

TRADING WITH THE HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY: A CASE STUDY OF  
NIPIGON HOUSE POST 1828 - 1838

Written By: Kirsten Odber

MASTER OF ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES IN NORTHERN ENVIRONMENTS  
AND CULTURE (NECU)

LAKEHEAD UNIVERSITY

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## **Table of Contents**

<b>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....</b>	<b>i</b>
<b>ABSTRACT .....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION.....</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>Research Objectives .....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW- THE FUR TRADE IN CANADA.....</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2.1 The Fur Trade in Canada.....</b>	<b>12</b>
2.1.1 The Fur Trade in Northern Ontario.....	18
<b>2.2 Resource Depletion - Environmental Conditions Prior to Monopoly .....</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>2.3 Economic Anthropology .....</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>2.4 Fur Trade Dependency .....</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY.....</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION.....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Category 4.1 Travel; Family Connection Indicated .....</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>Category 4.2 Anishinabe People Encamped at the Post.....</b>	<b>58</b>
<b>Category 4.3 Anishinabe People Working at the Post.....</b>	<b>60</b>
<b>Category 4.4 Anishinabe Travel to Other Posts for Trade.....</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>Category 4.5 Post Employees Travelling for Furs .....</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Category 4.6 Trade Items In and Out.....</b>	<b>65</b>
<b>Category 4.7 Trade Items Brought in For Repairs .....</b>	<b>71</b>
<b>Category 4.8 Fishing .....</b>	<b>72</b>
<b>Category 4.9 Alcohol Consumption.....</b>	<b>75</b>
<b>Category 5.0 Starvation.....</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION .....</b>	<b>80</b>
<b>REFERENCES .....</b>	<b>87</b>

**List of Figures & Tables**

**Figure 2.1 - Fur Trade Posts on Lake Nipigon.....24**

**Figure 2.2 - Trading Posts in the Little North. 1770 - 1780 .....25**

**Figure 2.3 - Fur Trade Posts in the Little North 1820-1821.....29**

**Table 3.1- Primary Data Sources Nipigon House Post 1828-1838 .....50**

**Table 4.1 - Frequency of Trade Items in Post Journals 1828 - 1838 .....68**

**Table 4.2 - Country Produce Procured by Year at Nipigon Post.....71**

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis critically examines generalizations offered in the fur trade literature regarding the impact of the amalgamation of the Northwest Company and Hudson's Bay Company upon Aboriginal trade partners. There are essentially two schools of thought. One asserts that Aboriginal trappers had become dependent upon European technology by the time of the 1821 amalgamation, and were forced to continue the trade exchange accepting the changes imposed by the Hudson's Bay Company during the monopoly period. The second perspective holds that Aboriginal trade partners were not dependent upon European technology and were adaptable, choosing to opt out of the trade exchange, focusing instead upon subsistence hunting and trapping to satisfy finite wants and needs. The focus of this research project is to evaluate these competing ideas about the amalgamation phase of the fur trade, using the records of Nipigon House Post dating between 1828 and 1838.

The fur trade is typically characterized by several predominant periods: the early fur trade, the competition phase, and finally the amalgamation phase. As each phase of the trade progressed, Aboriginal trade partners were affected in various ways. It is thought that in the post-amalgamation phase, there was a loss of Aboriginal bargaining power, and an extended time of hardship due to a widespread collapse in the viability of fur and food resources. This thesis examines how the Anishinabe community at Nipigon House Post was affected by the amalgamation. Data derived from the Journals of the Nipigon House are used to explore the Anishinabe community and their trade activities. Contrary to expectations deriving from the conventional fur trade literature that emphasize growing dependence upon the HBC, the Nipigon House data indicate adaptability to the monopoly period. This involved a limited demand for a narrow range of goods in keeping with the modest fur returns generated. Indeed many people focused heavily upon satisfying their subsistence needs, and sharply reduced their efforts at fur trapping. This contributed to a shift of the settlement system, with much more time spent along the lakeshore. These data suggest that the Lake Nipigon Anishinabe were not dependent upon European goods for survival. It can be concluded that reconsideration of generalizations about Aboriginal dependency during the monopoly phase of the fur trade is required.

## CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

This thesis compares the data derived from Hudson's Bay Company Post Journals at Nipigon Post (1828 - 1838) to the two opposing perspectives evident in the academic fur trade literature to assess the impacts of amalgamation on the local Aboriginal population. This comparison acknowledges the importance of Aboriginal perspectives and worldview in understanding their participation in the fur trade, a perspective often missing from the literature. Identifying such Aboriginal perspectives is challenging given the heavy reliance upon the surviving written records of Euro-Canadian participants in the trade. Since Aboriginal perspective, economic motivation and worldview are often not evident in the primary fur trade documents, some general reference is also made to ethnographic texts and transcriptions of the Oral Tradition relevant to Algonkian speakers, including the Anishinabe of Lake Nipigon.

The fur trade in Canada played a central role in the historic and contemporary relationship between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal populations in Canada and has been the focus of study in several academic disciplines including history, economics, geography, anthropology and ethnography. Although the fur trade literature is extensive, classical fur trade scholarship maintains a strong Eurocentric bias, which has defined as well as distorted the role of Aboriginal communities as trade participants. There are two predominant phases, that characterize the nature of the British fur trade period, specifically the competition phase between the Northwest and Hudson's Bay Company and the monopoly phase after the two companies amalgamated in 1821. These episodes provide a basis from which to discuss the participation of Aboriginal communities in the

fur trade and the resulting consequences. These successive periods of competition and monopoly had diverse impacts upon Aboriginal communities. One perspective asserts that during the competition period, Aboriginal customers were confronted with an array of foreign technology that was eagerly integrated into everyday life, fostering a level of dependence that continued, and perhaps escalated participation in fur trapping. With the post-1821 Hudson's Bay Company monopoly, this dependence resulted in a significant erosion of autonomy, whereby Aboriginal customers were forced to accept unilateral changes in trade policy and practice in order to assure continued access to the now-essential European goods (Bishop, 1974a, 1974b, 1976).

In summary, with the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly phase of the trade, Aboriginal communities became completely dependent upon European trade goods and the fur trade post for survival. This assertion suggests that fundamental cultural changes must have taken place. Prior to the period of amalgamation, during the competition period there was an abundance of items being traded in order to acquire European goods. Dependency upon European technology did not occur in the monopoly phase of the trade, but rather during the competition phase, when there was an abundance of items being traded. Aboriginal trade partners had the ability to travel to various competing posts to trade and could barter for the most profitable transaction. Once Hudson's Bay Company attained monopoly, economic power was lost and since a dependency upon European goods had already been created, this placed Aboriginal partners in a subordinate role.

An alternative perspective, also found in the fur trade literature, maintains that as fur and food resources were depleted during the period of competition, Aboriginal hunters could no longer generate the fur yields that characterized the competition period, and

many withdrew from intensive trapping and focused instead upon satisfying basic subsistence needs (Rogers, 1978 and Lytwyn, 1986). This perspective asserts that Aboriginal people were not heavily dependent upon a continued supply of European goods and were able to withdraw from much of the trade since they required few trade goods. Instead of becoming dependent upon the fur trade post, some Aboriginal communities were able to retain a level of autonomy in their relationship with the European traders, while successfully adapting to the changing trade management system of the Hudson's Bay Company monopoly era, as well as to the sharp decline in the availability of resources.

### **Research Objectives**

This thesis utilizes two perspectives that derive from the discipline of economic anthropology, namely, the formalist and substantivist schools of thought (Polanyi, 1957). Each perspective is given closer attention in Section 2.3 Economic Anthropology. These frames of reference can be used to engage in the discussion of economic relationships that developed between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples as a direct result of the introduction of a market-based fur trade in Canada and more specifically to the economic participation of Aboriginals in the monopoly era of the fur trade.

The formalist position (Schneider, 1975) maintains that classical economic theories can be applied to any sort of economy, including Aboriginal economies that existed prior to contact with Europeans. Put briefly, formalist economic theory asserts that all humans confront the fundamental problem of satisfying infinitely expanding needs from a finite supply of resources, time or energy. This theory carries the



assumption that all humans are driven by personal self-interest and seek to maximize benefits deriving from economic interactions, and therefore the formalist theory offers a universal explanatory tool to understand human behavior.

In contrast, a substantivist position (Polanyi, 1957) maintains that cultural values and expectations condition the degree of maximization of individual profit, and therefore contribute to broad variability in how humans act upon their economic interests and interpersonal relationships. This perspective also rejects assumptions about the supposed universality of "individual maximization" and "infinite wants and needs" as a basis for understanding panhuman motivation. Pre-contact Aboriginal economies were usually organized around kinship relations whereby resource harvesting was intended to satisfy the wants and needs of the local group and not necessarily the demands of an external market or non-local exchange partners. More to the point, the substantivist position maintains that social relationships remain a priority; therefore, people will forgo aggressive maximization of individual profit in order to protect relationships with close kin and valued associates. Resource trade amongst pre-contact societies occurred, but not on any scale that could be compared to the European fur trade. In considering this, it is clear that even in modern market economies maximization of self-interest or profit is often tempered by social considerations, such as reputation and ongoing social relationships.

In the discussion of fur trade literature, the notion of Aboriginal dependency upon European goods for survival is a common generalization that can be critically evaluated from a formalist or substantivist perspective. From the formalist perspective, the argument can be made that Aboriginal trappers were motivated to aggressively expand

the hunt in order to maximize their return of European goods. This perspective assumes that the European technology offered intrinsic superiority over Indigenous technology, and that Aboriginal customers readily abandoned traditional materials in favor of foreign goods. As the demand for foreign goods was established, continued access was dependent upon the continued production of valued furs. Throughout the competition period, this trade contributed to rapid depletion of fur-bearing animals that could not sustain the escalating rate of predation to supply the external European market for furs. As the pace of fur trade resource harvest escalated in the context of fierce competition among European traders, a crisis was triggered that forced the major British trade companies to amalgamate to create a monopoly, and significantly reduce the costs of operations in order to restore profitability. Bishop (1974)<sup>1</sup> argues:

All the evidence indicated that, after 1821, the Northern Ojibwa could not have survived without relying on the trading post... It was only after big animals and beaver became depleted and trade rivalry ended that a state of total dependency was reached (1974, 11).

With their supposed dependence upon the superior European goods, Aboriginal customers had few alternatives than to accept the new trade arrangements imposed by the post-amalgamation Hudson's Bay Company in order to assure continued access to now essential foreign technology.

Based upon Lytwyn's (1986) study of the participation of the Lowland Cree, he argued that "[s]ome Lowland Cree in the post-1821 period withdrew from their involvement in the fur trade while others came to depend on trapping small fur-bearers and the annual

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<sup>1</sup> It is of interest to note that Bishop's perspectives of dependency from publications throughout the 1970s remained influential into the modern period. It is evident (1991) that his perspectives shifted to a discussion of adaptability, however this thesis uses the influential model of dependency presented in his publications dating to the 1970s (1974a, 1974b, 1976).

goose hunts for their sustenance" (1986, 442). The substantivist position maintains that cultural factors play a role in economic decisions. In this case, in order to "gain sustenance from the land, the Northern Ojibwa instituted a new adaptive strategy," (Rogers and Taylor 1978, 233) altering their subsistence activities to focus on fish and hare. There is no question that Aboriginal communities traded furs in order to attain European goods; after amalgamation, many Aboriginal communities continued to trade. The level of dependency upon these goods is debatable, however, and may not be applicable to all Aboriginal trade partners or communities. In order to test the classical literature and the notion of dependency, the following is proposed.

Following monopoly and development of new trade management systems after the amalgamation of the Hudson's Bay Company and Northwest Company in 1821, Anishinabe people resident in the Lake Nipigon region reacted in a way consistent with Rogers' (1978) discussion of adaptability as opposed to Bishop's (1978) theory of dependency. Based on this proposition, this thesis has two objectives.

1. Analyze the fur trade records from Nipigon House Post with particular attention to the issue of community trade dependency, with specific attention paid to resource and land use, using economic data as the proxy
2. Test whether Bishop's notion of dependency or Rogers' adaptation model better captures the experience of the Anishinabe community at Nipigon House Post participating in the trade from 1828-1838.

This thesis is divided into five chapters. It begins with the introduction of the predominant phases that characterize the fur trade era and the research objectives for the project. The second chapter provides background information regarding the way in which

a market system of trade was introduced in Canada, as well as a literature review of the body of fur trade literature from which dependency theory has been derived. Chapter Three outlines the methods through which this research was conducted. Chapter Four presents the data analysis and discussion of the data derived from the Nipigon House Post Journals, with conclusions outlined in Chapter 5.

## CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW - THE FUR TRADE IN CANADA

The body of Canadian fur trade literature is extensive, covering a wide array of topics, overlapping into the subject areas of Canadian colonial and economic history, Aboriginal history and social history, geography, anthropology and ethnography. The fur trade has been a topic of scholarly interest since the late nineteenth century, characterized by histories of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies. During this time, the majority of publications focused upon voyages and Europeans' adventures into the 'new world', the business and corporate histories of the Northwest and Hudson's Bay companies (Ellis 1886; Bryce 1900), and biographies of influential company men (Cormie, 1917), and voyageurs responsible for discovering new trade routes and resources. Moving into the early twentieth century, the literature shifts from a corporate history interest (Patton, 1929) to detailed analysis of the economics of the trade (Carlos, 2001) and, further, the influence of and interaction between Hudson's Bay Company employees and the Aboriginal community.

Early fur trade literature, such as Innis' (1930) foundational, *The Fur Trade in Canada: An Introduction to Canadian Economic History*, is predominantly focused on the economics of the trade, whereby theories such as staples theory and dependency theory have been used in understanding perspectives held by European and Aboriginal peoples with respect to resources and a market system of trade. As the fur trade literature evolved, so too did interest in the socio-cultural aspects of the fur trade, whereby a stronger interest was taken in relationships between the European and Aboriginal communities. By the late 1970s and early 1980s, the fur trade was no longer being viewed as a purely economic exchange, but also involved cultural aspects, such as worldview and

social organization (Martin, 1978 and Van Kirk, 1984). Colonialism continued to be an overarching theme of much of the socio-cultural research in the sense that it is generally agreed that Aboriginal peoples had long-standing socially organized communities prior to contact and were sustainably managing resources for the benefit and survival of the community. This is not meant to imply that traditions were abandoned upon European contact, but rather that there is no doubt that the Aboriginal communities faced changes to varying degrees upon European arrival.

Literature from the 1970s and 80s (Bishop, 1974; Hickerson, 1973; Ray, 1978a) marks a definitive turning point in fur trade literature. As interest in Aboriginal studies and social history began to grow, there is a departure from conventional narrative history, featuring sequential accounts of events or the careers and actions of predominant men. Instead, there was a shift in attention to socio-cultural analysis including the impact of and response to the fur trade with respect to Aboriginal communities. Investigation of the types of relationships, which developed between diverse Aboriginal and European communities, using the fur trade as a platform for the beginning of these relationships, was given greater attention by scholars (Kay, 1985; Thomas, 1981; Winterhalder, 1980;). One could argue that, for the most part, the fur trade literature is presented under the umbrella of colonialism. As Innis (1930) originally discusses, Aboriginal peoples essentially were subject to European colonialism and expansion in the pursuit of raw materials, or staples, in order to support the economy of the mother country. In essence, fur trade literature itself is representative of the colonial experience.

As it has been written, and as it represents the European experience, the fur trade literature as a whole is not proportionately representative of the Aboriginal experience as compared to the European experience. Innis' (1930) theories regarding social

relationships were no longer taken at face value, representing a shift from the conventional colonialist perspective along with the realization that not all communities that participated in the fur trade shared the same experiences.

Changes that occurred within Aboriginal societies upon European contact can be indicative of their adaptability whereby change is not necessarily negative, but rather that the Aboriginal community adapted to European ways to meet their needs. The degree of adaptation or participation, and level of autonomy or dependency that Aboriginal communities maintained during the fur trade era, grew in popularity with regards to scholarly interest (Griffith and McWilliam, 1972; Hickerson, 1973; Bishop, 1974). Other themes that developed from the socio-cultural aspects of the trade include gender relations, labour studies, the specific role of Aboriginal women, and more in depth case studies of socio-cultural organization and interaction at specific fur trade posts across the country (Alwin, 1979; Brown, 1987; Calloway, 1986).

The impact of the fur trade on the environment is a prominent theme, throughout much of the fur trade literature, but has gained greater popularity in more recent fur trade research (Burley et al, 1996). The degree of resource depletion, or conservation, has prompted a re-examination of the role that Aboriginal peoples played in the fur trade, including Aboriginal worldviews in the discussion (Gilman, 1982; Van Kirk, 1984; Lytwyn 2002). The fur trade is significant to the discussion of Canadian economic as well as social history; it provides one of the earliest contexts for discussion of the relationship, which formed and continues to exist between European and Aboriginal peoples.

The fur trade literature has evolved from a formal, discussion of the economics of the trade to a more critical discussion and examination of the development of the social relationships that evolved between European and Aboriginal communities whereby

resources and the exchange of goods are the catalyst for developing relationships. In uncovering socio-cultural aspects of the trade, the literature better provides for Aboriginal interpretation (Wright, 1965 and White, 1982, 1987).

Taking a qualitative and quantitative approach to the examination of Hudson's Bay Company archival records as a source of primary documentation, this thesis will provide a narrative of a people undergoing acculturation and their response to that process, using economic changes in trade management systems as the proxy. The use of the word acculturation in this case refers to the "modification of the culture of a group or individual as a result of contact with a different culture" (Merriam Webster).

In the examination of the literature that applies to the fur trade in northern Ontario, it can be divided into several sections for discussion. Beginning with a discussion of the nature of fur trade in Canada, and followed by a discussion of the nature of the trade in northern Ontario, provides the context for the discussion of the evolution of the market-based fur trade in this region. Included in this chapter is a discussion of the literature regarding the fur trade in northern Ontario, environmental conditions prior to the monopoly phase of the trade, economic anthropology and the notion of fur trade dependency.

As indicated by the majority of the fur trade literature, the competition period reflected a time when Aboriginal peoples held an element of control as choice was available to trade with either the French or the English, and later between various British-owned trade companies. Amalgamation, on the other hand, reflects a time of monopoly whereby the element of choice was eliminated and so too the control. The question being asked here is, 'is this the case'? Did the monopoly mean a loss of all control? A great deal of the fur trade literature depicts Aboriginal peoples as being so dependent on European



trade goods that they had no other choice but to accept the terms of the newly amalgamated HBCo. Does this theory apply to Nipigon Post?

## **2.1 The Fur Trade in Canada**

Although Canada's original peoples maintain a spot in Canadian history books, arguably, this spot is not reflective or representative of an Aboriginal experience, but rather, a European experience that just happened to include Aboriginal peoples. There is not a great deal of written evidence through which first hand insight can be obtained with regards to the first peoples, from their own perspective. There is a fundamental difference between the way in which Aboriginal and European peoples express their history, and although traditionally Aboriginal history is expressed orally, there is some literature that addresses the history of various Aboriginal groups as a facet of Aboriginal history. This body of literature is important in building an understanding of various Aboriginal groups. Unfortunately, it is impossible to attain first hand oral testimony from Aboriginal participants in the fur trade; for the purpose of this research, the written record of the Hudson's Bay Company will be used. Hudson's Bay Company fur trade records are unique in the sense that they contain first-hand accounts, written primarily by Europeans, of what Aboriginal peoples were doing at the time of contact and throughout the fur trade, albeit from a European perspective.

The history of pre-contact Canada (roughly pre-1500) is pieced together from anthropological studies, archaeological evidence and relevant data provided by meteorologists, biologists and other scientists as well as Aboriginal oral testimony (Conrad and Finkel 2002). The idea that there is little consensus regarding the exact time

or reasons why peoples traveled to North America reinforces the notion that documenting or recording Aboriginal history through a European perspective does not always account for the Aboriginal experience. Interpretations and inferences can be made based upon scientific and historical evidence; however, making definitive claims about what the original people were doing or why they were doing it, is not always appropriate.

The dominant early seventeenth century historical narrative is characterized by the competing political, religious and territorial interests of France and England in the newly discovered territory of what was to become Canada. During this time, the English were not as active or committed to establishing trade posts and permanent settlements, specifically in the interior territory, which allowed the French to maintain an upper hand with respect to establishing relationships with Aboriginal peoples. This greatly strengthened their trade position, and they remained predominant throughout the eastern coast of Canada. The focal point of Britain's settlement activity at this point in time was on the Atlantic region, specifically Halifax after the Treaty of Utrecht (1713) (Conrad and Finkel, 2002).

There were several attempts by France and England to settle the area of Newfoundland and further along the St. Lawrence into present day Quebec; however, none were successful until 1608 when Samuel de Champlain and Pierre du Gua Sieur de Monts of France established a permanent settlement at Stadacona, or present day Quebec City, followed by the establishment of a trading post at Hochelaga, present day Montreal in 1611. These settlements were established to monopolize the fur trade in the St. Lawrence region. In 1616, the Secretary of State in France organized La Compagnie des Cent-Associés (The Company of 100 Associates) also known as La Compagnie de a

Nouvelle-France (Company of New France), which was made up mainly of important and influential trade leaders at the time. By 1627, the Company had been granted the perpetual monopoly of the fur trade and all other trades for fifteen years and was to fund missionary activities (Conrad and Finkel 2002). This resulted in the influx of European men, coming to New France to settle, participate in the trade and promote a European lifestyle, throughout a land base that went, from Florida to the Arctic Circle with the right to grant estates to Seigneurs under the feudal laws of France whereby 2-300 settlers would be sent from France annually, encouraging a systematic method of settlement for New France.

Under this system, all land belonged to the Crown, which made grants of seigneuries, to the church and nobility. The seigneur was required to maintain a household on his estate and develop it with the help of peasant farmers. As it developed in the colony, seigneurialism was intended to accomplish a number of objectives: to provide the colony with a basic land-survey system; to perpetuate a traditional class structure; to establish a legal framework for relations between privileged landowners and dependent peasant families; and to develop a system for recruiting and settling immigrants (Conrad and Finkel 2002, 56).

The French traded and allied with the Aboriginal peoples they encountered in order to get a sense of what the community was like: how they responded to trade goods, how they were organized and how resources were hunted and harvested. These relationships and acquired knowledge proved beneficial once the English, who were slower moving into North America, arrived and competition thrived.

Beginning in the late seventeenth century and throughout much of the eighteenth century the French and English were continuously at war, attacking and capturing major settlements and forts. Warfare was not solely related to matters of small settlements or the fur trade, rather, conflicts in North America were a small part of the conflict between

nations, in comparison to the colonial wars between European empires. In 1689, Louis XIV had formally declared war on the English, and although there were periods of peace, conflict was a routine part of colonial life, which is evident in the historical record (Conrad and Finkel, 2002; Dickason, 2009). War was declared between the French and English again in 1702 and 1744 culminating in 1756 with the Seven Years War. During this tumultuous time, the French maintained their position in the system of trade, having established strategic trade posts, as most furs travelled through Montreal, along with a trusting relationship with various Aboriginal communities (such as the Huron). This was not an undertaking solely for the accumulation of profits; it was also to establish colonies and perpetuate the European worldview through Christian missionary work.

The acquisition of territory and accumulation of profits through harvesting resources were not the only colonial motivations of France. Religious motivations in New France are integral to the discussion as religion was an active part of the colonial experience. Conversion or Christianization of Aboriginal peoples was a conscious effort and responsibility on the part of the French monarchy to save Aboriginal souls. Conversion had essentially become part of the fur trade experience whereby as expansion occurred to find more resources, communities caught in the colonial expansion were inevitably affected. The Recollect Fathers officially initiated the Christianization of Aboriginal peoples, in 1615 followed by the Jesuits in 1625. Religious conversion and missionary efforts were a large part of the settlement experience and therefore the early trade system, as Christian beliefs were spread and adopted by some Aboriginal communities, but not all. As Dickason explains:

The King of France spent a good deal of time and energy, not to mention money, maintaining alliances with these people whose ideas of equality and individual freedom he would not have tolerated for an instant in his own subjects. He recognized, however, that if he were to realize France's colonial ambitions in Canada, it would be necessary to understand the Amerindians in order to Christianize them, to cooperate with them in order to provide an economic base through trade, and to cultivate them in order to win their support as allies in war. New France's dependence on its Amerindians both economically and militarily forced the absolute monarchy of France to compromise some of its most cherished principles (2009, 134-135).

Although the English were slower moving into what they considered the New World, the abundance of resources and the desire to claim territory and discover new routes of travel were factors motivating travel to and settlement in the New World. English efforts at this time were focused on their agricultural colonies located on the eastern seaboard and the Caribbean. It was not until 1670 that fur trade commerce became formally part of the capitalist enterprise in northern North America.

The Hudson's Bay Company was founded in 1670 at a time when mercantilism was the predominant economic policy in England. As Gough explains:

In this period the aristocracy took part in the affairs of joint-stock companies, the gentry became affluent from commercial profit, and merchants of the principal exports, especially London grew in wealth to a degree that often overshadowed that of the aristocracy themselves. In this economically expansive and mercantile society, the power of venture capital was increasing; and the transformation of England from mainly an agricultural to a largely commercial nation was well underway (1970, 35).

Application for charter was granted by King Charles, giving a monopoly of the territory, which would be known as Rupert's Land, that drains into Hudson's Bay, under the Great Seal of England by the name of the "Governor and Company of Adventurers of England Tradeing into Hudson's Bay." A total of eighteen adventurers were granted:

"The sole Trade" of waters and lands within the Hudson Straits, rights to all fish, whales, sturgeons and all other "Royal Fishes," and control of all mines and minerals in Rupert's Land. In this territory, the Company was to hold the land as "the true and absolute Lords and Proprietors for which they would pay 'two Elks and two Black beavers'" whenever the king, his heirs or successors entered the region. Finally, the Charter allowed the Company sole rights of trade with the Indians and assigned powers of governance and defense over the region (1991, 52).

The 1670 establishment of the HBCo marks an important turning point in the Canadian fur trade as it triggered direct commercial competition between British and French interests throughout a large territory to the north and west of the upper Great Lakes. With French direct trade within the continental interior and British trade from major depots along the coast of Hudson and James Bay, the two European interests were increasingly in military and economic competition until the 1760 defeat of New France and the 1763 Treaty of Paris. At this time, France was forced to abandon its interests throughout much of northern North America, and from this point onward the fur trade in northern North America was dominated by English-owned fur trade companies. The Montreal based trade was not abandoned at this time; rather, companies were merged under the ownership of Anglo-Scots merchants who employed a large number of French-Canadian laborers. The period of rapid commercial expansion into the Northwest after 1760 is strongly an English commercial enterprise. The period of competition leading up to amalgamation was characterized by rivalry and competition amongst English capitalist interests. This level of competition resulted in rapid geographic expansion of European knowledge and commercial activity and the overhunting and depletion of fur and food resources. According to the literature, this rapid expansion of fur trade activity created an Aboriginal dependence upon European goods that forced them into a subordinate role

once the HBCo gained a monopoly (Bishop, 1974; Martin 1978). The European market driven fur trade was capitalistic in nature, whereby the accumulation of profits in the most cost efficient ways was promoted and propelled the exploitation of resources.

### **2.1.1 The Fur Trade in Northern Ontario**

According to Rogers (1994), northern Ontario was in a unique position throughout the fur trade era, as it was effectively part of the indirect trade area of the St. Lawrence based French trade and also was included in the middleman zone of the Hudson Bay oriented trading network. Those Aboriginal communities participating in the trade in northern Ontario had the opportunity to fully take advantage of the French and English competitors from Nipigon or Michipicoten, where French traders had established inland trade posts in competition with HBCo Posts at Moose Factory, Albany or Henley House, inevitably getting the best price, and/or trade items. The fur trade in northern Ontario mirrors the phases of the fur trade earlier mentioned, whereby there is a period of competition that was forcibly ended upon amalgamation. Lytwyn states that in northern Ontario, as the HBCo had not initiated a strategic move inland, "prior to the eighteenth century, the Indians were solely responsible for transporting fur to the trading posts as long-distance traders or through neighboring middlemen, in this way they exercise some control over the exploitation of the fur resources" (1986, v).

By 1610, the Ojibwa had been touched by the European fur trade, according to Bishop (1974) first indirectly through other intermediate tribes such as the Ottawa and Huron, and by the 1620s directly through Europeans themselves. Moving into what Bishop calls the 'Era of Population Concentration' (1640-1680), large gatherings of Ojibwa and other tribal groups, often numbering 1,500 souls, collected near Sault Ste.

Marie to exchange fur pelts and material commodities for European items. These were obtained directly from the French fur traders from Montreal or from other Indians who acted as middlemen. Bishop's Era of Dispersal and Relocation (1680-1730) is characterized by a major dispersal of the Ojibwa whereby some groups migrated along the north shore of Lake Superior and others the south. By 1680 Sault Ste. Marie was no longer a focal point for many Ojibwa and a major separation of the Ojibwa began, as groups penetrated westward both along the north and south shores of Lake Superior to exploit new ecozones and to establish alliances with more distant peoples.

North of Lake Superior there were few Ojibwa until their middleman monopoly was broken during the late seventeenth century, when the HBCo began building posts along the coast of James Bay and Hudson Bay to accommodate the Cree and Assiniboin (Bishop, 1976, 8, 44). By this time, the HBCo had been established for ten years, and competition between the French and English was growing rapidly. Bishop (1976) states that, although the Ojibwa made occasional visits to the Hudson's Bay Company posts, on Hudson and James Bay, there was no regularized trade pattern or permanent residence of Ojibwa groups in the interior north of Lake Superior until after about 1730.<sup>2</sup> Bishop attributes the movement of the Anishinabe as well as the Cree and Assiniboine to the increasing growth of the fur trade and inevitably, competition between French and English interests in the region.

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<sup>2</sup>Throughout the literature, there are several variations of names and spellings which have been used to denote the Aboriginal community commonly referred to as Ojibway, (Ojibwa or Ojibwe) such as Chippewa or Chippeways. The variety of names has the potential to cause confusion and misunderstanding. This misunderstanding, according to the literature can be attributed to the Anglicization of traditional Aboriginal names, that is to say, the way in which the community refers to itself, may not be the same way as the European community. For the purpose of this research, the term Anishinabe will be used interchangeably with the term Ojibwa in reference to what is commonly referred to the community of northern Ontario and, more specifically, the community at Nipigon House Post.



The competition between the English and the French and the expansion of the fur trade to directly involve tribes west of Lake Superior was creating and fostering intertribal hostilities, as Algonkians from the east shifted into the territories of others. By the 1720s, Ojibwa who had encroached into Cree domains north of the lake were threatening to kill the inland Cree should they carry their furs to the Hudson's Bay Company posts on James Bay. About this time, the Cree who had occupied the Shield country north of Lake Superior began gradually to shift to the west, while in their place came roving bands of Ojibwa and other Algonkian-speakers from the southeast (1976, 44).

As the Anishinabe began to settle the interior, the Cree and Assiniboine retreated north and west. By the 1770s, the Ojibwa had expanded to their present limits and once interior posts were established, the Aboriginal population grew more geographically stabilized, arguably as a direct result.

Greenberg and Morrison (1982) question the conventional theories of movement and migration such as those proposed by Bishop (1976) and Hickerson (1973) and expands upon the difficulties in using the historical record as a source for accurate information regarding Aboriginal peoples. The predominant difficulty lies in the "formal typological method of classifying culture areas" (1982, 91). Essentially, Greenberg and Morrison argue that the 'emergence' and population growth, which Bishop discusses, alternatively could be attributed to the "diffusion of the term 'Ojibwa' to ethnic units known at contact under a host of different names" (1982, 91).

Hickerson (1973) discusses the expansion of the Ojibwa geographically in the context of military expansion and warfare, which lasted from 1736 through the 1850s between the Ojibwa and Dakota.

In the 1720s and 1730s, the French of Canada, this time in opposition to countrymen who were extending trade from the new Louisiana colony northward, began to establish posts west of Lake Superior and further west at various locations along what is now the boundary between the United States and Canada. To consolidate their grip on the trade, the French also established posts in the Dakota country along the upper Mississippi. The Ojibwa were bypassed and consequently had lost their trade with the Dakota, which, due to the barrenness of the western Lake Superior region, had become a necessity for survival. Throughout the last part of the eighteenth century, the Ojibwa carried on a war of attrition against the Dakota and were successful in wresting a large portion of northern Minnesota and western Wisconsin from their former trading partners... In the latter part of the seventeenth century other Ojibwa began to trap north of Lake Superior and by the turn of the nineteenth century, had occupied the country as far west as Winnipeg (1973, 30).

The first historical reference to Lake Nipigon is in relation to trade and, as in other parts of the country, the French were the first to establish themselves as the European trade presence on Lake Nipigon. According to J.P. Bertrand,

The first historical reference to Lake Nipigon is contained in a document dated May 15, 1656. The then Governor of New France, Jean de Lauzon granted a trade concession to Sieur Zacharie Dupy, a colonial officer. This extensive privilege extended from the Gulf of St. Lawrence, always following the same point of the compass, to beyond Lake Superior, proceeding from Lac des Alepinigons (Nipigon), without any interruption to the navigation. It would seem evident, from the writing of that document that natives from the Nipigon district had been down along the St. Lawrence to trade with the merchants or else some of the *coureurs de bois*<sup>3</sup> may have already come that far to trade with the Indians (1985, 1).

This reference suggests that by 1656, Aboriginal peoples from the Nipigon area were already involved in the fur trade, specifically with French traders, including *coureurs de bois*.

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<sup>3</sup>Coureurs de bois refers to independent and unlicensed French Canadian fur traders who were responsible for bringing French goods into the upper territory to trade with Aboriginal hunters and trappers. These unlicensed traders were looked upon unfavourably by the government of New France, facing fines and imprisonment if caught.

After the restructuring of the Montreal trade in 1760, the fur trade in North America was predominantly controlled by British merchant-traders who replaced the formal French trade. For example, Montreal trader named Ezekiel Solomon, who was granted a license, headed the re-establishment and control of the French Canadian trade presence based out of Montreal in the interior. As Lytwyn explains,

The Canadian traders saw the Little North as a valuable fur domain into which further expansion was possible, and from which greater profit could be derived. The HBC men knew it only as a vaguely defined hinterland which for a century had yielded its wealth each spring to the bayside forts employing the old system of tidewater trading, a system which the English were loathe to give up (1986, 23).

The Lake Nipigon region was no stranger to the strong pre-1821 competitive interests of the HBCo and NWCo; as indicated by Figure 2.1, there were upwards of twenty-five trade posts on the Lake. It is for this reason that data from the Nipigon House Post is being used to investigate impacts of the post amalgamation period on the Anishinabe trade partners. It is important to note that the NWCo was not created until 1779 whereby it lasted until the point of amalgamation in 1821. A further merger occurred between leading Montreal fur trade merchants forming an even more powerful North West Company partnership.

As opposed to the east coast of Canada where the trade was initially established, Aboriginal peoples held a great amount of independence and therefore control in northern Ontario throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Lytwyn (1986) discusses the fur trade in this region throughout the period of intense competition. First, Lytwyn addresses the name of the region; he states that the early Canadian fur traders have described the region that lies north of Lake Superior and east of Lake Winnipeg as Le Petit Nord or The Little North. In contrast, the area west and north of Lake Winnipeg was

referred to as Le Grand Nord or the Great North. The NWCo as well as the HBCo each held a place in the Little North. Direct trade in the Little North did not begin until the late seventeenth century, according to Lytwyn (1986) when

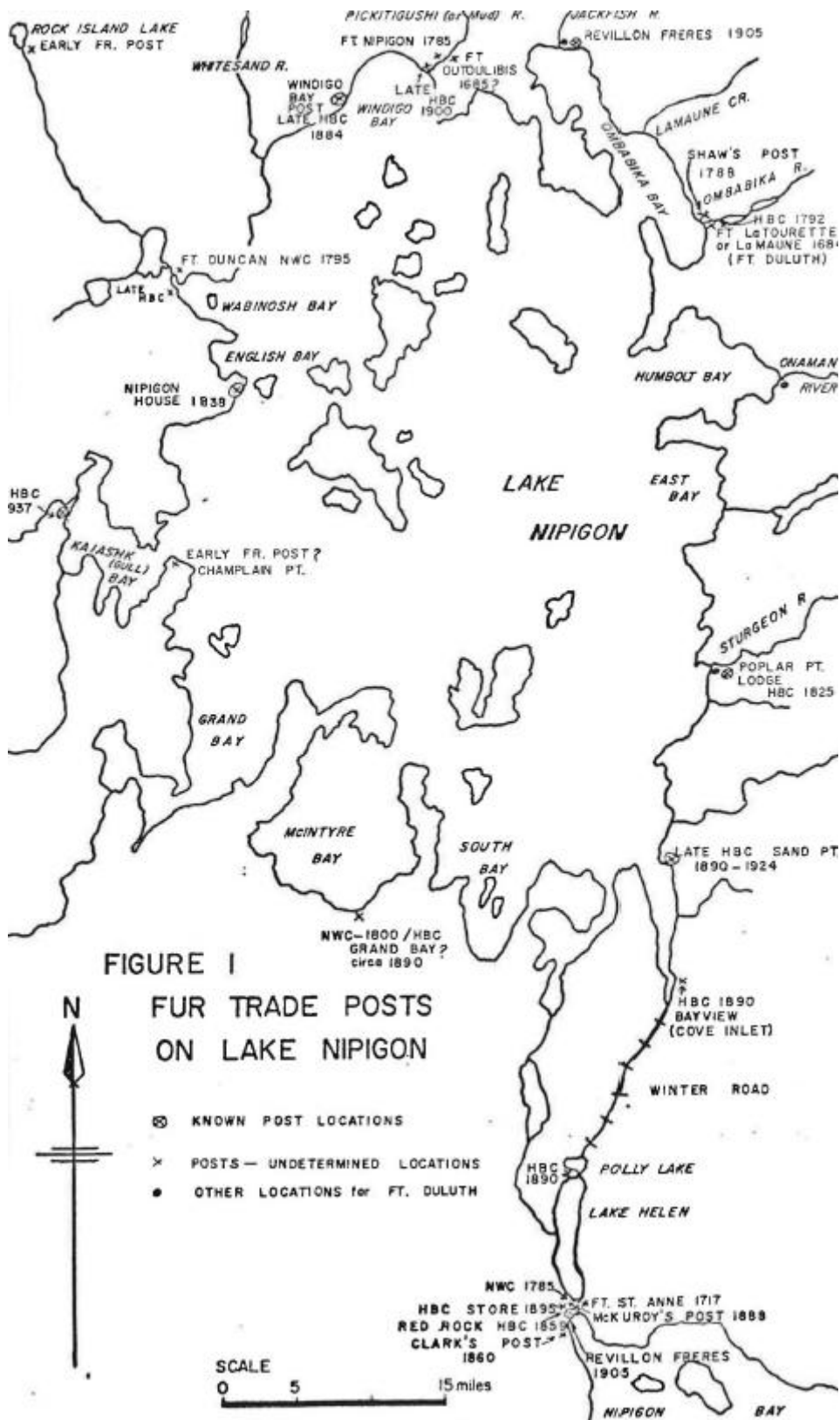
[m]issionaries and French explorers ventured into the lands north and west of Lake Superior. About the same time English fur traders of the Hudson's Bay Company settled on the shores of Hudson and James Bays and attracted long-distance traders from the interior of the Little North (1986, v).

Prior to this period, the trade was primarily conducted through Aboriginal trade networks. Lytwyn describes the organizational style of the HBCo as well as the locations of English interests in the Little North:

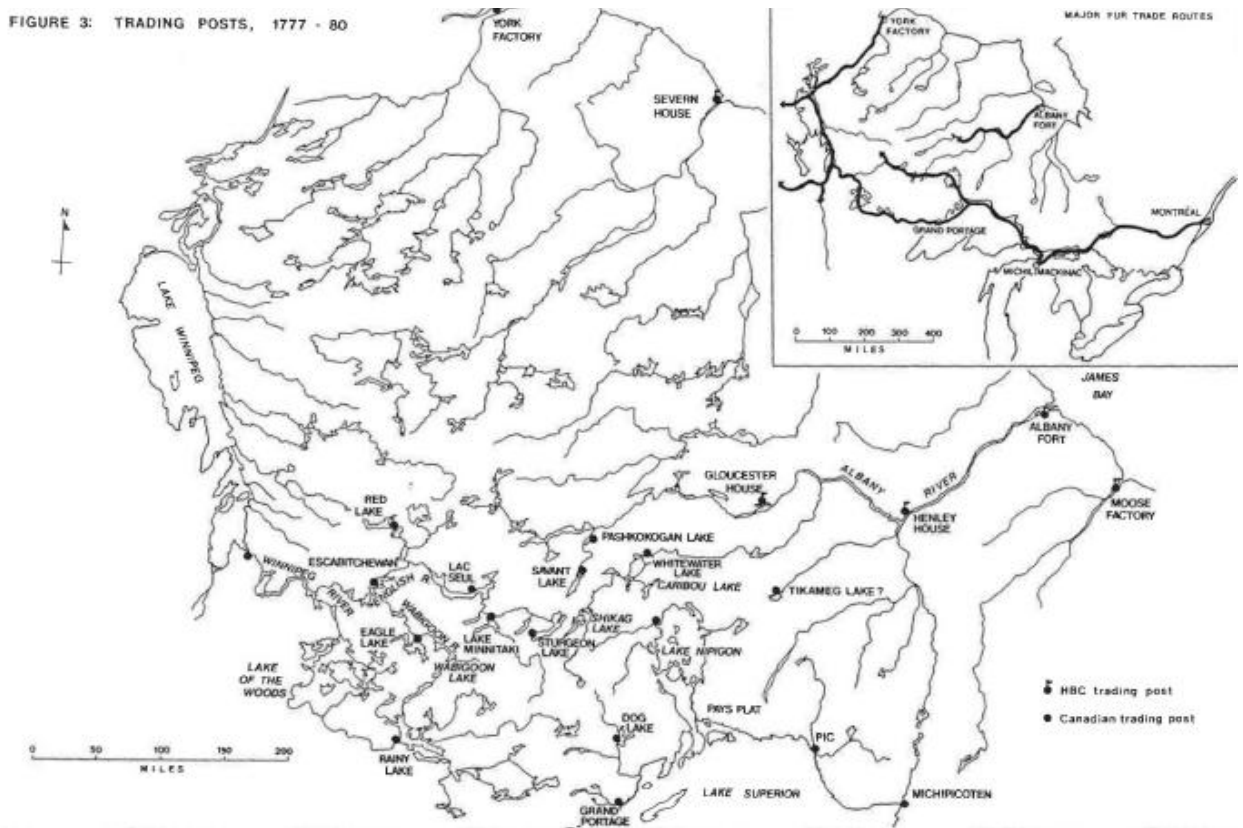
Two departments dominated the Nor'Westers trade in the Little North: the Lac Ouinipique and Nipigon Departments. The Hudson's Bay Company in contrast, had five districts within the Little North. These were Osnaburgh, Lake Sanderson, Red Lake, Point au Foutre and Lake St. Ann's. Point au Foutre House was well positioned to watch the movements of the Nor'Westers on their way to and from the Great North. The proprietor of the Lac Ouinipique Department was William McKay, and the proprietor of the Nipigon Department was Duncan Campbell. The HBC districts were smaller and contained fewer trading posts. For example the Nipigon department of the North West Company had at least twelve posts in 1799-1800 while none of the Hudson's Bay Company districts had more than two (1986, 89).

This is depicted in Figure 2.2, Trading Posts in the Little North 1770-80, which gives an indication as to where NWCo and HBCo posts were located at this time. Due to the Treaty of Paris, 1763, and the ceding of lands to the English, the level of competition in the trade system of the Little North flourished "as new entrepreneurs emerged from Canada to conduct the fur trade in the northwest. These Canadians quickly re-established the earlier French pattern of the trade in the Little North" (Lytwyn, 1986, iv).

Figure 2.1 - Fur Trade Posts on Lake Nipigon. Griffith and McWilliam (1972, 27).



**Figure 2.2 - Trading Posts in the Little North. 1770-1780. (Lytwyn, 1986, 74).**



During the years 1763-1821, the fur trade in the "Little North" was characterized by competition whereby British fur trade interests were re-establishing themselves after the Treaty of Paris, including in the Lake Nipigon region. Throughout the competition phase, Aboriginal participants in the trade maintained some level of control, as they were in the position to bargain with the Canadians as well as the English for the best possible price, or the highest quality of goods. With the amalgamation of the HBCo and NWCo, the HBCo underwent some organizational changes that set the stage for the HBCo monopoly period whereby a stringent restructuring took place. The discussion of the restructuring follows below.

The period of competition had several impacts upon Aboriginal partners in trade. Not only was this period of competition marked by a decline in wildlife, but also disease had devastating impacts on Aboriginal peoples and also the trade. According to Lytwyn, the Little North was negatively affected by each factor:

The winter of 1782-1783 was marked by a devastating smallpox epidemic that raged among the Indians in the southern parts of the Little North. Numerous Indian reports during the winter and following spring revealed the extent of destruction. Areas that were particularly hard hit were Nipigon and Sturgeon Lake and the epidemic appeared to have spread from the southwest margins of the Albany River drainage basin ... By 1810 the fur trade in the East Winnipeg Country and throughout much of the Little North had declined sharply... The state of the fur trade in this region, however, was far from encouraging. Beaver was drastically depleted and William Sinclair at Oxford wrote: "they (Indians) make a heavy complaint that there is no Beaver to be found anywhere which I truly believe to be the case... few of these animals is in this quarter of the country when first this House Oxford was settled the Beaver was middling numerous and every year since they have been on the decline and at present there is no sign of animals" (1986, 44, 127, 132).

Also during this period, the HBCo went through a period of Retrenchment in 1810 (Lytwyn, 1986, 129; Ray, 1998), whereby significant changes were made within the organization, including a period of conservationism concerning beaver populations. There were several important factors in the retrenchment, including the division of Rupert's Land into two company divisions, an imposed wage ceiling on its laborers and finally the elimination of free company products, which may have affected the desire of European men to participate in the trade as the pay-off was ultimately less desirable (Lytwyn, 1986). The cost cutting measures during the Retrenchment period provided the basis for Governor George Simpson's subsequent cost cutting policies after the 1821 amalgamation.

Amalgamation of the HBCo and NWCo occurred on the 5th December 1821, granted by Royal Proclamation. Rich states: "The agreement between the two companies had been made for a period of twenty-one years, to begin with the outfit of 1821, and the License for Exclusive Trade was to run for the same period, provoking little or no comment" (Rich, 1958-59, 404). The abandonment of trade posts and the "discharging or pensioning the redundant" (Rich 1958-59, 484) was a significant change as compared to business operations prior to amalgamation whereby trade posts were being built in abundance, side by side and surrounding French posts in the area, which required employees for operations. However, due to high transportation costs and the depletion of resources, primarily beaver, restructuring would seem logical. Lytwyn (1986) explains:

Simpson's policy of abandoning posts and establishing beaver quotas was guided by a fundamental desire to cut costs. It was also predicated on his belief that with monopoly control he could dictate the terms of trade with the Indians. The closing of so many posts meant that the Indians had to travel greater distances to obtain their necessary supplies. This pattern of trade saved the company the expense of transporting men and goods to remote outposts, but it also had several disadvantages. Some Indians simply refused to participate regularly in the fur trade, while others moved closer to the operating posts and thereby encroached on the lands of Indians already living in the vicinity (1986, 161).

Restructuring during the period of monopoly was manifested in several other ways: reorganization of the transport system, closing trade posts; eliminating redundant positions and pensioning older employees of the Company, as well as imposing quotas on beaver pelts in hopes that the population would replenish itself quickly while cutting transportation costs.

Lytwyn's comment that, during the monopoly phase some "Indians simply refused to participate regularly" in the trade is significant for this discussion. Refusal to participate regularly runs contrary to the notion that monopoly created dependence in



Aboriginal communities upon fur trade posts for survival. An element of choice still existed with respect to participation. Lytwyn (1986) and Ray (1998) further the discussion, addressing the fact that due to declining resources and increasing travel costs, downsizing the Company was the only way in which to keep the HBCo prosperous:

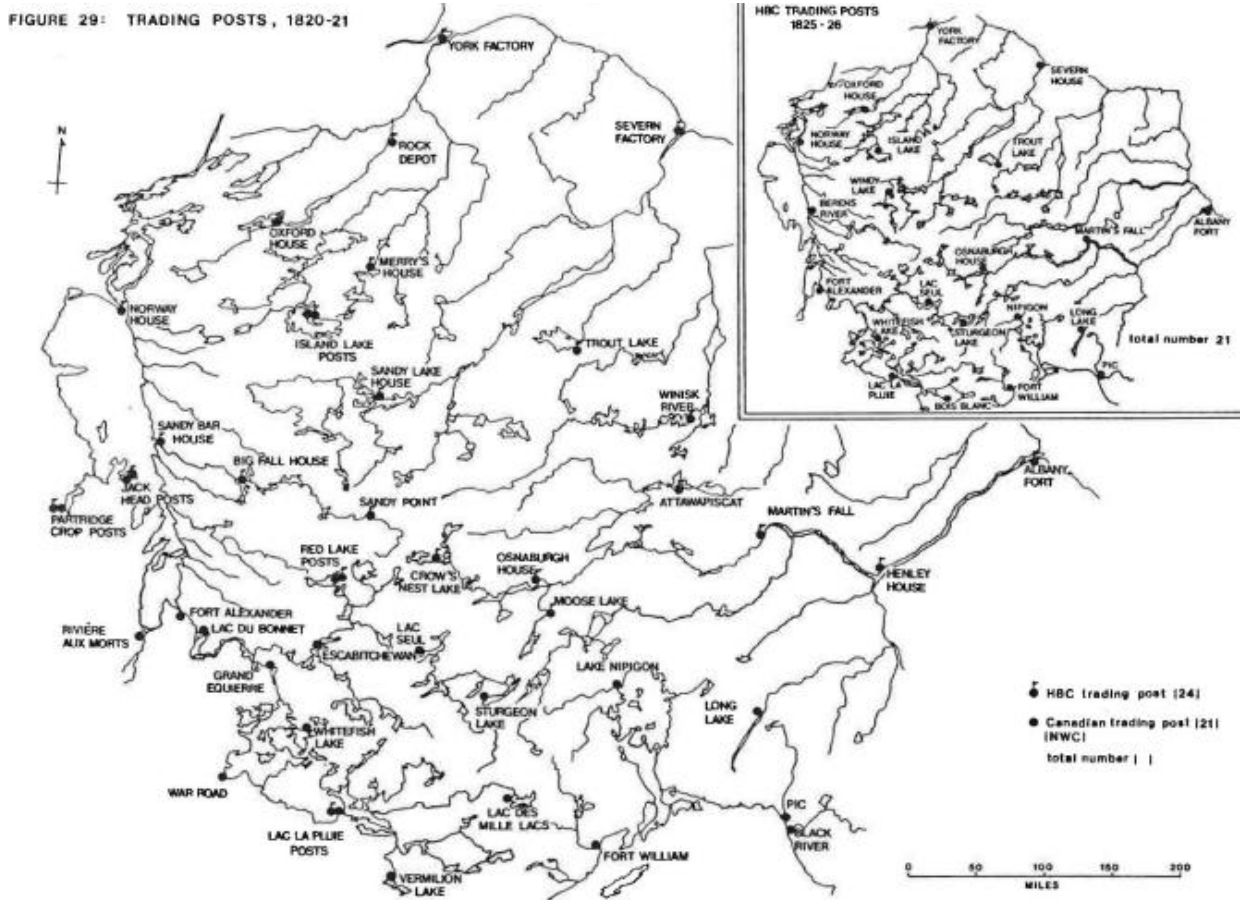
The union of the North West and Hudson's Bay companies in 1821, ended fur trade competition in the Northwest... Within the Little North, the company exercised virtual monopoly control until 1870. There was periodic competition with American fur traders, but in the boreal forest, the Hudson's Bay Company was the only non-native establishment. This situation enabled the company to tighten its trading practices and reduce the number of men and trading posts. The labour force in the Northern Department was cut from about 2,000 in 1821 to fewer than 700 men in 1826. During the same period, trading posts were abandoned throughout the northwest. In the Little North, twenty-eight posts were operating in 1820-21. Five years later the number of posts was reduced to fourteen (Lytwyn, 1986, 158).

This reduction is illustrated in Figure 2.3, Fur Trade Posts in the Little North 1820-21.

Due to the intense level of competition, it could be hypothesized that impacts of amalgamation in this region may have been more severe than in other regions.

According to historical references (Bertrand, 1985), French travellers initially called the lake "Lac des Alepinigons," a name initially used by French travelers. Dawson (1976) describes the physical features and topography of the area, based upon his first hand experience canoeing on Lake Nipigon:

Figure 2.3 - Fur Trade Posts in the Little North 1820-1821 Lytwyn (1986, 74).



Lake Nipigon is the most northerly of the Upper Great Lakes. It is roughly 70 miles long and 50 miles wide with 580 miles of coastline not including the smaller bays and approximately 1000 islands. While there are seven major rivers draining into the lake the only outlet is the Nipigon River, which drains south dropping approximately 250 feet to Lake Superior.

The Nipigon basin topography is characterized by low rolling relief with some rugged exposures on the west side, soils are thin or lacking, winters are long and some with heavy snow falls, summers are short and relatively warm and frost may occur in any month. The black spruce, paper birch, tamarack, balsam poplar, fir, jackpine, willows and alder occur in favourable situations. Large mammals include bear, moose, woodland caribou, Fisher, marten, short-tailed weasel, wolverine, red fox, lynx, red squirrel, beaver, muskrat, porcupine and snow-shoe hare are common (1976, 1).

Portrayed in Dawson's descriptions of the Lake Nipigon region are the reasons for initial attraction to the area by the Cree, who preceded the Ojibwa. The availability of fresh water and abundance of resources set the stage for competition and rivalry throughout the fur trade.

With regards to the population of the Lake Nipigon region, Kelso and Demers (1993, 21-22) state that the archaeological record illustrates human occupation on the shores and river mouths of Lake Nipigon:

Human populations were fairly stable and continuous around Nipigon enduring through the Woodland periods, 3000 years ago to the time of European contact. Prehistoric Algonquians in the Nipigon basin, first Cree and later Ojibwa were highly mobile individuals. They ranged over large areas mainly hunting Woodland caribou and fishing for lake trout, whitefish, sturgeon and brook trout (1993, 21-22).

European entrepreneurs arrived at the mouth of the Nipigon River in the early 1650s. By 1654, New France was familiar with the location and the seemingly limitless beaver, otter, fox and muskrat associated with Nipigon waterways. The area around Lake Nipigon became the most profitable fur bearing district along the north shore of Lake Superior (1993, 26).

Griffith and McWilliam (1972) suggest that it was not until the introduction of the fur trade that significant cultural changes took place, including adaptations to hunting practices in order to attain the abundance of furs expected by the HBCo and NWCo. Taking the fur trade out of the equation, it would only be natural that upon moving to a new territory, Aboriginal communities would have to adapt in some way to new surroundings whether it be a change in diet due to available food sources, or travelling farther distances for resources, or building a certain type of shelter.

The first post established on Lake Nipigon by French traders was at the northern end of the Lake, named Fort Outoulibis, in 1685. HBCo influence came in the Lake Nipigon region shortly after the year of incorporation. According to Kelso and Demers (1993), by 1676, furs from the Nipigon region were making their way HBCo posts such as Albany and Moose Factory; this also reflects the slow movement of the HBCo inland. Concerning the information regarding the first Hudson's Bay post built on Lake Nipigon, sources vary in terms of dates and names of posts. For example, Bertrand (1985), as well as Griffith and McWilliam (1972), state that the first HBCo post to be built on Lake Nipigon was Fort Nipigon in 1775; Dawson (1970), however, states that Fort Nipigon was built in 1792. According to Figure 2.1, an HBCo post was built near the Ombabika River in 1792; however, it is not specifically named Fort Nipigon. There is a Fort Nipigon on the west side of the lake at Windigo Bay and there is another Nipigon House located near English Bay in 1838. Furthermore, neither of the maps show an HBCo post dating to 1775. Rather, the Fort Nipigon that Griffith and McWilliam (1972) refer to indicates 1785 as the date of establishment. The dates represented on the maps and in the literature reflect inconsistencies in the historical record.

The period after monopoly had been established is the concern of this thesis. The years 1828-1838 can be used as a basis for understanding the transition faced by the Aboriginal community at Nipigon following the change in trade management systems.

## **2.2 Resource Depletion - Environmental Conditions Prior to Monopoly**

Literature regarding specific motivations and inquiry into Aboriginal participation in the fur trade begin to develop in 1960s and 70s, with the rise of Aboriginal civil rights movements and the growing interest in Aboriginal studies, alongside the ideas of economic dependency and autonomy (Rogers and Smith, 1978). Building upon Polanyi's (1957) theory, to begin to more critically consider Aboriginal participation in the trade, it became essential to understand their worldview.

Worldview is fundamental to the discussion of European and Aboriginal relationships both historically and contemporarily. Worldview represents one's perception of the world; it is one's identity. In the discussion of non-Aboriginal and Aboriginal relationships in a historical as well as contemporary context, worldview is the key to understanding intergroup differences. Worldview allows for the enhancement of interpretations of actions and motivations in various instances, in this particular case, the fur trade. As defined by Overholt and Callicott (1982),

A worldview may be understood as a set of conceptual presuppositions, conscious and unconscious, articulate and inarticulate, shared by members of a culture... A worldview is the collective conceptual outlook of a culture. A worldview exists, so to speak at the level of culture; it is the common property of the culture's members." According to the authors, "narratives, told and retold generation after generation, may thus serve as the primary resource for worldview (1982, 1)."

With specific reference to the fur trade, Chief-Joseph La Peau De Chat, of Fort William gives his perspective. Although this perspective is not applicable to all Aboriginal trade participants, it is reflective of an Anishinabe perspective from the same geographical region as the Anishinabe community at Lake Nipigon. Derived from the

publication *Fort William First Nation: our traditional territory and duty to consult*, published by Anemki Mountain Corporation (2011), Chief-Joseph La Peau De Chat responds to the question posed by Fort William Commissioner Anderson in 1848: "How do you come in possession of this land?"

You ask how we possess this land. Now it is well known that 4000 years ago when we first were created all spoke one language. Since that, a change has taken place, and we speak different languages. You white people well known, and we Red Skins know how we came in possession of this land - it was the Great Spirit who gave it to you - from the time my ancestors came upon this earth it has been considered ours - after a time the Whites living on the other side of the Great Salt Lake, found this part of the world inhabited by the Red Skins. The Whites asked us Indians, when there were many animals here - would you not sell the skins of these various animals for the goods I bring - our old ancestors said yes. I will bring your goods, they the Whites did not say anything anymore, nor did the Indian say anything. I did not know that he said come, I will buy your land, everything that is on it and under it, he the White said nothing about that to me - and that is the reason why I believe that we possess this land up to this day (2012, 1).

The Eurocentric perspective of land ownership perpetuated the exploitation of resources and the occupation of territory that is not consistent with an Aboriginal worldview. The latter holds that a reciprocal relationship must be maintained with the environment and land in order to ensure a community's sustenance and well-being. This spiritual connection to environments and the notion of reciprocity is not evident in the Eurocentric perspective of land ownership and resource extraction.

As discussed previously, fur trade had severe environmental impacts upon resources in the Little North prior to amalgamation, due to European competition for furs. In light of the traditional reciprocal relationship maintained between people, the land and animals, one must ask two rhetorical questions. Did Aboriginal communities 'abandon' their worldview and participate in the exploitative European market driven fur trade? Why did the Aboriginal population attempt to meet European demand? Martin (1978)

offers an explanation: "European contact should be viewed as the 'trigger factor,' that is something which was not present in the ecosystem before and which initiated a concatenation of reactions leading to the replacement of the aboriginal ecosystem by another" (1978, 64-65). Furthermore, he attributes three specific characteristics of early European contact - disease, missionary efforts and the fur trade - to the corruption of the relationship that Aboriginal communities held with their environments. Arguably, the key to understanding Aboriginal involvement in the fur trade is by considering changing Aboriginal relationships with the environment through the lens of worldview.

Martin (1978) juxtaposes the Aboriginal and European worldviews contrasting the way each population regarded animals:

The white man regarded game animal as meat from which to supply his needs, as mere objects to be taken. The Indian on the other hand considered the animal as intelligent, conscious, fellow member of the same spiritual kingdom. His own destiny was linked with that of the animals by the Creator and he felt that both he and his victims understood the roles which they played in the hunt - the animal, in other words, was resigned to its fate (1978, 116).

According to Martin, it was not until the smallpox epidemic of the mid seventeenth century, that devastated many Aboriginal communities throughout the Great Lakes region that the spiritual connectedness that Aboriginal communities had with their environments was undermined. This spiritual disconnect was further undermined by European missionary efforts throughout the region:

The single most important deterrent to excessive hunting, in the Eastern Algonkians mind at any rate, was the fear of spiritual reprisal for indiscreet slaughter. Prior to European influence, these Indians of the Canadian forest were on amicable terms with the spirits of the game, including the game "bosses" or keepers of the game and it was the vivid, daily awareness of this courteous relationship which more than anything else precluded overkill... Nature, as conceived by the traditional Ojibwa, was a congeries of societies: every animal, fish, and all plant species functioned in a society that was parallel in all respects to mankind's. Wildlife and plant-life had homes and families, just as man did. Each species had its leaders, quaintly termed "masters" or "keepers" of the game, and each local band of a particular species was said to have its own boss (1978, 1).

As the ferocity of the smallpox disease was extreme and widespread, traditional Aboriginal healers were not able to overcome it. Devastation of populations, combined with missionary efforts whereby Christianity was being presented as a way to get relief from the disease, led to the spiritual connection between Aboriginal peoples and their environments being severely undermined. Martin (1978) explains:

Somehow, the connection must have been made between the sickness that stalked the land and the animals that were overrunning the earth. In an attempt to extricate himself from their morbid grip, the Indian sought to destroy his wildlife tormentors: he went on a war of revenge, a war which soon became transformed into the historic fur trade (1978, 146).

According to Martin (1978), the fur trade set the stage for the over-hunting of beaver. The fur trade gave Aboriginal populations an additional rationale or motivation to "vanquish their enemies," who had inexplicably withdrawn their support for humans and their plight.

The Indian lost faith in the traditional avenues of spiritual redress. Man thus became hostile toward an animal kingdom which he was convinced had broken faith with him. The fact is that the spiritual edifice had already rotted from within by the time these European goods became craved necessities. In order to procure the Indian hunted and trapped recklessly - his conscience only slightly troubled (1978, 148-149).



Martin (1978) emphasizes the notion of reciprocity and the role that Aboriginal peoples hold within Nature to further explain the set of "rules" that were adhered to:

We come to realize that the key to understanding the Indian's role within Nature lies within the notion of mutual obligation: man and Nature both had to adhere to a prescribed behavior toward one another. If the Indian had any concept of balance this was it. Catastrophe resulted when either one or both parties broke the contract by some extraordinary act which caused injury to the other... Man had been given the awesome right to harvest Nature: he was, by definition the hunter and gatherer, dependent upon wildlife and plant-life for his subsistence. All his livelihood - his tools, weapons, clothing, shelter, food, etc was collected from these other life-forms. He knew that he must never abuse them by taking more than he needed for the present, nor insult them through ridicule or blasphemy, nor torture them in any fashion. For their part animals, fish birds and plants were to yield themselves up to a man for his needs. The Ojibwa hunter was acutely aware of the boundaries of propriety which he was not to transgress. If he did he ran the risk of revenge from outraged game spirits. Conversely, wildlife were not to subject man to duress, since he in turn might retaliate with his arsenal of sanctions (1978, 73-74).

Although this is a European interpretation and perspective of the reasons for Aboriginal participation in the fur trade and the magnitude of overhunting, these reasons seem to be logical in a chronological sense and with respect to worldview, specifically the connection that Aboriginal communities held with their environments. In a reciprocal relationship, it would be fair to assume that if one party offended another, the relationship would be drastically altered and reciprocal action may be the result. As the animal spirits could be interpreted as bringing disease and ultimately death, the reciprocal action was overhunting or effectively eliminating the cause of the disease.

Krech (1999) frames the discussion of Aboriginal reasons for participating in fur trade activities using the concept of "The Ecological Indian." He uses this concept and the way in which it has created stereotypes of Aboriginal peoples as 'conservationists,' coming out of the modern environmental movement, which emerged in the 1960s. In

contrast to Martin's (1978) discussion, the notion that Aboriginal groups abandoned their beliefs for cultural reasons is only one part of the discussion and other factors must be taken into consideration, specifically the market-oriented nature of the fur trade. Krech (1999) defines the concept of ecologist and conservation in relation to the discussion of Aboriginal peoples. Although Krech (1999) somewhat dismisses the fundamental spiritual connectedness of Aboriginal peoples and their environments, he offers a perspective that provides an alternate perspective regarding the notion of over-hunting throughout the fur trade:

When speaking of Native Americans as ecologists we should mean that they have understood and thought about the environment and its interrelating components in systemic ways (even if the system, all increasingly agree, is more metaphor than hard bound reality)... If we describe a Native American as a conservationist, [we mean] that he does, with deliberation, leave the environment and resources like animal populations in a usable state for succeeding generations (1999, 24).

Using six examples of different Aboriginal communities, Krech (1999) stresses the idea that no Aboriginal community participated in or experienced the fur trade in the same way:

Although the decline of the beavers in eastern and central Canada was widespread, we cannot assume that it is explained in the same way everywhere. Not all Northern Algonquians were equally enthusiastic participants in the trade, especially when it conflicted with traditional subsistence activities (1999, 180).

In the first three examples presented, Krech (1999) discusses the following communities- the Montagnais in the 1630s, the East Main Cree in the period from 1650 to 1745 and the York Factory Cree from 1738-1775. From these examples, Krech (1999) concludes that the "concept of conservation seems to have been largely absent. These Indians killed as many beavers as they needed to satisfy their desire for trade goods and domestic consumption." The last three examples discuss the Cree near Lake Winnipegosis in the

1790s to 1820s, the Cree on the East Main in the 1820s to 1840s and the northern Ojibwa in northern Ontario in the 1790s-1840s. These cases

[t]ook place during a period of intense fur-trade company competition followed by monopoly; of dedicated trapping and consumerism; of steady destructive pressure on the beaver populations and of stated interest on the part of the traders in the conservation of beaver and territorial beaver. And while some Northern Ojibwas developed both conservation and territorial systems at the same time as, and seemingly in response to, new HBC regulations, others lived by trespassing and poaching. Conservation and territoriality in this vast region clearly were affected by local variations in ecological, demographic, social, cultural and historical circumstances (1999, 194).

Although one may superficially find Aboriginal motivations of trade participation resembling that of Europeans, it is not appropriate to simply assume European motivations and priorities are universally applicable to Aboriginal peoples. Each derived from fundamentally different cultural traditions, with divergent political economies and technologies, and each played a very different role in the trade exchange. Furthermore, fur trade literature in itself is a European construct written by European males from a European perspective, with much of it being produced to serve European business and colonial interests. Clearly, such documents will be inadequate to articulate an Aboriginal side of the story. In the same vein, Aboriginal perspectives are only indirectly and sometimes incorrectly represented in European fur trade documents. Thus, it is only possible to extrapolate what these perspectives might be by referencing secondary source material such as ethnographic studies.

## 2.3 Economic Anthropology

Under the umbrella of economic studies, there are two schools of thought: formalist and substantivist. Kaplan (1968) provides some insight into the formalist position of economic behavior:

At the very heart of formal economics is the postulate of economic rationality or economizing. According to this postulate, the universal limitation of means relative to ends includes a situation in which deliberate decisions must be made about how these scarce means can be optimally allocated to alternative ends. The basic units of analysis are rational, autonomous individuals... Not only does this postulate assume that all action is preceded by a choice making situation but it also assumes that this decision-making involves a complicated calculation about how scarce means can best be allocated to optimize alternative ends (1968, 223, 238).

Schneider (1975) supports this explanation of the formalist school of thought:

In sum, formalists have accepted that some of the apparently noneconomic characteristics of the economic behavior of non-Western people such as slowness to change, unresponsiveness to change in demand, supply and prices, or preference for labor rather than capital intensive operations are explainable by viewing that behavior as ultimately economic, balancing costs against benefits (1975, 273).

On the other side of the discussion, Schneider (1975) explains the substantivist position:

The substantivists reject the cross-cultural applicability of formal economic models, asserting rather that they are relevant only to industrial capitalism because economies historically have grown out of subsistence village communities by a process of increasing social differentiation (division of labor). Hence development is seen as a process of promoting institutional development, which brings with it increased control of destiny and progressive decline in starvation and other undesirable effects of economic helplessness (1975, 288).

Although there seems to be a distinction between these two schools of thought, both offer a different perspective from which to gain insight into the "bigger picture." A collaborative method, using each frame of reference would be beneficial to the discussion

of economic behavior, as formalist economic theories do not adequately explain economic behavior. Dalton (1969) sums up the benefits of each framework:

In summary, all societies of record - those studied by anthropologists, historians and economists - have structured arrangements to provide the material means of individual and community life. It is these structured rules that we call an economic system. Economic anthropology delineates these social rules of economy by describing activities and folkviews, and analyzing transactional processes and relationships in the small-scale pre-industrial communities of the underdeveloped world, and makes comparisons between primitive, peasant and industrialized developed economies. So too, with comparing the components and sectors of economy: the allocation of land and labor, the organization of work, the disposition of produce and the organization and usage of forms of money, markets and external trade. There are very important differences among economies, however differences in structure and in performance and much valuable analysis lies in contrasting them (1969, 72).

When applying this theoretical framework to the discussion of the fur trade, the formalist, or classical economic position held by Innis (1930), maintains that Aboriginal participation in the trade was motivated by the same reasons as the French and British, the pursuit of profits. The substantivist position or theory, offered that human economic behavior was conditioned by the social values of the society. Developed by economist Karl Polanyi (1957), specifically concerning the British economy, he argued that North American Aboriginal peoples neither believed nor behaved as Europeans and that what appeared to be economically motivated activity might have had other causes and meanings, for example, political interests (Peterson and Anfinson, 1984, 229). Essentially, the formalist definition applies economic theories to explanations of participation in trade and market-economies and the substantivists maintain that economic theories purported to have pan-cultural application fail to explain the whole story. With specific reference to non-Western societies, economies are intertwined with subsistence activities, social organization and other cultural characteristics. This interconnectedness plays a role in economic decision-making activities; for example, to participate in the

European fur trade, Anishinabe motivations cannot be determined by formalist Western economic indices. Rotstein (1967) furthers this idea in *Fur Trade and Empire: an Institutional Analysis* whereby he concludes that for Aboriginal peoples, the major purpose of involvement in the fur trade was in the making and maintaining of political alliances. Polanyi did provide an alternative to formalist economic theory, but he did not specifically apply this theory to the fur trade; it is, however, still important in the sense that it demonstrates the necessity to consider the social and cultural context of the fur trade.

The development of cod fisheries in the late fifteenth century marks the beginning of resource exploitation, which is supported by Mackintosh (1967) and Innis' (1995) staple theory that suggests Canada's economy developed from the exploitation and exportation of prominent natural resources, or staples, to European interests. This began with the export fishing industry and over the centuries led to the export of furs, timber, minerals and profitable agricultural crops. Profits derived from the establishment of the cod fishery is one of the earliest examples in Canada of the European worldview with specific reference to the resources and relationships Europeans maintained with their environments. Using the formalist perspective, European actors were effectively able to maximize profits using available resources.

Discovery of new territory and new travel routes were important factors influencing European expansion activities. According to Gough (1991),

[t]he tantalising idea of finding a route to the fabled Orient told of by Marco Polo relentlessly drove them on to feats equivalent, though much less publicised, to those of our space age. Yet this very search, an integral part of the European reconnaissance of the New World, was to yield up a remarkable new source of wealth in furs (1991, 50).

Therefore, the behavior of Aboriginal peoples involved in the fur trade cannot be analyzed following classic economic theory. Whether discussing the fur trade in the context of Aboriginal or non-Aboriginal participation, social and cultural factors play a role in the decision making of both groups. It is important that worldview is recognized as a concept in fur trade research. In this particular case, the data derived from the Journals does not speak to how worldview influenced the lives of the Anishinabe trade partners at Nipigon House Post and therefore, recognition is the extent of the discussion of this concept.

## **2.4 Fur Trade Dependency**

*The Fur Trade in Canada; an Introduction to Canadian Economic History* represents a strong perspective of economic dependency. It is an in-depth history of the fur trade and significant historical events, which helped shape and were affected by the fur trade, beginning in 1497 and concluding with the rise of the industrial revolution and the decline of monopoly in the early twentieth century. Not only did Innis (1930) provide a comprehensive factual historical account of trade activity in Canada from 1497 onward, he provided a framework for analysis and interpretation of European and Aboriginal relationships. He argues:

The history of the fur trade is the history of contact between two civilizations, the European and the North American with especial reference to the northern portion of the continent. The limited cultural background of the North American hunting peoples provided an insatiable demand for the products of the more elaborate, cultural development of Europeans. New tribes demanded European goods in increasingly large amounts. The fur trade was the means by which this demand of the peoples of a more limited cultural development was met (1930, 388-389).

This quote from Innis captures the notion of Eurocentric biases, which supported assumptions that Aboriginal communities were inferior. The superiority of European technology and culture as a basis of dependency is a central flaw with much of the conventional fur trade literature.

Dependency is not solely in reference to Aboriginal peoples of the fur trade post but also of the 'mother country' in relation to the hinterland as a source for resources. Initially presented by Mackintosh (1992) as a way to characterize the Canadian economy, and at first considered to be a distinctively Canadian theory, Innis (1930a) discusses the importance of staple exports, or resources to Canadian economic development, beginning with cod in the Atlantic which expanded into furs in central Canada, then to lumber, minerals and wheat, ultimately resulting in dependency on the mother country for the purchase of those resources. Innis extends this theory insofar as to claim: "The civilization of North America is the civilization of Europe." Innis presents a formalist opinion in the sense that, although he makes note of interactions between French and British traders and Aboriginal peoples and notes trade behaviours he does not provide any analysis or interpretation as to why. Rather, he makes somewhat general statements such as the quote following, placing more of an emphasis on the motivations of the men of the HBCo and NWCo throughout the book:

The fur trade demanded larger quantities of bulkier goods as Aboriginal communities became more dependent on European goods, and the trade was less profitable to the French. With reduced profits, it was necessary to pay greater attention to new and cheaper supplies of fur. Exploration and penetration to new areas were results (1930, 110).

Although not much emphasis has been placed on the Aboriginal experience in *The Fur Trade in Canada*, Innis is sympathetic to that experience as a whole. Operating under the umbrella of colonialism and capitalism, there is no argument that French and British



economic interests and Christianization trumped any sort of consideration of the Aboriginal population at the time:

It was the contact between the Aboriginal civilization of North America and the European civilization, as brought by the French, which produced a disturbance disastrous to the Aboriginal peoples and of profound importance to the French and to Europeans. The contrast between diverse cultures produced a disaster for which no remedy was adequate (1930, 383, 110, 83).

This change was perpetuated by the ideas presented by Rich (1960) and Hickerson (1973). How did Aboriginal communities respond to the fur trade? How did they participate and what were motivating factors of decision-making? Were communities dependent upon trade goods as suggested by Innis or were they active participants making informed decisions to benefit their community?

In *Trade Habits and Economic Motivation among the Aborigines of North America*, Rich (1958-59), presents a discussion of the early Canadian fur trade, and the interactions between the colonial French and the Ottawa, Huron and Cree. Rich notes that each of these groups had established important trade roles as middlemen, exerting some control over the trade in their area. He argues, that the Aboriginal traders had dictated the pattern of trade, and in reaction to the monopoly Aboriginal peoples had dictated the expansion of the trade from the earliest days. "The Aboriginal and his role were all-important, and in straightforward terms they are apt to be taken for granted by the historians of the fur trade" (Rich 1958-59, 42). Hickerson (1973), on the other hand, focuses on the organization of North American Aboriginal peoples pre and post contact with specific reference to the production aspect of the trade.

Hickerson's (1973) theory is complementary to Innis' notion of regarding Aboriginal peoples as an "oppressed class" of colonial subjects. According to Hickerson (1973), the fur trade was essentially a catalyst, where Aboriginal peoples provided the

labor to produce fur traded in international markets of which they had no cognizance. They constituted an oppressed class because they had no control over the areas they occupied. In reality, Aboriginal communities had control over the land, but not control over the products of their labour.

The concept of control over territory is not ideologically the same according to an Aboriginal worldview. The idea that land can be owned is very much a European, colonial ideological perspective. The Aboriginal worldview maintains that there is no concept of ownership, specifically concerning land; Mother Earth cannot be owned, the land is for everyone to share. As Hickerson (1973) discusses, territory was mutually shared and respected. Hickerson (1973), Bishop (1974) and Greenberg and Morrison (1982) emphasize the importance of pre-contact and pre-European social organization, which Hickerson (1973) argues was based upon kinship and cooperation.

Trade partnerships existed amongst groups, and although there may have been political issues or disagreements, the trade relationship was not exploitative and concerned with profit in the same way as the European–Aboriginal trade relationship. Hickerson (1973, 15) argues that the means of production was owned in common by Aboriginal peoples prior to the arrival of Europeans and this led to the most drastic transformation in Aboriginal production and exchange relations in the sense that production was no longer for the immediate family and community, but rather the "Mother Country"; the goods themselves were critical to the establishment of Euro-Aboriginal relationships. The establishment of fur trade posts altered the trade relationship even further in that the regularization of the trade changed from casual or sporadic trading into a profitable enterprise.

The degree to which Aboriginal communities have depended upon European goods for survival throughout the fur trade era is debated in the literature. The case at Nipigon Post is interesting to examine to see the aftermath of the competition period due to the Posts' location, the abundance of available natural resources and the high level of rivalry that existed on Lake Nipigon during the competition phase of the fur trade.

### CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

There is no standard formula or template to apply when using archival material for fur trade research, specifically qualitative research. With reference to the authors and secondary sources discussed throughout the Literature Review, methodology is rarely highlighted in the research. For example, there are no table of contents or index that exist in Post Journals to assist researchers. It is important to note that while these primary documents are now important research resources, their authors had no such intention. They were business documents, primarily written by employees carrying out operational roles within Rupert's Land, to be read by more senior officers and perhaps shareholders within the company hierarchy. The primary HBCo documents consist of several different types that include ledgers and account books, daily journals of events occurring within the individual trade posts, correspondence books representing communications between staff, district reports summarizing the conditions of trade within each administrative region. The information is varied in nature, and differs sharply in quality and completeness depending upon the skills, interests and agendas of the authors. As such, the documents have served many research purposes reflecting the varied objectives of many different researchers.

Ray (1978) and Carlos (1993, 2001) provide mathematical formulae for calculating specific quantitative information gathered from HBCo Account Books which speaks to methodology, but this cannot be applied to the Post Journals. The HBCo Account Books are very different from Post Journals and contain a detailed account of such as the post men's debts, expense accounts and profits and losses (Ray, 1975-76).

Although this information is useful in determining things such as consumption of goods and, reliance upon country foods, offering some insight into the way in which Aboriginal communities participated in the trade. HBCo Journals are not always in complete form or accessible. For some HBCo posts, the record is comprehensive and plentiful, for example, York Factory, and for other posts, the record is illegible and not very useful such as the records of Michipicoten.

While written from a European perspective, primary fur trade documents can offer insight into the day-to-day activities and inner workings of HBCo posts such as Nipigon House. Hudson's Bay Post records, such as those from Nipigon House Post, contain information regarding the day-to-day, monthly and yearly activities of the Anishinabe community as well as descriptions of relationships between European and Aboriginal groups. As discussed in Chapter 2, retrenchment and reorganization of the HBCo in the mid nineteenth century took place in order to cut costs and ensure the fur trade remained profitable. Along with these cost-cutting measures, the Post Journals were re-vamped as well. As Burley (1997) notes,

In 1814, it ordered all chief factors and district masters to submit reports, with maps and sketches, describing the state of their districts and their trade together with suggestions for making it 'more profitable.' These reports were to include information on the topography and climate of Rupert's Land, the Native peoples, the condition and location of each post, the establishments of the NWC and the ages, occupations, character and physical description of all employees. The clerk stationed at each post would keep a journal, under the supervision of his master, containing a record of each day's events, the men's duties, and descriptions of the weather, flora and fauna, unadorned by personal comments or observations. Journals were not new of course but the committee had never before specified what they were to contain.

Another innovation was the annual report that every district master now had to submit. This would pull together the information provided by the journals of the district's posts and include a list of all officers and servants of the district, giving their names and details of their conduct the preceding year (1997, 36-37).

The Post Journals from Nipigon House did not contain sketches or specific details such as the ages, occupation, character or physical description of the Post employees however, topography, climate and information on the Anishinabe community were recorded. Although there was only one District Report available for Nipigon House (1828-1829) this document contained information that was not present in the Journals such as the population of the post and physical descriptions of the topography. The limitations of using HBCo Post Journals varies depending on the post, these can include legibility, incomplete information such as missing dates, or simply the availability of the record itself, it simply may not exist. For example, there is only one District Report for Nipigon House; there is not another District Report available at this post until 1889.

For the purpose of this case study, Hudson's Bay Company archival material from Nipigon House Post (B.149) from 1828-1838 was used. This includes Post Journals, and the District Report from 1828-1829. These primary documents are valuable sources of information as they record the daily activities of the fur trade post, typically from its establishment forward to its eventual abandonment. The following table presents a description of the primary sources of data<sup>4</sup>:

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<sup>4</sup> The reasoning as to why the author remains unknown in the 1836-37 and 1837-1838 columns is simply because the record is not authored. Although the handwriting looks very similar and it is likely John Swanston was Chief Factor during these years, this cannot be stated with 100 percent certainty.

**Table 3.1 Primary Data Sources Nipigon House Post 1828-1838**

<b>Nipigon House Record - Type and Years Covered</b>	<b>Author</b>	<b>Frequency of Entries / Quality of Legibility</b>
Journal 1828-1829	Unknown	Daily - June 1828 - May 1829
Journal 1830-1831	Unknown	Daily - June 1830 - May 1831 - sporadic, missing dates, poor legibility
Journal 1831-1832	Unknown	Daily - June 1831 - May 1832 - sporadic, missing dates, poor legibility
Journal 1833-1834	Louis Denis de LaRonde	Daily - June 1833 - May 1834
Journal 1834-1835	John Swanston	Daily - June 1834 - May 1835
Journal 1835-1836	Unknown	Daily - June 1835 - June 1836
Journal 1836-1837	Unknown	Daily - June 1836 - June 1837
Journal 1837-1838	John Swanston	Daily - June 1837 - June 1838
District Report 1828-1829	Donald McIntosh	1 entry (only Report available)

Despite the fact that there are gaps and complete records are not always available, there is a great deal of documentation from which to gather and analyze participation in the fur trade. While often containing an abundance of information, only the microfilm versions of these records were available for study. Each Chief Factor, in charge of individual posts, was required to record daily occurrences at the Post, (sometimes recorded by a clerk), yet had discretion regarding the information recorded. For example, concerning the Nipigon House Post Journals, the record from 1831-32 does not provide descriptions of day-to-day activities but rather simply recounts the weather in most entries.

For the purpose of this qualitative research, the focus will be on the events recorded in the Post Journals and District Report (1828-1829). Nipigon House data was obtained from the Chancellor Patterson Library at Lakehead University as well as from the Hudson's Bay Company Archives located in Winnipeg, Manitoba. These documents

are recorded on microfilm, which demands a lengthy and detailed transcription process in order to obtain the data. That the documents have been recorded on microfilm was problematic at times given the poor legibility of some sections.

The Post Journals from Nipigon House are annual records that document the daily activities of the men employed at the post as well as that of the Anishinabe community who visited the post. The record for the most part was complete, with the exception of the record from 1830-32, whereby dates are incorrect or missing, there is limited content and legibility is very poor. Although data was derived from the journals from these years, it is not as abundant as the other years. This could be attributed to the Chief Factor, responsible for recording the data and their personal preference. The Chief Factor is the highest position that can be held at a fur trade post; these men are responsible for recording not only the day-to-day activities of the post but also conducting the trade and ensuring the post ran smoothly. For example, throughout the years 1830 - 1832 the Chief Factor was consistent in recording the temperature at the post but not as consistent in recording details regarding specific trade items.

In terms of authorship, this is only indicated in the years 1833-34, 1834-35 and 1837-38. This does not present specific difficulties or limitations with the data but it is of interest to note. For example, the Report on District 1828- 1829 is authored by Donald McIntosh, but this does not necessarily mean that he also authored the Journals from 1828-1829. It would be inappropriate to attempt to make any assumptions regarding authorship based upon handwriting.

In order to discuss the data from the Post Journals in relation to generalizations presented in the fur trade scholarly literature, several thematic categories were identified for comparison. The categories of 'trade items', 'starvation', 'alcohol consumption' and



'traveling to other posts for trade,' are themes discussed in the fur trade literature. For example, Black-Rogers (1986) discusses the use of the term "starvation" in the HBCo record and Bishop (1976) addresses the role that alcohol played as an item of trade throughout the fur trade era. Robson, (2004) as well, has attempted to build a typology of activity that includes trade items and routes of travel, from the fur trade record. These categories are representative of aspects of the European fur trade that are thought to have been altered upon amalgamation in 1821. The remaining categories used in this analysis were developed specifically to elicit indications of adaptability or dependency. It is important to note all information in quotations is taken directly from the Report on District and Post Journals.

What does the record say about the Aboriginal community at Nipigon House Post? Beginning with the Report on District from 1828-29, a sense of the Anishinabe trade community can be ascertained that includes the population demographics and subsistence activities. The District Report details the breakdown of Anishinabe men, women and children in 1828-1829 as follows: "The Indian population of this Establishment amounts to two hundred and twenty seven souls, say fifty-four men including young lads above seventeen years of age, sixty-two women and one-hundred-and-twelve children who are divided into thirty four families in their manners, customs and habits of life" (Nipigon House B.149/e/1-2 p.1). Although not extensive, the population account provided in the District Report is fairly detailed in terms of age distribution and number of families.

Beginning in 1828, the Post Journals have been organized according to monthly, yearlong increments from June until May of the following year. Beginning in 1828, the daily land-based activities of those involved with Nipigon House Post were recorded in a

spreadsheet, and later were aggregated into monthly increments. Activities were recorded under the following headings. These categories can be used as an indication of dependence or autonomy with regards to the Anishinabe community:

- Travel - Family Connection Indicated
- Anishinabe Encamped at Post
- Anishinabe Working with Employees at the Post
- Anishinabe Travel to Other Posts for Trade
- Post Employees Traveling for Furs
- Trade Items - In and Out (including large and small game)
- Trade Items Repaired
- Fishing
- Starvation
- Alcohol Consumption

From this information, key indicators of dependence as well as a narrative of how the community was affected by amalgamation are identified and presented in Chapter 4, Data Analysis and Discussion. The period chosen (1828-1838), represents an appropriate snap shot through which to test the research objectives since it offers a decade long summary after the amalgamation and transition to monopoly was well established. In addition, the record throughout this time was intact and legible for the most part, further enhancing the sample.

## CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Using Hudson's Bay Company Post Journals at Nipigon House Post, the impacts of the 1821 Amalgamation are assessed. According to the literature regarding the European fur trade, there are specific periods of time that shaped the way in which the fur trade evolved. The time frame with which this thesis is mainly concerned is after the 1821 amalgamation of the NWCo and HBCo. This period was preceded by an intense period of competition for resources that depleted furbearer populations, which fostered dependency upon European technology.

The District Report discusses the Aboriginal population who visited the post; it also makes some distinction of the boundaries of the area with regards to hunting: "the lands which the Indians who resides at this Post claims and hunts upon, extends South to the borders of Lake Superior, North to Sturgeon Lake, West to Lac Des Chiens, and East to Long Lake"(Nipigon House B.149/e/1-2 p.1). If these landmarks coincide with the lakes currently named the same, this hinterland is estimated to be about 38,000 km<sup>2</sup> in extent. It is important to keep in mind the population was 227, organized into 34 families utilizing the area. Although this may not include all of the hunting, trapping and fishing territory used by families trading at Nipigon Post, it likely represents the core area being harvested. There is specific reference to the Lake itself, including the approximate size, navigability, and types of fish:

This Lake from which the Post claims its name it is about eighty miles in length North and South and is nearly circular. There are a great number of islands interspersed in it; and remarkable for the abundance and variety of fish it contains, the principal and best are Trout and white fish. The only navigable Rivers for craft of any size are the Nipigon and Petit Jour. There are seven portages in it, [ Nipigon River] where the navigation is obstructed by high falls over these the people have to carry both the canoes and property. Canoes loaded with thirty trading pieces can navigate in both these Rivers during the summer season. There are several other of less note that falls into this Lake, not distinguished by any names but their Indian names, the natives navigate them in their small canoes (Nipigon House B.149/e/1-2 p.1).

It is clear from the excerpt that the Anishinabe population at Nipigon House have a more extensive knowledge about the area than the Chief Factor. The fact that there are lakes in the area still identified by their Anishinabe names may indicate that these lakes have been untouched by European influence at this point, in the sense that they are not fished or traversed by Europeans. The quote could also be reflective of the level of geographic knowledge of the Chief Factor in charge at the time who was; perhaps comparatively new to the district.

Each of the categories outlined in Chapter 3 are presented in a separate section below. The categories of 'trade items', 'starvation', 'alcohol consumption' and 'traveling to other posts for trade' are themes discussed in the fur trade literature. These categories are representative of aspects of the European fur trade that are thought to have been altered upon amalgamation in 1821. The remaining categories used in this analysis were developed specifically to elicit indications of adaptability or dependency. These categories are interspersed in order to present the environmental and social structure first, then, the items of trade and then, themes that could indicate possible social issues in the Anishinabe trade community.

## Category 4.1 Travel; Family Connection Indicated

The first category for analysis was travel to and from the post. This was important since it reflects the degree or regularity of participation in the trade, and how far hunters and trappers had to travel from their foraging area to the post to pay credits, buy supplies or gain advances on future country produce. It also reflects the demographic makeup of trading parties. When a family was traveling together, it was indicated in the Journals. This suggests that a kinship relationship existed amongst hunting groups that came to visit the post. The following five examples, while not indicative of the size of the hunting group do indicate that travel groups that arrived at the post were typically composed of kin. While not an exhaustive list; these examples serve to illustrate the different types of parties and how they were organized.

In July of 1828 it was noted in the record that "Le Grains, his two sons and La Glace arrived,<sup>5</sup> in March of 1829 that Le Grains, his two sons and La Glace arrived,<sup>6</sup> in September 1830 that The Medal and family came here,<sup>7</sup> in October 1835 that Michimukwa and 2 brothers arrived<sup>8</sup> and in August 1837 Big Bear and brother Keneweshkinge arrived from L. superior where they have been the summer."<sup>9</sup>

This is likely consistent with the pre-amalgamation period, whereby kin related groups were the primary socio-political and production units. These records suggest only one or two men brought produce to trade, which could mean that hunting is done by one or two men, not the whole group. It could also indicate that these men were conveying

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<sup>5</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.5

<sup>6</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.5

<sup>7</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p .7

<sup>8</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/17 p.16

<sup>9</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/19 p.12

country produce while the balance of the hunting band remained out on the land. On four occasions, one Aboriginal woman, La Medals wife, was documented as coming to the post, bringing furs to trade, with her son(s). Although Medal was also trading at the post, on occasion it may have been more convenient for his wife to bring these furs in at these times in order to save time, as he may have been preoccupied with other subsistence activities in the meantime. The lack of documentation of other women coming to the post suggests trade was not typically carried out by women. The participation of women in the fur trade at Nipigon House Post is not substantial enough to make any inferences regarding participation or lack thereof. Taking into consideration the population demographics and the number of family hunting groups, the data suggests that small groups, typically kin-related males, travelled to the post to take care of the everyday business, with some occasional exceptions.

#### **Category 4.2 Anishinabe People Encamped at the Post**

This category does not support the notion of dependency upon the fur trade post due to the limited number of examples that specifically refer to 'encampment,' and in light of the ambiguity of meaning. "Anishinabe People Encamped at the Post" has the potential to be interpreted as an indication of dependency in the sense that they are waiting on European goods to come from other posts, or perhaps reflecting people coming to the post seeking support and provisions in the face of hardship, illness and starvation. "Anishinabe People Encamped at the Post" refers to the establishment of a temporary encampment in close proximity to the post by Anishinabe traders. Although this may speak to the working relationship between traders it does not necessarily denote a dependency

relationship. It can also be interpreted as a resting spot, or meeting point to await family and friends. Perhaps some Anishinabe people encamped at the post while they were traveling to or from another post or hunting location. As trade posts were often set up in areas of abundant resources, this would also seasonally attract Aboriginal peoples to harvest resources. This is indicated by the following four examples and represents an exhaustive list of the references to 'encampment.' In July 1828 it was noted in the record that "La Medicine and Le Grains Bands came and encamped at the Fort,"<sup>10</sup> in August 1828 that La Medicines 4 sons arrived and encamped,<sup>11</sup> in August 1833 that Grand Geulles and sons are encamped about the place,<sup>12</sup> and in June 1834, that La Chouettes band came and encamped at the fort."<sup>13</sup>

As there is no indication as to why they were encamped, it is difficult to make inferences; however due to the limited number of examples, it would seem as though they are not camping at the post because of some sort of dependency upon the post and its resources. If this were the case, it would likely be documented more often. In this case, the visitations were sporadic and showed no obvious pattern, suggesting that encampment was an occasional occurrence.

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<sup>10</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.7

<sup>11</sup> Ibid p.8

<sup>12</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/16 p.6

<sup>13</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/17 p.3

### **Category 4.3 Anishinabe Travel to Other Posts for Trade**

Traveling to other posts for trade is an interesting indicator in that after amalgamation, one of the policies<sup>14</sup> implemented was that Aboriginal peoples were not to travel from post to post for trade or to pay credits. They could choose where they wanted to trade but once this decision was made, they had to strictly conduct trade with that post. In the case of Nipigon House, there is evidence to show that trade goods were accepted from other Posts and that on occasion Anishinabe traders from Nipigon House took their furs elsewhere. This suggests the HBC rules may not have been as effectively enforced at Nipigon House Post. These references run counter to expectations of trappers, dependent upon the HBCo for goods, accepting the new rules imposed unilaterally through the power of monopoly. The following five examples represent travel to other posts for trade, or other Aboriginal peoples coming to Lake Nipigon to trade as recorded in the Journals. It was noted in the record that "in December 1831 that Payaskemish and Careasin came here, they are Sturgeon Lake Indians and brothers of Tefson who was killed last year - they brought a few skins to exchange for ammunition,<sup>15</sup> In July 1833 that 2 of La Chouettes sons arrived one belongs to this post, he says he paid 20 skins at Sturgeon Lake on account of his debt here,<sup>16</sup> In January 1836 that 2 men preparing to accompany me to Cedar Lake where I expect to find Mishomis an Indian who owes a large debt here but is in the habit of taking his furs to lac Lapluie - I am afraid I shall not get his skins without I

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<sup>14</sup> Another policy which was enforced, but was short lived was that of the "Ready Barter System" which replaced the debt system for a short period of time. According to Bishop (1974). " Periodically put into effect after 1824 require that Indians trade their furs for their trade needs, rather than obtain them in advance in early Autumn as had been the custom. This meant that Indians had to begin the fall trapping season without the necessary supplies they would normally obtain on the debt system. Due to difficulties experienced by Indians the Company was forced to abandon the policy a number of times and later modified it to allow Indians a few items in debt which were deemed essential. This policy was not enforced during the 1828 - 1838 time period as there is mention of "giving advances" (1974, 9-10).

<sup>15</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.10

<sup>16</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.3



go myself as he is rather a bad subject <sup>17</sup> and in August 1836 Niskoke and Coocouchie arrived here they are Pic Indians but they refuse to return thither - they gave a few skins on account of their debt at that fort principally rats and minks."<sup>18</sup>

"Anishinabe Travel to Other Posts for Trade," demonstrates that the Anishinabe had a degree of control over the trading process. Although the HBCo attempted to prevent traders from taking their furs to other posts for trade, the record indicates that Anishinabe traders exercised the option.

#### **Category 4.4 Post Employees Travelling for Furs**

The fact that Anishinabe traders would leave their furs at their lodge to be collected and transported by HBCo employees is an indication of Anishinabe autonomy. A dependent population would likely transport the furs themselves, rather than tell the post men to fetch them. The practice of leaving furs for post men to collect has its roots in the competition period. Due to the level of competition, each company would be in the habit of dispatching labourers to assist in the transportation of Aboriginal furs as to ensure they were not 'stolen' by a competitor. Based upon the seven examples provided, this is not common practice at the Nipigon House Post after amalgamation, however such activities are sufficiently mentioned to be noteworthy since it is contrary to the expectations of the monopoly period. That is, if Aboriginal traders were supposedly dependent upon the HBCo and forced to accept the post-amalgamation protocols then one

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<sup>17</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/18 p.26

<sup>18</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/19 p.18

would expect that the officer would not be expending valuable laborer resources on conveying customers' furs to the post.

The following are examples that speak to this. It was noted in the record that, "in June 1828 that Dubois and Jobainville went off with Gisik - Oki for the skin that he, Mishomis and Sagacheweskunk have at their lodges,<sup>19</sup> in February 1829 that (Illegible name) arrived about dusk to see if we would send for rabbits which he had collected at his tent to barter for rum and ammunition<sup>20</sup> and Dubois and Deshaulet accompanied the Indian who arrived last evening to his tent for 300 rabbits which was paid him in rum and ammunition,<sup>21</sup> in April 1829 that Le Galais arrived - came for people to go for furs he had at his lodge<sup>22</sup> and Le Galais arrived - came for people to go for furs he had at his lodge - Dubois and Jobainville accompanied him,<sup>23</sup> in April 1835 that Black Cloud came in said he has 34 skins at his lodge. [Not indicated if someone was sent]<sup>24</sup>, in December 1835 that The chief and his oldest brother arrived they have left their skins at their lodge they say they have 144 between them<sup>25</sup> [Not indicated if someone was sent], in December 1836 that Was'nikikahboway, Pechigance and Shegowish arrived they say they have collected 260 beaver Was'nikikahboway and Shegowish started for their lodge<sup>26</sup> and that Robertson and Shearer came home with the remainder of the furs 290 1/2 made beaver.<sup>27</sup> In December 1837 it has been noted that The lake appears to be fast which enables me to

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<sup>19</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.18

<sup>20</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.21

<sup>21</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.21

<sup>22</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.24

<sup>23</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.25

<sup>24</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/18 p.14

<sup>25</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/18 p.21

<sup>26</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/19 p.14

<sup>27</sup> Ibid

send off 5 men with sledges for 400 rabbits that La Garde has collected at the Straits<sup>28</sup> and that Jobainville and Brudard arrived with the furs of Keneweshkinge and son and also with those of the medals wife, Michekangue and young brother Shawanaipenaise<sup>29</sup> and in January 1837 that Keneweshkung and Petit visage came in but left their furs at their lodge; it appears they have made good hunts as they say they have collected 170 made beaver<sup>30</sup> and that The Indians are still here; gave them their supplies today - 2 men will accompany them to their lodge tomorrow for their furs."<sup>31</sup>

Arguably, a population dependent on the post for survival would not leave their furs elsewhere or travel to the post without them. With company amalgamation and monopoly, and in the context of cost-cutting, and reduced staffing, persistence of the earlier practice of dispatching post men to acquire furs seems contrary to the idea of dependency.

#### **Category 4.5 Anishinabe People Working at the Post**

This category was developed in order to see whether there was cooperation between the post and Aboriginal trade community with regards to labor. A large number of Anishinabe people working at the post could indicate dependency upon the post for goods for survival. In contrast, a lack of Anishinabe employment indicates that the traders were not in dire need of the post's assistance.

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<sup>28</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/20 p.27

<sup>29</sup> Ibid p.30

<sup>30</sup> Ibid

<sup>31</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/19 p. 16

There was only one Aboriginal man, named Kanton, who regularly worked for the Post. He is reported to have fished, brought in furs and worked in the gardens. Essentially he participated in all of the activities the men of the post engaged in; however, fishing is recorded as the activity he was most frequently engaged. Kanton appears throughout the whole of the ten-year record whereby he makes his first appearance in July 1828 as "Kanton the Indian" (Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p. 2) who brought 34 whitefish from his lines. On few occasions, other Anishinabe people were identified as assisting with the various tasks necessary for the Post to operate smoothly.

This could be indicative of a cooperative relationship between the Post and Anishinabe community. There was only one explicit indication that a man was paid when he brought in a canoe, "Payashkineyash brought in a fishing canoe, placed to his credit a blanket."<sup>32</sup> This category could also be interpreted in such a way that perhaps Anishinabe peoples only helped when they chose to; perhaps they participated in these activities in order to supplement their subsistence activities through exchange for post goods when it was necessary. As there is only one indication that credit was placed for work completed, in the form of a blanket, it cannot be said conclusively that the Anishinabe community members participated in laborious activities around the post to supplement their subsistence activities. However, perhaps those who assisted were given credit at the HBCo post, which was not documented in the Journals, as it is difficult to believe that these tasks were completed free. On the other hand, during the summer season, many of the post employees are occupied with agricultural activities such as making hay, weeding gardens and hoeing potatoes. Perhaps, with the seasonal shortage of post men who were

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<sup>32</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.4

otherwise employed conveying furs out and new supplies into Nipigon House, the Anishinabe community would casually assist in these activities.

The following are four examples of the Anishinabe community working at the Post. In July 1828 it is noted in the record that Payashkineyash brought in a fishing canoe, placed to his credit a blanket,<sup>33</sup> in June 1834 that La Chouette finished 2 fishing canoes for us,<sup>34</sup> in August 1836 that Bouchard and a couple of Indians returned to English bay to make hay,<sup>35</sup> and that La Garde and Indians brought home the remainder of the hay from the English Bay; 84 bundles ; the people of the fort employed in securing of our hay which we have about 300 bundles; secured 62 bundles of hay,<sup>36</sup> and lastly in June 1838 that Bouchard, La Potrie (both post men), Kanton and the women (wives of post men) of the fort and also the Indians have been employed weeding the potatoes.<sup>37</sup>

This category does not reflect a dependency on the post in the sense that if the Anishinabe community were dependent upon working at the post for survival there would be many more participants and instances of occurrence. This would also most likely be noted in the record, as is Kanton.

#### **Category 4.6 Trade Items In and Out**

The various items that were traded give an indication as to what was available in the Lake Nipigon region for harvest, but also the items considered valuable at the Post. The following examples represent non- fur trade items coming in to the post, followed by examples of the items that were going out. The first is a list of the three non-fur trade

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<sup>33</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11p.4

<sup>34</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/16p.4

<sup>35</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/18p.8

<sup>36</sup> Ibid

<sup>37</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/20 p.2

items followed by examples of the types of import goods given to the Anishinabe for their local goods.

In

Cedar Bark - July 1831 - La Choille brought in 100 cedar bark.<sup>38</sup>

Canoes - July 1831 - Payashkineash brought in a canoe to exchange.<sup>39</sup>

Gum - March 1832 - Grand Geulles came with some gum.<sup>40</sup>

August 1833 Payashkineash brought in 2 canoes and 200 cedar bark.<sup>41</sup>

June 1834 - Cha ca bince brought canoe to exchange.<sup>42</sup>

Out

Rum - January 1832 - Le Grains youngest son and Cayash brought 50 rabbits, I gave them some rum and tobacco.<sup>43</sup>

Cloth - January 1832 - Grand Guelles came with some gum he exchanged for a yard of white cloth.<sup>44</sup>

Ammunition - March 1829 - La Garde brought in 70 rabbits for which I gave him some rum and ammunition.<sup>45</sup>

Tobacco - May 1838 - La Garde and Niskoike brought in 14 ducks, I gave them some ammunition and tobacco.<sup>46</sup>

Blankets - October 1828 - Tefson and son brought in 13 rats for which I gave them a blanket.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.3

<sup>39</sup> Ibid p.4

<sup>40</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/15p.27

<sup>41</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/16 p.6

<sup>42</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/17 p.4

<sup>43</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.13

<sup>44</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/14 p.13

<sup>45</sup> Nipigon House B. 149/a/11 p.23

<sup>46</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/20 p.2

<sup>47</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11/p.17

Leather - September 1831 - The young Indian who arrived yesterday went off this morning after we advanced articles to him such as leather to net their snowshoes.<sup>48</sup>

In summary, rum, cloth, ammunition, tobacco, blankets and leather are the only imported goods mentioned in the Journals as being traded in exchange for country produce. This is an exhaustive list of the types of items traded, not the number of instances.

Based upon the limited variety of trade items, the Anishinabe community at Nipigon House were not as dependent upon the Post as the literature suggests. If a high level of dependency existed, a greater diversity of trade items should be seen as going out to the Anishinabe community. As the list of items is exhaustive, there is no indication that the Anishinabe community was dependent upon the Post for food, clothing or tools. Ammunition is the only item on the list, which is necessary. Those remaining on the list are considered 'luxury' items; even though they are staples, they are not traded in large enough volume to indicate that the Anishinabe were reliant. The consistent appearance of ammunition as a trade item in the Journals is an indication that firearms are important hunting tools. The following table represents a tally of the frequency of trade items

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<sup>48</sup> Nipigon House B. 149/a/14 p.10

**Table 4.1 Frequency of Trade Items in Post Journals 1828-1838**

Trade Item	Total Frequency of Trade Item in Journals (1828-1838)
Rum	17
Tobacco	13
Ammunition	29
Blanket	2
Cloth	3
Leather	2

The appearance of leather in the record as a trade item speaks to the decline of large game whose skins were typically used for items like snowshoes, which is consistent with Rogers' (1962) discussion of the implications of the fish and hare period and Bishop's (1974a 1974b, 1976) model of dependence. Trading for leather to net snowshoes, rather than procuring this commodity reflects overhunting-induced dependence. Leather was a critical resource to survival of the community in the sense that without snowshoe lacing, people faced hardship and starvation during the cold winter months. Rogers (1978) suggests that rather than depend upon the post for leather, some Subarctic communities sought new solutions to their problems by developing their snowshoes to suit the available resources, specifically using cedar planks in lieu of leather as webbed snowshoes. As there is only one example which directly speaks to the use of leather for snowshoes, this suggests the possibility that the Anishinabe adapted to the



limited availability of leather and altered their process of making snowshoes to suit their particular needs.

In the literature, large game, including moose, deer and caribou are consistently referenced as being depleted throughout much of northern Ontario prior to the period of monopoly. The Nipigon District Report corroborates this generalization: "Large Animals are not numerous in this part. The Indians who hunt to the westward of this Lake fall in occasionally with a few straggling Rein Deer but so few that it contributes very little to their comforts or means of subsistence" (Nipigon House B.149/e/1-2 p.1). Further evidence is provided by Duncan Cameron, one of the wintering partners of the NWCo who was in charge of the Nipigon District for the NWCo. This quote was noted in the year 1796, prior to amalgamation, further supporting the notion that shortages of resources were evident and collapse was anticipated.

Notwithstanding all of the complaints and arguments against us, we still get three-fourths of the trade. But I am sorry to say that, even if there were no opposition at all in the country to spoil the trade it is now getting so barren and poor that in a dozen years of hence, the returns from it will be so trifling that, even if one company had the whole, on the cheapest terms, it will be little enough to pay the expenses of carrying on the business for the hunt is declining very fast and we are obliged every year to make new discoveries and settle new posts (Masson, 1960, 246).

In this way, the effects of the competition period can be seen as having a significant impact on large game populations. As mentioned previously, the abundance of natural resources initially attracted settlement and trade in the area. During the early fur trade, large game was much more abundant in comparison to the competition period. This is based on the assumption that, prior to the fur trade, it was the abundance of large game that attracted the trade posts during the competition period. There is evidence that caribou and deer were traded at Nipigon House, but the instances are rare. Over the ten-year

period covered, there were only three instances, all in 1828 and 1829 whereby caribou and deer were brought to the post to trade, supporting the generalization about resource depletion. The three instances are as follows.

Caribou - July 1828 - La Medicine's son brought in Caribou skin, which I traded for ammunition and tobacco.<sup>49</sup>

February 1829 - Petit Visage brought Caribou flesh, I gave him some ammunition.<sup>50</sup>

Deer - December 1828 - Payashkineyash and Tefson brought in a deer skin, I gave them some ammunition, tobacco and liquor gratis.<sup>51</sup>

Table 4.2 represents the types and amounts of game brought to trade from June 1828 through June 1838 as indicated exclusively in the Post Journals. The furs being brought to the Post indicate that the primary prey was smaller game. These numbers represent the indicated types of pelts in the record. Aside from the examples already cited, it is clear from the types of game brought in to trade that there is virtually no large game being traded.

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<sup>49</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11/p.1

<sup>50</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11/p.21

<sup>51</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11/p.17

**Table 4.2 - Country Produce Procured by Year at Nipigon House (Nipigon House B.149 Post Journals 1828-1838)**

<b>Game</b>	<b>1828</b>	<b>1829</b>	<b>1830</b>	<b>1831</b>	<b>1832</b>	<b>1833</b>	<b>1834</b>	<b>1835</b>	<b>1836</b>	<b>1837</b>	<b>1838</b>	<b>Total</b>
Beaver		100 1/2	24		1		65	31			16	237 1/2
Rabbit		400			50				260	400		1110
Lynx (Cat)		26		22 0	23					11		280
Muskrat/ Musquash	238					52 1/2	264		63	20		637 1/2
Marten								4				4
Ducks/ Geese						16					14	30
<b>Total Specified Produce</b>	238	526 1/2	24	22 0	74	68 1/2	329	35	323	431	30	2299

Although it has been stated that beaver populations were virtually wiped out throughout the country due to over-hunting, beaver makes an appearance in six years of the record. Referring back to the discussion of HBCo policies being implemented upon amalgamation, one of those policies was the establishment and enforcement of beaver quotas, in an attempt to allow the populations to replenish themselves.

#### **Category 4.7 Trade Items Brought in for Repairs**

There are only four instances across the ten-year period, indicating that an item was brought in to the Post to be repaired. "Trade items being brought to the Post for Repairs" can be an indication of dependence on European technology. It is important to keep in mind that the repairs to these items generally required the specialized skills of the

Post blacksmith. These facilities were not available in hunting camps, which indicates that travel to the post for repairs had to occur, or the item would remain broken.

In "June 1828 it was noted in the record that Shegowish got beaver trap repaired,<sup>52</sup> in September 1828 that Tefson arrived with a purpose to get a steel trap that broke repaired by the blacksmith,<sup>53</sup> in July 1833 that The cause of Shegowish making his appearance so early is on account of his having broke the lock of his gun which the blacksmith repaired<sup>54</sup> and in February 1835 that Petit visage's wife came in to exchange an axe which was broke."<sup>55</sup>

This could be indicative of several things. First, the goods that the Aboriginal community possessed were high quality, and seldom required repair. Secondly, this could indicate a lack of dependence on the Post in the sense that perhaps not all of the Anishinabe traders had these items, and therefore had nothing to repair. Or, third, that the Anishinabe did not count on the European goods to survive and thus did not seek repair for everything that broke.

#### **Category 4.8 Fishing**

Fishing was essential to survival for both the men employed at the post and the Anishinabe population as indicated by the District Report and Journals. The men of the Post were not able to support themselves solely through hunting and trapping according to the Journals. The Post Journals offer a comprehensive record of the fishing activities of

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<sup>52</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.2

<sup>53</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p .8

<sup>54</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/16 p.3

<sup>55</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/18 p.18

the men at the post. "Checking the nets" for fish was a daily occurrence and supported the diets of the Post men throughout the winter when wild game was less available and daily tallies are recorded in the Journals. Also, if the post men could not check their nets due to weather conditions this is recorded. Fishing is the most consistent reference documented by the authors of the Journals.

There are several examples that speak to the importance of fishing for the survival of the men employed at the Post, including specific numbers that they required per day:

Oct 1828 - It has never been known by those who have been here these twenty past years that this fishery produced less than 4000 fish, in consequence of this failure at one of our best fisheries we cannot think of sending the two men off now to Fort William. Being two of our best fisherman, we must keep them to attend to fishing in the Straits. If the people who are fishing at Dubois fishery not prove more successful, we shall be distressed for provisions until the winter is over.<sup>56</sup>

Nov 1828 - The boat arrived with 940 white fish from Dubois fishery which is all the men caught at this Station; our whole stock of fish is now secure on the Fort but it falls short 1/2 of the number that were caught at the same fisheries for several years back; we have calculated the whole this afternoon and find that there are 9900; finding that our present stock of fish is insufficient to admit of our giving the men their usual allowance of 6 fish/day - we reduced them to 5/day; It is a doubt if we can afford to give them even that through the season unless we should make good fishing in the Straits. The fish are so small here that once they have been hung up and exposed to air they don't average 3/4inch each hence they will find 5 fish scant enough when the days are long in Spring.<sup>57</sup>

The men of the Post were not able to support themselves solely through hunting and trapping according to the Journals. The Post Journals offer a comprehensive record of the fishing activities of the men at the post. The heavy reliance of the men employed at the post upon subsistence fishing may be reflective of the limited amount of large game for consumption. The District Report of 1828-29 (Nipigon House B.149/e/1-2) also

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<sup>56</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.10

<sup>57</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.11

demonstrates that fishing was essential to the Anishinabe population as well as the men employed at the post.

The great facility with which the Indians of this place can support themselves at all seasons with fish little labor or exertions, is the cause that the greater part of them remains three fourths of the year on the borders of the Lake attending to nothing else but fishing, in consequence of which they do not make one half the hunt that those who remains all winter and spring inland (Nipigon House B.149/e/1-2 p.1).

This could be interpreted in several ways. It could indicate that the Anishinabe population was fully aware of the depletion of wild game, and determined that it was more logical to concentrate efforts on fishing that was sustainable year round. This could also indicate that those who are attending to fishing year-round are not as concerned with participation in the trapping and trading of furs. If the Anishinabe community was focusing efforts on supporting themselves rather than participating in the market-driven fur trade, this is an important indicator of control and autonomous decision-making in the sense that decisions are not being made based upon dependency on the HBCo. This suggests the resilience and adaptability of the Anishinabe community in adjusting to changing conditions in ways that were inconsistent with the notions of dependency suggested in the literature. In this case, the Anishinabe community was able to continue fishing as a subsistence activity without having to take into consideration market conditions. Another possible scenario could be that Aboriginal peoples were hunting, and keeping their hunts for themselves. If those fishing made half the hunts than the rest, this may not be reflective of an absence of hunting and trapping.

Based upon the data, the post men as well as the Anishinabe community relied upon fishing in order to avoid going hungry. It can be inferred that big game was not

available due to the evidence that they were worried about insufficient stock for the winter months. As the data suggests, smaller game is being trapped, processed, and consumed by the Anishinabe community for subsistence needs. The surplus of small game is being brought to the post and traded for a narrow range of goods (tobacco and ammunition) which further speaks to the limited dependency the Anishinabe community at Nipigon House had on the post for survival. Like the conditions at the post, fishing supplements the small game food source, further providing evidence to the lack of large game available.

#### **Category 4.9 Alcohol Consumption**

Alcohol consumption and starvation are the last two categories, which are prominent in the academic discussion of the monopoly period of the fur trade. The consumption of alcohol and its use as a trade item is discussed in fur trade literature as the root of dependency upon the European fur trade post. Dependency in this case refers to the notion that Aboriginal communities were trapping to satisfy their craving for alcohol. In the case of the Nipigon House Journals, alcohol consumption is a minor trade item prior to its trade prohibition in 1836. The following eight examples represent the instances in which alcohol was noted in the record. In "August 1828 that The Indians who got their supplies for the winter yesterday are still drunk,"<sup>58</sup> in October 1828 that Sugucheweskunk got his advances for the winter and they went off immediately to drink liquor I gave them at the Roche qui Trappe<sup>59</sup> in September 1831 that Several families of

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<sup>58</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.9

<sup>59</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.15

Medicines are about the place drinking and waiting the arrival of some of them,<sup>60</sup> in June 1833 that 3 young Indians came in and informed us that Wasanakikabow's youngest son dies and he was in want of liquor,<sup>61</sup> in May 1834 that The Indians are still drinking - Indians are all drinking outside the fort.<sup>62</sup> in June 1835, that Nataway came to the fort for rum I told him that I had none - he was very impertinent so that at last I was obliged to kick him out of the fort.<sup>63</sup> in February 1836 that Morisseau and McDonald arrived from Long Lake with a packet; I also received the copy of the act for prohibiting the sale of spirituous liquor to Indians,<sup>64</sup> and in March 1836 that Cayash came in he has left his furs on the border of the lake; first visit since rum has been prohibited, he took the news quietly."<sup>65</sup>

If dependence on alcohol existed at Lake Nipigon, one would expect larger and more frequent transactions and more forceful negative reactions to its prohibition in 1836. Typically portrayed as the one trade item which Aboriginal populations could not live without (Bishop, 1976; Rich, 1960), there is no indication in the data that alcohol dependency existed at Nipigon House Post.

### **Category 5.0 Starvation**

This is the final category that is noted in the literature as a consequence of over-hunting throughout the period of competition, which added to Aboriginal dependency on the fur trade post. Black-Rogers (1986, 353) makes specific reference to the way in which

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<sup>60</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/15 p.7

<sup>61</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/16 p.1

<sup>62</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/16 p.21

<sup>63</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/18/p.1

<sup>64</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/19/29

<sup>65</sup> Nipigon House B.149/a/18 p31



the word 'starving' has been interpreted as it appears "in post journals and reports by fur traders among Subarctic Algonquians." She argues that the word can have different connotations depending on the context of its use and outlines three general "contexts of usage," literal, technical and manipulative. "Literal refers to the simple situation of literal lack of food, technical to the technical fur trade message that fur supplies were low because food had been scarce, and manipulative to messages beyond these literal and technical ones" (Rogers 1986, 354).

The fur trade literature maintains that throughout the period of intense competition, rivalry between the HBCo and NWCo fueled the depletion of resources and provided Aboriginal participants the freedom of choice and control. The NWCo and HBCo rivalry effectively provided a platform for Aboriginal participants to play each company against the other. In other words, Aboriginal traders claimed the superiority of NWCo trade goods to the HBC post they wanted to trade with, in the hopes that the HBC post would give them a better bargain, perhaps giving them more goods for the same amount of furs (Lytwyn, 1986; Ray, 1978a).

On the other hand, there are generalizations offered in the fur trade literature (Griffith and McWilliam, 1972; Martin, 1978; Bishop, 1974, 1976) that the company amalgamation was detrimental for the Aboriginal community, ultimately resulting in a complete loss of control and a dependency on European trade goods. The following are the only three cases where starvation is mentioned at Nipigon House. "In January 1829 it was noted in the record that the old Grand Geulle and his son Nisoki came and encamped opposite to the Roche Que Trappe, they are starving,<sup>66</sup> in March 1829 that Grand Guelle

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<sup>66</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.15

and family arrived and are starving they encamped near the Fort<sup>67</sup> and in February 1838 Cahsians daughter came up, starving at their lodge and came in to get a few fish which I am happy my means will permit me to supply them with."<sup>68</sup>

In this case, the term starving would seem to be used in a literal way, suggesting a food shortage because fish were given in response. Once again, the data from Nipigon House Post does not reflect generalizations, which have come from fur trade literature in reference to impacts of the fur trade on Aboriginal communities. Den Otter (1999) cites Krech (1985) and Morantz (1992) to argue that the fur trade did not necessarily significantly change the lifestyles of all participants and the notion that some Aboriginal communities preferred to opt out of the trade.

In the case of Nipigon House Post, generalizations, that suggest dependency on the HBCo Post for survival, do not apply. Based upon the data acquired from Post Journals from the year 1828 through 1838, the argument cannot be made that the Anishinabe community was dependent upon the trade post for survival. In contrast, the community at Nipigon House adapted to the economic changes which were taking place by changing subsistence patterns to rely on game which was available specifically fish and hare. The data is not consistent with Bishop's (1978) model of dependency on the post for survival post amalgamation, rather, these observations are consistent with the generalizations offered by Rogers (1962), regarding adaptation of the northern Ojibwa in the monopoly period of the fur trade.

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<sup>67</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/11 p.23

<sup>68</sup>Nipigon House B.149/a/20 p.35

## CHAPTER 5: CONCLUSION

The established scholarly literature identifies a series of historic phases, representing the evolving nature of the Canadian fur trade. Each of these phases is thought to characterize changing circumstances that had significant socio-economic impact upon Aboriginal people. This thesis seeks to critically evaluate the generalizations offered about cumulative impacts upon the Anishinabe, using records from a decade-long period at Nipigon House as a case study.

While this thesis focuses upon the post-1821 period of HBCo monopoly, it cannot be understood without first addressing the preceding era defined by rapid inland expansion and competition between European traders. This began in the late 1600s as French and British fur traders began to affect the Lake Nipigon basin, which increased dramatically after the 1760 Conquest of New France and culminated with the 1821 Amalgamation of the NWCo and the HBCo. This marks the beginning of a period of HBCo monopoly that extended from 1821 through to the late 1800s. During that time, the company intended to use its monopoly status to reduce costs, implement conservation measure to promote ecological recovery and downsize operations in order to restore trade profitability.

The competition period represents a time of widespread trade involvement by Aboriginal people, and unprecedented levels of resource harvesting that resulted in rapid depletion of natural resources. It was also a time of maximum relative power in the hands of Aboriginal trappers, as they were able to capitalize on European competition to ensure the most favorable economic outcome. Despite this economic power, conventional

interpretations of the fur trade often portray Aboriginal participants as comparatively passive economic players, who responded to the supposed superiority of European technology by increasing hunting and trapping intensity in order to secure an array of these superior goods. This was thought to have contributed to a heavy dependence upon European technology and ultimately, to widespread abandonment of traditional technology, values and land use practices. Continued access to this technology was predicated on continued trapping and resource harvest and resulted in rapid declines in availability of furs. In other words, there was a heavy reliance on European goods, but little means for securing them through natural resource harvest.

The model of economic integration and growing Aboriginal dependence reflects Eurocentric perspectives of economic motivation that is consistent with the formalist economic anthropological literature. This model of the fur trade has not traditionally considered Aboriginal perspectives and motivations that might reflect pre-existing spiritually based values regarding resource harvest and land use or social relations that could affect these as well. This reflects both the almost exclusively male European authors of the primary fur trade documents, and the dominance of European-origin scholars who have studied the fur trade.

A second group of fur trade scholars have challenged conventional wisdom and asserts that adaptability is a more realistic and applicable lens through which to interpret the impacts of amalgamation on Aboriginal communities. There is evidence to support the perspective that after amalgamation some Aboriginal participants deliberately chose to opt-out of participation in the trade (Den Otter, 1999). According to conventional fur trade literature, during the intense period of competition resources had been depleted and

therefore people no longer had the means to barter or trade for European goods. In response to a diminished resource base, focus shifted from hunting and trapping of large game and economically valued fur-bearers, to the procurement of smaller game. These smaller animals, while yielding less valuable furs, allowed Aboriginal people to continue participation in the fur trade, and thereby acquire some of the now-essential European trade goods. The dependency upon European goods that started in the competition period were now necessary for survival.

To counter the dominance of the formalist perspective, earlier sections of this thesis summarized substantive economic theory to assert that human economic behavior was conditioned by culture-specific value systems. This perspective is consistent with a second theoretical perspective that emphasizes the importance of 'worldview' in attempting to analyze human behaviour. In this case, human behaviour refers to the notions of dependency or lack thereof as well as assumptions about expanding consumer demand resulting in intensification of harvest beyond that deemed acceptable within the Algonkian spiritual tradition.

The primary objective of this thesis involved testing whether Bishop's (1974a, 1974b, 1976) notion of dependency or Rogers' (1978) adaptation model better captures the experience of the Anishinabe trade participants at Nipigon House Post from 1828-1838 using economic data as the proxy. Based upon the data collected from Nipigon House Post, there is clear evidence to support the model of adaptability rather than dependence. There are several examples that speak to some degree of dependency such as the need for leather, and three reported cases of starvation. These categories imply that due to the loss of local resources that were typically available, there was no other

alternative than to attain these resources from the HBCo post. The appearance of leather as an item of trade speaks to this. The loss of large terrestrial game, from which hides were harvested for leather forced the trade community to either adapt what they used leather for, (snow shoes for example), or procure country produce to trade for leather. The example provided in Chapter 4 does not speak to the use of different materials for snowshoes, therefore why are there only two instances of leather traded at the post? As stated, there is the possibility that the Anishinabe found more suitable materials for their snowshoes, such as cedar bark that had been split to form broad and thin planks (similar to skis) that could be used as replacements or winter travel (Rogers, 1978). The tanned hides of large game animals were also important for winter footwear and clothing. (Rogers, 1978) and also Hallowell (1992) both describe the importance of rabbit skins that had been cut into strips and then woven on handlooms as one replacement for leather in winter clothing.

Only three incidents of starvation are recorded over a 10 year period noted or resource scarcity. Considering that the post served a regional hunter-gatherer population of over 250 people, this low incidence of starvation reports suggest it was not a common occurrence. It would seem likely that if a significant number of the trade customers were starving and not trapping, that this would be recorded. If the trading post was unproductive during this time of monopoly it would have been closed.

The data regarding the theme of Anishinabe working at the post and the evidence of producing canoes to pay debts or attain credits or goods from the post remains ambiguous. As these references are sparse and sporadic, it cannot be suggested that there

is a systemic or widespread problem reflecting loss of economic power or production of non-fur goods to assure ongoing access to essential supplies from the HBC post.

The former examples do not provide enough evidence to support the notion that the Anishinabe at Lake Nipigon were dependent on the post for survival. In contrast, there is clear evidence to support the model of adaptability to changing circumstances while retaining a significant measure of autonomy. This is reflected in the narrow range of trade goods recorded as being traded, and the prominence of fishing in the record. The limited variety of trade goods reported as bartered at Lake Nipigon and the fact that they are luxury items (aside from ammunition) speaks to a limited reliance upon imported European goods for clothing, tools or food items. There are a few references cited primarily in the context of the trade in alcohol that indicate that Anishinabe hunting groups purchased a stock of goods in the fall on credit before leaving for their winter trapping areas. The nature and quantity of such purchases are not specified in the record and may provide a better representation of the range of staples and luxuries routinely purchased at this time.

Particularly important for this analysis is the explicit observation offered in the District Report, indicating that many of the Anishinabe of Lake Nipigon at this time supported themselves throughout all seasons by fishing. The report further explains that this is why those who focus on nothing else but fishing do not make half the hunt of those who remain inland throughout the winter and spring. Although there is no specification as to how many Anishinabe moved inland in the winter to trap and how many remained at Lake Nipigon to fish, the fact that it is specified in the District Report suggests that it had a significant impact upon the district fur returns. It also is consistent with the observation

offered by Lytwyn (1986) that a number of Aboriginal people simply opted out of fur trapping and focused instead on subsistence hunting and fishing during the monopoly period (with its widespread food shortages).

Citing specific examples derived from the Post Journals such as pressing the Post master to dispatch post employees to collect furs cached at their camps, and travel to other posts for trade are indications which further speaks to the independence of the Anishinabe community during the monopoly phase of the fur trade at Lake Nipigon. As these practices were common throughout the competition period in order to avoid furs being 'stolen' by competitors, or to attain a better bargain, it is not explicitly clear as to why remnants of this practice are evident at Lake Nipigon. These themes present contrary evidence in comparison to the literature that discusses HBCo policy changes after amalgamation. That the Anishinabe community at Nipigon House Post (1828-1838) were not dependent upon the post challenges several generalizations that frequently appear in conventional fur trade literature; specifically, the degree of passivity of Aboriginal trade participants, the notion of Aboriginal commitment to participation in the trade, and the degree of acculturation that occurred as a result of that participation.

Unfortunately, the nature of the primary information available for analysis exclusively represents that written by clerks and post masters placed in charge of Nipigon House and that record is largely mute about the values, priorities and agendas of the Anishinabe participants in the fur trade. While this thesis cannot directly address Aboriginal motivation conditioned by worldview, it remains important as a 'subtext' to be considered when reading the written documents. It also remains important since it



reinforces the notion that Aboriginal people were active and engaged participants in the fur trade, who acted on their own priorities and values.

Bishop's (1974a, 1974b, 1976) theory of dependency asserts that:

All the evidence indicates after 1821, the Northern Ojibwa could not have survived without resorting to the trading post. This dependency was related to environmental shifts, alterations in trade policies implemented by the Company and to the replacement of Native wares by European substitutes (1974a, 11).

In contrast, Rogers (1962) and Lytwyn (1986) maintain that not all Aboriginal communities reacted to the amalgamation of the HBCo in the same way, and some communities were adaptive and resilient to the change in trade management systems whereby they effectively opted-out of continued intensive trapping of commercially valued game in favour of focusing upon the subsistence needs of their community.

Rather than becoming increasingly dependent upon the trade post for survival, the Anishinabe community focused their efforts on the remaining and reliable resources of fish and hare to assure a basic level of subsistence. In this way, the Anishinabe community avoided the downward cycle of diminishing returns by continued predation upon large game and valued fur-bearers in order to acquire goods for survival. The Anishinabe at Lake Nipigon were not hunting and trapping intensively to fulfill a need for trade goods. Rather, they appear to have opted out of terrestrial hunting and trapping as the diminishing returns made it non-viable. In the case of Nipigon House Post, the data suggest that the Anishinabe community had not become dependent as Bishop (1974a, 1974b, 1976) maintains, but rather remains consistent with Rogers' (1978) and Lytwyn's (1986) adaptability model.

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