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Mixed Bloods of Moose Factory, 1730 – 1981: A Socio-Economic Study

CAROL M. JUDD

From time immemorial groups of Cree Indians from the interior woodland regions travelled down the lowland rivers to the coast of James Bay every spring. They came to feast on fresh geese and to socialize with others who also came to intercept the migrating flocks. The Indians travelled down the rivers as families or groups of families, while the inland regions they left behind held shared hunting areas rather than carefully defined and defended individual or group hunting lands. Thus they were generally peaceful people, establishing kinship and friendship networks throughout the James Bay region.

They lived simply with few material goods. A wigwam suited the housing needs of their nomadic lifestyle. They spent the goose hunting seasons near the shores of James Bay, on the flight path of the birds. Summers were spent along the rivers at the best fishing spots. In winter they moved into the woodlands in search of fuel, food, and protection from the elements. Fur bearing animals provided both food and clothing for the harsh winter months. The environment was fickle. Drought, floods, excessive cold or heat, and disease often disrupted the normal food supplies, bringing starving conditions to the people who relied on them. It was, however, a way of life that lasted for many thousands of years.

Granted a charter from the British parliament in 1670, the Hudson's Bay Company was given a monopolistic right to trade furs in the lands draining into Hudson and James Bays, an area it named Rupert's Land. By a single stroke of the pen many thousands of miles distant, a way of life was altered permanently by forces in many ways beyond the control of the Native inhabitants of the fur-rich lands.

The first fur trading post at Moose Factory at the mouth of the Moose River was built in 1673. It grew in importance until its capture by the French in 1686, yet it was not apparently used thereafter by the British even though it was returned to their ownership by the Treaty of Utrecht in 1713.

A new post was erected at Moose in 1730. It was built at least in part because the Indians requested a post nearer to their hunting grounds than Albany, about 100 miles north of Moose at the mouth of the Albany River. The reason they gave of James Bay being treacherous to navigate in small open canoes was certainly true, but even after the new post was built the Indians continued to travel freely between the two posts. The British company moved to Moose also because of the posts of the French opposition which were not far from Moose. Indeed, they may well have been as close as the Abitibi River, a branch of the Moose River, because in 1730 Indians who were sent on to Albany for trade goods sometimes indicated that they would go to the French who they said were nearer.¹

In the fall of 1730 a tradition was established at Moose that was in effect at older posts and would continue at this post for two centuries. Immediately upon the arrival of the building party a few Indians began to hunt geese for the use of the post. They stayed in the vicinity for over a month bringing in their excess catch. For this service the Indians were allowed shot, brandy, and trade items. During this first short season Indians brought well over 500 geese for the use of the fur traders. Every spring and fall thereafter Indians hunted geese to provision the post. In good years many thousand were salted and packed in kegs for the winter. Gradually these Indians began to form semi-permanent attachments to the fur trade post, leaving their sick and elderly while they went off fishing in summer and hunting and trapping in winter. In lean years they often congregated at the post expecting to be fed until the geese flew. These Indians became known as the home or homeguard Indians.

Other Indians continued to come to the shores of the bay only seasonally to hunt geese for their own use and to exchange their furs for British manufactured goods. Instead of paddling along the edge of the open water to Fort Albany, they were now able to trade furs closer to home. These Indians became known at the fort as the inland or upland Indians. They were less dependent upon the fort and hence less acculturated to British lifestyles. When they reached the fort they usually visited with the home Indians who were often related to them.

Social exchange between the Natives and traders was officially forbidden but the regulation could never be enforced effectively. In particular, the officers in charge of the posts were able to disregard it. William Bevan, in charge of Moose Fort between 1732 and 1737 kept an Indian woman as his companion. Since this practice was officially forbidden, very little was recorded about the woman. Presumably she lived in the factor's apartment. It is also likely that they had children who shared the same apartment.

The common workers were not allowed such normal domestic ties. If they formed attachments to local women, their relationships had to be clandestine, with perhaps the woman living near the post in a wigwam. Such discriminatory practices may well have contributed to the discontent of the men who worked under Bevan, for his tenure was marked by several instances of labour unrest.

James Duffield who succeeded Bevan clearly did not maintain an Indian woman, nor did he approve of his men having Indian companions. Indeed, he had great contempt for men such as Augustin Frost, a carpenter, who maintained more than one Indian family. In May 1742, when Frost reported that the Indians were grumbling and would go to the French if Duffield did not treat them better, the factor wrote,

. . . this is an artifice of Frost's own coining, who wants it to become an Indian Factory with his own wives & numerous family both in & about it as was the custom before. I shall say no more here but submit to you [the London committee] how any servant, can maintain such a numerous clan as belong to the home guard, who bring nothing here to trade & forever will be indolent while they are supported by such a fellow who has lived here without control before my arrival.²

Duffield effectively interrupted Frost's influence with the local homeguard by sending him home on the next ship. Once Frost had left, Duffield reported that the Indians seemed regretful for having deserted the post in protest of his treatment. Indeed, he was able to announce the following spring that trade had increased despite Frost's warning that his homeguard would abandon Moose. Nevertheless, within a few months Duffield had to report that the trade was much interrupted by the French who were now on the main branch of the river. This meant that the upland Indians did not bring down the expected quantity

of furs. However, he also reported that an uplander later revealed that a homeguard captain named Sakie had advised them not to come.

Augustin Frost had been very popular with the Indians and apparently was influential among them. When Duffield sent him home the Indians were obviously quite unhappy. One reason for this was the brisk "illicit" trade that Frost had conducted. One of Duffield's projects was to try to intercept this underground trade. He seemed to have at least moderate success by simply locking his men up within the compound of the factory whenever upland Indians came to the post to trade. This meant that little outside work could be done, but at least the furs that were reaching the vicinity of the post were reaching the hands of the Hudson's Bay Company and were not being siphoned off by individual employees.

Therefore, although the men usually formed social ties with the homeguard Indians, they were able to influence the uplanders because of the social interaction between the two Indian groups. In the earliest times the social ties were frowned upon and at times actively interrupted, but once the company began to expand inland in the 1770s a more liberal attitude began to prevail.

In response to increasing competition from Canadian-based fur traders, in 1777 Moose began to send individual traders upriver with trading goods. They built temporary or seasonal outposts and traded with the Indians on their own lands. Although this practice saved the Indians the long trip down the shoal and rock-studded river, it meant that company men now had to travel many miles inland. They had to master transporting heavy and bulky trade goods and valuable furs while at the same time carrying as few provisions as possible. It was not an easy task. While London congratulated its men in the field on their diligence in pursuing inland trade, the committee did not send enough additional employees to follow up effectively the initial thrust. Because Moose sent so many men inland, the coastal post soon reached a critical state of distress. It was clearly overextended in its attempt to pursue inland exploration and trade and at the same time continue to look after the farm operation, boatbuilding requirements, and repairs to structures at the bayside post.

It was clear that something had to be done to relieve the manpower stress on the bayside post that did not involve addi-

tional European servants. Although the Englishmen at Moose had used Indians to collect country provisions and in particular to supply geese and fish, they had not used Natives on a larger scale as labourers. Certain trusted Indians had been used to carry packets and individual sleds of trade goods and furs to and from inland posts.

Now, however, the Hudson's Bay Company turned to the Native people as a labour force to perform the myriad tasks that were necessary after the inland expansion brought mushrooming manpower demands. In 1777 E. B. Kitchen, the factor in charge of Moose, hired them to carry goods up the river in their canoes and also to build two canoes for company use on the Moose River. During the following winter Indians hauled sled-loads of food to the three inland posts for which Moose was responsible.

At Moose itself Indians began to be used to assist with the farm, especially to get hay and to harvest the crops. Women as well as men performed these tasks. They travelled inland with the boats and they took part in haying and harvesting.

In response, Native people began to congregate at Moose after the ice went out and spend their summers on the island waiting for opportunities to earn access to British trade goods. This movement which took many years to be established as a tradition meant a loss of independence for many of the upland Indians. It also indicated that trapping furs did not provide a stable enough income to allow the Natives to avoid being drawn into dependency upon the company to provide a supplementary income.

The Natives were not always totally acquiescent to the English company's demands, however. For example, they sometimes refused to travel with English partners in their boats.³ Since manning boats entirely by Englishmen left the post too empty of men "and tempts Uplanders otherwise usually quiet to be unruly,"⁴ the company was forced to rely heavily upon Indian canoeists despite their demands. In the summer of 1786 the Hudson's Bay Company was using a canoe that the Indians believed was too large. None would agree to travel in it, so it had to be left behind at the factory.⁵ However, in the following year, three company men, an Indian and his wife agreed to travel together in the large canoe.

Usually at this time a few English employees would accompany several canoes manned entirely by Indians on the inland

trips. For example, in September 1786 six Indian men and six Indian women went with Phillip Turnor and William Bolland in four canoes to Frederick House.⁶ Thus, when Indians first began to be used to assist the Hudson's Bay Company during the early phases of inland expansion, they were able to make demands (within limits) and to establish certain terms.

By the same token, the Hudson's Bay Company did not hire Indians on the conditions that other servants enjoyed. Whereas regular servants served under three to five year contracts, Indians were engaged merely for the season or individual canoe trip. They were therefore able to maintain a certain amount of independence from the company, but at the same time they did not enjoy any of the security for their future that a longer-term contract would allow.

By the turn of the nineteenth century both upland and home-guard Indians assisted the post on the bay in a variety of ways. While their primary importance was as suppliers of country produce such as geese, fish, and rabbits and as trappers of fur-bearing animals, they now began to work gainfully in other ways. Old men and women spent the winter fishing, snaring rabbits and netting partridges. Younger women and children also fished and helped with the work of the post's farm, which freed regular tradesmen to perform their own work rather than labouring jobs.⁷ Surprisingly, the officers (administrators) often helped the women and children with the haying.

Indian men went in boats to the marsh to collect hay; they helped to pull the boats up onto the bank in the fall; they built canoes and paddled them full of supplies to inland posts. Although men may have helped with the wood-chopping, the journal mentions that Indian women and young boys rafted the wood down the river to the factory. In the winter, if Indian families were forced to remain on the plantation, the men might be employed chopping wood or spinning oakum, but the women who were not fishing spent their time making moccasins and cleaning and restretching furs.

Therefore, as the Hudson's Bay Company set up temporary and then permanent posts in the inland regions to combat the aggressive methods of their Canadian competitors, the role of the Indians in the fur trade at Moose Fort changed considerably. In a sense, their position strengthened. They were able to exact fairly high prices for their furs, and to seek the best market, but on the other hand they were inexorably being drawn into Brit-

ish ways by taking seasonal positions at the fur trade posts. Only time and tradition would tell whether the increased economic security would outweigh the loss of independence and masking of cultural traditions.

Moose Fort, long accustomed to a high turnover of factors, entered a period of stable leadership which coincided with the period of inland expansion. John Thomas had been at Moose for some time in 1774 when he was named surgeon and second in command. In the same year he went with two canoes of Indians to explore the Abitibi River. Three years later he extended his explorations toward Lake Superior but did not make a settlement (trading establishment) there. By the time Thomas took the helm in 1782, provisioning inland posts had become routine and Britain was beginning to recognize the need to send out additional European servants to meet the increasing manpower needs.

Thomas also took his position of command at a time when Indian wives and mixed blood (called halfbreed) children were beginning to be recognized as natural adjuncts to the fur trade. Indeed, the post journal was beginning to indicate the existence of wives. In 1776, for example, George Atkinson "went for Eastmain to fetch his woman."⁸ In 1784 the London Committee approved the hiring of two Natives of Hudson Bay (another term for mixed bloods) at Albany.⁹ But such references were extraordinary. Very few clues were being made as yet about the existence of Native families.

In the summer of 1793 John Thomas thrashed one of the servants at the fort with a stick for behaving in a "most indecent manner" to one of Thomas's infant daughters. Thomas thus acknowledged the existence of his own by now numerous family. At about the same time he wrote to the committee in London requesting 50 primers or spellers to use for teaching the children at the factory.¹⁰ A year later the books that were sent out were being put to good use, at least whenever other chores did not interfere with the children's schooling. Once he revealed in the journal in 1796 that "squaw died after a long illness," he began to report more often about local wives. On October 27 of that year one Chilton and his mate went to the north shore to tent; two years later he noted that Gladman, carpenter & Rawbon and their wives and two children set off in a very large canoe.¹¹ Thus, slowly, families began to be accepted enough to form part of the daily business journal of the post and thus allow glimpses of social relations at the post.

Some of the men with Native families became quite adept at the Indian way of life. An employee, George Moore, for instance, who may have been a mixed blood himself, not only learned to make birchbark canoes and snowshoe frames, but he went off in the fall with his wife to hunt and trap. They set up their tent at Wayway Creek.¹²

In 1801 Thomas sent his own Native son John up the river with Moore and two other people to learn how to build canoes. John Thomas, Jr., also frequently engaged in fishing expeditions with his mother. Within a few years he was placed in charge of one of Moose's outposts, but by 1809 he was back at Moose surveying timber and taking charge of the men who manned the log tent for felling and squaring timber.

Thomas's son was not the only Native lad to be hired during this period. Indeed, so common were such employees becoming that the record was beginning to distinguish between Indian and mixed-blood employees. In 1797 the post journal recorded that three factory boys and four Indian lads went to Middleburgh Island to get hay. By 1804 the record was distinguishing even more clearly: "sent 3 men, seven Native youths and four Indians with both boats to the March."¹³ More often, however, the mixed blood men who worked for the post were merely mentioned by name and hence were almost indistinguishable from the Europeans.

In 1803 John Thomas wrote that the services of Native youths were becoming every year more important and that they were used extensively for supplying inland posts and opposing Canadians. This represented a move away from using Indians for inland travel and may have been made because the loyalty of the sons of fur traders was more assured. Taking its cue from the pioneering work of John Thomas at Moose in educating the local children, the company directors in London decided in 1806 to provide more universally for the education of company children. The committee sent the following instructions to its factors:

Wishing you to cultivate as much as possible an intimate connection with the Natives all over the Country & to facilitate your intercourse with them, which must of course prove advantageous to the Company, we have thought it would be adviseable to instruct the Children belonging to the Servants in the principles of Religion and teach them from their youth reading

writing & Arithmetic also Accounts which we should hope would attach them to our Service & in a few Years become a small Colony of very useful hands.¹⁴

The education of these children was at first the responsibility of the officers at the post who had to fit their teaching duties in with other work. Even with the addition of a full-time teacher, however, the education of the children was frequently neglected. Manpower shortages meant that the teacher often had to be used to perform more urgent tasks, and the provisioning and other immediate needs of the post also called the children away from their books. Therefore, even when the company recognized the educational needs of the children at the posts if they were to be turned into useful employees, finding the time to teach them was not easy.

It is also perhaps curious that when the new, more formal educational system was set up in 1809 upon the arrival of a school teacher, four of the eight students had the surname Thomas (probably most, if not all, were John Thomas's grandchildren) and four of the eight were girls. Thus only a select few were educated at all, and most of those were the progeny of prominent fur traders. This may have stemmed from the fact that the children of servants were commonly raised in the homeguard tents; or it may have been because servant-level employees did not recognize the value of a formal education, not being educated themselves.* For probably a combination of reasons, mixed blood children were usually not trained for anything but labouring or tradesmen's jobs for which extensive formal education was not a pre-requisite. Few Native children of company employees ever attained positions of responsibility as administrators and those few were sons of officers who were educated in Britain.

In sum, the factor John Thomas not only ushered in a new period of stability in the administration of Moose Factory, but he also oversaw a period when Native families were being increasingly recognized and hence acknowledged in the post

*Or that the social hierarchy awarded education to the higher-ranking children first [Ed.].

journals. Although they doubtlessly performed the same tasks in earlier days, the families of company men were now described as serving many useful functions at the post. The wives of officers and servants alike spent considerable time fishing, snaring rabbits, and netting partridges. They sometimes went off for days or weeks at a stretch to more distant locations to perform this work. Their children also learned the skills of hunting, trapping and fishing, and often accompanied their mothers in the performance of these tasks.

The children of men at the post assisted with haying and other farming duties; they fished, trapped and hunted; they gathered and sledged home firewood and timber; and they learned the skilled work of tradesmen often by apprenticing to their fathers. When they became adults they were usually hired to journey inland, build canoes, act as interpreters, or as tradesmen. Many were hired seasonally, but others were engaged under contracts similar to those held by European servants.

Thus the period of initial expansion inland with its requirement for additional men meant that not only were Indians now employed at different jobs, and European servants given gratuities and other advantages for remaining in the country after the expiration of their initial contracts, but the sons and daughters of fur traders began to become recognized as integral but distinct parts of fur trade society.

What had been a company of men who came to the fur trade regions for a limited time before returning home now became a separate and unique community of people who together made up a social unit. The men had families whom they were able to recognize formally. They worried about the education and placement of their sons, the proper marriage of their daughters, and their own retirement plans as they might affect their Native families. For some, this meant leaving them behind in the fur trade country, but for others it meant either remaining with them near a fur trade post or retiring with their families to the more settled regions of Canada or even back to Britain.

In the years of intense competition, both the Canadian companies and the British fur trading company suffered heavily. Not only was it difficult to man and provision the posts that were spreading all across the vast country, but trade goods were being exchanged for furs at diminished profits. Indeed, in some years the companies may have lost money. By using unscrupulous methods to obtain the Natives' furs, sometimes by force,

and sometimes by the use of liquor, the Indians, too, suffered. The unusually high returns for their furs led them to overtrap, and fur resources, especially beaver, became dangerously depleted.

In 1810 the Hudson's Bay Company re-organized and retrenched its field administration. Moose Factory became the headquarters of the newly-formed Southern Department. In 1821 when the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company joined forces under the banner of the British firm, Moose Factory was confirmed as the port of entry for the Southern Department and the seat of its governor.

Because the new Hudson's Bay Company combined the resources and the philosophies of both old companies, certain changes were made in its administration. The Canadian company had been built upon a nucleus of Scottish officers, many of them with family connections with the fur trade. The vast majority of the North West Company servants, the voyageurs, were drawn from the ranks of French Canadians who lived in the area of Montréal and down the St. Lawrence. Iroquois from Caughnawaga and St. Régis supplemented them. Thus, the North West Company was composed of two separate ranks of employees who were distinguished by race, culture, and language. The Hudson's Bay Company had been somewhat less pronounced in its ranking of officers and servants, although its officers tended to be English and its servants, especially in most recent years, tended to be Orcadian or Native. Servants could still cross the line from tradesman to officer, yet local mixed-blood employees seldom did.

Under the new regime, the line between servant and officer became clearly defined, and the chain of command in the fur trade hierarchy became more entrenched. The officers were not salaried, but shared in the profits of the company. The clerks, who aspired to become commissioned officers, were hired under five to seven year contracts at specified salaries that averaged between £50 and £150 per year. They lived and messed with the higher-ranking officers. The servants, on the other hand, were only in the most unusual circumstances promoted to officer ranks. They performed duties ranging from labourers and middlemen in boats, to highly skilled tradesmen such as shipwrights, blacksmiths, and schoonermasters. Therefore the new Hudson's Bay Company adopted the North West Company tradition of having two main streams of employees, officers and

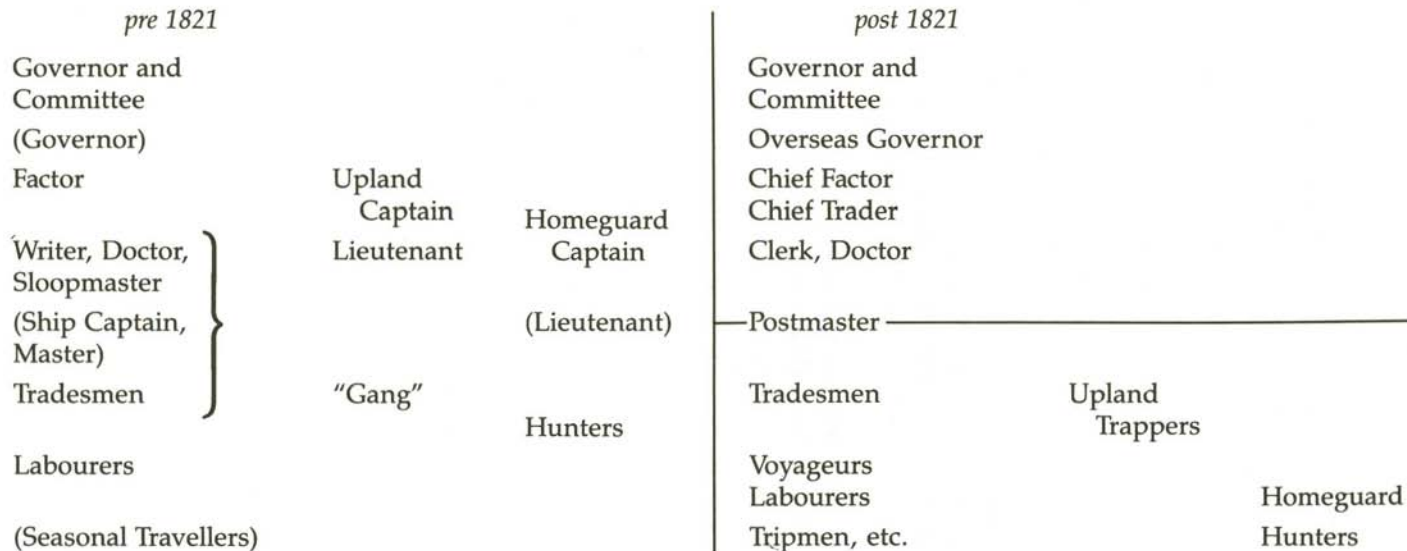
servants; the servant classes could no longer realistically hope some day to become officers.

In the period after 1821 the mixed blood or halfbreed workers became increasingly important to the Hudson's Bay Company. Partly because mixed-blood children were able to acquire only the rudiments of an education, and partly because the influential overseas governor under the new regime considered them "merely fit for voyaging,"¹⁵ they were hired at the lower servant levels of employment as labourers, middlemen or apprentice tradesmen. In earlier times men who were so hired could hope to rise within the company according to the level of their ambitions and, to some extent, education. But with the sharp line between the recruitment of servants and officers, people who initially engaged as servants no longer were able to become higher ranking administrators. Thus, with the exception of a few sons of prominent officers, mixed bloods were forced to occupy the lower rungs of the company hierarchy. Nevertheless they were hired in increasing numbers for unskilled positions; some were able, such as Philip Turnor, to become leading tradesmen, but only a few were granted places in the upper levels as officers. Almost none became commissioned, or profit-sharing, officers.

In 1822 Moose District employed 71 people, of whom 17 were "Natives." None of them were commissioned officers, whose profit-sharing position left them outside the bounds of the salaried employees. Three of the Natives were clerks, the lowest rank of officer. They earned 20.4% of the total payroll for salaried employees, a reasonable and representative remuneration. By 1830 29 men were under contract at Moose Factory itself, of whom 31% were "Natives." One of the five clerks was a local person, but the Native element earned only 25.9% of the total salaries paid in the district. A decade later 45% of the employees were Natives but they earned only 30.5% of the total salaries. In 1850 the Native component of the contracted labour force had dropped to 35% and they earned merely 23% of the total wages paid in the district.

This drastic downward trend in the per capita salaries of the Native people was reinforced by a concurrent loss of status of the jobs they held. While there were three Native clerks in 1822, by 1840 there were none, although the Native son of chief factor Robert Miles was an apprentice clerk. By 1850 not even one apprentice clerk clung to the ranks of officers. At the other end

Hierarchical Structure of Hudson's Bay Company Trading System at Moose Factory



of the spectrum, however, in 1822 20.5% of the boatmen were Native employees, the lowest level of contracted employment. By 1830 45% of the boatmen were Native, and by 1842 the situation had deteriorated further. Now, when the contracted work force was 45% Native and this group earned only 30.5% of the total salary, 35% of the Natives were apprentices. They apprenticed as a clerk, blacksmith and for two positions that normally did not require apprenticeship, labourers and sailors.

By 1850 this trend had become a pattern: 46% of all Native employees were serving merely as apprentices. It should not be surprising, then, that this group (35% of the labour force) was earning only 21.8% of the total payroll. This welter of statistics represented above all a marked loss of economic opportunity, a closing down of access to the more prestigious economic classes to which they had formerly enjoyed at least limited access.

Curiously, however, the records of the Southern Department do not reveal unusual labour unrest similar to the mutinies that threatened to bring boat travel in the Northern Department to a close. With the exception of one crisis, the Natives, both Indian and mixed blood, seem to have acquiesced in their fate with little protest.

The major exception to the normal placidity of the workers occurred during the residency of the first missionary at Moose Factory. Rev. George Barnley, a Wesleyan, attempted to rouse the Natives (probably both Indian and mixed blood hired for the trip or season only) to refuse to travel on Sundays. Barnley argued that they could not find eternal peace if they worked on Sundays and that the company had to feed them even if they did not work on the Lord's Day. His plea was unsuccessful. After considerable initial hesitation, the Indians as well as the contracted servants undertook to work on Sundays while travelling inland. Thus, even with the urging of an indignant pastor, the Native people at Moose could not be induced to work together to prevent the possibility of an eternity in hell. The reasons for this record of docility may never be fully understood, but the Natives of the Southern Department differed sharply in this regard from their counterparts further west.

The coalition of 1821 also brought extensive social changes to the lives of the mixed bloods who lived at Moose. These changes, however, were not as immediately apparent as the economic

reversals. While the men suffered most directly by the company's administrative practices, the social changes probably affected the women more directly.

Since White women were virtually unknown in the Indian country before 1821, mixed-blood and Indian women became the wives of both servants and officers of the Hudson's Bay Company. Traditionally they stood at all levels of fur trade society, assuming the social level at which their husbands stood. George Simpson, a relative newcomer to the fur trade in 1821 when he became a governor of the company, played a major role in determining the social conditions that accompanied the running of the fur trade corporation. In 1826 Simpson became governor of all Rupert's Land. His attitudes while at the apex of a highly hierarchical society assumed far greater importance than most individuals normally claimed.

In the Indian country marriage did not usually take place with the benefit of clergy, but rather tended to follow the Indian custom. Because they were not sanctified by the church, Simpson viewed fur trade marriages as liaisons, and Native wives as paramours. Thus his ill-informed and prejudiced view denied a long-standing and well-ordered fur trade social tradition.

After maintaining relationships with at least three successive mixed blood women, Simpson left for Britain to secure a British wife. Two of his closest associates also went off on similar missions. All three were successful in their separate searches. The arrival of these women had serious consequences for the women who had grown up in the Indian country and had previously been regarded as highly desirable wives.

One of the three men who introduced European wives to Rupert's Land was John George McTavish, formerly chief factor at York Factory, who after his marriage to Catherine McTavish went immediately to Moose Factory. Catherine McTavish's arrival at Moose was not mentioned in the post journals nor in the post letters. Nevertheless it is easy to speculate upon her effect on the flow of events at Moose.

Although McTavish informed Simpson shortly after his arrival at Moose that he and his wife were well and happy, Simpson advised McTavish to keep her aloof from the local residents.

I am perfectly amazed at the folly of [Chief Factor Joseph] Beioley in attempting to thrust his infernal Squaw upon the acquaintance of Mrs. McTavish and

understand that the other Ladies at Moose are violent and indignant at being kept at such a distance, likewise their husbands, . . . the greater distance at which they are kept the better. . . .¹⁰

This letter revealed at least an indication of the social ferment that accompanied the residency at Moose Factory of a Scottish woman who expected to be regarded as superior to the local people. Accustomed to being considered socially equal to their husbands, the wives of officers at Moose were understandably upset at being treated with such undisguised disdain.

It is possible that without Simpson's counsel, McTavish may have been more receptive to the Native women at Moose, for the governor had written to remind him that his position at Moose was different from his position at York Factory. Things that happened quite naturally and properly at the northern post were no longer natural and proper. The only change in McTavish's situation was the substitution of an European wife for his former mixed blood spouse. Therefore Simpson could only have referred to McTavish's altered social position. Simpson therefore surely meant that it may have been appropriate for McTavish's first wife to mix with the Indian and mixed-blood wives of officers, but "brown jugs," "smoky chimnies" or "circulating bits of copper" were not comparable in status or class with British women.¹⁷ They should be made aware of their place and of the place of the British women. Regardless of his personal view, the correspondence suggests that McTavish acquiesced to Simpson's suggestion.

So complete was the social isolation of the European women at Moose Factory and Red River that their husbands had provided them with imported British waiting servants. Thus it is reasonable to conclude that the fear and anger of the local women in both communities sprang from a deeper source than a superficial snubbing. In fact, their formerly secure niche on the social ladder of the fur trade was now threatened to an unknown extent for a reason that was totally beyond their control.

At the same time the European husbands of the mixed-blood women felt a similar distress at having their formerly acceptable wives socially devalued. The distress did not end with the principals involved. Other fur traders who understood the social system of the Indian Country were also acutely distressed. Donald Ross, who had married a Swiss immigrant at Red River

wrote, "I think the presence of these ladies will somewhat alarm our poor homespun country squaws, to some of them at least it will be any thing but a gratifying sight—"18 and James Hargrave who had not yet formed an attachment and hoped some day to return to Scotland for his own bride, wrote, "this influx of white faces has cast a still deeper shade over the faces of our Brunetts in the eyes of many." Two years later Hargrave, a clerk at York Factory, advised a friend who was on the brink of marriage with a local woman. Ask yourself, he counselled, "whether you could pass your life with a Native of this land—or whether by a little longer abstinence you may not be enabled in a few years to match yourself creditably in old England."19

A few years later the truth of the local women's fears were poignantly expressed on the occasion of Hargrave's long-postponed marriage to a Scottish woman. James Douglas, himself married to a mixed-blood, wrote:

There is a strange revolution, in the manners of the country; Indian wives were at one time the vogue, the half breed supplanted these, and now we have the lovely tender exotic torn from its parent bed, to pine and languish in the desert. What a debt of gratitude you incur, through such heroic devotion, which a lifetime of the tenderest attentions can hardly repay.²⁰

Although Catherine McTavish left Moose Factory when her husband was given a post in the Montréal District in 1835, and it would be many years before European women became common in the area, Moose was soon shaken by another encounter with a British wife.

The Wesleyan missionary society in 1840 sent a bachelor as the first Christian minister to Moose Factory. In 1844 Rev. George Barnley went back to Britain to find himself a suitable wife to help him with his ministry. After a successful search he returned with his bride in the summer of 1845.

Although Mrs. Barnley remained at Moose only two years, she caused the chief factor, Robert Miles and his wife (a mixed blood woman) considerable consternation. From the evidence available it appears that Mrs. Barnley considered herself to be socially better than Mrs. Miles, an attitude which Miles and his wife resented and resisted. Miles summed up what he thought to be the problem between the two families:

In 1844 Mr. Barnley went to England, returning in 1845 with a wife, the change in his condition being no greater than the change in his disposition and manners; he had become overbearing and dictatorial to the families of the Company's officers, he and his wife both assuming an unpleasant tone of superiority, with a strange captiousness and desire to find fault with every thing.²¹

It is also possible that Miles became defensive of his wife and family and more easily took offense than he otherwise might. That is, the minister alone had been inoffensive enough, but when he brought a British wife to the community, his presence became threatening to the established social order.

In any case, Mrs. Horden, who came with her husband in 1851 for the Church Missionary Society, did not seem to cause the same difficulties with the social condition at Moose. Mrs. Horden's stay which lasted 28 years allowed the local people to slowly become accustomed to women from outside. Nevertheless, Native women at Moose suffered the same changes that women all over the fur trade country felt. That is, they were relegated to a lower social status than at least some had held earlier. This is not to say that women demonstrably fell off the bottom of the social scale, but rather that their comfortable access to the upper reaches of the hierarchy appeared to be shaken. Their lower status was more in line with (but not as confining as) the economic classes that their brothers had always occupied and were now more than ever locked into.

Indian women suffered even more than mixed bloods. For many years the Company had actively encouraged its employees to marry mixed blood women, the daughters of fur traders, rather than Indians. But in 1855 James McPherson, a company servant was publicly refused permission to marry Hannah Ward, daughter of one of the home Indians.²² Such social limitations combined with constricting economic opportunities to force the Native Indians in the Moose Factory area more and more into economic and social hardship.

After 1870 the distinction between mixed blood and Indian became even finer than before. When the Canadian government took Indians of Moose Factory into Treaty 9, they allowed anyone regardless of the European element in his blood to be

admitted to the treaty, unless he was living in a non-traditional way. That is, as long as he lived like an Indian, no matter what his racial background, he could become a treaty Indian. Conversely, those who were left out were largely living in houses and working for the Hudson's Bay Company. To distinguish between the two groups the Canadian government had therefore fallen back on the method the Hudson's Bay Company had traditionally used. Those who worked for the company were mixed-blood Natives.

After 1870 fewer servant level employees were imported from Scotland. They were becoming harder to get, harder to please, and harder to keep. In 1873, for example, several men went to the frontier to take advantage of the high wages paid to lumberers, miners, and railwaymen. By 1884 Cotter complained that he had great difficulty keeping his men. The nearness of the railroad and reports of high wages in Canada and the north west were unsettling the minds of the people at Moose. A spirit of restlessness seemed to be agitating the fur trade post.

Joseph Fortescue arrived to take charge of Moose in 1889. He attempted to sweep through the post with the same zest that James Duffield had used a century and a half earlier. He had harsh words for everyone from his predecessor to the Indians and even his own employees. He complained, for example, that Moose had too many skilled men on its payroll and not enough general servants; thus highly paid men were often used to perform tasks that could be done by someone with less skill and earning less money. He also complained that nearly every servant was intermarried with each other and with the coast Natives. Consequently, he argued,

we are beginning to feel the effects of a policy, which to escape temporary difficulties in recruiting in times past, has only opened the way for greater, now that the numbers have increased so largely that employment in the service, cannot be found for the surplus.

All of this intermarriage, he continued,

affects the discipline of the fort, rendering Service lax and the men, unwilling to leave their families even for a day or two, and gives the Co the additional burden if not of providing, at least of hauling all their firewood to the extent of over 1000 loads.

He also regretted to have to report that there was much private brewing and drinking which he believed interfered with their work, and in addition, "their connection with the Indians, transfers their empathies to them in any difficulties regarding labor &c."²³

Whatever labour problems Moose had did not reach the post journals. Fortescue's statement, "to fall out with one is to break with all, which makes it very difficult to deal with them,"²⁴ was much more applicable at York Factory, a post he had recently left, than at Moose. Despite his fears, Moose Factory remained at least superficially a reasonably satisfied fur trade post. Real labour problems were few and scattered.

This is not to suggest that conditions were superior to other posts. They likely were not. Perhaps when more is known of the employment situation at other posts, Moose's place overall will be easier to assess.

Magistrate E. B. Borron who visited Moose Factory in 1890 left an account of living conditions at the post among the servant classes:

The servants of the Company, as distinguished from the hunters and trappers, are engaged for a term of years, at wages varying from twenty to thirty pounds a year, with a ration of food sufficient only for themselves. A few of the mechanics may get more, but the wages do not usually exceed that amount. Many of these are Scotchmen, or Scotch half breeds. As long as they remain unmarried they can live, and even save money. Few however do this; the far greater number marry Indian or half breed women. The single ration, together with what the wife may be able to add by fishing and hunting, suffices the young people for a while. But as child after child is born, the annual pittance of wages is drawn upon not only for clothing but for food. At the prices charged (and which it is to some extent necessary to charge) in this territory, the man's wages will not go very far. The quantity of game and fish at or near the trading posts is not great, not at all times to be procured, and when the families are large and chiefly girls they are, I fear, very sorely pinched to live. If the father dies, their condition is still more pitiable. There is no employment for women, and as

to getting out of the country to seek it elsewhere, it is simply impossible. It is a mystery to me how many of them do live.

In the matter of education the children who had to remain at the post for their schooling received only the most imperfect grounding. The school was open for only a few hours a day and was too cold to operate in winter. The junior officers, tradesmen and servants, Borron observed,

see with anxiety and sorrow their families growing up to manhood and womanhood, either altogether uneducated, or with an education so imperfect as to afford very little hope of their being able to make an honest and comfortable livelihood in any other part of the world. While, on the other hand if they remain where they are, their prospects are too sad to be contemplated by most parents . . .²⁵

As the years passed, conditions did not materially improve. Indeed, in 1902 twelve servant families were dismissed as surplus workers and sent up to the railroad line to find work. After a brief respite during the war when many of the young men at the post enlisted, the problem of having too many people and too few jobs returned. In 1922 Moose submitted a report outlining the extent of the problem:

As I pointed out elsewhere the number of general servants etc. employed at various posts in the district are far in excess of the number required, yet what are we to do with them? They are the sons of generations of Hudson's Bay Company servants. We cannot give their fathers medals for long service and then send them [the children] out into the world. They are in reality products of the Company and the Company must carry them until such time as a railway or something comes into the country and absorbs them. Of course in taking this view I am governed by sentiment, but no business can be completely soulless.²⁶

Therefore, at Moose the mixed blood employees were suffering economically as the company was suffering the attempt to find work for them.

In sum, 1870 to 1930 was a period of adjustment at Moose Factory. The fur trade as it had traditionally been run was on the verge of extinction. At least in comparative terms the fur trade company itself was suffering economically. During this period its officers stopped depending solely on the profits from the fur trade for their remuneration and instead had a guaranteed yearly income augmented by a smaller share of profits.

The population of mixed blood sons and daughters of the fur traders was also growing and now controlled most skilled and semi-skilled as well as unskilled trades in the district. Still, many were without work and were pressing for jobs.

An expanding group of Indians was attempting to maintain a livelihood from a dwindling resource base which it hoped to supplement with the limited opportunities to earn money in secondary industries such as farming, boatbuilding and transport. In order to increase their chances of gaining employment they moved to Moose Factory Island to spend the summer.

Although on one level the company feared the coming of the railroad, believing it would disrupt what remained of traditional trading patterns, on another level it welcomed the railway as a means of siphoning off its excess labour pool, which was comprised largely of the mixed blood sons and daughters of fur traders.

Moose Factory has survived the coming of the railroad and with it the end of isolation. It is no longer a fur trade community. The Moose Works shut down even before the first train snorted into Moosonee, and the Hudson's Bay Company farm operation closed down shortly thereafter; more importantly, only a few old timers trap anymore and those that do ship their furs to the government auctions in North Bay. At Moose Factory as almost everywhere else, the Hudson's Bay Company is merely a retail store.

Yet memories of the fur trade keep Moose Factory from being just another northern town. Many families have lived for generations, if not centuries, on the island, for their names, Morrison, Moore, McLeod, Chilton, Faries, Taylor, Small, and Linklater, could be found on employment records two hundred years ago. They are the sons and daughters of servants, tradesmen, sailors, labourers who have stayed beyond the terms of their initial contracts and built a community here. The officers, Duffield, McTavish, Christie, Miles and Watt, for example, with all

their stature in the Hudson's Bay Company, left a much less permanent mark on the community. Only Thomas Vincent, a prominent chief factor in the late eighteenth century, left any local descendants whose roots can be shown to derive from the privileged officer class of employees. The rest of the progeny of officers apparently left to seek their fortunes elsewhere or were re-absorbed back into Native society, their connections with British gentry forgotten.

The prominence of the non-status Native people within the larger community of Moose Factory, if not unique in Canada, is certainly highly unusual. At Moose Factory, the doctors, nurses, and teachers are outsiders and exercise little social control. The Anglican church, on the other hand, is a major force in the community.

Up until fifty years ago Moose Factory was an isolated village beyond the northern fringes of settlement in Ontario, connected far more directly with Britain than its capital in Toronto. Moose entertained few visitors. It functioned in a traditional, relatively self-contained manner, urban yet remote, supporting several service industries such as farming, lumbering and shipbuilding—yet focused on a single staple, primary resource, the fur trade.

The traditional way of life, however, was inexorably becoming unworkable. Shipbuilding virtually ceased and eventually the Moose Works stopped producing even small boats. Those who blame the arrival of the railroad for their present economic difficulties were perhaps not aware of the slow decay that was already crippling their village. Nevertheless, the railway clearly acted as a catalyst to accelerate change.

One hundred years had to pass after the establishment of the Hudson's Bay Company before the progeny of the fur traders were able to claim a separate identity. For a time they enjoyed a period of relative good fortune. But that time was during a period of ill-fortune for the company and hence was doomed not to last. After the re-establishment of near monopoly conditions, the place of the mixed bloods was soon relegated to a position of limited opportunities and racial stereotyping. Although non-status Natives (or mixed bloods) can be said to be the dominant ethnic group at Moose Factory, if not throughout the James Bay region, these people have been locked in a struggle for recognition for well over a hundred years. For many years they appeared to have given up and accepted the con-

straints imposed by the Europeans in their midst. More recently, however, they have begun to stake a claim to more equitable treatment. Some have succeeded, but the social and economic position of this People is still frustratingly restricted.

NOTES

1. W. A. Kenyon and J. R. Turnbull, *The Battle for James Bay, 1686*, Macmillan, Toronto, p. 67.
2. Hudson's Bay Company Archives (hereinafter cited as HBC) B. 135/a/11, 31 May, 1742.
3. HBC B. 135/a/61, 14 June 1780.
4. HBC B. 135/a/62, 26 May 1781.
5. HBC B. 135/a/70, 28 May, 3 June, 1786.
6. HBC B. 135/a/71, 12, 13 Sept. 1786.
7. HBC B. 135/a/84 27 July, 7 Aug. 1797; B.135/a/91, 24 July 1804.
8. HBC B. 135/a/57, 13 Oct. 1776.
9. HBC A. 6/13, fo. 95, pgh. 6, Albany 1784.
10. HBC B. 135/a/79, 10 Aug. 1793; A. 6/15, London Outward 1794, fo. 103f, pgh. 19.
11. HBC B. 135/a/84, 3 Oct. 1796; *Ibid.*, 27 Oct. 1796; B. 135/a/86, 29 Sept.
12. HBC B. 135/a/87, 29 Oct. 1779; 17 July 1800.
13. HBC B. 135/a/84, 7 Aug. 1797; B. 135/a/91, 23 July 1804.
14. HBC A. 6/17, for example, fo. 81f, pgh 21, instructions, 1806.
15. HBC D. 4/87, Simpson Official Reports, 1824, fo. 8 (this refers specifically to the mixed bloods of Red River but could be generalized to apply elsewhere).
16. HBC B. 135/c/2, fo. 74, Moose Inward Correspondence, 15 August 1831, Simpson to McTavish, Red River Settlement.
17. *Ibid.*, fo. 71, 72, York Factory, 7 July 1831; 3 Jan. 1832, fo. 78.
18. PAC MG 19 Hargrave Papers, Series 1, Vol. 2, fo. 214-15, D. Ross, Edinburgh, 25 Feb. 1830.
19. *Ibid.*, Series 1, Vol. 21, Hargrave to Charles Ross, York Factory, 1 Dec. Vol. 22 Letterbook 9, York Factory, 31 July 1833.
20. *Ibid.*, James Douglas to Hargrave, Fort Vancouver, 26 Feb. 1840.
21. HBC A. 11/46, Simpson Inward, fo. 65, 30 June 1847. Miles to Simpson, fo. 30.
22. HBC B. 135/a/163, 19 Aug. 1855.
23. HBC D. 20/58, 1 Feb. 1880, Fortescue to Wrigley.
24. *Ibid.*
25. HBC D. 26/16 Borrón's Report on Indians, 1890. John Long's essay in this volume also comments on this important report.
26. HBC FDTR 15, Moose District Report, 1922.