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Title

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Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/86p100fp>

Journal

American Indian Culture and Research Journal , 6(2)

ISSN

0161-6463

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Publication Date

1982-03-01

DOI

10.17953

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Reflections on Fur Trade Social History and Métis History in Canada

Arthur J. Ray

A striking aspect of the historiography of Métis studies in Canada and the northern United States relates to the fact that Marcel Giraud's classic study, *Le Métis Canadien*, published in 1945, did not have the immediate effect of stimulating a great deal of additional research.¹ While the quality of Giraud's work was of such high standards that his book is still an invaluable source, nonetheless it is useful to consider why it did not serve to spark further research in a wide variety of areas of the history of Peoples of Indian-European ancestry.

Initially the problem was one of timing. The work appeared in 1945 when most historical research had been interrupted by World War II. New momentum was slow to develop. In the case of Native studies, the pace did not begin to accelerate until the 1960s. Initially anthropologists and archaeologists took the lead. They were primarily interested in Indian history. Much of their attention was focused on questions of contact tribal locations, post-contact migrations, changing ecological circumstances, and kinship systems responding to a variety of post-contact environmental as well as socio-economic pressures.² The opening of the Hudson's Bay Company archives to the scholarly community and its subsequent transfer from England to Canada further stimulated work and permitted researchers to venture into new areas. Charles A. Bishop was one of the first ethno-historians to make extensive use of this previously inaccessible data base.³ Geographers and historians soon followed and a growing body of scholars began sifting through the Hudson's Bay Company's massive records.

In the growing body of literature that has emerged from research in the company's archives, the Métis have continued to receive remarkably little attention until very recently. In essence, they have remained the invisible part of the Euro-Canadian-Métis-Indian trio that built the fur trade. Their continuing "invisibility" has been partly a consequence of the persistent preoccupation of anthropologists with the search for vestiges of "aboriginal culture" in the effort to achieve one of their long-term elusive goals of reconstructing pre-contact Indian cultures. Clearly the Métis are not central to this quest given their culture was created by the interaction of Indians and Europeans in the context of the fur trade. Like anthropologists, historical geographers have also been more concerned with Indian history. They have been particularly interested in ecological issues, the problems of ascertaining contact locations and movements of Indian bands, and determining the economic responses of Indians to the new opportunities offered by the fur trade.⁴

It is the historians who have paid the greatest attention to the Métis. But, their perspectives have been rather limited. The biographical and political dimensions of Canada's past have been a major preoccupation of historians until recently. Louis Riel and the two uprisings that he led have been the subject of numerous studies, the classic one being George Stanley's, *The Birth of Western Canada*.⁵ The problem with these studies, however, is that they are usually approached from the perspective of the building of the Canadian nation rather than that of the Métis. I believe this is one of the problems with Stanley's impressive work. He tends to treat the Métis as a single group with a common set of goals and aspirations. And, while he acknowledges that they had many legitimate grievances that led up to the two conflicts, in the end, Stanley sees their resistance movements as ". . . fundamentally the revolt of a semi-primitive society against the imposition of a more progressive, alien culture. . ." ⁶ This outlook detracts from his otherwise sympathetic treatment of the Métis and it is, I believe, a by-product of his approach to the topic as well as a reflection of the time when the work was completed.

The Birth of Western Canada and other later studies suggest an alternative view is possible that does not involve seeing the conflict as a clash of civilizations of two different levels of sophistication. The fact is that until 1880 commercial buffalo hunting was a very profitable enterprise that provided the plains Métis with a lucrative return. Indeed, from the point of view of

economics, it was probably more rational in the context of the regional economy to engage in buffalo hunting than farming. The former provided a more reliable livelihood than the latter which suffered repeated setbacks due to drought, locusts, frosts and a host of other problems. Granted, buffalo hunting was a way of life. But, so is farming. The trouble is that scholars have too often seen buffalo hunting only as a traditional way of life, and a primitive one at that. And, while many Métis treasured the lifestyle that went with it, undoubtedly by the late 1870s many were aware, as the Indians were, that the end to buffalo hunting days was fast approaching.⁷ Change was in the wind. The question was who would control it and what directions would the regional economy take. Finally, with regard to the buffalo hunt, it must be remembered that not all of the Métis of the parkland-grassland participated in it. Furthermore, many of those who did also were involved in other activities such as farming, petty trading and transportation using the Red River carts. In short, they were very actively involved in the regional economy in a variety of ways, some of which would survive, others would not. But, to see those practices that did not withstand the economic transformations of the west after 1870 as being "primitive" is to view them from an ethnocentric retrospective bias.

The scholarly treatment of Riel is also problematic. There has been a preoccupation with the question of his sanity. While this topic may be worthwhile for those who are interested in determining who Riel was, it is probably irrelevant to the larger concern of obtaining an understanding of the course of Métis history and their struggle for nationhood.

Because of these traditional concerns and conceptual orientations, we have gained relatively few new in-depth insights into Métis economy and society, the development and persistence of their sense of identity and nationhood, or a fuller appreciation of their contribution to Canadian history since the early 1940s. In these respects Métis history has lagged far behind Indian history.

Fortunately this situation appears to be rapidly changing at present. This is largely a reflection of two developments. In Canada Métis and "non-status" Indian organizations (Native peoples who were not included in treaties) have undertaken, or have commissioned, a great deal of research to put forward their claims for compensation for losses of land and other rights previously unrecognized or violated by various governments. The

growing interest in fur trade social history has been another development that has served to draw greater attention to the Métis. Social historians have shown a great regard for the roles that women played in the fur trade; they have been concerned with the impact that changing marriage practices had on the social status of Indian, Métis and Euro-Canadian women; they have made some effort to show how marriage patterns influenced the economic and social positions of fur traders and their families; and they have tried to ascertain if there were significant differences in the societies that developed out of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Montréal based trading systems. These various concerns have sparked a great deal of genealogical and biographical research that has considerable relevance for Native studies.⁸

While this social history has made great contributions to fur trade and Native history, it will be useful to pause and reflect upon the limitations of present approaches and consider possible directions that future research should take.

One of the major recent works in this area is *Many Tender Ties* written by Sylvia Van Kirk.⁹ In this book she has clearly shown that Indian-European marriages were a necessary part of the fur trade for a variety of reasons. Most notably, Indian women were invaluable travelling companions, provided important labour, and through marriage linked European traders into Indian kinship systems thereby offering economic advantages to both cultural groups. These Indian women thus served to bridge the cultural gap that existed between Indians and Europeans. Very quickly a large mixed-blood population sprang up at French, Nor' Wester and Hudson's Bay Company posts. By the beginning of the 19th century it had become common practice for European traders to take Métis women for their brides instead of Indian women.¹⁰ After 1821 it became increasingly fashionable for White men in the upper ranks of fur trade society to seek out White wives. According to Van Kirk, this marked the beginning of the decline of the social position of Native women (Métis and Indian) in fur trade society.¹¹ Of considerable importance, Van Kirk's book breaks the essentially "macho image" of the fur trade that has prevailed for so long by showing that it was as much a women's world as a man's. In doing so Van Kirk has provided a very readable account of aspects of fur trade society that gives one a feeling for certain dimensions of family life on the frontier.

Acknowledging this important contribution to fur trade and Native history, there are a number of serious limitations to Van Kirk's approach nonetheless. Her purpose was to set out to discover norms of fur-trade society by looking at the roles and positions of women in it. However, we are never told precisely what the term "fur-trade society means"! Instead, Van Kirk simply says that ". . . fur-trade society was not Indian; rather it combined both European and Indian elements to produce a distinctive, self-perpetuating community."¹² Does this mean that all Métis communities were "fur-trade societies"? Or, does the term apply only to communities that developed around trading posts? Did fur-trade society have significant regional variants? For instance, one has to consider the very distinct probability that the different precontact social systems of the Indians had an impact upon the social interactions of Europeans and Indians. Van Kirk acknowledges the traders ". . . actually encountered many different tribes with varying languages, customs, and standards of living."¹³ Indeed they did. Native societies included examples of band, segmental tribal and petty chiefdom forms of socio-political organization. Kinships systems included bilateral descent much like our own as well as unilineal schemes stressing either the female (matrilineal) or the male (patrilineal) side. Some were highly stratified, like those of the west coast, and some were very oriented to status enhancement through the control of access to wealth (certain west coast and plains Indian societies). Yet, Van Kirk pays little regard to these differences. Is this because they did not matter in the end? If this was so, and a highly uniform "fur-trade society" did in fact emerge, the process by which this came to pass warrants a great deal of attention and it clearly would be crucial for efforts aimed at obtaining an understanding of Métis roots, regional variants of their culture, and the process by which a collective identity was molded.

It is more likely Van Kirk simply found it "convenient to speak in general terms of 'the Indian'" even though she cautioned against approaching the Native people this way.¹⁴ In this important respect, her approach to the foundations of fur trade society, and hence Métis society, is unbalanced. After similarly cautioning against treating the traders as a single group, she does attempt to show that the approaches of the Hudson's Bay Company and the Nor' Westers to relations with the Indians were different.

In the end, the Van Kirk approach is largely anecdotal and does not firmly establish any universal norms of "fur trade society." Instead, it deals largely with the success and failures of a small number of Indian, mixed-blood and White women who attempted to marry White traders who occupied the upper ranks of the various trading companies. It is assumed, but never proven, that their aspirations matched those of most of the other women of their respective ethnic backgrounds. Furthermore, much of the data cited, particularly for the period between 1821 and 1870, is drawn from Red River. The assumption, again untested, seems to be that it is typical for the whole of the north and west. The heavy focus on Red River leaves another question completely unaddressed. What happened to "fur trade society" after 1870? The society of Red River may have been radically altered by the events of 1870 and thereafter, but the fur trade has continued until the present in many areas with all three groups (Indian, "non-status" Indians and Euro-Canadians) taking part.¹⁵ What are the societies of these communities like now and how have they been altered by the events of 1870 and thereafter? For instance, have the Indian treaties and various government acts, most notably the Indian act, served to perpetuate separate Native traditions by establishing distinctive legal categories for people having Native ancestors? Granted these questions lay outside the intended scope of Van Kirk's work. Yet, her study raises them nonetheless.

While Van Kirk's approach to fur trade social history is of the more traditional narrative style, the other major work to appear within the last two years, Jennifer Brown's *Strangers in Blood*, is very different. Brown was interested in studying the ". . . growth and accretion of distinguishably fur trade social patterns over time."¹⁶ The conceptual approach that she took was one developed by Fredrik Barth termed "institutionalization" or "how individual experience feeds back on cultural standardization."¹⁷ The methodology involved undertaking a macrobiography. This consisted of collecting, organizing, and comparing biographical materials on temporally and/or spatially distinct groups of individuals as a means of tracing the structuring of social life over extended periods.¹⁸ Thus, Brown's work is essentially a social science history that blends the approaches of history and anthropology in an effort to come to an understanding of how "fur trade society" evolved.

As in the case with Van Kirk, Brown is not primarily concerned with the Métis. Rather, she merely considers them as one of the constituent groups within "fur trade society." Following current conventions in fur trade historiography, she attempts to show how the two different sub-traditions in "fur trade society", the Hudson's Bay and St. Lawrence traditions, influenced the way the two different groups of European men interacted with Indian, and later mixed-blood, women.¹⁹ More effectively than Van Kirk, Brown analyzes social change in local fur trade communities, particularly Red River, against the backdrop of regional and international socio-economic change. The value of this perspective is evident in her discussion of the impact of racist attitudes on Native peoples in the west. Rather than simply pointing out that racism was a factor in Native-White relations, Brown points out that it was a useful tool to categorize and "marginalize" the Native people in the economy.²⁰ Carol Judd was the first scholar to discuss this process at length.²¹ She noted that after 1821, and indeed before that date, the Hudson's Bay Company hired men for jobs on the basis of race. In the 18th century Indians were not hired as permanent employees. Instead, they were given only temporary seasonal jobs that did not interfere with winter trapping activities. On the other hand, mixed-bloods could obtain regular employment, but they were largely excluded from the officer ranks.²² Thus, racist thinking entered into the fur trade employment practices of the Hudson's Bay Company well before 1821.

However, the merger of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company in 1821 brought the evils of racist thinking more forcefully into play for a number of reasons. Brown points out that the St. Lawrence sub-tradition as manifest in the North West Company was characterized by a more well developed system of social stratification in the sense that there was virtually no movement across the upper and lower class boundary. When the two advisories merged in 1821, this aspect of the society, which was incipient in the Hudson's Bay Company before 1821, became dominant. The merger also temporarily disrupted the local fur trade labour market and many men, perhaps one-third of the combined labour forces of the two companies, were laid off. Brown suggests that racial stereotyping ". . . eased problems of screening new applicants for clerkships [junior officers], of whom there were far too many from the 1820s to the

1840s, and Native-born [mixed-blood] sons were rejected out of hand, unless they were extremely well educated and Briticized, with powerful advocates within the company."²⁴ As Judd and Brown have shown, this racial stereotyping was a source of growing social tension because status was closely linked with occupation.²⁵ And, officers in the company who had mixed-blood sons wanted their children to have the same economic opportunities that they had. As the society became more rigidly stratified and class conscious, denial of certain employment opportunities on the basis of race became an increasingly bitter pill for the mixed-bloods to swallow.

It is for these reasons that the changing position of mixed-blood women in "fur trade society" must be more carefully considered against the background of the more general socio-economic pressures that were building. It is clear that the racist attitudes of White women alone was not the cause of the decline of the social status of mixed-blood women. Had mixed-blood men been given the same access to jobs and privileges as their White counterparts, then the social position of the wives of these mixed-blood men would have been less threatened by the attitudes of the White women who appeared on the scene after 1821.

Thus, although Brown's approach lacks the zest and feeling for the period that Van Kirk's has, it may be the more useful one to build an analytical social history upon. However, if fur trade social history is to make further strides, it must break out of its present boundaries. Brown's and Van Kirk's studies, as well as most other ones that have been attempted to date, suffer from weakness of drawing generalities about "fur trade society" from a very limited and biased data base. Virtually all of the biographies and genealogies that have been used to date are drawn from the upper classes. It might not be stretching the point too far to suggest that if one excluded information drawn from the various papers of the Anderson, Bulger, Ermatinger, Hargrave, Keith, MacDonell, Ross and Simpson families, there would be no fur trade social history! Brown acknowledges that this is a problem. But, she attempts to justify drawing on this skewed (in terms of social class) sample by arguing that there is a practical and theoretical reason for doing so. In her words:

On the practical side, far more information can compiled about men who were literate (or if not, who left some imprint on the records because of their spe-

cial duties, explorations, or other work) than about particular labourers, voyageurs, and others who remained in low positions. . .

The theoretical interest of focussing on the upper ranks emerges in both the earlier and later periods covered by this volume. Particularly in the eighteenth-century . . . the role models provided by officers in familial and other spheres proved of much importance as the numbers of Hudson's Bay families grew . . . in the difficult period after the 1821 merger, officers hold special interest precisely because of their rank, their various and changing perceptions of rank and its ingredients, and their varied assessments and treatment of the social placing and ranking of their Native-born wives and offspring.²⁶

There is no question that it is easier to study the officer class. However, that does not mean that an examination of the "common labourers" is impossible. By painstakingly going through employment records, accounting records of various types, as well as letters and post journals, it is possible to do a more comprehensive social history than has been attempted to date. The work of Rogers and Black at Round Lake, Ontario demonstrates that genealogical work can be extended to the Indians who were illiterate and presumably occupied the lowest rung of "fur trade society."²⁷ Most of the "new" social history following in the tradition of the British historian E. P. Thompson focuses on the working class and frequently has to draw on a data base that is more intractable than that of the Hudson's Bay Company. The effective utilization of the company's archives will require complementing the more traditional narrative/subjective approach with a quantitative history one. This combined attack should make it possible to obtain an idea of what daily life was like for all classes and thereby broaden our view of the society which is presently limited largely to an understanding of certain aspects of familial relations.

As for the theoretical justification for concentrating on the upper class, Brown's points are well taken and clearly point to the need for understanding this group. But, one of the underlying assumptions needs to be questioned nonetheless. Brown's remarks suggest that the aspirations and goals of the officer class represented those of the society as a whole. Is this a safe

assumption? In the case of the Métis members of that society there is good reason to suspect that there were at least two different life-styles. One was oriented to the buffalo hunt and more "traditional ways." The other was more oriented to Red River, and its material comforts, fashion, and social status. It was the life of the economically ambitious entrepreneurs.²⁸ The diverse economic orientations of the Métis and their place in the evolving social order warrants more careful attention. It is likely that the efforts to do social history solely from within the context of the employment structures of the trading companies is not inadequate, especially for the period after 1821. There is no question that status and rank went hand in hand within the company system, but what about the growing number of Métis and others who sought economic opportunities outside of the company after 1821? Officers would not have served as their role models. How did these groups seek social recognition? From whom did they seek it?

The other general difficulty of fur trade social history to date relates to the preoccupation with Red River. This is not meant to suggest that further study of the settlement is not useful. Rather, it is my opinion that fur trade social history and Métis history has been viewed too narrowly through "Red River blinkers." After all, the colony was very different from most other northern and western communities even if it was tied to many of them socially and economically. Agriculture provided an increasing share of the settlement's basic food requirements and income as time passed. Furthermore, educational as well as other opportunities were available there that were lacking elsewhere in the northwest. For these and other reasons it became an attractive place of retirement for many of the Hudson's Bay Company's officers and servants.

Yet, not everyone, perhaps not even the majority, chose to live in Red River. There were other Métis settlements in the west such as St. Albert, Deven/Christchurch, and Lac la Biche to name few.²⁹ There were large settlements at some of the oldest company establishments, such as York Factory and Moose Factory, as well as at many of the district headquarters posts. In the case of Moose Factory, one of the few communities outside of Red River to be studied intensively, it is clear that there was a large mixed-blood population resident there that had no significant kinship ties to Red River. These mixed-bloods were skilled labourers who occupied a central place in the commu-

nity's economy until the great depression when, for all practical purposes, Moose Factory ceased to be an active fur trade community.³⁰ It may be argued that Moose Factory is an atypical example. But then, what is the norm? In the fur trade there were settlements that served as departmental headquarters which were heavily oriented toward warehousing, transportation, and manufacturing. York Factory and Moose Factory are the prime examples, although somewhat similar roles were also performed for short periods by Fort Churchill and Fort Albany. There were many more district headquarters that provided some of the same functions, albeit on a more limited scale. They also supported local communities of mixed-bloods and Indians. Finally, there were the smaller trading posts and outposts which were oriented almost exclusively to the trading of furs or provisions depending upon their environmental situation. Occasionally small communities developed around these establishments also. Until we understand what life was like in these various types of settlements in the grassland, parkland, boreal forest, and Hudson Bay-James Bay lowlands, it is premature to suppose that Red River can serve as our model of fur trade society.

That the histories of all of these communities did not parallel that of Red River can be illustrated by considering the cases of Moose Factory and York Factory. As noted earlier, the merger of 1821 led to a cutting back in the size of the labour force which had a particularly adverse effect on the Métis. However, it is clear that at Moose Factory, contrary to the general trend, a labour shortage was experienced as a consequence of the merger. This stemmed from the decision to make Moose Factory the headquarters and shipping centre for the Southern Department.³¹ Thus, this community may have been spared from some of the social pressures that were experienced at Red River as a consequence of the general shrinkage of the labour market. York Factory may have been spared this trauma as well since it remained the primary depot for the Northern Department until 1874. It is likely that other general trends such as resource depletion, fluctuating levels of competition, changes in transportation technology, the later expansion of logging and mining frontiers all had differential impacts on northern and western communities depending upon their ethnic composition and primary economic orientations.

If it is clear that social historians need to pay more attention to the economic considerations, it is also clear from their work that economic analyses of the trade would benefit from a fuller appreciation of the social dimension of exchange. In 1960 the late historian of the Hudson's Bay Company, E. E. Rich, suggested that Indian involvement in the fur trade was perhaps as much a consequence of political motives as it was for economic ones. He argued further that Indians did not understand market forces. Instead, he suggested that rates of exchange were set by political conventions and for this reason were not easily changed.³² The political economist A. Rotstein, a student of K. Polanyi, attempted to give a theoretical underpinning to Rich's idea and suggested that Polanyi's concept of "treaty trade" could provide useful insights into the operation of the fur trade.³³ He also posited Indians became involved in the trade more for political motives than for economic ones.³⁴ These ideas sparked a debate as to the nature of Indian economic behaviour in the fur trade and led to a considerable discussion about which economic models are most appropriate for analysis of this behaviour.

It has become clear that Rich's original tentative suggestions were based on a poor understanding of trading post accounting procedures. There was, in fact, a great deal of price variation within the system depending on the strength of local competitive demand for Indian furs. Thus, the Indian did respond to market factors.³⁵ Had this not been the case, there would have been no pressure on the part of Europeans to gain a monopoly hold on the trade. Furthermore, the "treaty trade" model assumes the presence of fairly sophisticated political institutions and a power structure capable of enforcing agreements. In the case of the western interior of Canada these ingredients simply were not present in Native society. They were, after all, band societies. Perhaps in the Iroquoian or west coast areas things were different. In any event, it is clear that many groups of Cree, Ojibwa and Assiniboine freely traded with rival European groups in spite of pledges of friendship ("treaties") to the English and French alike.

Although the "treaty trade" model is not useful in our attempt to gain an understanding of Indian economic behaviour, it is also clear that Indian behaviour was not influenced by economic factors alone. Their societies were held together by kinship bonds and these bonds strongly influenced economic relations. General reciprocity prevailed amongst close kin and balanced rec-

iprocity characterized exchange between distant kin. This latter type of exchange preceded barter trade between unrelated groups. Frequently, women would be exchanged to establish a kinship connection at the time of initial contact. In this way, social distance had a bearing on the type of exchange that took place and it served to channel the flow of goods through kinship networks. Clearly the Europeans had to accommodate themselves to these exchange traditions. As Van Kirk, Brown and others have demonstrated, this was one of the reasons why European traders took Indian wives. It served to cement ties with Native groups.

This social aspect of trade raises a number of interesting questions. How did the various Native groups respond to the opportunities of competitive market conditions within the context of their kinship systems? Judd's work suggests one way this was accomplished. Some of the bands at Moose Factory clearly had both a French and an English trading captain. In this instance they were brothers. With their band tied into two European networks they had the best of both worlds without giving offense to either side. The question is, how common was this practice? Was it partly determined by the prevailing attitudes of the local European traders? Presumably if a French or English trader pressed the Indians very hard not to deal with their opponent, as many did, the Indians may have responded in the manner Judd has outlined. On the other hand, if the Indians were not pressured in this way, they might have freely roamed between posts. In the case of the Hudson's Bay Company trade, Indians who might have done so may be the ones described as being "Frenchified", i.e., outfitted in French goods and able to converse in the French language.³⁶

The above set of questions relates to trading bands who visited posts a limited number of times a year in the early days of the fur trade. Trading post bands are another problem. For example, when bands settled at or near a trading post, how did this affect kinship ties and economic opportunities? Did intermarriage with traders completely disrupt older networks? Did the factor, or the chief officers, effectively replace Native leaders, or at least weaken their positions, given that the officers increasingly controlled the means of production due to the process of technological replacement? It is well known that at Hudson's Bay Company posts two trades went on hand in hand, the official trade of the company, and an illegal one in which the men

traded for their own personal gain contrary to the strict orders of their employers. The official trade, which probably accounted for over 90 percent of the turnover, has been analyzed in considerable detail for the period before 1763.³⁷ The "private trade" has not been examined thoroughly. Indeed, it will be difficult to do, so given that the men covered up their activities as much as was possible. Yet it warrants closer scrutiny because this trade undoubtedly was one that largely involved post traders and the local Indian populations to whom they were increasingly related by country marriages. Thus, by obtaining more information about the "private trade" of the 18th century, it should be possible to obtain an understanding of how the evolution of "home-guard" kinship systems influenced economic life and opportunity for individual Native peoples living in fur trading communities. It is clear that kinship remained a key determinant in northern economic life into this century. For instance, the shipbuilding and repairing facility at Moose Factory was under the charge of a mixed-blood named T. C. Moore in the second decade of this century. Most of the other employees of the "Moose Works" were said to be his relatives.³⁸

In conclusion, fur trade social history has made some important strides forward in the past five years. To continue progressing forward it will be necessary devote more attention to the lower classes of "fur trade society." The spatial and temporal horizons need to be broadened so that the work encompasses more than Red River and includes the period after 1870. The work is very important in that it can provide us with a better understanding of the historical roots of present patterns of Indian, "non-status" Indian, and White interaction. For example, in many northern communities of Canada today these three groups are present. Often the communities are run by a small group of Whites who control the economic lifeblood of the settlement. On the surface these Whites often treat the Native peoples with condescension, i.e., as though they were children. In turn many Indians and mixed-bloods ostensibly act very deferentially towards these power brokers. It is commonly assumed that this apparently deferential behaviour is inherently Indian, i.e., is typical of traditional cultural patterns. Yet, it seems to be a pattern of behaviour unlike that of the hard bargaining Indian middlemen of the pre-1774 period or the Métis petty traders of the middle 19th century. However, this Native "entrepreneurial tradition" did not survive. Likewise, the "buffalo hunting tradi-

tion" of the Métis and plains Indians afforded these people a degree of economic independence that enabled them to deal with the Europeans from a position of equality.

It seems more likely that contemporary deferential behaviour patterns are a vestige of the "homeguard tradition." J. E. Foster has provided an excellent analysis of the early development of this tradition.³⁹ It was one common to those Native peoples who were intimately drawn into the paternalistic mercantile capital system of the fur trade that lingered longer in northern Canada than similar labour-capital systems did elsewhere in the country.⁴⁰ Native peoples who were linked into the system in this manner were usually described as being "steady hunters," "always paid their debts," "honest," "reliable," and so forth. In contrast, their independent minded brothers from the plains were usually described by the traders as being "insolent" and "insubordinate." Rather than simply seeing commentary of this type as being evidence of European prejudicial thinking, by analyzing such remarks within the context of the paternalistic system of the fur trade it may be possible to obtain clues as to the changing nature of local Native-European socio-economic relations.

The examination of present patterns of social interaction and the search for their historical antecedents may reveal that there is a northern Canadian sub-culture which has been built on a fur trade socio-economic base. It consists of a blending of a dual European tradition (Hudson's Bay and St. Lawrence), a highly varied Indian tradition (combining elements of pre-contact orientations and post-contact specializations), and a "non-status Indian" component that had at least three variants (buffalo hunters, entrepreneurs, and wage-labourers) (Figure 1). One of the earliest and perhaps fullest manifestations of a variant of this sub-culture was probably in Red River. It was swept away after 1870. However, in the north it has lingered to the present.

NOTES

1. Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien*. Paris: Institute d'Ethnologie, 1945.

2. Charles A. Bishop and Arthur J. Ray, "Ethnohistoric Research in the Central Subarctic: Some Conceptual and Methodological Problems," *Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology*, 6(1), 1976: 116-44.

3. Charles A. Bishop, *The Northern Ojibwa and the Fur Trade*. Toronto: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1974.
4. See, as an example, Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974.
5. George F. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: A History of the Riel Rebellions*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973 (reprint of 1936 edition).
6. *Ibid.*, 61.
7. Ray, 1974, p. 227-28.
8. Jennifer Brown, *Strangers in Blood*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980; Jacqueline Peterson, "Prelude to Red River: A Social Portrait of the Great Lakes Métis," *Ethnohistory*, 25(1), 1978: 41-67; and Sylvia Van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*. Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980.
9. Van Kirk, 1980.
10. *Ibid.*, pp. 95-122.
11. *Ibid.*, p. 201.
12. *Ibid.*, p. 5.
13. *Ibid.*, p. 3.
14. *Ibid.*
15. "Non-status Indians" are Native peoples who are not registered as Indians by the Department of Indian Affairs. For a good discussion of status, non-status peoples and their legal positions see *Indian Claims In Canada: An Essay and Bibliography*. Ottawa: Information Canada, 1975.
16. Brown, 1980, p. xx.
17. *Ibid.*
18. *Ibid.*
19. *Ibid.*, p. 21-50.
20. *Ibid.*, pp. 205-07.
21. C. M. Judd, "Mixt Bands of Many Nations, 1821-70" in *Old Trails and New Directions*. ed. by C. M. Judd and A. J. Ray. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 1980., pp. 127-46.
22. Judd, p. 139.
23. Brown, 1980, p. 47. According to Brown, the North West Company had fewer vertical divisions, but it was harder to move across them than in the case of the Hudson's Bay Company.
24. Brown, 207.
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