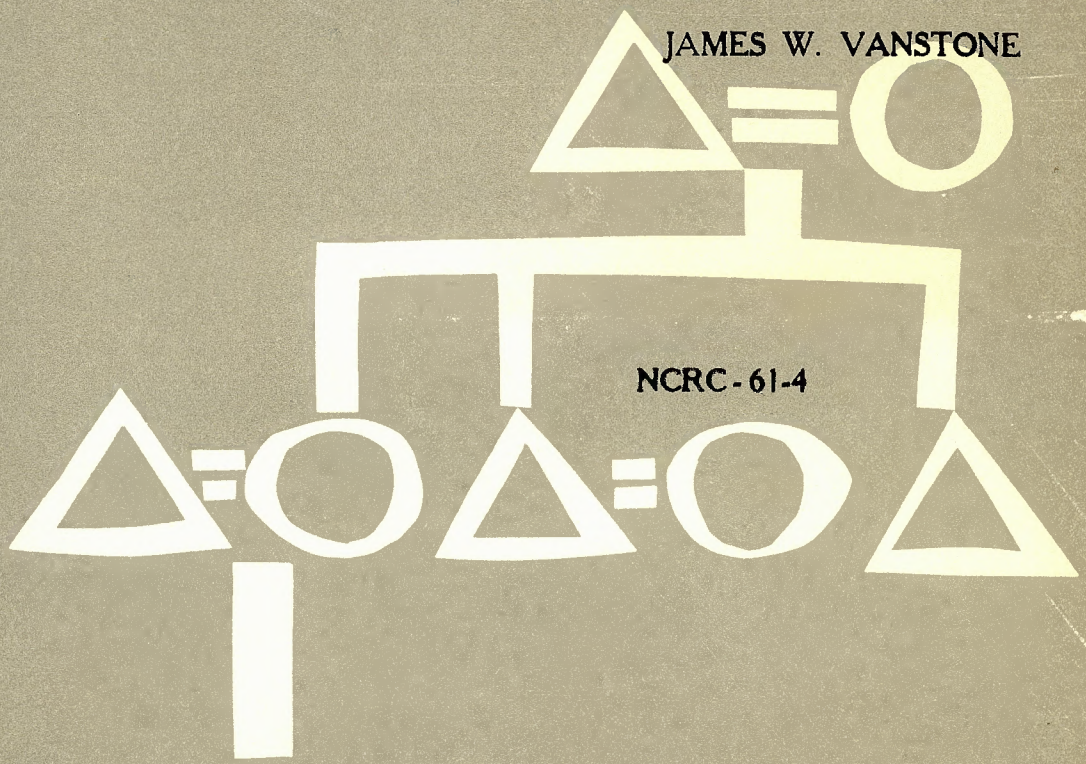
northern co-ordination and research centre department of northern affairs and national resources

THE ECONOMY OF A FRONTIER COMMUNITY
A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

JAMES W. VANSTONE



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A PRELIMINARY STATEMENT

by

James W. VanStone

The material of this report was collected by Mr. James W. VanStone during the summer of 1960, while under contract to the Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre of this Department. It is reproduced here as a contribution to our knowledge of the north. The opinions expressed however are those of the author and not necessarily those of this Department or other government departments.

Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre,
Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources,
Ottawa.

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Requests for copies of this report should be addressed to V. F. Valentine, Northern Co-ordination and Research Centre, Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources, Ottawa.

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INTRODUCTION

The field work among Chipewyan Indians at Snowdrift, Northwest Territories, carried out for a period of thirteen weeks during the summer of 1960, arose out of a general interest on the part of the writer and some of his colleagues in the Department of Anthropology at the University of Toronto in the problems of culture change in the area of the Mackenzie River valley and Great Slave Lake. Although it was postulated that this culture area would turn out to be a relatively homogeneous universe of interacting forces, this generalization was qualified by the realization that in the history of contact, different parts of the area would show a variation in effects. Thus, some population groupings in the area would have been exposed more intensively to new penetrations, such as mining and commercial fishing, while others would still be following a trapping-trading economy with much less access to schools and other aspects of an urban environment. Obviously, in order to understand all the operative factors, it would be necessary that sub-groups or communities displaying all the differential effects of the historic acculturative continuum be discovered and made available for study. It was proposed that this information be obtained by a field survey which would be followed by more intensive work in certain communities chosen as representative of specific acculturative levels.

Although this survey was conceived of as being the initial phase of the total project, it was realized that at the same time more intensive work could begin in a community that represented a low level of intensity as far as acculturative factors were concerned and that was farthest removed from the urbanizing influences that are a growing characteristic of the entire region. This intensive study of a relatively isolated community, heavily involved in a trapping-trading economy, was to serve as a comparative foundation on which other phases of the project would be built.

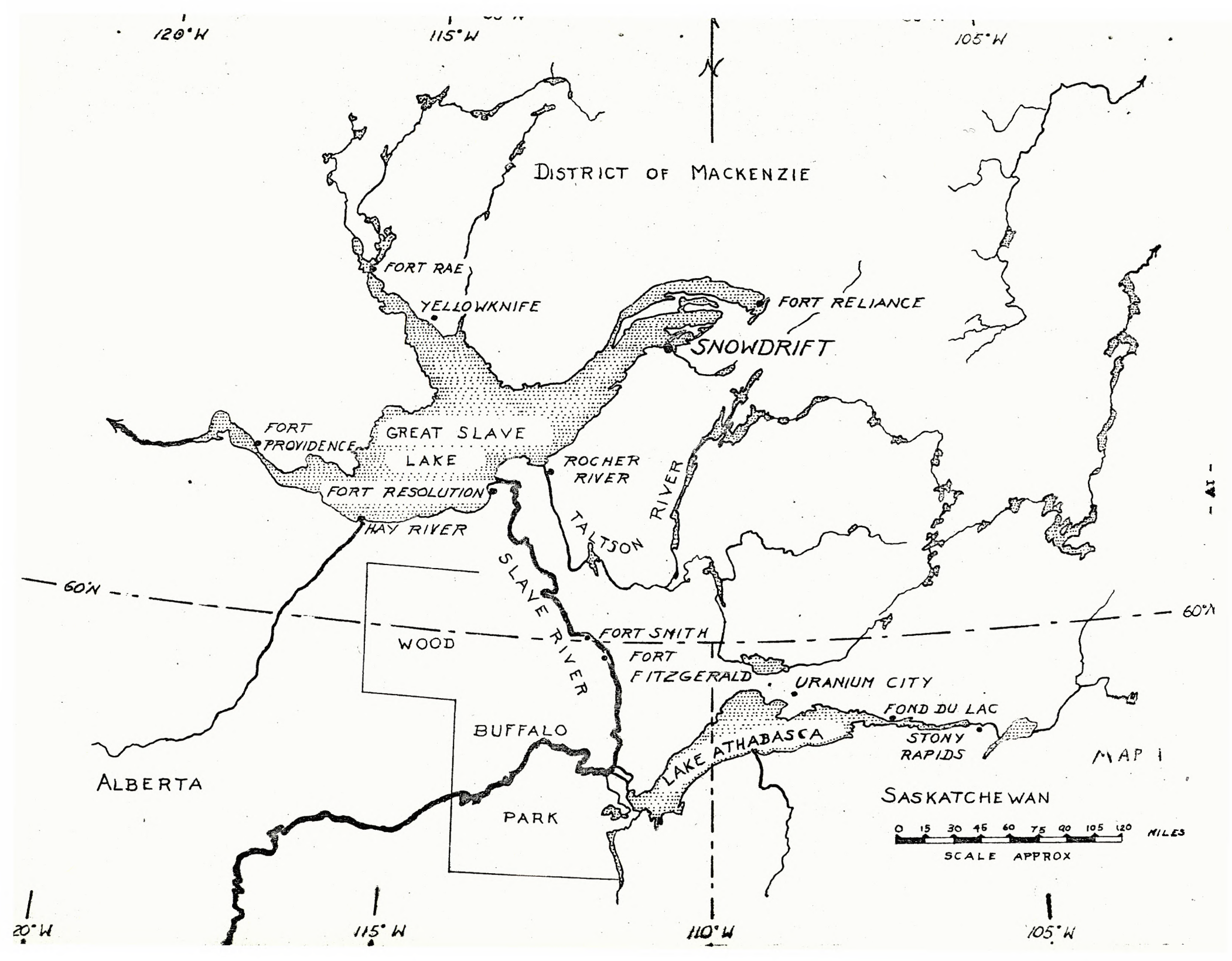
The village of Snowdrift was chosen for this first intensive stage of the project because it appeared to be one of the most isolated communities in the Mackenzie River-Great Slave Lake area, had a relatively homogeneous population, and benefited only slightly from the urbanizing influences that effect many of the river communities and the more accessible villages at the west end of Great Slave Lake. Whether or not Snowdrift was the best possible choice might be open to question. Nevertheless it fulfilled a sizeable number of requirements for the initial intensive phase of the project.

The work at Snowdrift, begun during the summer of 1960, will be continued another summer and possibly a third if additional time appears to be necessary. The writer arrived in the community on June 14th and left on September 8th. Arrangements had been made in advance to rent an empty house and he settled down as unobtrusively as possible. From the first day of his arrival, he received many visitors in his home who were curious concerning the reasons for his presence in the village.

During the course of the field work, very little use was made of paid informants, the major reliance being on participant observation. The writer observed and participated to the best of his ability and then asked questions based on the gaps in his observation. In most cases this could be done informally while visiting or being visited but occasionally it was advisable to hire an informant to obtain such information as the kinship terminology and details about aspects of the seasonal cycle that would take place after the writer left the community.

Whenever possible, the information obtained during the day was written down in outline form in a small notebook. At convenient times this information was transferred to five by eight inch punch cards which were punched for the major categories of culture (i.e. the individual, social structure, work round, etc.) as well as the sub-categories (i.e. nuclear family, childhood, artifacts, hunting and fishing techniques). The punched cards were filed according to an outline of desired data that made it possible, throughout the course of the field work, to determine which aspects of culture needed to be emphasized in order to give as complete a picture as possible of village life.

This report should be considered only as a preliminary statement based upon the first three months of a projected six to nine months of field work. Although data on all aspects of community life were gathered, only that information pertaining to village economics is included in this report. A preliminary analysis of the data collected during the summer showed that economic information was the most complete, and it was felt that by confining the report to this kind of information, it would be possible, within narrow limits, to provide a concise picture of the most significant aspect of life in Snowdrift and at the same time provide a report that would be of maximum use to the sponsoring agency.


120° W
115° W
105° W
DISTRICT OF MACKENZIE
FORT RAE
YELLOWKNIFE
FORT RELIANCE
SNOWDRIFT
FORT PROVIDENCE
GREAT SLAVE LAKE
ROCHER RIVER
FORT RESOLUTION
HAY RIVER
TALTSON RIVER
SLAVE RIVER
60° N
WOOD
FORT SMITH
FORT FITZGERALD
URANIUM CITY
FOND DU LAC
STONY RAPIDS
LAKE ATHABASCA
BUFFALO
ALBERTA
PARK
SASKATCHEWAN
0 15 30 45 60 75 90 105 120 MILES
SCALE APPROX
MAP 1
120° W
115° W
110° W
105° W

CHAPTER I

THE SETTING

Geography and Environment

The Chipewyan Indian community of Snowdrift is located on the southeast shore of Great Slave Lake in the vicinity of latitude 63 degrees 30' north and longitude 110 degrees 15' west (see map 1). The eastern end of the lake which lies entirely within an area of Precambrian rocks, has an extremely intricate shoreline with large numbers of bays and innumerable islands. The country around Snowdrift is characterized by wooded, rolling hills from 500 to 1000 feet above sea level and many lakes of varying sizes dot the area. The vegetation is essentially sub-arctic in character, the principal forest trees at the eastern end of the lake being white and black spruce, poplar, and, to a much lesser extent, white birch. The trees are small and large stands are limited to the sheltered valleys. Snowdrift is not far from timberline which runs south to the southern end of Artillery Lake, nearly reaches Great Slave Lake in the vicinity of Fort Reliance, and then extends in a southeasterly direction. It is about 100 miles directly east of the villages to the limit of timber. The ground cover throughout the entire area is heavy, particularly around the village where the trees have been cleared and there is a dense growth of tall grass, fireweed and raspberry bushes.

The climate of the region is characterized by the seasonal extremes that are typical of much of the interior country in the northwest. The three summer months are usually dry with a considerable amount of bright, warm weather. Sometimes it is even extremely hot with temperatures between 80 and 90 degrees F. There is snow on the ground from October until April but it seldom reaches a depth of more than two or three feet. Temperatures below -40 degrees F have been recorded at Fort Resolution but, generally speaking, the winter temperatures are less extreme than at many points on the prairies further south. The lake in the vicinity of Snowdrift freezes in early November and is usually clear of ice by the middle of June and sometimes earlier. People are often still using their outboard motors on the lake when they are using dog teams on land. The relatively late break up at the eastern end of the lake appears to be at least partly due to the fact that there are no large rivers entering the lake from the south east of the mouth of the Taltson, and also to the presence of many deep, sheltered channels in this area.

The fauna of the region does not differ in any marked respect from that of western Canada in general. Animals which are of economic significance to the Indians of Snowdrift include the western moose, barren ground

caribou, muskrat, beaver, porcupine, hare, lynx, red fox, fisher, arctic fox, black bear, mink, marten and ground squirrel. The barren ground caribou and arctic fox seldom come near the village but they are reasonably plentiful within the hunting and trapping range of the Indians. Fishing is an important economic activity and the varieties most commonly taken are whitefish, grayling, lake trout and northern pike (locally called "jackfish"). Birds are of less importance but the following species are occasionally hunted: mallard, old squaw, Canada goose, ptarmigan and spruce partridge (much of the above material was taken from Bell, 1929, pp. 8-11, 23).

A Sub-Arctic Community

The community of Snowdrift is situated at the tip of a point that forms the north shore of a small bay. Less than a mile to the northeast of the village occurs what is referred to locally as the mouth of the Snowdrift River. Actually, the Snowdrift River flows into Stark Lake at a point nearly ten miles from the village by water. However, the channel which connects Stark Lake and Great Slave Lake is considered to be the mouth of the river (see Map 2). Directly behind the village rises a hill 650 feet in height from which it is possible to obtain an excellent view of the surrounding country.

From the air, Snowdrift appears as a cluster of some twenty-six log houses nestled at the foot of the hill and strung out along the shore of the lake. The village is dominated by a number of buildings that are the centre of Euro-Canadian functions in the community. Centrally located and facing the beach on the west shore of the point are the buildings of the Hudson's Bay Company, consisting of a store, warehouse, residence for the manager and a small building which houses the electric light plant. Directly behind this complex of fram structures is a building containing a freezing and storage unit that is maintained for the community by the Indian Affairs Branch. Residents of the village store caribou meat and other game in this freezer during the summer months. In front of the Hudson's Bay Company store is a dock where barges unload and planes tie up.

Directly north of the buildings mentioned above are a number of cabins constructed by individuals from outside the village and intended for use as sport fishing camps. Two large ones have been completed but never used and one of them serves as a dance and meeting hall for the villagers. Five smaller ones are part of a combination mining and tourist camp operated by a man from Toronto. Over the past five years this camp has been operated occasionally as a base for a mining survey team and also as a tourist fishing lodge. Two other fishing lodges are located in the vicinity of Snowdrift, one at the mouth of the Snowdrift River less than a mile from the village and the other at the west end of Stark Lake about three miles from the village. Both camps opened for business for the first time during the summer of 1960.

In the southwest corner of the village is the Roman Catholic Mission consisting of a church with residence attached and a small warehouse. Although there has been a church in the Snowdrift area for many years, these buildings were constructed in 1951. The mission is run by the Oblates of Mary Immaculate and a priest from Fort Resolution makes periodic visits to the village.

Snowdrift, with a population of approximately 150 individuals in 1960, including 33 children of school age, had no school until the fall of 1960. Prior to this time these children were taken out every fall by air to attend schools at Fort Resolution or Fort Smith. During the summer of 1959 a teachers' residence was constructed at the southeast end of the village and the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources completed construction of the school buildings and power plant during the summer of 1960. In the vicinity of the school buildings several government agencies have constructed small cabins for the use of their personnel when they are in the village; these agencies include the Department of Forestry, the Department of Fisheries and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

Although relatively isolated, Snowdrift has periodic contacts with other communities in the general area. Approximately 100 air miles to the west is the cosmopolitan town of Yellowknife, an administrative center where the area administrator for the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources has his headquarters as does the agent of the Indian Affairs Branch whose territory includes Snowdrift. The community has no scheduled air service but charter flights from Yellowknife are fairly common, particularly during the summer. Flights to the village from Fort Smith and Hay River are also fairly frequent. During the summer months planes usually bring government personnel, Hudson's Bay Company employees or sports fishermen. Since there is no post office in the village, the Hudson's Bay Company manager collects the letters and gives them to the pilot of a charter flight when it arrives. Mail coming into the village must come from the central post office at Yellowknife, but usually any plane takes outgoing mail. A daily radio schedule is also maintained with Fort Resolution by the Hudson's Bay Company for the transmission and receipt of telegraphic messages.

It is an easy three day trip to Yellowknife by outboard powered boat and about the same for dog team. Villagers occasionally make the trip to seek employment, trade furs or visit relatives. Indians seldom travel by plane except when going out to the hospitals at Fort Smith, Fort Rae, Yellowknife or Edmonton.

Approximately 100 miles to the northeast of Snowdrift is the small community of Fort Reliance. There are only three Indian families living there permanently but several Snowdrift families spend part of the year in that community and Fort Reliance can be considered as an extension of Snowdrift since it is within the subsistence area of Snowdrift residents. At Fort Reliance is the headquarters of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police and a small Department of Transport signal station. The police make frequent trips to Snowdrift as it is the only populated place within their area of jurisdiction.

During the summer months, Snowdrift is served occasionally by supply barges coming from Fort Smith and Hay River. The Hudson's Bay Company supply ship comes once a year and during the summer of 1960, three barges brought supplies for the construction of the school. Commercial fishing boats operate at the eastern end of the lake all summer and their crews make frequent visits to the village for diversion and to hire villagers for work on the boats. Sports fishermen in privately owned boats are also frequent visitors during the summer months.

Although far removed from the centres of population at the west end of Great Slave Lake and along the Mackenzie River, Snowdrift is not a socially isolated community, particularly during the summer months. Every plane brings news from the outside. Frequent radio contact means that medical assistance in an emergency is usually only a few hours away. However, radios and aeroplanes are mechanical devices and therefore far from infallible. When mechanical difficulties render the former useless, and inclement weather makes it impossible for planes to fly, the isolation of the community is virtually complete. Since all planes coming into Snowdrift must land on skis or floats, there are extensive periods during freeze-up and again during break-up when planes cannot land at the village in any weather.

CHAPTER II

THE HISTORICAL DIMENSION

It is not the purpose of this paper to go into detail concerning European contact in the Great Slave Lake area. However, it is necessary to examine the history of Snowdrift and the movements of the people who eventually came to be permanent residents of the community.

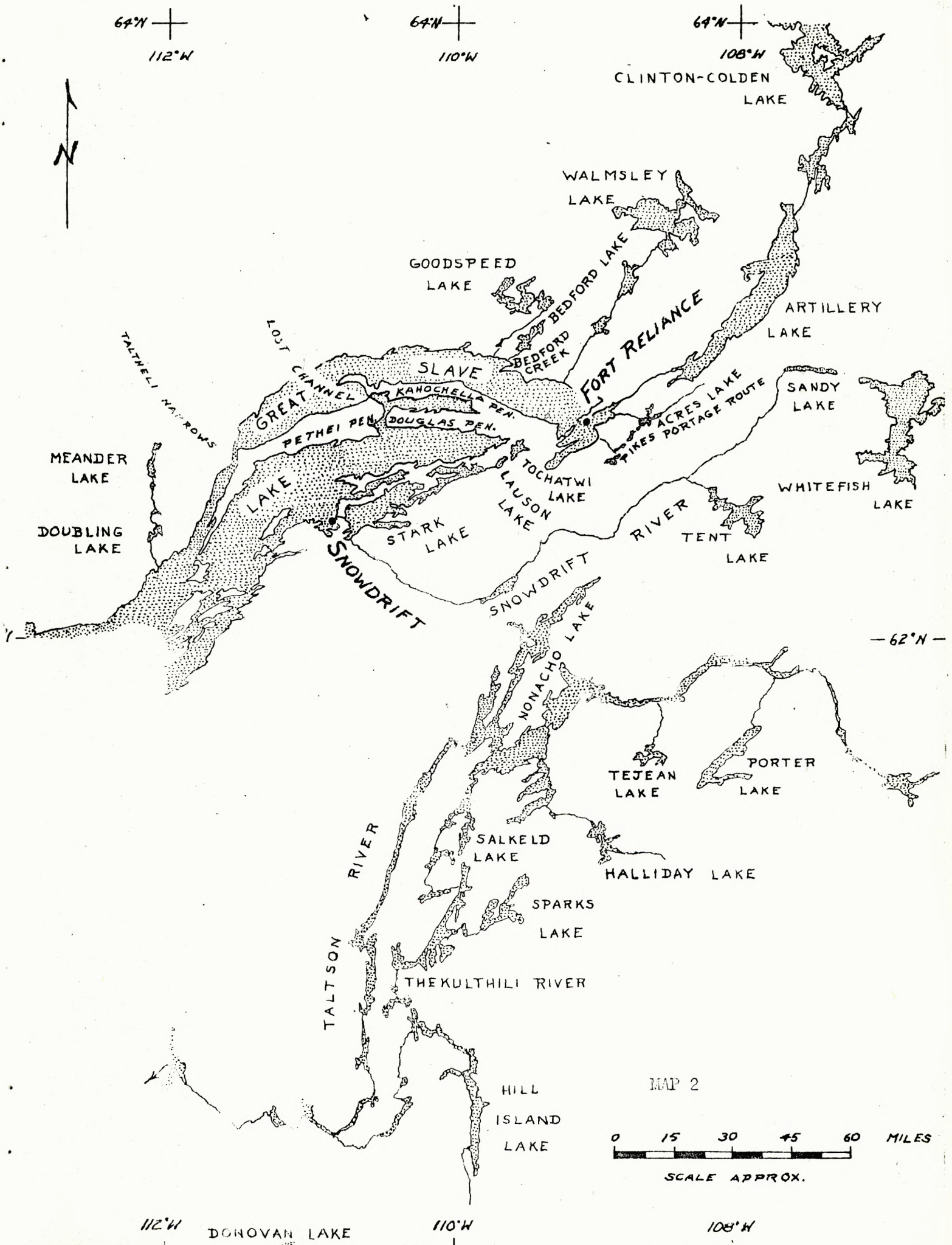
The physical existence of Snowdrift in its present form goes back no more than five or six years. However, the area has been a focal point for residents of the surrounding region for at least thirty five years and possibly much longer. As recently as 1951, the church and many houses were located on a point about two miles southwest of the present village while the Hudson's Bay Company was the only occupant of the present site. Around 1954 most families built houses on the present site or moved their old houses from localities in the vicinity. This was apparently done in response to suggestions made by the Indian Agent who pointed out that in the future an increasing number of whites would be coming into the area and that it would be a good idea for the Indians to have their own village; an area that would be considered as theirs. Other factors were also involved, some of which will be discussed in detail later.

In order to understand the significance of the concentration of people in the Snowdrift area it is necessary to go back to a period before the Hudson's Bay Company established its post. Prior to this time the population of the eastern end of Great Slave Lake consisted of an unknown number of Chipewyan families who hunted, fished and trapped throughout the area and moved about the country as single families or in groups of two or three families. These families traded at Fort Resolution and considered that community to be their trading centre. They made periodic trips to Fort Resolution to trade and the Hudson's Bay Company occasionally sent a large canoe loaded with items to trade into the country around the present community of Snowdrift. In 1925 the Company established a post at Snowdrift, probably in response to competition from free traders. Since the free traders were self employed, they have left no records, and it is very difficult, if not impossible, to determine where they located and how long they stayed. In fact, some were highly mobile with outfits consisting simply of a boat loaded with trade items. These traders went out to meet the Indians on their way to the trading post and did a certain amount of trading with them before they reached the Company's store at Fort Resolution, thus cutting off some of the Company's business. The existence of a post at Snowdrift allowed the Company to compete directly with the free traders and, because of its size and wealth, to drive many of them out of business or to another location. As a matter of fact, there was a free trader in the Snowdrift area for many years and he operated successfully, even in competition

with the Company, until about 1948 when his store burned. It is significant that the free trader was unable to recover from this fire while the Company rebuilt immediately after its store burned a year or two later.

The immediate result of the establishment of a Hudson's Bay Company post at Snowdrift was that the Indians living in the area who had previously traded at Fort Resolution now found it convenient to bring their furs to Snowdrift. People who had been within the sphere of influence of other trading centres to the south were also affected. Chipewyan families who normally hunted and trapped in the area between Snowdrift and Lake Athabasca and traded into such centres as Fond du Lac Stony Rapids, Fort Smith, and Fort Fitzgerald found that it was more convenient for them to trade at the Snowdrift post (see Map 1). One informant, whose parents had come to Snowdrift from Uranium City in 1948, told the writer that his family had hunted and trapped in the area immediately to the south of Snowdrift and that many times they had visited the post and finally decided to shift the centre of their movements from Uranium City to Snowdrift. Another informant, who was born at Fort Fitzgerald, said that his father used to trap northeast of that village into the Nonacho Lake area. There were thirty-two portages on his route, and the considerable distances involved made travelling difficult even in winter. He came to Snowdrift at about the time the Hudson's Bay Company opened the post and thereafter traded there because he did not have to go so far with his furs and it made trapping much easier.

The following detailed account of the trapping activities of a man who formerly lived in Fort Fitzgerald and who, in the years following the season described, shifted his centre of operations to Snowdrift, will illustrate why the latter area was a strategic location for a new Hudson's Bay Company post. In August of 1941 this informant, with his father, left Fort Fitzgerald and paddled into the Taltson River country near Nonacho Lake. They arrived in mid-September, did some fishing and killed a moose. They had brought nine dogs with them and after freeze-up they moved east to Tejean Lake and then to Porter Lake where there was good fishing through the ice. They trapped the Porter Lake area until Christmas when they moved to Sparks Lake. Here caribou were plentiful during February and the trapping was good. In March they travelled to the Thekulihli River and from there to Hill Island Lake in mid-April where they met a white trapper who traded them some food for furs. About the 15th of May, the informant left his father and went back to Nonacho Lake to get the canoe. He met lots of people on the Taltson River. Picking up the canoe, he returned to Hill Island Lake where he met his father, and they returned to Fort Fitzgerald by way of Donovan Lake in late June. The


64°N
112°W
64°N
110°W
64°N
108°W
N
CLINTON-COLDEN LAKE
WALMSLEY LAKE
GOODSPEED LAKE
BEDFORD LAKE
BEDFORD CREEK
FORT RELIANCE
ARTILLERY LAKE
TALTHELI NARROWS
LOST CHANNEL
SLAVE
GREAT
KAHOCHELLA PEN.
PETHEI PEN.
DOUGLAS PEN.
ACRES LAKE
PIKES PORTAGE ROUTE
SANDY LAKE
MEANDER LAKE
LAKE
TOCHATWI LAKE
LAUSON LAKE
WHITEFISH LAKE
DOUBLING LAKE
STARK LAKE
SNOWDRIFT
RIVER
TENT LAKE
SNOWDRIFT
NONACHO LAKE
62°N
TEJEAN LAKE
PORTER LAKE
SALKELD LAKE
HALLIDAY LAKE
SPARKS LAKE
TALTSON RIVER
THEKULTHILI RIVER
HILL ISLAND LAKE
MAP 2
0 15 30 45 60 MILES
SCALE APPROX.
112°W
DONOVAN LAKE
110°W
108°W
60°N
60°N

two men stayed in Fort Fitzgerald all that summer and in the fall of 1942 they went to Salkeld Lake where the informant's father had a cabin, and there was very good fishing. From there they went to trap in the area between Sparks Lake and Halliday Lake, staying there until mid-March of 1943 when they headed for Snowdrift by dog team (see Map 2). It was that year that the family decided to stay in the Snowdrift area because it was closer to their trapping area, because the fishing was very good, and because the family had relatives in the area.

By way of summary, it can be said that the people who moved into the Snowdrift area when a Hudson's Bay post was constructed there in 1925 were people who originally traded their furs at Fort Resolution or at one of the communities to the south and soutwest that have been mentioned previously. They shifted their centre of activity to Snowdrift either because the trapping, hunting and fishing were better in the area, they had relatives who had already moved to the vicinity of the new post, or they found that they did not have to go so far to trade their furs. It follows then that the genealogical connections of the Snowdrift people outside the village are mostly to the south and southwest. Because these places cannot be reached easily, contact is not usually maintained with relatives there. Closer contacts are maintained with Fort Resolution and Rocher River since they are easily accessible.

It is important to realize that although the Snowdrift post quickly collected a large number of families that were dependent on it for trading their furs, the community as it exists today is a very recent phenomena. In fact, the families who moved to the Snowdrift area probably spent no more time in the vicinity of the post than did the Fort Fitzgerald family whose trapping activities have just been discussed. The reasons for the recent concentration of a permanent population around the Hudson's Bay Company store will be considered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER III

MAKING A LIVING

The Yearly Cycle

Autumn - The major autumn activity for the people of Snowdrift is fishing and this is the time when the winter's supply of dog food is obtained. Although the caribou hunting sometimes lasts until the end of September or even into October, most families like to be back in the village by the 15th of September which is the commonly accepted date for the beginning of autumn fishing. In recent years this would be about the date when school children would be transported to schools at Fort Resolution and Fort Smith.

The good autumn fishing begins when the fish start to ascend the rivers to spawn. Some men set their nets near the mouth of the Snowdrift River while others fish at various places in Stark Lake, particularly near the second mouth of the river where it flows into the lake. Those that fish in Stark Lake near the far mouth of the River camp there until they have secured their supply of winter dog food. It is not uncommon for one man to set as many as five nets. The fish caught at this time of the year are placed on a raised platform until it is cold enough to store them in a tent or warehouse for the winter. The cache consists of four poles placed upright in the ground in the form of a square with a framework of light poles across the top. From these poles hang forked sticks on which the fish are hung. Trout have the fork slipped through their gills while the whitefish, because they have soft mouths, have it inserted through the tail. The fish are not cleaned since it is cool enough so that they keep well until freeze-up. While lake trout and whitefish are the most common varieties caught, some grayling and northern pike are also taken. The latter is not considered as good dog food because it is not fat. Whitefish are very much preferred for human consumption and many are taken with that purpose in mind. Although most fishermen place their nets as previously indicated, some prefer to fish in Great Slave Lake and set their nets in front of the village or near the shores of one of the many islands in the vicinity.

The nets used for fall fishing are similar to those used during the summer. They are of nylon or cotton, about thirty to forty feet in length and three to four feet wide, although some fishermen prefer nets of greater width, even as much as twelve feet. The nets are anchored at each end by a large rock. For weights, small stones are placed along the bottom of the net and blocks of wood or commercially made floats run along the top. At one end of the net a piece of wood is fastened which floats on the surface and indicates where the net is set since the floats are not always on the surface of the water. In bringing in the net, the rock and floating stick are brought into the boat and the net is then coiled into a large metal tub.

Insetting it, the same procedure is followed in reverse; the fisherman maneuvers his canoe so that the net pays out smoothly from the tub.

At the same time that autumn fishing is in progress, firewood is being gathered for the winter. There is an attempt to get a large supply in before freeze-up. Short trips are made by canoe to areas where there are stands of dead trees. Since wood is used as a fuel for cooking and heating in all village houses, large amounts are required. The men leave their families for varying periods during the trapping season, and they like to have a supply of firewood on hand before their departure.

In addition to fishing and wood gathering, ducks are shot in autumn near the village. Mallards, pintails and Canada geese are common varieties. Most are eaten immediately but some are frozen for winter use.

Winter and Spring - These two seasons are considered together because they are the trapping time of the year and since all other activities are of a subsidiary nature, the Indians think of the trapping period as a single unit. Trapping begins officially on the 1st of November when the season for most fur bearing animals opens. Marten, mink, lynx, fisher, otter and ermine can be taken after that date as can fox, both arctic white and coloured, south of the timber line. The season for beaver and fox north of the timber line begins on November 16th. The problem of enforcing the trapping season is not a relevant one since the fur is not in marketable condition except during the season.

The area utilized by Snowdrift trappers is bounded on the north by Walmsley and Clinton-Colden Lakes, on the east by Whitefish Lake, on the south by the southern Taltson River-Nonacho Lake area and on the west by the Doubling Lake-Meander Lake region (see Map 2). This is a large area but the majority of trappers do not trap to peripheries of the region. Only one man, for example traps north of Narrow Lake in the Doubling Lake-Meander Lake area and in recent years few trappers have extended their activities as far north as Clinton-Colden Lake or as far east as Whitefish Lake. In fact, the number of trappers who operate beyond the tree line is very few indeed. During the winter of 1959-60, when fox prices were high and the animals few in the wooded country, only three men trapped in the Barren Grounds. Most men do a large part of their trapping within a radius of sixty five to eighty miles of the village and the Taltson River-Nonacho Lake area is the centre of concentration. Other areas are also important, however, and some trappers are wide ranging. One informant told of having a cabin at the east end of the Douglas Peninsula and that during the winter of 1959-60 he trapped on the peninsula and in the

Lauson Lake-Tochatwi Lake area until Christmas. At that time he returned to Snowdrift for about a month and then crossed the lake to Bedford Creek and trapped in the Bedford Lake-Goodspeed Lake area until spring. Another informant trapped east of Fort Reliance into the Barren Grounds through Sandy Lake to Whitefish Lake but mostly in the area immediately to the east of Whitefish Lake. When there were no foxes in this area, he worked his way west again down the Snowdrift River where he trapped for mink in Tent Lake. He then went back to Fort Reliance and returned to Snowdrift by way of the portages and Stark Lake (see Map 2). He made this trip in the two months previous to Christmas and a similar one after having remained in the village during the first three weeks of January. The good fox prices that have prevailed for the past two years and seem likely to continue will possibly encourage more trappers to move out into the Barren Grounds where this animal is more plentiful. During the summer of 1960 a number of men talked of shifting their trapping activities to the northeast but all seemed disturbed by the expense of outfitting for that area and the necessity of having a good dog team.

It is probably true that in most years the majority of Snowdrift men trap alone, although there are numerous exceptions to this rule. Among the younger, unmarried men, two individuals will occasionally trap together, particularly if neither has enough equipment to carry out the operation alone. In cases of this kind there is pooling of equipment and usually only one trap line is worked. The traps are set alternately so that each person has an equal number. Other combinations of trappers sometimes involve brothers, a man and his father-in-law, a man and his brother-in-law or a father and son. It seems safe to say that most men would prefer to trap alone. When informants described trapping partnerships, they nearly always gave lack of equipment as the reason for the partnership and projected into the future to a time when they would have young dogs, or a new sled, or enough money for supplies and would be able to trap by themselves.

The length of time that the trappers stay away from the village varies considerably. As previously indicated, some men, particularly young ones or those without family responsibilities, go out in the late fall, return for Christmas, and perhaps stay several weeks, then go out again and do not return until late in the spring. However, a much larger number return frequently to trade furs and obtain supplies. One informant who traps in the Nonacho Lake-Taltson River area said that he stayed out about two weeks and then returned to trade. He maintained that he had to trade his firs frequently in order to obtain more credit and leave supplies for his family while he was away. He realized that the main difficulty with this procedure was that he spent a great deal of time travelling. He wished that

his family could travel with him but knew that this was impossible with small children. Some men who have only older children will take their families into the bush with them thus avoiding the need to return to the village at frequent intervals. Many families were unenthusiastic when they learned that a federal school would be constructed at Snowdrift since it meant that all the school children would be living at home and there would be a reduction in the mobility of many families.

A trapper who expects to trap effectively should have a team of at least six or seven dogs since he must move every four or five days. First he makes camp and looks over the area for tracks and other indications of animals. Then he sets the traps and moves on to another location, makes new sets, and returns to check those at the first location. Each trapper has several areas within his trapping range where he is continually checking and setting traps. Usually the traps are checked every three or four days but when the trapper returns to the village to trade his furs and pick up supplies, the traps are sometimes left set for as long as a month. Many trappers have log cabins dispersed throughout their trapping area, others use eight by eight canvas tents.

In the fall before leaving for the bush the trapper prepares a large quantity of rotten fish for use as bait. The setting of traps requires considerable care and a knowledge of the habits of the animals. Mink, marten and otter traps must be close to open water. Usually the trapper chooses a place where there is a falls or rapids flowing into a small lake. For otter, a hole is made in the ice of a small lake and a three-sided wooden enclosure is constructed and lowered to the bottom. The fourth side is left open and the trap is placed at the opening. The bait is placed on the other side of the trap and the animal is caught as he goes into the wooden enclosure to get the bait. Traps for red fox are usually set on flat rocks on islands in small lakes.

In placing a trap for lynx, the trapper looks for a place where there are many lynx and hare tracks. The trap, a number three, is set close to the trail and a piece of brightly coloured cloth or beaver castor is used for bait. Traps for marten are set on the side of a hill and rotten fish is used for bait. For weasels the trap is set where it is flat and there are no trees, while squirrel traps are set at the openings of holes.

It is usual to trap white foxes at a place where a caribou has been killed on a lake. The intestines are left and the traps are set close to them. The traps should be covered with snow so that the fox will not see them as he approaches the bait. The wolverine is a very difficult animal to capture and traps must be cleverly concealed. The trap is fastened

to logs driven into the ground and frozen meat is used for bait. The trapper has to be careful not to leave obvious tracks leading up to the trap as the wolverine is extremely wary. The bait is not placed in the trap but near it, and the trap is covered so that the animal will walk into it as he goes for the meat.

In spring the main trapping is for muskrat and beaver. The muskrat season opens on the 1st of March and lasts until the 20th of May while the beaver season ends on May 10th. In trapping beaver, a hole is cut in the ice near the beaver house and some birch or willow logs are placed vertically through the hole. The trap is placed among the logs on the bottom of the lake and should be checked every three days. After the ice is gone, beaver may be shot as they swim on the surface of the water near their houses. To trap muskrats when the lakes are still frozen, a hole is made in the side of a muskrat house, the trap placed, and the hole covered up again. When there is no ice, the animals are shot from a canoe with a .22 calibre rifle. Most hunters own small canvas covered ratting canoes for use during late spring. They are about ten feet in length, pointed at each end, and paddled from a kneeling position in the centre. They are extremely light and easy to carry over the portages from one lake to another.

There are a greater number of regulations attached to the trapping of beaver than to other animals. Most of these do not apply to the Snowdrift Indians, except the rule making it illegal to trap more than five beaver each year. Although there is no charge to Indians, each trapper must obtain annually a beaver trapping licence and with it he receives five seals which are to be attached to the animals he takes. It is illegal for a trapper to have in his possession or use a seal issued to another person, but it is common practice for those Indians who do not wish to trap beaver to sell their seals to more ambitious villagers. Unused seals are supposed to be returned to the game officer but more often they find their way into the hands of an energetic trapper who will probably have paid about one dollar for it. During the spring of 1960, one man sold twenty five beaver pelts to the Hudson's Bay Company. The Company will not take a pelt without a seal, but it does not attempt to prevent the illegal transference of the seals.

Trappers always have to do a certain amount of hunting because their dogs need food and usually their own food from the store is meagre and consists of little more than staples. Moose, although hunted at all times of the year, are a particularly important source of food during the trapping season. Winter moose hunting requires a great deal of care and a thorough understanding of the habits of the animal. The hunting technique

used involves careful tracking and is similar to that described by Osgood for the Tanaina (Osgood, 1937, p. 34) and also characteristic of the Ojibwa of northern Ontario (personal communication, Dr. Edward S. Rogers). Also hunted during the winter and spring are bear and caribou. The latter occasionally wander as far south as Snowdrift and are sometimes killed on the lake. Trappers operating near or beyond the tree line have the best chance of killing caribou during the winter months. For hunting moose or caribou, high powered rifles are used, the most popular calibres being the .30-.30 or .25-.25, but some men own .303's. Hares are shot and snared during the trapping season. Nets are set under the ice for whitefish and lake trout when the trapper makes camp. A number of informants emphasized the fact that the trapping season was very difficult when the hunting was poor.

The existence of clearly defined family trapping territories among the Chipewyan has been the subject of some dispute. Some early observers believed that these territories did exist (Seton, 1911, pp. 150-1), while others have denied their existence (Penard, 1929, p. 21). It must be admitted that the evidence collected at Snowdrift does not support the theory of family trapping territories. Most informants stated that they had learned to trap in one of the areas trapped by their fathers and afterwards often continued trapping in the area. However, few trappers could be found who trapped more than five years in any single area. Two or three years was the more usual length of time depending on how successful the trapper was in a particular locality. Some trappers had trapped at one time or another throughout most of the area within a one hundred mile radius of the village. As stated previously, the fact that white fox prices were very high during the past two years has encouraged several individuals to shift their trapping operations to the Barren Grounds. The local attitude toward fixed trapping territories is reflected in the reception given the suggestion that all the Snowdrift trappers register their lines. They were against the idea when it was introduced by the Indian Agent on the grounds that it would restrict the movements of the trappers and also limit the number of trappers who could exploit a particular area. Also the problem of trap lines that crossed one another would be difficult to reconcile under registration. Most Indians felt that registration would get them in trouble with other people and would be impossible to enforce without going to court. It would seem, then, that the opposition to trap line registration is an indication that the Snowdrift trappers desire freedom to determine for themselves where the trapping is best.

Although detailed information is lacking, there is every indication that the total area trapped by Snowdrift residents has been steadily shrinking in recent years and particularly since the Indians began to build permanent villages and partly due to the fact that government services

have increased and reduced to some extent the reliance on income derived from trapping. The payment of family allowance on a monthly basis has doubtless been one of the most important factors of this kind. Wage employment, though limited at present, will, if it increases, have a similar effect, as will the establishment of a federal school in the village. It is certain that the area around Snowdrift is not being trapped as effectively as it might be and this is largely due to the fact that developing tendencies toward a sedentary community life are not compatible with the semi-sedentary routine that is required for effective trapping.

During the winter of 1959-60 there were a total of thirty eight trappers trading into the post at Snowdrift. Of these, thirty five were actual residents of the village, one a full time resident at Fort Reliance and two who have since moved to Yellowknife. Of the twenty six households in the village, consisting for the most part of nuclear families, thirteen have one active trapper, eight have two, and two have three; three families have no active trappers. There are five young men over the age of eighteen who apparently did not trap during 1959-60, but represent potential trappers although one of them is partially disabled. It could also be that the animals trapped by these young men were included in the totals of other trappers in the family. On the basis of figures compiled after June 30, 1960, the distribution of trapping income is as follows:

Income	Number of Trappers
Under $100	10
$100-$199	5
$200-$299	5
$300-$399	8
$400-$499	1
$500-$599	4
$600-$699	1
$700-$799	2
$800-$899	1
Over $900	1
Total	38

The same data, when considered on the basis of the household membership of the trappers, yields the following information:

Household	Trapping Income	Number of Trappers in Household
A	$ 232.74	1
B	41.02	1
C	290.25	1
D	458.55	2
E	487.60	3
F	1,390.00	2
G	516.85	2
H	96.95	1
I	480.90	2
J	293.75	1
K	948.23	3
L	550.50	2
M	650.40	2
N	1,068.40	1
O	527.40	1
P	71.00	1
Q	144.25	1
R	393.20	2
S	732.00	1
T	401.70	1
U	701.50	1
V	363.45	1
W	445.20	2
Total	$11,285.84	Total 35

The centre of the fur trapping activity at Snowdrift, and of almost all economic activities for that matter, is the Hudson's Bay Company. The Store is a compact one room structure with a side room for the manager's office and an attic for storage. It is well stocked with general merchandise. In the food line there are canned meats, vegetables, jam, peanut butter etc., as well as such staples as lard, flour, tea, coffee, milk, and baking powder. A complete line of clothing is carried since the residents of Snowdrift purchase most of their clothes. Dishes, stoves, rifles, radios, record players, outboard motors, large amounts of tobacco and candy are also sold. Items such as watches, cameras, cheap jewelry and sun glasses are an important part of the inventory and patent medicines, phonograph records, guitars, sleeping bags, tents, and gasoline are also stocked.

Before going into the bush, a trapper normally receives a certain amount of credit at the store based upon his past trapping record and the expectancy of his future catch. This will be enough to enable him to outfit

for an extended period on the trap line if he so desires. The Company is careful about the credit it extends but occasionally some individuals do run up large debts. In 1960 there were four or five individuals whose debts amounted to as much as $400.00. Most of these large debts appear to have resulted from a sudden and unexpected lack of success in trapping, particularly in the trapping of white foxes. A man will, on the basis of past successes, obtain a large grub stake, go out and bring in many foxes, then get a further and even larger advance and go out again. This continues until suddenly the trapper has no success at all and he is left with a large debt. Since a large debt is very discouraging to the individual involved, the Company will often cancel as much as half of it after a period of time in order to encourage the debtor to pay the rest. The Snowdrift store keeps a file on all the men in the village containing information with regard to their skill as trappers and their reliability for purposes of advancing credit. This file has been compiled over many years by previous post managers.

The following figures represent the prices paid for various furs by the Company at Snowdrift during the fiscal year 1959-60. They represent the highest and lowest figures paid for pelts of top size and grade. It should be kept in mind that many, if not most, of the furs obtained are of less than top size and grade.

Animal	Highest Price	Lowest Price
Beaver	$25.00	$13.00
Muskrat	.90	.50
Cross fox	3.00	
Red fox	2.00	
Silver fox	2.00	
White fox	40.00	32.00
Blue fox	15.00	12.00
Marten	12.50	
Mink	20.50	16.50 and lower
Fisher	25.00	
Lynx	22.00	12.75
Otter	30.00	21.65
Ermine	1.20	.96
Squirrel	.42	.36
Timber wolf	10.00	
Arctic wolf	20.00	
Prairie wolf	4.00	
Wolverine	18.00	
Skunk	1.00	
Caribou	3.00 (approximate)	

It will be noted that although there is only one price for many of the fur bearing animals, the prices paid for the more valuable ones, particularly for white fox and beaver, varied considerably during the course of the year.

Another set of figures that is of particular interest represent the numbers of pelts of various animals purchased by the Hudson's Bay Company at Snowdrift for three fiscal years, 1957-58, 1958-59, and 1959-60, plus the prices paid for these pelts. These figures illustrate clearly the extensive fluctuation from year to year not only in the number of animals taken but in the prices paid by the Company. This is particularly noticeable with regard to white fox, ermine and muskrat.

Animal	Number Taken			Total Price Paid		
	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60	1957-58	1958-59	1959-60
Beaver	46	71	110	$ 336.00	$ 671.50	$1158.95
Ermine	76	106	184	39.90	34.15	88.05
Blue Fox	1	2	1	4.50	9.00	12.50
Red Fox	20	13	12	32.30	23.05	46.15
Cross Fox	3	6	4	6.80	12.10	21.40
White Fox	151	136	16	2517.50	2512.00	482.50
Lynx	2	4	25	14.50	19.00	282.25
Marten	106	166	513	764.60	952.00	3153.95
Mink	143	194	440	2538.25	3584.75	7156.10
Muskrat	3069	3771	1883	1427.96	2143.37	1137.36
Otter	8	10	14	188.00	191.00	280.30
Squirrel	1245	1496	1302	387.00	357.71	369.02
Timber Wolf		1			1.75	
		Total		$8257.31	$10511.38	$14185.53

It is probably safe to say that the majority of Indians at Snowdrift are dissatisfied with the services provided by the Hudson's Bay Company, particularly with regard to the handling of furs. Most Indians feel that the prices received for furs in the village are always low, while the same furs bring very high prices when disposed of in the urban centres to the south. There seems to be no knowledge or understanding of the various price mechanisms that are operative with regard to the trading of furs. The Indians cannot understand why the prices fluctuate so much, and they are often bewildered to find that the prices may even go down while they are in the bush so that they go out thinking they are going to get one price for their furs, but when they return they find that quite a different price is in force. Also, most informants thought that the Company must be "crazy" to raise the price paid for a particular fur after once having bought them at a lower price. The general opinion is that the Company is taking advantage of the fact that the Indians have nowhere else to trade.

The Snowdrift Indians may be uninformed concerning the price mechanisms operative in the fur trade, but there is almost universal knowledge that higher prices are paid for furs when there is more than one store in a village. They know that two stores means that the traders have to compete for the furs and therefore must pay more. This knowledge seems to arise from the fact that there are two stores in the nearby community of Rocher River. Indians who visit that community note that fact that the Hudson's Bay Company pays higher prices for furs there.

Fur prices are invariably one of the subjects discussed when the Indian Agent visits the community. Many Indians would like to market their fur in the urban centres to the south and the Agent has expressed a willingness to help arrange this kind of transaction. One of the problems in an arrangement of this sort is paying the fee for export from the Northwest Territories which is 2¢ on every muskrat pelt and higher for other animals. This fee must be paid in advance before the furs are shipped.

As a concluding comment on trapping, it can be said that there seems to be few Indians who are very enthusiastic about trapping as a means of making a living. Most men feel that it is very difficult to make any money trapping and yet the items that must be purchased at the store are very expensive. Nearly all the informants felt that the only solution to this situation was steady wage employment and almost to a man they maintained that they would give up trapping at once if an opportunity for steady employment presented itself.

Summer - The summer months are a time of inactivity in the village as there are relatively few subsistence activities until later in August. Nets are set near the village but fishing is not particularly good and seldom sufficient to meet more than the immediate needs for dog food. As in the fall, the setting of nets and collecting of fish is done entirely by the men. Most of the cleaning of the fish is done by women but men sometimes help as well. Only occasionally are there enough fish caught so that a few can be dried for human consumption.

A favourite activity during the summer, particularly on Sundays, is a family picnic along the shore of the lake or on some nearby island. An entire household will load themselves into a canoe and spend the day away from the village. On these excursions firewood is gathered, and usually someone takes along a .22 calibre rifle and hunts for small game such as rabbits and porcupines. Later on in the summer when the raspberries and blueberries are ripe, a picnic will also be a berry

picking excursion. However, berries are obviously not an important part of the diet since even on picnics people make only a half-hearted attempt to gather them.

At various times during the summer, some individuals spend a day hunting hares in the bush near the village. A favourite place for hares is the thick underbrush where movement on foot is difficult. The hunter walks along armed with a .22 rifle. At intervals he stops and makes a noise through compressed lips that sounds like a hare. More often than not, a hare will come out of the undergrowth to investigate and will be easily shot at close range. Spruce partridges may also be killed on these expeditions.

Many men use the summer months to make improvements and repairs on their houses, to build a new dog yard, or put a new canvas cover on their canoe.

By far the most important summer activity is the hunting of caribou that begins about the middle of August and continues until autumn; fishing begins around the middle of September. In terms of actual food, this is the most important subsistence activity in the yearly round. Late in the summer large numbers of caribou are usually to be found at the south end of Artillery Lake and in the vicinity of Fort Reliance. Between August 13th and 20th, 1960, members of approximately fifteen households left to hunt in this area. The trip is made by canoe and takes about eleven hours with a ten horse power outboard motor. There is one short portage of about 100 yards. The trip is made through The Gap which separates the Douglas Peninsula from the Pethei Peninsula, across the short portage into Lost Channel, and around the tip of Kahochella Peninsula almost due east to Fort Reliance (see Map 2). The Indians use large canvas covered freight canoes with straight sterns for motor attachment. The largest are about twenty-four feet in length. Every household head has a canoe although, in the summer of 1960, there were some who did not have motors in working order. There were at least four men who would have liked to have gone caribou hunting but simply did not have equipment in good enough condition to make the trip.

Preparations for the caribou hunt are considerable and often take several days. One informant with a large family was involved in intensive preparations for three or four days before his actual departure. First he had to obtain a tent large enough for his whole family. This he was able to purchase second hand from the fishing lodge at the mouth of the Snowdrift River. His old tent, which he had been using for storage purposes, was then taken down and sewn into a smoke house cover so that it could be used for

making "dry meat" while the family was in the bush. A log store house which he started earlier in the summer was hastily completed to house the materials, mostly winter trapping and hunting equipment, that had previously been stored in the old tent. Then the informant purchased $70.00 worth of food from the store for the trip. Part of it was paid for with cash earned while working at the fishing lodge and the rest was drawn as a government ration for one of his sons who had recently returned from hospitalization for tuberculosis. He also obtained thirty gallons of gas which was considered to be sufficient for the round trip. Finally, there was much hustle and bustle on the day of departure. All the bedding and many personal belongings were packed in suitcases and canvas bags. Rifles were packed as was cooking equipment, a small stove made from an oil can, nets, and many other things. The informant loaded all this gear in his boat together with five of his dogs and his family of six.

All the Snowdrift hunters who went to Fort Reliance to hunt caribou were in hopes that the animals would come down to the lake at this point, where they could be hunted easily. Apparently this is sometimes the case and when the animals go into the water, it is a simple matter to shoot them at close range. As it turned out, most of the herds stayed along the shores of Artillery Lake and the hunters were handicapped because of their heavy canoes, families and large amounts of gear that made it difficult to negotiate the eight or nine portages. Most of the hunters camped in the vicinity of Acres Lake along the Pikes Portage Route and killed some caribou that represented the southern most extension of the herds. It is generally considered that twenty to twenty-five animals per household is a good kill at this time of the year, but during the summer of 1960 it is doubtful whether any hunters obtained this number.

The meat is dried over a smokey fire immediately after butchering and is then brought back to the village to be stored in the government cold storage unit. One informant mentioned that in the past, people had hunted caribou in the Bedford Creek area and into Bedford Lake. Another possible route into the Barren Grounds is up the Snowdrift River, as there are no rapids except near the mouth, all the way to the tree line (see Map 2). An informant mentioned that he had used this route once or twice in the fall to hunt caribou and moose but it does not seem to be generally used.

According to a rough estimate made by several informants, a single household requires about 100 caribou to subsist during an entire year. This is probably an ideal number as far as annual kill is concerned, and it seems certain that most households have been getting by with much fewer animals, at least during the past two or three years.

Those men who did not go to the Fort Reliance area to hunt caribou in August of 1960, remained in the village for a variety of reasons. Some were working on the school while others had just recently been laid off the job and felt that they had enough money so that they did not need to hunt. At least four, as previously mentioned, would liked to have gone but did not possess outboard motors or other important equipment. Some were doubtless discouraged by reports that the caribou were in the relatively inaccessible Artillery Lake area rather than along the shores of Great Slave Lake. Four men with their families went as far as The Gap and hunted moose for a period of about three weeks, killing five animals. Many men who did not go caribou hunting were able to share in the kill by contributing to the expenses of those who did. One man who was working on the school purchased the gas used by a family for the trip while several others contributed boxes of shells, camping equipment, a motor and other necessary items to various caribou hunters.

In the past years it has frequently been the case that large numbers of Dogrib Indians from Fort Rae come east in the late summer to hunt caribou at Snowdrift for a while, and it is a time of great celebration with extensive gambling and a tea dance nearly every night. The Chipewyans cannot speak the Dogrib dialect, but they can understand it so communication of a sort is possible. One informant said that years ago, when there were more people hunting and trapping in the Snowdrift area, it was a common practice for all the boats to go to Fort Reliance together and meet the Dogribs there. This was presumably before the flu epidemic in 1929. In August of 1960 there were five or six boat loads of Dogribs who made the long trip from Fort Rae, but they went directly to Fort Reliance and did not stop at Snowdrift. The Fort Rae people came without their families and were thus able to portage more easily into Artillery Lake and as a result, they killed many more caribou than the Snowdrift people.

A certain number of opportunities for wage employment are available in and around Snowdrift during the summer months and are taken advantage of by some of the Indians. However, the situation changes from year to year and, in recent years at least, it has been difficult for local people to predict with any degree of accuracy the amount of employment that is going to be available in any given summer. One of the more certain types of summer employment can be obtained on the commercial fishing boats that have operated on Great Slave Lake every summer since 1945. The fishing season begins as soon as the lake is free from ice, usually no later than the middle of June, and ends by regulation on September 15th. Each boat crew consists of from two to four fishermen, including the captain. In some boats, two men are

partners but usually the captain hires the rest of the crew. Most of the captains own no equipment except their gill nets. One of the fishing companies rents them boats and sells them new nets and other gear on credit. A captain who is under such an obligation to a fishing company must sell his catch to the company which financed him (Kennedy, 1956, p. 7). During the summer of 1960 there were four commercial fishing companies with fleets of boats under their jurisdiction. It is the men who operate the fishing boats that hire Snowdrift people. There is also commercial fishing through the ice during the winter but it is only very rarely that Snowdrift people are employed at this time of the year.

The fishing boats operate around the lake, occasionally taking their catch to a barge where the fish are packed into boxes weighing sixty pounds each and placed in a cooler. A packer boat comes from Hay River every four or five days to take loads of boxes back to be shipped. The barge can be moved according to the nature of the fishing. There is a commissary on the barge and also at Hay River where employees of the fishing boats can purchase clothing and other items much cheaper than at the Hudson's Bay Company. The commercial fishing boats are not allowed by law to operate within a ten mile radius of the village.

During the summer of 1960 approximately ten men, mostly young and unmarried, worked for varying periods of time on the commercial fishing boats. The boats make frequent visits to the village even when there are no villagers working on them as the operators like to have a place to tie up over the week end, and they enjoy gambling with the village residents or taking part in a square dance. Usually on the occasion of these visits the boat operators try to recruit Indians for work. The fishing was not particularly good during the season under discussion and several men who were hired in early July were laid off soon after. However, during the second week in August steadier employment was offered through to the end of September. The pay for such work was $250.00 per month with $50.00 going for meals. All informants agreed that the work was hard and the operators of some boats more difficult to work for and more demanding than others. The work consists of checking the nets or working on the barge cleaning and packing the fish. Many of the boats carry up to seventy nets and it is not uncommon for a crew to check thirty-five in one day.

Work on the commercial fishing boats is not a particularly popular form of employment. More than half of those employed during the summer of 1960 quit their jobs, usually after only two or three weeks. Most felt that the work was too difficult for the pay received and objected to being asked to work sixteen or eighteen hours a day without any additional pay.

Although the boats made frequent visits to the village, some men became homesick or wished to quit work and hunt caribou. A few felt that while the wages were low and the work hard, they might as well be working on the boats rather than hanging around the village doing nothing. In this way they would at least have adequate food and some money at the end of the summer.

Another form of short term summer employment is provided by the Hudson's Bay Company. Each year a barge brings supplies for the store and these must be unloaded and stored in the Company's warehouse. During the summer of 1960, two barges came to the village, one bringing gasoline and oil for the store and for the new federal school. The second barge arrived at the end of July bringing the store's supplies plus building materials for the school. The unloading of the second barge took approximately eighteen hours. A group of fourteen men worked for the Hudson's Bay Company at $1.50 an hour and earned $12.00 each for carrying the supplies from the dock to the warehouse. Another group of eight men worked on the barge unloading the supplies onto the dock. These men, who also worked at unloading the school supplies, were paid by the freighting company and earned a total of $21.00 each. They were paid off in cash before the boat left. A number of men who went to Fort Reliance in August to hunt caribou also put in some time unloading supplies at the Department of Transport station there. The rates paid were $17.00 a day for unloading the barge and $1.66 an hour for rolling and stacking barrels of oil.

Work on the new school was begun during the summer of 1959 with the construction of a teacher's residence. In mid-July of 1960, the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources sent in two carpenters to begin work on the school building and a combination warehouse-powerhouse. Actual construction did not begin until the supplies arrived by barge at the end of July. Six men were hired to work on the school at $12.50 per day. Construction was finished by the middle of September but by that time only two men were working, the others having been laid off as the job neared completion. The Hudson's Bay Company allowed full credit against the cheques that the employed men received and as a result most of the money was spent even before it was received. There will now be one permanent job at the school for a villager to act as caretaker. In choosing the men who were to work on the school, the government carpenter in charge chose only those who were married and had large families.

The summer tourist industry on Great Slave Lake appears to be growing and this is indicated at Snowdrift by the construction of two fishing lodges near the village during the spring and summer of 1960. One was

open for business by the first of July but the other was not completed until near the end of the summer. The one that opened for business early did not have a particularly good season, and there is some doubt as to whether it can be successful without greatly revising its schedule of charges. At any rate, the area's fame as a good fishing location appears to be growing and a number of tourists bring their own power boats to Hay River by automobile and then fish at the east end of the lake. As yet, the Indians have not benefited greatly from the increasing tourist business. They have had no previous experience as guides and do not really know what is expected of a guide. As a result, when they are hired by the tourists they do not often give full satisfaction. In renting equipment to summer fishermen, the rate seems to be from $6.00 to $8.00 a day for a canoe without a motor and from $10.00 to $12.00 a day when the motor is provided. The standard price for a canoe, motor and man is $15.00 per day. However, quite a few tourists arrive with their own equipment. The Indians are only just beginning to understand what sport fishing is, and they are apt to look on it as a very strange thing for people to be doing. Although initially hostile to sports fishing, they now realize that it can be turned to economic advantage for themselves. Whether or not the two lodges near Snowdrift use the local people to any great extent as guides depends on how successful the business turns out to be and whether the Indians themselves are able to fulfil the expectations of the fishermen. During the summer of 1960 a number of tourists expressed annoyance because they hired local people with their boats under the impression that they would act as guides in the accepted meaning of the term and perform such chores as preparing meals, taking fish off the hook and other activities normally expected of guides. The Indians, on the other hand, were usually under the impression that they had been hired simply to run the motor.

One factor of local economics that should be mentioned is the considerable amount of trading, buying and selling that goes on in the village, most of it during the summer months when the people more often have some cash. Two men who worked for nearly three months on the school purchased canoes from others and another man who purchased a new outboard motor from the store subsequently sold his old one. There is considerable buying and selling of dogs, and the price varies a great deal depending on the time of year and the age of the animals. In the early summer one informant paid $10.00 for four one month old puppies and it was generally considered that he took quite a risk considering that much could happen to them before they were old enough to harness. On the other hand, another informant paid $35.00 a piece for two full grown dogs in the fall just before the beginning of trapping and felt that he had received a good bargain. An ordinary adult dog may sell for as little as $3.00 in the spring and as much as $15.00 in the fall while a very good dog may bring $15.00 in

the spring and more than $50.00 in the fall. The trade in dogs is apparently so brisk that some men raise extra pups just on the chance that they will be able to sell them.

In concluding the discussion of wage employment at Snowdrift it should be pointed out that as yet there is relatively little opportunity for the residents to earn wages on any regular basis. The school construction represented only temporary employment and even that benefited relatively few individuals. Commercial fishing can use only a limited number of men and has relatively little appeal to married men with families. The tourist industry is an unknown factor as far as its effect on community economics is concerned. In the past three or four years a few young, unmarried men have left the village for varying periods of time to work in the larger communities of Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Hay River, but they usually have not been successful in obtaining steady employment and in all cases have preferred to return to the village after absences no greater than six months. During the early summer of 1960 there was a great deal of talk about employment prospects and many men seemed to feel that there would be much more opportunity for work on the school than actually turned out to be the case. Nearly all the men in the village pay lip service at least to a preference for wage employment, and there can be no doubt that increased opportunities along this line would give a stability to their way of life that it does not now enjoy.

Government Assistance and Unearned Income

It is not the purpose of this paper to discuss formal community organization or to go into detail concerning the history of the area's relationships with the Canadian government. It is sufficient to simply point out that Snowdrift is in the area covered by Treaty No. 11, signed in 1921, and that by signing the treaty the Indians gave up the rights to their land in return for the various services provided by the Indian Affairs Branch of the Department of Citizenship and Immigration. For purposes of administrative convenience, all Indians living within treaty areas are grouped into bands. This grouping, which was made at the time the treaties were signed was intended to have regional, and to a certain extent tribal significance. However, at least as far as the area of Treaty No. 11 is concerned, the considerable movement of peoples that has taken place since the original bands were set up has resulted in a situation where any one community is apt to contain members of several bands, thus reducing the administrative value of the band system. All the residents of Snowdrift are members of the Yellowknife "A" or "B" bands but these bands are also represented in the communities of Yellowknife, Fort Resolution, Rocher River, Hay River and Fort Rae. An attempt is being made by the Indian Affairs Branch to re-align band membership by communities, and it is the present administrative goal to make all

residents of Snowdrift and Fort Reliance members of the Yellowknife "A" band.

Band organization consists of a chief and councillors, the number of the latter being determined by the size of the band at the rate of one councillor for every one hundred band members. The Yellowknife "A" band, which represents by far the largest number of Snowdrift residents, has two councillors, both of whom live at Snowdrift; the chief is resident at Rocher River. The policies of the Indian Affairs Branch are administered by an Indian Agent who, for the Snowdrift area, is resident at Yellowknife. His territory includes all of Great Slave Lake and west as far as Fort Providence. However, it is expected that the communities of Rocher River, Fort Resolution, Hay River, and Fort Providence will soon be transferred to the Fort Smith Agency. He visits Snowdrift on the average of about once every three months and holds a meeting of the band at least once a year, usually when the treaty money is paid in late July or early August. In recent years there has also been a meeting in late December. The two councillors at Snowdrift, one of whom is considered by the villagers to be their "chief", act in a liaison capacity with regard to relations between the villagers and the Indian Agent.

The education of the Indians of the Northwest Territories, which was provided for in the treaties, has recently been taken over by the Department of Northern Affairs and National Resources but the Indian Affairs Branch provides other services which vary from time to time according to local conditions and the limitations of the Branch's budget. The terms of the treaty also provide for a cash payment of $5.00 to be made every year to each Indian. The chief of a band receives $25.00 and each councillor $15.00.

Over the past few years the Indian Affairs Branch has concentrated its assistance programme on helping the Indians of Snowdrift to overcome some of the uncertainties of a subsistence economy. This has, for the most part, consisted of providing the Indians with equipment or helping them with the expense of maintaining equipment. Any Indian who needs a nylon fishing net is provided with one, and ammunition is also provided in small amounts. As mentioned previously, the Indian Agent has assisted local trappers to market their furs in the urban centres to the south. The branch seems to be moving towards a policy of promoting more stability and removing some of the uncertainty from the trapping economy. During the winter of 1959-60, the Indian Agent advanced up to $100.00 each to fourteen trappers in the Yellowknife area which enabled them to outfit for the trapping season much more successfully than would be possible with the much smaller advances obtainable from the Hudson's Bay Company. He was discouraged from instituting a programme of this kind in other

communities because only one of the fourteen paid back the loan. When one of the Snowdrift councillors pointed out to him that such a thing would not happen in this community, the Agent countered with information that he had received from the Company to the effect that sixteen men who received advances for trapping during the 1959-60 season had not repaid the loan.

A programme of assistance that is just getting started at Snowdrift provides for help in house construction to be given to individuals who indicate a desire for improved housing and a willingness to provide some of the materials themselves. If a man will cut the logs for a house, the Branch will provide everything else including roofing, lumber, plywood for interior finishing, windows, doors, paint, insulation etc. At a band meeting held in July of 1960, the Agent indicated that he had requested funds for the construction of fifteen houses for Snowdrift during the next year. To date only five individuals have constructed houses with materials provided by the Branch, but there is indication that several residents have cut logs preparatory to participating in the programme, or are prepared to do so and have indicated this to the Indian Agent.

As previously mentioned, the Indian Affairs Branch maintains a freezing and storage unit in the village for the use of the Indians. The people store both dried and fresh caribou meat in it as well as moose meat and occasionally fish. The manager of the Hudson's Bay Company store holds the key, and the freezer is usually opened on Saturdays, the people taking out the meat they will need for the coming week. The freezer is particularly useful when the families return from caribou hunting in the late summer or early fall. There are no other satisfactory facilities for the storing of large amounts of dried and fresh meat.

Mindful of the growing interest on the part of Canadian sports fishermen in the Great Slave Lake area, the Indian Agent would like to interest ten or twelve Snowdrift men in learning to be sports fishing guides. Although such a programme is only in the planning stage, it reflects a growing concern for the economic future of the Snowdrift Indians. The plan is to send in a man from the Indian Affairs Branch to teach a number of men the fundamentals of guide work for sports fishermen.

The Indian Affairs Branch provides a monthly ration issue to those individuals or families who, at the discretion of the Agent, require assistance. This is handled through the Hudson's Bay Company and the rations are issued from the supplies in the store. The recipient has a certain amount of credit available to him at the first of every month, and he can spend it in any way that he sees fit. At Snowdrift in recent years rations have been issued to families supporting foster children, to

individuals with physical disabilities, and to families where the family head is dead, unknown, or in a hospital. In September of 1960, six persons were receiving rations which totaled $140 per month. Five were receiving $20 per month and one woman whose husband is in the hospital received $50 per month. The Indian Affairs Branch also maintains a supply of buffalo meat in the freezer which is issued monthly to those individuals on rations and also to those receiving federal old age pensions. This meat ration is in addition to the amount of money received as a ration or pension. The buffalo meat is obtained from Wood Buffalo Park and is distributed to the various villages at the time the game department has its annual kill. The amount sent depends on the number of animals killed and it is distributed to the villages according to their size and needs. A shipment of buffalo meat into Snowdrift was made in January of 1960 to the amount of 4000 pounds. It was freighted in by air at a total landed cost of 41¢ per pound.

It should be emphasized again that the various services provided by the Indian Affairs Branch vary considerably from year to year and are subject to the effect of budget cuts and other financial curtailment. For example, when the Indian Agent held a meeting of the band at Snowdrift in July, 1960 he told those assembled that certain services, such as providing canvas covers, canoe paint etc. would have to be discontinued because of cut-backs by the Treasury Board.

The residents of Snowdrift benefit from federal welfare programmes in the same way as all other citizens of Canada. The family allowance is an important source of income in the village and seven individuals receive old age assistance. The amount received by each recipient of the latter is $55.00 per month and this amounts to a total of $385.00 per month that comes into the village. Although the actual number of old age recipients is not great, it should be pointed out that in households where there is an old person, a large number of people will often be indirectly dependent upon the monthly old age assistance cheque. In some cases the recipients object to this procedure. One informant whose aged mother and father both receive cheques has a tendency to buy things at the store and charge them to his parents' account. His father finally told the manager that he was not to allow this unless the old man gave his consent. This precaution was unsuccessful since the son did not hesitate to say that he had his father's permission to make purchases even when this was not the case. Other old age assistance recipients experience the same difficulty and at least two have directed the manager that none but themselves are to make purchases on their accounts. There is no doubt but that the old age assistance programme has strengthened the position of old people in the community. No longer are they forced to accept the charity of their

relatives, and these same relatives are now glad of the opportunity to accept an aged mother, father or other relative into the household.

The payment of family allowance represents an important source of unearned income for the people of Snowdrift. A family receives $6.00 per month for each child until it reaches ten years of age and the $8.00 per month until the child is sixteen years old. In July of 1960 there were twenty families receiving family allowance but the total number is greater since no payment is made for children who are attending a boarding school at the expense of the federal government. This means that during ten months of the year, payment is received only for those small children below the age of six who do not attend school. There were approximately thirty children attending school at Fort Smith and Fort Resolution during 1959-60. All children will be in the village after 1960 and the family allowance payments will be considerably larger. July, 1960, was the last month for which accurate figures were available and at that time four families were receiving $18.00 per month, eight families $12.00 and eight families $6.00 for a total payment per month of $216.00. There can be no doubt that the payment of family allowance has had the result of better clothing and food for children. Its effect upon trapping has already been briefly mentioned. Some informants maintained that the men used to take their families with them during the trapping season before family allowance was paid. Although the point could not be adequately documented, it seems likely that the availability of credit at the store each month has done a great deal to keep people closer to the community at all times.

Since all the old age assistance and family allowance cheques come to the Hudson's Bay Company along with other mail, the recipients normally do not see the cheques at all unless they specifically request them. They are either applied against debts or toward credit and very rarely does the recipient receive cash. The Company allows full credit on both kinds of cheques but usually does not allow a recipient to get more than one month behind unless the circumstances are unusual. However, unusual circumstances include outfitting for trapping.

CHAPTER IV

THE ECONOMIC FUTURE

One point that should be obvious from the discussion of the yearly round in the preceding chapter is the importance of caribou to the people of Snowdrift. These animals form the staple diet of the villagers and since the Chipewyan Indians are primarily eaters of meat, even fish, which are abundant in the environment, are not considered as an adequate substitute. It has been shown that the Indians spend a large part of the year in trapping animals that have little food value. Therefore it is caribou and, to a lesser extent, moose that sustain the people during this period. Fish are an adequate protection against emergency food shortage and the people of Snowdrift probably live better than the residents of many other Indian communities in the Northwest Territories simply because they have this additional and fairly predictable source of food. All informants agreed that credit at the store obtained through the trading of furs was not sufficient to maintain a family even during the months of the trapping season. Therefore, if anything were to happen to the caribou supply, the villagers would face a food shortage of fairly serious proportions.

There can be no doubt but that the ability to earn a cash income, particularly during the relatively free summer months, would do a great deal to offset this dependence on caribou, would not interfere with the important fall fishing, and would provide a buffer against the uncertainties of a trapping economy.

Any attempt to assess the extent to which opportunities for wage employment in the Snowdrift area will increase in future years is complicated by the fact that it is difficult to predict the future of those opportunities which are already in existence. A growing tourist industry and the continued importance of commercial fishing seem to be indicated. In 1944, before commercial fishing was begun, surveys established the fact that Great Slave Lake could yield a total fish catch of 4, 500, 000 pounds annually. Further studies, carried on after the fishery had been established, seemed to justify an upward revision of the catch quota to 9, 000, 000 pounds (Fisher, 1958, pp. 96-99). In a review of the first ten years of commercial fishing on the lake, a statement was made that this estimate could be sustained and possibly even increased (Kennedy, 1956). The average landings between 1956 and 1959 totalled 6, 462, 000 pounds; 4, 311, 000 taken in summer and 2, 151, 000 in winter (Anonymous, 1959, p. 18). The Annual Report of the Fisheries Research Board of Canada for 1958-59 contains a statement to the effect that fishing pressure has not been excessive since commercial fishing began but that the pressure could not be increased without adversely affecting the domestic fishing.

All of this seems to indicate a healthy industry that will continue to be an important part of the local economy for some time to come. However, local observers who have been watching the industry for the past fifteen years are under the impression that within the next ten years the fishing potential of the lake will be reduced to the point where commercial fishing will no longer be worth while and sports fishing will also be poor. They point out that there has been a noticeable decrease in the number of commercial outfits operating during the past few summers. It is certainly true that during the summer of 1959-60, the fishermen were loud in their complaints about their poor catches and several independent boat owners and captains ceased operation in the middle of the summer. Although there are fewer boats than in the past, the fishing methods and equipment have improved, and the fishermen themselves are hard working so that they are still taking large numbers of fish. It must be said, therefore, that although the facts seem to indicate the continued vigour of commercial fishing on Great Slave Lake, its bright future cannot be predicted with complete confidence.

While commercial fishing is an activity of long standing on the lake, the area is just beginning to be opened up for sports fishing. In 1954 a lodge was opened in the vicinity of Taltheli Narrows and it has been extremely successful. Because of its location in a remote area and the expense of transportation, such fishing lodges are within the means of only the more affluent sportsmen, but the fishing has been very good and the lodge at Taltheli has built up a good reputation. As mentioned previously, two lodges were built near Snowdrift in 1960, but it is too early to predict the extent to which they will be successful. The success of any lodge on the lake will, of course, be dependent upon the extent to which the fishing remains good.

If the tourist business does grow and become economically important, even on a short term basis, there are many ways that the Indians could aid and benefit from the growing industry. They are skilled in the construction of log cabins and could be employed in the building of lodges and other facilities that a tourist camp would need. In addition, they could be employed for the hauling and cutting of wood, not only for construction but also for fuel supply. With proper training, the Indians would be available for hire to sports fishermen for guide work. A number of problems will have to be overcome before Indians and whites can work successfully together to develop the tourist industry in the Snowdrift area. Although well aware of the advantages of working within the framework of a money economy, the Snowdrift Indians do not appear to be psychologically adjusted to the requirements involved in working for someone else. Therefore, the work that they do under these circumstances cannot always be compared, as far as quality is concerned, with the work that they do for themselves. Careful supervision would be required in any work situation involving the people of Snowdrift. After all, a satisfactory employment

situation does not exist in any culture unless those employed fully understand the job and are aware of exactly what is expected of them. In a cross-cultural work situation, the problem of communication adds to the difficulty of establishing these ideal employment conditions. Prejudice against employing Indians runs high in the Great Slave Lake area and this too will have to be overcome if the indigenous population is to make a contribution to the economic growth of the region.

If commercial and sports fishing are not to be relied on to provide summer employment for the Indians of the Snowdrift area, some consideration might be given to the establishment of a subsidized industry that would not only provide local employment but would be of benefit to a wide area. One industry that might be successfully introduced is a saw mill that would provide lumber for various locations on the lake, mining interests in the area, and also to communities along the Mackenzie River. According to a reliable report, there are only three sawmills in the Mackenzie River area, and it is said that only one of these is working at full capacity. The Indians could be employed to cut and haul logs and the lumber could be sent out on the barges that come to the village at various times during the summer and return empty. There were three such barges during the summer of 1960. It would presumably be necessary for the government to subsidize such an operation to the extent of investing in the mill and instituting a training programme for its operation and maintenance. The extent to which such an operation might eventually become self-sufficient and even show a profit should be thoroughly investigated. Such an industry would not only provide steady work for the inhabitants of Snowdrift but would also be a factor in strengthening village organization and leadership.

The above suggestions are tentative and should be considered as random thoughts on the subject of providing financial stability for a group of people whose subsistence base no longer provides them with all that they need and who are subject to the unpredictable fluctuations that are characteristic of a trapping economy. It has been shown that the uncertainties of trapping are in themselves demoralizing and that there are often other factors at work to prevent the optimum utilization of the environment for purposes of trapping. Any programme for planned economic change in the Snowdrift area should begin with the realization that trapping must be augmented by some more reliable source of income if the people of the area are to continue to lead useful lives and attain a standard of living comparable with people in other areas of rural Canada.

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