ARE THE KASKA AND SLAVE ABORIGINAL?

An Ecological and Ethnohistorical Study

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ABSTRACT

This study of aboriginal Kaska and Slave societies introduces additional and new information regarding the northern Athabascan Indians of the arctic drainage system of Canada. With the aid of ethnohistorical and ecological data, the socio-economic adaptive strategies of those people are examined. Starting in 1670, the data that the Hudson's Bay Company started to operate from its posts on the shores of Hudson Bay, the population movements and nature of developments are followed, to determine the early and subsequent influences on the Athabascan speaking people.

Julian Steward, Elman Service and June Helm have all attempted to postulate the early social structure of the Dene, by a variety of methods and theories. Other anthropologists, Diamond Jenness and Cornelius Osgood proposed certain tribal divisions (in the 1930's). However, few ethnographic field studies had been done and precise historical studies were lacking. During and since the Second World War an increasing amount of direct information became available.

Although it has been widely accepted that the Athabascan people went through a destructive period during the indirect and direct fur trade, the precise dynamics have not been investigated. This situation led some anthropologists to some mistaken assumptions. The history of the two groups, today known as the Kaska and Slave people, provides us with some examples of such mistakes.

Aboriginal Athabascan hunters, fishers and gatherers were people of

the transition zones rather than the boreal forest proper. Chapter two discusses the habitat and specific behavior of the animal populations of the north, especially in relation to the region where the Kaska and Slave Indians live today: the Cassiar and Upper Mackenzie River areas. This examination compares the historical and contemporary numbers of species, their specific habitat and total interrelationships. The conclusion was reached that the area is predominantly an area inhabited by solitary woodland species and fur bearers. Only the extreme eastern region, the Horn Mountains, was seasonally frequented by the barren ground caribou, an important herd species. The area contains very few good fishing lakes and provides a limited amount of vegetation for human consumption. Thus, the area is characterized by a widely dispersed animal population, on which the human population was highly dependent for their livelihood.

In Chapter three it is shown that the name "Slave" is incorrectly used to denominate a group of people in the Upper Mackenzie district. The name "Slave", was given by the Cree Indians to many other Indian populations, including Athabascan speakers, who were pushed north and northwestward during the Cree expansion as middleman in the fur trade. The displaced Athabascans moved into a variety of ecological zones and adopted new cultural and social forms in their adaptation to these environments. Denominations like Sekani, Sarcee and Beaver, therefore can be taken as cultural ecological distinctions although these people had their cultural and social roots in a common ancestor. The wrongly named "Slave" however should be considered Beaver Indians. All early

fur traders indicated this to be the case, but anthropologists disregarded their statements or, without explanation, declared this to be wrong.

The expansion of the fur trade, in particular by the aggressive methods of the North-West Company, which entered the northern interior in the late 1700's, caused a rapid depletion of woodland game species and fur bearers. Starting around 1800, reports of starvation started to increase. Although birth and death cycles, natural catastrophes and severe local climatic conditions reduced animal populations locally for many hundreds of years, it was the "all season - clean sweep" hunting methods of the fur trade companies, regardless of the natural cycles, under which the animal populations failed to regenerate. The Indian population of the Fort Simpson and Fort Nelson area found themsleves in a destroyed environment following the collapse of the North-West Company in 1821.

Chapter four follows the Hudson's Bay Company's search for new fur areas, following their take-over of the North-West Company. Several attempts were made to establish new hunting areas in the mountainous area of northern British Columbia and southern Yukon, to no avail. They found an extremely barren country, especially in winter, starvation was almost a certainty. Some small groups of Indians seasonally exploited some of the mountain valleys, but no Indian population was observed to exist that could have formed the direct ancestor to the present day Kaska Indians. In spite of the fact that more investigations had been made than on the "Slave" Indians, anthropologists failed to unscramble the customary Athabascan way of naming other groups.

The modern Kaska groups are shown to be directly descended from people who moved into the area during the Cassiar gold rush in 1873, which provided a number of wage-labour opportunities. Part-time fur trapping and occasional wage-labour kept some people concentrated in the Cassiar region and subsequent intermarriage occurred. As the people came from many different areas, modern Cassiar society shows a variety of social and cultural traits.

Contemporary field-data presented by June Helm, indicates that the founding of Jean Marie, a community south of Fort Simpson, had similar underlaying dynamics: wage-labour, and later in time, self-owned machinery, provided a stabilization base.

The Study concludes that the patterns uncovered for the two societies may hold for more northern communities. Rather than internal (sociological) features of social organization, the external physical and economic circumstances - the lack of sufficient wild animal food sources which necessitate the attachment to wage opportunities - provided the basic structural foundations of Athabascan communities.

To: Gerrit en Hendrik

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

METHODOLOGY

This is a study of the socio-economic adaptive strategies of some of the Northern Athabascan hunters, fishers and gatherers, over a period of approximately 250 years. The framework of ecological analysis is chosen as it is recognized that the inflexibility of topography - water, land and climate - presents important restrictions on human activity, but that within such broad restrictions, choices are made between alternative lines of action.

Traditionally, anthropological studies in cultural ecology were directed towards the description of how social groupings were suited to the particular economic use of the environment (Steward 1955:36-42). Sahlins (1961), Barth (1972) and Bennett (1969) have taken the position that the concept of environment should be expanded to include the social dimensions: the presence or absence of neighboring groups.

In this study the environment is not considered to be a fixed entity, but constitutes a constantly changing set of "resource opportunities". Human groups convert the environment into usable resources, and the process of decision making or choosing between alternative actions is the basis of the behavior of a population. The study of adaptive behavior, is thus, the analysis of how people respond to changing circumstances. Social dimensions are viewed as resources, that people use and manipulate in

order to gain their ends. While natural resources exist outside of social systems and can be considered passive elements, social resources are dynamic and exist both outside and inside society. Inside refers to the immediate social group and outside refers to the groups or institutions over which the "actor" or individual has very little direct control (e.g. government agencies, the board of governors of a corporation, economic markets) (Bennett 1969:17).

This type of ecological analysis emphasizes the reciprocal transactions between groups, as well as those between groups and the environment. An important part of these transactions of adaptive behavior is the conservation of resources, which should be considered next to the acceptance of newly emerging patterns (Bennett 1969, Barth 1972:7). A population that maintains the availability of resources and provides itself with fulfillment of perceived needs, will maintain a stable form. A population that exhausts or abuses its resources can be said to be maladaptive and consequently continues in search of new adaptive strategies. The origins of maladaptation may lie in the natural environment - large-scale climatic change - or in the social environment e.g. overproduction through the profit motive. Anthropologists have until very recently neglected this point (Harris 1971:221). In this study, the validity of the notion of maladaptiveness is explored.

John Bennett (1969:14) proposed that the concept of adaptation can be divided into two parts: first, adaptive <u>strategy</u>, or the patterns formed to obtain and use resources and to solve immediate problems; this usually operates on the conscious level in the behavior of the people

involved. Secondly, adaptive processes, the repeated use of strategies over relatively long periods of time; adaptive processes are formulated by observers and analysts.

It is clear that the conventional anthropological method, describing social statuses organized in persons and corporate groups and interconnected through patterns of recruitment, is of little use in this type of analysis (Barth 1972:6). In this study, the method proposed by Fredrik Barth, the entreprenurial model and exploitation of ecological niche, will be employed (Barth 1972:5-13). This model allows for the examination of the specific adjustments which groups or a group have made to the environment and to other populations, irrespective of any preconceived social, cultural or environmental boundaries. In addition it allows for the examination of internal limitations of the social phenomena, (i.e. skills, freedom of choice) through the concepts of assets and restrictions (Barth 1972:9-10).

This study deals with a large time span and limited, fragmentary information and thus emphasis is placed on the adaptive processes. It attempts to uncover the dynamics behind the changing relations of populations to resources in its environmental, economic and socio-cultural facets. The study does not attempt to show the dynamics behind the changing conceptualization or sanctioning of new emerging patterns, a process which is tied up with notions of value and purpose. The type of resources available to me makes this clearly an impossible task, and its usefulness is more directly restricted to community studies in the field.

This study describes an unfolding adaptive process, where the choices are undertaken in sequence, one step influencing the next one.

THE NORTHERN ATHABASCANS

The Northern Athabascans have played a role in the theories of social organization of both Julian Steward and Elman Service. This study of "aboriginal" Slave and Kaska societies introduces additional information regarding the debate on the Northern Athabascans of the Arctic Drainage System.

Julian Steward identified the Arctic Drainage Dene as a society of composite bands (1955:143-150). Elman Service, using an evolutionary perspective, introduced the historical variable and concluded that:

> "The causes of the modern fluid, informal, composite band clearly lie in the initial shocks, depopulation, relocation, and other disturbances in the early contact period which produced refugee-like groups of unrelated families. . ." (Service 1962:88)

June Helm, using contemporary data of the 1950's and two societies dating back to 1911, refuted the theory of Athabascan bands being composed of unrelated families (Helm 1965:362, 380, 383, 1971:363, 365). Helm, in her presented field data, has clearly shown that Service was mistaken in using the word "modern", and that he should have been more careful in placing this social phenomena in a specific time framework. Helm on the other hand attempts to show that the kin-relatedness of the Athabascan groups goes far back into history (Helm 1965:362, 380-382; 1971:363-367).

The information presented in this study shows that both writers were partially correct and partially incorrect. In Chapter 3, information is

presented regarding the "Slave" Indians. Leaving aside the social organization that predated the changes brought about by the fur trade - an organization which Service supposes to be the patrilocal band (1962:108) but for the group under discussion in this study this remains guesswork - the general sequence is clearly a combination of both Service's and Helm's theories and observations. During the devastating influences of the indirect and direct fur trade, the people who had come to depend on the boreal forest resources exclusively had constantly to re-group themselves. Wide-spread starvation during the "low-point in resources" era (± 1800-1880) - occurring incidentally among both the Europeans and Indians - necessitated constant re-location. Following this disastrous period many groups became localized in the well known "riverine" and "bush" communities, through possibilities of wage-labour and credit fur trapping. Subsequently populations stabilized and kin-communities developed.

In Chapter 4 the "aboriginality" of the Kaska Indians is examined. The information presented shows clearly that Service's general sequence does not fit the Kaska. The Kaska did not constitute an aboriginal population as proposed by Honigmann (1964). Kaska society is a relatively new society formed by single individuals and small groups that entered and remained in the Cassiar district during the Cassiar gold rush which started in 1873. The people who are today known as the Kaska came from many different parts of the North to exploit the new ecological niche opened up by the economic circumstances created by the wider Euro-Canadian society. Kaska society, therefore, provides a specific example how the kin-

relatedness of a modern Athabascan community developed.

This study also provides additional arguments against the "tribal" division proposed by Osgood (1936). Although June Helm observed that contemporary groups of people know themselves as "Dogrib", "Hares" or "Slaves" (Helm 1965:380), the literature and nature of groups indicate that usage of such nomenclature by the Athabascan speakers themselves is very recent, and may have come about through governmental usage, which is ultimately based on anthropologically accepted denominations. The historical literature indicates that tribal names "grew" on the populations concerned. Europeans used all kinds of names, including mis-translations obtained from other Indians. Most of the names were not employed by the Athabascans themselves as Osgood himself pointed out (1936:3).

Throughout the study I will use the neutral words "group", "population" and "community". In my understanding of the populations examined in this study, it has become increasingly clear that the continuing entity is <u>not</u> the Athabascan BAND or TRIBE, but the physical and economic circumstances to which the populations had to adapt (Leach 1961:296-306).

HISTORICAL DOCUMENTATION

The use of historical documents - library and archival materials - has proven to be a valuable tool for anthropologists in uncovering the early information regarding populations. Eleanor Leacock for the Montaignais (1954), Harold Hickerson for the Chippewa (1970) and Bruce Trigger for the Huron (1969) have presented valuable information,

adding to the understanding of social change.

This study is restricted to the use of library materials since archival study was impossible. This however does not limit the usefulness of this information; the North-West Company which operated in the Fort Simpson - Liard - Halkett area until 1821 did not leave any records of those operations, or they remain to be discovered. Only the accounts of individual traders are left, and these have been used. The Hudson's Bay Company does have archival material, but was relatively unimportant before 1821 in that area. The information presented in Chapter 3 might have been supplemented by the use of archival materials, but the information presented by the journals of the traders who travelled and worked in the area were sufficient to build up a complete sequence and understanding.

The earliest information on the Arctic Drainage Dene is presented by fur traders. Unlike the eastern Canadian situation, religious organizations appeared very much later. This brings us to the question, how much value can one attach to the historical information?

Many of the fur traders were victims of changing social and economic conditions in the British Isles, especially Scotland. Some were recruited from orphanages or were illegitimate children, others were dispossessed minor gentry who were on the losing side in the 1745 Scottish rebellion. They entered the fur trade through the North-West Company, the X.Y. Company and the Hudsons's Bay Company, all large-scale, profit-oriented organizations. The time of individual small-scale trade, resulting in quick profits, had disappeared with the early French fur

traders, "the coureur des bois".

The British traders therefore were "Company men" and had institutionalized some of their roles. In their command over the trade proceedings, special privileges were created and usually their word was law. They were the only ones who could give "presents" to the Indians (Mckenzie 1960;382). Without too many exceptions the fur traders thought themselves far superior to the Indians (as well as other Company personnel who were usually French) and saw themselves as "civilized and religious".

Statements regarding the social life and character of Indians seem in many cases to be discriminatory and often contradictory to statements of other traders in the same region or same area (i.e. Keith 1960;69; Wentzel 1960;86 on marriage customs among the Beaver Indians). In my opinion, statements on social customs of Indians by fur traders have a limited validity.

What is true for the social information, however is not true for the economic and ecological information, which may be considered much more precise. The trader's inquiry always was directed to the optimal fur trade opportunities: how many hunters, young boys, what territory, what and how many animals, subsistence possibilities etc., etc., I do not wish to give the impression that all fur traders were completely preoccupied with monetary gain. True, many of them were complete fanatics, but as always, there were some exceptions. An example of a lonely voice and in a time period that the fur trade was as good as dead, John McLean wrote in 1845,

> "While the resources of the country are thus becoming yearly more and more exhausted, the question naturally suggests itself, What is to become of the natives when their lands can no longer furnish the means of subsistence? . . . Are they left to the tender mercies of the trader until famine and disease sweep them from the Earth?
> . . . the Company have had their charter renewed for a period of twenty-one years, which does not expire until 1863; and that Government is bound to honour to sustain the validity of the deed. But if Government is bound in honour to sustain and protect the INTERESTS of the Hudson's Bay Company, is it less bound to protect the PROPERTY and LIVES of the weak, ignorent, and wronged subjects? . . . are we to turn a deaf ear to the still small voice of justice and humanity pleading on behalf of the numerous tribes of perishing Indians?" (Wallace 1938:355, 360)

* * * * *

In Chapter 2 the environment of the populations which today are known as the Slave and Kaska Indians is described in detail, and historical information is presented regarding the animal populations. Data on the behavior of species and vegetation characteristics, as well as numbers of species in particular time periods are presented in one argument to which the reader should refer back if required in later parts of the study.

Chapters 2 and 3 consider the available information regarding the aboriginal populations of the area. Wherever possible more than one source will be presented to allow the reader to cross-evaluate the presented material.

The cited passages are given directly from the source without corrections of spelling etc. Words between square brackets within quotes are the present-day names used parentheses within quotes are the cited author's own, and parentheses outside quotes are my own. Maps

are included, which will enable the reader to follow the geographical description.

CHAPTER TWO

THE ENVIRONMENT

The area discussed is the main territory of the contemporary "Slave and "Kaska" Indians. The total territory has no distinct geographical name and some of the names applied to distinct regions today, are not exactly the same as used in historical times. To avoid confusion the neutral denomination, "The area under study" is often used. (Map 1)

The examination of the area will establish where, when and for how long food resources are available; some animals hibernate, others only occur in specific places under specific conditions.

* * * * *

TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE

The area under consideration, latitude 58°N to 62°N and longitude 117°30'W to 130°W, is the drainage area of the Liard River and the Upper Mackenzie River, into which the Liard empties its waters. This region today contains the boundaries of two provinces, British Columbia and Alberta and two territories, the Yukon and the Northwest Territories.

The Cassiar Mountains, with elevations up to 8,000 feet, form the western boundary of the area under study. They also form the divide between the Pacific drainage and Arctic drainage systems. Separating the

Cassiar Mountains from the Rocky Mountains is the Rocky Mountain Trench with its deep and steep-sided river valleys (Kendrew 1955:152). The Rocky Mountains, with elevations up to 9,800 feet, abruptly go over into a flat and almost featureless plain. The Horn Mountains, east of Fort Simpson, are local hilly elevations of approximately 500 feet. The area under consideration therefore lies within two major physiographic divisions; namely, the Canadian Cordillera and the Interior Plains.

The area of our concern falls within the sub-arctic climatic region and is subject to long, cold winters and short, cool summers. The monthly mean temperature ranges between 55° and 62°F. for the months of June, July and August and between -17° and +11°F. for the period between November and February. Short periods of extreme cold and great warmth are not uncommon and -66°F. and +98°F. have been recorded (Higgins 1969:19).

Several weather recording stations are located within the area: Fort Simpson, Fort Nelson, Watson Lake, Smith River, Dease Lake and Frances Lake. However, since the topographical contrast in the area is large, the local fluctuations are prominent and micro-climatic conditions important.

In the whole sub-arctic region, an anticyclone settles in winter and the weather becomes predominantly very cold, clear and fairly calm. In spring, summer and fall (April - September) the atmosphere becomes unstable and heavy rain and snowfall occurs (Villiers 1969:9). The mean annual precipitation is between 15 and 20 inches for the mountainous part of the area and between 10 and 15 inches for the Interior Plains. The mean annual snowfall is similarly higher for the mountainous area, between

60-70 inches, in contrast to 40-60 inches for the plains (Kendrew 1955: 188; Higgins 1969:19).

The area lies in the southern fringe of the permafrost belt, which means that the occurrence of permafrost is discontinuous and patchy and depends on ground/air temperature, depth of soil, elevation and ground cover. Areas with a heavy vegetative cover of trees, brush and especially mosses, will have a higher incidence of permafrost patches situated closer to the surface (Higgins 1969:22).

The Liard River System (including the main branches: Frances River, Dease River, Kechika River, Hyland River, Coal River, Beaver River, South Nahanni River, Fort Nelson River and Petitot River) joins the Mackenzie River at Fort Simpson which flows into the Arctic Ocean. The freeze-up and break-up of the rivers does not occur at precisely the same time (table 1), resulting in regular flooding because of the ice-jams. Following break-up, the river levels drop, but rainfall and melting snow create fluctuating levels and velocity. The Liard and South Nahanni Rivers are notorious for their swift and treacherous nature at certain places and caving and clumping of the riverbanks occurs frequently. By late October the small lakes and sloughs are frozen and after the middle of November the larger rivers are frozen over.

Thermal springs occur at several points; near Tungsten, a few along the valley of the South Nahanni River and some in the neighborhood of Lower Post, at the confluence of Dease and Liard River. The warm waters of some of those springs have been observed to resist freezing in winter. Vegetation near those springs is more luxuriant than elsewhere.

TABLE 1

Break-up and Freeze-up dates

LOCATION	BREAK-UP*		FREEZE-UP*	
	Earliest	Latest	Earliest	Latest
Fort Nelson	22 Apr.	10 May	2 Nov.	20 Nov.
Fort Liard	27 Apr.	16 May	3 Nov.	26 Nov.
Fort Simpson	6 May	31 May	2 Nov.	1 Dec.
Fort Providence	18 May	19 June	29 Nov.	31 Jan.

* period 1958-1967 (except Fort Providence: period 1956-61)

(Higgins 1969:21)

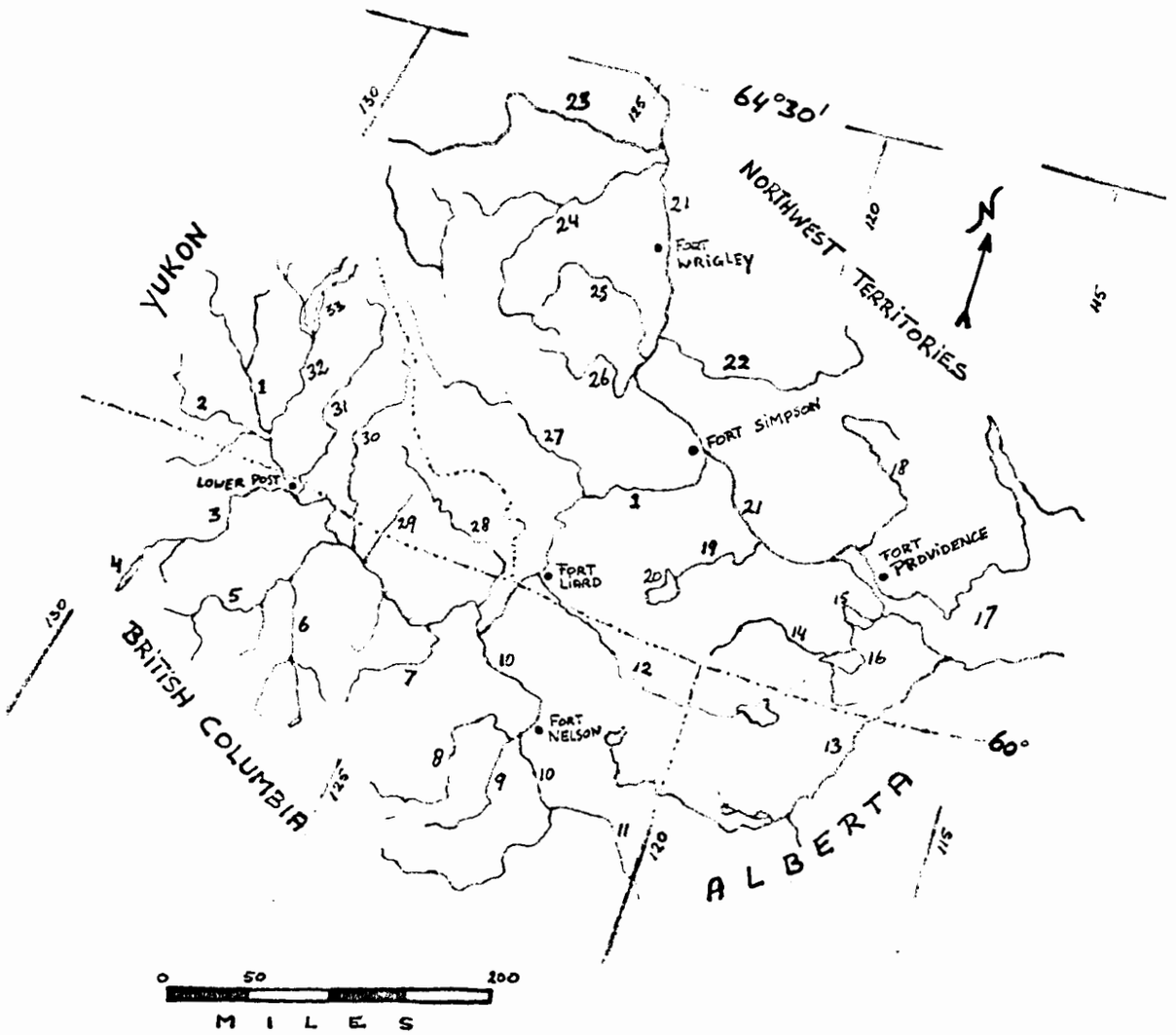
TABLE II

Duration of Daylight

LATITUDE	DATE	SUNRISE	SUNSET	DURATION OF SUN ABOVE HORIZON
60°N	21 Dec.	0902	1454	05h. 52m.
	21 June	0235	2128	18h. 53m.
62°N	21 Dec.	0923	1432	05h. 09m.
	21 June	0209	2154	19h. 45m.

(Kendrew 1955:156)

Map I The Liard and Upper Mackenzie Drainage Systems



1. Liard River
2. Rancheria River
3. Dease River
4. Dease Lake
5. Turnagain River
6. Kechika River
7. Toad River
8. Muskwa River
9. Prophet River
10. Fort Nelson River
11. Sikanni Chief River
12. Petitot River
13. Hay River
14. Kakisa River
15. Kakisa Lake
16. Tathlina Lake
17. Great Slave Lake
18. Horn River
19. Trout River
20. Trout Lake
21. Mackenzie River
22. Willowlake River
23. Keele River
24. Redstone River
25. Root River
26. North Nahanni River
27. South Nahanni River
28. Beaver River
29. Smith River
30. Coal River
31. Hyland River
32. Frances River
33. Frances Lake

VEGETATION

The region under study lies in the Boreal Forest belt. The most heavily forested areas occur in the valleys of the large rivers and smaller streams. In the mountainous area the treeline is approximately at 3,800'. Above the treeline mosses and grasses are plentiful but patchy.

The principal tree species include the white and black spruce, black poplar, jackpine, aspen and birch, all of which can reach heights of 100' and over. The brush layer includes the willow and alder, which usually do not reach over 30', the red osier dogwood, wild rose, high bush cranberry, raspberry, bunchberry, squashberry, Labrador Tea, dwarf birch and larch. The herblayer includes the fireweed red currant, horsetail, cloudberry, alpine bearberry, miterwort, twinflower, grasses, mosses and lichens (Higgins 1969:22, 145, 247).

The trees occur, of course, at the places with appropriate soil conditions; black spruce in the swampy areas, pine on well-drained gravels and sand and white spruce, aspen and birch on the fine mineral soils. Because of the permafrost the roots tend to run horizontally and the best support is obtained in a cluster of growth, when the roots intermingle. The removal of a number of trees from such a cluster may mean the fall of the rest when a good storm blows. Up to 1968, no important commercial logging had taken place in the Lower Liard River area (Higgins 1969:145). Towards the Great Slave Lake area, commercial logging, concentrated mainly on the white spruce, has resulted in almost complete deforestation. In the Cassiar region, logging increased after the building of the Alaska

Highway during the Second World War (Zaslow 1957:312)

Forest fires are frequently recorded, especially in the coniferous forests. The fires not only destroy the forest but also the associated lichen-moss growth, as both the spruce and lichen-moss are climax growth species. After a forest fire, weeds brush and fast growing shoots of willow are the first species to appear. From 30 to 100 years of undisturbed growth is needed to reach the climax growth stage again.

The vegetation type determines the nature of the mammal populations. Slight changes in the vegetation may have profound effects on these animal populations. In a study near Jean Marie Creek, 50 miles south of Fort Simpson, the relationship of small mammals and vegetation type was established in a controlled trapping experiment in the early 1970's (Wooley, 1974).

The area was divided into several plant communities:

Poplar - Alder	-	primarily poplar on sandy silt soil. A fire successional stage.
Jackpine - Poplar	-	primarily jackpine on sandy silt soil. A fire successional stage of about fort years.
Mixed Forest	-	trees approach 100 years, on sandy silt soil species include jackpine, white spruce, black spruce, poplar, larch and birch.
Black Spruce - Sphagnum	-	primarily black spruce, sphagnum mosses cover the soil surface, soil poorly drained.
Black Spruce - Hylacomium	-	primarily black spruce on sandy silt soil, about 100 years old. Feathermoss

most abundant on well drained spots and sphagnum mosses in the west areas.

The trapping experiment showed that the highest population of small mammals (deer mouse, vole, fieldmouse and chipmunk, in that order of incidence) were to be found in the mixed forest. The second highest population of such species was in the spruce - sphagnum forest and the lowest population was found in the poplar - alder forest.

The small mammals are an important part of the diet of predatory species and are more habitat specific than the larger ones (Wooley 1974:1). Vegetation, the producer level in the foodchain, determines the number and types of organisms that occupy the consumer levels. Forest fires change the distribution of vegetation and, of course, the distribution of mammal populations associated with that vegetation, so that, for example, after a forest fire the moose which feeds on young shoots, will move into the area, but the predatory species will stay away for the lack of sufficient prey species.

The outstanding and most important feature of the examination of the vegetation of the area under consideration, is the lack of possible protein sources for human populations. Although berries are in abundance and a good source of vitamins, they are not sufficient to carry people through the long cold winters. An examination of the distribution of the animal population therefore is of utmost importance.

FAUNA

The society and culture of the Athabascan speaking people cannot be

understood without knowledge of the several species that occur in the sub-arctic environment. The specific behavior of the animals, the food source they depend upon, cyclical birth and death rates and man-made changes in the environment have a profound effect on human populations. A close examination of the most important mammals, both those used for food and those used for the fur trade, should provide some insight into the dynamics behind sub-arctic living conditions. In addition to the contemporary animal situation, historical records regarding occurrence and numbers of species are examined.

Caribou: There are three types of Caribou; The Barren Ground Caribou, the Woodland Caribou and the Mountain Caribou. The Barren Ground Caribou is the best known of the three through the popular accounts of their high numbers. Their summer range is the tundra, north of the treeline, where they feed on lichens and grasses. In winter they move south but rarely as far as the boreal forest proper, remaining in the areas of scattered trees. Here again they feed on lichens which grow on trees or are scraped free from snow cover, with their hooves. Sparsely wooded spruce - lichen forests and mountain slopes are the prevailing choice for winter range. Burned out areas are avoided (Jakimchuk 1974:16).

Accumulated observations by modern investigators have added to our knowledge of migration movements, but they are still not fully understood. Daily differences of the amount of travel of the caribou are considerable and erratic.

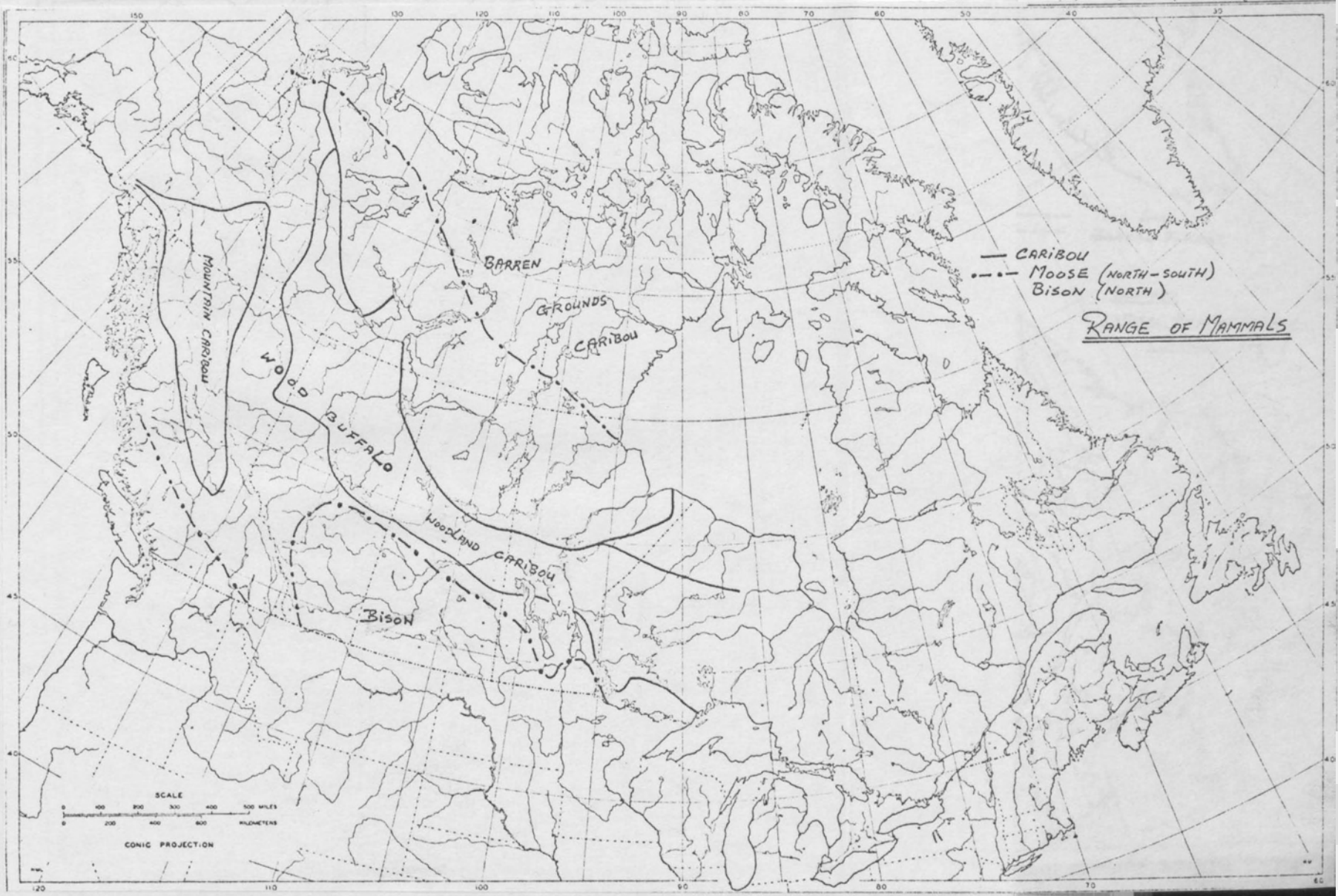
> "Migrations begin as an erratic movement most likely influenced by weather conditions primarily snow, wind and storms. The time however is very variable". (Jachimchuk 1974:76, 79)

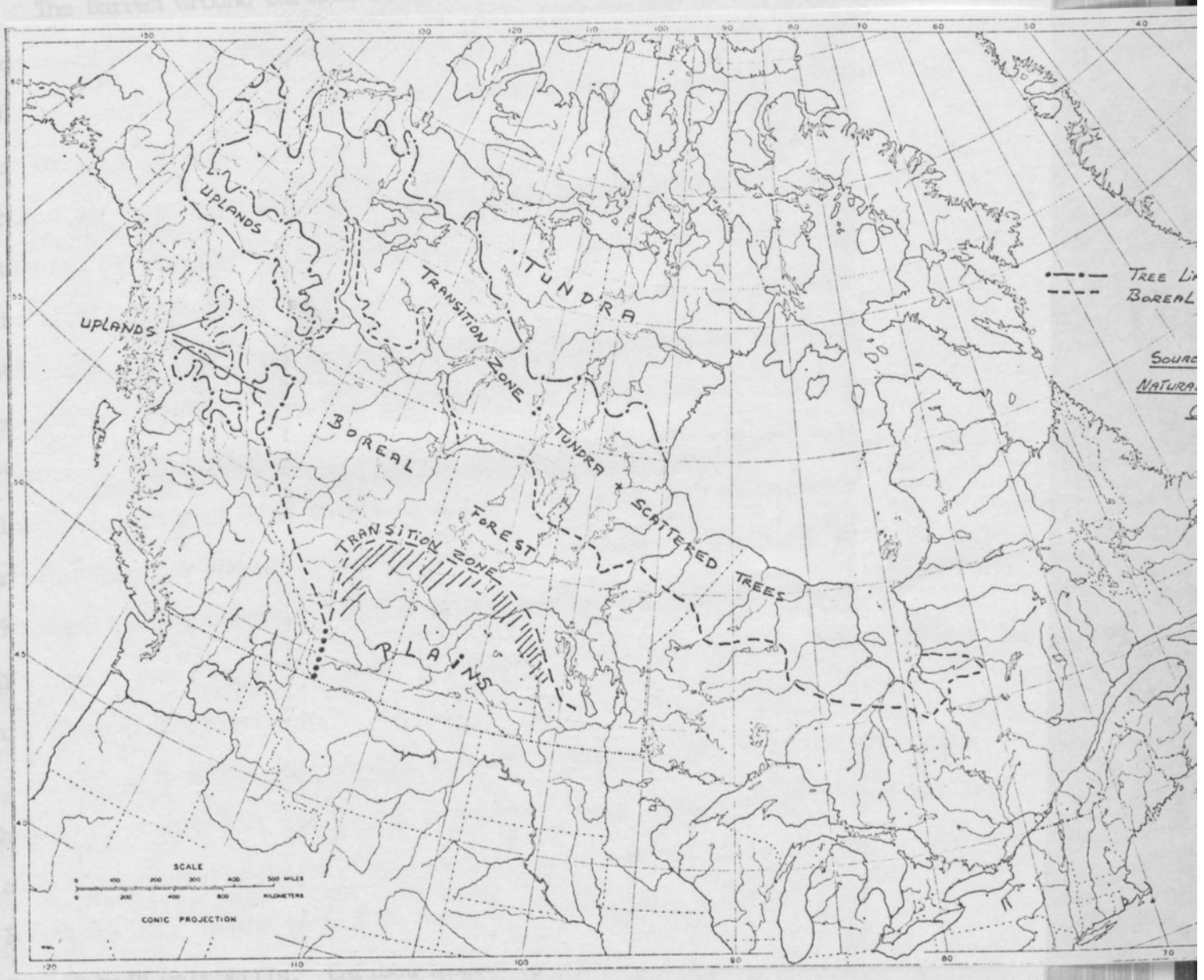
During the migrations of the "Porcupine Caribou herd", which winters in the central Yukon area, it was noted that routes crossing difficult terrain were sometimes chosen over easier routes and even large fast-flowing rivers were crossed without difficulty. Throughout the literature the excellent swimming capabilities of the caribou have been noted. The speed reached by a swimming caribou is as high as 7 mph. (Jakimchuk 1974:51). Although not completely understood, the migration routes contain traditional crossing points; their use seem to depend on local snow conditions and topography (Jakimchuk 1974:25, 51).

> "It is highly significant that according to archaeological evidence, traditional migratory routes across the Porcupine River have been used for hundreds, perhaps thousands of years". (Jakimchuk 1974:67)

Especially if the herd is large, migrating caribou are indifferent to human activity in close proximity. Only very close contact with noisy machinery, like motorboats or helicopters, alarm them (Jakimchuck 1974:76).

The Porcupine herd wintering in the central Yukon area in 1971, consisted of approximately 85,000 animals. The adult males go further south than the cows and calves and in spring, during the northward migration, the cows and calves precede the adult bulls. This herd structure however is by no means entirely rigid (Jakimchuk 1974:33, 36, 37). During calving time, in early June, the herd reaches its high point of dispersal. Eighty-five percent of the smaller groups then consist of less than 50 animals, the majority (59%) not exceeding 9 animals (Jakimchuk 1974:55). Rutting time sets in around October and the gestation period is about 7 months.


CARIBOU
MOOSE (NORTH-SOUTH)
BISON (NORTH)
RANGE OF MAMMALS
MOUNTAIN CARIBOU
BARREN GROUNDS CARIBOU
WOOD BUFFALO
WOODLAND CARIBOU
BISON
SCALE
CONIC PROJECTION


UPLANDS
UPLANDS
TRANSITION ZONE
TUNDRA
BOREAL
TUNDRA
SCATTERED TREES
FOREST
TRANSITION ZONE
PLAINS
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BOREAL
SOURC
NATURA
SCALE
0 100 200 300 400 500 MILES
0 200 400 600 KILOMETERS
CONIC PROJECTION

The Barren Ground Caribou is the smallest variety of the three kinds mentioned. The Mountain Caribou is the largest and grows up to 700 lbs (Cowan 1973:384). The three varieties have the same life cycle, only the size of herds are remarkedly different. The Barren Ground Caribou has been observed most frequently by the early Europeans and estimates of the size of the herds run as high as in the millions in the late 1700's. (see page 60). No coordinated counts were made until 1949, 1955 and 1967. The count of 1967 showed a strong increase over the count made in 1955. Since the 1955 date, the herds have doubled and tripled in number (Radojicic 1968:99; Villiers 1969:27). Whether this fluctuation is part of a long term cycle is unknown, but the numbers are far short of the estimates of the early Europeans. The herds of the woodland and mountain caribou seldom exceed thirty or forty individuals. The boreal forest and high mountain ranges of British Columbia, respectively, are their main ranges.

Aside from men, the caribou has few predators. The wolf and wolverine have been observed to follow the herds, but their chances of getting a healthy animal are normally slight. An examination of caribou kills for the Porcupine herd in the period of April - October, gave a total of 131 "suspected" wolf kills. Caribou killed by humans, for the Yukon Territory alone already had reached 3,000 in that period in 1971. The total mortality rate, including the Alaska range and natural catastrophes, approached the 10,000 mark or about 10 percent (Jakimchuk 1974:41-47).

In addition to the considerable toll through natural catastrophes

and by men,

> "the real enemies that hold down their numbers are of the small and ever-present type - mosquitoes, which blind and persecute them all summer, bot-flies or bull dog flies, which breed maggots by the hundreds in their skin, tapeworms, screwworms, lung-worms, which wreck their lungs, round-worms which sap their vitality, nose-flies that drive them mad with pain; and a number of diseases" (Seton 1953:89).

Raven, golden eagle, fox, grizzley bear, lynx, wolverine, bald eagle and marten are among the species that have been observed to feed on caribou corpses.

The area under study is almost completely inhabited by the woodland caribou, except for the Horn Mountains east of Fort Simpson, which provided the Barren Ground Caribou their winter range. In a later section of this study the density of the caribou population in the Cassiar district will be examined in relation to human population density.

Moose: The habitat of the moose is the boreal forest of North America. A browser, it favors low brush and young shoots of willow and poplar, as well as waterplants. Its shifting range is most likely congruent with the succession stage of growth of the vegetation. Although the range of the individual moose can possibly cover large distances, such movement cannot be classified as migration. The moose avoids the forest climax growth and prefers areas with recent forest fires, where young regenerative growth is abundant.

In winter the moose "yards" and can be found in groups of up to 12 individuals, centered around willow stands (Roseneau 1974:16). This

winter yard consists of a large network of trails several miles long; however, it is not completely static. When food is no longer available the moose will search for new food sources (Roseneau 1974:28). In the plateau areas of the Yukon the number of moose in a single group has never been more than four (Roseneau 1974:16). As with the caribou, the dynamics of the movements of the moose are poorly understood.

The highest concentration of moose population occurs at rutting time, during September and October. During this fall rut, the moose gather in rivers, especially around the long willow covered bars that curve along the inner margins of its bends (Nelson 1973:86). The modern Athabascan hunters described by Nelson (1973), consider this to be the best time to hunt the moose.[1] At that time the behavior of the bulls is fearless, the weather is cold enough to store the meat without drying, but the rivers are still open and water travel still possible. During the rest of the year the moose is extremely difficult to approach. Wind and temperature are then extremely important to the Indian hunter setting out for a moose. Wind is necessary to cover noise and temperatures below -15°F. cause the snow to spueak and crunch. The best temperature for moose hunting is around 0°F. (Nelson 1973:108).

The moose is a large animal weighing up to 1700-1800 lbs,undressed (Seton 1953:156). New born calves weigh about 36 lbs, and sexual maturity is reached at 18 months. Usually two calves are born but three is not uncommon.

As with the caribou, the enemies of the moose are principally natural catastrophes, men and insects. Minor enemies are wolves, bears,

and cougars. There are however, accounts by hunters of moose successfully attacking bears (Seton 1953:188).

In regard to the earlier moose population density, the Hudson's Bay Company trader from Fort Simpson, Roderick MacFarlane, who became a fulltime naturalist when retired, remarked about the moose in the time period of the 1860's:

> "This valuable food animal [moose] used to be very numerous on on Peace River, and indeed, throughout the forest region of the northern portion of the Great Mackenzie Basin, but for the last twenty years it has been much less abundant, and, indeed, remarkably scarce in many parts, especially along the Athabasca Peace, Liard and other rivers."
> (MacFarlane 1908:157)

Several accounts of shifts in their habitat have been noted. Regions where the moose used to be unknown suddenly became invaded (Seton 1953:169). In British Columbia there were virtually no moose south of the Hazelton-Prince George line prior to 1920. Since then the most dense populations are known to be in this newly invaded territory (Cowan 1973:378). Warburton Pike, traveller artist and sportsman, who travelled through the Cassiar district via Dease Lake and Frances Lake in 1892 remarked that it was only twenty-five years ago that the moose had moved into that district (Pike 1967:89). This coincides roughly with the reported distruction of forests by fire in the Cassiar district with the influx of gold miners in the early 1890's (Zaslow 1957:309). Pike himself commented on the forests being burnt in many places (Pike 1967;62). It is evident that the reported shifts in territory by moose are closely connected with changes in vegetation, either through forest fires or logging operations.

TABLE III

Reported kills of game animals.
Fort Simpson area, including Jean-Marie

	1966-67	1967-68
Moose	77	177
Caribou (Barren Ground?)	22	54
Black Bear	29	64

(Higgins 1969:13)

TABLE IV

Reported kills on game animals
Fort Liard, including Nahanni Butte and Trout Lake

	1957	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66	67	68
Moose	135	104	121	139	150	175	160	97	120	90	109	89
Caribou	21	10	15	30	25	20	15	13	22	n/r	n/r	14
Dall Sheep		8	11				1	2	2			
Goat								1				
Black Bear	37	39	17	26	20	28		22	20	16	18	37
Grizzly										1		
Wolf	3	8		8				13	1	4	11	n/r

(Higgins 1969:138)

This importance of moose for contemporary populations in the Fort Simpson and Fort Liard area can be easily seen in Tables 3 and 4. Of interest, in view of this importance, is the extremely little information a recent study, connected with the proposed Arctic Gas Pipeline through the Mackenzie Valley, has presented (Ruttan 1974a).

Sheep: In the area under study, only the mountainous areas of the west are inhabited by the moutain sheep. The variety in the Cassiar is a gradation between the blackish-brown Stone Sheep and the white Dall sheep. To the northward the proportion of white becomes greater (Cowan 1973:399). Their main habitat is the upland meadow above the treeline with the ewes and lambs at higher altitudes than the rams. The sheep are observed to keep to certain mountain ranges and that way tend to form "colonies". Their yearly movement centers around the different areas of food supplies in the winter and summer season, the lambing ground and location of mineral licks (Roseneau 1974:41). The same trails are used repeatedly.

The vegetation most favored by the sheep are the mountain grasses, flowers, young twigs, leaves and seed pots. Their rocky and steep habitat and their enormous ability to climb and jump, makes the sheep an extremely difficult animal to follow. Few predators are known to be successful in killing mature sheep, but the lambs may be successfully hunted by the lynx, wolf and eagle.

The rutting season is in December and the gestation time 150 days. Between one and three young are born. Throughout the seasons the sheep

move around in flocks. The largest flocks consist of ewes, lambs and yearling rams. The smaller flocks comprise the older rams, seldom more than 5 or 6 together. The only mixing of the flocks occurs at rutting time.

As with the caribou and moose, their numbers are much lower than reported by early Europeans (Seton 1953: 523-25, 579-83).

According to MacFarlane, the sheep and mountain goat were hunted in the 1860's by the

> "Nahanni tribe of Indians belonging to the Company's [Hudson's Bay Company] northern posts of Nelson, Liard, Simpson Norman, Good Hope, Peel's River and La Pierre's House usually brought in for trade small supplies of the meat of goat and sheep of the Rockies in a partly smoked or sun-dried state. We always considered it, when in prime condition, second to no other variety of flesh food to be had in that extensive territory". (MacFarlane 1908:169)

In addition, the Nahanni Indians brought dressed skins and dried caribou meat but this trade in food supply ended with the introduction of steam vessels on the Mackenzie River in the late 1880's (MacFarlane 1908:162). The york boats, replaced by the steam vessels, required more labour and carried less supplies.

Mountain Goat: The home of the goat is the high mountain peaks of the western ranges. Goats and sheep do not inhabit the same mountain. Goats usually inhabit the higher mountains, frequently at extremely high elevations. It prefers the roughest possible terrain, where its climbing capabilities are used for escape. The goat has no important predators, only stomachworm infestations have been observed to be important causes of death (Cowan 1973:290).

The life cycle and food requirements resemble those of the mountain sheep. The groups of females and young are smaller than those of sheep, while the goat males are usually solitary.

When the naturalist Seton wrote his book Lives of Game Animals around 1900, he noted with "gratifying amazement" that the goat was the exception to the rule that men had wiped out nearly all big game in America. Theirnumbers and habitat were still the same as it had been 40 years ago (Seton 1953:481).

Grizzly Bear: Today the grizzly bear is considered an endangered species. Formerly a common animal throughout the north, today its range is usually confined to the mountainous areas.

Grizzly bears are omnivorous and feed on grasses, herbaceous plants, fruits, berries, roots, hoary marmots, ground squirrels, lemmings and fish (Cowan 1973:297). The grizzly is not considered an important predator of large game, but more a scavenger feeding on carrion.

In the interior mountainous areas it favors the edge of the treeline. The range of an individual animal is approximately 15 miles (Rand 1945:19). Towards November the grizzly bear goes in "hibernation"[2], which lasts from four to five months (Nelson 1973:118). The young, usually two, are born during hibernation and follow the mother for up to two years. The female does not ovulate while nursing and consequently, young are produced only every other year (Cowan 1973;297).

Black Bear: The observations on the grizzly bear could be repeated for the black bear: the main differences are its size, the black bear is

smaller than the grizzly, and it is more often found in the wooded areas. The colour, of course, is another distinction but slight seasonal changes in colour may lead to confusing observations.

The contemporary Athabascan hunters observed by Nelson consider the den-killed bears as superior, as at that time of the year they are fattest and best-tasting (Nelson 1973:118). Table 2 indicates the importance of the black bear in the Fort Simpson and Fort Liard area. After moose, it is the second most important source of wild meat supply.

Wood Buffalo: Today there are no wood buffalo left in the area under consideration. However, historical accounts covering the first years of European contact indicate that the wood buffalo used to be numerous in the interior plain area. In 1793, the fur trader Alexander Mackenzie noted that around the "Old Establishment" at Peace River the country "abounded in buffalo, elk, wolf, fox and bear" (Mackenzie 1902:349). MacFarlane who went north to the Mackenzie district in 1853 wrote,

> "At the end of the eighteenth and in the earlier part of the nineteenth century, buffalo were abundant on the Upper Peace River, and many also roamed to the northwest as far as the Liard River. Even as late as 1864 a straggler was killed within 40 miles of the Company's post of that name, and another in 1866 about 25 miles from the same".
> (MacFarlane 1908:177)

The naturalist Seton, commenting on the habits of the wood buffalo, remarks,

> "Its general habits differ a good deal from those of its prairie relative, rather resembling those of the moose, although it is much less wary and difficult to approach than that animal".
> (Seton 1953:709)

By 1880 the wood buffalo was nearly extinct. In 1922 the Wood Buffalo Park was established, south of Great Slave Lake, to save it from complete extinction.

Beaver: The beaver is one of the few animals that shares men's ability to alter the landscape. It builds dams and lodges in slow-moving streams and lakes. The water-level is controlled through the network of dams. Swift-flowing streams, subject to flash flooding, are unsuitable for permanent colonization by the beaver (Cowan 1973:170).

Aspen and willow are highly favoured foods, but a large variety of other vegetation can be used (alder, birch, pond weeds and even coniferous trees). A winter food supply is stored near the underwater entrance tunnel to the lodge. The beaver pond plays an important role in the ecology of other animals. Moose, raccoons, otter, weasel, muskrat, waterfowl, fish and insects are often seen around the beaver pond (Bartlett 1974:724).

The beaver is a monogamous animal and the two adults occupy the lodge with two generations of offspring. Weights of adults (over 3 years of age) range upward from 30 to 100 lbs (Cowan 1973:173).

The beaver was, and still is today, hunted for its fur as well as for castoreum, a secretion from the muskglands. Castoreum is used in aspirin and as a fixitive in perfumes (Bartlett 1974:719). Aside from the commercial value, the meat of the beaver is edible and the tail considered a delicacy by some people.

> "The flesh of the beaver except when very lean, is very palatable and easy of digestion, and is much relished by the natives and whites who have partaken thereof" (MacFarlane 1908:253).

A conservation period, implemented by the Hudson's Bay Company in 1821, was however necessary to save the beaver from extinction[3]:

> ". . . they had become scarce or had wholly or almost entirely disappeared (as a result of the keen and very costly rivalry in trade which had for many years existed between the North West Company of Montreal and the Hudson's Bay Company of England, previous to their coalition in 1821 . . .)"
> (MacFarlane 1908:253)

Today, the flat plains east of the Rocky Mountains, drained by the Lower Liard, Petitot and Kaskisa Rivers, is considered good beaver country and especially the Kaskisa River drainage area was noted to support a large beaver population in 1971 (Ruttan 1974c:113).

Aside from men, all the large carnivores prey upon beaver; disease is another important enemy.

Muskrat: The muskrat prefers an environment similar to the beaver. It feeds on aquatic and waterside plants, as well as grasses and herbs. Its main predator is the mink. Of lesser importance is the otter, wolf, wolverine, hawk and owl.

Although a small animal (pelt sizes range from 11 1/2 to 15 inches) a high number of muskrats is relatively easily obtained and the meat is used by the Athabascan speaking hunters described by Nelson (1973:269). The muskrat is the intermediate host of a tapeworm which houses in the liver (Ruttan 1974b:97).

> "When very numerous, epidemic liver disease appears and carries off many thousands of musquash [muskrat]"
> (MacFarlane 1908:245)

The muskrat throws two or three litters of 1 to 11 young a year. The gestation period is about one month (Cowan 1973:229).

Lynx: The lynx is a medium-size cat and a creature of the forest. It prefers the mixed deciduous and coniferous forest, usually remaining in or near the cover (Cowan 1973:344). It feeds mainly on hares, although birds and rodents are utilized as well.

The meat of the lynx is edible, as MacFarlane observed,

> "It is chiefly taken in snares, some are trapped others followed up with dogs, treed and shot. The flesh is white and tender and is an important and much-relished native country product."
> (MacFarlane 1908:179)

The amount of meat, however, is not large as the reported weights of the contemporary lynx, did not exceed 18 pounds (Cowan 1973:344).

Marten: The marten favours a mature coniferous forest, although to a lesser extent it is also found in the mixed coniferous-hardwood forest. The marten feeds mainly on squirrels, hare, mice and ptarmigan.

The upland regions of the Cassiar have historically been an excellent region for marten hunting and its fearless behavior made it an easy prey (Rand 1945:23).

Mating occurs from June to September. The gestation period takes up to 270 days because of delayed implantation (Cowan 1973:301). It has not been established whether fluctuations in population are due to a population cycle or to pelt prices.

Mink: The mink is semi-aquatic in habit and feeds on muskrat and fish. The distribution of mink is related to these factors. Since the introduction of mink farms, the importance of trapping the mink has declined.

Fisher: The fisher belongs to the marten family and has a similar life-cycle. It prefers the mixed coniferous decidious forest, which the fisher almost never leaves. It preys on squirrels, hares, porcupines, mice, fish, insects and sometimes eats berries and fruits (Cowan 1973:307).

Historically they have been unimportant for the Fort Simpson, Fort Halkett and Fort Nelson region (MacFarlane 1908:203).

Weasel: Two sub-species are known in the northern latitudes: the small Least Weasel and the twice as large short-tailed weasel. The Least weasel is more sparsely distributed than the short-tailed weasel. They occur in a variety of habitats wherever small mammals are found (Cowan 1973: 310, 315). Both species change colour during the seasons, brown in summer and white in winter.

Like the marten, the weasel has a long gestation period because of delayed implantation (Rand 1945:27).

Wolverine: The wolverine is even less habitat-specific than the weasel and occurs throughout the north. It feeds on a high variety of small and large animals and carrion. Its robbing of the trap-lines and food caches is legendary. It is reported to successfully attack moose and caribou (Cowan 1973:323).

Commenting on the economically destructive wolverine, MacFarlane observed,

> ". . . the carcajou [wolverine] is not very abundant anywhere . . . even one will, in course of a single season, do an incredible amount of damage. They are fist-class experts in persistently demolishing very extensive lines of deadfalls, marten, and other traps, as well as in hiding, eating, or otherwise injuring the animals found in them." (MacFarlane 1908:203).

Otter: Fish is the usual prey of the otter. It is therefore found wherever the aquatic conditions are suitable, but population density is never high in the interior regions. They are extremely difficult to trap or snare because of their wariness and intelligence (Nelson 1973:248).

Porcupine: The porcupine is most abundant where rocks, cliffs and open pine forest occur together. For food it favours the bark of the pine-tree (Cowan 1973:246). The weight may be around 20 lbs and is relished by many hunters.

Hoary Marmot: Also known as the "whistler" and is readily recognized by a long shrill whistle. It is the largest of the American marmots, weighing as much as 30 pounds (Cowan 1973:120). Their habitat is the alpine meadowland, where it feeds on herbaceous plants. The hoary marmot hibernates for about seven or eight months a year (Cowan 1973:121).

Snowshoe Hare: The hare is an important food source for all carnivorous mammals in the north, as well as for men. The hare prefers a semi-open type forest, the clearings providing vegetation for food and the trees and brush providing shelter. The snowshoe hare does not burrow (Cowan 1973:100). Especially in the north, cycles of great abundance or scarcity of hare

occur at intervals of from 6 to 14 years, the cause behind this cycle being still unknown (Cowan 1973:101).

The North-West Company fur trader Willard Wentzel was the only European survivor through the winter of 1810-1811 in the Fort Simpson area, when in addition to all other game, the hare had disappeared (Wentzel 1960:107). The Hudson's Bay Company trader Edward Smith, who replaced Wentzel at Fort Simpson wrote in 1829 that the hare formed the basic "standard of living" in that area. When in 1831 the hare failed again, Smith had to import pemmican to save the traders from starvation. The severe winter of that year caused the death of half of the Indian population of the locality (Glazebrook 1938:37, 75). In the 1950's Helm reported that the hare, in addition to fish, still constituted "the backbone of the meat diet" for the contemporary population of Jean Marie (Helm 1961: 31).

Fox: The red fox (including the colour phases black, silver and cross, all being one species) prefers a parkland type of habitat. Their food is predominantly hare, mouse, and groundsquirrel, but fruits and berries are consumed as well (Cowan 1973:287). The size is much smaller than that of the wolf.

Wolf: The wolf is perhaps the most widely known as well as the most widely misunderstood animal of the North. The wolf is the least habitat-specific of all animals examined in this study and occurs throughout the North.

There is a widespread popular belief among Europeans, that wolves have been the main cause behind the reduction of the big-game species (caribou, moose and buffalo). This has led to a legally encouraged, but ecologically unjustified wholesale slaughter of wolves through bounty-hunting for many decades. In addition to this bounty-hunting, the impact of humans on the environment in recent years, has altered the predatory behavior as well as the social behavior of wolves.

Studies on the food habits of wolves in North America are all of very recent date, starting in the 1940's (Pimlott 1967). It has been generally accepted that large mammals serve as prey in winter (Pimlott 1967:270). The age distribution of kills made (deer, moose, caribou, wood buffalo) in winter, indicates that predation tends to be concentrated on the very young and the very old (Pimlott 1967:275). Extremely little information is known about the condition of the young animals killed by wolves or whether these would die anyway because of their condition (disease), or how many of these actually were killed by wolves .

In summer, especially during the period when there are pups, the wolf is more dependent on small animals, due to its limited mobility. Large game may be taken but usually consists of solitary stragglers, of which again, the health conditions are basically unknown (Pimlott 1967:275).

The wolf has a complex social organization. It is a communal hunter, as well as a communal feeder. Small animals may be hunted individually, the large game animals are hunted in packs or families. As such, the wolves occupy the same ecological niche as humans, both being

important hunters of large herd animals. This basic ecological similarity between man and wolf, is reflected in contemporary Chipewyan thought, as a model of what Man was, and should be (Sharp: n.d.).

The wolf, dog and coyote are interfertile. Rabies and distember are the important diseasesamong wolves.

Birds: The value of birds in the total food intake of the population of the area under consideration, both contemporary and historical, lies mainly in the variation of diet, rather than in the quantity. Various species of birds, as well as their eggs are eaten. Ducks, grouse, ptarmigan, geese and swans are among the more important species which are hunted.

FISH

The importance of the fisheries in Great Slave Lake for the contemporary Athabascan bush community Jean Marie has been described by June Helm. The people of Jean Marie, situated only about 35 miles south-east of Fort Simpson, travelled via the Mackenzie River all the way to Great Slave Lake, to obtain one of their most important single sources of food. Depending on the amount of fish caught, it also formed a possible monetary income (Helm 1961:22, 23, 31, 32, 128).

Special sections of Great Slave Lake are today reserved for domestic fishing, the remainder, the largest part, is open to commercial fishing. In the 1960's the commercial quota was set at 9 million pounds, while the domestic quota was 1 million pounds (Radjocic 1968:94). At that time the Great Slave Lake fisheries supplied 97% of the commercial fish landed

in the Mackenzie district (Radjocic 1968:93). Lake whitefish and lake trout are the most significant species taken from Great Slave lake. Inconnu, Arctic Grayling, northern pike, pickerel (or wallaye) burbot and goldeye are species of lesser importance.

Trout Lake, Tathlina Lake and Kaskisa Lake are the only other lakes, west of Great Slave Lake, of significant dimensions. The same species of fish inhabit those waters, the whitefish reported to be less important in Trout Lake (Higgins 1969:132). Between 1957 and 1967 the population that made up the community of Trout Lake, consisted of 4 families. Over these years a population increase of 11 persons set the total on 42 (Higgins 1969:73). This community was almost completely dependent on the local mammal population and fish obtained from the lake. It has been suggested that this dependency on a "fish lake" represents an aboriginal pattern (Helm 1961:32). However the lack of lakes, the size of Trout Lake and the general shallowness of most of the small lakes west of Great Slave Lake, causing them to freeze to their entire depth and subsequently containing little fish (Radjocic 1968:93), seems to argue against the importance of small lake dependency in aboriginal times in the area under investigation. River fisheries have been noted as even less important than the lake fish supply. Willard Wentzel, a Norwegian in the service of the North-West Company observed in 1807 that the Indian population, went north of Fort Simpson, near Great Bear Lake for their fishing,

> "Lakes are numerous on the north side of the Grand River [Mackenzie River]. The principal ones and those which offer the best fisheries are: the Great Willow, the Porcupine and Lone Lakes . . . All these lakes empty into the Grant River . . . these lakes are fishing abodes for many families of Natives;

> none of them are of any considerable extent. On the south side of the Grant River, there are only two of any note, the first is the Trout Lake . . . We formerly got a great quantity of peltries from this lake, it being a fishing place for a few Indian families." (Wentzel 1960:82)

The indication that people had to travel far to obtain sufficient fish supplies is underlined by the information that the traders of the Hudson's Bay Company at Fort Simpson had their fall-fisheries, in the 1930's, at Great Slave Lake (Campbell 1958:31).

The pattern, therefore, observed by Helm of the Jean Marie people going to the Great Slave Lake to catch a winter's fish supply and a small population exploiting Trout Lake, is of long standing and strongly suggests the lack of sufficient food resources in the area under consideration throughout the historical period. It does not, however, mean that this was an aboriginal pattern. In the following chapter the aboriginal pattern and ecological changes in the Upper Mackenzie Valley will be examined.

SUMMARY

In addition to the above listed mammals, birds and fish, many more are part of the total food-chain of the area. Chipmunks, rats, insects and other creatures are found in the North. Their importance to subsistence or commerce is negligible, and outside the scope of this study.

The examination of the animal populations within the area with which we are concerned indicates that except in the hilly region of the Horn Mountains, no important concentration of large mammals occurs. The best fishing area is just east of the area, in Great Slave Lake.

The Horn Mountains, east of Fort Simpson, is the only area frequented by the Barren-ground caribou during the winter season. As the migration routes depend on local snow and weather conditions, there are years that the caribou does not come through the area. One such year, 1952, was observed by June Helm during her study of the Jean Marie community (Lynx Point). That year the caribou failed to come to the Horn Mountains.

The flat plains, east of the Rocky Mountains and west and south of the Mackenzie River, have in a recent study been classified as good to excellent fur-bearer, beaver and moose habitat (Ruttan 1974:113). Historical records indicate that animal population density in that area was much higher in the late 1700's, when the European fur traders entered the region. Since then the numbers, as well as the variety of animals have diminished. Already by the 1880's the woodland bison had disappeared, increasing the already high hunting pressure on the moose and woodland caribou. These two species, characteristic of the boreal forest, do not occur in large aggregations and are mainly solitary animals.

Commenting on the Cassiar, the upland boreal forest and remaining section of the area under consideration, Honigmann (1949, 1964:14), thought animal life was quite abundant and well-stocked with game and fur bearers. The historical record indicates exactly the opposite. Few places in North America were observed that supported so few animals. In the following chapters the historical records dealing with the ecology of specific places and movement and use of the environment by human populations will be examined in more detail.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 1

1. According to Robert McKennan, the hunting of moose by the Pacific drainage Athabascans, is a recent development. In earlier times, caribou was more important, but the "introduction of firearms and individualistic hunting practices, resulting from the fur trade have greatly increased the importance of moose in the native economy". The moose does not lend itself to collective hunting techniques (1969:97).

2. The hibernation of the grizzly is not a true hibernation in the biological sense. The body metabolism does not change and it should be considered a deep "sleep". The concept "hibernation" however is retained as itclearly explains the behavioral situation (personal communication with Lawrence Warren).

3. John McLean, a Hudson's Bay Company trader writing in 1945, remarked that several of these so called "conservation measures" were taken. Not only were these completely meaningless, they were "positively untrue". He points out that, first, it was the Company's policy in certain sections to lay the country to waste to keep competition out. Secondly, the measures taken amounted usually to not buying beaver pelts. The condition the natural habitat was in at that time, necessitated the Indian populations to hunt "anything", just not to die of starvation (Wallace 1932:351-354).

CHAPTER THREE

THE ABORIGINAL "SLAVE" INDIANS

Osgood (1936) proposed a distribution of the Northern Athabascan Indians along tribal units. Osgood himself immediately pointed out the extremely arbitrary method used (1936:5). Although cautious at first in deciding what a tribal unit signifies, he abandons it for a sharp distinction when discussing the Slave Indians:

> "It may be mentioned that a group of Indians at the mouth of the Liard River are called Beaver by early writers. These belong to the Slave group and not to the Beaver of Peace River." (Osgood 1936:17)

Osgood, however, does not provide the information on which he based this statement. The following chapter examines the early information regarding the Slave Indians of the Fort Nelson and Fort Simpson area. The examination starts with the expanding early fur trade from the east and follows the subsequent movements of populations and the changing exploitation of the different ecological zones, including the European fur traders into the area of our concern.

The historical and ecological information presented indicate that the tribal distinctions between the Beaver, Sekani and Slave are not aboriginal and have little meaning in historical times, as indeed Osgood himself pointed out:

> "The Athapaskans do not consider themselves as composing neat political or cultural units" (1936:3)

* * * * *

THE WESTWARD EXPANSION OF THE FUR TRADE

The 1665, two French fur traders, Sieur des Grosseilliers and Pierre Esprit Radisson, found a number of English merchants interested in financing an expedition to Hudson Bay. (Rich 1967: 23) In earlier travels (1654-1659) the two fur traders had discovered rich fur trapping areas bordering on Hudson Bay. The Hudson Bay had been known for a long time by French, Dutch, Spanish and Danish explorers searching for the North-West Passage. The fur trade however was of no great interest to these explorers as the fur market in Europe had not developed to any great extent before the 1660's.

Europe had gone through important social and economic changes (the growth of private colonial trade empires and toward a consumer oriented society/economy), and the large scale demand for furs had been firmly established. The English merchants quickly reacted on the information given by Radisson and Grosseilliers and a syndicate of interested people, including members of the English Royalty, provided the capital and an expedition met with success in the eyes of the merchants and within two years the Hudson's Bay Company was founded and a trading post, Fort Charles, was built on James Bay (Rich 1967:29, 39)

Following the first establishment in 1670 all attention was directed toward the expansion of trading posts along the shores of Hudson Bay. The places where the rivers entered the Bay were the favored spots for trade establishments, but no serious attempts were made to penetrate inland along the rivers or to erect trading posts among the population of the interior.

Several factors were involved in this failure to penetrate inland. The landmass surrounding Hudson Bay, known as the Canadian Shield, requires

a special cultural adaptation. The birch-bank canoe and the snowshoe were essential features by which existing Indian populations had adapted to that environment. The Europeans lacked those elements. Neither birch nor cedar grew that close to the shores of Hudson Bay, nor did the Europeans have the skills to manufacture the types of canoe necessary to travel the shallow fast-flowing rivers of that environment. The long cold and snowy winters characteristic of the Canadian Shield also prevented the Europeans from quickly penetrating the interior of the Northern American continent.

Another factor that kept the early fur trade "static", was the constant warfare between the English and French, both interested in expanding their fur trade. The two parties were preoccupied with building trade establishments along the shores of the Hudson Bay, capturing those of each other and subsequently recapturing them again. Additional confusion was added by European treaties, which in turn reversed ownership of trade posts again.

The policy of the Hudson's Bay Company, from its earliest establishment onward, had emphasized the self-sufficiency of the Forts. This policy stipulated that the forts had to "live off the country". This meant almost complete dependency on Indian production of game and fish. (Innis 1967:134)

The geographer Arthur Ray Jr. (1971) has thoroughly documented, how the Cree moved into the different ecological niches in reaction to the existence of trading posts on the shores of Hudson Bay. The people, today known as the Western or Plains Cree, took up the middleman role between the English and the interior tribes. Others, known as the Swampy Cree, attached themselves more closely to the trading forts, providing food and furs. The two groups exploited different ecological zones, which was dis-

tinctively reflected in the buying and trading behaviour at Fort York on Nelson River. (Ray 1971: 90-105).

The middleman position of the Western Cree had a profound influence on the Athabascan speakers, today called the Slave Indians. Precise details during the early years of the Cree middleman role are unknown; only the rapid expansion of their influence and subsequently that of their territory in western and northwesterly direction has been established (Ray 1971: 55). As early as 1690 the Cree were reported to be at war with the Gros Ventres by Henry Kelsey, a young Hudson's Bay Company man, but the total amount of information is regarded by the historian Burpee (Henday 1907: 307) too unsubstantial to make any safe historical conclussions.

At the time that detailed information becomes available about Cree mobility, trade patterns had already changed, as the French fur traders had reached the interior via the Great lakes water system. In the 1720's a French fur trader, landowner and former army man, Pierre Gaultier de Varennes, Sieur de la Vérendrye had obtained the command over the French fur trading posts. He reorganized the early individual attempts of the "coureur de bois" into a joint venture and pushed westward into the interior. (Rich 1967: 83). This French penetration into the area west of the Great lakes had a distinct effect on the trade that reached the English trade establishments at the Hudson Bay (Ray 1971: 90).

The French, dependent upon the supply of trade goods brought in by long canoe trips, mainly offered easily transportable goods. The heavier and bulkier goods like cloth, blankets and kettles had still to be obtained

from the English by the Cree middleman. A further important need was provided by the English at York Factory, which reinforced the continuing Cree affiliation with the Hudson's Bay Company: it was the only post with blacksmith service west of the Great Lakes. The Indians, lacking the technological knowledge and appropriate tools to repair guns, were dependent on this service[1] (Ray 1971: 94)

The loss of trade experienced by the English through the influx of French trade goods was important enough to have the Hudson's Bay Company investigate and try to persuade the interior tribes to come to trade at York Fort themselves. In 1754 Anthony Henday was sent by the Hudson's Bay Company on such a mission. (Henday 1907: 337)

Henday joined a small group of Cree Indians who were regular traders at York Factory. They went up the Nelson River, through the boreal forest, where a shortage of provisions was experienced, toward the Saskatchewan River. As soon as the party reached the plains provisions were easily obtained as animal life was abundant. Toward the North Saskatchewan other small groups of Cree and Assiniboine were met and the groups travelled together to a central meeting point with the Blackfoot Indians. At one time, over 300 tents were occupied by people who spoke a total of four different languages. (Henday 1907: 340) Here, the buffalo was hunted and the meat dried for winter consumption.

Firearms, which are often thought to be more efficient, had been available to these Indians for more than eighty years, yet ---- the hunting of buffalos took place with the bow and arrow, rather than with the gun.

> "I went with the young men a Buffalo hunting, all armed with Bows & Arrows: killed seven, fine sport. So expert are the Natives, that they will take the arrows out of them when they are foaming and raging with pain, and tearing the ground up with their feet and horns until they fall down -------
>
> ------They are so expert that with one or two arrows they will drop a buffalo. As for me I had sufficient employee to manage my horse ----- (Henday 1907: 333, 340)

Moose and deer were hunted when buffalo was not available and then the gun was prefered over the bow and arrow. (Henday 1907: 333). Throughout the trip, the buffalo were so numerous and the Indians killed so many, that often only the choice pieces and the tongue were taken, the rest being left for the wolves(Henday 1907: 334).

Henday provides us here with two important pieces of information. In the first place, the horses mentioned were a recent introduction among the northern Plains Indians. According to the historian Burpee, La Vérendrye had not mentioned the use of horse in 1738-39 (Henday 1907: 334). In 1754, horses were used in hunting the buffalo, apparently with great success. Secondly, rather than using the gun for all animals, the weapons used depended on the most effective and economical method by which an animal could be killed: bow and arrow for the bison, and the gun for the animals which were more difficult to approach, tne moose and the deer. It is clear that the northern Plains Indians had not lost their aboriginal knowledge regarding tools and were not in great need of European technology. This, again, was reflected in the trade patterns at York Factory (Ray 1971: 90-109).

The trade figures at York Factory, as Ray points out, indicate that

the firearms obtained by the Indians west of Hudson Bay, were primarily used for war, rather than for hunting. With the use of guns, the Cree were able to over power the tribes that had not obtained firearms and the results may have been out of proportion to the actual effectiveness of the guns, especially in their initial "shock effect" (Ray 1971: 92-3) With the introduction of the horse and gun a fierce competition for resources developed between the different tribes inhabiting the Plains and warfare became a necessary part of Plains existence (Oliver 1968: 259). Status patterns among the Plains tribes became attached to military or raiding skills and the stealing of horses. Among the Cree, men who had not participated in warfare were ridiculed and their names might be given feminine endings. (Oliver 1968: 260)

Towards the fall the large Indian assembly dissolved into small groups again and Henday found himself leisurely spending the winter in the area which today is called Alberta. An abundance of animals made hunting easy and often there was "Dancing, Conjuring, Drumming & Feasting" as Henday observed. No attempt was made to acquire pelts for trade. Henday tried to persuade the Cree several times to do some fur hunting, to no avail (Henday 1907: 344). Towards the end of March, the men started with construction of canoes. In the last week of April the journey to the east started. Travelling down the North Saskatchewan at several points trade meetings were held with the Black foot and elsewhere other small groups of Cree joined the ever growing flotilla of canoes. Some of the groups carried women and children captives besides the pelts. With the plains tribes, old metal tools were traded for pelts. (Henday 1907: 350-51). At

the end of the third week in May, the Cree were cleaned out off guns, kettles, hatchests and knives, all traded in return for pelts.

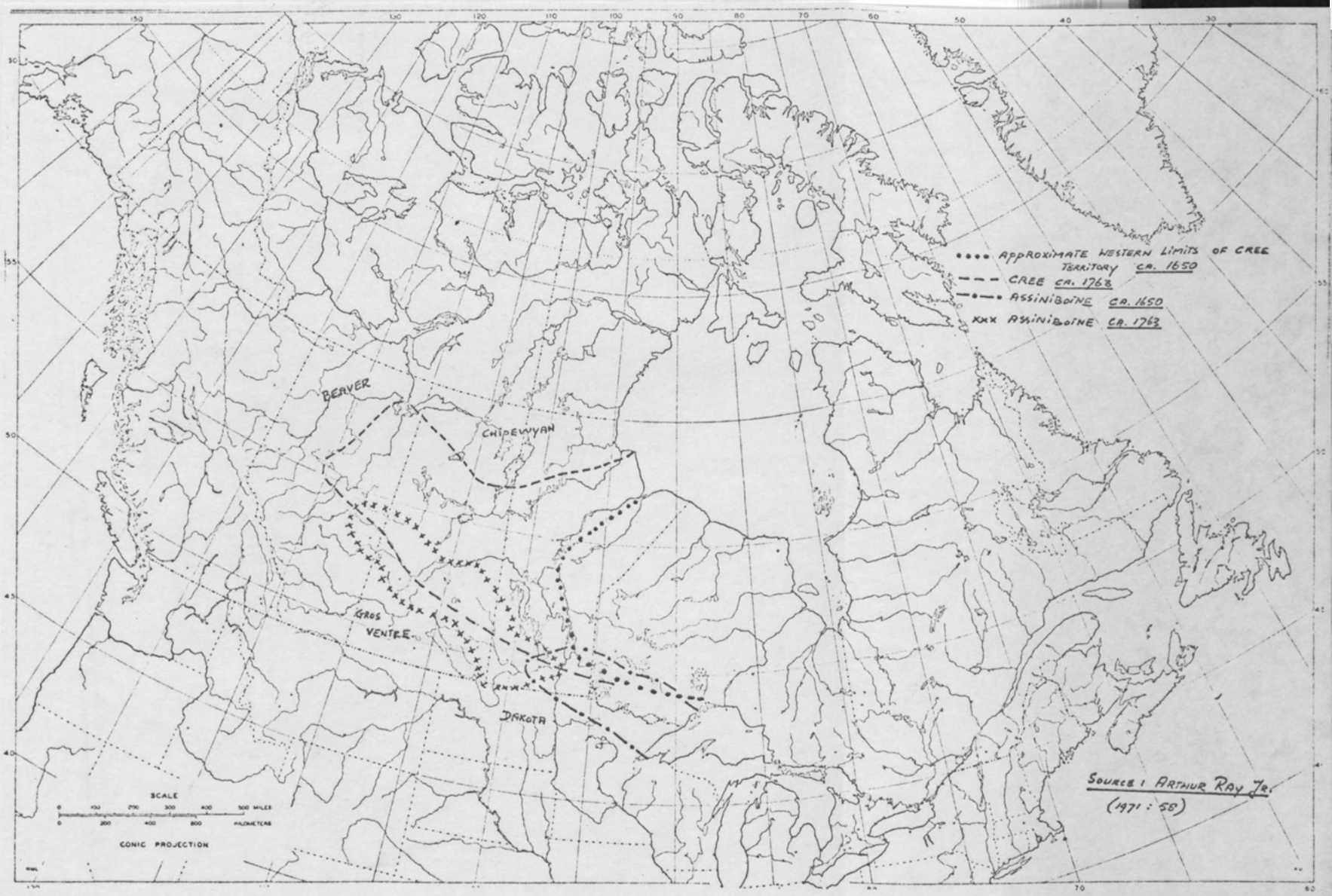
All the pelts, however, did not reach York Factory. Upon reaching the French forts, La Corne on the North Saskatchewan and Fort Pasquina, in the The Pas area, the prime furs were traded to the French, leaving the less valuable pelts to be traded to the English at York Factory (Henday 1907: 352)

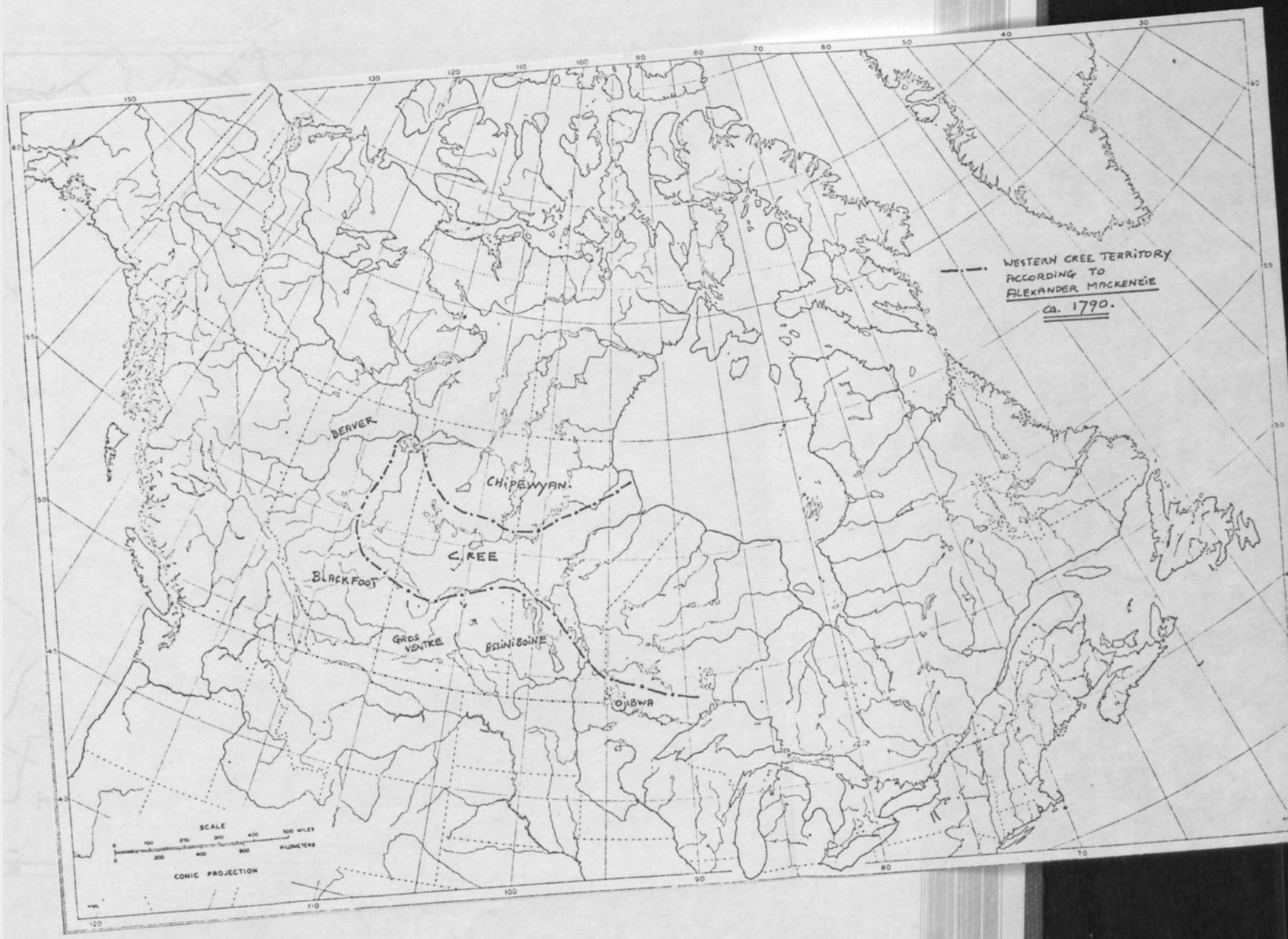
From the Hudson's Bay Company viewpoint, Henday's expedition had failed. He had been unable to persuade the Indians of the interior to come to York Factory themselves. The leader of the Blackfoot Indians had given Henday an answer with which he wholehartedly agreed:

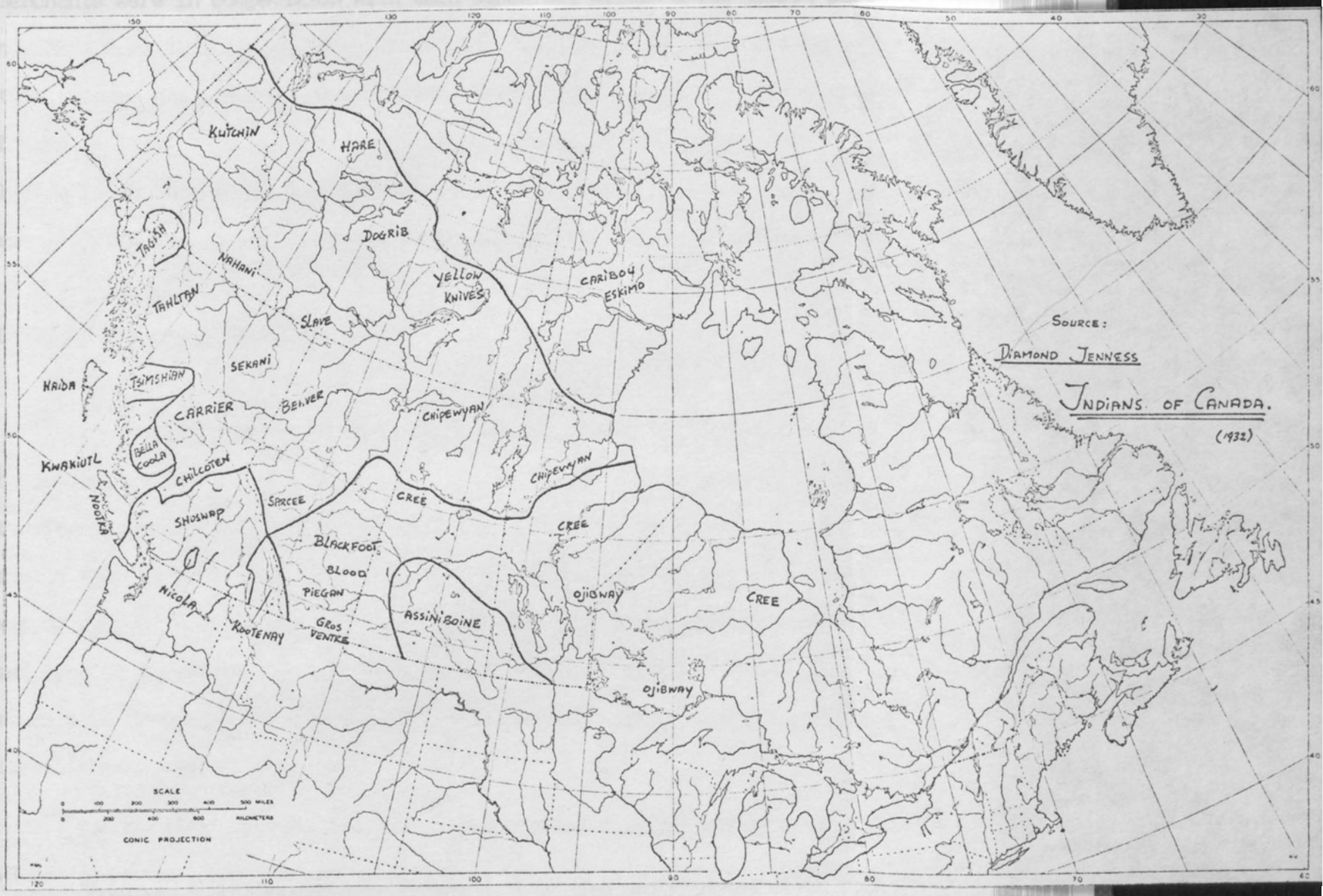
> "it was far off and they could not live without Buffalo flesh; and that they could not leave their horses + c : and many other obstacles, though all might be got over if they were acquited with a canoe and could catch Fish, which they never do. The Chief further said they never wanted food, as they followed the Buffalo and killed them with the Bow and Arrows; and he was informed the Natives that frequented the Settlements, were often times starved on their journey (Henday 1907: 338)

To the Hudson's Bay Company at York Factory the trade with the interior tribes was extremely important. Roughly half of the total trade came from the area where Henday had travelled. (Ray 1971: 89). The decline in this trade was however, short lived. In the second half of the 1750's, shortly after Henday's trip, the French posts were abandoned, when the British conquered the French colony of New France.

A decade later the French were back. Only this time they were in the service of British merchants from Montreal, who had hired many of the


APPROXIMATE WESTERN LIMITS OF CREE TERRITORY CA. 1650
CREE CA. 1768
ASSINIBOINE CA. 1650
ASSINIBOINE CA. 1763
BEAVER
CHIPEWYAN
GROS VENTRE
DAKOTA
SCALE
CONIC PROJECTION
SOURCE: ARTHUR RAY JR. (1971 : 58)


WESTERN CREE TERRITORY
ACCORDING TO
ALEXANDER MACKENZIE
ca. 1790.
BEAVER
CHIPEWYAN.
CREE
BLACKFOOT
GROS VENTRE
ASSINIBOINE
OJIBWA
SCALE
100 200 300 400 500 MILES
0 200 400 600 KILOMETERS
CONIC PROJECTION


KUTCHIN
HARE
TAGISH
DOGRIB
NAHANI
YELLOW KNIVES
CARIBOU ESKIMO
TAHLTAN
SLAVE
SEKANI
HAIDA
TSIMSHIAN
BEAVER
CHIPEWYAN
CARRIER
BELLA COOLA
KWAKIUTL
CHILCOTEN
SPARCEE
CREE
SHUSWAP
BLACKFOOT
BLOOD
PIEGAN
NICOLA
OJIBWAY
ASSINIBOINE
KOOTENAY
GROS VENTRE
SOURCE:
DIAMOND JENNESS
INDIANS OF CANADA.
(1932)
SCALE
CONIC PROJECTION

French-Canadians as boatmen (Rich 1967: 138). Initially the British merchants were in competition with each other but within a few years, partnerships were established among them. Those partnerships, of short duration, became amalgamated under the name "North West Company". They were formed in 1775, 1776, 1779, 1780, 1874 and the largest and final one in 1787. In another section of the paper, the new trade relations that emerged with the expansion of the North West Company will be examined.

EARLY ATHABASCAN DISPLACEMENT

The early European fur traders, or explorers as they often liked to be called, at several points gave information regarding shifts in tribal territories population size etc., which had preceeded their coming. One should keep in mind that much of the information sought by the furtraders was of extreme value to themselves. Language, behaviour, population size, and type of hunters, were important points of information, on which decisions were made such as bringing in special hunters, food supply for trade establishment etc.

As one might expect, the furtraders werenot free of ethnocentric value judgements, but wherever possible, I will quote a number of individuals to allow cross-evaluation of the presented material.

Alexander Mackenzie, a partner of the North West Company presents a variety of information in his account of his voyages to the Arctic Sea in 1789 and Pacific Ocean in 1793, which pre-dates the influence of the

European traders:

> "On the 13th at noon we came to the Peace Point; from which, according to the report of my interpreter the river derives its name; It was the spot where the Knisteneaux [Cree] and Beaver Indians settled their dispute -----
>
> When this country was formely invaded by the Knisteneaux, they found the Beaver Indians inhabiting the land about Portage La Loche and the adjoinning tribe were those whom they called slaves. They drove both these tribes before them; When the latter proceeded down the river from the Lake of the Hills [Lake Athabasca] in consequence of which that part of it obtained the name of Slave River. The former proceeded up the river [Peace River]; and when the Knisteneaux made peace with them, this place was settled to be the boundary. (1902: 340)

Makenzie's remark was made during the voyage to the Pacific Ocean in 1793. In this same time period David Thompson, in the service of the Hudson's Bay Company came to a similar conclusion:

> "The Northern portion of this region [the Canadian Shield] interior and north of Hudson's Bay to far westward is hunted upon and claimed by a distinct race of Indians, who, however dispersed, claim their origin and country to be from Churchill River at its sortie into the sea [Hudson Bay]. Their native name by which they distinguish themselves is "Din-nae". To some, hunting on a particular tract of country, an adjective is added "Tza Din-nae" - "Beaver Dinnae" (Thompson 1971: 130)

The reason for the abandonment of the original territory was the expansion of the Cree.

> "The Missinipi [Churchill River] is the name which it received from the Knisteneaux, when they first came to this country and either distroyed or drove back the natives, whom they held in great contempt, on many accounts, but particularly for their ignorance in hunting the beaver, stretching and drying the skins of those animals". (Mackenzie 1902: cxix)

The information presented by Thompson and Mackenzie indicates that the Athabascan speakers occupied territories further south than contemporary Athabascan speakers. The area mentioned by the two fur traders is significant in several ways. In the first place, 4 distinct ecological zones with their characteristic animal populations are within easy reach: the plains and parkland transition zone with the buffalo, the barren grounds and transition zone with the caribou, the boreal forest with beaver and moose and a large number of excellent fishing lakes. The extreme richness of resources in that time period made it a favorite place for fur trading posts (Mackenzie 1902: cxxxix, 200-204). In the second place, the area constituted the central point of water-route transportation. From these the routes lead north to Lake Athabasca via Elk River, west to the Beaver River and Lesser Slave Lake, east to the Hudson's Bay Company posts via the Churchill and Nelson Rivers, and south toward the North and South Saskatchewan (Mackenzie 1902: cxxvii).

The Cree expansion, triggered off by the early shock effect of the gun and the acquired middleman role, was directed towards this important area. The good transportation routes were essential to the middleman position, while the northern plains and parkland environment provided abundant resources. As noted earlier, in the second half of the eighteenth century, the introduction of the horse on the plains heightened the competition among tribes exploiting the plains environment. The horse, an introduction from the south, undoubtedly created a northward resource pressure, leaving populations that had not acquired the horse at a distinct disadvantage.

Of the Athabascan speakers who originally occupied the northern fringes of the plains transition zone, only a small group managed to acquire horses and have become known as the Sarcee Indians. The remaining Athabascan speakers (the Tza Din-nae of Thompson) were pushed into the boreal forest.

The Dene (rather than Tza Din-nae) referred to by Thompson, have become known as the Chipewyan Indians, who exploited the environment of the caribou as well as the excellent fishing lakes of the area. The amount of caribou available to the Chipewyan hunters was experienced by Thompson himself in 1792, when he went caribou hunting about twenty miles up the Nelson River from York Factory. At a point where the caribou crossed the river, Thompson counted the animals by a method partly learned from the Indians. A total of 3,564,000 animals crossed the river, without including the small herds. (Thompson 1971: 118) The alternative to the caribou, were the fishing lakes of the area.

> "[The Chipewyans]--- pride themselves on being expert anglers, and have made it their study; the great lakes of their country yield the finest fish, and when the deer [caribou] fail they readily take to angling, although it affords them no clothing ----- (Thompson 1971: 146).

Unlike the Tza Din-nae or Beaver Indians, the Chipewyan Indians were not challenged by other populations regarding the exploitation of their ecological niche. This allowed the Chipewyan Indians to continue their aboriginal hunting methods:

> "they [the Chipewyan] are not remarkable for their activity as hunters, which is owing to the ease with which they snare deer [caribou] and spear fish. But, notwithstanding the barren state of their country, these people might live in great comfort, for the lakes abound in fish, and the hills are covered with deer. Sometimes

> they drive the deer into the small lakes, where they spear them, or force them into inclosures where the bow and arrow are employed. (Mackenzie 1902: clxxx, clxxiv, clxxxii)

Like the Blackfoot, Assiniboine and Cree, described by Henday on the northern plains, the Chipewyans used the bow and arrow and spears in the hunting of large game animals (Mackenzie 1902: cxxxviii, clxxxii). On the plains, however, the hunting of the buffalo had changed from the surround-method to the hunting on horse-back. The Chipewyan continued their method of hunting until deep in the nineteenth century. This was noted by the fur traders Samuel Black, who explored the Finlay River for the Hudson's Bay Company in 1824. Black had with him a Chipewyan hunter:

> "Le Prise, at Fort Chipewyan passed for a good hunter, in Peace River he starved and at one time came to the Fort on all fours by starvation by missing and etc. and on this voyage he is always missing ----" (Black 1955: 131).

The difference in game and methods of hunting was most likely an insurmountable problem for the Chipewyan hunter in this new environment. Moose and beaver were only alternative sources of food for the Chipewyans (Mackenzie 1902: clxxv, cxxxciii).

Of all the populations, here examined, the Athabascan speakers, called the Beaver Indians, were the only group excluded from an ecological zone with important large scale concentrations of game animals, or important fishing lakes. They were confined to exploiting a Moose, woodbuffalo, woodland caribou and beaver habitat. All of these game animals are solitary in behaviour. In addition, these Athabascan speakers found themselves constantly raided by Cree and Assiniboine Indians, who were interested in

obtaining beaver pelts, as well as slaves, and to increase their warrior status within the tribe.

The raiding methods used by the Cree and Assiniboine were observed by John McDonnell, a partner of the North-West Company:

> "In these excursions they take forty days or two months, sometimes travelling night and day, especially on their return, if they have been successful, for fear of pursuit; and they mostly return by different routes, leaving the wounded to shift for themselves (McDonnell 1960: 281).

Evidence of raids was found within the Rocky Mountains proper (Mackenzie 1931: 81-83, Thompson 1971: 114 Black 1955: 72) as well as far down the Mackenzie River (Mackenzie 1902: 228).

> "The Indians informed me they had been to hunt at a large lake, called by the Knisteneaux, the Slave Lake [Lesser Slave Lake] which derived its name from that of its original inhabitants who were called slaves --- It is well known to the Knisteneaux who are among the inhabitants of the plains on the banks of the Saskatchiwine River; for formerly, when they used to come to make war in this country they came in their canoes to that lake and left them there; from thence to the Fork, or East branch [Smokey River] of this River which was their war-road. (Mackenzie 1931: 29)

During his Arctic Sea expedition in 1789, Mackenzie found abundant evidence of the Cree intrusions. Searching for the entrance to the river that eventually was named after him, an island in the Great Slave lake was found to be cleared of its trees. The English Chief, a Chipewyan Indian, who had joined the expedition in the role of interpreter and hunter, explained that,

> "several winters ago, many of the Slave Indians inhabited the islands that were scattered over the bay, as the surrounding waters abound with fish throughout the year, but had been driven away by the Kristeneaux". (Mackenzie 1902: 206)

On a small island in the Mackenzie River between the present day settlements of Fort Simpson and Jean Marie, the poles of four lodges were found. Mackenzie concluded that these had belonged to the Cree and had been used during their war excursions some six or seven years before. (Mackenzie 1902: 225). Further down the same river, near the entrance of Willowlake River, the local population had made their encampment on a high hill. The reason behind this, according to Mackenzie, was to defend themselves better against their enemy, the Cree (Mackenzie 1902: 228).

On the return part of the voyage, again in the neighborhood of Fort Simpson, an awl and a paddle were found on the river bank. Mackenzie concluded Mackenzie these had been left behind by the Cree chief Meude-d'ours who had been in that region the preceeding spring. (Mackenzie 1902: 326).

In addition to raids by bands of Cree, the Chipewyan Indians frequented the western shores of Great Slave lake. The Red-Knife Indians, who were met by the Mackenzie expedition in the north west corner of Great Slave lake, complained about the Chipewyan Indians who regularly pillaged them. (Mackenzie 1902: 213). The English Chief, a Chipewyan who had been attached to the Hudson's Bay Company trading posts, but had switched to the North-West Company, had made several fur trading trips to that area in 1786 and 1787. During the Mackenzie expedition he even settled some of his old accounts with the Red-knife Indians. (Mackenzie 1902: 212)

On the maps, which accompany the published journal of Mackenzie's voyages, the Beaver Indians are indicated as occupying the region of the

Horn Mountains, the hilly country east of Fort Simpson. As the journals give no account of Mackenzie meeting any of the Beaver Indians, he must have used the information given to him by the English Chief and the Red-Knife guide, who helped the expedition find the entrance to the Mackenzie River (Mackenzie 1902: 222, 332, 333).

In 1807, Willard Wentzel, a Norwegian who traded for the North-West Company at the post today called Fort Simpson, reported that the population of the area were Beaver Indians.

> "The inhabitants of the country --- are Beaver Indians, but their original name is Echel-la-o-tuna or Gens des Bois Forts, and pretend to be a branch of the tribe of the Beaver Indians of Peace River, from whom they had been formerly separated and then driven this way by their inveterate enemies the Crees ----- These wars exterminated great numbers of them, so that they were at length reduced from a numerous tribe to but 200 men. Their language still bears an analogy to that of the Peace River Indians who are at most not above seven or eight days walk in an easterly direction from the place where those of the Grand River [Mackenzie River] reside (Wentzel 1960: 85)

His friend and colleague George Keith who was stationed at what is today called Fort Nelson presents similar information.

> "The Natives of this Establishment call themselves "Beaver Indians" a name which they claim as descendants from the Beaver Indians of Peace River from whom they were separated some ages ago when attacked by enemies. The terror caused by this sudden attack induced them to fly for safety to the northward (Keith 1960: 68)

The Beaver Indian population of the Peace River, however, had gone through some profound changes by the time the Europeans reached them. Mackenzie used an establishment called "The Fork" (at the confluence of the Smokey and Peace Rivers) as his starting point for the expedition to the

Pacific Ocean in 1793. He observed that the local Beaver Indians had adopted a Cree lifestyle:

> [Beaver Indians] --- of the same stock as the Chipewyan, they differ from them in appearance manners and customs, as they have adopted those of their former enemies, the Knisteneaux; they speak their language, as well as cut their hair, paint, and dress like them, and possess their inmoderate fondness for liquor and tobacco. This description, however, can be applied only to the men, as the women are less adorned even than those of the Chipewyan tribes (Mackenzie 1931: 10).

Commenting further on religion, Mackenzie points out that he never witnessed any ceremony of devotion which was not borrowed from the Cree.

> " ..... their feasts and fasts being an imitation of that people (Mackenzie 1931: 40)

Among the Beaver Indians Mackenzie met two "Rocky Mountain Indians" who told him that the name given to them was actually wrong as they were pushed in that direction by the Beaver Indians. Their original country had been well east of the Rocky Mountains (Mackenzie 1931: 30)

> "The Beaver and Rocky Mountain Indians, who traded with us in this river [Peave River] did not exceed an hundred and fifty men, capable of bearing arms; two thirds of whom call themselves Beaver Indians. The latter differ only from the former, as they have, more or less imbibed the customs and manners of the Knisteneaux (Mackenzie 1931: 37).

In 1810, Daniel Harmon, a furtrader with the North-West Company who traded among the Beaver Indians in Peace River as well as among the Carriers and Sekani Indians of New Caledonia [British Columbia], reported that the Sekani:

> "..... at no distant period, belonged to the tribe, called Beaver Indians, who inhabit the lower part of Peace River; for they differ but little from them in dialect, manners and customs, + c. (Harmon 1957: 131).

During the summer months they fished and hunted in the Rocky Mountains, but during the winter months they returned toward the plains east of the Mountains to hunt the bison, moose and deer (Harmon 1957: 130) In 1824, this seasonal movement was still followed, as reported by Samuel Black who in that year explored the headwaters of the Finlay, Stikine and Kechika Rivers for the Hudson's Bay Company. (1955: 188, 189). Like the earlier writers, Black noticed the remarkable similarity between Beaver and Sekani Indians.

> "The Thecannies have but a couple of songs derived from the Cree and learned from the Beaver Indians of Peace River, they use the Tambour and dance no better than the Beaver Indians and like them. (Black 1955: 121).

Black, who had a good knowledge of the Cree language, acquired during his long-time service with the North-West Company, frequently used the collective noun "Slaves" or "Slave tribes" when a general reference was made to Athabascan speakers including the Sekani among whom he was living (Black 1955: 12, 108, 109, 131). Mackenzie, as noted before, reported the original inhabitants of the Lesser Slave Lake to be Slaves. In the area where the Slave Indians should have been, according to the proposed distribution of Osgood (1936), whose view is generally accepted by ethnologists, Mackenzie, Keith and Wentzel reported the population to be Beaver Indians. Mackenzie in a letter to Roderic McKenzie in 1791 suggests the

development of trade relations with the Beaver Indians of the Mackenzie River (he himslef had named it River Disappointment), but at the same time urges him to investigate the problem of the precise location of Beaver and Slave Indians. The confusion lay in the Cree word "tlya-tsai-see-nu" meaning "slave" or "stranger" and was used by the Cree to indicate many different people including the Blackfoot (Bryan 1969: 35). The early Europeans started to use this term in general for the Arctic Drainage Athabascans or "some" Athabascans, but it was never applied to a distinct group with whom they had direct contact or trade relations.

The total information presented regarding the aboriginal Beaver Indians, the similarity in language and customs among the later groups of Beaver and Sekani Indians, and the unavailability of a population that named itself "Slave", suggest that all the population today known under these names, are descendants of one common stock: the Beaver Indians.

The increased dependency on a woodland environment, with its characteristic animal population, caused by the pressure of developments that took place among the plains tribes and the subsequent raiding of the Beaver Indians by these plains tribes, required a different sort of social organization. A wide dispersal of population took place. Fluid, small scale groupings with high, constant mobility could more effectively exploit the resources available. The importance of firearms for woodland hunters became again evident with the expansion of the North-West Company into the Peace River and Upper Mackenzie regions. Unlike the Plains tribes and Chipewyan Indians, who hunted the vast herds of buffalo and caribou and

who continued to use the bow and arrow and spear, the Beaver Indians quickly changed to firearms. Before the early 1870's, few guns had reached the Beaver Indians through the Cree middleman trade, but by 1786,

> "When the first traders from Canada arrived on the banks of this river [Peace River], the natives employed bows and snares, but at present very little use is made of the former, and the latter are no longer known". (Mackenzie 1931: 38)

As one might expect, the furs obtained were traded rather than used for clothing and already in 1809 Daniel Harmon noted the important changes that had takén place among the Beaver Indians of Peace River.

> "Cloathed with European goods + have firearms instead of Bows and Arrows. Formerly they were cloathed with buffaloe Skins + c. and cut their wood with sharp Stones, and made use of the Bones of animals in lieu of knives. (Harmon 1957:23).

The rather swift and total adoption of European firearms and the sharply increased use of European clothing, resembling the pattern uncovered by Ray for the Swampy Cree (Ray 1971: 98-102), indicate that the Beaver Indians initially favored the possibilities presented to them by the arrival of the North-West Company traders.

THE DIRECT-CONTACT ERA; THE EXPANSION OF THE NORTH-WEST COMPANY

The traders, who after the conquest of New France moved into the niche earlier abandoned by the French, revolutionized the fur trade. The enormous size of the country and the length of the canoe trips, necessitated a constantly increasing size of partnership and financial involvement. The largest partnership, an association of free partners operating

without a charter or fixed organization, was established in 1787 and became known as the North-West Company (Black 1955: xxii).

Merchants in Montreal and Quebec, known as the eastern partners, organized the supply of trade commodities bought in England, while younger merchants, the wintering partners, took charge of the trading posts and field operations (Black 1955: xxi).

The new merchants of the North-West Company followed an agressive and unscrupulous policy which in 1795 gave them control over eleven-fourteenths of the totalfur trade, while the Hudson's Bay Company accounted for only two-forteenths and independant traders had one-fourteenth (Rich 1967: 130, 188). Several methods were used by the North-West Company to obtain a maximum amount of furs. Special hunters were employed, mostly Iroquois, who successively cleared out whole territories of fur bearers, taking all animals regardless of age and throughout the season (Wentzel 1960: 109, Harmon 1957: 118, 193 Innis 1967: 237, Black 1955: 8, 9, 41) Regeneration of animal life under such high hunting pressure was extremely slow. Food requirements for both the hunters and Company personnel were only partly met in the woodland habitat, and the available game species quickly deminished. The Cree, whose middleman role had become obsolete with the direct contact of the Europeans and interior tribes, joined the Assiniboine in the new role of meat traders to the North-West Company, (Ray 1971: 160).

> " ---- and although as we have observed above, these Indians [Plains Indians] have no valuable furs, their friendships and co-operation, is necessary to the support of the trade carried on with others. They alone supply all the food on which the company servants subsist; without which they could be compelled to abandon

> three fourths of the country, and all the valuable part of the trade. The sole employment of these Indians, is to kill the large animals with which the country abounds; to select particular parts of their flesh and tallow; and prepare it in the usual manner and deposit it at the posts where the Company's servants will find it, as they progress from and return to the general rendezvous; as these Indians are not like those of the cold and mountainous regions in want of manufactured goods, their principal inducement to perform the services we have enumerated is the present of rum, which they receive at stated periods (Innis 1967: 236)

In 1813, the North-West Company required 58.095 pounds of provision to feed the company's servants[2)] (Ray 1971: 160) Not all provisions came from the Plains Indians. The trading posts attempted to cultivate a variety of products and fresh meat was obtained through local hunting and fishing, whenever possible. In addition to furs, dried meat and pemmican became important trade articles.

Exorbitant amounts of liquor, rusty guns and pieces of rotten tobacco were used and offered in a variety of circumstances as long as they secured the goal; pelts (Innes 1967: 269, Davidson 1967: 88, McKenzie 1960: 372, 382) It is outside the scope of this study to examine the atrocities reported of that era. However, it is quite clear that the ruinous hunting methods used did not exist in a vacuum, but were part of the total lunacy, or what the writer-historian Patterson (himself a distinguished traveller-trapper) calls "a wild wartime extravagance" (Black 1955: xxiii). The destructive hunting methods necessitated the removal of the local Indian populations to other areas and that the North-West Company push forward constantly in search of new sources of fur (Black 1955: xxii, Innis 1967: 264).

With the Europeans came disease. The often quoted example of the death-rate through disease is the"nine-tenth of the Chipewyan" by Samuel Hearne. David Thompson places the toll of the 1782 small-pox epidemic as one-half of the population. (Thompson 1971: 122). Its devastation is maybe fully realized with Mackenzie's explanation of the name "Portage des Morts" situated between a succession of small lakes which form the headwaters of the Churchill River, east of Lac la Crosse,

> "On the left side is a point covered with human bones, the relics of the small-pox, which circumstances gave the Portage and the lake this melancholoy denomination". (Mackenzie 1902: cxxi).

In the 1820's "measles and chincough", imported, according to Wentzel, by the colonists of Red River, destroyed one fifth of the Indian population all the way from Lac la Pluie to the Athabasca area. Besides the large scale epidemics, local disease took its toll. In the years before 1807, Wentzel reported the death of many natives, and in 1808, Keith reported the death of many excellent hunters, neither of the two fur traders specifying the exact disease. The people concerned were the Beaver Indians of the Fort Simpson and Fort Nelson area. (Wentzel 1960: 95 Keith 1960: 79)

The North-West Company penetrated the area of Great Slave Lake in 1786 when two fur traders, Grant and Le Roux, erected a trade post east of the mouth of the Slave River. (Mackenzie 1902: 202, Wentzel 1960: 94). Initially, trade relations were directed toward the Chipewyan Indians but:

> "These being somewhat lazy to hunt, went in guest of strange, nations, with whom they would trade an old knife or a worn out axe, which they had got for little or nothing, for double or triple its value ---- (Wentzel 1960: 94)

In fur trade parlance "lazy to hunt" refers specifically to the trapping of fur. As noted before, the abundance of caribou made the Chipewyan Indians strongly self-sufficient. The English-Chief, who later joined the Mackenzie expedition in 1789 and who had for many years been a fur trader connected with the Hudson's Bay Company post of Churchill Factory (Mackenzie 1902: 193), turned out to be a valuable middleman to the traders of the North West Company, when from 1786 onward, he brought his trade to the newly erected post at Great Slave lake (Wentzel 1960: 94)

In 1789, the year Mackenzie travelled to the Arctic Sea, a trading post was established at Marten Lake by Le Roux. It was not until 1796 that the North-West Company established their first post down the Mackenzie River, eighty miles from Great Slave Lake (Wentzel 1960: 95) This post only experienced a short period of successful trading. Already in 1799, according to Wentzel, a sharp decline in trade set in, a decline which never recovered:

> "This was not occasioned by the inactivity of those who had charge of the department but rather by the late struggle between the X.Y. and the North-West Companies and, partly, by the death of many Natives. (Wentzel 1960:95).

The X.Y. Company operated only for 5 years (1799-1804). Led by Alexander Mackenzie, this group of merchants attempted to buy out the Hudson's Bay Company, in which endeavour they failed, and shortly after merged again with the North-West Company (Black 1955: xxi). If Wentzel was correct, the merger of the X.Y. and North-West Companies would have resulted in a higher volume of trade in the years following. However, only the year 1807 showed a slight increase. From 1808 onward the fur trade

dwindled "down to nothing" in 1814 and was reported completely ruined towards the 1820's (Wentzel 1960: 95, 109-115, Keith 1960: 125-129).

The relations between the Indians and the traders deteriorated increasingly. Especially the use of Iroquis hunters by the North-West Company - whose methods of hunting have been noted earlier - and the subsequent shortage of beaver which resulted from these methods, were an important part of the complaints of the local Beaver Indians. Large scale internal mismanagement within the North-West Company may have added to the ever increasing problems. In 1814 a party of Beaver Indians destroyed Fort Nelson and shortly after, the North-West Company pulled out of the Fort Simpson - Fort Nelson district (Wentzel 1960: 109-115: Innis 1967: 274).

When in 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company acquired the monopoly of the fur trade, the traders returned to Fort Simpson. This time however the value of Fort Simpson was mainly in a new function: it became the most important supply station for the exploration and exploitation of new fur producing areas in the mountainous northwest. (Wentzel 1960: 145-151)

SUMMARY

June Helm has attempted to project back into aboriginal times, pattern and regularities in social organization of the contemporary Arctic drainage Athabascans. (1965: 382). As the continuity of kinship systems cannot be regarded as intrinsic, but adaptive to the economic conditions,

it became necessary for Helm to regard the ecological conditions "in truly aboriginal times not much better" (Helm 1965: 382). Her investigation of the past conditions however do not reach beyond the information presented by Wentzel and Keith in 1807-1820. (Helm 1965: 381, 382)

In this chapter I have shown that this era, the last years of the stronghold of the North-West Company in the Upper Mackenzie River district, was the low-point in resources available. Preceeding this era, important changes had taken place. From 1670 onward, the date when scanty information becomes increasingly available, large population shifts took place, in which the different groups were pushed into new ecological situations. The Athabascan speakers, who had become known as the Beaver Indians, were such a population and they found themselves increasingly dependent on the boreal forest proper, rather then on a variety of ecological zones, which were available to them when they occupied the southern fringe of the boreal forest and plains transition zone.

The woodland area, occupied by these Athabascan speakers, was at the same time the most important fur bearer habitat. The importance of fur as a trade commodity, and an increasingly war-like and war-status oriented population inhabiting the northern Plains, including the Western Cree, resulted in a constant flow of raiding parties into the area occupied by the Beaver Indians. The destructiveness in terms of male Athabascans can only be guessed at, but many women and children captives were taken as slaves.

The Cree team "Hya-tsai-see-nu" meaning "Slave" or "Stranger" was applied to many different people (Bryan 1969) and the early European traders took over this nomenclature and used it as a synonym for the Arctic drainage Athabascans.

With the coming of the European traders, the raiding parties gave way to specialized hunting units, increasing the pressures on the woodland resources, and shortly afterwards this resulted in the complete destruction of some species. In this perspective, the high death rates among the Indians through disease, which coincides with the same time period, reflects the much lowered resistance against some of the diseases, due to undernourishment and starvation.[3)] Starvation became an important population control mechanism, even among the Europeans (see p 39) only their numbers were replenished through the hiring of new people and where possible, the distribution of pemmican.

For the Athabascan people, the main survival mechanism open was the attachment of people to the "good hunter". Micro-climatic and ecological conditions, and the limitations on the duration of the status or efficiency of the good hunter (age, accidents, disease), required an organization that enabled people to reorient themselves around newly emerging good hunters (Helm 1965: 381). Affiliation to such "survival units" was certainly not restricted to any people of specific "tribal" origin. As was noted among the Peace River Beaver Indians intermarriage with the Cree took place. Although it is not completely clear, whether this intermarriage already took place before the collapse of the Cree middleman position, the reported

use of Cree "customs" seems to indicate a long standing relation for some groups.

In his study of the "aboriginal" ancestors of the Athabascan population of Fort Nelson in the 1940's Horrigmann concluded that "the business of adaptation occupied all the time available to the society" Although this was certainly the case; the reason is probably not because they were not agriculturists. (Honnigmann 1946: 60)

Following the collapse of the North-West Company a new era started for the Athabaskan speakers of the Fort Nelson, Fort Simpson area. Helm called this the "stabilized fur and mission stage" (Helm 1971 : 349). This time period is largely unexplored by anthropologists although an abundance of archival materials is available. This study, dependent on library material, therefore will follow the trade expansion into the unexplored regions of the mountainous Northwest.

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 3

1. This knowledge of metallurgy was closely guarded by the British. In the eighteenth century several laws were published that prohobited the export of machinery used in the production of iron. Blacksmiths were liable to one year imprisonment and a penalty of 500 pounds if they tried to go to a foreign country (Russell 1967:368).

2. One buffalo, using the lean meat only, produced one bag of pemmican (90 lbs.). Pemmican consisted of half dried and pulverized meat, with half fat mixed. The taste was reported to depend completely on the imagination of the eater.

3. Immunities to disease are acquired. All races can ultimately develop immunities to disease. Europeans had been around in North America for over 200 years and epidemics had occurred earlier in Mexico and South America. Although I do not exclude disease, it seems that too many writers and analysts exclude starvation as an important cause behind the constantly recurring waves of epidemics in North America. The coincidence of widespread epidemics with the breakdown of animal populations, the main source of food, is too great. Up to this time one theory of specific immunity is the sickle cell/malaria hypothesis - as yet, not fully accepted.

CHAPTER FOUR

ABORIGINAL "KASKA" INDIANS

The division of the Kaska Indians among the Northern Athabascans, has been extremely problematic for most ethnographers. The Kaska, who have also been called "Nahani" Indians, have been classified with and subdivided into, a variety of units by Morice (n.d.), Swanton (1952), Jenness (1932) and Osgood(1936). Osgood's classification and subdivision was basically the one proposed by Jenness, only the name "Nahani" was refuted and dropped. The name of the most widely known subdivision, the Kaska, was adopted for the whole "tribal unit". (Osgood 1936:13). The name Nahani was eliminated because it had been indiscriminately used as a label for many different Indian populations. Although Jenness himself had pointed out that Nahani meant "people there far away" he had still used this name for the tribal division (Jenness 1932:377). Jenness classified the Nahani among the tribes of the Mackenzie and Yukon Basin, but indicated that influences of the Pacific coast cultures had reached that influences of the Pacific coast cultures had reached these people and had been adopted (1932:396-399). Osgood placed the Kaska among the Arctic drainage Athabascans.

When in 1944/45 Honigmann studied the Kaska in the field, the Pacific coast influences were noted to be largely restricted to the Western Kaska. The study proposed a new internal subdivision: the Kaska consisted of 5 macrocosmic bands, of which one, the Espatodena, has remained totally unknown ethnographically until today (Honigmann 1949:33-35).

On examination of the earliest literature on the area and the populations exploiting the area indicate that the resources were extremely

scanty and the number of people accordingly very low. Some of the populations recorded by different people at different times did not originate from existing groups but were "immigrants" from other areas.

* * * * *

EARLY TRAVELS IN KASKA TERRITORY

In 1821 the Hudson's Bay Company acquired the North-West Company and inherited the almost totally ruined fur districts in which that company had operated. Drastic internal reorganization took place and a policy of exploring new beaver hunting ground was implemented. One of the first expeditions in search of new fur hunting territories was the exploration trip by Samuel Black, who in 1824 travelled to the headwaters of the Finlay, Stikine and Kechika Rivers. Interest was specifically directed toward the headwaters of the Liard River whose course was still unexplored by Europeans.

Iroquois hunters had already operated in the Lower Finlay River (Black 1955:8, 41, 203) and rather than crossing the land-bridge between the Finlay and Kechika River, Black followed the Finlay River to its source and found himself in the mountainous area that forms the Pacific and Arctic divide. Had Black listened to the reports of the Indians regarding the country, his trip might have been successful and his maps correct. However he regarded all Indians as "Liars" (Black 1955:110;115) and the exploration trip turned out to be a failure: good beaver grounds were not found and the correct course of the Liard remained unexplored.

Travelling by foot, the expedition went from Thutade Lake, which forms the head waters of Finlay River, north toward the Turnagain River, crossing the Pacific-Arctic divide at several places. This area was the worst of its kind that Black had ever seen.

> ".....for in all the Countries of the Northwest I have been except in Western Caledonia I never saw so few vestiges of animals as on this voyage - for some days we have seen none at all, even our old acquaintances the sifflue [Hoary Marmot] have disappeared"(Black 1955:170).

The hoary marmot constituted an extremely important part of the diet and clothing for the small group of Sekani Indians Black met in the area of Lake Thutade. This group of about 20 people under the leadership of an old man named Old Methodiates frequented the area of the Upper Finlay River in summer, exploiting the fisheries, snaring marmots and digging licorice roots. In winter they moved to the plains east of the Rocky Mountains and subsisted on large game (Black 1955:189, 50-53).

The more north the Black expedition went, the less animals they found. As predicted by the Sekani Indians, Black found:

> "a barren waste, scanty of subsistence and consequently few natives to work the few Beaver scattered over the country" (Black 1955:185)

This lack of animal life was reflected in the human population density. Only three small groups of Indians were met or reported to frequent the area. The first group, the aforementioned Sekani of the Upper Finlay area, had obtained most of the trade goods which they possessed, from the Rocky Mountain Establishment at Peace River. Old Methodiates even remembered having seen Black some years before at Rocky Mountain Establishment (Black 1955:53). Their experience with traders is reflected in Black's

surprised observation that

> "The Thecannie ladies know well to ask for payment for every little job they do for us and hankering about the price" (Black 1955:84).

With the help of this group of Sekani Indians contact was made with the Thloadennis or Thluckdennis, a small group of Indians (6-7 married men and 8 young men with an unspecified number of women) who frequented the country between Fort Liard and Babine Lake (Black 1955:108,125). According to Black, they had all the characteristics of the "Slave tribes", which meant that language, dress and further behavior was similar to that of other Arctic Drainage Athabascan speakers (Black 1953:108).

The Thloadennis traded at three different places. In the Fort Simpson and Fort Liard area, they knew the names of the European traders who were in charge of these posts, at Babine lake, where they traded salmon and where they were going when Black met the group and with the Nahani Indians, who came from the west in bands of 15 to 20 people to trade for furs (Black 1955:51, 110, 111, 125).

> "The Thloadennis are the only Natives between this and the Nahannies back of the Beaver Indians of River Liard, but these are not Trading Nahannies of whom more anon that come in Bands a great distance to pick up a few furs from these Thloadennis for which they give them muskets Powder Ball axes and c." (Black 1955:107).

The technological implements in use by the Thloadennis were a combination of metal and traditional tools. Woven baskets, in which meat was boiled with hot stones, were used next to the metal kettles. Rather than using the european hatchet, pieces of metal were constructed according to the model of a traditional stone hatchet. The trade goods were noted

Reproduction of portion of map in
Richardson's "Boat Journey." 1851

RUSSIAN TERRITORY

NEW NORTH WEST

MACKENZIE RIVER DISTRICT

Herald I.
Pitt or I.
Wainwright Inlet
Icy Cape
Pt Barrow
Pt Franklin
Return Reef
Flaxman I.
Camden B.
Romanzoff Mts
Demarcation Pt
Herschel I.
Beechey I.
Collinson Pt
Richards I.
C. Dalhousie
Liverpool Bay
C. Bathurst
Franklin Bay
C. Clarence
Esquimaux
Lake
Melville Chain
Basil Halls B.
Richardsons B.
Ft Confidence
Hare Indians
Haldanes R.
Ft Good Hope
Pt Separation
Ste Mantle Id
Smiths B.
GREAT BEAR L.
Fort Franklin
Knaggs B.
Clarke Id
Black Vict.
Gr. Lake
Gr. Slave L.
Lake of Elevated Land
Fort Norman
Hare Indian R.
Fort M.Pherson
Peel R.
Big Fish L.
Porcupine R.
Buchanan R.
Buckland Chr.
Phillips Bay
British Chr.
Barrow R.
Colville R.
Kotzebue Sd
C. Espenberg
C. Krusenstern
Mulgrave Hills
C. Seppings
C. Thompson
C. Golovnin
Pt Hope or
C. Lisburne
Cape
C. Sabine
Icy Cape
Wainwright Inlet
Pt Barrow
Dease Inlet
Return Reef
Flaxman I.
Camden B.
Romanzoff Mts
Demarcation Pt
Herschel I.
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Peel R.
Big Fish L.
Porcupine R.
Buchanan R.
Buckland Chr.
Phillips Bay
British Chr.
Barrow R.
Colville R.
Kotzebue Sd
C. Espenberg
C. Krusenstern
Mulgrave Hills
C. Seppings
C. Thompson
C. Golovnin
Pt Hope or
C. Lisburne
Cape
C. Sabine
Hotham Inlet
Diomede Is
BERING STRAIT
C. Deceit
Pt of Wales
Kowerok
Eschscholtz B.
Portage House
Trading Fort
Liff B.
Presumed course of the R. Yukon
Rat L.
Peel R.
Big Fish L.
Porcupine R.
Buchanan R.
Fort M.Pherson
Hare Indian R.
Fort Norman
R. Dahadinnes
The Indians descend it in three days
Clarke Id
Black Vict.
Gr. Lake
Gr. Slave L.
Lake of Elevated Land
Fort Franklin
Knaggs B.
Smiths B.
Ste Mantle Id
Pt Separation
Fort Good Hope
Haldanes R.
Hare Indians
Ft Confidence
Richardsons B.
Basil Halls B.
Melville Chain
Esquimaux
Lake
Liverpool Bay
C. Bathurst
Franklin Bay
C. Clarence
C. Dalhousie
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Barrow R.
Pt Franklin
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Icy Cape
Pt Barrow
Dease Inlet
Romanzoff Mts
Greenough Mts
British Chr.
Buckland Chr.
Phillips Bay
Buchanan R.
Porcupine R.
Big Fish L.
Peel R.
Rat L.
Presumed course of the R. Yukon
R. Yukon
Boundary settled 1825.
Red Island R.
Dease R.
Wrangell V.
Amer Coast
Whitehed
Comptrollers B.
Mt St Elias
Pts Red above the Level of the Sea
Great L.
Pease R.
Peel R.
Lewes R.
Simpson L.
N. West Branch
Mackenzie R.
Nahanny R.
Pt Simpson
Warten R.
Pt Simpson
Mc Kinlie L.
Franais
Peel R.
Pelly Banks
Hyatt above the Sea
Russian Redoubt
Fort Simpson
Dolphin & Union Str.
Coronation G.
Wollaston Land
Kendall I.
Richardsons R.
Cape Parry
Franklin Bay
C. Bathurst
Liverpool Bay
C. Dalhousie
Esquimaux
Lake
Melville Chain
Basil Halls B.
Richardsons B.
Ft Confidence
Hare Indians
Haldanes R.
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Nahanny R.
Pt Simpson
Warten R.
Pt Simpson
Mc Kinlie L.
Franais
Peel R.
Pelly Banks
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Russian Redoubt
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Dolphin & Union Str.
Coronation G.
Wollaston Land
Kendall I.
Richardsons R.
Cape Parry
Norton Sound
Stuart I.
St Michael
Chirikoff
Tapkanafan
Kuchunack
R. Kwichpak
C. Vancouver
C. Avinoff
R. Kuskokwim
Shoal Nose
L. Nuwheyuk
Pt Alexander
R. Nuwheyuk
L. Haeman
C. Newenham
Bristol Bay
Nushagak
Kulthul R.
Russian Factory
Suchitna R.
Pt Campbell
Pt Fellew
Pt Nicholas
Pt Gardner
Cook's Inlet
or Lamb
Chirikoff
C. Elizabeth
C. Douglas
Barren Is
Aconitehack
L. Nuguishek
Sulima R.
Afognuck I.
Strait of Cherigholf
PRINCE WILLIAM'S
Hinchinbrook
Boys
C. Suckling
KADIACK I.
C. St Elias
Behrings B.
C. Thipps
Farmweather
1778
Chilkhat or
Lynn
Canal
Mt
Brilliant
Cross Sound
Norfolk Sd
Sitka I
Aleutian Is
60°
70°
160°
140°
170°
150°
130°

by Black to be from the Hudson's Bay Company as well as from the Coast (Black 1955:116, 117).

The precise territory of the Thloadennis was a matter of great confusion to Black. A reproduction of a portion of a map, published or used in 1851 (Murray 1910:74) shows that Black confuses the headwaters of the Stikine with that of the Turnagain River which he also calls the Liard. The explanation given by the Thloadennis, which was correct, was apparently not followed or taken into account (Black 1955:114, 125). The Thloadennis territory was indicated to be north of the Peak Mountains, (Black 1955:51) at the headwaters of the "Liard River". On Blacks' map, the headwaters of the Liard (or Turnagain River as explained above) are indicated as flowing from west to east from the Peak Mountains. Today these mountains are called the Thudaka Range. North of the Thudaka Range the valley of the Kechika River is shown as running parallel with the valley of the Lower Finlay River. This was in accordance with the information given to Black by a Sekani Indian, a member of the expedition, named Old Slave (Black 1955:25).

Other populations of which the Thloadennis had knowledge included

> "The Sasdennis or Bear Indians and the Yede Yede in that quarter also of the Ozennis as he names them Sadinne or Beaver Indians of Liard River, but they are their enemies . . ." (Black 1955:112)

In addition there were the Nahani Indians who came quite a distance from the west. Between

> ". . . them and the Nahannies they did not know of any other Indians than the Itseladoadennis their relations . . ." (Black 1955:125)

Further north, but still on the headwaters of the Stikine River a possible Itseloadennis Indian was met:

> ". . . discryed a human appearance standing on the brow of of a mountain, made signs to it to come down and after called aloud in the Thecannie language to come here . . . did not perceive the deception until too late to retreat . . . This Indian speaks like Thloadenni but still with a longer singing tone and Cournoyer says he speaks like the Indians in the Mountains back of Liard River, . . . he calls himself a Itsiladoadinni . . ."
> (Black 1955:160)

Before Black was able to question the Indian any further, the man disappeared through a trick played on the members of the expedition, with a hoary marmot (Black 1955:160). A search resulted in the finding of an abandoned encampment. Materials found in the camp were basically the same as the materials earlier observed in the possession of the Thloadennis (Black 1955:161-162).

Black returned from his trip thoroughly convinced that there were no good beaver grounds to be found in that part of the country. Old Slave, his Sekani hunter, however, knew the area of the Kechika River well and reported that the Kechika River Valley was good beaver country and the main hunting grounds of the Thloadennis. The beaver was traded to the Nahani Indians who came down to the confluence of the Liard and Kechika Rivers to trade with the Thloadennis (Black 1955:26, 143, 148). Although Black was told several times that he would be able to reach Fort Simpson by this route, he decided to return the same way as he had entered the country. Black's distrust of the knowledge of the Sekani Indians of their own country was too great.

The country, he decided, was worthless for the fur trade. It would require "better hunters" to feed a trading post and the means of subsistence was very uncertain (Black:169, 187). The only way the fur traders would have been able to do some business was to use the North-West Company

method of sending in special hunters:

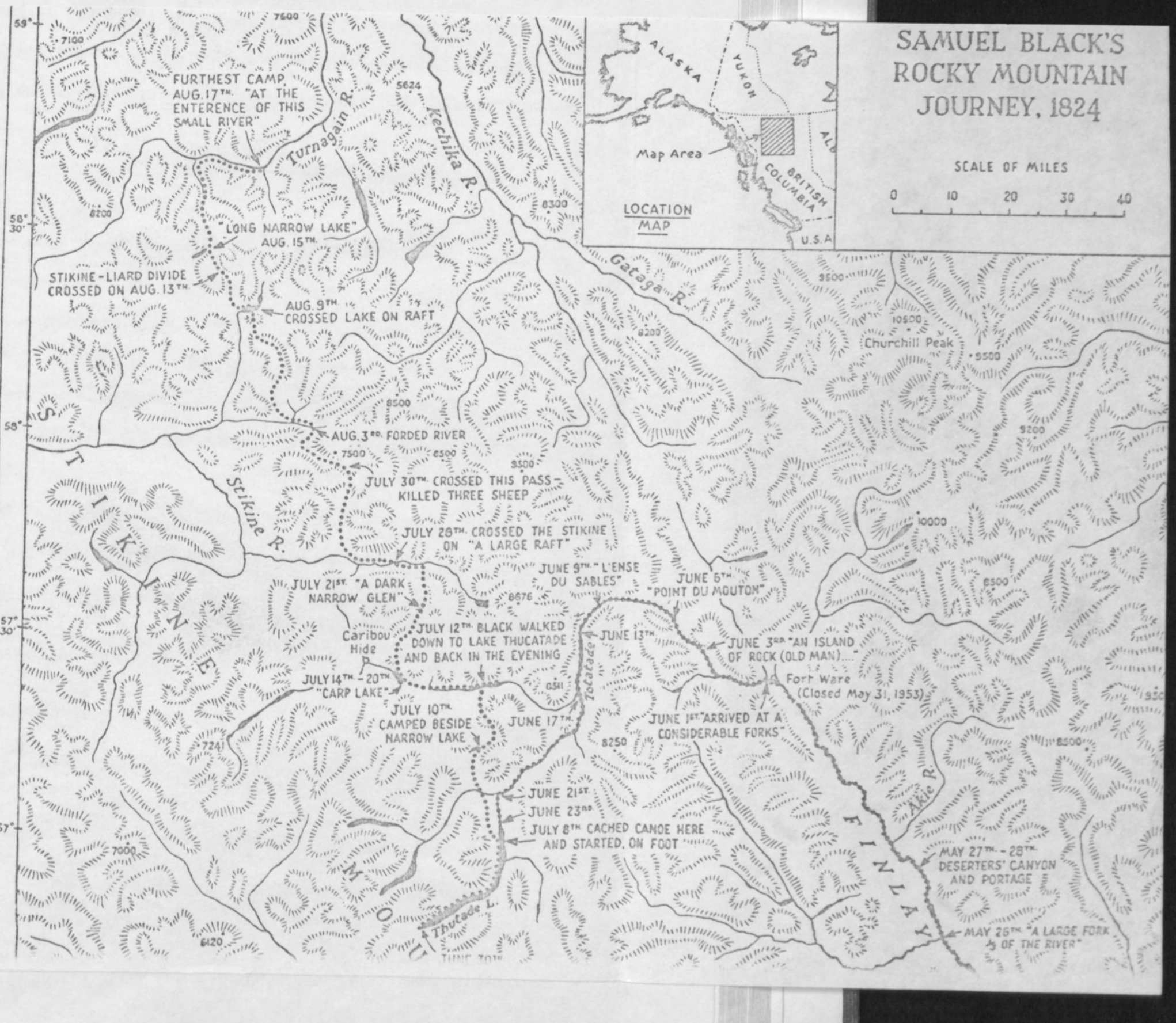
> "I have little doubt but Trappers of a certain description i.e.: active and without families and enterprising enough to come so far: would make hunts by moving about in summer but in winter I doubt very much good hunters could live well . . ." (Black 1955:157)

Regarding the distribution of human populations, Black's expedition provided some new information. During the North-West Company era no serious attempts were made to penetrate beyond the Rocky Mountains in the Liard River area. Keith and Wentzel both reported from hearsay that the mountainous regions were inhabited by Indians named Nahanies or Nahané, Dahoteena and Nombahoteenais (Keith 1960:68, Wentzel 1960:78). Keith also reported a quarrel between the Trilli-da-ha, tinné and the Beaver Indians, which resulted in the death of may of them (Keith 1960:79). Aside from the names little was known about the interior tribes of the mountainous region. As noted earlier the Thloadennis had direct contact and were neighbors of the Beaver Indians of the Lower Liard. Jenness (1937:8) in his attempt to unscramble the confusing information on the Sekani noted only that it was impossible to draw a sharp line between Sekani and Beaver Indians but that the Sekani had recently occupied the mountainous areas.

> "What people, if any, occupied the basins of Finlay and Parsnip rivers previous to the Sekani we do not know. Native tradition and archaeology are alike silent on this point. Very possibly the region was uninhabited, or, if inhabited, only by a few straggling Carrier who wandered farther afield than the rest of their nation. (Jenness 1937:8)

Black in his journals, indicates that there had to be a difference between the Nahani Indians, found by the Fort Simpson based clerk John McLeod in 1823, after a "considerable trip" on the South Nahanni River and the

SAMUEL BLACK'S ROCKY MOUNTAIN JOURNEY, 1824



Trading Nahanies west of the Kechika River (Black 1955:110, 118, 171). The Nahani of the South Nahanni River were also named Esbataottine or Goat Indians (Black 1955:118). Other expeditions were sent from Fort Simpson, up the Liard river in the 1820's, but they failed to enlarge the knowledge regarding the existing populations. None of these exploration trips seem to have penetrated the country as far as the confluence of the Kechika and Liard Rivers (Black 1955:171).

For some years following the first disappointments no further progress was made by the Hudson's Bay Company traders. Not until 1829 was there a new development. During that year, the trader Hutchison established relations with the Sekani Indians and an establishment, Fort Halkett, was built at the confluences of the Smith and Liard Rivers. (Glazebrook 1938:37). Trade with the Sekani developed smoothly and the chief trader of Fort Simpson, Edward Smith reported in 1831 that the Sekani had become "more industrious and expected them to become good workers" (Glazebrook 1938:81). In that same year Smith reported that

> "another strange Tribe from the west of the mountains have sent in their couriers twice with some production of their country and promise a general visit in Spring." (Glazebrook 1938:81)

Whether this promised visit was ever paid is unclear from the available publication but shortly after, in 1834, John McLeod travelled straight to Dease Lake.

> (Dease Lake) . . . must be the same lake from which the Nahani Indians make a portage to the large River west of the Mountains (Stikine) and in this opinion I am the more sanguine from a well beaten path proceeding from south and, at which place there was a Wooden Canoe sufficiently large to carry six Persons and made much in the same model as a Boat" (Wilson 1970:11)

McLeod's remarks on the canoe indicate that it was a dug-out, a type of canoe not found among the Arctic drainage Athabascans. Crossing the divide between the Dease and Stikine River systems, the McLeod expedition found that the turbulent Tanzilla and Tuya Rivers, could be crossed by bridges.

> "This stream (Stikine) is the same so much and so long spoken of, by which the coast Indians annually come up, in boats on trading excursions with the Nahani and other Indians in the interior."
> (Wilson 1970:12)

No direct contacts with the Nahani Indians were made, but recently abandoned living quarters were found in which there were a variety of European trade goods. Rather than crossing the apparently dangerous bridges, the expedition returned to Fort Simpson.

McLeod reached the same conclusions about the environment of the Pacific-Arctic divide, which Black had made some ten years before:

> "The country over which we have been travelling was so very destitute that nothing more than a solitary partridge and occasionally a badger could be procured, and surprising that although the space of country from south end of Dease Lake to Frances River (Strikine River) abounds in small lakes and rivulets during our ramble, not on one instance did we either see beaver or a single trace of any vestige of that animal, neither a track or a moose or reindeer."
> (Wilson 1970:13)

Two years later, in spring 1836, an attempt was made to establish a post at Dease Lake and to explore west of the mountains. Hutchison, starting from Fort Halkett, did not come very far as a reported party of "Russian Indians"caused a panic. The party leaving everything behind, jumped in their canoes and never stopped until Fort Liard was reached (Campbell 1958:30). This panic and hasty retreat is not surprising when

one considers that the Nahani Indians were known to be very hostile people and in his report concerning the failure of his expedition, Hutchison pointed out that ever since the establishment of Fort Halkett the Nahani Indians had threatened to kill the Europeans (Wilson 1970:16).

In 1937 a young trader, Robert Campbell volunteered to carry out the instructions given to Hutchison the previous year. Fort Halkett was reoccupied and preparations made for the new expedition which took off in 1838, after considerable difficulties with deserting expedition members. At Dease Lake a fort was built, while Campbell with some of his hunters traversed the height of land between Dease Lake and Tanzilla River. Campbell crossed the bridges and established contact with the Nahani Indians. Reports of a huge gathering of Indian tribes made Campbell decide to investigate further.

> "From the top of a hill we caught our first glimpse of the immense camp (about 13 miles from the bridge) of which we had heard so much and indeed the description given us was not exaggerated. Such a concourse of Indians I had never before seen assembled. They were gathered from all parts of the slope of the Rockies and from along the Pacific Coast. These Indians camped here for weeks at a time living on salmon which could be caught in thousands in the Strikine by gaffing or spearing."(Campbell 1958:41-42)

Among the tribes, Campbell observed that the Coast Indians and their chief "Shakes" had leading positions. Shake or Shĕk is reported to be the traditional name for the chief of the Tlingit Indians (Dawson 1889:194, 6). The traditional name for the Tahltan chief was Na-Nook, but unfortunately, Campbell does not tell us how the chieftainess of the Nahani was addressed;

> ". . . The Chieftainess of the Nahanies. The Nahany tribe over which she and her father a very old man, held sway were

> then about 500 strong, and like other Indians led a nomadic hunting life."
> (Campbell 1958:44)

In Campbell's time the most important reasons behind the assembly were undoubtedly trade and salmon fishing. Boat loads of trade goods obtained from the Russian fur traders were brought to the gathering by the Tlingit (Campbell 1958:42). When the traveller and author Warburton Pike passed through that area some sixty years later, the trade had disappeared to almost nothing and only the salmon fishing had remained important. The Tlingit Indians ascending into the region made use of the much better weather conditions to dry the salmon (Pike 1967:27).

Campbell spent the winter at the Dease Lake post. During this winter he found himself in a constant battle against starvation. The predictions and observations of the more experienced traders Black and McLeod proved to be correct.

> "We were scattered in two's and three's trying with nets and hooks for fish, and with traps, snares and guns for any living thing, bird or beast that came in the way. Everything possible was used as food,: "tripe de roche [lichens], skins, parchement, in fact anything. But much as we felt these privations, our greatest trouble was the frequent passing and repassing of Russian Indians, who kept us night and day in a state of alarm and uncertainty, particularly as it was impossible for us to be all together".
> (Campbell 1958:48)

In February the first of a large number of groups of Nahani Indians visited the Dease Lake post. Just at that time the establishment was completely out of food. The Nahani Chietainess, whom Campbell had met earlier in summer, was with that group and it became apparent what these Indians used for their own food supply:

> "She ordered her servants (all leading Indians there have slaves) to cook the best they had for our use . . . consisting of excellent dried salmon and delicious fresh caribou meat."
> (Campbell 1958:49)

This good treatment was certainly not repeated by the several groups of Nahani Indians who passed the establishment after that date. It was also the only time the chieftainess was reported to be with such a group. Up to four such bands passed in the time period February-March and Campbell reported the behavior to the company:

> "The Nahani Indians . . . they brought some furs, fresh meat and dried salmon in abundance but their demand for everything was enormous beyond all reason. For about one skin's value in Made Beaver with us they wanted at the rate of 9 or 10 M.B. They likewise demanded payment for inhabiting their country.
>
> . . . They pillaged us of all we had except our nets, and not satisfied with emptying our store, they robbed us of all our utensils nor did they stop there. On reaching the upper end of the lake they reduced those there to nakedness and expelled them from the place, and it was with difficulty that Mr. McLeod succeeded in preventing their taking off one of the men as a slave."
> (Wilson 1970:37, 38)

The Sekani Indians, who traded at Fort Halkett had been asked by Campbell to bring in supplies to the Dease Lake Post. This they did, two or three times, but:

> "They could only do so by stealth and at the risk of their lives, as our inveterate enemies from the Stikine quarter threatened to kill them if they found them dealing with us or rendering us any assistance."
> (Campbell 1958:52)

Notwithstanding some provisions brought by the Sekani, the members of the expedition were walking skeletons by the end of the winter. The last meal before abandoning the post when the ice on the rivers broke, consisted

of snowshoe netting and parchment windows boiled down to a soup (Campbell 1958:55). Upon returning to Fort Simpson the men found out that all their troubles were in vain, as the Hudson's Bay Company had leased the mainland territory up to Cape Spencer, including Point Highfield, the entrance to the Stikine River, from the Russian-American Company.[1] This gave direct access to the upper regions of the Stikine and made the post at Dease Lake obsolete (Campbell 1958:56).

NO ABORIGINAL KASKA INDIANS

Honigmann designates the country adjacent to Dease Lake and River, the territory of the aboriginal Kaska proper, the Ki'stagotena (1964:19). None of the early travellers, Black, McLeod, Hutchison and Campbell, indicate that there were any other populations aside from the Nahani Indians, who resided and caught salmon in the Stikine Plateau. Transient hunting and trading parties crossed the lake regularly and Sekani Indians from Fort Halkett were needed to supply provisions. No other population is mentioned.

In 1840, Campbell was sent to explore the Frances Lake area in which he went as far as the Pelly River. This area, according to Honigmann was the territory of the Frances Lake Kaska or Tuteogotena, Titslotina, Titeotena, Tzazi?a?otena or Tutcomena-gotena (1964:20). Campbell however remarks,

> "We saw no Indians nor a trace of them during the entire trip" (Campbell 1958:60)

During that trip "Glenlyon House" at Frances Lake was built. In 1942 Campbell returned to Frances Lake and a permanent structure was erected to serve as wintering quarters. Provisions remained problematic throughout the year and some people had to be sent back to Fort Simpson on account of the shortage of supplies. Again the winter was spent in great deprivation. As was the case with the Nahani Indians at Dease Lake, in late winter groups of Indians again appeared with fresh meat supplies. In the following years this basic pattern was continued. No Indians were reported throughout the year, except that toward the late winter early spring,

groups of "strange" Indians came to trade, some of whom Campbell had never seen before, even after several years at the post (Campbell 1958: 64, 71, 73, 76).

The appearance of those small groups of Indians coincided with an important hunting cycle as we also learn from Campbell,

> "I may remark that the weather in these Arctic latitudes is generally very calm in December and January. February is called by the Indians the "Windy Moon" which is always impatiently looked forward to, as it is then they are able to kill moose". (Campbell 1958:76)

Although situated more north, but referring to the whole Yukon Plateau, the trader and founder of "Fort Yucon" for the Hudson's Bay Company, Alexander Murray provides us with similar information regarding the hunting of moose, only he mentions March and April as the best time (Murray 1910:80).

The wider ecological cycles of the mountainous North seem to reinforce the validity of the seasonal movements of the Indian groups observed by Campbell, although he himself apparently did not notice this. Both the Stikine and the Pelly Rivers have salmon runs (for Pelly River see Pike 1967:178, 179). During the salmon run, it is highly probable that populations subsisting for a large part on salmon, would put all their available manpower behind the securing of a supply of salmon, adequate to last through the year. For the people of the Stikine it was also the time of the large assembly and trade with the coast Indians. In addition, the snow conditions in the Cassiar and the reported southern boundary of the Porcupine Herd winter migration (Chapter 2) indicate that small groups of Indians came into the Cassiar district in late winter - early spring to

make use of the advantageous atmospheric conditions to hunt moose, and some may have combined this hunting with trading, as the Trading Nahanies or Tahltan did. That the Indians, who started to trade at Frances Lake were originally from the Pacific drainage area, was noted by Murray at Fort Yukon.

> "with them another Indian belonging to the "Men of the Forks" (a band near the Forks of the Lewis [Yukon] and Pelly) who had two years before been at the Great Lake [Lake Teslin] the principle source of the river [Teslin and Yukon River]: they described the Forks of the Lewis and Pelly where Mr. Campbell had been, the Lewis River the the house on the west side of the mountains near Frances Lake where some of his people had traded deer skins."
> (Murray 1910:76)

Murray also indicated that the "Naheiy Indians" inhabited the mountains toward the source of the Gravel River [Keele River] and the Grand River [Pelly River]. This region is also the source of the South Nahanni River where McLeod in 1823 had found the Nahani or Espataottine or Goat Indians. This area at the same time gives access to the salmon of Pelly River and the wintering grounds of the Porcupine caribou herd. As MacFarlane reported, these Nahanies provided the Mackenzie River posts with caribou meat (Chapter 1). The Espataottine Indians, who have remained unknown ethnographically and reluctantly classified with the Kaska by Honigmann (1949:33, 35), were in reality Indians from the Pacific drainage population.

The information presented in this study strongly points toward the non-existence of an "aboriginal" Kaska society, as proposed by Honigmann (1964). Except for the Thloadennis of the Kechika River, described by Black, who could be Honigmann's "Tselona"[2] or "Nelson Indians". The

Hudson's Bay Company traders at Fort Simpson and at Fort Halkett called these people Sekani Indians. Jenness as well, thought the Tseloni of the Kechika River to be Sekani Indians (1937:11). None of the other bands or macro-cosmic groups, as Honigmann calls them, fit the categories proposed by Honigmann (1949, 1964).

As Jenness has correctly pointed out, Nahani means "people over there far away" (Jenness 1932:427). The Arctic drainage people used this collective noun to indicate Indians from the Pacific drainage, Indians with a different culture, occupying a different ecological zone. The trading Nahanies have now been identified as Tahltan, who at the same time exploited seasonally the Dease River and Lake areas and had trade routes at least as far as the Kechika River, where they traded with the Sekani (Black 1955:lXXiV).

This situation leaves us three possibilities; Either the aboriginal Kaska became displaced by the Tahltan in their role of middleman, comparable to the situation described for the Cree and Beaver Indians, or, Kaska society as investigated by Honigmann originated after the period of European penetration. A third possibility is of course that the Europeans failed to observe their existence. The historical material does not give any indication of a spatial movement of Kaska Indians but later developments indicate the possibility that a "refugee-like" society has developed in that region.

THE BIRTH OF KASKA SOCIETY

The fur traders lost all interest in the Dease Lake area and the establishment at Frances Lake remained of some importance as a relay

station toward Fort Selkirk at the Pelly and Yukon Rivers. With the Chilcat Indians attack on Fort Selkirk in 1852[3] this function disappeared completely (Wilson 1970:121, 122).

In early 1873 gold was discovered at Thibert Creek, a tributary of Dease River. By August of that year twenty miners were working the gravels and by 1874 the population had increased to 1600.

> "of all the miners arriving in that season, scarcely a hundred remained to face an Arctic winter, and these suffered great hardship from disease and lack of food" (Galloway 1931:25)

The wintering place for most miners was Fort Wrangell at the mouth of the Stikine. To reach Dease Lake, the provincial government built a pack trail and bridges in 1874 over the land divide crossing the Tahltan, Tuya and Tanzilla rivers. A year later a trail was cut to import 300 head of cattle. This eight-hundred mile trail came from Quesnel in the Cariboo district of British Columbia and via Fort Fraser and Hazelton on the Skeena, reached Dease Lake (Galloway 1931:26, Zaslow 1971:49).

In 1877, W.H. Pierce, a young man trying his luck as a goldminer, entered the Cassiar goldfields via Wrangell at the mouth of the Stikine which was connected by a steamship service with the southern cities of British Columbia. The passengers heading for the gold fields of the Cassiar included miners, Indians and half-breeds, many of the latter with native wives (Pierce 1890:11, 12). It was not uncommon that women worked the gold claim as well, but the majority did not:

> "On the contrary, they appeared to be rather expensive in their habits and I have seen them sitting by their smoky, dusty camp-fires dressed in silk".
> (Pierce 1890:12)

The gold-rush offered a variety of wage-labour for the Indians: hired packers (Galloway 1931:26), boat-crews (Dawson 1889:87B), suppliers of meat (Pike 1967:59) and of course, the mining of gold itself. The small but wild mining towns of Laketon (Dease Lake) Glenora and Telegraph Creek (Stikine) which sprang up almost overnight, provided a breeding ground for prostitution (Krause 1956:207, Teit 1906:339, Pike 1967:55). Indians from many different regions entered the Cassiar district. James Teit reported in 1903 that a Shuswap from Canoe Creek had been living there, among the Casca, for the last twenty-five years and had acquired some kind of leadership role (Teit 1906:348). Packing freight and supplies provided the best opportunities for wage-labour in the mountainous Cassiar District.

> ". . . all transportation of supplies is done by river boats and where there are no rivers it is done by Indians who charge very high for packing."
> (Pierce 1890:18)

> "The boating on the [Dease] River (goodsfor McDame post) has been done principally by crews of Coast Indians, who are engaged and brought into the interior for the purpose".
> (Dawson 1889:87B)

In the 1870's, until the 1890's when precise boundaries were laid down, the whole northern section of the interior of British Columbia was known as the Cassiar,

> "Cassiar is a corpution of Kasha, the Nahane name for McDame Creek"
> (Galloway 1931:24)

In a story concerning the prospectors who found the gold in the Dease Lake area, the miner Pierce mentions the "Cascar" Indians (1890:19)

This is the first reference in the literature to a term that eventually became the modern name Kaska. The story however, was told from hearsay and whilst Pierce himself was in the region, no indication is given of the existence of a distinct or homogeneous group of Indians in the Dease Lake area. This would not be so remarkable had Pierce not, throughout his book, commented on or described many other Indian populations he saw during his long wanderings in the north. It is more than likely that Cascar Indians therefore was a general reference to "Indians in the Cassiar".

The gold diggings were successful for only a short time. In 1878 the population was around 1500, a third of whom were Chinese (Galloway 1931:26). In 1879 the population started to decline and in 1887 the population was down to 125, nearly all Chinese. In that same year George Dawson travelled through the Cassiar on an exploration expedition for the Canadian Federal Government. In his notes on the Indian tribes of the area, Dawson has the Tahltan territory still including Dease Lake, as far down the Dease River as Eagle Creek, extending also to the west branch of the Black or Turnagain River (Dawson 1889:192B).

With regard to the Kaska, fifteen years after the impact of the gold rush, the following was noted: the name was applied to two bands, who called themselves Sa-zẽ-oo-ti-na and Ti-tso-tĩ-na, who traded at McDame Creek or Lower Post, at the mouth of the Dease River. A total of 94 (23 men, 18 women and 53 children) traded at Lower Post and although not specifically stated they were the Ti-tso-tĩ-na, and 70 traded at the McDame post. Of this group, the Sa-zẽ-oo-ti-na, no further breakdown is

given. The total territory stretched in an easterly direction as far as Fort Halkett, where they met with the Sekani or Sat-e-loo'ne or Al-ta'-tin or Bear Lake Indians. In the north it went as far as Frances Lake "though it would appear that not till recent years have they ventured so far in that direction" (Dawson 1889:200B). As noted, southward the Tahltan still claimed Dease Lake and a large part of Dease River. From the north groups of Taku, Tagish and Pelly River Indians occasionally came down to trade at Lower Post.

No information on social structure is presented by Dawson other than that the Kaska intermarried with the Tahltan, but were more closely allied by language and marriage to the Indians of the Lower Liard (Dawson 1889:199B). At Lower Post the entire "tribe" was seen by Dawson:

> ". . . and this curiosity proved to be very embarrising Mr. Egnell, who was in charge of the post, excused it by explaining that they have never seen so many whites together before, the number being nine in all . . ."
> (Dawson 1889:201B)

This point made by Dawson seems somewhat doubtful if we take into account the number of miners that flooded the country some years earlier and that a cattle trail was built to import some 300 cattle to feed those miners. It rather seems to indicate that the group of Indians themselves were recent immigrants.

In 1892 Pike travelled through the Cassiar district via Dease Lake and Francis Lake toward the Pelly River. The little steamer, built in the 1870's was still servicing Dease Lake (Galloway 1931:28, Pike 1967: 52). Laketon was by then a dead mining town with young shoots pushing up through the streets (Pike 1967:55). Pike who had hoped, and indeed made arrangements, to pick up a boat and crew to continue his voyage toward

Pelly River, discovered that:

> "the local Indians, who, besides being untrustworthy have the strongest aversion to hard work, and expect wages for what little they do at rates that were in vogue when the diggings were paying and labour was scarce."
> (Pike 1967:64)

Together with the miners, business also had disappeared. The Hudson's Bay Company operating Lower Post sold that establishment in the fall of 1892, to a freetrader named La Montagne, who had competed with Lower Post from a post down the Liard River. The Hudson's Bay company discharged the "Manitoba halfbreeds", who had been employed as boatmen, the following spring (Pike 1967:84,85). Employment was an important part of the Cassiar economy as lack of it meant a complete dependency on the meagre resources of the area (Pike 1967:125).

The Cassiar gold rush, therefore, can be seen as the most important upheaval behind the breakdown of patterns which were noted by the early fur traders.[4] The miners and government transportation systems, broke up the trade roles of the Tlingit, but especially that of the Tahltan. Although the salmon-catching gatherings were still reported in the early 1900's, trade, which before the gold rush consituted an important part, had virtually disappeared (Dawson 1889:192B, Pike 1967:27). Small shops continued to supply the area with goods long after the importance of the gold rush had passed. The need to protect the trade routes through the drainage system of the Liard River, as experienced by Campbell, became less urgent for the Tahltan, and the region void of settled populations, provided an opportunity for the Indians, who arrived with the gold rush wage-earning possibilities, to settle in the area, when the excitement collapsed.

Few people remained permanently in the district and the continuing service of some trade posts and shops in the area provided the population with the income from some fur trapping and from occasional wage-labour.

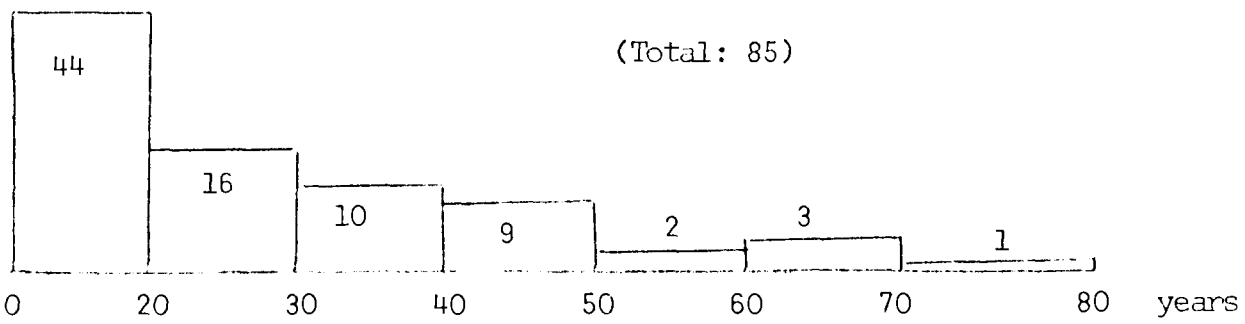
If this proposition, that the Kaska society as described by Honigmann (1949) had its origins in the exploitation of an ecological niche created by the gold rush, (rather than that there was an aboriginal Kaska society also described by Honigmann (1964), has any validity, it would surely be reflected in the information presented by Honigmann from his fieldwork among the Kaska in 1944 and 1945. A 70 year period between the extensive fieldwork of Honigmann and the first impact of the gold rush, would give the older informants used by Honigmann either some knowledge reaching back into the nineteenth century, or at least parents that had told them about th period.

The age groups of the main Kaska informants and their children are presented in Table 5-6-7 (Honigmann 1949). The backgrounds of the "over 40" people are highly diversified, except for one family whose members make up the majority of the Nelson Indians. The remaining 11 people are Slave, Tahltan, Tlingit, or from the Lower Pelly, the Mackenzie River area, Upper Liard, or Dease River with two of unspecified origin. The same holds true for the informants used in a later study (Honigmann 1964:25, 26). Of these six informants three, and possibly four, had Pacific drainage ancestors one is not classified, one had Sekani parents and one "perhaps" Espatotena parents.

The most valuable informant, Old Man, was thought to have included information regarding the Teslin Lake and Upper Taku River people rather

TABLE V

Age of Kaska Informants



(Honigmann 1949:27-30)

TABLE VI

Total Kaska Population March 31, 1944

Tribe	Men	Women	Boys (under 16)	Girls (under 16)	Total
Dease River	20	14	16	24	74
Upper Liard	14	9	8	11	42
Nelson River	17	14	16	12	59
Total	51	37	40	47	175

(Honigmann 1949:37)

TABLE VII

Kaska Population 1875-1944

Tribe	1875*	1887*	1914	1917	1924	1928*	1929	1934	1944
Dease River	105	70	70	70	64	150	64	137*	74
Upper Liard + F.L.			79	84	82	80	80	95	42+
Nelson River			89	106	123		141*	91	59
Total			238	260	269		285	323	175

*only trading Indians (McDame Post) - no tribal specifications.

+includes only three Frances Lake Indians.

(Honigmann 1949)

than the Upper Liard dwellers (Honigmann 1964:26). Of this informant an autobiographical sketch was presented (Honigmann 1949:316-330). His grandparents on his father's side were Tagish Indians, his father was born at Ross River and later moved to Dease Lake where he worked, packing things by horse to the miners up McDame Creek (1949:317). Old Man's mother's father belonged to the Liard River Country as did his mother, who came to the Pelly country to fish for salmon. Old Man himself had a large variety of wage jobs in summer and trapped fur in winter. Once, trading some of the furs in Fort Liard, he was told by his family to demand cash rather than credit, the usual Hudson's Bay Company method in dealing with the Indian trappers, but rather useless to the Indians of the Cassiar who had been completely integrated into a cash-economy since the gold rush.

Besides the diversity of Indian ancestry a large number of informants are classified by Honigmann as part-white, part-Cree and some married to white. Although no bands of Cree have been reported to operate that far north into the mountainous interior in earlier times, the Hudson's Bay boatmen, as noted, were "Manitoba halfbreeds" and when fired in 1892, they stayed in the area (Pike 1967:84, 85).

That this information can be obtained from Honigmann's study, indicates the exceptional quality of the data he presents. Where Honigmann errs is in his assumption of an aboriginal Kaska society:

> "According to the Old Man, an Upper Liard informant, the Kaska Indians of that region believe themselves to be descendant from the Tlingit through the Ross River (Pelly) Indians (Honigmann 1949:38)"

Apparently developing this statement, Honigmann strikes out and concludes that:

> "Sometime within the past 20.000 years man probably first set foot in the Cassiar. The immediate point from which those early settlers had migrated presumably lay somewhere to the northwest." (Honigmann 1964:15)

Honigmann must not have realized that Old Man was in all probability telling his own personal history, explaining where his own parents and grandparents came from. Although some minor details are wrong in Honigmann's discussion of the history of Kaska society,[5] the overriding problem is his assumption that Kaska society had existed prior to all these happenings.

> "At the time when the more easterly Cassiar people first contacted the white man in the Mackenzie basin the group collectively and gratuitously referred to as Kaska (synonymy: Casca) was divided into a number of macrocosmic groups or tribes. These units have been variously named, the confusion being due to the fact that the groups were loosely organized and failed to adopt fixed tribal designations of th ir own."
> (Honigmann 1964:16)

This statement is followed by the observation that names given to these groups were not fixed, but may have been different when other informants were consulted and may even have varied from time to time with the same informant. Notwithstanding this realization, Honigmann follows this up immediately with the impossible task of unscrambling the information by only using the names of the different groups. (Honigmann 1964:16-20).

Osgood classified the Kaska among the Arctic drainage groups. This classification is mainly based on the lack of salmon in the rivers. The occurrence of salmon allowed for a relatively rich culture among the

Pacific drainage people and the lack of salmon explained the essentially simple patterns of behavior of the "aborigines of the Arctic east" (Osgood 1936:31). Why Osgood makes an unfortunate switch to "aborigines" rather than people is not clear and seems to complicate the picture unnecessarily. This proposition is confirmed by Honigmann, with the addition that the Kaska represent "a transitional character simply on the grounds of geographical position" (Honigmann 1964:143), and that "similarity is found between the Kaska (but excluding the Nelson River tribe) Tahltan and Carrier " (Honigmann 1949:38). Acculturative foces, therefore, explain the Kaska's intermediate position, both in the technical as well as social aspect.

This position was also taken by MacLachlan (1955) who proposed that the Western Kaska social system developed from a "slave-type" system to an intermediate "Tlingit-type" under influence of the trade relations with the coast Indians. Accultaration and diffusion were the forces behind this change, psychological dimensions forming the basic ingredients of the dynamics involved (MacLachlan 1955:1, 14). As noted, the Tahltan traded directly with the Kechika River people before the 1870's and no flow of Pacific drainage traits has been reported for these people; on the contrary, they served as the model for the basic "slave-type" system.

The vague proposition of acculturation, explaining the Pacific drainage cultural influences observed among the Kaska communities, is untenable. Quite a different situation occurred: during the gold rush in the Cassiar district, many Indians came in search of employment and wage-earning opportunities. After the decline of the gold rush a few job

opportunities remained and winter trapping of fur in the area now abandoned by the Tahltan, was possible. Consequently a small number of people stayed. The new settlers had come from many different areas but the majority came from both the Pacific and Arctic drainage areas. As one might expect, marriage between these families took place, resulting in a mixture of social and cultural traits.

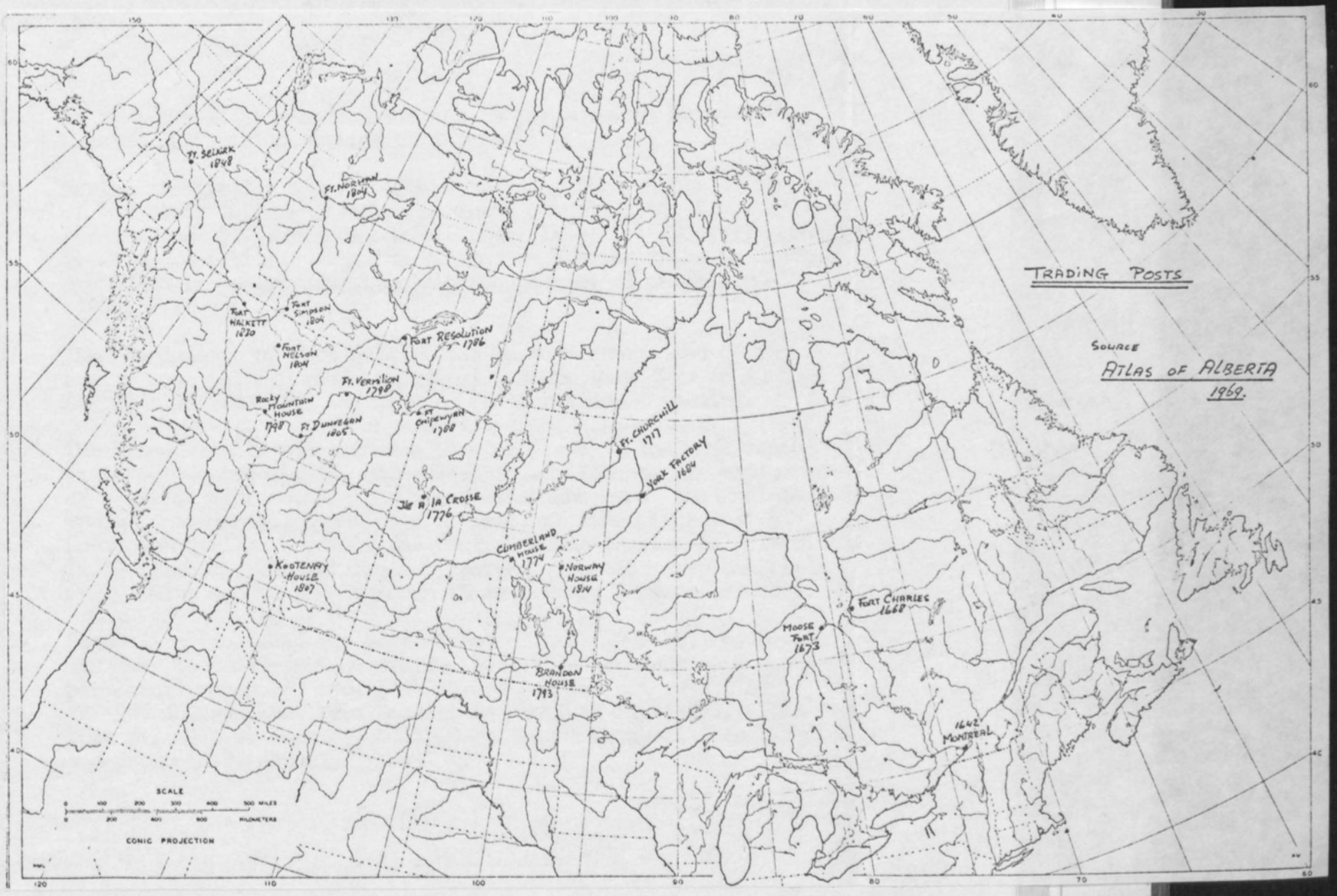
Thus an unusual process started: A non-society slowly developed into a "society", which 70 years later was still characterized by a variety of inconsistencies.

SUMMARY

It should be emphasized that the mountainous region around the 60° latitude North was observed to be distinctly lacking in resources, especially during the winter. Subsequently only a small human population inhabited the area permanently throughout the seasons. Trade relations that existed among the Indian population did not collapse because the Hudson's Bay entered the region - their own efforts collapsed - but the sudden influx of large numbers of miners and governmental transportation and trade routes changed all existing relations. A large demand for wage-labour drew many people to the area.

Following the gold rush, a small group of people remained, attached to both wage-labour and fur trapping. With cash so obtained western food was purchased in the shops and trading establishments in order to supplement the diet. The distinct impossibility of subsisting on the natural resources alone has characterized the populations of the Cassiar until today.

Field data gathered by John Honigmann in 1944/45 contains sufficient information to allow an examination of the proposed dynamics behind the emergence of the new communities. The notion "community" seems of more value than the notion "macro-cosmic or micro-cosmic band," which implies an internal continuity. Over time, kin-relatedness of the people developed, with frequent intra-group marriage. No fixed group endogamy or exogamy could be established for the modern Kaska (MacLachlan 1955:2) and moiety affiliation could be allotted whenever the situation demanded this (Honigmann 1949:133).


TRADING POSTS
SOURCE
ATLAS OF ALBERTA
1969.
FT. SELKIRK 1848
FT. NORMAN 1804
FORT SIMPSON 1804
FORT HALKETT 1820
FORT NELSON 1804
FORT RESOLUTION 1786
FT. VERMILION 1798
ROCKY MOUNTAIN HOUSE 1798
FT. DUNVEGAN 1805
FT. CHIPEWYAN 1788
FT. CHURCHILL 1717
YORK FACTORY 1684
LA CROSSE 1776
CUMBERLAND HOUSE 1774
NORWAY HOUSE 1814
KOOTENAY HOUSE 1807
FORT CHARLES 1668
MOOSE FORT 1673
BRANDON HOUSE 1793
1642 MONTREAL
SCALE
CONIC PROJECTION

FOOTNOTES

CHAPTER 4

1. In 1825 the 141st meridian was set as the boundary between the Russian and British spheres of interest.

2. Morice classifiies the Tse'-loh-ne, meaning "the people of the end of the rocks" with the Tse'kehne tribe occupying the Finlay River territory at 57° latitude north (Morice 1893:29). He felt himself to be too unfamiliar with the Nahanny or Nah'ane tribe to discuss any of their tribal divisions with any degree of certainty (1893:31).

3. The abandonment of Fort Selkirk can be seen as the end of the era of colonial fur trade expansion. Since this date no further territorial expansion was made by the fur trade Companies.

4. The Klondike gold rush, in the closing years of the nineteenth century, created similar patterns. In addition to the employment as packers, porters, deckhands and mine labourers, the Indians traded considerable quantities of meat, obtained from the Porcupine Caribou herds of the Central Yukon (Zaslow 1971:144,145). In addition the Chilkat Indians charged one dollar per head from every white man passing through their country (Pierce 1890:98).

5. Campbell established the post at Dease Lake (1949:42) which was only occupied for one winter (1949:43). Frances Lake was permanently occupied from 1842 onward and was not raided by Chilkat Indians, but Fort Selkirk was in 1852 (1949:43). This fort having also been established by Robert Campbell (see also p. 95 and footnote 3. above).

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION

Contact with European society has had a varied effect upon populations of native societies. In this study it has been demonstrated that the dynamics behind the contact conditions were different for two groups of Athabascan speakers. The people of the boreal forest of the Fort Simpson - Fort Nelson region went through a long period of displacement, warfare, starvation and disease. Above all, it was the disruption of the aboriginal susbistence base that characterized the history of the Beaver Indians. From 1670 onward the Athabascan speakers were pushed northward into the boreal forest, an environment lacking important concentrations of large game animals. However, solitary animals like moose, wood buffalo and woodland caribou were available. Following this era, the fur traders of the North-West Company exploited the forest environment in such a manner that it was soon virtually emptied of its animal populations. No major large-scale catastrophic natural changes have been reported for the time span this study is concerned with. Fluctuating local ecological conditions and cyclical animal birth and death rates occurred, but these presumably have occurred for hundreds if not thousands of years. These fluctuations, coupled with the extremely high hunting pressures introduced by the fur trade, explain the serious reduction of animal population. The new hunting and trapping methods did not allow animal populations to regenerate following the reduction of numbers through natural causes.

Elman Service, quoting Alexander Mackenzie, most likely meant this period to be the time of the development of the Athabascan composite band (1962:88). For Service, the composite band in general was "a product of the near destruction of aboriginal bands after contact with civilization" (1962:108). In that model disease played a prominant role. Although it is correct that disease has been reported continuously this apparently self-evident proposition only holds, when the conditions of starvation, brought about by the destruction of the subsistence base, are disregarded. Modern investigations (Stott:1968) have shown that ill-nourishment is a major cause behind large-scale outbreaks of disease, constitutional ill-health, infant mortality index, malformations etc., etc. Disease, unlike starvation, is a relatively easily observed empirical phenomenon, especially when one considers that the fur traders reporting the diseases were not interested in the overall living conditions of the Indians, but only in the Indian as trapper. Company personnel lost through accidents, fights and starvation were easily replaced by the hiring of new people. For the Athabascan speakers it meant a constant reorganization and the "good hunter" became the central focus (Helm 1961:171). This may have resulted "in the merging of unrelated peoples" (Service 1962:108).

The historical sequence for the Indian population today known as the Kaska is drastically different. The opening up of a new ecological niche through the gold rush attracted people to enter the Cassiar region. Ongoing wage-labour opportunities and cash fur trapping, formed the

predominant influence behind the emergence of a new community. Families grouped around the cash-flow introduced by those with incomes. Rather than emerging from an existing aboriginal population, as was the case with the Beaver Indians of Fort Simpson - Fort Nelson area, the new population of the Cassiar was a mixture of people from different cultural areas, with different cultural traits. This was of course recognized by the anthropologists, but wrongly explained by the concept of acculturation. The assumption that the Kaska Indians did emerge from an aboriginal society has led Honigmann (1964:1965) and MacLachlan (1955) to a variety of untenable propositions.

The dynamics behind the emergence of the present-day Cassiar community presents a model for other Athabascan communities. An examination of the history of Jean Marie (Lynx Point), as presented by June Helm, provides a similar basic pattern of economic and physical forces. The establishment of Jean Marie, situated south of Fort Simpson on the Mackenzie River could be traced back to 1911 (Helm 1961:45, 1965:365). The founder of the village, "Old Mink", was a steersman working on the York boats of the Hudson's Bay Company. Before he got this job, Old Mink had travelled and trapped in various parts of the Mackenzie region (Helm 1961:45). A number of families lived in the village, but in 1943/44 an important change took place according to Helm. The group co-ordination became more stable as the "Lynx Point Venture" was now fully launched. The reason was the acquisition of the power-boat and barge (1961:123). According to Helm, the "typical Slavey band" developed into a "Venture-type band" due to the leadership of some of the members of the community

and both types of social structure could serve as historical models (Helm 1961:124-190).

The similarity of this development to that of the Cassiar people is clear. Wage-labour formed the decisive influence behind the development of a community. In the case of the Jean Marie community, the ownership of a barge and boat created a stronger economic position with some alternative cash earning possibilities (selling fish and fire-wood), while the Cassiar people remained more dependent on the whims of Western Society. That the Lynx-Point Venture was continuously successful was shown in an economic survey in the late 1960's. The Jean Marie people were the only Indians of the Upper Mackenzie area who had acquired their own saw-mill (cooperatively owned) and a late model pick-up truck. The boat that pulled the barge was out of order (Higgins 1969:73, 105-107).

Neither the Cassiar people nor the Jean Marie people could do without either the cash-income or the hunting of animals for food. In both communities it was observed that the store-bought food was the larger part of the total food intake (Helm 1961:27-36, Honigmann 1949:102-111).

Helm and Damas have pointed out that Jean Marie could be considered a "Contact-Traditional" community (Helm and Damas 1963). A decisive feature of such an all-native community was the presence of permanent dwellings, indicating that nomadism and cultural independence had declined (Helm 1963:10). The prime forces behind these stabilization processes were shown to be the introduction of fur trade and access to new technology and it was proposed that the Dene, over a long time period, had abandoned their subsistence activities, the areas rich in subsistence

biota, the rich fishing waters, to obtain easier access to the "Point of Trade" and its market economy (Helm and Damas 1963:10, 11, 13, 19). A mysterious "pull" operated from the "Point of Trade" (1963:13) comparable to the pull of the city in Western society.

This study has shown that the natural resources of the boreal forest area around Fort Simpson/Fort Nelson, was not rich in resources, the lakes were not good fishing lakes and within a few years after the arrival of the North-West Company continuous complaints about the shortage of beaver were recorded. This, in an area which according to Helm and Damas included some of "the richest regions in the North for marten, mink and beaver" (1963:10).

A more accurate picture, since the 1800's, is of an Athabascan population in an almost totally destroyed natural environment, "killing whatever game came in their way to appease their hunger" (Wallace 1932:353). An increasing dependence on the western market economy, especially to complement the failing wild food supply, with western food, resulted in the attachment of people to the credit trapping system, a vicious circle most favourable to the Hudson's Bay Company.

For both the Cassiar and Upper Mackenzie people it was the physical and economic circumstances rather than internal sociological facets of the social system (such as kinship) which constitute the fundamental means of social organization. Stable income, through wage-labour or trapping created stable communities. Within such a stable community, like Jean Marie, kin-relatedness may continue and develop. In unstable communities, like the Lower Post community described by Honigmann (1949), kin-relatedness is

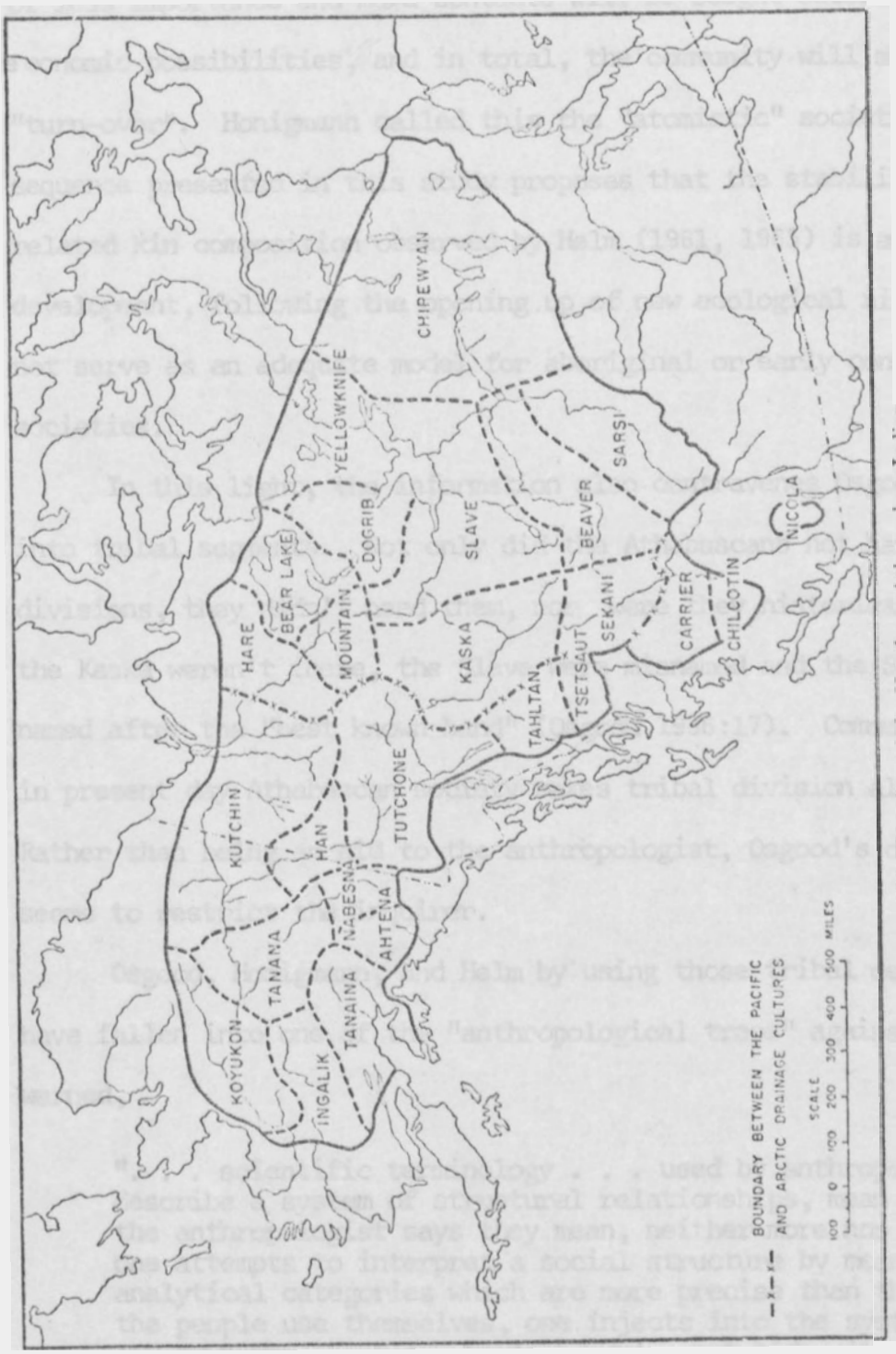


FIG. 1. Distribution of the Northern Athapaskan Indian

of less importance and more contacts will be sought outside for alternative economic possibilities, and in total, the community will show a high "turn-over". Honigmann called this the "atomistic" society (1949). The sequence presented in this study proposes that the stabilized inter-related kin composition observed by Helm (1961, 1965) is a recent development, following the opening up of new ecological niches and does not serve as an adequate model for aboriginal or early contact Athabascan societies.

In this light, the information also contravenes Osgood's division into tribal segments. Not only did the Athabascans not have these divisions, they didn't need them, nor were they historically inherited: the Kaska weren't there, the Slave were misnamed and the Sekani were named after the "best known band" (Osgood 1936:17). Community composition in present day Athabascan society makes tribal division almost meaningless. Rather than being an aid to the anthropologist, Osgood's distribution seems to restrict the inquirer.

Osgood, Honigmann, and Helm by using those tribal denominations, have fallen into one of the "anthropological traps" against which Leach warned,

> ". . . scientific terminology . . . used by anthropologists to describe a system of structural relationships, mean just what the anthropologist says they mean, neither more nor less. If one attempts to interpret a social structure by means of analytical categories which are more precise than those which the people use themselves, one injects into the system rigidity and symmetry which may be lacking in real life situations." (Leach 1954:103-106).

This study suggests, that similar types of investigations should be made into other groups of Athabascan people. Throughout the

Athabascan literature unsolved problems remain.

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