so I feel for you and am so anxious about you."
>
> "Do you say it is your love for us that brought you here?" he asked.
>
> "Yes, Sowanas. Our religion is very different from your paganism. Jesus sent his first Disciples the first Missionaries telling them to Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature, and from that day to this God has been raising up men, who love Him, and in whose hearts there is a great love for the souls of those who are perishing in heathenism. God, and the Church sent me here, and *willingly* I come to tell you of this great salvation and to point you to the great Light. Yes, yes, it is because Jesus loves you that we are here. We love him who died for you. We *do love* your precious soul and want you to love Him too."
>
> Sowanas, now weeping and trembling, said, "I have fully decided in my mind to give up my old ways, and become a Christian but last summer [1874] after I had heard you preach about this great religion of the Bible I had a long talk with the other old conjurers, and promised them, that I would not be Baptized and fully become a Christian without first letting them know '*of my intention.*' For said they, 'If the Missionary convinces you that his religion is really the right one and ours wrong, and you are able to convince us, we will go with you and be baptized at the same time.' Now," added Sowanas, "I believe in your

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5 Copy in possession of Jennifer S. H. Brown.

religion I am not now as I was, in my heart but I think that as I made
such a strong promise to them I ought first to go and see them and ask
them to come with me."

For my answer I opened the Bible and read extracts from the *Charge
of Joshua* and then applied the words to him. I said, "Sowanas, Invite
them to come, urge them, use all your powers of persuasion; bring all
the arguments and reasons you can to induce them to come with you. I
hope they will come indeed I believe they will. *But* Sowanas, even if they
decide not to come do not let their decision influence you in the least.
Remember the words of Joshua I have read to you, 'As for me and my
house *we will* serve the Lord.'"

Note. Sowanas is a noble old Saulteaux Indian. He is an *honest trusty
truthful pagan* Indian. I have long coveted him for the Lord. He is a noted
old conjurer, and by his incessant attention to his pagan religious rites
often shames us for the briefness of the time we spend in communion
with our God. But as the above conversation will show He is not far
from the Kingdom. Oh God help me to lead him into the Light. *He will
be useful yet.* (Young 1874–75, 121–23, 26 February 1875)[6]

We may ask whether Zhaawanaash really wept and trembled; this may be
a touch of missionary rhetoric. Yet Young, writing privately and at first hand,
must have seen some sort of strong response in his elderly visitor. Whatever
Zhaawanaash felt on that occasion, however, he remained unconverted until
after Young left Berens River. But there were no hard feelings over the matter,
and indeed, a few weeks later, Young renewed his advocacy of the Berens River
Ojibwe, communicating their concerns to the government. On 7 April 1875,
he again wrote to Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris on their behalf:

Enclosed I send you as decided upon, a letter from the Indians of this
place. Requesting a supply of simple agricultural implements, tools and
materials to aid them in their efforts to improve their temporal condi-
tion.

I sincerely hope you will have it in your power to oblige them in
this matter; their condition at the best is a sad one and we know that
whatever can be done for them you will most gladly do.—

I have written this letter for them, translated as literally as possible.
With it is the list of Articles [not found] made out by themselves in
Council.

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6 The passage from Joshua 24:15, reads, "And if it seem evil unto you to serve the Lord,
choose you this day whom ye will serve; whether the gods which your fathers served that
were on the other side of the flood, or the gods of the Amorites, in whose land ye dwell: but
as for me and my house, we will serve the Lord."

They were very anxious that I should not forget to send their very best respects to your Excellence the Keche-ookemou [great chief], and also to the different members of your household.

The letter he enclosed read as follows:

We the Berens River Indians desire to address you humbly in reference to some things relating to our happiness. Our hearts were very sore when we were disappointed at the Indian Commissioner not coming, as had been promised, to give us the same amount of Treaty money as had been given to the other Indians around us.—

However we are pleased to hear from our Missionary that you are willing that we should receive a quantity of tools, and other things to help us build houses for ourselves and also to enable us to clear and cultivate the land.

We now send you a list of what we now think we require and we should be very thankful if we could get them soon.

Our hunting grounds are nearly empty of fur—our future is dark. We are urged to follow the example of the white people and cultivate the land. If you give us the tools, we will try and do what we can.—

We all send our respects to you.

Our missionary tells us you are the true friend of the Indians our hearts warm towards you. We also send our respects to your family.—

Signed by Sow-wa-nas (south wind) (chief) on behalf of the rest of the people.

On 24 April, Morris forwarded Young's letter and the Ojibwe request to Ottawa. He commented on the latter, "They are under the erroneous impression that I had promised to give them these articles. I think, however, it would be right to comply with their request, and encourage them to enter upon a more civilized mode of life."[7] It is not clear whether the requested items were delivered, but the hoped-for treaty did come about in September 1875.

In the meantime, while E. R. Young was writing letters to the government, his family and Zhaawanaash were developing stronger ties through his children. His eldest child and namesake, E. Ryerson Young, or Eddie, as his parents called him, was aged five to seven during the family's two years at Berens River. At Norway House, he had learned Cree under the care of his Cree nurse or nanny, Little Mary, and through the friendship he developed with Sandy Harte from

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7 Correspondence, 24 April 1875, RG 10, 1-11-2, vol.1, box 4819, Library and Archives Canada; copies of correspondence courtesy of Mary Black-Rogers.

Nelson House, who lived with the family. At Berens River, he adapted equally well to Ojibwe companionship. Zhaawanaash became a friend and storyteller to Eddie and his younger sister, Lillian, and Eddie warmly remembered him in the reminiscences that he wrote in his old age (Young and Young 2014). When Eddie's father published a book of stories, *Algonquin Indian Tales*, in 1903, he featured Zhaawanaash and his son, Jakoos, in his text and its illustrator, J. E. Laughlin, painted a watercolour scene, *The Indian Storyteller*, which was printed in the book (opposite p. 222) and showed the two children listening to Zhaawanaash (Young and Young 2014, frontispiece). Young recorded that Zhaawanaash made "a beautiful little bow and a quiver full of arrows" for Eddie, while his "old wife was manufacturing an elaborate baby cradle of the Indian pattern" in which his sister Lillian "could carry her favorite doll in the style popular among the Indian girls" (1903, 222).

The influence of Zhaawanaash in the family was most prominent soon after a daughter was born to Elizabeth Bingham Young at Berens River on 9 May 1875. The Youngs' previous three children, born at Norway House, had received Cree names, and their Ojibwe friends decided that the new baby, Florence, should have an Ojibwe name. Eddie's memoirs record that Zhaawanaash took a strong role in choosing her name and in organizing a naming ceremony that corresponded closely to traditional Ojibwe practice (Brown 2008, 82–84). As traditional chief and the surviving son of Yellow Legs, he made his own move to incorporate the missionary's family into his community by adopting and conferring a blessing on its youngest member who had been born among them. While the Youngs were greatly impressed by the occasion, they could not have fully realized the import of his action and of the ceremony in Ojibwe terms. Zhaawanaash was engaging in a kind of reverse assimilation, bringing the new child and her family into his world at the fundamental level of conferring a name and the spiritual blessings that accompanied it.

Five months later, on 20 September 1875, Treaty 5 was signed at Berens River, and Jacob Berens became the new treaty chief. Egerton and Elizabeth Young signed as witnesses (Morris 1880, 342–48). When Jacob's son William recounted his reminiscences to Hallowell in 1940, he remembered both the treaty signing and Young's sojourn at Berens River, as well as his influence: "When the missionary Egerton Young came and preached to us about the love of God and his son I wanted to understand what this man was talking about. Finally, I got enough sense to believe in Christianity" (Berens 2009, 42). The families certainly knew each other, although Jacob and William Berens are nowhere mentioned in the writings of Young family members, published or unpublished. It is likely that Jacob was away much of the time; William remembered that in the summer of 1874, he was working on a York boat (Berens 2009, 42), and he

was often travelling. Jacob's uncle, Zhaawanaash, was, for the Youngs, the most memorable Ojibwe figure to engage with them at Berens River.

The Youngs left Berens River in the summer of 1876, before completing their expected full term of service. The reason given was the state of Mrs. Young's health, which was evidently a factor. On a personal level, Young also felt that the full costs and hardships of mission work and travel were not adequately appreciated by his church superiors. But another critical factor, revealed in Eddie's reminiscences, was that as he reached the age of seven, his parents were concerned that he was growing up Indian, getting too much involved in and influenced by his Aboriginal surroundings and association, and they felt that he should be in school in Ontario. Indeed, E. Ryerson Young as an old man still vividly recalled the culture shock he experienced on leaving the north and being thrust into a rural Ontario school where he was called an "Indian" and faced bullying and grief (see his memoir in Young and Young 2014).

After the Youngs' departure, the Reverend John Semmens was assigned to the Berens River mission. Semmens had about two years of Cree mission experience at Norway House and Nelson House. Like Young, he had visited Berens River before his assignment there, but he had not previously worked among Ojibwe people. Owing to transportation difficulties, he did not settle at Berens River until October 1876. He formed a strongly negative impression of the Ojibwe, which he expressed a few years later in print. The Berens River Ojibwe, he wrote, "are conservative and prejudiced, stiff of neck and hard of heart. Darkness covers the land, and gross darkness the minds of the people. . . . The average sense of right and wrong is so lamentably feeble, the general character is so positively vicious, that the most sanguine of missionaries would give up in despair, did he not know that the blood of Jesus Christ cleanseth from all sin" (1884, 28).

His views were probably influenced in part by a windigo execution case that occupied the minds of Berens River people from late November 1876 until the following March. On 25 November, the Berens River HBC clerk, James Flett, noted in the post journal, "An Indian arrived [and] told that he and brothers had killed their mother and burnt her afterwards" (fol. 15d). As the region had recently come under Canadian federal jurisdiction, HBC chief factor Roderick Ross, who was in charge of the Norway House district, held authority as magistrate to investigate the matter and make recommendations. At a hearing that James Flett chaired as justice of the peace on 2 January 1877, and for which John Semmens served as secretary, the men's confessions were taken down. The three brothers freely admitted what they had done, saying that their mother had asked to be destroyed and describing how her behaviour had led them to great fears about the danger that she as a windigo presented to other family members.

(A person so afflicted typically threatened to attack others with cannibalistic intent.) Roderick Ross wrote on 29 March 1877 to Lieutenant Governor Alexander Morris and Council of the District of Keewatin, describing the case and explaining in sympathetic terms the beliefs surrounding windigo. He added,

> There is a good deal of excitement among the Indians of Berens River . . . about the probable punishment of the parties implicated in the murder. This was in a measure caused by the unguarded expressions of certain parties there who should have known better. The Indians are opposed to any future action in the case, that, they believe, must necessarily involve the death by hanging of the guilty parties. The parties implicated are at large, on the responsibility of the head-man of the Band [Jacob Berens], who will deliver them up whenever called upon to do so. (Morris, papers, 1872–77)

The Berens River people preserved memories of Ross's understanding and sympathy. In the 1930s, A. I. Hallowell heard the Ojibwe side of the story from William Berens, who remembered attending the hearing as a boy. Berens recalled that his father, Jacob, pleaded the brothers' case to Ross, "saying that this was this people's belief that they thought many more people would lose their lives if the woman was not killed and besides the Indians had just come into Treaty and had no chance to learn anything different. The charge of murder was not pushed against the men and the case was laid on the table" (Hallowell, n.d.). Ross came of a family with long experience in Rupert's Land.[8] Evidently, he listened well to Jacob Berens and succeeded in encouraging the authorities not to intervene further. In contrast, John Semmens, to judge by his later prejudicial writings on the Ojibwe, would have read the matter very differently.

The documents do not mention that Zhaawanaash had any role in this affair. But he must have observed it and its outcome closely, forming a favourable opinion of Roderick Ross and his restrained and judicious use of his authority. Less than a month after the windigo hearing, he asked John Semmens to baptize him and chose "Roderick Ross" as his Christian name. Semmens wrote at the time, "Some few days ago, an old man with raven locks, came in to see me. I had often met him before and supposed that he had come to plead poverty and to crave assistance. . . . However, to my surprise and delight, he began to talk about spiritual matters." Semmens clearly had no grasp of who Zhaawanaash was or what his position had been. After speaking at some length, Zhaawanaash asked, "Will you baptize me tomorrow?" Semmens replied, "With all my heart's good will, I shall grant your request." On 4 February 1877, Zhaawanaash was

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8 See also chapter 15, this volume, for Ross's important role in preserving the "Cree Tradition" of James Settee.

baptized. Semmens later asserted that "from that time on his deportment totally changed. His medicines were buried in the swamp and his heathen practices were abolished forever" (Semmens ca. 1915, 54–55; Gray 2006, 79–80).

Why did Zhaawanaash elect baptism at this time and not while his friend, Egerton R. Young, was there? Young seemed to hope for voluntary conversions arising from persuasion rather than pressing as forcefully as some other missionaries did. After all, Tapastanum, at Norway House, was also baptized by Young's successor there, not by Young himself (Lindsay 2012). But it was also true that the winds shifted considerably at both places from the early to later 1870s. As Zhaawanaash said to Semmens, his wife and children had already been baptized; they may have been among the "thirty adults and as many children" who were baptized in the previous months (Semmens ca. 1915, 55). He was among the last survivors of his generation. Treaty 5 also brought a new order and level of control, as Zhaawanaash, the elderly *ogimaa*, ceded his place to Jacob Berens, a government-sanctioned *ogimaagan*, a "made-up" chief (even if a close relative) who was selected and functioned under government oversight. The new chief was cast into obligations to and relationships with authorities who had powers to seize the windigo executioners if they chose, even if the affair involved no white people whatsoever. As Zhaawanaash saw his relatives join the church, he found himself more alone and may also have concluded that his spiritual powers and blessings were departing and could not be passed on. On 1 August 1877, he took still another step into the new religion: as HBC clerk James Flett wrote in the Berens River post journal, "Old Sowanash got married today to his old wife" (fol. 24).

Zhaawanaash continued to turn up at intervals in the Berens River HBC records. On 5 April 1878, Flett recorded, "Sawanash killed the first goose today" (fol. 32d), an act that held resonance for a man whose name, He Who Soars with the South Wind, evoked the return of the summer birds. As for Semmens, he left Berens River in June of 1878. For the next few years, the Berens River Methodists had to rely for church services on the visits of the Reverend A. W. Ross, who was based at Fisher River, across the lake to the northwest, and mission records became more discontinuous. It was Ross who recorded the death of Zhaawanaash in 1882–83: "Our oldest member died there [Berens River] this winter, 'Sowanas'" (Ross 1882–83).[9]

The story of Zhaawanaash sheds some light on the thought processes and intellectual trajectory of an Ojibwe elder confronted with major changes for him and his people in the 1870s. Thanks to a sojourning missionary in the 1870s, Berens family memories, and a visiting anthropologist sixty years later, an

9 Thanks to Susan Elaine Gray for this reference.

unusual cluster of sources provides insight into an Ojibwe life in these critical years. We get a glimpse of how a single overt act of baptism (often simplistically equated with conversion) was based on several years of observation, reflection, conversation, and negotiation—a process that was seldom recorded in depth. "Converts" did not act in a vacuum; Zhaawanaash had consulted with the other "old conjurors" and considered, also, the decisions that members of his family had made. The building of consensus was important in Ojibwe social relations, and he probably did reflect on Joshua's phrase, "as for me and my house," as Young had urged. By 1877, power relations with the outside world were also shifting. The windigo episode of 1876 and the resulting investigation, even though Roderick Ross and Jacob Berens deflected any penalties for the accused, made clear that new authorities were taking control and that traditional Ojibwe leadership would be circumscribed by the larger political and legal structures that were coming into place.

As for burying his medicines in the swamp, Zhaawanaash surely read that act differently than did John Semmens. As an old man, probably in his eighties, he evidently had no younger relatives who would or could take up his spiritual or healing practices. He saw no further place for this work and may have considered that the powers and blessings he had received from his *baawaganag*, or dreamed helpers, had faded. Yet he surely still possessed the tools of his profession—medicines, probably a water drum, and Midewiwin paraphernalia—that held great power. They could not and should not be used by persons who had not received them with proper protocols or with the dream blessings and instructions needed to use them appropriately. In fact, they could do harm to anyone who took them or tried to use them inappropriately (cf. Charlie George Owen in Matthews and Roulette [1996, 358–59] and in Brown [2003, 625]). The act of burying them in the swamp was a classic Ojibwe response to the situation, which John Semmens narrowly interpreted to his own satisfaction.

As Susan Gray argues in her book on Berens River Ojibwe responses to missionaries (2006), the movements of the Berens River people towards Christianity did not mean that they became any less Ojibwe. Zhaawanaash was acting within his own frame of reference, which lay quite beyond the ken of the man who baptized him. It is fortunate that the surviving sources, in combination, afford some knowledge and understanding of this pivotal yet overlooked Ojibwe personage at Berens River in the 1870s. Zhaawanaash may now be placed in the company of his better-known Moose clansmen—Jacob and William Berens, Fair Wind (Naamiwan) of Pauingassi, and Fair Wind's grandson Charlie George Owen (Matthews and Roulette 1996)—all of whom navigated, in their own ways, some complex and intricate paths between Christianity and Ojibwe traditions, while remaining unequivocally Ojibwe.

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Fair Wind

Medicine and Consolation on the Berens River

Sometime after 1900, an Ojibwe medicine man named Fair Wind (Naamiwan), or, in English, John Owen, became widely known along the Berens River in Manitoba and northwestern Ontario.[1] Celebrated in some quarters, notorious in others, Fair Wind never evoked indifference among those who knew him. His personality, his powers, and above all, his Drum Dance with its powerful big drum brought regional prominence to his home community of Pauingassi, a small Ojibwe settlement about ten miles north of Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba. The threads of his extensive family connections are interwoven with the histories of many Berens River people to the present day.

Fair Wind presents challenges for biography. Although he had numerous non-Ojibwe acquaintances, most left little or no record of him. A few penned highly coloured vignettes that reveal more about their authors than about Fair Wind. The American anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell, who met him in 1933, went furthest towards giving him a place in written history in an ethnological context.[2] But other observers left only scattered references, dots

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[1] Fair Wind's burial record dates his birth to 5 March 1851 and his death to 18 March 1944. He was buried under his English and presumably baptismal name, John Owen, at Pauingassi on 21 March (burial no. 64, United Church registers, Little Grand Rapids, United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, Winnipeg), although a baptismal record has not been found. The March birthdate may reflect memories of the season of his birth. Ojibwe linguist Roger Roulette provided the orthography of Ojibwe names and terms.

[2] Hallowell's only published discussion of Fair Wind appeared in "Spirits of the Dead in Saulteaux Life and Thought," *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 10 (1940): 29–51, reprinted as chapter 22 in A. Irving Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies*, ed. and intro. Jennifer S. H. Brown and Susan Elaine Gray (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2010). In his posthumously published *The Ojibwa of Berens River*, figures 13, 14, and 15 illustrate Fair Wind and his drum ceremony.

to connect with lines as in a child's pencil game. For most outsiders, Indians had no history—an attitude still sometimes found among outsiders who visit or work in their communities.

The memories that the Berens River people preserve about Fair Wind also present challenges. Their stories, as is usual in oral traditions, do not emphasize the telling of a whole life.[3] Ojibwe recollections of him are thematic and situational. They include stories of healing or of danger, reflecting the tellers' closeness to or distance from him and his family. They recall memorable events such as the times when Thunder spoke to him or when he played the big drum at Pauingassi or at Poplar Hill farther up the river.[4] Together, these sightings and triangulations contribute to a more stereoscopic image of his life. All our views of Fair Wind, however, are refracted through the multiple lenses of his varied observers.

Fair Wind came of an extraordinary family. His father was Zhenawaakoshkang (Making a Rattling Noise by Stepping on a Twig), also known as Gichiomoonzoonii (Great Moose), who was probably born no later than the 1820s. Great Moose was from the Lac Seul region to the east, according to Hallowell. He had six wives, more than any other man in local memory, and by five of them, he fathered a total of twenty children, of whom sixteen lived into the post-treaty period after 1876. None of the women were sisters—a contrast to the sororal polygyny common among men with several wives. Three wives, however, were clan mates, having fathers of the Pelican clan; of the others, one was a Kingfisher and another a Sturgeon. Hallowell did not learn the totem of Fair Wind's mother, Mangitigwaan, who died around 1914–15.[5] Great Moose

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3 On issues in doing Native (auto)biography, see H. David Brumble III, *American Indian Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988); David Murray, *Forked Tongues: Speech, Writing, and Representation in North American Indian Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1991); and Arnold Krupat, *For Those Who Come After: A Study of Native American Autobiography* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985).

4 The drum story was the subject of a two-hour CBC Radio program, "The Search for Fairwind's Drum," produced by Maureen Matthews for *Ideas* and aired in May 1993.

5 Hallowell published some information on Great Moose and his wives in "The Incidence, Character, and Decline of Polygyny Among the Lake Winnipeg Cree and Saulteaux," *American Anthropologist* 40 (1938): 235–56 (reprinted in Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies*, 86–108), transcribing his alternate name as Cenawagwaskang. The wives' names and totems are in his notes on Moose genealogy under Indian Linguistics, file 2, Hallowell Papers, ms. coll. 26, American Philosophical Society (APS), Philadelphia. Gary Butikofer, who taught school at Poplar Hill, Ontario, from 1970 to 1990 and visited Pauingassi, researched and compiled Moose and other family histories through consulting descendants, Indian Affairs records, and Hallowell's data. Poplar Hill and Pauingassi residents who talked with us in 1992 and 1993 confirmed and supplemented his information.

himself was of the Moose clan, members of which had resided in the area since before 1815.[6]

Great Moose, Hallowell was told, was "a noted hunter and also the most famous conjurer of his time" in the area. He also had a secular role as a "barter chief" when trading with the Hudson's Bay Company. As such, he received (as did similar Cree leaders along Hudson Bay) a trading captain's coat and other gifts for his yearly assistance in bringing his people's furs to the HBC post.[7] In Ojibwe belief, hunting success and spiritual powers were closely associated and could entitle a man to have more wives than others. Expanded family connections in turn enlarged the prospects for gathering furs from kinsmen and for more effective bargaining with HBC or other traders. The successes of Great Moose in several domains reinforced his position in all of them. His roles and rank compare with those of other Ojibwe and Ojibwe-Cree leaders remembered as progenitors of leading families and local groups in the region: Yellow Legs, founder of the Berens family on Lake Winnipeg; Crane, whose sixteen or more sons and other descendants created the group known as the Cranes in the Weagamow Lake region; and Jack Fiddler, who had five wives and dominated the Suckers of Sandy and Deer lakes.[8] While the wives played essential economic and familial roles, their husbands and sons were the holders of prestige and power.

It is doubtful that all six wives of Great Moose co-resided with him for long. Two wives died before the family appeared on the first treaty lists in 1876, and the last two survivors, one of whom was Fair Wind's mother, died in 1914 or 1915.[9] Hallowell was told that the family lived in a zhaaboondawaan, a long

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6 George Holdsworth, "Report on the Eastern Coast of Lake Winipic," 1815, Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereafter HBCA) B.16/e/l, fols. 6–6d, Archives of Manitoba. Holdsworth added that several families of Kingfishers lived a little farther south, along the Bloodvein River.

7 Hallowell, "Incidence, Character, and Decline of Polygyny," 250, 252. The barter chiefs who were described to Hallowell parallel the Cree trading captains portrayed by Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz in *Partners in Furs: A History of the Fur Trade in Eastern James Bay, 1600–1870* (Montréal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983), 41–46.

8 On Yellow Legs, see Hallowell, Ojibwa of Berens River, 11–12. On the Cranes, see Edward S. Rogers and Mary Black Rogers, "Who Were the Cranes? Groups and Group Identity Names in Northern Ontario," *Approaches to Algonquian Archaeology: Proceedings of the Thirteenth Annual Conference, the Archaeology Association of the University of Calgary*, edited by Margaret G. Hanna and Brian Kooyman, 147–88 (Calgary: University of Calgary, Archaeology Association, 1982). On Jack Fiddler, see Thomas Fiddler and James R. Stevens, *Killing the Shamen* (Moonbeam, ON: Penumbra Press, 1985), 41–42.

9 Hallowell found four wives listed in the 1876 and 1877 treaty paylists ("Incidence, Character, and Decline of Polygyny," table 1, 240). Other details come from Butikofer's family histories, cited above.

lodge covered with birch bark, which had an entrance at each end and three fires within. Great Moose sat at the central fire, with his wives on each side of him, seated at the left- and right-hand fires. This arrangement allowed the wives easy access to the entrances; they also thus avoided the centre of the dwelling, observing the usual women's taboo against "stepping over [their husband's] legs and belongings, which was strictly forbidden."[10] Great Moose "supported them well," Hallowell was informed: "Every woman had to have a 4 pt. HB [Hudson's Bay] blanket, besides cloth for dresses & handkerchiefs—[he] never wasted time snaring rabbits—women did this & caught fish—[he] caught big game, moose, caribou & beaver."[11]

Great Moose and his family were the earliest remembered residents of Pauingassi. The locale offered good resources to the family, which was already quite large by the time Fair Wind was born in 1851. Pauingassi is on the west side of Fishing Lake, which lies just north of Little Grand Rapids. The settlement occupies a flat, sandy peninsula above a shoreline of smooth granite rocks and beach. It is relatively sheltered from prevailing winds and has an eastern and southern exposure. It also strategically overlooks a main channel on the water route from the Berens River to Deer Lake and Sandy Lake in the Severn River watershed. The population of Pauingassi fluctuated seasonally; it rose greatly during the summer fishing season, while in winter, most of its residents dispersed to their hunting and trapping grounds.[12]

When Fair Wind was very young, he would have gone through the naming ceremony customary for Ojibwe infants. He received his name from a man of the same name who belonged to the Kingfisher clan. Hallowell was told that the older Fair Wind had come, as did Great Moose, from the Lac Seul area and became a "fur chief" at the HBC post at the mouth of the Berens River.[13] The name Fair Wind or Down Wind (Naamiwan) refers to a favourable breeze, as when water travel is helped by a tailwind, or as when a hunter finds himself downwind from an animal that thus cannot hear or smell his presence.[14] By Ojibwe custom, the older Fair Wind would have stood in a grandfatherly relationship to his namesake, a clue that the infant's mother was also a Kingfisher. In this role, the name-giver brought benefits to the child, passing on blessings

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10 Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 105. Figures 21 and 22 (106–7) illustrate the dwelling type.

11 Indian Linguistics, file 2, Hallowell Papers, APS.

12 Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 43–50.

13 Indian Linguistics, file 2, Hallowell Papers, APS. "Fairwind" is mentioned at intervals in Berens River post journals of the 1860s (e.g., 1863–66, HBCA B.16/a/5–6).

14 Roger Roulette provided information on the meaning of Naamiwan.

that he himself had received in dreams from his *bawaaganag* (lit. the dreamed [ones]), the other-than-human spirit beings to whom he owed his powers.[15]

At around the age of ten to fourteen, Fair Wind, like other Ojibwe boys of his generation, would have gone on a vision fast for a week or so. Sleeping alone in a tree on a small platform built for him probably by his father, he sought blessings from whichever *bawaaganag* might benignly grant him their powers and assistance.[16] Successful dreamers could not reveal the content of their visions if they hoped to keep the blessings conferred by their dream visitors. Often, however, the identities (and powers) of a man's helping spirits were surmised by others who observed his activities and spiritual affiliations.

Fair Wind had a special affinity with Thunderbirds. In July 1932, when Hallowell visited Little Grand Rapids for the first time, one of his Ojibwe travelling companions, John James Everett, told him about an event that he had witnessed during a storm at Pauingassi twenty-one summers before. As Fair Wind was sitting in his tent, thunder sounded. He explained to his wife, Koowin, that Thunderbird (*binesi*) was asking him "whether I have a pipe & why I don't give him a smoke." He told Koowin to bring his long ceremonial pipe and firebag with tobacco, flint and steel, and punk; a servant (*oshkaabewis*, a term used for any helper to a religious leader) filled and lit the pipe. Fair Wind took a few puffs, "then lifted [the] stem over [his] bowed head—swung it around clockwise (everyone quiet . . . no smiling—very very solemn)." Keeping his head bowed, he prayed and "asked pardon from thunder—pleading for himself." Everett decided that "pinesi must have been his pawagan." As Hallowell later concluded, "This explains why he thought he was addressed. By and large, the Ojibwa do not attune themselves to receiving messages every time a thunderstorm occurs!"[17]

Everett dated the Thunderbird episode to 1911, when Fair Wind was about sixty. By that time, Fair Wind held a respected position as a familial leader and grandfather. Great Moose had died in 1881 or 1882, and some of his descendants moved away, but among those who continued living at Pauingassi, Fair Wind assumed a leading role. He had one wife, Koowin, a Pelican, by the mid-1870s. In the next fifteen years, they had six children, of whom four sons and a daughter survived into the 1950s or 1960s.[18]

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15 Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 58–59.

16 Ibid., 87–88.

17 Field notes, 10 July 1932, Hallowell Papers, APS; A. Irving Hallowell, "The Role of Dreams in Ojibwa Culture," in Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies*, 447.

18 Family history notes by Gary Butikofer.

Fair Wind also gained respect from others for his medicinal knowledge, which, in the Ojibwe frame of reference, was granted to individuals by other-than-human beings such as Thunderbirds. In his older years, he became a powerful healer. One winter during the 1920s, a Cree named Tom Boulanger was trapping at Charron Lake, about forty miles north of Pauingassi, when he became ill with pneumonia. As he later remembered, a man from Little Grand Rapids told him that "the best way to do is to take me to Powgashee and see the old man Fairwin." He was bundled into a sleigh, and, on arriving at Pauingassi, he presented to Fair Wind "tobacco and matches, a new pipe, and some new clothes from the store." The next day, Fair Wind's sons brought some roots from the shore, and Fair Wind boiled them, adding "a power medicine, about half a teaspoon."

Boulanger, a baptized Methodist, was impressed that Fair Wind prayed before giving him the medicine to drink. In four days, he was better but he stayed on for several days, enjoying the stories that Fair Wind told "about his old times." One of those stories confirmed Fair Wind's powers in hunting as well as curing. One winter when he had two children (about 1880), his family was starving, "just a rabbit at home to eat." After hunting in vain, he slept out one night, some distance from their camp. Towards morning, he dreamed that "somebody like a man" spoke to him, directing him to a lake, which he found the next day. Near the shore, he saw a group of caribou on a high rock. He was able to shoot six of them and brought his family to camp beside the new supply of meat.[19]

From the 1880s on, Fair Wind and his family interacted increasingly with outsiders. Active in the fur trade, they evoked mixed sentiments from the HBC manager at Little Grand Rapids.[20] In 1912–14, they were doing business with both the HBC and an independent trader, George Leyound, described as Syrian, who was based on the Bloodvein River to the south. Fair Wind himself often traded at the Little Grand Rapids post with members of his "Powngassie tribe." But sometimes his son, Angus Owen, and other kin bypassed the HBC on visits to Leyound while his nephew, Moses Owen, took on the role of being "the Company's trader at Powngassi." On 18 February 1913, the frustration of the HBC journal keeper, William Chapman, in dealing with the Owens reached a peak. "Fairwind's crowd at Powngassie," he wrote, "are the most awkward crowd in the L.G.R. band. They have received faultless treatment . . . they were given big Fall debts, and an outfit has been kept at [their] Settlement. Old Fairwind himself is not so bad as far as paying debt is concerned; but he has too big an

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19 Tom Boulanger, *An Indian Remembers: My Life as a Trapper in Northern Manitoba* (Winnipeg: Peguis, 1971), 63–64.

20 Numerous references to Fair Wind and his oldest son, Angus, can be found in Indian Ledgers, 1895–99, for Big Fall (Little Grand Rapids), HBCA B.18/d/6–9.

opinion of the Ego."[21] Both the Owens and rival free traders challenged, with mixed success, HBC dominance along the Berens River. In a later instance, on 5 December 1927, the HBC manager at the mouth of the river referred to another rival, "the Jew Sam Arbor," whose men were visiting "the Owens camp" at Pauingassi, among others.[22] The Owens' lack of subservience to the HBC and other traders counters the image of Native dependency sometimes assumed for recent periods; while they relied on numerous imported goods, they bargained with all comers and attended effectively to their own interests.

Fur traders were not the only outsiders to take notice of the Pauingassi area by the early 1900s. For several decades, Methodist missionaries had been developing an interest in the region. In 1873–74, the Reverend Egerton R. Young, who had spent five years with the Cree at the Rossville mission at Norway House, founded the first mission at the mouth of the Berens River. Young's interest in the Ojibwe had been sparked while he was still at Rossville. In July 1871, several Ojibwe men from up the Berens River had come to see him there and asked him to visit them the following winter. Young was astonished to find that although they had never seen a missionary, they were able to read the Cree syllabics that his predecessor, James Evans, had developed in the 1840s for printing hymns and bibles. They had learned them, they said, from Christian Indians whom they met on their winter hunts and had since acquired a few Cree syllabic bibles on a visit to York Factory. On the strength of their demonstrated knowledge, Young baptized them, unfortunately recording no names or surnames except for number 1439, "Alexander Bushy," who was probably the Alex Boucher (Poshi) who lived around Little Grand Rapids in that period.[23]

In February 1872, Young made a trip from Lake Winnipeg up the Berens River and visited some of the men who had called upon him at Rossville. Although his writings are vague on geography, his canoe route would have taken him to Little Grand Rapids and possibly beyond. At any rate, the Pauingassi people doubtless heard about "the first missionary to visit this

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21 Fur trade journal, Little Grand Rapids, 1912–15, p. 78, MG 1, C5, Archives of Manitoba, Winnipeg.

22 Berens River journal, 1927–28, HBCA B.16/a/13, fol. 15. Owen as a surname for Fair Wind's family was in use by about 1910; it may have arisen from the last two syllables of his Ojibwe name, Naamiwan, which was variously transcribed as Namoen, Namawun, and Namiwan.

23 Egerton R. Young, *Stories from Indian Wigwams and Northern Camp-fires* (New York: Hunt and Eaton, 1892), 104–9. When Young recorded these baptisms, he wrote across the column for parents' names, "Unknown wild Saulteaux"; Bushy was the only surname entered. Norway House baptismal register, 1433–40, United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, Winnipeg. Information on Alex Boucher comes from Gary Butikofer, manuscript family histories.

interesting people," as Young put it; among Aboriginal people of the region, communication networks operated with remarkable efficiency, as the spread of the syllabic writing had already indicated.[24] Later, while stationed at Berens River, Young made two further trips up to Little Grand Rapids and its vicinity. One February, he visited a "Saulteaux chieftainess," Ookemasis, who had come to him the previous summer to learn about his religion.[25] Between 4 and 14 April 1876, he again journeyed to Little Grand Rapids.[26] His visits, and those of upriver people to his mission, were the first in a long chain of encounters between missionaries and the upriver Ojibwe, with results that ran the gamut from confrontation or avoidance to dialogue and conversion or creative syncretism.

The question of visitors and contacts is basic to understanding how Fair Wind became a religious innovator in the last thirty years of his life, from about 1914 onwards. The groundwork for his reputation was laid within his local community, building on his father's family ties and on his own spiritual kinship with Thunderbirds. His hunting prowess and curing abilities also affirmed to others his connections with strong other-than-human beings. Late in life, however, Fair Wind also drew widely upon ideas whose roots lay a long way from Pauingassi. In about 1914, a powerful dream led him to initiate a drum ceremony that combined local and individual innovation with religious influences originating several hundred miles to the south.

The external ideas that influenced Fair Wind's Drum Dance were probably introduced to the locality by visitors, for although Fair Wind had worked on the HBC York boats, he rarely travelled in later life. His grandnephew Jacob Owen recalled that Fair Wind, in his youth, made periodic trips as far as the mouth of the Berens River. He added enigmatically, "Oh, maybe someday long time ago he go to Norway House and the ocean. He was gone the whole summer that time, almost whole summer—old people long time." But most of the time, Fair Wind didn't leave "because he have something here, that's why he not want to go." The something was medicine, which he found in such places as a sandy spit at Pauingassi and a nearby island; every fall, he gave medicine

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24 Young, *Stories from Indian Wigwams*, 109–13. Knowledge of the Cree syllabics had spread in 1842–43 through the powerful prophetic movement led by a Severn River Cree, Abishabis (chapter 13, this volume).

25 Egerton R. Young, *On the Indian Trail: Stories of Missionary Work among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians* (New York: Fleming H. Revell, 1897), 194–202; see also Young's *By Canoe and Dog-Train Among the Cree and Saulteaux Indians* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1890), 262–65.

26 Young's departure from and return to Berens River is recorded in the Berens River post journal, HBCA B.16/a/8, fol. 10. Young later described, in heroic terms, an April journey far inland in *Stories from Indian Wigwams*, chapter 14, but these ten days, given the travel involved, permitted only short visits to the people around Little Grand Rapids.

to people to protect them through the winter on the traplines. Many came to Pauingassi for his remedies.[27] And he surely talked with and learned from his patients; indeed, he encouraged them to extend their visits, if we may judge by the example of Tom Boulanger, mentioned earlier.

Most patients or other visitors were doubtless from within the region. In about 1912, however, one newcomer who came from farther afield had a considerable impact on Little Grand Rapids and, less directly, on Fair Wind and Pauingassi. Hallowell recorded his name in 1932 as Niskatwewitang, or "when pinesi [thunderbird] calls there is always rain." He spoke both Saulteaux and English well, but Hallowell could not learn what community he came from. At Little Grand Rapids, the visitor introduced a give-away dance that "proved exceedingly popular." He charged one hundred dollars to make the drum and "supply the proper songs."[28]

Hallowell's notes on this man tell us nothing more. He was not from Berens River, the community at the mouth of the river; indeed, the big drums that became part of life at Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi were unknown on that reserve, probably in part because of its Christian churches and visibility to white authorities. Some residents of Little Grand Rapids, however, remembered his name and origin. David Eaglestick's grandfather had a brother named Naas-kaatwewitank, who came from Jackhead, on the west side of Lake Winnipeg.[29] He may have brought the ceremony to Little Grand Rapids via the Bloodvein River, the next major river to the south, following the same route as Fair Wind's family members when they went to Bloodvein to trade with George Leyound.

Strikingly, the dance was introduced at Little Grand Rapids in a period when an amendment to the Canadian Indian Act prohibited such ceremonies. Its adoption on the upper Berens River suggests how unevenly the law against Indian ceremonials was enforced; Indian Affairs agents and police seemingly took no action against drum dances in this area.[30] Government suppression of such observances on the Plains and Northwest Coast was sometimes harsh, and at both the Jackhead and Bloodvein reserves on Lake Winnipeg, give-away

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27 Jacob Owen to Maureen Matthews and me, 17 October 1992, in Pauingassi on one of our most valuable visits.

28 Field notes, 10 July 1932, Hallowell Papers, APS; information initialled as from W.B. (Chief William Berens).

29 David Eaglestick to Henry Neufeld, 20 May 1993, Little Grand Rapids. At Jackhead on 13 December 1993, several people recognized photographs of the Little Grand Rapids drums and told Roger Roulette and Maureen Matthews of memories of "Niiskaatwewitang" or Edward Thomas. Originally from Roseau River, Manitoba, he was a powerful healer.

30 For comparative discussion focused on the western plains, see J. R. Miller, "Owen Glen-dower, Hotspur, and Canadian Indian Policy," *Ethnohistory* 37 (1990): 386–415.

dances and drums drew police intervention in 1920 and 1921.[31] Up the Berens River, however, the law went unmentioned and was probably even unknown to many residents. Indeed, United Church missionary Luther Schuetze, who was serving at Little Grand Rapids when Hallowell visited in the 1930s, decided that drum dances in the open air were far more healthful than "modern dancing" with fiddles and guitars in small, overcrowded houses. So, he later wrote, "I forbade all such dances during the winter and encouraged the people to go back to their outdoor drum dances if they were done in a thankful mood of happiness."[32]

Neither Schuetze nor Hallowell mentioned anything about more distant origins of the drum dances at Little Grand Rapids. Thomas Vennum's studies show, however, that in their main features, they closely paralleled the Ojibwe dream drum ceremonies that began to spread in Minnesota and Wisconsin in the 1870s. Stories of how those dances began have a common theme. "Somewhere to the west," Tailfeather Woman, a Sioux, was fleeing the site of a battle where white soldiers had killed her people, including her four sons. While hiding among water lilies in a lake, she was instructed in a dream about how to make a large drum and learned the songs to go with it. She taught others, and the ceremony became the vehicle for making peace between the Sioux and the Ojibwe. When white soldiers heard the sound of the drum, "they put down their arms, stood still and stopped the killing." Vennum has traced in detail the elaboration of the Drum Dance and its spiritually mandated transmittal from one community to another over the next decades.[33]

The most conspicuous example of the Ojibwe Drum Dance north of Minnesota was Maggie Wilson's dance, given to her by Thunderbirds in dreams in the fall of 1914. Anthropologist Ruth Landes recorded in detail Wilson's account of her dreams and the resulting dance ceremony at the Manitou Reserve near Emo, Ontario; it attracted wide attention during the years it was performed (1918 to about 1929).[34] The ideas that Maggie Wilson drew upon were clearly circulating along the Rainy River and in the Lake of the Woods area, and Ojibwe people could easily have carried news of them farther north

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31 Katherine Pettipas kindly shared her research notes on Jackhead and Bloodvein from the Library and Archives Canada, RG 10, vol. 3826, file 60, 511-4, 4a.

32 Luther Schuetze, *Mission to Little Grand Rapids: Life with the Anishinabe, 1927–1938* (Vancouver: Creative Connections, 2001), 106.

33 Thomas Vennum, *The Ojibwa Dance Drum: Its History and Construction* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1982), 44–47.

34 Ruth Landes, *Ojibwa Religion and the Midewiwin* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1968), 207–13. Landes recorded this information in 1932, the year of Hallowell's first trip up the Berens River, but there is no sign that they compared data on the subject.

to Jackhead and the Bloodvein River by means of the Winnipeg River and Lake Winnipeg. Her dance drew contradictory responses from the local white authorities. The Anglican missionary at Emo discouraged her from learning still more songs through dreams; "[he] scared me," she said, "saying the devil was after me." But when the Thunderbirds encouraged her to give the dance more often, the Indian agent helped. "We gave it at the ball ground near Fort Frances and charged twenty-five cents admission," she recalled. "We all shared and did well."[35]

By the time Hallowell visited Little Grand Rapids in 1932, three or four large drums were being used in ceremonies there by men of different families. His photographs show that these drums were of the same style as those already established in Minnesota and Wisconsin, though he lacked the data to make comparisons. The visit of Naaskaatwewitank, mentioned above, provides a plausible date for the arrival of the Drum Dance in the community. In October of 1912, HBC trader William Chapman wrote that the Indians there were drumming and holding a Dog Feast, which, according to Thomas Vennum, was often associated with the drum dances.[36]

As a frequent visitor to Little Grand Rapids, Fair Wind was well acquainted with what went on there, while maintaining his own medicine practice and ceremonies at Pauingassi. Sometime around 1914, however, his confidence in his powers was severely tested. Two of his sons, Aankas (Angus Owen) and Waanachensh (Alex Owen, Sr.) had married daughters of Pachahkaano (Timothy Keeper) of Little Grand Rapids. Aankas and his wife, Red Bird, never had children. Waanachensh and his wife, Pikochiish, had a son in about 1912, their firstborn and Fair Wind's first grandson. Two winters later, the boy died. The recital of the story of his death and its consequences became a part of the ceremony that grew out of the tragic event—Fair Wind's Drum Dance. When Hallowell saw the dance at Pauingassi in 1933, he wrote down as closely as he could the story as Fair Wind told it:

> I tried to cure him, but I found I was unable to help him. Others tried too, but they also failed. . . . Then one day he slept away. After that, I was full of grief. One day I was away in the bush by myself. The tears were running down my cheeks all the time, thinking about this boy. I put

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35 Ibid., 212.

36 HBC journal, Little Grand Rapids, 45–46, 9–11 October 1912, MG 1, C5, Archives of Manitoba (text much damaged and faded). Joe Leveque, of Little Grand Rapids, told Gary Butikofer that he knew of four drums played there in the past (interview, 1 July 1990, Butikofer research notes). One, which belonged to John Keeper, is illustrated in Vennum, *Ojibwa Dance Drum*, 39, fig. 10, and another in Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 101, fig. 18. On the Dog Feast, see Vennum, *Ojibwa Dance Drum*, 109–12.

down my gun and my mittens. I made up my mind to die. I lay down on the point of a rock where I could be found. . . . When I looked towards the east, I heard something saying: "This is something that will stop you from crying. You'll not die. For this is one of the finest things to play with."[37]

This vision, which was still told in all its particulars by Fair Wind's grandchildren in Pauingassi in the 1990s, led to the building of his big drum by his four sons, Angus, Alex, Jamsie (James Bear Hair Owen), and James Owen (Wechaanimaash). It was larger than most dream drums and constructed rather differently, but the drums were never identical—each reflected the idiosyncratic vision of the dreamer. In its glory days, it was beautifully decorated. Around the sides, tinkling cones, dog-harness bells, large beads, tufts of feathers, ribbons, and an upper and lower rim of fur were all mounted over a wrapping of bright red and blue tartan cloth.[38]

The most distinctive aspect of Fair Wind's dance was the pavilion in which it was held—a circular, open-lattice-work dome of willow or poplar saplings curving up to a central opening, under which the drum and its four drummers sat. In building technique, the structure resembled the older Midewiwin and Waabano longhouses well known in Ojibwe country, while its form recalled the small circular sweat lodges, the family dwelling type known as the *waginogan*, and the conical shaking tent. It was unique, however, in its large size, being twenty to thirty feet in diameter. The pavilion became the hallmark of the ceremony at Pauingassi, and later at Poplar Hill, up the river towards Pikangikum.[39]

Fair Wind's Drum Dance was probably first performed in the summer of 1914, but the only writings that help to verify the date come from a missionary whose historical details are overshadowed by his strong Methodistical opinions. The Reverend Frederick G. Stevens visited Pauingassi in the summers of 1913 and 1914, on trips to and from the Sucker clanspeople at Deer Lake, a few days' canoe travel northeast of Little Grand Rapids. Stevens was confident that

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37 Hallowell, "Spirits of the Dead," 426.

38 For a detailed account of Fair Wind's dream and ceremony based on first-hand memories of his descendants, see Maureen Matthews and Roger Roulette, "Fair Wind's Dream: *Naamiwan Obawaajigewin*," in *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*, 2nd ed., edited by Jennifer S. H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, 263–92 (Peterborough, ON: Broadview Press, 2003).

39 Fair Wind's grandnephew Jacob Owen, born in about 1909, told Gary Butikofer that the drum was built by Fair Wind's sons when he was a small boy; "Angus was the oldest and the boss of the operation" (notes taken by Butikofer, 28 March 1977). For pictures of the drum and pavilion see Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 77, 78, figures 13 and 14. Butikofer purchased the drum (damaged and unused since the 1970s) and donated it and many related items to the Red Lake District Museum in Red Lake, Ontario, when he left the area.

the Suckers, influenced by the conversion of one of their leading men, Adam Fiddler, were on the road to Christianity. In polar contrast, Stevens portrayed "Namawun" (Fair Wind) as "a celebrated conjuror" who "with his women, sons, and daughters lived at Opowangasse, and held the Indians round about in terror." Influenced by the Deer Lakers' negative views of the Pauingassi people, Stevens wrote that the two groups were "old time enemies." Fair Wind "had his camp on a sandy bluff, at the narrows of the lake. Like the old robber barons in Europe of old, he from his wigwam (castle) demanded tribute from all passersby. He threatened dire consequences to any who would dare to pass by without landing," and especially, it seemed, to the people around Deer Lake.[40]

The maintaining of control over a waterway and the assessing of "tolls" to strangers was noticed by Europeans as a custom of local Aboriginal leaders from times of earliest contact, and such implicit boundaries between local groups existed here, as they did for the more northeasterly Cranes and their neighbours.[41] Most relevant here, however, is the question of what Stevens saw at Pauingassi: Had the large round pavilion been built by then, and was the big drum being played in it? Among other things, Stevens described "an extra long Salteaux structure," measuring "perhaps eighteen by thirty feet." In it lived Fair Wind and "his wives" (all other sources mention only one wife), with their children and spouses and grandchildren; the residence, he added without explanation, was also "used as a conjuring tent."[42] This may have been a large *zhaaboondawaan* such as Fair Wind's father and wives had occupied. It was clearly not the round pavilion, and it probably was not the enormous Waabano longhouse that Hallowell photographed there in 1933; the latter structure appeared more on the order of twelve feet wide and forty feet long. Other reports of Stevens's journeys, however, refer to a "big tepee" or "a great tepee some thirty feet across" in which "the medicine man kept up a continual drumming" during one of his visits. The "tepee" was probably the circular pavilion, which later (in Hallowell's time) co-existed with the Waabano longhouse and sweat lodge in which Fair Wind carried on his repertoire of medicinal practices.

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40 Stevens, unpublished autobiography, 47–49, F. G. Stevens fonds, box 1, file 25 (86.198C), United Church of Canada Archives, Toronto.

41 Olive P. Dickason, in *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), 100, 126, calls attention to "Amerindian trade protocol" as practised by the Iroquoians of the 1500s on the St. Lawrence and, later, by Tessouat on the Ottawa River. On the Cranes and social boundary markers, see Mary Black-Rogers and Edward S. Rogers, "The Cranes and Their Neighbours, 1770–1970: Trouble Case Data for Tracing We-They Boundaries of the Northern Ojibwa," in *Actes du quatorzième Congrès des Algonquinistes*, edited by William Cowan (Ottawa: Carleton University, 1983), 91–125.

42 Stevens, unpublished autobiography, 49.

Stevens's most detailed accounts pertained to his visit of July 1914. Helpfully, he hinted that the death of a son and grandson was fresh in the minds of the Pauingassi people at the time:

> We went into the camp. . . . We asked them if we might hold a service and, as they consented, we did so. Before we left, they began to tell us of the loss of friends during the year. A young couple had lost their first-born, an old woman her grandchild, and we felt our hearts drawn together as we talked to one another of these things and discerned the longing of their spiritual natures.

Fair Wind was not there, but farther up the lake, Stevens met him returning home from hunting ducks. "As soon as he got home," Stevens recollected, "he at once began to drum, and kept it up all night in hopes of counterchecking the effect of our visit." The missionary party heard the sound at their encampment five miles away and "were sorry to think that the devil was trying to eat up the good seed we had sown."[43]

Given his Christian dualism and evangelical concerns, Stevens naturally conceived of religion in oppositional terms: pagans and the devil versus Christians and Jesus. If he could have examined the Drum Dance more closely, he might have seen that Fair Wind did not think in such dichotomies. While the drum served as consolation for losses and as a means to communicate with the spirits of the dead, it was surrounded by a rich syncretic theology. At the ceremony that Hallowell observed in 1933, the bringing of food offerings for the dead was followed by a short speech by Fair Wind: "When a person has lost a brother, a child, or some other relative, we call upon them to look down upon us. They have been on this earth once, and before that they were sent from above to come on this earth. Jesus, too, came from above to be the boss of the earth."

Fair Wind's son Angus, the head drummer, also spoke of his grief at the death of his nephew. Being himself the childless eldest son, he may have acted as another father to the boy, although it is possible that, speaking in 1933, he was referring to a different child when he told the following story. While he was hunting, he said, a voice had spoken to him as it had to his father: "I'll give you

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43 Stevens's letter of 27 January 1915, published in the *Missionary Bulletin* 11 (March–June 1915), 245. The grandson and firstborn who had died may have been Fair Wind's grandson; Stevens may even have met Fair Wind's mother, who died sometime in 1914–15. In a letter dated 18 September 1917, in *Missionary Bulletin* 14 (January–March 1918), 35, Stevens gave a slightly different account of the 1914 visit, which seemed to incorporate some details of his 1913 trip. The conflation persisted in the *United Church Record and Missionary Review* (November 1925, 20), in an unsigned article, "Namawun—'Fair Wind,'" which mentioned the "great tepee some thirty feet across."

something to ease your mind and that of others. But you must take care and carry things through as you are told." The voice mentioned a minister's name (possibly Stevens?). But, Angus added, "the minister did not tell me half of what he should have told me. He did not even know what pinesi [Thunderbird] was. . . . I know something different on account of what I have dreamed."

After the final dance, "the drummers stood up, Fair Wind came forward, and the whole group sang a Christian hymn. Fair Wind lifted his hand in benediction, in the Christian manner, and Jesus was mentioned again." Afterwards, Hallowell asked whether the dance was a gift of the *djibaiyak* (the spirits of the dead) or of a *pawagan* (dream helper). The answer was no: "It came directly from God." As Hallowell concluded, "This dance . . . illustrates extremely well how diverse strands of belief and practice can be welded together under the influence of a strong personality, and yet still kept within the framework of the Saulteaux interpretation of the universe."[44]

Hallowell's representation in 1933 contrasts vividly with the Fair Wind who, a few years earlier, was portrayed by an unnamed writer to readers of the *United Church Record and Missionary Review*. A full-page article titled "Namawun – 'Fair Wind'" divided his career into three parts. The first part, "Namawun, the Indian Medicine Man," retold F. G. Stevens's encounters with the "medicine man" as published in earlier mission letters. The second, "Fair Wind in Trouble," told of his "incantations and threats of evil voyage to all who passed." At his worst, he seized, one time, some HBC property from some Deer Lake freight men who were passing his settlement and got into difficulty with the North West Mounted Police. In 1918, however, he attended a religious meeting held by Stevens at Little Grand Rapids and spoke at the end, saying, "As my old religion seems to bring me trouble. I think I will try this new religion." The third part, "Namawun—the Christian Patriarch," asserted that when Fair Wind got home,

> he ordered all his family to be Christians too, and in the old tepee held services for prayer, with a Bible he had secured laid on a table before him. So the whole family of thirty-five souls . . . began the new way. A year later the tepee was deserted, log cabins were built and one cabin was built for a church. The drum was replaced by a church bell, in 1920, and the old wigwam and dancing tent disappeared.[45]

This three-part drama was compelling but full of partial truths. Fair Wind had doubtless harassed the Deer Lakers and spoken at Stevens's meeting. By

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44 Hallowell, "Spirits of the Dead," 427–28; see also Matthews and Roulette, "Fair Wind's Dream."

45 Namawun," *United Church Record and Missionary Review*, November 1925, 20. Thanks to Lacey Sanders for spotting this item.

1925, he also had a church bell (which may have been intercepted en route to Deer Lake). But a photograph taken at that time shows the bell mounted not on a church but on a small wooden tower next to the round drum pavilion, which, if it had disappeared for a while, had been replaced.[46] Fair Wind's descendants at Pauingassi recalled that along with his Waabano and drum ceremonies, he rang the bell on Sundays to call everyone together, and he would preach and pray.[47]

In sum, Fair Wind was not the convert Stevens would have wished. He surely did not order his family's conversion—an act that would have exceeded his authority as an Ojibwe leader. Rather, he integrated elements of Christianity into his own powerful spiritual repertory. The ambiguity and versatility of some of the religious symbols upon which he drew gave interpretive scope to both Fair Wind himself and to outsiders who selectively read his activities in terms that they found congenial. On the drum itself, for example, outlined in blue, was a design that Westerners would call a Maltese cross (a standard Christian cruciform). Adam Owen at Pauingassi said, however, that Fair Wind called it *gaagige-anang*, "forever star," and that he was the one who knew its meaning because of his special relation to the drum. His name for it challenges Christian assumptions and also hints at a parallel with Maggie Wilson's Drum Dance at Emo, to the south; she called her dance the Star Dance.[48]

The writer in the *United Church Record* in 1925 made an interpretive leap when he reported that the church bell had replaced Fair Wind's drum at Pau-ingassi. He was correct that the original drum had departed, but the reasons for its departure were beyond his ken. In Wisconsin in the 1950s, Menomini drummers told James Slotkin, "Them Drums, they keep travelling, keep travel-ling. They got to keep them so long; maybe four years." The Drum Dance was intended to be passed from one community to another, ideally in a clockwise direction, replicating the correct movement of dancers around a drum.[49] Actual patterns of transmission varied and were less consistent on the edges of the

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46 The photograph is in Gerald Malaher, *The North I Love* (Winnipeg: Hyperion Press, 1984), 56, and is reproduced in Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies*, 408, fig. 4. Malaher, who worked in forestry and fire protection in Manitoba in the 1920s and visited Pauingassi in 1925, wrote in his caption, "This group of Indians . . . refused to be converted by mission-aries."

47 Jacob Owen and Adam Owen both recalled Fair Wind's use of the bell (interviews with Maureen Matthews and me, 16 and 17 October 1992); we found it mounted by the door of the small Mennonite church at Pauingassi. Jacob Owen, a member of that church, felt that Fair Wind overreached himself; he would "try everything he thought he know it all himself, that's no good. . . . Don't work for two gods, two bosses."

48 Landes, *Ojibwa Religion*, 208.

49 Vennum, *Ojibwa Dance Drum*, 70–71.

Drum Dance region. But the known dances in Manitoba appear to describe a clockwise arc from Jackhead, Bloodvein, and Little Grand Rapids to Pauingassi, and on to Poplar Hill, Ontario.

Hallowell could not fully sort out the story of Fair Wind's drum, in part because he first saw the ceremony at Poplar Hill in 1932; he did not reach Pauingassi until 1933. He realized that the Poplar Hill people had purchased the ceremony so that they might "share the benefits of the dream blessings of Fair Wind and Angus." But they had also purchased the original drum. The drum he later saw at Pauingassi was its "younger brother," a replacement, and Fair Wind's drum had "travelled" as it was supposed to.[50] In about 1920, a Poplar Hill man named Omichooch (James Owen), a relative of the other Owens, visited Pauingassi and bought the drum. He was the son of Lynx (Bizhiw), also known as Kepekiishikweyaash or Sandy Owen, who in turn was the eldest son of Great Moose and his first wife, Emihkwaan. That is, Lynx was a half-brother of Fair Wind, and their sons were parallel cousins, classified as brothers in Ojibwe kin terminology.

Lynx had two wives, who were sisters, and sixteen known children, most of them born at Stout Lake, a wide section of the Berens River about thirty miles east of Pauingassi and fifteen miles west of Poplar Hill. He died in the spring of 1921. It was at about that time that his sons Omichooch (the eldest), Kepeyaash (Chooshi or Joseph Owen Moose), and Keshiiyaash (John Owen) established Fair Wind's drum at Poplar Hill and built for it a round pavilion like the one at Pauingassi. The passing of the drum involved considerable outlays of goods by the recipients as they acquired the ceremonial paraphernalia, were taught the songs that they needed to know, and hosted the donors; Hallowell was told that the price was so high that, as of 1932, the Poplar Hill people had not completed their payments.[51] Fair Wind and Angus sometimes came to play the drum with their kinsmen at Poplar Hill; their visits were still remembered decades later.[52]

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50 Hallowell, "Spirits of the Dead," 430 and 437n44; Jacob Owen to Gary Butikofer, 28 March 1977; Mrs. Turtle Strang to Butikofer, 1 April 1977. James Owen Moose (lnini), the son of Omichooch, who introduced the drum to Poplar Hill, told Butikofer (16 February 1972) that his father made the drum, but the testimony from the other older informants appears more convincing, given other evidence.

51 Butikofer, unpublished family histories; Hallowell, "Spirits of the Dead," 437n44. Thomas Vennum verified for us the strong links between the Drum Dance songs of the upper American Midwest and those still remembered at Pauingassi and Poplar Hill. Two of Hallowell's photographs of the Poplar Hill pavilion are in Hallowell, *Contributions to Ojibwe Studies*, 432, 433, figs. 5 and 6.

52 For example, by Yellowbird (Mrs. Mikinaak Moose), recorded by Maureen Matthews, Poplar Hill, June 1992.

When Hallowell visited Pauingassi in 1933, Fair Wind was over eighty and blind, but a powerfully impressive figure. Hallowell photographed him and his wife, Koowin (who died the next year), in front of the magnificent Waabano pavilion, which overlooked the lake on a site later occupied by the Pauingassi school. He also took group photographs of the younger generations of Owens and their spouses and offspring, who all had roles in Fair Wind's Waabano and Drum Dance ceremonies, and photographed the round pavilion close by. While there, he was privileged to participate in a three-day Waabanowiwin, after which Angus and his fellow drummers performed the Drum Dance with the drum they had built to replace its Poplar Hill brother.

Hallowell's pictures and texts vividly express Fair Wind's position among his people in the 1930s—a standing that was grounded in extensive parental, brotherly, and marital ties reaching back to Great Moose and his wives. Fair Wind benefited, too, from the spiritual powers that were thought to be helping a man if his family flourished and grew and if numerous family members lived a long time. In their study of the Cranes, Edward and Mary Black Rogers commented on "their origin from one extraordinarily large family most of whom lived to reproduce" and suggested that they may "represent a pattern of group evolution that has occurred repeatedly among Subarctic Algonquians."[53] The rise of the Owens at Pauingassi was comparable, in some respects, and owed some of its dynamics to Fair Wind's membership in the family of Great Moose. Families were not equal in size or power, and their fortunes varied across the generations.

As a family-based local community grew, it might be closely allied to some of its neighbours and caught up in rivalry and medicine wars with others. The Owens were seen as threatening to the Deer Lakers and to some at Little Grand Rapids, as were the Cranes to their neighbours. Such patterns evidently went back a long time. In 1815, George Holdsworth, HBC trader at Berens River, observed that the Ojibwe in the region did not show strong jealousies over territory even though their migrations led them to encroach on one another's lands. However, he noted that "feuds and animosities frequently exist between particular families," a situation that "not infrequently terminates in murder"—or, more accurately, in accusations of murder, given the personalized explanations that, as Hallowell found, were often assigned to disease and death in Ojibwa thought.[54] Similarly, there was a dark side to the powers of Fair Wind and the Owens if they found themselves injured or threatened by

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53 Rogers and Rogers, "Who Were the Cranes?" 17.

54 Holdsworth, "Reports on the Eastern Coast of Lake Winipic," fol. 6d; Hallowell, *Ojibwa of Berens River*, 95–96.

others, although good medicine and consolation appeared dominant in Fair Wind's activities.[55]

The evidence tells much about the sort of leader that Fair Wind was; it also hints at what he was not. He was never described in English as a "chief" since he never carried that political role in dealing with non-Aboriginal people. In this respect, he offers a contrast to his fellow Ojibwe, Peguis, the "Colony Chief" of Red River, who was born about three generations earlier.[56] Both men lived for nine decades, but Peguis spent much of his life in intensive interactions with incoming whites. Fair Wind was only thirteen when Peguis died in 1864, but his circumstances, his opportunities, and the demands placed upon him were principally of Ojibwe making; he did not have to cope with Red River colonists or Anglican missionaries, the Métis, or Indian agents. Outsiders did not construe him as a chief; he did not negotiate regularly with white men except in the old and familiar context of the fur trade.

If Pauingassi had been a separate band and reserve in Fair Wind's lifetime as it is now, he surely would have been its chief, but his community was considered part of the Little Grand Rapids Band, just as Poplar Hill, up the river, was subsumed under Pikangikum. This fact has made such communities relatively invisible in some kinds of records, complicating their historiography and muting their claims to governmental attentions. On the positive side, though, they were spared having to elect chiefs and councils along Indian Affairs guidelines, and they carried on for a few more decades without the often divisive politics that accompany band offices and their incipient bureaucracies.

If Fair Wind and leaders like him escaped being chiefs, however, they did not escape "othering" of another sort. Some older Christian missionaries made them into their own stereotypic Others: Indian medicine men and conjurors with their pagan drums and assuredly evil powers. They also embedded them in a dualistic and progressivist history of their own making; the outline of Fair Wind's career from "Medicine Man" to "Christian Patriarch" in the *United Church Record* of 1925 is a classic example. The linear upward course of missions was unquestioned. The departure of the drum signified the rise of Christianity: What other meaning could it have? And by inference, medicine men (and

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55 Fair Wind used his powers to harm others "only sometimes when someone did something to cross him." Jacob Owen, pers. comm., 17 October 1992, Pauingassi. Contests between medicine men are common themes in Algonquian traditions; see, for example, Thomas Fiddler, *Legends from the Forest*, ed. James R. Stevens, trans. Edtrip Fiddler (Moonbeam, ON: Penumbra Press, 1985).

56 See Laura L. Peers, "Rich Man, Poor Man, Beggar Man, Chief: Saulteaux in the Red River Settlement, 1812–1833," In Cowan, *Papers of the 18th Algonquian Conference*, 261–70.

Indians in general) were doomed relics of another time and place, outside the change and progress of "real" history.[57]

Historians and anthropologists have not escaped the othering syndrome. Calvin Martin construed Aboriginal people as "people of myth" who operate on another plane from the non-Indigenous "people of history." Hallowell himself, writing about his first journey up the Berens River, gave chapter 1 of *The Ojibwa of Berens River* the title "The Living Past in the Canadian Wilderness" and remarked on the upriver people as isolated, unacculturated, and living essentially as they always had, though he did not deny them a history. In 1992, Rupert Ross, in a popular book based on his legal experience in the region, imagined the Ojibwe as isolated people who had lived on their own forever: "nothing but wilderness . . . nowhere else to go, no other context in which to seek fulfillment," with great-grandparents and their descendants carrying on in exactly the same places, "in the same ways forever, just as it had always been."[58]

These images are not helpful to our understanding of Fair Wind or other Ojibwe leaders like him. Nor is it helpful to cast him as a "traditional" Indian leader, as the term is used in most writing—implying a contrast with "modern" people who have changed, adapted to an outside world, become acculturated. Traditions, as we need to be reminded time and again, are continually being constructed. Compared to such men as Peguis or Big Bear, Fair Wind was able to carry on in a more fully Indigenous context, but he was not, on that account, isolated, unchanging in his ways, or hidebound in his outlook. His Ojibwe world had its own dynamism and cosmopolitanism of which white outsiders (including Hallowell) knew almost nothing.

A few closing thoughts about this story come to mind. Fair Wind's relatives—whom Maureen Matthews and I met in Pauingassi, Poplar Hill, and Pikangikum—welcomed our interest in their kinsman, and their perspectives have been essential to this partial effort to tell of his life. They now live in a world that seems very different from his, one in which cultural discontinuities and crises sometimes seem endemic. Yet their clear memories of both Fair Wind and Hallowell, and the accord between those memories (carried on in their own language) and Hallowell's writings, reflect the extent to which culture and history endure in people's minds—and they also attest to the

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57 Filmmakers as well as governments and missionaries have promoted stereotypes of chiefs and medicine men. The film *The Silent Enemy* (Milestone Film and Video, New York), a drama about Ojibwe of northern Ontario, was released in 1930, the year Hallowell began his Ojibwe fieldwork; it is a classic example. See also Maureen Matthews's look at Hollywood Westerns in "lsinamowin, the White Man's Indian" (CBC Radio, *Ideas*, 1991).

58 Calvin Martin, ed., *The American Indian and the Problem of History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 194–97; Rupert Ross, *Dancing with a Ghost: Exploring Indian Reality* (Markham, ON: Octopus Books, 1992), 89.

solidity of Hallowell's observations. The persistence of these memories calls to mind Edward and Mary Black Rogers's firm rejection of "the idea that Indian cultures changed so rapidly and radically on contact with Western society that one can learn little about them from twentieth century Indian people." The Rogers's experience with the Weagamow Lake Ojibwe showed "change to be surprisingly superficial, and 'memory' to reside not only in explicit knowledge but also in patterned ways of thinking and reacting, for the most part unselfconsciously."[59]

Some basic issues in writing a biography such as this recur for all who undertake it. First, oral historians would not tell the story of Fair Wind as it is told here; this linear account does not conform to an Ojibwe oral genre. But the range of information gathered here has drawn great interest from the people. In pooling their memories and perspectives with documentary and other kinds of source materials, we uncovered a composite life history that, despite its gaps, helps to counter some venerable stereotypes about medicine men and people without history.

Second, a principal risk in this telling is that Fair Wind may now join the pantheon of great Indian chiefs, in spite of our cautions. To write about one individual at length is to create a personage who then becomes knowable and hence more widely known, a hero to those in search of heroes. We cannot control that process, but we can warn about the distortions it may introduce. For those in search of other such personages among the Ojibwe, their stories are there to be told. Telling their stories with due care could, in fact, help to demystify Fair Wind as individualized hero, for they would reveal that while he was outstanding, he was not unique. The challenge—given the gaps, biases, distortions, partial truths, and neglect from which our sources so often suffer—is to move beyond the heroics and stereotypes to a more encompassing and stereoscopic view, to resurrect Fair Wind and his peers without deifying them or doing violence to the nuanced historical contexts that gave them their significance in the first place.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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59 Rogers and Rogers, "Who Were the Cranes?" 168.

doi:10.15215/aupress/9781771991711.01

use of technical equipment and for support from the radio program *Ideas*. Beth Carroll-Horrocks and Martin Levitt, of the American Philosophical Society in Philadelphia, and Diane Haglund, of the United Church Archives, Conference of Manitoba and Northwestern Ontario, provided valuable archival assistance. John Richthammer, former curator of the Red Lake District Museum, Red Lake, Ontario, facilitated our visit to that museum, and Thomas Vennum, of the Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC, provided essential information on Ojibwe dance drums. Finally, Gary Butikofer, former schoolteacher at Poplar Hill, freely shared his detailed family and community history files, and Henry Neufeld, of the Conference of Mennonites in Canada, contributed his knowledge of Pauingassi based on his long experience with the community.

Fields of Dreams

A. Irving Hallowell and the Berens River Ojibwe

The boreal forests of Canada have been the setting for diverse dreams and visions—those of Northern Algonquians, who have resided there for centuries, and those of a long series of questing newcomers who, experiencing their personal "first contacts" with the inhabitants, have recurrently framed those experiences in tropes that foster exotic illusion. In July 1998, the *Winnipeg Free Press* featured an article headlined "Heart of Magic: Up the Berens River, Time Has Stood Still." The journalist author, Bill Redekop, and a friend had flown from Winnipeg to the Ojibwe reserve community of Little Grand Rapids, Manitoba, and then spent a week canoeing downriver to the Berens River reserve on the east shore of Lake Winnipeg. Redekop vividly described how, leaving behind such things as TVs, computers, and cellphones, they "entered a region where Ojibway stories and superstitions of hundreds of years ago were still told," an area where they could experience "total wilderness, as if travelling back in time" (Redekop 1998).[1]

These outsider dreams reaffirm the relevance of Johannes Fabian's critique of Western travellers' habits of constructing and distancing exotic Others, including those living today, as belonging to some other time or as situated in "a system of coordinates (emanating . . . from a real center—the Western metropolis) in which given societies of all times and places may be plotted in terms of relative distance from the present." The habit of locating "remote" spaces and peoples in some other temporal universe is symptomatic of an underlying

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"cosmological myth of frightening magnitude and persistency" (1983, 26, 35). Fabian's analysis awakens us from the dreaming in "Heart of Magic." Of course, the Ojibwe along the Berens River live in the same calendar year as everyone else and are just as subject (or more so) to pressures and problems of "our" times. They are not as remote as city types make them out to be; scheduled air flights reach them every day, and for three months a year, winter roads across frozen lakes and muskeg allow transport on a large scale. Every community band office and school has telecommunications, computers, and people who know how to use them. And their time has never stood still; to say so is to overlook a complex past full of changes and, in essence, to deny them a history.

Ironically, however, when Redekop expressed geographic remoteness in terms of temporal distance, he drew upon a source that I had provided to him. His canoe trip came about partly because of his interest in the people whom anthropologist A. Irving Hallowell met on the Berens River in the 1930s. Some years ago, I drew his attention to one of Hallowell's books, *The Ojibwa of Berens River, Manitoba: Ethnography into History*; written in the 1960s, it was finally published in 1992, eighteen years after Hallowell's death. Hallowell titled its first chapter "The Living Past in the Canadian Wilderness," and a journalist caught by that image could easily miss my gentle caveat about such phrasings in my afterword to the book (Hallowell 1992, 112).

Similarly, the *Winnipeg Free Press* article title, "Heart of Magic," nicely evokes the exotic distancing of Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1902), published almost a century earlier. Hallowell's portrayals of Ojibwe bands as appearing increasingly traditional (and remote from "civilization") as one ascends the Berens River into the boreal forest interior readily call forth such imagery. Given that these journalistic and ethnographic tropes dovetail so well with the mythic questing language that has long typified wilderness canoeists' discourse (James 1985), Redekop's abstinence from such images would have been more surprising than his use of them. Of course, a vast disparity exists between his brief *Free Press* article and Hallowell's understandings of Berens River people. Their shared referral of the upriver people to some other time dimension, however, highlights what might be called a powerful waking dream common among parvenus in Indian country. The difference is that Hallowell's repeated research trips to the Berens River through the 1930s kept his dreaming in check and ultimately led him to far deeper cultural and historical perspectives (e.g., Hallowell 1992, 3, 11).

The main Ojibwe personage appearing, somewhat exoticized, in Redekop's narrative is Percy Berens, a person Redekop had heard about from me and my colleague, documentary radio journalist Maureen Matthews. Percy Berens's father was William Berens, the chief of the Berens River band at the mouth of

the river who made Hallowell's work possible. Our talks with Percy in the 1990s gave us a living link to the two men who, for a decade (1930–40), collaborated to share and attain deeper understandings of Berens River Ojibwe history, culture, and world views. Hallowell led us (and Redekop) to him, and he in turn, through memories, helped to lead us back to Hallowell, to the Ojibwe chief who befriended him, and to the fieldwork that engaged them both. Percy Berens became a nexus for tales of the field, past and present, journalistic and other, and for genealogies both familial and cultural-historical.

In their intellectual lives, as in families, scholars too have genealogies. Raymond D. Fogelson and George W. Stocking, Jr., who had formative roles in my graduate education at the University of Chicago, retained vivid recollections of Hallowell from a period and place very different from those in Percy Berens's memory. As a senior professor at the University of Pennsylvania in the 1950s and 1960s, Hallowell had a great influence on both: Stocking described him as "my anthropological godfather" (1968, x). This paper is grounded in an appreciation of the ideas, insights, and stories that Hallowell brought from Berens River and wove into his writings and teachings, particularly on the subject of dreams. More immediately, it credits Ray Fogelson for his generative role both in building on the rich legacies of Hallowell in North American Indian studies and in freely sharing his knowledge and insights with all those fortunate enough to work with him. Fogelson led me to Hallowell, and thereby to two locales that could hardly offer a greater contrast: first, the venerable precincts of the American Philosophical Society, where Hallowell's papers and photographs reside, and second, the living communities on the Berens River where his small, posthumously published book about them (1992) and his photographs from the 1930s stirred vivid memories of him and of their ancestors.

In 1986, when I ventured into the Hallowell papers, they had just become accessible. I had no idea of what doors they would open or how they would give new directions to my research. Beyond the richness of their own content, they led to renewals of conversations that Hallowell was not able to pursue once his Berens River visits ended in 1940. Hallowell learned a tremendous amount from the Ojibwe, particularly through his partnership with Chief William Berens. It was Chief Berens who, in 1930, planted in his mind the idea of focusing his studies along the Berens River, diverting him from an initial focus on the more northerly Cree, who had proved to be less isolated than he had hoped. They met at the right moment. Hallowell, aged thirty-seven, was still very much a Boasian comparative ethnologist. His first major publications (on bear ceremonialism [1926] and on historical changes in Abenaki kinship terminology [1928]) were strongly based on library sources. His limited fieldwork among the Abenaki had followed in the empirically oriented ethnographic

footsteps of his mentor, Frank Speck. He had not yet defined a satisfactory field space of his own beyond where other anthropologists had ventured. William Berens gave him that gift, inviting him into his community and those of his relatives up the river—Little Grand Rapids, Pauingassi, Poplar Hill, Pikangikum, and others (Hallowell 1992, 6, 8). Here Hallowell could find, as James Clifford put it, "a cleared place of work" allowing the "specific practices of displacement and focused, disciplined attention" and resultant travel discourse that have been hallmarks of field anthropology (1997, 186, 196). Although time did not "stand still" for Hallowell on his trip upriver with Chief Berens, he later recalled his sense of how that first journey led into "a more primitive world of temporal orientation. The days of the week melted away. . . . As we ascended the river, the hours of the day soon disappeared since I was the only person who carried a watch and it stopped" (1992, 8).

As for William Berens, he was about sixty-five in 1930. For twenty-three years, he had been chief of the Ojibwe band at the mouth of the Berens River. When he was a boy, his father, Jacob Berens, the first treaty chief in the region after Treaty 5 was signed in 1875, had said to him, "Don't think you know everything. You will see lots of new things and you will find a place in your mind for them all" (Berens 2009, 38). Berens lived by that advice. Like his father, he and his family belonged to the Methodist Church (part of the United Church of Canada after 1925), which had established a mission at Berens River in 1873–74 (Young and Young 2014). Like his father, he spoke two languages and combined, in his own way, two bodies of knowledge and experience. He gathered freely from the knowledge and opportunities that outsiders brought, and Hallowell provided one of his most productive harvests.

More profoundly, Berens also had unusual breadth from being brought up by an Ojibwe father and grandfather on one side and a mother of Scots-Cree descent (Mary McKay) on the other. When Hallowell appeared, Berens was prepared to talk to him at length, and to travel with him up the river on several occasions, introducing him to venerable elders and into communities whose ways had been little touched by missionaries and Indian agents. His openness may have reflected a retrospection related to aging, a sense of cultural losses and pressures that had intensified during his life, and the agreeable prospect of revisiting upriver Moose clan relatives whom he had not seen in a long time. More immediately, he had lately experienced some conflict with the local mission day school over a son's schooling, and although he did not sever his church connection, he may have been ready to reorient himself towards the Ojibwe culture and ways that he had learned from a succession of powerful ancestors and to transmit what he knew to the eager student who arrived so opportunely (Brown 1989, 218–19).

Amid his research into many other topics, Hallowell quickly learned how central dreams and dreaming were to Ojibwe experience and world view. Eventually, he was to link his understandings of Ojibwe dreaming to an analysis of dreaming as a universal human characteristic. In his article "The Role of Dreams in Ojibwa Culture" (Hallowell 2010d; first published 1966), he speculated on when dreaming had first appeared in human evolutionary history. Noting that dreaming appeared to be a distinctly human phenomenon, he suggested that its advent was one marker of human beings' attainment of "a new behavioral plateau," one that was "vitally linked with man's psychobiological functioning and his distinctive level, perhaps, of behavioral adaptation" (439, 438).

Hallowell also learned how dreams, for the Ojibwe themselves, had a central place in their world view, quite aside from their interest for students of psychobiology. "At the level of group adaptation," he argued, "the Ojibwa interpretation of dreams may be seen as a positive and necessary factor in the maintenance of the sociocultural system that gives meaning to their lives" (2010d, 441). He took the point further in some of his unpublished notes and in an undated handwritten diagram showing how closely dreams intersect with myths and waking experience. On this chart, three sectors of a circle representing the individual are divided by dotted rather than solid lines and connected by arrows to represent their mutual influences. These relationships are not easily fathomed by Western observers; as Hallowell noted, the Western habit of creating conceptual divisions between myths, dreams, and waking experience leads outsiders to see them as more distinct from each other than they actually are for the Ojibwe. In a more elaborate figure, published when his book manuscript *The Ojibwa of Berens River* appeared in 1992, Hallowell placed Ojibwe dreaming in a still more ramified and complex setting. The figure, captioned "The role of dreams in the Ojibwa sociocultural system," maps the integral links between dreaming, the socialization of the child, concrete individual experience, world view, and central institutions of traditional Ojibwe society, such as the puberty fast and the shaking tent (Hallowell 1992, 86).

Within what scholarly frame and by what means did Hallowell arrive at these formulations? The answers reside in two domains: intellectual genealogy and methodology. Regna Darnell has succinctly traced the intellectual line: "Franz Boas begat [Frank] Speck who begat Hallowell." At the University of Pennsylvania, Hallowell's professional home, "the Americanist psychology and culture tradition was transmitted . . . through professional socialization by two generations of mentors working together to train their successors and future colleagues" (Darnell 2006, 5). Hallowell's dynamic relating of individual psychology to social system and world view combined, in his analysis of dreams, with

a strong concern to grasp Ojibwe perspectives, logic, and understandings and map them accurately as far as possible.

As for method, Hallowell listened carefully; he cared about understanding the significance of dreams and their integration in Ojibwe culture and thought. He gained people's confidence so that they talked to him about such things. And he had William Berens as mentor, intermediary, and translator. I can say with confidence that when Hallowell came up the river, the elders he met found that the level of conversation they could achieve with him through Chief Berens was beyond that possible with any other white man they had known. The name by which he was still remembered in the 1990s echoed that relationship: people at Little Grand Rapids and Pauingassi referred to him as Midewigimaa or Mide master, because he understood these things so well and took such interest in them (Matthews and Roulette 1996, 333).[2]

As Hallowell explored dream experiences and their ramifications, he learned that the vision quest was central (for males, in particular) to the process of growing up Ojibwe and receiving necessary powers and instruction. Many younger men of the 1930s had not undertaken dream quests, but their older relatives had, and the process by which a boy left home, fasted alone in a "nest" in a tree, and awaited the blessings of dream visitors (*bawaaganag*, lit., the dreamed [ones]) was often and amply described. Usually not talked about were the nature and content of the actual visions and the other-than-human persons who conferred them; dreamers were restricted from revealing these matters unless they were prepared to lose the gifts given (Hallowell 2010d) or under certain other conditions.

The prohibition on a dreamer's telling of vision quest dreams might be taken to signify that Ojibwe people had a more general rule against the telling of dreams. But Hallowell's materials, along with the writings of others and the praxis of Ojibwe themselves, indicate that this conclusion is simplistic. If a youth had dreamed but failed to receive blessings, or if he was near death and unable to use these gifts anymore, or if he belonged to a Christian church and had no plans to use the spirits' offerings (as was the case with William Berens), he might talk more freely of them. A dream that predicted the future might be told once the event had happened, and dreams validating the gift of and rights

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2 *Mideg* (plural) are persons with spiritual powers and gifts received from dream visitors, *bawaaganag*. *Mide* has been variously translated as priest, conjuror, or shaman; Manitoba Ojibwe people commonly use "medicine man" in English. Hallowell's Ojibwe nickname evoked not only his interest in the Midewiwin (Grand Medicine Society) of the Ojibwe (see Angel [2002] for an overview) but also his broader interest in dreams and spiritual practices. The orthography of Ojibwe words, except when quoted from Hallowell's writings, follows that of Nichols and Nyholm (1995), with advice gratefully received from linguist Roger Roulette for Berens River vocabulary.

to a ceremony and telling its origin might be recited as part of that ceremony. Dreams, with the usual exception of the specifics of a person's empowering vision, were communicated on proper occasions and to appropriate audiences, and necessarily so if they were to be part of a shared culture. As Greg Urban has observed about another society where dreaming is central, the Ibirama of Brazil, "Each dream must be put into words, if it is to have the possibility of becoming a cultural object" (1997, 7).

Dreams were not simply interesting to talk about. They were ways of learning from and about the other-than-human dreamed ones, the mythic personages (*aadizookaanag*) also known as "our grandfathers," who appeared also in legend (Hallowell 1992, 84–85). They taught about how to interact properly with these beings and, more deeply, about the importance of remembering and attending to dreams, which is a skill one needs to learn and practice. Vision dreams, in particular, had much to teach, even if they were never explicitly revealed. Sometimes they became subjects of conjecture and discussion by others, although the recipient himself never told them. Observers of a powerful medicine man's behaviour could pick up clues about the identity and powers of his *bawaaganag*, the dream visitors from which his blessings had come, and about how to interact with them properly. At Pauingassi, Manitoba, Fair Wind (Naamiwan), a venerable religious leader, was seen to speak with Thunderbirds (*binesiwag*) and to offer them a smoke during thunderstorms (see chapter 17, this volume). Other people assumed that they were his *bawaaganag*, and by watching him, they learned about how Thunderbirds should be treated. The carved wooden bird symbol (*obineshishikaniwan*) placed on a post at the entrance to his Wabano pavilion and silently recorded in Hallowell's photographs also confirmed the association. No one needed to talk about this; its significance needed explaining only to outsiders (Matthews and Roulette 1996, 332, 357; Matthews 1995, 7).

Fair Wind's circumspection about his vision-fast dream contrasted with his public reciting, at his Drum Dance attended by Hallowell in the 1930s, of the charter dream that led to his founding of the ceremony after the death of a favourite grandson (see chapter 17, this volume); the spiritual giver of that dream evidently mandated its telling as part of the performance. Vision-fast dreams are not distinguished terminologically, however, from other sorts of dreams; the general term for "dream" in the region is *bawaajigewin*, related to *bawaaganag*, the dream visitors who are implicated in all dream experiences.[3]

While the content of a successful vision-fast dream was typically kept private, such dreams might be revealed if they had gone badly wrong. On the upper

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3 As Neil McLeod (Cree) put it to Maureen Matthews, for Ojibwe/Cree people there is no such thing as a "secular" or non-spiritual dream; definitionally, all dreams are, on some level, encounters with these spirit beings (McLeod to Matthews, pers. comm., 8 December 1998).

Berens River, a man named Birch Tree (or Birchstick) told Hallowell of a dream that a dying young man had told to his father; he wanted it known "as a lesson to the people." When he went on his vision quest, he had wished to dream of all the leaves on every tree in the world:

> Sure enough, he began to dream about all sorts of different leaves. Finally he heard a voice speaking to him. "Grandchild," it said, "that is enough. I'm a little scared for your sake. You have dreamed of half the leaves in the world now. If you dream of every leaf in the whole world you will gain nothing by it." So the young man went home. He was very proud of his power. Very little was hid from him [i.e., the leaves told him everything that went on—AIH]. Yet he was not satisfied. He wanted to know more and more. So he went back to his nest in the tree and slept again. He heard a voice. It said, "What do you want?" "I'm not satisfied with half," the boy said. "I want to dream of every tree that bears a leaf." "It will not be a good thing for you to do that," the voice said. "But I want to," the boy replied. So the voice said, "Alright, then." And so the young man dreamed of all the remaining leaves in the world. After this he heard the voice again. "Grandson," it said, you've been dreaming of every tree in the world that bears a leaf but as soon as the leaves start to fall, you will get sick. Then, when all the leaves drop to the ground, your life will end. You can't blame me. It is your own fault. I told you it was not good to know everything."
>
> "That is what the Indians taught their children," Birch Tree commented. "It is better to dream of many things than too much of one thing."

Hallowell added that the reason for dreaming of many things rather than one was that "a man needs many different kind of pawaganak in order to help him in a variety of circumstances. The more he has, then, the better. Some men, I was told, have hundreds of guardian spirits" (Hallowell 1892–1981, series 1, MSS, file 1, "Dreaming," 22–24).

As Hallowell pointed out, this story parallels two Ojibwe tales recorded by William Jones, although in those two stories, it was a father who pushed his son to fast until he knew everything. Both quests ended in the loss of the faster: one became a robin and flew away, and the bones of the other were later found by the father, lying where the boy had been fasting. Overfasting and efforts (or claims) to know everything in the world both carried penalties (Hallowell 1976, 418 and 419n 24). The stories evoke Jacob Berens's admonition to his son William: "Don't think you know everything." Arrogance and greed carry a price, just as hubris or overweening pride did for the ancient Greeks.

Another Berens River story about vision fasting emphasizes the need for proper preparation and purity. Boys were not to engage in sexual relations until after their fast and were to avoid any association with females immediately before and after the quest (Hallowell 1992, 88). One boy who wanted to fast admitted to his father that he had become involved with a girl. The father warned him that his quest would probably fail, but the boy went anyway. He lay down and slept. Someone came and said, "What do you want?"

> I've come here to try to receive a blessing.
> Nothing will bless you because you are not clean—go back.
> The boy went home but wanted to try again. He made a sweat lodge and sweated four times, washing himself in water each time. Again he tried and was told he was not clean. He returned home, sweated and bathed seven times, and had all his clothes washed. Then he went out again and slept and dreamed. Someone asked what he wanted. He answered, a blessing.
> Nothing will come to you.
> So he gave up the quest. (Hallowell 1892–1981, series 5, Research, misc. notes, file 3)

Interpretations of rules against a vision faster's contact with females have varied. Hallowell's informants explained them by saying that women, because of menstruation, were, relative to men, *wiinizi*, in a state of impurity, which put at risk the cleanness or religious purity (*bekize*) required when interacting with *bawaaganag*. Margaret Simmons, a granddaughter of William Berens, and Roger Roulette, an Ojibwe linguist, explained that the problem was not "dirt" as in a dirty house but rather the risk of a spiritual disorder or chaos. A woman after menarche and before menopause, and especially during her monthly periods, "can put everything into disorder because of the strength of her powers" (Roulette, quoted in Brown and Matthews 1995, 9). Berens River Ojibwe women did not engage in an institutionalized vision fast because they were said not to require the spiritual powers that men needed; some, however, did receive unsolicited dream visitors and blessings (Hallowell 1992, 88).

Another anecdote about a failed quest emphasized the self-discipline needed to fast. Sometimes two boys would go out fasting together. One time, two parallel cousins ("brothers" in Ojibwe terminology) went to a "nest" to fast. When they were alone, the older boy said,

> "Do you want something to eat?" He had secreted a roasted rabbit under his clothes. At first the younger boy refused. But after his companion had eaten some of the rabbit, he, too, ate a portion. They stayed in the "nest" that night and the next day they finished up the rabbit. Later the same

day they went back to camp in time for the evening meal. They knew that it was no use to expect a dream revelation. (Hallowell 1892–1981, "Dreaming," 12–13, Typescript, ser. 1, n.d.)

Dream experiences might also be revealed if the teller had no intent or plan to use the powers offered in them. William Berens, as a church-going Methodist, never mentioned trying a vision quest, but sometimes he had dreams in which spiritual beings offered powers and gifts that he could have accepted if he had chosen. Since he declined their offers, he recounted the dreams to Hallowell. In one powerful example, he encountered the *memengwesiwag*, small beings who lived in rock cliffs above water and were known for their medicines, while he was hunting:

> I climbed a high rock to have a look across the lake. I thought I might sight a moose or some ducks. When I glanced down towards the water's edge again, I saw a man standing by the rock. He was leaning on his paddle. A canoe was drawn up to the shore and in the stern sat a woman. In front of her rested a cradleboard with a baby in it. Over the baby's face was a piece of green mosquito netting. . . . The man was a stranger to me but I went up to him. I noticed that he hung his head in a strange way. He said, "You are the first human being ever to see me. I want you to come and visit me." So I jumped into his canoe. When I looked down I noticed that it was all of one piece. There were no ribs or anything of the sort, and there was no bark covering. I do not know what it was made of.
>
> On the northwest side of the lake there was a very high steep rock. The man headed directly for this rock. With one stroke of the paddle we were across the lake. The man threw his paddle down as we landed on a flat shelf of rock almost level with the water. Behind this the rest of the rock rose steeply before us. But when his paddle touched the rock this part opened up. He pulled the canoe in and we entered a room in the rock. It was not dark there, although I could see no holes to let in any light. Before I sat down, the man said, "See, there is my father and my mother." The hair of those old people was as white as a rabbit skin. I could not see a single black hair on their heads. After I had seated myself I had a chance to look around. I was amazed at all the articles I saw in the room—guns, knives, pans, and other trade goods. Even the clothing these people wore must have come from a store. Yet I never remembered having seen this man at a trading post. I thought I would ask him, so I said, "You told me that I was the first human being you had seen. Where, then, did you buy all of these articles I see?" To this he replied, "Have you never heard people talking about *pagiticigan* [offerings; cf. *bagijigan*]? These articles were given to us. That is how we got them." Then he took me into another room and told me to look around. I saw the meat of all

kinds of animals—moose, caribou, deer, ducks. I thought to myself, this man must be a wonderful hunter if he has been able to store up all this meat. I thought it very strange that this man had never met any other Indians in all his travels. Of course, I did not know that I was dreaming. Everything was the same as I had seen it with my eyes open. When I was ready to go I got up and shook hands with the man. He said, "Anytime that you wish to see me, this is the place where you will find me." He did not offer to open the door for me so I knew that I had to try and do this myself. I threw all the power of my mind into opening it and the rock lifted up. Then I woke up and knew that it was a dream. (Hallowell 1992, 90)

A second dream, about a boy in a red tuque, drew William Berens into a contest of powers and rewarded him with a gift of protection from bullets if he should ever go to war. Since he never did so, even though he was offered a chance during World War I, he concluded that he did not need the blessing and felt that he could relate the dream:

I was walking along and came to a house [not a wigwam]. I went in. There was no furniture in the room I entered. All that I saw was a small boy in a red tuque. He said to me, "Oh, ho, so you're here." "Yes," I replied, "I'm here." This boy had a bow in his hand and two arrows. One was red and the other black. "Now that you've found me," he said, "I'm going to find out how strong you are." I knew that if he ever hit me that would be the end of me. But I went to the middle of the room, as he told me, and stood there. I filled my mind with the thought that he would not be able to kill me. I watched him closely and, as soon as the arrow left the bow, I dodged. I saw the arrow sticking in the floor. He had missed me. Then he fitted the other arrow to his bow. "I'll hit you this time," he said. But I set my mind just as strongly against it. I watched every move he made and he missed me again.

"It's your turn now," he said and handed me the bow. I picked up the two arrows and he went to the middle of the room. Then I noticed a strange thing. He seemed to be constantly moving yet staying in the same place. He was not standing on the floor either, but was about a foot above it. I knew that it was going to be hard to hit him. I let the black arrow go first and missed him. I made up my mind that I was going to hit him with the red arrow and I did. But it did not kill him. He took the bow from me, tied the arrows to it and laid it aside. "You have beaten me," he said. I was very anxious to know who it was but I did not wish to ask. He knew what I was thinking, because he asked, "Do you know who you have shot? I am a fly" (smaller than bull-dog fly which is to be seen on flowers—but is constantly moving and does not stay still long).

[The boy went on to say that W.B. would never be shot and killed by a bullet unless the marksman could hit a spot as small as a fly.] (Berens 2009, 91–92)

The two dreams speak to some other themes besides that of powers offered but then not used by the dreamer. In telling them, Chief Berens vividly and perhaps strategically affirmed to the visiting anthropologist not only his immersion in Ojibwe ways of thought and experience but also the fact that other-than-human beings selected him more than once to receive gifts in dreams and allowed him to choose among options. (The theme of a dreamer making choices about accepting blessings or accepting the advice offered by dream visitors also appears in the story of the boy dreaming about the leaves.) His dreams also highlight the power of mind and will. Confined inside the rock cliff of the *memengwesiwag*, Berens escaped by throwing all the power of his mind into opening the rock. Similarly, when attacked by the boy with the red toque, Berens recalled, "I filled my mind with the thought that he would not be able to kill me"—and indeed, the boy failed to hit him.

Dreams (or the *bawaaganag*, through dreams) also offered gifts of foresight about what was to happen. At Pauingassi, Fair Wind told Hallowell that he had dreamed four years earlier that Hallowell was coming, and Fair Wind's son (Angus?) had dreamed the previous year (1932) "that I was coming (a stranger)." Similarly, some other old men told Hallowell "that they knew what I was going to ask—*a very marked pattern. Foresight is the basis of power*" (Hallowell, series 5, Research, misc. notes, file 3). In these instances, the telling of a past dream served to establish that the teller had predictive powers and to validate and perhaps affirm a certain amount of control over what was happening in the present. Within this framework, Hallowell's visit and questions were not surprises. One is reminded of the predictive dreams about first contacts with white men reported in oral traditions from the coasts of North America (e.g., Prins 1996, 44).

A dream could also validate a waking experience that someone had already reported. When Peter Berens was a boy of eleven or twelve, he saw a Thunderbird (*binesi*) lying with wings outspread on the rocks at Flathead Point near Berens River. It was bluish gray with striped feathers and a red tail. It was just after a storm had passed; the rain had ended but there was still thunder. Peter ran back to his family's camp to tell them, but when they came, no bird was there. He was not believed at first, "because it is so unusual to have seen pinesi with naked eye." Later, however, an old man who had dreamed of Thunderbirds confirmed Peter's description and said that Peter too would live to be an old man because he had seen a Thunderbird (Hallowell 1892–1981, Research, series 5, Religion; Hallowell 2010b, 547). In this instance, the old man revealed a clue

about his own vision-fast dream so that Peter would understand the blessing he had received and so that others would accept the boy's account as truthful. Ojibwe perspectives on the world gave weight to empirical observation and verification, as Hallowell recognized in his article "Some Empirical Aspects of Northern Saulteaux Religion" (1934; repr. in Hallowell 2010a). In Raymond Fogelson's terms, one might speak of Ojibwe ethno-empiricism—an outlook also found among Plains groups for whom dreams serve as "a reality base for the lived world" (Irwin 1994, 64).

Sometimes dreams provided ominous foreshadowings or warnings about the future or about happenings in a certain place. William Berens told Hallowell about such a dream:

> When I was a young man I dreamed that I fell through the ice of the river at a spot . . . where the current is very swift. I found 2 otters in the water there. I turned into an otter, and swam along with them to a hole in the ice. There was my father ready to help me out.
>
> Ten years later I fell through the ice at the same place I had dreamed about. At first I lost my senses. The swift water swept me along to a place lower down where the river was open. My father called out, "Hold up your hand." I heard him, did so, and he saw me coming. He pulled me out by my parkey [parka], just in time. (Berens 2009, 101–2)

In another dreamlike experience one night, Berens, half awake, saw a winged angel with golden hair who made him tremble all over. "I wondered," he said, "what was going to happen." He was at Poplar River at the time, some distance north of Berens River, his home. The next day, Berens's fur trade boss unexpectedly and urgently asked for his help on a trip to Berens River, so he went. There he found that his sister was very ill and the family had been wanting to send for him. Since his sister died a few days later, he was glad that he had come (Berens 2009, 103–4).

Still another dream, this one with Christian elements, foreshadowed to Berens the Methodist-Roman Catholic religious conflicts that came to Berens River in his later life and the role he would play in them as chief and as a member of a family that had had Methodist ties since the 1860s. It took place near the Hudson's Bay Company's woodpile at Berens River:

> Two Catholic priests were holding me, one on each side. Another Indian was there too (named). One of the priests took his [the Indian's] head off. There he stood without any head. I was fighting them but they dragged me off towards where the Catholic mission now stands. We came to a big furnace and these priests tried to push me into it. At the same time there was an old man who stuck his head out of the flames and tried to pull

me in. But they were not able to get me in. I kept on fighting them and they dragged me to another place where there was another furnace. Here the same thing happened. . . . I got pretty close to the flames that time: then I woke up.

Berens told Hallowell that the dream provided foreknowledge of his later struggle with the Catholic Oblate missionaries at Berens River (see Gray 2000). The image of the Indian losing his head signified "that the priests can do what they want with Indians who do not think for themselves. They can put any ideas in your head they want to" (Berens 2009, 103–4).

The telling of a dream sometimes served to explain what a ceremony was about and to declare and validate its leader's role and spiritual powers. At Pauingassi in 1933, Hallowell and Berens attended Fair Wind's Drum Dance, a ceremony whose cultural and musical connections reached far south of the American border (see chapter 17, this volume). Fair Wind, blind and in his eighties, opened with a speech recounting how the ceremony had come to him in a dream, after the death of a favourite grandson whom he had been unable to cure. Later in the ceremony, Fair Wind's son Angus told of his own mourning for his brother's son, Fair Wind's grandchild, and the blessing that he had received through a dream. Hallowell observed that dreams, in the absence of rules about inheritance, could be subtle markers of succession. Angus was the head drummer in that ceremony and was "also the active leader of the *wabanowiwin* [Waabano ceremony] at Pauingassi, of which his father is the ostensible head." His dream experience, Hallowell wrote, "is undoubtedly the reason why Angus takes a leading role in the ceremony mentioned and after his father dies will undoubtedly succeed him as the 'owner' of this cere- mony as well as the wabanowiwin" (Hallowell 1892–1981, series 1, MSS, file 1, "Dreaming," 20–21, n.d.). Angus did indeed succeed his father but had no children of his own. Instead, he brought up one of his brother's surviving sons, Omishoosh (Charlie George Owen, d. 2001), who in turn had the appropriate dreams and received gifts and powers. Dreams gave (and still give) structure to family histories and to the transmission of cultural and spiritual knowledge, privileges, and responsibilities, as demonstrated by conversations from both the 1930s and the 1990s.

When Maureen Matthews and I talked with Charlie George Owen about his memories of Fair Wind (and Hallowell) in 1992, the first thing he wanted to tell us about was a dreamlike healing experience in which his grandfather's powers brought him back from the dead. He also retold several times Fair Wind's vision, the one that founded the Drum Dance, since it was his legacy, and his details complement and go beyond those recorded by Berens and Hallowell in 1933. Charlie George Owen was a practicing Mennonite for over thirty years,

and the big drum he once owned was burned in a house fire in 1972. But he was also heir to Fair Wind's knowledge and to strong traditions and blessings passed down, in part, through the experiencing and telling of dreams. The two streams of belief, firmly dammed apart in conventional missionary doctrine, are braided together, or at least exist side by side, in many Ojibwe minds, as they evidently did in Fair Wind's; both Christian and Ojibwe spirit beings can empirically prove to be sources of power and spiritual support.

At Pauingassi, Fair Wind's grandnephew Jacob Owen exemplified this pattern. In one of Hallowell's photographs of the 1930s, he stands in a group of young ceremonial helpers, wearing a feather in his cap. His relatives told us that the feather was a sign of his connection with Thunderbirds. Visiting him one time, with interpreter Margaret Simmons (Chief Berens's granddaughter), Maureen Matthews and I left the initial conversation to him, and he offered a long discourse on the Bible; like Omishoosh, his cousin, he had become a Mennonite during the sojourn of Mennonite missionaries, Henry and Elna Neufeld, in Pauingassi in the 1960s.[4] Then Margaret asked whether he had ever seen Thunderbirds. "No, never," he replied; "I have never seen them with my own eyes. But I knew them and they spoke to me. And today, I use it [the power] some days." He went on to tell us of his encounter with them, a story he said he had never told before, and to recount an instance of his use of their power (Matthews 1995, 5–6).

Why did he speak of these things at that moment? Several reasons may have converged. Perhaps the fact that William Berens's granddaughter asked the question made a difference. Also, he appreciated Maureen's and my connection with Midewigimaa (Hallowell's name at Pauingassi) and may have been among the elders there who had decided to call us Midewigimaawikwewag, the Hallowell women. In fact, there was some surprise that we weren't related to Hallowell in some way, and one person asked us why his children never came back to visit.[5] Two other possible reasons arise. First, Jacob Owen had just, in essence, preached a Christian sermon, and the giving (away) of his Thunderbird dream may have signalled a tip in the balance towards the Mennonite side of his life, just as William Berens's Methodism offered him licence for the telling of otherwise privileged experiences. Second, Jacob was then the oldest man in

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4 Henry and Elna Neufeld first arrived in Pauingassi in 1955 and stayed as missionaries and teachers until 1970; fluent in the language, they developed a deep, lifelong affection for and commitment to the people. In 1993, they published *By God's Grace: Ministry with Native People in Pauingassi* (Winnipeg: CMBC Publications).

5 Hallowell had one adoptive son whose life took some tragic turns (Stocking 2004). Surprised by the question, we were not quick enough to try to explain the sense in which we, intellectually, were Hallowell's grandchildren. But the Pauingassi elders must have gotten the idea anyway, as evidenced when they named us.

Pauingassi; he was almost blind and in failing health (he died in 1996). Maybe he felt that he now had little chance to use his powers and that this was the moment to pass on something of what he knew, which he knew we cared about and would otherwise be lost.

When Hallowell came to interpreting the meanings of the dreams that he was told, he was, on the whole, an excellent listener and worked to understand the ways in which dreams were integrated into Ojibwe life and world views. But as a professional anthropologist, he was also deeply involved in the social science of his times. Especially from 1938 into the 1940s, he became absorbed by possibilities of applying psychological methods such as the Rorschach ink-blot tests to his subjects and by the potentialities of looking at their myths and dreams in psychological terms (Spindler and Spindler 1991). One short report concerning a dream of William Berens, published in the journal *Man* in 1938 (repr. in Hallowell 2010a), may mark the peak of his engagement with Freudian psychology, which was then on the rise among American anthropologists.[6] Berens and Hallowell were travelling upriver to Little Grand Rapids, a hundred-mile trip with fifty portages. One morning, Hallowell asked Berens if he'd had any dreams, and Berens described one he had just had. He was walking on snowshoes, evidently in spring because not much snow was on the ground:

> I was travelling with a boy. I sighted a camp but there was no one in sight. Then I heard the sound of chopping in the bush. As we came closer a man appeared. This man handed me some money, over one hundred dollars in bills. I could see an X on some of them. But the bills were the colour of that (pointing to my [Hallowell's] sleeping bag, which was yellow-brown in hue). This man also gave me some silver and I gave some of it to the boy. I asked whether this was all right and the man said "yes." (Hallowell 1938, 47–48)

Hallowell asked Berens what he thought the dream signified. Berens replied that it might mean "that he would catch a fox the next winter. He inferred this from the colour of the bills, which he thought so inexplicable" (47). He could not identify either the man or the boy, and said he was also puzzled by the colour of the bills.

Hallowell went on to state his own analysis of the dream in remarkably assured terms: "The Freudian symbolism in this dream is so transparent that it needs no further comment. On account of the colour of my sleeping bag

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6 Lee Irwin, writing on the application of Freudian theory to Native American dreaming generally, comments on how its use "creates a climate of suspicion with regard to the value or significance of the manifest dream" and gives priority to its latent "hidden and disguised" content; it certainly led for a time to analyses very different from those offered by the dreamers themselves (Irwin 1994, 11, 246n3).

it could hardly have been more forcibly emphasized." The money motif, he wrote, "unconsciously associated with faeces" (Hallowell 1938, 48). The reason that Berens had this dream was that the chief, having been his "interpreter and mentor during several summers of field work," was getting rather tired of it, and here he was, starting off on yet another trip. Hallowell added that the dream was probably an expression of repressed aggression: "I was the man he failed to recognize. . . . I gave him the money, which approximated the amount he would earn, but this money was also faeces, metaphorically speaking. . . . Since we have been close friends, he could not turn me down, and he needed the money as well. But he was not anticipating a pleasurable trip, because internally he very much resisted going." To Hallowell, this Freudian interpretation served to "make the dream intelligible in terms of the circumstances in which it occurred." Interestingly, Hallowell added, "When I explained the Freudian symbolism [to Berens], he seemed in no way resistant to the idea" (48).

We must wonder what actually happened when in the midst of their conversation Hallowell supplanted Berens's analysis with his Freudian theory. Was Berens convinced, or polite, or struck dumb by his friend's interpretation? We can't tell. In any case, such a determinedly etic analysis was not typical of Hallowell's writings. Cast as a brief letter to a journal rather than a full article, it was also less measured, perhaps representing the apex of his enthusiasm for Freudian analysis. The main interest of the note lies more in what it tells us about Hallowell than about Berens. By 1938, Hallowell was evidently concerned about his relationship with the aging chief and worried that he had made too many demands upon him. Psychologically, his own sense of guilt and his projection of his feelings about the chief and about the money involved are the things that shine through most clearly.

I would like to conclude with one further dream that Hallowell recorded. The interpretation and context in which Hallowell placed this dream appear more typical of his best work and are more revealing and interesting. They also take us back to the dream charts mentioned earlier. One of the men whom Hallowell met up the Berens River had been told this dream by an old man who evidently felt he had no further use for the powers of the dream visitor involved, and the hearer, in turn, passed it on.

A father left his son on an island to fast. Several times, the boy dreamed of an *ogimaa* (a chief or leader), who finally said to him, "Grandson, I think you are strong enough (in magic power) to go with me." The visitor began dancing around him and turned into a golden eagle, and the boy noticed that now his body too was covered with feathers. They flew south together, a long distance, to the land of the summer birds, where there were many people living. (For Berens River Ojibwe, this land was also the abode of the dead.) The boy shot

lots of ducks, geese, and other birds while he was there. Then, in springtime, the two flew north again to the island:

> "Your relatives must wonder where you are," said the Eagle to him. "But you stay here and in a day or two your father will come for you and you can go back home with him. Any time you want me, just mention my name and I will always help you." The next day the boy's father came for his son. He was glad in his heart to see him but he asked no questions. (Berens 2009, 107)

This dream, as Hallowell observed, echoed patterns often found in dreams. But Hallowell also drew attention to how its motifs and structure paralleled another story that he had been told by a Cree, several hundred miles to the north. This story, said to have happened long ago, was represented as a real waking experience, not as a vision or myth. A boy canoed out to an island in God's Lake (northern Manitoba) to gather birds' eggs. His canoe drifted away, and he was marooned and became very hungry. Finally, as he sat on the shore, he heard someone say from the water, "Nojis (grandson), come down here." When the boy did so, he saw the Great Trout:

> "Get in under my fin," the fish said. So the boy did as he was told. It was as comfortable there as if he were in a wigwam. There was plenty of food too.
>
> The fish dived and travelled to many different lakes during a whole season, teaching the boy "everything there was to know about the different kinds of fish." Then he returned the boy to the island in God's Lake. One day, when the boy's father was out paddling, he saw four otters swimming. He followed them to the island and "saw his son sitting on the shore. He was very glad to see him. He brought him home but he asked him no questions." (Berens 2009, 104–5)

Hallowell pointed out how stories told from long ago could resemble dreams in both outline and content. According to what he called the Ojibwe "psychology of belief," both were accepted as plausible and true, consistent with the larger framework of Ojibwe world view. As Hallowell made clear elsewhere (1939, 32), this was not the prelogical or childlike confusion of fantasy and reality that Lucien Levy-Bruhl (1922) postulated when writing about what he called "the primitive mind." Rather, there was consistency, feedback, and parallelism, as shown in Hallowell's charts. The pattern resembles what Greg Urban found in Brazil among the Ibirama: old dream narratives "may ultimately transmogrify into myths," conforming as they do to durable patterns common to both myths and dreams (1997, 7).

As Hallowell learned, the myths recounted on long winter nights echoed the motifs of stories and dreams, and their telling served as "a kind of invocation" to the other-than-human "grandfathers" to come and listen (2010d, 448). Children falling asleep with the stories and myths in their heads dreamed of the personages that the stories featured; as well, they knew their voices because they heard them speak in their diverse distinctive manners whenever shaking tent ceremonies were held. Through life, one's waking, sleeping, and ceremonial experiences served to reinforce one another in a coherent, meaningful, and long-established system that guided both thought and action, values and belief. Dreams, the (re)telling or discussion of dreams in appropriate settings, and the overt interaction of a medicine man with his *bawaaganag* (as with Fair Wind and the Thunderbirds) on the basis of an untold dream were means of teaching and learning and were deeply integrated into what Hallowell called the Ojibwe "culturally constituted behavioral environment" (1992, 80; 2010c, 527, 530).

In recent times, changed ways of living and learning in reserve communities and schools have damaged the fragile personal and familial contexts in which communication of and learning from dreams could occur. Along the Berens River, the language, culture, and stories of dreams and of legendary "grandfathers" can be found, but the knowledge often seems imprisoned in the older people's heads as they sit alone in their small frame houses on the reserves or in corners of the crowded homes of offspring, surrounded by the tumult of younger generations and the noise of TV and video streaming. Intergenerational rifts and misunderstandings have created islands of solitude with few means of crossing the gulfs between them. Quiet chances for telling stories and dreams and for mutually respectful conversation and communication are casualties of the conditions of life in many reserves today, and off the reserves, things are often even worse.

There is a role for insider-outsider communication and dialogue here. The patient study and conversations carried on by Hallowell with Chief Berens in the 1930s fostered learning and teaching not only for the two collaborators but also for a young man named Percy Berens as he watched and listened to his father hard at work with the visitor, and for others. Up the river, at Pauingassi, Hallowell attended Fair Wind's ceremonies and photographed both the old man and his descendants. These apprentice ceremonial attendants (*oshkaabewisag*)—Omishoosh (Charlie George Owen), Jacob Owen, and others—could still recall rich details from the 1930s when they looked at Hallowell's photographs over sixty years later. In 1992, farther upstream at Poplar Hill, a young translator, rather mystified about what Maureen Matthews and I were doing, took us around to visit old people who he thought might remember Fair Wind or Hallowell (*aadizookwewinini*, story or legend man, as they called him

up there). As the young man located those who could be most helpful, he was hearing about such things as Fair Wind's Drum Dance and the Midewiwin for the very first time. Finally, one elderly woman, recognizing that we already knew rather more than he did, said firmly to him, "Your grandmother danced in that dance; you should know about this!" It was like dropping pebbles in a pond and watching the ripples spread, or relighting candles of memory and wondering how far their light would travel.

Dreams are ways of framing, telling, and remembering history. Raymond Fogelson asks us to make "a determined effort to try to comprehend alien forms of historical consciousness and discourse." He adds, "Such an approach insists on taking seriously native theories of history as embedded in cosmology, in narratives, in rituals and ceremonies, and more generally in native philosophies and worldviews" (1989, 134–35). We may add dreams, broadly defined, to the list. This essay began with outsiders' waking dreams in Ojibwe country—reveries of travel that are grounded in cosmic assumptions about time and history (or a supposed lack of history) along the Berens River. These reveries themselves make and reinforce history in that they structure so many outsiders' initial perceptions and representations of their "first contacts." The test for the new-comers is whether they manage, as Hallowell did, to move beyond the reveries and write beyond the tropes.

Within Ojibwe country, selective and strategic tellings and retellings of dreams, verbally and through overt ceremonial demonstrations of powers, have long helped to structure historical and cultural knowledge and memory. They persist but they do not stand still; they move onward through time and through changing contexts with lengthening pasts—what Fogelson has called "a series of contiguous past presentisms." As he emphasizes, "The awareness of the interface between the past and present has theoretical and practical significance for ethnohistorians" (1989, 136). Practically speaking, as illustrated here, enriched insights can arise from juxtaposing oral and written sources with contemporary observation.

On a theoretical level, however, a look at the Ojibwe field of dreams may lead us to ask whether the drawing of dichotomies between past and present is one more instance of outsider imposition. In Ojibwe terms, it seems useful to speak of what Clifford Geertz, in a different context, described as "experience-near" and "experience-distant" (1983, 57–58). From the people's insider perspective, powerful other-than-human beings such as Thunderbirds and other dream visitors are very much alive and available despite missions, schools, and efforts to explain thunder and other "natural phenomena" through science. In fact, they are embedded in the Ojibwe language; one cannot name thunder without referring to these giant birds. Fair Wind and Jacob Owen carried the blessings,

and weights, of "experience-near" relationships with Thunderbirds. Charlie George Owen could speak at first hand of Fair Wind; his oral texts are sprinkled with *mii iwe*, a particle indicating veracity and certainty. When speaking of topics he was less certain of, or more distant from, he used other markers indicating "a subtle declension . . . from personal experience to hearsay" (Matthews and Roulette 1996, 358n).

Others, ranging from Percy Berens to Margaret Simmons or Roger Roulette, may speak from experiences or observations that are more distant, while the great majority of outsiders may only look and listen from outside. But the beings are there, to be sought in the proper ways. As Maureen Matthews was told by Roger Roulette, "Everyone has a guardian, even me. It doesn't matter that I might be ignorant of it and not know how to show my respect" (Matthews 1995, 5). In this context, images of spreading concentric circles seem more useful than Hallowell's acculturational gradients or linear histories that oppose past to present. Owing to language loss and all sorts of other pressures, the dwellers of the inner circles are fewer at present than in the 1930s, but renewals of spiritual contacts and powers are always possible—and indeed, rising in numbers all the time—even if their terms of reference change and vary from the old ways (see, e.g., Williams 1992).

To conclude, even though we may emend a few of the conclusions and conceptual frames that Hallowell developed, his papers and writings offer special opportunities to follow his student Fogelson's advice about the doing of ethnohistory. Without Hallowell, none of the work discussed here could have gone forward. His writings are not the whole story, however. He also, unlike many visitors, left warm memories among the people he met; he respected them, listened well, and brought practical gifts—for example, the shirt that Fair Wind wore in Hallowell's photograph of him in the 1930s. His attitude shines forth in his short essay "On Being an Anthropologist," written in 1972: "I deeply identified myself with the Berens River Ojibwa. To the small number of white people in the area I paid practically no attention. . . . I was completely oriented toward Indians and their culture rather than the total community [of Hudson's Bay Company traders, clergy, and others]" (1976, 10). Of course, as he went on to admit, this meant that, at the time, he overlooked studying Ojibwe relations with others (Indian-white relations), the prejudices they experienced, and the growing outside pressures they faced. We can forgive him for that, however, given his lasting contributions, and in any case, those topics have not been neglected in more recent years (see, e.g., Dunning 1959; Gray 2000, 2006). As fieldworker and as scholar, Hallowell left a legacy that allowed the reopening of conversations that he and the Berens River Ojibwe never finished, helping us learn how to ask better questions, how to listen better and what to listen for, and how to teach a little when our turn comes.

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Index