# THE IROQUOIS: VOYAGEURS OF THE NORTH-WEST AND OREGON TERRITORIES

by

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis will posit that the *Iroquois* migrations into the Northwest and Oregon Territories are misunderstood in their interactions amongst both the Indigenous and frontiersmen. By Iroquois we specifically mean the French-speaking and Catholic Iroquois who settled in New France in Sault St. Louis (1680), Lac des Deux-Montagnes (1717) and in 1755 when the St. Régis Mission was established. After 150 years of acculturation (1650s to 1800s), these *Iroquois* had become a hybrid culture with a syncretic Catholicism. The *Iroquois* immigrated to the Saskatchewan River in 1799 to escape 'improvements of civilization' in the east and to follow the mode of life of their forefathers. Peter Fidler's three versions of the Chesterfield House incident, where 14 Iroquois and 2 Canadiens were killed, will be analyzed to provide a new understanding of the role of the Iroquois as central actors in the fur trade rivalries.



Keywords: Haudenosaunee, Mohawk, syncretism, deputation, Chesterfield House, Peter Fidler, pioneer.

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# INTRODUCTION

The historian Alfred A. Cave in one of his works *Prophets of the Great Spirit: Native American Revitalization Movements in Eastern North America* demonstrates that syncretic and revitalization strategies were workable delay tactics during the North American Indians' forced acculturation (2006: 5-6, note 7). In this research, however, I am examining the history of those Iroquois who voluntarily converted to Catholicism. In the 17th century, Jesuits ventured to the *Haudenosaunee* traditional territories. These missionaries converted some of the inhabitants of the Five Nations of the 17th century Iroquois League, including prisoners that had been adopted into their society. Many of these converts facing condemnation and threats in their home communities, chose to resettle in New France, notably the Jesuit missions and seigneuries created for this purpose. Initially there was the Laprairie Mission (otherwise known as Kentaké) established through a gift of land in 1647 by Sieur de Lauzon to the Jesuits (Devine 1922: 20), following is the establishment of Sault St. Louis (otherwise known as Kahnawáke) founded in 1680 and Lac des Deux-Montagnes (otherwise known as Kanesatake) founded in 1717, later named Oka. Sault St. Louis was relocated to the south shore of the Saint Lawrence River in Quebec farther away from Montréal in an area away from the vices and rum runners. A fourth settlement, Mission de St. Régis (otherwise known as Akwesasne), was founded in 1755 in the midst of the Seven Years War which ended with the Conquest of New France by the British. All are now Mohawk Territories and reserves except for La Prairie.

The Iroquois being discussed should not be directly equated with the contemporary Iroquois living in Québec, Ontario and the United States as significant cultural and linguistic changes occurred after the period under study. I argue that a metamorphosis occurred

whereby the Christian Haudenosaunee, who fled to New France in the mid 17th century to the Jesuit seigneuries, due primarily to the persecution of their own people, developed into an Iroquois contingent that migrated to the Northwest as voyageurs and *engagés*. These *Iroquois* not only came out of the north-eastern geographical space as suitable employees for the fur trading North West Company, they also held Christian values, spoke French, and some of them brought their wives and cultivated agricultural strategies. More importantly, they were able to pass on these new-found cultural adaptations to those who might be seeking an alternate *raison d'être* to their plight in life. These Iroquois were some of the "intruders" who branched into the Northwest Territories. In this sense, they can be considered—as some anthropologists and historians might suggest—part of a group of "pioneers" who settled the region. The term pioneer and its associated imagery is not normally associated with First Nations people; however, the Iroquois, as recorded in the journals and history books, were not simply the Indians described by European settlers and explorers, they also helped settle and establish colonial structures in the North-West and Oregon Territories. This research highlights the role and occupation of the Iroquois during this settlement period through an examination of the historical record. Indeed, Trudy Nicks (1980b) argues that the visibility of the Iroquois in written accounts makes them "a useful model for studies on the post-contact development of descendant Native populations in the Canadian West and North-West United States" (1980b: 96).

While the response to the arrival of the Iroquois in the Northwest did not carry a reputation as formidable as the Gros Ventres (Atsina) who contended for access of resources and sustainability at a higher level than most North Central First Nations people, they were generally disliked by other groups because of their single-minded hunting practices. It was

these practices which gave the North West company the edge in the trade prior to its 1821 merger with the Hudson Bay Company (Nicks 1980b: 91-92). This research explains how Iroquois trappers were willing to "pioneer a beaver-rich, if often game poor area." Their occupation of thinly populated areas undoubtedly served to mitigate violent confrontations. Iroquois trappers, primarily due to overhunting, were also highly mobile, travelling to new areas as they exhausted fur supplies in existing trapping regions (Nicks 1980b: 91-92).

This thesis seeks to answer two main questions. The first being the role of Catholicism and Christian religious belief in the lives of those Iroquois who migrated to the territory of New France in the Saint Lawrence. Did the religious conversion, even if it entailed syncretism, shape the culture of the 18$^{th}$ century Iroquois making them ideal recruits for the North West Company as it fought the Hudson's Bay Company for control of the fur trade? To answer this question, the religious beliefs and practices recorded by clerics and others in the Pacific Northwest are examined to flesh out the sometimes-sparse information contained in the HBC archives concerning the Iroquois religious beliefs.

The second question entails the role played by Peter Fidler in the murder of 14 Iroquois and two Canadiens near Chesterfield House in 1802. It is argued that the Iroquois were seen as a threat as they were excellent trappers, leading to losses for the HBC. As they were French-speaking Catholics, this certainly did not gain them many friends in some very Orange Order Protestant HBC quarters. Exploring the circumstantial evidence provided in Peter Fidler's multiple iterations of his notes and journal entries suggests that it is possible to shed new light on this old tragedy.

This thesis examines not only the misrepresentation which the *Haudenosaunee* suffered initially, but also provides a historical account of those who converted to Catholicism and relocated to New France. When I speak of the Iroquois in this thesis, I am specifically referring to the inhabitants of the three communities noted above: Sault St. Louis, Lac des Deux-Montagnes and St. Régis. The main premise of this thesis is that it is necessary to understand the process of conversion and inevitable syncretism to fully appreciate the culture of the Iroquois that heeded the call of the fur trade and headed out west. This religious conversion along with its ensuing cultural hybridity made these Indigenous peoples valued employees of the fur trade, second only in number to the *Canadien*, the descendants of the French settlers of New France.

### *The Archival Sources*

The *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence: Edmonton House 1795-1800, Chesterfield House 1800-1802* include the reports of HBC officers who were assigned to these outposts: William Tomison (1795-6), George Sutherland (1797-8), James Bird (1799-1800), and Peter Fidler (1801-02). Peter Fidler's notes while at the Chesterfield House in 1800 to 1802 were first recorded as field observations and rough notes; he then rewrote these notes in two other journals. The post journal from 1799-1800 was obtained by J.B. Tyrell from George Ray, who was the district manager at York Factory, ca. 1910. Tyrell donated the journal to the Archives Department of the Hudson's Bay Company in 1952. A transcription made of this journal before it was donated and was kept in Tyrell's papers now preserved in the Thomas Fisher Rare Book Organization at the University of Toronto Library (Fisher 2019). The rough version of the events was recorded in the Fort Chipewyan post journal from 1801-1803. Johnson in her edited volume presents the information from two

Chesterfield House post journals from 1800 to 1802, though she refers to the two other journals in her footnotes. Fidler had left all of his journals to the 'concern,' as the HBC was called by its officers, in his will. All these versions present slightly different variations of the events surrounding the killing of 16 NWC recruits.

### *Organization of the Thesis*

In chapter one, we will see how the Iroquois distinguished themselves as a courageous and fearless nation. Resisting the encroachment of Europeans in their territory from the 16th to the 21st century, they became a member of the Canadian mosaic while maintaining facets of their traditional ways. The American Indian people to the South call themselves *Haudenosaunee* (people of the longhouse), but the name "Iroquois" today conveys a certain sense of dour resoluteness. An Innu (Montagnais) description relayed to Samuel Champlain in the early seventeenth century calls the people to the south of the Innu as "formidable men, men to fear" (Arnaud 1880: 153). This reputation would pursue them to the North-West and Oregon Territories. Dr. Kurt Jordan whose work primarily involves the restoration of Seneca cultural habitats states that Champlain was at odds with the *Haudenosaunee* right from the get-go since he was involved in 1609 with their defeat (though it was more likely the Mohawks, one of the five members of Iroquoian League). This defeat occurred at a battle near Ticonderoga, now in the state of New York on the southern end of Lake Champlain, where Champlain formed an alliance with the Wendat (Huron), Algonquian, and Montagnais (Jordan 2008: 4).

Chapter two examines the consolidation of the Iroquois in the three communities established in New France as well as the emergence of a truly Iroquois Catholicism. One of

the best-known Iroquois Catholics was Kateri Tekakwitha a martyred Catholic convert who is now a Catholic saint. This chapter will set the stage for our understanding of the Iroquois participation in the continental fur trade starting in the 1780s.

Chapter three begins with a discussion that details the Iroquois involvement in the fur-trading companies in the late 17th and early 18th century. Because they were experienced canoeists, fur trappers, and voyageurs, the Christian Iroquois were given contracts alongside French-Canadian voyageurs. To emphasize, the Iroquois which were mostly Mohawks, were coveted for their abilities as canoe men, ruthless talents as trappers, and their fearsome warrior reputation. Since both groups were influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, spoke French, and possessed both skill and experience with the required duties, it was no feat for the Iroquois to be comfortable and prepared for the advance to the West. To clarify once more, we are dealing with the *Haudenosaunee* who took refuge in the Roman Catholic missions in New France from the second half of the 17th century and the 18th century. Information from the Oregon Territory will be included to flesh out our understanding of the role of Catholicism in the lives of the Iroquois. The primary documents from this territory make it evidently clear that the Iroquois who headed west were devout Catholics. This chapter also delves into the influence these Iroquois had on spreading the Christian message to other Indigenous peoples and how this influence resulted in local First Nations in the Oregon Territory sending deputations to St. Louis to bring back Catholic prelates. This chapter follows the syncretic religion and Catholicism that encouraged this proselytizing by these Iroquois—some even garnering reputations as 'apostles'—and alternatively finding a place within the communities of the Flatheads (Salish), Nez Percé, and Pend d'Oreille in the Oregon Territory. Ultimately, the Iroquois and their descendants established communities

with the people who occupied the Eastern range of the Rocky Mountains, in hamlets such as Jasper, Grande Cache, Grande Prairie, Lac St-Anne in Alberta, and Kelly Lake in British Columbia.

Chapter four examines the competition that existed between the fur trading companies, resulting at times in the death of fur trappers aligned with rival companies. In truth, most fur trappers were aware of the dangers that stemmed from being intruders in virgin trapping territories occupied by different First Nations. But the early western saga of Chesterfield House demonstrates that the danger did not only lie with some of the hostile nations of the North-West and Oregon Territories but in the severity of competition (and underlying prejudice and bigotry) between the rival fur trading companies. I examine how the stories recorded of these violent events vacillate between 'incidents' and 'massacres', depending upon the point of view—or of the commercial fur-trapping association—being put forward in the historical record. I suggest that Peter Fidler, HBC officer in charge of the company's interest at Chesterfield House was in all likelihood responsible for the death of 12 men, including 10 Iroquois. Not only are there odd discrepancies in various versions of the events which he records as having transpired, he seems privy to details which he should not have normally known. This is something that the existing literature has not proposed. A close analysis of the discrepancies in Peter Fidler's account suggests that the violence was in fact instigated or incited by the Master of the Chesterfield House of the Hudson Bay Company himself to protect his 'concern,' his employees and his family.

Chapter five asks whether the Iroquois could be included among the "pioneers" of the Northwest and Oregon Territories. McDougall et al (2018) in *Before and After the State: Politics, Poetics, and People(s) in the Pacific Northwest* speculate and arrive at a conclusion

that the Iroquois were omitted as true pioneers who had a dominant influence in establishing the West in the 18th and 19th centuries. Building on this premise, this research suggests that the Iroquois were the pioneer "mountain men" (according to historians Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge 2001: 44), that they were pioneers of the gospel (according to Father P.J. de Smet 1915: 99); that they were pioneer explorers (Thomas the Iroquois) who successfully took David Thompson on the western side of the Rockies by the Athabascan River Pass (1960: 239 Vol. 11). Likewise, the Iroquois were (pioneer) settlers of the areas around Dunvegan and Vermillion in Alberta (Frisch 1976), Tête-Jaune (Smyth 1984), Kelly Lake and Finlay Forks and beyond (British Columbia). I also suggest that these Iroquois pioneers were shaped by the events which took place at Chesterfield House and in my conclusion examine how these events influenced the development of the Canadian state.

# CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW

Though much has been published on the fur trade, the Iroquois and even the Iroquois who ventured West, little research has sought to understand the early history of those Iroquois who converted to Catholicism and how this conversion, and syncretism, would later facilitate their recruitment in the fur trade and migration to distant locales in the Pacific Northwest. This literature review provides an overview of the forces which led to the conversion of some Iroquois to Catholicism and their relocation to territory in the Saint Lawrence Valley during the French Regime with later accounts of the Iroquois and how they came to figure in the fur trade while others were noted for their role in the spread of Catholicism in the Pacific Northwest. This review serves as an essential prelude to better understanding the role of the Iroquois in the fur trade and how fourteen Iroquois recruits came to be killed in the vicinity of Chesterfield House.

## *1.1 What is in the Name Iroquois?*

The historic period for the *Haudenosaunee* originates from the very first explorers of North America in the 16th century. At the onset France allied itself with the Algonquin and Wabanaki Nations, mortal enemies with the five members of the Iroquois League: the Mohawk, Onondaga, Oneida, Cayuga, and Seneca Nations. As more players were added to bolster the Eastern miscellany (i.e. the Portuguese, the Dutch, and the English), the Iroquois started to forge their own alliances. Known as the "Beaver Wars," the era between 1642 and 1698 saw the Iroquois make their first allegiance to European powers. Even though their common foe in this period was the French and their Aboriginal allies, the Iroquois switched loyalties from the Dutch to the English, who took a stranglehold on the Eastern Coast by

establishing their thirteen colonies. Who were these new allies – these Iroquois – who so markedly changed the playing field in the fur trade competitive landscape?

Arguably, naming the indigenous people who came to the North West and Oregon Territories via contractual employment for the North West Company (NWC) can be better understood through an exploration of the etymology of how the term Iroquois came about. Indeed, the word 'Iroquois' demonstrates "how language can be manipulated by unsuspected circumstances and adapted as a colloquial preference to the *Haudenosaunee* Confederacy' (Day 1968: 389-402)." Gordon Day (1911-1993) was an Anthropologist, some of his ethnographic research related to Abenaki settlements in New England and at Odanak, Québec. According to some historians, at the beginning of the 17th century, the name Iroquois was given to the *Haudenosaunee* by the Montagnais people when Samuel Champlain inquired about who their neighbours were to the south. Champlain logs in his journals "les irocois" (Day 1968:389-402). Day refers to an Oblate Father Charles Arnaud who was with the Montagnais for approximately 30 years and who became proficient in the Montagnais language.

> Champlain qui a entendu ces noms pour la première fois de la bouche des Montagnais, ses alliés, comme il les appela, et avec lesquels il voyageait dans ses découvertes, les a appliqués aux nations dont on lui parlait et a francise ces noms: Iroquois, irrokué en Montagnais, homme redoutable, homme à craindre. Je vous ai déjà fait observer que les lettres ***Irn*** se confondent et qu'on peut très bien dire irokue: pour homme terrible, redoutable. Cette nation était redoutable en effet à toutes les autres [Arnaud 1880: 153].

Arnaud contested that the 'irocois' came from a Montagnais word 'irrokué' which meant "*home redoubtable, home à craindre*" – "formidable man, a man to fear" (1880: 153).

Another incident where language has been manipulated to furnish a name comes once again from the French. Pierre François Xavier de Charlevoix (1682–1761) was a French Jesuit priest, traveller, and historian often considered the first historian of New France. One of his writings *Histoire et description générale de la Nouvelle France avec le Journal Historique d'un voyage fait par ordre du Roi dans l'Amérique Septentrionale* was directed towards the King of France. The explanation out of Charlevoix's writings (1744: 270-271) as to why we call the *Haudenosaunee Iroquois*:

> Le nom d'Iroquois est purement Français, & a été formé du terme *Hiro*, ou *Hero*, qui signifie, *J'ai dit*: et par lequel ces Sauvages finissent tous leurs discours, comme les Latins faisaient autrefois par leur *Dixi*; et de *Koué*, qui est un cri, tantôt de joie, quand on le prononce plus court. Leur non propre est *Agonnonfionni*, qui veut dire *Faiseurs de Cabannes*; parce qu'ils les bâtissent beaucoup plus solides que la plupart des autres Sauvages.

To paraphrase the translation, the name *Iroquois* is purely French, and it was formed by the idiom *Hiro*, or *Hero*, which means, "*I said*:" and with which these Indigenous people ended all their conversations, similar to the Latin which can be otherwise noted by their *Dixi*; and the *Koué*, which is a yell, sometimes of joy, when it is uttered in a short manner. Their proper name is *Agonnonsionni* (*Haudenosaunee* depending on dialect form), which translates as "makers of cabins" (Longhouses), because they built them more solid then the other Indigenous peoples (Charlevoix 1744: 271). Ultimately, *Iroquois* is a French invention or colloquialism. In a way, this is a bit misleading since the Iroquois were comprised after 1722 of six different Nations and in the same context but with a more in depth literature review the Iroquois that came out West, if not almost all, were Mohawks from Sault Saint-Louis with additional small numbers from Lac des Deux-Montagnes and St-Regis (Devine 1922: 27; St-Onge 2016: 5). Large fur trade companies specifically used Mohawks from the village of

Kahnawake, relying on their warrior tradition and reputation for fierceness, to intimidate both the canoe brigades of rival companies and in the west potentially hostile Native peoples (Karamanski 1982: 5-6).

### *1.2 Conversion and Identity: Iroquois Christianity in Seventeenth-Century New France*

The Beaver Wars (1642-1698) saw the Iroquois adapt new strategies in obtaining recruits to replace comrades lost to disease and skirmishes against the French and their allies (the Huron, Algonquin, Montagnais, and the Wabanaki League). One particular strategy was to turn their 'Mourning Wars' (essentially retaliatory raids) into an advantage by helping to keep their military strength resilient. This type of warfare was adapted in part to help women and family members of fallen warriors cope with the grieving process (Richter 1983: 533 n. 20-21). Daniel Richter, Professor of History at the University of Pennsylvania, has extensively researched and written about the Eastern Woodland cultures. Richter states that even though the Iroquois were quite reputable in their methods of warfare, they were afflicted by infectious diseases and their offspring did not rejuvenate proportionally to their warriors lost in combat (Richter 1983: 531-534). To counter this dilemma, they introduced a statute in agreement at the Great Councils with all participating League members, that they should start taking prisoners. Captured men, women, and children could be adopted into the Iroquois League. Eschewing adoption, uncooperative prisoners would be left to the grieving wives and mothers, resulting in torture or even being burned at the stake. This cultural adaptation sufficiently replenished the Iroquois' ranks (Richter 1983: 531-534). J.R. Miller, professor of History, who examines in one of his writings *Lethal Legacy: Current Native Controversies in Canada* (2004) notes that the *Haudenosaunee* is a matrilineal and matrilocal society in which the chiefs/sachems were elected by the clan mothers. As such, these

"mournful wars" served to relieve the grief of the wives and mothers of the fallen warriors (2004: 57).

After a while, there would have been quite an accumulation of captives from a number of different Nations, including French men, women, and children. Along with these new people's needs there were some challenges motivating them to be compliant. At this time in the mid 17th century, there would be quite a number of First Nations (aside from the French, Huron, Algonquin, and Wabanaki League of the upper Saint Lawrence River) where faith in the Roman Catholic religion was dominant. During peace times in order to placate the Catholic captives, the Iroquois brought Jesuit missionaries to minister to their spiritual needs (Richter 1985:8). However, the results of such an intercession were not necessarily as intended so explains Peter Duignan (1958: 725-32) in his ethnographic analysis of Jesuit writings:

> Doubtless, however, the considerations that induced Iroquois to become Catholics to those that influenced Indians elsewhere to turn Christian: social and ideological disorientation resulting from disease and other aspects of European led many to seek new religious answers; the evidently superior Christian God impelled some to abandon traditional deities; and material benefits - food, clothing, tools, medicines - brought others into the missionaries' orbit.

However, this close encounter between the new adoptees and the grieving wives and mothers overseeing them were subjected to daily testimonial to the Roman Catholic faith. As Iroquois tradition dictated that lineage be matrilineal, these wives and mothers being influenced by the Jesuit teachings were the same women who spoke for the Clan at the council fires. J.R. Miller (2004: 57) who examines current indigenous controversies in Canada notes:

> Iroquoians were matrilineal and matrilocal peoples, meaning that they traced kinship through the mother's family, and when a man married, he relocated to the longhouse of his bride's family. Much of the prominence of Iroquois women's public role seems to have stemmed from their contribution to agriculture. In short, farming was women's work, with the result that women controlled the food supply and thereby gained great influence.

Soon, these grieving mothers and wives, having been exposed to the Roman Catholic faith, were inspired by the fervour and zeal of the missionaries and the new converts; so much so, that some were ultimately convinced to convert to the faith of the Christians:

> Christian factions, then, encompassed three sets of social networks, and therein lay a dilemma: factional alignments cut across the lineages, clans, and moieties that defined Iroquoian political structures. In the consensual politics of Iroquois councils, disputes were usually resolved - if they were settled at all - through a process of patient discussion in which clans or moieties advocated opposite sides of an issue until agreement emerged … to the extent that Garakontie, Assendasse, and other converted headmen spoke for Christian clans, they conformed to familiar patterns. But because spouses (who were necessarily of different clans) proselyte each other, and because so many converts were adoptees (who were purposely scattered among various lineages), the formation of Christian factions could severely disrupt village politics [Richter 1985: 9].

This eventful turnover, from spiritual awareness to a belief unorthodox to the pre-existing animism that was predominant in most Indigenous belief systems, would be caused by missionaries—not by the power of what they preached, but rather by the dynamism of their convictions. Peter J. Duignan a senior fellow at the Hoover Institution has written extensively on comparative colonial history, in his "Early Jesuit Missionaries: A Suggestion for Further Study" work he outlines the progressive attraction of Roman Catholic values (1958: 725-732):

> In addition, Jesuits, unlike Protestant missionaries, skilfully employed incense, bells, paintings, and spectacle in ceremonies that sometimes paralleled Indian religious practices and often reached potential converts through each of the physical senses. But perhaps the explanation is both less complex and more profound. Frequently, an initial attraction to the missionaries - for whatever reason must have become a heartfelt conversion simply because of the Jesuits' ceaseless efforts, evident dedication, and willingness to share in the lives of their charges. A message delivered often enough and sincerely enough by a respected figure was bound, sooner or later, to win adherents.

This in turn influenced some of the sachems, progressing to the point where some sceptics thought the ‘black robes’ were harbingers of coercion who wrought havoc on the law-making processes of the League. To make their point clearer, the unbelievers were starting to convince their people that their woes such as losing in battle and the scourge of infectious diseases were directly linked to these missionaries who were turning their own people against the League of the *Haudenosaunee*:

> Perhaps, then, the violence should be seen not only as an effort by traditionalists to force deviants back into line but also as evidence of the formation of divergent communities within single villages. Christians were no longer the traditionalists' kinsmen. They were, in some respects, their enemies [Richter 1985:10].

We can also see the persecution and ostracism inflicted upon the new generation of converts within the Onondaga. One sachem of the Onondaga, Garakontie—having been converted to the Roman Catholic faith through a spiritual experience—was persecuted for his beliefs. Richter (1985: 10) utilizes a reference from the *Jesuit Relations* (Volume LVII: 137-39) to describe the animosity the converted were subject to:

> Such behaviour, said Garakontie's opponents, revealed "that he was no longer a man; that he had become French; that the black gowns had turned his head;

> and that, since he had abandoned the customs of the Country, he had also ceased to have any affection for it. During intermittent peace treaties where prisoners were exchanged, missionaries spent their time encouraging new converts to move up north around Montréal where the Jesuits had founded a mission in and around 1672 at Sault Saint-Louis. They were easily convinced, having been persecuted to the point that they feared for their lives and could not practice their faith and ceremonies in peace.

Richter (1985: 11) in his discussion of persecution cites another passage from the *Jesuit Relations* which states:

> While traditionalist ranks solidified, Christian forces shrank through departures for mission villages in the St. Lawrence Valley. Migration began as a trickle in the late 1660s and grew to a flood after 1673, when the Jesuits altered their missionary tactics. "To make them good Christians in their own country is a difficult thing," concluded Jean de Lamberville, Superior of the Five Nations missions. His solution was to isolate proselytes in separate villages where "it would be very easy to make worthy Christians of them in a short time" [Jesuit Relations LVII: 69-71].

This migration to the Canadian missions, that would become reserves in a more distant future, was the beginning of a new era for the Iroquois that migrated. When priests began to encourage Christian factionalists to escape the political violence and pagan ways of Iroquoia for the more pious environment of New France reserves as Sault Saint Louis near Montréal and Lorette close to Québec, hundreds heeded the advice (Richter 1985: 11).

Even given this cultural adaptation, the exact outcome is a matter for deliberation. Was this conversion of the *Haudenosaunee* outright to the Catholic faith, or had they simply adapted syncretically the religion for reasons outside of spiritual needs and desires? It is discussed and suggested that it was not merely the religious conversions that motivated Mohawks, as well as other native populations to the Montreal-area settlements. Marie Lise

Vien (2013: 42) and Nicole St-Onge (2016: 7) state many more came due to commercial possibilities linked to the Montreal-based fur trade network and others were lured by a desire to distance themselves from the strife and warfare that persisted in the Mohawk Valley.

### *1.3 Dispossession of the Iroquois Land Base at Sault St. Louis*

A disagreement occurred between the Jesuits and the Iroquois in the management of the seigneuries in and around Sault St. Louis. It develops by the dispossession of the land that the Iroquois thought was theirs to work on and develop. In 1762 the Iroquois from Sault St. Louis brought the Jesuits before the British military court in Montreal because as they said, they were being deprived of their rights and livelihood (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 31-32). There was increasing scrutiny of the land-hungry French farmers, for the Jesuit seigniors rent-paying French farmers seemed more attractive than the Iroquois. Again, in 1798, "26 chiefs and seigneurs" of the Sault sued the last living Canadian Jesuit, Jean Joseph Casot, in the court of the King's Bench but were unsuccessful and the Iroquois remained bitter towards the local French farmers encroaching upon their lands (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 33). With all these *mêlées* with the Jesuits and the Sulpicians, the faith of the Iroquois in the Roman Catholic Church might have diminished to a certain point and as a consequence the Iroquois would modify their beliefs to personify their resentments. After all, they were not the original converts from the *cantons* of New York state but the product of five to six generations of going through the ceremonies and rituals – a following of a paternalistic hierarchy that was now showing signs that they wanted to settle scores. Nevertheless, this might be the reason why Grabowski and St-Onge (2001) do not incorporate the Iroquois religious beliefs with their perseverance and fortitude in the North West. Again, if we do look at the politics and subservience carried on by the Jesuits pertaining to the dispossession

of the Iroquois land base, Grabowski and St-Onge would not include the Iroquois' hireable trait as having a Roman Catholic upbringing (2001: 31-33).

# CHAPTER 2: THE IROQUOISCATHOLIC KEEPERS OF A TRADITIONAL CULTURE

For those Iroquois moving West and actively engaged in the fur trade, Catholicism had become an integral part of their daily lives. This was a Catholicism tinged with Indigenous beliefs, but a belief which allowed them to easily work side by side with the *Canadien*, the term for the French-Canadians of the 18th and 19th centuries. This Catholicism was more than simply a religious conversion, it also entailed cultural convergence and a degree of acculturation. Though the Catholicism of the Iroquois is largely ignored in the accounts of the fur trade in the first decades of the 19th century, it is an element which certainly must not be overlooked. The challenge faced is that the clerks and partners do not say much as to the religious faith of the Iroquois in their journals, so this information must be obtained elsewhere. The religious fervour of the Iroquois, for example, is demonstrated in the delegations sent from Pierre's Hole in what is now Idaho to St. Louis, Missouri in the 1830s. The history of the conversion and relocation of the Iroquois is an integral part of the history of a large component of the fur trade, roughly one-third of all the NWC fur-trade employees were Iroquois (Foxcurran et al. 2016: 310). Their conversion and acculturation made them ideal recruits as they were excellent canoe men, hunters, and understood and could adhere to the hierarchical structure of the trading companies, whether the North West Company or the Hudson's Bay Company.

## *2.1 Initial Iroquoian Converts to Roman Catholicism up to the 1780s*

When we are referring to the Iroquois in this thesis, I am not referring to the Iroquois of the League and later on referred to the Confederacy, whether in Canada or the United

States, but specifically to the Iroquois of three communities in New France then Lower Canada (Québec) that were heavily recruited for the fur trade and out of which some headed out West. The history of these communities begins in the latter half of the 17th century. The Jesuit missionaries contributed to the acculturation of these newly transformed Iroquois into the New France paradigm and it is in the period of New France that the term Iroquois is coined and disseminated. To be clear, there was only a segment of the League who had seemingly converted to the Catholic faith that migrated North initially to avoid persecution from their own people and then politically on account of their allegiance with the British over the American Revolutionary war. Over 150 years (from roughly1650 to 1800) and approximately through six generations of Jesuit and Sepulchian missions, the Iroquois absorbed the culture and religion of the society of New France and the later British Colony of Canada.

### *2.2 The Ministration and Education of the Iroquois in the Regime of New France*

Notwithstanding all the work the missionaries accomplished with the converted *Haudenosaunee*, were there any real changes in the Iroquois perception of what Roman Catholicism had done for their outlook on the mysteries of their new-found faith? Their fresh vision of their cosmology produced revitalization within their new-found faith not only in their day-to-day existence but in how they now interpreted the world around them and the after-life. Questions remain, however, as to how much the Iroquois brought to the table and what characteristics of their past beliefs became intertwined with the dogmas and doctrines of the Roman Catholics.

The Iroquois of the Catholic missions had evolved—changed—as they headed out west as *engagés* for the North West Company (NWC). Foraging and hunting did not get in

the way of their religious duties like going to church or volunteering as altar boys and being part of the choir, the Iroquois children and adolescents did so without sway (La Potherie 1722). Iroquois children could nonetheless receive a basic education and a modicum of literacy before they were integrated into the adult economy of horticulture and foraging. The chronicler of the new world, Bacqueville de la Potherie, also known as Claude-Charles Le Roy, a French *raconteur* of New France is a primary source. His work, *Histoire de I'Amérique septentrionale*, is an account of French expeditions to the Great Lakes and Mississippi region in the late 17th century. The book was written in 1702 but not published until 1722. La Potherie (1722: 36) describes how the need for education fell by the wayside because the parents needed their offspring out there in the *chasse,* the hunt:

> Je vous ai donné, Mgr., une idée de l'Iroquois non Chrétien, vous voulez bien que je vous parle de ceux qui sont établis parmi les Français, il y en à deux Missions, l'une à la montagne de Montréal, qui est à une portée de canon de la Ville, & l'autre est au Sault Saint Loüis qui en *est* à trois lieuës. La religion Chrétienne & le commerce que cette Nation a eûë avec nous par la conduite judicieuse des Jésuites, « les a un peu humaniser depuis trente ans ». Les mœurs de ces gens si barbares & si farouches {fierce, wild} ont été adoucis sans doute par le Baptême, avant et après la guerre déclarée contre les Iroquois. Ils ont fait voir des marques d'humanité, & quand ils ont vû que les Iroquois leurs ennemis en abusaient, ils ont fait voire que le Christianisme n'est point opposé à la véritable valeur (emphasis and translation added by author).

La Potherie provides to the *Monseigneur* a description of what the converted Iroquois are like after 30 years of being among the two missions at "la montagne de Montréal" and Sault St-Louis. He states that the morals of these fierce and feral natives have abated since their baptism both before and after the French declared war on the *Haudenosaunee*. They were known to have semblances of humanity, he states, but even though they were Christians it did not prevent them to stand against any abusive

relations with valour. La Potherie (1722: 36) embellishes that the parents of the converted Iroquois children have deliberately omitted any conversations about the ancient superstitions and customs of their League. Thus, he envisaged that when the children grew up, these beliefs and customs would not act as stumbling blocks and lead them to losing their faith:

> Ces Iroquois convertis ont toujours eû soin que leurs enfants n'entendissent point parler des superstitions & des coûtumes de leurs païs, en leur faisant sucer la Foi avec le lait, ils font ce qu'ils peuvent afin que quand ces enfants sont grands ils ne demeurent plus au païs de peur qu'ils ne se perdent.

And again, the wellbeing of their children is emphasized where La Potherie argues that for children to go out hunting and fishing with their clan, they must first of all be of appropriate age or stature. To properly use weapons and fishing gear and hike the trails, an approximate age of 13 or 14 would be somewhat preferable. We can surmise that the children would have received seven to eight years of religious and secular instruction. Again, the argument put forward is that the children, when free to make the choice of receiving instruction or going off on the *chase*, the children would not be totally illiterate. La Potherie further adds the adventures of two great sachems of the Mohawk and the Onondaga, Hot-Cinder (*Cendre-Chaude*) and Captain Paul respectively. The great Mohawk chief, having defeated the Wolf Clan, became a Christian and learned the Christian prayers while he was in the forests during the hunting season. He confounded even the English proselytizers and brought over 50 of his own warriors to the Sault. He admitted that he was the one that sentenced Father Bréboeuf in 1649 to burn at the stake (La Potherie 1722: 40).

La Potherie (1722: 39) identifies how the Iroquois modified their lifestyle and religious views, but did not totally convert to the Roman Catholic faith:

> Quand elle fut morte son mari fit un Festin en forme de Testament, & dit aux assistants, vous savez que nous avons plusieurs superstitions dans nôtre païs touchant les funérailles; à présent que nous sommes Chrétiens, & que nous faisons prier Dieu pour les morts, je donne aux pauvres tout ce qui a appartenu à ma femme; il y avait pour cinquante écus de bardes en Colliers & autres choses. *Depuis ce temps on donne aux femmes qui ont fait la fosse, & aux pauvres, ce que ceux qui ne sont pas Chrétiens mettent dans la fosse avec le corps* [*Since that time, we give everything that we used to put in the grave to the women who dig the grave, also to the poor, we give away what the non-Christians put in the grave*] (emphasis and translation added by author).

The Iroquois adopted many aspects of Christianity over this period, including burial ceremonies, division of labour, and the education of children both in the scholarly and devotional aspects. These children were educated at the behest of the missionaries, but problems arose helping them obtain apprenticeships in iron works, carpentry, or manufacturing goods. The Fathers admitted that they were positive the Iroquois had the capabilities to enhance these professional skills, but the Iroquois tended to keep to their traditional roots. This was the concern: that the Iroquois children would keep honing their skills for the *chase* and fishing to the exclusion of other skills. Yet, this is precisely what would make them ideal recruits for the future North West Company.

Considering all this, devoted Iroquois Christians would not renounce their Christian faith even though the cruellest acts of torture, molestation, and fire were put upon them. Additionally, even though the missionaries managed to isolate these new converts and adoptees, they were hunted down at every opportunity by their people of the southern *cantons*. There is a list of Iroquois saints that Father de Charlevoix (1744) describes in his

writings who could not even leave the confines of their fortified missions for the fear of being spotted. But some did, and when recognized by their people from the 'infidel' villages, they were brought back to their own canton and there dealt with. "During the 1670s some converts were stripped of their chiefly titles; others became targets of verbal abuse, attacks by stone-throwing boys, and physical assaults" (Richter 1985:10). Father de Charlevoix gives examples in which he names witnesses to the facts of the Catholic martyrs: they are Catherine Tegahkouita [Kateri Tekakwitha], Étienne Tegananokoa, Françoise Gonannha Tenha, Marguerite Garangouas and Étienne Haohoentsiontaouet (Charlevoix 1744: 572, 587, 590, 592, 595 respectively). These converts were tortured and eventually left to die because they would not renounce their faith in the new religion. More on the fate of Charlevoix's martyr Kateri Tekakwitha. Kateri Tekakwitha baptized as Catherine and informally known as Lily of the Mohawks (1656 – April 17, 1680), is a Catholic saint who was an Algonquin-Mohawk laywoman. Born in the Mohawk village of Ossernenon, on the south side of the Mohawk River, she contracted smallpox in an epidemic; her family died and her face was scarred. She converted to Catholicism at age nineteen, when she was renamed Kateri, baptized in honour of Saint Catherine of Siena. Refusing to marry, she left her village and moved for the remaining five years of her life to the Jesuit mission village of Sault St. Louis, south of Montréal in New France. Tekakwitha took a vow of perpetual virginity. Upon her death at the age of 24, witnesses said that minutes later her scars vanished and her face appeared radiant and beautiful. Known for her virtue of chastity and mortification of the flesh, as well as being shunned by some of her tribe for her religious conversion to Catholicism, she is the fourth Native American to be venerated in the Catholic Church and

the first to be canonized. Kateri was beatified in 1980 by Pope John Paul II and canonized by Pope Benedict XVI at Saint Peter's Basilica in 2012 (Chauchetière 1695).

Furthermore, the martyrs, mentioned previously, would proclaim to those who were torturing them and those who were spectators what their new-found faith had given them and that the torturers should embrace and receive forgiveness for what they were doing (Charlevoix 1744:572-596). While Father Charlevoix was reporting his findings to the King of France Louis XV and that his project was sponsored by the King his writings might show a little flair towards their success with the conversion and adaptation of First Nations in New France.

### *2.3 Conversion or Syncretism*

We have before us a question: was the Christianization of the Iroquois a true conversion, or an adaptation through hybridization—or perhaps syncretism? As we approach an answer to this question, we can look at Kateri Tekakwitha's life. As one researcher points out, "she was born a Mohawk, but she died a symbol" (Koppedrayer 1993: 280). Daniel Richter (2001: 80) points out that Kateri falls into the same category of myth as the tale of Pocahontas in that it is "no more possible to prove that Kateri Tekakwitha lived a life of virgin purity and continues to work miracles to this day than to prove that the Jesus that in whom she is said to have believed is the Son of God." That said some people still believe in such things—not as fictions, but as meaningful, truthful ways of making sense of their world. James Oliver Robertson, an historian at the University of Connecticut, argues "that a myth is a story which explains a problem and very often the problem being solved by a myth is a contradiction or a paradox, something which is beyond the power of reason or rational logic

to resolve" (1980: 6). Kateri's mythic story provided meaning, hope, even healing for many who shared it; but on a broader, cultural level "the stories of Kateri and Pocahontas help to resolve the moral contradictions raised by the European colonization of North America and the dispossession of its native inhabitants" (Richter 2001: 81).

Gregory Dowd (1992: 1-9) states that in the Iroquoian cosmology - ancestors, animals, trees, winds, and waters were other-than-human persons, the impersonal force that permeated the world, observable in anything marvellous, beautiful, or dangerous, and with whom it was important to maintain mutually beneficial relationships. These impersonal forces and the relationships and ceremonies surrounding them contrast rather starkly to the specific set of dogmas, doctrines, or beliefs about the characteristics of particular spiritual beings in European Christianity (Dowd 1992: 3). David Blanchard (1982: 79-84) further adds to stay in touch with the spirit world besides prayer; there were vision quests through fasts, sweats, self-induced pain, and/or employing different herbal plants that affect the mind or behaviour. They were understood as means of achieving altered states of consciousness in which more direct relationships with other-than-human persons and the *Manitou* might be established.

Another picture of needful spiritual support would be as complex as preoccupying oneself with attachment to Roman Catholic missions. It is not hard to imagine and understand why young women trapped in such circumstances might find something attractive in the preaching of the French missionaries:

> Nor is it hard to imagine that, when the person now named Kateri left the Mohawk country to resettle at Kahnawake; she found the kinship, the social acceptance, and the spiritual power she never before had – under the tutelage of priests who supported her efforts and joined her in her chastity and

> penance, within a broader community that identified itself as both Indian and Catholic [Richter 1992b: 126-128].

James Ronda (1981) states that most presumably these converts found some sincere spiritual meaning in the beliefs they crafted from missionary teachings and their own religious traditions. In any number of ways, thousands of Native people thus found "a lifeboat to weather the storm" and "used Christianity to revitalize their lives in a world growing more and more unfriendly" (Ronda 1981: 392-393).

We can reason that many First Nations converts to Christianity came to deeply believe in the doctrines and practices of their new belief system, though without abandoning basic elements of the cultures of their birth. Oral tradition holds that the people of Kahnawake were called *ongwe honwe tehatiisontha*, "real men who make the sign of the cross" (Blanchard 1982: 90). And what was Christianity besides a way of making sense of their condition and mobilizing the spiritual power the missionaries inadequately described as grace? Kateri symbolizes one of the many ways in which Native Americans tried to come to grips with the challenges of the 17th century by incorporating people, things, and ideas from Europe while still having a world still of their own making (Richter 2001: 90).

*Syncretism* and *hybridity* both refer to a process of cultural interaction that result in a "mixed" outcome. Katharine Gerbner (2015: 139) states that while the terms have divergent histories, they have both come to be employed by historians to describe "non-European" conversions to Christianity. Of the two, the term most aligned with the study of religion is "syncretism." As the cultural historian Peter Burke's (2009: 48) states, 17th-century writers used "syncretism" in a derogatory sense to describe "a kind of religious chaos" and adds:

> Originally coined in the first century of the Common Era to refer to a "political alliance," it was redefined in the 17th century to describe the "mixing" of different religious groups. By the late 19th century, however, "syncretism" was deployed in a more positive way to explain the integration of multiple religious systems in classical antiquity. The term entered the field of anthropology in the first half of the 20th century through the work of Melville Herskovits (1941), who used it to explain the persistence of African religious traditions in African American practice.

As syncretism migrated into historical descriptions of conversion, it was used to emphasize the continuing influence of 'non-Christian' traditions after Christian conversion. This objective is evident in John Thornton's (1988) paper "On the Trail of Voodoo: African Christianity in Africa and the Americas". For Thornton, Christianity in Africa was syncretic because it "allowed the Africans to retain their old cosmology, their old understanding of the structure of the universe and the place of the gods and other divine beings in it" (1988: 278). Yet while syncretism offers historians the opportunity to demonstrate the continued relevance of 'non-Christian' religions, the term has been criticized for implying that religions are discrete entities that can mix with one another, producing a syncretic form (Gerbner 2015: 139). Responding to this criticism, some scholars have suggested updating the meaning of syncretism to represent an ongoing process among continually changing entities … they have argued that the study of syncretism is vitally important for understanding the evolution of religious traditions, none of which can be deemed 'pure' or 'whole'" (Gerbner 2015: 139).

While "syncretism" and "hybridity" have evolved to emphasize the ongoing processes of cultural interaction, they continue to be influenced by their etymological histories that imply "mixing" (Gerbner 2015: 139). Scholarship on Native North America in the past thirty years has shifted away from a condemnation of evangelization and conversion as part of the colonial agenda towards a more nuanced exploration of what Christian

conversion offered Native Americans (Gerbner 2015: 136). However, they still debate how native engagement with Christianity should be described:

> Were native Christian politically savvy opportunists who recognized that membership in a Christian community offered material benefits? Were they desperate refugees who sought to rebuild kinship networks within a Christian congregation? And furthermore, was conversion experienced as a single event of transformation or one element of a diverse religious practice [Gerbner 2015: 136]?

*The Invasion Within* (1986), a classic study by James Axtell, moves past the view that Natives were passive victims of evangelization. Axtell argued that *Indians* were historical agents who could convert Europeans to Native ways. He compared the varying success of French and English missions, "concluding that the French Jesuits succeeded more often because, among other things, they were less likely to condemn native practices" (Axtell 1986: 79-81). Since *The Invasion Within*'s publication, scholars have moved even further to examine Native experiences of Christian conversion. Daniel Richter (1992a) has argued that scholars need to shift their perspective away from missionary intentions and focus on Native appropriations of Christian practices. Though missionaries often rejected Native Christianity, some *Indians* incorporated Christian baptism and prayer into their own religious practice regardless of missionary judgment (Richter 1992a: 471-484).

Finally, Hugh Brody (2000) has made an interesting comment concerning the faith of First Nation's belief in Christianity. In his writing *On the Other Side of Eden* (2000) he ponders why some indigenous people are prone to believing and accepting Christianity. Brody quotes Pien, an elder of the Innu, stating that "The Innu religion is the religion of life. Christianity is the religion of death. We have to follow Innu ways in order to get our food

here on our land, to live - but we have to follow the Christians in order to get into heaven when we die. So, we need them both" (Brody 2000: 242). The difference between Christian and shamanistic beliefs and practices was the very thing that made hunter-gatherers willing to accept, or at least find room for, Christianity. "It is the spirituality of shamanism that has caused it to accommodate Christianity, a religion whose representatives dedicated themselves to getting rid of shamans and all that they stood for" (Brody 2000: 248).

It seems that recent scholarship has also rejected the notion that evangelization always represented a clash of cultures or existed as an agent of imperialism. In his essay, *The Practice of Native American Christianity*, Michael McNally (2000: 43) forcefully argued that historians have reduced the contact between Euro-Americans and Natives to a "collision" of belief systems and viewed Native Christianity as a form of "acculturation." Within this context, Michael McNally states that 'Native conversion' has been defined "as a loss of traditional religious practice, rather than a complex process shaped by both missionary and Native Christians" (2000: 843).

Similarly, Allan Greer's (2003) "Conversion and Identity: Iroquois Christianity in Seventeenth-Century New France," states in his study of the Mohawk woman Kateri Tekakwitha Catholicism was not a part of the colonial agenda, but as an opportunity to strengthen and renew kinship ties within Native communities and negotiate alliances with Europeans. Thus conversion "did not imply submission to European rule," and it should not be treated "as a discrete, unidirectional event, but as a problem to be unravelled in all its ambiguity, instability, and local specificity" (Greer 2003: 177). In another writing, Allan Greer's *Mohawk Saint* (2004), he rejected the suggestion that Iroquois people were "about to turn into Europeans" upon their conversion. Instead, "Christian beliefs and practices were

incorporated into an indigenous framework…there could be no other form of 'conversion'" (Greer 2004: 108). Gerbner 2015: 140 adds:

> Often, however, Europeans refused to acknowledge the legitimacy of native (and African) appropriations of Christianity. In some cases, the appropriation of Christian rituals profoundly disturbed Europeans. As these examples show, emphasizing "appropriation" and "incorporation" demonstrates that native (and African) converts "were not passive recipients of Christian doctrine but active participants in the creation of new religious meanings for Christian symbols, practices, and rituals – many of which threatened European notions of Christianity."

While the missionaries believed conversion to be a universal process that involved "the removal of difference and distinction, (the Indigenous people) sought to place the Christian God *into their own relativistic understanding of the cosmos* (Gerbner 2015:141, emphasis added). Taking the above into consideration, 'conversion' is a patently complex concept. When we refer to a conversion we risk falling into a 'missionary mindset' that dismisses the idea of non-European participation with, or input into, the Christian philosophy. In consequence, the Iroquois who were hired by the NWC and transferred to the Northwest and Oregon Territories not only had what amounts to a *Christian mindset,* but had evolved their ancestral cosmology within this Christian framework. Therefore, the literature which characterises Iroquois religious concepts as being intermingled with their ancestral beliefs is validated.

There are authors who suggest first, after qualifying the eastern First Nations as coming from the Catholic missions and exemplifying their never-ending love of their tribal beliefs, demonstrate the syncretic attributes suggested in their camaraderie with the Natives of the west. Washington Irving (1836) a classical writer who had adapted Father Gabriel

Franchère's (1820) journal *Relation d'un voyage a la côte du Nord-ouest de l'Amérique Septentrional, dans les années 1810, 11, 12, 13, et 14* into describing Ignace Shonowane, the Iroquois hunter, as a specimen of a different class:

> He was one of those aboriginals of Canada who had partially conformed to the habits of civilization and the doctrines of Christianity, under the influence of the French colonists and the Catholic priests; who seem generally to have been more successful in conciliating, taming, and converting the savages, than their English and Protestant rivals. These *half civilized* Indians retained some of the good, and many of the evil qualities of their original stock … though they generally professed the Roman Catholic religion, yet it was mixed, occasionally, *with some of their ancient superstitions; and they retained much of the Indian belief in charms and omens* [Irving 1836: 92-94 emphasis added by author].

In Ruby and Brown's (1992) *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* they write that the Iroquois' visitation among the Flatheads in and around 1820 soon became permanent, followed by intermarriage. These Iroquois eventually lost their tribal identity, and their Christianity developed a strong *nativist* cast. It was among the Salish peoples that the nativists' *Prophet Dance* resurged. Robert Burns' (1966) "The Jesuits and the Indian Wars of the Northwest" notes that this was a strange amalgam of Christianity and pagan Prophet cult. It swept in a great wave over the Interior from about 1830. Burns further adds that "among its doctrines it taught the imminent destruction and renewal of the world, and the resurrection of the dead" and a ritual dance will hasten the process (Burns 1966: 17).

Also, in the 1830s, Flathead delegations (deputations), usually led by Iroquois, visited St-Louis seeking the "black robes" (Ruby and Brown 1992: 76-77). Not believing themselves fully competent in conveying the full meanings and messages in the Bible, there was an inducement by the Iroquois, one of which was Ignace La Mousse, to task their new-found

compatriots with these new syncretic beliefs. They sought to bring to the Pends d'Oreille, the Nez Percé, and the Flathead relief from their plights: hunger, disease, and the encroachment of intruders in their territory.

An instance from Father de Smet's 1840 writings (a letter to the Reverend F. J. Barbelin – dated St. Louis University, February 4, 1841), while he was in the Flathead country on his first journey to the Rocky Mountains, demonstrates the ease with which the Iroquois adapted to the rigours of the North-West and Oregon Territories:

> The travelers (*Iroquois*) were so cordially received by the Flatheads that they decided to remain with them. Ties of marriage soon strengthened the bonds of friendship, and the newcomers became members of their people. Beneath his native ruggedness and rare intelligence, the soul of an apostle lay hidden in Old Ignatius. His courage and loyalty acquired for him an influence which he used for the good of the tribe. He often spoke to the Flatheads of the Catholic faith, of its beliefs, its prayers, and its ceremonies. The conclusion of his discourse was always the same appeal: to send for a Black Robe to instruct them and show them the way to heaven [De Smet 1915: 99, emphasis added by author].

Here it is evident that the Iroquois are true Catholic believers, and this would also have been true of the Iroquois recruited by the fur trade companies. While the *Canadien* voyageurs were paddling, they sang old French folk songs, while the Iroquois sang Catholic hymns (Mackenzie 1801 [Lamb 1970: 85]; Ross 1956: 195; Barman 2017: 92).


**LITTLE or Young IGNACE, OR AENEAS.**
**Named so to distinguish him from Old Ignace La Mousse;**
**Young Ignace participated in the fourth deputation to St. Louis in 1839.**
**This drawing by Gustavus Sohon is dated May 16, 1854 (Courtesy Smithsonian Institution) [Ewers 1963: 8]**

### 2.4 The Iroquois at Lake of Two Mountains

Alexander Mackenzie's description of the Iroquois' demeanour after approximately 150 years of seclusion from their 'former self'—their native cousins to the south, the *Haudenosaunee* League—is quite enlightening. It is worthwhile to examine more closely a particular section of Mackenzie's description of the Iroquois:

> *They* do not advance towards a state of civilization, but retain their ancient habits, language, and customs, and are becoming every day more depraved, indigent, and insignificant. The country around them, though very capable of cultivation, presents only a few miserable patches of ground, sown by the women with maize and vegetables. During the winter season, they leave their habitations, and pious pastors, to follow the chase, according to the custom of their forefathers [Mackenzie 1801: xxx].

Mackenzie identifies that the Iroquois have adapted quite nicely to the religious and educational niceties of the teachers in the missions; however, in his view, they have retained their old self—whatever that is. Mackenzie appears to hold in disdain a First Nation peoples who have taken the ways of the dominant nation in matters that concern their education and their spiritual ceremonial devotions, but have kept their previous cultural values intact. His commentary reveals his view that just because you are Christian and receiving a basic education does not place one on an equal footing to Mackenzie's and his own upbringing—a view of the Iroquois likely held by many of Mackenzie's contemporaries.

Bacqueville de la Potherie (1722: 40) brings up an important point about how the rearing of the Iroquois children is a cultural adaptive strategy that persists in their new conversion:

> Les enfants qui n'ont jamais été au païs étant plus capables d'instructions que ceux qui ont été parmi les infidèles, les Parents ont grand soin de leur faire apprendre les Prières, & de les envoyer à l'Église: ils ne sont pas portez à leur faire apprendre à lire n'y à écrire , à cause, disent-ils, que l'Écriture ne leur donne pas de quoi à vivre, il vaut bien mieux qu'ils apprennent à aller à la Chasse, ou à Pêcher pour apporter quelque chose à la cabane. Ils sont bien (à l') aises qu'ils apprennent à servir la Messe & à chanter. Il y en à quelques uns qui lèvent bien leurs enfants, mais la plûpart ont trop d'indulgence {leniency} pour eux [translation by author].

The above passage describes the parents' devoutness towards their children's religious devotions, while being lenient to a fault (as their custom dictates) towards the scolding of their children. Parents find it reasonable that if the children wish to go hunting and fishing instead of learning letters (writing) then let it be so, since it does bring wild game to the cabin. With this in mind, the construct of the Iroquois spiritual slants towards the divine as most (all) First Nations people do. One could even argue that Christianity has brought the missing link to the Iroquois cosmology. The Iroquois and their syncretic beliefs began to impact and influence others as they expanded into new territories. By viewing the incorporation of Christian beliefs and practices by the Iroquois as a process of syncretism rather than of wholesale conversion we are perhaps better prepared to evaluate the impact these free thinking and adaptable Iroquois made as they made their way west. These Catholic Iroquois had been living among the Europeans and Canadiens for generations and they thus knew very well the culture of the other, while maintaining elements of their traditional culture. It is this hybridity which made them ideal recruits for the North-West Company that was headquartered in Montreal. To the south of this city was the Sault St. Louis mission and the canoes heading out to the old *Pays d'en Haut* had to pass by the Iroquois settlement of Lac des Deux-Montagnes.

### *2.5 Exodus to the Fur-bearing Territories of the New West*

Trudy (Gertrude) Nicks (1980), an Anthropologist, states that the first Iroquois reported in the Northwest Territories arrived near Sturgeon Post on the North Saskatchewan River, as recorded in Duncan McGillivray's 1794-1795 journal under the employ of David Grant, a former member of the NWC (1980: 86). Grant's venture failed primarily because his men, three of whom were Iroquois, were lured away from him by the NWC. Other sightings are well established, but the major migrations were from the years 1800-04. In retrospect, most of the Iroquois came as *engagés* following signing contracts, but what were their credentials, and who were these people that came out of the east? The cultural identities they carried with them were not the presumed caricatures ascribed to the alleged Iroquois (*Haudenosaunee*) folklore. According to Daniel Richter (1985) these Iroquois did not come out of the New York geographical space with the *Haudenosaunee* oral traditional religious beliefs, but as people who had been acculturated through six generations of Jesuit religious instruction and education in fundamentals such as reading, writing and arithmetic. This syncretic evolution takes place initially in the missions in New France around Montréal right through the British takeover in 1763. The occupants of the Jesuit missions at Sault-aux-Recollets, Sault-St-Marie, and Kahnawake were initially people converted by the Jesuits, participants in the Beaver Wars (1642-1698) and the Indian Wars (1756-1763). As the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 came about, however, the Iroquois in the Catholic missions had a choice whether or not they wanted to participate. Trudy Nicks (1980), Theodore Karamanski (1983), and Grabowski and St-Onge (2001) all seem to describe the Iroquois as flat-footed: people who came out as worker bees with no fanfare. There seems to be no description of these First Nations people who had come out of the

Catholic Missions. There were no questions being asked: what do the Iroquois look like, talk like, or even think like after spending approximately 150 years separated from their ancestral lands; how does a Christian Iroquois intermingle with the 17th and 18th century western frontier people; and what kind of bond did the Iroquois have with their fellow compatriots with whom they were travelling and working? Acculturation takes on many different forms, and if some of those questions could be answered (as they have in the Jesuit writings of the 17th and 18th century) the aforementioned authors could have given a more complex portrait of the First Nations NWC *engagés*.

However, we have other authors like Anne Anderson (1985) who besides being of Iroquoian ancestry has an Honorary Doctorate from the University of Alberta; Robert Ruby and John Brown (1992), Ruby is a retired physician and independent scholar while Brown was a Professor Emeritus of History at Wenatchee Valley College; and Foxcurran et al. (2016) whereas all three references argue that the Iroquois in their leisure time would pass on those around them the messages learnt from the Jesuit missions. The Gospel's message would be their link in forming a congruent kinship with other First Nations people, and with American Indians of the North-West and Oregon Territories. Father P-J de Smet (Harper 1905/2004: 26-28) notes that their message of salvation was so effective that there were four deputations sent from the Flathead country to St-Louis so they would elicit a visit from the 'black-robes' to minister them in the teachings of the missionary Bible/Catechism (Harper edition states de Smet's comments were taken from *Letters and Sketches* V and VI addressed to the Father Provincial and dated respectively Fort Hall, August 16, 1841, and Big Face's Camp at Beaver Head River, September 1, 1841). Even though these deputations were sent in the 1830s, the Iroquois were reported to have proselytized as far back as the 1810s (Burns

1966: 16-18; Ruby and Brown 1992: 76-77). The first missionaries to reach the people of the Oregon Territory were Protestant ministers, who for some reason were not well received by the locals. In 1834 the Flatheads learned that a band of missionaries was en route to their tribe, aspiring that it was the Black Robes with the messengers who had been sent to fetch them. Alas, it was to their disappointment when the caravan arrived and they beheld not one of their tribe in the party. The missionaries, moreover, in no way resembled those the Iroquois had told them about. They were married and they did not wear either the black robe or the crucifix, neither did they recite the 'big prayer' (the Mass). These were not the masters they expected. Realizing that it was useless to remain, the Methodists left to establish themselves in Oregon. Eugène Laveille (1915), a Roman Catholic scribe and priest, writes that another attempt was made a year later by the American Board of Foreign Missions, with no greater measure of success (1915: 100-101). The first Catholic Oblate to finally come to that region was Father Pierre-Jean de Smet in 1841.

Between the years 1794 and 1841 the Iroquois had garnered quite a reputation as voyageurs, fur trappers, and traders—and as people who were establishing themselves as residents of the west. Nicole St-Onge (2016), in a more refined literature review states that the Iroquois that came out West, if not almost all, were Mohawks from Sault Saint-Louis with additional small numbers from Lac des Deux-Montagnes and St-Regis (2016: 5). Learning the western countryside, they became respectable guides who were hired for their skills by famous explorers like David Thompson and Samuel Black, among others (Samuel Black 1955 – primary source; David Thompson 2009 – primary source). Their history in the Oregon Territory also brought them an infamy as deserters in the Peter Skene Ogden expedition in 1824, and notoriety as some of the first 'mountain men' who co-habited and

worked with the American trappers in the region (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 44). Another incident, perhaps best left to folklore, saw these supposedly Christian Iroquois blamed in 1818 for the killing of 14 natives (Upper Umpquas) of the Umpqua River in the south-west Oregon Territory (Ruby and Brown 1992: 254). Of course, they were at the time under the employ of the Nor'Wester Alexander Roderick McLeod. The reporting of these and similar incidents owed primarily to several factors—including the employ of the Iroquois with the NWC, as well as rumours spread by the HBC District Master William Tomison about how the Iroquois with their steel traps and 'castorum' had killed all the beaver whenever they went. Alice Johnson (1967) editor and archivist of the *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence: Edmonton House 1795-1802* has William Tomison stating in a letter to John Ballanden (accountant and future chief factor of the HBC), 6 June 1802; that during the 1801-02 summer season the NWC and XY companies had brought in more that 300 Indians on three year contracts (Johnson 1967: xci-ii). Indians who left 'wherever they come' had swarmed over the Saskatchewan District to complete the destruction of the beaver which had been started several years backs by the many 'Bungee (Algonquians), Tawau Mischelemacana (likely Nipissings), but mostly *Eroquees* or Mohawk' who had followed in the wake of the *Canadiens* (Johnson 1967: xci-ii; Daschuk 2002: 138-140). James Daschuk delves into this history demonstrated by his thesis *The Political Economy of Indian Health and Disease in the Canadian Northwest*. Nicole St-Onge (2016: 6) specifies other pertinent statistics which were corroborated by Jennifer Brown (2007) and Arthur Ray (2009):

> Between 1714 and 1821, 35,000 men are known to have signed fur trade employment contracts in front of Montreal notaries. From the closing years of the eighteenth century to the 1821 merger of the Montreal-based NWC and the London-based HBC, over 1,300 Mohawk voyageurs who can be documented by work contracts signed up with large fur trade concerns. These men originated from Sault Saint-Louis (Kahnawake) with additional small

> numbers from Lac des Deux Montagnes (Oka/Kanasetake) and St-Regis (Akwasasne). Added to these Mohawk voyageurs were 150 or so Algonquian or Abenake men who specialized in the Upper Saint-Maurice River Weymontachie fur trade. These numbers are conservative, as many fur trade employees prior to 1800 worked without the benefit of a written contract and not all archival notarial collections survive.

While competition between fur trappers was understood, there was a specific pressure directed towards the *Canadiens* and, to perhaps a greater degree, the Iroquois. In this particular time-frame, HBC and NWC policies were different. The NWC, as mentioned previously, had *engagés,* but the HBC would have the *in situ* Indigenous people bring in their furs for trading. The competition was so fierce that one could envision competitors spreading rumours to the local Indigenous populations that the *Iroquois* did not care one way or the other what happened to the indigenous territory and their fauna. It's worth noting that the blame was not put on the NWC Masters who ran the brigades, nor on the French *Canadiens;* it was laid directly at the feet of these 'invading' Iroquois.

Another contribution to the infamy of the Iroquois (which served to confirm existing suspicions) were the orders given by Sir George Simpson after the amalgamation of 1821 into the parent company. Simpson gives orders to obliterate the beaver so none would be left to the Americans after that part of the Oregon Territory was relinquished to the United States of America. Grabowski and St-Onge (2001) describe measures adopted to counteract the sharply increasing advances of American fur traders into the Snake River area, which was slated to become a U.S. Territory. Sir George put forward, "If properly managed no questions exists that it would yield handsome profits as we have convincing proof that the country is a rich preserve of beaver and which for political reasons we should endeavour to destroy as fast as possible" (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 43). This policy lasted until 1827, six years

after the merger. Therefore, to erase any possible doubt as to who should be blamed for the wanton killing of the beaver, it would not be too far to imagine that the HBC contrived to spread rumours to garner preferential treatment from the locals and to help fabricate a contemptuous reputation for the competition.

The Iroquois brought with them a Christianity of a nativist cast, arguably arrived at through a syncretic process rather than one of pure conversion. When analysing David Moreau's (2009) edition of *The Writings of David Thompson Volume I: the Travels, 1850 Version* and depending on how reliable David Thompson's *Narratives* are, Thompson himself described the Iroquois' religious concepts of Christianity as folly or non-existent, though he makes no mention of their Christian teachings, education, or ties (2009: 280-282). Thompson's account has proven to be highly unreliable (Nicks 1980: 85). But the question remains: what do we really *know* about the semi-transparent Iroquois and their invisible Christian beliefs? Inn this respect we can consider how the Jesuits consistently received the highest marks from the critics for their effort if not effects. Recognized by all as "indefatigable," the Jesuits won points for their adaptations to native life, their well-regulated reserves, their positive outlook on native ability, and their political and pedagogical skills (Axtell 1985:273). These attributes certainly affected the Iroquois character.

This period between 1780 and 1821 describes the wherewithal of the western Iroquois and examines bilaterally the charisma and the threat they posed, as believed by a predominantly European cognizance. Fully active in the fur trade, they were caught up in a feud between the NWC, the HBC, and the New North West Company (XYC). But who were these Iroquois that were introduced to the Western frontier? To what extent were they able to

influence the landscape—not to mention the inhabitants who had already adapted to that part of the continent for at least a few millennia?

## CHAPTER 3: THE IROQUOIS AND THE FUR TRADE - 1780 to 1830

The Iroquois of New France had been living in New France for generations when the British conquered the territory. In 1759, the forces of General James Wolfe defeated General Louis-Joseph de Montcalm on the Plains of Abraham. Montréal would capitulate in 1760 and in that same year English traders would recruit Canadiens to push into the territories that had been under the control of the French and their Indigenous allies. In the two decades which followed, these English and Scottish "petty traders" would compete against the Hudson's Bay Company to enrich themselves in the fur trade. In the meantime, the Thirteen Colonies would begin their battle for independence and new boundaries would be drawn. This chapter reviews the literature to better understand the role of the Iroquois from Sault St. Louis and Lac des Deux-Montagnes in settling these western territories and eventually the southern prairies where Chesterfield House is located. As noted, the secondary literature on the Canadian fur trade does discuss the Iroquois, but pays little attention to their Catholicism. If there was more on this characteristic such as their religious inclinations, we might understand to how the Iroquois was so influential on the Indigenous people of the Oregon Territory.

The Iroquois involvement in the fur-trading companies dates to the late 17$^{th}$ and early 18$^{th}$ century. Because they were experienced canoeists, fur trappers, and voyageurs, the Christian Iroquois were given contracts alongside French-Canadian voyageurs. To emphasize, the Iroquois were coveted for their abilities as canoe men, their ruthless talents as trappers, and their fearsome warrior reputation (Karamanski 1982: 5-6). Since both groups were influenced by the Roman Catholic Church, spoke French, and possessed both skill and experience with the required duties, it was no feat for the Iroquois to be comfortable and prepared for the advance to the West. Though they were Indigenous, these Iroquois would

nonetheless be outsiders encroaching on the sovereign lands of other First Nations and this would result in a number of Iroquois being killed as a consequence. Part of this chapter will be trying to answer the question, "How did these French Roman Catholic Iroquois fare in the North West and Oregon Territories?"

Trudy Nicks (1980) writes in *The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada* that the visibility of the Iroquois in the historiography of the Canadian West may be a model of native population development for the period after initial contact (1980: 96). In defining this 'native population' Nicks notes that the Iroquois migrated from the east as yet another 'intruder' seeking to settle the west. The Iroquois are also described as trying to achieve cultural and economic goals within the fur trade economy and mix in with the original occupants—while at the same time envisioning their lot in life, and in the life beyond, as—dare we say—pioneers. In Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge (2001: 47-48) they come together in their analysis of the "Montreal Iroquois *engagés* in the Western Fur Trade, 1800-1821" where they mention Charles Wilson's observations. In George Stanley's (1970) edition of *Mapping the Frontier: Charles Wilson's Diary of the Survey of the 49th Parallel, 1858-1862* there is a passage where the Cartographer Charles Wilson refers to the Iroquois amongst others as pioneers in and around Fort Colville in the Oregon Territory. On June 30, 1860 in and around "French-Prairie" Charles Wilson wrote in his journal:

> Descending into the valley we soon were among cornfields, cattle & houses & found ourselves quite the object of curiosity, being the first English soldiers that the people have ever seen; and such a curious medley of people these said people are, nearly all of them old servants of the HBC, the old trapper, the voyageur, the Canadian, French, Iroquois and half-breed … the hardy *pioneer* of civilization now quietly settled in the valley with their wives and families round them [emphasis added by author].

According to Grabowski and St-Onge the erosion of Amerindian land base, the exhaustion of traditional hunting territories and a new demand for Amerindian labour by Montreal-based companies appears to have encouraged the defection of some Iroquois to the western fur trade (2001: 32). One of the main reasons for these Iroquois signing three-year contracts with the NWC was their dissatisfaction with the conditions at home. They were in agreement with this contractual accord since it allowed them to trap far afield of their long-overhunted homeland. And some authors have argued, it gave restless young men of the tribes a chance to fulfill the traditional role of hunter-warrior (St-Onge 2016: 3). However, some of these Iroquois left with their wives, and many never came back, it is possible they viewed the employment as a form of subsidized relocation venture (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 34; St-Onge 2016: 25).

Descriptions of the Iroquois through this work has them as *engagés*, *domiciliés* and described as "sauvages" to keep them separate in pertaining as to whom came from where. The *domiciliés* Iroquois were from Sault St-Louis, from Lac-des-Deux-Montagnes and St. Regis. There is a misunderstanding that the Iroquois were hired at lower contractual pay than their fellow French Canadians. Ross Cox (1832) states in his journal, "The third description of men in the Company's service are the Iroquois, Nipissings, and others of the native tribes of Canada. These Indians have been all nearly reclaimed from their original state of barbarism, and now profess the Roman Catholic religion. Ross Cox (1832), who was in charge of Fort Okanagan (Washington) for the NWC in April 1816 stated in his letters that the Iroquois, "engage for limited periods in the Company's service as canoe-men and hunters, but on lower terms than are usually allowed to the French Canadians" (1832: 314-315). Also, historian John Ewers (1963: 5) notes that some time ago Natives were hired because they

accepted lower wages than the French Canadians. An examination of Mohawk notarized contracts, however, contradicts this assertion. St-Onge (2016) argues that "the Kahnawake Mohawks had a well-earned and long-standing reputation as people who drove hard deals. Also, when hired on multiyear contracts, they went out both as hunters and as voyageurs, a unique position" (2016: 17-18).

Again, Grabowski and St-Onge (2001) writing about the 'Christian Iroquois' from Montreal and the 'Native Catholic' migration westward, emphasize that the migration did not end with the amalgamation of the HBC and NWC in 1821. However, they fail to link those essential cultural aspects that qualified the Iroquois in the late 18th century and early 19th century as exceptional fur traders. The link missing occurs as a result of the Iroquois recurring participation in the fur trade in one aspect and in the other, Grabowski and St-Onge insert as a matter of fact the Christian life of the Iroquois. One of the attributes besides being expert canoe men, trappers, hunters and a notoriety as fierce warriors that was beneficial to their employment was the failure of the authors to highlight that the Iroquois were Christianized. The fact that the Iroquois from the missions of Sault St. Louis and Lac des Deux-Montagnes as well as St. Régis maintained a Catholic faith which emphasized charity, compassion and sociability. Such practices might in fact have brought the demise of some of them.

### *3.1 The Iroquois Presence in the North-West and Oregon Territories: 1789-1810*

Sometime around 1789 Alexander Mackenzie recounted the heart of the 'voyageurs' departure from the Lachine Rapids west of Montréal to the North West (Mackenzie 1801 [Lamb 1970: 85]). Along with the description of their initial departure point, Mackenzie further mentions a part of the surrounding area's history, that of the Lake of Two Mountains

along with the Seigneuries belonging to the clergy (Sulpicians). On the East side of the Lake of Two Mountains were the Algonquians and on the West side the Iroquois which numbered about five hundred warriors (Mackenzie 1801: xxix). In a move that was detrimental to the safety of the Catholic Iroquois, the Sulpicians founded a mission at the village of Oka upon which the Iroquois later settled in 1720, followed soon after by the Algonquians (Mackenzie 1801: xxix). There are some questions as to how the Iroquois became relied upon for the type of labour needed to facilitate a fur trading company. As we note in Alexander Mackenzie's writings, the decision to hire them came as a reluctance. Here Mackenzie believes that even with all the education and ministry from the missionaries, the Iroquois have remained depraved, indigent, and insignificant:

> Each party has its missionary, and divine worship is performed according to the rites of the Roman Catholic religion, in their respective languages in the same church: and so assiduous have their pastors been, that these people have been instructed in reading and writing in their own language, and are better instructed than the Canadian inhabitants of the country of the lower ranks: but notwithstanding these advantages, and though the establishment is nearly coeval with the colonization of the country, they do not advance towards a state of civilization, but retain their ancient habits, language, and customs, and are becoming every day more depraved, indigent, and insignificant. The country around them, though very capable of cultivation, presents only a few miserable patches of ground, sown by the women with maize and vegetables. During the winter season, they leave their habitations, and pious pastors, to follow the *chase*, according to the custom of their forefathers. Such is, indeed, the state of all the villages near the cultivated parts of Canada [Mackenzie 1801: xxix-xxx].

Though this passage is telling as to Mackenzie's biases and disdain for the Indigenous Iroquois, it is still quite important for our later analysis of Chesterfield House. This ethnocentric mindset was also evident in the writings of HBC officer Peter Fidler. Both Mackenzie and Fidler see the Iroquois as an inferior people, yet both indirectly attest to their

valour in the fur trade. Though Mackenzie, a partner in the NWC, may not value the Iroquois in his writings, the NWC would recruit them in great numbers for their trade pursuits. The NWC would also hire the Iroquois, put them under contract, and send them out over 3000 miles (approximate distance from Montréal, QC to Edmonton AB) to go and kill beaver (St-Onge 2016). He adds in his note that some Iroquois were immigrating to the Saskatchewan River in 1799 to escape 'improvements of civilization' in the east and to follow the mode of life of their forefathers (Mackenzie 1801 [Lamb 1970: 411]). Were these 'improvements of civilization' consisting of escaping the brandy sellers, the erosion of Amerindian land base, and the exhaustion of traditional hunting territories as stated by Jan Grabowski and Nicole St-Onge (2001: 32)?

The quote above (Mackenzie 1801: xxix-xxx) amounts to a caricature of the Iroquois which should not to be taken literally. Mackenzie's commentary on the Iroquois should be understood in the context of his apparent prejudice—either wanting his Scottish countrymen hired for the task, or relying on second-hand information relayed by persons who wanted Orkney people on the NWC roster. However, there are additional inconsistencies in his comments and further incongruities uncovered in Mackenzie's notes through another explorer for the NWC: Simon Fraser. When Simon Fraser came through and established New Caledonia in and about 1804, Fraser had relied on the journals written by Mackenzie in 1801, only to find some misleading and unfortunate omissions related to the geographical landmarks supplied therein. Simon Fraser's *The Letters and Journals of Simon Fraser 1806-1808* edited by Lamb (1960: 190, 196, also check out Map pp 162) conveys this disappointment.

### 3.1.1 *Sturgeon Post on the North Saskatchewan River*

Nevertheless, there came a time when the Iroquois had proven their worth not through a capacity to be worthwhile employees, but through, it might seem, endorsement by a minor fur trader by the name of David Grant as recorded in Duncan McGillivray's 1794-1795 journal (Nicks 1980:86). These Iroquois that were initially reported in the northwest arrived near Sturgeon Post on the North Saskatchewan River in 1794 in the employ of Grant, a former member of the NWC. If we are to take Alexander Mackenzie's word at face value and the Iroquois were not hired in the initial drive to have dependable and appropriate contractors, then perhaps this hiring by Grant was the spark that turned around the suitability of the Iroquois. The North West immigration of the Eastern Iroquois is well documented in the Hudson's Bay Company Journals from their inception in the late 1700s (Johnson 1967; Grabowski and St. Onge 2001; Binnema and Ens 2012). Theodore (Ted) Binnema and Gerhard Ens (2012), state that initially these records were kept with the North West Company's journals; however, since the companies' amalgamation in 1821 we find their records joined. There are some records missing from 1800 to 1805 from the Edmonton House Journals but we have some other travellers who would fill in this gap of time (Binnema and Ens 2012: iv). The later records from 1806 make mention of contact with the Iroquois on quite a number of other occasions. Curiously, the records make a point of distinguishing between a *Canadien* and an Iroquois, also especially when making the distinction between another First Nation person and an Iroquois (Johnson 1967; Binnema and Ens 2012).

### 3.1.2 *The Oregon Territories*

The existence of the Iroquois in the North-West Territory overshadowed their presence in the Oregon Territories. However, Washington Irving (1836) who complied with Pacific Fur Trading Company owner John Astor's request to write the history of the Oregon Territory and their people, made known the Iroquois' presence from their earliest arrivals at the mouth of the Columbia River in the 1810s. Irving's references relied on an earlier explorer and writer by the name of Gabriel Franchère (1820). Even more curious, there is a mention of a possible Iroquois known as 'Shining Shirt' who made his appearance in the mid western plains at an earlier date (Burns 1966: 16-18; Ruby and Brown 1992:76-77). This 'Shining Shirt' told the locals that there will be "black robes" approaching and they will show them the true religion.

There is much more to add in this period concerning Samuel Black's exploration of the headwaters of the Finlay, Peter Skene Ogden's brigade being infiltrated by American trappers, and the abandonment by the Iroquois to become one of the first pioneer 'mountain men' (Grabowski and St. Onge 2001: 44). "The major defection came during the HBC Snake Expedition of 1825 under the leadership of Peter Skene Ogden. This large and well-equipped trapping expedition hunted in the interior for several months (Ogden 1950: 91 – primary source)). Pierre Tevanitagon and John Grey led 23 trappers, nearly all of them Iroquois (Mohawks), out of Ogden's camp and over to the Americans (Ogden 1950: 92). These Iroquois, among others, became the famed "mountain men" trading yearly with the highest bidder at the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous (Grabowski and St. Onge 2001: 44). Another famous gathering was at the Green River Rendezvous in Wyoming.

**IROQUOIS INDIAN was painted by Alfred Jacob Miller in 1837, probably at the Green River Rendezvous**
**(Reproduction courtesy of Walters Art Gallery, Baltimore) [Ewers 1963: 2].**

The feuding between the major Canadian fur trading companies around 1821 led to a new era of combining knowledge and resources to explore the North West and Oregon Territory. The pioneering Iroquois had already taken the lead in spreading the 'Gospel' and their proselytizing which, at the time, had been spread "word of mouth" over the North-West and Oregon Territories' landscape.

### *3.2 The Iroquois Presence in the North-West and Oregon Territories: 1810 - 1821*

Though the Oregon Territories are not necessarily adjacent to the Canadian prairies where the Chesterfield House was located, a review of this history provides insights which will help to better understand the Iroquois in Fidler's account. The Iroquois had initially migrated west because of demand by some of the fur trading companies (especially the NorthWest Company/Nor'Westers/NWC) for experienced canoe paddlers and fur trappers. Some reports suggest that the Iroquois began their journey from their homes near Montreal in the mid 1790s (with three-year contracts) and penetrated through the Rocky Mountains down the Columbia River to the Flathead country in Montana. Other accounts have the Iroquois coming through the Mississippi Valley up to Astoria House on the Pacific Coast. One facet of the Iroquois' legacy that stands out is how they left the east with Roman Catholic Christian beliefs. Possessed of great oratory skills, the Iroquois carried these new beliefs with them as they traveled to the West. Indeed, having been exposed to the teachings of the Jesuits and later the Sulpicians, they were far from shy about sharing their Christian beliefs. Father Jean-Pierre de Smet portrays the leader of the Iroquois brigade, Old Ignatius, as having, "the soul of an apostle" (Laveille 1915: 99)." Eugène Laveille (1871-1941) was a Jesuit who specialized on historical autobiographies of the clergy. The 'apostle' reference is just a part of the incredible description of a people who came thousands of miles with a gift of carrying

the message of salvation and eternal life to an unsuspecting people of the Oregon Territory. A description of the *proselytiser* by de Smet, Ignatius La Mousse, leads to a legend evincing the obvious pioneering spirit that concerns the gospel:

> Let us here recall this extraordinary evangelization. Between the years 1812 and 1820 a band of Catholic Iroquois left the Caughnawaga Mission near Montreal, and, crossing the Mississippi valley, directed their steps to the unknown regions of the West. What could have been their object in migrating to the far West? Possibly, they were unconsciously serving the designs of Providence in behalf of those who were to become their brothers by adoption. The chief of the band, Ignatius La Mousse, had been baptized and married by the Jesuits and remained for some time in their service [Laveille 1915: 98].

Father de Smet describes how these travelers were so cordially received by the Flatheads that they decided to remain with them, even intermarrying. Old Ignatius' courage and loyalty acquired for him an influence which he used for the good of the tribe. He often spoke of the Catholic faith, of its beliefs, its prayers, and its ceremonies. La Mousse asked the Flatheads to send for a *Black Robe* to instruct them and show them the way to heaven. In the meantime, they learned from him the principal mysteries of the Faith, the great precepts of Christianity, the Lord's Prayer, the Sign of the Cross, and other religious practices. The Flatheads in turn regulated their lives by this teaching; "they said morning and night prayers, sanctified Sunday, baptized the dying, and placed a cross over the graves of their dead" (Laveille 1915: 99). The Iroquois' introduction in the Oregon Territory began in the 1810s, but they did not launch their first deputation to St. Louis to seek out the Black Robes until 1831. In reviewing this period, it will be necessary to connect the link between these western missionaries and the ones seeking spiritual ministry.

A brief look at the spread of the missionary work demonstrates there was a gap of approximately twenty to thirty years before any missionary reached the people of the Oregon Territory. The missionary work of the Jesuits in New France extended from Maine to the Mississippi. The "principal fields of labour were among the Abenaki in Maine; the Iroquois in New York; the Huron in Ontario; the Illinois in the Mississippi Valley, and other less important tribes scattered along the way (Laveille 1915: 6)." Although Father De Smet arrived in the central Northwest of North America in the early 1840s he acknowledged the presence of the Catholic Iroquois' influence on the aboriginal people who occupied these lands. We suspect that Father De Smet was elated once he had the privilege of meeting some of the *French speaking Roman Catholic Iroquois* of the western prairies. De Smet's letter to Bishop Hughes, from the foot of the Great Glacier, May 6, 1846 conveys the baptisms and marriages he ministered to at Fort Jasper on his expedition to seek the Blackfeet people (Laveille 1915: 188). The Iroquois left many descendants not only in the east side of the Rocky Mountains but among the interior tribes, especially among those that became the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation (Foxcurran et al 2016: 62).

The Indian groups of what is now Western Montana, Northern Idaho, Eastern Washington, and parts of British Columbia were a peculiar people in the matter of their susceptibility to religious influences (Laveille 1915: 19). This is especially true of the Flatheads, the Pend d'Oreille, and the Nez Percé who of their own volition and without ever seeing a priest sought the services of the missionaries. De Smet thought of them as opened minded, easily moved by religious teachings, and also relatively high in the scale of morality as measured by the 'Indian' standard (Laveille 1915: 19).

Two references emerge depicting divine experience by the Flatheads and others in that region. The first occurred around 1811 and 1812 when the traders of the Northwest and Pacific Fur Companies introduced themselves to the locals and their territory—a territory that remained a fruitful field of the fur trade until settlement took possession of the country. The men that made up these early traders were *Canadiens* who were mostly lawless and led irreligious lives, though presenting as staunch Roman Catholics (Irving 1832: 70). The second occurrence was when the Iroquois as a people that spoke French, were Roman Catholic, and had no qualms about exploring foreign territories. According to Father de Smet, these Iroquois must have been the same offspring of the eastern Iroquois who shunned and shut their doors to the missionaries 150 years previous. De Smet refers to two individuals of these classes that arrived on the Lower Columbia: Regis Bruguière (Bruguire, Bruguier), a half-breed (Scot-Iroquois?), and Ignace Shonowane, an Iroquois (Mohawk). Whether he meant that Bruguière was a half-breed Iroquois with the other half being *Canadien* or that he was a half-breed mixed with one of the north western aboriginals is not clear. Irving (1836) was mildly amused by the Iroquois hunter who he describes as a specimen of a discrete caste. He goes on to say that he was one of those aboriginals of Canada who had partially conformed to the habits of civilization and the doctrines of Christianity under the influence of the French colonists and the Catholic priests. These latter seem generally to have been more successful in conciliating, taming, and converting the savages than their English and Protestant rivals (Irving 1836: 72). Irving did warn about the Iroquois, however, "Once inflamed with liquor, to which they were madly addicted, all the dormant passions inherent in their nature were prone to break forth and to hurry them into the most vindictive and bloody acts of violence" (Irving 1836: 72). Although Irving's third western book, *Astoria*, was

complimented by maps and notes from Brevet Brigadier General Benjamin Bonneville, there was a touch of irony used to paint his descriptions of the Iroquois. In one way, Irving demonized the Iroquois in the same manner he discredited the *Canadiens* with their *force de tour* and accomplishments in developing the North American landscape (Foxcurran et al 2016: 26-30). In fact, Irving was actually describing a cultural adaptation that would be the crucial focal point to the Iroquois' survival: *syncretism*. Irving noted that though the Iroquois generally professed the Roman Catholic religion, it was occasionally mixed with some of their ancient superstitions. They also retained much of the Indian belief in charms and omens. Irving's upbringing from a Scottish Orkney home and his American patriotism could be viewed as blinding him through the prejudices and bigotry that lurked inside this intelligent poet and author's mind (Foxcurran 2016: 26-30).

The Iroquois travelled rather freely in the Columbian Basin and professed to the locals that they had discovered the only true religion. The winters were spent with the people who accepted them with their odd spiritualist views centred on the sacrifice of the Son of the "Great Spirit." The Flatheads were susceptible to the Iroquois' beliefs and accepted this sense of spirituality. However, the Iroquois pleaded with the locals that their knowledge and teachings were limited, and that they should send a deputation to St. Louis. After a dozen years or so of this interaction, a deep desire arose in the Flatheads. They decided to have instruction directly from the black-gowns even though they had never met one (Harper 2004 [1905]: 23-24).

In reviewing the history of the Iroquois who ventured west, both to the North-West, notably the Canadian prairies, as well as the Oregon Territories demonstrates that they were Catholic, industrious, quite knowledgeable of contracts while seeking to maximize their

gains. Given the increasingly violent competition pitting companies against each other, notably in the "Pemmican Wars" which would ensue, the reputation of the Iroquois as warriors would certainly have influenced both the hiring of the Iroquois as well as their perceived threat to rivals (St-Onge 2016: 1, 3, 8). This certainly is a meaningful prelude to the incident which will be analyzed in the next chapter, that of Chesterfield House in the early months of 1802.

### *3.3 Iroquois Isolated Incidents in the North West and Oregon Territories*

Though the Chesterfield House incident is the central focus of our chapter, there are other such isolated incidents involving the Iroquois during their transition from their eastern homes to their final settlements in the Northwest and Oregon Territories. Not all the Iroquois remained in the Northwest and Oregon Territories to pursue economic and social benefits, but the majority left an imprint, or for lack of a better word, a legacy that none could erase from the history books. They were not known just as voyageurs or just as trappers or even just as Indians but as the Iroquois of the Northwest and Oregon Territories. The panorama of the western ethnographic dynamic is clustered with tales, myths and a saga to their contributions. In order to perpetuate and filter through the many works of literature to present their case as individuals worthwhile of being listed as one of the people who established the north-west from the 1790s to the 1850s a look at the conflicts, they inherited might give us a better understanding of their persistence. The emigrant Iroquois were well suited to the territories of the west. Their craft and demeanour gave these 'intruders' numerous opportunities to make a living and mix with the locals who already inhabited the landscape.

The major Iroquois migration to the North West and Oregon Territories occurs from around the late 18$^{th}$ century to the coalition (amalgamation) of the NWC with the HBC in

1821. There were very few Iroquois hired after the fact as a "survey of the HBC's *Northern Engagement Registers* and lists of servants showed that between 1830 and 1860 only 33 new Iroquois recruits were brought inland" (Nicks 1980b: 100). Of these, "…17 returned to Canada or the Red River settlements, 11 stayed in the northeast and the fate of seven were not indicated" (Nicks 1980b: 100 n. 47). The highest concentration in the 18th and 19th century of these Eastern fur trappers migrating west was between 1800 and 1804.

Most of the isolated incidents paralleled the Iroquois' employment with the company they had contracted with, who unfortunately had rival and competitive factions which sought to end Iroquois employment with the NWC. These incidents cannot be considered as anomalies in themselves but interconnected with the commercial competition that existed. A quote in the introduction for Simon Fraser's (1806-1808) book edited by W. K. Lamb (1960) notes:

> Meanwhile the latter *(HBC)* had been struggling with competition of another sort – that which had developed amongst themselves *(that is with the Montréal traders).* This had proven to be both costly and dangerous: costly, because it demoralized the trade, raised prices and increased transportation costs; dangerous, because the more unscrupulous traders, were not above encouraging the Indians to attack their rivals, a policy which would create a state of affairs in which the life of *no white man* would be safe" [Lamb 1960: 10; *emphasis added* by author].

Nicks (1980b) lists some isolated incidents that occurred north of the 49th parallel, and the Iroquois also played a pivotal role in opening the Oregon Territory, and their presence in 1810 was noted in the French-Canadian author and explorer Gabriel Franchère's journals in 1820.

There are a few questions concerning Trudy Nicks' (1980b) list of isolated incidents in her paper "The Iroquois and the Fur Trade in Western Canada." Of the first of these encounters, she states that "local natives, probably Beaver Indians, in the Peace River district in 1822 made a firm stand against HBC's plans to send Iroquois to the Smoky River" and she cites Kyle Lamb's (1970: 193) edited version of "The Journals and Letters of Sir Alexander Mackenzie." Obviously, this is in error, since the time of the incident was in 1822 and Mackenzie died in 1820—additionally he had written his journals by 1801. Another incident Nicks refers to is that Daniel Harmon in his journal *Sixteen Years in the Indian Country: The Journal of Daniel Williams Harmon 1800-1816* (primary source), edited by W. K. Lamb (1957), attributed the murder of an Iroquois and his family at the hands of Carrier Indians in New Caledonia in 1818 to the dismay that Iroquois freemen had been encroaching on Carrier Territory for several years (Nicks 1980: 93). The killing of the Iroquois and his family were forewarned; residing on Carrier land and supposedly taking advantages of the resources, they had been asked to vacate the surroundings. The Iroquois were well-prepared to act diplomatically as they have in other encounters by offering presents and seeking permission to remain on peaceful terms. But this incident seems to be hear-say.

One particular isolated event north of the 49$^{th}$ was the incident that took the lives of 14 Iroquois and two *Canadiens* in and around the Chesterfield House in 1802 (Johnson 1967: 311-317; Nicks 1980b: 93). Why delve into this anomaly as part of this research? Three reasons in particular. First, Peter Fidler, Master of the Chesterfield House, failed to report the massacre to his superiors, brushing it off as just some trouble with the Fall Indians that they were getting hostile (Johnson 1967: xciii). Second, after the incident and his stay at the Chesterfield House from 1801 to 1802 Fidler was transferred to other fur trading Houses. He

experienced a lot of hostility from some of the NWC officers leading to the notion that these Nor'Westers knew about the circumstances surrounding the death of the 16 men and it was not because the Atsina were a little hostile. And finally, there is too much circumstantial evidence pointing to the fact that the man in charge at the Chesterfield House was irresponsible and that his prejudices and hidden hostility towards the rival company led him to sacrifice the lives of 16 Roman Catholic Francophiles and Francophones who had proven that they were capable of keeping the HBC as a second class company (Johnson 1967: 311-317). Additionally, an in-depth examination of Peter Fidler's rough notes and journals suggest that there was a state of economic rather than military war that still existed between the parties who had sat down at the 1763 Treaty of Paris that marked the end of the Seven Year War between Britain and France.

However, not included in Trudy Nicks 'isolated incidents' is the killing of Tête Jaune (Pierre Bostonais) and his brother Baptiste with their families allegedly by Beaver Indians in 1827 (Smyth 1984:7). In late March 1828, word reached Connolly from Bear Lake of the unconfirmed rumour that Tête Jaune, his brother Baptiste and their families "have been Cut off by the Beaver Indians, as a punishment for Hunting upon their lands" (HBCA, B. 188 / b/6, 12-3, March 16, 1828. Bear Lake, Charles Ross to William Connolly, Officer in Charge of New Caledonia). A month later, the deaths were confirmed by the officer in charge of the post at McLeod Lake. He reported that the brothers and their families had been killed in September at "Finlays Branch" by a party of "Indians from the Rocky Mountains," probably at the instigation of the Beaver Indians (HBCA, B. 188 / b/6, 42-3, April 18, 1828, McLeod Lake, John Tod to Connolly). The jottings for April 27, 1828 where Connolly notes the findings sent to him by the officer in charge of McLeod Lake. Actually, Tête Jaune, his

brother and their families were killed in September 1827 at Finlays Branch (noted on page 44 of the journal which is found in HBCA B.188.a.12 microfilm reel 1M0129 – FC 3207 .H83 2008).

When Connolly received confirmation of the killings, he stated that the identity of Tête Jaune's slayers could not be determined:

> This Melancholy Occurrence took place last Fall at Finlays Branch, but by whom perpetrated Could not be ascertained. The natives throughout this District have for a long While past looked upon the Iroquois as Robbers and despoilers of their lands. And it is only in Consideration for us that they have not long before this taken the only means in their power to rid themselves of their depredators" [HBCA B. 188 / a /12, April 27, 1828].

In E.E. Rich's (1955) edition of Samuel Black's journal (1824) there is another deposition taken out of Harmon's Journal 1818 (May 8th and 9th) that the Iroquois were to blame for killing everything in sight (Black 1955: 268). If this is true, then we need to ask who put the Iroquois up to this? They were under contract (although some were already *freemen*) and of course the NWC did not have a policy to employ these measures unless the competitive spirit warranted it. Did the NWC want to leave anything behind for the HBC, or was that a ploy by the HBC to turn the local aboriginals against the Iroquois? Further on in Grabowski and St-Onge (2001) there was mention that the fur trappers were under orders to do just that. While they were working the Oregon Territory the British wanted the *engagés* to clean up the beaver before the border on the 49th parallel was finalized. Grabowski and St Onge (2001) list one of the reasons why the rival companies put forward controversial histories concerning the Iroquois. The first of many is the decision by Sir George Simpson, Governor of the HBC in the British Territory, who describes the adoption of destructive/preventative

measures that would abort or set back the advances of the American fur traders into the Snake River area. Discussed earlier in this paper, these measures were blamed on the Iroquois, with their steel traps and castorum, and thus their reputation preceded them on both sides of the future border (Rich 1960 vol. 11: 189-190). The competition was so fierce that it is indeed plausible one company would 'trap the area out' to leave nothing for the competition, and then spread rumours to the local indigenous populations that the fault lies with the 'invading' Iroquois. Some had doubts as to the Iroquois motives, but their homes and their lands in the east were encroached by new French settlers, leaving them with no less than a resentment against the 'Fathers of Redemption.' They therefore departed the missions to escape 'improvements of civilization' and to follow the mode of life of their forefathers (Mackenzie 1970:411). The literature singles out the Iroquois; however, what means did the Bungee (Assiniboine) Nipissings who had followed in the wake of the *Canadiens* employ to trap the beaver?

In the Oregon Territory a few more isolated incidents occurred involving the Christian Iroquois who were accepted into the Flathead, Nez Percé, and Pend d'Oreille Nations (Laveille 1915). There were the encounters involving the Iroquois bringing the Christian message of salvation discussed in an earlier chapter. In Ruby and Brown (1992) they refer to an incident where the Iroquois were blamed for the killing of fourteen natives (Upper Umpquas) of the Umpqua River in 1818 in south-west Oregon (Ruby and Brown (1992: 254). It is strange how that number '14' sounds familiar. At this time, the Iroquois were still under the employ of the NW Company under Thomas Skene Ogden who had most of his Iroquoian brigade desert him because of his constant manipulation of the prices (Rich 1950: 51-56, 209). Ogden inflated the prices of the supplies and marked down the prices of

the furs brought in from the hunts which rendered the Iroquois *engagés* unable to pay their debts for their supplies. As recorded in Ogden's journal *Peter Skene Ogden's Snake Country Journals 1824-1825 and 1825-1826*, this exasperated the trappers, and under the leadership of Pierre Tevanitagon most of these Iroquois (which is a Mohawk name), if not all, switched over to the American fur trappers (Rich 1950: 51-56, 209):

> The major defection came during the HBC Snake Expedition of 1825 under the leadership of Peter Skene Ogden. This large and well-equipped trapping expedition hunted in the interior for several months. Pierre Tevanitagon and John Grey led 23 trappers, nearly all of them Iroquois, out of Ogden camp and over to the Americans. These Iroquois, among others, became the famed "mountain men" trading yearly with the highest bidder at the Rocky Mountain Rendezvous.

These are some of the isolated incidents involving the Iroquois in both the North-West and Oregon Territories. The Iroquois were caught in an economic war that grew outwards from the vestiges of the European wars. Whether it was the religious wars between the Catholics and the Protestants; or whether between the imperialistic national wars between the French and the English; or whether between the British and the American revolutionaries; or even again whether between the HBC and NWC (XYC): the Iroquois reputation was used to turn the locals against the employees of the NWC. As such, the realization that not only was the character of the Iroquois at stake, but the very name of the NWC as well.

Father Adrien-Gabriel Morice (1904) quips in his writings, that the *engagés* were mostly single men, many of whom, once in the country, contracted unions, open or secret, with native women; but there were times when a man left a wife in the East and his prolonged absence too often had a demoralizing effect, as "when the wife of a native did not hesitate to form a *liaison*, as Governor Simpson delicately puts it, referring to an Iroquois

who would not stay in the service unless his lawful wife was brought him from Canada" (Morice 1904: 180). In the Oregon Territory there is an excerpt about the Iroquois settling in and around the Astoria House District by Sir George Simpson. Simpson did not think much on his *engagés* forming partnerships in the Northwest and Oregon Territories. His comments that he made on his visit to Fort Astoria in 1824 when he was on a tour to reorganize the 'concern' points this out. Simpson found "several old favourite Canadian Servants and useless Iroquois about the Establishment who we must get rid of altogether as they are merely a burden on our hands" (Rich 1947: 69; McDougall et al 2018: 31). The burden that these *Canadiens* and useless Iroquois represented was their liaison with Native women and the families that they propagated. While the Company did not have to feed these families, Simpson adds that their "self-sufficiency created a competition in the market that the Indians used to their advantage in manipulating the price of fish and other supplies" (McDougall et al 2018: 31). It was in 1825 that Simpson saw this as a handicap to the fur trade. The fact remains that it turned out to be an inevitable outcome of situating permanent trading posts near established local communities. As we can see the communities were established by *Canadiens* and worthless Iroquois.

In another instant where the Governor of the HBC displays his attitude towards the Indigeneity of individuals has to do with one of the Abenaki that came West with the fur-trade as a clerk in 1818 (Barman 2014: 61). Francis Noël Annance who was part-Abenaki had his studies done at Dartmouth College in New England, and distinguished himself as an officer on the British side during the War of 1812. He came West with the NWC as a clerk but he was employed also as a hunter and interpreter for a decade and a half (Barman 2014: 61). Sir George Simpson noted in 1832 that Annance could "have no prospects of advancement" (Williams 1975: 200). The Annance story is in direct correlation to how the Iroquois and the *Canadiens* were viewed and it was brought up to rekindle a key point – that point being that even though Francis Noël Annance was a college educated Protestant and

English-speaking gentleman his Indigeneity had hindered his advancement. That does not leave much room for the French speaking Catholic Iroquois who by the way assisted the British in taking over New France, assisted the British during the American War of Independence and as Annance participated in the War of 1812 so did the Iroquois again on the British side. By now well aware that Annance was marked out by virtue of his indigeneity, he left and returned to his native land realizing that policies premised on dispossession and exclusion were well in place in the British domain even for the 'civilized' First Nation people. Though these events occurred long after the events at Chesterfield House, they attest to the lingering animosity held by HBC officers to the Iroquois who came out West. This antagonism would certainly have been even more virulent in the midst of the violent conflicts pitting the HBC against the NWC and the short-lived XY Company.

## CHAPTER 4: A NEW READING OF THE CHESTERFIELD HOUSE INCIDENT IN 1802

Chesterfield House was a trading post jointly established by the HBC and the NWC in 1800. The historical Chesterfield House was located at the junction of the Bad River (today known as the continuation of the South Saskatchewan River) and Red Deer River. It is located in the prairies, terrain described by Fidler thus: "the woods here are few and bad for building with." Fidler eventually manages to find a spot on the north side of the junction of the Red Deer and South Saskatchewan Rivers where there is sufficient timber to build a fortified outpost (Fidler 1800: 268). These two rival companies would not have joined forces under most circumstances, but they were located in a territory that was being contested by rival First Nations populations. The Atsina or Gros-Ventres were at war with the Assiniboine and Cree. Thus, two Indigenous coalitions had been vying to control the fur trade and thus the trade in guns to ensure that their rivals would not get firearms for their wars. The northern coalition which consisted of the Cree, Assiniboine, and Sarcee; while the central coalition was comprised of the Siksika, Blood, Peigan, Gros Ventres, and (at least, peripherally) the Sarcee. In past years during this period, trading forts had been attacked and the employees killed in the midst of these ongoing conflicts. Thus, building a joint outpost in this contested territory would have been a reasonable strategy. The NWC was also competing against a new upstart, the XY Company, and a temporary alliance with the HBC would have cut costs. The XY Company whose master was John Wills, built its own fort a bit farther up the river (Johnson 1967: xcii). Thus, two companies shared their compound with Peter Fidler as the master of the HBC side, while Pierre Belleau (*Bellew*) was the master of the NWC side during the 1800-1801 hunting season (Fidler 1800: 270). The HBC as a matter of policy did not permit its employees to trap for furs. They relied on First Nations to bring the furs to the

trading posts to barter for goods. The NWC, however, actively brought in Iroquois from Canada along with *Canadien* freemen to trap and hunt. The NWC domination of the fur trade, in fact, was due to their reliance on the freemen. They began with their importation of Iroquois, Bungee (Ojibwa), and Nipissing Indians to the west to trap furs north and west of Edmonton House/Fort Augustus in the eastern hills of the Rockies (Daschuk 2002: 138-140; Binnema and Ens: 2012: 43). The NWC, however, had miscalculated the Gros Ventres and Blackfoot who sometimes attacked and killed these NWC recruits (Binnema and Ens: 2012: 32).

Over 300 First Nations were hired by the NWC and XYC from the east consisting largely of over 250 Iroquois, supplemented by Nipissings and Algonquians (Johnson 1967: xci-ii; Daschuk 2002: 138-140). In fact, these 'freemen' show up as early as the 1790s in the HBC journals; but the majority of these recruits appear between 1801 and 1804 on three-year contracts and according to St-Onge (2016:7) these Iroquois were comprised mostly of Mohawk. It took the HBC ten years to catch or match NWC's production based on its strategy of bringing in Iroquois freemen. It was the HBC's James Bird who veered the HBC course of action and applied these same tactics to their efforts to improve their trade returns by hiring experience trappers to increase their fur yields (Binnema and Ens: 2012: 42-43). Many of these Iroquois freemen decided to stay in the west instead of returning to Lower Canada. Some intermarried with the Cree, but there are some sources which indicate that some of the Iroquois travelled with their wives from the east (Thompson 1848: 317; Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 34). St-Onge (2016) argues that the former was mostly from the Mohawk Nation that followed traditional paths in that they needed to be separated from their loved ones (2016: 7). The basic social organizing principle of these Iroquois was a

belief in separate and compatible *orenda* (spiritual essences). David Blanchard an anthropologist documents that the "Mohawk believed that men and women each possess a distinct power, and when this power is active – during years of fertility and sexual potency – men and women must not spend a great deal of time together, lest their powers become 'mixed-up'" (Blanchard 1983: 57). This is the most likely reason the Iroquois were favourable for long term contracts away from home; and as we see in the contracts there are noted 'codicils' whereas their wages, after a certain time frame in the field, were doled out to the families left back home (St-Onge 2016: 13-15).

Most fur trappers were aware of the dangers that could befall them, recognizing that they were intruders in these trapping territories. But the irony of this early western saga demonstrates that the danger did not only lie with some of the hostile nations of the North-West and Oregon Territories, but in the severity of competition between the rival fur trading companies. The one event that seems to stand out most in our history is the 'Pemmican War' and the battle that occurred in June 1816 at Seven Oaks (downtown Winnipeg today). Some historians do not figure it was a battle but an incident, and to the other extreme some other historians note that it was a massacre.

There were besides the rigorous travel and environmental dangers other societal and communal reasons that put the Iroquois at risk; first, their compatibility to working alongside the *Canadiens* and in sharing the same faith as Roman Catholics set them at odds and would ignite old prejudicial sentiments, since most HBC workers in the field were Orkneymen (*Orcadians*), Protestants and deep-rooted English Scotsmen (Johnson 1967 :xciii); second, the Iroquois, masters of their profession as voyageurs and trappers more notably as *engagés*, would supersede any local men from being hired and were envied by the HBC officers but

often despised by the local Indigenous populations for killing all the beaver and leaving nothing behind; but more because of their being Indigenous they were considered expendable especially if your employment was with the rival company. The expendability set the stage for the Iroquois to be used as a bargaining chip by Peter Fidler (under the leadership of William Tomison) to thwart the Gros Ventre from seeking retribution for previous misgivings. Alice Johnson (1967) in her introduction does not set out to point fingers as to the murders of these individuals; however, she provides enough material both in the foreword and the journals left behind by Fidler to justify another interpretation of the circumstances that led to the trappers' demise in 1802.

The matter concerning the roving Iroquois and *Canadiens* merits some investigation due to apparently mitigating circumstances surrounding the demise/massacre of the NWC employees. It is no surprise that there was animosity between the two fur trading companies, even though they were both run by British and English-speaking governors. Indeed, there was a modified alliance of the HBC and NWC who for a time ran in competition with the XYC until the re-emergence in 1804 of the NWC and XYC. All this did not fall on deaf ears, especially since William Tomison's authority over Bird and Fidler puts the latter in a precarious position.

### *4.1 Impact of the Gros Ventre*

The Gros Ventre or Atsina had a tremendous impact on the history of the North West plains in the 18$^{th}$ and 19$^{th}$ centuries. In response to attacks by well-armed Cree and Assiniboine, large groups of Gros Ventre plundered Manchester House (NWC) in 1793 and attacked the South Branch House (HBC) in 1794 mostly because the Houses were providing guns to the Cree and Assiniboine tribes in what is now present-day Saskatchewan (Morton

1973: 456-457; Johnson 1967: 316). At the HBC South Branch it was reported that they murdered four men and all the women and children, took all the goods, and burnt the house to ashes (Johnson 1967: 316). The Manchester House was 50 km east of present-day Lloydminster and the South Branch House was near present-day Batoche, Saskatchewan. In Duncan McGillivray's journal he describes how interpreter Jacques Raphael shot the Fall Indian chief "L'Homme au Calumet" leading the charge against the HBC Fort (McGillivray 1929: 49). This occurs about eight years before the incident at the Chesterfield House. Their alliances and some of the conflicts that precipitated through the contact and post-contact with the fur companies dramatizes events leading to Peter Fidler's "justifiable" decisions while Master of the Chesterfield House. The objective of setting up a trading House at the junction of the South Saskatchewan River and Red Deer River seems to have been to draw the Blackfeet and Piegans away southward, and the Indians of the Missouri northward (Morton 1973: 511).

### *4.2 Inland HBC District Chief William Tomison*

William Tomison (1739-1829) was the district chief out of Cumberland House when the violent events transpired. Tomison was of the "old stock," hired by the HBC mostly because he was of an Orkney background and was capable of handling himself (Nicks 2003). During the second half of the 18$^{th}$ century the HBC tended to hire people outside of the English domain, as new English employees would be more inclined to leave their employment than endure the harsh conditions and climate of North America. Subsequently, the HBC found likely candidates in the Orkney Islands who were not only British subjects since 1707 but also of good Protestant stock, hailing from the Orangeman Presbyterian tradition (Nicks 2003). Having no formal education, Tomison arrived in the Hudson's Bay

area (York Factory) when he was 20 years old in 1759. He was trained in the field and became a steward after seven years.

Tomison was determined to become the Inland and Coastal Chief of the establishments of forts and fur trading houses in Rupert's Land based out of York Factory. His performance was based on reports from other officers of the HBC, and after a few years (on account of his demeanour) he was not promoted but demoted to Inland Chief of operations (Nicks 2003). As a result, Joseph Colen became the Chief at York Factory to replace Tomison:

> In April 1785, having had extensive experience in both "mechanic & mercantile Affairs" and being "perfect master of his Pen in writing and figures," Joseph Colen was engaged as a writer by the Hudson's Bay Company for five years at £20 per annum. He was to assist Humphrey Marten, chief at York Factory, and to oversee the rebuilding of the factory, destroyed in 1782 by Jean-François de Galaup, Comte de Lapérouse – a project that was too much of a burden for the gouty Marten (Smith 1983). When Colen took over he was 35 and Tomison was approximately 57. Much younger and less experience than Tomison, Colen's education and ties to England's upper class gave him a higher pay rate and greater say in the operations. The much older and experienced Tomison grew spiteful; anyone working under him was manipulated into undermining Colen's plans (Smith 1983). Colen wanted to expand the fur trade into the Athabasca region by finding new routes by lakes and rivers to that region. Colen thought that the HBC Orkneymen were planning something against the company, which led him to hire Englishmen as opposed to Orcadians. Realizing this, Tomison worked to further upset Colen's plans in the NorthWest Territory (Johnson 1967: xix). In a way Colen was correct: because of Tomison's bitterness he disrupted plans for Colen's vision of competing against the NWC in the Athabasca Region [Johnson 1967: xvii].

The only reason that Colen started to organize the inland district was due to Tomison's plans of retirement from the company: "Jealousy, obstruction and confusion, particularly in relation to the Athabasca project, continued because the causes could not be remedied

through correspondence, particularly by correspondence with Tomison" (Johnson 1967: xci). Tomison employed different waylaying tactics to postpone this outcome so he could continue these hindrances to Colen's vision. Therefore, it is conceivable that Tomison's resentments had infested the men under his charge not only in this regard but of what he thought of the new flurry of fur trappers such as the eastern First Nations. Under Tomison's direction there were many Masters, including Peter Fidler (1769-1822) whose actions, we will see, led to the demise of sixteen men in and around Chesterfield House who were freemen or under contract with the NWC.

As district chief out of Cumberland House (Chesterfield House is part of this District) Tomison summarised the difficulties he had experienced during the 1801-2 season (Nicks 2003). In the summer of 1801, the North West and XY Company had brought in more than three hundred Iroquois on three-year contracts. These new arrivals, as reported by Tomison, had swarmed over the Saskatchewan District to complete the destruction of the beaver (Harmon 1818: 268; Johnson 1967: xcii; Daschuk 2002: 138-140). There are indeed several statements blaming the Iroquois for the extermination of the beaver, one of them being Harmon's (1818: 268). We have to remember that the Iroquois, Bungee, Nipissings, and *Canadiens* were under employ or under contract, in this case by the NWC, and it would not be surprising if the Chief Master of these NWC posts was ordering their *engagés* to employ the tactic of leaving nothing behind to hinder the competitive HBC.

Tomison had other grievances as well. First, he received a letter from London stating that any friendly suggestions from the Nor'Westers about making local trade agreements were to be received and settled with 'due observance of peace and harmony'; second, the Committee was sure that 'the superior quality' of the Hudson's Bay Company's trading

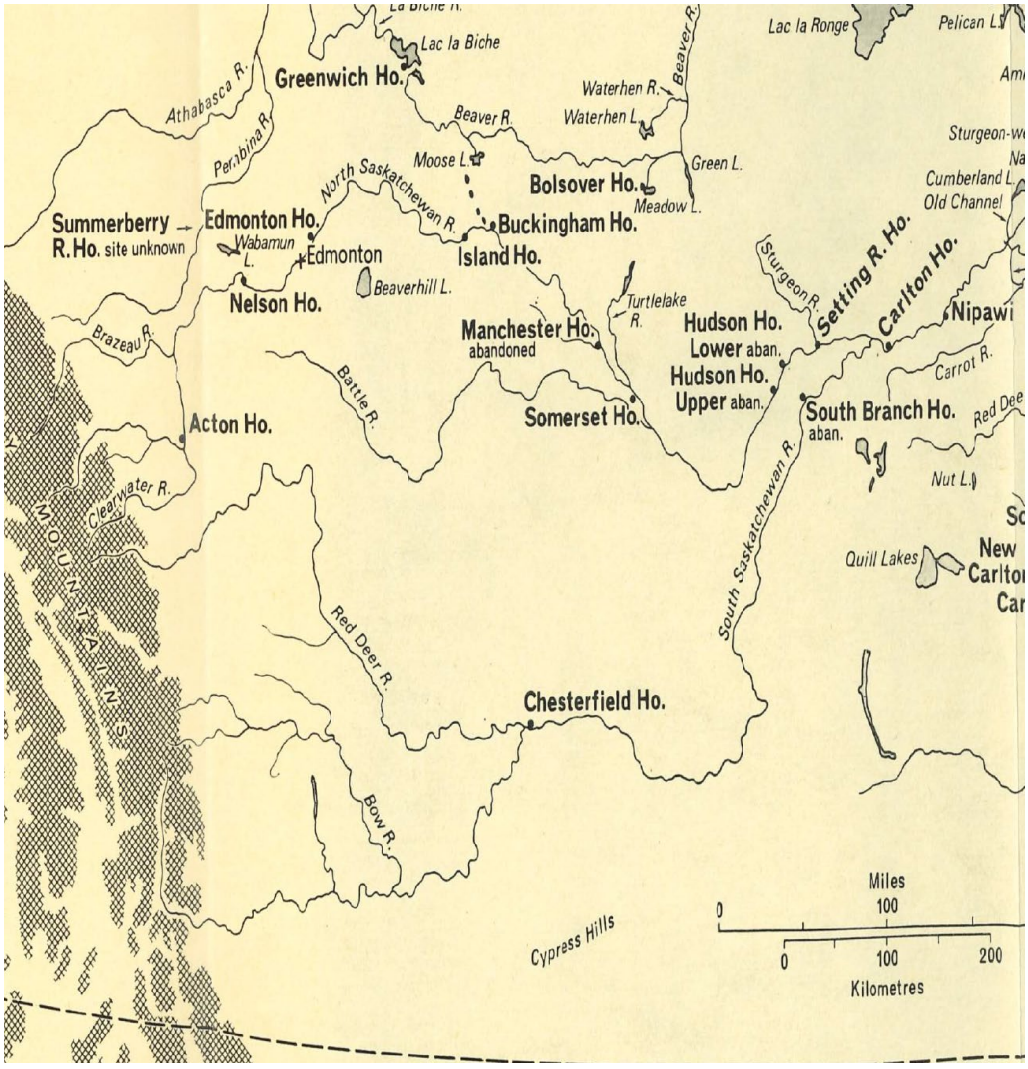
goods would always command a preference with the Natives (Johnson 1967: xci). The wandering Iroquois and free *Canadiens* about whom Tomison complained must also have affected the HBC's trade along the upper Saskatchewan during the season 1801-2 (Johnson 1967: xciii). James Bird and Peter Fidler left Cumberland House on August 14th, 1801, and on Tomison's orders James Bird went and closed the Carlton House on account of the waste of goods occurring with no trading and no beaver coming in from the local First Nations (B.49/a/31: 14 August 1801; Johnson 1967: xcii). According to Johnson (1967: xci), "Tomison opposed by both the Old and New Companies, complained on 19 January 1802, that these competitors were dogging the Indians and preventing them from hunting by keeping them well supplied with rum."

### *4.3 The Fur-Trading Houses at Chesterfield*

The Hudson Bay Company (HBC) and the North West Company (NWC) were noted rivals all through the North West and Oregon Territories from 1789 to 1820. Although the New North West Company (XYC) formed in 1800 partly from shareholders in the NWC and presented some competition, it endured only until 1804 when once again the shareholders were taken in by the NWC without, notably, Sir Alexander Mackenzie. The fur trading competition was embroiled with strife, threats, and in some cases assaults between rivals, but there were also internal tensions within the HBC (Lamb 1970: 10). Before the amalgamation of the NWC and the HBC which occurred in 1821, the HBC had been struggling with something other than the procurement of furs, getting the merchandise to the ships, supplying the posts with food, and providing trade goods that would attract the First Nations to their posts. This struggle had developed amongst themselves: the tensions and conflicts that existed between the officers of the HBC, particularly in the North-West Territories, as has

been discussed. In our time frame there was some animosity between the new XYC and the NWC. To address these issues, the NWC allied with the HBC at the Chesterfield House and subsequently built the Chesterfield House together in opposition to the XYC (Johnson 1967: 270 n. 24). For one hunting season, 1800-1801 the HBC and NWC worked side by side trading for furs at this new post. However, Peter Fidler along with James Tomison, the HBC Inland Manager, alleged that the NWC operations at Chesterfield House was merely a ploy to divert the HBC from reaching the Athabasca Region, prized for its rich beaver pelts (Johnson 1967: xcii). And a new contingent of NWC men hired in 1801 and deployed to Chesterfield House were viewed by the HBC as a threat to its interests. It was clear that these recruits were trappers not traders. In reviewing the three versions of Fidler's account of the years 1800-1802, my research suggests that Fidler betrayed the whereabouts of this NWC brigade to the Atsina/Gros Ventres/Fall Indians/Rapid Indians, knowing full well that this would result in the men being killed. What is known without any doubt is that 16 NWC men, mostly Iroquois, were killed. Two Canadiens, Frenchmen in Fidler's term, came first and met with Peter Fidler. And then two Iroquois arrived, bringing presents to the Atsina. These two Iroquois were killed that day at the Atsina camp. The following day, two more Iroquois who split up with the two Canadians accompanying them were also killed by the Atsina. On March 3rd, 1802, Fidler reports that he fears their post would be attacked, but he later learns that the Atsina had veered away and end up going down the South Branch of the Saskatchewan River and attacking and killing ten more Iroquois as well as two Canadians.

**Chesterfield House and Surroundings**
**1794-1802**
***Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence: Edmonton House 1795-1802***
**(Alice Johnson 1967).**




**HUDSON'S BAY COMPANY INLAND POSTS (in part)**
**dependent on YORK FACTORY 1795 - 1802**

With the NWC supposedly not showing up for the 1801-02 season and the rapprochement of the Fall Indians, Fidler had only John Wills, Master of the XYC Chesterfield House and his employees (all *Canadiens*) as a neighbour. After the demise of the NWC brigade, Fidler asked Wills to burn down their House and invited them into the HBC House in light of an apparently imminent threat of attack from the Gros Ventre (Johnson 1967: xcii). The company men burnt the XY House to the ground.

Tomison and Fidler concluded that the NWC had been there the previous year to pull a ruse: by erecting a post at the Chesterfield House, the NWC was trying to divert the other companies from concentrating on the Athabasca Region (Johnson 1967: xcii). The question remains: who employed the 14 Iroquois and 4 Canadiens? According to Fidler, they belonged to the Old Company, on Sunday February 21st 1802 Fidler logs in:

> This morning two Canadians came here, belonging to the Old Company, they are come from the mouth of this river which place they left 23d January; also, fourteen *Irroque* Indians and two more Canadians accompanied them" (B.34/a/2, printed *supra*: 253-91; Johnson 1967: 311).

In the original rough version of his journal Fidler said that the Canadians "were intended to go to the Hill where we got pitch to kill Beaver – 1 Canadian is to remain here & go down with us in the spring, he is to come to take up their goods that they left *en cache* all summer, the other 3 was to accompany the *Irroques* to kill Beaver" (B.39/a/2, emphasis added). But alas, another third revision made of this entry (E. 3/2, pp. 122-41) which Fidler revised again at a later date says, "That the Canadians and Iroquois came up the South Saskatchewan in March (January) 1802 to kill beaver, having been wrongly informed that these animals were plentiful in the area" (Johnson 1967: 311 n. 5). Fidler concluded this very lengthy revised

entry by writing that the two *Canadiens* who arrived at Chesterfield House on February 21st, 1802 remained there all spring as mentioned for his entry on March 4th, 1802 in the second version (Johnson 1967: 311, 314). Oddly, were the four Canadians and the 'roving' Iroquois not going to make use of the NWC post as a layover until they were ready to head to the Cypress Hills (Johnson 1967: xciii)? This fact puts the allegations of a ploy to rest as that there was no apparent intent to trick anybody.

James MacGregor (1966), historian, states that in the autumn of 1794, Fidler married *à la façon du pays* a Swampy Cree named Mary while stationed at York Factory. Their union brought about 14 children of which 11 survived. In 1800 Mary had her third child, a son named George at the Chesterfield House (1966: 252; Allen 1983). Also, with Fidler were his employees, who were all Orkneymen of which brings to bear the question, "Do Orkneymen and Roman Catholic *Canadiens* and/or Roman Catholic Iroquois mix?" (Johnson 1967: xciii, 294 n. 1). In this particular time-frame, Fidler made no mention of how well John Wills, Master of the XYC House did, even though they shared close quarters and accommodations for a few months. It seems that Fidler secured some 7,495 beaver pelts as compared to 12,000 the previous season. Even with this decrease, this Saskatchewan post trade was still the best result for the 1801-2 seasons for all houses in that part of the territory (Johnson 1967: xciii).

HB and XY Companies both left Chesterfield House on April 21st, 1802 and for a few days kept close together, going their separate ways when they heard from the Blackfoot that the Gros Ventre had headed to the Missouri country. The Fidler crew waited at the mouth of the South Saskatchewan River for James Bird who showed up on May 28th with a brigade of three boats and six canoes (Johnson 1967: xciii). Bird commented that it was the least

amount of furs taken out of this area in the last 20 years. A report or a letter entry of 1802 from John Ballanden (accountant and future chief factor of the HBC) and the council at York to the Governor and Committee reported that Bird and Fidler blamed the drop in fur collection to the extreme cold winter (Johnson 1967: xciii). The incident concerning the demise of the NWC brigade was not reported except for the fact that the local First Nation people were getting hostile. It is important to review the events which led to their departure from Chesterfield House in their chronological sequence.

### 4.4 Circumstantial Evidence from the Chronology of Events

Questions are raised in reading Fidler's journals and the revisions he made, which are elaborated further on in the thesis. How did Fidler know the precise details of how the men were killed and the goods that were pillaged? Also, Fidler reports that he would not trade or even let one Atsina man in the post until the other ten Iroquois and two Canadians arrived safely at the post. But Fiddler then offers them, the Atsina, a keg of liquor with tobacco. And again, it is odd that he sends a Stony Indian to investigate the reported deaths of two Canadians, as the Stony people were the blood enemies of the Atsina. As will be discussed in greater detail in this chapter, these inconsistencies in the various versions of Fidler's account suggest the likelihood that Fidler himself had orchestrated the tragic events: he likely informed the Atsina of the whereabouts of the Iroquois and Canadians and directed them to attack the competitors while ensuring the safety of his outpost. Though this cannot be proven definitely, the events and discrepancies will be presented for consideration. Theodore Binnema (2001) in his *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* remarks that Fidler's dealings with the Fall Indians was curious. The tragic event of the killing of 12 men unfolds some 10 days after Fidler has been

informed of the demise of the first Iroquois who came forward to introduce themselves to the Atsina in offering good will and presents. Unfortunately, the four Iroquois were scalped, dismembered, and mutilated, and this was known by Fidler even as he trades with the Atsina and shares with them information on the larger contingent of Iroquois and Canadians coming down the river. "Curiously, the traders at Chesterfield House traded with these Gros Ventres after they promised to let the other two Canadians and ten Iroquois reach the posts" (Binnema 2001: 191). As this thesis suggests, these actions are curious precisely because Fidler was seeking to construct a narrative which would obfuscate the events which occurred. The simplest explanation is that Fidler is masking the fact that he incited the Atsina to attack the NWC brigade comprised mainly of Iroquois. In studying and researching through other works for this particular series of events (three separate attacks which culminate in the demise of 16 employees of the NWC) there are quite a few other moments which would give us pause and characterise as 'curious.' The analysis presented relies upon the revisions Fidler made between various iterations of his field notes pertaining to these events. This includes the first, second and third versions of his notes. Different facts are presented in these notes, facts which should have remained unchanged. I argue that Peter Fidler, Master of the Chesterfield House from 1800 to 1802, employed tactics that would keep the 'concern,' the men under his charge and his family from harm's way and would, under his auspices, instigate the death of 16 men who were contracted out to the rival company. The analysis which follows will tease out what factors affected Master Peter Fidler's decisions in how he managed his supervisory role when confronting one of the most hostile people, the Gros Ventre, on the Western plains.

Critical events include two previous attacks (uprisings) by the Fall Indians in 1793 and 1794 (Johnson 1967: 293 note 1); and, the NWC not returning to the Chesterfield House area in 1801 for the winter trade and hunt. This would give rise to Tomison's opinion as to the NWC's intentions, already planned in 1800, to divert its opponents' attention from the Athabasca territory. Finally, Fidler had revised his journals, and the encounter that he faced at Chesterfield House with the death of the NWC *engagés* by the Fall Indians, yet this was never relayed to the Head Office (Johnson 1967: xcii). The challenge is to sift through the various iterations of Fidler's notes and journals to piece together the events.

On February 20th 1802 there were about 60 tents of the Fall Indians pitched about ¾ mile from the Chesterfield House (B.39/a/2). On Feb. 21st the new (XY) Company's Master (John Wills) came over to Fidler's House and told him that three or four Fall Indians rapped on the gates to let them in at around midnight, and as soon as he did, they were rushed by over 30 other Indians who were well armed. Though the armed men were in the fort, they found themselves so crowded that there was no room to move and to stage a confrontation. When the natives saw that the *Canadiens* were well armed, according to Wills, it was likely evident that a few of the Gros Ventre might get killed, so they left the fortifications (Johnson 1967: 311).

In the morning of February 21st 1802 two Canadians, belonging to the NWC came to Fidler's fortress supposedly on their way to the Cypress Hills—*I e Kim me coo* hill (Cyprus Hills)—70 or 80 miles SW of the Chesterfield House. David Thompson was paving the way for their trappers to proceed without getting in harm's way, and in November 1800 David Thompson and Duncan McGillivray got permission from the Piegans to take some Iroquois and Saulteaux trappers into the foothills of the Rocky Mountains (Hopwood 1971: 229).

According to Alice Johnson the discrepancies between Fidler's first rough journal (B.39/A/2) to his third revised journal (E.3/2, pp. 122-41) which he also revised at a later date is suspicious and also does suggest an attempt to cover-up of what had actually transpired (Johnson 1967: 311 n. 5). From the NWC party coming down to the Chesterfield House, two Canadians left on Jan. 23rd from the mouth of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan and arrived in February (Johnson 1967: 311, 314). The remaining 14 Iroquois and two other *Canadiens* of the party stayed in the meantime at the junction of North and South branches of the Saskatchewan River near present-day Prince Albert, Saskatchewan. But according to Johnson, Fidler had revised the earlier rough versions that he transcribes in a journal (Microfilm 1M21 B.39/a/2). On this day Monday February 22nd, 1802, according to Johnson, Fidler writes, "Several Fall Indians came to the house to trade but we would not let a single man in. This is done with the intent that they may not fall upon the other ten *Irroques* and two Canadians, who are expected here daily" (Johnson 1967: 312). In the same breath or in the very next sentence he curiously adds, "Gave the Fall Indian chiefs a big keg of liquor and one fathoms of tobacco to let the others come in safe to the house, which they solemnly promised to do" (Johnson 1967: 312). Did Fidler just say he wanted no dealings with them yet still provided a keg of liquor? However, when we analyse the rough version B.39/a/2, outlined below, there is no mention on this particular day of any fraternizing with the Fall Indian chiefs nor giving them liquor and tobacco. Instead Fidler is saying that he wishes to intimidate the Fall Indians into giving safe passage for their rival company's employees by not trading with them.

Detailed below is what Fidler supposedly wrote on February 22, 1802 in his rough journal as compared to the above-mentioned quote of his dealings with the Fall Indians in the *Saskatchewan Journal*. In the entry dated February 22nd, 1802, Fidler writes:

> Feby 22nd Monday: Later that night we heard that the Fall Inds killed the other 2 Iroquois – a little on this & either Feathers [illegible] when the [illegible] – some of our men heard the guns fired from the House about 10 o'clock in the morning – This day, gave every man a bayonet, for close quarters, should the Fall Inds be daring enough to attack us, they got guns last night with ½ pint of powder and 20 balls each man – Several fall ind. Came this day to be admitted into both the Houses but would not let one man in – We told them that when the other 10 Iroquois and 2 Canadians came here. That, they will be admitted into the house and trade as usual. This is done with the intent of keeping the fall Indians from falling upon the other Iroquois as they are very much irritated at present by the great losses they have met with in the Summer & this Winter [B.39/a/2 in Microfilm 1M21, page 17].

Here Fidler and his men get ready for an attack and he tries to pacify the chiefs with liquor and tobacco. He continues:

> – 2 make kegs – Taylor at work for John Ballanden – 2 putting in filling pieces with the stockades when open - & the rest variously employed in both making carrot Tobacco & we went back to look for the French goods laid up last Summer but the Snow is too deep to find the Swivel gun – as it is laid up separately from the rest of the things – the black feet said it cared for the bodies of the 2 Iroquois that was killed last - & this afternoon 3 of the Fall Inds went and pulled them *heau* to pieces & cut off the four legs and out to their *tents – all the Blackfeet pitched near the House* – This storm is over – traded a little liquor with them – they all got drunk – one man stabbed *À kane stom* in the shoulder – but not mortal – he is likely, soon to get better – the Blackfoot that came last night traded 6 guns [B.39/a/2 page 17].

Not only does Fidler provide the Atsina alcohol, he also writes how he informs them of the party of NWC freemen who are on their way:

> We told them that when the other 10 *Irroques* & 2 Canadians came here that they will be admitted into the house & Trade as usual. This is done with the

> intent of keeping the fall Indians from falling upon the other *Irroques*, as they are very much irritated at present by the great losses they have met with in the Summer & this Winter' [B.39/a/2].

The second journal was altered to fit some story of his own elaboration—perhaps to hide the real events of that encounter (Johnson 1967: 311 n. 5). Who were the 14 Iroquois and four *Canadiens* working for? The Iroquois, as mentioned, had just come up from Montréal in 1801 with a new three-year contract (Johnson 1967: 316-317). Was it a contract with the XYC or NWC? Tomison had confided to Fidler that the NWC had employed a ploy to make the HBC think that the NWC were not concentrated on the Athabasca District, letting the competition think that the NWC was interested in killing beaver in and about the South Saskatchewan tributaries (Johnson 1967: xcii). As Fidler points out, these "roving Iroquois," were from the Old Company (NWC) and therefore there was no subterfuge to outsmart them (Johnson 1967: 311, 314).

To recap, Fidler complains about the NWC not showing up but acknowledges that there is a crew of NWC trappers. When the NWC brigade was six days walk from the Chesterfield House, four Iroquois and two Canadians came ahead to make peace with the Atsina. However, a small party of Fall Indians killed the first two Iroquois that had gone to their tents to give presents and to initiate a friendship with them. Not knowing the fate of their two comrades, the other two Canadians and two Iroquois followed (Johnson 1967: 311). But these slept in Blackfoot tents only four miles from the three trading posts. The next morning the other two Iroquois were approached by the Atsina, who according to Fidler, apologized for killing the other two fellow Iroquois (no reason was given for their overreaction). The Fall Indians told them they would be safe and were sorry about the deaths

of the other two Iroquois, and the Iroquois agreed to join them and head out to the Atsina camp. However, as soon as the Iroquois got ½ mile from the Blackfoot tents, they were killed, scalped, and stabbed repeatedly (Johnson 1967: 312). This latter statement begs the question, how was Fidler able to know precisely what went on or who said what, notably the fact that the Fall Indians were sorry for killing the other two compatriots? The comment made by Fidler is "such is the behaviour and manners that when they appear to be well pleased and satisfied, they have the most rancorous revenge lurking in their minds" (Johnson 1967: 312). For what were the Atsina seeking revenge? The killing of a chief in 1794 at the South Branch House? Revenge for what the Cree and Assiniboine had done to their people by the killing of family members and stealing their horses? Revenge because they were smitten by smallpox the previous year? Revenge on the "intruders" who were not welcomed to trap beaver in their territory they claimed as theirs? Fidler was not too clear as to the Atsina's motive. Some further questions arise. For example, where did Fidler get the facts about the Fall Indians lying to lure away the Iroquois? Where did Fidler get the information that the Fall Indians were looking for revenge and specifically blamed a Canadian for the deaths of one of their chiefs?

Fidler writes in his rough journal one of the Fall Indian Chief's was the reason they had killed the French Canadians:

> One of the New Company traders (*Fall Indian*) told Mr. Wills (*Master of the YYC*) in a private manner that the intentions of *A Kas Kin*, the chief of the nation, was not well inclined towards us on account of the death of his brother who was shot at the South Branch House by the Canadians at the same time that they destroyed ours. He was carrying fire to set fire to the house when he was shot; when he fell all desisted and went away crying [B.39/a/2; March 8th, Monday; Johnson 1967: 316, emphasis added by author].

Jacques Raphael "Jaco" Finlay as mentioned previously was the man responsible for killing the Fall Indian chief "L'Homme au Calumet" leading the charge against the NWC Fort (McGillivray 1929: 49). Actually, Raphael was reported to be working with David Thompson in 1810 to build the Spokane House (Olson 2014: 53). The Atsina tried unsuccessfully to seize the NWC trading post (Manchester House) in 1793 but then burned and killed everybody except one at the HBC trading post (South Branch House) in 1794 (Johnson 1967: 316). This occurs about eight years before the incident at the Chesterfield House, though one could argue there is no time limitation when the "moccasin telegraph" and past grievances and revenge are at play (Johnson 1967: 316).

In Fidler's revised journal, Fidler noted many other instances where the Atsina had told some untruths thus suggesting that the rationale for seeking revenge was also false, "The Fall Indians make us very fair promises and many of them, that we have not the least to dread from them, but we cannot sincerely trust them" (Johnson 1967: 316). This discussion of the need for revenge also leads to asking why is it that Fidler and his crew would find security in joining with the *Canadiens* (at John Wills' XYC – there were 16 Canadiens among them) if they were about to be attacked by the Atsina seeking revenge (Johnson 1967: 293 n. 1)? We might conclude that they were not after the Iroquois but the *Canadiens*; if this was the case, however, why leave the first two *Canadiens* alive that first arrived at the Chesterfield House?

The Blackfoot had buried the two Iroquois who were first killed, but the Fall Indians had pulled them up again and cut off their hands and feet and brought these to their tents ¾ miles off. Feb. 22nd, 1802 was the first instance the Fall Indians were made aware that there were 10 more Iroquois and two *Canadiens* on their way to the House (Johnson 1967: 312). After hearing about the deaths of the Iroquois Fidler would not let the Fall Indians come to

trade but in the same breath, as discussed, in his first revised journal Fidler gave the Fall Indian chiefs a big keg of liquor and one fathom of tobacco for safe passage of the remaining party on their way to Chesterfield House which the Fall Indians solemnly promised Fidler to do. This very act was irresponsible since Fidler gave the Fall Indian Chiefs information concerning the status and location of the men coming to the Chesterfield House (Johnson 1967: 312 note 2). To reiterate there is a page from Fidler's rough journal taken from the microfilm 1M21 (B.39/a/2: 17) dated the 22nd of February 1802 and it does mention they would not let the Fall Indians in to trade but there is no mention of buying them off with whisky and tobacco to let these other Iroquois come safely to Chesterfield House (see APPENDIX B). The revisions suggest that Fidler understood that the implications of his actions would be evident as recounted in the earlier notes (see APPENDIX A through D).

It is clear that Fidler was under a lot of pressure and he had other responsibilities that came first. Fidler was under the influence of his District Manager, William Tomison, who was not too fond of the havoc that these French-speaking Catholic Indians from the east were wreaking. Their actions he believed necessitated the closure of HBC fur trading Houses and his presumption was that they were killing all the beaver. Fidler's concern was the success of the Chesterfield House; there was also the 19 Orkneymen working under his charge (Johnson 1967: 314) and where he was living with his family that Fidler rarely if ever mentions. Fidler brought his wife Mary (a Swampy Cree) and his children wherever the 'concern' sent him. As a matter of fact, his third child, George, was born at the Chesterfield House in 1800 (MacGregor 1966: 252). Fidler in recalling the burning and killing of every man, woman, and child at the South Branch House in 1794 must have felt some apprehension and this suggest that he engineered a tactic to distract the distraught Fall Indians (Johnson 1967: 316).

Furthermore, if there was no deal struck between the Fall Indians and Fidler it is curious how he itemizes all the equipment that the 16 men were bringing to the Cyprus Hills if the Chesterfield House employees could or would not approach the area where the incident occurred (Johnson 1967: 314 n. 3). The itemized equipment that the NWC brigade were taking with them to the Cypress Hills which was not itemized in the first two versions of Fidler's versions, "They pillaged those they killed of 1 Keg of Powder, 70 lbs. of Ball & 60 lbs. of Shott, upwards of 50 Steel Traps & all their Guns & other articles" (E 3/2 p. 139, September 20th, 1800). This is peculiar since the evidence demonstrates that Fidler claimed that they feared for their lives, they surely did not want to venture out to investigate and bury the *Canadiens* and Iroquois, but still Fidler knew precisely the quantity of supplies this crew was transporting to the Cypress Hills. Were these supplies left in a cache or were they traded for supplies, liquor and tobacco?

To add to the growing list of discrepancies was the sending of a Stone Indian to investigate whether or not the Gros Ventre were truthful about the two Canadians that were killed apart from the Iroquois. Johnson (1967: 317-318) cites Fidler:

> March 12, Friday. Sent a Stone Indian to see whether or not that the two Canadians was killed along with the *Irroques*, as we cannot believe the Fall Indians. In the evening the Indian returned, and found that the Canadians had been killed with the *Irroques* and scalped, one of their heads was also cut off. The Indian found two Fall Indians waiting there where they was killed; he asked them the reason of their being there and they said that they was looking out for more *Irroques* as they thought that more might be behind and that we wanted to keep it secret that they might arrive safe. Men's employ as yesterday.

Were not the Stone and Cree Indians responsible for putting the Fall Indians to flight in two different campaigns? In the previous year, warfare with the Stonies and Crees had claimed 76

Gros Ventre lives, another 100 people had succumbed to smallpox, and more died due to the severity of the winter of 1801-2. In addition, nearly 300 of their horses had been lost through snowstorms and theft by their enemies in the spring of 1801 (Nicks 1980b: 93; Johnson 1967: 316).

In the third version (E.3/2, pp. 122-41 of the first part of his 1800-1 Chesterfield House journal (B.34/a/2, printed *supra*, pp. 253-91) Fidler recounts this tale:

> What raised the resentment of the Fall Inds. So very much was that the Summer 1801, The Southern & Stone Indians had made war upon them, killing 76 men women & Children, in two different places up towards the Stony Mountain in the *Moocoowans* river, & at the *I e kim me coo* hill, they also scalped 3 who they took for dead two Children about 10 years old and a middle aged woman, who survived & came to our house afterwards.

Then the question might be asked, why send a Stone Indian, as the Gros Ventre would certainly recognize his "hair and head" as not being European as they said of the Iroquois but one of their arch enemy (Johnson 1967: 315 – see APPENDIX C)?

There are too many questions, holes, and discrepancies to honour the account of Peter Fidler. He was caught up in the "fur trading wars," and what seemed important to Fidler had to be his family, his charge to the Company, and himself. He knew what the Fall Indians were capable of doing, as demonstrated in 1793 and 1794, and so he made his decision to trade the lives of some Roman Catholic Indians and NWC Frenchmen *engagés* for his family, and his company's wellbeing. Fidler would, after all, seek to represent his own choices as 'necessary' when seen in retrospect.

### *4.5 Aftermath*

Fidler fails to tell or write his employer about the conflict that occurred and does not even record any competitive notes with his *ally* John Wills of the XYC (Johnson 1967: xciii). We need to appreciate the fact that there was not much news happening in the North West Territories, so when any conflict occurred, the news would spread through the territory like a wildfire. It is no wonder why Fidler thought he was having such a hard time afterwards being sent by the 'concern' as Master to different trading Houses.

The aftermath of the isolated incident at the Chesterfield House in 1802 details what amounts to be a series of disappointments for Fidler with the managing of his new posts, manifesting a constant harassment from his NWC competitors:

> By the summer of 1802 Fidler was back at York Factory; he remained only briefly at the bay before being ordered to lead an expedition to trade at Lake Athabasca … In mid September of the same year Fidler and 17 men, including Thomas Swain who was to establish a provision post on the Peace River, began the construction of Nottingham House on English Island in Lake Athabasca, less than a mile from the NWC post of Fort Chipewyan, which had been relocated on the northwest shore about 1800. For the next four hectic years, this small HBC post attempted to compete against the large and solidly entrenched NWC. Throughout these years Fidler and his contingent were continually harassed by the NWC. The HBC traders and the employees of the New North West Company (sometimes called the XY Company), also established in the region, occasionally joined forces to oppose the NWC [Allen 1987].

This would be enough time for the "moccasin telegraph" to take effect, that is, the outcome that resulted in the slaying of the NWC's fellow *engagés* in 1802 would have reached all corners of the North-West Territory. After the XYC reunited with the NWC in 1804, John Wills', Master of the XYC at the Chesterfield House, would ultimately share the past events with their renewed partnership:

> But after the union of the NWC and the XY Company in 1804 Fidler faced a formidable opponent, especially in the person of the cruelly effective Samuel Black, who arrived the following year. According to Fidler, the NWC used abusive tactics to intimidate him and his men. They destroyed a canoe, ripped up the garden, scared away game, and nearly burned down the post. "I suppose it was their intention to starve our people out." Black and his cohorts humbled the HBC men and, with little prospect of trade, Fidler became convinced that the competition was unfair and senseless … the intimidation continued until June 1806 when a dispirited Fidler and the HBC contingent paddled out of the lake. For Fidler, the abandonment of the Athabasca was the nadir of his fur trade career" [Allen: 1987; also, the same sentiment was expressed in Rich 1960: 276-277 Vol. 11].

After a few stints as map maker and having received awards, accolades and a raise in pay from the Company, Fidler was sent out in the fur trading field again only to meet up with new reprisals as he was first sent to Île-à-la-Crosse in June 1810, but left within a year as he was "badgered" by the NWC under the direction of  Samuel Black and Peter Skene Ogden (Allen 1987). Tired and discouraged, Fidler was granted a one-year leave whereby he travelled to England (Allen 1987), and when he returned in 1812, he was transferred to the Red River settlement which Lord Selkirk was in progress of colonizing. Fidler is again caught in the mêlée that lead into the "Pemmican War." Fidler was temporarily in charge of the Red River settlement in 1815 when the governor of the colony, Miles MacDonnell resigned from his post (MacGregor 1966: 186-187; Allen 1987). As a result of constant harassment by the Métis, led by Cuthbert Grant and encouraged by the NWC, he signed on June 25, 1815, a capitulation that ordered "all settlers to retire immediately from this river, no appearance of a colony to remain." Fidler and the colonists abandoned the settlement and fled to Jack River House, Manitoba (MacGregor 1966: 203; Allen 1987). However, Colin Robertson relieved Fidler of his command and took some of the settlers with him to re-establish the colony (MacGregor 1966: 216-217). Fidler went back to York Factory and there was given new orders to transport the new governor of the Selkirk Colony, Robert Semple,

and additional settlers to the Red River colony. After fulfilling his duty, he went back to aid the struggling Brandon House (Allen 1987). Shortly thereafter he escapes his fate and the killing of 20 men at Seven Oaks that might have secured his name in history as a martyr in the service of the HBC. Fidler was demoted, serving as a clerk until he resigned due to his ill health. He died soon after when he was only 53 (MacGregor 1966: 249-252).

### *4.6 Closing Stage of the Chesterfield House Incident of 1802*

An analysis of all the iterations of Fidler's account as well as other HBC documents does allow us to compile some facts, which will not be contested. NWC and HBC fur trading houses were pillaged in 1793 and 1794 by the Gros Ventre. Also, the Inland District Chief, William Tomison certainly swayed Peter Fidler and other company employees to their allegiance. Tomison was certainly biased and prejudiced towards the NWC, XYC, the Iroquois and other eastern First Nation people in the fur trade. Fidler's family including his wife and his three children of whom their third child, George, was born at the Chesterfield trading post in 1800 were part of the contingent in the HBC post which also included 18 employees who were Orkneymen. The *Canadiens* referred to by Fidler on more than a few occasions as 'the French' and the Iroquois were referred to as the destroyers of all beaver and it was without a doubt feared that this the NWC brigade that was coming down the river in 1802 was going to denude the furs from the Cyprus Hills and take away the HBC monopoly. It was reported on Feb. 20$^{th}$ there were 60 Gros Ventre tents located ¾ mile from the trading post. On another date March 3$^{rd}$ Fidler cited there was approximately 200 Gros Ventre going down the river to meet the other Iroquois. In his third version he states that the Atsina are about 600 able warriors (see APPENDIX D). There does not seem to be any changes made to Fidler's 1800 Journal concerning the aforementioned facts but when we research the three

different versions of his stay at the Chesterfield House during the winter of the 1801 and 1802 hunting season we find a few discrepancies; we find in the version of his rough notes a few actions by Fidler that are curious: in dealing with the Gros Ventre after Fidler is told that there has been the killing of four Iroquois by the Gros Ventre, he refuses to trade with them noted in the rough journal but in the 2nd journal Fidler writes that he gave the Gros Ventre a keg of liquor and a fathom of tobacco so they would let the other two Canadians and ten Iroquois reach the trading post; in both writings Fidler gives away the knowledge of other men coming (telling them specifically that they are Iroquois) and their position; March 6th, 1802 we see Fidler's resolve in seeking retribution for the slaying of the NWC men—the *Canadiens* had a plan but Fidler talked them out of pursuing any such course of action; another discrepancy which was outlined in the thesis which was curious indeed was Fidler's dispatch of a Stony Indian to find out the whereabouts of the other two *Canadiens*; the Stony, a member of the people who have put to rout the Gros Ventre and killing 76 of their members and stealing about 100 horses (see APPENDIX C).

The culmination of microfiche information and literary references has brought the fact of the matter – which is the incident that occurred at the Chesterfield House between February 20th to March 3rd 1802–to an alternative conclusion. The incident where 16 men were killed can be viewed as 'a matter of fact' incident or through investigation of the evidence one can arrive at a different as presented. In this alternative account, the tragic events were not simply a random even, but influenced by the very actions of Peter Fidler and his HBC colleagues. The two companies were not divided solely by commercial competition but also by the religious and ethnic compositions of its employees. Though the leadership of both companies was largely English-speaking, they differed drastically in the composition of

their workforce. The HBC employees in this earlier period were recruited from the British Isles, while the French Canadian as well as the Eastern Woodland First Nations, Iroquois and other, were largely recruited by the NWC in Montréal. In contrast, the main basin of recruitment for the HBC were the Orkney Islands.

Seeing the snowball effect of one isolated incident, the killing of 16 men in the locale of the Chesterfield House, we can appreciate that nothing happens without a reason. That history is not made by singular events, but larger currents pulled along by forces such as productivity, commercialism and competitiveness. The interactions between competing powers and forces can produce a chain of events beyond the control of individual actors. What is necessary is to read the historical accounts critically in order to understand not only what was written, but also what was left out of the official record (Colpitts 2018). Curiously, we discover that the Chesterfield House was re-established a few years later by a Donald McKenzie of the HBC with no further incidents reported (Morton 1929: li, 49; Fairfield 1970: 41).The case of Peter Fidler's record is telling as the discrepancies suggest that Fidler was not a passive observer of the events that occurred, but quite possibly the instigator of the tragedy. The Iroquois would face other challenges in the years and decades that follow. Though there is no Iroquois community which remains at the present, their legacy and descendants are still visible across the Western plains and in northern British Columbia.

The Chesterfield House incident 1802 may have in fact initiated a chain reaction that eventually led to the battle at Seven Oaks in 1816, leading to the taking of Fort William by Lord Selkirk and eventually to the amalgamation of the London and Montréal based fur trade companies in 1821. Even though the Iroquois were not directly involved in the Seven Oaks affair, on July 31st, 1815 it was reported by an Indian who informed a Mr. McKenzie (HBC)

who was at or near the Winnipeg River where it flows into Winnipeg Lake that fifty Iroquois had lately arrived at Point au Foutre with goods. It was noted that these Iroquois are constantly armed and on guard, and that part of the canons plundered from the Colony at Red River were placed in the Bastions of the NWC's House. The informant warned that if Mr. McKenzie and his men were to go there, that they would certainly be murdered (Binnema & Ens 2012: 319).

News of Seven Oaks reached Lord Selkirk as he was travelling westward with De Meuron Swiss mercenaries hired to defend the colony (St-Onge 2016: 18-19). James Bumsted (1999: 133-152) states that on the 13th of August 1816 because of the Seven Oaks' incident, Selkirk retaliated by seizing Fort William, the NWC's inland headquarters and key transfer point for the northern and Montreal brigades. Selkirk's control of Fort William thus threw NWC operations in disarray. Selkirk wrote of his increasing concern that the NWC would attempt to recapture Fort William. Luckily for him, as the story unfolds, the Mohawk-manned brigade of canoes that were heading to Fort William foundered in the autumn gales of Lake Superior and had to turn back (Bumsted 1999: 81, 168). Like the Spanish Armada which sank off the English Coast in 1588, this forced return of the NWC Iroquois brigade, gives the London-based HBC a second chance. After order is restored, it would be given a monopoly over trade when the NWC is forced to merge under the HBC flag in 1821.

## CHAPTER 5: THE IROQUOIS WHO REMAINED

The history of the Iroquois of the West begins with the "Mourning Wars," better known as the "Grieving Wars" of the East. The mournful wars were a cultural adaption long maintained to relieve the grief of the wives and mothers of the fallen warriors (Richter 1983:533 n. 20-21). The *Haudenosaunee* as a matrilineal and matrilocal society elected their chiefs/sachems by the clan mothers (Miller 2004: 57). Therefore, it was decided through councils of the League to adopt prisoners and welcome them into their society. However, respecting the new adoptees spiritual needs led to the calling of Roman Catholic prelates into their midst and inciting a series of events that would lead to the ceremonial rites of the Jesuits and, more importantly, the fervour and zeal of the Jesuits in their beliefs. Conversion was brought about by missionaries: not by the power of what they preached, but by the dynamism of the missionaries' convictions (Richter 1985:8-9). The mothers and wives of the fallen Iroquois warriors who were witness to the Jesuit proselytization had a great deal of influence on the balance of the people in their canton—especially on their husbands and children. This was the beginning of the intertribal strife that deteriorated a spiritual cohesion enjoyed by the *Haudenosaunee* for centuries. Indeed, their cultural adaptation to European religious beliefs was like a siege stone unmooring one of the fundamental pillars of Iroquois society and resulted, as discussed, in the migration of a Catholic cohort of Iroquois to New France.

These Catholic missions in New France eventually took in many Catholic First Nations that formerly occupied that part of the world such as the Algonquians, Huron, Nipissings, and the Iroquois. The Iroquois arrived in the missions during the time of the Beaver Wars, went through the Indian Wars, and the British takeover of the New France territory in 1763. Although the British had left the seigneuries to the care of the Sulpicians,

the British would ask for the Iroquois allegiance in future wars such as the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812. The now Christian Iroquois declined the offer, as they would not fight against any of the people of the Iroquois League who allied themselves with the American enemy of the British. There is the question of whether they were actually converted or whether they underwent a syncretic evolution that led many to later convert to the Methodist Protestant faith in the latter half of the 19th century. "The timing of the arrival of Methodism, with its emphasis on individual salvation, co-ordinated itself appropriately with the First Nations need – they enjoyed its evangelical emphasis and its orientation toward individuality in religion and in education" *(*Du Vernet 1983: 82*).* This greatly influenced their willingness to hire out to western interests. The Iroquois wanted a life of their own, free from a paternalistic (even feudalistic) mandate by the Sulpicians in Kahnawake (Du Vernet 1983).

With a more in-depth review of the literature, we see that the Iroquois who came out West were comprised primarily of Mohawks from Sault Saint-Louis with additional small numbers from Lac des Deux Montagnes and St-Regis (Devine 1922: 27; St-Onge 2016: 5). Large fur trading companies specifically used Mohawks from the village of Kahnawake, relying on the warrior tradition and reputation for fierceness to intimidate both the canoe brigades of rival companies and, in the west, potentially hostile Native peoples (Karamanski 1982: 5-6).

After approximately six generations of Iroquois being influenced in an effort to "Frenchify" them, their non-involvement with the ongoing wars between the British versus the French in the Seven Years War (1746 to 1763), coupled with their non-involvement in the American Independence War, rendered the Kanestake Iroquois effectively neutral. But to

the dismay of the Roman Catholic Jesuits, the Ursulines, and the Sulpicians, all the effort put forward to convert and establish a doctrine-based faith with the Iroquois came to no avail according to Richter (1985) and Miller (2004). According to Richter that there was a need for the Iroquois to find a solution to their plight of being demoralized by plagues, wars, and economic woes. Miller argues that, "Even in the hothouse atmosphere that prevailed in such reserves it seems clear that complete conversion and cultural change did not occur" (Miller 2004: 223). He adds that the Kanesatake/Oka people were essentially refugees established under missionary administration to which a variety of First Nations repaired after converting to Catholicism in their home settlements or after being defeated by First Nation enemies in inter-tribal war (Miller 2004: 223). The question still remains: even though Miller and Richter concluded the failure of the missionaries in their duties, what was going on with the Flathead, Nez Percé, and Pend d'Oreille that sent deputations to St-Louis in the 1830s to plea for a "black robe" to come and minister to them in their territory? What was going on when in the Jasper area in the 1840s and 1850s where the Iroquois and their extended families requested the "black robes" to come and minister to them? Obviously, some Iroquois were affected by the Roman Catholic faith and their teachings. According to Grabowski and St-Onge (2001) the erosion of Iroquois land base, the exhaustion of traditional hunting territories, and a new demand for labour by Montreal-based companies appears to have encouraged their escape to the western fur trade (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 32). The reason for the Iroquois signing three-year contracts with fur trading companies was their dissatisfaction with conditions at home. They sought these contracts because it allowed them to trap far from long overhunted homelands. Some authors have argued it gave restless young men of the tribes a chance to fulfill the traditional role of hunter-warrior. Finally, some of

these Iroquois left with their wives, and many never came back. It is possible that the latter viewed their employment as a form of subsidized relocation venture (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 34). Sir Alexander Mackenzie logs in his journals that some Iroquois who were emigrating to the Saskatchewan River in 1799 went there to escape 'improvements of civilization' in the east and to follow the mode of life of their forefathers (Mackenzie 1970:411).

The work ethic, the experience manoeuvring canoes, and their skill in handling fur bearing animals won the Iroquois the privilege of being considered by the NWC to be hired as *engagés*. The earliest noted appearance of the Iroquois in the northwest near Sturgeon Post on the North Saskatchewan River was recorded by Duncan McGillivray in 1794 in the employ of David Grant, a former member of the NWC (Nicks 1980: 86). Other sightings are well established, but the major migrations were from the years 1800-04. In the Oregon Territory the Iroquois were acknowledged and recognized around 1810 (Ruby and Brown 1992; Irving 1836). Their appearance in the territories made for newsworthy tidbits because of the reputation they carried with them from the East, with involvement in numerous wars over the previous two centuries. Despite this notoriety, Grabowski and St. Onge described the Iroquois as a peaceful people concerned only with the task at hand. Fur-trapping, their economic interests, it seems fell in line with other First Nations economic interests.

Trudy Nicks mentions that the visibility of the Iroquois in the historic record has particular advantages for the studies development of descendant native populations; in addition to the fur trade documentation, "Iroquois and their descendants are identifiable in the records ... the major role of Iroquois in the historiography of the Canadian West may therefore become that of a model of native population development for the period after initial

contact" (Nicks 1980: 96). According to Nicks the Iroquois came from a sedentary, partly agricultural society and met nomadic hunters, gatherers, and trappers of the forests of the northwest. But these differences were of little importance when making contact with the Cree, Sekani, Beaver, Carrier, and some of the plain tribes. This shared economic interest in the fur trade was the main avenue by which the Iroquois could enter into local native groups—and was at the same time the basis for much of the hostility that occurred between them. There were a few minor skirmishes; one is described by Peter Fidler in 1802 (Johnson 1967: 311-317) at Chesterfield House; a second was reported by Daniel Harmon where one Iroquois family was killed at the hands of the Carrier in New Caledonia in 1818 (Harmon 1957:118 n. 50); and a third happened when the local natives, probably the Beaver Indians, in the Peace River district in 1822 put up a strong stance against the HBC plans to send Iroquois to the Smoky River (Mackenzie 1970:193). These illustrations of hostility represent relatively remote incidents. It was not as if the Iroquois were at war with the North West; indeed, according to Nicks they fit into the North West cultures quite nicely, a fact she attributes to the 'shared economic sphere,' though she overlooks the possible impact of their conversion to Christianity. After the two companies merged in 1821, she mentions the fact that the only major cultural difference carried over from their eastern background appears to have been their Roman Catholic religion (Nicks 1980: 95). Now, this seems to indicate Nicks does not think that their being docile would have anything to do with their conversion to Roman Catholic beliefs, but that their acculturation into the main stream of economic know-how would be sufficient to quiet those warlike cultural tendencies.

The Iroquois—those of historical Sault Saint-Louis and with additional small numbers from Lac des Deux-Montagnes and St-Regis—left vestiges of their bloodline in the

western Canadian provinces and Northwest United States (Devine 1922: 27; St-Onge 2016: 5). Their contribution to the fur trade during the late 18th and the first half of the 19th centuries left a legacy of inspiration and awe that a First Nation's group chased out of their original cantons in the Northeastern United States would decide to remain as *freemen* in the West to establish themselves as an integral part of the western cultural dynamic.

### *5.1 Iroquois Traces*

Following the forced merge of the NWC and HBC in 1821, the Iroquois did fall upon hard times. Some prominent Iroquois who had played an important role in the NWC were excluded by the HBC. Thus, Pierre dit Tête-Jaune, who had identified the pass which bears his anglicized name (the Yellowhead) would be left without a contract and quite indigent and finally killed for encroaching on another Indigenous nation's land. The descendants of the Iroquois did remain in pockets across western Canada and northern British Columbia.

An example of such Iroquois who would leave an important lineage in Western Canada includes Louis Kwarakwentha (*Calliou L'Iroquoise*), an ancestral patriarch of the Kelly Lake Cree Nation. Born in 1782, in the Iroquois Village of Caughnawaga near Montréal, he settled on the shores of Jasper around 1801 when he was just 19 years old. As established by historical accounts of intermarriage in the region, the Iroquois free traders arrived in the west in the early 1800s. This timeline is supported by HBC Journals that were kept mostly up-to-date on the movement of the Iroquois. In and about 1803, it was reported by Peter Fidler, that there were 110 Iroquois-Cree on the Peace River near the Rocky Mountains. In the following passage their pioneering spirit is expressed by the fact their

motive for coming out west was not only for the work, but "they did much of the settling and trading throughout the Rocky Mountains." Mackenzie, as stated earlier, mentions why the Iroquois came out west; this passage (in 1799) identifies that they went there to escape 'improvements of civilization' in the east and to follow the mode of life of their forefathers (Mackenzie 1970: 411):

> Our people often traveled through the passes of the Rockies through Snake Indian Pass to the Athabasca Pass to trade with other tribes, the Shuswap and Ktunaxa Nations. It was in the Athabasca pass where our ancestors took wives of the Sekani (means "People of the Rocks") they were the Beaver branch of the Athabaskans, who lived in the Rockies. Roaming the country, they did much of the settling and trading throughout the Rocky Mountains and its passes, some families migrated to the Lesser and Greater Slave Lakes, and they are reported to have gone down the Mackenzie, and to Great Bear Lake [Kwarakwante 2018, oral traditional knowledge].

Of course, a small number of Iroquois brought with them their wives from back east, though in general the remainder married primarily into the Cree nation (Grabowski and St-Onge 2001: 34):

> Kwarakwante also married two sisters of Cree descent, of which the people of Kelly Lake are descendants from. Later they were guides of Mackenzie, Thompson, Cheadle, and others. Chief Kwarakwante, as described by Milton and Cheadle (surveyor & guides for HBC) who made a trip across Canada in 1862-63. Chief Louie took the guides from Jasper House to Tête Jaune Cache as a tour through the breathtaking area through the Rockies. David Thompson would take two of our ancestors as expert guides on his exploration of the Columbia River. Thomas Karaconti Calliou, L'Iroquoise, born 1806 Jasper's House, (Alberta) died April, 1876 Fort Dunvegan, (Alberta) - *this Thomas Calliou was not the one guiding Thompson through the Athabasca Pass* [Kwarakwante 2018, oral traditional knowledge, emphasis added by author].

David Thompson claimed discovery of the Athabasca Pass in 1811. In fact, it was an Iroquois, named Thomas that showed David Thompson the Athabascan River, which opened up the mountain pass over the Continental Divide to the headwaters of the Columbia River. This allowed Thompson to follow its waters down to the Pacific Ocean (Rich 1960: 239 Vol. 11; Foxcurran et al 2016: 36-37). All David Thompson did was ask for directions through the mountains, besides the one pass was already known as the northerly Peace River way (Foxcurran et al: 2016: 37). This demonstrates that the Iroquois were already familiar with the territory in that they had knowledge of the mountain passes—knowledge acquired through ties formed with the local First Nations or, more than likely, through their trapping furs in those areas.

Mgr. A. Taché (1823-1894), was a Canadian Roman Catholic priest, missionary of the Oblate Order, and founder of Ile à la Crosse, Saskatchewan, in 1846. He was a zealous missionary who became Coadjutor Bishop of St. Boniface in 1850 and besides being an author of "Esquisse sur le Nord-ouest de l'Amérique" (1869) was the first Archbishop of Saint-Boniface in Manitoba. As the west opened up, there were many reports that the Iroquois and their lineage were spread about the eastern and western side of the Rockies (Taché 1869: 225-229, French version; 1870: 98-100 English version, primary source). In this review of the immigrant Iroquois Mgr. Taché (1869: 225) describes their union with the local First Nations' women and that, Taché surmises, the first generation of offspring would be noted as *métis* and they would not have a single drop of white blood in them:

> Une petite colonie d'Iroquois est venue du Canada dans les montagnes Rocheuses; là, ils se sont alliés à des femmes de tribus indigènes et, chose assez étrange, les enfants nés de ces alliances sont classés parmi nos métis.

> Pas une goutte de sang blanc ne coule dans leurs veines, et les descendants de ces farouches guerriers, qui faisaient trembler nos ancêtres lors des premiers établissements du Canada, sont aujourd'hui considérés comme des métis canadiens.

The English translation:

> A small colony of Iroquois from Canada went to the Rocky Mountains. There they allied themselves with the tribes of the locality, and, curious to relate, the offspring of these alliances are classed among our *Half-breeds*. The descendants of those savage warriors who made our forefathers in their pioneer Canadian homes, tremble for their lives, in whose veins there flows not a drop of white man's blood, are called *French Half-breeds* [Taché 1870: 98-100, emphasis added by author – also some of us might be disturbed by the derogatory translation of the word *métis*].

They settled in pockets, as in a clan or settler community, so they could help each other in case of drought, famine, or the arrival of enemies. In such communities, they would have pioneered and developed the land for their own use. Other reports indicate that after the union of the North West Company with the HBC in 1821, many of the Iroquois stayed in the West as "freemen," trapping and trading. Gerry Andrews (1985: 11, 277-278), a former school teacher states in his book *Metis Outpost: Memoirs of the First Schoolmaster at the Metis Settlement of Kelly Lake, B.C. 1923-1925* that three Kelly Lake families claim Iroquois paternal ancestry: Calliou, l'Hirondelle, and Thomas, though there are certainly others. A Dr. (Sir) James Hector of the Palliser Expedition, ascending the Athabasca River toward Jasper House, recorded on 30 January 1859:

> … found a camp, four tents of Iroquois half-breeds … These … were originally trappers in the service of the N.W. Company, and on the junction of that company with the HBC (1821) they turned "freemen" … they all talk the Cree language *besides their own*, and have latterly intermarried a good deal

> with the Cree *half-breeds of Lac St Ann's* [Fleming 1877 in A41: 367, primary source, emphasis added].

We have a glimpse of what the Iroquois became when the fur-trade petered out, and to where these fine voyageurs and frontiersmen disappeared. Some Iroquois accepted the closing of the frontier and settled down, often on independent ranches or small farms (Grabowski and St. Onge 2001: 45; Adams 2013: 45).

> On one occasion, James Teit in 1909 maps out the territory of the Cree-Iroquois tribe as far reaches as a *settlement* on the confluences of the Fraser and Canoe River, British Columbia. The band was trading with the Shuswap for dried salmon, salmon oil and dentalium shells in exchange for our people's clothing and moose skins. His remarkable journey and leadership helped improve the oppression and coming together of three tribes in the Peace area during the period of European contact in the West [Kwarakwante 2018, from traditional knowledge keepers, emphasis added by author].

They are known to have settled in the area around Jasper's House, which was established in 1813. Jasper House was first a part of the North West Company, later a part of the Hudson's Bay Company. It was a fur trade outpost on the York Factory Express trade route to what was then called "New Caledonia" (now British Columbia), and Fort Vancouver in the Columbia District on the lower Columbia River. The Western Iroquois possibly settled as far west as the Finlay River (Black 1955) and north as far as the Pouce Coupe and Dunvegan (Fort Vermillion) areas, where they founded new Aboriginal communities which have persisted to the present day and which claim either First Nations or Métis identity and Indigenous rights. Jack Frisch (1976: 53), Anthropologist, writes in one of his papers, "Some Ethnological and Ethnohistorical Notes on the Iroquois in Alberta" that the Michel Band, the Mountain Métis, the Aseniwuche Winwak Nation of Canada in Alberta (~ Grande Cache

[Nicks and Morgan 1985]) and the Kelly Lake community in British Columbia all claim Iroquois ancestry. In 1915 the ancestors were pushed out of Jasper House and Mt. Robson due to the Canadian Northern Pacific Railway line; to this list we can add the infamous story of the settlement of "Tête-Jaune" (Frisch 1976: 58).

At present, the Kelly Lake Cree Nation (KLCN - oral traditional knowledge), the Kelly Lake First Nation (KLFN), and the Apetokosan Nation (Kelley Lake Métis Settlement Society) are three different groups claiming to speak for the Aboriginal community of the area. None are recognized by the Canadian government as Aboriginal peoples, though they have been part of land claims in the courts and are recognized as stakeholders in the Northern Gateway Pipeline region by Enbridge. In 1996 Kelly Lake Cree Nation filed a comprehensive land claim

> The BC Assembly of First Nations endorsed the claims of the local people as a First Nation in 2008, supporting the claim that the people of Kelly Lake were wrongly missed during the enumeration of peoples living within the Treaty 8 area. In the 1999 court documents, both the KLCN and KLFN are described as a group of "Beaver, Cree, and Iroquois people." The chief of the KLCN has claimed indigenous rights because of the group's Dunne-za and Nehiyaw ancestry when speaking to a joint review panel on BC Hydro's Site C dam project. He also claimed that the people's traditional territory extends into Alberta. Currently there are less than a hundred people living in the small community as there are only 33 houses, a church and an old school that has been transformed into a Community Centre [Kelly Lake 2018, oral traditional knowledge].

Besides Jerry Andrews (1985:11-12) work there are more oral traditional historic sightings indicating where the Iroquois had settled:

> Ten years later, Sanford Fleming and his party met our tribe from the Smoking River, "where they reported a small band of Indians had been settled

> for about fifty years." Louis' son, Michel aka Kwarakwante or Callihoo, brought his band into Treaty 6 when he signed an adhesion at Fort Edmonton on September 18, 1878. He claimed a reserve west of St. Albert, and it became a *successful farming community* in the late 1800s. After 1958, about 500 descendants of the original Michel band regained treaty status after Bill C-31. They formed an association with an elected chief and council. Chief Gilbert Anderson of Edmonton, a great grandson of Chief Michel Callihoo, petitioned the federal government to "resume recognition and services to the Michel Band on the same basis as services and recognition are provided to other bands/Indian Nations in Canada." In 2001, the descendants sued the federal government, alleging illegalities in the loss of its reserve and early land surrenders [Kwarakwante 2018, emphasis added by author].

These First Nations are from the same original tribe and are from the same pedigree of the *As'in'i'wa'-chi Ni'yaw* Tribe (Kelly Lake Cree Nation), the *Aseniwuchie Winewak* Nation (Grande Cache settlement [Nicks and Morgan 1985]) and the Michel Band Society. The Alberta Métis Association founded in the 1930s had eventually established eight Métis Settlements in the Province of Alberta. Joseph Dion (1979), a teacher for twenty-four years and an elder of the Cree community, in his book *My Tribe The Crees* expresses that these settlements had representation from Métis-Iroquois communities who had participated in its inception (Dion 1979:186-187). The names of Callihou and Gladue are well known around the Fishing Lake Métis Settlement situated near the Saskatchewan border in Alberta (Dion 1979:182-187).

These are just a few of the communities that the Iroquois established north of the U.S.-Canada border. South of this same border, as described in Foxcurran et al. (2016: 62-63), through close relations with the Flathead and Nez Percé the Iroquois indirectly familiarized these groups from the Oregon Territory with the tenets of Christianity. In 1829-30 two young men returned to their tribes after attending the Anglican school at Red River for four years. The two were sons of prominent chiefs of the Spokane and Kootenay tribes.

The HBC board members renamed these two young evangelists Spokan Garry (Nicholas Garry) and Kootenay (Coutonais) Pelly [J.H. Pelly] (Josephy 1979: 77). They stirred up a high level of interest in Christianity throughout the tribes of the Upper Columbia, lecturing and preaching to their own people and other gatherings which included Nez Percé, Coeur d'Alène, Pend d'Oreille, and Flatheads. Also in the Oregon Territory when the Peace Treaties were being signed in and around 1855 the Iroquois which were now members of the Flathead Nation were moved to the now Confederated Tribes of the Grand Ronde Community of Oregon (CTGR) which consists of twenty-seven Native American tribes with long historical ties to present-day western Oregon between the western boundary of the Oregon Coast and the eastern boundary of the Cascade Range; the northern boundary of south-western Washington and the southern boundary of northern California. One of those languages from the twenty-seven tribes was French Canadian (Iroquoian) and through dialectical evolvement it is a Chinook jargon now called *Chinuk Wawa* (CTGR 2018).

## CONCLUSION

The contests of cultures in colonial North America were far from one-sided. Despite superior technologies, aggressive religions, prolific populations, and well-articulated ideologies of imperialism, the French and English invaders enjoyed no monopoly of success in converting enemies to their way of life. In fact, the Indian defenders of the continent were more successful, psychologically if not numerically, than either of their European rivals (Axtell 1985: 302). The French hit upon a somewhat winning combination of methods for drawing large numbers of natives to at least minimal adherence to Catholic Christianity and substantial numbers of English prisoners to both Catholicism and loyalty to French colonial culture. But the Indians, despite all odds, succeeded in seducing French and English colonists in numbers so alarming to European sensibilities that the natives were conceded to be, in effect, the best cultural missionaries and educators on the continent (Axtell 1985: 302).

A study of what occurred during the Spring of 1802 at and around the Chesterfield House has helped frame the outcome of future events. Though they had been instrumental in the success of the NWC, many notable Iroquois such as Pierre dit Tête-Jaune (Yellowhead) were left without a contract and destitute after the fusion of the NWC and HBC. Many of these Iroquois were forced to settle where they could, locales such as Jasper and around Lac Ste-Anne where they could establish themselves without facing the resistance of other Indigenous nations. The events at Chesterfield House, we suggest, also influenced the events of the "Pemmican War" and the Battle of La Grenouillère (Seven Oaks). This is turn influenced the emergence of a form of Métis political consciousness, which in turn influenced the resistance to Canadian expansion and the eventual creation of the province of Manitoba. As we approach the last half of the 19$^{th}$ century we encounter a period in Canadian

history that still affects us today: the hanging of Louis Riel. The decision of John A. Macdonald to deny clemency in regard to the death by hanging of Riel for treason reaches further back than the Métis uprising in the Northwest Territories in 1885 (Flanagan 1996: 182). We might forget that Riel was teaching school at the St. Peter's Jesuit mission in the Sun River district of Montana and was enticed to come back to the Red River area to lead a bunch of homesteaders in their strive for independence and the safeguarding of the lands that they had developed (Flanagan 2000: 10). We might also forget that Louis Riel initiated the first Provisional Government for the Province of Manitoba in 1870. But we will not forget Thomas Scott who was convicted and executed by a tribunal court of the new Provisional Manitoba government (Trémaudan 1926:344-345; Flanagan 2000: 132), and we will not forget what happened at Seven Oaks in 1816 where Lord Selkirk's dream of establishing a colony resulted in the slaying of the newly appointed governor, Robert Semple, and nineteen other colonists—a slaying blamed on the Métis under Cuthbert Grant, but actually it was instigated at the coercion of NWC officials (St-Onge 2016: 18-19).

We can appreciate the fact that old grievances are not easily forgotten, especially amongst fellow euro-countrymen and religious authoritarian alliances. Indeed, this was most likely a build-up to Prime Minister Macdonald's reluctance to grant Riel a pardon. However, what was the initial motivation that put this sequence in motion? A quote, as previously referred to in Simon Fraser's (1806-1808) book edited by W. K. Lamb (1960) notes, "the more unscrupulous traders, were not above encouraging the Indians to attack their rivals, a policy which would create a state of affairs in which the life of *no white man* would be safe" (Fraser 1960: 10; *emphasis added*). The bloodbath that occurred March 3rd, 1802 caused a change in NWC manoeuvring in how to plan their retaliation against the man they felt

responsible. It was not like Peter Pond's man, the Canadian Pleshe, who killed John Ross in 1786 (Gough 2003), or the flogging death by P. Fraser, son of Simon Fraser, of a Canadian by the name of Falardeau for purportedly failing in the discharge of his duties (Morice 1904: 280). Peter Fidler's handling of the whole affair at the Chesterfield House materializes in his journal revisions and demonstrates incongruities and a curious sequence of events. Wherever Peter Fidler was dispatched after the affair, he was hounded by serious NWC men like Samuel Black and Peter Skene Ogden. Fidler was also found to be part of that group that was organizing and helping the new settlers from Selkirk's home community to settle in the Red River area. The "moccasin telegraph" had followed Fidler, impacting his worth and finally his health whereas he passed at the age of 53.

Here, I am postulating that the isolated incident at the Chesterfield House in 1802 is not an anomaly but influenced John A. Macdonald's decision to deny clemency for Louis Riel. In fact, this series of events were not initiated by the *Canadiens*, the Iroquois, and the Métis who worked for the NWC, but by the Master of the Chesterfield House who reported to the London based HBC. To reiterate, Macdonald cast a shadow on Riel because of what the Métis had done to the settlers of the Red River Settlement, the creation of the Provisional Manitoba Province, and the execution of Thomas Scott, a member of the Orange order (Trémaudan 1926:344-345; Flanagan 2000: 132); Macdonald did not, however, ask himself what initially set off the hostility.

## APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

| | Version 1 (rough notes) (B.39/a/2) | Version 2 (Sask. Journals) (B.34/a/3) | Version 3 (E.3/2) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Feb 21 1802 first contact with the NWC brigade** | **The Canadians 'were intended to go to the Hill / where we got pitch / to kill Beaver. 1 *(one)* Canadian is to remain here & go down with us in the spring, he is come to take up their goods that they left [en cache] all summer, the other 3 was to accompany the Iroquois to kill Beaver.** | **p. 311 n.5 on February 21 it says, "This morning two Canadians came here, belonging to the Old Company, they are come from the mouth of this river which place they left 23d January; also, fourteen *Irroque* Indians and two more Canadians accompanied them."** | **Fidler remarked in the entry for 20 September 1800, that the Canadians and Iroquois came up the South Saskatchewan in March [January] 1802 to kill beaver, having been wrongly informed that these animals were plentiful in the area. Fidler concluded this very lengthy revised entry by saying that the two Canadians who arrived at Chesterfield House on 21 February 1802 remained there all spring (see p. 314 B.34/a/2). (pp. 122-41) of the first part of his 1800-1 Chesterfield House journal; (B.34/a/2, printed supra, pp. 253-91), which he revised at a later date (p. 253, n. 1),** |

The Chesterfield House journal and correspondence, 1800-1, by Peter Fidler is classified *B.34/a/2*. This manuscript was first catalogued as a separate item and numbered 23 in the 'Catalogue of Library. &c' (A.64/52, p. 34). The contemporary label on the marbled front cover reads: '1800/1801 YF (*York Factory*) Chesterfield House Journal by P. Fidler'. The Chesterfield House journal, 1801-2, by Peter Fidler is classified *B.34/a/3.* This manuscript was first catalogued as a separate item and numbered 45 in the 'Catalogue of

Library. &c' (A.64/52, p. 35). The contemporary label on the marbled front cover reads: 'YF 1801/2 Chesterfield House Journal by Peter Fidler'.

The latter were published in "Chesterfield House Journals, 1800-1802" in *Saskatchewan Journals and Correspondence: Edmonton House 1795-1802*. London: The Hudson's Bay Record Society Vol. 26 edited by Alice M. Johnson (1967) and listed as *B.34/2*. These were derived from the rough notes Peter Fidler kept at the Chesterfield House from 1800-1801 listed as *B.39/a/1* and from 1801 to 1802 listed as *B/39/a/2.*

APPENDIX B

| | Version 1 (rough notes) (B.39/a/2) | Version 2 (Sask. Journals) (B.34/a/2) | Version 3 (E.3/2) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **'Liquor and tobacco' bribe or payoff / Feb. 22 1802** | **Monday: Several fall ind. Came this day to be admitted into both the Houses but would not let one man in – We told them that when the other 10 Iroquois and 2 Canadians came here. That, they will be admitted into the house and trade as usual. This is done with the intent of keeping the fall Indians from falling upon the other Iroquois as they are very much irritated at present by the great losses they have met with in the Summer & this Winter.** | **"Several Fall Indians came to the house to trade but we would not let a single man in. This is done with the intent that they may not fall upon the other ten *Irroques* and two Canadians, who are expected here daily" (Johnson 1967: 312). In the same log and on the same day "Gave the Fall Indian chiefs a big keg of liquor and one fathoms of tobacco to let the others come in safe to the house, which they solemnly promised to do" (Johnson 1967: 312).** | **pp. 138-141 Fidler concluded his long entry for 20 September 1800 with accounts of the deaths at the hands of Fall Indians of fourteen Iroquois and two Canadians in February and March 1802 and with an outline of the events leading up to the murders and how the bodies were mutilated but there is no mention of giving gifts or buying them off.** |

Besides these two there is another version listed as *E.3/2.* Peter Fidler revised his two first versions of the listed *B.39/a/1* (rough notes) and *B.34/a/2* which was his voyage down from the South Saskatchewan River to the location of the future Chesterfield House and its establishment by the three fur trapping companies the HBC, NWC and the XYC. The revision is entitled Journal from the Mouth of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan River to the Confluence of the Bad & Red Deer's Rivers, where Chesterfield House is situated. Also, Fidler added some other variations which included revisions of his stay at the Chesterfield House for the 1801-1802 fur trading season.

APPENDIX C

| | Version 1 (rough notes) (B.39/a/2) | Version 2 (Sask. Journals) (B.34/a/3) | Version 3 (E.3/2) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Dispatching Stone Indian to reconnaissance the area of the killings of two Canadiens and ten Iroquois on March 12, 1802. The cause of the first four Iroquois to perish might have been on account that they maintained a Catholic faith which emphasized charity, compassion and sociability.** | **Fidler went into much greater detail. The Indian found more than a hundred wolves in the vicinity. In this writing Fidler says that he hired a Stone Indians from the French XYC and paid 10 Beaver each (does this mean he hired more than one?)** | **Friday. Sent a Stone Indian to see whether or not that the two Canadians was killed along with the *Irroques*, as we cannot believe the Fall Indians. In the evening the Indian returned, and found that the Canadians had been killed with the *Irroques* and scalped, one of their heads was also cut off. The Indian found two Fall Indians waiting there where they was killed; he asked them the reason of their being there and they said that they was looking out for more *Irroques* as they thought that more might be behind and that we wanted to keep it secret that they might arrive safe…** | **There was no mention of sending off any reconnaissance team to gather information except the fact that Fidler reports there are over 600 able warriors among the Fall Indians** |

The *E.3/2* version is supposed to be a re-write of Peter Fidler's trip and establishment of Chesterfield House in 1800 which was logged in "Journal from the Mouth of the South Branch of the Saskatchewan River to the Confluence of the Bad & Red Deer's Rivers, where Chesterfield House is situated." The entries revised are from 15 August to 14 September 1800. But it seems that Fidler felt necessary to revise entries from Sunday February 21 to Friday March 5, 1801 from his rough notes and the second version. This was done in *E.3/2* for the entry dated Saturday September 20. In this entry he does re-write the same day venue

he had in his rough notes and version *B.34/a/2* but Fidler recounts the details of the killings of the 14 Iroquois and two Canadiens and their dismemberment. He must have had a lapse of memory or he felt he needed to be reconciled or maybe he was just trying to convince himself he had nothing to do with their demise. Also, in the third version he reported that the whole Nation being above 600 warriors, while in *B.34/a/3* he reports on 20 February 1802 there were about 60 tents of the Fall Indians just ¾ mile from the House. In the same version on another date March 3rd Fidler cited there was approximately 200 Gros Ventre going down the river to meet the other Iroquois.

The outtake from this revision of the killings, Fidler mentions that the Iroquois and *Canadiens* brigade had just left the Carlton House in January 1802. This House was vacated by the HBC in 1801 (see below), from this we can conclude that NWC took over the facilities.

James Bird and Peter Fidler left Cumberland House on August 14th 1801, and on Tomison's orders James Bird went and closed the Carlton House on account of the waste of goods occurring with no trading and no beaver coming in from the local First Nations (*B.49/a/3*: 14 August 1801; Johnson 1967: xcii). "Tomison opposed by both the Old and New Companies, complained on 19 January 1802, that these competitors were dogging the Indians and preventing them from hunting by keeping them well supplied with rum" (Johnson 1967: xci).

APPENDIX D

| | Version 1 (rough notes) (B.39/a/2) | Version 2 (Sask. Journals) (B.34/a/2) | Version 3 (E.3/2) |
|---|---|---|---|
| **The total Fall Indians reported by Fidler. Also, we find through Fidler that the NWC brigade had initially come from the Carlton House which was closed down by James Bird by orders of William Tomison.** | **February 20, Saturday – ¾ mile from the House there are 60 tents in the whole**<br><br>**March 3rd Fidler cited there was approximately 200 Gros Ventre going down the river to meet the other Iroquois.** | **February 20, Saturday – ¾ mile from the House there are 60 tents in the whole**<br><br>**March 3rd Fidler cited there was approximately 200 Gros Ventre going down the river to meet the other Iroquois.** | **September 20th in the third version he reported that the whole Nation being above 600 able warriors (pp. 139).** |

Another conflicting and curious addition to the third version (E.3/2) was his capacity to know what the fallen recruits had in their possession when they were massacred:

> They pillaged those they killed of 1 Keg of Powder, 70 lbs. of Ball & 60 lbs. of Shott, upwards of 50 Steel Traps & all their Guns & other articles (B.34/a/2 printed *supra*, pp. 253-91; E 3/2 p. 139).

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