

PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE  
IN A NORTHERN SASKATCHEWAN  
TRAPPING COMMUNITY

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PERSISTENCE AND CHANGE IN A  
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by

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## ABSTRACT

This study was undertaken to discover the major factors at work in cultural change and persistence among a community of trappers in northern Saskatchewan. Using the theoretical construct, the mode of production, change and persistence are examined in terms of the social relations of trapping and other forms of bush production, with specific attention to the family.

The author did field research in Pinehouse Lake, Saskatchewan, interviewing trappers and other members of the community and carrying out participant observation during the summer of 1990. Significant among her findings was that the major changes to the people's lifestyle were brought about by external influences such as government and the larger economy. These are felt in the community in the forms of mandatory attendance of children at school and dwindling prices paid for furs and escalating costs of living. The combined effect of these influences over the years is to radically change family-oriented trapping to an exclusively-male economic activity, and finally to restrict trapping to a smaller group of men, almost bringing an end to trapping altogether.

Factors of persistence of trapping and the commitment of some individuals to the bush activities regardless of economic hardships, are also explored in this context. Good health, good food, freedom from the ills of the larger society present in the village, and moral prescription are all found in the testimony to the benefits of bush life provided by the informants.

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## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this study is to examine socio-cultural change and persistence in Pinehouse Lake, Saskatchewan, with specific reference to trapping, which has been the mainstay of the economy for generations. Persistence and change will be examined according to the theoretical direction advanced by Tanner (1979), Asch (1979a), Usher (1981) and others, focusing on the social relations inherent in the domestic mode of production which characterizes trapping, and change within that context. It is argued here that major influences, initiated from the outside, have brought great changes to the way of life of the people of Pinehouse within the last fifty years. Like other subarctic trapping communities (see VanStone 1963), Pinehouse has experienced increasing sedentization in the village and a decreasing involvement in the bush, a trend viewed with sadness by some members of the community. It is the intent of this work to show how things have changed and to show why, despite pressure to change, some trappers remain committed to bush involvement.

Many aspects touched upon in this work have been dealt with in a large body of ethnographic work from the subarctic. The pertinent literature, a description of the social relations of trapping and the theoretical focus used here to discuss change and persistence are presented in chapter 2. Chapter 3 introduces the community of Pinehouse, providing a description of the geographical, historical, and economic context of the community. Chapter 4

contains the main discussion of the factors involved in bringing about sedentization and a removal of people from the land and from trapping. Paramount among these factors is the compulsory attendance of children at school which succeeded in removing children and women from the trapline, inhibited the traditional socialization process, encouraged the sedentization of people, separated the family for longer periods and severely curtailed family co-operation in many economic activities. The younger generation has largely failed to take up trapping as a source of livelihood. Since the family is the heart of the unit of production, this failure may well be the coup de grace which has brought an end to trapping as a major source of livelihood in the North.

The increased cost of living, also initiated from the outside, without a corresponding increase in fur prices is another factor in the severe reduction in trapping. These and other factors contribute to increased sedentization and greater dependence on social welfare programs and wage labour which do not successfully reproduce the same social relations characteristic of the traditional bush activities.

Yet, many trappers of Pinehouse prefer and remain committed to trapping and the bush life as discussed in chapter 5. This discussion derives primarily from responses acquired through interviewing trappers and other members of the community. The testimonies regarding continued attachment to bush activities implicitly and explicitly illustrate an allegiance to the social relations of the bush mode of production. A discussion of the prestige system

in the community shows that trapping is still important in the value structure of the culture as a major source of prestige and self-validation. While change may be coming to this area as well, judging by the increasing withdrawal of young men and women from the bush, nevertheless it appears that the bush activities do represent an important source of identity and it may be that although young people engage in them less and less, what is carried out assumes greater importance in terms of maintaining a separate identity, a sense of continuity and a link with their past. Therefore, the people of Pinehouse continue to maintain and even reproduce the social relations of production characteristic of bush life.

Nevertheless, flexibility and ability to make a living and support one's family by any means other than the passive acceptance of welfare was positively viewed by the informants to this study. Resourcefulness and adaptability have served the Métis well throughout history and may continue to do so under changed circumstances.

### 1.1 Research Population

The village of Pinehouse Lake was chosen for this research after being recommended by two village residents, one born and raised there, the other employed by the village council but originating from a neighbouring community. The primary consideration was that there were plenty of trappers with whom to conduct research. Other considerations, in order of importance,

were: accessibility of the community by road; the availability of lodging with a family; the presence of a day care; and the recommendations of acquaintances in the village. As it turned out, Pinehouse was an ideal setting in which to conduct this research. The fact that research had been conducted in the village previously, with the Pinehouse Planning Project (Pinehouse 1987a and b), and was favourably viewed by the people, did not hinder and may have helped this project.

Pinehouse is a village of approximately 1,000 Cree Métis residents situated in the boreal forest on the shore of Pinehouse Lake, a five hour drive northwest of Saskatoon. The people under discussion are primarily Cree Métis, referred to as "Métis Cree" by Jarvenpa and Brumbach (1985) or simply "Métis" by others (Valentine 1954, 1955; Bone and Green 1986). Terms derived from the people themselves include "Indian" and "Métis." One Pinehouse trapper referred to himself as "a little on the white side." This writer prefers the term "Cree Métis," the Cree adjective indicating Cree-speaking and with some considerable Cree cultural influence, but recognizing that fundamentally they are Métis. Jarvenpa and Brumbach's preference for "Métis Cree" is not explained by them (1985: 313).

Some discussion of the term "Métis" is required. Slobodin's distinction between Red River and Northern Métis is useful here (1966: 12-14). The people of Pinehouse would most closely resemble Slobodin's Northern Métis because they are not descended from the historic Métis nation which had its beginnings

at Red River. The Métis of Pinehouse are descended largely from the mixture of Cree women and Scottish, English or French fur traders. Historically they formed a transitional group between the whites of the fur trade and the Indians in the area, performing the function of cultural brokers. In the words of one Pinehouse trapper, "the Métis were the first ones to confuse the Indians, before the white man." Jarvenpa and Brumbach describe how they became a "rudimentary working class" of the fur trade for a period of time (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1985: 323). In Pinehouse, the Métis are overwhelmingly Roman Catholic and speak Cree and English.

In his discussion of the Western Woods Cree distribution, Smith (1976) situates the "th" dialect of Cree on the Churchill River, and Valentine, in his treatment of northern Saskatchewan Métis, lumps the Pinehouse people in with the La Ronge and Stanley communities as speaking the "th" dialect of Cree. "The Cree spoken here differs markedly from that of the West side which is said to be 'sing-song,' containing many French words" (Valentine 1955: 6). However, the Cree spoken in Pinehouse is largely of the "y" dialect, with some speakers of the "th" and some mixing of the two. This corresponds with the fact that many of the families which make up the community originally came from the "west side" communities such as Ile-a-la-Crosse, Beauval, Green Lake, and the lakes in between. They are thus descended from the Strongwoods or Thickwoods Cree (Smith 1976; 1981). A couple of the families arrived from east of Pinehouse, including La Ronge area, which explains their dialect. Cree is still



widely spoken, even amongst the children; however, most people also speak and understand English, with the exception of the elderly. A few of the older residents also speak French, learned at the Ile-a-la-Crosse convent.

There are a few "Treaties," as status Indians are called in the village, who are descended in the male line from Indian adherents to Treaty 10 signed in 1906 between the Indians of northern Saskatchewan and the federal government. Many more are becoming registered as "Indians" as a result of recent amendments to the Indian Act (Canada 1985). These "Treaties" with their special legal status serve to point out that the Métis, although an Aboriginal people, have only the same rights and legal status as do non-Indians in the province. It is too early to say what percentage of the village will regain Indian status. One informant suggested that fifty percent might be close to the truth; another, sixty to seventy percent.

White residents of the village total approximately twenty-four and these include both transients and long term residents. Transients, who live in the village for a year or two and move on, include teachers, RCMP officers, Parks and Renewable Resources employees, and a couple of nurses. There are four or five long term residents including the current mayor who has married into the community. A couple of Indians from other localities were present at the time of research, connected with the school either as teachers or teachers' spouses.

Pinehouse Lake does not seem like an isolated community any longer.

Most homes have a telephone and a television and the village has recently gotten cable television. Twelve channels link this subarctic community to Detroit. The latest movies on Superchannel, CNN, the News Network and the sports channel keep residents as up to the minute with American and world events as anyone in southern Canada, or southern California, for that matter. The children speak Cree but wear the latest in neon children's fashions, dance to popular music and desire the same diversions as those in urban centres (video games, for example). Change has come rapidly to Pinehouse.

#### 1.1.1 The Village

In 1983 the village amended its jurisdictional status from a Local Advisory Council to become a Local Community Authority (LCA). Basically, this meant taking charge of its own financial management and accounting, which was formerly handled by the Northern Municipal Council. The LCA is composed of a mayor and council. In addition to this, an economic development board, school board and recreation board are other important administrative bodies in the village. The Fur Block Council and the Fishermen's Council regulate those activities.

The village is laid out in grid fashion beside the lake. A focal point is the Co-op store, which contains a small restaurant and the local post office. The mail arrives every Tuesday and Friday. Another focal point is the Village Office, housed in a large building along with the Pinehouse Communications and the community hall. There is another store called Tinkers' Cafe, the RCMP

Barracks, the clinic along with the Department of Parks and Renewable Resources, a child care and a day care, a recreation or pool hall, and the Church. There is a large, well-equipped school, housing Kindergarten to grade ten. Pinehouse has about 156 houses, and boasts a local radio and television station which broadcasts popular music and regular bingo games. Bingo is a popular activity, as is general visiting and poker games. School projects, whether career days or games, are well attended by the community members. Adult ball games and hockey are popular.

## 1.2 Methodology

Approximately two and a half months was spent conducting field research in Pinehouse between May and August 1990. During that time, the researcher, accompanied by her two year old son, lived with a young family and carried out directed interviews and participant observation in the village. Since trapping is not carried out in summer, the summer months were chosen in order to have access to the trappers who might be present in the village. It was also considered the most favourable time to safely and comfortably travel to the village with a small child.

To commence, a list of current Fur Conservation Area members was acquired from the local office of the Department of Parks and Renewable Resources. The list contained sixty-six names, including one woman. A Conservation Officer was the first asked to recommend individuals on the list

for interviews. Next the researcher's hosts were asked for their recommendations and subsequently, as interviews began, most respondents went through the list and identified potential respondents or added names which were not there. In all twenty-one people were formally interviewed at least once. Seven of them were visited more than once, usually twice. Half a dozen others, mostly women, were interviewed informally, some more than once. None of those approached actually declined to be interviewed, however, one managed to put the interview off a few times, while assuring the researcher he was willing to do it. In the end it was never carried out. Another indicated he was willing; however, it was later heard that he had suspicions about the purpose of the research and he was not interviewed.

Two non-Aboriginal former residents also provided insightful information. Both had lived in the community for some years and had done significant research there, the findings of which comprise the Pinehouse Planning Project (Pinehouse 1987a and b) referred to above. The researcher's hosts were a source of information and assistance on an ongoing basis.

An attempt was made to attain a balance in terms of age amongst the respondents, however, the number of men formally interviewed was underrepresented in the age group sixty and over, there being only three in this group. This was due to problems with the language barrier and the fact that most of the men in this age group spent much of their time at their cabins on the trapline even during the summer. In terms of data, this may mean a bias is

present with trapping appearing less significant for the younger men. Five of the seventeen men interviewed were thirty-five or younger. The mean age of the men was forty-eight years, six months. (See Appendix A for a description of each of the male informants. Throughout the text hereafter individual male informants will be numbered).

Four of the twenty-one respondents were women. Three of them, ages sixty-nine, eighty and ninety-two, had all lived the trapping way of life with their parents and husbands, even trapping themselves. They had raised children on the trapline and the younger of the three still travelled with her husband, spending most of the year away from the village.

The ninety-two year old, a widow, now lived in the village year round. Hers was the only woman's name to appear on the trappers' membership list and this was due to the fact that she frequently bought furs from others which she subsequently sold. She proved a fascinating informant. As a midwife, she had delivered 502 babies, and as the oldest member of the community, her bank of oral history was extensive. She had trapped, hunted and fished in former days and had frequently spent long periods in the bush alone.

The eighty year old woman is mostly confined to the village now due to the responsibility of raising a grandchild. She, too, had trapped as a younger woman and had travelled extensively.

The fourth woman, a thirty-five year old, lived in the village year round except for short periods of a week or a month spent camping out during the

summer or fall.

Of the men, none were exclusively trappers. The three men over sixty were successful in the various combinations of economic activities they undertook. Commercial fishing, trapping and wild rice harvesting are the principal industries in which most of the seventeen men interviewed participated to varying extent. There were five exceptions to this. Three men, ages forty-eight, forty and twenty-six were involved in the local administration, and two other young men, ages thirty-three and twenty-eight, depended primarily on wage labour. Of the ten men over fifty, all had families and all but one had grandchildren. Nine of the ten travelled to their traplines regularly, but only one regularly took his wife with him. One was widowed and another separated from his wife. This age cohort was collectively the most active group concerning bush activities. During 1983-84, many of these men would have been in the 40-49 age cohort which at that time was responsible for harvesting the greatest amount of bush meat, including edible trapped animals (Pinehouse 1987b: 39).

Of the seven men under fifty, all had families, one was separated from his wife, and none took their wives with them on trips to the trapline. In fact, only two of these men trapped on a regular basis in recent years. Two others maintained trappers' licenses, but seldom trapped. Two others did not trap or harvest rice and two did not fish either.

Most of the formal interviews were tape recorded, with three exceptions

where the informant was uncomfortable with the medium or where technical difficulties rendered the recording inaudible and useless. On these three occasions, notes were taken by hand, either during the interview or immediately thereafter. The recorder used was a very small and unobtrusive model with a built-in microphone. The researcher made every attempt to eliminate unnecessary fiddling with the machine and at times felt that the presence of the recorder was forgotten.

The formal interviews were guided by a set of questions designed to seek various types of information and these questions changed somewhat during the field period. An initial aim to acquire the life histories of trappers was never fulfilled adequately and eventually abandoned. Time constraints and interpreter problems were the reasons for this. Certain vital statistics were always sought, such as age, education, marital status, number of children and where an informant was born and raised. Other questions pertained to how the informant began trapping, who taught him the skills involved and if he is now passing those skills on to the next generation. Location of traplines, methods of trapping and supplementary income were items of interest. The individual's perspective of the qualities required to be a good trapper and the qualities of an admirable, respectable person were also sought. As well, the perception of change and persistence in the community was sought from informants both young and old.

As the field period progressed, more questions were added to the list.

An effort to chart each man's annual cycle was made. In addition, some attempt was made to ascertain the point where an individual would cease trapping because he deemed it non-viable. This was made difficult by the fact that detailed individual economic data were not sought. For younger men who did not trap on a regular basis, the questions were obviously quite different and often aimed at eliciting their feelings towards the traditional activities and the individuals and qualities they respected and admired.

Informal interviews generally began as a discussion where the researcher quickly reached for a notepad to record certain pertinent information. Informal interviews were also conducted after the field period, when Pinehouse residents visited Saskatoon for social or medical reasons, and over the telephone. All the informal interviews were conducted in English. Of the twenty-one men formally interviewed, six required interpreters. Finding willing and competent interpreters was not a problem. Getting them to the right place at the right time along with the informant proved to be a chronic difficulty and was compounded by a lack of money for remunerating such services and a lack of time on the part of both interpreter and researcher. Ultimately, this difficulty resulted in fewer interviews than desired and, it is suspected, a poorer quality of data from those individuals whose facility in English makes Cree their preferred language for expressing themselves fully and precisely.

In addition to interviews, the researcher employed participant observation as a field research technique. This consisted simply of participating



in the daily life of the people in the village, particularly that enjoyed by the host family, and making observations to be later recorded. This was also limited by time and financial constraints. The result was confinement in the village except for two trips into the bush, one berry picking and the other a visit to a locally run alcohol rehabilitation camp. Other bush activities were learned of from interviews or from the perspective of the home. My host did some hunting, fishing and guiding in addition to his full-time employment constructing houses during the field period. Observation was always limited by the researcher's scant understanding of the Cree language, the lingua franca of the village for both young and old.

The limitations in the field research, therefore, were quite numerous. Lack of sufficient funds combined with the high cost of living in Pinehouse resulted in frequent returns to Saskatoon, limiting the time spent in the field. The inability of the researcher to speak Cree and the difficulties of interpretation limited the amount and quality of the data gathered. Nevertheless, the field experience was invaluable, enjoyable and essential to an understanding of the problem addressed.

In addition to the field research, literature research was conducted. Ethnographic and historical works were the principal sources of data, as well as economic studies, especially the Pinehouse Planning Project. These are summarized in Chapter 2. Data from the provincial Department of Parks and Renewable Resources are also used.

## 2.0 LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL CONSIDERATIONS

### 2.1 Literature Review

Today there is a large body of literature on subarctic Aboriginal hunting and trapping peoples (see Rogers 1981), but ethnographic accounts were few and far between when Frank G. Speck did his work among the northeastern Algonkians, most notably the Montagnais and Naskapi of Quebec and Labrador, in the early part of the 20th century (1915, 1923, 1928, 1935). By that time, the subarctic peoples had been in contact with and very much influenced by the fur trade for generations. Early ethnographers concentrated on descriptive accounts and many were primarily interested in the aboriginal situation prior to the European contact that caused significant cultural change (see Speck 1931; Cooper 1939).

Gradually, scholars began to focus on particular aspects of culture and more general theoretical concerns. For example, Speck began to examine the social organization and land tenure of the Indians he studied (Speck 1915; Rogers 1981: 21). Specifically, he looked at the family hunting band, observing that the bands of Indians travelled on a seasonal basis, returning in winter to the same general area where smaller family hunting groups then took up residence on a recognized family hunting territory. He defined the family hunting group as a

kinship group composed of individuals united by blood or marriage maintaining the right to hunt, trap and fish in a certain inherited district...(Speck 1926: 327).

Speck defined the land tenure system as follows:

With a few exceptions the whole territory claimed by each tribe was subdivided into tracts owned from time immemorial by the same families and handed down from generation to generation in the male line (Speck 1926: 327).

Speck believed the family hunting territories he observed represented true land ownership and were institutions which predated involvement with Europeans and the fur trade (Speck 1915, 1923, 1928). His ideas became a challenge to Marxist evolutionary thought about the communal nature of pre-contact aboriginal land use. Speck expanded on this in his later work with Eiseley (Speck and Eiseley 1939, 1942), and was supported in his views by Cooper (1939), Lowie (1920), and Hallowell (1949), who all believed the patrilocal family hunting territory land tenure system pre-dated contact. Opponents of this position included Jenness (1932, 1935), Steward (1936), and Leacock (1954). They argued that the territories arose only after contact and involvement with the fur trade. This debate on the aboriginality of the tenure system was not the sole issue discussed by anthropologists during this period, but it did dominate the discussion on land tenure until Leacock's work in 1954.

Leacock's monograph (1954) on the Montagnais seemed to settle the question of the aboriginality of the family-owned hunting or trapping territory. She described its development, among the Montagnais, in three stages correlated to increasing involvement with the fur trade and dependence upon store-bought food. She distinguished between the economic activities of

harvesting for food and harvesting for exchange. According to her, subsistence activities required co-operation among families. "With production for trade, however, the individual's most important ties, economically speaking, were transferred from within the band to without, and his objective relation to other band members changed from the co-operative to the competitive" (Leacock 1954: 7, emphasis original). The determining factor was obviously the source of food, according to Leacock, who based her argument on the availability of store-bought foods. These foods were individually acquired and therefore, "the individual family becomes self-sufficient, and larger group living is not only superfluous in the struggle for existence but a positive hindrance to the personal acquisition of furs" (Leacock 1954: 7). What Leacock essentially describes, albeit in different terms, is the intrusion of the capitalist mode of production into the bush mode creating changes in the social relations.

Since Leacock, Rogers (1963), on the Mistassini Cree, and Bishop (1970, 1974), on the Northern Ojibwa, also dealt with the question of land tenure. These scholars began to use the Hudson's Bay Company archives as a source of data. Both also viewed the family hunting territory system as a result of involvement in the fur trade. The literature following Leacock became more refined and quite complex because of growing attention to the many variations in land tenure systems resulting from historical, regional and ecological determinants. It is generally accepted, however, that the family hunting/trapping territory system of land tenure did develop out of the

economic activities and relations of the fur trade.

Murphy and Steward, in their famous paper on acculturation, "Tappers and Trappers" (1956), accepted Leacock's thesis and relied heavily on her research to substantiate their discussion, adopting her stages of development to illustrate increasing acculturation of the Indians in question.

At roughly the same time, ethnographers among the western subarctic Dené groups largely chose to ignore the land tenure question and contributed to discussions on social organization and social relations, some observable and some reconstructed from pre-contact times. June Helm (1961), who initially did field work at "Lynx Point", Northwest Territories in the 1950s, set out to provide general ethnographic portrayals of Dené groups and also examined the changing social organization she observed. She became one of the acknowledged experts on the subarctic and is the editor of the Smithsonian Institute's Handbook of North American Indians - Subarctic volume (1981).

Among Helm's contributions to the literature was her collaboration with David Damas (1963), in developing a chronological scheme of European contact and Indian acculturation. Their "Eras of Cultural Impact" described the various stages of contact and culture change experienced by the Dené Indians of the western subarctic (Helm and Damas 1963). These stages, further refined by Helm, Rogers and Smith (1981: 146) are defined as the early contact era, the contact-traditional era and the modern era. The early contact era began in various localities with the establishment of fur trade posts, anywhere from

approximately 1500 to approximately 1850. A feature of this era was the introduction of the Indians to diseases. The contact-traditional era lasted from about 1821 until 1954 and is described as a relatively stable period during which the Indians engaged in the fur trade and became Christians. The modern era begins in 1945 with the introduction of government programs and services and encompasses the most dramatic changes to affect the Indians to date.

These stages have proven useful in discussing culture change for some authors, notably Rogers and Smith, but have come under criticism from Bishop and Ray (1976:127-128) and Krech (1984: 81). Bishop and Ray appear to feel that Helm, Rogers and Smith ignore the possibility of great culture change in earlier periods. Furthermore, along with Krech (1984: 81), they appear to doubt that stability was ever achieved in the subarctic fur trade, as suggested by Helm, et al. Bishop and Ray propose a more detailed chronology, dividing the prehistoric, protohistoric and historic periods into several more eras based on discernible economic strategies and involvement (1976: 134).

Helm also contributed to discussions on social organization, defining units of organization among the Dogrib. She defined the "regional band" as the largest body of subarctic Indians which has a common name, a sense of unity and which may, in times of resource abundance, assemble into one unit (Helm 1968). The local band is described as a smaller group, based on kin and composed of two or three nuclear families which travelled together for most of the annual cycle. The "task group" is composed of a small group or pair of

individuals assembled for a specific purpose or task.

Smith interprets Helm regarding the nature of band organization:

Traditional band organization and task-group composition had an amorphous or fluid quality based upon the constantly shifting alliances and associations that reflect the flexibility inherent in the the principle of bilateral kindred (Smith 1979: 310).

Rogers (1965) and Smith (1979) discuss changing social organization and leadership patterns based on the chronology developed by Helm and Damas (1963). While Rogers looks primarily at Cree and Ojibwa of the eastern subarctic, Smith discusses groups west of Hudson Bay, in the barrenlands, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, as well as northwestern Minnesota (Smith 1979: 305). Rogers first defines the units which had leadership beginning with the band. He rejects Speck's and others' earlier definitions in favour of the following:

The band was the largest social and, to some extent, political (not economic) unit that existed among the Indians of the Eastern Subarctic. Each band was composed of two or more hunting groups and ranged in size from 50 to 100 or more persons (Rogers 1965: 266).

The hunting group, in turn, was composed ideally of four nuclear families based on kinship. "It was the paramount economic, social and political unit" and the main unit for the greater part of the year (Rogers 1965: 266). The hunting group corresponds to Helm's local band; however, at this time in the early 1960s, Rogers finds that the hunting group is giving way to trapping partnerships (Helm's "task group"), as discussed more fully in his monograph on

the Round Lake Ojibwa (Rogers 1962: B80).

Generally, Rogers and Smith agree on the nature of leadership of bands and hunting groups during the early contact, contact-traditional and modern eras, to use their scheme. Leadership in the early contact era was based on achieved status:

The band leader rose to his position through personal qualities that included demonstrated and sustained ability as a hunter, generosity to his followers, wisdom, and skill in oratory, particularly in grasping and verbalizing developing group consensus (Smith 1979: 312).

The leader had no coercive influence and his following was fluid and changeable. In addition, situational determinants came into play, and the person deemed most capable of leadership in a given situation was accorded the position.

The situation in the early contact era was much the same as that just described, except that the validation of the chief or leader by the European fur traders became an additional criteria for leadership. In the late contact era, Smith states,

By far, the most important authority figure was the HBC post manager, who controlled economic life through the credit system and monopoly of trade goods that now often included foodstuffs. The post manager became known as okima (chief, leader, or "boss"), while the traditional leaders became okima.hka.n, or leader-surrogate (Smith 1979: 314).

Finally, both Rogers and Smith discuss the development of the Indian "community" in the modern era, which in Canada is based on the "band" as



defined in the Indian Act, and led by an elected Chief and Council as prescribed by that legislation. While Rogers appears to believe that all authority and influence of the traditional leaders has been eroded and usurped by government agents, Smith discusses a somewhat different scenario existing in Minnesota:

The values of the native peoples of the northern woodlands have demonstrated their strength over a period of centuries. The stress on individual autonomy, egalitarianism, decision making by consensus, and limitation on the exercise of power were - and continue to be - reflected in the social organization and patterns of leadership. Originally adapted to the uncertainties of an aboriginal Subarctic environment, the traditions pertaining to leadership were preadapted to the uncertainties that have characterized the European periods up to the present (Smith 1979: 320-321).

This flexibility and adaptability, according to Smith, explains the high and frequent turnover in elected leadership roles in Indian communities, a condition which most observers conceive of as a sign of instability.

Rogers' monograph on the Round Lake Ojibwa (1962), discusses many aspects of social organization and the changes that are coming to them. The hunting groups which existed at the time of his field research were weak in contrast to those which had existed in former times, according to Rogers (1962: B80). They were still based upon kinship, with the senior male the leader by example, his influence considerably eroded from previous times. At the time of Roger's research, the hunting group appeared to be disappearing in favour of the two-man trapping partnership. As such, individual nuclear families were becoming the more important unit. Although he maintained that the money

economy was giving nuclear families more independence, he also pointed out that "every economic activity has its social components" and whereas they were usually oriented along kinship lines, this was not necessarily always the case:

With the introduction and use of money, non-relatives interact more often with one another through rents paid for the use of goods, the direct purchase of goods, or the employment of others for pay (Rogers 1962: C2).

Victor Valentine did some ethnographic work among northern Saskatchewan Métis for the provincial Department of Natural Resources in 1955. He described the Métis economy of the time, the settlements and many aspects of settlement life. Regarding social organization, he stated,

Each family head believes himself to be self-sufficient...There is no strong political focus which is peculiarly Métis. The mission often provides political leadership through indirect methods, but it is entirely up to the individual, in the final analysis, which way he will behave. In the matter of formal community life the Métis may be characterized by their "individualistic" rather than "co-operative" behavior - using these terms in the broadest sense (Valentine 1955: 13).

Many other researchers examined cultural change among subarctic groups. Important works included Dunning's (1959) examination of the changing kinship, marriage and residence patterns among northern Ojibwa at Pekangekum, Ontario. Knight (1967) examined the changing economy and social organization of the Rupert House Cree in the early 1960s. While Knight discussed many factors of significance, a valuable aspect of this study is the discussion of the nuclear family, the roles men and women play and the division

of labour by age and gender. At this point in Rupert House history, there were very few male roles in the community which could not be performed by every adult male. The same homogeneity applied to women's roles as well:

A man's economic role is primarily that of hunter and trapper. Women are basically concerned with tasks ancillary to the hunt and with maintaining a family and camp (Knight 1967: 54).

Knight cautioned, however, that the ecological conditions facing this hunting society "do not allow for irrevocably distinct roles" and that men and women do perform work deemed to be in the other's domain (Knight 1967: 55).

During the early 1960s, Rupert House men carried out the trapping of beaver and fine fur and sometimes rabbits. They hunted large game and geese and skinned and butchered their kills. They made and maintained all items of local manufacture made of wood. This included cutting and hauling firewood, building and maintaining houses and canoes. They made and maintained fish nets, set up tents, operated outboard motors and handled the dogs. It was primarily the men who engaged in any wage labour which might be available (Knight 1967: 55).

The women, on the other hand, were concerned with tasks closer to home, whether in the settlement or in the camp. They would snare rabbits and shoot small game and birds. Everything concerned with preparing pelts, hides and meat fell to their hands, including some skinning. Sewing, knotting, braiding and webbing were their tasks, as well as making and repairing fish nets. The domestic chores of chopping and splitting firewood, cooking and washing

for the family and the care of infants were women's work as well. Occasionally they would be hired out to do housework for non-Indians (Knight 1967: 55).

Knight also provided a chart which showed the assumption of tasks at different ages by males and females. While there was some variability resulting from factors such as the age of any older siblings and the individual characters of children and parents, the children usually began learning the gender-appropriate tasks between the ages of six and eleven. Boys accompanied and watched their fathers or older brothers on the trapline. Girls began domestic chores, looking after infants and learning to prepare pelts. Between the ages of eleven and sixteen or seventeen, boys and girls should have learned the full range of appropriate activities but would still be inefficient at them. For the next five years or so, they improved their efficiency and could become more capable than their parents. Thirty years of productive adulthood should follow.

From age fifty-five or so, men's and women's capabilities were reduced and by age sixty-five some may have settled in the villages. Older men, Knight states, will still engage in hunting and fishing trips for enjoyment, as long as possible. Both men and women in old age assisted their children and grandchildren in many practical ways (Knight 1967: 57-58).

The status of both the elderly and the very young has changed considerably since the extension of government support programs, according to Knight.

To "do something" or "to take care of oneself" is to be able to contribute to the economic support of the

commensal group with which one belongs. To be a good hunter and trapper is still the major element of the manhood ideal and is still an important consideration in courtship. But the persistent demand is to bring in the goods - by trapping, wage labour, or by any other means (Knight 1967: 38).

Children, for whom family allowance payments are received, and the elderly, since they receive old age pensions, were therefore no longer as dependent as formerly and were seen to contribute to the family support. Furthermore, the transfer payments had implications for the mobility of the trappers and the trend toward trapping partnerships. The elderly and the young can be left in the settlement to subsist on welfare or old age payments, while the family or just the men are away trapping. The trapping groups or partnerships can operate very efficiently without the non-productive family members (Knight 1967: 56).

Many others have examined subarctic trapping communities with a view to documenting the changes that have taken place. In particular, James W. VanStone (1963) has examined the "Changing Patterns of Indian Trapping" in the North, comparing Snowdrift, Northwest Territories, the locality where he did his field work, with several other communities on the basis of published accounts of other ethnographers. In Snowdrift, he found a number of factors contributed to the changing patterns of trapping, in particular to the increased sedentization of the people and decreasing amount of time the men spend trapping. The responsible factors include the payment of government transfer payments, including welfare, family allowance, and old age pension, which are

regular, reliable sources of income. The second factor he discussed is the establishment of a federal school in the community which had immediate effects, especially for men with large families. Improved housing meant much more comfortable circumstance in the village compared to the trapline bush cabins. And lastly, VanStone discussed the role of wage labour which, while as yet not that important in Snowdrift, was already giving an indication of things to come. Men favoured involvement in wage labour, especially compared to the unpredictable rewards derived from trapping (VanStone 1963: 163-165). As a result, trapping was becoming less and less important as an economic contribution and as an occupation which Snowdrift men engaged in.

In his comparison of Snowdrift with seven other subarctic groups studied by various people, VanStone concluded that, although there are several factors which may strengthen trapping as an occupation among some groups,

It seems, nevertheless, to be true that in most if not all parts of the Subarctic, factors favouring the persistence of trapping as a major economic undertaking are in rapid decline (VanStone 1963: 172).

Perhaps VanStone inspired Richard K. Nelson in his study of the Kutchin of Alaska (1973, rpt. 1986). Nelson's work could be described as salvage ethnography, as the tone of his introduction is one of impending doom of a way of life. In great detail, he examined and recorded the environmental adaptation of the Kutchin, describing their environment, the animals they sought and the technology they used in getting a living from that environment. As an

afterthought, he discussed the history of the Indians and the recent changes. Important among these was the emergence of villages and their effect on the trapping way of life. Although culture change is dealt with only very briefly, Nelson's work is otherwise an important, detailed and complete account of the Kutchin's adaptation to their environment.

In terms of literature on northern Saskatchewan, a number of ethnographic studies have been done on Chipewyan bands in the province, including Sharp's (1973) work on the Black Lake Chipewyan and Irimoto's (1981) on the Chipewyan of Wollaston Lake. A large body of writing has been produced by Jarvenpa (1975, 1976, 1977, 1979, 1980 and 1982) and Jarvenpa and Brumbach (1984, 1985, 1988; see also Brumbach and Jarvenpa 1989) on the Patuanak or English River Chipewyan, who are close neighbours to the Pinehouse Cree Métis. These latter works have been drawn upon considerably in this thesis because of the excellent research which informs them, the close proximity in geographical terms, and because informants from both Pinehouse and Patuanak have indicated that there is not much difference between the two communities in terms of trapping behaviour.

Concerning the immediate locale of Pinehouse, little of importance has been written except for the comprehensive Pinehouse Planning Project (1987) commissioned by the village in the early 1980s. This work, consisting of two reports based on extensive research concerning bush harvests and the total Pinehouse economy, is further discussed in Chapter 3.

## 2.2 Theoretical Considerations

### 2.2.1 Mode of Production

For the purpose of this research, the theoretical construct, "mode of production" is borrowed from such authors as Asch (1979a), Tanner (1979), Usher (1981), Wolf (1982) and McCormack (1984). These authors have all arrived at a preference for the Marxian concept with which to view material reproduction and socio-cultural change. To describe the concept, Wolf first defines Marx's concepts of "labor" and "production". According to Wolf, "labor" allowed Marx to draw the connection "between a socially interrelated humanity and nature" (Wolf 1982: 74). Through labor, human beings transform nature for their own use:

Yet labor is always social, for it is always mobilized and deployed by an organized social plurality. Marx therefore drew a distinction between work and labor. Work represents the activities of individuals, singly or in groups, expending energy to produce energy. But labor and the labor process was for him a social phenomenon, carried on by human beings bonded to one another in society (Wolf 1982: 74).

The term "production," for Marx, identified the "complex set of mutually dependent relations among nature, work, social labor, and social organization" (Wolf 1982: 74). Further, the major ways in which human beings deploy their social labor, and organize their production, which succeeds in recreating their material existence as well as the social and ideational relationships of the process, Marx termed "modes of production" (Wolf 1982: 74-75).

Tanner describes the concept of mode of production as used in



anthropology as one which,

refers to the particular combination of the technical conditions and the social relations of production, where it is recognized that the concept of production includes an economic, a juridico-political and an ideological level (Tanner 1979: 10).

Asch defines it as follows:

From a formal point of view, a mode of production can be defined as a structure which results from the mutual and simultaneous operation of two sets of components: the technical and the social (Asch 1979a: 89).

The technical component consists of three major forces of production, according to Asch: land or natural resources, technology and labour power. The social component consists of the social relations of production, that is, the human relationships which obtain in the production process (Asch 1979a: 89). Like Tanner, Usher takes the definition a little farther adding the value or ideological component (Usher 1981: 57). To Usher,

the mode of production [is] a concept which incorporates not simply the forces of production (land, labour, technology and capital), but also the relations of production, which is to say, the social organization of productive activity and the values and beliefs which serve to perpetuate it (Usher 1981: 57).

The concept, therefore, allows one to adequately deal with a wide range of social aspects concerned with human material existence and change within that context. It also does not neglect the ideological realm, which Tanner chose to study (1979).

Furthermore, Usher states, the "major epochs of human history are

marked by a particular mode of production becoming dominant but, importantly, not exclusive" (Usher 1981: 57). Different modes of production, therefore, may exist simultaneously and in relationship to one another.

While Marx identified a number of different modes of production in existence, Wolf only deals with three: the capitalist, the tributary and the kin-ordered modes of production, these being necessary for his exposition of European colonial expansion (Wolf 1982: 77-100). The capitalist mode is a monetary-based system where production and distribution are controlled by those with wealth and capital, while those without must sell their labour in order to subsist. The tributary mode is one in which the producers must, from their produce, pay tribute to a political or military power which controls and allows access to the means of production. In the kin-ordered mode, production and distribution is organized by such informal social relations as kinship. Here everyone has equal access to the means of production and rules of sharing and distribution apply equally to all. Differentiation and specialization is limited.

Variants of the kin-ordered mode of production described by Wolf have been used by other authors and essentially derive from Marx's "original, primitive, communitarian mode" (Wolf 1982: 75). Sahlins described the "domestic mode of production (DMP)" (1972: 78-86), which McCormack succinctly describes as follows:

The two major elements of the DMP are that (1) goods are produced for their use-value, that is, they are produced to be consumed directly by the producers themselves; and (2) goods are exchanged

only to obtain other goods for their use-value.... As a mode of production, the DMP is characterized by the fact that the producers own and control the means of production, both the land and its resources and the technology necessary for production. Therefore, the relations of production are basically egalitarian, with the domestic unit as the unit of production and consumption (McCormack 1984: 156).

In discussing the economy of the Cree of the Churchill River basin in northern Saskatchewan, Ballantyne et al describe the domestic mode of production in greater detail:

With the family as the basis of production, it is marriage and procreation that creates groups constituted to produce a livelihood, and each family contains within it the division of labour of the society as a whole. Characteristically, the division of labour is along lines of age (young/old) and sex (male/female). Work and production specialization is rare or non-existent. The domestic group generates its own productive technology from the extraction of raw materials to the completion of the finished article. Within the constraints of the division of labour, each member of the domestic group is capable of utilizing and applying the group's and, perhaps, the entire society's full range of technology.

Production and exchange of goods and services are oriented to providing a sufficient livelihood for the members of the domestic group. Surplus is characteristically absent (Ballantyne et al 1976: 4).

Others have termed this the "traditional" mode (Usher 1981: 61), the "bush" mode (Asch 1979b) or even the "foraging" mode of production (Cox 1988: 57). Its characteristics are best described by contrasting it to the opposing and currently dominant mode, which is capitalism.

The way in which production is organized and the social relations of

production of capitalism are fundamentally different from, and opposed to, those of the traditional mode of production.

First, capitalists detain control of the means of production. Second, laborers are denied independent access to means of production and must sell their labor power to the capitalists. Third, the maximization of surplus produced by the laborers with the means of production owned by the capitalists entails [endless accumulation] (Wolf 1982: 78).

A main feature of the social relations of capitalism, therefore, is the non-egalitarian class divisions which arise and the unequal access to the means of production. Far from the household, "[m]odern capitalist production, in its most advanced manifestation, is performed by large and highly structured social organizations, which we call corporations" (Usher 1981: 58).

These two contrasting and opposing modes of production do not exist in isolation from one another, but rather articulate and it is this articulation and the effects on the traditional mode of production of Aboriginal peoples which concerns the above authors. During the fur trade, the two modes of production came into contact and the resulting changes led to the increasing vulnerability and dependence of the traditional mode, while the capitalist mode, in its present form, has retained dominance.

Some of these authors recognize, either implicitly or explicitly, a "transitional" period or "transitional mode of production" which resulted from interaction between the Indians and the fur traders. It is implicit in Wolf's discussion of the fact that there are no untouched, pristine, pre-contact cultures

for anthropologists to study. They have all been altered by European contact (Wolf 1982: 18).

Recognition of a "transitional" mode of production is implicit in Tanner's discussion of the changes that have taken place among the Mistassini Cree (Tanner 1979: 10-13). Tanner refers to Leacock's "useful insight that a distinction exists between those groups which have a system of 'production for use', and those with a system of 'production for exchange'" (Tanner 1979: 10). Leacock's assertion that Algonkian trappers had succumbed to the pressures and temptations of the fur trade and had altered their mode such that their social relations now resembled more closely those of the dominant mode, is challenged by Tanner. He asserts that both have had to adapt and that, at the time of his fieldwork, two modes of production existed side by side at Mistassini (Tanner 1979: 11). This is possible, he states, because the Indians carry out both subsistence and commercial activities and that the subsistence requirements still operate under the traditional mode. Therefore, even though the commercial trapping activities are subordinate to the requirements of capitalism, the Indians maintain some autonomy by virtue of their hunting activities, divorced from the settlement and the seat of the capitalist mode of production (Tanner 1979: 11-12). In Tanner's words,

The autonomy of the hunting groups results not from the ability of the hunting sector of the economy to resist this historical process of externally-caused change, but to modify its mode of production in a way that enables the hunting group to retain control of the means of production, and ensure the

conditions for its own reproduction despite the existence of those powerful external influences (Tanner 1979: 12-13).

This is so, he says, because of the strong requirements of the systems of social relations, land tenure and religious ideology (Tanner 1979: 12). The means of production here include the land and the animal resources on the land. What, however, of the equipment and technology required in the bush? In contrast to Tanner, Frank Tough states:

that even if more time is spent on subsistence activities, the commercial aspect remains dominant. Income from trapping was used to purchase equipment or the means of production, used by both the subsistence and commercial sectors (Tough 1987: 125-127).

Ultimately, therefore, the bush mode remains dependent on the dominant mode.

Both Ballantyne et al (1976) and McCormack (1984) explicitly discuss a transitional mode of production brought about by Indian involvement in the fur trade. Ballantyne et al state:

By 1889 the Churchill River Basin...Native people....were thoroughly integrated into the market economy of the fur trade and were dependant [sic] upon European-manufactured goods....This transitional mode of production involving subsistence through domestic production and access to technology through market production... was a viable economic lifestyle for the Churchill River Basin Cree (Ballantyne et al 1976: 45).

McCormack describes how the traditional mode of production of the Fort Chipewyan Dené and Cree underwent changes with involvement in the fur

trade, not solely because of a growing dependence upon trade goods, but because of the "pressure exerted by traders who wanted the Indians to become dependable fur producers" (McCormack 1984: 160). The new "fur trade mode of production" saw changes in social organization to smaller units of production and increasing individualization especially in production for exchange (McCormack 1984: 160). McCormack's discussion is historical in context and does not deal with change after World War II.

Asch and Usher do not discuss any transitional mode of production. Their concerns are largely with the present-day and the two distinguishable modes of production currently existing, but especially with the relative positions of dominance and subordination that the two occupy. For example, Usher states that,

forms of production effected by large organizations [in the capitalist mode] tend to be economically and politically dominant, as well as centrally controlled. Those forms that remain open to small units of production and especially to the household [such as hunting, fishing and trapping], tend to be socially and economically marginal, and often geographically peripheral. They are, accordingly, highly vulnerable to initiatives from the [former], and must react and respond to these (Usher 1981: 58).

Therefore, change which is apt to occur to those groups using the traditional mode of production is likely to be initiated from the dominant mode.

The present study deals with changes which have been brought about in the social relations of the traditional mode of production of the people of Pinehouse as a result of intrusion from the capitalist mode of production.

Specifically, this work looks at the family and the effects that government programs and the larger economy have had on family-oriented bush activities, especially trapping. These effects discourage involvement in commercial trapping and inhibit the re-creation of traditional social relations. Furthermore, the social relations which do exist are taking on the characteristics and forms of those inherent in the capitalist mode of production. As such, one can conclude that significant change to the culture is manifested in Pinehouse as a result of intrusions during the past fifty years.



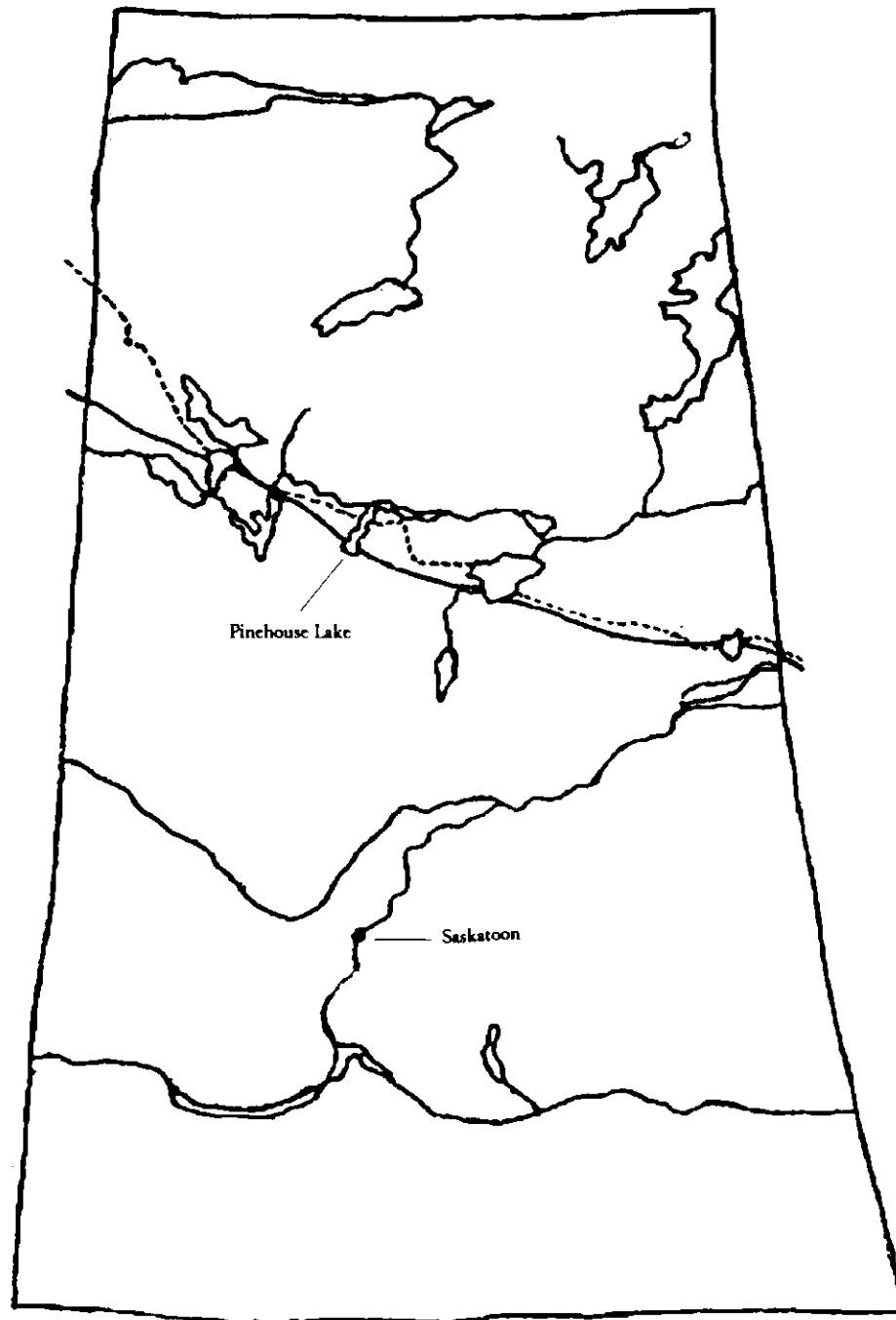
### 3.0 PINEHOUSE LAKE, SASKATCHEWAN

#### 3.1 Geographical Location

Pinehouse Lake, formerly known as "Snake Lake," "Serpent Lake" or "Lac des Serpents," is one of the many lakes which the Churchill River flows through on its long and circuitous journey to Hudson Bay. The Village of Pinehouse is located on the western shore of Pinehouse Lake (W106-34'/N55-31') (Pinehouse: 1987a: 5), or Sections 20, 21 and 28, Township 75, Range 4, West of the 3rd Meridian (Underwood McLellan 1981:5). It sits on a flat limestone formation in the boreal forest, just a few miles south of the Canadian Shield (see map 1). By recent construction of an all-weather road, Pinehouse lies 220 km west of La Ronge, 380 km northwest of Prince Albert and 90 km east of Beauval (see map 2). It is encompassed by the Pinehouse Lake Conservation Area, Furblock N-11, (see map 3), which is administered by the Department of Parks and Renewable Resources of the Saskatchewan provincial government.

The physical/biotic context of Pinehouse Lake is essentially identical to that described in some detail for Patuanak and the English River Band by Jarvenpa (1980). The residents of Pinehouse, like their Chipewyan neighbours up the Churchill, also frequent both the boreal, mixed forest and the adjacent Shield area. The mixed wood forest features a mix of white and black spruce, aspen, birch, balsam poplar, balsam fir and jackpine, with occasional muskeg or bog and shrubs and willows (McConnell and Turner 1969: 76-77). The Shield is characterized by pre-Cambrian rock, and a greater incidence of black spruce

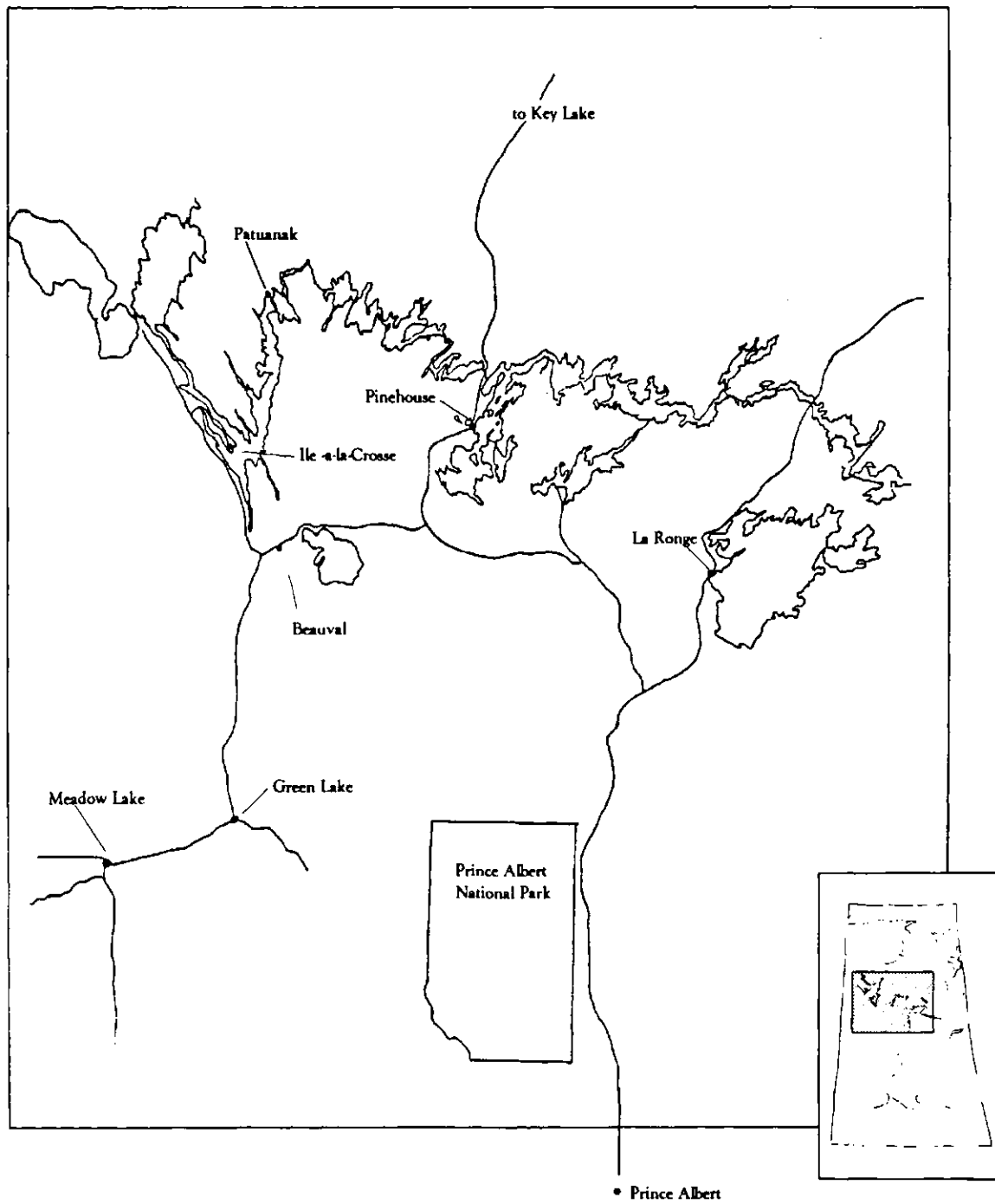
**Map 1.** Saskatchewan Showing Pinehouse Lake in Relation to Saskatoon, the Northern Forest and the Canadian Shield.



--- Southern edge of Canadian Shield  
— Southern edge of Northern Forest

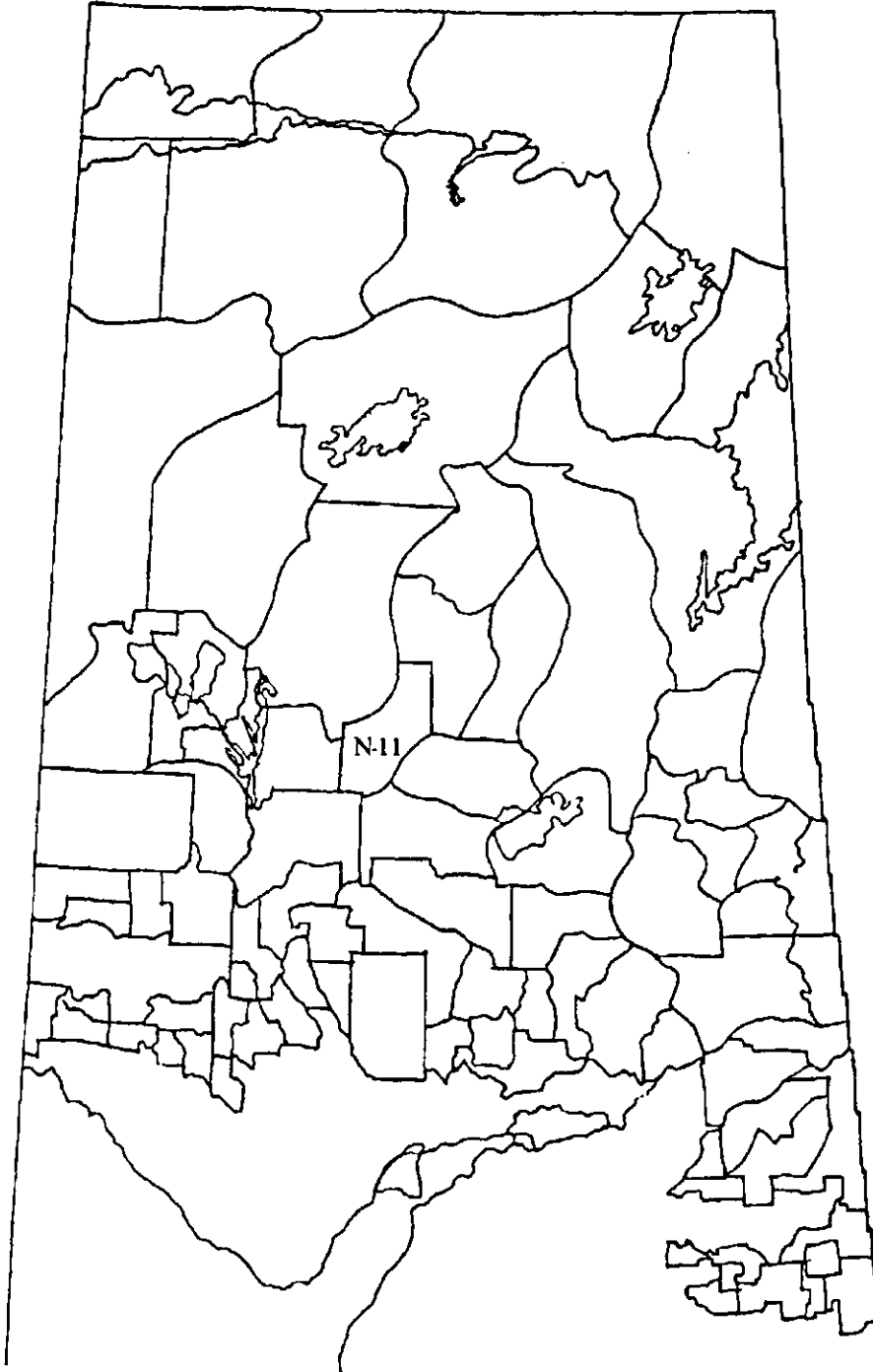
Not to Scale  
(adapted from Richards (ed.), 1969: 4).

**Map 2.** Contemporary Centres on Upper Churchill River Drainage.



Not to Scale  
(adapted from Saskatchewan Department of Highways, 1990 Map of Saskatchewan).

**Map 3. Saskatchewan Northern Fur Conservation Areas Showing the Pinehouse Furblock N-11.**



Not to Scale

(adapted from Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, Wildlife Branch, Northern Fur Conservation Areas Map, n.d., n.p.).

and jackpine.

The principal animal species targeted for harvesting activities include moose, white-tailed deer, black bear, snowshoe hare (rabbit), porcupine and groundhog. Woodland caribou were once of greater importance, but have largely disappeared from the area. Animals trapped include beaver, lynx and muskrat, which all provide food. Strictly for fur, red squirrel, red fox, coyote, ermine, mink, otter, fisher and marten are sought (Jarvenpa 1980: 18). Among bird species, grouse and ptarmigan as well as some 34 species of waterfowl are found in the area. Lake trout, lake whitefish, jackfish, red and white sucker and walleye are the prominent fish species sought by Pinehouse residents (Pinehouse 1987a: 14-15).

The climate in the upper Churchill vicinity is characterized by short, warm summers and long, cold winters. Summer temperatures may reach as high as 32 degrees Celsius, and a winter low can reach -49 degrees Celsius. The area can receive as much as 127 to 152 cm of snow during the winter and often has snow cover from late October to late April (McConnell and Turner 1969: 54-56). The lakes and streams usually freeze up by mid-November and remain frozen until the spring break up in mid-May. The rivers thaw before the lakes and small streams do and the snow cover on land can disappear a full month before the lake ice is gone (Jarvenpa 1980: 33).

### 3.2 Regional History

The Upper Churchill River region is presently occupied primarily by Chipewyan, Cree and Métis communities. Such was not always the case. It is commonly accepted by scholars that the fur trade facilitated the movement of Cree westward, at the expense of the Chipewyan and other groups (Ray 1974: 12-23). James G.E. Smith (1976;1981), however, citing archaeological, historical and linguistic evidence, subscribes to the notion that various Cree groups inhabited the boreal forest from the Hudson Bay all the way to the Rocky Mountains in prehistoric times. He contends that,

[t]o explain Western Woods Cree distribution by a war of conquest that extended their western boundary some 500 miles between the advent of the Europeans in the late seventeenth century and the middle of the eighteenth century, a Blitzkrieg, does not seem credible (Smith 1976: 430).

Dale Russell (1990) also exposes flaws in the common interpretation of the primary historical sources and suggests that the commonly held view on the matter is ill-informed and may be incorrect. Smith's discussion has the Churchill River drainage in Saskatchewan, north to Reindeer Lake, inhabited by the Rocky Cree of the "th" dialect and the Strongwoods Cree, or "y" dialect occupying northern Alberta in the aboriginal and early historical period (Smith 1976).

Subsequent jockeying for position in response to the fur trade and disease epidemics saw the movement of Chipewyan southward, putting the boundary between Cree and Chipewyan roughly in the area under discussion here. Jarvenpa (1980: 36-41) documents this movement southward and the adaptation

of the formerly tundra-forest transition adapted Chipewyan to the fur-rich boreal forest of the upper Churchill River as beginning in the late 1700s and crystallizing early in the nineteenth century. At this time, due to the competition for furs which the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) faced from Montreal traders, the HBC began to establish their trading posts inland. Between 1774 and 1800, major posts and outposts established in the region included Cumberland House on the Saskatchewan River, and Ile-a-la-Crosse, Green Lake, La Ronge, Frog Portage, Stanley House, Buffalo Lakes House, "Pine House", Pelican Narrows, Bedford House and South Reindeer House on the Churchill River (McConnell and Turner 1969: 17). Ile-a-la-Crosse was a strategic site for the fur trade and was occupied by independent traders as early as 1776, the Northwest Company from 1790 and the HBC from 1799 and served as a major headquarters for outposts scattered throughout the district (Rich 1938: 417). Two posts were established at Pinehouse in 1786 (Rich 1938: 417), and although McConnell and Turner indicate that one was a HBC post, Davies (1975: 34) states that the Northwest post at

Lac des Serpents was established as a wintering post in 1786 by William McGillivray on the south-east shore of Pinehouse Lake. It was occupied until approximately 1790.

Of the other, Davies simply lists it as established the same year by Roderic Mackenzie for Gregory, McLeod and Co. (Davies 1975: 32). Nothing is said of the fate of this post but presumably it was shortlived for no other record of it was uncovered.

The HBC outpost at Souris River, (formerly known as "Mouse River"), at the north end of Pinehouse Lake, opened in 1875 and continued in operation until the 1930s (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984: 155, 160). This post originally operated seasonally and Jarvenpa and Brumbach's archival research shows that in 1889-90, the customers at Souris River were all Chipewyan, with the exception of one Cree or Saulteaux. In 1894-95, seventeen out of forty-four customers had Cree or Métis names (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984: 162, 170). Some of these were "trippers, camp traders, and other servants and staff associated with the post" (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1984: 170). These would be the ancestors of many Pinehouse residents today. In addition to the HBC post at Souris River, oral history indicates that the Revillons Freres provided some competition there in the early part of this century.

Although the Chipewyan became adapted to the requirements of the fur trade, they never achieved the level of primacy of the economically dominant Cree in the area (Jarvenpa 1982: 285-286). According to Jarvenpa, Cree "[d]ominance in the trade system was also expressed in the rapid growth of a Métis Cree working class and in the prominence of the Cree language in mixed ethnic settings." And, "[i]t is likely that as the Métis Cree became integrated into the lower managerial ranks of the fur industry, that the Cree language was becoming a lingua franca between [the Cree and Chipewyan]" (Jarvenpa 1982: 286).

The influence of the fur trade along the Churchill River is well



documented by Jarvenpa (1976, 1979, 1980, 1982) and Jarvenpa and Brumbach (1984; 1985). It is a major part of the heritage of all the peoples of this area, and the people of Pinehouse are no exception. Indeed, they are largely descended from the Métis Cree working class to which Jarvenpa refers. The community of Pinehouse itself, however, is of recent development and largely the result of the establishment of a Roman Catholic Church at the village site. While the fur trade posts may have been a focal point, drawing people to Souris River at the north end of "Snake Lake" at regular intervals, it was not until the establishment of the church and the school in 1944 and 1948 respectively, that people settled at the village in significant numbers.

Christianity made its debut in northern Saskatchewan with the Oblate Fathers and the Anglicans in competition in the 1840s and was embraced by the Indians with little effort (Grant 1984: 100). John Webster Grant describes the competition for converts between the Roman Catholic, Anglican and Methodist faiths as one revolving simply upon who got there first (Grant 1984). Ile-a-la-Crosse saw the establishment of a Roman Catholic mission in 1842 (Jarvenpa 1980: 51) and the historic Anglican Church at Stanley Mission was built by the Reverend Robert Hunt with Indian labour in 1850 (Kemp 1956: 131-132).

The Christian devotion of the Indians in the early 1900s is well illustrated by the colourful memoirs of H.S.M. Kemp, who recalls the extremes his Indian companions faced to return to Stanley Mission in time for communion given by the visiting minister in approximately 1926 (Kemp 1956: 202-206). This

devotion is present today among the Cree Métis of Pinehouse, who are stolidly Roman Catholic. The Roman Catholic mission at Ile-a-la-Crosse was an important development for the area, and many residents of Pinehouse today were educated by the Grey Nuns at the mission school there. The mission school at Beauval has also been responsible for the education of some Pinehouse residents. Both were residential schools.

### 3.3 Pinehouse History

Oral history and HBC records indicate that the first inhabitants in the area of Pinehouse Lake were Dené, connected with the Patuanak Chipewyan. Souris River, at the north end of Pinehouse Lake, was the first established settlement. According to Jarvenpa and Brumbach's archival and archaeological research,

Artifactual material recovered indicated that these loci had been continuously occupied for nearly a century. Although Souris River [HBC post] served a predominantly Chipewyan clientele through the first decade of this century, after that point, for reasons not yet fully understood, Cree and Métis Cree from the Lac la Ronge area and elsewhere replaced the Chipewyan in that region. Indeed, a few Métis Cree families from the contemporary village of Pinehouse Lake presently maintain seasonal fishing and trapping camps in and near the historic Souris River site (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1985: 161).

Consultants for the Department of Northern Saskatchewan stated that the reason for the departure of the Chipewyan and their replacement by Cree Métis was a severe small pox epidemic during 1900 and 1901 which wiped out a large percentage of the people there and the Dené survivors left the area (Underwood

McLellan 1981: 7). Cree Métis families from Ile-a-la-Crosse and the La Ronge region subsequently moved in to the Souris River area. It seems likely that the early fur trade posts on "Snake Lake" may have encouraged the settlement of some families at the south end of the lake in the same way that Souris River developed as a settlement.

From 1911 to approximately 1944, Father Rossignol from Ile-a-la-Crosse visited Pinehouse Lake once a year and ministered to the six or seven families resident in the area. He was fetched by dog sled when required to perform marriages and so forth. Ile-a-la-Crosse was a favoured location for Pinehouse residents to spend Christmas, partly because of the presence of kinfolk, but also because of the presence of the Roman Catholic priest there. In September 1944, St. Dominic's Church was built at Pinehouse and this served to draw families from around the lake, the Souris River, the south end and elsewhere to settle in the immediate vicinity of the church, forming the present village. St. Dominic's church still stands and is still served by visiting priests from Beauval, and by local lay readers. The Souris River and the south end are still frequented by Pinehouse people having traplines and cabins there.

A school was built and ready for classes to begin in September 1948. This provided further and perhaps greater incentive for families to take up residence in Pinehouse, and as we shall see later, had a great impact on their former seasonally nomadic lifestyle and social organization. The village of Pinehouse Lake has grown steadily since then.

### 3.4 The Economy

#### 3.4.1 Historical Summary

The economy of the Churchill River region in historic times has been dominated by the fur trade. The Cree Indians of the Upper Churchill River became involved in the fur trade in the early 1700s and are recorded as regular visitors at York Factory by 1714 (Ray 1974: 53). Towards the end of that century, they witnessed the growing competition and proliferation of fur trade posts established in the vicinity by independent traders, the Northwest Company and eventually the HBC. In 1776, Thomas Frobisher established an independent post at Ile-a-la-Crosse and in 1779, a Northwest Company post was established there (Davies 1975: 31). This was an important post and became a headquarters for the district. It was not until twenty years later, in 1799, that the HBC also gained a significant foothold in the area with the opening of a post at Ile-a-la-Crosse (Rich 1938: 417). Competition was fierce until 1821 when the two companies merged. After that time, the Indians found themselves under a monopoly, without benefit of the competition, and dictated to in terms of prices and conservation measures (Ray 1974: 199-204).

    Holding a near monopoly, the Hudson's Bay Company was able to maintain high prices, pay low seasonal wages, and put the Indians under an obligation to it through the extension of credit (Ray 1984: 12).

The competitive period had taken its toll and chronic and widespread resource depletion caused hardships for trappers resulting in increased dependence on

the fur trade posts. Trapping under these conditions continued as the Indians adapted to the new commercial climate.

One major aspect of the relationship between the Indians and the traders was the credit-debt system. Ray (1984) has shown how, during the period of competition, debt was used to tie Indians to a particular post or fur trade company. But after 1821, debt became a burden to the HBC. By this time, however, it was a necessary element of the Indian economy and they resisted any effort to abandon it. Throughout the last century, trappers relied on traders to advance them their "grubstake" and their outfit of traps and equipment for the trapping season, and after a period of time spent trapping, would return to the trader, pay off the old debt with furs and incur a new one, only to return to the bush and continue the cycle.

During the monopoly period, the HBC employed Aboriginal people at its posts in various capacities. "Most of this labour was applied to transportation, production of food, production of construction materials, the manufacture of tools and buildings, and the production of fuel" (Ballantyne et al 1976: 44). Often this labour was seasonal. Late in the last century, the Métis were heavily involved in wage labouring for the various fur trade posts. Doug Elias (1990), has recently examined the role of wage labour in the economic history of the Churchill region and found that for a period of time, it was an extremely important source of income for many Aboriginal people.

Ballantyne et al (1976) examined wage labour income in the total

economy of the Indians at Rapid River post, Pelican Narrows and Lac La Ronge late in the last century. Since Rapid River was a district post, there was more work to be done there in overall operations than in the other two outposts. Consequently, the percentage of income derived from wage labour was much higher there than at either Lac La Ronge or Pelican Narrows. At Rapid River, in 1888-1889,

...wage labour - Mission labour, Hudson's Bay Co. labour and tripping - provided 66% of the total dollar income of the area. Trapping and the sale of produce accounted for only 30.2% of income and gratuities, relief, etc., for 3.9% (Ballantyne et al 1976: 41).

At Pelican Narrows in 1891-1892, because there was less work and because the labourers were paid a lower daily rate, the sale of labour only accounted for 13% of total income, with trapping and produce bringing in about 88%, and the situation at Lac La Ronge in 1896 was similar (Ballantyne et al 1976: 42). An additional factor in this discrepancy between the major post and the outposts was the comparative abundance of fur-bearing animals in the less populated areas of Pelican and La Ronge. Therefore, although there were generally opportunities for employment and wages in the North at this time, there were localized differences due to factors such as these.

It appears that the Métis occupied a special status in this era of the fur trade. The subarctic Métis have often been characterized

as an intermediate society that combines some Euro-Canadian and Indian behaviors, yet remains socially separated from both...[and] as an economically

transitional population, serving as a sort of rudimentary working class in the trade system and thereby acting as a linkage between Indian hunting bands and the European managerial class (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1985: 310).

Examining account books for the Ile-a-la-Crosse post in the HBC archives, Jarvenpa and Brumbach analyzed the patterns of transactions of Métis Cree (as they call them) customers and found a variety of individual strategies. In their 1985 paper, "Occupational Status, Ethnicity, and Ecology: Métis Cree Adaptations in a Canadian Trading Frontier," they present profiles of the economic behavior of three representative Métis Cree individuals in the 1890s. Their research suggests that

there was a continuum of Métis Cree adaptations based upon characteristics in work regimens and level of integration into the HBC hierarchy of trading positions. At one end of the continuum were occasional laborers whose intermittent service yielded no regular salary, food rations, housing, or other benefits....Near the other end of the continuum were full-time engaged servants...who received an annual wage, food rations, and housing....Between the two extremes...was a spectrum of occasional workers...whose relative specialization...was accompanied by some regularity in work schedules and a degree of compensation in food provisions (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1985: 324).

Despite the apparent greater reliance of the Métis on store food and rations, they all nevertheless relied considerably on domestic harvesting of resources and this increased as fur trade employment decreased and as the Métis population rose (Jarvenpa and Brumbach 1985: 325).

A number of developments occurring at this time, however, signalled the

beginning of the end of the HBC fur trading business. Ironically, one of those factors was a general increase in fur prices beginning in the mid-1880s and lasting, with a couple of short declines, until the end of World War II. Construction of two transcontinental railroads provided greater access to the Northwest by rail and, along with good fur prices, encouraged independent traders and other companies to offer competition to the HBC (Ray 1990a: 192-193). Incoming immigration tended to displace many Indians and Métis from employment and finally, "the reorganization and modernization of the Hudson's Bay Company's fur-trading operations reduced the range of employment that the firm offered to natives" (Ray 1990b: 200). Many posts closed down. Then, during the 1930s, the depression sent many non-Aboriginal men into the North to try their hand at trapping. The effect was greater pressure on resources and displacement of Aboriginal trappers. Furthermore, the company began to hand over more and more responsibility for the welfare of the Indians to the government. The decline of the HBC fur trade and the closing of many posts saw the decline in job opportunities and a greater reliance on trapping which, in resource-poor or heavily populated areas, resulted in grinding poverty for many trappers.

#### 3.4.2 Pinehouse Economic History

The old east-west axis of transportation and interaction which existed in northern Saskatchewan for about 200 years, as dictated by the Churchill river system, eventually gave way to a more north-south orientation, first with the



construction of the CPR railway, which lessened the importance of Churchill as a port, and then with the completion of the road to La Ronge in 1946 (Buckley *et al* 1963:8) or 1947 (Kemp 1956: 236). Formerly, Pinehouse was isolated and restricted to lake and air travel, with a winter road connecting it to Beauval recently. The all-weather road from La Ronge and Prince Albert was extended from the Besnard Lake turnoff to Pinehouse and Beauval in 1978 (see map 2). This opened an important link to the outside world and is well travelled today.

As a commercial venture, fishing in Pinehouse Lake was well established early on. About the turn of this century, a handful of men began fishing the lake and A.L. Karras remarked on the frozen fish arriving in Big River in 1934 from points widely scattered, including Snake Lake, "later named Pinehouse for the benefit of tourists" (Karras 1970: 192). A greater emphasis on fishing was brought about by a flagging fur market in the 1940s (Jarvenpa 1982: 286). Today, fishing is still important at Pinehouse; tourism, however, has not yet gained much of a foothold.

Since the end of World War II, the North has seen a period of unprecedented rapid expansion. Pinehouse shares in the history of northern Saskatchewan and the infusion of government services and controls which began in the 1940s. Social assistance, health and education as well as conservation and wildlife management programs were initiated and extended to the North (Buckley *et al* 1963: 32). Such programs had a tremendous impact on the lifestyle of the people but along with the "modest programs of assistance

for building and repairing homes" initiated by the Saskatchewan government in the 1960s, actually did little to enhance the quality of life experienced in the North (Kew 1963: 16).

Victor Valentine documented the problems of the Métis in Northern Saskatchewan in the early 1950s. According to him, hunting, fishing and trapping were still widely practised in the La Ronge region, in which he includes "Snake Lake." However, fur returns were dwindling at this time, with the average income per trapper not exceeding \$500 a year (Valentine 1955:11). Commercial fishing, however, was enjoying an increase and becoming a stable source of income, especially at Lac la Ronge, Buffalo Narrows and Snake Lake, according to Valentine (1955: 11). His study focuses more on the social, cultural and psychological characteristics of the Métis and less on the economics of the time. The major problems documented by him are those caused by the provincial government's Fur Block Conservation system and Fur Marketing Service established in 1944 and 1945 respectively (Valentine 1954: 91-95; 1955: 32-35) and discussed later in chapter 4.

Buckley et al carried out a more comprehensive social and economic survey of northern Saskatchewan for the Department of Natural Resources in the early 1960s. The study revealed that a social and economic "crisis" was looming in the North as a result of rapid population growth without a corresponding economic growth (Buckley et al 1963: 11). They found that, of necessity, the northern peoples were still heavily dependent upon hunting, trapping and

fishing, with trapping being the main industry and fishing a poor second (Buckley et al 1963: 18). Both yielded low returns, according to the study. Of course, this was before the age of bush harvest surveys and recognition and quantification of the importance of country food in the total income of families.

Wage employment was found to be scarce and of a seasonal nature, based on the resource industries including the forest industries, guiding, fish plants, mink ranching, power and the Dept. of Natural Resources (Buckley et al 1963: 19). The study found that, overwhelmingly, the people of northern Saskatchewan were living in poverty. A few exceptions reported included some successful commercial fishermen from Patuanak and Pinehouse and some fur trappers in the isolated interior, where fur blocks were still relatively uncrowded (Buckley et al 1963: 20). Underemployment and heavy and increasing dependence on welfare programs, including family allowance, old age pensions and social assistance, was documented in this study. Therein lay a danger, according to the authors:

For many trappers and fishermen, the day has already arrived when productive activity makes little economic sense - and sometimes, none at all. Earnings of \$200 to \$300 for a winter's work are well below what a family of four or five could get on Social Aid. If men are not already asking it, the question is bound to come: Why trap? (Buckley et al 1963: 25).

A series of related reports surveyed other effects of poverty, such as health, education, standard of living, and housing (Buckley et al, 1963; Buckley 1963; Kew 1963). Recommendations for improving conditions included

relinquishing greater control to the northerners in their own development. The authors examined co-operatives, local fur-block councils and fish marketing councils as they were just getting started in the North. Pinehouse saw the establishment of the co-op store only in 1970.

Using data from a 1976 housing survey, Bone and Green (1986) examined thirty-two northern Métis communities, including Pinehouse, to determine the effects on the wage economy caused by road accessibility. They were surprised to find similar wage income levels in both remote and accessible communities and concluded that,

there is no evidence that accessibility to the provincial highway system has made an appreciable improvement in the economic lot of the Métis people (Bone and Green 1986: 70).

Wage income here included that derived from trapping and fishing.

### 3.4.3 Recent Economy

In the late 1970s, the Pinehouse Planning Study (Underwood McLellan 1981) was undertaken under the direction of the Community Planning Branch of the then Department of Northern Saskatchewan. The study was intended to form the basis of a community development strategy. On the eve of completion of the road to La Ronge and Prince Albert, such a strategy was deemed urgent to forestall negative social and cultural effects the road might bring. The report briefly profiled the community of the late 1970s and made recommendations in areas such as local administration, land use, social, educational and economic development. Pinehouse's economy at this stage was dominated by

unemployment and underemployment, according to the consultants (Underwood McLellan 1981: 38). The leading source of employment in the village was commercial fishing, with between 10 and 16 licenses issued, but no report on the actual number employed. In total, the value of fish production at Pinehouse increased from \$48,000 to \$102,000 between 1973 and 1978 (Underwood McLellan 1981: 38). Trapping was ranked second in cash value, bringing in over \$26,000 in 1976-77 and almost \$46,000 in 1977-78, a marked increase in one year which was not explained by the authors (Underwood McLellan 1981: 41). My research indicates, however, that the year 1977-78 saw a dramatic rise in fur prices which may have accounted for the increase in total value. The number of trappers was not given by Underwood McLellan and I could find no reliable indication either.

Seasonal wage labour in the forestry industries was minimal at this time, but along with a few local jobs at the co-op store and other small-scale business ventures, offered the only other sources of wages (Underwood McLellan 1981: 44-58). Given the employment available and the overwhelmingly young population, the consultants arrive at a high dependency ratio, 7:1. For the total population of the village - 563 as of June 1979 - every person earning was supporting, on average, seven others.

Much space in the Pinehouse Planning Study is given to speculating on the amount of employment two proposed developments might provide for Pinehouse at that time. One was the Key Lake uranium mine which, according

to my informants, was disappointing to the local residents despite promises of compulsory hiring of Native northerners. It appears, however, to have made a significant contribution to the total income during 1983-84, being the largest single source of wages (not including commercial fishing) earned by the residents of Pinehouse that year (Pinehouse 1987b: 65). No data indicating its contribution in other years was retrieved.

The other proposed development was a limestone mine to be situated some 35 kilometers south of Pinehouse. This endeavour was opposed by the trappers of Pinehouse (Carriere 1981), and never came to fruition.

The planning study hoped to provide a comprehensive profile of the community and plan its future development. It included recommendations on improving trapping and making it a more intensive and profitable industry for fewer trappers. The study suffers from a lack of research and insight into the peoples' aspirations.

In response to the above study, with its shortcomings and "erroneous assumptions," Pinehouse initiated its own planning project in 1982 (Pinehouse 1987a: 7). To date, two technical reports have been completed: Bush Harvest Surveys (Pinehouse 1987a) and Contemporary Village Economy (Pinehouse 1987b). They reveal a great deal of valuable information regarding all sectors of the local economy during the year April 1983 to March 1984. The bush harvest surveys provided detailed and comprehensive data on the amounts and percentages of all resources harvested for domestic use. This includes fish, both

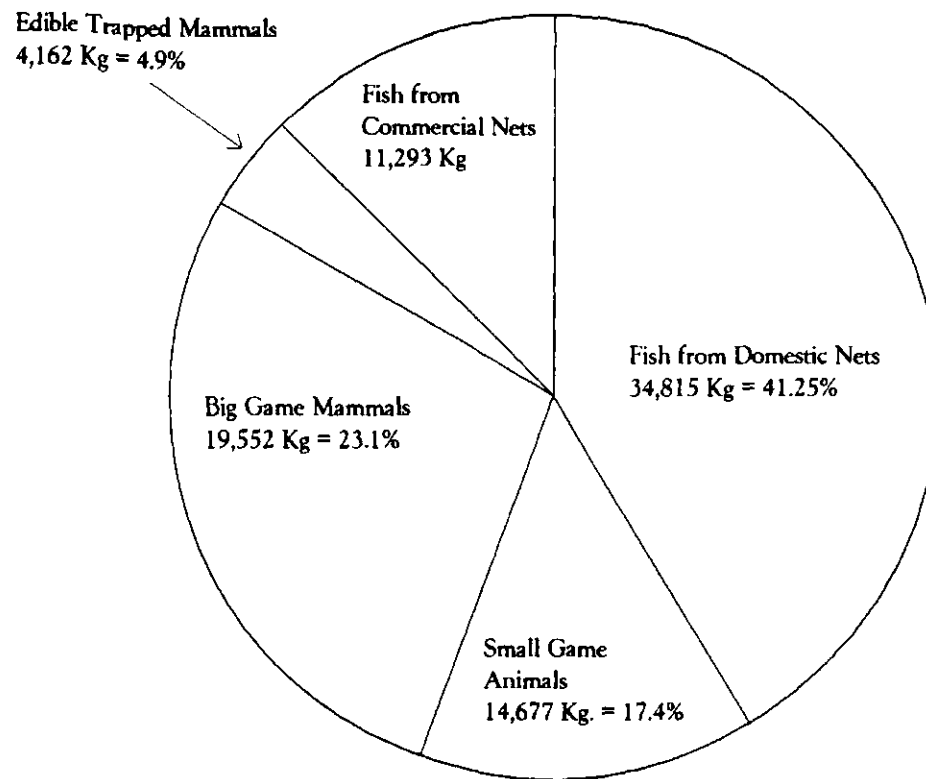
domestic and commercial fish used for domestic purposes, big game and small game animals, edible trapped animals, waterfowl and other birds, berries and fuel wood (Pinehouse 1987a: 2-3).

In all, 84,455 kilograms of edible meat and fish were harvested for consumption by the local residents that year (see Figure 1). This includes fish, game, birds and trapped animals. For the population estimated at 750 at that time, this harvest provided an average of 0.34 kg per capita per day. "That is, an average of 0.76 of a pound [0.34 kg] of fresh meat was available to each woman, man, and child every day of the year" (Pinehouse 1987a: 1). In addition, 3,033 kg of berries were harvested for local consumption, and 682.5 cords of fuelwood cut for use in the village alone (Pinehouse 1987a: 1).

By far, the greatest contribution of bush meat was domestic fish from nets, which comprised 34,815 kg or 41.2% of the total. If we add to the domestic fish that taken from commercial nets and used for domestic purposes (13.4%), then fish comprises 46,108 kg or 54.6% of the total harvest of bush meats. Big game animals (moose, bear, deer and caribou) contributed the next largest amount with 19,553 kg or 23.1% of the total. Small game, including waterfowl, hare, grouse and ptarmigan, comprised 14,677 kg or 17.5%. Edible trapped animals (beaver, muskrat and lynx) comprised 4,162 kg or 4.9% of the total bush meats harvested that year.

The second and complementary report provided a profile of the village economy in the year 1983-1984 (Pinehouse 1987b). This includes a dollar

**Figure 1.** One-Year (1983-84) Edible Meat and Fish Harvest.



(adapted from Pinehouse 1987a: 4).



valuation of the bush harvests and a comparison of the incomes derived from all sources divided into four categories. These are income-in-kind, which includes all bush meats, berries, fuelwood, and garden produce produced and consumed locally; bush commodities, including income derived from the sale of commercial fish, furs and wild rice; wage employment; and transfer payments. The contribution of each to the total gross income for Pinehouse that year is represented in Figure 2.

Of the four sectors, transfer payments of all types (except Unemployment Insurance which was not included) represented the largest source of gross income, at \$1,092,498, or 33.8% of the total gross income of Pinehouse residents that year. Income from all types of wage employment was \$1,008,791, or 31.1% of the total.

The bush commodities discussed above were valued at \$575,667, or 17.8% of the total. This sector breaks down as follows:

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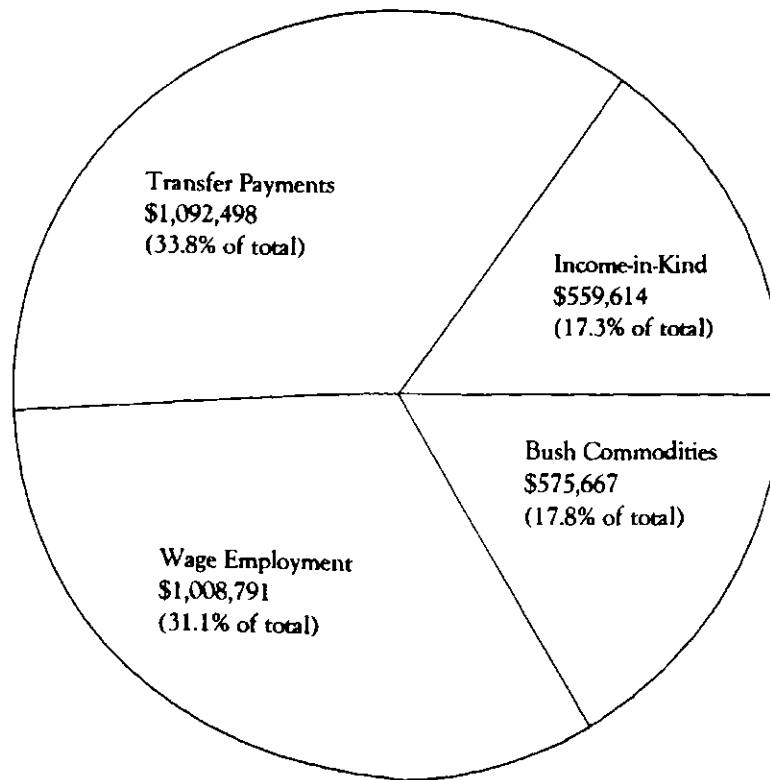
**Table 1.** Value of Bush Commodities in Pinehouse Harvest 1983-84.

	Total Value	% Contribution
Fish payments and fish subsidies	\$493,078	85.0%
Fur payments	\$ 44,231	7.68%
Rice payments	\$ 35,433	6.15%
Handicrafts	\$ 2,925	0.5%

(Pinehouse 1987b: 60-69).

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**Figure 2. Total Annual Gross Income (1983-84) Accruing to Pinehouse Residents from All Sectors.**



(Pinehouse 1987b: 70).

Fur payments, therefore, comprise 7.68% of the total income derived from bush commodities and a mere 1.36% of the total gross income from all sectors during 1983-1984. Income-in-kind comprises 17.3% or \$559,614, of which \$451,307 (80%) was the value of bush meats alone (Pinehouse 1987b: 60-69). Add together the two sectors most closely associated with the bush, Bush Commodities and Income-in-Kind, and the two comprise 35.1% of the total gross income that year. Bush economic activities, therefore, were still slightly more important to the total economy than either transfer payments (33.8%) or wage employment (31.1%).

Undoubtedly, this picture has changed over the years since then. Fur prices have fluctuated wildly in recent years and wild rice has seen a considerable increase in value. Transfer payments will have increased significantly, as well as income derived from wage employment. There has been success in landing lucrative contracts with SaskPower, clearing bush for new lines, and this has employed significant numbers of men from the village, albeit for short periods. Housing has also seen a marked increase recently and this employs a few men for periods of a few months at a time. Nevertheless, the Pinehouse Planning Project shows what previous studies did not perceive: that although the bush sector of the economy declined, its contribution was still vital to the overall economy of the village.

### 3.4.4 The Role of Trapping in the Total Economy

It is apparent that, since the 1940s, when fur prices began to lag and commercial fishing became prominent in Pinehouse, trapping has occupied a much less important position in the whole economy. Data from the Pinehouse Planning Project (Pinehouse 1987a and b) indicate that for the entire fur block the total value of the furs harvested in 1983-84 - a good year for fur prices - was \$44,231. This represented 7.68% of the total income derived from Bush Commodities (commercial furs, fish and rice). Fish payments and fish subsidies made up 85%, followed by furs at 7.68%, which narrowly surpassed rice.

The contribution of trapping is not represented only in furs. The meat from edible trapped animals was also calculated and assigned a dollar value. The replacement value given was \$3.25 per edible pound of meat. In 1983-84, the pounds procured and the value assigned were as follows:

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**Table 2.** Contribution of Edible Trapped Animals, 1983-84.

Species	Edible Pounds	Value
Beaver	4,973	\$16,162
Muskrat	3,938	\$12,799
Lynx	263	\$ 855
	-----	-----
Total	9,174	\$29,816

(Pinehouse 1987b: 55).

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The amount \$29,816 is only 4.8% of the total value of income-in-kind. Add the amount from the sale of furs, \$44,231, and the total income from trapping for the furblock during that year was \$74,047. This amount represents 2.28% of the total gross income of Pinchouse residents for the year. Furthermore, although similar economic data was not retrieved to make the same comparison, the total number of pelts and the total value of the pelts sold from the fur block has been declining in recent years. Table 3 shows the trend from 1970-71 to 1990-91 for Furblock N-11. The total value of furs from the Furblock in 1983-84 was \$44,231, an average year, compared to just \$7,072 in 1990-91. The total income from the sale of furs declined dramatically in recent years. Furthermore, while the population is rising, the total value of the income declines due to inflation. The right hand column shows what each year's fur catch would be worth in 1970 dollars. Without corresponding data regarding edible trapped animals, we must assume that trapping's contribution represents proportionately much less than it did in 1983-84. The recent statistics seem to uphold the widespread belief that trapping is a dying trade. Fur trapping, as an economic contribution, appears to be almost insignificant.

#### 3.4.5 The Annual Economic Cycle

During the last century trapping and associated activities were carried out by families travelling a seasonal route. Generally, they would trap all winter, with a break at Christmas and possibly a few trips to the posts for goods. In summer they would return to the posts where they would settle their debt and,

**Table 3.** Pelts Sold and Total Value of Pelts for Fur Block N-11, 1970-1991.

Year	Number of Pelts	Total Value of Pelts	Value in 1970 Dollars*
1970-71	5,881	14,131.24	14,131.24
1971-72	3660	14,759.54	14,343.13
1972-73	2314	19,885.99	18,457.05
1973-74	722	8,080.77	6,958.44
1974-75	2,101	9,804.54	7,617.56
1975-76	5,510	20,143.88	14,128.06
1976-77	2,800	26,229.82	17,118.41
1977-78	3,340	45,934.00	27,757.39
1978-79	4,648	58,168.20	32,257.85
1979-80	8,271	88,278.30	44,862.74
1980-81	8,180	77,463.00	35,734.42
1981-82	2,133	27,462.20	11,275.87
1982-83	3,150	37,316.00	13,820.74
1983-84	3,670	44,231.00	15,493.34
1984-85	2,309	36,570.25	12,269.24
1985-86	3,249	46,269.25	14,941.11
1986-87	-?-	42,112.00	13,054.72
1987-88	6,480	42,196.80	12,529.70
1988-89	2,926	21,385.00	6,104.37
1989-90	2,537	7,858.00	2,136.82
1990-91	1,461	7,072.00	1,834.58

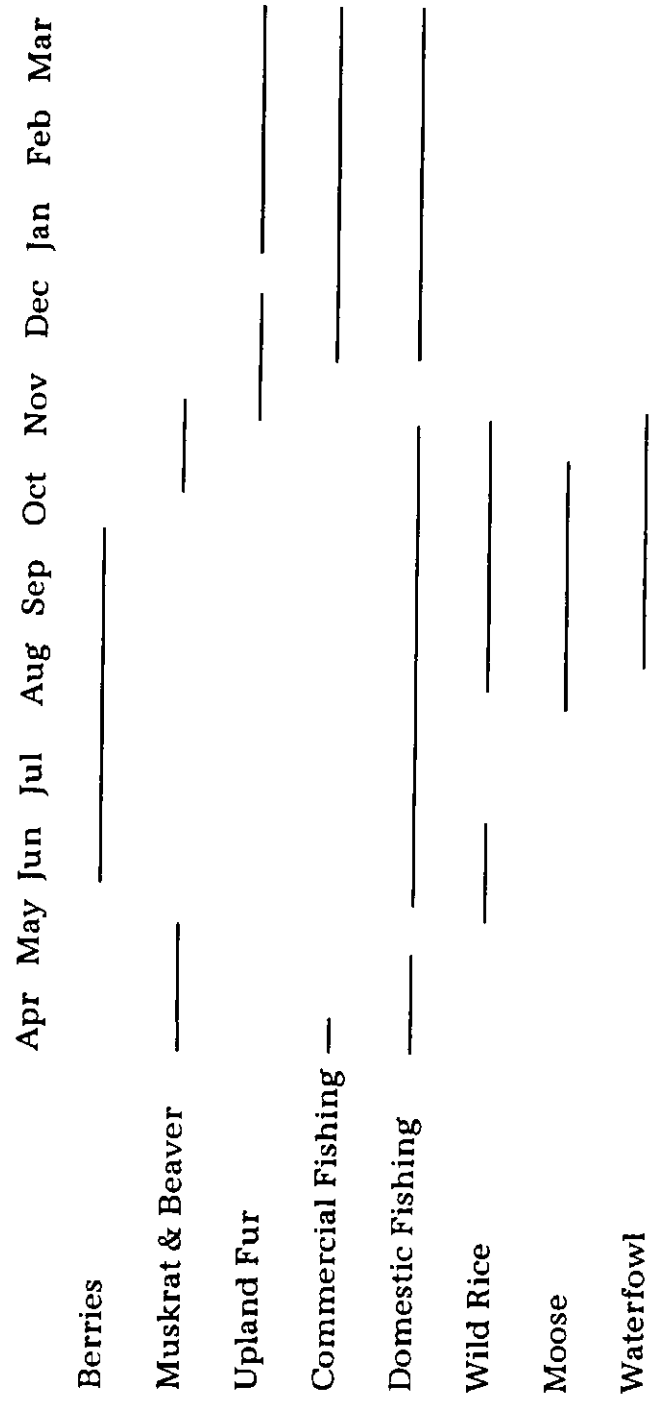
(Source: Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, Wildlife Branch, Prince Albert, Saskatchewan.

\* Consumer Price Index 1986 = \$1.00).

on the Churchill, engage in summer fishing. Such a cycle continued right up until the 1940s for most and still continues today for a handful of trappers. The annual cycle of bush activities in Pinehouse today is represented by Figure 3.

Trapping for furs is carried out from mid October right through until just before Christmas, where the principal targetted species are beaver and muskrat for the first two or three weeks before freeze-up. Then the upland furs are sought from early November until the end of March, with a break for Christmas. As spring arrives, muskrat and beaver are again the main species trapped. Today, commercial fishing only takes place in the winter, and many former trappers are now fishing from January to April, instead of trapping. They may still trap muskrats and beaver before and after the fishing season. Summer commercial fishing has been discontinued in Pinehouse Lake during the past few years, but domestic fishing still occupies men and women to a considerable extent during the summer. Those who harvest wild rice tend to their patches in the spring, seeding and cleaning out the old straw. This takes place in May and June after the ice has thawed. Summer is also the period where one is most likely to land short term employment in fire fighting, guiding, construction and other seasonal labour. Late summer sees men, women and children berry picking. Blueberries and cranberries are abundant in this area. Fall is the season for moose, particularly for the Métis who must buy a license to kill them during the moose season. Treaty Indians enjoy the right to kill a moose at any season.

**Figure 3. Annual Cycle of Bush Harvesting**





#### 4.0 TRAPPING AND OTHER BUSH ACTIVITIES - FACTORS OF CHANGE

##### 4.1 Introduction

Commercial trapping in the North has seen many changes over the generations since it began. It is likely that this century has seen the most dramatic changes and today, many trappers believe their trade is dying because very few in the younger generation take it up in any meaningful way. The reasons for this are varied, and are discussed here from the perspective of the theoretical approach outlined in chapter 2. Much of the discussion of change is illustrated by testimony from the trappers and Pinehouse village residents themselves.

Change was the underlying theme of all the interviews in Pinehouse. Although technological change was not the focus of this research, it is not surprising that for a formerly highly mobile population, the changes in transportation which have taken place over the last few decades would be mentioned most frequently. For one eighty year old woman who had travelled first with her father who worked for the HBC post at Dipper Lake, and then with her first and second husbands, both trappers:

the most important thing that she had seen was that motor pulling five boats at one time. And they didn't have to paddle [through interpreter].

Another woman, sixty-nine at the time, recalled the story her husband had told of the first plane that was seen by the people. According to her it was a bi-

plane with two seats which flew into the community where they were camped:

I guess they all went running out 'cause they heard this thing in the sky. They didn't know what it was. Some people were kind of scared. "Jesus Christ is coming!" one person said.

Snowmobiles, automobiles, winter and then all-weather roads revolutionized the transportation of the people and enhanced their economic activities. The changes were not always viewed with wholehearted acceptance and doubtless they resulted in changes in social organization; however these are not discussed here. A focus on change occurring in the social aspect of the mode of production is seen as appropriate for this study because it is precisely in the area of social relations concerning production that the greatest change to the culture has come thus far. With this in mind, we will first examine some aspects of the social relations of trapping in Pinehouse. Then the major changes and sources of change are discussed, including sedentization, schooling and socialization of children, government resource management and the removal of women from the trapping activities. Finally, a discussion of the economics of trapping within the economy of Pinehouse is presented.

#### 4.2 The Social Relations of Trapping

A comprehensive discussion of the social relations of trapping in any community would necessarily be long and complicated. The types of human relationships that can develop in the process of production and distribution of furs and their proceeds are many and varied. For example, such a discussion

may begin with the married couple, the nuclear family, the extended family, and proceed to relationships beyond the family, between and among heads of families, trappers, the local community and beyond to relationships between government agents and trappers, or between trappers and fur buyers and so on. Within the family, such an examination would look at dynamics such as division of labour by gender and age, authority relationships, and socialization of children. Among larger kinship networks and communities, one might examine the allocation of labour, means of production (including land) and produce, or the formation of trapping partnerships, leadership and other socio-economic relationships. The relations grow more complex when one considers the larger world with government resource managers and fur buyers with their different demands and expectations of the trapper and vice versa. This study examines only a few such dynamics of the social relations of trapping.

#### 4.2.1 Trapping Partners

The people of Pinehouse are descended largely from intermarriage with fur traders and the community itself is of relatively recent origin, therefore there exists no continuity, either in memory or historical records, stretching back in time to the pre-contact period. One cannot trace their roots back to the aboriginal system of social organization, or the regional band of Helm (1968) and Smith (1979: 309). While it seems likely that the local band (Smith 1979: 310) or hunting group (Rogers 1962; 1965: 266) composed of from two to four nuclear families based on kinship, existed amongst the Cree of the Churchill

River, the people of Pinehouse are somewhat different. Their recent ancestors were born in the fur trade of the late nineteenth century which had already seen significant socio-economic changes from the aboriginal or pre-contact situation. Some older residents of Pinehouse were born and raised in the social unit Slobodin called the "paired family" (Slobodin 1962: 43), formed by the joining of two nuclear families, usually the families of siblings. No memory of any larger units was uncovered in Pinehouse. According to Slobodin:

The relationship [between two families so paired] is marked by commensality, by sharing of proceeds or profits of economic activities, and by co-operative care for children and other dependants (Slobodin 1962: 43).

Informant 4\* travelled with his parents and siblings and the family of his mother's sister during the late 1930s and early 1940s. His father and mother's sister's husband were partners. Trapping was their main occupation and they supplemented the hunted and trapped food with fish. The distribution of the produce within the group is unknown, however it is strongly suspected, based on the more recent situation between equal trapping partners, that while all else may have been shared, the traps and furs were kept separate and the proceeds from the sale of furs would accrue to each family head. Informant 4 grew up with his first cousins, the two families moving everywhere together.

It is unknown how common this arrangement of paired families was before they settled in the village, but there is evidence of it in other families as

\* I will refer to informants throughout the following chapters only by number. Profiles of each are presented in the appendix.

well. It appears that many occupiers of the same trapping zones in the fur block are descended from families which once were paired. The paired families appear to be the earlier form of what today are called "trapping partners." Some trapping partners may simply be the male heads of the paired nuclear families after the removal of women and children from the traplines.

Trapping with a partner is very common in Pinehouse today. One informant stated that, in the past the Department of Resources required them to go with a partner when the lake ice was unstable. Through an interpreter, informant 4 said:

When his son doesn't go with him, he goes with a partner until the ice gets thick, then he goes alone. Till the danger part is [over]. — The Resources never used to allow them to go alone because it was so dangerous. They had to go with somebody. — A lot of times, like there was so many people that drowned, fall through the ice and all that, that was the reason that they wouldn't allow them to go alone. They had to go with a partner.

No other mention of such a requirement was made by other informants, but according to Wayne Runge, Director of Wildlife, Department of Parks and Renewable Resources, no such regulation ever existed. It may have been a strong suggestion interpreted as an order, however.

Jarvenpa has examined in depth the aspects of male mobility in the Chipewyan community of Patuanak (Jarvenpa 1976; 1980). He divided the types of all-male trapping teams which form in the absence of women into two categories, the symmetrical and the asymmetrical. Symmetrical are those

composed of two or more men of roughly the same age-grade and status. They can be brothers, brothers-in-law, cousins or just friends. Asymmetrical partnerships are those where the men vary in age and status, such as that which obtains between a man and his son, grandson, nephew or other apprentice. Both of these types of partnerships can be found in Pinehouse. Jarvenpa predicted, from the situation in Patuanak in the 1970s,

... that if the trapping economy remains viable for another generation there will be a decrease in the proportion of asymmetrical teams and a corresponding increase in symmetrical partnerships (1980: 148).

This, of course, would result from the fact that fewer young men are taking up trapping and when the men have no sons, nephews or grandsons who will accompany them, they then either trap alone or with a partner of the same age or status (Jarvenpa 1980: 148).

Both symmetrical and asymmetrical partnerships can be found in Pinehouse, however the majority of those interviewed who trapped, did so in asymmetrical partnerships. Only two habitually trapped alone and two more occasionally trapped alone or else in an asymmetrical arrangement. Only one indicated he usually trapped in a symmetrical partnership and one more in all three types of arrangements at different times. My data do not appear to indicate a predominance of symmetrical partnerships such as Jarvenpa anticipates. In fact, such equal partnerships appear to be quite rare and were discussed in the past tense, as something which used to occur in the old days.

Upon closer inspection, it was learned that some symmetrical partnerships, where men were of the same age-grade, for example, were not as equal as at first assumed. As one partner, perhaps because of luck, good choices or other economic endeavours, acquires more equipment, or the other finds he cannot afford to replace worn-out traps, the relationship becomes lopsided and gradually, the equality which existed before diminishes. In its place develops a relationship wherein one trapper is in a position to outright hire the other to trap his line. If the latter has the skills but inadequate or no equipment, or does not hold a license, he may trap for hire using the other's equipment, and the hirer will sell the furs under his license.

Such arrangements were discovered in Pinehouse. In two cases noted, the employer was himself busy with commercial fishing which takes place during trapping season in the winter. These agreements involved the exchange of some income-in-kind (in one case, a small boat) as well as cash when the furs were sold. In another case, the young man who had been hired missed out on payment by arriving in the village too late for a share of the fur proceeds. They had already been spent by the employer on Christmas goods. The young man simply called it "my mistake" and seemed undisturbed by the incident, although he did mention his success in trapping valuable furs that season.

The hiring of a hand to trap represents a further step away from the domestic mode of production. In these cases, the employer owns the means of production and controls the trapline. The employee simply traps for

payment and perhaps for the benefits that come with living on the land. This phenomenon demonstrates further "proletarianization" of the formerly independent trappers. Lacking the means of production, some are forced to sell their only means, their labour power. Any surplus they produce will be retained by the owners of the traps and equipment, the employers, thus further widening the difference in wealth and deepening the developing class differentiations. This is a good example of the intrusion of capitalism into the traditional mode of production, altering the social relations of the latter.

#### 4.2.2 Leadership

Traditional leadership, as described in Chapter 2, was difficult to discern in Pinehouse beyond the level of the household which was led by the male head. The influence of certain older, respected trappers was noted and is discussed in Chapter 5. Their influence appears to be based on long experience in the bush and on successful trapping, hunting and other endeavours. Influence might also be attributed to their relative ability to communicate with and liaise with the larger society on behalf of the people, as was the case with one of the older men who had lobbied effectively for the building of the road which ended the isolation of Pinehouse. Regarding another of these older men, it was remarked that he was the "head" of the zone in which he traps and had the persuasive power to permit or deny anyone else the privilege of trapping in that zone. Although seventy years old, he is still a very influential man who



always seems to be accompanied by young men.

Beyond the traditional forms of leadership, there appears to be a heavy participation of the adult population in electing the village mayor and council: in a recent election, over four hundred voters turned out from a voting population of approximately five hundred. Little is known about the election since it occurred after the field research period, however, it may be significant that the former mayor, a long-term white resident, was defeated in favour of a young Metis man from a prominent family in the community.

At this point it appears that two different kinds of leadership exist side by side in the community, the traditional and the elected leadership required by the larger society. The two articulate in much the same way as do the two modes of production. The criteria for attaining each largely differ, as do the spheres of influence and the resources that each controls. Ultimately, as the intrusion of the capitalist mode becomes greater and more pervasive, the elected mayor will assume greater importance and traditional leadership will give way.

#### 4.2.3 Land Tenure

The changing system of land tenure held by Aboriginal peoples has been discussed at length over the years beginning with Speck in 1915. Leacock (1954) shed new light on the subject and recent works, including Tanner (1981) and a special issue of *Anthropologica* (1986), devoted to the subject, show that the matter has not yet been settled conclusively. The prevailing system in the

last century and the early part of this century in this region was based on various types of extended families, travelling a seasonal route of some annual consistency. According to Jarvenpa, "because of the exigencies of the fur trade it appears that some family units became associated with rather specifically delimited trapping territories" (1980: 42). Some informants in Pinehouse, however, asserted there were no strict family hunting or trapping territories prior to the introduction of management zones in the 1940s. A typical response was: "My dad could trap all of northern Saskatchewan, and he probably did." It seems, however, that certain areas were associated with certain families, as some informants mentioned areas habitually used by their parents.

The system of fur blocks and zones set up by the provincial government in the 1940s somewhat respected the habitual land use of the people, resulting in three main types of fur blocks. In the far north there are large "open" fur blocks which are undivided and can be used by every licensed trapper in the fur block. This resulted from the wide-ranging travels of the caribou-hunting families and their resistance to smaller areas which would curtail movement. In the middle north there are fur blocks divided into zones held by groups of families, within which are the informal but recognized traplines held by individuals. In the southern, forest-fringe area there are individual registered traplines. That is, each fur block is essentially an individual trapline, held by one person (Runge 1991: personal communication).

Jarvenpa states that, unlike the Chipewyan who showed resistance to

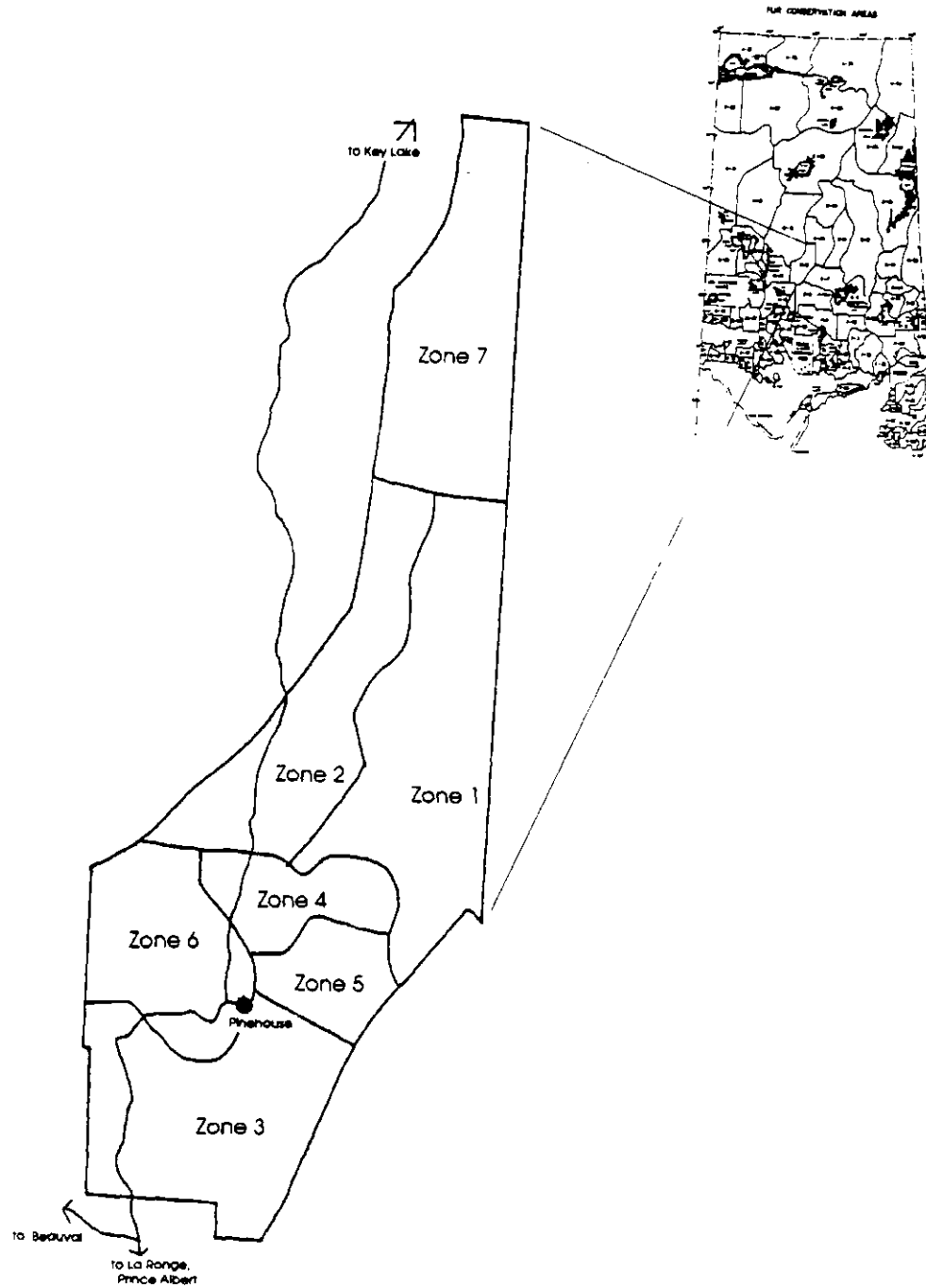
delimited trapping areas which curtailed their movement,

the predominantly Cree trappers in the Ile a la Crosse area immediately to the south of the Patuanak fur block have accepted zoning divisions created recently by the Department of Natural Resources and show more enthusiasm for the individual registered trapline system (Jarvenpa 1980: 43).

In Pinehouse, the fur block and the system of zones within the fur block seem quite well accepted today (see map 3, chapter 3). Of the seven zones in fur block N-11, encompassing Pinehouse (see map 4), the zone farthest from the village was occupied by the fewest number of trappers in 1990. Zone 7 had only three members. The distance from the village would require a greater amount of capital equipment and outlay for transportation to trap this zone. Zone 5, the smallest zone, had only four members and this is attributed to the small size of the zone. The remainder each had from ten to sixteen members. The close proximity to the village and the relative abundance of natural resources were cited as factors in the popularity of these zones. It was learned that the father of informant 4 had trapped in zone 4 before the zones were demarcated. Informant 4 himself was assigned to zone 7, however, when his father died, he transferred to zone 4 and took over his father's trapline. He still had the right to trap in zone 7, but due to age, he elected the closer zone. His son also traps in zone 4.

Informant 4 remembered when he used to charter a plane to take him and his outfit out to zone 7 for the trapping season. It took an hour to fly there, and four days to walk back for supplies. Today, the road to Key Lake passes the

**Map 4. Furblock N-11 Showing Zones.**



Not to Scale

(adapted from Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, Wildlife Branch, "Fur Conservation Areas" Map).

length of zone 7 and would facilitate travel to the trapline. It is still an unpopular zone, however, as the only three members are young or latecomers to the village. Another possible reason for this zone's unpopularity is that there has been some dispute over the assignment of this zone to Pinehouse. People from Patuanak have been known to use it and it is possible that part of this zone was traditionally used by Patuanak Chipewyan.

Individual traplines within the zones are informally handed down, usually from father to son. When his father dies or retires, a trapper may take over his father's trapline and his son may take over his. Inheritance generally follows in the male line, although a daughter's son may also may stand to inherit a trapline. Most trappers interviewed in Pinehouse, however, had at least one son who held a trapper's license and who would take over the trapper's trapline. Of those who did not, such as informant 7, it is likely that one of his daughter's sons would inherit.

Given the small number of young men taking up trapping, one would not suspect there to be significant pressure on the resources. The amount of land and resources available within the fur block is, of course, limited and therefore the number of trappers licensed in the fur block is regulated by the provincial government's department of Parks and Renewable Resources, upon recommendation of the fur block council. A possible problem for the young men in this regard was revealed by the remarks of a 28 year old who stated:

Well it's hard to get in fishing and trapping, too, you know. They won't let you in. That's the biggest

problem, too. Yeah. The old people won't let you in. There's only a limit of fifteen fishermen in Pinehouse and that's the limit....And until they die - that's the only way to get in....There's the different zones and you gotta be let in first before you can trap. Let's just say you look at a certain zone, you gotta get permission from all the trappers in that zone. If they don't let you in, you can't trap. Lucky my dad bought me the license. Let's just say if I wanted to trap now and my dad wasn't there, I'd probably never get in. And let's just say, the young trapper that knows how to trap probably better than I do, he won't get in because he won't talk. He'll just stand in the corner, and even if he wants to, he probably won't get in.

Just how important this difficulty is in discouraging young trappers was not ascertained. It appears, however, that this young man's statements have more relevance to fishing than to trapping. A cursory examination of the minutes of Fur Block Members' annual meetings in recent years suggests that anyone who applied for membership in Fur Block N-11 was admitted. It would be recognized by the membership, however, that not everyone would immediately take up trapping as a full-time occupation. It is suspected, by the relative youth of the trappers in zone 7, that it is easier to get permission to trap that zone if so desired. It would require longer absences from the village to trap the more remote zone, however, a condition not typically regarded with enthusiasm by the young men (and discussed later in this chapter).

#### 4.2.4 The Family

Up until the current generation of young adults, many aspects of family life remained similar to that described for the early contact situation. Those in

Pinehouse aged 60 and over, although they may have sporadically attended school, were brought up in the domestic mode of production wherein the family was the basic economic unit. Division of labour was based on gender, with men carrying out the hunting and trapping, and women preparing the pelts, the food, gathering and carrying the domestic duties, including the responsibilities of rearing young children. As a young boy, a son would accompany his father, learning the trade by observing and assisting. As he learned he was given more and more responsibility, until the father sent him out alone to check his traps. By the time the boy was sixteen, if his training had gone relatively uninterrupted, he would be ready to start his own trapline, near that of his father's. Until he was married, however, he was required to give his furs to his father, the head of the household of which he was still a part, and who still supported him. He may still have shared a cabin on the trapline with his father, even after he was married, especially if his wife and children remained in the village. He may also have built his own, however, on his adjacent trapline and began to train his own sons.

The duties of the men included hunting, trapping and fishing. In addition, they were required by necessity to manufacture many of the tools and equipment that they needed to carry out these tasks. Paddles, boats and snowshoe frames were among the items they made, and anything that required work with wood. This included the building and maintenance of cabins and the furnishing of a fuelwood supply. Women, on the other hand, besides

processing all the animals and furs that the men brought home, including moose hides, were required to do all the sewing and netting needed. This includes the manufacture and maintenance of all clothing, fishnets, and stringing snowshoes. The roles were not strictly divided and men learned the domestic skills required during trips away from home while women also did some trapping and hunting near home. Both men and women set and lifted fish nets. With the changes brought about in the last few decades and increasing sedentization of women and children in the villages, many changes have occurred to the domestic mode of production.

#### 4.3 The Decline of Trapping

The trappers of Pinehouse all agree that their numbers are dwindling and trapping is seen to be dying out. Simply examining the numbers of trappers over the years is misleading (Table 4). The number of active trappers does not appear to diminish drastically, but rather appears to fluctuate over time and decline gradually. However, when the number of active trappers is compared to the overall growing village population, the concern is apparently given substance. Table 4 shows the numbers of active trappers and the percentages they comprise of the overall village population over a number of years since 1956. Some years are missing because of a lack of records. The population statistics are derived from the Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan Covered Population reports and it is suspected they undercount the actual numbers.



**Table 4.** Percentage of Active Trappers in Pinehouse Village Population

Year	Population	Active Trappers	%
1956-57	—	63	—
1958-59	—	59	—
1959-60	—	59	—
1963-64	—	48	—
1964-65	394	50	12.7
1965-66	411	49	11.9
1966-67	438	51	11.6
1967-68	458	47	10.2
1968-69	442	40	9
1969-70	471	39	8.2
1970-71	453	37	8.1
1971-72	509	31	6
1972-73	488	31	6.3
1973-74	508	24	4.7
1974-75	530	26	4.9
1979-80	594	36	6
1980-81	—	30	—
1981-82	648	29	4.4
1983-84	706	24	3.3
1984-85	719	30	4.1
1985-86	736	36	4.8
1986-87	721	—	—
1987-88	742	24	3.2
1988-89	742	30	4
1989-90	735	21	2.8

(Sources: Saskatchewan Hospital Services Plan Covered Population Reports; Department of Parks and Renewable Resources Reports).

Pinehouse Village Office records indicate a population of over 800 residents in 1986, whereas the Hospital Services Covered Population is given as 736 for that year. The Village also estimates 1,000 residents in 1990, when the figure used here is 735. Note also that the numbers given for trappers are only those who sold fur. This number does not include all the members of the fur block, and it does not indicate how many of these bought licenses.

The Department of Parks and Renewable Resources distinguishes between three classes of trappers: members of the fur block, licensed trappers, and active trappers or those who actually sold fur. According to Wayne Runge, Director of Wildlife for the Department, if there were 3,000 members in northern Saskatchewan, approximately 2,500 of these (83%) would buy licenses, and of these, 1,800 (72% of the 2,500; 60% of the 3,000) would actually sell fur.

It is believed that the statistics in Table 4 reliably illustrate the trend observed by informants in Pinehouse. One can see from this table that the number of individuals considered active trappers in the total village population declined steadily during the period given to one-third the 1956-57 high. In other words, the number of individuals who actually sold fur in the Furblock N-11 declined 66% from 1956 to 1990.

The fluctuation in the numbers of trappers must be attributed to variables such as the price of furs. Participation is greatest when the prices for furs are comparatively good. Animal populations are not a factor these days because of good management. Many of the trappers interviewed insisted that there are still

plenty of fur-bearing animals to support more trappers. The overall decrease must be seen in light of the overall increase in the community's population. Today there is a larger number of young men than previously, but comparatively fewer are taking up trapping. It is understood by the trappers that the reasons for the decline are initiated outside the community and beyond the control of the trappers. What follows is a discussion of the factors of change in an historical context and incorporating the substantiating comments of the trappers where possible.

#### 4.3.1 Sedentization

The term "sedentization" refers to the process of gradual nucleation and consolidation of settlement in a particular locale. The process began in the subarctic with the introduction of fur trading posts which soon became foci of activity. Especially during the summer months, the trading posts would attract Indians from the surrounding areas to camp in the vicinity to carry out trading and visiting. Gradually a collection of more permanent log cabins replaced the summer tent communities (see Waldram 1987), and eventually villages became consolidated with the establishment of schools, churches and medical clinics.

All over the North, settled communities have arisen in response to various factors. Formerly seasonally nomadic families have experienced increasing removal from the bush and sedentization in small villages over the past seventy years. H.S.M. Kemp, a white trader, has recorded his experiences in parts of the North, especially Stanley Mission, during the 1920s (1956). His account is

both informative and fascinating, providing a vivid picture of conditions and lifeways of the Indians and Metis he dealt with. In the 1920s, the community of Stanley Mission was still only a summer camping place where, come fall, families packed up their tents and left the trading post for their scattered winter trapping grounds. There they would be visited periodically by various competing traders, or they would make occasional trips to visit the trader, returning to Stanley to camp for the summer (Kemp 1956). Jarvenpa describes a similar situation for the people of Patuanak (1980: 48-57). The permanent settlements along the Churchill at Patuanak, Dipper Lake, Primeau Lake and Knee Lake developed in this manner (Jarvenpa 1980: 49). The settlement at Souris River, from which the people of Pinehouse eventually moved, was another such site, coalescing as a result of the presence of fur trade posts and because of good summer fishing on Pinehouse Lake.

Access to the posts, churches, clinics and schools are powerful incentives for settling in villages, but beginning in the 1940s, additional factors entered in the form of government assistance programs and government resource management programs. The latter will be discussed later in this chapter. Of the former, family allowance and social assistance or "welfare" are the most significant in terms of sedentization. These represent regular monthly or bi-monthly payments which, in order to be received, require the presence of the recipient in the village, near the post office or band office to collect the cheques and cash them. Besides this logistical factor, VanStone found that the

availability of the transfer income "reduces the reliance on income derived from trapping," which means that trappers need spend less time in the bush seeking furs and can spend more time in the village (VanStone 1963: 163). Furthermore, the transfer payment income is reliable, whereas the fur yields and fur prices are not.

Interestingly, Sharp indicates a different scenario, discussed later in this chapter, where welfare and wage labour actually assist the Chipewyans in a northern Saskatchewan village to continue to trap by providing the income required to purchase their outfits and supplies (Sharp 1975). This apparent contradiction is not explored here.

Many of the social and economic effects of sedentization in the North are beyond the scope of this work and other authors have dealt with them elsewhere (see Waldram 1987). However, some of the effects on trapping are pertinent. Sedentization, in keeping the men in the villages more often or for longer periods, has the effect of reducing the range that a trapper will travel to exploit the fur resources. The actual territory exploited shrinks and trappers must intensify their efforts closer to home. As such, the territory surrounding the village may become trapped out or depleted of fur resources, discouraging trappers from going out at all. Increasing nucleation of the people in a particular locale, therefore, becomes somewhat of a vicious circle. It reduces the range travelled by trappers, reduces the efficiency of trapping by reducing the amount of time a trapper spends out on the trapline and also reduces the

number of trappers because fewer find it worthwhile (VanStone 1963).

Sedentization continues today with the withdrawal of men and women from the bush, spending longer periods of time in the village. Many factors, including government programmes of health and social welfare, played a part in encouraging sedentization in the North, but by far, the compulsory education of children has had the most serious ramifications.

#### 4.3.2 Schooling

The Roman Catholic mission had established a school at Ile-a-la-Crosse as early as 1873 (Jarvenpa 1980: 53), however, attendance was quite poor. "A pattern of seasonal separation of children from families was initiated" during the 1920s, with sporadic attendance (Jarvenpa 1980: 53). During the 1940s, attendance became compulsory and the payment of family allowances was made conditional upon the children's school attendance (Buckley et al 1963: 32). This served as a strong incentive to send children to school. Nevertheless, during the 1940s, only about half of the Metis children in northern Saskatchewan were actually attending school (Buckley et al 1963: 31). Over the years, the number increased although the success rate was not spectacular. Children tended to leave school early. Many of the people at Pinehouse attended school at Ile-a-la-Crosse, spending many months a year away from their parents. Their experiences are akin to those now surfacing across the country among former students of Indian residential schools; in a word, painful. One Pinehouse trapper, aged sixty, brought it up and then said,

I don't really want to talk about this - I talked about it in the church. It came out. The hurt came out after. I didn't even know it was there till I started speaking.

In 1948 the school was opened at Pinehouse and thereafter, the necessity of leaving children in the village to attend the school meant increasing pressure on the family as a unit of economic production. In many cases, children would stay with a grandparent, aunt or older, married sibling while attending school, and the parents with younger children continued their traditional round of activity. Not wishing to be absent from their children for too long, however, the parents would find themselves spending more and more time at the village. Some children were still sent to the residential schools in Ile-a-la-Crosse and Beauval, partly to avoid the necessity of an adult and productive member of the family having to stay in the village to keep the children during the trapping season, partly also due to a lack of housing in the village. The housing programs of the 1960s enabled more people to stay in the village and often, the mothers would keep the house with the children while the father carried on with trapping activities. Women and children became largely removed from the bush and settled in the village. "A pronounced trend of sedentism had been triggered, but male trappers would preserve aspects of mobility and the "bush life" associated with their recent heritage" (Jarvenpa 1980: 58). Again, the father would not want to be absent from both wife and children very long.

Informant 2, aged sixty-eight, commented on the necessity of having his wife remain in the village to keep the children in school in order that family

allowance payments were not suspended:

It used to be the wonderful times when we were able to go out with the man and the wife, like - just pull out. When the trapping time's open, just pull out. A man and his wife together, you know, so you got your love along. You know and then this has been taken away. Its taken away around twenty years ago, because you see, this schooling began very heavy, around [former Premier Allan] Blakeney's time. And everybody had to move to the village to get these kids going to school. And then they handicapped the peoples by giving them family allowance. And there again, if you take your kids out and go trapping, and go to your worthwhile life, they force you to town by bluffing you out by family allowances.

The same trapper, on another occasion, stressed:

Only thing, its completely lost: you cannot take out your family. That's lost. Completely lost. That's taken away. Because of school. Even one kid. You cannot leave that one kid. You see, my wife's been tied down.

Like other Aboriginal people elsewhere, the people of Pinehouse also have the custom of grandparents adopting and raising one or more of their grandchildren. In the same way that one's children would curtail one's movement, so do grandchildren necessitate remaining in the village. Cases were noted of the responsibility falling on the grandmother to remain in the village to keep her grandchildren in school. The effect is not only to keep women in the village, but also to keep those men who do not wish to leave their wives for too long, in the village more than would otherwise be the case.



### 4.3.3 Socialization of Children

Schooling successfully interrupted the traditional socialization and education of the children, and removed children and women from the trapline, which in turn often has the effect of keeping men in the village for longer or more frequent periods. It has prevented the new generation from learning the skills necessary to successfully take up trapping because if the child is in the village to attend school, he is necessarily not on the trapline learning the skills from his father. This fact along with the higher costs of living, is bringing an end to trapping as the North has known it for generations. What follows is a look at these issues from the eyes of the trappers themselves.

To enable the children to adequately learn to reproduce the lifestyle of their parents, it was emphasized that the children need to be taught early. If they do not learn the bush skills at an early age, they will not learn them adequately. Most of the trappers interviewed had grown up on the trapline before they began school and, through observation and the gradual assignment to them of more and more responsibility, had learned sufficient skills to go on their own by the age of sixteen. Many of them had received very sporadic formal education, if any at all. Some of them had returned to trapping after leaving school at an early age. Regarding the importance of early training, informant 5 stated:

I think they would [want to trap for a living], but you know, because we're moving into the town...the younger generation got caught in the society and they haven't had the trade of trapping, you know, so

they have a hard time fitting in....We would have to train our families, our kids...how to trap. And its a lot harder because, if you start them up when they're a small age then they become a real good trapper by the time they're fifteen or sixteen, eh? But this way, if they don't start 'til they're twenty, you know, you have a hell of a time training them.

Another trapper, informant 2, said:

Oh yeah, you got to teach them when they're young, while they can't handle too much at the time. At the time they can't handle much, you teach them then, and then they really pick it up for remembrance. Because you know at that time they're a little weak and they can't do it, eh? So they're always waiting for this power to be able to do it, so they just - once they keep it, go in their heads and then it stays there. So its easy for them to remember.

Not only is the teaching of traditional bush skills inhibited by school attendance, but some expressed dubious sentiment about the learning which does take place at the schools. It is perceived to create a generation gap.

Informant 3 was one such doubter:

...There's a difference between children and parents; they don't quite understand each other. You get frustrated when you put values on certain things and they put a value on others. Its really surprising sometimes. You might even say, "here, put gear oil on the motor," when just two minutes ago he said, "well, I'm grade twelve, I'm smarter than you are." So you tell him, "well, put gear oil on that motor." Then he looks at you and he says, "where?" (Laughter) Then if you start arguing, you'll say, "what the heck you went to school for?" You know, so the arguments start, eh?

Informant 11 expressed similar sentiment:

And half the time, when your kids are in schooling,

you don't know what they're being taught. I think, you know, maybe that's why they change so much, you know.

Informant 2 blames the education the people get, along with the noisy village life, as responsible for making people dull or dim-witted. He also stressed that what one learns for himself is better learned than what the teachers or books teach one. Nevertheless, he and other trappers indicated they felt education was needed in these changing times. Through an interpreter, informant 4 said:

When the kids went to school, now, he used to go [trapping] alone and his wife used to stay in town. [How did he feel about that?] ...He didn't really mind at that time because he wanted his kids to educate themselves so they can have that background... In those times then, they used to hear, as we're hearing today... you have to have that education and that future in order for you to have jobs and to work...

Informant 11 also said:

The older people, they started finding out that schooling is really important, too, I mean for the way of life nowadays. Instead of trapping, because trapping is going down the drain.

Young and old alike in Pinehouse recognize that the younger generation, both men and women, are not picking up the necessary skills to continue trapping.

Informant 11 stated:

I've seen a lot of old people - a lot of old stuff and I've seen a lot of young people. To compare them, its a lot of difference - what my grandmother used to do and what my grandchildren is doing today....Back in those days, we used to make anything [paddles, snowshoes]. Nowadays you can't even go around and ask somebody to make you a paddle. I mean its pretty hard to find guys now....Same thing with

moose hide. I don't think in this community - there's about a thousand people in this community - I don't think you'll ever see a young person to scrape the hair off the moosehide and the flesh, to make a hide.

Informant 4 said, when discussing the changes he has seen in his life through an interpreter:

And he says there's so many young people now but except the young people don't go out trapping. They don't know how to trap.

When asked if many young people were taking up trapping, informant 8 replied:

No. [They were ] never taught [how to trap] I guess. Their parents, I guess, drinking too much, you know. Never paid no attention - nobody ever showed them how.

And informant 9 agreed:

Yes, they don't learn [how to trap]. Nobody teach them. They don't have the chance, I guess.

This fact was acknowledged with a degree of frustration and bitterness by a young man, of twenty-eight, who holds a trapping license:

If they would say they want to keep trapping alive, fishing alive, well they better start showing the younger people how to do it. My dad never showed me how to skin a muskrat or a beaver and I still don't know how.

In Pinchouse, an effort was made to rectify this problem through the regional Community College. For each of three years in the mid 1980s, five boys were apprenticed to older trappers to learn the trade. The older man was paid to take two boys out and train them in the art of trapping. At the end of their program the boys were each provided with an outfit, consisting of some

traps and a skidoo, giving them the opportunity to begin trapping on their own. Not much was learned about the program. The community college has since become the Northlands Career College and I could find no records of the program in Pinehouse. Various reports in the village, however, indicate it was not very successful. Informant 14 stated:

When they pass their course they get a skidoo plus some traps. But they used them all up, here, just sell them, broke his skidoo driving around. It wasn't good. They know how to trap, but they don't want to go now....Maybe if it was higher [fur prices], everybody would go.

Others suggested the young men did not have the capital equipment required to begin trapping on a full time basis. Furthermore, the fur prices fell drastically around 1987 to 1989, about the time they would have completed their course. In all, fourteen boys completed the course, but economic and other factors prevented them from successfully starting trapping as yet.

Besides the learning of skills, other types of learning are also inhibited by living in the village. Rogers (1962: B15-B21) emphasizes that children learn the values and ideals of their culture from their parents during lectures by both father and mother on desired behavior. Such lectures and learning require the presence of the parent. Rogers also emphasizes the great authority of the father over his children and his wife. The presence of the father would seem to be very necessary for the adequate learning of the child. For the children of those men who still travel to the bush frequently or for long periods, the mother becomes the most important agent of socialization and teacher. Although she

will have support of her kin network, it may prove difficult, especially with adolescent and teenage children, to fulfill the role of both mother and father. Particularly where the father is a strong leader and the ultimate authority in the family, the void left by him can create discipline problems for the mother.

In Pinchouse village, as in virtually all Aboriginal communities, there is an abundance of teenagers. At night they patrol the village, walking around outside. For this age group, the socialization by peers is very important and today, with other influences impinging upon them through the radio and television and through travel outside, it can be very difficult to instill in them the values of the parents, particularly if one or both of the parents is absent. The difficulties here and the contrast to family life in the bush were remarked upon by informant 2:

Now on these two that I'm just talking about, by being loving, its a man and a wife...and it goes to your kids. It relates on your kids, you know. If your kids live in the city, they're always on the run. They're running, you know, maybe going to the dance, maybe going with the gang...They hear all bad things. You have a full love again with your family [in the bush]...There's nobody giving them bad thoughts. I don't know. There's many good people comes from the bush.

As a result of these problems in socializing children, with a few exceptions, the younger generation is unable to reproduce the lifestyle, social structure and social relations of former times. Furthermore, economic and certain structural factors work against those who may wish to try.

#### 4.3.4 Government Resource Management

While all government programs to come to the North have undoubtedly had a significant impact on the mode of production, the first ones to intrude were those established to manage fur and wildlife resources. Increasing population and pressure on those resources presaged government intervention.

In the 1930s, as a result of the Great Depression, the North saw a dramatic influx of white trappers who sought a new way to make a living. "[H]undreds of transient white bachelors from southern Canada [flooded] into the remote northern forests where they competed with the Indians for fur" (Jarvenpa 1980: 55). A.L. Karras has compiled his memoirs of the years he and his brother spent trapping near Cree Lake during this period. His book, North to Cree Lake (Karras 1970), is an interesting chronicle of this period from the perspective of one of these white trappers.

The increased pressure on fur resources brought about by the influx of trappers, along with a decline in beaver and subsequent strict management of that species, worked together to create hardships for trappers and a greater emphasis on commercial fishing in the late 1930s and early 1940s. This, in turn, encouraged families to spend more time in the settlements (Jarvenpa 1980: 57). Then in the 1940s, a number of measures introduced by the provincial government also assisted this process. Foremost is the Northern Fur Conservation Program initiated in 1944. The North was divided into Fur Conservation Blocks within which the resident trappers could control who was

allowed to trap therein. The fur blocks were established in association with the local communities and, as the boundaries are fixed, this meant an end or curtailment to the nomadic behavior which existed previously (Valentine 1954: 93). It also meant increased pressure on the resources of the delimited area, especially with the corresponding increase in northern Aboriginal population which was observed during this period. In many cases, the fur blocks became overcrowded, necessitating the withdrawal of men from trapping and an increased involvement in commercial fishing or other wage employment. Today the fur blocks are still controlled by the provincial government with input from local councils to regulate the number of trappers.

The provincial government's Fur Marketing Service is another example of a good intention with unexpected effects. In 1945, this provincial crown corporation was established to collectively market furs and thereby ensure trappers got a fair price for their furs. At the same time it was made compulsory that beaver and muskrat pelts be sold only through the Service, enabling management of these dwindling species. The system ensured better prices for trappers' furs, but had the effect of cutting off their credit. The HBC and other traders, since they would not be receiving the muskrat and beaver pelts, and since there was no guarantee they would receive the other furs, would no longer risk giving trappers much credit. Valentine (1954; 1955) documents the problems the Metis had with this system:

When the trapping season comes the Metis trapper may get no more than \$15 or \$20 credit from the



Hudson's Bay Company or a private trader. This enables him to go on the trap-line with his family for about one week, rather than the whole season. After that time he must return because of short supplies, with whatever fur he may have obtained, sell it to the Fur Marketing Service, get enough supplies to last another week or so, and then go back to the trap-line (Valentine 1954: 92).

At the end of the season the trapper must camp near the post office and wait, possibly for two months, for the final cheque to arrive (Valentine 1954: 92). The Fur Marketing Service, therefore, required trappers to attend to the village more frequently and for longer periods. Valentine suggests that these and other programs were initiated by the government, not only to improve conditions for the Metis, "but at the same time to wean them from their nomadic hunting and collecting existence" (1954: 90). He describes the resistance with which the Metis met these measures because they "have seen them as threats to their entire customary mode of living" (Valentine 1954: 90).

The compulsory selling of beaver and muskrat through the Service was discontinued in 1952 and the Fur Marketing Service itself was suddenly closed by the province in 1982 (Reid 1984: 224), leaving trappers again at the mercy of independent buyers. "And fur buyer, I don't know what kind of a market he would have, but I'm sure if he could get your fur for free, he would be very happy to," one Pinehouse trapper said. Another maintained that an honest fur buyer could not be found which, along with other testimony, suggests that trappers feel they cannot trust the fur buyers to give them honest prices and often feel cheated by them. This sentiment is simply part of the

overwhelmingly prevalent feeling that the outside world, be it government or the larger economy, or large social movements such as the animal rights lobby, has powerful influence over the lives of the trappers of Pinehouse. Several times informants mentioned that they felt that trappers had no rights, or that their rights were impossible to protect against external interests. They felt vulnerable and powerless to effect or control change.

#### 4.4 Removal of Women from the Bush

##### 4.4.1 Effect on Domestic Production

The subject of removal of women from the trapline was examined primarily in relation to the effect on trapping. A very few old couples remain at their trapline almost year round. Generally, however, the women, whether widowed or with dependent children or grandchildren, must remain in the village for much of the year while the men travel back and forth. Most of the trappers, therefore, now do all the pelt preparation themselves while out on the trapline. One man, informant 1, whose children are grown and whose wife now accompanies him to the trapline quite regularly, still does all the pelts himself, except for beaver. His wife does the beaver because she is particularly skilled at it, he said. Today, some trappers will hire older women to fix their pelts, sometimes in exchange for money, sometimes in exchange for the meat from the edible trapped animals. The ability of a man to fix his own pelts, however, was admired and was mentioned as a quality of a respected trapper.

Pelt preparation has become accepted as a man's task, as evidenced also by the remarks of the young man above who complained that his father had not taught him those skills. Few young women have a need to learn these skills and therefore, as a group, the women are losing them. Their role in the traditional mode of production is therefore rapidly declining. In fact, the role of women is changing significantly as the mode of production undergoes change. Many of the wage-earning positions available in the village are filled by women doing clerical work, child care, and janitorial work.

#### 4.4.2 Effect on Men's Mobility

In the absence of women, the trapping units today are composed of men either alone or organized in teams or partnerships, as discussed above. A greater effect of removal of women, however, was in keeping the men, particularly the young men, closer to the village themselves. Valentine found in his 1955 study that:

A man is always lonely for his family when separated from them, even when he is young. Many men refuse to go "outside" for work because of this loneliness....The theory that the men miss their families because they are afraid that their wives are cheating on them, is only partially true. More to the point is the fact that, in Indian and Metis society, there is no place for the single or unmarried person and, to an extent, a man becomes a man or at least makes a step in that direction, when he marries. The same holds true for women (Valentine 1955: 17).

In Pinehouse, informant 2, who had trained a number of young men to trap over the years, told the researcher:

The easiest thing to persuade a person that I know [of], when you're training him for something, is women, girls, love. A love easily takes you away from the things that you-[are trying to do].

When asked about this matter, informant 16, a young man of 28, responded:

That's definitely true. I don't know of any [young] woman going out in the trapline. I can understand that too, because I was young, and once you fell in love you don't want to leave and go out fishing for a month. That's just the way it is.

This same young man and others discussed how many people like to "trap from town."

Yeah. Trap, fishing and be out in the bush, like be out in the cabins. Stay out a couple nights or on weekends. You won't find that anymore. No. Well, at least, I find that the younger kids are, like partying, staying, you can't - I can't even get my own friends to go out hunting if I want to stay overnight. They want to make sure to come back that same day.

The preponderance of members in the trapping zones closest to the village may also attest to this trend. Because the men do not want to be separated from their loved ones for long periods, they do not leave the village for very long and they therefore do not want to travel too far from the village.

Besides the annual trapping, summer commercial fishing at Pinehouse and wild rice harvesting have both seen a similar change in the removal of women and children from production. Both operations used to be based in a large camp where the men and their families would stay for the duration. Summer commercial fishing was discontinued approximately three years ago in order to preserve fish resources. In some families, domestic fishing still functions as it

used to, drawing the entire family out of town to camp. Many men do fish from town, however, bringing their catch home for their wives to process and smoke.

Wild rice harvesting was formerly a family affair when it required many workers plying the patches in small canoes, harvesting the rice by hand. Mechanization has reduced the number employed by each harvester to three within the last few years. And these men rarely take their families out. Of the nine wild rice harvesters in Pinehouse, all now use mechanical harvesters which they either own or borrow.

#### 4.5 The Economics of Trapping

There is no single reason for the decline in trapping amongst the people of Pinehouse. Schooling has taken its toll, and the younger men either lack the skills or equipment or are reluctant to leave the village to spend considerable amount of time at the trapline without their wives or girlfriends. Fewer men are therefore taking up trapping in a serious manner. A major factor in the decline of trappers, however, is the inability to attain sufficient returns to time and capital invested. The effects of the decline in the fur market combined with high inflation in the cost of living has made trapping less attractive to the younger generation than other types of wage labour and even welfare in some cases.

Fur prices have generally been in decline since the 1940s. Table 5

**Table 5.** Average Fur Prices for Some Common Furs for Six Years  
Between 1964 and 1990.

	1964 -65	1969 -70	1974 -75	1979 -80	1984 -85	1989 -90	1990 -91
Beaver	9.85	12.85 (10.75)*	11.80 (7.42)	31.28 (12.87)	23.71 (6.44)	15.00 (3.30)	13.00 (2.73)
Fox (Red)	6.57	8.55 (7.25)	30.24 (19.02)	65.57 (26.98)	33.73 (9.16)	11.50 (2.53)	9.00 (1.89)
Lynx	16.24	24.82 (20.76)	77.38 (48.68)	169.42 (69.71)	452.35 (122.87)	135.00 (29.72)	65.00 (13.65)
Muskrat	1.20	1.22 (1.02)	2.14 (1.35)	6.27 (2.58)	3.28 (.89)	1.35 (.30)	1.50 (.31)
Squirrel	.47	.28 (.23)	.64 (.40)	1.73 (.71)	.96 (.26)	.76 (.17)	.80 (.17)

\*Figures in brackets standardized to 1964 dollar, following Consumer Price Index (1986 = \$1.00).

(Saskatchewan Department of Natural Resources, 1965-1970; Saskatchewan Department of Tourism and Renewable Resources, 1974-1980; Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, 1984-1990).

presents a comparison of average prices for some common furs for six seasons spanning two and a half decades. The table shows that the prices for these furs were very high from approximately 1979 to 1985. As a result, production was also high, as shown in Figure 4, creating a surplus on the market. The prices then underwent a drastic drop from 1987 to 1989 due mainly to the surplus and to a lower demand for fur coats (Runge 1990: personal communication). Several trappers in Pinehouse fully expected and were rewarded to see a recovery of fur prices in 1990 but even a recovery to average prices of previous decades does not help when the prices of basic goods have become prohibitive. Figure 4 shows that the price recovery did not significantly affect production for 1990-91.

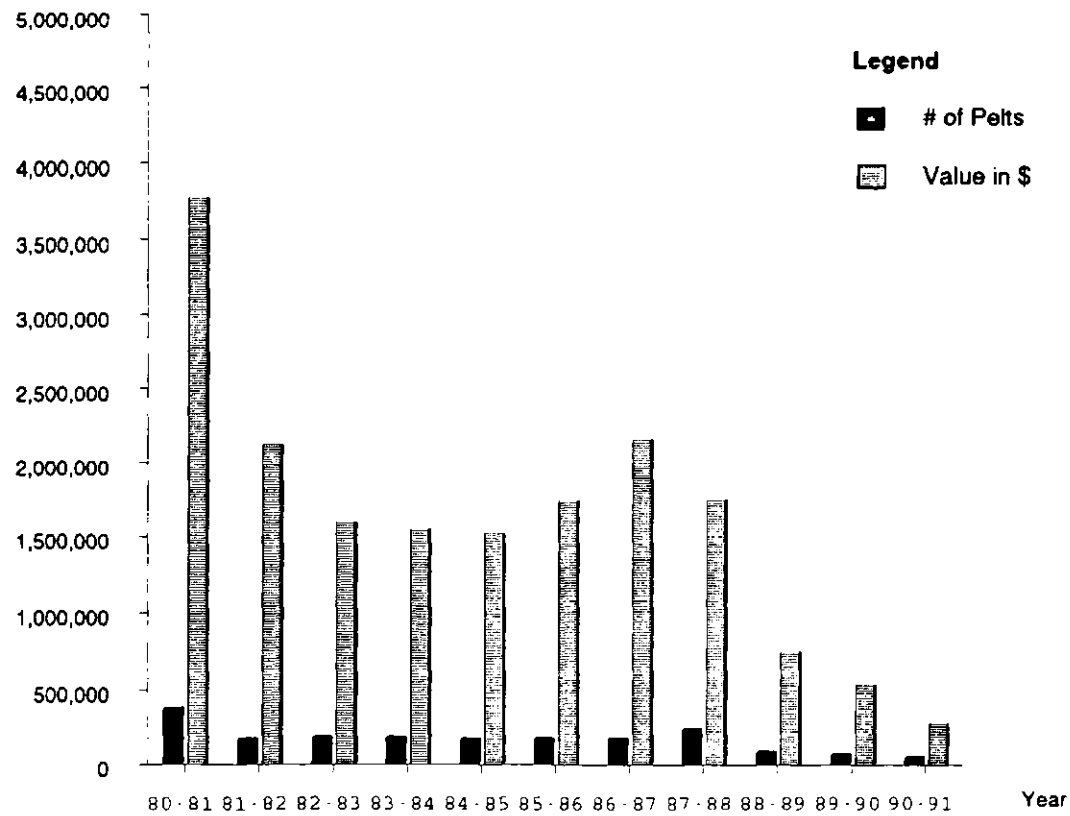
Furthermore, inflation in the cost of living means that overall, trappers are not doing as well financially as they once did. Everyone remarked on the rising costs of living in Pinehouse. Food, equipment, gas and oil, all the basic supplies had undergone severe increases in price in recent years. For instance, informant 9 stated:

Price keeps going up, the price at the store. Fifty dollars worth of things, you'll hardly eat.

Informant 3 said:

I think I would have to say that it is impossible to make a living out of [trapping]. Because, I think the main issue would be there is no value for fur now. That's the main reason for it. In other words, it costs too much to go and trap nowadays.

Informant 4, speaking through an interpreter of increased costs, said:

**Figure 4. Northern Fur Conservation Areas****Fur Production and Values 1980-1991**

(adapted from Saskatchewan Parks and Renewable Resources, Wildlife Branch, "Trends in Wild Fur Harvest in the Fur Conservation Areas).

Dollars standardized to 1980 dollar, following Consumer Price Index (1986 = \$1.00).



At that time they were talking about when they used to walk over here, the fur wasn't that high, but with the low cost of everything, they figured that it was, they were getting high price on their fur, because everything was so cheap. But then just recently, he's talking about a few years back, the prices were jacked up.

As a result, trapping is simply not viable for most men. There is no money in it and the cost of an outfit may well be more than a trapper can recoup with furs. The situation is particularly discouraging for young men and was the primary reason stated for the apparent failure of the community college trappers' training program.

#### 4.5.1 The Influence of Other Income on Trapping

As indicated earlier, wage employment brought in approximately one-third of the total gross income for residents of Pinehouse during the year April 1983 to March 1984. This does not include working for local commercial fishermen. It does include work both in the private sector, at mines, guiding, and in the public sector, including for the Village of Pinehouse (Pinehouse 1987b: 63-70). In his survey of "Changing Patterns of Indian Trapping in the Canadian Subarctic," VanStone states that for the Dene community of Snowdrift, NWT, the availability of wage labour, along with other factors such as those discussed above, led to the hasty abandonment of trapping (VanStone 1963: 160). That wage employment plays a role in affecting trapping at Pinehouse also seems clear from the testimony of many trappers. A few expressed that if they did not have a job right now, they would be out on the trapline. Others

mentioned that if they had a more lucrative opportunity, they would abandon trapping. Informant 13, a young man of thirty-five, angrily chastised those who wish to halt development, which may bring work opportunities, in order to preserve the bush activities:

These guys that are saying that, here's the comparison. They're older. They have their wild rice patches. They have their fishing license. And they have something, even if they didn't want mining, they didn't want the forestry, they didn't want that - but they have something to fall back to, like their wild rice and fishing. They don't have to worry. But what about me? I got fuck all. Grade six education, that's all I have. And capitalize on the opportunities that come along. And that's the majority of this community. I'd say about 85% of the town is like me. And the guys that are talking about living off the land and the way it was, are the 15% that have something to fall back on. And those people, I would strongly suggest that they open their eyes to other people in this community. They want to give us back to welfare? Nobody wants welfare. We'd like all to work. And if its available to us, we'll do it. We'll work. We're not going to sit on our asses like those guys are and live off the land. That's a dream they have and we'll never see it again.

Social assistance, although apparently negatively viewed by all who commented on it and described by one as "the biggest destructive force to come to northern Saskatchewan," is nevertheless a necessary evil. There are not enough jobs to go around. And even when there are, if they are not lucrative enough, some will prefer social assistance: "Welfare is getting too easy. It's much easier than having a five dollar an hour job." An additional advantage of welfare over wage labour with long working hours is that it allows a man to

continue with the bush activities and provides some funds with which to maintain an outfit.

Some scholars (Usher 1981; Sharp 1975; Bone 1988; Ballantyne et al 1976), have discussed the extent to which wage labour and transfer payments can actually contribute to greater involvement in bush activities.

Time being a critical and limited factor, it will be seen that wage employment which imposes an inflexible working schedule or provides inadequate income will, because of its rendering domestic hunting and fishing impossible, not be attractive. It follows that within certain limits, employment in such high-paying activities as oil and gas exploration can serve to promote rather than diminish participation in hunting, fishing and trapping (Usher 1981: 60).

Ballantyne et al, in the study Aski Puko, on the potential impact of proposed hydro dams on Indians of the Churchill River region, give evidence that while domestic production remained the most valuable sector of the total economy in the early 1970s, wage labour assisted:

Conventional wisdom which assumes a decrease in domestic food production where there is participation in wage labour is clearly contradicted by the evidence from the study. ... The actual and potential complementarity [sic] of wage labour and domestic production must become a primary determinant in economic planning... (Ballantyne et al 1976: 321).

In examining country food production in an area affected by the Norman Wells Pipeline construction in the early 1980s, Bone (1988) found that in spite of the intense intrusion into the lives of the Dene and Metis in the area, country food

production did not decline and in fact increased in some areas. This is attributed to a number of cultural and geographic factors, as well as the participation of the Aboriginal people in the wage labour offered.

In a 1975 paper entitled "Trapping and Welfare," Henry S. Sharp discussed the differing economic orientations of two subdivisions of Chipewyan in a northern Saskatchewan village. The first group was situated in the village, highly reliant on social assistance, and trapped only as a secondary economic endeavour. Indeed, if they trapped too much, their fur income would be deducted from their assistance. The second group travelled long distances with their families to trap, collected assistance only for the supplies needed for the trip and worked for wages during the summer to subsidize their trapping. The latter group consistently recorded a financial loss after every trapping season (Sharp 1975: 43). According to Sharp, members of the first group "subsist on welfare and game and use the cash proceeds of trapping for luxury items and gambling" (Sharp 1975: 36). For the second group, "not only do [they lose] money by trapping, they work during the summer to save up the money they will lose trapping. Without the welfare income for supplies, trapping would be impossible for them" (Sharp 1975: 43). Sharp concludes:

The single activity, trapping, thus functions in a dual manner for [these groups]. For the [first group] trapping is a luxury producing adaptation to the white man and his welfare. For the [second group] it is an expression of protest against the white man and his welfare; a protest that uses the white man's welfare and jobs to continue a traditional way of life (Sharp 1975: 44).

It appears, therefore, that other sources of income, if they do not require complete absence from the land, or cause a reduction in the resources, can assist the domestic production that is carried on by providing cash with which to purchase the necessary equipment and supplies. In Pinehouse, wage labour opportunities, other than in winter commercial fishing, are few. From time to time there are housing construction projects which employ some men from the village. There are a few janitorial and road maintenance jobs, but most of the full time occupations are filled by outsiders. Wage labour, in and of itself, therefore, does not necessarily lead to an abandonment of the bush activities. The increasing sedentization caused by schooling and other factors, along with the increasing economic non-viability of trapping, as a livelihood, are the major reasons for its decline.

## 5.0 TRAPPING - FACTORS OF PERSISTENCE

Since time immemorial, the Aboriginal economy in the North was based on harvesting the renewable resources of the land. After contact, adopted technology and involvement in commercial harvesting of fur changed certain aspects of the culture, but the ecological facts of harvesting these resources remained and so did the fundamental values, social structure and relations inherent in such a lifestyle. It was not until sedentization and attendance by children in the externally-imposed provincial educational system that the social relations inherent in the domestic mode of production which obtained previously experienced serious erosion and change. These changes, therefore, have occurred relatively recently. In Pinehouse, since the establishment of the school in 1948, trappers have seen their sons and daughters inculcated to a larger degree in the southern culture and become handicapped in their efforts to reproduce the lifestyle of their forebearers.

Southern influence and capitalist-sponsored developments have pushed the frontier further north in recent decades. Change inevitably accompanies such developments. And time and again, when threatened with imminent change to their ways of life, northern Aboriginal people have come forward to speak in support and protection of their lands and traditional livelihoods. Thomas Berger heard reams of testimony from northerners about the importance of preserving the land to support subsistence or bush harvesting activities (Berger 1977). Whether in response to proposed hydroelectric

projects, pipelines or other developments, Aboriginal northerners express a deep attachment to life on the land (Delancey 1985: 5-6). It is recognized that certain social relations are inherent in the bush life and attempts to maintain these and carry out the successful reproduction of the culture in the settlement context are hampered. Usher claims that,

It has been shown...that the loss of a part of the resource harvesting complex, even where there is a corresponding rise in wages and welfare, can result in the remaining traditional activities assuming an even more central role in serving these purposes (Usher 1981: 61).

In Pinehouse the younger generation may wistfully speak of the past as a good life, or take pride in the limited amount of bush activity they pursue, but most nevertheless must seek wage labour and other sources of income to support themselves and their families. We have seen that they have virtually no other choice. Many men in their middle age also seek wage labour due to the rising cost of living and the increasing inability to make significant income by trapping. These middle-aged men often have the skills such that they can choose to trap or engage in other work if necessary. It is generally the older men, 60 and over, who exhibit the greatest commitment to the bush way of life. Some men, both middle-aged and older, expressed their intent to continue trapping, no matter what occurs, until they die. The reasons given for this attachment to trapping vary from the down-to-earth practicalities of it, including monetary and food benefits and lack of alternatives, to the more abstract, metaphysical aspects of life on the land. This section will examine these

reasons for the attachment to the trapping lifestyle and the bush economy, and will largely let the trappers, young and old, speak for themselves on these issues.

### 5.1 Economic Benefits

We have seen that trapping today directly contributes relatively small amounts of money, in the form of furs and value of meat, to the overall income of the community of Pinchouse. However, depending on the variable price of furs and the costs an individual trapper has, which in turn depends largely on the distance from the village to his trapline, and notwithstanding the previous discussion on the economic difficulties trappers face, one may still make a little cash. During the study period, however, most trappers found they would spend more money on fuel and oil for their transportation than what they would make for their furs. Some trappers actually subsidized their fur trapping activities through other means, such as wage employment or transfer payment income.

According to one trapper, informant 11:

Can't depend on trapping anymore, because there's no price for fur. I like trapping. I've trapped since I was about eleven years old. And I'm 47 now and I'm still trapping. But right now, trapping - I went in the hole last fall and this spring, but I still went out there, you know, just to be out in the trapline. Because I like trapping.

Another trapper, informant 3, stated:

This year, I don't think anybody really went trapping....One guy did, my brother-in-law. And he



had a long ways to go from here, about thirty miles. And he said, "I went so far in the hole." So he had to give up immediately. So no one is going to trap to go in the hole. Its impossible. See, the only reason that he could trap is because he has another income, a pension.

The few who subsidized their trapping with other income demonstrate the strong attachment to trapping that many trappers feel. Most, however, simply ceased trapping when it appeared the return would not be great or sufficient to cover their costs.

As a commentary on the sad state of the fur market, informant 11 stated:

Its funny, you know, you trap now, but the meat is - you eat the muskrat as well, you know, the beaver, which is not bad, eh? And you can sell the fur. But lets put it this way now, [the meat is worth more] today than the hide. [A smoked rat is worth] more than a dollar and a half. And a muskrat - the hide is not even worth that much. Not now.

Another economic advantage was voiced by informant 11:

And besides, you can live off the land when you're trapping, eh? Because you're out there. You don't have to pay for anything when you're out in the trapline, if you have your own cabin. It doesn't cost you nothing for wood. It doesn't cost you nothing for water. You don't have to pay power. No phone bill. You don't have to use a truck or a car. But you still have to use a skidoo nowadays. I mean, you don't really have to if you don't want to.

Informant 5 was more explicit:

When you're out there, you don't have to depend on the stores that much, you know. Get a little flour and things like that and you survive. But here its costing you maybe seventy dollars a day to live with your family. But out there, it'll cost you maybe ten

dollars, at the most maybe fifteen.

Besides the fur returns, then, there is the possibility of saving money while living on the trapline.

## 5.2 Country Food

Trapping remains important also, "since it puts the trapper in the way of quantities of country provisions" (Cox 1988: 260-61). While carrying out trapping activities on their lines, trappers will hunt for food or set nets for fish to supplement the store-bought "grub" brought with them. The importance of country food during the year 1983-84 is illustrated by data from the Pinehouse Planning Project (Pinchouse 1987b: 42). The researchers compiled data from 137 harvesters in Pinehouse, examining their participation in various combinations of bush meat harvesting activities. They found that of the four discrete harvesting categories, (fish, small game, trapped mammals and big game), only three of the 137 harvesters fished to the exclusion of any other harvesting activity. Thirty of the 137 hunted small game to the exclusion of anything else. One hunted big game and nothing else, but none trapped edible mammals to the exclusion of other harvesting (Pinchouse 1987b: 42). None combined fishing and trapping to the exclusion of large and small game, and none combined large game and trapping to the exclusion of fishing and small game procurement. Eight trapped and hunted small game to the exclusion of big game and fish. Sixteen combined fish, small game and trapped mammals,

excluding large game. None combined fish, big game and trapping to the exclusion of small game. Five hunted small game, big game and trapped mammals to the exclusion of fish. Twenty seven participated in all four activities. The thing to note here is that procurement of small game seems to go hand in hand with trapping, as every one who trapped also hunted small game (hare, grouse, waterfowl). The other harvesting activities of those who trapped only non-edible fur-bearers were not recorded. Small game procurement appears to be an important hunting activity and it was recorded as accompanying all other harvesting activities to various degrees (Pinehouse 1987b: 42).

The importance of country food in the total income of trappers has been evaluated by scholars in recent years (Usher 1976; Ballantyne *et al* 1976; Pinehouse 1987a and b). Earlier we saw that during 1983-84, country food, when given a dollar valuation, contributed close to 17% of the total gross annual income of Pinehouse residents. This included fish, game and edible trapping animals, particularly muskrat and beaver. Lynx is also eaten but, at the time of this study, the species was under strict management to rebuild the population. We have already observed that the edible trapped animals contributed 4,162 kg or 4.9% of the total bush meats harvested in 1983-84 (Pinehouse 1987a: 1). Most people interviewed stated that even if the price for furs was negligible, the food these animals provided was still important.

Nutritionally, also, country food has been found to be superior to store-

bought food in some respects (Waldram 1985; Farmer and Neilson 1967; Schaefer 1971, 1977, 1978). Almost all the respondents interviewed during this research responded that the food was an important reason why they continued to trap and hunt. Some recognized its nutritional value, some its economic value. Some simply preferred it to store food.

Informant 11, a forty-seven year old man, stated:

Its pretty good to be out in the trapline. You eat lots of wild meat, eh? You know, actually you feel better when you eat from the bush, I think, instead of eating everything now what you eat from the store now. You don't know half the time what you're eating. Maybe, if you can afford a steak, maybe you know what you're eating. But most of us people here don't have no big income, so we depend on something cheaper than that. So when you start buying something cheaper, you're not going to get what you should eat.

Informant 9 said:

Well, I like living in the... out of town. That's one thing important to me. Especially in the summertime. Its warm. Berries will be growing, too. There's no way that you can get short of something [meaning food], out there in the wild.

A young man, informant 14, stated:

Muskrat was about a dollar fifty each. Usually seven dollars. Went down. Well, enough to pay for the gas anyway. Plus food. You eat those muskrats, you know, smoke them. They're good.

This same young trapper, after several minutes of reminiscing about times spent in the bush, was asked, "so you miss those days when you could go out and spend a lot of time out there? What are the reasons you miss it?" The answer

was "eating, I guess. Eat meat a lot. You don't have to buy any." He then stated that he preferred wild meat. Another trapper, informant 2, stated that store food makes people sick after a while and he himself has to get away and cannot spend too long in the village. Young and old, men and women prefer the wild foods.

At least one trapper, informant 3, fears that some day the wild food may become contaminated and inedible.

I'm sure you have heard of DDT, what it has done to the eggs? There was a report that one person that was doing - but he came back and he said to me, "you know James boy I'm really concerned about you guys." Then I asked him "why?" "Well, I seen you guys pick eggs on the Rock Island." We don't do that much now, but... So I asked "Why?" "Well," he said, "there's a test that we did that was done in northern Quebec that if you had one meal of those seagull eggs, the poison that's in those eggs is equivalent to 900 meals that you would have, from that one meal." And that really scared me.... Because, you know, what if somebody came and say, one of these days, "James you just got a moose license and you killed a moose. Well, here's a report. These uranium mines, 20 years after, from the twigs and leaves these moose eat, you know, if you're going to eat it, you might be able to eat one or two meals, but you can't eat the whole moose."

The food obtained from the bush, therefore, is a very important contribution, according to the people. Many of those who do not trap, nevertheless hunt regularly for food. One young informant stated that all the residents of Pinehouse depend to a considerable extent on wild meat.

Studies of Aboriginal people elsewhere have suggested that, particularly

for the elderly, wild meat is preferred sometimes for more than the nutritional and economic reasons (Nelson 1973: 112,130). According to Wenzel (1991) and Brody(1975), Inuit are not considered "real people" unless they partake in a variety of activities concerning the procurement of animals and unless they eat "real food" or wild meat (Brody 1975: 125; Wenzel 1991: 137, 139). A preference for wild meat has been observed by the writer amongst Cree elders from southern Saskatchewan, as well. At times it is explained in terms of the properties of the particular animal being consumed; at other times, just because the individual was raised that way and it is what he or she is accustomed to.

### 5.3 Health Advantages

It was observed by trappers in Pinehouse that the bush lifestyle is more conducive to good health than is life in the village. Informant 2 observed:

Its a great value on health. There's no doubt on that, you know. That's what I've found. Because I've visited about as much as five, six hundred trappers, maybe a thousand trappers, and I've studied many a trapper, and like, one that started before me,... I don't think there's a hell of a lot more than trapping about him. [He trapped all his life.] And I couldn't see that guy where he spent any time at all in the hospital. Not yet today. So that my studying of how many peoples going into the hospital by living in a healthy country, and their lives not being pushed around, they just stay away from sickness.

Informant 11 expressed it as follows:

I think its - people used to live for a long time before, eh? They used to live off the land. Even my dad is

over 70 now, he's still got good teeth. Nowadays you have to see a dentist, only about 7 year old. Because you spoil your teeth already. You spoil everything. You spoil your eyes. Everybody's wearing glasses nowadays. Before you didn't have to. Why is that? Nobody doesn't even know. ...And everybody is getting sugar diabetes nowadays, left and right, and even that they don't know what's causing that. Before there used to be none of that.

This is even taken to the extent of variable intelligence or sharp-mindedness. Whereas at times youngsters are derided for their lack of bush knowledge and skills, it might even be extended to their mental abilities. One trapper maintained that the education the children receive makes them dull or slow-witted. He finds, after observing this for about fifteen years, that the people who grew up in the bush and who still live there a lot, are sharp:

You go into even an old man's cabin, just say, "hey," and he's awake and says, "hello." Here, when you tell a child to pick up a dish, they don't hear you. You have to say their name, then tell them the name of the dish. Out there you just say it once and they jump.

It's the silence, according to this man, which is responsible. In the village it is too noisy.

According to some informants, the health benefits of the bush life are not unrelated to the freedom from noise and stress of the village which the trapper finds in the bush. The same trapper who said part of the reason for good health was that "their lives [are] not being pushed around," also stated,

There's many worries where I see the worry would cause you sickness. You know, maybe ulcers or whatever, whatever could affect you by being

worrying. And you stay away more from that trouble [in the bush], you know, and you're in the freedom.

One Pinehouse trapper's main reason for his preference of the bush was the noise:

Like, when I stay in town, not that I don't like my grandchildren [but] they make a lot of noise. My dad used to be that way. He used to be - doesn't really like noise. That's why I like the bush.

And this man spends a considerable amount of the year at his trapline, usually alone.

In his study of trappers from nearby Patuanak, Jarvenpa also observed that:

In certain situations the trapline or fishing camp becomes a social safety valve, a valuable outlet for individuals avoiding unpleasant or stressful relations with people in the family or larger community (Jarvenpa 1980: 81).

A good example of this in Pinehouse was the case of an elderly woman whose marriage was more or less arranged for her when she was 16. According to her, she frequently escaped unwanted married life by going alone to the bush for periods of time.

Following Savishinski (1971), Jarvenpa agrees that a highly mobile dispersion of population in such communities may actually operate as a tension management system. Several Pinehouse trappers specifically mentioned that one of the attractions of the bush was to avoid alcoholic behavior in the village.



Informant 5 stated:

Its a better life than you can have in town here. Its a very settled life. Your mind is settled, you know. You're not thinking, or worrying about your family everyday, all that. You take the pressure off you and you're healthier and everything. Its the healthiest environment there is. And we won't give up.

When pressed further on this point, the respondent expounded as follows:

We older people don't worry so much about how we're going to make our living, you know, once we're out there. It's more, we're happy. We don't have the pressure. We're relaxed. We enjoy life. We enjoy the bush. And we're with God, that's most important to us....You know, here is where we're worried, is in town. Where you get your next dollar, you know, to put food on the table....You know, every day I'm worried about my family getting drunk, so, that worries me. I never have a settled mind.

Jarvenpa discussed the fact that many men who drank heavily in the village abstained while in the bush and that the settlement seems to be the recognized, acceptable context for drinking:

[T]he almost universal abstinence from alcohol by men working in the bush...may have as much to do with economic viability as with ethics. A man incapacitated by liquor endangers his partners' lives as well as his own (Jarvenpa 1980: 71).

Furthermore, men in the village may find themselves with little to do and if unemployed and not carrying out the economic roles of trapper, fishermen or hunter in the bush, they may turn to alcohol more quickly.

According to Hugh Brody, many of the adverse conditions of rapid socio-

cultural change taking place amongst Indians of northeastern British Columbia are experienced more acutely in the settlement context. Returning to the bush or the trapline may represent a safety-valve or reprieve from these conditions:

The effects of colonial pressure, of the frontier, and of the very presence of the white man are escaped in the bush. All of the indicators - poor health, accidents and injuries, violence, and, of course, drunkenness - very rarely occur in the bush. That is why ... many ... hunters and trappers like to take their families to the bush when there are disruptive intrusions in the everyday life of the Reserve (Brody 1981: 253).

A self-help alcohol recovery program, initiated in the community, also builds on the peaceful, healing qualities of the bush. In its third summer of operation, "Recovery Lake" has led about 75 individuals through month-long dry-out and rehabilitation programs, camped out in the bush (McNab 1990). For these reasons, the bush and access to it, may take on greater importance to the people. While recognizing it as an oversimplification, Jarvenpa states that,

traplines and fishing camps are becoming less and less significant in regulating balances in food, labour and money and more and more concerned with obviating or rectifying inequities and conflicts in social relations (1980: 171).

This is illustrated for Jarvenpa especially by those trappers who spend more money to get to their traplines than they recoup from the sale of furs. Savishinski also discusses the greater sense of community as well as the freedom and flexibility inherent in bush living which, being valued by the people, are sought after, influencing survival strategy choice (Savishinski 1978: 21).

At Pinehouse, freedom and personal autonomy were expressed as attractions of the bush life, and at times seemed inextricably bound up with a lack of alternatives. One trapper described the concerns of a trapping friend from another community:

He's one of the top trappers from Deschambeault. He's a leader. Lots of tough lives he went through. He don't know what he would do, if you take him out of the trapline, you know. Where would he go? He can't have a job. He's too old. Nobody would appreciate his job. Only what he does himself he appreciates it very well, what he can do for himself. But to work for someone else, he might not do as good. And if he can't do it, is what he worries about, he wouldn't be able to do it. So it gives him a great worry.

Many of the older trappers at Pinehouse, and a couple of the middle-aged trappers, simply stated that they preferred the lifestyle "because I was raised that way." Or, in the words of the interpreter, "It's what he knows how to do, and he'll keep on doing it until he dies."

#### 5.4 Aesthetic Attractions

Most informants expressed aesthetic appreciation of the bush as influencing their preference for bush life. One trapper waxed eloquent on the changing seasons and natural beauty and the feelings one has for the land.

He said that the changes are like steps. That a trapper feels different all the time. In the Fall, when the leaves turn to yellow, red, brown, and the water changes colour and the water starts to get colder, each change changes your life. And then the moon gets bright and shines off the water, and when it

freezes, off the ice. And then, in the spring, when patches of black earth begin to show, and when the water goes on top of the ice and it shines again. Just like you get lighter, when you're going. And it changes your life, with each change. These are the things he missed when he was in Churchill. He thought of these things as the seasons changed (from author's field notes).

Many other villagers recognized the natural beauty of the surrounding country and the Lake. The comparative richness in resources of some areas seemed to add a dimension of fruitfulness to the descriptions which was a criteria for the appellation "God's country" used by some trappers.

## 5.5 Social Relations as Factors of Persistence

### 5.5.1 Trapping Partners

While the arrangement of trapping partners to carry out production has been discussed above with a focus on change, it should be noted that in Pinehouse there is an element of persistence revealed by the preponderance of assymetrical partnerships. As discussed earlier, assymetrical trapping partnerships are those in which the two partners are of unequal age-grades and status. A father-son or grandfather-grandson partnership is an example, wherein the elder teaches the younger the techniques involved in trapping, and where the elder usually owns the means of production and the younger provides his labour power to the production process. That most of the trappers interviewed trapped in assymetrical arrangements indicates some continuity from one generation to the next.

### 5.5.2 Bush Ethics

One trapper, informant 3, feels strongly about the morality inherent in the bush life, and believes it is a God-given occupation:

See, trapping was meant - I don't know if I can say this right, but trapping is a way that they're supposed to - it's the way they're supposed to live. ...That was the intention of God. Because in the trapline, you notice people. Probably in the trapline the first thing you would do is, "well, you're welcome. You want to eat? You want a place to stay?" Or- You go in the city now and knock on the door and the guy will say, "what the heck you want?" So that's a change. You kick the guy out. So we lost this, whatever you want to call it, sharing and caring for - see that's the lifestyle of the land, is caring and sharing, not only for the land but with human beings. ...It's a different way of living, eh?

This strong sharing ethic is an important rule of conduct and an important component of the social relations of the bush mode of production. It is still evident in many areas directly related to traditional resource harvesting. For example, it was learned that trappers often offer free assistance to one another, especially if a young man is attempting to begin trapping. An older, experienced trapper might offer to show him some techniques if it appears that he needs assistance. Sharing according to traditional protocol still governs the distribution of food to some degree, especially country food, however this aspect was not closely examined during the field research.

Related to the bush ethics are those rules of conduct regarding land tenure and trespass. Within the government-imposed zones and furblocks, discussed earlier, the traditional mode of land holding and inheritance still

exists. Handed down from father to son, individual traplines within the zones are commonly recognized and trespass is discouraged, not through the larger society's judicial system, but simply by indicating to the trespasser that he is infringing on another's territory. If a trapper finds another's traps on his trapline, he will simply hang the traps in a tree for the owner to find. Thus the trespasser will be made aware of his mistake and of the extent of the other's trapline and will move accordingly. The people are fully expected to follow these rules of conduct in the bush and in the (still) rare event that they did not, it is likely that the matter would be brought to the judicial authorities representing the larger society. It is recognized by informant 3 that the bush ethics are often abandoned when people become involved in another mode of production, for example, that which exists in urban centres. The code of ethics perceived to be held by the trappers is an aspect which sets them apart from others and helps define them as a distinct group with a separate identity.

### 5.5.3 Prestige

Persistence in the social relations of the bush mode is also evident in the status and prestige system of the community. Results were not as clear and conclusive as hoped, but like Savishinsky found among the 1960s Colville Lake Dené, in Pinehouse,

A positive evaluation of environmental involvement and the skills and endurance needed to meet its challenges was ... found among members of both the older and younger adult generations in the community (Savishinsky 1978: 10).

And Jarvenpa, among the Dené neighbouring Pinehouse, noted:

Patuanak men also take considerable pride in their trapping ability, and there is great concern about maintaining an image as a good trapper....There is little question that trapping has a positive image among the English River Chipewyan (1980: 151).

And it was found by Jarvenpa that even though commercial fishing brought greater returns for less work, trapping remained the more prestigious occupation (Jarvenpa 1980: 152). A similar observation was arrived at in Pinehouse during interviews with community members.

Prestige accrues to the individual by public recognition of a person's qualities or skills. Most often this was brought to the attention of the researcher through the words of others. Just identifying the target group of trappers to be interviewed was a lesson in the shared values and appraisals of individuals in Pinehouse. The researcher identified her target group first by acquiring a list of fur block members and then going through the list with a number of people to identify "good people to interview about trapping." That most people recommended individuals on the basis of their qualities rather than on their understanding of what the researcher was after, seemed likely when it was learned that many of those recommended did not speak English and required an interpreter. There was some discrepancy between the trappers recommended by the villagers and those recommended by the Department of Renewable Resources Conservation Officer. There was a high level of agreement among members of the community, young and old, as to who was

a "good trapper," or a "real trapper." A number of names came up again and again, agreed upon by all. Three individuals, highly recommended, were unavailable to the researcher precisely because of the qualities which recommended them: they were almost always in the bush. Most agreed that a "real" or "good" trapper was one who is always out there, come trapping season, no matter what the price for furs is. There also seemed a high level of agreement on those who spend a great deal of time on their traplines and rarely come to the village. When other characteristics which distinguish a good trapper were sought, responses were also similar. The following are examples.

Informant 9, aged fifty, had this to say:

Oh, well, I guess [a good] trapper is those that has an area to trap, and some traps to use and the material things you use in trapping, that likes to stay out, that's interested in wild area. Not like somebody's wanting to go out just one day and coming back, or trap from town. I don't like that myself....Somebody wants to trap he'll stay out there and dry up his own pelts, and bring home something to eat....They like to eat, all of us like to eat, like beaver, muskrat, all the others.

First and foremost, then, is required the land or the area, then the necessary equipment and finally the desire to trap. According to another, younger trapper, thirty-three year old informant 14, these things must be supplemented by knowledge and technique:

You gotta have a lot of traps. Know how to set them, know how to trap, know how to set snares. You gotta know the lake, you know, make sure you don't fall in the water. You gotta know what the weather, too, if its going to change, and what time



you should be heading home....Gotta remember where you set your traps. You know if you catch something, if you don't go and check it, two days afterward when you catch something, when it snows, you gotta know how to track it. Some of these guys are good at it....And then how to kill something if you catch it by- it might be dangerous sometimes....a lynx is dangerous if you catch it.

Most who responded spoke in terms of the skills that are required, and the ability to provide for their families. Jarvenpa found among the Chipewyans that earning power was not that important in determining personal worth:

A trapper of average ability who can provide for his family and share food and possessions with others is truly successful by community standards. He will have a reputation as a "good trapper" (1980: 166).

By inquiring of informants who they admired and why, the qualities of the respected individual were sought. A number of factors, however, prevented some from providing this information. Among them, difficulty comprehending the reasons for wanting such information, perhaps a fear of offending others by implied comparison, particularly when translation was required, and also avoidance of bragging were possibly the main reasons. Many times it was assumed that it was the qualities of a trapper that the researcher was inquiring after and the answers sometimes reflect this assumption. For instance, through an interpreter, fifty-three year old informant 6, shared his views:

He admires someone who doesn't drink, works every day, is a good trapper, builds everything for himself, like his house, boat and stuff. Does his own fur, helps others when help is needed.

This reflects the skills and the ethics that trappers should have.

In response to questioning, thirty-three year old informant 14 responded:

-like [so and so]? He likes to stay over there. He just comes here for a while, you know, already he's lonesome for the place, you know, the trapline. He keeps it clean all the time. Yeah, he likes staying over there all the time. Every trapping season he goes over there. Every Fall. He's there all the time, even at summertime. Right now, he left, he just left today. Over 60, now, 65, 66 years old. All alone.

Besides word of mouth recommendation, it was found in this study that a person's skills are recognized substantively in three other ways: 1) he gains a following; 2) he can incur debt; and 3) he may inherit traps or other material necessary to pursue trapping.

In the first instance,

Acknowledged expertise attracts, though perhaps only temporarily, what we may term a following of dependent persons. These persons will be welcomed as a principal source of prestige (Paine 1973: 308, emphasis original).

This observation about James Bay Cree is also upheld by some of the comments received in Pinehouse. For instance, Informant 9 stated:

Yeah, trapper is a respectable person. See, the hunter, if everybody goes to you when you kill something, especially moose. Or any other animal. [And when a] person asks you, something, if a younger person comes around my cabin, he asks me what he don't know. Many times young guys are looking at me when I'm fixing a pelt, or-[other tasks].

Another respondent, a woman aged sixty-nine, when it was remarked upon by the researcher that her husband was apparently well-respected,

responded that "he has four with him right now," referring to the fact that four young men had accompanied him on a trip to get a boat. This seemed to illustrate his high prestige since, even though he was an old man, approximately seventy, he still had followers who respected his skills and knowledge. Furthermore, this man was considered the "head" of the trapping zone he uses. "If any trapper wants to get in and [this man] says 'no', he can't." This status was attributed to the long period of time the man had trapped in that particular zone.

Another man remarked that his father was a well-respected man who had taught many young men to trap. This man had participated in the community college program, training young men. The traditional leadership and influence, therefore, as discussed earlier, is still present and exists simultaneously with that those forms introduced from outside.

Debt has been an important element in trapping since the early days of the Hudson's Bay Company. According to Valentine's 1955 study of the Métis of Northern Saskatchewan, it was still important:

The economic basis of the wildlife dependency is credit...Without credit, [the trapper-fisherman] cannot make a living... [And furthermore,] the role of credit is also bound up in the system of social prestige. The big hunter is a big man, good provider and a desirable husband. The amount of credit given to the hunter is a sign of his hunting ability. When he receives large sums from the white storekeeper, it becomes a matter of pride, for it indicates that even the white man recognizes how good a hunter a man is (Valentine 1955: 11).

Concerning debt, informant 2, aged sixty-eight, stated:

It took thirty years before the bank could get to know me. Now I can walk into the bank and sign my name in about two places and walk out with a pisspot full of money - and same with the store. I don't have to go to the manager anymore, if I want something, just go to the counter.

Others mentioned getting loans for equipment and vehicles. Without a significant revival in fur prices, however, it is unlikely that institutions will advance credit against fur returns today.

On the last substantive indication of prestige, it was taken as a matter of pride that one trapper was recognized as a "big bear trapper," in the words of his brother. He apparently had earned the recognition of others, including his elders, in this regard for he had inherited his father's bear traps as well as the bear traps of four other old men who had retired. These traps had subsequently been banned, however the trapper noted that there is more than one way to kill a bear and he did not seem disturbed by the banning.

That trapping is a prestigious occupation is reflected also by the fact that many of the young men, whether with benefit of a teacher or not, have attempted at one point or another, to take up trapping. One man told how, ten years earlier, at age twenty-five, he had bought seventy traps, built a cabin and commenced trapping on his own. It was not clear how long he trapped, but in the winter of 1985, when prices were good, he made \$3,300. At the time of this study, he was trapping just enough to keep his license. Another young man responded bitterly that his father had never taught him how to trap, but he

maintains a trapping license anyway, in the hopes of someday pursuing it further.

Almost all the young men carry out some bush activity, if not trapping, then hunting, fishing and gathering. In neighbouring Patuanak, according to Jarvenpa,

Community norms and values are such that it is desirable, if not honorable, for men to maintain active bush careers at a time when accelerating economic development is making settled, village life more attractive (Jarvenpa 1980: 170).

Such appeared to be the case at Pinehouse as well. These norms and values are also illustrated by the scorn and derision which a young man may encounter when he shows his ignorance of the skills and knowledge. Such is not unusual, according to one informant, and may discourage some young men from successful learning.

Following Savishinsky, it seems evident in Pinehouse that,

For many villagers, involvement in bush activities is a vital part of their own identity; it is a process of self-validation, a route to adulthood, and a link with the respected way of life of the "old-timers" (Savishinsky 1978: 11).

The link with and dependence upon the land may become more important as a source of identity and separateness from more urbanized and acculturated communities, as interaction with such communities increases. A young man spoke with pride of how much bush knowledge even the young children of Pinehouse possessed and how he intends to teach his children everything he

can. Many men spoke proudly of their sons who had learned the skills and who loved the bush. Some also spoke somewhat disparagingly of the younger generation who preferred to play games, drink, party and depend on welfare. Implicit in these discussions is the desire to maintain those social relations inherent in the bush mode of production. At times this desire was explicit when informants spoke about the benefits of bush life in the socialization of children and the morally superior code of ethics of the bush mode. The continued recognition of traditional leadership and prestige, continued use of country food with its attendant rules of distribution, and the perpetuation of knowledge and technique through asymmetrical trapping partnerships all attest to the persistence of the social relations of trapping. That change is coming to Pinehouse is clear from the previous chapter. It seems, however, that the people will maintain a certain amount of bush involvement as the economy allows and at times encourages it, and as there is still a desire to perpetuate the social relations of production involved in the bush mode of production.

## 6.0 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this thesis has been to examine certain aspects of change and persistence with regards to the bush economy, and specifically trapping, in Pinehouse Lake, Saskatchewan. While some trappers in northern Saskatchewan perceive that trapping is dying out, at the same time there are those who are committed to it as a lifestyle. It was my intent to present both views of trapping as much as possible from the trappers' points of view.

Following Tanner (1979), Asch (1979), Usher (1981) and Wolf (1982), this work focused on the mode of production which characterizes the bush economy, variously referred to as the "bush," "traditional," or "domestic" mode of production. In examining change, the mode of production approach was deemed the best tool to use to discuss important changes in the social relations involved in trapping. Such changes include the enforced attendance of children at school, removing them from the trapline and the bush mode; the removal of women from the trapline and the increasing presence of men in the villages. The impacts on trapping of the larger economy and of government programs are also viewed in this context. The underlying principle that change which occurs in the domestic mode of production is often effected by forces outside that mode, and in this time and place by increasing intrusions of the dominant mode of production, capitalism, is also borrowed from these authors. In particular, Tanner states:

The more thoroughgoing implications of a dominance model of the articulation between two

systems of production is that in all spheres the dominant society tends to impose its own conditions on the subordinate one, whether or not this is necessary to the continued functioning of the dominant one (Tanner 1979: 4).

As such, the subordinate, dependent, bush mode of production is vulnerable to changes and conditions imposed from without and the traditional harvesters are powerless to stop change and effectively defend their way of life.

### 6.1 The Findings

Trapping itself was viewed in the context of the entire mixed economy of the community of Pinehouse and it was found that its economic contribution was negligible and declining. Based on data collected for the Pinehouse Planning Project (Pinehouse 1987) in 1983-84, the contribution of trapping, including both fur income and edible trapped meat given a dollar value, only amounted to 2.28% of the total gross income of Pinehouse residents that year. My research shows that that contribution declined considerably by 1990-91.

The declining economic importance of trapping is certainly a major factor in discouraging trappers from going out to trap and in discouraging young men from becoming trappers. Most trappers in Pinehouse today will not bother to go out to trap if it appears they will not attain sufficient returns to cover the costs involved. Only a very few actually sustained a loss in order to carry out trapping for other reasons. As a result, the number of trappers in proportion to the population is steadily declining.



The social relations of production involved with trapping have also experienced change and are beginning to disappear with trapping. Change in this area was looked at in an historical context, with greater attention to major changes within the last fifty years. Certain dynamics of the social relations were examined. For example, relations between trappers are most evident in the trapping partnerships which exist today. In Pinehouse it was found that asymmetrical partnerships, of two men of different age-grades, are the most common. This represents continuity in two ways: the skills and the technology are still being handed down from one generation to the next; and, despite predictions that, with fewer young men becoming trappers, symmetrical partnerships would soon be the norm (Jarvenpa 1980: 148), this indicates to some degree a persistence of the social relations of production inherent in trapping.

An apparently recent development, however, is the hiring of one man by another to trap for payment. The employee will use the equipment and cabin of the employer and trap his line for him. Payment may be cash or in-kind or both. This is a significant departure from the former relations where both men, and indeed, all men had equal access to the means of production. Partners would trap together, sharing a cabin, supplies and meat, but keeping their fur catch separate. This new development represents an emerging "proletarianization" compatible with the intrusion of the capitalist mode.

Traditional leadership was examined in relation to trapping and hunting

and evidence indicates that the traditional patterns of respect and leadership still exist to some degree. Traditional harvesters with a great deal of success and experience were regarded with esteem and respect and wielded considerable influence.

The greatest change to land tenure resulted from the controls and regulations imposed on the trappers by government beginning primarily in the 1940s. The imposition of management zones had the effect of reducing and restricting the range of the formerly mobile hunters and trappers. In the memory of Pinehouse informants, their families habitually utilized certain general areas and the principle of patrilineal inheritance which existed then still obtains today. Sons generally inherit their fathers' traplines, but where a man has no sons, or no sons who wish to trap, a grandson may inherit.

The greatest changes in the social relations of production are evident in the family life. Within the last fifty years, the North has seen increasing sedentization of the population in centres around important foci such as post offices, stores, churches, schools and medical clinics. Such a demographic shift has had a tremendous impact on trapping and on the social organization of the people, especially on the families. While formerly trapping was a family-oriented activity, the compulsory attendance of children at school has succeeded in removing children from the trapline, interrupting and inhibiting traditional methods of socialization and education. In most families the women also settled in the village to keep the children in school. Thereafter, it was

primarily the father who maintained the trapline, although he, too, would spend longer and more frequent periods in the village, not wishing to be absent from his family for long. Among the many effects this trend had on trapping and the family, one of the most obvious is that the younger generation is not effectively learning the skills required to carry on trapping. The absence of the parents or just the father can also have an adverse effect on the transmission of traditional values and other knowledge from one generation to the next. The result is increased influence of peers, media, or the provincial education system on the youngsters.

Besides schools, other external influences encourage increasing sedentization in the villages. Early government resource management programs discouraged the bush industries and encouraged settling in the villages. Government transfer payments such as Family Allowance and Social Assistance have the dual effect of attracting people to the village to collect their cheques and of making trapping for income somewhat less necessary. For individuals committed to trapping and the bush life, wage labour income and transfer income may actually assist them to continue to trap. For many, however, this income obviates the need to risk a winter's cold labour on the capricious fur market.

Therefore, while for generations of involvement with the fur trade, the Cree Métis ancestors of Pinehouse residents successfully managed to combine production for external markets with production for domestic use, using a

single set of social relations for both, eventually the demands and conditions of the dominant society were brought to bear on trapping and erosion of the domestic mode of production began. The complex economic relations of the dominant society intruded further into their lives and today, because of the fur market and the general cost of living, for many, trapping is no longer a viable economic endeavour. Furthermore, what trapping remains is taking on the characteristics of the capitalist mode of production, much as Leacock predicted (Leacock 1954: 7) and with which Tanner took issue (Tanner 1979: 11). Once a family-centred economic activity with an even distribution of labour, trapping and fur processing activities now take place for hire. Those without the means of production are forced to sell their labour to those with the capital equipment to carry out trapping.

Recognizing this perhaps, some Pinehouse residents have come to attach even greater importance to the bush activities, actively seeking to enhance the traditional social relations and to instill skills, values and love of the land in their children. Many trappers in Pinehouse demonstrated continued attachment to trapping and the bush life by either their actions or their words. The strongest statement is made by those who continue to trap, covering a loss in this sector with income from another. For them, economic factors are neither the only nor the most important determinants of behaviour. The health benefits deriving from country food, hard work, and freedom from the stresses of village life are highly valued by many. For some, therefore, aspects of the bush mode of

production will be preserved for another generation. Many, however, will regretfully or unknowingly take the irreversible steps towards the dominant mode of production, leaving behind and in the past the ways of their forefathers.

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APPENDIX A

## APPENDIX A

The following is a list and short description of the seventeen male informants. The female informants are described in the text, chapter 1.

Informant 1. 70 year old trapper, married with grown sons. This man spent a good deal of the year on his trapline with his wife. He trapped with his sons or a partner, if his sons were not available. He currently has a young partner, in his 20s. He had at one time, pursued commercial fishing, but more recently worked for other commercial fishermen. He received a veteran's pension, which he used to supplement his trapping activities. He traps zone 1.

Informant 2. 68 year old trapper and fisherman. This man, one of my main informants, was a wealth of information. He had worked in a leadership capacity in the community and had travelled extensively, gaining a large knowledge of trappers from other areas. He is married with four grown children. He trained several boys to trap and fish, including his own two sons. He is a renowned bear hunter. He spends much of his time on his trapline, frequently returning home for a day or so to be with his wife, who stays in the village, and to attend church. He traps zone 3, alone or with a son.

Informant 3. This 60 year old trapper is more of a fisherman and a wild rice harvester these days. He is widowed and the father of several grown boys and a young adopted girl. He traps zone 3 with a partner, or more frequently now, employs others to trap his line for him.

Informant 4. This 59 year old trapper passed away since the field period. Except for some guiding and some work for fishermen, he trapped all his life and taught his only son the trade. He trapped zone 4, where his father had before him. He was originally given zone 7 when he started on his own, at age 16, but since his father died, he has trapped zone 4 and his son also traps in that zone. It is closer.

Informant 5. 54 year old, former mayor and reeve. Is still involved heavily in internal and external boards and is president of the Metis Society of Saskatchewan Local. He is married, with children. His external involvements, including that with regional trappers' associations, keeps him busy and travelling, and therefore he does not spend much time on the trapline, which is in zone 3 close to his brothers'.

Informant 6. This 53 year old trapper and hunter was one of those who trained boys in the trappers' training program. He traps in zone 2 close to his common-

law-wife's father's line. One of his sons from a previous marriage helps his father in law.

Informant 7. Also 53, this trapper has worked for fishermen on occasion. He mentioned that he would cease trapping for a more lucrative opportunity. He is still able to trap because his line, in zone 6, is close to the village and therefore overhead expenses are kept to a minimum. He also traps for Informant 3 for payment. He usually traps alone.

Informant 8. Age 52, trapper and fisherman. Married with 15 children. Traps zone 6 with sons.

Informant 9. A trapper at 50, he also fishes. He usually traps alone, in zone 3. He is married with grown children, a couple of whom also trap. His trapping area would have been affected by the limestone mine had it been developed.

Informant 10. A former trapper at age 48, this man was from another village, but worked for the Village of Pinehouse during the field period. He was also involved in the Northern Fur Conservation Area Trappers' Association.

Informant 11. This 47 year old trapper traps in zone 3, along with his father, brother and uncles. He is married, but currently separated. He also does fishing and rice harvesting for hire.

Informant 12. This mid-40s man was the mayor at the time of field work. He is non-aboriginal, a non-Cree-speaker, and not a trapper, however, he is married into the community and his parents-in-law are ardent bush lifers. As an outsider he has taken pains to learn a great deal about the traditional mode of production and the history of the community.

Informant 13. A young man, 35, and a former trapper, he does any kind of wage labour necessary. He still traps enough to keep his license. During the field period he worked at housing construction in the village, guiding, and on a SaskPower contract, clearing bush for a power line. He is married with young children.

Informant 14. A young man, 33, trapper and wage labourer. Despite working at a steady job for the elderly home care, this man maintains a trapper's license and regularly hunts and fishes. He is married with a young family of six children.

Informant 15. Young man, 33, non-trapper. The son of a trapper, this man finds work from various sources. He has travelled and lived away from the community for periods of months at a time, usually in southern, urban centres.

He has some university education and made an excellent interpreter.

Informant 16. Young man, 28, son of a trapper, fisherman and wild rice harvester, this man manages one of two stores in the community. He is married, two young children. He maintains a trapper's license, and calls himself a fisherman.

Informant 17. Young man, 27, brother of Informant 16. This man is married in common-law with 5 young children and in October 1992 was elected Mayor of Pinehouse. Prior to that, and during the field work period, he was the Recreation Director in Pinehouse. He is the son of a trapper, fisherman and rice harvester.