

NEGOTIATED IDENTITIES:  
A HISTORY OF SHARING AND INDIGENOUS-SETTLER RELATIONS  
IN WESTERN CANADA, 1800-1970

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation is an analysis of sharing in the history of western Canada and Indigenous-Settler relations from 1800 to 1970. Based on original research conducted with two Indigenous groups – the Stó:lō Nation of British Columbia’s Fraser River Valley and Metis communities of northwest Saskatchewan – it documents the significance of sharing to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations at the turn of the eighteenth century as well as the role it played in mediating cross cultural interactions following sustained contact in the nineteenth century. Using ethnohistorical methods, I argue that sharing has been a defining feature of Native and Newcomer lives and collective identities. In Indigenous communities it insulated family groups from environmental variability while affirming kin-based social networks. Among non-Indigenous people, sharing provided the basis for imagined communities of individuals connected by religion, occupation, and other non-kin characteristics. In situations of cross-cultural interaction, sharing provided an important lens through which Natives and Newcomers viewed themselves and each other. Indigenous people have viewed sharing as the “Indian way,” a defining feature of Indigeneity in western Canada and elsewhere. Non-Indigenous people, on the other hand, have viewed Indigenous peoples’ dependence on welfare and other government transfer payments – recent examples of sharing – as evidence of cultural difference and, often, inferiority. Sharing thus provides a window into Native and Newcomer worldviews and socio-cultural structures as well as relations forged between and among them. This history of sharing illuminates subtle, critically important events and processes in the history of Indigenous-Settler relations and the transformation of Indigenous North America into Canada.

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Introduction: Sharing and the History of Indigenous-Settler Relations

By the time Matt Garner turned fifteen in 2012, he was already an able fisherman and was learning from his father, Kevin, how to hunt game. He was also being taught how to share the produce of these activities with family members, friends, and others according to local cultural and social protocols. For the Garners, a Stó:lō family living in Chilliwack, British Columbia, these subsistence and sharing practices are part of Matt's cultural education and training. Sharing is particularly important. Although part of the produce of these activities is saved for home consumption, Matt was taught from an early age the importance of sharing what he harvests with others. The first animals Matt kills are given entirely to his elders; Matt keeps no meat, hides, or other parts. Similarly, the first fish caught in spring are gifted to local elders, family members, and organizers of community feasts. Despite the cost of fuel, supplies, and ammunition, associated with hunting, fishing, and other subsistence activities, no payment is requested or accepted by Matt or his family in exchange for these gifts. Sharing is viewed as a cultural imperative.<sup>1</sup> The non-recompensed distribution of harvested foods and resources appears as a fundamental aspect of Stó:lō culture, and a defining feature of what it means to be Aboriginal in Canada today. More than hobbies or pastimes, these practices link modern

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<sup>1</sup> I first met the Garners while participating in the 2005 Stó:lō Ethnohistory Fieldschool organized by the University of Saskatchewan and University of Victoria. The Garners were my homestay during the first week of the course and we have remained close ever since. Whenever I visit Chilliwack and surrounding area, I stay with the Garners and often have the opportunity to join them fishing and participate in other activities. The information contained here is a product of these experiences and the numerous conversations we have had over the years about Stó:lō culture, my work, and other topics.

Stó:lō families with each other and their ancestors, thereby preserving important elements of Stó:lō culture and forging bonds of collective identity.

This view of subsistence activities and sharing as markers of Indigenous<sup>2</sup> identity is not unique to British Columbia's Fraser River Valley. While posted in the Île à la Crosse area in the mid-twentieth century, Oblate missionary Father Leon Levasseur remarked on the significance of sharing to local Cree, Dene, and Metis peoples. Sharing, he noted, was “a pattern for living, a pattern with a definite focal point with radiating spokes.” As a socio-cultural adaptation to local environmental variability, sharing provided a safeguard against hunger and destitution: “[t]he best ice box for game is in the stomachs of your neighbors – give to receive ... The best insurance policy was the good will of one's neighbour.” Sharing, according to Levasseur, ensured future reciprocity. As in the Fraser River Valley, sharing in northwest Saskatchewan was inseparable from indigeneity. It connected people to each other, the land, ancestors, and other elements of the natural world in a web of mutual dependence and meaning. “[T]heir philosophy,” Levasseur concluded, “demands that they must share.”<sup>3</sup>

Sharing thus represents an important example of continuity in the Indigenous history of northwestern North America. Despite the devastating demographic and cultural consequences of introduced diseases, attempted assimilation, and other legacies of colonialism, sharing endures as a symbol of Indigenous survival and perseverance. Matt's abilities as a fisherman and hunter and Levasseur's observations about the role of sharing link them, and other Indigenous Canadians, to generations past who, although

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<sup>2</sup> This dissertation uses the term “Indigenous” to include First Nations, Metis, Inuit, and non-status peoples. Specific group names, such as Stó:lō, are used when possible for greater specificity.

<sup>3</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2.



living in a different era, engaged in similar practices and espoused similar teachings. For Indigenous people, the practice and the discourse of sharing is a powerful cultural refuge from the storm of colonial history.

But sharing has not endured unchanged. Although it has withstood colonialism, its meaning, purpose, and application have changed, in some cases dramatically. Matt's subsistence activities differ in significant ways from those of his ancestors. The social and cultural protocols regulating the distribution of foods and resources harvested by Matt are not the same protocols that were in place generations earlier. While the impetus for sharing today is largely a function of cultural continuity and social solidarity and participation in sharing networks is mostly voluntary, sharing in the past was a societal obligation – compulsory, unavoidable, and arguably rarely altruistic. Similarly, the social and cultural meaning of sharing Levasseur observed was a product of his contemporary world, one that is markedly different from that of earlier generations. Rather than a marker of pan-indigeneity, a product of recent times, sharing was the material expression of local kin ties and social standing; sharing contributed less to formation of race-based collective identities than to the internal stratification of Indigenous societies. Similarly, the numerous alternatives to sharing offered by market capitalism, mass consumerism, and the welfare state, challenge the staying power of sharing today. Will Matt Garner, for example, maintain the connection between sharing and identity that has been so crucial to his ancestors? In form and function, sharing, like other aspects of Indigenous societies and cultures, has changed in subtle but significant ways through complex processes of adaptation.

This dissertation analyses the history of sharing as a site of both continuity in change – the perseverance of sharing through colonialism – and change in continuity – changing ideas and practices of sharing – within the context of ongoing intercultural relations. Based on case studies conducted in Stó:lō communities in what is now southwestern British Columbia and Metis communities in present day northwestern Saskatchewan, it draws on a range of historical documents, ethnographies, oral histories, and other materials to explore and analyze how sharing has changed, or not changed, from the turn of the nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. Sharing is approached in this dissertation as the exchange of various forms of wealth, including food, goods, materials, supplies, stories, names, songs, spouses, and numerous other tangible and intangible “things” between and among diverse, overlapping social groups connected through real and/or fictive kin ties. It is, in other words, a unifying feature of Indigenous economies that has regulated social behaviour and mediated their interactions with economic activities introduced by newcomers.<sup>4</sup> Investigating the history of systems of sharing thus illuminates important aspects of Indigenous and settler histories, and the ongoing cross-cultural relationships forged among members of both groups. Although the history of sharing has not featured prominently in existing analyses of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations, it provides fertile ground for generating complicated and nuanced interpretations that engage both Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives of the past and of each other. The history of sharing in many ways reflects the past two hundred years of history of western Canada.

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<sup>4</sup> Although market exchange, wage labour, and other forms of proto-capitalism are excluded from this definition of sharing, it nonetheless recognizes the possibility for Indigenous systems of sharing to adapt to and integrate other forms of exchange into pre-existing systems.

The practice of sharing is a particularly useful subject for exploring this history for several reasons. First, it enables us to engage Indigenous historical consciousness and perspectives of the past. As Taiaiake Alfred and Geoff Corntassel remarked, although it remains largely understudied, sharing and networks of exchange represent unique opportunities to study Indigenous history and identity according to culturally significant practices and institutions.<sup>5</sup> Conducting a monograph-length study of the history of sharing directly engages Indigenous viewpoints and culturally relevant categories of analysis. As discussed below, most historical analyses of intercultural exchange, gift giving, and the redistribution of wealth have been approached from a largely non-Indigenous perspective, privileging Euro-Canadian over Indigenous understandings of economics and economic behaviour. By situating sharing at the centre of my analysis, this dissertation attempts to approach the history of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations from the perspectives of Indigenous peoples and according to Indigenous worldviews. Privileging sharing as a legitimate and fruitful avenue of inquiry thus represents a concerted effort to write Indigenous history, not as part of Canadian or western history, but in its own right and according to its own structures and significance. As historian Keith Thor Carlson remarks, “non-Natives are not necessarily always the most important thing in Indigenous historical consciousness, let alone Indigenous history.”<sup>6</sup> Exploring the history of sharing is to engage, at least in part, Indigenous perspectives of the past.

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<sup>5</sup> Taiaiake Alfred and Geoff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences against Contemporary Colonialism,” *Government and Opposition: An International Journal of Comparative Politics* 40, no. 4 (Autumn 2005): 609-610.

<sup>6</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 19.

Second, a comprehensive analysis of sharing helps decenter prevailing understandings of non-Indigenous economies and systems of exchange, thereby illuminating sometimes hidden aspects of this history. As demonstrated by participants in the 2004 Canadian Historical Association roundtable dedicated to reviewing Cole Harris' award-winning book *Making Native Space*, even exemplary analyses of colonialism and the mechanisms through which Euro-Canadians gained control of Indigenous territories need to consider Indigenous perspectives and histories if they are to develop culturally reflexive and culturally relevant studies of the past.<sup>7</sup> Doing so allows for increasingly nuanced and complicated interpretations of Indigenous, Canadian, and cross-cultural histories that avoid depicting the history of colonialism as either the triumphalist story of Euro-Canadian conquest and tragic fall of Indigenous societies or the heroic struggle of Indigenous cultures against oppressive colonizers.<sup>8</sup> Although aspects of these metanarratives are at specific times evident in the history of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations, their narrative trajectories obscure as much as they reveal. Few heroes or villains are found in the historical record. Instead what we find are flawed, imperfect, and interminably human characters who may appear, at times, as heroes and/or villains, but are not reducible to either category.

Third, the history of sharing recasts important aspects of the history of Indigenous-Settler relations. For example, by situating sharing within its cultural contexts, this dissertation challenges both nineteenth century Euro-Canadian depictions of Indigenous systems of sharing as primitive barter exchanges and modern definitions of

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<sup>7</sup> Keith Thor Carlson et al., "Appraising Cole Harris' *Making Native Space*," *Native Studies Review* 16, no. 2 (2005): 125-149.

<sup>8</sup> Robin Brownlie and Mary-ellen Kelm, "Desperately Seeking Absolution: Native Agency as Colonialist Alibi?," *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 4 (December 1994): 543-556.

sharing that consider it voluntary, altruistic, and inherently benevolent. Indigenous systems of sharing practiced in the Stó:lō and Metis communities of southwestern British Columbia and northwestern Saskatchewan around 1800 (when first contact was being made with representatives of European society) were neither simple nor one-dimensional. Rather, they were compulsory, infused with power relations, and inextricably connected to virtually all facets of Indigenous societies (see chapters Two and Three). Indigenous peoples in these places were obligated to share or risk facing social ostracism or some other form of punishment. Sharing was not voluntary, and participation in sharing networks was not necessarily beneficial to everyone involved. Although systems of sharing insulated individuals and families from the potential hardships of environmental fluctuation and change, they were also intimately tied to land and resource use, the accumulation of wealth, and what constituted proper social relations. As such, sharing regulated power and relations of power. For elites, it functioned in part as a mechanism of marginalization through which they legitimized and affirmed their status while the participation of the less powerful implicitly sanctioned the status quo and existing power structures. Rarely entirely altruistic or benevolent and certainly not simplistic, sharing was, and in some ways remains, a manifestation of both sophisticated adaptations to local environments and social relations through which power was and is negotiated on a daily basis.

Situating sharing in its cultural contexts and recognizing its compulsory, power-infused nature challenges the universality and primacy of Euro-Canadian definitions and categories of analysis. Whereas economics today is routinely separated from politics, religion, society, culture, and other parts of society, sharing was viewed by Stó:lō and

Metis peoples more holistically, as inextricably connected to these other areas. Acts of sharing were at once economic, social, political, and spiritual; confining sharing to strictly economic realms risks obscuring or missing much of its social and cultural significance.

This emphasis on unique cultural contexts does not, however, suggest that Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing were incompatible or mutually exclusive in practice. Indeed, this dissertation demonstrates that although most histories stress the differences and, often, incompatibility of these systems (see Chapter Four), similarities are evident in sharing practices, if not always in the meaning ascribed to them. For example, trade and labour, economic activities often presumed to have been introduced to Indigenous peoples by newcomers, were in fact important parts of many Indigenous economies long before “first contact.” Similarly, gift giving and generalized reciprocity, often discussed as being exclusively Indigenous in origin, were common among non-Indigenous groups, especially networks of kith and kin. Indeed, although the relative value of each of these activities fluctuated across time and between cultures, they were by no means inconsequential to either group, nor were the systems of which they were a part in any way mutually unintelligible. Similarities in ideas and practices of sharing, and of exchange more broadly, are equally if not more important to the history of western Canada and Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations than are the differences so readily evident in some existing literature.

Together, this attention to distinct cultural understandings of sharing and to similarities among sharing practices facilitates new insights into the post-contact period. Rather than a period of total cultural disruption or complete assimilation, the nineteenth

and early twentieth centuries, I argue, represent a time of genuine hybridity, to borrow Homi Bhabha's term, wherein neither Indigenous nor non-Indigenous people were able to impose their will on the other and both were transformed by their cross-cultural interactions. For example, the origins and growth of the "fur trade," an era of history that I argue is better understood as the "wealth exchange" (see Chapter Five), was predicated on constructive intercultural relationships and compatible socio-economic practices. Euro-Canadian fur traders at this time became enmeshed in Indigenous kin networks, adopting in the process aspects of Indigenous systems of sharing and their obligatory, power-infused protocols. Indigenous people, meanwhile, became active participants in Euro-Canadian systems of exchange that privileged trade, wage labour, and other aspects of the emergent capitalist economy ahead of Indigenous forms of exchange. This hybridity also is evident in the emergence of mixed social groups and social structures, including the increasingly large Metis populations of the prairie region that represent less a people "in between," as some scholars have recently argued, than genuinely hybrid, intercultural communities with distinct cultural traits. Even in the Fraser River Valley, where few people self-identify as Metis,<sup>9</sup> similarities in sharing and other socio-economic structures led to widespread intercultural exchange during periods of economic cooperation, settlement, and Canadian nation building (see Chapter Six). The resettlement of northwestern North America should no longer be viewed as a linear process whereby newcomers gradually wrested power from the land's original inhabitants

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<sup>9</sup> In fact many people in the Fraser Valley do identify as Metis, but the vast majority of these are people who within the last generation or two have relocated to British Columbia from the Canadian prairies and who, therefore, trace their Indigenous Metis heritage back to communities in Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and Alberta. No historical Metis community developed in the Fraser Valley out of the fur trade as in more eastern parts of Canada.

but rather as a complicated, often messy, process of intercultural interaction, negotiation, and uncertainty. This is not to downplay or ignore colonial exploitation and expropriation, but to recognize that Indigenous – non-Indigenous history is in many ways as much a story of hybridity and cultural similarities as it is of differences and “conquest.”

Returning to ideas of both continuity in change and change in continuity, this dissertation demonstrates that the role and meaning of sharing in the twentieth century among both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations was markedly different from those of earlier generations. As the Canadian state, for example, gained greater control of lands and resources, their notions of sharing, rooted in emerging capitalist ideologies and individualism, became increasingly prevalent and powerful, even hegemonic. In the process, earlier systems of sharing connected to reciprocity and social obligation practiced by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and families were marginalized and became dislocated from their socio-cultural contexts (see Chapter Seven). Sharing thus shifted from being an obligatory practice and important determinant of power to a voluntary act separate from relations of power. While Indigenous populations continued to view it as a marker of indigeneity and collective identity, sharing came to signify, among non-Indigenous populations, philanthropic charity directed toward impoverished Native communities. Thus, although sharing has endured the violence wrought by colonialism and the influence of cross-cultural interaction, it operates today in a manner markedly dissimilar to its earlier iterations and is continually challenged by alternative socio-economic practices.



## 1.1 Cultural Practice, Colonial Tool: A Historiography of Sharing

Reflecting on the state of anthropological and historical inquiry twenty years ago, historical anthropologist Marshall Sahlins suggested that “if Anthropology was for too long the study of ‘historyless peoples,’ history for even longer was studying ‘cultureless peoples.’”<sup>10</sup> Anthropologists, in other words, had neglected change over time in their analyses of culture while historians had ignored the role culture plays in interpreting and ascribing meaning to the past. Although Sahlins’ position omits a number of important studies that cross this disciplinary boundary,<sup>11</sup> his call for greater interdisciplinary research was timely and highly relevant to the historiography of sharing. As discussed below, for much of the twentieth century, systems of sharing have been analyzed by anthropologists as unique economies practiced by and emblematic of hunter-gatherer and other non-western, non-capitalist, societies. Historians, meanwhile, have studied systems of sharing largely as part of a pre-contact past that was disrupted and eventually overcome by colonization and introduced economic activities. While these approaches are valid and have generated important insights into Native-Newcomer history in Canada

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<sup>10</sup> Marshall Sahlins, “Past History,” in *Waiting for Foucault, Still* (Chicago: Prickly Paradigm Press, 2002 [1993]), 72.

<sup>11</sup> See, for example, the work of the *Annales* school, specifically Fernand Braudel, *The Mediterranean in the Ancient World*, trans. Siân Reynolds (London: Penguin Books, 1998 [1949]), which emphasized the historical significance of *mentalités*. In the Canadian Aboriginal context, see Alfred Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1934); and in the international context, see Nathan Wachtel, *The Vision of the Vanquished: The Spanish Conquest of Peru Through Indian Eyes, 1530-1570* (New York: Barnes and Nobel, 1977), which examines European colonization in South America within the cultural contexts of both Spanish conquistadors and Indigenous peoples in the Andes.

and elsewhere, they privilege a particular understanding of sharing that separates culture and history, producing what Sahlins might call historyless and cultureless analyses.

### *Sharing and Economic Anthropology*

For much of the twentieth century, the study of Indigenous systems of sharing was dominated by anthropologists interested in documenting cultural economies. Indeed, much of what we know about sharing comes from economic anthropologists whose research focuses on gift giving, reciprocity, and other forms of exchange. Classic works in this field include Bronislaw Malinowski's *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* and Marcel Mauss's *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies* which proposed competing interpretations of what exactly was exchanged when items, such as jewellery and other material goods, changed hands. While Malinowski argued that gift giving was primarily a political act whereby individual givers affirmed or augmented their power relative to their peers, Mauss asserted that giving, although often performed by an individual, was a collective action that linked together "corporate kin groups." Similarly, whereas Malinowski argued that gift giving, due to the political power inherent in it, was non-altruistic and had to be reciprocated with a gift of equal or lesser value, Mauss emphasized the non-material significance of the gift, which he referred to as a "total prestation." Rather than exchanging only physical goods, collectives were, according to Mauss, symbolically binding themselves to one another.

Reciprocity, therefore, had more to do with affirming relationships than with returning gifts.<sup>12</sup>

The work of Malinowski and Mauss was further developed in the second half of the twentieth century by Karl Polanyi, Claude Lévi-Strauss, and others. Informed in part by ideas in *The Gift*, Polanyi's *The Great Transformation* advocated what he called a substantivist approach to the study of economics that, unlike the work of earlier economists, recognized the ethnographic contexts within which economies and people operate. Polanyi was particularly critical of what he called "formalist" models of economic behaviour, espoused by John Stuart Mills, Adam Smith, and other political economists, that focused principally on individual desires. Although applicable under certain conditions, this "economic man" approach, Polanyi argued, was too narrow, privileging individualism and utility maximization above what he called "economizing," the myriad ways in which societies meet their material needs on a daily basis. From a substantivist perspective, this economizing was embedded in culture. The supra-rational economic man, according to Polanyi, was a myth.

Writing in the 1960s, Lévi-Strauss was less convinced of the importance of culture. Considered a leading practitioner of structural anthropology, a school of thought devoted to uncovering the universal laws or patterns of human thought and behaviour, Lévi-Strauss, who also was informed by Mauss's interpretation of the gift, posited exchange as the foundation of kinship and social relationships. It was through these

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<sup>12</sup> See Bronislaw Malinowski, *Argonauts of the Western Pacific: An Account of Native Enterprise and Adventure in the Archipelagoes of Melanesian New Guinea* (Prospect Heights, Illinois: Waveland Press, 1984; originally published in London: Routledge and Keagan and Paul, 1922), and Marcel Mauss *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen & West, 1969).

exchange relationships, he argued, that social units were formed not only in so-called “archaic” societies but also in “modern” or “advanced” ones. The work of Mauss and Malinowski could, therefore, be extrapolated upon to generate an understanding of the industrializing world. Cultural differences, from this perspective, were largely trivial; although the precise form economic practices took may have changed from one instance to the next, the structures themselves were universal.<sup>13</sup>

Despite the obvious tension between Polanyi’s and Lévi-Strauss’ conclusions, both authors influenced the work of Marshall Sahlins, whose 1972 monograph *Stone Age Economics* remains a seminal work in economic anthropology. Informed by both structuralism and substantivism, it examines systems of exchange by identifying three types of reciprocity: 1) generalized reciprocity, or gift giving, whereby goods and/or services are exchanged with an expectation they will be reciprocated but without any formal mechanisms for doing so; 2) balanced reciprocity, whereby a gift is reciprocated according to a negotiated timeframe and value; and 3) negative reciprocity, similar to market exchange, whereby both parties attempt to derive a profit from the exchange. The type of exchange practiced depended on the degree of social relatedness: the closer the relationship, the more general the exchange; the more distant the relationship, the more negative the exchange.<sup>14</sup> Like Lévi-Strauss, Sahlins views these relationships as fundamental to understanding human societies and structures, but whereas the work of Lévi-Strauss posits universal laws of thought and behaviour, Sahlins insists, like Polanyi, that structures cannot be understood outside of culture. Rather than viewing culture as a

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<sup>13</sup> See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Elementary Structures of Kinship*, trans. James Harle Bell, John Richard von Sturmer, and Rodney Needham (Boston, MA: Beacon Press, 1969); and Claude Lévi-Strauss, *The Way of the Masks*, trans. Sylvia Modelski (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 1982).

<sup>14</sup> Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atheron Inc., 1972).

unique expression of universal structures, Sahlins viewed structures as mutually constitutive: neither exists independent of the other. Rather than developing a universal understanding of economic behaviour, Sahlins's work has attempted to understand economics and economies as embedded within socio-cultural contexts.<sup>15</sup>

Since the publication of *Stone Age Economics*, both structuralism and substantivism have been thoroughly critiqued by anthropologists, sociologists, and other scholars. Structuralism in particular has been criticized for being overly deterministic and ahistorical and neglecting local culture. These critiques, often levelled by poststructuralist and postmodernist scholars, emphasize the complex nature of human action and behaviour (none of which was reducible to universal systems of laws), cultural relativism, and the inability of the researcher to step far enough outside social structures to objectively interpret them. Rather than seeking to understand structures and, in turn, universal human laws, these critiques argued that scholars ought to focus more explicitly on the various ways that meaning is constructed and how this meaning may change from one context, or person, to the next.

Due to its greater emphasis on the influence of culture on social structures, substantivism is in some ways compatible with poststructural and postmodern approaches. However, it too has been criticized for being ethnocentric, specifically in its use and unconscious replication of western categories of analysis in studying non-western societies, implicitly casting primitive and modern economies in opposition to one

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<sup>15</sup> See Marshall Sahlins, *Apologies to Thucydides: Understanding History as Culture and Vice Versa* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2004); Marshall Sahlins, "The Return of the Event, Again: With Reflections on the Beginnings of the Great Fijian War of 1843 to 1855 Between the Kingdoms of Bau and Rewa," in *Clio in Oceania: Toward a Historical Anthropology*, ed. Aletta Biersack (Washington: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1991); and Patrick Vinton Kirch and Marshall Sahlins, *Anahulu: The Anthropology of History in the Kingdom of Hawaii, Volume 1* (Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

another, and not recognizing the socio-cultural constructedness of terms like “economics.” Even when criticizing formalist uses of “economic man,” for example, substantivists continued to employ western understandings of economics as universal, self-evident, and separate from other aspects of life (political, spiritual, social, etc.). Indeed, some anthropologists rejected altogether abstract models of economic behaviour, focusing instead on local models to understand on their own terms.

Both structuralism and substantivism, and their critiques, have influenced recent anthropological studies of sharing. While continuing to document systems and structures of exchange, economic anthropologists today are careful not to underestimate the role of socio-cultural factors in mediating economic practices and praxis. The anthology *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resources Allocation and Modern Hunter Gatherers*, edited by George Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami, for example, analyses both “traditional structures” and how they have changed (or not changed) in response to globalization and modernization in the north.<sup>16</sup> In his study of the Wiradjuri of Australia, contributor Gaynor Macdonald argues that these structures did not crumble under the weight of modernity but persisted, albeit in sometimes changed form, because they are fundamentally economic expressions of social imperatives. “[L]ife [among the Wiradjuri],” he argues, “is first of all social ... economies as systems exist to augment and give expression to the social, not the reverse.”<sup>17</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> George Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami, eds., *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resources Allocation and Modern Hunter Gatherers* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000).

<sup>17</sup> Gaynor Macdonald, “Economies and Personhood: Demand Sharing among the Wiradjuri of New South Wales,” in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Sharing and Modern Hunter Gatherers*, ed. George W. Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), 91.

Another recent edited collection, Peter Schweitzer's *Dividends of Kinship: Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness*, offers updated perspectives on kinship studies, one of anthropology's oldest and most popular topics.<sup>18</sup> Focusing on the function of Indigenous systems of exchange and social relatedness, contributors such as Mark Nuttall approach kinship, and, by extension, kin-based economies, as socio-cultural constructions. They see them as flexible, complicated, and constantly changing in response to shifting social, economic, and political circumstances.<sup>19</sup> As David Natcher demonstrates in "Subsistence and the Social Economy of Canada's Aboriginal North," these findings have implications well beyond the academy. If government programs and economic development schemes are to succeed in the north, government and industry need to understand the socio-economic practices of the people living there and how they have changed over time.<sup>20</sup> Regarded in this light, the study of kinship, sharing, and subsistence is as relevant today as it was for Malinowski and Mauss a century ago.

These recent examples of economic anthropology illustrate the contributions the field has made to our understanding of sharing and exchange. Through their focus on systems and structures, these authors illuminate subtle socio-cultural protocols that regulate, but do not determine, human action and behaviour. They also emphasize the importance of culture. Rather than searching for universal human concepts, economic anthropologists have delineated culturally specific socio-economic models, locating them

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<sup>18</sup> Mark Nuttall, "Choosing Kin: Sharing and Subsistence in a Greenlandic Hunting Community," in *Dividends of Kinship: Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness*, ed. Peter Schweitzer (New York: Routledge, 2000), 33-60.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid.

<sup>20</sup> David C. Natcher, "Subsistence and the Social Economy of Canada's Aboriginal North," *The Northern Review* 30 (Spring 2009): 83-98. See also Mark Nelson, David C. Natcher, and Cliff Hickey, "Social and Economic Barriers to Subsistence Harvesting in Aboriginal Communities," *Anthropologica* 47, no. 2 (2005): 289-301; and John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007).

not on a linear spectrum ranging from primitive to advanced but on equal footing, as distinct, culturally unique adaptations to local environments and circumstances. The form and nature of these socio-economies are, therefore, remarkable not only for their complexity but also for their dynamism, resilience, and adaptiveness. Despite the changes wrought by globalization and modernity, kin-based exchange networks persist due in large part to the social and culture imperatives embedded within them. Although no longer seen as deterministic, these structures provide insight into human societies around the world.

This work also raises questions for future research. Although most economic anthropologists have moved from a strictly structuralist approach to one informed by poststructuralism and/or postmodernism, they remain focused on cultural systems which in some cases remain supra-historical. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, ideas of what constitutes sharing and economics in general have changed dramatically over time, especially during periods of sustained contact with alternative ideas and practices. As Sahlins reminds us, these are not historyless people or processes, so we need to understand how the meaning ascribed to these systems has changed over time. Several questions come to mind. How have these ideas been constructed at various times in the past and today? What impact have these changes had on the purpose, form, and practice of sharing and exchange? There also remains in some of these works, due in part to their laudable focus on local case study, a tendency to set up non-industrial, kin-based economies in opposition to industrial ones. Although these systems are clearly different, they are not incompatible; common practices and ideas bridge seemingly vast cultural divides. To what extent, then, have both industrial and non-industrial socio-economies



been shaped by interactions with other economies? How have these economies effectively rejected or assimilated foreign practices and ideas into their own structures? What can this cross-fertilization, or lack thereof, tell us about the history and nature of cross-cultural interactions both in the past and today? These questions, although largely outside the scope of economic anthropology as it has been practiced in North America, warrant further inquiry.

### *Sharing and Economic Colonialism*

Compared to their counterparts in anthropology, historians have spent less time documenting and interpreting economic structures and models of exchange practiced by Indigenous peoples. Rather, they have focused on the ways in which economies, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, have changed over time, especially during the colonization of North America, and what has resulted from cross-cultural contact.<sup>21</sup> Sharing and exchange thus exist largely as subplots in broader stories of cross-cultural interaction, European colonization, and, increasingly, the resurgence of Indigenous cultures.

Arguably the best example of this focus on sharing as part of a broader history of cross-cultural exchange and interaction is fur trade historiography. Regarded as a pivotal era in the Canada's history and one of the first areas of study to engage in any meaningful way the contributions of Indigenous people to Canada's past, the fur trade has captured

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<sup>21</sup> For a detailed discussion of Canadian aboriginal historiography, see Ken Coates, "Writing First Nations into Canadian History: A Review of Recent Scholarly Works," *Canadian Historical Review* 81, no. 1 (2000): 99–114; and Keith Carlson, Melinda Jette, and Kenichi Matsui, "An Annotated Bibliography of Major Writings in Aboriginal History (1990-2000)," *Canadian Historical Review* 82, no. 1 (March 2001): 122-171.

the attention of historians for the better part of a century. Building on the earlier work of Harold Innis,<sup>22</sup> fur trade historians of the 1970s analyzed in detail the economic relationships forged between Natives and Newcomers that both fuelled the fur trade and contributed to the formation of Canada. Arthur Ray's *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870*, for example, demonstrates not only the importance of Indigenous people to the trade but the influence that Indigenous economies had on the industry, while Sylvia van Kirk's *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur Trade Society, 1670-1870* documents the central role played by Aboriginal women in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies and economies.<sup>23</sup> In a similar vein, Jennifer Brown's *Strangers in Blood* challenges prevailing histories of the North American fur trade by analyzing the historical significance of Metis peoples and families to the fur trade.<sup>24</sup> Although the arguments of Ray and others rely on a western, materialist analysis of Indigenous economies that renders Indigenous peoples as practical, rational beings and their activities as supra-cultural<sup>25</sup> – a perspective that is challenged by this dissertation which sees economic behaviour as a product and producer of Indigenous culture and identity, discernible only through Indigenous lenses – they successfully demonstrate that, rather than dominating

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<sup>22</sup> Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930), 386-92.

<sup>23</sup> Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); and Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980);

<sup>24</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980).

<sup>25</sup> Like Innis and Robin Fisher in *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1978), Ray argued that Indigenous peoples' actions during the fur trade were rational responses to material needs. This perspective was challenged by "cultural idealists" including Calvin Martin, "The Metaphysics of Writing Indian-White History," in *The American Indian and the Problem of History*, ed. Calvin Martin (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 27-34. For a broader discussion of this historiographical debate, see Steven High, "Native Wage Labour and Independent Production during the 'Era of Irrelevance'" *Labour/le Travail* 37 (Spring 1996): 243-264.

their Indigenous counterparts, Euro-Canadian traders adapted their own economic systems and practices to make them more compatible with Indigenous ones. Inter-cultural interactions during the fur trade were negotiated, contested, and more complicated than the simple triumph of one system over another.

In the wake of the works by Ray, van Kirk, and Brown came another wave of aboriginal history that built on existing fur trade historiography and pushed the field in new directions. For example, Diane Payment, *Batoche, 1870-1910* and Jacqueline Peterson and Brown's edited collection *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* demonstrated the importance of studying communities in non-traditional locations beyond the Great Lakes region, such as Alberta and Montana.<sup>26</sup> These works were a marked departure from earlier scholarship that either excluded Metis and other Indigenous peoples from national histories or cast them as inherently inferior to their

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<sup>26</sup> Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S. H. Brown, eds., *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985). See also Diane Payment, *Batoche, 1870-1910* (Saint-Boniface, MB: Éditions du Blé, 1983). D. N. Sprague and Gerhard Ens have also reassessed traditional subjects, specifically the Red River settlement and Rebellion, emphasizing in the process Metis peoples' agency and significance to Canadian history. See D. N. Sprague, *Canada and the Métis, 1869-1885* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier Press, 1988); and Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Métis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); and Donald George McLean, *Home From the Hill: A History of the Métis in Western Canada* (Regina: Gabriel Dumont Institute, 1987). Others, meanwhile, have continued to follow the lead of Peterson and Brown and to expand the geographic and interpretive boundaries of Metis history by examining communities beyond southeastern Manitoba and by employing innovative techniques for studying Metis culture through time. See, for example, Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); Ute Lischke and David T. McNab, eds., *The Long Journey of a Forgotten People: Métis Identities and Family Histories* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2007); and John Weinstein, *Quiet Revolution West: The Rebirth of Métis Nationalism* (Calgary: Fifth House Publishers, 2007). Finally, a number of scholars have applied cultural history frames of analysis to challenge the prominence of the nation-state in the study of Metis peoples and cultures. See Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006). These nuanced analyses also demonstrate the importance of studying not only the history of Metis people but of Metis socio-cultural beliefs and practices as well as their Indigenous antecedents.

non-Indigenous counterparts and obstacles impeding the expansion and growth of Canada.<sup>27</sup> By emphasizing the contributions of Metis peoples, and Indigenous peoples more generally, to Canadian history and focusing explicitly on Indigenous peoples and cultures, these studies stood in stark contrast to more nation-centred analyses.

Fur trade historiography has also contributed to the growth of historical scholarship devoted to analyzing the effects of colonialism on Aboriginal peoples, lands, cultures, and economies. Whereas the fur trade witnessed the meeting of separate, but relatively equal, socio-economic systems, this subsequent era, which might be called economic colonialism, is punctuated by the dominance of European society and economy over Indigenous ones. One of the earliest examples in this field is Brian Titley's *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada*, which argues that the Department of Indian Affairs, believing Indigenous people to be racially inferior and inherently savage, implemented assimilationist strategies that effectively stripped Aboriginal people of their cultures, lands, and resources.<sup>28</sup> In

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<sup>27</sup> See, for example, G. F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: The Riel Rebellions* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1936); Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in Western Canada*, 2 vols., trans. George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986). Although the research conducted by Stanley and Giraud was substantial and ground-breaking in its inclusion of Metis and other Indigenous actors, their interpretations of history were profoundly shaped by an ethnocentrism that portrayed Metis people as inherently maladaptive, in the work of Stanley, and destined to be overcome by western civilization or, in Giraud's analysis, as racially inferior. For a more detailed discussion of this historiographical trend, see J. R. Miller, "From Riel to the Métis," *Canadian Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (1988): 1-2.

<sup>28</sup> E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986). Titley argues that, using both overt and less obvious tactics of assimilation, the Canadian government sought to eradicate Indigenous traditions and beliefs, replacing them with Euro-Canadian equivalents seen to be universal and normative. Undermining Aboriginal economies and replacing them with Euro-Canadian commercial practices was fundamental to this program of assimilation. See also Noel Dyck, *What is the Indian 'Problem': Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991); Robin Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2003); E. Brian Titley, *The Indian Commissioners: Agents of the State and Indian Policy in Canada's Prairie West, 1873-1932* (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 2009); and Martin Cannon and Lina Sunseri, eds., *Racism, Colonialism, and Indigeneity in Canada: A Reader* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2011).

contrast to earlier histories that celebrated the growth of the nation, Titley chastised the government for its unjust treatment of Indigenous peoples.<sup>29</sup> Rather than a story detailing a “middle ground,” a phrase used by Richard White to describe aspects of the fur trade era around the Great Lakes, this historiography documents what Cole Harris has termed the “resettlement” of lands and peoples in northern North America.<sup>30</sup>

Two of the most prominent examples in the historiography of economic colonialism are Sarah Carter’s *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* and Frank Tough’s “*As Their Natural Resources Fail*”: *Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba*. Carter’s work, which examines government attempts to make Indians into farmers at the turn of the twentieth century, argues that the government failed to provide Indigenous farmers on the Canadian prairies with the tools and resources necessary to succeed. Contrary to earlier works that

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<sup>29</sup> Government policies of assimilation have been well documented by historians. Arguably the most important analyses have been penned by scholars of religious and missionary history. The work of historians Jim Miller and John Milloy, for example, documents almost four hundred years of residential school history from seventeenth century New France to twentieth century Canada, arguing, in Miller’s words, that it “would have been difficult to construct a system ... that was more likely to fail ... only Native parents and political leaders consistently spoke and acted as though they thought that residential schools should be about schooling before everything else”. See J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 419. Milloy presents an even bleaker view of the history of Canadian residential schools. Commissioned by the 1996 Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, it focuses specifically on the post-Confederation period and the Canadian government’s role in Indigenous education. Although some blame is placed on the church, the DIA, according to Milloy, is primarily responsible for the physical, psychological, and cultural abuses that took place at residential schools across the country in the name of progress and civilization. See John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

Historians Susan Neylan and Tolly Bradford have crafted similarly critical analyses of missionaries’ efforts to convert Indigenous peoples to Christianity in northwestern North America during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as well as Indigenous peoples’ creative and adaptive responses thereto. See Susan Neylan, *The Heavens Are Changing: Nineteenth-Century Protestant Missions And Tsimshian Christianity* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2003); and Tolly Bradford, *Prophetic Identities: Indigenous Missionaries on British Colonial Frontiers, 1850-75* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2012). See also Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994).

<sup>30</sup> See Richard White *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991); and Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

suggested Aboriginal culture was incompatible with Euro-American economies and farming practices, Carter demonstrates that Indigenous people had proved to be remarkably capable farmers and only struggled because they were effectively sabotaged by government policy.<sup>31</sup> Tough's work explores another failure of government Indian policy: the privileging of commercial interests over the wellbeing of Indigenous peoples and economies. The government's eagerness "to serve the outside interests of capital, to open up a regional economy," he argues, ignored "the basic needs and rights of Aboriginal peoples," resulting in widespread impoverishment and economic dependency among formerly self-sustaining Indigenous populations.<sup>32</sup> As demonstrated by these scholars, the loss of lands and resources and the colonization of Aboriginal economies by European and Canadian interests have pushed Indigenous peoples to the geographic and economic margins of Canadian society, with devastating consequences.

The marginalization of Aboriginal peoples and economies was part of the broader colonization of lands and resources documented by Cole Harris and Jim Miller, among others. In *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia*, for example, Harris analyses the processes through which successive colonial and state governments alienated Aboriginal peoples, lands and resources in Canada's westernmost provinces, confining the area's original inhabitants to tiny reserves demarcated by government officials more interested in facilitating non-Aboriginal

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<sup>31</sup> Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); and Douglas C. Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of Salmon in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

<sup>32</sup> Frank Tough, "As Their Natural Resources Fail": *Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 113.

settlement than in securing the well-being of Indigenous communities.<sup>33</sup> Similarly, Miller's *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* documents the myriad negotiations and agreements that purportedly extinguished Indigenous land rights across Canada, though the terms and validity of these are contested.<sup>34</sup> As these authors demonstrate, the economic colonization of Indigenous societies was predicated on the alienation of their lands and resources.

The consequences of economic colonialism are perhaps most evident in the history of government relief and social welfare programs. Hugh Shewell's "*Enough to Keep Them Alive*": *Indian Welfare in Canada*, to date the only study focusing directly on the history of these programs, offers a detailed analysis of almost a century of

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<sup>33</sup> Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997)

<sup>34</sup> J. R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009). See also, Jill St. Germain, *Broken Treaties: United States and Canadian Relations with the Lakotas and the Plains Cree, 1868-1885* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Jill St. Germain, *Indian Treaty-Making Policy in Canada and the United States, 1867-1877* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of the Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000); Michael Asch, ed., *Aboriginal and Treaty Rights in Canada: Essays on Law, Equality, and Respect for Difference* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); and Treaty 7 Elders and Tribal Council with Walter Hildebrandt, Dorothy First Rider, and Sarah Carter, *The True Spirit and Intent of Treaty 7* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1996).

Environmental historians have documented the ecological processes that facilitated European colonization of the Americas and set the stage for the alienation of Aboriginal lands and resources described by the scholars above. See Alfred Crosby, *Ecological Imperialism: The Biological Expansion of Europe, 900-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1986); and Alfred Crosby, *The Columbian Exchange: Biological and Cultural Consequences of 1492* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Company, 1972). For analyses of the ongoing effects of epidemics and the colonization of Indigenous bodies, see Robert Boyd, *The Coming of the Spirit of Pestilence: Introduced Infectious Diseases and Population Decline among the Northwest Coast Indians, 1774-1874* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999); Robert Boyd, "Commentary on Early Contact Era Smallpox in the Pacific Northwest," *Ethnohistory* 43, no. 2 (Spring 1996): 307-328; Paul Hackett, *A Very Remarkable Sickness: Epidemics in the Petit Nord to 1846* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 2002); James Waldram, *Revenge of the Windigo: The Construction of the Mind and Mental Health of North American Aboriginal Peoples* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); James Waldram, D. Ann Herring, and T. Kue Young, *Aboriginal Health in Canada: Historical, Cultural, and Epidemiological Perspectives* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1995); Maureen Lux, *Medicine that Walks: Disease Medicine, and Canadian Plains Native People, 1880-1940* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); and Mary-Ellen Kelm, *Colonizing Bodies: Aboriginal Health and Healing in British Columbia, 1900-1950* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2001).

government welfare legislation based on the author's experiences as an employee of the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs and his extensive research into federal government archival material and Indian Affairs Branch correspondence. By providing Indigenous people with temporary relief, the government, he argues, induced them to adopt a Euro-Canadian work ethic based on "deservedness, self-reliance, thrift," and moral virtue. Following this thread through the World Wars and Great Depression to the massive overhaul of welfare state programmes in the 1960s, he demonstrates that despite ongoing shifts in policy and leadership and the effects of international events, the state's goal of assimilation remained consistent: "Indian welfare policy evolved as a feature of the continuing subjugation and domination of First Nations by the Canadian state, and it has been a consistent part of state attempts to assimilate Indians into Canadian society." Increased levels of welfare dependency among Indigenous peoples, therefore, are "not simply an episode in the history of their dispossession; it is an integral aspect of the continuing history of relations between First Nations and Europeans."<sup>35</sup>

Aside from documenting the effects Euro-Canadian colonialism has had on Indigenous societies and economies, historians have also attempted to engage Indigenous perceptions of and responses to these external forces. John Lutz's *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations*, for example, examines the history of trade, wage labour, welfare, and other supposedly distinctive European economic activities in British Columbia according to Indigenous worldviews. Using exchange, or "*makúk*," as a metaphor for Native-Newcomer relations, Lutz argues that the incorporation of these

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<sup>35</sup> Hugh Shewell, "*Enough to Keep Them Alive*": *Indian Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 23. See also Helen Buckley, *From Wooden Ploughs to Welfare: Why Indian Policy Failed in the Prairie Provinces* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1992); and John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).



activities into Indigenous economic systems does not represent cultural corruption or assimilation. Trade, wage labour, and welfare were not entirely foreign or novel economic practices. Although Indigenous societies often privileged subsistence practices ahead of other forms of exchange, labour trade and welfare were not unknown. In some cases, they were prevalent parts of Indigenous economies, allowing those cultures to integrate economic opportunities presented by newcomers quite seamlessly into their existing systems. By actively incorporating aspects of supposedly novel economic systems into their own, Indigenous peoples, Lutz argues, crafted “moditional economies,” hybrid systems of exchange that combined modern capitalist pursuits and traditional subsistence-prestige activities in accordance with existing cultural structures and protocols. These systems represent not the destruction or corruption of Indigenous cultures but, through adaptation, their resilience and continuity in spite of widespread change.

Keith Carlson’s *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* takes Lutz’s approach a step further.<sup>36</sup> Whereas Lutz engages Indigenous worldviews as a way to challenge and reimagine aspects of Canadian history, Carlson discards Canadian history as a conceptual framework, replacing it with a Stó:lō historical framework that privileges Indigenous ways of knowing and remembering. The result is a sophisticated ethnohistorical analysis of Stó:lō collective identities through the eighteenth and nineteenth century. Although a product and producer of Stó:lō culture, these identities were neither static nor homogenous; they changed over time as a result of both internal and external forces, all

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<sup>36</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*.

of which, regardless of origin, were experienced and understood within Stó:lō worldviews. For example, the establishment of Fort Langley, a Hudson's Bay Company post, in Stó:lō territory represents not so much the proliferation of Euro-Canadian economies and colonialism in northwestern North America as it does the extension of Stó:lō economic systems to a new site and resource base. To the Stó:lō, Fort Langley did not symbolize the disruption of their history and the economic marginalization of their people as it did a new opportunity for longstanding economic activities and practices associated with Indigenous ownership and management of sites associated with the production of wealth. This blending of historical and anthropological modes of inquiry not only revises earlier interpretations of the Canadian Aboriginal pasts, but also challenges the underlying framework of and approach to the field itself.

The work of Lutz, Carlson, and other ethnohistorians<sup>37</sup> demonstrates the benefits of contextualizing historical events and processes within their cultural contexts. While analyses of economic colonialism have provided deep insights into the history of colonization – that is, how Indigenous places have been transformed, at the expense of Indigenous peoples and communities, into non-Indigenous ones and the devastating consequences that have ensued for Indigenous populations – they do not investigate Indigenous perceptions of colonialism or its consequences. Colonialism was not

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<sup>37</sup> See, for example, Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life Of Stories: Narrative And Knowledge In The Yukon Territory* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998); Julie Cruikshank, *Life Lived Like A Story: Life Stories Of Three Yukon Native Elders* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1990); and J. Edward Chamberlin, *If this is your Land, Where are your Stories?: Finding Common Ground* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 2004). Latin Americanists have employed similar approaches in their analysis of Indigenous perceptions of colonization in Central and South America. See, for example, Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995); Orin Starn, *Nightwatch: The Politics of Protest in the Andes* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1999); and Greg Grandin, *The Blood of Guatemala: A History of Race and Nation* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2000).

experienced by Indigenous peoples the way Euro-Canadians experienced it, nor did they respond to it the way Euro-Canadians expected. Responses to colonialism and its aftermath reflect these different cultural perspectives: where Euro-Canadians saw disruption and loss, Indigenous people saw adaptation and cultural rejuvenation; where there is change, there is continuity, and vice versa. Studying the history of sharing, and Indigenous-Settler relations more broadly, requires us to analyze not only the mechanisms and machinations of colonialism but also the culturally constituted lenses through which past events and processes have been experienced and understood.

## 1.2 Studying Sharing: Approach and Methodology

My approach to studying the history of sharing builds on economic anthropological analyses of socio-economic systems of sharing and historical analyses of changing economic systems and relationships. I consider this approach to be ethnohistory, which, as used here, combines ethnographic analysis of culture with historical analysis of change and continuity over time. As both a methodology and conceptual framework, it is a relatively new approach to academic inquiry, though a “new” school of ethnohistory has already been identified.<sup>38</sup> “Old” ethnohistory emerged in the 1960s and 1970s in conjunction with the launch of the journal *Ethnohistory* released by the American Society for Ethnohistory largely as a response to research associated with the Indian Claims Commission in the United States in the 1930s and

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<sup>38</sup> See Keith Thor Carlson, John Lutz, and David Schaepe, “Turning the Page: Ethnohistory from a New Generation,” *The University of the Fraser Valley Research Review* 2, no. 2 (2009): 1-8.

1940s.<sup>39</sup> The defining feature of ethnohistory at this time was the inclusion of non-traditional sources, specifically oral history and oral traditions, in the study of history.<sup>40</sup> To this point, these sources, as well as the Aboriginal peoples and cultures that produce them, had been seen largely as the exclusive domain of anthropologists, especially ethnographers and ethnologists. As a result, Aboriginal pasts, if they were acknowledged at all, were viewed only through the lens of written documents and other materials generated by non-Aboriginal peoples.<sup>41</sup> Ethnohistory thus represented greater interest among historians not only in alternative sources for studying the past but also in the histories of Aboriginal peoples and other oral societies.

Since the 1970s, ethnohistory has expanded to include, in addition to different sources, alternate worldviews, epistemologies, and approaches to history. Thomas Abercrombie's *Pathways of Memory and Power*, for example, investigates history-making and historical consciousness among Indigenous peoples in the Andes.<sup>42</sup> Similarly, Robert Borofsky's *Making History*, which he intended to be a standard anthropological analysis of Pukapukan social organization in the South Pacific, became, through the course of the author's research, an analysis of western anthropological and

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<sup>39</sup> See Verne F. Ray, "Introduction" in "Anthropology and Indian Claims Litigation: Papers Presented at a Symposium Held at Detroit in December, 1954," ed. Erminie Wheeler-Voegelin, special issue, *Ethnohistory* 2, no. 4 (Autumn 1955): 287-291.

<sup>40</sup> The use of archaeological data and methods was also an important part of ethnohistory methods at this time but has since faded in significance. See Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered* (Kingston and Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985).

<sup>41</sup> One notable exception is Alfred Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Culture 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969), which provides a culturally reflexive analysis of contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in colonial North America.

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Abercrombie, *Pathways of Memory and Power: Ethnography and History Among an Andean People*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998).

Indigenous ways of knowing and uses of knowledge.<sup>43</sup> This approach is evident in Canada in the work of Carlson and Lutz, summarized above, as well as in Julie Cruickshank's most recent book, *Do Glaciers Listen?*, which juxtaposes western Euro-American and local Indigenous constructions of history and environment in the Yukon.<sup>44</sup> This rapidly growing emphasis on ways of knowing has contributed to the articulation by Keith Carlson, John Lutz, and Dave Schaepe of a "new ethnohistory" that aims to "rebalance" ethnohistory by according greater respect to "differing world views" and treating western historic sources as "equally mytho-historical" as their Indigenous and other non-scholarly counterparts. In addition to writing Aboriginal people in existing historical narratives and consulting non-traditional sources, by "putting both parties under the same ethnohistorical lens," this approach engages alternative historical consciousnesses and distinct cultural histories while dislocating western texts and ideas from their privileged position in historical analysis.<sup>45</sup>

Critical to this ethnohistory approach is what Marshall Sahlins has called event-structure analysis. This approach, which addresses the perceived disconnect between historical and anthropological modes of inquiry, seeks to "thickly" describe<sup>46</sup> both social structures – defined here as the underlying rules, customs, beliefs, and behaviours that regulate and give meaning to daily life within a society – and historical events, discrete occurrences and/or processes that illuminate, and sometimes challenge, existing social

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<sup>43</sup> Robert Borofsky, *Making History: Pukapukan and Anthropological Constructions of Knowledge* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

<sup>44</sup> Julie Cruickshank, *Do Glaciers Listen?: Local Knowledge, Colonial Encounters, and Social Imagination* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2005). See also Cruickshank *The Social Life Of Stories* and *Life Lived Like A Story*; and Chamberlin, *If this is your Land, Where are your Stories?*

<sup>45</sup> Carlson, Lutz, and Schaepe, "Turning the Page," 2.

<sup>46</sup> The term "thick description" is borrowed from Clifford Geertz, "Thick Description: Toward an Interpretative Theory of Culture," in *The Interpretation of Cultures* (New York: Basic Books, 1973), 3-30.

structures. As Sahlins notes, structures and events are mutually determining; neither can exist or have meaning without the other.<sup>47</sup> Indeed, it is the intersection and interplay between the two that is the focus of this dissertation and ethnohistory, as used here. How, for example, did the arrival of non-Indigenous peoples and societies affect Indigenous systems of sharing? How did their interactions within Indigenous systems of sharing affect non-Indigenous notions of sharing and exchange? How, through the course of sustained and increasingly intimate contact, did Indigenous and non-Indigenous people forge, wittingly and sometimes unwittingly, new, genuinely hybrid systems of exchange informed by both existing, culturally unique sharing practices and potentially transformative events, such as the increased demand for animal pelts during the fur trade, territorial disputes that arose from non-Indigenous settlement of Indigenous lands, or the advent of state-sponsored welfare programs? Addressing these questions through the lens of event-structure analysis helps me to understand and analyze not only what happened in the past but also, when possible, why it happened and how it was perceived and experienced by those involved. Although such insights are fleeting and can never be known entirely, actively seeking answers to these types of questions represents an important avenue of inquiry.

Applied to the history of sharing, ethnohistory and event-structure analysis helps to contextualize within unique cultural contexts change and continuity in relation to processes of exchange. In Indigenous communities, for example, I approach sharing not through the lens of Euro-Canadian or western frameworks that conceptualize it primarily as an economic activity but through local, place-based analyses informed by oral

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<sup>47</sup> Sahlins, *Apologies to Thucydides*, 9-11. See also Marshall Sahlins, *Islands of History* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985); and Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*.

ethnographic materials. Doing so allows me to engage and interpret Indigenous systems of sharing on their own terms, to indigenize histories and understandings of sharing. I use the same ethnohistory approach to interrogate non-Aboriginal systems of sharing. Although the sources I use for these analyses are largely textual, treating them ethnographically permits me to contextualize them in time and space. This helps me to avoid examining them through the lens of modern perceptions that privilege their economic function above more holistic interpretations. Although sometimes described or assumed to be acultural, non-Aboriginal systems of sharing are just as culturally constructed as Aboriginal ones. Doing so allows me to recognize similarities between culturally distinct systems of sharing as well as differences. Although different in form and function, significant overlap exists in discrete practices and processes – as well as their purpose and function – not readily visible when examined only according to ethnocentric frameworks that assume the normality or universality of one system.

Situating distinct systems of sharing within their cultural contexts enables me to also examine historical events and processes within multiple cultural contexts and locations that recognize both change and continuity in the historical record. Ethnocentric analyses of Aboriginal history have tended, by privileging Euro-Canadian sources and frameworks, to emphasize change and discontinuity as the most important and perhaps inevitable result of cross cultural contact between what have been assumed to be inferior and superior, or powerful and powerless, civilizations. Keith Carlson identifies dangers in such approaches and invites us to consider inverting the scholarly praxis: “[p]erceived through local Indigenous modes of history we catch glimpses of the continuity in change, as well as the causes of change in continuity, and in this way Aboriginal history need no

longer be burdened with questions of cultural authenticity.”<sup>48</sup> The onus should be on newcomers to figure out how Indigenous people see the world differently. “To accomplish this,” Carlson argues, “non-Aboriginal people might want to consider inverting the intellectual exercise; to try and discern how indigenous people understand history, and where we, as outsiders, fit into indigenous history.”<sup>49</sup> Analyses of Aboriginal history that privilege cultural perseverance and continuity within an ethnocentric framework thus risk undervaluing change. Although they have endured colonialism and although change and disruption are undeniable, Aboriginal societies and cultures have not endured unchanged. Systems of sharing, like other aspects of Native-Newcomer societies, need to be investigated reflexively so as to acknowledge both change and continuity in specific locations and times. The result is a more nuanced and balanced analysis of the history of sharing, its role in shaping Indigenous-Settler relations, and its relevance today.

This ethnohistory approach also draws on the work of theorists whose ideas help articulate the cultural meaning and historical significance of sharing. As Latin American historian Florencia Mallon and other subalternists remind us, engagement with, or recovery of, Indigenous formulations of politics, economics, culture, spirituality, tradition, and other aspects of society is critical to understanding not only Indigenous pasts but also the history and consequences of colonialism and the marginalization of subaltern groups.<sup>50</sup> Mallon’s concept of “decentering” challenges us to remove terms

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<sup>48</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 80.

<sup>49</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, “Aboriginal Diplomacy: Queen Victoria Comes to Canada and Coyote Goes to London,” in *Indigenous Diplomacies*, ed. (Hampshire: Paulgrave MacMillan, 2009), 155-170.

<sup>50</sup> Florencia E. Mallon, “The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies: Perspectives from Latin American History,” *The American Historical Review* 99, no. 5 (December 1994): 1496. See also Ranjit



like “sharing,” and economics in general, from their temporal and cultural contexts and resituate them within indigenous frameworks while simultaneously recognizing the internal power dynamics that make sharing and other social institutions sites of both empowerment and oppression, domination and resistance.<sup>51</sup> Doing so carves out the intellectual space necessary to view sharing not as a predominantly economic pursuit, as it often appears within western paradigms, but as a social activity governed by the cultural logic and common sense of a particular place and time. More importantly, this type of scholarship can contribute, according to Mallon, “to the possibility for a future reconstruction of an emancipatory and hegemonic postcolonial political order... that will truly liberate ‘the people’.”<sup>52</sup> Recognizing internal divisions within subaltern societies can help produce nuanced analyses attuned to the subtle differences and power struggles that, although sometimes unflattering in their implications, are ultimately humanizing in the conclusions they support. Only by attempting “to understand how the multiple discourses of gender, race, ethnicity, and, increasingly, class interacted and were transformed and rebuilt historically, in the context of particular social formations, conditioned by the particular practices of the people involved,” Mallon continues, can we fully appreciate the complex and often contradictory experiences of past peoples.<sup>53</sup> Although this prediction may seem overly optimistic and perhaps romantic in its prospects, the purpose and promise of subaltern studies is clear: by taking subaltern ideologies and practices as seriously as we do their colonial and/or western counterparts,

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Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, eds., *Selected Subaltern Studies* (Delhi: Oxford University Press, 1988); and Ileana Rodriguez and María Milagros López, eds., *The Latin American Subaltern Studies Reader* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2001).

<sup>51</sup> Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 5, 19-20.

<sup>52</sup> Mallon, “The Promise and Dilemma of Subaltern Studies,” 1496.

<sup>53</sup> Mallon, *Peasant and Nation*, 12.

we can generate a better understanding of the past, how it has shaped the present, and how the future might be imagined in ways that recognize the historic and ongoing significance of subaltern peoples and societies.

To do so, I draw on Clifford Geertz's concept of "thick descriptions" to inform my reconstruction of Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing.<sup>54</sup> In trying to understand how they operated in daily life, who participated in them, and what cultural protocols regulated their use, I can identify, although never fully comprehend, the socio-economic significance sharing held in these societies and how it transformed and was transformed by colonialism. Additionally, I employ Benedict Anderson's concept of "imagined communities," and specifically his description of the "horizontal comradeship" experienced by members of socially constructed nations despite their social distance and prevailing "inequality and exploitation," to illuminate the nature and importance of sharing, especially at the inter-family level.<sup>55</sup> Despite obvious power imbalances, elites and non-elites in Stó:lō communities formed social bonds based on their participation, as either givers or receivers, in regional sharing networks. These analytic perspectives help me carve out the intellectual space necessary to view sharing not as a predominantly economic pursuit, as it often appears within western paradigms, but as a social activity governed by the cultural logic and common sense of Indigenous societies.

Lastly, this dissertation is informed by the work of Homi Bhabha, which argues that contact was a transformative process for colonizer and colonized alike. Although the extent of its influence often went unacknowledged, in betweenness or hybridity, to use

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<sup>54</sup> See Geertz, "Thick Description."

<sup>55</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991), 6-7, 224.

Bhabha's term, is an inevitable part of cross-cultural interaction. More than a physical interaction, hybridity represents the myriad, and often subtle, ways that societies and cultures are transformed through interactions with others.<sup>56</sup> Both Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing were and are the products of intercultural interaction, not only during the fur trade (see Chapter Five) and other periods of sustained socio-economic interaction between natives and newcomers, but throughout their longer history on both sides of the Atlantic Ocean. Rather than appearing as culturally unique and mutually unintelligible, socio-economies are presented here as dynamic, contested, and sometimes contradictory arrangements negotiated by a wide array of historical actors who, although connected through common systems of exchange and socio-economic intercourse, were often separated by significant internal fissures. By engaging both Aboriginal and Euro-Canadian economies on their own terms, I challenge historiographical trends that depict Indigenous and non-Indigenous economies as diametrically opposed and mutually unintelligible. In so doing, I hope to generate a richer understanding not only of the unique cultural histories of these societies but also of cross-cultural relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

### 1.3 What Follows

This dissertation is divided into two parts. The first part surveys systems of sharing in three distinct cultural contexts: Stó:lō communities of British Columbia's Fraser River Valley; Cree, Dene, and Metis communities of northwest Saskatchewan; and

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<sup>56</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 111-112.

Euro-Canadian communities of colonial North America and Canada. Relying heavily on ethnographic and oral information, Chapter Two analyses the importance of sharing to Stó:lō culture circa 1800. In addition to insulating Stó:lō people from the unpredictability of environmental fluctuations and change, systems of sharing regulated social relations, mediated power, and forged collective identities in Stó:lō communities. Rather than a simply economic activity or pastime, sharing was a pillar of Stó:lō society and culture.

Chapter Three extends this argument to northwest Saskatchewan during approximately the same time period. Although presumed to be less stratified and more egalitarian than their Stó:lō counterparts, Cree, Dene, and Metis communities in northwestern Saskatchewan also practiced extensive sharing activities that influenced human relationships with the environment and with each other. Contrary to modern assumptions, sharing in this context was neither voluntary nor necessarily altruistic; rather, it was compulsory and infused with power. Giving and receiving were obligatory activities, and there was no stigma attached to receiving shared goods. Chapter Four addresses systems of sharing practiced in Euro-Canadian communities circa 1800. As among Indigenous communities, sharing figured prominently into these non-Indigenous socio-economies. Contrary to existing scholarship that situates Aboriginal economies in direct opposition to non-Aboriginal ones, important similarities are evident, especially in the exchange activities of Euro-Canadian families and other small social units. These cross-cultural similarities challenge the primacy of racial difference in Native-Newcomer historiography.

The second part of this dissertation examines historical events and processes that brought these unique cultural systems into contact with each other between 1800 and

1950. Focusing specifically on the fur trade, Chapter Five analyses how the intersections between Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing contributed to the development of productive socio-economic relationships between Aboriginal peoples and Euro-Canadian traders throughout much of the nineteenth century. These relationships were genuinely hybrid in nature; both groups integrated aspects of the other's socio-economic practices into their own, creating entirely new, cross-cultural social and economic configurations. From this perspective, the "fur trade period" is reimagined as an era punctuated by the expansion of longstanding kin networks, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

Chapter Six examines how, as the fur trade waned in the second half of the nineteenth century, greater Euro-Canadian settlement within Indigenous territories changed the socio-economic relationships that had developed during the fur trade. As colonists increased in number, the newly formed Canadian government actively replaced longstanding, co-operative relationships with temporary transactions that assumed Indigenous peoples to be inferior to and dependent on Canadian society. Resettling northern North America was as much a socio-economic process as it was a geographic or demographic one. As discussed in Chapter Seven, the effects of resettlement became amplified in the twentieth century as government-funded relief and welfare payments increased dramatically and sharing became stigmatized. Rather than an integral aspect of functioning social and economic relationships, the practice of redistributing wealth and resources came to be seen, at least from a non-Indigenous perspective, as a strictly economic refuge for lazy or unproductive peoples. This stigmatization contributed to the marginalization and impoverishment not only of Indigenous peoples but of Indigenous

cultures and societies as well. Yet Aboriginal people have continued to practice sharing as a key determinant of indigeneity in Canada today.

The final chapter of this dissertation reflects on the historical significance of Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing and the effect that contact between these systems has had on the history of Indigenous-Settler relations and the history of Canada. Analyzing the history of sharing in what is now western Canada sheds light on ongoing cross-cultural interactions and helps situate modern challenges facing Indigenous peoples and communities within their cultural and historical contexts. The form, meaning, and function of sharing in the Fraser River Valley and northwestern Saskatchewan changed dramatically between 1800 and 1950 from compulsory systems of exchange that mediated social and environmental relationships to mechanisms of marginalization. But despite the ongoing marginalization of Indigenous peoples and cultures, sharing remains a determinant of indigeneity today and modern collective identities. Never passive victims, Indigenous people have and continue to engage change within their own cultural contexts.

Power and Prestige: Stó:lō Systems of Sharing

Some of you have probably heard the story about the man who was called *Xepá:y* who was a very generous man. This was a story told by the late Bertha Peters, she said that when he died he was transformed into the cedar tree. And that's why (because of his generosity) that's why we get so many things from the cedar tree. Where the tree is used for canoes, it's used for paddles, building our longhouses, building our pit houses, the bark is used for clothing, the inner bark is used for diapers, the roots are used for cedar baskets and then even the cedar bows [sic] themselves are used for spiritual cleansing used as a smudge to get rid of the bad spirits. So all those parts of the cedar are used, so whenever we use any part of the cedar we say a prayer to the spirit of that man *Xepá:y* you know for allowing us, or for his generosity to give all those things to us.<sup>1</sup>

- Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, sharing cultural information while conducting a Stó:lō place names tour in 2008

The history of sharing in Stó:lō Coast Salish territory begins not in the geography known today as the Fraser River Valley or in the modern towns of Yale, Hope, and Chilliwack but in *S'ólh Téméxw*, the hereditary homeland of the Stó:lō people. Although rarely referenced on Canadian maps from any era, *S'ólh Téméxw* is an ancient and storied place that did not always look the way it does now. Long ago it was a place in “chaos,” where humans could shapeshift into animals and vice versa, and where resources, like salmon, sturgeon, and the cedar tree – the staples of Stó:lō society – were scarce or absent. This chaos ended when *Xexá:ls*, the transformer who took the form of a group of four sibling black bears, traveled through the world “making it right” through transformations.<sup>2</sup> In so

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<sup>1</sup> Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, “Aselaw Tour,” unpublished manuscript, 30 October 2008, Stó:lō Research and Resource Management Centre Archives, Sardis, BC.

<sup>2</sup> The moral imperatives imparted by *Xexá:ls* are particularly evident in oral histories. Earlier stories recorded by ethnographers and anthropologists describe the actions of *Xexá:ls* as random and erratic. Some transformations had no moral message and were done by *Xexá:ls* simply to demonstrate their power. For a

doing, *Xexá:ls* created *S'ólh Téméxw* and made life there not only possible, but stable and predictable.

It is within this transformed land that our history of sharing begins. In transforming the land, *Xexá:ls* simultaneously inscribed in the land the cultural importance of sharing and its associated protocols that have been communicated, though not unchanged, through oral histories passed down from one generation to the next. As demonstrated by the Stó:lō social structures and philosophical ideologies explored in this chapter, sharing was not easily divorced from the meta-physical world of which it was a part. Whereas academia, and western discourse in general, often separates economics from politics, spirituality, and other aspects of society,<sup>3</sup> in *S'ólh Téméxw* such distinctions were almost entirely absent. Actions and behaviours were at once physical and meta-physical, economic and spiritual, social and political. Systems of sharing are an expression not only of economic exchange but also of environmental adaptations, social relationships, spiritual beliefs, and power dynamics. Indeed, it was partly through systems of sharing that cultural practices were given form and meaning, and confirmed or challenged.

The story that begins this chapter exemplifies this worldview. In recognition of his generosity, *Xepá:y*, upon his death, was transformed into the cedar tree, one of the Stó:lō people's most important and celebrated resources. Like the story, which has been

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detailed discussion of these oral histories and their meanings, see Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, David M. Schaepe, and Keith Carlson, "Making the World Right through Transformations," in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Vancouver/Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre/Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 6-7.

<sup>3</sup> For a critique of the separation of economics from other facets of life within Stó:lō historiography, see Jay Miller, "Commentary: Back to Basics: Chiefdoms in Puget Sound," *Ethnohistory* 44, no. 2 (Spring 1997): 375-387; and for a broader discussion of this topic, see Marshall Sahlins, *Culture and Practical Reason* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976), 211; and Stuart Plattner, ed., *Economic Anthropology* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1989), 11-13.



passed down from one generation to the next, the cedar tree itself serves as a physical reminder of the social, cultural, and material importance of sharing and cooperation. As Gaynor Macdonald found in his study of the Wiradjuri people of New South Wales, “life is first of all social, and ... economies as systems exist to augment and give expression to the social, not the reverse.”<sup>4</sup> Jana Fortier reached similar conclusions in her work among the Raute of western Nepal, stating that although exchange is central to systems of sharing, social relationships trump materialism.<sup>5</sup> In these places, as in *S’ólh Téméxw*, sharing is woven directly into the fabric of Indigenous life and culture; viewing it as predominantly or exclusively economic in form and purpose misses much of its meaning. Critically analyzing Stó:lō systems of sharing therefore requires a simultaneous engagement with Stó:lō culture and what was considered common sense in *S’ólh Téméxw*. Only then can we begin to understand sharing from Indigenous perspectives, through Stó:lō eyes.

This chapter is a history of these types of stories and logics, the socio-cultural significance of sharing, and how systems of sharing operated within Stó:lō societies prior to widespread migrations of non-Indigenous peoples to *S’ólh Téméxw* in the early nineteenth century. It is, in other words, a Stó:lō ethnohistory of sharing, or at least the beginnings of one. Using stories as well as other oral histories and ethnographic observations recorded by anthropologists and other visitors, it explores the material and

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<sup>4</sup> Gaynor Macdonald, “Economies and Personhood: Demand Sharing among the Wiradjuri of New South Wales,” in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Sharing and Modern Hunter Gatherers*, ed. George W. Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), 91.

<sup>5</sup> Jana Fortier, “Monkey’s Thigh is the Shaman’s Meat: Ideologies of Sharing among the Raute of Nepal,” in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Sharing and Modern Hunter Gatherers*, ed. George W. Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), 113.

social significance of sharing and the types of sharing and other forms of exchange practiced on daily and less frequent bases both within smaller family units and among broader kin-based social networks. In so doing, I also survey the role of trading and raiding, two important but often overlooked aspects of Stó:lō economies that became increasingly important following the arrival of Euro-Canadians and other strangers in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. These stories and documents show that sharing was not a wholly economic activity. In *S'ólh Téméxw* at the turn of the eighteenth century, sharing was at once economic, social, political, and cultural. Although not always followed in practice as in theory, it effectively regulated human uses of local environments; structured social relationships between close family members, distant relatives, and strangers; and mediated relations of power at every stratum of society. Removing systems of sharing from their socio-cultural contexts and viewing them in strictly economic terms would thus miss many of their most salient functions and features. This would also be, from a nineteenth century Stó:lō perspective at least, totally illogical. Sharing was, and in some ways remains, woven directly into the social fabric of daily life in *S'ólh Téméxw*. Navigating the history of Stó:lō peoples and societies requires an engagement with practices of sharing and exchange more broadly. And so this history begins by situating sharing within its cultural contexts to better understand how it functioned, what it meant, and how it had, and would continue, to change.

This analysis of sharing in *S'ólh Téméxw* departs in significant ways from existing analyses of exchange in Stó:lō society. Although sources about Stó:lō culture 200 years ago are relatively rich ethnographically – anthropologists have been working in the area for more than a century – few have dedicated much space to sharing, and those that have

adopt a largely materialist approach to the subject. Most important among these is the work of Wayne Suttles, a classically trained anthropologist and ethnographer who documented in great detail the potlatch, kinship systems, and other aspects of Stó:lō socio-economies during his long and prolific career. Informed by economic anthropology and set against the backdrop of increasing awareness of the environment and environmentalism in the 1970s and 1980s, Suttles' work stresses the importance of environmental adaptation, the primary objective, according to Suttles, of Stó:lō sharing practices.<sup>6</sup> Although much of this work was written decades ago, his conclusions remain valid. Stó:lō systems of sharing, and exchange more broadly, at the turn of the eighteenth century were uniquely well adapted to local environments. As discussed below, they ensured not only survival but, in many instances, prosperity.

Yet, the purpose and importance of sharing is not entirely material; sharing was and remains socially significant, a point raised by some of Suttles' successors. Building on the rich ethnographic tradition established by earlier anthropologists and ethnographers such as Suttles, William Elmendorf, Marian Smith, Wilson Duff, Homer Barnett, Charles Hill-Tout, Diamond Jenness, and Franz Boas,<sup>7</sup> the work of Albert

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<sup>6</sup> See Wayne Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays* (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987); Wayne Suttles, ed., *Handbook of North America Indians, vol. 7, Northwest Coast* (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1990); Wayne Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish," *American Anthropologist* 62, no. 2 (1960): 296-305.

<sup>7</sup> See Suttles, *Coast Salish Essays*, Suttles, *Handbook of North America Indians* and Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish." See also William Elmendorf, *The Structure of Twana Culture: Pre-White Tribal lifeways on Washington's Hood Canal* (Pullman: Washington State University Press, 1992); Marian W. Smith, *The Puyallup-Nisqually* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940); Wilson Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir No. 1, 1952); Homer Garner Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1955); Charles Hill-Tout, *The Salish People: The Local Contribution of Charles Hill-Tout, Volume III: The Mainland Halkomelem*. ed. Ralph Maud (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1978); Diamond Jenness, ed., *Faith of a Coast Salish Indian*, Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir no. 3, (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum, 1955); Diamond Jenness, *The Faith of a Coast Salish Indian* (Victoria: British Columbia Provincial Museum,

(Sonny) McHalsie, Bruce Miller, Keith Thor Carlson, and others<sup>8</sup> have provided valuable insights into Stó:lō history, society, and culture. In particular, McHalsie, a community-based, non-academic intellectual has fused scholarly research techniques with Stó:lō epistemologies rooted in orality, genealogy, and knowledge of place to create genuinely hybrid interpretations of Stó:lō history and the role of non-Stó:lō people within it.<sup>9</sup>

Miller, meanwhile, has re-situated the history of Stó:lō law and politics using an ethnohistorical approach that privileges Stó:lō perspectives of society and its proper function,<sup>10</sup> while Keith Thor Carlson's many publications demonstrate the benefits of not only including Stó:lō people in Canadian history but of inverting the standard scholarly paradigm so as to incorporate Canada into Stó:lō history. *A Stó:lō Coast Salish*

*Historical Atlas*, for example, uses oral histories, origin stories, archaeological findings,

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Anthropology in British Columbia, Memoir No. 2, 1955); Franz Boas, *Indian Tribes of the Lower Fraser River: The 64th Report of the British Association for the Advancement of Science for 1890* (London: 1894); Franz Boas, *Indian Legends from the North Pacific Coast of America*, trans. Dietrich Bertz (Victoria: BC Indian Language Project, 1977).

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, David M. Schaepe, "Stó:lō Communication and Transportation Routes, c.1850," in Carlson, *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 60-61; David M. Schaepe, "Rock Fortifications: Archaeological Insights into Pre-Contact Warfare and Sociopolitical Organization Among the Stó:lō of the Lower Fraser River Canyon, B.C.," *American Antiquity* 71, no. 4, (2006): 671-705; Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities Around Puget Sound* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1998); Daniel Boxberger, *To Fish in Common: The Ethnohistory of Lummi Indian Salmon Fishing* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1989); Jay Miller, *Lushootseed Culture and the Shamanic Odyssey: An Anchored Radiance* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1999); Crisca Bierwert, *Brushed by Cedar, Living by the River: Coast Salish Figures of Power* (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1999); and John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Although much of McHalsie's work is created for and housed internally at the Stó:lō Nation Research and Resource Management Centre, important examples of his work include *Naxaxalhts 'I*, Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, "We Have to Take Care of Everything that Belongs to Us," in *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish*, ed. Bruce G. Miller (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007), 82-130; numerous plates in Carlson, *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*; and Keith Thor Carlson with Albert "Sonny" McHalsie, *I Am Stó:lō: Katherine Explores Her Heritage* (Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1998).

<sup>10</sup> Bruce G. Miller, ed., *Be of Good Mind: Essays on the Coast Salish* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); Bruce G. Miller, "Rereading the Ethnographic Record: The Problem of Justice in the Coast Salish World," in *Coming to Shore: Northwest Coast Ethnology, Traditions, and Visions*, ed. Marie Mauzé, Michael E. Harkin, and Sergei Kan (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 279-304; Bruce G. Miller, *The Problem of Justice: Tradition and Law in the Coast Salish World* (Lincoln and London: University of Nebraska Press, 2001); Bruce G. Miller and Daniel Boxberger, "Creating Chiefdoms: The Puget Sound Case," *Ethnohistory* 41, no. 2 (1994): 267-93.

ethnographic observations, and other historical material to construct Stó:lō histories of the land, its resources, and its inhabitants, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous,<sup>11</sup> and his most recent book *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time* uses a variety of oral and written sources to analyze Stó:lō collective identity and historical consciousness in a way that allows for the inclusion of both structure and event in ethnohistorical analysis. The approaches used by these authors help craft a dynamic and rich interpretation of life and history in *S'ólh Téméxw* that emphasize Stó:lō ways of seeing and interacting with the world and history. Stó:lō identity and culture appear not as a response to the appearance and dominance of Euro-Canadians but as a longstanding, resilient expression of collective unity. Although contact and modernity have influenced the shape this expression has taken, Stó:lō history, Carlson argues, is not a product of the actions of non-Stó:lō people.<sup>12</sup>

This chapter contributes to Stó:lō and Indigenous historiography by analyzing Stó:lō systems of sharing, and exchange in general, within a framework firmly rooted in and informed by Stó:lō cultural frameworks. To do so, I investigate how they operated in daily life, who participated in them, and what cultural protocols regulated their use. I am thus able to identify, although never fully comprehend, the socio-economic significance sharing held in Stó:lō society and how it transformed and was transformed by colonialism. The resulting analysis is divided into two parts. First I analyze the ecological significance of sharing and how it was mobilized by Stó:lō people to insulate

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<sup>11</sup> Carlson, *A Stó:lō Coast Salish Historical Atlas*. See also Keith Thor Carlson, ed., *You are Asked to Witness: The Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History* (Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1997); and Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

<sup>12</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 32.

them from the hazards of an unpredictable environment. In this section I explore the composition of and meaning ascribed to the category of family in Stó:lō society and how family members worked and shared cooperatively to account for ecological fluctuations. In the second, larger part, I examine the uses and consequences of sharing beyond the immediate family and kin group among the upper classes of Stó:lō society. Here, I pay particular attention to power relations, cultural constructions of wealth, and the ways in which sharing was mobilized by high status people to generate wealth and prestige. I also contextualize these inter-family forms of sharing alongside other forms of exchange, specifically trading and raiding, more commonly practiced among lower classes. Lastly, I discuss Stó:lō potlatching practices as physical manifestations of the social relationships, elaborate exchange networks, and power relations that permeated Stó:lō society at the turn of the nineteenth century as well as the social consequences of hoarding wealth or refusing to share.

In so doing, this chapter argues that Stó:lō systems of sharing have played a more significant role within Stó:lō society than the existing historiography and western frameworks allow, and that by contextualizing them within their cultural frameworks, it is possible to illuminate subtle but important features of Stó:lō society. Although materialist in part, sharing is inherently a social activity. Historical evidence reveals that sharing, as an integral aspect of life in *S'ólh Téméxw*, informed human interactions with the natural environment and between people, thereby establishing a unique form of social welfare based on countless generations of ecological adaptation and social negotiation, and playing a crucial role in mediating power relations between elite and non-elite segments of Stó:lō communities. Similarly, although sharing permeated all spheres of

Stó:lō society, internal divisions – especially those related to social class, gender, and familial belonging – affected its meaning and importance. For elite Stó:lō men and women, systems of sharing could be used to acquire and safeguard status and power, while for lower class peoples, particularly those with few or no familial connections to desirable resources, sharing was obligatory and a way of stunting upward social movement, thereby protecting the status quo. Recognizing these subtle but important aspects of sharing sheds light on the internal complexities of Stó:lō society and culture and the complicated interactions that ensued between Stó:lō peoples and European immigrants.

### 2.1 Sharing within the Family: Ecological Adaptation and Social Cohesion in *S'ólh Téméxw*

Systems of sharing, as Suttles and others have noted, were and remain in part materialist adaptations to local environments and resources. For the Stó:lō, a subgroup of the Coast Salish, the local environment encompassed the watershed areas of what is now the Fraser River, Puget Sound, and the Strait of Juan de Fuca in southern British Columbia and northern Washington State (see Figure 2.1), an area sometimes referred to collectively as the “Coast Salish Sea,” a continuous body of water representing the geographic and spatial centre of Coast Salish life (see Figure 2.2).<sup>13</sup> People inhabiting the shores of this sea were connected within what Suttles calls “a social and biological continuum”<sup>14</sup> and were known in the Halkomelem Stó:lō language as Xwélmexw, human

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<sup>13</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 61-62.

<sup>14</sup> Wayne Suttles, ““They Recognize No Superior Chief”: The Strait of Juan de Fuca in the 1790’s,” in Jose Luis Peset, ed., *Culturas de la Costa Noroeste de America* (Madrid: Turner, 1989), 252.

beings or “people of life.” Although this term did not necessarily infer familiarity or friendship between Coast Salish individuals, it did distinguish them from non-Coast

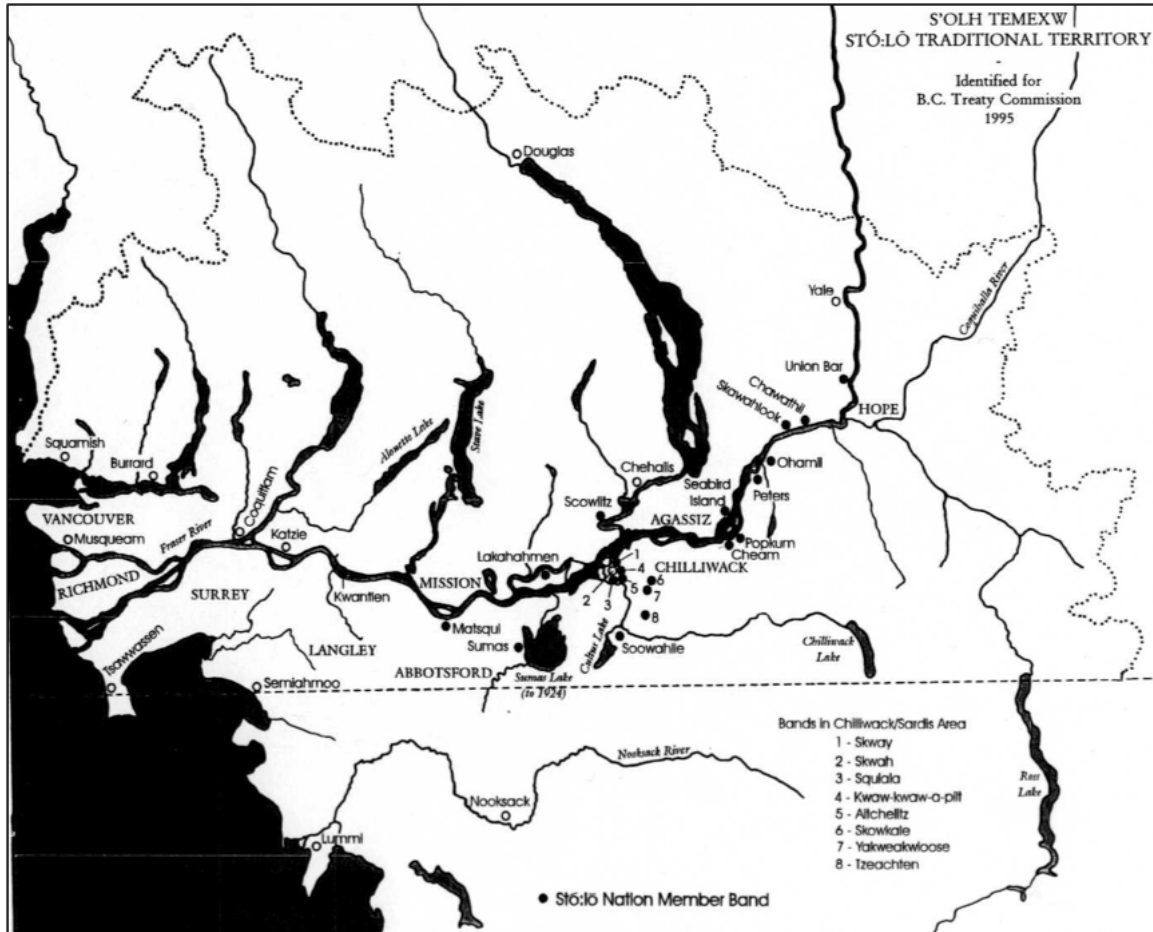


Figure 2.1: Map of *S'ólh Téméxw*, Stó:lō Traditional Territory, prepared for the B.C. Treaty Commission, 1995. From: Stó:lō Nation Research and Resource Management Centre Archives.

Salish people, known as *lats'umexw*, meaning different or “other.”<sup>15</sup> Indeed, as anthropologist Marian Smith concluded from her spatial analysis of Coast Salish communities around Puget Sound, Coast Salish communities demonstrated a significant degree of social unity among various tribes in the area, amounting to a strong sense of

<sup>15</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, “Expressions of Collective Identity,” in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Vancouver/Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre/Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 24-25.



collective identity.<sup>16</sup> In the decades since Smith’s research was first published, other scholars, including Carlson, have added to her work. Using largely qualitative methods, Carlson argues that the lower Fraser River drainage system, an area stretching from modern-day Yale to the Pacific Ocean, connected the residents of “no less than twenty-four sub-watersheds” to a larger regional social grouping distinct from other Coast Salish collectives centred around Puget Sound, the Strait of Juan de Fuca, and elsewhere.<sup>17</sup> The Fraser River watershed therefore served and continues to serve as the geographical basis of Stó:lō identity and the physical boundary of *S’ólh Téméxw*.

Within *S’ólh Téméxw*, natural resources abounded (see Figure 2.3). Near the ocean, for example, shellfish, molluscs, and marine mammals were common while bog cranberries, berries, and wapato, a root vegetable, were found in lowland areas along tributary watersheds of the Fraser River. Salmon, the single most important foodstuff for Stó:lō people, were abundant in both these ecological zones but were most plentiful farther upriver in the lower canyon where the strong current enabled Stó:lō fishers to catch large quantities of salmon and the strong winds allowed them to preserve the meat through wind-drying techniques. Away from waterways in subalpine regions, game, berries, and tubers were harvested. This abundance of foodstuffs and the ecological diversity found in this relatively small area supported one of the largest non-agricultural populations in the world.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Smith’s conclusions were based on a quantitative analysis of more than 170 interviews with Coast Salish people around the Puget Sound area. See Smith, *The Puyallup-Nisqually*.

<sup>17</sup> Drawing on Smith and previously ignored historical sources, Carlson argues that earlier scholars underestimated the significance of inter-village collective identities. See Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 44-46.

<sup>18</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, “The Numbers Game: Interpreting Historical Stó:lō Demographics,” in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Vancouver/Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre/Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 76.

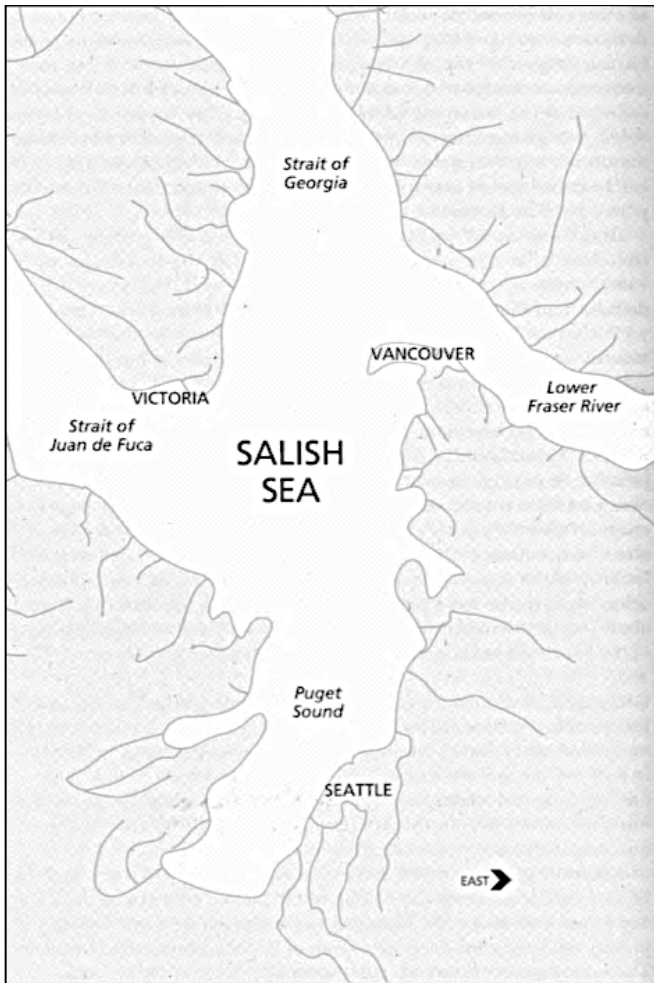


Figure 2.2: Map of Salish Sea, comprised of Lower Fraser River, Puget Sound, Strait of Georgia, and Strait of Juan de Fuca. From: Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 56.

The availability of these resources, however, varied both seasonally and annually, necessitating sophisticated systems of cooperation and exchange at both the local and regional levels. In his analysis of Coast Salish exchange practices, Suttles identified four environmental factors that affected access to local resources: variety of food (land and sea mammals, fish, berries, roots, etc.); local variation (from region to region); seasonal variation (especially for plants and fish); and yearly fluctuations (cyclical changes or

climactic variation).<sup>19</sup> As Suttles notes, each of these variables was potentially harmful to a family or group's wellbeing but it was annual changes in resource availability, which were far less predictable than regional or seasonal fluctuations, that "demanded [greater] versatility and adaptability."<sup>20</sup> This unpredictability compelled people and families, usually composed of brothers, cousins, and brothers-in-law, to work together, coordinating their labour to mediate the effects of ecological variability. Anthropologists refer to this practice as generalized reciprocity, the ongoing, reciprocal exchange of labour and foodstuffs within small social units without the expectation of immediate compensation.<sup>21</sup> Within *S'ólh Téméxw*, generalized reciprocity is a sophisticated adaptation to unique local environments that helped stabilize an unpredictable resource base and allow Stó:lō communities to flourish.

Food was also shared with deceased ancestors and less fortunate relatives who lacked the means to procure it themselves. At ceremonial burnings, for example, spiritual leaders, known as *hi'hiyeqwels*, would burn plates of food prepared by female relatives of the deceased. The fire symbolically and literally transformed the food into spiritual gifts as the living shared with the dead. Among the Stó:lō, spirits that are "cared for" and "fed" are less likely to cause trouble and can even provide aid to living relatives.<sup>22</sup> Often, these burnings coincided with larger food sharing ceremonies among living relatives.

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<sup>19</sup> See Carlson, "Expressions of Collective Identity," 24-29; and Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish," 302.

<sup>20</sup> Wayne Suttles, "Coping with Abundance: Subsistence on the Northwest Coast," in *Coast Salish Essays*, 62. See also, Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 47-48.

<sup>21</sup> Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish," 296. For more information about generalized reciprocity and anthropology, see Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton Inc., 1972); Marshall Sahlins "On the Sociology of Primitive Exchange," in *The Relevance of Models for Social Anthropology*, ed. M. Banton (London: Tavistock Press, 1965); and Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen West, 1969).

<sup>22</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," *Native Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (1997): 17.

Similarly, at feasts and other family gatherings, people “less well off” received gifts of food and other items from relatives who could afford to share what they had. Much like the *wahkootowin* protocols of Cree society that ensured “reciprocity, assistance, and mutual responsibility” (discussed in Chapter Three), these socio-economic networks and systems of sharing effectively created a safety net, a form of social welfare, available to all members of the kin group. Poor people in this context were not those who lacked material goods or wealth but those without the family connections that made them part of a viable extended economic network. Poverty in this context was symptomatic of unconnectedness and was experienced collectively.

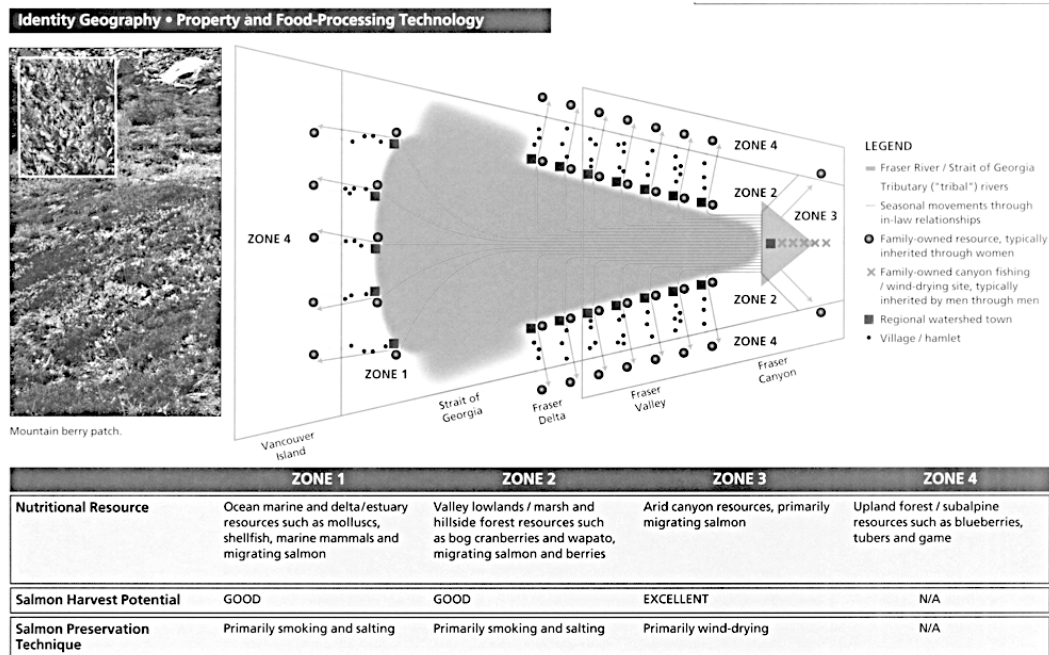


Figure 2.3: Diagram of salmon and other resource availability in *S'ólh Téméxw* by ecological zone. From: Carlson, “Expressions of Collective Identity,” 26.

Beyond its ecological considerations, intra-family systems of sharing thus reinforced familial and social bonds within kin groups. Despite the importance of the wider Coast Salish collective identities discussed above, family was, and in some cases

remains, arguably the most important determinant of collective identity in *S'ólh Téméxw*. According to Carlson, familial relationships, which included immediate and distant relatives, in-laws, and close friends (often referred to as “fictive kin”), “were the centre of Stó:lō peoples’ social universe.”<sup>23</sup> Collectively, fictive kin were identified by the term *siyá:ye* which Carlson interprets as “someone outside the standard kin and affine system with whom one wishes to establish and cement a relationship.”<sup>24</sup> Blood kin, by way of comparison, was equally expansive but much more precise. There exist, for example, more than one hundred terms to identify specific kin relationships denoting blood, marital, in-law (or affinal), step, and deceased relations.<sup>25</sup> This abundance of terms results in part from the historic prevalence of polygamy and a bilateral kinship system that made the entire system relatively flexible and far-reaching. Smaller social units comprised of the families of brothers, male cousins, and/or brothers-in-law were thus closely connected to much larger social collectives.

These kin relationships have been depicted by Carlson and Miller on a spectrum of kinship relations radiating outward from a central core of kin and *siyá:ye* (close family, affines, and friends) toward more distant relatives and acquaintances, with *lats'uméxw* (strangers and enemies) existing on the periphery of the socio-spatial world (see Figure 2.4).<sup>26</sup> In his seminal study of non-market economies, Marshall Sahlins concluded that this type of social distance is significant in that it regulated exchange

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>24</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 85-86.

<sup>25</sup> Carlson, “Expressions of Collective Identity,” 27-28.

<sup>26</sup> See Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics;” and Bruce G. Miller, “Centrality and Measures of Regional Structure in Aboriginal Western Washington,” *Ethnology* 28, no. 3 (1989): 265-276.

activity. Generalized reciprocity, for example, was a most common form of exchange among close kin but almost entirely absent among unrelated or distantly related kin:

[r]eciprocity is inclined toward the generalized pole by close kinship, toward the negative extreme in proportion to kinship distance ... The several reciprocities from freely bestowed gift to chicanery amount to a spectrum of sociability, from sacrifice in favour of another to self-interested gain at the expense of another.<sup>27</sup>

Other scholars have reached similar conclusions. In his study of Navajo communities in southwest United States, Richard White observed that Navajo people “distrusted nonrelatives who are not of their clan ... that is those who had no obligations of sharing or reciprocity.”<sup>28</sup> In both cases, the extent of a person or family’s kin ties determines both the nature of their relationship to another party as well as the type of exchange to be pursued. By thus connecting families and members of extended kin groups within reciprocal exchange networks, sharing was thus at once material and social, a response to environmental variability and an expression and moulder of local and regional collective identities.

The language and terminology Stó:lō people use to describe kin relationships further demonstrate their significance. While some terms, like *tá:l* (mother) and *má:l* (father) are quite easily translated into English, other terms, such as *skw’élwélh*, which refers to the parents of a married couple (or co-parents-in-law, as Suttles called them), are more difficult to translate. Similarly, some common terms, like *qeló:qtel* which refers to siblings as well as first to fourth cousins, include a wider range of relationships than their

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<sup>27</sup> Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*, 196-197.

<sup>28</sup> Richard White, *The Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 239.

English translation (sibling/cousin) permits.<sup>29</sup> This abundance of terms and the nuances contained therein testify to the social significance of Stó:lō kin networks. “[I]t was the extended family, and in particular in-laws,” Carlson concludes “that constituted the most meaningful network of inter-group affiliation within Coast Salish society.”<sup>30</sup>

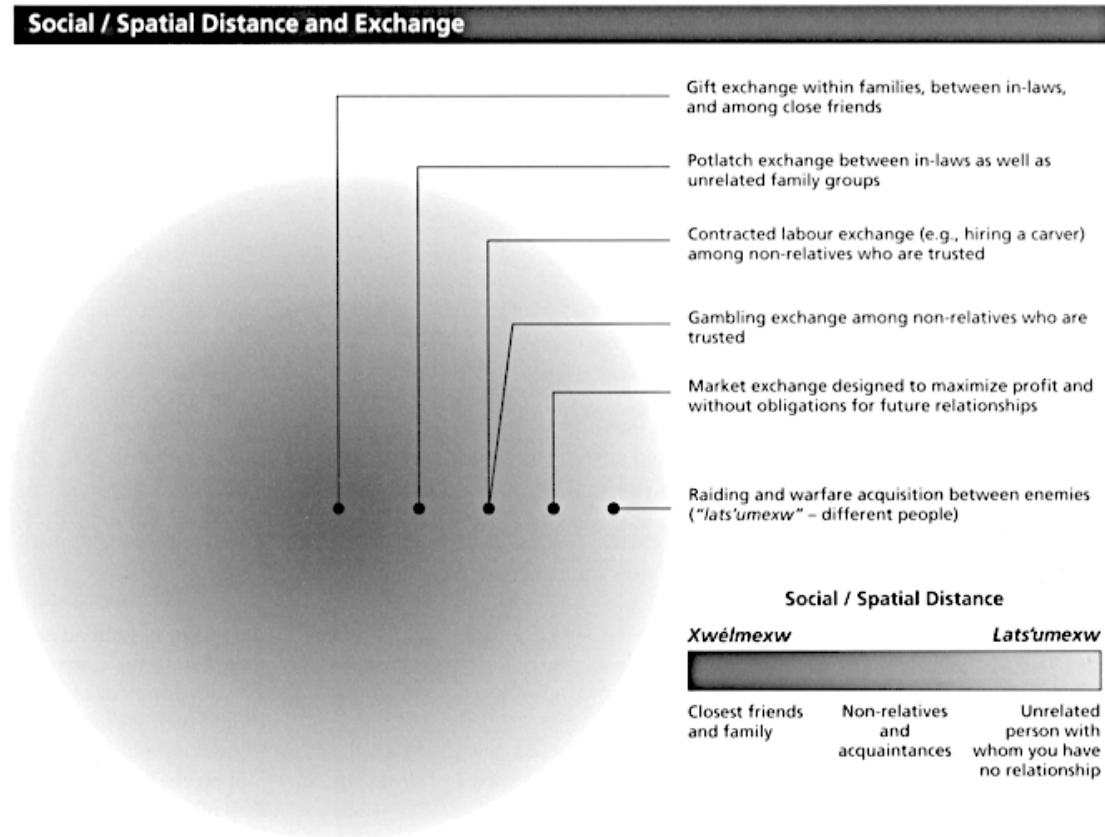


Figure 2.4: Diagram illustrating the relationship between specific modes of exchange and the socio-spatial difference separating exchange parties. From: Carlson, “Expressions of Trade and Exchange,” 57.

<sup>29</sup> Carlson, “Expressions of Collective Identity,” 27-29.

<sup>30</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 48.

## 2.2 Power and Prestige: Inter-Family Sharing and Other Forms of Exchange

Sharing, and exchange in general, played a somewhat different role beyond the immediate family. Although rooted in strategies of ecological adaptation, inter-family exchange circa 1800 was as much about acquiring and maintaining power as it was about living sustainably on the land. And although sharing informed local and regional collective identities and contributed to social cohesion within Stó:lō families, it was also a site of fracture and discord, especially between members of different classes or kin groups. Neither monolithic nor homogenous, the Coast Salish collective identities and formulations of family described above were transected by various markers of difference that separated elite, high status peoples and families from the middle and lower classes, thereby regulating the types of exchange practices available to them. Within *S'ólh Téméxw*, sharing was, therefore, both empowering and oppressive, altruistic and obligatory, unifying and isolating.

Arguably, the most significant marker of difference within Stó:lō society at the turn of the nineteenth century was social status. Due to the relatively abundant resource base of the Salish Sea watershed area, Stó:lō communities were largely sedentary and densely populated relative to other Indigenous communities in northern North America. They were also socially stratified, containing at least three separate classes: a relatively small elite, upper class; a large middle class; and a small lower class that included “slaves.”<sup>31</sup> Differences between these classes were predicated on a number of factors including resource access, genealogical/historical knowledge, and the accumulation and

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<sup>31</sup> Wayne Suttles, “Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish,” *American Anthropologist* 60, no. 3 (June 1958).



redistribution of wealth goods, all of which were closely connected and mutually reinforcing, meaning that social mobility was likely limited.

Because access to natural resources in *S'ólh Téméxw* was unequal across both space and time, control of a stable supply of resources, especially ones that did not occur locally, was prestigious. Wind-dried salmon from the canyon, berries from the tidal lowlands, marine life from the delta, and deer from the mountains were all manifestations of wealth, and having access to them was a sign of high status, especially for families that had access to resources from more than one ecological zone. “It’s like when you’re giving wild potatoes away [which only grow down river] and you’re up[river] in Yale,” says McHalsie, “you’re telling everybody you’re high-status. You’re saying ‘I have connections down there because I have potatoes.’”<sup>32</sup> As among the Wiradjuri of New South Wales, “[p]ower, derived from prestige,” according to Gaynor Macdonald, “is acquired and maintained through control of resources.”<sup>33</sup>

Access to productive resources sites was predicated on the family’s historical knowledge. Members of elite families, Suttles notes, required the proper genealogical information and “special practical and ritual knowledge necessary for its [the resource site’s] successful operation.”<sup>34</sup> Securing these rights required that the family demonstrate deep genealogical ties to such a place, possess the knowledge of relevant stories and songs, and harness the spirit power required to manage and harvest the resource. This knowledge was demonstrated most often through storytelling, oral narratives, and other forms of oration based on information collected and recorded by family members who

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<sup>32</sup> *Naxaxalhts’I*, Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, interviewed by Liam Haggarty at Stó:lō Nation, Sardis, British Columbia, 7 May 2009.

<sup>33</sup> Macdonald, “Economies and Personhood,” 97.

<sup>34</sup> Suttles, “Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish,” 500-501.

were trained in history and memory. In this context, knowing one's history was critically important to legitimizing access to important resource sites and the building of wealth and power. Indeed, "smelá:lh," the Halkomelem term used to identify members of high class families, translates as "worthy people" or people who "know their history."<sup>35</sup>

Being high class also meant having knowledge about certain social matters and esoteric customs unknown to the lower classes. Although its content varied regionally and from one family to the next, this private knowledge usually included teachings about what constituted good manners and proper moral behaviour and was normally passed down to children from their grandparents and great aunts and uncles.<sup>36</sup> In some Coast Salish communities, according to Suttles, this private or guarded knowledge was what we might call "advice." In addition to summarizing genealogical information and ancestors' great deeds, it often contained family traditions, revealed gossip about other families and their shortcomings, described secret signals for identifying people of lower-class descent, outlined instructions for acquiring the right kind of guardian spirit, and provided a "good deal of solid moral training." This type of information was closely guarded by the high status families to whom it belonged and was rarely, if ever, disclosed publicly.<sup>37</sup> In fact, artists were often prohibited from including representations of private knowledge on carvings and other artefacts due to the potentially harmful consequences.<sup>38</sup>

Low status families, on the other hand, were considered "worthless people" because they had lost or forgotten their history and therefore had little or no access to

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<sup>35</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 53-54, 166. See also, Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish."

<sup>36</sup> Suttles, "Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish," 297.

<sup>37</sup> Suttles, "Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish," 501.

<sup>38</sup> Wayne Suttles, "Productivity and its Constraints: A Coast Salish Case," in *Coast Salish Essays*, 132.

productive resource sites.<sup>39</sup> Included in this lowest tier of the populace were slaves, often captives from other areas who had no familial ties to the local landscape or resources. Referred to as *st'èxem*, meaning “worthless people,” these people, although they might have ancestral connections to important resource rights and prominent families, had lost or forgotten their history, ancestry, stories, and, writes Suttles, “had no advice” due to their own or their forbearers’ “misfortune or foolishness.”<sup>40</sup> The use of “lost” and “forgotten” is significant, Carlson notes, for these words imply “a historical process of change: people become *st'èxem* after they have become disassociated from their history. Thus, theirs is a history of losing their history; and, in lacking history, *st'èxem* people had neither claim to descent from prestigious ... [p]eople nor the ability to trace ownership rights or affinal access privileges to productive property sites.”<sup>41</sup> This lack of access rendered these people unconnected and excluded from middle and upper classes.

### *Inter-Family Sharing*

To expand their access to valuable, especially distant, resources and enhance their status, local elites forged familial connections with prominent families from distant communities through arranged marriages. “For the upper class,” Suttles observes, “the most proper and usual sort of marriage was one arranged between families of similar

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<sup>39</sup> Carlson, Carlson, “Expressions of Collective Identity,” 27.

<sup>40</sup> Suttles, “Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish,” 501. See also Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 297. McHalsie put it this way: “The lower class probably wouldn’t have any slaves, couldn’t afford them, and doesn’t have the elders to teach them their genealogies so they might have forgotten who their relatives were. Probably had relatives up there but because they didn’t know their genealogies they didn’t have elders saying ‘Oh, you should be able to go over there because your great-granduncle came from there, you should be able to go over there because your great-grandmother came from there.’ If you don’t have an elder teaching you that then you lose that connection.” (McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.)

<sup>41</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 166-67.

social standing in different communities.”<sup>42</sup> This type of “inter-village marriage,” anthropologist William Elmendorf adds, “was basic to a complex regional system of production, distribution, and redistribution”<sup>43</sup> among elite families. So basic in fact that the marriage, Suttles continues, “might be made to endure longer than the life of one party to it, for if one or the other died the family of the deceased might provide another spouse for the survivor.”<sup>44</sup> This replacement of a lost spouse demonstrates that arranged marriages were more than a union between two individuals; they were family unions that provided the new in-laws with access to one another’s resource base and labour pool and increased or affirmed their social standing. Through marriage, families expanded the core of a their socio-spatial universe as *lats’umexw* (strangers) became *xwélmexw* (known) and families once estranged by geographical distance were joined in a socio-economic network based on reciprocity and mutual obligation. Although these connections limited elite families’ potential trade partners (discussed below), they provided an additional degree of ecological stability while enhancing their wealth, status, and power.

The nature of sharing between newly joined in-laws took various forms. The marriage ceremony itself, for example, included more than an exchange of family members as the spouses’ parents (*skw’élwélh*) and male relatives gifted food and wealth items to each other, thereby demonstrating their own wealth and displaying the types of

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<sup>42</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 297.

<sup>43</sup> Elmendorf, *The Structure of Twana Culture*, 304. Building these types of expansive kinship networks was particularly important, Carlson argues, where the environment changed over time and space: “[i]n a world where food resources were so unevenly distributed on the landscape and so subject to periods of seasonal abundance and absence, and where processing and storing foods demanded short intense bursts of labour activity, being able to demonstrate family connections to a variety of property owners was of vital importance.” See Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 52-53.

<sup>44</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 297.

resources to which their new in-laws now had access. “[T]hat’s why there’s that exchange of gifts at a wedding” McHalsie remarks. “That’s basically what they’re trying to tell each other, ‘this is what you’re marrying into, this is the wealth you have.’”<sup>45</sup> After the ceremony each family could visit the home of the other to make spontaneous, unannounced presentations, usually of food. Aided by members of his community, an in-law, usually a spouse’s father or another male relative, would travel by canoe with great quantities of surplus food that would be gifted to the host family upon arrival. The hosts would share the food with local community members and hire a speaker to thank their in-laws and all those who helped bring the gifts with wealth items, such as carvings, blankets, and even sacred songs, or other foodstuffs. Guests would be compensated for the use of their canoes, paddles, bailers, and other equipment used on the journey as if they had been rented.<sup>46</sup> At some point in the future, the ceremony would be reversed; host would become guest and the wealth previously received would be once again exchanged for food or other items. In so doing families were able to “bank” surplus food with other communities and vice versa.<sup>47</sup> “Instead of food storing wealth,” Suttles argues, “wealth stored food” as families accumulated what today might be called “social capital.”<sup>48</sup>

Sharing between in-laws also included direct access to resources. A family living downriver, for example, might travel upriver to the canyon in late summer to participate in wind-drying salmon. There, in-laws with resource rights to both salmon and wind-

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<sup>45</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009. See also Thomas Crosby, *Among the An-kome-nuns; or Flathead Tribes of Indians of the Pacific Coast* (Toronto: William Briggs, 1907), 88-95.

<sup>46</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 298. See also Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia*, 76.

<sup>47</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 302.

<sup>48</sup> Suttles, “Coping with Abundance: Subsistence on the Northwest Coast,” 62. See also, Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 47-48.

drying spots would grant the family a finite amount of time, based on the size of the family and number of dependents, to catch and dry this valuable fish. For a well-connected canyon family, this event may be repeated several times as in-laws from different parts of *S'ólh Téméxw* visited them. In return, the canyon family would receive either foods and other goods or the right to harvest another resource, such as wapato or berries, when traveling to other ecological zones at different times of the year.<sup>49</sup> Whereas sharing with immediate family members most often took the form of generalized reciprocity, sharing with in-laws was more akin to balanced reciprocity, that is, with the expectation of return sometime in the future. As White observed among the Navajo, “[w]ithin the family, sharing was assumed; outside the family, gifts [exchanged between in-laws] brought reciprocal obligations, and rich men could presume some returns in the form of labor” or other type of good or service. Refusing to share food or satisfy one’s reciprocal obligations was considered “an anti-social act of enormous proportions. . . . If people refused to share, ridicule and supernatural sanctions were brought against them. Navajos shared to avoid the stigma of witchcraft.”<sup>50</sup> Similarly strict social protocols existed among the Stó:lō which, according to McHalsie, ensured that gifts of food or requests for access to resource sites could not be refused.<sup>51</sup>

Arranged marriages and the wealth they generated allowed families to specialize their labour. While some members procured foods, others might be engaged in basket weaving, canoe making, drumming, singing, and so on. “A man who could produce

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<sup>49</sup> As Duff noted, an “important feature of the seasonal rounds of activities were visits paid to relatives, usually during the slack period in the fall. Up river people, for example, would go down to Musqueam at this time to visit relatives and pick cranberries with them.” (Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia*, 76.) See also Elmendorf, *The Structure of Twana Culture*, 304.

<sup>50</sup> White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 238, 241.

<sup>51</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.

more food,” Suttles observes, “could release some of the members of his household from food-producing activities and let them produce wealth.”<sup>52</sup> McHalsie agrees, noting that “when giving baskets away, you’re saying ‘I have knowledgeable people in my family that know how to make baskets.’ Or, ‘Look what I have, I have paddles.’”<sup>53</sup> Combined with abundant food supplies, the wealth generated by these specialists allowed elite families to accumulate and redistribute great quantities of valuable items. This accumulation of wealth, in the process, helped elevate their social standing. Elite families, therefore, were those who were able to claim hereditary rights to productive resources sites from which they generated great wealth and power through the harvesting and redistribution of food items and material goods derived from specialized labour.

Within the context of arranged marriages and specialized labour, sharing, in the form of gift giving, was the most common type of exchange and a prerequisite of power in Stó:lō society. “High status,” Suttles writes, “comes from sharing food. ... [H]aving productive affinals [in-laws] meant being a food provider yourself – as long as you could thank your affinals properly for their gifts.”<sup>54</sup> Echoing these observations, Carlson notes that “[b]y sharing food, a person redistributed wealth and therefore increased, or validated, one’s status.”<sup>55</sup> Aside from securing peaceful relations, these marriage alliances, “created bonds of obligation between in-laws – obligations that often expressed themselves in reciprocal gift exchange.”<sup>56</sup> Therefore, at the same time that Stó:lō people

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<sup>52</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 22.

<sup>53</sup> *McHalsie*, interview, 7 May 2009.

<sup>54</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 299.

<sup>55</sup> Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 21.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.* 18.

were managing fluctuations in the ecological and social environment, they were also acquiring and affirming prestige and power.

The written historical record corroborates these ethnographic observations, demonstrating that the same cultural protocols also applied to Newcomers and their “families.” In 1792, for example, Stó:lō people in Musqueam territory, near modern day Vancouver, British Columbia, shared salmon with Captain George Vancouver and his crew on a regular, often daily, basis.<sup>57</sup> Although no marriages occurred between Vancouver’s transient crew and the Musqueam, the extension of Stó:lō socio-economic practices to these Newcomers demonstrated both their wealth and the possibility of expanded ties. Similarly, in 1828, Stó:lō chief Nicamuns arranged a marriage between one of his daughters and Mr. Yale, a prominent Hudson Bay Company (HBC) fur trader stationed at Fort Langley in close proximity to Nicamuns’s village of Kwantlen. The marriage affirmed and expanded existing economic relationships between Nicamuns, his brother Whitlakainum, and the post, rendering them not just trading partners but relatives whose interactions would from then on be mediated at least in part by Stó:lō inter-family protocols (see Chapter Four for a detailed discussion of these cross-cultural marriages and the protocols that applied to them).<sup>58</sup>

Explorer Simon Fraser occupied a more complicated socio-economic space while traveling through Stó:lō territory. At some villages, according to his journal entries from

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<sup>57</sup> George Vancouver, “Journal Entries,” in *A Voyage of Discovery to the North Pacific Ocean and Around the World, 1791-1795*, ed. W. Kaye Lamb (London: Hakluyt Society, 1984).

<sup>58</sup> See M. MacLachlan, ed., entries for 13 and 25 November 1828 in *The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1998), 85-86. Tension later arose when Fort employees discovered that Mr. Yale’s bride was already married to a Skagit man. See Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 305.



July 1808, he and his crew were given food, such as “five large salmon,”<sup>59</sup> and other goods, including “two coats of mail ... which are so good [for] shoes.”<sup>60</sup> These gifts suggest Fraser was viewed as a worthy person and potential ally. But in other places he was “not well entertained” with gifts or other presents. Instead of celebrating him, some Stó:lō people raided his supplies, as was customary with strangers who had no local kin ties or alliances. On the morning of 2 July 1808, for example, he and his men “discovered that the natives were given to thieving. They stole a smoking bag belonging to our party, and we could not prevail upon them to restore it.” In response, Fraser “took” a canoe he believed he had been promised by a Stó:lō chief “and had it carried to the waterside.”<sup>61</sup> The chief then invited Fraser and his men to the chief’s house. Fraser obliged “but were not above five minutes absent, before one of our men came running to inform us that the Indians had seized upon the canoe and were pillaging our people.”<sup>62</sup> Tensions continued to rise until Fraser and his crew, fearing for their safety, were able to procure a canoe and leave the village after apologizing to the chief for their actions. In these instances, Fraser clearly was viewed as a stranger. As a result, raiding (discussed below), or “thieving” from his perspective, was deemed the appropriate form of socio-economic conduct.

Taken together, these varied responses to Fraser’s arrival demonstrate both the importance of Stó:lō socio-economic relationships in determining proper behaviour and the ambiguous position of Newcomers entering Indigenous lands. Vancouver, Yale, and

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<sup>59</sup> W.K. Lamb, ed., *Simon Fraser: Letters and Journals, 1806-1808* (Toronto: MacMillan Company of Canada Ltd., 1960), 109-112. See also Wendy C. Wickwire, “To See Ourselves as the Other's Other: Nlaka'pamux Contact Narratives,” *Canadian Historical Review* 75, no. 1 (1994): 1-20.

<sup>60</sup> Lamb, ed., *Simon Fraser*, 102-104.

<sup>61</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 108.

Fraser were all viewed through the lens of sharing. Although many things about them were likely viewed as strange – their appearance, behaviour, language, etc. – it was their socio-economic relationships, or lack thereof, that was perhaps most significant in determining their place in Stó:lō social worlds. Wealth, in this context, was a product not of material possessions but of the familial ties and the historical knowledge that granted individuals and families access to *S'ólh Téméxw*'s rich resources. It was also inherently collective. Wealth was neither amassed nor measured by individuals; it was the result of cooperative action, pooled labour, and the strategic redistribution of wealth and prestige. As we will see in chapters Three and Four, this definition of wealth and economics is unique to *S'ólh Téméxw* and differs significantly from Cree/Dene and Euro-Canadian systems of sharing operating at the same time period. Yet some of the discrete practices that constituted Stó:lō systems of exchange, such as intra-family sharing, gift-giving, and regional trade, were compatible with alternative cultural constructions of wealth and economics, especially those imported to *S'ólh Téméxw* by Euro-Canadians.

### *Trading and Raiding*

Low status families could not build wealth and prestige the way elite families could. They had no means of arranging marriages with prominent families from distant areas or of amassing material wealth through specialized labour. The core of these families' socio-spatial universes was therefore small relative to those of elites, rendering sharing, in the form of elaborate gift giving, virtually non-existent among the lower classes. Indeed, aside from reciprocal sharing arrangements practiced within small kin groups, raiding, trading, and other forms of exchange practiced at the relatively expansive

periphery of low status peoples' social spectrum were most common.<sup>63</sup> Raiders, in other words, had no social connection to the people they assailed and no interest in developing ongoing exchange relationships. As a result, raiding parties consisted almost exclusively of lower class people or warriors who lacked the wealth and social ties required to pursue other types of exchange. For a high status family, engaging in this type of exchange would seriously compromise its members' social standing and potentially reduce its kin networks and wealth unless the raid was retaliatory and seen as a means of protecting one's own community from past or potential raiders.<sup>64</sup>

Trading was also practiced toward the outer edge of people's socio-spatial spectrum and, like raiding, was a one-time transaction. Characterized by bargaining and negotiation, trade represented a temporary agreement between *lats'umexw*, people who shared no family or kin ties. As intimated by Stó:lō Elder Rosaleen George, trading was often initiated by an offer made by one party: "I fancy your basket, I wonder if you would take this sweater? You see," she continued, "strange Indians would sell to each other."<sup>65</sup> In addition to this type of barter, which is often seen as a trademark of Indigenous cultures, Stó:lō trading practices included the commissioning of works, such as canoes, drums, or carvings, and the exchange of labour for food or other items.<sup>66</sup> Indeed, although often seen to be "non-Indigenous" or "un-Indigenous",<sup>67</sup> wage labour

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<sup>63</sup> Gambling is an important form of exchange in Stó:lō culture not discussed in this chapter. See Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," 33-35.

<sup>64</sup> *McHalsie*, interview, 7 May 2009.

<sup>65</sup> Quoted in Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," 6.

<sup>66</sup> See Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," 28-33; and Keith Thor Carlson, "Expressions of Trade and Exchange," in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Vancouver/Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre/Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 56-57.

<sup>67</sup> See John Borrows, *Aboriginal Legal Issues: Cases, Materials & Commentary* (Markham, ON: LexisNexis Canada, 2007); and for an example of this position advocated by an historian, see Thomas Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000).

and market type exchanges were common practice among the Stó:lō and other Indigenous groups.<sup>68</sup>

Like raiding, the express purpose of Stó:lō systems of trade was to maximize profit regardless of the social or ecological consequences. A number of Stó:lō words, such as *ts'its'í:l*, meaning “to be cheated in trade,” hint at the negotiated nature of trade relationships.<sup>69</sup> However, trading, unlike raiding, was not the sole domain of the lower classes. In fact, large-scale, regional trade relationships were more common among elites than lower status people who likely only had access to local networks.<sup>70</sup> Because trade was “not dependent upon close kinship, as had been supposed,” argues Carlson, “close kinship ties with distant people could ... work to a family’s disadvantage ... [I]f a family possessed resources that could not be had anywhere else, they could expect to derive greater benefits by exchanging their wealth with strangers” rather than sharing with friends and family.<sup>71</sup> Wind-dried salmon could potentially generate greater wealth through trade transactions rather than reciprocal exchanges with close friends and kin. These relationships, therefore, were an attractive option for elite families who had a surplus of scarce resources – especially when new trade partners emerged, as during the fur trade (discussed in Chapter Five).

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<sup>68</sup> See Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005); and Arthur Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of the Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). See also Lutz, *Makúk*.

<sup>69</sup> Carlson, “Expressions of Trade and Exchange,” 56.

<sup>70</sup> As discussed in Chapter Four, families in Europe and Canada often engaged in alternative and sometimes subversive economic activities that may have contradicted or defied officially sanctioned economic activity and ideas of what constituted proper economic behaviour. Often, these “indiscretions” fell beyond the purview of the state. Although eluding the gaze of elites would likely have been more difficult in Stó:lō society than in an urban centre like London or Montreal, it is nonetheless plausible that lower class Stó:lō families engaged in a range of “unofficial” and potentially subversive activities, and we simply lack the relevant records to explore this.

<sup>71</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 57-58.

## *Potlatching*

The wealth generated through resource access, expansive kin ties, and trade permitted elite Coast Salish families to further bolster their status and power by hosting elaborate public gatherings that included guests from other, sometimes distant, villages. Among the Stó:lō, the most famous such gatherings are commonly referred to as “potlatches.” Originating in the Chinook jargon language formed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people to facilitate trade in the Pacific Northwest, the term “potlatch,” when applied to *S’ólh Téméxw*, refers to a range of ceremonial activities in which food and wealth items were distributed by the host family or families to guests. In return for the gifts they received, guests, all of whom were high-ranking members of elite families, served as witnesses to the work being done, normally a change in the status of some member of the host family, legitimating it in the process and spreading word upon their return home.

According to Suttles, these changes represented “life crises marked by the use of inherited privileges, or merely transfer of the privileges themselves, as in the bestowal of an ancestral name. While such changes might be marked by intragroup gatherings, the larger gathering was preferable,” and while one family might organize the potlatch, several leaders of a household or village often pooled their resources, life crises, name-givings, etc., for a single event.<sup>72</sup> At such functions, each host “might have his own list of guests to whom he owed gifts from previous potlatches.”<sup>73</sup> Suttles’s analysis of potlatch ceremonies affirmed observations made earlier by Homer Barnett. The function

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<sup>72</sup> Suttles, “Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish,” 500. See also Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 245; and Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 23.

<sup>73</sup> Suttles, “Private Knowledge, Morality, and Social Classes among the Coast Salish,” 500.

of the potlatch, Barnett observes, was “to make a public assertion of every fact or event which contributed to the advance or change in [a person’s] social position. Such an assertion always had to be made before formally invited guests from outside [the] extended family, who listened to announcements and vouched for claims.” The presentation of gifts therefore represented

an assertion or reassertion of some claim to distinction on behalf of the donor or some member of his family. No one could raise a house or grave post, be married, or name a child and expect the matter to be taken seriously if he did not ‘call the people’ as witnesses. To ‘call the people’ meant that guests ‘received a gift or at least a portion of food.’<sup>74</sup>

Food and other forms of material wealth were thus converted into prestige and status. By gifting his guests, Suttles observes, “a man validates a claim to noble descent and inherited privilege and thus converts wealth into high status.”<sup>75</sup>

In addition to legitimizing the work being done, contact-era potlatches also served to repay debts and to place guests in the debt of their hosts. “Pay back” potlatches, as they are sometimes called, provided the hosts a forum to repay debts accrued as guests at previous potlatches. Having been called as a witness at a previous potlatch, hosts were required to repay the gift – and more, like paying interest on principal, McHalsie notes.<sup>76</sup> According to anthropologist Wilson Duff, the “paying off potlatch” was “probably the most typical type” of Stó:lō potlatch. Citing information obtained from a Stó:lō elder, Duff outlines in detail some hypothetical payments that might be made at such a potlatch, including compensation for speakers, friends, and relatives who aided in the organization of this or previous potlatches, payments for help provided at funerals, naming

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<sup>74</sup> Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*, 253.

<sup>75</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 301.

<sup>76</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.

ceremonies, and other important family events, and gifts provided in recognition of presents previously received by the host.<sup>77</sup> Although this type of potlatch would have been particularly large, Duff's account clearly demonstrates the considerable amount of planning and resources required to host these events.

In gifting their guests, host families also put them into debt. "You're paying back people that you owe, for one thing," says McHalsie, "and then you're putting people into debt at the same time because they've come to attend your ceremony ... Families boast to one another, show each other up." This process of indebting could be used to safeguard a family's status from less powerful families seeking to elevate their own. By presenting a middle class family with an inordinate number of gifts, hosts could effectively impose a debt so great that it would take years or decades for that family to amass enough wealth to make proper repayment, thereby curbing the middle class family's upward social mobility and protecting the upper class family's status. "People are always watching too," McHalsie continues, "almost like it's a stock market. [They're] doing research on who's giving what to whom and in what quantity."<sup>78</sup> This strategy, known as "*emitem*," meaning "to step on" or outdo,<sup>79</sup> is perhaps the clearest indication of the power dynamics involved in Stó:lō systems of sharing, demonstrating that vertical sharing was less about egalitarianism than it was about reinforcing existing power structures and social stratification.

This type of sharing among elite families occurred exclusively inside the hosts' longhouse and was off-limits to lower class people. Beyond the walls of the longhouse,

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<sup>77</sup> Duff, *The Upper Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia*, 88-89. See also Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*, 258.

<sup>78</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.

<sup>79</sup> Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," 28-33; and Carlson, "Expressions of Trade and Exchange," 56.

however, elite families indiscriminately distributed a wide range of goods to lower class people in what is called the “scramble” (Figure 2.5). Blankets, baskets, and other goods would be thrown, usually from a platform, to masses of people gathered outside the longhouse or at a nearby location.<sup>80</sup> As Duff was informed by Stó:lō elder Robert (Bob) Joe, the scramble was competitive: “[y]ou grab as much as you can in your arms. A man comes with a knife and cuts off what you have; that’s yours.”<sup>81</sup>

As such, the scramble was the primary form of wealth distribution practiced between the upper and lower classes during the contact era and an important contributor to the creation and maintenance of imagined communities. “No point giving low status people wealth inside the longhouse,” McHalsie notes, “because they can’t pay it back, but those people need to know you’re sharing too, you still need their support, so you throw a bunch of stuff outside to make sure they’re happy too. And of course everyone gets fed and there’s always enough food for people to take some home.”<sup>82</sup> Coupled with the horizontal system of social welfare that ensured the needs of all members in the local kin group were met, this vertical system of wealth redistribution ensured that at least some of the goods accumulated by elite families found their way into the hands of lower class peoples who, in the process, implicitly recognized and affirmed the power and authority of elites. The giving and receiving of shared items thus united elites and non-elites in imagined communities, despite their markedly different social standings, based on their participation in sharing and exchange, thereby promoting social unity and strengthening collective identities.

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<sup>80</sup> See also Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 26-27.

<sup>81</sup> Quoted in Duff, *The Stalo Indians of the Fraser Valley, British Columbia*, 89.

<sup>82</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.





Figure 2.5: Image of “Scramble” during Coast Salish Potlatch, circa. 1920. From: Royal British Columbia Museum, #PN 1500.

The contact-era potlatch thus had a number of important purposes and uses relating to the maintenance of social hierarchies, control of productive resource sites and the wealth they generated, and, above all, the redistribution of wealth. “Although validation of status and strengthening of solidarity were important, the redistribution of wealth,” Carlson notes, “was the most important function of the potlatch.” Except in specific instances, “[s]ize of gifts weren’t so much that recipient couldn’t later repay it with interest.”<sup>83</sup> As Barnett was told by one of his informants, hosts were careful “to make the size of his gift accord with the recipient’s ability to return more than was given

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<sup>83</sup> Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 27.

him.”<sup>84</sup> Suttles and White reached similar conclusions. “[W]ithin this total socio-economic system,” Suttles argues, the potlatch’s “most important function is to be found neither in the expression of the individual's drive for high status nor in the fulfillment of the society's need for solidarity, neither in competition nor in cooperation, but simply in the redistribution of wealth.” In non-state societies, White adds, “individual ambitions [were geared] toward redistribution rather than the accumulation of wealth. The sharing of goods began within the family where all goods were shared, but extended to the village, theoretically a collection of kinspeople, where necessities of life were never denied.”<sup>85</sup> Having produced much wealth through household production, gifts presented to validate status at potlatches, and as thanks for food taken to affinals, wealthy families, thus restored perhaps unknowingly, the “purchasing power” of other communities, thereby allowing the process to repeat.<sup>86</sup>

### *Refusing to Share*

Hoarding food and wealth with no intention of redistribution was seen as immoral and indicative of low status, and anyone failing to live up to their socio-economic obligations was labeled worthless or lazy and faced severe sanctions, such as ostracism from the kin group. Such behaviour, Carlson observes, would be “insulting” and indicative of poor manners in Stó:lō society.<sup>87</sup> “No, you just have to share with family,” recalled Rosaleen George in an interview with Carlson, “you’re not supposed to sell to

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<sup>84</sup> Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia*, 253.

<sup>85</sup> White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 175-176.

<sup>86</sup> Suttles, “Affinal Ties, Subsistence, and Prestige among the Coast Salish,” 303.

<sup>87</sup> Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 12.

your family.”<sup>88</sup> Even in the later twentieth century, elder Bill Pat-Charlie remembered people being “razzed” for selling fish to other Indians but not if they were sold to strangers.<sup>89</sup> Only extreme circumstances could cause in-laws to be turned away. “Unless a state of war existed,” Carlson notes, “families were obliged to allow visitors access to their property,” with preferential treatment given to those “with either blood or in-law connections to the site’s owners.”<sup>90</sup>

Stó:lō stories and legends illustrate the types of behaviour considered “proper” in the context of everyday sharing within the family. The story of Xa:ytem, for example, which refers to a massive rock, or glacial erratic, in Mission, British Columbia, conveys a similar story. As told by Stó:lō elder Bertha Peters, the rock is the transformed remains of three sí:yám, or chiefs, who refused to share:

The Great Spirit [Xexá:ls] travelled the land, sort of like Jesus, and he taught these three sí:yám how to write their language. And they were supposed to teach everyone how to write their language, but they didn’t. So they were heaped into a pile and turned to stone. Because they were supposed to teach the language to everyone, and because they didn’t, people from all different lands will come and take the knowledge from the people. Because they wouldn’t learn to write they lost that knowledge.<sup>91</sup>

Here, the penalty for hoarding wealth, in this case knowledge, went beyond personal repercussions; the society as a whole suffered a great loss due to the chiefs’ selfish behaviour. Whereas refusing to share horizontally among family and affines might have only local ramifications, refusing to share within the wider social group could have far-reaching effects.

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<sup>88</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 17.

<sup>89</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 14.

<sup>90</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 52-53.

<sup>91</sup> Quoted in M. Teresa Carlson, et al., “Spoken Literature: Stó:lō Oral Narratives,” in Carlson, *You are Asked to Witness*, 187. For a more detailed analysis of this story, see John Clapperton, “Presenting and Representing Culture: A History of Stó:lō Interpretive Centres, Museums and Cross-Cultural Relationships, 1949-2006” (master’s thesis, University of Victoria, 2006).

The Coqueleetza (or *Kw'eqwálitha'a*, meaning “beating blankets” or “beating their blankets”) contains a similar story. As told to Charles Hill-Tout and retold several times by Stó:lō elders from subsequent generations living in different parts of the valley, it describes the consequences of hoarding food during a time of need:

There was once a great famine, and while the men and boys go fishing the women and children are left at home  
the men find salmon, and one of the boys wants to go back to tell the women, but he is not allowed to go because the men want to abandon the women  
the boy escapes and tells the women the news  
the women are enraged and beat their husbands' blankets with bark  
the women then take the men's blankets, paint boxes, and feathers, and set off to find them, beating the blankets with sticks and calling on Xals (Xexá:ls) to transform them  
the men hear the women coming and see their feathers coming toward them  
the painter among them paints them as different kinds of birds  
as the women come upon them Xals [Xexá:ls] transforms the men into the birds they have been painted as the men, now birds, gather on an island in the Fraser.  
Beaver gets salmon for them that they caught earlier, and presents them to the women so that the husbands and wives make peace.<sup>92</sup>

Like the story of *Xepá:y* that began this chapter and the *Xa:ytem* story reproduced above, the Coqueleetza story stresses the importance of sharing within *S'ólh Téméxw* and the dangerous consequences – permanent transformation – associated with hoarding and selfishness. Moreover, these and other Stó:lō stories clearly demonstrate the social and cultural significance of sharing and the strict protocols that regulated its practice.

Today, these protocols endure, though in a less formal or elaborate form, as guests continue to bring food when visiting relatives so as not to burden their hosts. In return, guests receive modest gifts upon their departure to acknowledge and affirm their familial

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<sup>92</sup> “Coqueleetza (*Kw'eqwálitha'a*): The Meaning of Coqueleetza,” Stó:lō Nation Archives, n.d.

ties.<sup>93</sup> Guests “bring a gift,” says George, “but they don’t make a big deal about it. They just quietly give them [the host family] a sack of salmon or whatever when they arrive, and then the [host] people will give them [the guests] something to take back with them when they go home. You never say anything, you just *know* you will get something back, but you don’t expect it.”<sup>94</sup>

### 2.3 Conclusion

Sharing was woven directly into the fabric of life in *S’ólh Téméxw* at the turn of the nineteenth century. As Suttles and others have effectively argued, sharing, as well as other forms of exchange, represents sophisticated, dynamic adaptations to the local environments. Within local kin groups, it regulated resource use, managed the produce of harvests, and insulated Stó:lō people from both seasonal and annual fluctuations in foods and other important resources. For those “less well off,” sharing provided a social safety net comparable to similar forms of inter-family sharing networks discussed in chapters Three and Four. But sharing was not purely materialist in function. At the same time that it regulated land and resource use, sharing also animated the social lives of Stó:lō families. As a basic form of cooperation between kin, it expressed and affirmed social bonds between members of familial networks, both living and deceased, and contributed to broader Coast Salish collective identities. Although these material and social functions of intra-family sharing are often seen as separate through western lenses, no such distinction was likely possible for Stó:lō people. Sharing, like other forms of

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<sup>93</sup> Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 15.

<sup>94</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 16.

interpersonal interaction and exchange, was at once material and social, a pragmatic adaptation to the environment and a cultural teaching inscribed in local landscapes.

Beyond the local kin group, sharing also expressed and potentially deepened internal class divisions within Stó:lō society. Elite families, those with access to productive resource sites based on requisite historical/genealogical knowledge, amassed significant wealth, status, and power through specialized labour forces and marriages arranged with elite families from distant areas. In so doing, they expanded their socio-spatial universes and kin groups, granting them access to expansive systems of sharing networks only available to the upper classes. Combined with trade activities and other forms of exchange, these inter-family systems of sharing, which ranged in form from spontaneous gift-giving to direct resource access and potlatching, augmented and affirmed their wealth and, by extension, status while simultaneously “stepping on” the lower classes whose members were almost entirely excluded from these regional networks. In this way, sharing was a producer and product of power relations, representing for some Stó:lō families a means of empowerment and for others a source of oppression, while simultaneously strengthening social unity through participation in exchange networks.

By recognizing the social, as well as material, significance of Stó:lō systems of sharing and the fissures within Stó:lō society, we are better able to engage history from Indigenous perspectives and recast it within Indigenous frameworks. Economics therefore appears here not as an asocial or apolitical set of practices rooted in market-based exchange, but as a complex combination of social connections that manifested themselves in discrete exchange relationships. Regardless of the outcome of these

relationships, empowering or otherwise, taking them seriously is a humanizing process that grants Stó:lō people, families, and societies greater depth and nuance than non-Stó:lō frameworks might otherwise allow. Moreover, embracing differences and contradictions within Stó:lō society helps us recast the history of colonialism in *S'ólh Téméxw* as it was experienced and perceived by Stó:lō peoples. The social and material worlds of *S'ólh Téméxw* shaped the cultural lens through which Stó:lō people perceived and interacted with non-Stó:lō people and ideas, including those imported to their territory by Euro-Canadians. In these cases of cross-cultural contact between Stó:lō people and members of other Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups, difference was perceived and rationalized by local peoples within existing cultural frameworks that aimed to render the unfamiliar familiar and the new known. As demonstrated in Part II of this dissertation, the economic history of the Fraser River Valley and of western Canada generally is the story of contact – and sometimes conflict – not only between different peoples but also between distinct activities, ideas, and common senses. Engaging Stó:lō perspectives of sharing thus allows us to recast not only Stó:lō history but the history of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations and of Canada as well.

– CHAPTER THREE –

Community and Hybridity: Cree, Dene, and Metis Systems of Sharing

[Sharing was] a pattern for living, a pattern with a definite focal point with radiating spokes ... the most logical response to the pressure of the environment, the surest way of being assured help, food, and shelter in moments when the elements were not favorable. ... [T]heir philosophy demands that they must share.<sup>1</sup>

– Father Leon Levasseur, OMI

The history of sharing in present day northwest Saskatchewan begins much as it does in Stó:lō territory – in an ancient and storied place. To local Cree peoples it was called *Sakitawak*, meaning “where the rivers meet,”<sup>2</sup> while local Dene groups called it *Kwoen*, “where the people stay” or “village.”<sup>3</sup> But whereas the Stó:lō name *S’ólh Téméxw* refers to an area of land, *Sakitawak/Kwoen* refers more specifically to a location, a gathering place used in summer by both Cree, Dene, and, later, Metis peoples to recount the past winter and make preparations for the coming one. Here families shared not only stories and plans but foods, resources, goods, songs, dances, hereditary names, and arranged marriages. For Indigenous peoples, *Sakitawak/Kwoen* was, and remains, a hub of important social, cultural, political, and economic activity. Beginning in the late eighteenth century, *Sakitawak/Kwoen* also became an important gathering site and seasonal settlement for non-Indigenous peoples, especially fur traders, many of whom

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<sup>1</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> James G. E. Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol.6 (Subarctic)*, June Helm, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 267

<sup>3</sup> James G. E. Smith, “Chipewyan,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol.6 (Subarctic)*, ed. June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 271.



identified as Metis or had strong connections to local Metis families. Indeed, along with Red River, this area is considered one of the oldest Metis homelands in western Canada.

This chapter, therefore, is a history of sharing not only among Cree and Dene peoples who are considered the First Nations of northwest Saskatchewan, but also among the Metis peoples and communities that now populate many of these villages. It does not, however, replicate the arguments made or conclusions reached in Chapter Two. Rather than documenting the social significance of sharing within stratified First Nation societies, this chapter analyses the form and function of sharing within societies and cultures considered to be more egalitarian. Relying once again on oral histories and ethnographic observations, I argue that although these cultures may lack the social stratification found in communities on the northwest coast, uneven power relations permeate socio-economic relationships from small family units to wider kin networks. Sharing, here, was neither voluntary nor necessarily altruistic. Participation in sharing networks was mandatory and benefitted participants unequally. This system of sharing, sometimes termed “demand sharing,”<sup>4</sup> was an important part of life for Cree, Dene, and Metis communities at the turn of the eighteenth century and significantly influenced their relationships with non-Indigenous peoples and introduced systems of exchange.

Historiographically, this chapter is informed by studies of Metis cultures and peoples, especially the socio-economic structures and practices that regulated daily life. Although racial mixing and mixed heritage has received considerable attention from scholars, sharing in this context, as in Stó:lō historiography, has not been widely studied. Indeed, the idea that the Metis are a people “in between” – the product of intercultural

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<sup>4</sup> See Nicolas Peterson, “Demand Sharing: Reciprocity and the Pressure for Generosity among Foragers,” *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 4 (December 1993): 860-874.

exchange – is a common theme in both Metis and Canadian historiographies.<sup>5</sup> As discussed in the introduction to this dissertation, fur trade scholarship, which emphasizes the role played by Metis peoples as traders, provisioners, guides, freighters, trappers, etc., is partly responsible not only for placing greater focus on Metis history but for documenting the origins of a distinct culture in Canadian history. This trend remains evident in more recent scholarship.<sup>6</sup> Although scholars have added significantly to the depth and breadth of our knowledge of Metis history and culture, the idea of the Metis as a people in between remains prominent.

A notable and particularly relevant exception to this general rule is the work of Native Studies scholar Brenda Macdougall. Grounded by a genealogical approach to studying the past, her research in northwestern Saskatchewan stresses the importance of family and familial relationships to understanding Metis history and culture, including exchange, within a largely Indigenous framework. Using the Cree term *wahkootowin*, a fluid philosophical concept used to describe familial social networks and “togetherness,” her book *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-century Northwestern Saskatchewan* illuminates hidden aspects of Metis identity and culture through the reconstruction of prominent local family lineages. In so doing, she argues that although colonialism and other historical events have certainly shaped Metis life and society, Indigenous influences, specifically the idea of *wahkootowin*, remain fundamental aspects of Metis culture and the foundation of social, economic, and political behaviour in

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<sup>5</sup> See J. R. Miller, “From Riel to the Métis,” *Canadian Historical Review* 69, no. 1 (1988): 1-20.

<sup>6</sup> Brenda Macdougall, Carolyn Podruchny, and Nicole St-Onge,, “Introduction: Cultural Mobility and the Contours of Difference,” in *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History*, ed. Brenda Macdougall, Carolyn Podruchny and Nicole St-Onge (Norman, OK: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

northwestern Saskatchewan.<sup>7</sup> *Wahkootowin*, from this perspective, not only mediated Cree and Metis people's perceptions of and interactions with non-Indigenous others but actually absorbed Euro-Canadian peoples, ideas, and practices, subsuming them within an Indigenous cultural framework. Although Macdougall's analysis arguably downplays the contributions of non-Indigenous peoples and cultures to the formation of Metis identities and societies and although her use of the term *wahkootowin* privileges Cree ideologies of family above those of other groups such as the Dene, her work nonetheless represents an original effort to cast Metis history within an Indigenous/Metis framework.

This chapter aims to contribute to and challenge aspects of this historiography by examining Metis society and culture in northwest Saskatchewan through the lens of sharing. Like Macdougall, I stress the significance of Indigenous familial networks and socio-economic cooperation, aspects of Metis history that have been largely overlooked in the studies discussed earlier. But rather than a genealogical analysis, my study is rooted in ethnohistorical methods that recognize the social, as well as material, importance of sharing and illuminate the internal fissures within Cree, Dene, and Metis cultures through which power relations manifested themselves in exchange practices and relationships. In so doing, I interpret the impact of events in relationship to social structures and thereby posit a more complicated and messy interpretation of community and family that is rooted in the analytic approaches of postcolonial and subaltern studies. Although Cree and Dene societies are often described as egalitarian and equitable relative to the more stratified Indigenous societies of the Pacific Northwest (including the Stó:lō),

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<sup>7</sup> Brenda Macdougall, "One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan," (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010). See also Winona Stevenson, "'Ethnic' Assimilates 'Indigenous': A Study in Intellectual Neo-Colonialism," *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (1998): 43-74.

power and relations of power also operated within sub-arctic and northern-plains kin-based social networks and cooperative communities. Despite participating in cooperative and selfless acts of sharing and reciprocity that reinforced collective identities and comradeship, families and communities were nonetheless products and expressions of subtle and often multi-faceted power arrangements. Recognizing and analyzing these forms of power and social cohesion is critical to reconstructing Indigenous systems of sharing, and of society in general, thereby contributing to greater cross-cultural understanding.

In doing so, I seek to problematize historiographical efforts at defining Metis “betweenness,” and instead advance an understanding of Metisness which is far more complicated and revealing than either geographical boundaries or the mixing of bloodlines/cultures allows. As in other Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts, systems of sharing practiced by Metis people were and remain the product of intercultural integration and exchange, making the Metis not a people in between two cultures but one informed and influenced by many. Metis societies, like those of their Indigenous and non-Indigenous neighbours, represent sophisticated social and material adaptations to their local environments and the people residing nearby. As Homi Bhabha reminds us, in betweenness, or, to use his term, hybridity, is an inevitable part of cross-cultural interaction. More than a physical interaction, hybridity represents the myriad, and often subtle, ways that societies and cultures are transformed through interactions with others.<sup>8</sup> Metis people, therefore, are not reducible to ideas of in betweenness, nor is cultural mixing unique to Metis populations. Although not regarded as “people in between,” Cree

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<sup>8</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 111-112.

and Dene groups shaped and were shaped by contact with one other and with Euro-Canadians who entered their traditional territories in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Indeed, Metis communities in northwestern Saskatchewan are not so remarkable for their hybridity as they are for the mobilization of discourses of hybridity as a defining feature of culture and collective identity. Although Metis people certainly espouse unique practices, customs, and worldviews, it is more their acceptance of hybridity, an identity that at times has been imposed on them rather than self-appointed, that makes them uniquely Metis. Fully engaging Metis history requires greater emphasis on hybridity, specifically its connections to Indigenous social structures, in this case sharing and exchange. The history of Metis systems of sharing thus begins not with the convergence of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the creation of a hybrid offspring but with the socio-economic structures and practices that permeated the cultures and societies of northwest Saskatchewan in the early nineteenth century and would, in time, become part of Metis culture.

The resulting analysis is divided into two parts. First I explore the material and social worlds of *Sakitawak/Kwoen* (now Île à la Crosse) in order to situate sharing within the local environment as well as the cultures and histories of the area's Indigenous peoples. Here, I pay particular attention to the composition of families and hunting groups and the power relationships contained therein to understand how systems of sharing and other forms of exchange, including raiding and trading, operated on a daily basis within kin groups. In the second part, I analyze Indigenous systems of sharing and other forms of exchange practiced within kin and hunting groups, termed horizontal exchange, and between them, known as vertical exchange. Informed by ethnographic

observations and original oral histories, this section illuminates the intimate connections between the material and social significance of sharing as articulated by local Indigenous philosophies and worldviews. It also investigates the myriad ways in which power mediated exchange relationships, especially between members of different social strata. Lastly, I return to notions of hybridity and how systems of sharing can help illuminate subtle features of collective identities and histories in northwestern Saskatchewan.

Ultimately, this chapter argues that systems of sharing operating in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* at the turn of the nineteenth century were, like their Stó:lō counterparts, a fusion of social and material influences and sites of power. Although Indigenous societies of northwestern Saskatchewan are seen as relatively egalitarian compared to more stratified communities, including those of the Stó:lō, Cree and Dene social units were nonetheless products and producers of power. Even within small kin groups, power mediated individuals' social and economic relations with each other and with larger groups. Moreover, because participation in regional inter-family sharing networks was obligatory, the boundaries between sharing and other forms of exchange become blurred, making it clear that the purpose, form, and significance of sharing practiced in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* circa 1800 are markedly dissimilar from its modern meaning. Indeed, sharing as a solicited or compulsory act, especially across social boundaries, may be more akin to modern understandings of raiding or one-sided trading than to what is called sharing today. Analyzing and taking seriously these culturally and temporarily specific iterations of sharing and exchange thus adds depth and nuance to Indigenous history and allows for greater cross-cultural understanding both within the historical context of colonialism and in the present day.

### 3.1 Situating Sharing: The Social and Material Worlds of *Sakitawak/Kwoen*

*Sakitawak/Kwoen* has been home to both Cree and Dene peoples for countless generations, functioning as a late spring and summer gathering site as well as a bountiful resource procurement area that sustained populations year round. Île à la Crosse, the modern name of the main settlement area, is located on a peninsula near the centre of what today is known as Lake Île à la Crosse, a large body of water dotted with numerous islands of varying sizes and bordered by a fjord-like shoreline (see Figure 3.1). From this lake flows a system of rivers connecting Hudson Bay in the east to the Churchill, Beaver, and Canoe rivers leading deep into western lands. Much like *S'ólh Téméxw*, the region around *Sakitawak/Kwoen* is best thought of as a water world. Although today we approach Île à la Crosse and other modern northern communities from land and access them via roads, waterways – either flowing in summer or frozen in winter – were the primary transportation routes and important sources of food when in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*. Due in part to these physical advantages, the area functioned for countless generations as a regional hub for transportation, communication, commerce, and social interaction for Cree and Dene groups during their cycle of seasonal rounds.

In the final decades of the eighteenth century, both local Cree and Dene subgroups were active in the *Sakitawak/Kwoen* area, though it would be simplistic to suggest the territory was a shared one. Over the past few centuries, political and social control of the region has oscillated between Cree and Dene groups while at other times it has functioned as a borderland or buffer separating them. The Cree, an Algonquian-

speaking cultural/linguistic group comprised of nine major dialects,<sup>9</sup> occupied a vast area radiating outward from James Bay in modern day Quebec to Labrador and Ontario and into the west along the Churchill river system to what is now Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and eastern British Columbia (see Figure 3.1). By the early nineteenth century, the Cree occupied the largest geographic area of any Indigenous cultural group in northern North America.<sup>10</sup> The *Sakitawak* area specifically has been within the hereditary territory of the Rock or Woodland Cree. According to Reverend Marius Rossignol, a resident of Île à la Crosse for more than three decades in the early twentieth century, they referred to themselves historically as *assiniskawidiniwok* (*asini`ska`wiḍiniwak*), meaning “human beings (of the country where there is) an abundance of rocks,” or more generally as *ne`hiyawak*, “those who speak the same language.”<sup>11</sup> The group subsisted principally on moose, deer, elk, ducks, rabbits, and other small fur-bearing animals and various types of fish and gathered foods.<sup>12</sup> The historical movement of Crees in and around the area prior to the appearance of Euro-Canadians is difficult to track, though archaeological data suggests a sustained Cree

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<sup>9</sup> The main dialects are Plains Cree, Woods Cree, West Swampy Cree, East Swampy Cree, Moose Cree, East Cree, Attikamek, Naskapi, and Montagnais. See Alan D. McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, third edition (Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 2004), 116.

<sup>10</sup> Although land base has changed dramatically in the last two and a half centuries, the Cree remain one of the country’s largest First Nations. Today, the Cree, according to Canadian Geographic, comprise 135 bands and 200,000 members with reserves constituting the largest land holding of any Canadian First Nation. A 1995 report found that people identifying as Cree formed the largest linguistic group (31%) of Indigenous people in Canada. See McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 116; Olive Patricia Dickason, *Canada’s First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times*, Third Edition (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 427.

<sup>11</sup> M. Rossignol, “Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks,” *Primitive Man* xii, no. 3 (July 1939): 61; and Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 267.

<sup>12</sup> Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, “Occupational Status, Ethnicity, and Ecology: Métis Cree Adaptations in a Canadian Trading Frontier,” *Human Ecology* 13, no. 3 (1985): 311-313. Dene women were more likely to form unions with traders further west. See Richard Slobodin, *Metis of the Mackenzie District* (Ottawa: Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, Saint-Paul University, 1966).



presence in the area dating back to at least “late prehistoric times.”<sup>13</sup> Regardless of when the Cree arrived, by the time the first fur trade company erected a post in the area in 1776, the Rock Cree were well established and formed a majority of the Indigenous peoples living in and around *Sakitawak*.<sup>14</sup>

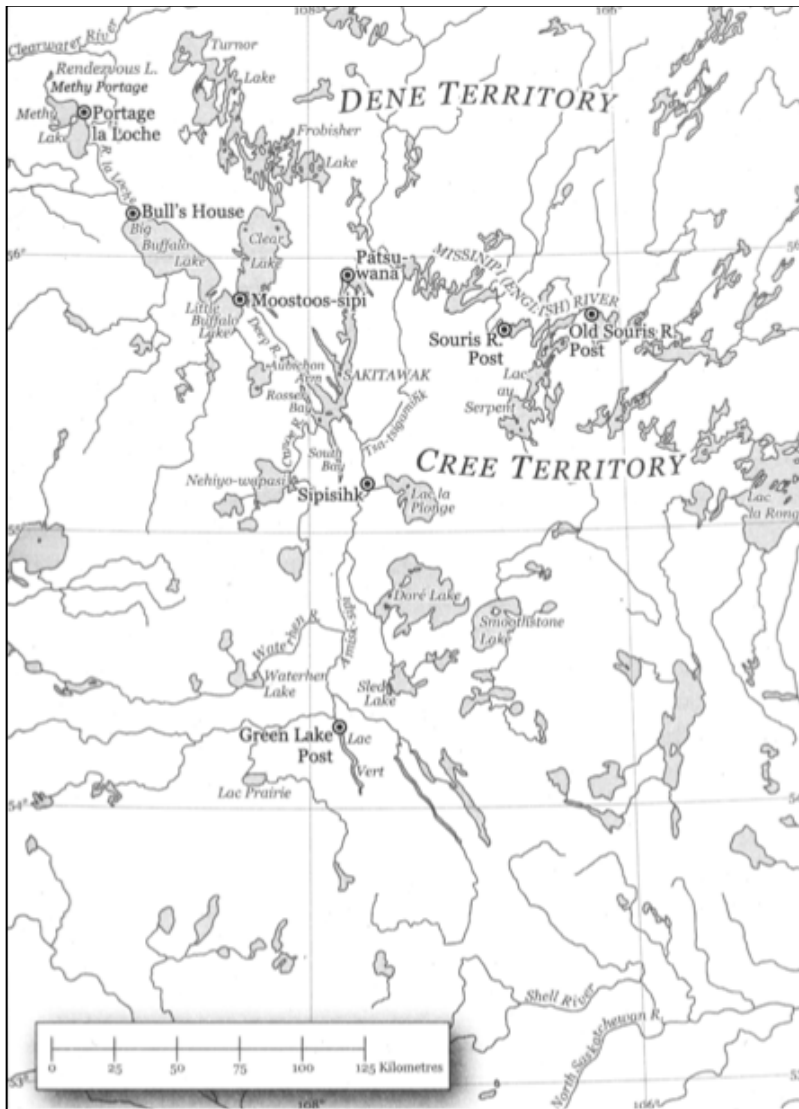


Figure 3.1: Map of Indigenous and fur trade settlements and place names in present day Northwest Saskatchewan. Note that *Île à la Crosse* appears here in the Cree form *Sakitawak*. From: Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 27.

<sup>13</sup> Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, “The Microeconomics of Southern Chipewyan Fur Trade History,” in *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations*, ed. Shepard Krech III (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 148; and Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 257.

<sup>14</sup> Jarvenpa and Brumbach, “The Microeconomics of Southern Chipewyan Fur Trade History,” 148-150.

The northern neighbours of the *assiniskawidiniwok* were the Dene, an Athapaskan-speaking cultural/linguistic group (formerly known as Chipewyan), who occupied a hereditary territory covering much of present-day Alaska, Yukon, Northwest Territories, southwestern Nunavut, and northern portions of British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, and Manitoba (see Figure 3.1). Other relatives of the Dene include the Navajo and Apache of the southwestern United States who speak similar dialects.<sup>15</sup> The regional group known as the *thilanottine* (*Thi-lan-ottiné/Öilq-hotine*), meaning “men of the end of the head” or “those who dwell at the head of the lakes,” operated in and around *Kwoen*. Within this group, the *kesyehot'ine* (*Kkpest'aylékkè ottiné/kestait-hotine*), meaning “poplar house people” or “dwellers among the quaking aspen” in reference to the trees and logs used to build early trade forts, were most closely associated with the local fur trade.<sup>16</sup> While Dene populations farther north relied extensively on the northern Caribou herds for food and other necessities, the more southern *thilanottine* also hunted moose, deer, and other terrestrial animals, trapped fur bearers, gathered berries, roots, eggs, and other plants and herbs, and fished for marine and riverine foods.<sup>17</sup> Although their association with the trading posts suggests their southern movements were a result of the fur trade, ethnographic and archaeological evidence demonstrates that Dene

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<sup>15</sup> Despite their relatively large land base, the population of the Dene Nation is significantly lower than the Cree, today numbering approximately 12,000 members. See McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 233-237; and Dickason, *Canada's First Nations*, 406.

<sup>16</sup> Jarvenpa and Brumbach, “The Microeconomics of Southern Chipewyan Fur Trade History,” 152; and Smith, “Chipewyan,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol.6 (Subarctic)*, June Helm, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 271. The more northern Dene groups were called *hoteladi* by the southerners but the separation between these regional groups was neither rigid nor inflexible. Throughout the north, southern and more northern Dene groups occupied overlapping wintering ranges intermarried, and forged close kinship ties between families and communities, thereby allowing for considerable mobility between regional identities.

<sup>17</sup> McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 116-7, 240-2.

peoples used the waterways and visited these areas at least seasonally long before the beginning of the fur trade.<sup>18</sup>

Life in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* was markedly different from life in *S'ólh Téméxw*. Whereas Stó:lō communities were predominantly sedentary and characterized by high population densities, Cree and Dene communities were more mobile, constantly moving strategically throughout their territories to take advantage of a disparate, changing resource base and to negotiate environmental variability. As a result, Cree and Dene populations were less dense than their Coast Salish counterparts and, because transporting goods was cumbersome, the accumulation of material possessions was largely discouraged in favour of intangible forms of wealth, such as songs, stories, and names. Combined, these cultural practices and customs produced and reflect a relatively egalitarian social structure compared to the stratified organization of Stó:lō society.

The flexibility and cooperative nature of Cree and Dene social structures, however, did not produce genuine egalitarianism or universal equality. Contrary to idealized notions of community depicted in popular culture that stress unity and social harmony, all levels and types of society – even supposedly egalitarian ones – are products and producers of uneven power relations negotiated by discrete segments of the population. As Latin American scholar Florencia Mallon argues, communities are neither static nor singular. Rather, they are the product of “communal hegemony,” the constant and ongoing negotiation of power within a heterogeneous, dynamic social unit at a specific place and time, formed through processes of political and cultural creation and imagination wherein power differences, based on age, gender, ethnicity, social status,

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<sup>18</sup> Beryl Gillespie, “Changes in the Territory and Technology of the Chipewyan,” *Arctic Anthropology* 13, no. 1 (1976): 6-11.

family, etc., yield “official versions” of a collective’s self, identity, and history. Thus, community power holders pursue common social and moral projects that allow those in power to rule by a combination of coercion and consent in order to maintain their precarious and unstable position.<sup>19</sup> Even small-scale communities seen to be overwhelmingly egalitarian compared to other, more stratified societies are the product of subtle but important power relationships.

Anthropologist Jane Fishburne Collier concurs. Her analysis of marriage and inequality in classless societies demonstrates that power relations and exploitation are ever-present. Kin-based, non-stratified societies lacking “classes or estate based on unequal access to the means of production,” she notes, “are often described as egalitarian.” She goes on to elaborate that this is particularly the case “when compared with stratified societies,” such as the Stó:lō and Euro-Canadian societies described in chapters Two and Four respectively, “but even in societies where members of kin groups work and consume together, not all kin group members have common interests.” Although they may lack the more obvious and familiar markers of exploitation commonly associated with class-based societies,

within kin groups, members enjoy different privileges and have different obligations, and within society as a whole some people enjoy more power and privileges than others. Labor in such societies may be divided only by sex and age, not by caste or class, but each person’s privileges and obligations do not derive solely from obvious physical differences between men and women or between the old and the young.

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<sup>19</sup> Florencia Mallon, *Peasant and Nation: The Making of Postcolonial Mexico and Peru* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1995), 6, 11-12. See also Keith Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010).

Like their more hierarchical counterparts, “[k]in-based, non-stratified societies have socially organized inequalities that merit analysis.”<sup>20</sup>

What we see in the historical record, therefore, are snapshots of processes in motion, momentary reconstructions that necessarily privilege the words and actions of the powerful. Even in the more egalitarian communities of northwestern Saskatchewan, our interpretations of the past are to a significant degree mediated by those whose ideas of community became dominant. In analyzing the history of sharing and exchange, or any other aspect of Indigenous or non-Indigenous societies, it is important to remain cognizant of the subtle but decisive way in which power is deployed. Systems of sharing, like all other forms of exchange and economic activities, benefitted some while disadvantaging, and sometimes exploiting, others. These relationships are infused with power; rarely are they entirely altruistic or benign.

### 3.2 Cree and Dene Systems of Exchange

Despite the emphasis anthropologists and some local people have placed on their cultural differences and at times hostile relationship, Dene and Cree groups in the area practiced markedly similar economic, social, political, and spiritual customs prior to widespread contact with non-Indigenous peoples.<sup>21</sup> Of these, sharing, trading, and

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<sup>20</sup> Jane Fishburne Collier, *Marriage and Inequality in Classless Societies* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 1.

<sup>21</sup> See Gillespie, “Changes in the Territory and Technology of the Chipewyan.” Indeed, Indigenous and Metis histories and cultures are so intertwined – not only during the fur trade but well into the twentieth century – that it is difficult to distinguish one from the other. When allocating scrip in La Loche in 1906, for example, James McKenna found it “difficult to draw a line of demarcation between those who classed themselves as Indians and those who elected to be treated as half-breeds. Both dress alike and follow the same mode of life.” See Canada, Treaty No. 10 and Reports of Commissioners (Ottawa: Queen's Printer, 1966), 8. Father J. B. Ducharme echoed these thoughts in 1939, stating that the difference between Indians

raiding were the principal forms of exchange and were employed purposefully, according to prevailing circumstances. As among the Stó:lō, raiding, practiced almost exclusively on the periphery of a group's social world, targeted people with whom the raiders had no kin ties or other social affiliations. Trading meanwhile was characterized by a desire to generate profit through the one-time exchange of goods or services and therefore occurred most often among distant relatives and non-hostile strangers residing between the periphery and centre of the actor's social network. As in *S'ólh Téméxw*, these types of exchange were mobilized at specific times and places according to prevailing social and ecological circumstances. As anthropologist Gaynor Macdonald observed among the Wiradjuri of New South Wales, this type of trade "does not entail the same kind of moral responsibility" that sharing does, thereby facilitating "the development of non-morally constituted social relations... outside kin networks."<sup>22</sup>

A general lack of archaeological and ethnographic research and analysis in the region, however, makes it difficult to know just how important and widespread raiding and trading were to the Cree and Dene of northern Saskatchewan. The existence of intricate, far-reaching trade networks connecting the southern and northern plains, Great Lakes region, and Pacific Slope is well documented. So too is the relative ease with which Cree and Dene people in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* took advantage of the fur trade, if they so chose. Trade networks and protocols were clearly well established, though the relative importance of these "stranger exchanges" appear to have been much greater among the

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and Metis in the area was "nominal" at least according to the criteria he was applying. See Jean-Baptiste Ducharme, O.M.I., *Report on the Indian and Half-Breed Question*, La Loche, 1939, HR201.A18R44Ex.1.  
<sup>22</sup> Gaynor Macdonald, "Economies and Personhood: Demand Sharing among the Wiradjuri of New South Wales," in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Sharing and Modern Hunter Gatherers*, ed. George W. Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), 101.

Stó:lō than among the *assiniskawidiniwok* and *thilanottine*.<sup>23</sup> Also clear is that neither of these exchange practices was as significant to Cree and Dene life and culture as were the systems of sharing that regulated the distribution of foods and goods between members of local groups.

### *Sharing within the Family and Hunting Group*

In contrast to raiding and trading, sharing was practiced at the core of the social world among close family, relatives, and in-laws who cooperatively redistributed the wealth they accumulated from the natural world. As is the case among the Stó:lō, two types of sharing are evident in the history of *Sakitawak/Kwoen*. The first type, intra-family or horizontal sharing,<sup>24</sup> occurred within the family household, which was often comprised of two brothers and their families, and the hunting group, consisting of several related families that worked together cooperatively. These were the most important social units in Cree and Dene society. From fall through spring, hunting groups directed economic, social, and political activity as families hunted and trapped in relative isolation. Consisting of ten to thirty people, the hunting group is the basis of what became known as “bands,” with each family within the band occupying a separate section of land for hunting, trapping, fishing, and gathering. Because kinship was reckoned bilaterally (again, as with the Stó:lō), band membership was flexible and movement between bands was common where kin ties could be demonstrated.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> Arthur J. Ray, *I Have Lived Here Since the World Began: An Illustrated History of Canada's Native People* (Toronto: Lester Publishing/Key Porter Books, 1996), 22-30.

<sup>24</sup> Richard White, *Roots of Dependency: Subsistence, Environment, and Social Change among the Choctaws, Pawnees, and Navajos* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983), 176.

<sup>25</sup> McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 117.

At the local level, political alliances were often temporary and leadership was largely informal and by consensus. As Reverend J. M. Penard noted, historically “there was no chief properly speaking,” though Dene groups did recognize a headman, or *denettheritset'i'*, noted for his wisdom and experience, and successful hunters were regularly joined by kin who wanted to hunt in his territory. Similarly, Rock Cree people recognized a leader, or *okima'w*, “based on his experience, ability as a hunter and organizer, and possession of spiritual powers.”<sup>26</sup>

Sharing in this context normally took the form of generalized reciprocity. For example, although animals killed by a hunter were his personal property, social obligations mandated that the meat be distributed among the entire group – either by the “chief” or by the hunter himself.<sup>27</sup> The produce of the hunt was itself considered a gift, given to the people by the animal. Among the Cree, obtaining future gifts required both the hunter and the community that received the gift to show respect and give proper thanks to the animal. When particularly large animals were killed, portions of the meat were ritually burned in the fire while bones were “handled carefully so the animals would not be offended.”<sup>28</sup>

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<sup>26</sup> Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 259; Smith, “Chipewyan,” 276; James G. E. Smith, “The Chipewyan Hunting Group in a Village Context,” *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (1970): 62-63; and James G. E. Smith, “Economic Uncertainty in an ‘Original Affluent Society’: Caribou and Caribou Eater Chipewyan Adaptive Strategies,” *Arctic Anthropology* 15, no. 1 (1978): 75-6. See also Regina Flannery, “The Position of Women Among the Eastern Cree,” *Primitive Man* 8 (1934): 86; A. D. Fisher, “The Cree of Canada: Some Ecological and Evolutionary Considerations,” *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (1969): 14-15; J. M. Penard, “Land Ownership and Chieftaincy Among the Chippewyan and Caribou-Eaters,” *Primitive Man* II nos. 1 and 2 (January and April 1929): 21-2; and McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 244.

<sup>27</sup> Rossignol, “Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks,” 68-9; and Penard, “Land Ownership and Chieftaincy Among the Chippewyan and Caribou-Eaters,” 42.

<sup>28</sup> McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 118.



In times of need, entire bands shared food with one another and gave freely to visitors. Historically, Rossignol reported, “[t]hose who had better luck than the others would, with a real family spirit, then share what they had with the poorer ones.” Similarly, when a family was traveling from one place to the next, Cree hunting groups “did their best to aid [the family],” giving them “all the food which they had at their disposal if [they] happened to be in need. These Indians were naturally very hospitable. ... The law of hospitality [that is, the willingness to share food and other goods] was everywhere inviolable.”<sup>29</sup> Penard concurs, stating that the Dene “were not at all inhospitable to strangers, and if a stranger wished to settle peacefully among them they granted him permission to hunt and fish, provided he observed the Chippewyan usages and customs.”<sup>30</sup>

At the regional level, sharing was practiced most often between extended families and kin, called “communities” by Alan McMillan and Eldon Yellowhorn, that did not live or hunt together in winter but were connected through marriage.<sup>31</sup> Normally arranged by fathers in consultation with their wives and brothers, marriages granted new in-laws access to one another’s resource base and labour pool and established strict protocols for cooperation and mutual assistance. Ideally, marriages joined together paternal cross cousins, not considered relatives, or pairs of siblings from two families to create a “double brother-in-law” relationship. So important were these alliances that

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<sup>29</sup> Rossignol, “Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks,” 65-6.

<sup>30</sup> Penard, “Land Ownership and Chieftaincy Among the Chippewyan and Caribou-Eaters,” 23.

<sup>31</sup> However, the authors’ assertion that such communities “did not function as an economic unit” suggests a particularly narrow definition of economics that is not supported by my evidence or analysis. See McMillan and Yellowhorn, *First Peoples in Canada*, 117. Adoption and, later, godparentage constituted other ways of establishing kin relationships. See Macdougall, “One of the Family,” 82-3; and Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Montréal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2005), 20. Prisoners of war were also sometimes brought into kin relationships. See J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 8-9.

some families would betroth children even before birth.<sup>32</sup> These in-law relationships formed the core of the larger social unit, or “regional band,” called *ellotine* (*?eehotine*) among the Dene and *ntotimuk* or *wahkootowin* among the Cree. Like those of the smaller social units, the boundaries of these larger collectives were flexible and membership often overlapped, allowing families to mobilize a variety of kinship ties according to prevailing environmental and social conditions.<sup>33</sup>

Sharing thus created a safety net, a form of social welfare, available to all members of the local and regional group provided they abided by the relevant protocols. Cooperation, assistance, and hospitality at the local level, Smith notes, were expected “as a matter of course. ... [E]very form of assistance is given for the asking – or even without asking,” making these groups “the nucleus of the traditional settlements.”<sup>34</sup> According to White, these systems “promised support for all. No one starved or went hungry unless everyone did. Material desires were culturally limited; generosity was the supreme economic virtue.”<sup>35</sup> Anyone who had the means but refused to share was, according to Rossignol, labeled “stingy and miserly,” and often excluded from future distributions of food or goods. This “boycotting” functioned as a general form of punishment to expel unwanted members of a band.<sup>36</sup> Poor people therefore were not those who lacked

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<sup>32</sup> Smith, “Economic Uncertainty in an ‘Original Affluent Society’,” 79; Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 259; and Smith, “Chipewyan,” 277.

<sup>33</sup> Beyond the *ellotine*, individuals also identify with the larger Chipewyan “nation” distinct from other Athapaskan and other Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups. According to Smith, the Inuit are called *otel’ena*, “enemy of the barrens,” the Cree are *ena*, or “enemy,” Euro-Canadians are known as *Øe’otine*, “people of the stone house,” and Euro-Americans are called *Bes-cok*, or “big knives”. See Smith, “Economic Uncertainty in an ‘Original Affluent Society’,” 75-6; and Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 260. See also Abel, *Drum Songs*, 18-19; and Henry Stephen Sharp, “The Kinship System of the Black Lake Chipewyan” (Ph.D. diss., Duke University, 1973).

<sup>34</sup> Smith, “The Chipewyan Hunting Group in a Village Context,” 63; and Smith, “Chipewyan,” 276.

<sup>35</sup> White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 321-322.

<sup>36</sup> Rossignol, “Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks,” 65, 68-69.

material goods or wealth, but those without the family connections that made them part of a viable and accessible economic network. Rather than being interpreted as the fault of an individual or the consequence of personal shortcomings, communities experienced and managed poverty, like prosperity, collectively and cooperatively. Knowledge of ancestry and family history in this context was extremely valuable; poverty was synonymous with unconnectedness.<sup>37</sup>

Sharing, in this context, was at once material and social, representing both an ecological adaptation to local environments and an expression of social cohesion. As Île à la Crosse resident Reverend Levasseur remarked, “[t]he best ice box for game is in the stomachs of your neighbors – give to receive. ... The best insurance policy was the good will of one's neighbour.”<sup>38</sup> In a world where access to resources was both critical and unpredictable, sharing provided an insurance policy of sorts for those who abided by the relevant socio-economic protocols, just as it did in *S’ólh Téméxw*, while simultaneously reflecting and reinforcing the social connections that manifested themselves in exchange relationships.

Insights into systems of Indigenous sharing in northern Saskatchewan can perhaps be gleaned from Gaynor Macdonald’s analysis of a similar philosophy that he observed among the Wiradjuri. The Wiradjuri “Law of Caring,” he noted, comprises “the system of etiquettes, decision-making, sharing, and respect relations by which Wiradjuri communities maintain the moral principles of their sociality, including they ways in

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<sup>37</sup> See Tom Johnson, “Without the Family We Are Nothing,” in *Native Heritage: Personal Accounts by American Indians, 1790 to Present*, ed. Arlene Hirschfelder (New York: MacMillan, 1995).

<sup>38</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2.

which they differentiate insider from outsider.” These teachings, according to Macdonald, are reflected in Wiradjuri economic activities:

“Sharing” is what the same moral principles produce as an economic system. ... [The Wiradjuri] “economy of sharing” shapes social and material relations. ... Kin relations both structure and are structured by the system of sharing, as it in turn structures economic and social relations. Wiradjuri kinship, or the vast “extended family” as it is sometimes known (which may be extended to non-kin prepared to enter into its constraints), is the system which provides the pathways for the expression of these systems of law and economy.<sup>39</sup>

Sharing thus represents a “general moral principle” that informs daily life, and the economic system it gives rise to regulates human interactions with each other and the natural world.

Historian Richard White reached similar conclusions in his study of Choctaw, Pawnee, and Navajo societies, suggesting that these cultural imperatives were and are widespread among North America’s first peoples. Among the Choctaw, as among the Cree and Dene, “[r]edistribution and reciprocal exchange were inseparable from the daily round,” he notes. Though we often separate and compartmentalize them today, “politics, social life, and economics were inseparable, and reciprocity and redistribution made up the glue holding them together.”<sup>40</sup> The economic system, which traditionally focuses on exchange practices, is thus redefined to emphasize, in Macdonald’s words, the “system of social relationships within which goods and services are circulated:

“[S]haring” is not merely a system of distribution, a way of ensuring people within a society have what is required to sustain them. It is an expression of a particular understanding of personhood in which the person is constructed through social action. ... Wiradjuri economies exist to augment and give expression to the social, not the reverse.<sup>41</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Macdonald, “Economies and Personhood,” 90.

<sup>40</sup> White, *Roots of Dependency*, 42.

<sup>41</sup> Macdonald, “Economies and Personhood,” 101.

In describing sharing and economics in general in this way, Macdonald and White explicitly fuse the material and the social, redefining in the process the meaning of exchange activities and the history of sharing.

The social and, to a lesser extent, material significance of sharing are still evident in northwestern Saskatchewan today. Reflecting on the cultural significance of sharing, Brian Macdonald (no relation to Gaynor), a commercial fisher, professional guide, and traditional land user in Buffalo Narrows, north of Île à la Crosse, situates sharing as part of a broad philosophy that permeates his relationships with other people, ancestors, and the land. “We shared everything,” he says. “We'd go hunting ducks in the spring, we'd shoot twenty, thirty ducks and we'd come back and everybody'd be making duck soup.” The same was true of moose, fish and other animals that were shared widely with the community, beginning with elders, widows, and families with many children. People also shared their labour as a way to reciprocate past acts. When hauling wood for an elderly woman, for example, Macdonald was thanking her father for past aid:

That wood wasn't brought from me, I just delivered it. That wood came from somebody else.... Her dad. We used to walk the shoreline trapping [musk]rats. He was an old man, I was a young kid. If there was a rat in my trap, it'd be dead and put away there so nothing'd bother it. And I did the same for him. So when I hauled her the wood, this is why I hauled it. Not for her, it was for that old man I used to know.... I told her, “your dad is still helping you. You think he's gone but he's not, he's here. That wood came from him, he's still helping.” Just 'cause they pass away and are gone that don't mean they're gone. And you never let them die, through these things. It still relates back to that [relationships].<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Brian Macdonald, interviewed in Buffalo Narrows by Liam Haggarty, 24 March 2010.

As in the nineteenth century, sharing, for Macdonald, connected people not only with their living relatives and kin but also with those that had passed on. Sharing connected people across both space and time.

Implicit in these systems of sharing are specific protocols for interacting with and managing local lands and resources. Often cited as evidence of Indigenous peoples' respect for the environment, they represent material adaptations to the management of finite resources and land bases, articulated in socio-cultural terms. The act of killing an animal, Macdonald was taught, has significant consequences for both the environment and the hunter:

when you eat the moose or the fish, that fish's spirit now looks through my eyes, speaks through my voice. His spirit becomes me. Whatever consumes me one day, I become. And the spirit just travels all around like that...the bug crawling there, the tree over there, the owl, the eagle, the bear, the fish – whatever eats you, that's what you become. When you come to understand that, you learn not to go and whack on that tree and chop on it for no reason, because maybe that's your uncle or your grandfather. Maybe that eagle you're gonna shoot coming over there is your aunty. You don't know this stuff. But when you understand all living things are some spirit, you don't damage any of them for no reason other than to eat it.<sup>43</sup>

Macdonald goes on to discuss aspects of the natural environment, which, although not considered “living,” are considered part of cyclical systems of sharing and, therefore, requiring respect:

So you have a respect for all living things, but at the same time you're taught you have respect for all dead things ... If you have no respect for the ground right over there, that's where you plant your potatoes, that's where the cherries grow out of the ground. Those things won't grow if they don't

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<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

have respect for it, and pretty soon you can't eat from it ... So you have respect for all living and all dead.<sup>44</sup>

This respect, according to Macdonald, is a shared one that is reciprocated to him whenever he is out on the land:

I always told my wife, “you know, don't worry about me, I'm out there all over and it's sometimes dangerous and that, but you don't worry about me 'cause there's an old lady that looks after me.” And my reference is to Mother Nature, 'cause I treat her well, and when you treat someone well they treat you back the same. I've always been treated well by her.<sup>45</sup>

Macdonald's use of the ideas of consumption, transformation, and respect demonstrate the intimate connections between material and social worlds. Material strategies that promoted sustainable behaviours were expressed through cultural teachings that stressed not the environmental significance of cultural protocols but their social consequences, making the social and material virtually inextricable from the other. Separating them even as a way to discuss them was likely seen as illogical, if not utterly impossible.

### *Generosity and Power: Sharing Between Families*

As in *S'ólh Téméxw* and elsewhere, sharing in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* mediated power relations at the community and inter-community level. According to Levasseur, it was a key characteristic of leadership and producer of status. “It is an honour to share,” he remarked:

[t]hose in the community who have the most to share are naturally the best providers, the best hunters, they are also the natural leaders or chiefs in the

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid. For a fuller discussion of food and its socio-cultural significance in Indigenous, specifically Stó:lō, culture, see Lesley Wiebe, “Stó:lō Traditional Food ‘Talk’ as Metaphor for Cross-cultural relations,” *The University of the Fraser Valley Research Review* 2, no. 2 (2009): 137-150.

<sup>45</sup> Brian Macdonald, interviewed in Buffalo Narrows by Liam Haggarty, 24 March 2010. Historian Amanda Fehr explores the role the Virgin Mary plays in Indigenous constructions of respect and metaphysical collectives in their article “Encountering Mary: Apparitions, Roadside Shrines, and the Métis of the Westside,” *Saskatchewan History* 61, no. 1 (Fall 2009): 29-31.

community. Those who ask him for help feel that they are honouring him. In other words, providing the chief with an opportunity to fulfill his role in the community as a great “Giver” or “Sharer.” ... The chief is paid for his services by asking him for them. Asking him for a material favor was payment and, more important, payment with honour to the Chief. It was in effect acknowledging the Chief's reputation as a “Giver,” the acceptance of his leadership.<sup>46</sup>

Well-established cultural protocols required chiefs and other elites to share with lower status people, thereby affirming prevailing socio-economic relationships. Although often extolled today as a virtue, generosity had a broader meaning among Indigenous groups whose economies were based on sharing. It was mediated and made meaningful by existing power structures that clearly defined the identity of and relationship between giver and receiver.

Despite its material function, sharing was therefore not practiced indiscriminately or for purely unselfish reasons. The Wiradjuri, for example, regarded indiscriminate generosity and altruism – sharing that did not conform to established protocols and therefore was divorced from prevailing power structures – not as virtues but as signs of “stupidity, gullibility or irresponsibility.”<sup>47</sup> Similarly, among the Raute of western Nepal, sharing, according to anthropologist Jana Fortier, “is not the result of an intrinsic altruism, but the outcome of many social, economic, and environmental factors which condition Raute social exchange behaviour and ideology.”<sup>48</sup> Sharing, from this perspective, was not important in and of itself, but rather as an expression and affirmation of prevailing social relationships and divisions of power.

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<sup>46</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2, 4-5.

<sup>47</sup> Macdonald, “Economies and Personhood,” 94.

<sup>48</sup> Jana Fortier, “Monkey’s Thigh is the Shaman’s Meat: Ideologies of Sharing among the Raute of Nepal,” in *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resource Sharing and Modern Hunter Gatherers*, ed. George W. Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000), 113.



Sharing in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* in the nineteenth century also was not optional. Due to its material and social significance, Levasseur notes, participation in sharing networks was obligatory:

[It was] a pattern for living, a pattern with a definite focal point with radiating spokes ... the most logical response to the pressure of the environment, the surest way of being assured help, food, and shelter in moments when the elements were not favourable. ... [T]heir philosophy demands that they must share.<sup>49</sup>

This type of obligatory reciprocity, or “demand sharing,” is markedly different from western, post-enlightenment notions of sharing.<sup>50</sup> Indeed, sharing, as a compulsory and perhaps solicited act, ceases to look like altruistic generosity or Sahlin’s generalized reciprocity,<sup>51</sup> moving instead into the realm of one-way trade or perhaps “tolerated theft.”<sup>52</sup> This form of sharing effectively blurs the boundaries between seemingly discrete forms of exchange and helps to decenter prevailing understandings not only of sharing but exchange in general. In so doing, we are better able to appreciate the role and significance of sharing as both a material and social imperative within *Sakitawak/Kwoen*.

In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, power-infused vertical exchanges occurred most often during the summer at large gatherings that included families from across the region. After the snow melted and the spring trapping season ended in late spring, family and hunting groups from across the region converged at a single, predetermined meeting place usually near a lake or river where fish, game, and berries could temporarily sustain a larger, more sedentary population. This regional band, according to anthropologist

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<sup>49</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2.

<sup>50</sup> See Nicolas Peterson, “Demand Sharing: Reciprocity and the Pressure for Generosity among Foragers,” *American Anthropologist* 95, no. 4 (December 1993): 860-874.

<sup>51</sup> See Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton Inc., 1972).

<sup>52</sup> Nicolas Blurton Jones, “Tolerated Theft: Suggestions about the Ecology and Evolution of Sharing, Hoarding, and Scrounging,” *Social Science Information* 29, no. 1 (1987): 31-54.

James Smith, was “the largest cooperative unit” and was led by an informally elected leader or chief: “[t]his was the time of major socializing, reinforcement of social ties, realignment of families and planning for the winter dispersal.”<sup>53</sup> Feasting, Rossignol noted, was an important part of these gatherings. “[A]ll the groups held a feast together, offered sacrifices, and talked over the events of the year,” he remarked. During the feasts, families made “magnificent presents ... of pelts, wearing apparel, etc.” to demonstrate their abilities and wealth:

[n]aturally the visitors who took away these presents, had in turn to send invitations and give presents the following year to their hosts of the previous one. This custom was a symbol of friendship but it was also a matter of justice. Certainly the first givers expected a return of the favor and would consider themselves injured if they received nothing in return for their courtesy and generosity.<sup>54</sup>

Through these feasts and gatherings, systems of sharing mediated power relations and forged social bonds. As occurred during potlatches on the west coast (discussed in Chapter Two), hosts of these gatherings effectively became indebted to one another in a cyclical process of gifting that demonstrated each successive host’s status and prestige. As anthropologist Marshall Sahlins notes, vertical sharing was a means of acquiring and expressing power, and through the act of receiving, the less powerful implicitly recognized and affirmed the power of elites. The act of giving inevitably produces a reciprocal, though not necessarily balanced, exchange, with the giver often receiving in return an intangible benefit, such as enhanced status.<sup>55</sup> And in addition to the actual gifts

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<sup>53</sup> Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 259-260.

<sup>54</sup> Rossignol, “Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks,” 69. See also Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 260.

<sup>55</sup> Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics*. See also Homer Garner Barnett, *The Coast Salish of British Columbia* (Eugene: University of Oregon Press, 1955), for a discussion of how the potlatch served this function.

being exchanged and witnessed by both elites and lower classes, through a potlatch, names and property were transferred across generations among the elite thereby confirming for the lower status their positions without real property or power and their role as suppliers of vertical wealth that served to provide unequal benefits. In the process, gift giving, and sharing in general, also contributed to the formation and maintenance of imagined communities that transcended socio-economic differences and power imbalances to unite givers and receivers, the powerful and the powerless, in social bonds. Just as it served to reinforce socio-economic hierarchies at both local and regional levels, sharing thus affirmed and strengthened collective identities within and beyond local social units.

Economic generosity was also a prerequisite of power in Plains Cree society. For example, as anthropologist David Mandelbaum notes, a chief was required to give freely of his possessions, especially for the benefit of the poor, which often occurred in public venues, such as the ‘Give Away Dance’ (*pa-kahkus*) or the ‘Sitting Up Until Morning’ ceremony (*e-wapana-pihtcikehk*). During his upbringing, *Ahtakakoop*, a prominent Cree chief of the nineteenth century, was continually being told stories by elders that emphasized the importance of sharing and selflessness, to prepare him for life as a leader.<sup>56</sup> Similarly, along with policing the buffalo hunt, dancing, and feasting, providing aid to the needy was a primary responsibility of the elite warrior or dancer society; the term *Okihtcitaw*, meaning warrior, could identify both reckless bravery as well as

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<sup>56</sup> Deanna Christensen, *Ahtakakoop: The Epic Account of a Plains Cree Head Chief, his People, and their Vision for Survival, 1816-1896* (Shell Lake: Ahtakakoop Publishing, 2000), 62-65.

generosity.<sup>57</sup> Acquiring and maintaining power in Cree and Dene society was thus predicated on the accumulation and subsequent redistribution of wealth. On the other hand, hoarding, interpreted as selfishness, was considered detrimental to the collective good and firmly chastised.

White reached similar conclusions in his examination of Choctaw and Pawnee economies. In Choctaw culture, generosity was intrinsically tied to obligation: “While all these offices [associated with leadership] brought with them prestige and status, most of all they brought obligations, the most important of which was generosity. A chief’s practical influence in large measure depended on what he gave away.” In fact, in “traditional” Choctaw society, “obligation initially was indistinguishable from chieftainship. Originally the chiefs redistributed food resources by allotting the proceeds of communal hunts and common grain reserves to the people ... [and were] responsible for redistributing this surplus to sustain the people and to provide for visitors.” As with *Sakitawak/Kwoen* generosity, in Choctaw society it was a prerequisite of power. “Choctaw chiefs thus were primarily redistributors,” White concludes. “They maintained power not by hoarding goods but rather by giving them away. ... In the nation there simply was neither power nor responsibility without generosity.”<sup>58</sup>

Similarly, among the Pawnee, “kinship,” White notes, “created a horizontal, reciprocal exchange of food and goods, but the status distinctions created another vertical exchange. It was the mark of chiefs to give to their people. When able, they gave freely, and it was their particular duty to provide personally for the destitute.” Therefore,

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<sup>57</sup> David Mandelbaum, *The Plains Cree* (New York : AMS Press, 1979), 106-7, 115-120. See also Edward Ahenakew, *Voices of the Plains Cree*, ed. Ruth Buck (Regina : Canadian Plains Research Center, 1995), 17.

<sup>58</sup> White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 40-42.

although the accumulation of foods and wealth items was necessary, “[m]ost wealth paused only briefly at the top of the Pawnee hierarchy; a chief’s unwillingness to give would have meant his loss of influence since his greed would have violated the very code that assured him of his power.” However, not all goods, White continues, were redistributed:

As wealth filtered back down ... the best goods – those which possessed highest quality or which gave symbolic status (such as flags after the arrival of Europeans) – remained with those of the highest social standing. Redistribution was thus in practice uneven; the highest got the best. All of this was integral to the social order. The ceremonies upon which Pawnee existence depended demanded the maintenance of chiefs and priests whose status and role, in turn, both dictated and depended on the constant vertical flow of goods.<sup>59</sup>

As among the other groups discussed above, power among the Pawnee was predicated on sharing. Leaders and other elites benefitted greatly from vertical forms of exchange, receiving wealth and prestige in return for the management and distribution of local resources. These exchanges illuminate the often-overlooked power dynamics inherent in sharing practices. In addition to its environmental adaptations, and its connections to social cohesion and collective identity, sharing reflected and reinforced structural differences within these Indigenous societies. At no time was it voluntary, benign, or altogether altruistic. Nor could it be separated from the other economic, political, and social structures to which it was connected. Sharing was a core feature of these societies, facilitating survival and prosperity, cohesion and connectedness, power and stratification.

But these attributes and forms of sharing are not unique to Indigenous societies, nor were they static. As demonstrated in Chapter Four, they exhibit noticeable

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<sup>59</sup> White, *The Roots of Dependency*, 176-177.

similarities with non-Indigenous systems of sharing. Although routinely depicted as separate and sometimes oppositional, Indigenous and non-Indigenous socio-economies show strong parallels, particularly in the form and purpose of discrete sharing practices adopted by families and small kin groups. Moreover, as demonstrated in Part II of this dissertation, Indigenous communities, and Metis communities in particular, following the arrival of Euro-Canadian peoples and socio-economic structures, adapted existing exchange practices to take advantage of the opportunities that accompanied Newcomers. As such, Metis systems of sharing, and Indigenous exchange practices in general, were products of hybridity. Through interaction with various others, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, systems of sharing were in a constant state of flux, continually adapting and readapting to various environmental and social variables over time. This type of hybridity, forged through intercultural interaction, goes well beyond physical contact, the mixing of bloodlines, and geographical overlap. Through the commingling of social structures, ideologies, and common senses, Indigenous communities, including those whose members identified as Metis, were genuinely hybrid, the product of ongoing, dynamic, socio-cultural borrowing.

### 3.3 Conclusion

This analysis of Cree, Dene, and Metis systems of exchange makes clear the historical significance of sharing as an ecological and social imperative within the Indigenous societies of *Sakitawak/Kwoen*. Combined with its central role in managing natural resources and environmental fluctuation as well as providing a socio-economic safety net for its members, systems of sharing practiced in this area at the turn of the

nineteenth century were uniquely tailored to the local environment and exceedingly adaptable and flexible in form. Of equal importance is the role sharing played in animating and affirming social relationships and kin networks through acts of generalized reciprocity and other forms of intra-family exchange that occurred on a daily basis. As in the Stó:lō society that flourished within *S'ólh Téméxw*, sharing thus constituted arguably the most important aspect of Indigenous collective identity among the Cree, Dene, and Metis people of what is now northwestern Saskatchewan.

However, although these relationships may have been relatively egalitarian compared to the more stratified societies of the Stó:lō, they were nonetheless mediated by unequal power relations. In even the most local and small-scale social groupings, power mediated individuals' relationships with others and with the natural world, with sharing acting as a key determinant thereof. The connection between sharing and power is particularly evident at the regional or inter-family level. As a marker of status and prerequisite of power, sharing, which often took the form of gift giving at large public gatherings, was not only expected but also obligatory. Contrary to modern notions of sharing as an inherently benevolent and voluntary practice, sharing in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* circa 1800 was a compulsory activity for both giver and receiver. For the givers, who held positions of power, it served as a mechanism for augmenting wealth and securing status while for receivers it represented a tacit acknowledgement and affirmation of the givers' place in society and of prevailing power dynamics. As such, sharing simultaneously represented and reinforced empowerment and oppression, social unification and economic disparity.

Implicit in this analysis of Cree, Dene, and Metis systems of sharing is a comparison with those practiced by the Stó:lō, discussed in Chapter Two. As mentioned above, strong similarities are evident between the two case studies despite the strikingly different social systems and structures. This suggests the value of studying sharing within Indigenous societies, as it helps to illuminate differences between Indigenous peoples, just as it works to reinforce the merit in seeing commonalities among Indigenous societies that go beyond those typically associated with Indigenous stereotypes. In both instances, for example, sharing served as a safeguard against environmental instability and change as well as an instrument of social cohesion and collective identities. Sharing was also a manifestation of power, expressing and fostering internal divisions and fissures in both places. Yet, despite these similarities, important differences are also perceptible. The larger cultures and societies of Stó:lō and Cree, Dene, and Metis peoples are markedly dissimilar in form. Whereas Stó:lō society at the turn of the nineteenth century was largely sedentary, stratified, and densely populated, Cree, Dene, and Metis communities were comparatively more mobile, less stratified, and less densely populated. Similarly, while wealth in *S'ólh Téméxw* was often expressed through the control of productive resource sites and the redistribution of their produce, wealth in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* was more likely to be expressed through physical abilities, especially in procuring food and waging war, and through intangible possessions, such as names, songs, dances, etc. Although none of these forms of wealth was exclusive to any one group or society, their relative importance, and the relative importance of sharing and other forms of exchange, illuminates important differences between Indigenous groups. Despite obvious cross-group similarities in discrete sharing practices, the larger socio-



cultural structures of which they are a part are markedly different. These differences demonstrate that Indigenous histories and cultures are neither entirely homogenous due simply to their Indigeneity, or non-westernness, nor are they utterly unique based solely on their mobile or sedentary lifestyles. The lived experiences of Indigenous people are far more complicated, multifaceted, and messy than these superficial suppositions allow.

But appreciating the complexity and multi-faceted expressions of sharing among Indigenous people is only half of the equation. Identities are inevitably products of negotiation, and so too are any economic activities that involve exchange. In Chapter Four, I apply this same interpretive framework to non-Indigenous systems of sharing and exchange with similar intent. Just as Indigenous societies have been reduced and oversimplified in analyses of socio-economic activity, western economies are sometimes viewed primarily as foils to their Indigenous counterparts. By applying the same ethnohistoric gaze to western culture as I do to Indigenous cultures, I illuminate subtle, nuanced characteristics of non-Indigenous socio-economies that may otherwise be overlooked.

– CHAPTER FOUR –

Charity, Alms, and Relief: Settler Systems of Sharing

... nothing perhaps would tend so strongly to excite a spirit of industry and economy among the poor, as a thorough knowledge that their happiness must always depend principally upon themselves; and that, if they obey their passions instead of their reason, or be not industrious and frugal... they must expect to suffer the natural evils which Providence has prepared for those who disobey the repeated admonitions.<sup>1</sup>

- Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population* (1803)

Ideas and practices of sharing that settlers brought with them to North America had a profound impact on their relationships with Indigenous people. As in *S'ólh Téméxw* (Stó:lō territory) and *Sakitawak/Kwoen* (Cree, Dene, and Metis territory), sharing was central to social and economic life in settler families and communities circa 1800. Individuals and families of all socio-economic classes participated regularly in various forms of reciprocity and exchange based on mutual obligation, cooperation, and solidarity between close, and sometimes more distant, kith and kin. For lower and middle class families, sharing helped ensure a degree of economic independence, insulating them from some of the unpredictability of the mercantilist era, namely the instability of labour markets and the hardships of settling new lands. At an institutional level, churches and clergy of various denominations allocated relief and administered a variety of social programs, including health services and temporary lodging, to individuals and families unable to rely on their relations for support. Similarly, professional associations, fraternal organizations, guilds, and other community-based

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<sup>1</sup> Thomas Robert Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population or a view of its Past and Present Effects on Happiness; with an Inquiry into our Prospects Respecting the Future Removal or Mitigation of the Evils which it Occasions*, 6th Edition (London: John Murray, 1826), IV.IV.2.  
<http://www.econlib.org/library/Malthus/malPlong.html>

associations likewise provided aid and assistance to its members in times of need, creating in the process social bonds between fictive, or imagined, communities that transcended socio-economic inequalities and power balances.

But Newcomers' notions of sharing were also markedly different from those of their Indigenous counterparts. Informed by both Christian teachings about generosity, compassion, and charity as well as economic theories that stressed the importance of labour laws, productivity, and free markets, sharing, between the seventeenth and nineteenth centuries, became institutionalized and increasingly regulated to ensure that only those deemed "deserving" were receiving aid from the Church or state. Indeed, the treatment of the poor and the administration of relief became a principal preoccupation of politicians, economists, and moral philosophers, as demonstrated by the poor law statutes passed during this period and the public debates surrounding them. By tracing these changing ideas and practices of sharing, this chapter analyzes the socio-economic worldviews that were imported to North America by European settlers. In addition to informing the social and economic structures within settler communities, these ideas and practices shaped fundamentally Newcomers' interactions with Indigenous people. From the earliest days of the fur trade through Confederation and Canadian expansion westward, settlers viewed Indigenous peoples and their interactions with them according to sophisticated cultural precepts, both sacred and secular. Juxtaposed with their Indigenous counterparts (discussed in chapters Two and Three), these settler systems of sharing shed light on the colonial history of Canada and cross-cultural interactions.

To date, few comparisons of Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing have been done. Indeed, to the extent that comparisons do exist, the Indigenous and

Canadian historiographies are remarkable for their practitioners' emphasis on cultural difference and, in some cases, assumptions about supposedly incompatible Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies. Early histories of Canada, for example, depicted Indigenous economies as primitive and unsophisticated compared to non-Indigenous ones. In *The Story of Canada*, J. Castell Hopkins looks back "upon the vast panorama of forest and prairie, lake and river over which the Indian wandered upon foot or glided in his birch-bark canoe" to find the Indian, "[a] native of the wilds, a product of primeval conditions... a noble animal" whose only vocations were hunting, fishing, and fighting.<sup>2</sup> Stephen Leacock draws similar conclusions in *Canada: The Foundations of its Future*. North America, at the time of contact, he argues, was empty:

[w]e think of prehistoric North America as inhabited by the Indians, and have based on this a sort of recognition of ownership on their part. But this attitude is hardly warranted. The Indians were too few to count. Their use of the resources of the continent was scarcely more than that by crows and wolves, their development of it nothing.<sup>3</sup>

These excerpts exemplify ethnocentric understandings of Indigenous peoples and economies that present them as primitive, animal-like beings who possess none of the industry or ingenuity evident in Euro-Canadian society. Although these simplistic descriptions began to be displaced in the 1960s through the 1980s by more balanced and

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<sup>2</sup> J. Castell Hopkins, *The Story of Canada: A History of Four Centuries of Progress from the Earliest Settlement to the Present Time* (Toronto: The John C. Winston Company, 1922), 45, 51.

<sup>3</sup> Stephen Leacock, *Canada: The Foundations of its Future* (Montreal: privately printed, 1941), 19. See also G. F. G. Stanley, *The Birth of Western Canada: The Riel Rebellions* (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1936); Marcel Giraud, *Le Métis Canadien*, 2 vols. trans. George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986); and Daryll Forde and Mary Douglas, "Primitive Economics," in *Culture and Society*, ed. Harry L. Shapiro (New York, Oxford University Press, 1956), 330–344. A notable exception is Alfred Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Cultures, 1504-1700: A Study in Canadian Civilization* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1969).

nuanced interpretations,<sup>4</sup> the residue of this ethnocentric approach remains evident in more recent studies, including James Clifton's *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* and Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard's *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry*, both of which argue that critical analyses of Indigenous people and cultures are being actively repressed by "pro-Indian" interest groups who benefit from benevolent stereotypes of Indigenous people.<sup>5</sup> The most recent and popular example of this trend is Thomas Flanagan's *First Nations? Second Thoughts*, which, despite its recent date of publication, shares much in common with the work of Hopkins, Leacock, and others in its dismissal of Indigenous peoples and history as remnants of a primordial, and inferior, past.<sup>6</sup>

More sympathetic analyses of Indigenous peoples and cultures, meanwhile, have posited that Indigenous economies are just as sophisticated as their non-Indigenous counterparts and immune from much of the oppression and corruption that characterizes western economies. In *Dances with Dependency*, for example, Calvin Helin documents what he considers a "golden age" of Indigenous economies rooted in self-reliance, self-discipline, and leadership that enabled Indigenous people to thrive, albeit temporarily,

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<sup>4</sup> Prominent early examples include Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson's Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977); Bruce Trigger, *Natives and Newcomers: Canada's Heroic Age Reconsidered* (Kingston, ON: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1985); E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1986); and John Milloy, *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988).

<sup>5</sup> James Clifton, ed., *The Invented Indian: Cultural Fictions and Government Policies* (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1996); and Frances Widdowson and Albert Howard, *Disrobing the Aboriginal Industry: The Deception behind Indigenous Cultural Preservation* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008). See also Philip Batty, "Private Politics, Public Strategies: White Advisors and their Aboriginal Subjects," *Oceania* 75 (2005): 209-221.

<sup>6</sup> Thomas Flanagan, *First Nations? Second Thoughts* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000). For a similar approach to Australian Aboriginals, see Keith Windschuttle, *The Fabrication of Aboriginal History: Volume One, Van Diemen's Land, 1803-1947* (Sydney: Macleay Press, 2002).

after contact with Europeans.<sup>7</sup> Taiaiake Alfred makes similar observations in *Peace, Power, and Righteousness*, which portrays “the intense possessive materialism at the heart of Western economies” as fundamentally contradictory to “traditional [Native] values aimed at maintaining a respectful balance among people and between human beings on earth.”<sup>8</sup> These overly romantic descriptions of Indigenous economies align with these books’ polemical aims, namely to raise awareness about and empower Indigenous peoples and cultures. They do not, however, challenge the existence of innate cultural differences that separate Indigenous peoples and economies from non-Indigenous ones, relying instead on a binary depiction of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and cultures as mutually unintelligible, wherein the virtues of one cannot be shared with the other.<sup>9</sup> Rather than sophisticated and innovative, non-Indigenous economies are cast as greedy and corrupt in contrast to Indigenous peoples’ egalitarian and sustainable approach. We are therefore left with a history of difference and opposition that arguably

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<sup>7</sup> Calvin Helin, *Dances with Dependency: Out of Poverty Through Self-Reliance* (Woodland Hills, CA: Ravenscrest Publishing, 2008), 80-81.

<sup>8</sup> Taiaiake Alfred, *Peace, Power, and Righteousness: An Indigenous Manifesto* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999).

<sup>9</sup> For more discussion of Indigenous and non-Indigenous perceptions of one another, see Robert F. Berkhofer, Jr. *The White Man's Indian: Images of the American Indian from Columbus to the Present* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978); Brian Dippie, *The Vanishing American: White Attitudes and U.S. Indian Policy* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1982); Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver, Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992); S. Elizabeth Bird, ed., *Dancing in Feathers: The Construction of the Indian in American Popular Culture* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1996); Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1998); Alexandra Harmon, *Indians in the Making: Ethnic Relations and Indian Identities around Puget Sound* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 2000); Ute Lischke and David McNab, eds., *Walking a Tightrope: Aboriginal People and their Representations* (Waterloo, ON: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2005); and Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2005).

does more to obscure similarities and create the impression that Indigenous and western systems are inherently mutually unintelligible.<sup>10</sup>

This chapter diverges from the historiography summarized here by adopting a more nuanced approach to settler systems of sharing and their application in Indigenous communities. Like *S'ólh Téméxw* and *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, settler spaces of the early nineteenth century represent foreign places, temporally if not culturally. Engaging and taking seriously the socio-economic structures present in this place thus requires an approach that contextualizes them within their ethnographic and historical contexts so as to view them, to the greatest extent possible, from the perspectives of their practitioners and according to the cultural logics and common senses that permeated Euro-Canadian life at that time.

Unlike chapters Two and Three, which are based on case studies of specific communities, this chapter adopts a wider perspective to engage the ideas and discourses of sharing circulating in Britain and colonial North America from the late sixteenth through the first half of the nineteenth centuries. My goal is not to provide a comprehensive or exhaustive analysis of British systems of sharing on their own, that is, outside the context of settler colonialism. Due to limited space and my more narrow focus on the history of sharing within Indigenous and cross-cultural spaces, this chapter does not adopt the “on the ground” approach evident in the previous two chapters.

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<sup>10</sup> This historiography also demonstrates that the study of non-Indigenous economies of sharing differs from the study of Indigenous ones. Whereas Indigenous systems of sharing have been examined most often by anthropologists and ethnographers, sharing in non-Indigenous communities has largely fallen under the purview of historians and political economists. This disciplinary distinction is a product of a scholarly bias inherent in the academy. The history of Indigenous people and institutions, perceived as different and “other”, becomes a subject for anthropologists and Natives Studies scholars, while the history of non-indigenous peoples and institutions, familiar and directly connected to present peoples and institutions, becomes historical.

Instead, this chapter analyzes British attitudes toward sharing and relief articulated by seminal writers and public debates about Poor Law legislation during the long eighteenth century. Although British historiography clearly demonstrates that the ideas and attitudes held by political and intellectual elites were not necessarily shared or experienced by the majority of British subjects at the time and although discussions of Poor Law legislation and the merits of relief are not the only lenses through which British systems of sharing may be interrogated (ideas of sharing, for example, could also be investigated through public debates about ownership and commodification),<sup>11</sup> these avenues of inquiry are beyond the scope of my dissertation and peripheral to the chapter's principal objectives.

This chapter also recognizes that settler systems of sharing were neither uniform nor universal. Although the British government was the principal European nation operating in northern North America after 1760, British voices were not the only ones Indigenous people were hearing in the nineteenth century; British ideas of sharing were mediated and filtered by a number of other colonial actors. As discussed in the second half of this dissertation, French Oblate priests, for example, maintained a strong and vocal presence in both *S'ólh Téméxw* and *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, espousing views and teachings that did not necessarily conform to British colonial laws or ideas of sharing. Similarly, British and French fur traders, a number of whom were from non-elite families, did not always act in accordance with their employers' directives, sometimes choosing to follow Indigenous precepts instead. Even Indian agents, from varied

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<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of "on the ground" relief practices, see, for example, Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Solidarities of Strangers: The English Poor Laws and the People, 1700-1948* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge Press, 1998), 19-41. For a broader discussion of sharing and market forces, see Frances Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Regulating the Poor* (New York, Pantheon, 1972); Catharina Lis and Hugo Soly, *Poverty and Capitalism in Pre-Industrial Europe* (Brighton: Harvester Press, 1982); and George R. Boyer, *An Economic History of the English Poor Law, 1750-1850* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990).



backgrounds, sometimes defied settler ideas of sharing in their interactions with Indigenous peoples. These were the day-to-day voices of colonialism in the nineteenth century, and although they echoed mainstream British ideologies, British notions of sharing, morality, and obligation were refined through various social and religious filters.

The approach adopted in this chapter aims to generate a deeper understanding of the intellectual contexts that permeated British settler society at the turn of the eighteenth century and shaped fundamentally the history of Indigenous-settler relations in northern North America. Divided into three main sections, it traces changing ideas and practices of sharing in Britain and North America from the late sixteenth to early nineteenth centuries. First I examine the development of the Elizabethan Poor Laws, passed at the turn of the seventeenth century, which, by consolidating earlier relief legislation that was done largely on an ad hoc basis, cemented existing philosophical approaches to sharing. The second part examines criticisms of the Elizabethan Poor Laws by economists and moral philosophers, including Adam Smith, Robert Townsend, and Robert Malthus, who articulated a changed understanding of the role of wealth redistribution within British society. Their critiques contributed to the repeal of existing legislation and the passing of the New Poor Law of 1834. Lastly, this chapter analyzes the impact British systems of sharing had on settler society in North America, particularly in interactions negotiated between Natives and Newcomers. Operating within a markedly different cultural context and according to a distinct worldview, Indigenous people were faced with a foreign and constantly shifting set of ideas and practices related to exchange and interaction that would play an increasingly important role in their communities in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. This deeper engagement challenges us to move beyond simplistic

interpretations of cross-cultural interactions informed by unquestioned assumptions of cultural difference and discontinuity. The history of Indigenous-settlers relations, the focus of the second half of this dissertation, demonstrates that the past is a much more complicated and compelling story.

This chapter argues that settler systems of sharing circa 1800 were dynamic, often contradictory arrangements of ideas and practices. Influenced by a number of sacred and secular philosophies and implemented in sometimes unexpected ways across space and through time, they, like their Indigenous counterparts, represent a culturally specific formulation of protocols and mechanisms through which wealth was acquired, managed, and redistributed among various classes of people. Rather than being diametrically opposed to the Stó:lō and Cree/Dene/Metis systems surveyed in the preceding two chapters, they also exhibit significant areas of overlap. Each of these systems represents adaptations to local, though markedly different, social and environmental contexts. They inform and are informed by power relations and are validated through dominant discourses, be they spiritual, religious, scientific, or otherwise. They, and the cultures of which they are a part, are not diametrically opposed or foils to one another, but rather multifaceted arrangements of people, ideas and practices that at times coincide, conflict, and converge, and always are in motion. The more nuanced approach this chapter seeks to present thus allows for a richer understanding not only of settler economies and societies but also of cross-cultural relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

#### 4.1 Sharing and Relief in Great Britain

Systems of sharing practiced in British North America in the nineteenth century were a product of changing ideas and policies about relief in Great Britain at the time. From the mid-eighteenth to mid-nineteenth centuries, British politicians, economists, philosophers, and church officials debated the purpose and protocols of distributing aid of various kinds to those considered to be in need. These debates reflect conflicting, changing perceptions of sharing and its contributions to the British economy and society in general. During the early modern period, for example, relief was a local matter. Parishes acted as distribution centres, providing relief on a case-by-case basis to impoverished community members deemed to be deserving of such aid. At this time, relief was not a primary economic resource; the poor relied most heavily on common resources, not government or Church aid. By the nineteenth century, however, ongoing industrialization and urbanization in Britain demanded a stable, permanent supply of urban labourers. In response to these broader economic shifts, poor laws were debated and ultimately amended to ensure relief policies did not inhibit the country's economic wellbeing. Throughout the long eighteenth century, systems of relief and ideas of sharing were inextricably connected to productivity and efficiency; the maintenance of the poor was contingent on economic growth. During the colonial period, these ideas and protocols became important mechanisms of settler colonialism in Indigenous territories that would eventually become form Canada.

### *British Relief Policies*

One of the most important pieces of legislation passed by the British government to regulate the distribution of relief was the Poor Relief Act of 1601. Commonly referred to as the Elizabethan Poor Law, it established a national system of relief in England and Wales to regulate the distribution of aid to those in need. It did not, however, chart a new course for relief legislation or articulate a new understanding of wealth redistribution. Rather than overhauling existing practices, the Poor Relief Act consolidated and systematized a series of earlier laws, particularly the Act for the Relief of the Poor (1597), that had been passed on an ad hoc basis since the sixteenth century.<sup>12</sup> The Elizabethan Poor Law, in other words, was significant not because it reflected a change in British ideas of sharing but because it reinforced them.

Prior to 1601, the distribution of relief was largely a sacred enterprise with the state intervening only when demand for aid overwhelmed the Church's resources or when relief efforts were viewed as a threat to the country's economic wellbeing. During the Middle Ages, for example, bishops allocated approximately one-quarter of diocese revenues, most of which were derived from church tithes, Church-owned land, legacies left to the Church, and public collections, to feeding and protecting the poor.<sup>13</sup> Informed by Christian theology, Church relief efforts were based on the view that failing to share with the less fortunate was not only ignoring the virtue of charity but was actually equated with the sin of murder. The twelfth century *Decretum Gratiani*, for instance, stresses the importance of sharing and providing aid to those in need: "Feed the poor. If

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<sup>12</sup> See Paul Slack, *The English Poor Law, 1531-1782* (Cambridge: University of Cambridge, 1990), 3-13.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1979), 5.

you do not feed them, you kill them ... Our superfluities belong to the poor ... Whatever you have beyond what suffices for your needs belongs to others ... A man who keeps for himself more than he needs is guilty of theft.”<sup>14</sup> Catholic priest and philosopher Thomas Aquinas likewise argued “the perfection of the Christian life consists radically in charity.”<sup>15</sup> Sharing was a central tenet of Christianity and relief an obligation to be fulfilled by the Church.

Aside from the Church, other institutions, following similar socio-economic protocols and ideas of sharing, also provided aid to the impoverished. Since their formal inception in the Middle Ages, trade guilds and social fraternities had provided various forms of aid and relief to what they considered to be needy and deserving members of society. As Europe, and Britain in particular, became increasingly urbanized after the eleventh century, these institutions filled a gap in the church-based welfare system, providing aid not only to members of their orders but also to non-members who were beyond the reach of rural parishes. In addition to occasional, informal aid provided to local people and destitute travellers, formal works of charity were organized to provide destitute peoples with barley, grain, and other foodstuffs on what became known as “feast days.”<sup>16</sup>

In so doing, these private organizations enhanced their status and prestige while forging internal bonds of solidarity and building what might be considered “imagined

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in Paul A. Fideler, *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England: The Old Poor Law Tradition* (Hampshire, England: Palgrave MacMillan Press, 2006), 14-15.

<sup>15</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica*, trans. The Fathers of the English Dominican Province (New York: Benziger Bros. edition, 1947).

<sup>16</sup> Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, 4-5.

communities.”<sup>17</sup> Linked not by blood or religion but by common membership or purpose, these communities developed familial relations and mutual obligation among people who otherwise were strangers. As elite members of their communities, professional associations thus redistributed a portion of their wealth to the lower classes in much the same way that Indigenous leaders shared wealth at potlatch ceremonies or community celebrations. Indeed, this connection between power/prestige and the redistribution of wealth is implicit in virtually all church and state welfare programmes and indicative of the similarities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing. By caring for the needy, the powerful validated and affirmed the existing socio-economic system and their access to the mechanisms of wealth-production, while those lacking power implicitly acknowledged and confirmed the status quo and simultaneously strengthened social cohesion in spite of sometimes massive socio-economic inequalities.

The growing number of hospitals, many of which were associated with monasteries, also provided relief to the poor. Although they focused mainly on the ill, early hospitals also offered basic necessities for orphans, the aged, and destitute travellers. Initially, hospitals were often located along travel routes where travellers who were separated from their family support networks could receive aid. But as a result of urbanization, and the associated inability of families to access sufficient food resources to support people unable to work, as well as increases in the frequency of urban crowd illnesses and disease like tuberculosis, Bubonic Plague, influenza, cholera, and smallpox, hospitals moved into towns and cities where the need was greatest. By the mid-

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<sup>17</sup> Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

fourteenth century, hundreds of hospitals existed in England alone, each caring for dozens or even hundreds of sick and destitute patients.<sup>18</sup>

The state rarely intervened in relief efforts until the mid-fourteenth century when a series of social, economic, and ecological events challenged the existing social order and placed the nation's economic wellbeing in opposition to Church relief. The burgeoning enclosure movement and concomitant decline of feudalism coupled with the growth of commerce and international trade, which increased the rise of the factory as well as increased capital investment, forced many rural labourers to relocate to more urban areas, beyond the reach of local parishes and Church aid. These migrations were exacerbated by ecological disasters, such as crop failures, famine, and the bubonic plague, that caused massive demographic changes and population loss, leading in turn to a nation-wide labour shortage, rising wages, and increased transience among labourers.

In response, King Edward III introduced in 1349 the Statute of Labourers, the first British law that directly affected the poor and destitute. Designed primarily to protect the interests of industry and the business elite, it mobilized relief legislation to regulate labour and reduce costs. The Statute set the first minimum wage, restricted the mobility of labourers, and prohibited the allocation of charity or relief to "sturdy" or "valiant" alms-seekers. Therefore, although the needy and destitute were not the main focus of this legislation, it became the foundation upon which future poor laws were erected. As historian Paul Fidler notes, this system of social welfare, "developed concomitantly to the emerging economic grid and market activities in the twelfth and thirteenth

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<sup>18</sup> Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, 5.

centuries.”<sup>19</sup> Britain’s earliest relief laws, in other words, were a product of state intervention in the economy. Rather than a response to impoverishment, state welfare programs – and ideas of sharing more broadly – were about maximizing economic productivity and profit.

Embedded in Britain’s emerging social welfare system were important distinctions between deserving and undeserving recipients of relief. Not everyone who needed or asked for aid should necessarily receive it. According to Christian theologians like St Ambrose and St Augustine, the deserving poor included anyone hardship was “fortuitous,” people who, in other words, suffered from physical and/or mental disabilities and were therefore unable to work and contribute to the national economy. Destitute through no fault of their own, this class of citizens had a right to seek and receive aid from others. The undeserving poor, on the other hand, were able bodied but unemployed. Cast as lazy, impatient, and/or immoral, their destitution was deemed to be preventable, making them unworthy of soliciting or accepting relief from either the Church or state.<sup>20</sup> As the principal administrators of the relief system, parish priests were charged with distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor on a case by case basis. As prominent members of their communities, priests would in theory know their parishioners well enough to ensure that only those whose hardships were real and not self inflicted would receive aid, thereby protecting the existing social order and maximizing the utility of the welfare system.

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<sup>19</sup> Fideler, *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England*, 13.

<sup>20</sup> Quoted in Fideler, *Social Welfare in Pre-Industrial England*, 16. This sentiment – that laziness is sinful – is also evident in some Stó:lō communities, perhaps suggesting that Christianity provided Indigenous people with a new vocabulary for articulating what constitutes proper socio-economic activity and that western and Indigenous societies’ views of “lazy” people share certain commonalities.



Distinctions between the deserving and undeserving poor remained a central feature of the social welfare system as King Edward III's relief policies were expanded in subsequent centuries to further standardize the welfare system and safeguard Britain's economy. For example, the 1531 Vagabonds Act, passed by King Henry III in response to a marked increase in demands for charity and aid during the Reformation, condemned able-bodied beggars – deemed underserving of relief – to public whippings while instructing civic officials to designate areas of their towns in which the deserving poor would be permitted to beg for alms and charity. This legislation was extended five years later with the passing of the Act for the Punishment of Sturdy Vagabonds and Beggards, also known as the Henrician Poor Law, which implemented more severe penalties, such as branding, enslavement, and execution, for able-bodied alms-seekers and ordered civic officials to both administer and raise funds for the relief of the poor, sick, lame, and aged through donations made by the church. At the same time, the King also dissolved a number of monasteries and other church property, further eroding the economic security formerly offered by feudalism and the church and exacerbating national levels of unemployment, poverty, vagabondage, begging, and thievery in cities and other commercial centres. As historian Walter Trattner notes, this separation of able-bodied labourers from the disabled or deserving poor was a central feature of the British welfare system at this time.<sup>21</sup> In attempting to eliminate the need for begging, the British Crown was effectively assuming responsibility for the poor. In the process, parishes, which once acted largely independently, were gradually being integrated into the state's system of relief.

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<sup>21</sup> Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State*, 6-8.

The government's takeover of relief services accelerated during the Protestant Reformation. Realizing that funds derived from church revenues could not meet the growing demand of the nation's poor, the Crown in 1572 instructed civic officials to tax local residents and use a portion of the proceeds for charity and relief. Sixteen years later, the Act for the Relief of the Poor (1597) codified existing relief legislation and created a new position, the Overseer of the Poor, to make the system more efficient by separating, at the local level, deserving recipients, those that were unable to work, from those that were idle but otherwise able.<sup>22</sup> This consolidation and expansion of welfare policies not only affirmed the state's role in the redistribution of wealth to the destitute, it also formed the basis of the Elizabethan relief system that would last for almost a century and a half.

#### *The Elizabethan Poor Law*

The Elizabethan Poor Law was thus not a new approach to state sponsored social welfare but an amalgamation and codification of previous legislation in various statutes. The system itself was decentralized; although organized at the national level, it was administered by local parishes. Given their knowledge of the parish and its residents, overseers of the poor were expected to distinguish between deserving and undeserving recipients. The deserving or "impotent" poor, those deemed incapable of working due to their age, health, or some other disability, were given money, food, clothing, or other goods to help them survive. Termed "outdoor relief," this type of support did not require recipients to live in or attach themselves to relief institutions, such as alms houses. This

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid., 9.

was the simplest form of relief. It required minimal institutional support and was not designed to change the actions or habits of recipients, simply to provide for their basic needs.

Able-bodied beggars, on the other hand, were subject to “indoor” or institutional relief. In some instances members of the impotent poor could be institutionalized: the aged were sometimes admitted to alms houses, families lacking a breadwinner might be sent to a poorhouse, and children could be apprenticed to mills, factories, or other businesses to ensure they actively contributed to, rather than hindered the national economy.<sup>23</sup> The majority of the institutionalized poor, however, were those deemed lazy, individuals that could work but chose not to. Rather than providing for their basic needs, the relief they received, which could include corporal punishment as well as incarceration in a house of correction or workhouse, was designed to modify their behaviour and force them to work. In extreme cases, able-bodied beggars could be executed for their unwillingness to work. In this way, the Elizabethan Poor Law served to provide a steady, reliable labour force as much as provided for the needy.

The policies and practices were the foundation of Britain’s welfare system until the Elizabethan Poor Laws were repealed in 1834. Aside from their economic application, they also provide an important window into British ideas and perceptions of sharing and wealth distribution during this time. Providing aid to the destitute was closely tied to economic efficiency and productivity; the allocation of relief was not to compromise or in any way harm the nation’s economic wellbeing, especially by reducing the size or availability of the unskilled labour force. These economic considerations,

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<sup>23</sup> Ibid., 9-11. The children of parents receiving outdoor relief could also be removed to poorhouses which would then hire them out as cheap labour.

coupled with the costs associated with public relief, made distinguishing between the deserving and undeserving poor such an important part of the British welfare system. Aid was only to be provided to those unable to care for themselves. Anyone capable of working was expected to actively contribute to the national economy.

But while the Elizabethan relief system continued to expand during the seventeenth century, it struggled to keep pace with economic and demographic changes happening in England. Although workhouses and other institutions increased in number throughout the 1700s, the ability of parishes to administer the system was waning. An increasingly mobile, urbanizing British population made it increasingly difficult for overseers of the poor to keep track of their wards, much less distinguish between the deserving and undeserving among them. The costs associated with the system also were on the rise. Delivering aid to the destitute was costly, further limiting the economic utility of the relief system.<sup>24</sup> As a consolidation of earlier laws and statutes, the Elizabethan Poor Laws by the dawn of the new century seemed ill-equipped to address the nation's economic and demographic needs.

#### 4.2 Reforming the Poor Laws

In the eighteenth century, the Elizabethan poor laws faced mounting criticism from various sectors of British society. Economic theorists and philosophers, in particular, criticized the laws for being increasingly out of touch with the country's changing economy, demography, and future goals. They called for an overhaul of existing legislation and the development of new laws better suited to industrialization and

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<sup>24</sup> Slack, *The English Poor Law*, 21-26.

modernity, as they saw it. These calls for reform would eventually result in the passing of the New Poor Law in 1834, an act that signalled not only a new direction in welfare policy but also the changing ideas of sharing that were circulating in Great Britain at the time and that would, in turn, influence welfare legislation in British North America.

One of the earliest critics of the Elizabethan Poor Laws was economist and moral philosopher Adam Smith. Although best known for his 1776 opus *The Wealth of Nations*,<sup>25</sup> Smith articulated the foundations of his economic theory in *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, a 1759 publication that commented directly on Britain's approach to relief and the redistribution of wealth generally. Responding in part to David Hume and other philosophers who were developing, in the eighteenth century, theories to explain human morality and economic behaviour, Smith used the term "sympathy" to describe what he considered to be an "invisible hand" guiding the actions of human actors in their relationships with each other.<sup>26</sup> It was sympathy, Smith argued, that mediated individuals' self-interest, causing them to behave compassionately and selflessly:

How selfish soever man may be supposed, there are evidently some principles in his nature, which interest him in the fortune of others, and render their happiness necessary to him, though he derives nothing from it except the pleasure of seeing it. Of this kind is pity or compassion, the emotion which we feel for the misery of others, when we either see it, or are made to conceive it in a very lively manner. That we often derive sorrow from the sorrow of others, is a matter of fact too obvious to require any instances to prove it; for this sentiment, like all the other original passions of human nature, is by no means confined to the virtuous and humane, though they perhaps may feel it with the most exquisite sensibility. The greatest ruffian, the most hardened violator of the laws of society, is not altogether without it.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>25</sup> Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, ed. Edwin Cannan (London: Methuen & Co. Ltd, 1904), <http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smWN.html>.

<sup>26</sup> See Samuel Mencher, *Poor Law to Poverty Program: Economic Security Policy in Britain and the United States* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1968), 65-66.

<sup>27</sup> Smith, Adam, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments* (London: A. Millar, 1790), I.I.1,

Although often employed to explain modern market forces,<sup>28</sup> Smith's invisible hand in fact represents the unseen moral impulses that at least sometimes trump more obvious motives and rationales.

Smith's invisible hand – the universality of sympathy – had important implications for British poor laws and ideas of sharing. Most significantly, Smith's theory questioned the role of the state in administering relief. Individuals, he argued were “no doubt, by nature, first and principally recommended to his own care; and as he is fitter to take care of himself, than of any other person, it is fit and right that it should be so.”<sup>29</sup> In the event that an individual could not care for themselves and required aid, the rich, acting on sympathy, would intuitively redistribute wealth to the poor, thus affirming the existing social order:

... [I]n spite of their natural selfishness and rapacity, though they mean only their own conveniency, though the sole end which they propose from the labours of all the thousands whom they employ, be the gratification of their own vain and insatiable desires, they divide with the poor the produce of all their improvements. They are led by an invisible hand to make nearly the same distribution of the necessaries of life, which would have been made, had the earth been divided into equal portions among all its inhabitants, and thus without intending it, without knowing it, advance the interest of the society, and afford means to the multiplication of the species.<sup>30</sup>

The rich sympathize with the poor not because they are necessarily compassionate but because they can imagine themselves in that position. Providing aid was both selfless

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<http://www.econlib.org/library/Smith/smMS1.html>.

<sup>28</sup> See the exchange between Gavin Kennedy and Daniel Klein: Gavin Kennedy, “Adam Smith and the Invisible Hand: From Metaphor to Myth,” *Econ Journal Watch* 6, no. 2 (May 2009): 239–263; Daniel B. Klein, “In Adam Smith's Invisible Hands: Comment on Gavin Kennedy,” *Econ Journal Watch* 6, no. 2 (May 2009): 264–279; and Gavin Kennedy, “A Reply to Daniel Klein on Adam Smith and the Invisible Hand,” *Econ Journal Watch* 6, no. 3 (September 2009): 374–388.

<sup>29</sup> Smith, *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, II.II.2.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, IV.I.10.

and selfish, serving both to alleviate the hardship of the recipient and to relieve the giver from seeing and perhaps experiencing another's hardship. In this way, sharing fulfilled what Smith considered to be a natural human desire to achieve respect through generosity while simultaneously protecting the "natural order." The "peace and order of society" that accompanied charitable acts, he wrote, "is of more importance than even the relief of the miserable."<sup>31</sup> By intervening in this moral economy, the state, according to Smith, jeopardized both the care of the needy and the social order.

Published three decades after *The Theory of Moral Sentiments*, Reverend Joseph Townsend's *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws* presented an even more critical analysis of state relief payments. Originally published in 1786 under the anonymous authorship of a "Well-Wisher to Mankind," it advocated the abolishment of all state-sponsored aid which, in Townsend's opinion, encouraged idleness and reliance on the charity of others. Using the Spanish colonization of Juan Fernandez Island as an allegory for British welfare policy, Townsend favoured the "survival of the fittest":

In the South Seas there is an island, which from the first discoverer is called Juan Fernandez. In this sequestered spot, John Fernando placed a colony of goats, consisting of one male, attended by his female. This happy couple finding pasture in abundance, could readily obey the first commandment, to increase and multiply, till in the process of time they had replenished their little island. ... When the Spaniards found that the English privateers resorted to this island for provisions, they resolved on the total extirpation of the goats, and for this purpose they put on shore a greyhound dog and bitch. These in their turn increased and multiplied, in proportion to the quantity of food they met with; but in consequence, as the Spaniards had foreseen, the breed of goats diminished. Had they been totally destroyed, the dogs likewise must have perished. But as many of the goats retired to the craggy rocks, where the dogs could never follow them, descending only for short intervals to feed with fear and circumspection in the vallies [sic], few of these, besides the careless and

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<sup>31</sup> Ibid., VI.II.23. See also John Cunningham Wood, ed., *Adam Smith: Critical Assessments*, Volume 3 (London: Croom Helm, 1984), 397.

the rash, became a prey; and none but the most watchful, strong and active of the dogs could get a sufficiency of food. Thus a new kind of balance was established. The weakest of both species were among the first to pay the debt of nature; the most active and most vigorous preserved their lives. It is the quantity of food which regulates the numbers of the human species.<sup>32</sup>

For Townsend, there existed a natural social order. That some people would live in poverty was inevitable no matter how much relief they received. Providing aid to the needy thus served only to increase their number, placing greater strain on the nation's resources and capacity. "It seems to be a law of nature," he opined, "that the poor should be to a certain degree improvident."<sup>33</sup> Providing them with relief risked destroying the beauty, the symmetry and order of that system, which God and nature have established in the world. ... In the progress of society, it will be found that some must want."<sup>34</sup>

To restore symmetry and order to British society, Townsend advocated for the gradual abolishment of relief payments over a ten-year period and greater reliance on the charity and compassion of the rich. In providing relief, the government, he argued was encouraging idleness; workhouses and other welfare institutions, in his eyes, were "palliatives" that hid the inherent deficiencies of poor laws by making the poor seem industrious.<sup>35</sup> As economist and political scientist Philipp H. Lepenies demonstrated, Townsend believed that, by guaranteeing subsistence, the poor laws "allowed the poor to have ever more children without simultaneously producing the means to care for them."<sup>36</sup>

Just as poverty was inevitable, so too was hunger which Townsend viewed as a

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<sup>32</sup> Joseph Townsend, *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws by a Well-Wisher to Mankind* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1971), 36-38.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 47.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 52.

<sup>36</sup> Philipp H. Lepenies, "Of Goats and Dogs: Joseph Townsend and the Idealization of Markets – a Decisive Episode in the History of Economics," *Cambridge Journal of Economics* 38, no. 2 (June 2013): 450.



productive, if lamentable, reality. Hunger, he believed, “will tame the fiercest animals, it will teach decency and civility, obedience and subjugation to the most brutish, the most obstinate, the most perverse.”<sup>37</sup> This view of state responsibilities and distinctions between the deserving and underserving poor are also evident in British and Canadian Indian Policy discussed below.

Where relief was absolutely necessary, the rich would provide it. “The poor might be safely left to the free bounty of the rich,” he argued, “without the interposition of any other law.”<sup>38</sup> As long as those in need demonstrated their deservedness through industriousness and moral decency, “the rich will never want inclination to relieve the distress of the poor.”<sup>39</sup> By allowing such things “to flow in their proper channels, the consequences would no longer be unnatural and forced, but would regulate itself by the demand for labour.”<sup>40</sup> This withdrawal of the state from Britain’s moral economy would, Townsend believed, encourage desirable behaviours, improve economic productivity, and check the growth of undesirable segments of the population, thereby ensuring that competition would drive evolution.

Although some considered Townsend an extremist, his dissertation and its use of what was then considered empirical scientific evidence, significantly influenced future discussions of poor laws and ideas of sharing.<sup>41</sup> Noted political economist Robert Malthus, for example, extended Townsend’s work to articulate what has become known as the “population principle.” Originally published in 1798, Malthus’ *An Essay on the*

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<sup>37</sup> Townsend, *A Dissertation on the Poor Laws by a Well-Wisher to Mankind*, 27.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 63.

<sup>39</sup> *Ibid.*, 69.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 61-62.

<sup>41</sup> See Lepenies, “Of Goats and Dogs,” 451-454.

*Principle of Population* was republished several times during his life with subsequent editions placing greater emphasis on the risk the poor laws posed to British society.

Malthus's population principle was predicated on the belief that, if left unchecked, human populations would eventually grow so large as to exhaust the resources necessary to sustain it, thereby increasing distress and impoverishment among the poor:

The constant effort towards population, which is found to act even in the most vicious societies, increases the number of people before the means of subsistence are increased. The food, therefore, which before supported eleven millions, must now be divided among eleven millions and a half. The poor consequently must live much worse, and many of them be reduced to severe distress. The number of labourers also being above the proportion of work in the market, the price of labour must tend to fall, while the price of provisions would at the same time tend to rise. The labourer therefore must do more work, to earn the same as he did before.<sup>42</sup>

Unchecked population growth, Malthus argued, would eventually lead to catastrophic famine, disease, or some other form of population control.

Malthus' theory had important implications for government relief. The "first obvious tendency" of the poor laws, he wrote, "is to increase population without increasing the food for its support." By providing relief to the poor, the state was effectively promoting the growth of the lower classes which, according to Malthus, consumed far more resources and food than they produced, diverting wealth away from "more industrious and worthy members".<sup>43</sup> Moreover, state relief encouraged what Malthus saw to be "imprudent marriages" between women and men unable to support them: "A poor man may marry with little or no prospect of being able to support a family

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<sup>42</sup> Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population or a view of its Past and Present Effects on Happiness*, I.II.16.

<sup>43</sup> *Ibid.*, III.VI.2.

without parish assistance.”<sup>44</sup> Lastly, the poor-laws, he observed, “tend in the most marked manner to make the supply of labour exceed demand for it,”<sup>45</sup> leading to increased unemployment, poverty, and dependence on relief. They would weaken and “probably destroy ... completely” the “love of independence” that Malthus regarded as a trademark of British society and character.<sup>46</sup>

To avoid such demographic and moral collapse, Malthus called for a full repeal of the poor laws. Relief, he argued, should only be granted by the rich through charity, and only to the deserving poor, those whose misfortune resulted from sickness or accident but were otherwise industrious and decent:

... nothing perhaps would tend so strongly to excite a spirit of industry and economy among the poor, as a thorough knowledge that their happiness must always depend principally upon themselves; and that, if they obey their passions instead of their reason, or be not industrious and frugal while they are single to save a sum for the common contingencies of the married state, they must expect to suffer the natural evils which Providence has prepared for those who disobey the repeated admonitions.<sup>47</sup>

Individuals, not the state, were responsible for their own welfare and subsistence. To safeguard the British spirit of independence and protect the social order, the government, in Malthus’ view, had to withdraw from the socio-economic lives of its citizens and allow nature, or “Providence,” to run its course.

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<sup>44</sup> Ibid., III.VI.2.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., III.VII.27.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid., II.VIII.5 For a more detailed discussion of Malthus’ criticisms of the poor laws, see James P. Huzel, “Malthus, the Poor Law, and Population in Early Nineteenth-Century England,” *The Economic History Review*, New Series 22, no. 3 (December 1969): 430-432.

<sup>47</sup> Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population or a view of its Past and Present Effects on Happiness*, IV.IV.2.

Highly influential when it was published,<sup>48</sup> Malthus's essay epitomized the *laissez-faire* approach to social welfare policy. Along with the work of Smith, Townsend, and others, it reflected changing ideas about sharing and economics that were circulating in Britain during the second half of the eighteenth century. No longer viewed mainly as a moral or religious imperative, the redistribution or sharing of wealth by elites was being recast in scientific and secular terms, as a key determinant of demographic health and economic productivity. Set against a backdrop of increasingly rapid urbanization and industrialization, these novel economic ideas framed the debates in Britain that would ultimately lead in the nineteenth century to a fundamental shift in government welfare policies rooted in individualism, utilitarianism, and free market economics.

### *The New Poor Law*

Passed in 1834, the Poor Law Amendment Act, better known as the New Poor Law, charted a new course for state relief policies in Britain and elsewhere. Responding to concerns about abuses of the existing Elizabethan poor law system and increasing costs, especially in rural areas where it had become a form of wage subsidization for labourers, as well as the critiques levelled by economic theorists and moral philosophers as well as, the British government had struck, in 1832, a Royal Commission to investigate the operation of the poor laws. Informed by Malthus and others, the Commission argued that, given the option, people would rather collect relief than work for a living, which accounted for the abuses and increasing costs of the existing system. If left unchecked, these Elizabethan Poor Laws, coupled with England's rapidly growing

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<sup>48</sup> See Huzel, "Malthus, the Poor Law, and Population in Early Nineteenth-Century England," 433-434.

population, would eventually exhaust the country's resources and cripple its economy. In response, the commissioners advocated a stricter relief system that dissuaded able-bodied citizens from applying for relief. If outdoor relief ceased and the conditions of institutions that provided indoor relief were allowed to deteriorate, only the most destitute, the commissioners believed, would apply for aid, thus reducing the government's expenses and avoiding economic catastrophe.<sup>49</sup>

The New Poor Law was a concerted effort by Britain's political leaders to implement the Commission's recommendations. It drastically reduced outdoor relief, confined all alms-seekers – both the able unemployed as well as the aged, sick, and infirm – to state-run workhouses, and required all able bodied recipients to accept job offers regardless of pay or working conditions; the government implemented a policy of “less eligibility” that deliberately worsened the condition of workhouses to make them more destitute and repellent than alternatives; and a permanent Poor Law Commission was established at the national level to monitor the operations of the new legislation and ensure local parishes and workhouses were adhering to the country's new policies. Although parishes continued to provide some forms of outdoor relief and although most workhouses failed to match the destitute conditions their wards were subject to outside the institutions' walls, the New Poor Laws nonetheless represented a significant shift in British ideas of sharing and the administration of relief.<sup>50</sup> In contrast to earlier ad hoc legislation rooted in Christian doctrine and administered primarily by parishes, the New

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<sup>49</sup> See David Englander, *Poverty and Poor Law Reform in 19th Century Britain, 1834-1914: From Chadwick to Booth*, Seminar Series in History (London and New York: Longman, 1998), 9-13.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 13-16.

Poor Law adopted a more secular, draconian approach to the treatment of the poor and others who were seen as threats to the nation's economic and moral wellbeing.

The harsh treatment of the poor under Britain's new relief system is well documented in history and fiction. A series of scandals and other failures led to growing concern among both citizens and politicians, many of whom had initially supported the New Poor Law. The legislative reforms ushered in by the Royal Commission were not providing the economic salvation or prosperity that had been imagined, a reality perhaps best articulated by works of fiction, such as Charles Dickens' novel *Hard Times*.<sup>51</sup> Originally published in 1854, it explored the desperate social and economic conditions present in England at the time, satirizing the utilitarianism that underpinned British relief and, from Dickens' perspective at least, was responsible for the abject misery experienced by the novel's characters. The government's emphasis on economic productivity and "facts," Dickens suggested, were eroding the nation's social and moral health. By the end of the nineteenth century, a number of amendments to the New Poor Law, including replacing the Poor Law Commission with the Poor Law Board, were passed to soften the system's harshest elements and avoid future scandals. In the early twentieth century, a second Royal Commission was struck to investigate the operations of the poor laws which led, in the interwar period, to the introduction of the first liberal welfare reforms and, in 1948, the repeal of the New Poor Law.

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<sup>51</sup> Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London: Heron Books, 1970).

### 4.3 Settler Systems of Relief

Despite the failure and eventual collapse of the New Poor Law, it significantly influenced ideas of sharing and economic policy throughout the commonwealth in nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Although relief was not the only economic resource available to the poor and although it is only one mechanism through which broader ideas of sharing were made manifest, poor laws nonetheless shed light on the worldviews held by government officials in British North America. Colonial elites passed relief statutes that mirrored those already in place in the mother country and replicated the economic and social mores of the time. In 1837, for example, legislators in Upper Canada, eager to establish a cheap labour force, passed the Houses of Industry Act which called for the establishment of public institutions to accommodate “all poor and indigent persons who are incapable of supporting themselves, who refuse or neglect to do so; all persons living in a lewd, dissolute vagrant life or exercising no ordinary calling or lawful business sufficient to procure an honest living.” These “Houses of Industries”, absent in rural areas, were funded by municipalities with revenues generated by hiring residents out to private companies that negotiated directly with the municipality. Even the aged, who formed the majority of residents, were rented out while children were placed in apprenticeships, girls doing domestic work and boys labouring on farms to contribute to family income and avoid the poorhouse. In Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, these houses remained the sole source of relief into the 1950s. Deemed “less eligible,” “state-aided” employees were paid lower wages to ensure state subsidies did

not cause wage increases.<sup>52</sup> Reflecting the economic rationale of Britain's New Poor Law, Sir Francis Bond Head remarked that "workhouses should be made repulsive" to ensure the populace endeavours to avoid them.<sup>53</sup>

At the same time that the state was tightening eligibility requirements, some middle and upper class women were creating a number of charitable organizations to provide more humane solutions to poverty and what they saw to be its associated vices. At no point, however, did these reforms challenge the prevailing social order or inequalities. As Finkel ably demonstrates, beginning in the 1820s, these organizations were subsidized by the state, especially in the Canadas.<sup>54</sup> Whig legislator Thomas Babington Macaulay clearly articulated the state's position:

Our rulers will best promote the improvement of the nation by strictly confining themselves to their own legitimate duties, by leaving capital to find its own most lucrative course, commodities their fair price, industry and intelligence their natural reward, idleness and folly their natural punishment, by maintaining peace, by defending property, and by observing strict economy in every department of the state. Let the government do this: the people will assuredly do the rest.<sup>55</sup>

Macaulay's comments reflect changing ideas of sharing and wealth distribution circulating in Britain and its colonies at this time. Whereas church officials, feudal lords, and other providers of relief had been motivated in part by a sense of *noblesse oblige*, which included a responsibility for caring for the less fortunate, emergent forms of government welfare were tied to economic productivity. Relief was intrinsic to settler

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<sup>52</sup> Alvin Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada: A History* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 2006), 39-40, 48-50.

<sup>53</sup> Quoted in Allan Irving, "'The Master Principle of Administering Relief': Jeremy Bentham, Sir Francis Bond Head and the Principle of Less Eligibility in Upper Canada," *Canadian Review of Social Policy* 23 (1989): 17.

<sup>54</sup> Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*, 40, 50.

<sup>55</sup> Quoted in Anthony Arblaster, *The Rise and Decline of Western Liberalism* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1984), 252.



economic policies which were becoming further alienating from older forms of redistribution.

Just as the meaning of sharing was changing, so too was the criteria used to allocate relief. Throughout the colonial, pre-industrial period (pre 1800), municipal authorities provided relief to both able-bodied and disabled people without really distinguishing between the two, except that relief for the employable was temporary. In rural areas, charity was obtained from both state and private sources that often blurred together. Caring for the impoverished, especially the aged, was seen as a community responsibility that was to be supplemented with state funds, especially if the person had no kin to rely on.<sup>56</sup> Here again differences between older, church-based systems and newer state-based systems of relief are evident. By minimizing its social responsibilities, the state distanced itself from the activities of the church and other organizations more concerned with the moral impetus for providing aid. The approach adopted by state officials both highlighted the tension that existed between different models for administering social relief and carved out a space in which these alternative systems could operate and in some contexts grow. Rather than a predictable, homogenous scheme, settler systems of social welfare in the nineteenth century were often erratic and inconsistent.

In British North America, colonists' calls for American-style democracy tempered British attempts to replicate its own models. Although some immigrants and other members of the lower classes were able to buy land and assert a modest degree of control over their economic lives, British colonial policy favoured elites by granting them

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<sup>56</sup> Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*, 40.

massive land holdings and organizing a reserve labour force. On the other hand, lower classes that became dependent on wage labour faced serious hardships. In Lower Canada after 1800, the feudal seigneurial system was replaced by the more capitalist freehold tenure system, whereby landowners could charge habitants whatever the market would bear rather than whatever the social relationship would sustain, as was previously the case. Harsh winters, which made most wage work seasonal and contributed to illness and death, exacerbated economic hardship among the lower classes. Throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in response to these hardships, charitable organizations, operated by elite men and, more often, women, solicited aid from and arranged jobs with local elites and businesses whose actions ironically were largely responsible for this economic distress. Within these economies of relief and sharing, there emerged a dichotomy between, on the one hand, capitalist individualism within the formal marketplace and, on the other Christian charity and *noblesse oblige*. In so doing, elites from both sectors, which often overlapped, effectively reinforced what, in Benedict Anderson's terms, might be regarded as intersecting imagined communities, contributing to social cohesion and collective identities in spite of the power differentials that separated them from welfare recipients.

Excluded from much of the colonies' formal administration and capitalist economy, women found in charity not only an opportunity to express Christian piety but also an arena for activism. For the most part, charity workers in British North America were inter-denominational lay protestants, though women's Roman Catholic orders remained active provisioners of social and medical relief after the British forced French Catholic men's orders to return to France. After the rebellions of 1837-38, the priestly

orders were allowed to return, and more recruits were sought for the female orders in order to bolster conservative forces in Quebec, thereby augmenting the role of the church in providing relief required of the state.<sup>57</sup>

By the mid-nineteenth century, men had largely replaced women as the leaders of both Catholic and Protestant relief organizations, though women continued to provide much of the labour.<sup>58</sup> Community-based relief efforts consistently failed to meet the needs of the poor or challenge the structural inequality present in British North America. Often, impoverished people were imprisoned on vague charges of “disturbing the peace” and prisons came to resemble maternity wards and children’s homes due to the high number of dependent women and children sent there. Healthcare, that is denominational hospitals run by protestant or catholic orders, were subsidized by the state in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries but still received generous donations from local elites, partly for their charitable work and partly to ensure the sick were removed from the general population. Beginning in the 1820s, asylums run mostly by women and especially nuns were created specifically for the insane, while public schools also received state funding.<sup>59</sup>

### *Colonial Indian Policy*

The application of colonial relief policies to Indigenous peoples and communities during the nineteenth century was unpredictable and inconsistent. As Finkel notes,

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<sup>57</sup> Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*, 42, 45.

<sup>58</sup> See Marta Danylewycz, *Taking the Veil: An Alternative to Marriage, Motherhood, and Spinsterhood in Quebec, 1840-1920* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987).

<sup>59</sup> Finkel, *Social Policy and Practice in Canada*, 54-56.

Indigenous people and members of racially marginalized groups were generally excluded from relief institutions:

On the whole, Native peoples were shut out of the expanding institutional structure that assured at least some help for European-origin indigents, whether they were the elderly, single mothers, abandoned children, the ill, or the unemployed. They were also excluded from the public-school systems that were developing at mid-century, as were the small black and Chinese populations of the colonies.

Less likely to live in urban centres where relief efforts were strongest, and assumed to be a declining, and perhaps dying, population rather than a growing one, Indigenous people, like other marginalized groups, were not the primary focus of relief legislation. Despite the important role they played in the fur trade and other resource extraction industries, Indigenous people were viewed largely as primitive beings who didn't factor into the economic or political future of settler societies in North America.

The exclusion of Indigenous peoples from state relief does not mean, however, that settler ideologies of sharing and wealth distribution did not inform colonial Indian policy. In fact, the same Christian and socio-economic doctrines that influenced the Elizabethan and New Poor Laws also helped shape the legislation passed in British colonies to manage the lives of their Indigenous inhabitants. With the formation of the Indian Department in 1755 and the passing of the Royal Proclamation in 1763, the British government adopted an approach to the treatment of Indigenous people that viewed them primarily in terms of their economic utility. While they remained integral to the fur trade and other colonial economic pursuits, Indigenous people existed largely beyond the scope of British law; legislation, like the Royal Proclamation, was normally only enacted as a way of facilitating commerce or avoiding costly conflicts between Indigenous and non-

Indigenous populations.<sup>60</sup> Notwithstanding the activities of missionaries (discussed below), the state had little interest in legislating the lives or morality of Indigenous people who were self-sufficient and productive.

However, as both the fur trade and Indigenous people's economic contributions waned in the decades after the War of 1812, the state adopted a more interventionist approach. Concerned that "Indians" were becoming an economic liability that would detract from the colonies' productivity, the British government passed a series of statutes aimed at absorbing, or assimilating, Indigenous people into British society and moulding them into contributing citizens. One of the earliest of these statutes was the Act for the Protection of the Indians of Upper Canada. Passed in 1839, it officially recognized lands reserved for Indians — "reserves" where Indigenous peoples, in accordance with the Royal Proclamation, would be protected from the onslaught of European settlement while being absorbed into the mainstream. To expedite this process, additional statutes, such as the Act for the Protection of the Indians in Upper Canada from Imposition (and its Lower Canada counterpart), were implemented in 1850, expanding the reach of the Indian Department and defining, for the first time, who qualified as a status Indian.<sup>61</sup>

Seven years later, the Gradual Civilization Act, which, combined with the Gradual Enfranchisement Act, would form the basis of the 1876 Indian Act, established the first guidelines for enfranchisement, the process through which Indians could become British, and later Canadian, citizens. Once they were deemed literate in either French or English, formally educated, of "good moral character," and "free from debt," Indigenous

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<sup>60</sup> Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive": Indian Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 25-40.

<sup>61</sup> David McNab, "Herman Merivale and Colonial Office Indian Policy in the Mid- Nineteenth Century," *Canadian Journal of Native Studies* 1 no. 2 (1981): 277-302.

people would automatically lose their status as Indians and become subjects of the Crown.<sup>62</sup> Combined with existing legislation, this Act was designed to ensure Indigenous people would not be granted citizenship until they could demonstrate they would not be economic or moral liabilities to the colonies' wellbeing. Legislatively, "Indians" were viewed in much the same way that lower classes and other undesirable segments of the population were seen in England and British North America at the time. Only if they could prove their moral and economic worth would Indians be enfranchised as British subjects.

### *Residential Schools*

Residential schools, another pillar of colonial Indian policy, was likewise imbued with culturally specific ideas of sharing, economics, and the treatment of the "other." From the establishment of the first known missionary boarding school by French Récollets missionaries in New France in 1620 through the growth of residential schooling in British North America following the expulsion of French Catholic missionaries in 1763, education was viewed by both British and French church officials as an effective means of converting Indigenous peoples to European religion and culture while eradicating Indigenous cultural practices.<sup>63</sup> Although funded primarily by British and French governments, these schools were established and administered mainly by Christian religious orders to facilitate conversion: "none could ever succeed in converting

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<sup>62</sup> John F. Leslie, "The Indian Act: An Historical Perspective," *Canadian Parliamentary Review* 25, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 24.

<sup>63</sup> For a history of early boarding schools in New France and British North America, see J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 39-88. See also John S. Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999).

them,” the Récollet friars wrote, “unless they made them men before they made them Christians.”<sup>64</sup>

But as European settlement in North America increased and colonial governments recognized the usefulness of education in facilitating settlement and assimilating Indigenous peoples, the state became more involved in the schools’ operations. As historian J. R. Miller argues, the primary purpose of education shifted in the nineteenth century from facilitating conversion to facilitating settlement:

The forest-dweller now was perceived not as a means to the Europeans’ ends [as during the fur trade], but as an obstacle to the newcomers’ achievement of their economic purposes. Rather than a commercial or a military asset, the Indian was now a liability to people who wished to reduce the forests to tidy farms, tame the rivers by means of canals to haul their goods, and develop manufacturing. In all these areas, the Indian was as much an obstacle as the pine forests had to be reduced to make the farms, furnish the locks, and, later, supply the ties of railways. From “the point of view of the European, the Indian had become irrelevant.”<sup>65</sup>

In light of these changing colonial priorities, British government officials became increasingly active in the purpose and operation of residential schools to ensure they met state aims. Gradually the state replaced the church as the principal funder and overseer of residential schools, although church agents continued to provide much the labour at the institutions.

Government funding for residential schooling and other state-sponsored programs was allocated according to criteria based in part on criteria used in Britain to distinguish between the deserving and undeserving poor. When distributing relief, for example,

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<sup>64</sup> Christian Le Clercq, *First Establishment of the Faith in New France*, ed. J. G. Shea (New York: J. G. Shea, 1881), 1: 110-111. Although state funded residential schools were the norm, some schools, such as St. Mary’s in Stó:lō territory (Mission, British Columbia), were for periods of time funded solely by church proceeds.

<sup>65</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk’s Vision*, 62-63.

which is discussed further in chapters Six and Seven, colonial and, later, government officials stressed the importance of potential recipients' character and behaviours. Viewed as wards of the state and racialized as different from predominantly white Euro-Canadians,<sup>66</sup> "Indians" had to demonstrate a certain level of effort toward and/or desire for self-improvement in order to be considered worthy recipients of government aid. As historian Hugh Shewell demonstrates, by providing Indigenous people with temporary relief, the government induced them to adopt a Euro-Canadian work ethic based on "deservedness, self-reliance, thrift, [and moral virtue]."<sup>67</sup> In so doing, the government, Deputy Superintendent of Indian Affairs Lawrence Vankoughnet remarked, could effect the "improvement and elevation of the Indian Race, socially and morally."<sup>68</sup> From the perspective of government agents, the allocation of relief was thus a social as well as economic project.

Funding for residential schools was somewhat different, especially after Canadian Confederation. Following the signing of the first seven Numbered Treaties in the 1870s, the federal government, Miller notes, targeted funding for education at status Indians who, in theory at least, had demonstrated a certain loyalty to the Canadian state and to whom the government had a fiscal obligation.<sup>69</sup> According to Vankoughnet, the children of non-status Indians or those living off reserve were only educated "when it can be done with any prospect of success."<sup>70</sup> Indigenous access to education was thus determined by both status and deservedness as expressed by a child's likelihood of success. Despite

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<sup>66</sup> See Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001).

<sup>67</sup> Shewell, "Enough to Keep Them Alive" 8.

<sup>68</sup> Quoted in Shewell, "Enough to Keep Them Alive," 36.

<sup>69</sup> Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision*, 103-104.

<sup>70</sup> Quoted in Shewell, "Enough to Keep Them Alive," 36.



these nuances in the allocation of government funds to Indigenous peoples, one central feature of government financing is clear: the redistribution, or sharing, of wealth from the government to its citizens, especially those most in need, was determined not by any social obligation but rather its economic utility as demonstrated by the recipients' perceived deservedness.

#### 4.4 Conclusion

Settler systems of sharing practiced at the turn of the nineteenth century provide a window into a culturally specific formulation of economics and wealth distribution. Informed to varying degrees by both sacred and secular doctrines and buttressed by religious and scientific discourses, they were dynamic and multi-faceted, constantly being debated, challenged, and reformed to meet the needs of a rapidly changing society. As a consolidation of existing legislation, most of which were passed on an ad hoc basis, the Elizabethan Poor Law of 1601 provided a reasonably clear, if temporary, direction in relief legislation that joined Christian teachings with emergent economic thought. In response to demographic changes in England, ongoing urbanization, and economic critiques of existing policies, the Elizabethan Poor Laws were eventually repealed, replaced in 1834 by the New Poor Laws. Informed by the writings of Robert Malthus and other economic and moral theorists of the time, this new system emphasized “less eligibility,” the tightening of relief criteria and the worsening of conditions within relief institutions to ensure only the most desperate and deserving recipients received aid; all able-bodied person would be put to work and actively contribute to the national economy.

Embedded in these systems of relief are specific formulations of sharing and deservedness that shaped government policies in British North America. Beginning in 1837 with the passing of the Houses of Industry Act, colonial governments in what would become Canada instituted a system of relief rooted in British ideas of wealth redistribution and social protocols, contested and fluctuating as they may have been. Although unenfranchized Indigenous people were largely excluded from these institutions and policies, the ideas underpinning them are also evident in British Indian Policy at the time. Passed between 1839 and 1857, the Indian Protection Acts and the Gradual Civilization Act viewed “Indians” as inferior, not only in moral or racial terms but in socio-economic ones as well. Unless they were actively contributing to the colonies’ economic wellbeing, as during the fur trade, Indigenous people were a liability, ill-equipped to operate within an industrializing world and in need of protection from the vices imported by an allegedly superior society. At the same time, Residential Schools, managed by Christian churches and funded by the state, aimed to remold Indigenous people into pious Christian subjects who, along with their religious devotion, could also contribute to settler economies. Combined with colonial Indian legislation, these schools propagated settler ideas of sharing and social obligation, in contrast to Indigenous formulations, in an attempt to increase the productivity and industriousness of people that were increasingly becoming described as “lazy” and “backward.”

These settler ideas of sharing and reciprocity were not wholly incompatible with their Indigenous counterparts. Despite historiographical depictions of non-Indigenous economies that stress difference, important commonalities are evident. For example, although the form sharing took varied among Natives and newcomers, the role it played

in binding together communities transcends cultural boundaries. People of similar social status shared with each other as a way of acknowledging and affirming their solidarity and belonging. Similarly, vertical forms of sharing, specifically the redistribution of wealth from elites to lower classes, reflected the separation of classes and power differentials present in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous societies. The mechanism and protocols that regulated this redistribution was culturally determined but its political implications demonstrate significant overlap. This more nuanced interpretation of sharing helps explain why, when Indigenous and settlers systems of exchange came into contact in western Canada during late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, sharing became an important site of intercultural interaction. Rather than an example of unintelligibility or conflict, sharing, at least initially, facilitated cross-cultural cooperation and engagement.

The second half of this dissertation analyses the interactions between Indigenous and settlers systems of sharing. Situating traders, missionaries, and government agents as ambassadors of non-Indigenous society within Indigenous lands, chapters Five, Six, and Seven re-interpret pivotal periods in Canada history — the fur trade, the settlement era, and assimilation — through the lens of sharing and other forms of cross-cultural exchange. Sometimes these interactions were one-sided, particularly when one group held the balance of power, while other relationships were more equitable. In all cases, actors interpreted the unfamiliar through the familiar, the unknown through the known. In the process, new ideas and activities became part of old, or existing, systems, and novel ideas and practices emerged, not simply as a mixing of different economic activities or the grafting of one onto another, but a genuinely hybrid process of

production and innovation. This process of creation and transformation is representative of the history of sharing in northern North America and of relations between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people more broadly, and it explains, in part, economic conditions present in Canada today.

– CHAPTER FIVE –

Of Strangers and Kin: Sharing in the “Fur Trade”

His family name attaches him to that place, its rocks and resources, the stlalecum [creatures] that lurk in the waters, and the associated longhouse, carvings, stories, and songs that make it known.... He has a name that has a stronger attachment than anybody else. He’s the si’yem [respected person] of that place.... To him, it’s like this Fort [Langley] was in his area, where his ancestor name comes from. It’s his resource.<sup>1</sup>

- Albert “Sonny” McHalsie, Stó:lō Elder and Cultural Advisor

The fur trade represents the first period of sustained social and economic interaction between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in northwestern North America. Having crossed the Atlantic Ocean in search of fortune and adventure, fur traders fanned out across the “New World,” embarking with local Indigenous peoples on a process of mutual discovery and initiating a prolonged period of interaction spanning the spectrum from cooperation and collaboration to cooptation and conflict. Studying similar situations elsewhere, Mary Louise Pratt argues that these myriad interactions took place in “contact zones,” physical and meta-physical areas of exchange that ranged widely over space and time, illustrating the complex history not only of who and what came into contact, but how, when, where, and to what end.<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the fur trade, and “first contact” in general, joined together not only previously separate peoples but also discrete material goods, ecologies (including diseases), ideas, and social structures, including those related to the culturally distinct systems of sharing discussed in Part I of

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<sup>1</sup> Albert “Sonny” McHalsie, interviewed by Liam Haggarty in Sardis, BC, 7 May 2009.

<sup>2</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992).

this dissertation. In the process, these structures and their related practices were challenged, sometimes resulting in change, sometimes affirming the status quo, as cross-cultural interaction led to the hybridization of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures. As Homi Bhabha argues, contact was a transformative process for colonizer and colonized alike, though the extent of its influence often went unacknowledged.<sup>3</sup> The fur trade thus represents not simply the exchange of furs and other goods but the intersection and mutual transformation of culturally unique common senses and socio-economic ideologies.

This chapter examines these processes of hybridization by tracing the history of the fur trade in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* (Cree, Dene, and Metis territory) and *S'ólh Téméxw* (Stó:lō territory) from the late eighteenth century to the mid nineteenth century. Specifically, it examines how Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing changed over this period to make sense and take advantage of socio-economic contact with each other, as hinted in the quote that begins this chapter. In contrast to analyses of cultural trauma and change, the story presented here is one of adaptation and change in continuity. Although novel and exotic, the fur trade and other events associated with contact were perceived and rationalized by local Indigenous peoples, as well as their non-Indigenous counterparts, within existing cultural structures that rendered them knowable and familiar. One aspect of this rationalization that has received little attention, and yet holds potentially deep insights into the inner works of culture, is sharing. Through constant negotiation with new peoples and ideas, unique expressions of cultural hybridity emerged that combined Indigenous systems of sharing with Euro-Canadian mercantilist

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<sup>3</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994), 111-112.

practices, thereby forging new imagined communities that included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, ideas, and structures. In the process, the nature and structure of sharing networks shifted to accommodate and take advantage of newly available economic opportunities. In surveying this history of transformative exchange, I argue for a culturally relevant interpretation of the fur trade that engages Indigenous perspectives of cross-cultural interactions through sharing and exchange.

Heralded by Canadian historians as a pivotal moment in the nation's history, the fur trade is well represented in Canadian historiography. Indeed, although Canada did not come into being until 1867, by which time the centuries-old industry was on the decline, the fur trade is routinely included in histories of Canada and celebrated as the genesis of the nation state.<sup>4</sup> In his seminal work *The Fur Trade in Canada*, for example, Harold Innis argues that Canada as we know it would not exist without the fur trade, for it was the linkages of the fur trade that created the foundations for the Canadian nation despite its geographic diversity and fragmentation.<sup>5</sup> Following Innis, a number of historians, including Arthur Ray, Sylvia van Kirk, Jennifer Brown, Richard White, and many others, expanded the scope of fur trade scholarship to focus specifically on the role played by Indigenous people in the fur trade and the history of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations more broadly.<sup>6</sup> Their work effectively wrote Indigenous people, as

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Harold Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1930); A. S. Morton, *A History of the Canadian West to 1870-71* (London: T. Nelson, 1939); and E.E. Rich, *The History of the Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1870* (London: Hudson's Record Society, 1958-59).

<sup>5</sup> Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 386-92.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974); Sylvia Van Kirk, *"Many Tender Ties": Women in Fur-Trade Society, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Watson and Dwyer, 1980); Jennifer S. H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980); and Richard White *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires, and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991). See

well as women and other groups previously marginalized by national narratives, into Canadian history. Rather than appearing as noteworthy but largely insignificant elements of the natural environment, obstacles to progress, or foils for Euro-Canadian civilization, Indigenous people were studied as independent historical actors who contributed not only to the history of Canada but also to their own national or cultural histories.<sup>7</sup> In this way, fur trade historiography is partly responsible for including Aboriginal people in mainstream Canadian history.

Informed by recent ethnohistorical works (discussed in the introduction), this chapter contributes to fur trade scholarship by engaging Indigenous perspectives of the fur trade so as to contextualize it within Indigenous worldviews. Despite the significant contributions fur trade scholarship has made to Indigenous and Canadian historiographies, questions related to Indigenous peoples' experiences and perceptions persist. What, for example, does the fur trade look like from Indigenous points of view? How is it conceptualized within Indigenous histories or the histories of specific nations or communities? How were fur traders and fur trade practices incorporated into existing Indigenous economic models? Did Indigenous structures and practices change as a result of the introduction of alternative methods? What does an Indigenous history of the fur trade look like? Addressing these questions, which view the increased demand for fur

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also Susan Sleeper-Smith, ed., *Rethinking the Fur Trade: Cultures of Exchange in an Atlantic World* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2009); Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders' Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997); Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>7</sup> See, for example, Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977); Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977); E. Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986); and John S. Milloy, *The Plains Cree: Trade, Diplomacy and War, 1790 to 1870* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1988).



during the colonial period as a pivotal event in Indigenous-settler relations, one that held the potential to alter established, culturally distinct systems of sharing, challenges existing interpretations of Native-Newcomer relations in western Canada by generating more balanced ethnohistorical interpretations of these interactions.

Indeed, the term “fur trade” itself, and its emphasis on Euro-Canadians’ primary objective, the acquisition of furs, is decidedly Eurocentric and decidedly incomplete from Indigenous points of view. Although Indigenous people certainly traded furs, for them the emphasis was less on the furs that they traded away than on the new goods that they acquired. Indigenous people were attempting to acquire a variety of goods, ranging from foodstuffs and cooking instruments, to weapons, metal, twine and rope, liquor, blankets, medicines, and various other items not readily available to them locally. Intangible “goods,” such as stories, knowledge, news, information, and spiritual power, not to mention the wealth, prestige, and power that may result from expanded exchange networks, were also eagerly sought by certain groups. And the interactions that facilitated the transfer of all these goods were not limited to trade, at least not according to Indigenous peoples. Instead, they are additionally (and often better) understood within the context of sharing, reciprocity, redistribution, and other forms of exchange common in Indigenous communities but rarely discernible as such to their non-Indigenous counterparts. This industry was as much about muskets and flour as it was about fur, as much about sharing as it was about profit exchange. From this perspective, the so-called “fur trade” may be better understood as an intercultural exchange of and engagement with foreign ideas and commodities. This “intercultural exchange” is characterized by the sustained, but unsteady, transfer of tangible and intangible goods, as well as the

expansion of socio-economic networks among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples and groups in northwestern North America from the late eighteenth through nineteenth centuries.

To do so, I explore the history of the “fur trade” through the prism of the systems of sharing described in Part I. In contrast to existing studies, which typically locate the intercultural exchange within the context of European imperialism and mercantilism, this chapter frames these interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people according to the socio-economic structures and common senses these actors carried with them. As Brown has demonstrated, “trading brought people together for exchanges both tangible and intangible ... built upon and spawned a broad spectrum of Aboriginal, mixed, and newcomer communities that related with one another in diverse, complex ways that changed over time.”<sup>8</sup> The result is a more complicated interpretation of this important historical event that not only recasts the “fur trade” from the perspectives of Indigenous peoples but also challenges how we think about it historically. To understand the intercultural exchange from the perspectives of those directly involved, we must investigate the meanings historical actors attributed to exchange and cross-cultural contact in general.

This chapter is divided into three main sections. The first section examines the origins and early history of the intercultural exchange before fur traders, and the industry itself, physically reached *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S’ólh Téméxw*. It documents not only the history of the trade and the European companies involved, but also the principal

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<sup>8</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown, “Noms et métaphores dans l’historiographie métisse: Anciennes catégories et nouvelles perspectives,” *Recherches Amerindiennes au Québec* 37, no. 2-3 (2007): 8-9; quoted in English in Carolyn Podruchny and Laura Peers, eds., *Gathering Places: Aboriginal and Fur Trade Histories*, (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 40.

practices, many of which incorporated elements of Indigenous systems of sharing, that had become commonplace by the end of the eighteenth century. The second part traces the ways in which both Indigenous and non-Indigenous systems of sharing and exchange changed during the intercultural exchange in response to their exposure to alternative socio-economic models. The first half of this section examines how Indigenous systems of sharing were adapted to include trade and aspects of market exchange, while the second half details traders' integration of sharing and familial networks into their existing business model. Lastly, I consider the implications of these intersections between socio-economic structures and historical events to learn how Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures adapted to a changing world and made sense of it according to their unique worldviews, a process that often involved the creation of hybrid, cross-cultural imagined communities. As in Part I, comparing local case studies sheds light on subtle but important aspects of this history and helps articulate Indigenous peoples' perspectives of these events. Although replicated again and again across both time and space, the form and meaning of intercultural exchange activities changed dramatically based on local environments and conditions.

Through this Indigenous history of a reconceptualized intercultural exchange, I argue that neither Indigenous nor non-Indigenous people were able to impose their will on the other for any significant length of time. The contact zones, or middle ground,<sup>9</sup> within which these historical actors met and interacted were necessarily contested, negotiated, and constructed, much like the socio-economic activities they engaged in.

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<sup>9</sup> Although confined to the Great Lakes area, Richard White's analysis of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations and his use of the idea of a “middle ground” provides a useful framework for examining intercultural interaction in the western Canada when the power held by Indigenous and non-Indigenous groups was relatively balanced. See Richard White, *Middle Ground*.

Within this space, non-Indigenous people endeavoured to build expansive exchange networks based on trade and dependent on contractual and wage labour. But sharing was also important not only for newcomers' survival in new lands, but also as an integral part of traders' social and economic lives. In both *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S'ólh Téméxw*, Indigenous people had historically contingent mechanisms for actively incorporating non-Indigenous peoples into existing systems of sharing and kin-based, familial networks of exchange. Despite the increased prevalence and importance of trade and other more formal forms of market-based exchange, sharing remained a preferred method of exchange for many Indigenous groups. As such, neither Euro-Canadian trade nor Indigenous sharing became dominant. Instead, genuinely hybrid forms of exchange were created that fused aspects of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous socio-economic structures, creating in the process new imagined communities that transcended cultural differences and power imbalances. This process shaped fundamentally the lives and collective identities of the historical actors who participated in the intercultural exchange and the history of the exchange itself. By thus interpreting the intercultural exchange through the lens of systems of sharing, I seek to challenge existing understandings of the "fur trade" and contribute to greater cross-cultural understanding of both the past and the present.

### 5.1 Cultures in Contact: The Intercultural Exchange in Northwestern North America

The fur trade, which began in earnest with the formation of the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) in 1670, had become big business for Indigenous and non-Indigenous people alike by the mid-eighteenth century. Despite increasing competition from

independent traders and other fur companies, most notably the Northwest Company, the HBC was generating sizeable revenues for its British stakeholders. Indigenous groups, too, were eager to participate in the intercultural exchange, often competing with each other for secure access to the valuable goods and kin ties that fur traders controlled. The benefits realized by both sides triggered a new wave of expansion in the late eighteenth centuries as the HBC and NWC pushed further westward into territories previously inhabited and controlled exclusively by Indigenous peoples.

It is within this context of competition and westward expansion of the intercultural exchange that trading posts like Île à la Crosse (Figure 5.1) in modern-day Saskatchewan and, later, Fort Langley (Figure 5.2) in what is now British Columbia, were established. Strategically located near the confluence of the Canoe, Deep, and Beaver Rivers and connected to the historically significant English, now Churchill, river system, Île à la Crosse, for example, became a sort of gateway to the northwest, and an ideal location for a trading post. Additionally, Lac Île à la Crosse was rich in fish and waterfowl and the area was the location of large gatherings of both Cree and Dene families. As a result, a number of successive posts were established in and around Île à la Crosse between 1770 and 1820 but, due to harsh winters and inter-company competition which regularly escalated to violence, they were often abandoned seasonally or destroyed. If profits are any indication, this era, which lasted until the forced merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821, may be considered the “golden age” of the intercultural exchange both for traders and Indigenous peoples who benefitted greatly from increased competition.

Within this era of increased competition, Indigenous people remained critically important to both the HBC and NWC. NWC traders, for example, cultivated kin relationships based in large part on Indigenous understandings of family, that satisfied both social and economic goals while practicing what Europeans saw as barter exchanges. Meanwhile, the HBC trade relied heavily on the gift-giving ceremony, which preceded virtually every exchange involving the HBC during its first two hundred years, and the credit system, which provided Aboriginal hunters with goods in advance of their hunts on the condition that the furs they acquired would be sold back to the Company. As historian Kerry Abel notes, for the Dene and other Indigenous groups, these activities were at once economic and social: “a trade relationship was more than an economic agreement: it was a political and social arrangement involving reciprocal responsibilities.”<sup>10</sup>

These practices, aimed at affirming or renewing friendships for the purposes of immediate and future trade, became a hallmark of the intercultural exchange. When a trading party arrived, the Chief Factor welcomed the Indigenous leaders, or “captains,” into his residence and provided them with elaborate “captain’s outfits” and presented them with gifts of tobacco, pipes, brandy, prunes, bread and other foods that they, in turn, shared with other members of their party. During and after negotiations, further presentations were made of food, weapons, tools, utensils, medicines, and luxury items, a practice that was also common among the NWC and other fur companies.<sup>11</sup> In the fall

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<sup>10</sup> Kerry Abel, *Drum Songs: Glimpses of Dene History* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1993), 109.

<sup>11</sup> Most common among these in Île à la Crosse were guns, shot, powder and other weapons, brandy, tobacco, cloth, beads, fish hooks, ice chisels, twine, scissors, thimbles. See Hudson’s Bay Company Archives (HBCA), B.89/d/1-162, Île à la Crosse Account Books, 1810-1872. I am indebted to Brenda

before setting out to procure furs, captains and other hunters also received various items as credit from the HBC. In return for this act of sharing, the hunters committed to selling their furs to those posts that supplied them. Combined with the gift-giving ceremony and the cultivation of personal relationships, the credit system aimed to cultivate loyalty and solidarity among Aboriginal hunters by integrating aspects of their culture into the intercultural exchange.<sup>12</sup> As such, practices that have been regarded primarily as gift-giving ceremonies are perhaps better conceived as ritualized expressions of sharing networks negotiated between members of prominent “families.”

As historical geographer Frank Tough notes, fur trade companies, and the HBC in particular, accepted these “overhead or social cost[s] of production” as integral to the successful execution of the trade.<sup>13</sup> Terminology is significant here: production, in this context, is assumed to be economic (rather than social, political, etc.) and is treated as separate and distinct from the social. This division reflects upper class Euro-Canadian interpretations of sharing, and exchange in general, discussed in Chapter Four. As epitomized by the Elizabethan Poor Laws, relief and other forms of wealth distribution and reciprocity were treated as separate from Britain’s economic pursuits in the seventeenth century, both at home and in its colonies, and were to be practiced only if absolutely necessary, preferably in support of explicitly economic goals. That is why most social welfare legislation in Europe and colonial northern North America, much like

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Macdougall and Leanna Parker for sharing with me their abundant research into HBC activities in northwest Saskatchewan and related archival materials. See also Arthur Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of the Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 92–3; and J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 8-10, 286.

<sup>12</sup> Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*, 67-68; and Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant*, 21-25, 137-138.

<sup>13</sup> Frank Tough, *“As Their Natural Resources Fail”: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 7.

the social costs associated with the intercultural exchange, was in fact framed by employment legislation aimed at securing inexpensive, accessible labour, or, in the context of the intercultural exchange, access to furs. The social side of economic activity was both separate and subordinate, and sometimes ignored entirely; sharing was not to interfere with economic production and efficiency.



Figure 5.1: Image of HBC fort at Île à la Crosse in 1908. From: Saskatchewan Archives Board, Photo S-B8937.

But traders and other company officials were not simply mimicking aspects of Indigenous cultures when they gave gifts, granted credit, or developed kin ties. Nor were Indigenous people merely imitating Euro-Canadian culture when engaging in trade-based relationships. Whether they were conscious of it or not, members of both groups were weaving themselves directly into the fabric of the other's society while simultaneously weaving the other into theirs. In the process, markedly different social and economic objectives commingled and became fused in complicated, genuinely hybrid ways. What company shareholders and executives considered to be social overhead costs of



(economic) production, Indigenous people recognized as essential socio-economic activities. Indeed, for Indigenous people, the transaction itself, the exchange of fur for other goods, may have been considered an “economic cost of social production,” secondary to the expansion of kin-based systems of sharing and exchange. The significance of sustained contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people instigated by the intercultural exchange thus goes far beyond physical, person to person contact. Within these dynamic and multifaceted contacts zones, Natives and Newcomers exchanged a plethora of tangible and intangible goods, including culturally specific understandings of wealth, exchange, and economics that shaped the history not only of sharing but also of the settlement of western Canada.



Figure 5.2: Image of exterior of Fort Langley, 1862. From: British Columbia Archives, A-04313.

## 5.2 Strangers and Kin: The Intercultural Exchange in *S'ólh Téméxw* and *Sakitawak/Kwoen*

When fur traders and other “newcomers” first arrived in Indigenous places, they were viewed as strangers with no perceivable connection to the land, its ancestors, or its resources. Lacking kin connections, they could not readily access the sharing networks that permeated Stó:lō, Cree, and Dene societies. Instead, exchange with strangers was usually characterized by trade, which was profit-driven, or raiding, which, as discussed in chapters Two and Three, was only forbidden if it was conducted against family and kin where sharing was the norm.<sup>14</sup> In *S'ólh Téméxw*, for example, newcomers shared a place in the Stó:lō socio-spatial world akin to that of coastal raiders and were labeled *Xwelitem*, a Halkomelem word meaning “hungry to the point of starving,” in reference not only to their lack of food at the time of contact but also their insatiable appetite for land, furs, and other resources ever since.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, unconnected traders, those without recourse to *ellotine* and *wahkootowin* social networks, were treated as strangers and therefore potentially seriously disadvantaged.<sup>16</sup> Despite the novelty of exotic trade goods and new trading partners, fur traders, in this important respect at least, may be socially and economically destitute. In a world where survival, prosperity, and power depended primarily on family relationships and kin ties, traders were, at least initially, impoverished.

But traders did not remain strangers for long. Although some fur companies, including the HBC, initially discouraged their employees from forming relationships with

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<sup>14</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 32.

<sup>15</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 193-4.

<sup>16</sup> Brenda Macdougall, “One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan,” (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 177.

Indigenous women, they quickly realized the benefits and inevitability of such unions. As Ray and others have demonstrated, “social distance had a bearing on the type of exchange that took place and ... the flow of goods.... Clearly the Europeans had to accommodate themselves to these exchange traditions.... [T]his was one of the reasons why European traders took Indian wives. It served to cement ties with Native groups.”<sup>17</sup> For example, in 1827, the year the HBC established Fort Langley, its first post in *S’ólh Téméxw*, James Murray Yale, a clerk who would eventually become the post’s Chief Trader, married the daughter of the local Stó:lō chief “to form a family connection [between the chief and the post]... after making them [the chief’s family members] all liberal presents.”<sup>18</sup> These seemingly social unions and relationships were critical economically. In practice, this “ceremonial exchange of European goods,” anthropologist A.D. Fisher notes, “complemented informal means of exchange within the family hunting band” and helped establish respectful, lasting, and profitable relationships that enabled both trade and sharing.<sup>19</sup> Thus, by the time the intercultural exchange reached *Sakitawak/Kwoen* in the 1770s and in the early 1800s, marriages to Indigenous women had become common practice as chief traders and other intercultural exchange officials sought greater access to goods harvested by local Indigenous peoples and increased profits.

Indigenous peoples also were eager to forge more stable, lasting connections. Stó:lō, Cree, and, to a lesser extent, Dene families, especially elites, endeavoured to

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<sup>17</sup> Arthur Ray, “Reflections on Fur Trade Social History and Métis History in Canada,” *American Indian Culture and Research Journal* 6, no. 2 (1982): 102–3. See also van Kirk, *Many Tender Ties*; and Brown, *Strangers in Blood*.

<sup>18</sup> M. MacLachlan, ed., entry for 13 November 1828 in *The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1998), 65.

<sup>19</sup> A.D. Fisher, “The Cree of Canada: Some Ecological and Evolutionary Considerations,” *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 1, no. 1 (1969): 15.

attach themselves to traders so as to expand familial, kin-based socio-economic systems of sharing and exchange, thereby augmenting their access to wealth-generating resources and enhancing their social status and prestige. Due in part to their avid involvement in the fur trade and existing tensions with the Dene, the Cree were more likely to form unions with traders than were their Dene neighbours whose relative populations decreased. Dene women, on the other hand, were more likely to form unions with traders further west. As anthropologist Robert Jarvenpa has noted, this led to the emergence of a large Cree-Metis population in and around Île à la Crosse and its network of secondary posts.<sup>20</sup> Marriages arranged between male traders and female relatives of prominent patriachs established social and economic ties, which, from an Indigenous perspective at least, secured reciprocal access rights that demanded cooperation and mutual obligation.<sup>21</sup>

These ties also facilitated trade as Indigenous people, particularly those with expansive socio-economic networks connecting them to multiple traders and posts, could discriminate between different relationships based on their needs and resources available at a given time. Maximizing profits was not incompatible with Indigenous systems of sharing; at appropriate times, exchange networks could be mobilized to generate considerable wealth. Therefore, although each party may have not have been fully aware of the long-term consequences of these kin ties, they were nonetheless implicitly being incorporated into alternative socio-economic structures and becoming active participants in the creation of new socio-economic communities.

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<sup>20</sup> See Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, "Occupational Status, Ethnicity, and Ecology: Métis Cree Adaptations in a Canadian Trading Frontier," *Human Ecology* 13, no. 3 (1985): 311-313. See also Richard Slobodin, *Metis of the Mackenzie District* (Ottawa: Canadian Research Centre for Anthropology, Saint-Paul University, 1966).

<sup>21</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," *Native Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (1997): 33. See also McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.

Unions between traders and Indigenous women and their subsequent integration into these alternative structures increased dramatically following the establishment of permanent trading posts, many of which carried important symbolic and material meanings. The location of first fur trade posts in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* by the NWC and the HBC in the late eighteenth century, for example, was symbolically important because it coincided with historically important gathering sites used by Cree and Dene peoples, implicitly situating the post, fur traders, and the intercultural exchange itself within existing Indigenous seasonal rounds and socio-economic structures. Fort Langley became a similarly important site in the Stó:lō socio-economic world. Rather than viewing it as an outpost of a fur trade company, Stó:lō elites saw it as a semi-permanent resource site, similar to a canyon fishing spot or a downriver berry patch, a place where specific goods and wealth could be accessed at specific times through various forms of exchange arranged with the local resource controller, in this case the head trader. As in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, traders, officers, and other fort personnel were viewed as members of the head trader's "family" and kin network responsible for managing the fort's resources and negotiating exchange relationships.<sup>22</sup>

Arranged marriages therefore established familial relationships between the Indigenous and post families much like the earlier Coast Salish "co-parent-in-law" relationships described by Wayne Suttles and the traditional Cree *wahkootowin* ties discussed by Brenda Macdougall. Upon entering into such a union, post families were required to abide by local protocols related to gift giving, reciprocity, and mutual obligation both as providers and as receivers. They were required to actively participate

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<sup>22</sup> Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," 21, 28, 32.

in local feasts and ceremonies as bestowers of wealth, especially to those in need, while also receiving aid as necessary. Even the post itself could call on additional aid and provisions. These ties thus strengthened and expanded Indigenous socio-economic networks, at least initially. The introduction of these posts into Indigenous lands facilitated the synthesis of Indigenous and non-Indigenous socio-economic structures.

Traders, meanwhile, used marriage ties and family connections to build a reliable clientele with strong allegiances to a particular post, thereby increasing the frequency and significance of trade-based exchanges. For example, on his way to re-establishing a post in the Île à la Crosse area in August 1805, William Linklater assured a group of Indians he encountered that “the English from Churchill would always supply them with the necessities if they would make themselves deserving, by giving to the traders these from their yearly hunts” and advanced them cloth, a blanket, powder, ball, and shot, tobacco, knives, brandy, and other small articles. In subsequent months, he continued to gift brandy, tobacco, and ammunitions to “obey his instructions” and ventured to Indigenous camps to advance hunters and their relatives goods totalling about 15-20 skins per person.

Over the next several decades, Linklater’s successors continued to advance provisions and bestow gifts in order to develop close relationships with local Indigenous people. In this way, Indigenous systems of sharing became, through intercultural negotiation, infused with elements of profit-driven systems of trade channelled through the post. By attempting to render Indigenous people indebted and dependent on European goods, traders were in effect replicating the socio-cultural protocols evident in kin-based systems of sharing.<sup>23</sup> Therefore, although sharing continued to dominate

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<sup>23</sup> HBCA, B.89/a/1-35, Île à la Crosse Post Journals, 1805-1865.

exchanges negotiated between family members and close relatives, it was balanced with a greater emphasis on trade and market exchange, especially in the acquisition of furs, the hiring of labourers, and the procurement of provisions and other goods. This joining of sharing, normally minimized in market-based economies, and trade, formerly prohibited within Indigenous families, demonstrates both the originality and hybridity evident in the creation of new intercultural social and economic structures.

This synthesis of economies and people, however, was never a simple insertion of Euro-Canadian men into existing Indigenous kin networks or an unproblematic integration of Indigenous families into trading post commercial activity. Rather, a new system emerged that combined Indigenous systems of sharing with profit-based trade in a unique and genuinely hybrid socio-economic model. Over time, these dynamic, hybrid forms of exchange contributed to the formation of new communities and identities rooted in socio-economic nearness. Drawing again on the work of Benedict Anderson, the intercultural exchange can be regarded as having helped produce new types of imagined communities and expressions of collective identity that blurred cultural boundaries. Instead of one group absorbing or assimilating the other, Indigenous and non-Indigenous people were participating, intentionally or otherwise, in a shared process of creation.

### *Trading among Sharers*

Evidence of hybridization in the formation of new identities and communities is manifest in the actions of Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in parts of northwestern North America throughout the mid to late nineteenth century, as both Natives and newcomers modified existing socio-economic structures in response to the demands and

nature of intercultural interaction. In response to the emergence of trading posts as novel gathering places and resource sites, for example, local Indigenous families and groups increased the amount of time spent in these areas, sometimes settling there seasonally or permanently. In *S'ólh Téméxw*, prominent local family groups relocated their communities to be closer to the fort.<sup>24</sup> According to Albert 'Sonny' McHalsie, the Kwantlen chief Whittlekanim believed Fort Langley belonged to him:

His family name attaches him to that place, its rocks and resources, the stalecum that lurk in the waters, and the associated longhouse, carvings, stories, and songs that make it known.... He has a name that has a stronger attachment than anybody else. He's the si'yem of that place.... To him, it's like this Fort was in his area, where his ancestor name comes from. It's his resource.<sup>25</sup>

Following Whittlekanim's death in 1839, Nicamuns, who had settled on McMillan Island, adjacent to Fort Langley, became the Kwantlen tribe's most prominent leader. Through ancestral privilege and marriage ties, Nicamuns, like other Kwantlen chiefs, established himself in the strategic position of middleman, operating as intermediary between the fort and other prominent Stó:lō families who lacked direct access to post goods.<sup>26</sup> Although the powerful position of the Kwantlen chiefs was slowly eroded as other elite families gained access to Fort Langley through arranged marriages,<sup>27</sup> Whittlekanim and his successors for a time held power over both the HBC fort employees and other prominent local families due to their monopoly over this important resource site.

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<sup>24</sup> See Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 126, 178.

<sup>25</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.

<sup>26</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time* 129.

<sup>27</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.



Seasonal cycles in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* were also modified to include the trading post in Indigenous peoples' annual rounds. Speaking to anthropologists Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach in the 1970s, Dene elder Moise McIntyre detailed the historic movements of his people as recalled in the 1940s by Sarah Bell, an elderly woman he referred to as grandmother. In the interview, McIntyre describes how the trading post was integrated into the winter and summer activities of both the nuclear and extended family:

The southern nomadic round included Chipewyan [Dene] who made a traditional summer trading rendezvous at Île à la Crosse post. These people, including Sarah Bell's extended family and other kin, wintered in small multi-family encampments in the vast area between the headwaters of the Foster River and Cree Lake. Prior to spring break-up, they positioned themselves near groves of birch trees where new bark canoes could be assembled. With the disappearance of the ice, families descended the Mudjatik River in canoe caravans and reassembled in late June at Big Island, the primary summer gathering place near the Île à la Crosse post. The aggregation at Big Island lasted about one month and served as a renewal of kinship and friendship bonds for Chipewyan from throughout the area. It was also the period for exchanging furs at the post for credit and outfits for the next winter's hunt.... [I]n early August the Chipewyan had largely completed the summer rendezvous at Île à la Crosse post. Small travelling units, usually composed of four to six closely related families, began moving south and southeastward from Île à la Crosse by canoe. In many instances, the canoe travel parties represented families that wintered in the same locale.<sup>28</sup>

The trading post figured even more prominently in the activities of Cree and, later, Metis families. Instead of viewing the post as a seasonal meeting place, Cree families, anthropologist James Smith notes, often settled in close proximity to the post and became

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<sup>28</sup> Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, "The Microeconomics of Southern Chipewyan Fur Trade History," in *The Subarctic Fur Trade: Native Social and Economic Adaptations*, ed. Shepard Krech III (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984), 153–154. The northern cycle reached as far south as Cree Lake, a major gathering site where the two cycles met and people from both were able to socialize, intermarry, and affirm kin ties. According to Bell, the cycles acted like a gear with the northern one operating in a clockwise fashion and the southern cycle rotating counter-clockwise. This overlapping system began to break down around the 1870s as increased pressures from religious officials and the emergence of secondary posts interrupted migration patterns and stressed a more sedentary lifestyle.

largely sedentary: “[s]ubsequent to the establishment of a trading monopoly in 1821, there was an increased tendency for the [Cree] bands to be localized and oriented to a specific post, a first stage in the process of sedentarization.” Gradually, this “trading post-mission complex,” Smith argues, became “the focal point of band life and was visited at the end of the main trapping season at Christmas, at Easter, and in the summer for the rituals of treaty payment.”<sup>29</sup>

At the same time, wage and contract labour was becoming increasingly important to Indigenous peoples located near fur trade posts in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S’ólh Téméxw*. In both areas, Indigenous people were routinely hired to work in a variety of areas including agriculture, food processing and preservation, guiding, and the transportation of goods and mail between posts. In exchange, these men received wages that did not require any form of repayment or reciprocation. As Macdonald and Jarvenpa and Brumbach note, this type of labour was becoming increasingly important to Cree, Dene, and Metis peoples and collective identities by the mid nineteenth century. Stó:lō elites, meanwhile, whose social standing normally excused them from having to sell their own labour, benefitted from this emergent labour market by renting slaves to the HBC and collecting their wages. Although labour as a form of exchange was less prevalent among these populations prior to the arrival of fur traders and other newcomers, Cree, Dene, and Stó:lō peoples quickly adapted to increased demands for paid work by expanding its role in existing socio-economic structures.

This type of change, in terms of physical relocation and temporary or permanent sedentarization as well as the greater emphasis placed on wage labour, was not new nor

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<sup>29</sup> James G. E. Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol.6 (Subarctic)*, June Helm, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 266.

was it unique to the post-contact period. As demonstrated in Part One of this dissertation, change was a constant in Stó:lō, Cree, and Dene societies, and their members were able to draw on innumerable historical precedents to address it. For example, the Kwantlen migration to Fort Langley, according to Keith Carlson, was part of a larger pattern of movement triggered by previous floods, smallpox epidemics, and depopulation, all of which, although devastating in their effects, were interpreted by Stó:lō people according to earlier narratives detailing their ancestors' response to other similarly destructive events.<sup>30</sup> Similarly, rather than challenging existing practices or breaking with the past, trade and other post activities in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* became integrated quite seamlessly into existing Indigenous economies and systems of sharing. Indigenous peoples' approaches to labour and exchange were also congruent with historic socio-economic practices. Rather than seeing increased demand for labour as something foreign, Indigenous people understood it within existing structures which were modified or expanded to take advantage of these new opportunities.<sup>31</sup> By effectively incorporating fur trade posts into their existing resource harvesting cycle, Indigenous people were engaging newcomers within their own cultural frameworks and according to longstanding common senses. Responding to the arrival of newcomers is therefore a story not of disruption and cultural change but of continuity, adaptation, and intercultural creation.

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<sup>30</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time*, 127. See also Keith Thor Carlson, "Stó:lō Migrations and Shifting Identity, 1782-1900," in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Vancouver/Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre/Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 30-31.

<sup>31</sup> Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," 29.

### *Sharing among Traders*

Changes among Indigenous groups located outside trading posts were mirrored inside their walls as traders modified existing economic practices to align with local circumstances and systems of exchange. In *S'ólh Téméxw*, for example, fur traders broadened their focus away from furs, especially beaver pelts, which were never of great interest to the Stó:lō, to salmon and other important local resources. Traders justified this shift as a calculated move designed to capitalize on an emergent industry, but ultimately they had little control over the trade goods brought to the fort. Stó:lō people certainly wanted to access post goods and expand kin networks but they did so on their own terms, thereby compelling the HBC to adjust its trading practices.<sup>32</sup> Traders were likewise compelled to tailor their trade items to local demands. In the great lakes region, for example, tobacco and firearms were highly sought, while in *S'ólh Téméxw* and *Sakitawak/Kwoen* blankets and utilitarian items, such as twine, metal knives, and cooking utensils, were prized. The quality of these items was also scrutinized by local Indigenous people who at least occasionally refused to trade for poorly made or maintained goods.<sup>33</sup> These modifications to trading practices reflect the power of Indigenous groups and the contested, hybrid nature of economic exchange.

Kin-based sharing also became an increasingly important part of traders' activities. Aside from the gift-giving ceremony and the credit system described above, members of the trading post family reciprocated the aid they received from their Indigenous counterparts by sharing resources and participating in a wide range of formal

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<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 36.

<sup>33</sup> Arthur J. Ray, "Indians as Consumers in the Eighteenth Century," in *Rethinking the Fur Trade*, ed. Susan Sleeper-Smith (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press), 320-343.

and informal exchange activities. While attempting to establish a Fort at Île à la Crosse, for example, explorer and trader Peter Fidler subsisted almost exclusively on the fish caught by his Cree wife and family.<sup>34</sup> As Giraud notes, Aboriginal people had no obligation to share with the newcomers: “[a]ware how necessary the riches of their territory were to the fur traders, the tribes of the plains [and woodlands] were able to force the Hudson’s Bay Company into a dependence that, in George Simpson’s view, made the Indians arrogant and hard to please.”<sup>35</sup> Economically, Fidler and others like him at this time were largely dependent on social welfare and the socio-cultural protocols that compelled Indigenous peoples to share resources with their in-laws, even if they were perhaps ignorant of what was transpiring.

As post families acquired greater control of local resources through the mid-nineteenth century, they were required to reciprocate the aid previously received by actively participating in the socio-economic protocols related to sharing and redistribution. In return for supporting the post, Metis families expected access to company food stores and other forms of assistance, especially during times of personal hardship.<sup>36</sup> From their perspective, it was incumbent upon the HBC to do so in accordance with their longstanding socio-economic agreements. In fact, so successful were post families in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* that, according to anthropologist James Smith, the post factor became known among the Cree as *okima’w*, the traditional term for “chief,

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<sup>34</sup> Marcel Giraud, *The Métis in the Canadian West*, vol. I, trans. George Woodcock (Edmonton: University of Alberta Press, 1986), 314.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 16.

<sup>36</sup> See Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 170-175.

leader, person of authority or influence,” while hereditary Cree chiefs became *okima’hka’n*, literally “surrogate or substitute chief.”<sup>37</sup>

This terminological shift is significant. By recognizing post factors as chiefs, Indigenous people were affirming their role as controllers of resources, holders of wealth, and providers of aid. As such, these newcomers were in effect fulfilling the roles and responsibilities of hereditary leaders. This status within Cree society carried with it significant power that went beyond the accumulation and redistribution of wealth. As high-status members of rapidly expanding kin networks, post factors, whether they realized it or not, had the ability to modify socio-economic practices and thus shape collective identities. By indirectly expanding the role and importance of trade and other forms of profit-driven exchange, for example, they were potentially modifying the protocols regulating the social appropriateness of participating in specific exchange practices, including sharing. This de-emphasis of sharing may have fundamentally altered the social bonds through which collective identities were expressed and reinforced, privileging, in the process, not only Euro-Canadian perspectives of economics, but Euro-Canadian identities as well. Through their consistent and frequent participation in systems of sharing and exchange, post factors were thus actively manipulating the mechanisms through which imagined communities were given form and meaning.

Similar events were transpiring farther west. In *S’ólh Téméxw*, post families hosted potlatches and other gift giving ceremonies to reciprocate the presents and other

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<sup>37</sup> Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” 258, 264–5; and James G. E. Smith, “Chipewyan,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 6 (Subarctic)*, ed. June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 280.

items shared with them by their Indigenous relatives and local families.<sup>38</sup> According to Fort Langley's Chief Trader, the number of the goods given away by the post family at these events was expected to be at least "20 percent above the actual value" of the goods previously received in accordance with Stó:lō practices.<sup>39</sup> So onerous were the resulting responsibilities that a year after Yale's marriage to the chief's daughter at Fort Langley, the Chief Trader lamented the "high cost" required to participate in local gift giving ceremonies with his co-parents-in-law.<sup>40</sup> In the process of reciprocating the wealth they received, post families were effectively placing the receiving families in debt the same way that hosts indebted guests at potlatch ceremonies. In so doing, the post family was effectively displaying the amount and type of wealth it controlled, garnering respect from elite Stó:lō families and validating its high status in the process, becoming active participants in the cyclical processes of wealth accumulation and distribution that had governed Indigenous socio-economic networks in *S'ólh Téméxw* for countless generations.

Post families also actively supplied Indigenous people with relief and other forms of aid in times of need according to local protocols. By the 1860s, the same items routinely presented as gifts to local relatives and on credit to traders were also being provided on a regular basis to widows, orphans, "old Indians," and other people not directly involved in the intercultural exchange.<sup>41</sup> In lieu of direct relief, recipients sometimes received ball and shot which they could then gift to hunters in exchange for a

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<sup>38</sup> Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," 28.

<sup>39</sup> M. MacLachlan, see entry for 22 January 1829 in *The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1998), 94.

<sup>40</sup> M. MacLachlan, see entry for 20 December 1828 in *The Fort Langley Journals, 1827-30* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 1998), 90.

<sup>41</sup> HBCA, B.89/d/82-162, Île à la Crosse Account Books, 1853-1872; HBCA, B.89/a/4-35, Île à la Crosse Post Journals, 1819-1865.

portion of their produce.<sup>42</sup> The HBC post at Île à la Crosse post also extended these benefits to “pensioners,” most of whom were either descendants of former Company employees, hunters no longer able to work, and/or members of powerful families.<sup>43</sup> Unlike Company servants and retired traders, these “freemen” were not eligible for regular HBC pensions. Local officials, however, seemed compelled by their membership in regional kin networks to provide relief to local Indigenous and, increasingly, Metis people, even if Company administrators did not approve it. In some cases, this justified freemen pensions as necessary safeguards against competition from rival trading companies.<sup>44</sup>

In so doing, post families were effectively fulfilling their responsibilities to the extended kin network by reciprocating the relief the post had previously received. Compared to their counterparts in European and Canadian centres, traders in western Canada had relatively large extended families and spent much of their time with kin, rather than strangers, to whom they held certain obligations. Indigenous people, for their part, accepted the allocation of relief in the mid-nineteenth century in accordance with the cultural protocols that regulated the redistribution of wealth by elite families.<sup>45</sup> Recipients felt no shame in accepting relief; in fact, rejecting such gifts would have been culturally illogical. Despite these high social costs of production associated with incorporating Indigenous sharing practices into trading strategies, the HBC and other fur

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<sup>42</sup> Ray, Miller, and Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence*, 13.

<sup>43</sup> HBCA, B.89/d/159–162, Île à la Crosse Account Books, 1869–1872.

<sup>44</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 226–228. Safeguarding against competition suggests that economic pragmatism, as well as a feudal sense of *noblesse oblige*, also contributed to ongoing relief efforts. Beginning in 1821 with the elimination of widespread competition and continuing through the 1860s, HBC officials had endeavoured to limit expenditures on gifts and provisioning with little success; maintaining friendly relationships with local Aboriginal and Metis peoples was simply too important to privilege profit over reciprocity. See Ray, Miller, and Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence*, 11–12.

<sup>45</sup> McHalsie, interview 7 May 2009.



trade companies and officials thus continued to accept them for much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries as necessary aspects of the intercultural exchange and a means of maintaining amicable relations.

### 5.3 Consequences of Contact: Imagined Communities and New Meanings

Contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people was a transformative process for members of both groups. Despite shifting power relations and inequalities, each side in any relationship, Homi Bhabha contends, is inevitably and necessarily altered through the process of interaction, thereby generating processes of hybridity that were far more complex than earlier analyses of syncretism had allowed for. Our challenge, he contends, is to consider the ways in which colonizer and colonized informed one another's concepts and expressions of self so as to better understand the consequences of cross-cultural contact both in the past and today. Within the context of the history of sharing, this involves analyzing the ways in which Indigenous and Euro-Canadian systems of exchange affected each other and the cultures they belonged to. By adjusting existing socio-economic structures and practices in response to intercultural interaction, for example, we can see Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples as participating in the creation of hybrid identities, communities, and relationships in *S'ólh Téméxw*, *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, and elsewhere. As sharers placed greater emphasis on trading and traders made more room for sharing, new relationships developed based not only on the combining of discrete economic practices, but on the integration of culturally specific structures and ideologies in the creation of genuinely hybrid forms of socio-economic exchange. Contributors to this process of creation and hybridization thus

became linked by collective identities that combined and potentially transcended existing boundaries of race, class, and familial connectedness. The result was the formation of imagined communities based on shared socio-economic networks rooted in cross-cultural understandings and manifestations of sharing.

Arguably the most obvious example of this cultural hybridity and identity formation is the gradual emergence of distinct Metis communities and culture in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and elsewhere. Although the precise timing of the development of a collective Metis identity in the area is difficult to pinpoint and may not have been fully realized until sometime after the 1885 Northwest Resistance and subsequent scrip payments made by the federal government,<sup>46</sup> the process of identity formation was well underway by the mid nineteenth century. As the first offspring of Cree-Metis and Cree-Dene unions had children of their own, often with other offspring of “mixed” marriages, the number of people living in and around Île à la Crosse who recognized both Indigenous and Euro-Canadian ancestry began to increase rapidly, generating in the process a new definition of what it meant to exist in this liminal middle ground rooted in physical and cultural hybridity. According to Macdougall, northwestern Saskatchewan was thus gradually transformed into “a Metis homeland not only by virtue of the children’s occupation of the territory, but also through their relationships with the Cree and Dene women and fur trader men from whom they were descended” as well as through “familial – especially interfamilial – connectedness.”<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> See Timothy Foran, “‘Les gens de cette place:’ Oblates and the Evolving Concept of Métis at Île à la Crosse, 1845-1898” (PhD Diss., University of Ottawa, 2009).

<sup>47</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 7–8, 44–45. Although the use of the term *wahkootowin* to describe sharing networks during this period is absent in the written record, Macdougall uses the technique of upstreaming from contemporary ethnographic sources to infer from her genealogical research that the idea

In subsequent decades, the number of descendants of cross-cultural unions increased rapidly and new communities emerged that drew on both Indigenous and Euro-Canadian customs, practices, and common senses. Rules governing social interaction and proper behaviour, for example, remained heavily influenced by Cree and to a lesser extent Dene antecedents,<sup>48</sup> and were partly responsible for the relatively peaceful development of Metis identity in the area. The economic diversity and stability offered by extended family networks in Indigenous societies, as Spaulding notes, also remained significant; individuals who lacked these ties were considered impoverished. Daily activities, on the other hand, reflected their Euro-Canadian ancestry. For example, although hunting, fishing, and gathering berries and other foodstuffs remained critically important to Metis economies, working for the post, either as an employee or contractor, became customary, as did a more sedentary lifestyle centered on the post.<sup>49</sup> In the process, people imagined for themselves a new community with its own language, dress, arts, symbols, ideologies, and identity. Macdougall has interpreted this as being more than merely a people “in between,” but rather a distinct cultural group.<sup>50</sup>

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and structure represented by *wahkootowin* “contextualize[d] how relationships were intended to work within Metis society by defining and classifying relationships, prescribing patterns of behaviour between relatives and non-relatives, and linking people and communities in a large, complex web of relationships” and economies.

<sup>48</sup> Winona Stevenson, “‘Ethnic’ Assimilates ‘Indigenous’: A Study in Intellectual Neo-Colonialism,” *Wicazo Sa Review* 13, no. 1 (1998): 39.

<sup>49</sup> Philip T. Spaulding, “The Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1970), 96-98.

<sup>50</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 19-20. Anthropologist Richard Slobodin’s study of subarctic Canadian Metis populations draws similar conclusions about the formation of novel identities rooted in hybrid economic structures and meanings. Household composition and family structure, for example, were “only marginally different from those of the [Cree and Dene] peoples among whom Métis reside; in some instances, they are not different at all.” Marriages also continued to be arranged and basic social groupings and kinship patterns were largely congruent, though the nuclear family, so important among non-Indigenous people, often took precedence over the hunting group. What separates Métis people from other northern groups, Slobodin argues, is their participation in “a distinct communication network” based on kin ties and sharing networks: “in the North, with its small and relatively mobile population, people are linked over great distances by kinship ties, friendship, acquaintance, and shared occupational interests. The

Yet, the formation of Metis culture and collective identities runs deeper than bloodlines, shared practices, and the occupation of a place, though each of these factors is important. Even familial ties and the notion *wahkootowin*, which, after all, is a term borrowed from Cree ideologies, fails to explain the emergence of a unique Metis identity. These traits, common to virtually all Indigenous groups, are expressions of identity but are not markers of distinctiveness. At the heart of Metis identity is hybridity, and not simply the mixing of Indigenous and non-Indigenous languages and customs, but the assertion of hybridity itself as a marker of similarity. Hybridity, Bhabha reminds us, was common to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities during this period of cross-cultural contact,<sup>51</sup> yet only the Metis embraced it to the extent that it spawned a separate and powerful collective identity. Sharing and inter-family connectedness were thus mechanisms through which Metis identity, rooted in hybridity, was expressed and reinforced. In so doing, Metis people forged bonds of social cohesion and comradeship, in spite of potentially divisive cultural barriers and power imbalances, that contributed to the formation of what might be considered imagined communities. These collective identities both linked members together with one another and separated them from members of other collectives, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike.

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dynamic concomitants of these bonds are patterns of communication formed and maintained by travel, visiting, message- and gift-exchange which are fairly distinctive for Indians, western Eskimos, Whites, and Métis. For the Métis of the region, it has been possible to trace a series of communication circuits, analogous to sociometric patterns, which together form an interlinked network extending from the northern prairie provinces well into Alaska. The Métis communication network, owing its existence to common interests and a consciousness of kind, in turn functions to maintain these.” So important in fact was this “long distance sociability” that Slobodin considered it a criterion of Metis ethnicity. See Richard Slobodin, “Subarctic Métis,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 6: The Subarctic*, June Helm, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 362–364; and Richard Slobodin, “The Subarctic Métis as Products and Agents of Culture Contact,” *Arctic Anthropology* 2, no. 2 (1964): 50.

<sup>51</sup> Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 111-112.

Although the creation of Metis homelands in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and elsewhere is a striking example of hybridization and the formation of imagined communities, these processes are also evident in *S'ólh Téméxw* and other Indigenous places where no discernible Metis identity emerged. Indeed, Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples who retained existing collective identities nonetheless routinely engaged in this creative, intercultural process, and their collective identities, though they remained intact, were transformed in the process. Although the results are often subtle and can be difficult to discern, the ongoing intercultural interaction that began with the intercultural exchange was critical to the Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities and peoples that participated in it.

The hybrid economic structures negotiated and implemented by Indigenous and non-Indigenous people during the intercultural exchange demonstrate the complicated ways in which events challenged and sometimes changed existing socio-economic structures and meanings. Heightened interest in trade-based exchange and wage labour, for example, compelled Indigenous populations in *S'ólh Téméxw* and *Sakitawak/Kwoen* to modify existing sharing practices to take advantage of these new opportunities while the importance of sharing and kin-based exchange among Indigenous peoples in these areas caused traders and other non-Indigenous people to expand their systems of trade to make room for sharing and other forms of familial exchange. The intercultural exchange triggered the creation not only of hybrid practices and activities but also hybrid common senses and ways of thinking. New hybrid meanings, in other words, were being conceived to accommodate new colonial experiences.

These structural shifts, in turn, generated new understandings and definitions of important socio-economic terms. Wealth, for example, was redefined by Cree, Dene, and Metis people in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* to include the accumulation of trade items and access to wage labour, in addition to membership in expansive kin-based networks of exchange. As Indigenous populations spent more time at or near fur trade posts and gradually became more sedentary, the importance of material and accumulation increased. Intangible forms of wealth, on the other hand, became relatively less important than they had been due to both the influx of material goods and the cultural disruption resulting from colonialism that hindered the transfer of stories, songs, knowledge, ancestry, etc., from one generation to the next. Leadership, too, changed as non-Indigenous people, especially chief traders, acquired the same type of social standing formerly reserved exclusively for hereditary chiefs. These changes destabilized existing power structures and reframed ideas of wealth and poverty in individual rather than collective terms.

A similar shift occurred in *S'ólh Téméxw* as Stó:lō people began to place greater emphasis on wage labour and other non-Indigenous goods. Although material wealth had always been important to the more stratified societies of the Pacific Northwest, the influx of non-Indigenous goods altered the value ascribed to existing wealth items and specialized skills. Expertise related to the construction of tools and blankets, for example, became devalued as technological improvements and increased supply made them less rare and sometimes obsolete.<sup>52</sup> Elite families whose wealth was based on specialized labour therefore experienced a drop in their wealth and status relative to other families, especially those who controlled access to resources in demand at the forts.

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<sup>52</sup> McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.

These changes to ideas and markers of wealth also provided middle and lower class families with a degree of social mobility previously unavailable to them. Rather than being “stepped on” by and becoming indebted to elite families, these “new wealth” families augmented their wealth significantly, allowing them to host potlatches, though the gifts they offered were often considered “cultus,” of little or no value, because the givers were not of high status. Thus, although “old wealth” families seem to have maintained their privileged position within Stó:lō society for a time, changing ideas of wealth foreshadowed significant structural and material changes that ensued in the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries following the influx of thousands of non-Indigenous peoples into Indigenous lands.

And yet, within the context of rapid change there was also continuity. Certain other cultural definitions remained largely unchanged. For example, accepting wealth redistributed by elites, be they Indigenous or non-Indigenous, did not acquire the stigma that was later ascribed to it. In both *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S’ólh Téméxw*, Indigenous people accepted relief and other forms of wealth distribution according to existing cultural protocols that made the receiving of gifts not only permissible but obligatory. Only upper class people, those whose status demands that they be generous and reciprocate all forms of giving, would have been prohibited from receiving relief or accepting gifts they could not repay. Poverty therefore continued to be experienced largely collectively and free of pejorative connotations, as long as it remained a prerequisite of power. Although relief, from the perspective of the HBC, was an entirely new economic resource in western Canada, Indigenous people recognized it as a form of sharing: ancient, familiar, and very much expected.

There is also little evidence to suggest that traders felt shame in accepting aid and gifts from their Indigenous relatives. In accordance with Euro-Canadian ideas of horizontal sharing strategies practiced within families, traders did not interpret their participation in kin-based networks as a sign of ineptitude or dependency. Similarly, senior company officials' complaints regarding the costs involved in maintaining these networks were consistent with existing attitudes toward vertical sharing and redistribution that separated them as somehow less economic than trade and other more profitable endeavours. While profits derived from the intercultural exchange remained high, costs related to sharing were justifiable, but when returns decreased in the mid to late nineteenth century, fur trade companies were quick to curtail relief expenditures. Therefore, although sharing became an increasingly important aspect of the lives of non-Indigenous people, especially traders, it continued to be perceived and understood according to existing Euro-Canadian socio-economic structures.

#### 5.4 Conclusion: Change and Continuity in the Intercultural Exchange

As an instance of sustained socio-economic contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in northwestern North America, the intercultural exchange represents a pivotal event in the history of Native-Newcomer relations. Existing within the complex and contested space of intercultural contact zones, it brought together people, goods, information, beliefs, ideas, and common senses to forge new and innovative constructs. Systems of sharing, and exchange in general, were actively adapted to these shifting cultural terrains to make sense and take advantage of emergent opportunities, creating in



the process genuinely hybrid practices, ideas, and institutions that fused elements of distinct cultural models in unique and creative ways.

The intercultural exchange may therefore be seen as a time of change. Indigenous ideas of wealth in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S'ólh Téméxw* changed to place more emphasis on tangible goods and other forms of material wealth as well as to allow for greater participation in trade-based exchanges and wage labour, even within familial contexts. These ideological changes also contributed to material differences in social status as wealth became somewhat more individualistic and families gained access to greater social mobility. The social and economic lives of traders changed in a similar fashion as they and their peers became integrated into Indigenous families through marriage and kinship. In response, both individuals and post families modified their trade-based exchange activities to include a variety of Indigenous practices ranging from gift giving to potlatching and the granting of relief. The inclusion of these social overhead costs of economic production among traders and economic overhead costs of social production among Indigenous people illuminate the differences between distinct cultural structures as well as the contested, negotiated nature of socio-economic hybridization.

But the intercultural exchange also is representative of continuity. Neither Indigenous nor non-Indigenous people perceived and experienced new people, goods, or ideas according to the cultural worlds from which the objects came. Rather, the novel and unfamiliar were interpreted according to what was known and familiar. Among the Stó:lō, Carlson argues, “Altered circumstances associated with the arrival of the Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) in 1827 ... and subsequent Euroamerican settlement did not introduce a new exchange economy. Rather, these events and processes precipitated

incremental shifts in emphasis within existing Stó:lō exchange patterns towards increased open market exchange,” causing “certain types of pre-contact exchange activities to be emphasised and somewhat adapted to new circumstances.”<sup>53</sup> Although jarring and disruptive, this process was never “chaotic.” Neither the arrival of fur traders nor the resulting “incremental shifts” produced “a sudden transformative break with pre-contact history and identity.”<sup>54</sup> Instead, these changes were conceptualized within an ongoing history of adaptation that stretched back hundreds if not thousands of years.

This argument for continuity can be extended to Euro-Canadian and Metis peoples as well as other Indigenous groups. Across both time and space, historical actors drew on culturally specific histories, stories, and teachings to make sense of the world around them. For Euro-Canadians, and perhaps Metis people, this process resulted in the creation of an event known as the “fur trade,” a term that reflects the economic priorities of Euro-Canadian traders and the role of sharing in non-Indigenous places. In contrast, Cree and Dene people, like their Stó:lō counterparts, viewed their interactions with fur traders and other Euro-Canadians as part of a process of socio-economic expansion and wealth production of which furs and trade were only two parts. Arguably more important from Indigenous perspectives were the systems of sharing and kin-based networks of cooperation and exchange that made these interactions logical and meaningful.

These dual processes of change and continuity remained significant in the second half of the nineteenth century as fur traders were joined, and sometimes replaced, by other non-Indigenous peoples and communities, effectively ending the first period of sustained socio-economic contact between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in

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<sup>53</sup> Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 42.

<sup>54</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 132. See also McHalsie, interview, 7 May 2009.

northwestern North America. Subsequent waves of newcomers, including missionaries, fortune-seekers, and government agents, brought with them new goals and priorities that reshaped relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. As demonstrated in chapters Six and Seven, systems of sharing and exchange remained important aspects of these relationships as *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S'ólh Téméxw* were unsettled and then resettled as Canada.

Transformative Exchanges: Sharing in the Era of Resettlement

Once I was in Victoria, and I saw a very large house. They told me it was a bank and that the white men place their money there to be taken care of, and that by and by they got it back with interest. We are Indians and we have no such bank, but when we have plenty of money or blankets, we give them away to other chiefs and people, and by and by they return them with interest, and our hearts feel good. Our way of giving is our bank.<sup>1</sup>

~ Chief Maquinna, Nuuchah-Nulth

Indigenous lands and societies in northwestern North America were in transition in the late nineteenth century. As the fur trade waned, non-Indigenous settlement increased. Government officials, missionaries, labourers, and other newcomers entered the “west” in increasingly large numbers and with greater frequency. Each group of newcomers interacted with Indigenous peoples in specific ways according to their individual goals, most of which differed significantly from those of the fur traders that preceded them. Whereas traders sought profit through their interaction with Indigenous people, the agents of economic change who followed, such as the miners who descended on the Fraser River Valley during the gold rush of 1858, were in search of fortune despite Indigenous people. To help mitigate conflict, Indian Agents and other government officials deployed from Ottawa beginning in the 1870s designed and implemented policies aimed at transforming Indigenous society so as to remove it as an obstacle to western economic and intellectual expansion. Missionaries, similarly, came to save souls

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<sup>1</sup> Quoted in Earl Maquinna George, *Living on the Edge: Nuuchah-Nulth History from an Ahousaht Chief's Perspective* (Winlaw: Sono Nis Press, 2003), 70.

and provide Indigenous society with protection from the less savoury elements of settlement society.

Each of these newcomers contributed, intentionally or otherwise, to the displacement of Indigenous peoples and cultures in what is now western Canada, not only physically but socially, economically, politically, and spiritually. Through these processes of resettlement, Indigenous lands were being transformed, although never fully or completely, into non-Indigenous places: *Sakitawak/Kwoen* was becoming part of the Northwest Territories and, later, northwestern Saskatchewan, while *S'ólh Téméxw* was becoming southwestern British Columbia. Social structures, including systems of sharing and exchange, were likewise transformed as Natives and Newcomers negotiated hybrid relationships, practices, and institutions. Yet, Indigenous people, like their non-Indigenous counterparts, continued to perceive and experience these events through the prism of their own worldviews and according to their own common senses. As during the cultural exchange examined in Chapter Four, unfamiliar peoples, ideas, and goods encountered during the era of resettlement were understood within existing socio-cultural perspectives and worldviews. The history of the resettlement of northwestern North America is thus also the story of the ongoing redefining and restructuring of Indigenous and non-Indigenous socio-economies and collective identities, contributing to the dual processes of cultural exchange and hybridity.

This chapter analyses the ongoing transformation of systems of sharing and exchange during the late nineteenth century through processes of resettlement. I begin by examining the consequences of Canadian Confederation and the extension of government control over northwestern North America in the late nineteenth century. Building on

earlier relief policies implemented by the HBC and other fur trade companies, the Canadian government mobilized systems of sharing and exchange to facilitate western settlement while Indigenous people continued to perceive intercultural sharing within the context of ongoing social relationship-building with newcomers. During this period of settlement, newly arrived missionaries and labourers not formally attached to the fur trade became integrated into emerging, hybrid Indigenous – non-Indigenous relationships and the history of intercultural systems of sharing. As during the fur trade, these immigrants brought with them new economic prospects that Indigenous peoples understood within existing socio-economic frameworks. Just as the fur trade had allowed Indigenous people to expand kin-based systems of sharing and trade networks, subsequent waves of settlers fostered a wide range of exchange opportunities, ranging from government and church relief to market-based wage labour at home and abroad.

Indigenous people incorporated these practices into existing socio-economic structures to build wealth, augment status, and expand social networks. Church and state relief payments, for example, provided middle and lower class Stó:lō peoples and families with greater access to wealth and, in turn, increased their status. Similarly, payments and charity directed towards families often benefitted women who previously may have been unlikely to hold wealth of their own. Elite males, meanwhile, were less likely to benefit from these new forms of wealth and systems of distribution except that these payments may have alleviated their responsibility to share wealth with others in their community. Although the experiences of Indigenous peoples were clearly mediated by class and gender, newcomers were effectively providing Indigenous people with new opportunities to engage in “old” practices.

But taking advantage of these opportunities challenged aspects of Indigenous culture and society. Accepting relief, actively participating in Church, and working for a wage often compelled Indigenous people to make adjustments, not the least of which included becoming more sedentary and settling permanently on lands reserved for them by the government. This decreased mobility limited the breadth of existing kin networks and introduced new markers of difference based on tribal membership, religious beliefs, and occupation. New forms of wealth and markers of power also challenged existing leadership structures, causing Indigenous people to distinguish between hereditary and appointed leaders due in part to existing definitions of leadership and what traits and practices were expected of a leader. Combined with the devastating effects of disease, the loss of lands and resources, and the cultural trauma caused by residential schools and other assimilationist institutions, these structural changes fundamentally shaped Indigenous peoples' collective identities. Once key markers of identity, sharing and expansive kin networks were intersected by a range of other identity markers as existing collective identities became continually reimagined. Although reconciling these multiple identities was both possible and perhaps common, fragmentation also resulted. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, what it meant to be Indigenous had in many ways been unsettled and fractured, much like the land and the societies of its original inhabitants.

### 6.1 Sharing and Government Indian Policy

The resettlement of northwestern North America accelerated rapidly in the late nineteenth century following Canadian Confederation. Although the HBC had instituted

a number of informal administrative measures and become, from the British Crown's perspective, the *de facto* government in many places west of the Great Lakes,<sup>2</sup> fur trade officials were primarily interested in maintaining order and promoting their economic interests, not facilitating settlement or non-Indigenous immigration. The Canadian government, on the other hand, was keen to construct a trans-continental nation that promoted Euro-Canadian movement westward while staving off American annexation. To facilitate the extinguishment of Indian title to this land and encourage western settlement, the Canadian government turned to the HBC. Unlike the federal government, the fur trade company was well established in the west and had, despite instances of tense and sometimes violent interactions with Indigenous peoples,<sup>3</sup> developed largely amicable relations with Indigenous people based in part on its employees' connection to local kin networks and systems of sharing. Writing to HBC shareholders in 1871, Prime Minister John A. Macdonald proposed a deal that would benefit the company and country alike: "[i]t would be of advantage to us, & no doubt it would be of advantage to you, that we should be allowed to make use of your officers & your posts for the purpose of making those payments to the Indians which will have to be made annually by the Government of Canada in order to satisfy their claims & keep them in good humour."<sup>4</sup>

Eager to divest the company of the financial burden associated with providing

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<sup>2</sup> This was particularly true in places like Fort Victoria where the HBC was responsible for facilitating settlement and colonization within the colony of Vancouver Island.

<sup>3</sup> See Chris Arnett, *The Terror of the Coast: Land Alienation and Colonial War on Vancouver and the Gulf Islands, 1849-1863* (Vancouver: Talon Books, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Quoted in Arthur Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Hunters, Trappers, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974), 4-5.



relief, gifts, and other “presents” to Indigenous people,<sup>5</sup> shareholders agreed with Macdonald. From their perspective, this agreement allowed the company to continue administering relief – which was becoming a rather lucrative enterprise – and, following the signing of the numbered treaties, annuities to local Indigenous peoples without the associated expenses. Within ten years, the HBC was managing almost a half million dollars annually in relief payments and another quarter-million in treaty annuities.<sup>6</sup> This no doubt reinforced in Indigenous eyes the connection between the powerful state and corporate powers within Canada, and it no doubt had repercussions for the way relief and sharing were interpreted by indigenous people.

The most obvious examples of these annual payments are the treaty and annuity payments that became part of the seven so-called “numbered treaties” negotiated between the federal government and various prairie Indigenous groups between 1871 and 1877.<sup>7</sup> In addition to providing Indigenous peoples with reserved lands, agricultural tools and instruction, and recognizing their subsistence rights, the Canadian government promised annual payments to Indigenous people in partial compensation for relinquishing, from the government’s perspective, their land rights. The first seven numbered treaties, however, covered neither *Sakitawak/Kwoen* nor *S’ólh Téméxw*. Despite its historical significance to local Indigenous people and the fur trade, *Sakitawak/Kwoen* was deemed undesirable by the government due to its lack of agricultural and capitalist economic potential and remoteness: “there was no particular necessity that the treaty should extend to that

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<sup>5</sup> Miller also notes the effect a new generation of bureaucrats had on Canadian Indian Policy. See J.R. Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant: Aboriginal Treaty-Making in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 105.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur J. Ray, Jim Miller, and Frank Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence: A History of the Saskatchewan Treaties* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2000), 54, 74.

<sup>7</sup> See Miller, *Compact, Contract, Covenant*, 162-183.

region,” explained Indian Commissioner David Laird. “It was not a territory through which a railway was likely soon to run, nor was it frequented by miners, lumberman, fishermen, or other whites making use of the resources of its soil or waters.”<sup>8</sup> In British Columbia, meanwhile, provincial authorities, arguing that the Royal Proclamation did not apply west of the Rocky Mountains, successfully persuaded the federal government not to pursue treaties as it had on the prairies. As a result, no annuities were paid to Indigenous people living in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* or *S’ólh Téméxw* at this time. Relief, therefore, remained the primary mechanism of socio-economic exchange negotiated by Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in these places. As during the fur trade, these hybrid practices not only mediated relationships between Natives and newcomers, they also contributed to the resettlement of Indigenous lands.

### *Government Relief*

In areas outside of those covered by formal treaty relief payments the Canadian government implemented a system of financial assistance modelled after those distributed by the HBC. Most often, relief was provided in the form of tangible goods, foodstuffs, clothing, medicine, and other necessities. In some areas, especially those within the boundaries of the first seven numbered treaties, relief was used as a coercive measure by the government. Indigenous groups and individuals who occupied desirable lands but refused to participate in the treaty process were denied aid from the government unless they capitulated with the government’s demands. In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, *S’ólh Téméxw*, and other areas where treaties were not being pursued in the nineteenth century, relief

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<sup>8</sup> Quoted in Ray, Miller, and Tough, *Bounty and Benevolence*, 171-172.

was provided directly to individuals deemed “destitute” by local government officials. Thus, unlike annuities, relief payments were made on an ad hoc basis, the amount and timing varying from one person or case to the next. Such vagaries resulted in these payments being used less as tools of coercion than as implements of pacification and appeasement. All levels of government remained eager to avoid conflict with Indigenous peoples, a prospect that seemed ever more likely as the number of non-Indigenous people immigrating to Indigenous lands began to increase rapidly in the second half of the nineteenth century.

In some ways, government relief was similar to the aid provided by fur trade companies. Although Indian agents did not enter into sexual or familial relationships with Indigenous people at the same rate as did fur traders, they did purport to represent a larger family that included both DIA staff and other government officials as well as the Crown, which was routinely described in familial terms as “the Great White Mother” or “Father.” Important non-Indigenous political leaders also regularly visited Indigenous communities, often presenting themselves as chiefs and/or kin of local peoples. Moreover, as government agents and non-Indigenous people in general became more numerous in Indigenous places, they acquired, through various colonial mechanisms, greater control of lands and resources that had once been the exclusive domain of local families. As newcomers increased their wealth, they were obliged, from an Indigenous perspective, to continue reciprocal exchanges with prominent families and redistribute wealth to those less well off, very much in keeping with the precedent established by fur trade companies.

Despite these similarities in form, the purpose of relief payments changed in

subtle but important ways when the government became the principal purveyor of socio-economic aid. Whereas the HBC viewed its participation in Indigenous systems of sharing as part of the social overhead costs of economic production, the government viewed its participation in these networks as the economic overhead costs of western settlement.<sup>9</sup> To this end, the government actively replaced longstanding, co-operative Native-Newcomer relationships based on reciprocity and mutual obligation among members of extended kin networks with temporary transactions that assumed Indigenous peoples to be inferior to and dependent on Canadian society. As Prime Minister John A. Macdonald stated in 1887, “[t]he great aim of our legislation has been to do away with the tribal system and assimilate the Indian people in all respects with the other inhabitants of the Dominion as speedily as they are fit to change.”<sup>10</sup> Rather than a means of developing socio-economic ties between themselves and Indigenous peoples, various governments used systems of sharing – and the political power inherent in them – to undermine and assimilate the very societies that had created them. Therefore, although the form and nature of payments themselves may have remained the same throughout the nineteenth century, their socio-economic meaning changed dramatically.

Despite abundant records related to government Indian policy, little is known about the first relief payments issued to an Indigenous person in western Canada. This lack of information is due in part to the informal nature of these payments and the absence of an organized system of distribution prior to the creation in 1880 of the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and subsequent commissioning of Indian Agents

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<sup>9</sup> Frank Tough, *“As Their Natural Resources Fail”: Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996), 7.

<sup>10</sup> Quoted in Malcolm Montgomery, “The Six Nations Indians and the Macdonald Franchise,” *Ontario History* 57, no. 1 (1965): 25.

responsible for administering government policy and overseeing Indigenous populations, both treated and non-treated. Before 1880, relief was distributed by a range of non-Indigenous people, including HBC employees, members of the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), missionaries, shopkeepers, and various others who, aside from Mounties, were often only loosely connected to the government. The first payment made in British Columbia, for example, was routed through “G. Wilson” who was reimbursed in the amount \$19.75 for distributing “supplies to destitute Indians” in 1872-73.<sup>11</sup> Specific details concerning the recipient(s) of this relief, the supplies distributed to them, and the provider are unknown, but payments of this type increased dramatically in subsequent decades.

Prior to British Columbia’s entrance into Confederation, Governor James Douglas had pursued policies designed explicitly to limit Indigenous peoples’ need for relief payments. Indeed, the reserves originally surveyed by Douglas’s government were generous, relative to subsequent reserve allotments and reductions, so as to provide “Indians” with an “inheritance” that could be used to generate revenues and maintain their economic independence. Writing to Colonial Secretary Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1859, Douglas stressed that “[a]nticipatory reserves of land for the benefit and support of the Indian races will be made for that purpose in all districts of British Columbia inhabited by native tribes.” Doing so would “make such settlements entirely self-supporting, trusting for the means of doing so, to the voluntary contributions in labour or money of the natives themselves; and secondly, to the proceeds of the sale or lease of a

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<sup>11</sup> Department of the Interior, *Report of the Indian Branch of the Department of the Minister of the Interior, For the Year Ended 30<sup>th</sup> June, 1873* (Order of Parliament, Ottawa: I.B. Taylor, 1874), 22.

part of the land reserved.”<sup>12</sup> Combined with the “civilizing” effects of residential schooling, the allocation of large tracts of land for the benefit of Indigenous people would, in Douglas’s view, ensure they would not “degenerate into the mere recipients of eleemosynary relief.”<sup>13</sup> The state, in turn, would avoid the financial burden of what were deemed to be unnecessary relief payments made to Indians.

After Confederation, small-scale payments continued to be issued on a case-by-case basis to Indigenous people across British Columbia. Whenever possible, this relief was paid from band funds held by the DIA or from fees collected by Indian Agents for liquor law infractions and other illegal acts. Payments were concentrated in Victoria and other urbanizing areas with large non-Indigenous populations. In 1888, for example, H. M. Moffat, the DIA’s Acting Indian Superintendent, authorized relief payments to eight Lekwungen elders, seven women and one man, each of whom received one blanket, one sack of flour, one pound of tea, five pounds of sugar, one tin of yeast powder, and ten pounds of rice.<sup>14</sup> The location of these relief payments is perhaps predictable. Urban centres contained large non-Indigenous populations that had displaced Indigenous peoples or were in the process of doing so. Government relief payments were, therefore, a means of compensating and placating these dislocated persons and were often couched in humanitarian discourses.

Relief payments, however, were also symbolic in that they marked the transfer of the control of local resources and wealth from Indigenous to non-Indigenous people. The

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<sup>12</sup> Governor Douglas to the Right Hon. Sir E.B. Lytton, Bart., Victoria, March 14, 1859, in *Papers Connected with the Indian Land Question 1850-1875* (Victoria: Richard Wolfenden Government Printer, 1875), 16-17.

<sup>13</sup> Secretary of State for the Colonies to Governor Douglas, London, April 11, 1859, BCA, C/AB/10.2/1, 89-93.

<sup>14</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 257.

eight elders in Victoria, who would have once appealed to family or local leadership for aid, now turned to government officials to request allocations of food and wealth. This likely made sense from an Indigenous perspective. As the government asserted greater regulatory control of lands and resources formally managed by Indigenous elites, it increased the amount of food and wealth distributed to local peoples, much as hereditary chiefs had formerly done. Indeed, in some instances when requesting relief, Indigenous people in British Columbia asked for their “potlatch,” thereby making a direct connection between historic systems of sharing and late nineteenth century government relief policies.<sup>15</sup> Similarly, Stó:lō elder Elizabeth Edwards recalled stories about an explicit agreement reached in British Columbia during a meeting between a powerful Coast Salish chief named Skakahtun and Queen Victoria, or her representatives. In exchange for control of the gold and other resources found in the chief’s territory, the Queen promised Indigenous people would be able to “live off the wealth.” To Edwards and other Indigenous people, this remembered agreement is regarded as requiring the Crown to provide social assistance to all “needy” Indigenous people.<sup>16</sup> Regardless of whether the arrangement was an explicit one, relief, Lutz notes, “was easily assimilated into an Aboriginal version of a subsistence/prestige economy where those who had food, like the Indian Agent, had an obligation to share it with those who did not.”<sup>17</sup>

In the “Northwest Territories,” the federal jurisdiction in which *Sakitawak/Kwoen* was situated until the creation of the Province of Saskatchewan in 1905, relief was

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<sup>15</sup> Lutz, *Makik*, 260.

<sup>16</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, “Aboriginal Diplomacy: Queen Victoria Comes to Canada and Coyote Goes to London,” in *Indigenous Diplomacies*, ed. J. Marshall Beier and P. Whitney Lackenbauer (Hampshire: Paulgrave MacMillan, 2009), 157.

<sup>17</sup> Lutz, *Makik*, 287.

administered primarily by the HBC and the NWMP, which maintained an increasingly visible presence in the area following the unrest of 1885. Following the sale of Rupert's Land in 1869, HBC officials continued to provide relief to local Indigenous and Metis people throughout the 1870s and 1880s as they had previously, effectively fulfilling their socio-economic obligations to kin networks. This practice continued into the twentieth century, though the HBC was not always financially responsible for the payments. Beginning in the late 1880s, the NWMP began issuing reimbursements to the HBC and other non-Indigenous groups and individuals for providing relief to "halfbreeds" in southern *Sakitawak/Kwoen* as well as other areas near present day Prince Albert, North Battleford, and Batoche. During the winter of 1889-90, for example, the NWMP in the Prince Albert area issued rations of bacon (202 lbs.), fresh and canned beef (96 lbs.), flour (623 lbs.), and biscuits (22 lbs.) valued at \$462.50 to twenty-two families. These families consisted of 130 individuals, almost half of whom (60) were children under twelve years of age and an additional seventeen between twelve and twenty years.<sup>18</sup> Although records from the *Sakitawak/Kwoen* area for this period are scarce and inconsistent, the frequency and amount of rations issued by the NWMP seem to have increased in subsequent years. Between 1898 and 1903, it provided more than \$1600 in direct and indirect relief to "halfbreeds" in the Green Lake area.<sup>19</sup>

As in *S'ólh Téméxw*, the theoretical and practical purposes of these payments were often at odds. The federal government described the distribution of relief as a

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<sup>18</sup> RCMP Records, Comptrollers, 1890, RG 18, vol. 38, "Provisions Issued to District Half Breeds at Prince Albert during Winter 1889-90," LAC.

<sup>19</sup> RCMP Records, 1906, RG 18, vol. 318, "Statement of expenditure incurred by the Mounted Police in connections with Prisoners Lunatics and Half Breed Relief during the fiscal years 1903-04 and 1904-5, in Police Districts now included in the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan," LAC.



humanitarian act, arguing that relief was being provided out of good will rather than obligation or as compensation for colonization. For non-Indigenous people operating “on the ground,” such as fur traders, missionaries, mounties, and others who may have developed personal relationships with recipients and witnessed firsthand their “destitution,” this humanitarianism was often real and significant, and played a central role in the creation and maintenance of imagined communities and collective identities. However, the government, like Macdonald in 1871, was most interested in avoiding conflict and violence between settlers and Indigenous people, a project that failed at Red River in 1870 and Batoche in 1885. Relief was seen as a tool of pacification and appeasement as well as an implicit acknowledgement that Indigenous people were liable to resist the ongoing alienation of their lands and resources. That government relief expenditures increased significantly in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries is, from this perspective, perhaps not surprising given the coincidental increase in non-Indigenous immigration to western Canada and greater potential for conflict. Relief and, later, welfare were both catalysts for and government responses to the resettlement of Indigenous lands.

## 6.2 Of Missionaries and Miners: Stranger Exchanges

Complicit in the government’s resettlement of Indigenous people in western Canada were a variety of newcomers including missionaries, migrant labourers, and business people who interacted directly with Indigenous exchange networks. Aside from fur traders, missionaries were often the first non-Indigenous immigrants to arrive in Indigenous lands in western Canada. This was not always a coincidence; traders and

missionaries sometimes saw their projects of profit-making and conversion as compatible and mutually beneficial, which often led to formal, albeit unstable, partnerships. For example, the first missionaries to arrive in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, the Oblates of Mary Immaculate (OMI), were invited and transported to the area in the 1840s by HBC officials eager to introduce Christianity to local Indigenous people. With ongoing aid from fur traders, these Oblates constructed the first mission in 1846 at Île à la Crosse (Figure 6.1), which remained an important area of settlement for traders as well as local Cree, Dene, and Metis peoples, and began ministering to local Indigenous people, most of whom were involved in the fur trade.<sup>20</sup> Bolstered in 1860 by the arrival of the Sisters of Charity from Quebec, better known as Grey Nuns, who ministered mostly to women, children, and the infirm, the Oblates' work expanded to include both local and distant Indigenous and Metis populations.<sup>21</sup> Although their relationship with the HBC deteriorated over time, missionaries throughout this early period of conversion remained dependent on traders' familial networks and kin relations. Without them, missionaries were little more than strangers.

Oblate missionaries were also active among the Stó:lō, though their relationship with fur traders was often tenuous. Beginning in the 1840s and 1850s, Catholic missionaries fanned out from Victoria, the hub of the north Pacific fur trade and seat of colonial government, to minister to Indigenous people on Vancouver Island and the mainland. St. Mary's, the first mission in *S'ólh Téméxw* established by Oblate

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<sup>20</sup> Brenda Macdougall, "One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Northwestern Saskatchewan," (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010), 127-128. The Île à la Crosse mission was followed by subsequent missions established at Green Lake in 1875 and Portage La Loche in 1890.

<sup>21</sup> See Timothy Foran, "'Les gens de cette place': Oblates and the Evolving Concept of Métis at Île à la Crosse, 1845-1898" (PhD Diss., University of Ottawa, 2009), 57.

missionaries in 1861 near what is now the aptly named city of Mission (Figure 6.2), was joined in 1868 by the Sisters of St. Ann, a female order similar to the Grey Nuns working in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*.<sup>22</sup> But unlike the missionaries at Île à la Crosse, the Oblates operating in the Fraser River Valley were less dependent on fur traders, in part due to the massive influx of non-Indigenous immigrants to the area following the Gold Rush of 1858 (discussed below). Here, strangers abounded and colonial infrastructure was well developed relative to *Sakitawak/Kwoen*. As a result, missionaries pursued projects largely independent of the fur trade and other non-Indigenous activities.

The objective of missionaries working in Stó:lō territory was to save Indigenous people from their heathen ways so that they might achieve salvation. As stated by the order's founder, the OMI were dedicated "to preach[ing] the Gospel to the poor" which, in this case, involved converting "Indians" to the Catholic faith. Conversion, for these missionaries, required the rejection of both traditional Indigenous practices and customs, which were seen as pagan, as well as the corrupting influences of non-Indigenous society, specifically the consumption of alcohol. The goal, according to Father Leon Fouquet, the founder of St. Mary's mission, was "to not only uproot their deep-rooted savage vices, but also to attack the new ones that came along with drunkenness."<sup>23</sup>

One of the principal ways that OMI missionaries achieved these objectives was through the implementation of the Durieu system, an approach based on the creation of model Christian villages where "good Catholic Indians" would be safe from the

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<sup>22</sup> Jody R. Woods, "St. Mary's Roman Catholic Boarding School: A Spatial Analysis," in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Vancouver/Chilliwack: Douglas and McIntyre/Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 2001), 68-69.

<sup>23</sup> Fr. Leon Fouquet to Rev. Fr. Tempier, 8 June 1863, *Missions de la Congrégation des Missionnaires Oblats de Marie Immaculée*, Vol. 3 (Paris: Typographic Hennuvert et Fils, Rue du Boulevard 7, 1864).

deleterious effects of both Indian and white society.<sup>24</sup> Named for Bishop Paul Durieu, this approach was based on the “reduction system” established by missionaries in Paraguay in the sixteenth and seventeenth century. Although this earlier model failed to facilitate the widespread conversion of Indigenous peoples, Durieu and his peers believed that the philosophy underpinning it were sound, but that its execution was flawed, mainly because it completely eroded the autonomy of Indigenous communities and leaders. The North American version was therefore designed to be less intrusive. Indigenous communities would, at least in theory, implement the system themselves with missionaries acting only as overseers and advisors.

The Durieu system was bolstered by the creation of temperance or sobriety societies within Stó:lō communities. Led by Church-appointed “watchmen,” “captains,” and “catechists,” these societies monitored local populations, identifying sympathetic followers and allies as well as “traditionalists” who opposed the work of the Church and its effects on Stó:lō culture. As Edna Bobb recalled in personal communication with historian Keith Carlson, watchmen “looked in on everything; kept tabs on people, and reported to the priest people who were doing bad things, like drinking or beating their wives and children.”<sup>25</sup> OMI records concur, stating that watchmen reported “not only the important violations of important laws, but on family quarrels between husbands and wives, on neglect of children by parents, on the disobedience of children, on rowdiness of some men, etc., etc.”<sup>26</sup> Those charged by a watchman with violating temperance society

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<sup>24</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 187.

<sup>25</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 187.

<sup>26</sup> E.M. Buno, “Bishop Durieu’s System,” *Études Oblates* 1(1942): 195.

rules would appear in front of a tribunal, composed of society members, that could expel the accused, if deemed to be a “bad Indian,” from the community.<sup>27</sup>

As Carlson notes, the Durieu system and the activities of temperance societies wreaked havoc on existing Stó:lō socio-cultural practices and institutions, including longstanding exchange relationships and systems of sharing. “As the colonial settlement era progressed, one thing,” he argues, “was becoming clear: state and Church authorities were collaborating to undermine the social and familial linkages between communities upon which supratribal identity was based.”<sup>28</sup> Temperance societies, for example, began collecting from society members taxes to be redistributed to those considered to be in need. Rather than allocating relief according to longstanding socio-economic protocols and kin networks (described in Chapter Two), Church officials, following the precedent established by Victorian Poor Laws, instituted a relief system that distinguished between the deserving and underserving poor. Only those who followed Church rules and showed themselves to be “good Indians” could receive these redistributions of wealth.

OMI records testify to the success of missionary work in the area and the positive effect it was having on Indigenous communities. The annual report of 1867, for example, declares that “[t]here are no longer any sorcerers among them. They have burned their gambling instruments, and their laws oblige those who drink intoxicating liquors to pay a fine, destined for the relief of the sick and the old, or for decoration of the chapel and the little house that each village has built for the Missionary.”<sup>29</sup> Similarly, while traveling between communities, much of the work done by OMI priests centred on visiting the sick

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<sup>27</sup> See Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 186-187.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 189.

<sup>29</sup> Missions Of the Congregation Of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Number 21 – March 1867, 253.

and destitute,<sup>30</sup> further emphasizing the role of the Church in administering relief and social welfare and entrenching the distinction made between deserving and undeserving peoples. In their efforts to convert “Indians” to Christianity and in the process save their souls, Catholic missionaries were destabilizing longstanding socio-economic practices and redefining what it meant to be wealthy, prestigious, and respectable in Stó:lō territory. This attempted restructuring of Indigenous worldviews went hand in hand with the ongoing resettlement of their lands.

Protestant orders were also present in *S’ólh Téméxw* and, to a lesser extent, in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*. Among the Stó:lō, Methodist missionaries were particularly active from the 1860s onwards, often clashing with their Catholic counterparts in the race to save souls. This inter-denominational conflict was at times intense, as demonstrated by the rhetorical discourses and propaganda employed by both sects. As Carlson notes, “both Protestant and Catholic missionaries preferred paganism to the heresy of conversion to the wrong form of Christianity – at least one could then be considered to have not yet made a choice, rather than having made the wrong choice.”<sup>31</sup> Despite missionaries’ strong disapproval of those who had made the “wrong choice,” Stó:lō individuals at least occasionally switched from one denomination to the other for a variety of practical and cultural reasons. In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, meanwhile, Protestantism remained largely insignificant in the nineteenth century relative to other areas in the west. Although most HBC officials practiced Anglicanism, traders themselves, many of whom were French Canadian, and the vast majority of Indigenous people in the area remained devoutly Catholic. Therefore, although Protestantism flourished among certain

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<sup>30</sup> Missions Of the Congregation Of the Oblates of Mary Immaculate, Number 2 – June 1862, 107.

<sup>31</sup> Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 191-192.

Indigenous groups, Catholicism was largely hegemonic in *S'ólh Téméxw* and *Sakitawak/Kwoen* into the twentieth century.

The Oblates' success among Indigenous people in both *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S'ólh Téméxw* is explained in part by the compatibility of Catholicism with existing systems of beliefs. For example, priests' references to the "Holy Family" and their use of familial labels, such as Father, Brother, Mother, and Sister, mirrored Indigenous peoples' incorporation of deceased ancestors and other "spirits" into familial networks, effectively blurring the lines between material and metaphysical realms. Missionaries and Church "families" also contributed directly to these familial networks of exchange by regularly distributing food rations to local Indigenous families at the conclusion of the Sunday service, by hosting large feasts at weddings, funerals, and other community events, and by providing medicine and medical attention to individuals deemed needy and deserving.<sup>32</sup> In fact, the Catholic Church in the 1860s increased the amount and frequency with which it provided assistance to local peoples and communities to offset the shortages that resulted from the transfer of relief practices from the HBC to the Canadian government following Confederation.<sup>33</sup>

Other, more obviously Catholic, rites and rituals, such as baptism, mass, and godparentage, further connected missionaries to Indigenous kin networks by reinforcing familial ties through shared religious bonds.<sup>34</sup> Godparentage in particular became an important aspect of kin-based collective identities in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and elsewhere. In the nineteenth century, for example, Michel Bouvier Jr. and Julie Marie Morin arranged

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<sup>32</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 140–148. See also Foran, "Les gens de cette place."

<sup>33</sup> See, Foran, "Les gens de cette place," 130–131.

<sup>34</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 127.

godparents for their children and grandchildren that connected their kin group to other prominent Metis families in the area as well as members of the HBC.<sup>35</sup> Based on her genealogical analysis of these records and networks, Macdougall argues that Metis families viewed godparentage much like arranged marriages, as a means of expanding and strengthening expansive kin networks: “[j]ust as they [family leaders] carefully selected marital partners from one another’s family intergenerationally, they engaged in a similar pattern of intra-familial, intergenerational alliance building through the Roman Catholic mechanism of godparent selection.”<sup>36</sup>

These practices were therefore meaningful to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. On one hand, they were very much in keeping with Euro-Canadian forms of sharing (discussed in Chapter Four). Relief was seen as a charitable act, voluntary, and the responsibility of religious and private organizations rather than that of the government or state. Similarly, distinctions were to be made between deserving and undeserving potential recipients based, in this case, on their religious affiliation and willingness to become “civilized.” This was the socially prescribed mode of sharing according to prevailing Euro-Canadian understandings of wealth and economics. In so doing, missionaries also offset some of the challenges faced by Catholic priests who were prohibited from entering into the kind of sexual and marital relationships routinely developed between fur traders and Indigenous women.<sup>37</sup> By providing relief, the Church thus fulfilled its socio-economic obligations within Euro-Canadian society in northwestern North America while simultaneously pursuing its missionizing project.

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<sup>35</sup> For a list of godparents and their associated kin networks, see Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 249-258.

<sup>36</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 153.

<sup>37</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 134-137.



At the same time, these religious practices also allowed missionaries to actively participate in Indigenous socio-economies, generating status and prestige in the eyes of local families. Just as these systems of sharing provided traders with access to social welfare networks and valuable furs, missionaries used them to gain access to Indigenous peoples' spiritual and collective identities. From this perspective, sharing was compulsory, not voluntary, and it was the responsibility of whatever family or entity controlled local resources and access to wealth, while deservedness was seen to be a function of relatedness, not utility or economic productive capacity. Abiding by these socio-cultural protocols, missionaries fused Euro-Canadian ideas and systems of sharing with Indigenous ones. Over time, this connection between non-Indigenous ideas of charity and Indigenous ideas of sharing became increasingly important to Indigenous peoples' collective identities and social networks in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and elsewhere. Indeed, by the end of the nineteenth century, "a family's religion," Macdougall argues, determined "[a]s much as any other factor ... [that family's] connection to others and whether there were relatives to whom families members could turn in times of need." Religion thus operated as an important mechanism in the building of cross-cultural imagined communities.<sup>38</sup>

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<sup>38</sup> Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 127.

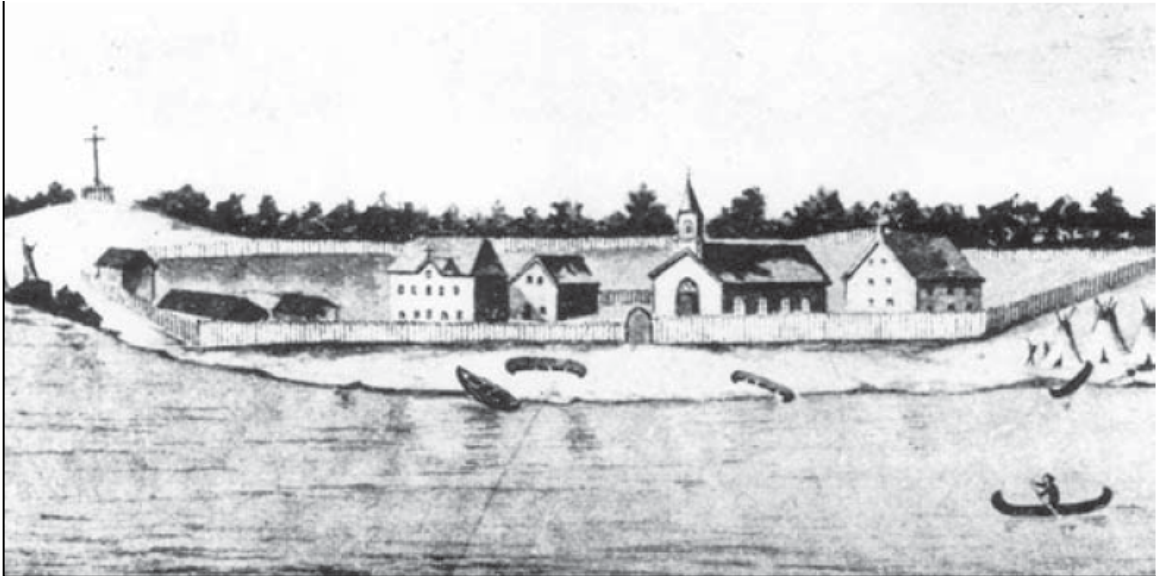


Figure 6.1: Sketch of the Oblate Mission at *Île à la Crosse* in 1860. From: Saskatchewan Archives Board, Photo R-A24431.



Figure 6.2: Image of the grounds of St. Mary's Mission Boarding School at its second location, 1883-1961. From: Mission Community Archives, #PR 189-13.

### *Wage Labour and Market-based Exchange*

Through the mid to late nineteenth century, missionaries and government officials were joined by labourers, fortune seekers, and other non-Indigenous people who entered Indigenous places in increasingly large numbers. Non-Indigenous immigration to *S'ólh Téméxw* had been slow and erratic prior to the Fraser River Gold Rush of 1858. Over the subsequent two years, however, tens of thousands of miners and other non-Indigenous entrepreneurs flooded the banks of the river in search of fortune and fame. Unlike the fur traders and missionaries that preceded them, these miners had little interest in developing close ties with local Indigenous peoples and families. Mining gold was not dependent on access to Indigenous kin networks or recourse to sharing networks, and few planned to stay in the area long term. As a result, the vast majority of miners and other immigrants who entered *S'ólh Téméxw* at this time remained strangers throughout their stay in the area.<sup>39</sup>

Stó:lō people likewise had little interest in developing familial ties with this group of newcomers. Although some miners remained in the Fraser River Valley area beyond the Gold Rush and married Indigenous women, some of whom, if they were lower class, may have been seeking to escape existing Stó:lō social structures,<sup>40</sup> most Stó:lō people, especially elite families and upper class males, did not develop the longstanding,

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<sup>39</sup> As Carlson notes, “[t]he subsequent influx of non-Natives associated with the 1858 gold rush and its aftermath remained for the most part outside of Stó:lō society. Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 161.

<sup>40</sup> Jean Barman has argued that miners’ interest in cross-cultural “couplings” was motivated primarily by sexual desire and survival, not the development of kin or wider economic networks. See Jean Barman, “‘What a Difference a Border Makes’: Aboriginal Racial Intermixture in the Pacific Northwest,” *Journal of the West* 38 (1999): 14-20; and Jean Barman, “Taming Aboriginal Sexuality: Gender, Power, and Race in British Columbia, 1850-1900,” *BC Studies* 115/116 (Autumn/Winter 1997/98): 237-266.

immersive relationships that were common during the fur trade. Unlike fur traders and missionaries, miners and other labourers did not, on the whole, control valuable resources or resource sites, nor were they likely to identify as members of larger families or collectives that could expand one's socio-economic network. Whatever desirable resources they had could be obtained most effectively through trade, wage labour, and perhaps marriages arranged with lower class women. Stó:lō men, for example, worked as guides, suppliers, and transporters while women exchanged sex for goods and other trade items.<sup>41</sup> Stó:lō people and families also traded and sold foodstuffs and other resources as part of one-time, profit-driven exchanges with strangers. Although sharing still seems to have been the dominant form of exchange in Stó:lō society at this time, these market-based activities fit very comfortably with well established Stó:lō systems of trade that long predated the arrival of Euro-Canadians.

Market exchange continued to increase even after the gold rush all but ended in 1860. That same year, the colonial government began construction of the historic Cariboo wagon road connecting Victoria and the Pacific coast to goldfields and other productive resource areas in the British Columbia interior via the Fraser River Valley. Work on this road, which lasted for two decades, as well as the construction of the Canadian Pacific Railway in the 1880s and the Canadian Northern Railway in 1904-05, provided abundant labour opportunities to Indigenous people across the province.<sup>42</sup> Emerging industries, especially agriculture, canning, and hop picking, also relied heavily on Indigenous labour throughout the end of the nineteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Agricultural work

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<sup>41</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, "Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics," *Native Studies Review* 11, no. 1 (1997): 28-33.

<sup>42</sup> See Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 178.

<sup>43</sup> Keith Thor Carlson and John Lutz, "Stó:lō People and the Development of the BC Wage Labour

was normally done in spring close to home at HBC forts, missions, or private farms while cannery and hop yard work required significant travel. In the 1880s and 1890s, large migrations of Stó:lō people occurred in the late summer to canneries located throughout the Fraser River Valley and northwest coast, and in the fall to hop fields in what is now southwestern British Columbia and northwestern Washington State.<sup>44</sup> Aside from the economic opportunities offered by industrial labour, these activities also provided a forum for large gatherings of Stó:lō people from disparate areas. Although the nature of the work and the types of resources being harvested were changing, this emphasis on gathering and the connection between social and economic “work” was longstanding.<sup>45</sup> Through a detailed quantitative analysis of Indigenous labour activity, John Lutz argues that by the twentieth century, virtually every Stó:lō family was participating in the capitalist work force.<sup>46</sup>

In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, where no such resource rush took place and non-Indigenous immigration was relatively slow, labour opportunities for Indigenous and Metis people remained scarce. The majority of jobs in the area remained tied to the fur trade and the HBC, though the number of independent traders, known as “freemen,” increased throughout the late nineteenth century.<sup>47</sup> Trading posts at Île à la Crosse and elsewhere

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Economy,” in *You Are Asked To Witness: The Stó:lō In Canada’s Pacific Coast History*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1997), 109-124. For early developments in wage labour relations, see Keith Thor Carlson, “Stó:lō-*Xwelitem* Relations During the Fur Trade and Salmon Trade Era,” in *You Are Asked To Witness*, ed. Carlson. For a summary of this history of Stó:lō participation in the hop-picking industry, see Robert Hancock, “The Hop Yards: Workplace and Social Space,” in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Carlson, 70-71. For a summary of this history of Stó:lō participation in the canning industry, see Jody R. Woods, “The Salmon Canneries: Making Room for Families,” in Carlson, ed., *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, 72-73.

<sup>44</sup> See Hancock, “The Hop Yards,” 70-71.

<sup>45</sup> Carlson, “Stó:lō Exchange Dynamics,” 39-40.

<sup>46</sup> John Lutz, “Seasonal Rounds in an Industrial World,” in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Carlson, 64-67.

<sup>47</sup> See Macdougall, *One of the Family*, 213-239.

hired local people as haulers, suppliers, guides, transporters, and unskilled labourers. This type of labour was particularly important to sedentary peoples, especially Metis families, who lived much if not all of the year near permanent settlements such as Île à la Crosse. Often, these labourers worked with close relatives, attesting to the ongoing linkages between the social and economic.

An example of this type of wage labour activity is found in HBC account books for the 1890s, which anthropologists Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty-Jo Brumbach examined to reconstruct the economic activities of three men: Francis Roy, Magloire Maurice, and Michael Bouvier, all of whom pursued Indigenous subsistence techniques alongside paid labour. Of the three men, Maurice, who received “contract wages,” appears to be the only one employed full-time by the Company, while Bouvier was paid for “temporary labor” and Roy was paid by the job for providing the Company with fish, cutting firewood, and building sleds and snow shoes. All three also traded furs to the Company for various goods, but whereas Maurice, who received employee rations, spent virtually all his credit on clothing and textiles, Roy mostly bought imported food and Bouvier split his credit almost evenly between clothing and food.<sup>48</sup> Despite their access to Company food, however, all three, Jarvenpa and Brumbach argue, obtained between fifty and eighty-five percent of their families’ annual caloric needs from subsistence activities outside the fur trade.<sup>49</sup> Although the sample size is small, these case studies demonstrate the diversity of individual Indigenous socio-economic practices and how new economic

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<sup>48</sup> In addition to “Imported food” and “Clothing/textiles”, the other categories listed by Jarvenpa and Brumbach are “Productive technology”, “Domestic technology”, “Personal”, and “Unknown”.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Jarvenpa and Hetty Jo Brumbach, “Occupational Status, Ethnicity, and Ecology: Métis Cree Adaptations in a Canadian Trading Frontier,” *Human Ecology* 13, no. 3 (1985). See also Philip T. Spaulding, “The Metis of Ile-a-la-Crosse” (PhD diss., University of Washington, 1970), 96–98.

opportunities and resources were integrated into existing structures, thereby preserving the resilience and adaptiveness that characterizes Indigenous systems of sharing. Despite the ongoing effects of depopulation, sedentarization, and non-Indigenous settlement, Indigenous people continued to view labour and trade exchanges through the prism of their existing socio-economic structures.

For most Indigenous people in the nineteenth century, this type of wage labour was not a means of survival. Unlike their non-Indigenous counterparts, especially those not connected to the fur trade, Indigenous people were not dependent on wage labour to satisfy their basic needs. For example, L. Vankoughnet, Deputy Superintendent-General of Indian Affairs, commented on the “enviable position” of local Indigenous peoples in his report on the Lower Fraser River Agency in 1892:

The Indians generally of this agency occupy an enviable position, having such varied and ample resources from which to obtain a livelihood. As an instance of how little dependent they are upon any special line of industry, it may be mentioned that although the salmon fishery, in which they generally engage to a very great extent, was almost a total failure last season, they were able to secure without difficulty an ample subsistence from other branches of industry.<sup>50</sup>

At a time when settlers systems of sharing were being eroding through ongoing industrialization and urbanization, hunting, fishing, gathering, and other non-market socio-economic activities satisfied their basic needs and generated considerable wealth for Indigenous peoples, thereby allowing them the freedom to sell their labour only when they deemed it advantageous.<sup>51</sup> Engaging in wage labour and other forms of market-based exchange was not a symbol of colonization or Euro-Canadian dominance. As Lutz

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<sup>50</sup> Department of Indian Affairs, *Dominion of Canada Annual Report of the Department of Indian Affairs for the Year Ended 31<sup>st</sup> December 1892* (Order of Parliament, Ottawa: S.E. Dawson, 1893), xxi.

<sup>51</sup> See Lutz, “Seasonal Rounds in an Industrial World,” 64–67.

notes, this type of work was actually very old and in keeping with historical socio-economic practices: “Aboriginal people flocked to the colonizers’ factories to work – not because they had ‘acculturized’ to the ways of Europeans, but so that they could engage more fully in their own ‘traditional pursuits.’”<sup>52</sup>

### *Moditional Economies*

The economic position of Indigenous people in the final decades of the nineteenth century may therefore be characterized as advantageous. Despite the devastating effects of disease and ongoing efforts on the part of Euro-Canadian governments to alienate them from their lands, resources, and culture, Indigenous people in both *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S’ólh Téméxw*, having greatly expanded their existing kin-based socio-economic networks and access to wealth during the fur trade, profited greatly from new wage labour and trade opportunities arising from the settlement period without abandoning longstanding subsistence activities. In so doing, they crafted durable, diversified and hybrid socio-economies that Lutz has identified as “moditional,” a term he uses to describe the cultural integration of both modern and traditional modes of production into a single, comprehensive economic arrangement. Based on case studies of two First Nations in British Columbia, Lutz argues that throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Indigenous people combined subsistence activities, wage labour, and government transfer payments, such as relief or income assistance, to take full advantage of all economic opportunities they encountered.<sup>53</sup>

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<sup>52</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 277.

<sup>53</sup> See Lutz, *Makúk*, 257-273.



Although Lutz's study is confined to Indigenous British Columbians, his ideas shed light on the motivations and processes of exchange in other areas, such as *Sakitawak/Kwoen*,<sup>54</sup> where people had access to a considerable number and variety of modes of production. When, for example, the price paid by the HBC for furs declined, Metis, Cree, and Dene people adjusted their moditional economies to emphasize the harvesting of subsistence foods, paid labour at the post, or company relief. Alternatively, when fur prices were high, relatively less time would be spent on subsistence activities and other modes of production. In so doing, Indigenous people in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, like Stó:lō people in *S'ólh Téméxw*, crafted distinct, highly adaptive socio-economies that fuelled the creation and maintenance of imagined communities throughout colonization.<sup>55</sup> Although the individual modes may be classified as either "Indigenous" or "Euro-Canadian", the particular way in which they were combined – their moditional economies – were just as culturally distinct as the economic structures espoused by local Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. More than the grafting of one set of economic activities onto another, Indigenous economics from this perspective appear as cultural hybrids, the unique products of ongoing cultural adaptation and negotiation.<sup>56</sup>

To non-Indigenous peoples, especially those involved in hiring Indigenous

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<sup>54</sup> On a basic level, the term "moditional" may refer to the simultaneous pursuit of economic activities from outwardly oppositional economic models, such as hunter-gatherer and capitalist or modern and traditional). However, due to its ethnohistorical genesis, the term also emphasizes the joining not only of activities but of culturally prescribed modes of production not linked to any one economic philosophy or model. By focusing specifically on the intercultural perception of and complex interplay between distinct economic systems, Lutz's approach offers particularly rich and sophisticated insights into economic history and the study of Indigenous – non-Indigenous relations.

<sup>55</sup> Other examples of Indigenous groups balancing the fur trade and other novel economic opportunities with existing pursuits are evident in Daniel Francis and Toby Morantz, *Partners in Fur: A History of the James Bay Fur Trade* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1983); Tough, "As Their Natural Resources Fail"; and Richard Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade in the Pacific, 1793–1843* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

<sup>56</sup> For a longer discussion of mimicry, and hybridity as well, see Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

labourers, this enviable economic position was a source of frustration and seen as counterproductive to settler initiatives. In a 1907 annual report, for example, a British Columbia game warden complained that, “As long as they could hunt, or put in weirs to trap trout or salmon on their way up streams to spawn, and do the occasional day’s work to get enough money to buy a little tea and sugar, they were contented, and the idea of steady work scouted. It must be admitted that this state of things is most unsatisfactory.”<sup>57</sup> The warden’s perspective, which does not recognize hunting and gathering as legitimate “work,” expected Indigenous peoples to be just as dependent on wage labour as were their non- Indigenous counterparts. From this perspective thus emerged the myth of the “lazy Indian,” a derogatory stereotype that casts Indigenous people as inherently lazy, indolent, and prone to choose welfare over work. Along with other stereotypes generated by European colonialism, this label has had a lasting, harmful effect on Indigenous - non-Indigenous relations in Canada.<sup>58</sup>

Despite its resilience and adaptability, however, this flexible economic strategy employed by Indigenous people would not last. In the twentieth century, ongoing non-Indigenous immigration, prejudicial hiring practices, and government legislation restricted Indigenous peoples’ access to subsistence foods and paid work, thereby increasing the economic significance of relief. Indeed, the same processes that initially provided Indigenous people with greater socio-economic opportunities and flexibility eventually led to increased reliance on a narrow set of socio-economic activities, a gradual change that would have significant consequences not only for Indigenous

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<sup>57</sup> Quoted in Lutz, *Makúk*, 253.

<sup>58</sup> In *Makúk*, Lutz demonstrates conclusively that Indigenous people not only were industrious and hard working, they were indispensable to the labour market. See Lutz, *Makúk*, 35, 278–79.

people's economies but for their societies and collective identities as well.

### 6.3 Mobility, Leadership, and Identity: Consequences of Resettlement

Greater integration of Euro-Canadian institutions and practices into Indigenous culture in the nineteenth century was not without consequence. Although relief payments, Catholicism, and wage labour were in part compatible with Indigenous worldviews, they also challenged existing socio-economic structures and practices. In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, for example, missionary activity, including the mounting significance of religious identities and practices as well as the establishment of religious schools for children, made what anthropologist James Smith calls the “post mission complex” at Île à la Crosse increasingly important both economically and socially.<sup>59</sup> In response, local Indigenous and Metis groups were becoming more sedentary, opting to spend more time in the village than on seasonal rounds pursuing subsistence activities. Similarly, although some labour opportunities required significant travel sometimes covering great distances, much of the work was centred in Île à la Crosse and other permanent villages, further compelling local peoples to adopt less mobile lifestyles.

The movement of Stó:lō people and families likewise became increasingly limited as missionaries and government officials attempted to permanently fix residency patterns. The introduction of band lists and the creation of reserves compelled Stó:lō people, sometimes forcefully, to remain in one place, thereby limiting their physical mobility as well as their social networks and collective identities. Where individual and group welfare is dependent on maintaining and developing expansive socio-economic

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<sup>59</sup> James G. E. Smith, “Western Woods Cree,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol.6 (Subarctic)*, June Helm, ed. (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 259.

connections, freedom of movement is essential and limited mobility leads to economic impoverishment and social fragmentation. This may in part explain the growing importance of labour opportunities, such as canning and hop picking, that required much travel and facilitated large gatherings among members of increasingly disparate groups. Wage labour, from this perspective, may have functioned as an economic means of social cohesion and networking through the building and maintenance of imagined communities and emerging collective identities while effectively augmenting individual and family wealth both economically and socially.

The actions of newcomers also challenged existing Indigenous leadership structures. Beginning in the mid nineteenth century, for example, missionaries and government officials became actively involved in the selection of “chiefs,” sometimes intervening in selection processes to ensure recognized chiefs were sympathetic to the aims of Church and state.<sup>60</sup> In so doing, priests and Indian agents, like the fur traders before them, were directly integrated into Indigenous socio-economies as producers of power. Indigenous people, in response, began differentiating between hereditary leaders, whose focus largely remained on the maintenance of the kin group or community, and elected or appointed chiefs, leaders recognized by various outside authorities and who operated as liaisons between their communities and newcomers. In the process, religious affiliation and connections to local government officials became a signifier of political power. Whereas leaders’ positions historically rested on their ability to control productive resources sites and manage wealth, greater emphasis was being placed on their relationships with powerful newcomers, especially in the case of elected chiefs.

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<sup>60</sup> See Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 198.

This change allowed for greater social mobility as non-elite individuals and families who lacked the wealth and kin connections to elevate their social standing could potentially do so through conversion and cooperation with newcomers.

Hereditary leaders, for their part, seeking to safeguard their economic and political status, were seemingly more culturally and economically conservative than their more liberal elected counterparts who benefited directly from mechanisms that privileged non-traditional forms of wealth existing power dynamics. For example, elected Stó:lō chief Captain John, also known as Swalis, meaning “getting rich”, actively supported government reductions of his band’s land base and changes to traditional Stó:lō leadership structures in favour of political reforms introduced by federal government Indian Agents.<sup>61</sup> Having risen to prominence from relative obscurity by taking advantage of economic opportunities generated by newcomers, Captain John, and leaders like him, regularly clashed with hereditary chiefs.<sup>62</sup> Although the case of Captain John may be somewhat exceptional – the two chieftainship positions were not necessarily at odds, and some elected chiefs were also hereditary chiefs or members of elite families – it demonstrates how traditional leadership structures were changing at the turn of the nineteenth century and the impact this had on broader Stó:lō society and culture.

Changing ideas of wealth further altered historic leadership practices. As Indigenous systems of sharing expanded to include various forms of trade and wage labour, the value of goods and services changed. Items such as blankets, fish nets, and tools, which once took considerable time and resources to make, had become more common, thereby reducing the commercial, if not social and ritual, value not only of the

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<sup>61</sup> See Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 195-199.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 198.

item but of the maker as well.<sup>63</sup> More importantly, access to wealth no longer required control of productive resource sites or the genealogical knowledge on which such control was based. Families with little or no connection to canyon fishing sites, berry patches, or valuable songs and stories could instead exchange their labour for various wealth items. This accumulation of previously unattainable wealth allowed for a greater degree of upward social mobility among lower class families and individuals, leading to an increase in what hereditary elite sometimes characterized as “cultus,” or “worthless,” potlatches. Although the work done and the goods distributed at these potlatches often mirrored the potlatches held by traditional elites, they were considered “cultus” because the hosts lacked the social, genealogical, and historical knowledge and prestige expected of them.<sup>64</sup> This new class of wealthy elite was, in effect, “new money,” both figuratively and literally. The introduction of money as a medium of exchange allowed for greater flexibility and transferability in exchanges, especially among these social climbers. Some elite families able to engage in these emergent socio-economic opportunities also witnessed growth in their wealth and status while those who focused solely on existing forms and understandings of wealth lost prestige relative to others. The resulting fluctuations in local power dynamics may have destabilized existing protocols and cultural norms as Indigenous peoples across western Canada adapted to a changing world. Political structures, like economic ones, were becoming increasingly moditional and hybrid.

Arguably the greatest challenge government officials and missionaries posed to

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<sup>63</sup> See Katya MacDonald, “Making Histories and Narrating Things: Social Histories of Material Culture in Twentieth-Century Canadian Aboriginal Communities” (PhD diss., University of Saskatchewan, forthcoming).

<sup>64</sup> See Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time*, 207-208 and 235-236.

Indigenous societies, however, was the prohibition of certain socio-economic institutions deemed by the Church to be immoral. Large ceremonial gatherings that included the gifting of presents and wealth were particularly dangerous from the perspective of missionaries and government agents. These gatherings, newcomers argued, were debasing and counter-productive to “civilizing” projects based on sedentarism, capital accumulation, and monotheism. Church and state opposition to these practices culminated in amendments made to the Indian Act, which, by 1895, prohibited all forms of ceremonial dances and giveaways, while facilitating the transition from traditional forms of housing and social organization to more Euro-Canadian or western styles.<sup>65</sup> Indigenous people, for their part, largely ignored this legislation. Rather than disappearing, dances and potlatches went “underground,” beyond the reach of church and government officials. But despite their persistence, the prohibition of these fundamental cultural institutions further challenged existing Indigenous ideas related to social composition and collective identities. Combined with the increasing importance of religious identities, wage labour, and relief, Indigenous people were being confronted by challenges that were not of their making, causing them to continually reassess and redefine individual and collective identities.

#### 6.4 Conclusion: Sharing and Resettlement

The extension of the Dominion of Canada over northwestern North America

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<sup>65</sup> See David M. Schaepe, Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, Keith Thor Carlson, and Patricia Ormerod, “Changing Households, Changing Houses,” in *A Stó:lō-Coast Salish Historical Atlas*, ed. Carlson, 40-47. The restructuring of Indigenous social structures and practices was part of a broader process of westernization underway throughout western Canada in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

accelerated ongoing processes of resettlement of Indigenous lands and their subsequent resettlement by non-Indigenous immigrants from eastern Canada, Europe, the United States, and elsewhere. These late nineteenth century newcomers arrived in much greater numbers and with greater frequency than did their predecessors, most of whom were attached to the fur trade. They also pursued different objectives. Whereas fur traders sought profit and social belonging and had little interest in alienating Indigenous peoples from their hereditary lands and resources – indeed, the “commodity exchange” very much depended on Indigenous people’s access to them – government agents, missionaries, and migrant labourers/business people more consistently tried to take control of Indigenous lands, shape Indigenous societies, and incorporate Indigenous peoples into emerging capitalist economic structures. Initially, these colonial projects inadvertently provided Indigenous people with new socio-economic opportunities they readily took advantage of to expand social networks and amass wealth and prestige. In the twentieth century, however, the increasing power of newcomers and their worldviews gradually displaced Indigenous worldviews and fragmented collective identities.

In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, where non-Indigenous immigration remained low through the end of the nineteenth century, the HBC remained the primary colonial authority and form of governance. Although many of its financial obligations to local Indigenous people were being offset by the 1880s by contributions made by the Canadian federal government, the HBC continued to distribute gifts, administer relief, and engage in various other forms of reciprocal exchange as required by the kin-based, familial connections forged by its employees with Indigenous families. Additionally, the HBC provided the increasingly sedentary Indigenous and Metis populations with wage labour



opportunities that became integrated into long standing patterns of subsistence hunting, gathering, fishing, and trapping. The Catholic Church, meanwhile, afforded local peoples new expressions of collective and social cohesion based on shared religious practices and the introduction of Catholic traditions and rites such as godparentage, a form of social connectedness that complemented and sometimes replaced the historic practice of arranged marriages and their emphasis on expansive, multifaceted kin networks. In so doing, certain types of wage labour, godparentage, and religious affiliations in general offset some of the consequences of increased sedentarization, which limited people's physical mobility and the maintenance of their socio-economic networks, thus contributing to changes in local collective identities.

A similar story can be told of *S'ólh Téméxw*. Despite the ongoing effects of introduced diseases, the creation of residential schools, and the demarcation of restrictive land reserves, Stó:lō people and families took advantage of new socio-economic opportunities to enhance their wealth, status, and power. Incidents of inter-cultural violence notwithstanding,<sup>66</sup> the influx of non-Indigenous immigrants during the second half of the nineteenth century and the growth of lucrative resource industries allowed Indigenous people throughout British Columbia to engage in as much market-based exchange as they liked without foregoing subsistence activities or becoming dependent on settler economies. Moreover, work at farms, canneries, hop fields, and other large-scale enterprises facilitated large gatherings of Indigenous people from across the Pacific Northwest, thereby offsetting some of the effects of fixed reserves and limited mobility. Government and church relief and other sharing practices provided the Stó:lō with other

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<sup>66</sup> See Dan Marshall, "Claiming the Land: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to British Columbia," (PhD diss, University of British Columbia, 2000).

important economic resources, especially in urbanizing areas with high concentrations of non-Indigenous people, while Catholic and Protestant officials introduced new means of social expression and collective identities based on religious connectedness. As during the fur trade, Indigenous people quite easily integrated these socio-economic opportunities into existing structures and worldviews. Despite the discontinuity inherent in demographic decline and the arrival of large numbers of strangers, Indigenous lifeways thus retained a remarkable degree of continuity throughout much of the nineteenth century.

Non-Indigenous socio-economic practices also changed to accommodate Indigenous worldviews though not to the same degree as during the fur trade. The newly formed federal government, for example, relied heavily on the HBC to engage in Indigenous systems of sharing and the redistribution of wealth by elites to local peoples. Indeed, as the government gained greater control of productive resources, Indian agents became the primary providers of relief to Indigenous peoples who, in accepting relief, implicitly acknowledged the status and power of the government. The Catholic Church likewise attached itself to local Indigenous systems of sharing, especially practices of gift giving and feasting, to entrench its representatives within local socio-economic networks. Ironically, missionaries, in their attempt to ingratiate themselves with local Indigenous people, became part of the very belief systems they were trying to alter or destroy. European employers, meanwhile, catered to the social imperatives of Indigenous labourers and ideas of “work.” Although they complained about the enviable position held by Indigenous people not dependent on wage labour, often referring to them as lazy, non-Indigenous entrepreneurs and business people facilitated large social gatherings,

hired groups of relatives, and allowed considerable social interaction within economic contexts so as to ensure a steady supply of labour. Therefore, although the objectives of the Canadian government and Catholic Church, namely the pacification and civilizing of Indigenous peoples in western Canada and the establishment of capitalist settler economies, differed from fur traders' pursuit of profits derived from animal hides, the success of each project in the nineteenth century depended heavily on the ability of government, church, and business agents to successfully attach themselves to Indigenous systems of sharing and exchange.

However, as immigration and the power of newcomers continued to grow in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, government and other non-Indigenous institutions and practices became less flexible and adaptive in their incorporation of Indigenous beliefs and practices. As demonstrated in Chapter Seven, Indigenous worldviews and common senses were gradually eroded by non-Indigenous alternatives purported to be universally applicable and preferable. Socio-economic understandings of work, wealth, poverty, and power were slowly being unsettled as sedentarization, individualism, and other core aspects of non-Indigenous worldviews became increasingly widespread. In the process, systems of sharing were marginalized as trade and other forms of market-based exchange became normative models of economic behaviour and activity in many parts of western Canada. For non-Indigenous people, for the inhabitants of the province of British Columbia and the Northwest Territories, this transformation was perhaps seen as natural and inevitable, but for the Indigenous inhabitants of *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S'ólh Téméxw*, it marked a fundamental shift in the way the world

was perceived and experienced. More than lands and resources was at stake during the resettlement of northwestern North America.

Ideologies and Assimilation: Sharing in the Twentieth Century

*It is well that Social Welfare workers remember [that it is an honour to share and an important quality of leadership]. Natives asking for social welfare are, in effect, recognizing the authority and reputation of the Welfare worker as a great 'Giver'. Is this not paying him in return for the welfare given?*<sup>1</sup>

– Father Leon Levasseur, OMI

The resettlement of Indigenous peoples, lands, and cultures during the nineteenth century continued into the twentieth as government officials and other non-Indigenous newcomers to northwestern North America embarked on a period of nation building and nationalization. Central to this project was the assimilation of Indigenous people and other groups who did not conform to “Canadian” worldviews and social norms. To date, most scholarship in this area has focused on strategies of assimilation that targeted specific aspects of Indigenous cultures and societies, namely education, religion, and ceremonial institutions and practices like the potlatch.<sup>2</sup> Less attention has been paid to the assimilation of existing systems of sharing and exchange (see Chapter One). Increasingly, these systems, rooted in horizontal sharing practices, were challenged by

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<sup>1</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2.

<sup>2</sup> See, for example, Brian Titley, *A Narrow Vision: Duncan Campbell Scott and the Administration of Indian Affairs in Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1986); Noel Dyck, *What is the Indian 'Problem': Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration* (St. John's: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991); Robin Brownlie, *A Fatherly Eye: Indian Agents, Government Power, and Aboriginal Resistance in Ontario* (Don Mills, ON: Oxford University Press, 2003); J. R. Miller, *Shingwauk's Vision: A History of Native Residential Schools* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996); John Milloy, *A National Crime: The Canadian Government and the Residential School System, 1879-1986* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1999); Katherine Pettipas, *Severing the Ties that Bind: Government Repression of Indigenous Religious Ceremonies on the Prairies* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1994); Tina Loo, “Dan Cranmer's Potlatch: Law as Coercion, Symbol, and Rhetoric in British Columbia, 1884-1951,” *Canadian Historical Review* 73, no. 2 (1992): 125-165.

market-based wage labour and vertical forms of sharing which affected not only Indigenous people's economies and cultures but also the foundations of their social orders and collective identities. The displacement of these systems of sharing and the associated cultural meanings that accompanied them was about more than the assimilation of discrete populations; it entailed the reengineering of ways of knowing.

This chapter analyses government strategies of assimilation within the context of sharing and exchange. Despite the overwhelmingly negative effects of government Indian policy in the first half of the twentieth century, Indigenous people perceived and experienced newcomers and newcomer practices according to their own worldviews and histories. As during the fur trade and the era of resettlement, Indigenous people worked to make sense of rapid change in their lives, but this did not prevent them from engaging relief and social welfare in general within existing socio-economies contexts and understandings. Often they viewed them as valuable resources for expanding existing social networks and building wealth. As a form of wealth distribution from the powerful to the less powerful, relief was expected and compulsory for both givers and receivers. Consequently, receiving relief, in certain Indigenous communities and for much of the twentieth century, was largely free of the stigma later associated with it. Indigenous people collected it much as they did other socio-economic resources, including the produce of subsistence activities and, increasingly, wage labour. Although the consequences of government assimilation policies and actions were traumatic, both individually and collectively, Indigenous peoples manipulated the strategies and institutions of assimilation to their own benefit.

Central to my analysis of sharing in this chapter is the rapid growth of the Indian welfare state in the first half of the twentieth century. After the relatively gradual rise of Euro-Canadian relief payments made to Indigenous people, most of which were made by fur trade companies and the Church, welfare payments had emerged by 1950 a dominant economic resource for many Indigenous communities in western Canada and economic dependence on these payments was increasing dramatically. This unprecedented growth, which occurred simultaneously with increased non-Indigenous immigration to Indigenous lands, changed the role sharing played in Native-Newcomer relations as well as the lenses through which Natives and newcomers viewed each other. Unlike earlier forms of intercultural exchange rooted in kin ties and managed by mutual obligation, government relief payments became detached from ideas of reciprocity and relationship building. They were instead envisioned as temporary forms of financial aid provided on a voluntary basis to Canadian citizens, or in this case wards of the state, unable to satisfy their basic needs through wage-based employment.

This emergent perspective of social welfare differs dramatically from earlier ideas that viewed the giving and accepting of relief, both of which were compulsory, as recognition of existing power structures. By sharing resources and food, the powerful affirmed their access to wealth-generating resources and resources sites while the less powerful, in accepting these gifts, implicitly acknowledged the power of elites. In the process, “Indians” came to be seen not as allies or family, as they had been during the fur trade, but as social and economic problems. No longer partners in mercantilist enterprises, they were reimagined as economic liabilities, a drain on Canadian society and an impediment to social and economic development. Shifting attitudes toward sharing

and exchange during the twentieth century thus became the lens through which newcomers viewed Indigenous people.

This shift in the meaning, form, and purpose of social welfare payments is representative of the gradual transformation of Indigenous lands, practices, and beliefs into non-Indigenous ones. In Métis communities of *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and Stó:lō communities of *S'ólh Téméxw*, as well as many other Indigenous places, these ideological shifts, which also affected Indigenous people's access to other economic resources, including wage-based employment and subsistence activities, resulted in widespread welfare dependency in the mid to late twentieth century as formerly diverse and resilient Indigenous socio-economies became increasingly narrow and fragile. In the process, systems of sharing were transformed from a fundamental aspect of socio-economic relationships into a symbol of destitution and hardship as Indigenous communities transitioned from being assets and partners of Canada and Canadian institutions to obstacles that stood in the way of national expansion and growth, representing a drain on financial resources. This transition in Canadian eyes was profound and its ramifications for Indigenous peoples' lived experiences produced negative legacies still evident today.

Nonetheless, sharing has remained a fundamental part of Indigenous peoples' lives, societies, and identities. Oral histories recorded in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* and *S'ólh Téméxw* testify to its continuing significance throughout the twentieth century even as government legislation, labour laws, and welfare programs became increasingly restrictive and intolerant of Indigenous practices and worldviews. At family and community levels, Indigenous people continued to share resources, labour, and various forms of wealth with kith and kin on a daily basis. Although they no longer held the



same place in their broader cultures as they had prior to the introduction of reserves, residential schools, and the prohibition of socio-economic institutions and practices, these activities link “modern” Indigenous people to their “traditional” ancestors, thereby demonstrating the ongoing importance of sharing to their collective identities and ideas of indigeneity. Indeed, that sharing has endured the cultural disruption caused by residential schools and other strategies of assimilation is a testament to its importance not only in the historical record but also in the lives of Indigenous people today. Sharing has proved remarkably resilient both in practice and ideology. Despite the overwhelmingly negative effects of welfare dependency and socio-economic impoverishment, Indigenous people in northwest Saskatchewan, the Fraser River Valley, and across Canada continue to experience and express their Indigeneity through systems of sharing and exchange.

#### 7.1 Socio-Economic Assimilation?: Government Relief in the Twentieth Century

In the twentieth century, government relief payments increased substantially as growing numbers of newcomers entered Indigenous lands. Prior to the First World War, relief was provided by Indian agents on a largely informal, case-by-case basis, as demonstrated in Chapter Six. Although the Canadian government was eager to avoid costly conflicts with Indigenous groups, it was also reluctant to spend significant sums of money on the wellbeing of Indigenous people who, it was believed, would either slowly assimilate into Canadian society regardless, or become physically extinct. Indian agents were regularly reminded that, “Relief should only be given where there is a danger of starvation, or in the case of extreme old age or sickness,” and at no time should promises

of relief be made.<sup>3</sup> As Shewell notes, these instructions were consistent with the government's policies of assimilation. To survive and prosper in Canada, Indigenous people would have to adopt Euro-Canadian ideas of work, welfare, wealth, and poverty.<sup>4</sup> The individual or small nuclear family would replace the extended family as the most important social unit and systems of sharing and wealth distribution, including potlatches and other wealth distribution ceremonies, would be abandoned. Social assistance was thus a temporary measure designed to sustain Indigenous people during periodic moments of crisis in their assimilation into mainstream Canadian society.

By the 1920s, however, it was becoming clear that Indigenous people were not assimilating as quickly as was anticipated. Despite massive depopulation, their relocation to tiny reserves, and the residential school experience, Indigenous people continued to resist assimilation, thereby hindering the government's ability to abolish the Department of Indian Affairs (DIA) and the institutions and practices it administered. Combined with ongoing immigration of non-Indigenous people to Indigenous lands, the resilience exhibited by Indigenous people caused the government to expand and standardize its social welfare programs.

### *Systematizing Social Welfare*

The most obvious way the DIA began to systematize relief was by providing Indian Agents with specific lists of goods that could be given to destitute Indians. Between 1910 and 1916, this list consisted of only two items: 25 lbs of flour and 4 lbs of

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<sup>3</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 259.

<sup>4</sup> Hugh Shewell, *"Enough to Keep Them Alive": Indian Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 41.

rice, though recipients who were ill received an additional 4 lbs. of sugar and half a pound of tea. Non-Indigenous recipients, on the other hand, received 25 lbs of flour, 3 lbs of rice, 8 lbs of sugar, 1 lb of tea, 1 pack of yeast cakes, 3 lbs of salt, 6 lbs of bacon, 5 lbs of white beans, 4 lbs of apples, and 3 lbs of lard.<sup>5</sup> Shortly thereafter the relief system was changed so that non-Indigenous recipients received cashable coupons instead of commodities.<sup>6</sup> In 1922, these coupons amounted to \$15 per month and \$25 by 1926 while Indigenous recipients continued to receive relief “in kind” to a maximum of \$4 per family per month. In 1928, this \$4 could be comprised of a combination of flour (up to 24 lbs), sugar (up to 1 lb), tea (up to 2 lbs), baking powder (up to 1 lb), and salt (up to 1 lb). Some recipients also were allowed fish, beans, fresh beef (up to 15 lbs), and bacon and pork (up to 8 lbs), to a maximum value of \$2; and lard, rice, oatmeal, molasses, and macaroni to a total value of \$1.20. Meanwhile, tubercular Indians were allowed an additional quart of milk daily and a dozen eggs weekly while other “sick Indians” had access to limited quantities of milk, eggs, rice, oatmeal, and fresh meat.<sup>7</sup>

During the depression, relief paid to Indigenous peoples remained relatively constant while relief paid to non-Indigenous peoples increased dramatically. As these distinctions grew ever more profound, so too did Canadian attitudes toward those who received relief. Between 1932 and 1936, the federal government spent approximately \$20 per capita for status Indians versus \$50 per capita for non-Status Canadians, and while total relief expenditures made by the DIA decreased annually between 1931 and

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<sup>5</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 262.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 259.

<sup>7</sup> Shewell, “*Enough to Keep Them Alive*,” 112.

1935, expenditures for non-Indigenous Canadians rose over 300 percent.<sup>8</sup> Indeed, the only increase witnessed by Indigenous people was in the amount of relief given to families. Prior to 1934, families were given \$4 regardless of size but beginning in February of that year, families of two or three persons received an additional \$2, families of four to six received an additional \$3, families of seven or eight received an extra \$5, and families of nine or ten persons received \$6 more for a total of \$10 per month. In 1936, the DIA gave “direct instructions” to Indian Agents that able-bodied Indians were not to be given relief, regardless of need.<sup>9</sup> Despite the ongoing alienation of Indigenous peoples from their hereditary lands and resources, Indigenous people were still expected to obtain most of their food from the land and sea.<sup>10</sup>

Stó:lō elders have been recorded discussing their memories of when these vouchers were first distributed. Annie Alex recalled her grandparents purchasing “all the staples” for the entire family,<sup>11</sup> while Herb Joe, who carries the hereditary name *Tixwelátsa*, vividly remembers visits to the general store:

I remember as a child, I was probably five or six years old, walking from the reservation over to the general store with my great-grandpa, my mom... there was like shelves up one wall, then the counter, and there was these big huge bins filled with old foodstuffs [like salt, rice, foodstuffs that you couldn't, you didn't, weren't able to produce yourselves]. So you went along and you could take what you wanted. That was the kind of stuff that

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<sup>8</sup> Ibid., 123.

<sup>9</sup> The only increase witnessed by Indigenous people was in the amount of relief given to families. Prior to 1934, families were given \$4 regardless of size but beginning in February of that year, families of two or three persons received an additional \$2, families of four to six received an additional \$3, families of seven or eight received an extra \$5, and families of nine or ten persons received \$6 more (\$10 per month). See Lutz, *Makúk*, 263.

<sup>10</sup> Although most government agencies wanted to curtail subsistence activities, the DIA sometimes supported Indigenous fishing, hunting, and trapping rights as a way to minimize relief expenses. See Keith Thor Carlson, “Early Nineteenth Century Stó:lō Social Structures and Government Assimilation Policy,” in *You are Asked to Witness: The Stó:lō in Canada's Pacific Coast History*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Chilliwack: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1997).

<sup>11</sup> Annie Alex, interviewed at her home in Hope, BC by Liam Haggarty and Heather Watson, 28 May 2005.

they had and they called it relief. They were basically food vouchers.<sup>12</sup>

Tilly Gutierrez, remembers that \$4 did not go far for her family:

The Indian agent used to give us only \$4 a month and all we were allowed was a package of matches, and tea. . .sugar, and salt, and things like that.... Then we had to wait 'til the next month to make another bigger supply to increase these that we already had. And that's what we had to do.<sup>13</sup>

As revealed by these oral histories, government welfare appears to have been becoming an increasingly important socio-economic resource in *S'ólh Téméxw* and other urbanizing areas.

At this time, there appears to have been no negative stigma attached to relief. As a child recipient and then later in the 1970s a provider of relief while working as a manager/social worker for the Chilliwack Area Indian Council's Social Development Program, Herb Joe experienced these programs from both sides:

I remember ... there wasn't a notable stigma attached to applying for and receiving social assistance. It was a new term to our people, a term that people didn't understand, you know.... You know, like 'social' and 'assistance,' when you put the two words together, what does it really mean? Well, to our people it didn't mean 'social assistance.' What it meant was another source of income.... [N]o, it didn't have the same kind of stigma attached to it at all.<sup>14</sup>

Elders Annie Alex and Tilly Gutierrez concur. When asked to think back and reflect on whether people were happy or ashamed to receive relief, Alex replied, "Oh, they just accepted it, that's all. They never thought nothing."<sup>15</sup> Gutierrez remembers that her family "thought it was good, yeah, because we didn't know a thing about money.... We didn't know the value of it really.... All we knew was our ducks, and our fish, and our

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<sup>12</sup> Herb Joe (Tixwelátsa), interviewed at Stó:lō Nation by Liam Haggarty and Heather Watson, May 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Tilly and Al Gutierrez, interviewed at their home in Chawathil by Liam Haggarty and Heather Watson, 28 May 2005.

<sup>14</sup> Joe (Tixwelátsa), interview, May 2005.

<sup>15</sup> Alex, interview, 28 May 2005.

deer, and all this, you know.”<sup>16</sup>

Similar understandings are found in northwestern Saskatchewan. Reflecting in the 1950s on the role of Indian agents and other government officials among local Indigenous and Métis peoples, Oblate priest Father Levasseur insightfully stressed the connections between government relief and existing Indigenous systems of sharing: “It is well that Social Welfare workers remember [that it is an honour to share and an important quality of leadership]. Natives asking for social welfare are, in effect, recognizing the authority and reputation of the Welfare worker as a great 'Giver'. Is this not paying him in return for the welfare given?”<sup>17</sup> Rather than viewing social welfare payments as one-way transactions provided to destitute peoples by a benevolent government, Indigenous people in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* interpreted relief within existing systems of vertical sharing: the allocation of relief represented a two-way transaction whereby the recipients tacitly affirm the authority and status of the givers in exchange for the resources they receive.

In these transactions we see both cultural continuity and change. On one hand, sharing is enduring, continuing to be practiced in Indigenous communities despite the devastating effects of colonialism and forced assimilation. Contrary to government and Church efforts, sharing was still a defining characteristic of indigeneity and collective identity in *S'ólh Téméxw*, *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, and elsewhere. But sharing was also changing, adapting to the influx of non-Indigenous settlers in Indigenous territories and the ongoing alienation of hereditary lands and resources. Newcomers, who were gaining greater access to and control of valuable economic resources, were integrated into

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<sup>16</sup> Gutierrez, interview, 28 May 2005.

<sup>17</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2.

systems of sharing not as hereditary chiefs or cultural leaders but as external agents. Although they were fulfilling some of the economic responsibilities of Indigenous elites, they were, for the most part, socially detached from the families and communities with whom they shared wealth, in the form of relief. Sharing thus remained an important cultural refuge for Indigenous peoples under siege from colonialism but one that also reflected colonial adaptations made to cope with a changing world.

The meaning of relief was also changing among non-Indigenous Canadians, especially government officials. Although Canadian families continued to practice various horizontal forms of sharing within and between them,<sup>18</sup> vertical sharing practices, namely the transfer of monies from federal and provincial governments to Canadian citizens, was becoming increasingly common and as such increasingly stigmatized. As historian James Struthers argues, government transfer payments came to be seen as financial refuges for lazy or incompetent people, most of them men, even though their hardships were “No fault of their own.”<sup>19</sup> This stigmatization of sharing was consistent with government programs designed to make citizens active contributors to the country’s economic wellbeing through their dependence on wage labour. Moreover, this mindset, historian Nancy Christie demonstrates, facilitated the creation and spread of normative models of family structure and behaviour; stigmatizing relief supported the breadwinner

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<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Christie and Gauvreau, eds., *Mapping the Margins: The Family and Social Discipline in Canada, 1700-1975* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2004); Joy Parr, ed., *Childhood and Family in Canadian History* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1983); and Lori Chambers and Edgar-Andre Montigny, eds., *Family Matters: Papers in Post-Confederation Canadian Family History* (Toronto: Canadian Scholars’ Press, 1998).

<sup>19</sup> James Struthers, *No Fault of Their Own: Unemployment and the Canadian Welfare State, 1914-1941* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983).

ideal and reinforced dominant gender roles and class attitudes.<sup>20</sup> Government transfer payments thus exacerbated negative connotations among non-Indigenous Canadian communities and families that were largely inconsistent with Indigenous concepts of sharing. Indians were becoming, in the eyes of newcomers, an economic liability and social nuisance.

The meaning ascribed to welfare within Métis and non-status Indian communities is more difficult to discern as these payments were less reliable than those made to both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. For the Metis living in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, the allocation of relief remained largely unsystematized and haphazard throughout much of the twentieth century. Where non-Indigenous immigration remained low, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC), aided by the North West Mounted Police (NWMP), maintained a relatively strong presence and continued to administer relief according to fur trade protocols and relationships even after the creation of the Province of Saskatchewan in 1905. Funded in part by the federal government, allocations of relief to "half-breeds" was to occur only in cases of extreme poverty or hardship. Indeed, the federal government continually tried throughout the first decades of the twentieth century to absolve itself of responsibility for people of mixed ancestry by arguing that they were wards of the provinces. These efforts met with little success as the provinces refused to accept fiscal responsibility for a group of people who, according to the British North America Act, were considered wards of the state. This ongoing neglect of Métis people and rights led to widespread impoverishment and the ghettoization of the Métis as "Road

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<sup>20</sup> Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).



Allowance People.”<sup>21</sup> Therefore, although Metis people for part of the early twentieth century existed outside the growing government welfare system, they nonetheless felt the effects of increased government control and the colonization of their territories, especially by mid-century when immigration expanded northward.

In time, this administrative gap was partly filled by conservation officers and other provincial representatives who became increasingly important members of northern communities. Although their explicit purpose in northwest Saskatchewan and elsewhere was to survey and manage the area’s resources, they also became actively engaged in local systems of sharing and exchange. Despite a general lack of extant records regarding the distribution of relief, gifts, and other forms of aid, anecdotal and oral historic evidence suggest that some of these officials, and conservation officers specifically, developed familial and fictive kin ties with Metis people in and around Île à la Crosse in much the same way that fur traders had previously.<sup>22</sup> But compared to the relatively systematic nature of on-reserve relief, the aid provided by the government representatives remained irregular and inconsistent.

### *Restricted Resources and Lost Jobs*

The history of government welfare programs is intricately connected to Indigenous peoples’ access to resources and work. At the same time that relief programs were increasing in scope and scale in much of western Canada, Indigenous peoples’

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<sup>21</sup> See Leah Dorion with Doreen R. Préfontaine, “Métis Land Rights and Self-Government,” (unpublished manuscript, Saskatoon: Gabriel Dumon Institute, 2003); and Maria Campbell, *Stories of the Road People* (Penticton: Theytus Books, 1995). In April 2014, the Canadian Federal Court of Appeal affirmed an earlier court decision granting Metis people the rights of Indian status under the Canadian constitution. See Giuseppe Valiante, “Appeals Court Grants Metis Indian Status,” *Toronto Sun*, 17 April 2014.

<sup>22</sup> Joe Favel, interviewed at his home in Île à la Crosse by Liam Haggarty, 10 June 2010.

access to wage labour and other forms of market-based exchange were becoming increasingly limited, as was their ability to participate in subsistence activities, especially hunting, fishing, and trapping. The correlation between these government acts is direct. When squeezed out of the labour market and prohibited from procuring “traditional” foodstuffs, especially protein, Indigenous peoples’ requests for and reliance on government transfer payments increased, sometimes dramatically. Conversely, when not prohibited from engaging in a diverse range of socio-economic practices, Indigenous people devoted less energy to accessing, or harvesting, government relief.

Throughout the twentieth century, the composition of these modal economies fluctuated according to changing labour laws, government restrictions, and environmental availability. In British Columbia, the first legislative constraints targeting Indigenous subsistence activities were passed in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Between 1888 and 1913, for example, the federal government instituted a series of licensing initiatives aimed at making commercial fishing a “white man’s industry” by prohibiting “Native technologies” such as reef nets, fish weirs, and other traps used primarily for subsistence fishing and by precluding Indigenous people from obtaining commercial licenses to operate purse and seine nets.<sup>23</sup> These licenses, according to George Pragnell, Inspector of Indian agencies, were not only unfamiliar to Indigenous people they also were difficult to obtain:

There seems to be a general complaint amongst the Indians that the most generous policy in fishing for food purposes has not materialized. Permits are hard to get and the presumption seems to be that the Indians will

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<sup>23</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 239–42. See also Douglas Harris, *Fish, Law, and Colonialism: The Legal Capture of the Salmon Fishery in British Columbia* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001); and Dianne Newell, *Tangled Webs of History: Indians and the Law in Canada’s Pacific Coast Fisheries* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1993).

necessarily break the law regarding the sale of fish.<sup>24</sup>

This criminalization of Indigenous fisheries effectively transferred productive resources sites from Indigenous to non-Indigenous peoples and governments.

Gaming laws also were becoming increasingly restrictive. After 1896, it was illegal for Indigenous people in British Columbia to sell deer meat, for example, and by the First World War Indigenous people were restricted to three deer annually to be hunted during a four-month open season. Licenses and permits also became mandatory for Indigenous hunters and trappers in British Columbia and Saskatchewan.<sup>25</sup> Sometimes, breaking laws in the pursuit of foodstuffs was unavoidable. These legislative measures both targeted the number of animals Indigenous people could kill and constricted hunting and trapping grounds in British Columbia to defined areas, known in Saskatchewan as “fur blocks.”<sup>26</sup>

In an effort to reverse this trend, Indigenous leaders protested government legislation. Stó:lō Chief Slemslton of Sumas, for example, testified before the 1915 Royal Commission on Indian Affairs:

We used to get our meat, ducks, fish out of this (Sumas) Lake and on the prairie. We go out on the Fraser to catch our fish, and we get got [sic] out on the mountains on each side of this lake and get all the meat we want; but today it is not that way anymore. . . .If I go out and take my gun there is always someone to round me up and have me arrested. If I go out and catch a fish the policeman comes after me with a gun. Every year that we use a net they come and take it away from us.<sup>27</sup>

Indigenous land users sometimes also found support, perhaps ironically, given their

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<sup>24</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 260.

<sup>25</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 249–51.

<sup>26</sup> See Miriam McNab, “Persistence and Change in a Northern Saskatchewan Trapping Community,” (master’s thesis, University of Saskatchewan, 1992).

<sup>27</sup> See Keith Thor Carlson and John Lutz, “Stó:lō People and the Development of the BC Wage Labour Economy,” in *You Are Asked To Witness: The Stó:lō In Canada’s Pacific Coast History*, ed. Keith Thor Carlson (Chilliwack B.C.: Stó:lō Heritage Trust, 1997), 122.

role in residential schools and as agents of assimilation, from missionaries, Indian Agents and other government officials who regularly remarked on the importance of Indigenous subsistence rights. However, protests like this one did little to curb government intervention, especially in urbanizing areas where growing non-Indigenous populations lobbied for greater conservation of “natural” areas for their own uses.<sup>28</sup>

Some of the effects of increasing restrictive legislation were offset by labour shortages, especially during wartime. As Canadians enlisted to fight in the World Wars, for example, Indigenous people found work in resource industries, such as fishing, canning, and logging. According to the Fisheries Inspector at Squamish, for example, Indigenous people were finding gainful employment during the Second World War:

Most able-bodied Indians were making good wages as labourers in various wood harvesting camps, and as railway section hands; this sub-district being practically drained of all its young men eligible for military training. Indians are getting much higher prices for their crops and farm animals and it does not pay them to neglect these matters for the time taken up in catching and curing salmon.<sup>29</sup>

Although more common in urban than in rural settings, the situation in Squamish was not unique. Between 1940 and 1942, the number of Indigenous British Columbians engaged in wage labour economies increased 400 percent, from 1,286 to 4,990. Consequently, relief dependency fell. By 1945, less than two percent of Indigenous British Columbians’ income came from welfare as opposed to almost nine percent ten years earlier.<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> For sustained discussions of conservationism within the context of settler colonialism, see Tina Loo, *States of Nature: Conserving Canada’s Wildlife in the Twentieth Century* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2006); John Sandlos, *Hunters at the Margin: Native People and Wildlife Conservation in the Northwest Territories* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2007); and Jonathan A. Clapperton, "Stewards of the Earth: Aboriginal Peoples, Environmentalists, and Historical Representation" (PhD Diss., University of Saskatchewan, 2012).

<sup>29</sup> Quoted in Lutz, *Makúk*, 265.

<sup>30</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 209, 227.

But as more Indigenous people entered the labour force, the government tightened its relief policies. In 1940, the largely unsuccessful “work for welfare” program instructed Indian Agents not to provide relief to “physically fit, able-bodied Indians” unless they “undertake certain tasks either on reserves or off reserves,” including gardening, farming, road building, wood-cutting, and fishing and trapping. At this time, the government released a revised monthly ration scale that included considerable detail. Acceptable relief goods included flour, rolled oats, baking powder, tea, sugar, lard, beans, rice, cheese, salt, matches, and meat or fish. The scale specified maximum quantities of goods that could be purchased based on the number of adults and children in each household but the total value of relief remained largely unchanged.<sup>31</sup>

The labour shortage also compelled Indigenous people to spend less time pursuing subsistence resources, leading the federal Department of Fisheries and provincial game departments to implement new restrictions on food licenses issued for harvesting subsistence foods. When the labour shortage ended after the war, Indigenous people returned to their subsistence activities only to find that they no longer had access to their traditional lands and resources. As Lutz notes, Indigenous people faced constant assaults on their economic livelihoods:

In times of labour surplus. . .the fisheries department used that argument of aboriginal access to a subsistence fishery to not allow them equal access to the commercial fishery. When there was a labour shortage, the subsistence economy was attacked because it allowed Aboriginal People to stay out of the wage-labour force.<sup>32</sup>

The versatility that Indigenous economies had exhibited half a century earlier was quickly eroding.

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<sup>31</sup> Shewell, “*Enough to Keep Them Alive*,” 126–28.

<sup>32</sup> Lutz, *Makik*, 253.

These restrictions had significant consequences for Indigenous families, especially those living in rapidly urbanizing places, such as the Fraser River Valley. Stó:lō elder Annie Alex remembers that her family, which in previously years, when fewer jobs were available, had spent more time harvesting subsistence foods, “got convicted for hunting” after the war.<sup>33</sup> Al Gutierrez was one of the few who were able to continue hunting game. “I was the last hunter here,” he says, “the last hunter on this upper valley here. . .[I stopped] about 30 years ago” when restrictions and costs became prohibitive.<sup>34</sup> *Tixwelátsa* (Herb Joe) remembers that fishing for subsistence also becoming more difficult during and after the war:

But then as, of course, restrictions on fishing became more and more enforced by fisheries officers, of course, then people learned other ways of getting the fish. Like, they would sink their nets, you know, and stuff like that just to make sure that their families continued to be fed. And, of course, that all changed too because once the fisheries officers learned that the men were sinking their nets so that they couldn't see them, they'd come by with big hooks dragging behind them and ripping nets out. It was a situation where our families still had to be maintained and if social assistance was the only way out, then that's what they had to do. It was a way that they were forced into because they couldn't fish and hunt.<sup>35</sup>

In more remote areas, such as northwestern Saskatchewan where urbanization and non-Indigenous immigration was slow relative to southwestern British Columbia, the effects of reduced employment and increased legislation were delayed, sometimes by decades. Prior to the 1940s, federal and provincial governments had little interest in developing or settling northern Saskatchewan. Aside from fur traders, mounted policemen, and conservation officers, few non-Indigenous people encroached on

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<sup>33</sup> Alex, interview, 28 May 2005.

<sup>34</sup> Gutierrez, interview, 28 May 2005.

<sup>35</sup> Joe (*Tixwelátsa*), interview, May 2005.

Indigenous lands or competed for local resources. Therefore, although Métis people in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* did not have stable access to government transfer payments for much of the twentieth century, they were also less likely to suffer the consequences of increased regulation in either subsistence activities or wage labour.

### *The Arrival of the Welfare State*

As subsistence activities and paid work became increasingly inaccessible to Indigenous people in urban areas across Canada, the government welfare system continued to expand. The year 1946 was a turning point in the history of Indigenous social welfare in Canada. For the first time, the DIA instructed its agents to provide all recipients with tinned vegetables, fresh meat, beans, peanut butter, and other forms of protein.<sup>36</sup> The inclusion of protein is significant because at no time in their history had Indigenous people been unable to procure the majority of their dietary needs from the natural environment. That they were becoming more reliant on government aid for their most basic needs eventually led to dramatic increases in relief expenditures and dependency among Indigenous communities.

The subsequent three decades were epitomized by increased need and expense. Set against the backdrop of a global movement toward welfarism and the rise of the “welfare state,” especially among former members of the British Commonwealth,<sup>37</sup> the type, frequency, and amount of aid provided to Indigenous peoples and other Canadian

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<sup>36</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 266.

<sup>37</sup> See Maurice Bruce, *The Coming of the Welfare State* (London: B. T. Batsford, Ltd., 1967); Frances Fox Piven and Richard Cloward, *Regulating the Poor: The Functions of Public Welfare* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1971); and Walter Trattner, *From Poor Law to Welfare State: A History of Social Welfare in America*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. (New York: The Free Press, 1979)..

citizens rose sharply. From 1946 to 1949, total Indian welfare expenditures rose from under one million dollars to well over two million as per capita relief almost doubled, from \$4.90 to \$9.53.<sup>38</sup> In British Columbia, 17 percent of Indigenous peoples' income in the 1950s came from social assistance, almost double what it had been during the Depression, and relief "in kind", which had become unmanageable, was replaced by cash payments.<sup>39</sup> By the 1960s, other government transfer payments, including mothers' allowance, disabled persons' allowance, and old age security, had been expanded to include Indigenous Canadians. By 1966, more than one in four Indigenous British Columbians received social assistance – four times the provincial average.

In northwestern Saskatchewan, where the construction of provincial highways and forms of infrastructure had begun to increase development and urbanization, Métis were facing similar hardships. Combined with restricted access to traditional economies activities and wage labour, ongoing disputes between different levels of government regarding their responsibility for non-status Indians resulted in unprecedented impoverishment, culminating in widespread protests by individuals and families denied relief from both federal and provincial authorities. By 1973, almost one out of every two Indigenous people in Canada was dependent on welfare.<sup>40</sup> Rather than an economic resource to be harvested alongside a variety of others, welfare payments were gradually becoming the most significant and reliable source of income for millions of Indigenous people.

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<sup>38</sup> Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive*, 234.

<sup>39</sup> When first implemented, about ten percent of Indigenous recipients received cash payments. The head of the household received \$18, each additional adult (over 12 years of age) received \$15, and children received \$12 each. Lutz, *Makúk*, 270; Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive*, 247.

<sup>40</sup> For numbers of recipients receiving these payments in 1957, see Shewell, *Enough to Keep Them Alive*, 263; Lutz, *Makúk*, 270.



## 7.2 Welfare Discourses: Interpreting Socio-Economic Change

As welfare became an increasingly important economic resource on reserves across Canada, new or changed discourses emerged to define its meaning and role in these communities. Some of these emergent “welfare discourses” were rooted in existing Indigenous understandings of sharing and the redistribution of wealth from elites, in this case the government, to the less powerful, especially those who had been economically marginalized through colonization and Canadian territorial expansion. Like earlier forms of sharing, there was no stigma attached to receiving welfare. Indeed it was the failure of givers to give or receivers to receive that was viewed as problematic. Other discourses seem to have more in common with Euro-Canadian perspectives of welfare which viewed state transfer payments not as the obligation of elites or an inherent aspect of settler capitalist economies but as an economic liability, a form of charity distributed to destitute Canadians temporarily unable to provide for themselves. These discourses stigmatized welfare recipients as lazy or incompetent, emphasizing the problematic nature of welfare payments themselves and of peoples’ dependence on government transfer payments.

A poignant example of changing Indigenous views of welfare is the introduction of “welfare parties” held in Stó:lō communities from the 1960s through the 1980s. According to Sonny McHalsie, these parties were organized by some Stó:lō families to commemorate someone’s eighteenth birthday, the age at which they became eligible for welfare.<sup>41</sup> They were, in other words, a right of passage of sorts; receiving welfare was seen as a marker of adulthood and, in at least one instance, the ability to buy alcohol.

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<sup>41</sup> *Naxaxalhts’I*, Albert (Sonny) McHalsie, interviewed by Liam Haggarty at Stó:lō Nation, Sardis, British Columbia, 7 May 2009.

Although there are no statistics available regarding the frequency or scope of such events, at least one of the families interviewed during the course of my research and which appears in this dissertation hosted these parties for children of the family. Their motives for doing so are unclear as we did not discuss welfare parties during the course of our conversations. Perhaps they viewed welfare payments as an extension of earlier forms of sharing, a topic I discussed with them at length. In this way, welfare might have represented a modern form of wealth redistribution. They may also be seen as politically charged, cynical celebrations meant to draw attention to the impoverishment of Stó:lō communities, both economically and culturally. Or perhaps they were motivated by despair. Maybe welfare really was the last economic refuge for such families, maybe there was little else to celebrate.

Views expressed by other welfare recipients and community leaders help shed light on the changing meanings of welfare in Indigenous communities and the emergence of new or altered welfare discourses. Some Stó:lō recipients, for example, connected welfare to earlier economic structures, viewing it as compensation for colonialism and the appropriation of their hereditary lands and resources by the Canadian government. Rena Peters, who received welfare in the 1970s, called the funds she received “spirit money:”

When I used to be on welfare, I used to think that the government owed it to me. That’s what I thought. They haven’t given us anything for coming here and saying this is their country and they’ve never treated us like we’re of any value to this country. So I put it in my head as they owed it to me. They’re not going to do me anything else. They don’t give me pride in who I am, they don’t give me a home, they don’t give me a place to respect myself, to respect First Nations People — they think of us as ‘in the way’. ‘If you guys were gone, we wouldn’t have to think about what we did!’ . . . So I think, ‘Hey, they owe it. I have two little kids here, I can’t

go to school. I'm going to take the welfare but I'm not going to call it welfare, I'm going to call it spirit money!"<sup>42</sup>

Peters's reasons for applying for and receiving welfare were at once economic and political. Rather than seeing them strictly in economic terms, as a temporary financial fallback, she viewed them in political terms, as obligatory payments to be made by an unjust government that had alienated her people from their traditional lifeways and degraded their culture and identity.

A separate welfare discourse, most often articulated by elected chiefs and other political elites, emphasizes the negative consequences of welfare dependency. By the 1970s, Indigenous people, this discourse suggests, were beginning to see welfare as an Aboriginal right, similar to other land and resource rights guaranteed by treaty or being claimed through court proceedings. According to Stó:lō Grand Chief Doug Kelly, this "Aboriginal right to welfare" was becoming a celebrated way of life for many Indigenous people:

So we've ended up with what was intended as a safety net has become a way of life. We've gone from where there was one generation dependent on income assistance, now we're up to three or four families where it's generational. And so that's going to be a difficult thing, breaking that belief. It's what I describe, that kind of value system, is the Aboriginal right to welfare.<sup>43</sup>

Aboriginal people no longer "believe in themselves," Kelly continues, "they do not believe in their community. They don't hold themselves in such esteem that they're worth more than poverty, 'cause that's all welfare is: keeping you impoverished."<sup>44</sup> In

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<sup>42</sup> Rena Peters and Joanne Jefferson, interviewed by Liam Haggarty and Heather Watson at Stó:lō Nation, 24 May 2005.

<sup>43</sup> Doug Kelly, interviewed at Soowhalie Band Office by Liam Haggarty and Heather Watson, May 27, 2005.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

this rendering, welfare payments are disconnected from earlier forms of sharing and wealth redistribution and the consequences of colonialism. Rather than an obligation of elites or a necessary function of settler capitalism, welfare is described in Euro-Canadian terms, as a temporary economic crutch that has become an economic problem. What Kelly is describing here is not “spirit money” but a form of economic (self-)oppression that poses a similar threat to band governments that it does to the federal one. Stigmatized and problematized, welfare becomes the mechanism through which Indigenous people are seen to be colonizing themselves.

These discourses reflect the changing nature of sharing and exchange through the mid- to late twentieth century. For example, as welfare dependency increased, both the number and type of recipients changed. Among the Stó:lō, the first recipients of relief appear to have been predominantly low-status, that is, people without access to productive resource sites or power. But by the 1950s and 1960s, even the most high-status families were being alienated not only from their wealth but also from basic subsistence. For them, receiving relief without the ability to repay their debts would be stigmatized whether it happened in 1750, 1850, or 1950. Welfare, therefore, was becoming increasingly stigmatized not necessarily because Stó:lō people were adopting Euro-Canadian views of welfare but because ancient understandings of status were finding new expression in welfare payments. Formerly wealthy families were becoming increasingly reliant on the economic resources of worthless or low status people.

The role of the giver was also changing at this time. The Indian Agent as the provider of relief was being replaced by government bureaucrats and paperwork while food and other goods distributed in person were replaced by cheques received through the

mail. This expansion and modernization of Indian welfare programs effectively erased the last traces of the interpersonal relationships that were so central to Indigenous systems of sharing and that were embodied, to some extent at least, by the fur trader and Indian Agent. Practices and relationships that had once been socio-economic were becoming increasingly narrow as their economic and social aspects became increasingly segregated.

This expansion of government welfare programs also affected regional kin networks and challenged existing class and gender boundaries. Combined with the reserve system and creation of band lists, both of which limited the physical mobility of Stó:lō people, relief payments constricted spatial kin networks that formerly connected peoples across the Fraser River Valley. That is to say, welfare programs, and government Indian policy more broadly, stunted regional affiliations and challenged existing collective identities. In the process, intra-community connections gradually replaced the more expansive inter-community and inter-family networks described in Chapter Two. At the same time, lower class peoples' access to government transfer payments challenged existing social hierarchies by making this emergent resource site available directly to non-elites. These changes were particularly important to women who, regardless of class, often lacked direct control of resource sites and wealth prior to the introduction of family and mother's allowance as well as other gender-specific transfer payments. Together with the ongoing dislocation of elite families from historic resource sites, such as fishing holes, wapato patches, and wind-drying spots, relief payments thus contributed to the flattening and subversion of Stó:lō social classes and the contraction of spatial networks.

In northwestern Saskatchewan, the expansion of the Canadian welfare state coincided with increased modernization, sedentarism, and the privileging of the individual and nuclear family above extended families and networks. For example, technological changes, especially the introduction of the gas engine, the building of the first roads, and artificial refrigeration which allowed families to transport and store food for long periods of time, limited the ecological necessity of sharing and promoted sedentarization over mobility. As anthropologist James Smith notes, by mid-century, the main village complex, which now included the school, post office, and a variety of social services, was “becoming the basis for the modern village ... with only men leaving for the traplines and hunting territories in the winter.” These changes were exacerbated by the gradual retreat of the Hudson’s Bay Company and increased government activity. According to Spaulding, the gradual retreat of the HBC caused “socially consequential ethnic distinctions” in Île à la Crosse to become “grossly exaggerated” and granted the local store manager “absolute authority” over Métis welfare. Funded by the federal government, the church-run school in Île à la Crosse further promoted sedentarism, especially among families with young children, and the geographical extent of seasonal rounds decreased as more time was spent at or near the school. Combined with the devastating effects wrought by reserves, the residential school system, unfair legislation, and other forms of colonial and state oppression, this history helps contextualize and explain the dramatic increase in Métis welfare dependency over the last century and especially the past five decades.

This greater emphasis on blood relatives and most immediate affinal kin changed the way families shared with one another, especially in times of hardship or emergency.

According to Smith, although “One may still, within this more limited group, expect gifts or sharing of caribou or moose meat from successful hunters without need for cash payment”, the frequency and extent of instances of sharing was declining.<sup>45</sup> In the process, prosperity and poverty came to be experienced individually rather than collectively. Whereas wealth had formerly been measured according to widespread social networks and reciprocal exchange, it was gradually becoming associated with the individual or small family and characterized by hoarding without the expectation of redistribution. Earlier ideas of wealth, economics, and sharing that had once been dominant throughout northwest Saskatchewan were being challenged by increasingly pervasive Euro-Canadian ideologies.

Set against the backdrop of socio-economic and cultural change, welfare discourses thus reflect both change and continuity in the history of sharing. Undergirding both Peters’s notion of “spirit money” and Kelly’s view of the “Aboriginal right to welfare” is the role of wealth distribution in Stó:lō and other Indigenous communities. Despite the ongoing effects of government strategies of assimilation and acculturation, especially in Indigenous communities located near Euro-Canadian cities, the traditional function and role of sharing mediated individual and community understandings of welfare. “Spirit money” was not stigmatized; it represented continuity with earlier forms of wealth redistribution informed by power relations and the generosity of hereditary leaders.

But welfare also became stigmatized and imbued with Euro-Canadian understandings of sharing and impoverishment, key assumptions of the “right to welfare”

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<sup>45</sup> James G. E. Smith, “The Chipewyan Hunting Group in a Village Context,” *The Western Canadian Journal of Anthropology* 2, no. 1 (1970): 65; and James G. E. Smith, “Chipewyan,” in *Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 6 (Subarctic)*, ed. June Helm (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1981), 282.

discourse. As Joanne Jefferson, Peters's daughter, observed, this was a significant, though relatively recent, change: "It's just been in these last few generations that the youth have attached [social assistance] to, 'you can't work or you don't have an education to find a better job.' It comes with trying to have the best shoes, the best house, the best whatever."<sup>46</sup> Although welfare for some recipients continued to link present generations with past ones and reinforced Indigenous collective identities, it also served to disconnect Indigenous people from their cultural roots and transform existing socio-economic relationships. Much as government Indian policy had attempted to assimilate "Indians" into the Canadian populace, welfare ideologies threatened to replace Indigenous systems of sharing with mainstream economic practices and ideologies.

The extent to which these changes have been realized is debatable; welfare parties may be read as examples of either cultural continuity or change. Or they might be viewed as both: an expression of a genuinely hybrid economic structure informed by both longstanding Indigenous views of sharing and settler capitalist understandings of welfare state economics. Regardless of how we interpret these events, what is clear is that although sharing has certainly changed, continually adapting to changing relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, it remained a prominent feature of Indigenous communities and collective identities well beyond the mid-twentieth century.

### 7.3 The "Indian Way": Sharing and Indigenous Identities

Oral histories and ethnographic information attest to the ongoing importance of sharing to Indigenous communities and identities. In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, for example,

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<sup>46</sup> Peters and Jefferson, interview, 24 May 2005.



Cree, Dene, and Métis people regularly remark on their participation in expansive sharing networks throughout the twentieth century. Jules Daigneault, an elder, former mine worker, and semi-retired skiff and sleigh builder in Île à la Crosse, recalls life before families permanently relocated to the village, affirming in the process the importance of sharing to Métis identity:

Everybody used to share. Nobody was stingy, nobody. ... When people used to go hunting, the whole family went. They all went in the river and they found a certain spot where it's good to set up tents. That's where the family would stay while the men would go further on to go shoot a moose or set nets or something. They had a hunting party, and the party would go on further off the river to look for moose tracks and everything. ... The women that was at the camp, hunting camp, they did all the work hauling wood, setting the teepee or smokehouse, getting everything ready.

After the hunt, the produce was shared widely with friends and relatives. Those able to make it to shore were allowed to help themselves while deliveries were made to those unable to travel:

So they used to go from house to house, the widows first get meat, and the elders, the old men and the old ladies that can't go hunting, those ones too were fed. It was very important to feed your relatives, your family. And if there's somebody living on the island not related to you, you still go check. Maybe somebody's sick or something, they go check them out. ... And in return, when the people start to get old, the young ones start to go hunting and they feed the elders. ... Everybody used to share. ... ammunition ... guns ... boats ... canoes ... fishing nets. They even shared their kettles, teapots ... even the clothes.<sup>47</sup>

Although many instances of sharing were informal and spontaneous, explicit strategies of redistribution also emerged at this time. For example, George Malboeuf, a mine worker and community hunter in Île à la Crosse, recalls witnessing as a child the communal sharing that occurred after a hunt:

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<sup>47</sup> Jules Daigneault, interviewed in Buffalo Narrows by Liam Haggarty and Stephanie Danyluk, 10 June 2010.

When I was growing up, that's what was the importance in my family. Not only in my family but among a lot of elders that used to hunt in their community. When they come in [to town] after they've shot a moose, then the community people used to come in and share with each other. They sat down and had a big cookout where people just – whatever they wanted to eat was available for them. Nothing was expected in return. And that's the tradition I'm trying to keep from what I was taught when I was young. I'm trying to share that.<sup>48</sup>

Further north in Buffalo Narrows, Brian Macdonald, a commercial fisher, professional guide, and traditional land user, recalls with pride his father's role as a community hunter. After the government introduced a permit system for hunting, elders and other community members were able to obtain a permit to give to a hunter:

[M]y dad would go out and he would hunt and then he would share with different people throughout the community. ... [P]eople that were eligible, they had to hunt for themselves [but elders and other people that weren't able would] go get a permit ... and my dad would go out and shoot the moose and we'd get a little bit and they'd get the rest. So my dad never really had to get his own permit 'cause he was always hunting for others. We got all of our meat through that all the time.

Sanctions for failing to share were also still in place, Macdonald remembers: “I know one time they were mad at a fellow that shot a moose and never shared it so after that they suffered him by not giving him any.”<sup>49</sup>

More recent interviews, conducted as part of modern traditional land use studies, reiterate these remarks, demonstrating continuity with past generations. According to Richard Abbey of Meadow Lake, most twenty-first century sharing is practiced among family, friends, elders, and people who otherwise would not get anything from the hunt. Victor and Steven Lariviere, from Pinehouse and Jans Bay respectively, also share with their family, saying it is part of culture and shows appreciation, especially to elders. In

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<sup>48</sup> George Malboeuf, interviewed in Buffalo Narrows by Liam Haggarty, 23 March 2010.

<sup>49</sup> Brian MacDonald, interviewed in Buffalo Narrows by Liam Haggarty, 24 March 2010.

Canoe Lake, Richard Desjardins continues to hunt as a way to share, and Toby Lemaigre of La Loche says moose meat must be shared because selling it is bad luck. Robert Gardiner and Angel Sylvester, however, note the decline in sharing during the past 50 years or so. While Gardiner, who lives in Beauval, blames increasingly restrictive government legislation for the lack of food available to share, Sylvester believes government relief and welfare have curtailed widespread sharing.<sup>50</sup> Much as they did hundreds of years ago, Indigenous peoples continue to adapt to their local environments. Now mediated by government regulations and industrial development, and resources, which now include wage labour and social assistance, they modified existing practices to maximize their economic stability and resilience.<sup>51</sup> The economic and social relationships forged in the process demonstrate the historical and contemporary significance of sharing and other forms of economic cooperation in northwest Saskatchewan communities.

The ethnographic record corroborates these oral histories and role sharing played in *Sakitawak/Kwoen* during the twentieth century. Father Rossignol, for example, remarked on the ongoing significance of these sharing activities after arriving in Île à la Crosse in the early twentieth century. Through his various interactions with local Cree, Dene, and Metis people, he observed that longstanding protocols regulating sharing and

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<sup>50</sup> All interviews were conducted by members of the North West Métis Council Traditional Land Use Study team. Richard Abbery, 10 February 2006; Victor Larivière, 4 February 2005; Steven Larivière, 30 November 2005; Richard Desjardins, 22 July 2005; Joseph Toby Lemaigre, 11 January 2005; Robert Gardiner, 10 February 2006; and Angel Sylvester, 8 April 2005.

<sup>51</sup> See Mark Nuttall, "Choosing Kin: Sharing and Subsistence in a Greenlandic Hunting Community," in *Dividends of Kinship: Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness*, ed. Peter Schweitzer (New York: Routledge, 2000); and George Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami, eds., *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resources Allocation and Modern Hunter Gatherers* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000).

proper conduct, subtle and inconspicuous to most outsiders, were still very much in effect:

In asking something from one another, they have many ways of expressing themselves. They very rarely employ direct formulae: "Give me", smacks of discourtesy among them. Instead, they say, "Lend me this", or else, "I should like to borrow this from you". Another still more subtle method is to extol or praise the thing that one wishes. Thus, you should never say to anyone: "You have a beautiful pipe", if you don't wish to possess it, for this would be the same as asking it of the owner. If you did so, he would answer as a matter of course: "Take it, it is yours".<sup>52</sup>

The subtlety evident in the language of sharing attests to its ongoing importance not only to Indigenous economies but also to social relations. Sharing, according to Rossignol, remained a defining feature of Indigenous society and identity in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*.

Sharing and sharing protocols also functioned to distinguish insiders from outsiders. Rossignol learned this lesson firsthand. While visiting an elderly woman, he was unknowingly "speaking cree" when he complimented her pet dog:

"You have a beautiful little dog, my grandmother", I said to her, thinking to please her. "Yes", she said to me compressing her lips, "You speak Cree, it is true, but I don't want to give him to you". I excused myself as best I could, telling her that I would not be able to take him with me even if she gave him to me. But I had committed an indiscretion; by my imprudent remark made without reflection I had asked outright for the little dog as a present. This method of "asking without asking" is called "speaking Cree". The natives sometimes make fun of strangers in the country who, but newly arrived, go into ecstasies over the least thing. "Oh, you already speak Cree", they say.<sup>53</sup>

Implicit in this exchange is the idea that sharing is a uniquely Indigenous activity, one that is central to Indigenous identity and culture but largely absent from non-Indigenous society. So important was sharing to Indigenous, or at least Cree, culture and society at

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<sup>52</sup> M. Rossignol, "Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks," *Primitive Man* xii, no. 3 (July 1939): 69-70.

<sup>53</sup> Rossignol, "Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks," 69-70.

this time that speaking the Cree language was synonymous with sharing. To be Cree was to share. Outsiders, on the other hand, presumably did not share, nor was sharing central to their collective identities. For them to learn to share meant learning Indigenous ways – not the language necessarily but the cultural protocols and systems of exchange embedded in the language.

Anthropologist James Smith reached similar conclusions. Writing in the late 1960s and 1970s, he noted that the nuclear family and immediate kin remained “the basis for traditional hunting and trapping partnerships” and in some cases had been extended to commercial fishing and even wage labour at mines or fishing resorts. Among these groups, “[o]ne may borrow food or cash, dogs or motors, freely.... Long-term reciprocity is [still] expected, but failure to reciprocate is common and resented, with a consequent decline in expectations.”<sup>54</sup> Although the ecological importance of sharing was in decline and its connection to power weakened, the social and culture significance of sharing remains evident in the Métis communities across northwest Saskatchewan. As demonstrated most clearly by excerpts from oral histories, sharing is fundamental to Métis life and a defining feature of individual and collective identities. As a result, these systems of sharing will likely play a central role in future attempts to achieve recognition of Metis status and to secure access to local lands and resources.

Oral interviews with Stó:lō elders also stress the ongoing importance of sharing to Indigenous culture and identity. The Garner family, mentioned at the beginning of this dissertation, in many ways epitomize the significance of sharing. Kevin Garner, who continues to fish with his son Matt and brother Dwayne at their family’s hereditary

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<sup>54</sup> Smith, “The Chipewyan Hunting Group in a Village Context,” 65.

fishing spot located just north of Hope, BC, sprinkles tobacco in the water prior to setting his nets as an offering – an act of sharing – to the Creator in exchange for the river’s produce. The first fish he pulls from the river when the fishing season opens every spring are given to local elders, most of whom are related to the Garners through familial or fictive kin ties, and to community events, including feasts, potlatches, weddings, funerals, and other ceremonies. Indeed, Kevin keeps very few of the fish he catches until later in the summer when the sockeye runs are plentiful and sharing obligations have been satisfied.<sup>55</sup>

The produce of family hunting trips, especially the first animals harvested each fall, are also shared widely with elders and community groups. As during the fishing season, this often leaves the hunters themselves with only a portion of what they kill. New hunters, for example, are required to share the entire animal whenever a new type of animal is killed. Matt, now a senior in high school, was obligated to give away all of the meat of the first deer, elk, and moose he killed as a way to demonstrate respect for both the natural environment and the recipients of his gifts. Although largely detached from its earlier material purposes and power structures – food resources are not as variable or unpredictable as they once were and Kevin holds no official title, such as chief – this type of sharing nonetheless performs important socio-economic functions as expressions of socio-economic relationships and shared collective identities. To share is to immerse oneself in Stó:lō culture.<sup>56</sup>

Doug Kelly remembers learning similar lessons as a young man. Reflecting on

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<sup>55</sup> Over the past decade, I have accompanied Kevin on numerous fishing trips. During this time we have discussed at length the cultural and social significance of fishing and resource harvesting in general.

<sup>56</sup> Ibid.

his childhood, he recalls the entire family working together:

My late grandfather called upon his family to help with haying, help with work for the farm. So when there was big projects, he said, ‘Okay guys, time to get to work,’ and away they went. They were fed, they were taken care of. They pitched in and it was done because of family and that value of taking care of the family. There was no expectation that they were going to get paid. It’s just that when they helped someone, when they needed help later, somebody would be there for them.

To Doug, this type of cooperation reflects Stó:lō approaches to looking after one another. “If someone wasn’t well, they were taken care of,” he remembers. “If someone passed away suddenly, their children were taken care of. It was our own, built-in safety net. It was the way we were housed, it’s the way we lived, it’s the way we took care of one another.”<sup>57</sup> Here, horizontal sharing, a prominent feature not only of Indigenous families but also Euro-Canadian ones, contrasts with the emergent capitalist economy and its emphasis on individualism and self-sufficiency. Whereas much of mainstream Canadian society may be seen as selfish and self-interested, sharing labour and other resources remains, from Kelly’s perspective, a defining feature of Indigenous society.

Tilly and Al Gutierrez remarked not only on the ongoing significance of sharing but also its role in forging Indigenous collective identities. Tilly, for example, spent a portion of her childhood caring for her grandfather according to the sharing protocols taught to her by her family. Paraphrasing her grandfather, Tilly recalls him explaining why she wasn’t at school: “I keep her at home because she’s the one that looks after me, she’s the one that runs for something that I need, she’s the one that milks the cows for me.”<sup>58</sup> Around the same time that Tilly was caring for her grandfather, Tilly’s father and Al Gutierrez, her future husband, were looking after an orphaned boy. The boy’s

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<sup>57</sup> Kelly, interview, 27 May 2005.

<sup>58</sup> Gutierrez, interview, 28 May 2005.

father had died, Al recalls, and needed help:

The father died and he didn't have nobody. . . .So I went there and chopped the wood up, that's what I did, and piled it for them. . . .Then her [Tilly's] grandfather says, 'Come on, we're going across the river to see my nephew.' So I rowed him across and he got the fish out of the net. . . 'here. . .take that fish,' he says. . . .So I laid the fish on the little steps up that they had to go to get into the house, so I laid it there. So when they wake up and open the door and see the fish there.

For Tilly and Al, this was the “Indian Way. . . if you can help somebody, you help them.”<sup>59</sup> Much like Matt Garner’s obligation to share and Doug Kelly’s emphasis on cooperation, the participation in systems of sharing was what it meant to be an “Indian.” Just as “speaking cree” was a defining feature of Indigenous identity in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, to be an “Indian” in *S’ólh Téméxw* meant participating in sharing networks and abiding by sharing protocols. Insiders knew this and knew how to follow these protocols. Outsiders presumably lacked this knowledge. Sharing was not seen to be a central feature of non-Indigenous identity or cultural practices. It separated self from other and, in the process, affirmed collective identities of Indigenous peoples as people who share. To share was the “Indian way;” to not share was not Indian.

#### 7.4 Conclusion: Ideology and Identity

In the twentieth century, government welfare programs expanded dramatically as increasing numbers of Indigenous people requested, received, and became dependent on social assistance. In urbanizing areas such as *S’ólh Téméxw*, this expansion occurred relatively rapidly as Indigenous people became alienated from hereditary lands and resources which gradually came to be controlled by government agents and other non-

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<sup>59</sup> Ibid.



Indigenous elites. Similarly, access to wage labour was often unpredictable as a result of racist government policies and the privileging of non-Indigenous labourers by local employers. During this period, Indian agents became fixtures in many reserve communities and relief paid first in kind and later in cash became increasingly important aspects of families' and communities' moditional economies. By mid-century, these changes left thousands of Indigenous British Columbians and other Indigenous peoples reliant on government transfer payments as the only reliable source of income and wealth.

In more rural areas like *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, on the other hand, the growth of government welfare services was slower and inconsistent. Neglected by both federal and provincial authorities for much of the twentieth century, Metis people in particular had limited access to government funds, normally provided not by Indian Agents but by remaining fur traders, mounted policemen, and conservation officers, many of whom maintained strong social connections to northern communities. As a result, welfare dependency remained relatively low in northwestern Saskatchewan prior to increased industrial development and new infrastructure projects in the 1940s onward, which further alienated Indigenous people from their lands and resources. Despite this delay, Indigenous people in virtually all areas of Canada – rural and urban – experienced greater reliance on government welfare through the 1970s, culminating in a dependency rate of close to fifty percent nationally. Payments rooted in historic socio-economic relationships based on relationship building, mutual obligation, and reciprocity had thus become a mechanism of government assimilation and oppression, a microcosm of colonialism.

The expansion of government welfare programs had important consequences for Indigenous peoples and communities. Combined with the cultural and demographic disruption caused by residential schools, reserves, and oppressive government legislation, welfare contributed significantly to the ongoing sedentarization and reshaped existing class and gender boundaries, which, in turn, led to a stigmatization of vertical forms of government wealth distribution largely absent from early cross-cultural relationships. In *S'ólh Téméxw*, welfare challenged existing social structures by fixing Stó:lō people and families to specific reserves and band lists, thus limiting longstanding socio-spatial relationships with communities throughout the Salish Sea area. Moreover, the availability of welfare as a new economic resource accessible to all classes and members of both genders regardless of social status, genealogy, or historic knowledge destabilized existing power structures, effectively flattening Stó:lō society and discarding important historic protocols governing power and proper behaviour.

In *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, welfare promoted sedentarization and urbanization as towns, such as Île à la Crosse, became permanent residences for formerly mobile families and communities. Combined with the effects of modernization and technological advancement, increased sedentarism also fuelled individualism as the individual and nuclear family replaced extended kin networks as the most important social units. As in *S'ólh Téméxw*, these fundamental changes to Indigenous peoples' social structures contributed to the gradual stigmatization of government transfer payments and vertical forms of sharing. Rather than compulsory redistributions of wealth from the controllers of resources to community members whose acceptance of such gifts implicitly affirmed elites' power and status, government transfer payments gradually came to be seen by

some Indigenous people as an economic safety net for those unable to provide for themselves and/or as compensation for colonialism.

Yet, despite this stigmatization of welfare payments and the growth of the welfare state after 1945, sharing has remained critically important to Indigenous culture and identity in *S'ólh Téméxw*, *Sakitawak/Kwoen*, and elsewhere. Although the decreased significance of sharing as a mediator of ecological variability and power relationships, Indigenous people continue to practice horizontal forms of sharing within and between families and communities. Indeed, despite the assimilationist efforts of Canadian governments, sharing and the participation in sharing networks remain key determinants of indigeneity and collective identities. As demonstrated by the oral histories and other sources discussed above, sharing is seen as inherently Indigenous by its practitioners, a culturally unique form of socio-economic exchange relationships that has withstood the assault of colonialism.

Sharing thus remained in the twentieth century an important marker of collective identity, both Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and a lens through which each group viewed the “other.” As articulated by the informants quoted above, sharing was a uniquely Indigenous activity. It was the “Indian way,” a principal mechanism through which indigeneity was expressed and collectively experienced. In a century of rapid non-Indigenous population growth and increasing cross-cultural interactions, it distinguished Indigenous people from newcomers who did not practice sharing in the same way. It is a cultural refuge that has afforded Indigenous people protection from the storm of colonialism and a lasting example of continuity during an era of significant change. To share was, and in many cases still is, to be Indigenous and connected to other Indigenous

people across both time and space. To not share is to be non-Indigenous, outsiders, “hungry people” who consume land and resources without redistributing the wealth generated from them. Viewed through the lens of Indigenous systems sharing, newcomers appear as worthless people lacking both stories and the cultural knowledge necessary to foster proper relationships with the natural world and with each other.

Sharing also functioned as a lens through which newcomers viewed Natives. As Canada continued to expand both geographically and demographically, Indigenous people, once viewed as important allies and, in many instances, kin, became obstacles to economic development and national progress. Rather than an important mechanism for relationship building and facilitating trade, sharing and other forms of intercultural exchange came to be seen as economic liabilities, financial burdens to be avoided or reduced. To be impoverished and dependent was to be Indigenous. To be a Canadian citizen was to be self-sufficient and industrious, a contributing member of the Canadian economy. This was, from the government’s perspective at least, the “Canadian way,” one from which Indigenous people by the 1970s were becoming increasingly disconnected. More than an economic activity or social convention, sharing thus represents an important mediator of power both within and across culturally distinct communities.

Conclusion: Reinterpreting the History of Indigenous-Settler Relations

Aboriginal economic development has become an increasingly important priority for the Canadian federal government over the past half-century. Between 1946/47 and 2011/12, total government expenditures on Indian Affairs, adjusted for inflation, rose from \$79-million to \$7.9 billion, or from \$922 per person in 1949/50 to over \$9,000 in 2011/12.<sup>1</sup> These dramatic increases, which far exceeded those in all other branches of government funding during this period, made Indian Affairs one of the most expensive government portfolios and, from the perspective of international investment, a major fiscal liability. In response, the government has launched a number of programs aimed at building greater financial independence and self-reliance among First Nations. In 2009, for example, Chuck Strahl, the Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and also the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians (and Member of Parliament representing the upper Fraser River Valley), announced a four year, \$200 million initiative to launch a new federal framework for Aboriginal Economic Development. The goal of the framework was to help Aboriginal People “take an unprecedented step toward becoming full participants in the economy – as entrepreneurs, employers and employees.”<sup>2</sup> According to Chief Clarence Louie, Chairperson of the National Aboriginal Economic Development Board, who was present for the

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<sup>1</sup> Mark Milke, “Ever Higher: Government Spending on Canada’s Aboriginals since 1947,” 9-13, Fraser Institute, Centre for Aboriginal Policy Studies, December 2013, <http://www.fraserinstitute.org/uploadedFiles/fraser-ca/Content/research-news/research/publications/Aboriginal-spending-2013.pdf.pdf>, accessed 12 October 2014.

<sup>2</sup> “Minister Strahl Unveils Federal Framework For Aboriginal Economic Development,” Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, <https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100033501/1100100033522>, accessed 28 August 2015.

announcement, “[t]he best way to make Aboriginal communities self-reliant is to put more effort and resources into economic development.”<sup>3</sup> Aboriginal dependence on government transfer payments had to be significantly reduced for the economic benefit of the nation.

The history of sharing is central to these programs and to the twin discourses of economic development and greater self-reliance. Although the term “sharing” is rarely if ever used, economic relationships negotiated between First Nations and the federal government today are a product of earlier relations, dating back at least two centuries. Viewed as a mechanism for redistributing wealth from the elites to the non-elites, modern government transfer payments appear as part of a temporal spectrum that also includes earlier relief payments distributed by Indian agents and fur traders to Indigenous peoples, the sharing of resources and knowledge by Indigenous peoples to early European explorers, and the ancient socio-economic systems practiced by Indigenous people across North America since time immemorial. Sharing, in other words, provides us with an important analytic framework for studying the past and contextualizing the present. It is a window into the history of Native-Newcomer relationships and the development of both Canadian and Indigenous nations in what is now western Canada as well as a principal lens through which Natives and newcomers have constructed collective identities and differentiated themselves from one another. Sharing is thus a pivotal theme in the history of Native-Newcomer relations and a revealing point of entry into the historical consciousness of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid., para. 4.

Yet, sharing has not featured in Canadian Aboriginal or Native-Newcomer historiographies. To date, most analyses of sharing have been penned by anthropologists and ethnographers attempting to document the economic behaviours and activities of non-western peoples.<sup>4</sup> While they have broadened our collective understanding of the role of sharing in Indigenous communities and challenged us to consider the wide array of practices and structures that constitute human economies, they do not, on the whole, investigate the ways in which systems and ideas of sharing have changed over time or how these changes have affected Indigenous collective identities. Historians have paid more attention to change over time. In analyzing the form and effects of economic colonialism and Canadian nation building, they have detailed the numerous ways by which newcomers alienated Native lands, resources, and socio-cultural practices as well as the effects this alienation has had on Indigenous communities.<sup>5</sup> This temporal sensitivity, however, generally has not situated these changes within their cultural contexts or analyzed how they have been perceived and experienced by Indigenous people according to longstanding, locally constituted worldviews. Fully exploring the nuanced history of Native-Newcomer relations thus requires a greater recognition of the

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<sup>4</sup> See, for example, Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: Forms and Functions of Exchange in Archaic Societies*, trans. Ian Cunnison (London: Cohen West, 1969); Marshall Sahlins, *Stone Age Economics* (Chicago, IL: Aldine-Atherton Inc., 1972).; George Wenzel, Grete Hovelsrud-Broda, and Nobuhiro Kishigami, eds., *The Social Economy of Sharing: Resources Allocation and Modern Hunter Gatherers* (Osaka: National Museum of Ethnology, 2000); and Peter Schweitzer, ed., *Dividends of Kinship: Meanings and Uses of Social Relatedness* (New York: Routledge, 2000).

<sup>5</sup> See, for example, Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977); Noel Dyck, *What is the Indian 'Problem': Tutelage and Resistance in Canadian Indian Administration* (St. John's, Newfoundland: Institute of Social and Economic Research, Memorial University of Newfoundland, 1991); Sarah Carter, *Lost Harvests: Prairie Indian Reserve Farmers and Government Policy* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990); Frank Tough, *"As Their Natural Resources Fail": Native Peoples and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1996); and Cole Harris, *Making Native Space: Colonialism, Resistance, and Reserves in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

effect change has on cultural structures as well as the role culture plays in mediating human reactions to change over time.

My dissertation seeks to be innovative by contributing to Indigenous, Settler, and Native-Newcomer historiographies through the joining together of anthropological and historical methodologies. Employing methodologies associated with “new ethnohistory,”<sup>6</sup> it explores the continuity of sharing during times of significant social and cultural change while also shedding light on the way that sharing practices have changed despite their longevity and resilience. That is to say, I approach sharing as a particularly revealing example of change in continuity and continuity in change, one that illuminates the nuances of intercultural interaction. By taking seriously different cultural worldviews and treating both western and Indigenous sources as equally mytho-historical, a more balanced interpretation of Native-Newcomer relations can be generated – one that is informed by alternative historical consciousnesses and distinct cultural histories.

This approach generates several important insights in the history of Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in western Canada and their interactions. For example, it demonstrates that sharing has functioned as an important marker of collective identities in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities over the past 200 years. In *S’ólh Téméxw*, for example, in addition to insulating Indigenous communities from the unpredictability of local resources, sharing mediated power relations, connecting families in webs of mutual dependence and regulating interactions between discrete social classes. Although the lived experience of sharing likely deviated from these structures in ways we can not fully appreciate due to a lack of records about daily life, sharing nonetheless

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<sup>6</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, John Lutz, and David Schaepe, “Turning the Page: Ethnohistory from a New Generation,” *The University of the Fraser Valley Research Review* 2, no. 2 (2009): 2.



shaped Stó:lō society in important ways, serving as a lens through which to view and distinguish between self and other. It served a similar function in *Sakitawak/Kwoen*. Although not as stratified as their Stó:lō counterparts in coastal British Columbia, social relationships in northern Saskatchewan Cree, Dene, and Metis communities were expressed in socio-economic terms; sharing informed identity. More than hobbies or pastimes, sharing thus articulated and reinforced social connections across time and space to produce lasting, shared collective identities.

The importance of sharing is also evident in non-Indigenous communities around the turn of the eighteenth century. Sharing among Euro-Canadian populations forged bonds of solidarity between otherwise disconnected peoples. In European and Canadian settlements, especially urban centres with high population densities and frequent transience, people were not often part of expansive kin networks. Where strangers abounded, private fraternities, guilds, church congregations, took the place of kin, mimicked familial ties to create “imagined communities”<sup>7</sup> through the identities they shared. This connecting of otherwise disconnected peoples was experienced and expressed through the sharing of resources, namely food, time, and labour. Identity here was constituted through sharing.

This dissertation also analyses how collective identities changed over time. In both Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, identities were dynamic and adaptive. Rather than static organizations of people and unwavering connections, they were constantly in flux, adapting to changing social and economic circumstances both before and after first contact. This dynamism is particularly evident in instances of cross-

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<sup>7</sup> See Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso, 1991).

cultural interaction, when culturally distinct forms of sharing and their associated collective identities came into contact. During the Canadian “fur trade,” for example, an event I argue can be better understood as the “intercultural exchange,” Natives and newcomers forged genuinely hybrid<sup>8</sup> systems of sharing that combined Indigenous systems of kin-based sharing with Euro-Canadian sharing practices and the imagined communities they fostered. During this period of history, Natives and newcomers viewed each other largely as allies. Through the lens of sharing, strangers on both sides became known and familiar – sometimes even family – through the extension of social networks.

As Euro-Canadian immigration to Indigenous lands increased dramatically in the latter half of the nineteenth century and this era of intercultural exchange waned, systems of sharing changed in form and function to become increasingly hybrid. Settlers, missionaries, government agents, and other newcomers, many of whom viewed Indigenous people more as obstacles than as allies, gradually replaced fur traders in western Canada. Less interested in cross-cultural cooperation than they were in settling and restructuring Indigenous places, they saw sharing differently. Government officials, for example, reorganized sharing networks to facilitate nation building by placating and subduing Indigenous communities. Provisions, annuities, and relief were distributed through existing share networks but with the purpose of facilitating colonialism and the appropriation of Indigenous lands and resources. The power inherent in sharing was mobilized by newcomers to undermine the integrity and sovereignty of the very nations to which it gave meaning.

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<sup>8</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1994).

The role of sharing in Native-Newcomer relations shifted again in the twentieth century as the social distance between Natives and newcomers continued to increase. Growing Euro-Canadian populations and the ongoing alienation of Indigenous lands and resources rendered cross-cultural partnerships increasingly insignificant to newcomers, especially the Canadian government. Government expenditures on Aboriginal programs, especially social welfare and assistance, rose dramatically as the perceived “Indian Problem” entrenched itself as a principal concern among non-Indigenous governments. Indeed, by mid-century, “Indian” represented little more than an economic problem, a drain on the country’s financial resources and a fiscal liability.

Indigenous people, meanwhile, struggled to make sense of welfare payments. Situated at the intersection of longstanding Indigenous systems of sharing and emerging welfare state ideologies, welfare payments were interpreted as both modern adaptations of traditional cultural practices and as a process of assimilation into mainstream Canada. Welfare, in other words, represented at once change and continuity while also providing a language through which Indigenous people could articulate their views of and separate themselves from the non-Indigenous other. Through the lens of sharing, Native people viewed newcomers as greedy and selfish, incapable of, or unwilling to, share and, thus, markedly different from themselves. In socio-economic terms, Natives and newcomers were once again strangers, perhaps as strange to each other at this time as they had been at first contact.

### *The History of Sharing Today*

The “real world” implications of the history of sharing are evident in both *S’ólh Téméxw* and *Sakitawak/Kwoen*. Speaking to a group of non-Native university students and local Stó:lō community members in spring 2013, Kevin Garner referenced encroachments into his fishing area by Yale Band member fishers. Kevin fishes near Yale, BC, at the northern edge of Stó:lō territory in a disputed region where the local Yale First Nation asserts itself a historically independent political group straddling the middle ground between the Stó:lō and the Nlaka’pamux. The Stó:lō, however, consider the Yale people to be Stó:lō, and share a historical narrative that describes how Yale is the one remaining Stó:lō settlement in a region where there were previously seven Stó:lō villages. Industrial incursions and government mandates regarding the necessity of adopting commercial agriculture caused the residents of the other six settlements to relocate to the fertile valley below. Descendants of those who migrated consider that they retain seasonal fishing rights. Yale disputes this. Consequently, every spring, when Kevin sets his nets for the first salmon fishery of the year, he notices Yale nets are moving further and further downriver toward his own. In the ongoing boundary dispute, nets are routinely cut from their anchors and set adrift in the Fraser River and both Stó:lō and Yale people post notices asserting their rights to that part of the river.<sup>9</sup>

Aside from potentially threatening the Garners’ livelihood and Kevin’s ability to provide for his family, nuclear and extended, encroachments into his fishing grounds, whether by non-Indigenous people or by members of the Yale First Nation, also affect his ability to participate in what he considers traditional Stó:lō subsistence activities and

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<sup>9</sup> Kevin shared this information during a feast organized by students participating in the 2013 USask/UVic Ethnohistory Fieldschool in conjunction with Stó:lō Nation.

sharing networks. Without access to the river, Kevin worries that he will be unable to pursue these practices fully or teach his son Matt their cultural importance. Moreover, given the many modern alternatives to sharing, it could be more difficult for Matt to identify and remember the connection between sharing and his Stó:lō identity. Encroachments into fishing grounds and the erosion of sharing would, in other words, potentially undermine a defining feature of indigeneity in the Fraser River Valley and compromise the continuity that sharing has provided for Stó:lō people through dramatic colonial change.

Similar challenges face Indigenous people in northwest Saskatchewan. Today, the “stomachs of your neighbors” are not necessarily the “best ice box for game,” as Father Levasseur suggested they were in the first half of the twentieth century.<sup>10</sup> Although sharing among Cree, Dene, and Metis peoples remains “a pattern for living,” technological shifts and ongoing acculturation have changed the way people interact with each other and the natural environment. As anthropologist James Smith observed, most sharing since the 1970s has been restricted to immediate family members at the expense of wider social networks and kin groups. Rather than sharing food and other resources widely, freezers fill the role neighbours’ stomachs once did. Through modernization and increased globalization, “Speaking cree,”<sup>11</sup> as discussed in Chapter Seven, is becoming increasingly less common.

These changes pose major challenges for the maintenance of Indigenous communities and identities across Canada as well as for cross-cultural relationship

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<sup>10</sup> Canada, Department of Indian and Northern Affairs, RG10-C-VI, 1956-1959. Social Welfare, Saskatchewan – The 4P File: Policy, Principles, Procedure, Practice. Circular no. 10.1: 1-2.

<sup>11</sup> M. Rossignol, “Property Concepts Among the Cree of the Rocks,” *Primitive Man* xii, no. 3 (July 1939): 69-70.

building. My approach to the history of sharing situates change within a balanced and nuanced ethnohistorical framework that better encapsulates peoples' lived experiences than does the historiography mentioned above. By engaging Indigenous historical consciousness and perspectives of sharing, for example, this dissertation decentres historical interpretations that privilege western worldviews and written documents. Drawing on oral historic and ethnographic materials, it represents a sustained attempt to craft an Indigenous interpretation of cross-cultural relations informed by Indigenous worldviews and contextualized within Indigenous cultural structures. In so doing, I ask readers to re-situated

The conventional understanding of the relationship between Indigenous and Canadian history. Rather than approaching Indigenous history as a subfield of Canadian history, this dissertation joins a growing body of ethnohistorical scholarship that explores Canadian history as a subfield of Indigenous histories. Contrary to the views of early Euro-Canadian explorers and agents of colonization, the arrival and actions of newcomers are not necessarily the most important occurrences within Native societies.<sup>12</sup> Although not recorded in written form, Indigenous histories are ancient, rich, and diverse. Rebalancing the history of Native-Newcomer relations thus requires a greater awareness of engagement with cultural interpretations of the past and historical consciousness. As a central feature of Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultures as well as cross-cultural interactions, the history of sharing provides a particularly productive means for rebalancing our interpretations of the past.

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<sup>12</sup> See Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, The Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010), 19.

This history of sharing also problematizes conventional definitions of economics and economic behaviour. Whereas sharing today is often seen as a charitable act commonly associated with philanthropy, the role of sharing in Indigenous communities reveals this perspective to be culturally and temporally limited. Rather than an altruistic act, sharing has, and continues, to function as a determinant of power. In Indigenous communities, where leaders were required to share wealth and resources and lower classes were obligated to accept these “gifts,” sharing normalized prevailing relations of power. The story of “speaking Cree” referenced in the previous chapter, in which Father Rossignol, by complementing a Cree woman’s dog, unknowingly asked her to give him the animal, illuminates the cultural imperative not only of giving but also of receiving. Generosity and the acceptance of gifts were not optional. Systems of sharing justified elites’ access to productive resources sites and modes of production while simultaneously rationalizing non-elites’ lower status. The act of giving was equated with power; the act of receiving equated with powerlessness. Under this definition, Indigenous socio-economies appear not as backward, primitive, or anti-modern but as culturally unique systems of social organization comparable and equal to settler ones. In broadening our understanding of economics in this way, nuanced analyses of sharing open new avenues of inquiry into and dialogue between alternative socio-economic structures and practices.

Lastly, analyzing the history of sharing contributes to more nuanced histories of Native-Newcomer relations and identity formation. As revealed by the name of the field itself, the field of Native-Newcomer historiography implicitly privileges ethnocultural identities – Indigenous and non-Indigenous – as the most important categories of analysis and identity. These differences are undeniable, as is their historical importance. Yet,

ethnocultural categories are intersected and influenced by other markers of difference, particularly class and gender. Lower class people, for example, due to their lack of access to productive resources, modes of production, and wealth, shared certain socio-economic identities that transcend cultural boundaries. Horizontal sharing practices were, and in some cases remain, a defining feature of non-elite families and an important marker of commonality and collective identities in Native and newcomer communities. Elite families, meanwhile, were joined together across cultural lines by their control of resources and wealth. In both Indigenous and non-Indigenous contexts, upper class peoples were the redistributors of wealth; although the mechanisms of sharing were culturally specific, elites were the givers, not the receivers, a distinction central to their collective identities.

Gender represents another important identity marker and category of analysis. Within both Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations, women had differential access to sharing networks and other forms of exchange. Although Native cultures were more likely to provide opportunities for legitimate social, economic and political influence for women than were their newcomer counterparts, neither the culture nor class to which a woman belonged determined her role within systems of sharing. Despite some ongoing gender scholarship and popular discourses that portray women as givers of life and other necessities, women did not necessarily act as givers. Regardless of their social standing or cultural identity, women generally did not control resources, wealth, or forms of redistribution, especially vertical ones. This positionality is particularly evident in examining the growth of the welfare state in the twentieth century as social assistance payments, family allowance, and other government transfers granted women greater



access to and control of wealth, though these amounts were always limited and closely monitored in accordance with state priorities.<sup>13</sup> Combined with the significance of class and socio-economic standing, these gendered experiences challenge the primacy of ethnocultural markers of difference. Both Native and newcomer collective identities – and their views of other collectives – have been informed by an array of identity markers, all of which are complicated, dynamic, and malleable.

An examination of the history of sharing thus challenges us to reinterpret Native-Newcomer history in western Canada. It presents a window into Indigenous and non-Indigenous worldviews and cultural perspectives; it reframes pivotal events and processes in the history of Native-Newcomer relations; and it engages an important marker of collective identity as well as a primary lens through which Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have viewed themselves and others. It reveals the dual processes of continuity in change as well as change in continuity, appearing as both the epicentre of dramatic socio-cultural change and a refuge from devastation wrought by settler colonialism. It has contributed to the tenacity of Indigenous worldviews and identities while simultaneously stimulating cross-cultural adaptation and hybridity. From fishing sites on the bank of the Fraser River to the freezers of northwest Saskatchewan, sharing contributes to our livelihoods, mediates our views of each other, and informs our shared identities.

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<sup>13</sup> See Nancy Christie, *Engendering the State: Family, Work, and Welfare in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2000).

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