

Journal of the Canadian Historical Association Revue de la Société historique du Canada



Itinerant Jewish and Arabic Trading in the Dene's North, 1916-1930

George Colpitts

Volume 24, Number 1, 2013

URI: <https://id.erudit.org/iderudit/1025000ar>

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.7202/1025000ar>

[See table of contents](#)

Publisher(s)

The Canadian Historical Association / La Société historique du Canada

ISSN

0847-4478 (print)

1712-6274 (digital)

[Explore this journal](#)

Cite this article

Colpitts, G. (2013). Itinerant Jewish and Arabic Trading in the Dene's North, 1916-1930. *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association / Revue de la Société historique du Canada*, 24(1), 163-213. <https://doi.org/10.7202/1025000ar>

Article abstract

In late nineteenth century and especially in the interwar years, "free traders" took advantage of better transport systems to expand trade with Dene people in the Athabasca and Mackenzie Districts. Well versed in fur grading and supported by credit in the expanding industrializing fur industry in the south, "itinerant" peddlers worked independently and often controversially alongside larger capitalized fur companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company. A large number of these newcomers were Jews. This article suggests that Jews and, to a lesser extent, Lebanese and other Arabic traders became critical in the modernization of the Canadian North. They helped create an itinerant trader-Dene "contact zone" where the mixed meaning of credit, cash, and goods transactions provided northern Aboriginal trappers the means to negotiate modernism on their own terms in the interwar years. However, by the late 1920s, the state, encouraged by larger capitalized companies, implemented policies to restrict and finally close down this contact zone. The history of itinerant trading, then, raises questions about the long-term history of capitalism and co-related economic neo-colonialism in the Canadian north and their impact on First Nations.

Itinerant Jewish and Arabic Trading in the Dene's North, 1916-1930*

GEORGE COLPITTS

Abstract

In late nineteenth century and especially in the interwar years, "free traders" took advantage of better transport systems to expand trade with Dene people in the Athabasca and Mackenzie Districts. Well versed in fur grading and supported by credit in the expanding industrializing fur industry in the south, "itinerant" peddlers worked independently and often controversially alongside larger capitalized fur companies such as the Hudson's Bay Company. A large number of these newcomers were Jews. This article suggests that Jews and, to a lesser extent, Lebanese and other Arabic traders became critical in the modernization of the Canadian North. They helped create an itinerant trader-Dene "contact zone" where the mixed meaning of credit, cash, and goods transactions provided northern Aboriginal trappers the means to negotiate modernism on their own terms in the interwar years. However, by the late 1920s, the state, encouraged by larger capitalized companies, implemented policies to restrict and finally close down this contact zone. The history of itinerant trading, then, raises questions about the long-term history of capitalism and co-related economic neo-colonialism in the Canadian north and their impact on First Nations.

Résumé

À compter de la fin du XIX^e siècle et notamment pendant l'entre-deux-guerres, les « commerçants de fourrures libres » ont profité de l'amélioration

* The author thanks David Koffman for his comments and suggestions for further reading after meeting at the CHA Victoria meeting. Peter Usher, on that occasion, was particularly encouraging. He also thanks Debby Shocter, at the Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta, for her assistance. He was very grateful for comments provided by the two readers of this paper and the journal editors' suggestions for improvement.

des réseaux de transport pour développer leurs échanges commerciaux avec les Dénés des districts de l'Athabasca et de Mckenzie. Très habiles dans le classement des fourrures et soutenus par le crédit d'une industrie de la fourrure en expansion dans le sud, les marchands « ambulants » travaillaient en mode autonome et souvent de façon controversée aux côtés de grandes compagnies pelletières bien capitalisées, comme la Compagnie de la Baie d'Hudson. Un grand nombre de ces nouveaux venus étaient juifs. Le présent article avance que les Juifs et, dans une moindre mesure, les Libanais et autres commerçants arabes étaient devenus indispensables pour la modernisation du Nord canadien. Ils ont contribué à mettre en place une « zone de contact » entre les marchands ambulants et les Dénés où le mélange des notions de crédit, d'argent comptant et de vente de marchandises ont donné aux trappeurs autochtones du Nord les moyens de négocier librement le passage à la modernité pendant l'entre-deux-guerres. Cependant, vers la fin des années 1920, l'État, encouragé par les grandes entreprises dotées de capitaux permanents, a mis en œuvre des politiques pour restreindre puis fermer cette zone de contact. L'histoire de la vente ambulante soulève donc des questions sur l'histoire du capitalisme dans sa longue durée et du néo-colonialisme économique correspondant dans le Nord canadien et sur leur incidence sur les Premières Nations.

This article examines the early twentieth-century northern fur trade and its connections to southern, industrializing manufacturers and retailers during the interwar years. It focuses primarily on relations between northern Dene First Nations and their relatively new partners in trade, Jewish and other merchants in the Mackenzie, Athabasca, Keewatin, and northern Saskatchewan districts operating on the margins of the influence of the Hudson's Bay Company. It suggests that modernism, usually studied in southerly contexts, was introduced in new forms of consumerism, credit relations, and cash transactions in itinerant-peddler trading in the modern north peopled by Dene. Often relegated to the sidelines of northern historiography, the activities of "free traders," those who traded independently outside large companies and moved in large numbers into traditional Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) hinterlands in the late nineteenth century, deserve far closer attention by historians for the economic

and quite likely social change they fostered in the twentieth century.

Free traders were closely connected to new forms of fur buying and processing that linked the north to the south through what Liza Piper has termed a “circuitry” transforming other northern resources.¹ In this case, transportation improvements allowed itinerant traders to move into far reaches of the north and connect First Nations trappers more directly to industrialism, volatile commodity pricing in global markets, and modern retail consumerism.

These movements have not been properly accounted for in histories that examine neocolonialism of the period but overlook an important, co-related phenomenon where state administration and its economic partnerships dampened rather than invigorated the market economy among First Nations.² Free traders, and Jewish entrepreneurs in particular, have in turn been mischaracterized or poorly assessed in terms of their collective impact.³ This article suggests that a significant economic space developed between these individuals and the groups within which they worked seasonally. The free trader introduced, rapidly, elements of modernism — consumerism being one, but also cash that most likely enhanced an already transformed culture in the north that integrated imported trade goods into traditional subsistence practices.⁴ Higher prices paid by free traders, often given in credit, also encouraged significant Dene debt accumulation. But just how deleterious these changes were is little understood. Historians agree that high fur prices encouraged large numbers of southern trappers to exhaust furbearer populations in Aboriginal territories around Fort Chipewyan, Alberta, Le Pas, Manitoba, and Québec's James Bay region.⁵ However, as this article suggests, itinerant trading, before the state implemented policies by the late 1920s to end it, provided an important economic interstice between an industrial economy to the south and Dene, who capitalized on these traders' presence to import trade goods to support subsistence ways of life in the north.⁶ Peddler trading, though castigated by capitalized companies and state representatives, provided Dene a means of negotiating modernism on their own terms, especially in reconciling unprecedented debt loads within still resilient communal band organizations and the kinship connecting them. In the space between peddlers and Dene, conventional book keeping, and especially, the

meaning of credit, debt, and new goods, were conceptualized in new ways from conventions in the south. But beyond this important observation, this paper also highlights the significant contemporary reaction of the state and capitalized companies to this developing Dene-itinerant trader economic space. Backlash — some of it obviously anti-Semitic — against the peddler trader in the period has obvious relevance in the present day as Dene continue to negotiate, on their own terms, the opportunities offered in resource industrial expansion, pipeline developments, and cash wage-earning in Canada's rapidly changing north.⁷

Jewish Peddlers on the Peripheries of Modern Capitalism

In the 1920s, at a time when Jews often saw in the marginalized experience of First Nations a common one with their own,⁸ a significant ground developed between northern Dene and Jewish and, to a lesser extent, Lebanese and other Arabic peddlers. What might be termed a “contact zone,” a term coined by Mary-Louise Pratt, opened between them.⁹ Pratt understood such zones as a “spatial and temporal copresence of subjects previously separated,” where their encounter moved people in mixed cultural “interaction, interlocking understandings and practices, often within radically asymmetrical relations of power.”¹⁰ Conceptualizing the meeting of people in such terms allows analysis to go beyond the simple binary of colonized and colonizer, and better understand barter and trade for its many linguistic and social meanings as a “transformational exchange,” to use John Lutz's term.¹¹ Although Pratt limited herself to the language of exploration, natural historical inquiry, and other European encounters figuring in discursive media and narratives, Jonathan Hsy, using Pratt's concept, elaborated the contact zone to include the “more mundane interactions” of early European trading “environments,” where, in his case, medieval European multicultural and multilingual zones developed in commercial settings. It was in the trading houses, merchant exchanges, and especially in the very language of ledger accounts of London and other European commercial centres, where he found “instances of sociolinguistic fluidity, exchange, and interpersonal negotiation.”¹²

A strikingly similar zone developed in Canada's north. There, intercultural exchange demanded that credit, debt, and other commercial transactions take on "disorienting" if not completely new meanings in what Hsy called the "trading tongues" allowing exchange to take place.¹³ Such a contact zone developed primarily among Jews with Dene people in an era of significant transportation revolution and capital investment in northern Canada.

Jews had frequently exploited the margins of pioneer economies and formed especially close economic links with First Nations. David Koffman's recent research has highlighted the work of Jewish traders in the American West who developed the Indian curio trade.¹⁴ In such peripheral areas, Jewish entrepreneurs were not accidental new arrivals, nor were they inconsequential in the widening expansion of North American capitalism. As Koffman has argued, they brought these First Nations as "new players" into American capitalism, linked American Indians via economic networks to metropolitan centres, and, most importantly, helped develop "new markets for a new commodity, curios, objects that originally had little to no concrete value outside of their Native American communities."¹⁵ Jews traded with First Nations for curios in the British colonies in western North America as well. So central were their activities in British Columbia's economy by the 1890s that Koffman argues that they "owned and operated almost all of the major companies active in the curio business on Johnson Street in Victoria."¹⁶

Jewish entrepreneurs formed trades in frontier settings often because of the limited opportunities offered them on the "margins of trade" in more well-established capital centres elsewhere.¹⁷ They exploited niche markets, especially in peddler trading, to advance themselves economically while preserving their Jewish culture as "semi-outsiders" in new settings.¹⁸ Culturally, Jews, like other marginalized groups in settler societies, whether Lebanese or Chinese, presented an ideal economic skillset to expand niche peddling. Their outsider status granted many a special role to play as intermediaries in new communities where formal, capitalized linkages were not yet in place or were only beginning to form. Yuri Slezkine, in his larger history of what he calls the "Jewish Century" (twentieth), suggests that the outcasts in any society, Jews included, naturally took up the

role as the “other” in foreign communities where there was “always room for the unprotected and presumably neutral strangers” to move trade and goods into new territories and among new people.¹⁹ Their very exclusion within home societies lent Jews a “Mercurian strangeness” and the very means for trans-border and transcultural exchange. Jews and, in this discussion, Arabic traders further enhanced their outsider status by observing dietary restrictions, religious practices, and marriage endogamy in exotic lands or foreign frontiers that further legitimized their avocations in commerce, foreign exchange, and trade across cultural borderlands.²⁰

Rebecca Kobrin’s research reveals the marginality that Jews exploited to move within and outside dominant capitalist paradigms. She has persuasively argued the need to reframe Jewish encounters with American capitalism in that very light.²¹ In the early United States, Jews developed niche economic sectors, most notably in clothing manufacturing and scrap-metal collection, because of their often difficult situation, lower status in dominant Anglo-American communities, and comparatively small clout in capitalized economies.²² Precisely because of their very vulnerability and comparatively small amounts of capital, Jews in frontier settings tethered their businesses to support within core Jewish enclaves in other communities and ultimately capitalist centres. They warrant particular attention on frontiers, then, not really because of their incidence, but the very nature of their linkages and support networks to other Jewish sources of capital and credit. Ira Katznelson, identifying such a “distinctively Jewish economic sphere” thriving between enclave communities has suggested the importance of vertical supports, credit, and other economic ties between Jewish populations.²³ Sarah Stein, too, has revealed vibrant interconnections between Jewish communities where individuals acting as otherwise autonomous entities in one spot drew linkages to Jewish communities across regions, nations, and, indeed, the globe to develop, in her study, the feather trade as an international market phenomenon. At every level of the industry, from ostrich farming, to blue-collar feather working, to the diaspora buying and selling communities in metropolitan centres in Europe, Jews facilitated the industrious side and elaboration of this new trade: wherever he or she found themselves, “his or her being Jewish

was not an incidental fact, but, instead, a productive force.”²⁴

It is perhaps not surprising that Jews and other outsider Lebanese peddlers, often subject to discrimination in southern regions, and First Nations, themselves facing the brunt force of government “neocolonization” (where new forms of government rationing programs and especially Indian Affairs regulations came to bear on treaty Indians), found advantages in negotiating between themselves. Both groups thrived in various business, trading, and cultural exchanges outside the purview and control of large enterprises like the HBC and especially the state via Indian Agents in treaty areas.²⁵ As early as the 1860s in colonial British Columbia, criticism mounted against Jews who had formed extensive linkages with First Nations in fur trading. In that decade, almost two dozen fur trading licenses were issued to Jewish traders operating out of Victoria. Among them were William and Amelia Copperman, who came from San Francisco after the California gold rush and developed a “roaring trade” with “thousands of Natives who camped along the shores of Victoria harbor in spring and summer.” David and Herman Shirpsers, perhaps the first Jews to trade fur in British Columbia after the HBC lost its legal monopoly, purchased direct from First Nations. The Shirpsers operated the “Cheap John” clothing store in Victoria while brazenly exploiting the coastal trade using the schooner *Nonpareil* to gather a good portion of the furs on the Northwest coast.²⁶ Their thriving trade did not escape the notice of the provincial legislature that heard one diatribe against “the little Jews on Johnson Street” who were trading with First Nations on lands earmarked for colonial agricultural expansion.²⁷

The Jewish “productive force” in the north, however, and indeed the entire history of the northern fur trade in the twentieth century has yet to be fully examined.²⁸ Certainly there is need to better understand the co-related and often complementary work of Lebanese and other Arabic traders who, through similar family networks and partnerships with Jewish buyers and suppliers, carried goods in a peddler tradition. The most comprehensive treatment of the modern, “industrializing” fur trade, provided by Arthur J. Ray, noted the social and cultural barriers with which Jews and Lebanese free traders contended in the northern trade.²⁹ However,

the voluminous HBC archival sources still tend to shift historiographical focus on that beleaguered London company — one that was reduced to trading, at times, between 20 percent to 30 percent of northern fur, offering goods less generously than free and competitor traders did, and losing almost completely the auctioning and selling functions of the fur industry in much of the twentieth century.³⁰ Although the HBC records include some of the papers of the larger competitors it absorbed in the 1920s, the many smaller players and peddlers remain minimally examined. Most of these individuals left few sources, and what exists is often fragmented in present-day regional and Jewish archives.³¹

Contemporary comment on the collective impact of free trading began in the 1920s with the first analysis offered by Harold Adams Innis whose own views of free traders and companies competing with the HBC were given to the government's attention. Innis' confidential memorandum written for the federal government in 1924 suggested that the free trade phenomenon was part of a larger change in transport and population growth in the north posing a problem that required careful government consideration. Innis, who had visited the Mackenzie River region that year as part of his field study leading to his work on the fur trade in Canada, cited the free traders and the intense competition among buyers as one of the reasons for upward prices on furs, which helped deplete imported food supplies that, in turn, made game conservation legislation unworkable in the circumstances.³² Although Innis' memo was in many respects stating the obvious, when his report reached the federal government it likely became a weapon in their arsenal to prohibit itinerant peddling. Administrators had already cast a wary glance towards peddler trading by the time the memo arrived at their offices and it helped strengthen the hand of government by 1926, when the minister of the Yukon and Northwest Territories Branch of the Department of Interior placed harsh restrictions on peddler trading in an order-in-council establishing Indian Hunting Reserves in the north, which effectively closed down free traders' activities.

The Industrializing Fur Trade and Jewish Fur Merchant-retailers

The actual numbers of free traders operating in the north in what became a new “golden age” of the fur trade in Canada is not certain. Their presence, however, was notable enough that newspapers, government agencies, and the HBC itself made frequent references, usually with misgivings, of “foreigners,” “Jews,” “Armenians,” or “Arabs” arriving in the north from the 1880s onwards. Although reports of such competitor free traders were often exaggerated, government administrators reacted by drafting the 1917 North-West Territories Game Act, which included the licensing of foreign traders while limiting the freedoms of First Nations’ subsistence hunting.³³ It is nonetheless apparent that entrepreneurs, especially Jewish or Lebanese traders, were exploiting new transportation opportunities offered by steamship service on the Athabasca and the Mackenzie rivers by the turn of the century, and, during World War I, northerly stretches of railways and their branch lines to reach farther into resource and commercial fishing areas to peddle goods.³⁴

Free traders or petty traders had long before challenged the HBC’s monopoly in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, particularly in the Athabasca district.³⁵ Métis and American traders on the prairies and parkland moved goods in competition with the company’s post system from early in the nineteenth century.³⁶ After Confederation, the HBC faced an expanded presence of “free traders” (the term they gave to small trade rivals) in what Ray called an extended “front” along the Peace and Athabasca region through the parkland belts and reaching the Rainy River area of Ontario. The company also faced competitors east of Lake Superior.³⁷ Certainly by the 1880s, competitor traders had increased in the Fort Chipewyan area, northern Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, and Northern Québec.³⁸ But it was by the end of World War I when free trading became most pronounced. In 1914-15, the British government suspended auction sales for the war effort, and the London-based HBC and many trading companies stopped trade over the course of an entire year. Free traders, purchasing for other Canadian and American auctions not disrupted by the war, expanded their activities accordingly. By the time Québec-born Edmund “Ted” Nagle,

soon creating the Nagle-Hislop fur buying and transportation concern, went on one of his first fur buying trips from Edmonton in 1916, he competed with a large number of newly-arrived Jewish fur peddler-buyers; much of his fur reselling, in turn, was to new Jewish traders, or his purchases were made from Jews selling culled (or second-best) fur in frontier areas.³⁹ Nagle clearly had difficulty matching the prices and fur grading intelligence of his Jewish rivals. In the Fort Chipewyan area, wartime seed capital also created new competitor upstarts that were later part-owned or managed by Jews. During the war large competitors formed that later involved Jewish talent as investors and managers. Most prominent were the Boston-based, later Canadian-incorporated Lamson and Hubbard, and the Edmonton-supported Northern Trading Company, headed by Colonel James Cornwall.⁴⁰ These new concerns had co-related investments in transportation companies and benefited from crediting merchandisers and wholesalers in Edmonton, Calgary, Winnipeg, and Toronto.⁴¹

Significant industrial growth in southern metropolises provided the basic incentive for free trading.⁴² Wholesalers in urban centres credited traders who represented or traded directly for retailers or batch-sale and graded fur-auctioning centres in St. Louis and New York, and subsequently in Edmonton, Toronto, and Winnipeg.⁴³ Many of these newcomers were expert fur graders with precise orders to purchase specific furs. Alex Loutit, operating a store in Fort Resolution by 1924, purchased directly for Fairweather Furs in Toronto, trading “only top quality” marten, mink, and fox (especially cross and silver fox). He sent these to Fort McMurray and then on to Toronto “to the plant where they manufacture the furs.”⁴⁴ New fur handlers, such as the Jewish-dominated Winnipeg Fur Auction Company, offered critical support for these traders, offering credit that could be advanced from wholesalers who, in turn, provided a wide variety of merchandise, whether ready-made clothing, children’s toys, brightly coloured fabric, or hardware.

The greatest incentive for free trading, however, came from the changing fur industry itself. Especially after the war, fur expanded as a consumer item, especially in women’s fur coats.⁴⁵ More rapid communication of fashion dictates from Paris, London, and New York set trends almost annually and prompted consumers to purchase

coats, many conforming to the classic design of Paul Poiret, the "Empire figure." Unlike Victorian fur coats that required costly tapering to the woman's body, the Empire figure was cut to more simply drape in straight lines from a woman's shoulders to her mid-calf.⁴⁶ Industrial techniques in dyeing and dressing, meanwhile, allowed for dramatic varieties of colour and texture in fur. It was especially the breakthroughs in German chemical dyeing — discovered in the 1890s and spread to other European and American production centres — that propelled fur consumerism. Using coal-based aniline dyes, fur dressers successfully transformed fur in colour, texture, and pliability, and struck upon, by 1921, the widespread and comparatively cheap imitation fur coat.⁴⁷ Traditionally low-valued trim furs, such as muskrat and rabbit, could be chemically treated to emulate pricier furbearing counterparts, such as beaver or mink. Mechanical devices and massive belt-driven beating drums allowed for factory processing of such small pelts as muskrat to now serve as a mass market item. The affordable and popular muskrat coat emerged as a selling favorite in the era.⁴⁸ H.S.M. Kemp, who worked as an independent trader with the Reveillons Frères in the 1920s in Manitoba, was careful to explain such processes to First Nations trappers. He had to. In the case of black fox, once fetching \$1,500 to \$3,000 per pelt, the market only paid \$15 by the early 1920s because, as he related to a local trapper, "dressers could take pale red [foxes] and dye them so that were indistinguishable from genuine blacks."⁴⁹

Most of the actual production of the Canadian fur coat, however, took place not in the headline-grabbing massive industrial works, such as Québec's widely publicized Paquet factory,⁵⁰ but in small and medium-sized "retailer-manufacturers." Before the post-World War II period, when men began to completely supplant women's work, manufactures hired a dozen or so seamstresses and often-male cutters in the back room to create fur garments.⁵¹ Québec's and Ontario's small-scale, almost artisanal, industry produced the majority of Canada's coats and trim apparel. Their typical establishments numbered less than ten people.⁵² Coats were sold to customers in storefronts, hotel lobbies, or in one of the many "furrier" window displays decorating Montreal's St. Paul and St.

Catherine streets, or Toronto's Bloor, Queen, or Yonge streets. The collective output from such works was impressive. The Dominion Bureau of Statistics' annual reports for these years show some 1.3 million women's fur coats being produced in such small settings during the interwar years, and an equally large number of fur trim or muffs, tippets, capes, and cloaks.⁵³ Given the strong reputation of Canadian fur, the common lament in American newspapers was that every man accompanying his wife on a visit to Canada found a fur coat retailer in almost every hotel lobby, speaking English with "false French accents," and offering coats at irresistibly low prices.⁵⁴

Southern industrialization and fashion significantly changed the long traditions of the fur trade. Although prices steadily rose in the 1920s, spikes and collapses occurred in the price of all fur species, sometimes on an annual basis.⁵⁵ Furs bought on futures could financially devastate, or richly reward, traders in such times. Muskrat provides a striking example. Commonly purchased from trappers before the First World War for ten to 15 cents each, the same pelt fetched as much as \$1 in the Fort Chipewyan area by 1919. By 1920, its price rose to a stunning \$4.50 to \$5.00, just before the market crashed to less than 50 cents.⁵⁶

New transport and communications systems, especially telegraph, gave buyers often false confidence in futures communicated to them in the fragmented and seasonally-constrained communications systems to northerly outposts. Young non-Jewish traders such as Sydney Keighley barely coped. Working for the HBC in the La Ronge area of Saskatchewan, where his free-trader competitors were posting signs offering \$6.50 a pelt for muskrat, Keighley learned through a company letter of the 1920 crash and imperiled his own life to deliver the news to the company's northern outposts. His competitors, without such knowledge, continued buying at the inflated price.⁵⁷

Despite its perils, the northern trade and even First Nations trappers became linked to the vicissitudes of southern markets. A "titanic battle for control of the fur trade" ensued, as the *Montreal Gazette* enthused in 1920, as numerous fur traders and buyers converged into northern spaces.⁵⁸

Central to these industrial connections were key constituent

players: Jewish and, lesser in number, Lebanese and other Arabic “peddler” traders. Jewish communities in Canada had grown in the immigration boom years of the 1890s to World War I and increased significantly in urban areas in the interwar years in Montreal, Toronto, Winnipeg, and other centres.⁵⁹ Many of these Jews from eastern Europe, Russia, Lithuania, and Hungary brought tradesman skills in fur cutting and dressing, and often exquisite technical knowledge in grading and handling fur to expand garment and retailing activities in Canada.⁶⁰ Immigrant Jewish talent galvanized the fur manufacturer-retailer sector in Canada during the interwar period. Many of the manufacturer-retailers registered by the Dominion Bureau of Statistics were Jewish enterprises.⁶¹ Louis Rosenberg estimated that by 1931, some 1,305, or 32.93 percent of all people engaged in fur and fur goods work were Jews.⁶² In this industry, men dominated; indeed Jewish males constituted 43.92 percent of all men in Canada working in the industry, compared to Jewish women, comprising only 9.72 percent.⁶³ By then, too, he counted some 126 Jews owning and managing fur manufacturing shops.⁶⁴ A vast proportion of the operations were of a small to medium size, requiring less capitalization, and hiring between three to six, or up to a couple dozen seamstresses, cutters, and designers. On the fur buying side, Jews with proven fur grading abilities organized or came to dominate auction houses and independent brokerages in almost every city in Canada, a phenomenon that began to elicit public comment and, in Toronto, unmasked anti-Semitism by the 1930s.⁶⁵

The “productive force” of these Jewish manufacturer-retailers was considerable. They purchased furs through auction houses in Calgary, Edmonton, Winnipeg, Toronto, and Montreal, and from them, direct from First Nations. Jewish buyers via family members or close associate Jewish peddlers traded in the north. A typical case was that of Thomas Pain in Calgary. Pain employed a half dozen seamstresses and a master cutter who manufactured fur coats in the back of his store. Capitalizing on the postwar demand for coats, Pain purchased a heavyweight fur sewing machine to keep up production in the 1920s. He made a sizeable impact on Calgary’s retail sector. Pain’s entry won the Calgary Stampede’s best float prize in the 1931

parade. The female head fur cutter stood at the front of the float, a number of the shop's seamstresses modeled mink, beaver, and other coats behind, and the float itself was decorated from front to back with raw furs hanging along its side. A common furrier selling point was posted on a prominent sign: "from trapper to wearer." Indeed, as his sparse surviving archival notes reveal, Pain purchased furs in the interwar period direct from First Nations trappers.⁶⁶

Whether in direct purchases for their manufacturing or simply as traders, Jews developed close relations with First Nations in northern areas. Fort McMurray trader Sam Kushner opened a general store in town in 1913 and purchased from Cree nearby. A "heavy-set man with bushy eyebrows and a Lithuanian accent," Kushner is cited as the first Jew living in Fort McMurray. His trade was not entirely accidental: the name "Kushner" translates as "furrier" in his Lithuanian homeland.⁶⁷ Kushner found life in the north appealing and trade with First Nations gratifying. According to his biographers, Kushner's daughter-in-law recalled his quiet manner and easy-going nature making him well suited to the trade. He "always spoke of his love for the Indians" upon whom he depended for his business life.⁶⁸

The stories of "Treyder Ed" Hanson provide other perspectives. He and his uncle, Elhanan, traded fur and ran a trading post in Fort McMurray, Alberta, in the mid-1920s. As Kirman and Shocter have suggested, his stories, published by Elhanan in Yiddish, read like a "Yiddish version of Jack London's 'Call of the Wild'." ⁶⁹ Hanson had come from Russia with his parents to Western Canada at the time of the Russian-Japanese War. Finding that Ed "was not suited for a city job," Elhanan opened a Fort McMurray trading post from which his nephew could work.⁷⁰ The enterprise prospered within eight years and the uncle passed the post's ownership to Ed, who thoroughly integrated his exchanges into the Dene world. He learned numerous northern languages, including Cree and Dene, and his post became a central meeting point for trappers. The story of Ed opening a post at Fond du Lac, on the eastern tip of Lake Athabasca, is instructive. In a meeting with an Edmonton buyer (who soon credited goods to Ed for the trade), Ed identified a spot on a map where only the HBC and another concern were located at Fond du Lac. On his arrival, he found his competitors were not very enthusiastic to find a Jew open-

ing shop in their midst. His credit in Edmonton allowed Ed to open bales of manufactured goods on the spot and a thriving trade ensued. "The loud curses and insults of the trappers added to the total chaos," Elhanan wrote. The "tumult" within the trading season coming to an end, Hanson then faced the daunting challenge of carrying his furs some 700 miles to Edmonton and the fur auction there. Again, he was not helped much by competing traders, but a fortuitous linkage with a Dene guide allowed him to carry his traded furs to Edmonton auctions mostly by dogsled.⁷¹ Hanson, too, seems to have struck close relations with his customers. He earned the endearing name "Uchulah," (in Chipewyan meaning "Rags") apparently in reference to the peddler tradition he carried north.⁷² Others included Abe Aaron, who traded with Dene in the 1920s from his base in Edmonton, and who also occupied, with other Jews, prominent places in the Edmonton Raw Fur Merchants Association; Fred Ramelson and Shep Slutker (later the prominent fur buyer in northern Alberta) stood out in a long list of Jewish fur buyers and retailers.⁷³

Linkages between traders, auction houses, and furriers mattered. By 1916, a formidable vertical support of Jewish trading and retailing was discernible in the Athabasca District, where the HBC saw profits completely lost to its "opposition" offering much higher prices. Their key rival was Ramelson and Levison, a partnership able to pay far higher prices because of the "standing orders from manufacturing furriers for best quality skins at a price which permitted them to pay what seemed a ridiculously high average," as a HBC inspector reported. From the quantities they secured, Ramelson and Levison sent the best on to the manufacturing-retailers in Edmonton and other cities, and then resold the poorer-quality "culls" in the Athabasca district where they were "sloughed off to small traders, storekeepers, and travelling buyers in any locality where prices at the time were high."⁷⁴ Even the HBC trader in the district ended up purchasing culls from the concern.⁷⁵

Following the spike in prices on muskrat in 1921, and the "high prices offered by outside firms ... a number of Jews and Assyrians outfitted in Edmonton in early fall and succeeded, thanks to the aid extended to them by the rival transportation concerns, in

reaching before freeze-up Fort Chipewyan and Fort Resolution,” one HBC report stated. Given the HBC’s own strictly set prices, these competitors were able to purchase muskrat to be “more or less successful, with the result that this last Fall they returned in increasing numbers with larger outfits and are now established at practically every point where Indian encampments are located.”⁷⁶ In 1923, the district manager of the Mackenzie District found that “competition has assumed proportions unheard of before.” He counted “no less” than 28 traders there, only half of which were actually licensed as permanent concerns in the north, the other half itinerant traders who used the new rail and waterway links to travel there seasonally.⁷⁷

Vertical business linkages were critical to these northern traders. Arthur Jan, in Manitoba, developed a close friendship and long-standing business support with former Jewish trader and now Winnipeg auction buyer George Soudack in the interwar years. Soudack would frequently store Jan’s furs “and advance me enough cash to carry on until he could sell in order to show me a profit. This was done several times.”⁷⁸ This support saved Jan during the 1920 bust in muskrat. He had purchased muskrat at \$4 a pelt in the spring when communications had been interrupted by the breakup on the rivers, few knowing that Chicago over-purchasing had driven the price to about 50 cents a pelt. By the time he brought his furs to market, Jan realized his mistake and in desperation sent his 3,000 muskrat to Soudack who did not sell them, but stored them over a number of years until prices rose. Soudack, in turn, advanced the struggling trader cash to meet his own debts in the meanwhile.⁷⁹

By 1926, the HBC’s concerns for the collective clout of Jewish north-south support grew considerably. Although capitalized rivals were clearly shocked by the volatility of prices and many were falling into insolvency, itinerant traders were not only thriving in their fur purchases, but also making inroads into the HBC’s more profitable merchandise sales. That year, the “onrush of new transient traders” had led to an 18.9 percent drop in HBC merchandise sales in the Mackenzie.⁸⁰ Having taken controlling stock of the massive Reveillons Frères in 1926, and attempting the take-over of the Northern Trading Company, the company was fully confronting the real threat: “What kills this District is the transient trader who drifts

his scow right behind the ice in the spring and calls at every camp en route. At that time of the year the natives have big debts to pay to the established traders and it does not take much talk to persuade them that the merchandise offered by the transient trader is good to take.”⁸¹ Now there were at least 24 other peddlers, he complained, who “sell at ridiculous prices counting nothing for the cost of the goods that they carry for themselves ... The more this District opens up to the insane activity of the petty traders and transient peddlers, the more the margin of gross profit diminishes. In other words our selling price is steadily reduced to face the competition.”⁸²

The Jewish “productive force,” however, was so effective because of linkages to southern metropolitan buyers. In 1925, when the Northern Trading Company went into receivership, its prime recipient of furs, the Winnipeg Fur Auction Sales Company, attempted to purchase the bankrupted concern. The HBC Commissioner feared that “a number of Winnipeg Jewish traders connected with the Winnipeg Fur Auction Company are now endeavoring to acquire the assets of the Northern Trading Company. It is to prevent the invasion of the territory by these people” that the HBC attempted to purchase the company pre-emptively.⁸³ They were too slow, however. According to Arthur Ray, Colonel J.K. Cornwall, the Northern Trading Company’s head, “obtained the backing of a number of important Jewish fur dealer from Winnipeg,” including Max and Moses Finklestein, to create the Northern Traders Ltd.⁸⁴ The revitalized rival now perturbed a HBC correspondent who noted that the Northern Traders “had as lately been taken over by a number of Jews who are closely connected with the Winnipeg Fur Auction Sales Company who also finance a number of small traders.”⁸⁵

Jewish free traders with links to southern retail-manufacturers and auction houses created a formidable competition for reserve buyers who tended to buy furs only cheaply from First Nations trappers as well as the HBC, whose own traders tended to follow proscribed prices sent from distant London often on an annual basis. Jacob Baltzan in Saskatchewan worked closely enough with Cree to learn their language of trade. He also purchased in towns across the province. On one occasion, learning that an Indian storekeeper on a

reserve near Balacartes had 3,000 muskrat to sell and was looking for 12 cents a pelt, Baltzan benefited from his brother's knowledge that the market price on muskrat had recently jumped to 20 cents a pelt. Needing cash for the anticipated transaction, his brother in Lipton "immediately canvassed all the stores — Jewish and non-Jewish — and obtained five hundred dollars." Given the amount of money he was carrying, he took along an assistant, Morris Abromovitch, as a precaution and travelled by sled to the reserve before other traders arrived. He recounted what became a memorable buying coup:

[The reserve store owner] wanted to know if I had come to buy rats, and I told him that I had come to purchase mink and others, but if he'd sell the rats for ten cents, I would buy them.

He refused to deal. I bought mink, wolves, weasel and asked again, 'Well, What do you say about the rats?'

He replied, "Give me twelve cents and they're all yours." ...

I bought them. I counted the money for him, had him load the bales on my sleigh. At the same time, I had my man keep the horses primed and ready to go!⁸⁶

Not all Jewish trading ended so profitably. Myer Sharon of Montreal, whose distinctiveness earned him the name "*Le p'tit rabbin juif*" in communities near Trois Rivières, "made a practice of coming from Montreal each winter to purchase furs from trappers" over a 30-year period in northern Québec. On his travels, Sharon would stay at farmhouses and on one occasion — prior to his murder by a deranged local youth for the cash he carried — "he had amused the farmer and his family with his tales of Jewish customs."⁸⁷

Itinerant Fur Trading

Working only on the "margins" of trade, Jews and Lebanese traders employed often only small amounts of capital. They pooled goods or gained credit through family relations or connections to other retailers. Jews and Lebanese traders often cooperated in the field. Their modest means forced many of them to use carts, sleds, and scows to carry their goods northward. Some continued to carry goods in the

peddler tradition, literally, on foot and on their backs. Peddling was always a modest undertaking, often suspect, in early modern periods. It had expanded as a phenomenon in the conditions of rising production in manufacturing Europe where, by the seventeenth century, peddlers, *colporteurs*, and itinerant traders, carrying goods not of their own manufacture, traded beyond the supervised markets and fairs of towns and cities, and, with considerable controversy, offered wares in countrysides and ad hoc trading areas.⁸⁸

Marginal peddler trading thrived in Canadian frontier settings. Esmeil Muhammed "Sam" Jamha was one of many Lebanese peddlers working in western Canadian settler and later northern Chipewyan and Cree territories. Born in Lala, Lebanon in 1890, he came to Canada in 1905, after hearing of the success of his cousin Ahmed Awid, who was a small ware peddler before owning his own store in central Canada.⁸⁹ Sam, still a teenager, reached Winnipeg penniless. A relative running a dry goods store advanced him a 100 pound pack of goods on credit which Sam carried on his back from Winnipeg to Brandon, visiting farm houses and towns along the way to sell ribbon, needles, thread, and a variety of small wares. His cousin resupplied Sam after he began making his first sales. Eventually, he reached Edmonton, an astounding feat considering that he did the entire journey, some 800 miles, on foot.⁹⁰ He did much of his subsequent trading the same way. He learned enough German, French, and English to sell in small communities in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and northern Alberta. From Edmonton he travelled north to the First Nations rendezvous at Lac Ste. Anne, where he returned in successive years. Initially unable to speak English, he memorized a single line that he called to Cree: "By Jesus, come over I give you a bargain!"⁹¹ From that point, he joined Cree camps, such as one at Bear Creek outside Grand Prairie where the Cree "accepted him as a friend and in that locale, he was able to sell the remainder of his merchandise."⁹² Sam became fluent in Cree and learned "the intricacies of the fur trade," excelling at fur grading. Strictly observant in his Muslim faith, and adhering to his dietary restriction against eating pork — often going hungry in his long journeys — Sam's very success in trading arose in measure from his outsider status, small means, and apparently modest trade. It is surely significant that when he was in a position to buy a

horse and buggy to carry his goods, which made him “feel like a king,” he found his business dwindling: “many of his customers considered he was putting on airs and discontinued dealing with him.” He returned to carrying his wares on foot for that reason.⁹³

In other circumstances, such as in 1907, Sam joined other Lebanese traders to pool goods together and travel into the Athabasca district by horse and wagons “piled high” to trade food and furs from the Cree.⁹⁴ And, later, in a surprising leap of cross-cultural collaboration, he acted as a fur buyer partnered with Fred Swartz and Sol Levine of the Edmonton Fur Auction Sales, to expand the goods and trade he took northward.⁹⁵ Collectively, then, such small capital trading represented a significant economic expansion in the north. By 1923 a little more than 40 percent of the Mackenzie District’s furs were being taken by the HBC’s capitalized competitors, and 15 percent more by itinerant peddlers. The latter, taking some 11,000 tons of furs that year, matched the returns of the HBC’s largest capitalized rival, the Northern Trading Company.⁹⁶

Because they used fur grading abilities to advantageously purchase furs as batches from First Nations, and offered a wide variety of hardwares, manufactures, and “fancy” goods that they could sell cheaply, peddler traders worked on a completely different dynamic than the HBC. In the chaotic fur pricing after the war, the HBC had taken the very conservative business strategy of counting less on the value of the furs it was purchasing (since their price fluctuated so wildly on the market), and more on the “merchandise sales” that it won in bartering for them. The proscribed rule of thumb for its traders was to keep to the cautiously pegged prices sent from London, and profit as much as possible in their sales of merchandise, limiting stock on hand except for critical times of the year, and avoiding credit advances. Because the HBC depended more on merchandise sales, its staff were under less pressure to grade fur. A widespread problem in the HBC trade was that old hands did not grade furs or did not know how, and young hands had no opportunities to learn how to do it well.⁹⁷ As well, because they relied on merchandise sales, old guard HBC men tended to curtail credit advances. Although HBC men were under pressure to match their competitors and found ways to hide credits in their book-keeping,

many knew that their employment depended on limiting their advances and adhering to company prices; and some gained notoriety for allowing no cash sales from their posts.⁹⁸

Peddlers, on the other hand, used sharp fur grading and price intelligence, as well as cheap supplies of goods to offer higher value for furs. They usually purchased furs in batches — able to identify within them the high priced superior grades — from which they could cull. In this, they took north a relatively new tradition in fur buying occurring in the south, employing the “eastern” purchase technique, whereby they used their fur grading knowledge to buy furs in lots, to be culled later, rather than the “western” purchase, where the buyer bought furs individually and discriminately.⁹⁹ Their approach was viewed as thoroughly reckless to HBC traders since they could offer what appeared as “insane” prices for furs. They were also, unlike the HBC, amenable to using cash and many eventually carried significant amounts of cash to make sales.

Buying according to superior grading ability gave traders significant advantage. Norway House's factor complained about silver fox landing in the hands of “the Jews” because of the doubled prices offered for them, and likely because the Jewish trader understood their intrinsic graded worth on the market better than the factor did.¹⁰⁰ In the southerly Berens River factors saw their clientele lost to “a Jew” named Trapper, whose barged-in goods comprised of Winnipeg “fire sales and bankrupt stock.”¹⁰¹ The Athabasca district HBC factor, who attempted to spread distrust towards at least one free trader among Christianized First Nations by labeling him as a “Christkiller,”¹⁰² saw a clear threat in the competition they offered. Indeed, the district inspector of the HBC northern areas, Louis Romanet, lamented the impact of traders whose rapid mobility, by whatever means possible, got them to customers earlier in the season, and whose credited goods could be offered significantly cheaper on the spot. His annual report for 1924/25 generalized Jews and what were likely Lebanese traders, charging that “Jews, Armenians, and other unscrupulous transient traders came in strong at first open water by the Athabasca route and the Fort St. John-Nelson route before the [HBC's] supply steamers could even be launched.... They took much of the spring trade and almost the whole of the Treaty

money by having new goods to exchange ... and by cutting the selling price unmercifully down to bare cost to secure the cash. They were following [the] treaty party as sharks follow a ship in distress.”¹⁰³

As early as 1920, the HBC was fully aware that its traders were often not able to match their competitors’ fur grading skills. Since its staff was being “victimized by astute and unscrupulous pedlars who may find ways and means of disposing of parcels of culls through the medium of a third party,” the company prohibited its staff, who would not know the difference between culled and best-quality furs, from purchasing “from dealers, pedlars or competitive traders.”¹⁰⁴

No wonder, then, that it was the “crowd of small peddlers in bankruptcy stocks, grub stakes, and home brew,” as Romanet pointed out in a district report, which constituted the HBC’s greatest threat.¹⁰⁵ These peddlers took on goods at their cheapest from their urban bases and dumped them in the north to purchase a band’s entire fur supply, apparently without making distinctions between them. Thus, in 1923, when the HBC was attempting to buy out a large concern in the north, Lamson and Hubbard (which it did acquire by 1924), its Mackenzie district manager warned his superiors that closing a capitalized rival would not solve the real problem: “an organized concern is far less harmful than the crowd of petty traders and Jews that would have rushed in to fill the vacancy left by the defunct firm.”¹⁰⁶

The phenomenon of free trading was, by then, widespread. In the Mackenzie, with fur prices so high in the south, every inhabitant including the prospector, missionary, tourist, and trapper was trading fur from First Nations. If they were combined “and the Jews are all put together, the whole McKenzie Basin is nothing but a vast unavowed field of fur trade matters.”¹⁰⁷

Louis Romanet eventually employed the argument that such free trading undermined the interests of First Nations themselves. In the Athabasca District, itself in the throes of free trading, Romanet saw the region’s governance and native welfare at stake in the energetic activity of free traders: “if competition is the life of trade in the civilized world, it may be said that it is the very reverse in the Interior as far as we are concerned, simply because it is generally of an insane nature and its character often leaves its demoralizing stamp on the

natives.” His opponents, “have very little to lose and a great deal to gain by abusing the credulity of the natives and of honest people ... Gossip, untrue stories and blackguarding are circulated around with most deadly effect upon the Indians, who never have any solid convictions and who lack judgment.”¹⁰⁸

The Itinerant Trader-Dene Encounter

Jewish, Lebanese, and other peddler traders in the north, however, were offering exactly what First Nations wanted in the changing dynamics of volatile pricing and fur grading. They delivered a wide range of trade goods, direct, based on Native consumer demands. Traders such as Jan were the first to introduce a wide variety of wares, including canvas canoes, outboard motors, gramophones, and radios.¹⁰⁹ They thrived in delivering the latest fashions and novelties. Their capacity to do so was continually criticized by HBC employees. However, their own company ran a comparatively antiquated, inflexible, indent system to draw orders from a centralized and slowly functioning Winnipeg depot. Despite Native demands for “fancy goods” offered by competitive traders earlier in treaty areas of Ontario, the HBC was slow in adopting new fashion lines and organizing goods purchasing to meet new demands in the North.¹¹⁰ Just after World War I, the HBC confronted American competitors introducing direct mail-order retailing, such as companies like A.B. Shubert of Chicago and Sears Roebuck, which began sending catalogues to First Nations trappers with fur buying price lists included.¹¹¹ In response, the HBC hired an expert merchandise purchaser, W.S. Lecky, who had served the company during the war years, interviewed trading post managers and determined the goods they most wanted.¹¹² His “Report on the Purchasing Methods of the Hudson’s Bay Company,” written in 1920, highlighted the changes needed to supply posts with rapidly emerging demands for goods and novelties now offered by competitors. Lecky was highly critical of the indent system, whereby northern traders on the spot sent on indents to a regional manager. These were later approved by the commissioner, and then sent on to Montreal, where a purchaser and two assistants filled orders. In many cases, requisitions were sent on to

London, where three full-time purchasers filled orders as best as they could.¹¹³

Whatever Lecky's recommendations, Harold Adams Innis saw the continued disarray in the HBC's large and slow-functioning system in northern Canada in his 1924 visit. On his journey through Alberta's Peace River country, he commented in his personal journal on the "Considerable competition [sic] large number of Jews in Business," and the high prices they offered for fur, (and, in that province, the relatively high price of "travelling licenses" these newcomers faced: \$100).¹¹⁴ The inroads of credit were remarkable to Innis, as well as First Nations who took furs to rival traders at the end of the season instead of paying their debts. He noted the scows of competitors now regularly plying the Peace River, carrying about 25-27 tons of goods at a time. He was also struck by the "lack of co-operation and general ignorance" of HBC employees, who had "No conception of demands of people outfitting for north, retail vs. wholesale or district manager." Within the Mackenzie District itself, one of his Métis informants, Conibear, "gets trappers price lists continually." From one of his HBC informants, he learned of "Assyrian jews coming to Fitzgerald and Smith. Frowned on by H.B.[C.]." Innis was cognizant of the slowness of the HBC's requisitioning system, criticized by "Morris," one of the Northern Trading Company traders he met at Fort Smith, who advanced considerable credit on the certainty of a good harvest. The HBC, he learned, were "under difficulty because everything requisitioned by manager for each fort is gone over by district manager who may or not know local needs and in many cases blue penciled [such orders to change or remove them]." He seems to have been struck that while the HBC might have brought "oranges and fruit of different sorts" once a year, "individual traders" were bringing them "very often." He jotted down "Greater elasticity with local man" in respect to their flexibility in meeting demands nearby.¹¹⁵ Free traders, not following the HBC's almost iron-clad requirement to minimize stock on hand, ordered "silk shirts etc." And there was the evident enterprise of one "Lefinsky — Russian — in Fitzgerald [who] bought very few furs, made money selling lemon extract (about 50% alcohol) to white people who sold it to breeds and Indians at dance."¹¹⁶

As Jan's reminiscences make plain, free traders were hustling to bring north what they could to seize a sale. One of the Cree women in the Lac du Brochet area wanted a corset from Jan, apparently having learned of the fashion accessory, although not understanding that she was to wear it under, rather than over, her garments in a show of conspicuous consumption. Since "she was a daughter of one of my best hunters I had to get it for her."¹¹⁷ Traders such as Jan worked with Winnipeg crediting wholesale houses to bring all manner of wares for new First Nations' demands. His memoir remarks, quoted by Tough:

The Indian women also made their own clothes and those of the children. They liked brilliant colours, but no yellow or white, and this meant that I always had to stock prints and dress materials in colours such as red, cerise, blue and green. They were the fashionable colours and used in society! Some of the young girls and women looked more or less like birds of paradise when they were really dressed up for a dance. In later years, they wanted made up clothing so I had to stock a certain quantity but the piece goods still sold well, especially for the older women.¹¹⁸

Jan also offered what First Nations wanted most: cash. Throughout the 1920s, he made more cash sales, to the point where for the last seven years of trading in the 1920s, all of his transactions were for cash.¹¹⁹ The responsiveness of free traders to this demand is significant. As anthropologist George Wentzel pointed out in his work among Inuit seal hunters, cash, once introduced, becomes a transformative element in northern Native subsistence economies.¹²⁰ Unlike a trade good, cash was convertible and could purchase tools, and hunting and camp equipment, which, in turn, became necessary to support Dene subsistence rounds. Cash could also be carried anywhere, as one free trader explained: with cash, the trapper enjoyed "the liberty to purchase anything from anywhere he wanted, in the other stores."¹²¹

The timing and extent of cash purchases in the north has been well described by Ray. Treaties 8 and 11 brought annuity payments each year. As Colonel Cornwall, of the Northern Trading Company,

put it: independent “cash” traders began working the “virgin soil” of Treaty 8 areas at first and proceeded “to cultivate it, advised the Indians to take cash, disregard his debt, posing as a savior and friend of the trapper,” in the Athabasca District, especially, by World War I.¹²²

But it was especially the expansion of credit in unprecedented levels that was hastened in free trading. Innis identified the “problem of credit most difficult” in the Mackenzie by the time he reached the area in 1924. The HBC’s competition gave it freely: the “average Indians gets \$4 to \$500 credit.” This amount represents, perhaps, a quadrupling of debt that had been typically advanced at the turn of the century.¹²³ This practice was not credit in the tradition of debt-peonage that the HBC had traditionally arranged with First Nations, in which the HBC advanced goods to help First Nations in their winter hunt. In the 1920s, trappers were taking credit in fall, at Christmas, at Easter, and then, if they could, in the spring trade. Innis reported trappers paying off fall credits at Christmas, or not, taking as much again before heading back to their camps, and often, in spring, reporting that they had paid off their debts earlier in the year — even if they had not — to take more again. Innis remarked, “Occasionally \$1200 to \$1500 credit given with new company e.g. Lamson Hubbard.”¹²⁴

Credit had expanded for many reasons. Newcomer trappers, who had come north after the war to profit on the high prices, generally insisted on cash, but given the variability of prices, traders offering cash usually counter demanded credit transactions of some kind, which allowed them to cushion their risk by elevating, often to double their book value, the price on goods being traded. Cash also necessitated that furs be graded.

First Nations, however, were clearly strategizing differently in the new era. “Indians do not like furs graded and generally accept a lump sum” for their fur, Innis reported near Resolution. Capitalized rivals to the HBC could not accept the risk of buying ungraded skins, however, without buying them on credit, and therefore be able to “whipsaw” (a term Innis used) their creditors with the high price of goods given in credit arrangements.¹²⁵ Given that traders suffered after freeze-up from ignorance of where prices were going, and could

only access mail on a monthly basis, credit became a means of hedging potential losses on falling values on furs by elevating prices on merchandise extended to First Nations.

First Nations tended to take this credit, however, on their own terms. Often the very nature of credit was transformed, renegotiated, and took on new meaning in these settings. As a form of obligation heaped on the receiver by a creditor, First Nations took credit from one trader and often sold their furs to another, preferring often to keep debt on another trader's books for future repayment. Although traders frequently gave "bad debts" to First Nations, most traders enjoyed relatively high repayment of debts, if only over longer periods than traders usually preferred.¹²⁶ This was not, then, fictional debt, but rather, debt in other words, First Nations strategizing in the changing market around them and taking large amounts of debt to capitalize on rising prices.

First Nations capitalized on the inroads of free trading in other ways. In the Mackenzie valley by 1924, Dene trappers forbade traders from grading their furs and took instead "lump sums" on their furs. This preference is not explained in the literature, but it is likely that the "eastern" system of buying, so employed by itinerant traders, allowed a First Nations trapper to sell the entirety of his community's fur at once, and the profits could therefore more equitably be divided among the group. The "western" system would, in effect, put different values on furs taken by individuals within the band, undoubtedly establishing tensions that could undermine a band's solidarity. It was precisely because of the communal distribution of wealth that HBC efforts to punish debt-ridden First Nations, as individuals, and "starve them into submission," did not work in the repayments of the large credits that they took on. Gary Garbitt, a Peace River pioneer trader, explained that "what one had in a camp, the others shared ... [and] The Indian who was in trouble with the Bay might also make a deal with another trader."¹²⁷

Since First Nations were also taking cash on such transactions and they, accordingly, took it in the form of debt, their debts differed from those held by newcomer traders from the south who were moving north at that time. Lump sum trades were likely downgraded in overall value, but were attractive to First Nations because they could

use their credit in more frequent visits to posts for supplies and provisions for their bands over the course of the entire hunting season. This phenomenon was sketched in Innis' field notes. He learned about debt from a Northern Traders' representative at Fort Resolution, where he counted 41 boats, 122 canoes, six scows, 12 birch bark canoes, and even Evenrude engines fastened on scows and other boats to haul large supplies of goods into the area, and noted, "Competition fairly severe all the way down the river." Karl Murdoff, the Northern Trader at Resolution, used credit to cushion the blows from the market on purchased furs. He gave it extensively to Dene trappers, who seemed to prefer it in their transactions. As a trader with fewer stocks available on merchandise, it was clearly a strategy — one expensive to the company in the end — to provide credit in such large amounts. Indeed, in the Mackenzie outside prices were often out of date by the time they arrived and of little value to those trading furs. Innis explains, "Murdoff claims they [the traders and trappers in the area] have too damned much communication with the outside. No one knows what fur will bring — reports coming from outside throw everything out. Buying fur similar to poker."¹²⁸

In such circumstances, many First Nations were selling their furs ungraded, but in lump cash advances, or on merchandise credits that they claimed in provisions. Murdoff himself gave much of his credit in "very large gratuities of flour, bacon — tin of everything on shelves, etc." Other traders, with meagerly supplied store shelves, were laughed at, or called "stingy" by nearby First Nations since they could only offer smaller disbursements as "gratuities." In the case of one trader at Fort Norman, working for the Northern Traders, Innis reported that he "Gives large credit say \$1000 representing about \$500 worth of goods. When fur comes in gives gratuity of \$3 or \$400. Consequently beats other traders out."¹²⁹

Although capitalized traders in the north complained about First Nations keeping debt on the books while buying goods from itinerant traders, it was simply an alternative way of exchange in the circumstances, and a very rational one at that. The complexities of this trading space appear most clearly in one free trader's reminiscences. The Lebanese trader, Bedouin Ferran, had come to Canada at the turn of the century. On his arrival, individuals at his Québec

immigration-processing centre renamed him Peter Baker. He was soon competing with the HBC in the Fort Smith area, and Mackenzie and Saskatchewan districts in the 1920s. On his first ventures, in partnership with another trader, Baker took a wide variety of goods north, including orange pop, relished by Dene customers (who called him "Jiak Oza" meaning "Orange" thereafter).¹³⁰ Baker, despite his Anglo name, still worked at a disadvantage in the Anglo-Canadian administrative situation. A police inspector singled him out for a trumped-up charge of illegal trading that undercut his business prospects until he was able to clear his name. A HBC rival at Fort Smith also started "spreading false propaganda" about him, calling him the "Jew" and his store the "Jew's store." "In those days," Baker explains, "when anybody was called a 'Jew', it meant outcast and despised, because a 'jew' was a 'Christkiller.' I was called that most often."¹³¹ First Nations throughout the region also called him a Jew. This mischaracterization might have arisen from his business associations with Jewish traders in the north. The Lebanese Baker entered a variety of arrangements, including, at one point, a partnership at Resolution with George and Bill Pinsky and John Nickrasoff, of the Pinsky and Brothers' concern.¹³²

In the Athabasca district in 1924, and against the advice of his "white friends," Baker provided "credit to almost everyone" from the Salt River band. He later observed that he enjoyed about a 90 percent repayment of such credits. He struck these credit arrangements, however, with the band implicated, rather than individuals. In this case, he extended to the "chief" of the band and his sons some \$300 worth of merchandise in the fall. Typically, band members returned only sporadically from the hunt to sell some furs, but they waited until late November to return to sell their furs as a batch. At that point, in the case of the Salt River band, "John," the eldest brother, who "had the say about selling the furs," was being lured into the HBC store by the factor there. Baker, learning of the possibility that the band's furs, with his credits, were about to go to the HBC, invited John, his brothers, and his brother-in-law "Joe," along with the chief, to a meeting where Joe reminded his family that Baker "had helped them when they were stuck" in the fall when they all needed goods. The chief, who maintained that only the elder brother

“had the say” in how the band’s furs would be sold, also prevailed on the son to remember the way Baker had helped with his credit earlier in the season.

The elder son, retaining his independence and the final “say” over the band’s sale of furs, then asked Baker for “\$100 cash,” upon which Baker insisted on seeing the batch. Baker undoubtedly benefited from his superior fur grading expertise — he was a consummate expert on the quality of furs — and was able to offer \$600 for the lot. Joe and the chief liked the price and John eventually agreed on the condition that \$100 in cash was offered, and Baker, after subtracting the credit already advanced, gave the amount agreed on, much to the consternation of the HBC’s factor.¹³³ The transaction shows some of the distinctive Dene interactions with the new market, taking credit far in advance of trapper supplies offered in the traditional fur trade, the careful attention to price, a cash transaction, but most importantly, furs being handled as a communal wealth dictated by the eldest trapper and sold as a “batch.”

Karl Murdoff, of the Northern Traders at Fort Resolution, was particularly attuned to this demand. He quite ably bridged cultural differences in the north and the industrialized-focused economy he represented. Baker related that “He had an office, where people brought him furs on which he had set a price, buy the lot and pay cash, after deducting any credit accounts.”¹³⁴ The cash-purchases, debt loads and volatile prices unfolding in the Mackenzie region was clearly negotiated on Dene terms. Baker respected the distinct custom where “I saw nowhere else,” in which the trapper (likely one who “had the say” over such matters) “with a bunch of fur, he distributed it among all the traders giving a portion to every store. They said, ‘I give you,’ they didn’t say, ‘I sell you.’”¹³⁵

In such circumstances, debts were communal in nature, and the wealth of a trapper, who occasionally appeared at a trader’s door, continued to link back into the trapper’s kinship network. First Nations’ trapper buying and selling — and the credits one trapper accumulated — often had some reference to a brother, or brother-in-law, who had similar credit relationships with the same trader or others in the district. One young trader learned of this local practice. At first rankled by the paternalism and formal strictures against enterprise he

encountered in the HBC's employ, H.S.M. Kemp finally broke his ties and moved into the ranks of the Reveillons Frères. Cash had to be part of these competitor's sales; indeed, Cree insisted on it, so that they could obtain a wider range of merchandise.¹³⁶ But, when Kemp took up the Reveillons post, he faced local demands for credit. Since they tended to use their advances by spring, Cree needed carry-over into the fall. Clearly in a difficult position because the company could not afford credit, the trader nevertheless knew that his post's predecessor had floundered precisely because he had withdrawn it (and likely cash) from customers demanding it. Cree negotiators provided the means out of the impasse. Red Earth Cree visited him in the spring, relating to Kemp their "troubles" and asking for "a little help." Anyone who helped them in such circumstances would not be forgotten: "if I would give them a little credit in the summer, I would get all their furs in the winter. On the other hand, and they suggested it quite frankly, if I wouldn't help them could I blame them if they sold their furs at Cumberland or The Pas [to other traders]?" The Red Earth band then proposed a compromise. If the trader gave perhaps \$10 to \$15 of credit to the Red Earth people to purchase ammunition, tea, and tobacco for their moose hunt in the fall, they would repay in the surplus leather created by the hunt, "to show that the people were honest." Then he would advance more credit for the duck hunt, and during the ensuing season as more moose skins were cured, these would be paid to write off the totality of the credited moose hunt. (In fact, Kemp found that the moose hunt was a success and "every man paid his account," save a few unfortunate hunters who had failed in the season). Then Kemp "grub staked" the duck hunt, and since he had no use for ducks or duck grease, he would get back his advance in furs produced still later in the season. Later, for the winter fur hunt, more credit was advanced in the form of "socks and underwear, the dress goods and all the other items that a family would need in a trapping camp." The encounter then created a paper record of invented meaning. All of this credit was carried unofficially in the "hip-pocket ledger" — "a little black book that held secrets shared only by the individual trader and his conscience."¹³⁷ Many of these traders, HBC men included, learned the importance of carrying debt unofficially in such black books, while maintaining "official" and

largely fictional accounts read by their superiors. Ray described the practice of “unofficial debt records” kept up between HBC traders and northern trappers who would otherwise go to peddlers. HBC men called them “vest pocket” or “purgatory” ledgers “to record unauthorized lines of credit.”¹³⁸ Credit, then, largely unknown to the district manager, and officially not carried on the post accounts, was risky but “something like this was necessary if one was to stay in business at all.”¹³⁹

Of course, certain individuals carried bad debts, but on the whole bands returned to pay their credits when they saw fit and often over very long periods of time. Traders had to ensure that individuals were not overwhelmed by crushing debts, and crediting traders had to be proactive in pressing bands as collectives to make returns. They were helped by the practice of “tripping” — traders visiting winter or spring camps directly to win the furs before other traders got them. Although traditionally fur traders had often gone to native camps to winter with and encourage production, or trading in camp, the “tripping” most often engaged in by competing concerns in the twentieth century would send men with dogs to briefly visit camps, often repeatedly during a single season, to trade furs.¹⁴⁰ Given that a number of traders extended credit to the same groups concurrently, and that the group would pay debts to the first trader who arrived to their camps, or leave it on the books for the future, traders such as Kemp learned the importance of going out to get furs. In one case, Kemp received news from a Dene trader paying his debt that his brother-in-law, Moses, who also had some of Kemp’s debts and even others from the HBC, “had better than average mink and marten on Little Deer Lake.” As a tactical diversion, Kemp paid a Dene trader to tell the HBC that Kemp was heading to Churchill for prime furs, while at night, he “stripped the bells” from his dog harnesses and “like the Arabs,” silently started in the other direction for Little Deer Lake.¹⁴¹ He knew that the “the first trader at Little Deer Lake would be the first man to be paid.”¹⁴²

As Kemp’s reminiscences suggest, Dene wanted cash in most of their transactions. They also gained credit as a band for not only the fur but the moose and duck hunts, and they saw the “help” they got from traders in times of difficulty forming relations of trust with the

trader. That trust was not linked to an individual, however, but to his family connections and their various needs in the seasonal hunting and gathering economy in Dene territories. At the same time, this "credit" was not in the form of former debt-peonage relations. Dene were, after all, taking on all manner of goods in credit relations. But Dene were clear in wanting to keep their hands free to trade with whomever they wished, wherever the prices, credit, or cash were better offered.

The Economic Colonization of the North

Frank Tough has persuasively argued that the "debt-peonage" of the fur trade, although having remnant significance in the twentieth century, simply did not hold by the 1920s. First Nations in areas heavily swayed by the effects of cash, wage-earning employment, and competitive trading clearly adopted new economic strategies in the market. He saw First Nations in northern Manitoba shaping the modern fur trade through their spatial responses to competition; they also exploited price, demanded and received new goods, and took advantage of a new debt system that clearly differed from the traditions of debt-peonage of the HBC of yesteryear. At the same time, Tough saw First Nations only shaping, not determining, the economic forces developing in their homelands.¹⁴³

This last point, sadly, proved critical with time. Government regulation began to tie First Nations' hands by the mid-1920s. The HBC went on the offensive against the inroads made by free traders and larger capitalized competitors in the northern territories. Having celebrated a few years earlier its 250th anniversary and branding its business history as coincidental with Canada's own national development,¹⁴⁴ the company helped create a negative perception of itinerant, seasonal traders in the north. The HBC, in slang well understood as "Here Before Christ,"¹⁴⁵ recreated itself as the "national" company, one with roots to Canada's earliest colonial past, and the company serving to civilize First Nations and Inuit people in the north.¹⁴⁶ Its buyouts of competitors, such as the Reveillons Frères, were undertaken for "safeguarding the interests of the native populations," as Charles Sale, the Governor of the company, stated in a publicity stunt

in 1927.¹⁴⁷ Sale did not mention the obvious, that the buyout stultified enterprise and kept prices artificially high for First Nations buying goods. It would also help curtail supply of goods to the north.

This last point was particularly relevant to First Nations. By its Mackenzie District manager's own estimation in 1923, the HBC was a poor supplier of goods. For every kilogram of fur the HBC exported from the Mackenzie, it imported a mere 19 kilograms of trade supplies. Northern Traders brought 31. Lamsden and Hubbard brought 39. The comparatively miniscule Pinsky Brothers (with whom Baker had formed an association at one point) operated a hodgepodge of posts and tripping activities in the Mackenzie and Athabasca districts. For every pound of fur they exported, the Pinskys imported 27 kilograms of goods!¹⁴⁸ It was the HBC, holding fast to its capital and profiting from merchandise sales rather than fur purchases that brought the fewest goods to First Nations in these years. Its firm stance on credit, too, made it a particularly difficult lender. By the HBC's calculations in 1923 at Fort Fitzgerald, the post collected about 71 percent of the fur in the area, with little official credit; the Pinsky Brothers, with only 14 percent of the catch, extended some \$3,500 in credit to mostly Slavey trappers; Lamson and Hubbard with only 9 percent of the share, had extended some \$1,800.¹⁴⁹

By 1926 the Yukon and Northwest Territories Branch of the Department of Interior grew suspicious of free traders. That year, it began maintaining a separate file on "Itinerant Traders, NWT."¹⁵⁰ The Ottawa-based office learned most of its information about free trading via correspondents hostile to the inroads of peddlers, "trippers," and free traders whose mobility and dumping of merchandise on the market had cost them dearly. One of the newspaper reports clipped and filed by the department was from the *Edmonton Journal* in 1926. Headlined "Fur Companies Fight 'Gypsies' for Business," it cited the "reports from the north," indicating the "unprecedented keenness of competition between individual fur traders and the established fur companies." The newspaper quoted a northern White trapper worried that most of the traders were foreigners, mostly "Assyrians," carrying goods north on barges, and offering better

prices, but were unreliable in their supply and not as solidly established as the larger companies.¹⁵¹ In the Mackenzie, "Many men had drifted down the rivers of the north, their scows piled high with supplies, often their final destination undetermined," the trapper was quoted. Although he himself benefited from the stocks they had on hand and was paid well for his furs, he saw this as "one of the evils of extensive free trading that has been going on in those parts." The traders, he said, "are mere peddlers ... subject to no governmental regulations."¹⁵²

The article was appended to the file for its minister, Charles Stewart. Stewart was a "chum" of the Northwest Traders' chief stockholder, Colonel J.K. Cornwall, an individual who had already passed to the minister his characterization of itinerant traders as "gypsies."¹⁵³ Stewart became convinced that such free traders warranted special restriction. He soon overhauled the existing licensing system and licensed only traders maintaining posts year-round in the north. He might have taken particular alarm in a ministerial memorandum the same year, when Stewart's office counted 182 fur trade licenses issued in the Northwest Territories in 1924-25, 138 to owners and managers of fur trading posts, and no less than 44 to itinerant traders.¹⁵⁴

For the federal government, embarking on its statist administration of northern Canada, the inroads of traders and trippers clearly presented a governance dilemma. The rush northward of traders, and now white trappers using airplanes to intensively harvest from "traplines," alarmed the Royal North West Mounted Police, especially in prime muskrat territories of the Peace-Athabasca Delta. Indeed, much of the discussion about the need for "Indian hunting preserves" and the enlarged boundaries of Wood Buffalo National Park as a wildlife preserve were informed in light of the large numbers of trappers from the south, and itinerant traders following them, moving into these territories.¹⁵⁵

In February 1926, the "No tripping policy" was announced and its provisions passed by order-in-council.¹⁵⁶ Its strictures were then communicated to the Royal North West Mounted Police to see their enforcement. The policy brought a sea change in commercial relations to the north. It discriminated between British non-resident itinerant

traders and British non-resident and resident post managers. It raised the license fee to \$500 on non-resident traders, a significant burden on credited free traders who often struggled to put together \$1,000 worth of goods. Not many peddlers were in a position to take advantage of the revised licensing system in any case. As northern fur post historian Peter Usher has pointed out, the policy's key change was to license an establishment, not an individual. Trade at a "fur trade establishment" required the permission of the Northwest Territories commissioner. By fall of 1927, Usher writes, "virtually every post had been licensed, and separate correspondence files set up for every applicant, from the Hudson's Bay Company down to the resident individual traders with only one establishment."¹⁵⁷ A "fur post," under the revised *Northwest Game Act*, was also redefined as "any kind of structure, building or tent or any means of conveyance used to contain merchandise for barter or sale, so soon as it is used for such a purpose."¹⁵⁸ Effectively, it drew free traders by their very manner of conveyance and even camping activities into a legal definition of a "fur post." Given that licenses were only permitted by the discretion of the superintendent, the times were against itinerancy. By 1929, the Act's further amendment insisted that such a "trading post" be operational eight months of the year, and any of its outposts three. Tripping thereafter became virtually impossible by the Act's "stipulating the nature of the buildings and duration of the trade" and it brought "an end to this practice" of tripping.¹⁵⁹

The strapped Northern Traders rejoiced with the ruling. Cornwall was happy with the limits set on itinerant traders and so also was Max Finkelstein, by then the president of the company, and rival to the HBC.¹⁶⁰ O.S. Finnie, the director of the NWT and Y Branch wrote to the HBC's fur trade commissioner to report on the development. The policy would please established companies such as the HBC, which did not want competition, and had found that tripping, forced by itinerant, mobile peddlers, cost them dearly. The policy would in essence see First Nations having to travel to established firms and be more firmly beholden to their prices and trade, than benefit from the convenience, better prices, and variety of goods offered them by travelling traders. But Finnie made his preferences clear. He felt that itinerant traders encouraged First Nations

trappers not to pay their credits to established companies, and among the itinerants "some of them are not altogether desirable and offer trade goods which are not at all necessary to the native population." Furthermore, the itinerant peddler did not have an investment in the country itself. He supported, then, the elevated license fee and all the discrimination against outsiders it implied.¹⁶¹

For Lebanese trader Peter Baker the sudden change in legislation was nothing short of a "slap in the face."¹⁶² When in 1926 he visited Fort Smith to purchase his usual trading license, he was astounded to find that "fur buying was confined to permanent trading posts" and that "no one was to be allowed to go among the [Native] trappers' camps anymore."¹⁶³ After making inquiries about the ministerial policy change, he visited Charles Stewart in Edmonton, where he explained to the minister the ways that he had extended credit to trappers, travelling by dog team to customers "to collect my debts and supply them with any further needs."¹⁶⁴ The minister shocked him with the reply that, "It wouldn't be necessary for the new rule if it wasn't for those damned Syrians and Jews going around fooling the poor Indians!"¹⁶⁵ "Obviously," Baker wrote, "that remark was made about me and although I didn't cheat the Indians and in fact helped them by supplying them with necessities at a lower price than anyone else, I had to abide by the law."¹⁶⁶ His tripping came to an end and he purchased two post licenses to curtail his trading activities within them.

The 1926 order-in-council, setting aside Indian hunting preserves and addressing the "grave danger" posed by "white traders and other white persons"¹⁶⁷ travelling within them, begs many questions. Just how such restrictions would benefit First Nations was not entirely clear. The district police inspector and the superintendent of the Mackenzie detachment protested the measure on the grounds that it would decrease competition that so clearly benefited First Nations in the north.¹⁶⁸

The policy certainly provided the HBC, already wearing down capitalized concerns with its advantageous access to larger capital, a boost in northern trading. During the economic collapse of the Depression years, the HBC regained some of its position in the northern trade and it accordingly shut down many of its "unneces-

sary” posts, requiring First Nations to travel farther and face the greater limitations on their bargaining capacity. The company’s strengthened hand could also force the trade in places back into barter and stop the inroads of cash transactions. Credit, too, could be tied more clearly into the hands of Dene individuals, not their communities, as formerly. The significance of such changing credit relations was exposed by experienced Mackenzie trader John Bartleman, who presented a paper on “the Issue and Control of Debt” to a 1936 conference of HBC staff and officers in Winnipeg. Bartleman remarked on the credit practices in the trade, where First Nations had traditionally taken credit for a single season’s necessities. Although not specifying the time period, Bartleman argued that he had seen that system change, likely in the 1920s, when First Nations trappers became “corrupt” by white men and their “evil ways.” They grew to desire imported food and other goods and were “inclined to ask for and take more goods than they actually required, or were able to pay for.” Now in the position of dominance in most of the trade, such traditions had ended. The HBC no longer cleared the slate on unpaid debt taken by First Nations trappers, and the company was now dealing with fewer, more trustworthy, hunters as individuals, and not the larger collectives that they represented.¹⁶⁹

Conclusion

The 1926 restrictions did not, by any means, end the practice of traders visiting First Nations’ camps directly. HBC traders, still contending with competitors, continued to visit First Nations’ camps to buy from winter trapping areas. Sydney Keighley believed that such tripping was critical to increasing First Nations’ trapping efforts since they would often not bother visiting posts if they had to travel farther and would not otherwise imperil their own subsistence activities to count on a post-situated fur trade.¹⁷⁰ The Jewish presence in the fur trade certainly did not diminish. Many Jewish traders continued long careers in the north at permanent posts, or stores, or they moved into senior positions in remaining competitive buying firms permanently located in the north. Indeed, Canada’s sizeable postwar

fur industry was propelled further by Jewish talent and investment in now well-established furriers, many of them continuing to have links to northern fur. Trute Furs, organized by Jack Trute, Hurtig Furs, expanding from Winnipeg to Edmonton, and many other concerns continued to develop the fur industry even in the more difficult market after the end of the Korean War. Jewish furriers also took a hand in further modifying and broadening the appeal of Canadian fur coats for the market. Meanwhile, raw fur dealers continued to operate from southern cities. Eugene Pechet, Allen Marcus, Harry Soifer, and Shep Slutker were some of the notable examples of the continuing postwar Jewish contribution to the Canadian fur trade.¹⁷¹

But while the Jewish stake in the trade in the long term developed in different ways, peddler trading came to an end by the late 1920s. Its demise raises questions for further research. Ironically, the significant enterprise these individuals exhibited, bringing north a large variety of goods, food stuffs, and even fancy wears so obviously wanted by First Nations, was diverted in large neo-colonial economic policies that reinforced a paternalistic relationship between northern Aboriginal people and the state. Such policies sought to shield First Nations trappers from the market and the temptations of what contemporary observers viewed as frivolous wares, credit, and even cash buying. At precisely the same moment when liberal economies were expanding from large-scale industrial forestry, mining, and other resource ventures northward, the government worked to more carefully control the economic hand of First Nations people.¹⁷² The itinerant peddler-Dene encounter had clearly fostered an important dynamic. Within it, northern Aboriginal people integrated the changes and industrialized nature of the fur trade within their traditional culture. Free traders offered Dene the opportunity to work within kin-based collectives and continue fur harvesting in a way that allowed them to exploit a competitive market. That “zone” also gave First Nations access to credit and cash. The trade sharpening after the 1926 policy in effect made First Nations trappers more closely accountable, as individuals, to fur trading establishments. It certainly limited access to trade goods in cash purchases, or hemmed in options in the repaying of credits. At worst, it reduced the individual selling furs to the barter relationships still preferred at HBC posts.

This issue is, of course, relevant to the ongoing history of capitalism in the north. The 1970s Dene initiative to force the Canadian government to pursue comprehensive land claims sought to allow communal, not individualist, profits to accumulate in First Nations' northern resource frontiers. The Dene Nation's radical departure in its land claims after 1974 attempted to control resource capitalism on their own terms. Indeed, a major divergence between what Dene wanted and what Justice Thomas Berger proposed in his famous report on the Mackenzie Valley pipeline related to the ways traditional political and social structures could exploit seamlessly the economic and political opportunities of oil and gas revenues.¹⁷³ To the present day, the push for "self-government" is not simply a Dene attempt to retain political traditions important to First Nations culture, but to control neo-liberal economics, in the words of Gabrielle Slowey, "in a way that meets the needs, objectives, and goals of a band but also in a way that respects and maintains the cultures and values of the community."¹⁷⁴ The Dene are certainly aware of the implications of the impending inrush of tourist and resource dollars into their communities. In many respects, the advent of free trading, and the flexible and profitable arrangements struck with itinerant traders, themselves connected as a "productive force" to the southern, industrializing fur trade, provides an important backdrop for consideration. At the time, peddlers were viewed as a problem for governments, not a benefit for First Nations. The non-conventional and alternative meaning of credit, debt, and goods as necessities, not merely "fancies," were established in this peddler-Dene encounter. The peddler history of the north, being closed down in favour of capitalized companies and promoting individualist neocolonial economic expansion, suggests relevant questions to frame the ongoing and pressing debate about economic development in the north to the present day.

GEORGE COLPITTS is an associate professor in the History Department of the University of Calgary. Specializing in environmental history, he has published extensively on the fur trade and the books, *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western*

Canada to 1940 and North America's Indian Trade in European Commerce and Imagination, 1580-1850.

GEORGE COLPITTS est professeur agrégé au Département d'histoire de l'Université de Calgary. Spécialisé dans l'histoire de l'environnement, il a publié de nombreux ouvrages sur le commerce des fourrures, ainsi que les livres intitulés *Game in the Garden: A Human History of Wildlife in Western Canada to 1940* et *North America's Indian Trade in European Commerce and Imagination, 1580-1850*.

Endnotes:

- 1 Liza Piper, *The Industrial Transformation of Subarctic Canada* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2009), 227-237.
- 2 Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates note the fragmented understandings of the twentieth-century northern fur trade in "The North and the Nation," in Kerry Abel and Ken S. Coates, eds., *Northern Visions: New Perspectives on the North in Canadian History* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 2001), 14; Morantz's valuable history of Cree colonization in the twentieth century provides one of the most nuanced analyses of Cree response to competition. Morantz also noted that the "margins within which they could operate were continuously being narrowed by world markets, by white settler intrusion and by government interference and/or involvement." However, Morantz's work suggests that game depletion and Cree impoverishment provided the context for colonial overreach in the form of rations and conservation policies. This article suggest that Cree hands were likely being tied much earlier in the market, Toby Morantz, *The White Man's Gonna Getcha: The Colonial Challenge to the Crees in Québec*, (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 6; 32-43; 98-110; 142-143. Mochoruk describing the economic marginalization of northern Manitoba Aboriginal peoples does not analyze the correlated way regulated trading tied the hands of Aboriginal people. On Cree marginalization in northern Manitoba, see Jim Mochoruk, *Formidable Heritage: Manitoba's North and the Cost of Development 1870-1930* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press 2004), 204-205; 370.
- 3 Morrison, for instance, suggests independent traders continued traditional competition in the northern trade along the lines of the earlier duopoly of the Hudson's Bay Company and the North West Company, to "encourage over-hunting and -trapping, resulting in quick depletion of local resources and ensuing hardship for the Native people." William R. Morrison, *True North: The Yukon and Northwest Territories* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 51; Zaslow only briefly examines the "varying numbers of itinerant fur buyers" in the 1920s who "skim the best furs ... leaving the local trader and

sometimes the trapper the losers.” He saw government regulations, such as those in 1926, which controlled trading and trapping, “in the interest of both the animals and the natives who depended on that resource.” Morris Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada, 1914-1967*, (McClelland and Stewart, 1988), 135, 141; Seward suggests that generally declining native fortunes in the fur trade in the 1920s and 1930s can be traced to “increased competition among the companies, the rapid incursion of white trappers, and the depletion of fur-bearing animals and resulting conservation measures.” Hugh Shewell, *Enough to Keep them Alive: Indian Welfare in Canada, 1873-1965* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004), 124. McCormack cited the “disdain without social conscience” of the Northern Trader’s Claire Dawson who is offered as an example of “the conduct and attitudes of these independent traders,” Patricia A. McCormack, “*We like to be free in this country*,” *Fort Chipewyan and the Shaping of Canadian History, 1788-1920s* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2010), 257-258; see also Maggie Siggins’ criticism of Arthur Jan’s attitudes and the work of itinerant traders placing Native people into debt, *Bitter Embrace: White Society’s Assault on the Woodland Cree* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2005), 80-82.

- 4 June Helm, “The Contact History of the Subarctic Athapaskans: An Overview,” in *The People of Denendeh: Ethnohistory of the Indians of Canada’s Northwest Territories* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2000), 102-123.
- 5 Zaslow, *The Northward Expansion of Canada*, 131-133; Mochoruk, *Formidable Heritage*, 204; Morantz, ‘*The White Man’s Gonna Getcha*’, 141
- 6 Helm uses the term “contact traditional” to describe the period extending to the very recent past whereby Dene continued to rely on traditional subsistence, “but through time ... came to derive more and more from the fur trade” to support their hunting and gathering. Helm, *The People of Denendeh*, 129.
- 7 Aauna Kuokkanen, “Indigenous economies, theories of subsistence, and women: exploring the social economy model for indigenous governance,” *American Indian Quarterly* 35, no. 2 (2011), 215-40. Alexis Celeste, Buntén, “More like ourselves: indigenous capitalism through tourism,” *American Indian Quarterly* 34:3 (2010), 285-311; John W. Colton “Indigenous tourism development in Northern Canada: beyond economic incentives,” *Journal of Native Studies* 25, no.1 (2005), 185-206. Katia Iankova, “Le tourisme et le développement économique des communautés autochtones du Québec,” *Recherches amérindiennes au Québec* 36 no. 1 (2006), 69-78; Robert Jarvenpa, “Commodification versus cultural integration: tourism and image building in the Klondike,” *Arctic Anthropology* 31, no. 1 (1994), 26-46.
- 8 R. Margolis, “Jewish Immigrant Encounters with Canada’s Native Peoples: Yiddish Writings on Tekahoinwake,” *Journal of Canadian Studies* 43, no. 3 (2009), 169-93.
- 9 Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (London: Routledge, 1992), 4-6.

- 10 Ibid, 7.
- 11 John Lutz, *Makúk: A New history of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 10-11.
- 12 Jonathan Hsy, *Trading Tongues: Merchants, Multilingualism, and Medieval Literature* (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 2013), 4-5.
- 13 Hsy, *Trading Tongues*, 12; predominant commercial French or Latin languages become, in accounts and other business documents, cryptic, ambiguous, and carried "clusters" of social meanings, 13; at counting houses the ledgers of merchants became polyglot in foreign language expression, 49.
- 14 David S. Koffman, "Jews, American Indian Curios, and the Westward Expansion of Capitalism," in *Chosen Capital: The Jewish Encounter with American Capitalism*, ed. Rebecca Kobrin (Piscataway, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2012), 168.
- 15 Ibid, 170.
- 16 Ibid, 172.
- 17 Ibid, 171.
- 18 David S. Koffman, "The Jews' Indian: Native Americans in the Jewish Imagination and Experience, 1850-1950," (Ph.D. diss., New York University, 2011), 122-123.
- 19 Yuri Slezkine, *The Jewish Century* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2004), 5.
- 20 Ibid, 41-75; a persuasive further example of Jews in the medieval spice trade is offered by Michael McCormick, *Origins of the European Economy: Communications and Commerce, AD 300-900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2001), 708-10.
- 21 Rebecca Kobrin, Introduction to *Chosen Capital*, 1.
- 22 Kobrin, Introduction to *Chosen Capital*, 3.
- 23 Ira Katznelson, "Two Exceptionalisms: Points of Departure for Studies of Capitalism and Jews in the United States," in Kobrin, *Chosen Capital*, 15.
- 24 Sarah Abrevaya Stein, *Plumes: Ostrich Feathers, Jews, and a Lost World of Global Commerce* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2008), 115.
- 25 Christopher J.P. Hanna, "The Forgotten Fur Traders," *The Scribe* 15, no.1 (February 1995), 3.
- 26 Christopher J.P. Hanna, "The Early Jewish Coastal Fur Traders," *The Scribe*, 15 no. 1 (February 1995), 9-14.
- 27 Hanna, "The Forgotten Fur Traders," 3-8.
- 28 Abel and Coates noted the need for better understanding of the modern fur trade in "the North and the Nation," 14; also, see Peter Clancy, "State Policy and the Native Trapper: Post-War Policy toward Fur in the Northwest Territories," in *Aboriginal Resource Use in Canada: Historical and Legal Aspects*, eds. Kerry Abel and Jean Friesen, (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1991), 191. Arthur Ray noted the lack of historical interest in the post-industrial fur trade, citing Harold Innis as a notable exception. Harold A. Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1999), xvii.

- Ray stands alone in providing one of the most complete histories of the modern trade in *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990); he could, however, only mention Jewish traders as part of a larger phenomenon of itinerant trading, albeit presenting the possibility that there were “racial overtones” in company reaction to their work, 166.
- 29 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 164.
 - 30 *Ibid.*, 160-8.
 - 31 *Ibid.*, 63-8; 75-80.
 - 32 George Colpitts, “Harold Innis’ Overlooked 1924 Memo on Wildlife Conservation in Northern Canada: The State and the Economics of Conservation,” in *Harold Innis and the north: Appraisals and Contestations*, ed. William Buxton (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 2013), 122-126. The memo is held in the Indian Affairs Files, Library and Archives Canada (hereafter LAC), RG 10, fol. 6742, file 420-6, pt. 1
 - 33 Bruce Alden Cox, “Whitemen Servants of Greed: Foreigners, Indians, and Canada’s Northwest Game Act of 1917,” in *New Faces of the Fur Trade: Selected papers of the Seventh North American Fur Trade Conference*, eds. JoAnne Fiske, Susan Sleeper-Smith, and William Wicken (East Lansing: Michigan State University, 1995), 121.
 - 34 Innis, *The Fur Trade in Canada*, 348-50; and on innovations in communications, particularly telegraph, *Ibid.*, 358-9.
 - 35 On the longer history of competition in Dene territories, see Lloyd Keith, *North of Athabasca: Slave Lake and Mackenzie River Documents of the Northwest Company, 1800-1821* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University press, 2001), 14-18; 26-30; 37-38; there was some continuity in the history of the fur trade coureurs de bois and later “free traders.” For the coureurs de bois tradition, see Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 22; John Foster, “Wintering, the Outsider Adult Male and Ethnogenesis of the Western Plains Métis,” *Prairie Forum* 19:1 (Spring 1994), 1-14; Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004), 54.
 - 36 Gerhard Ens, *Homeland to Hinterland: The Changing Worlds of the Red River Metis in the Nineteenth Century* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 77-78; 109; Peter J. Usher, *Fur Trade Posts of the Northwest Territories 1870-1970* (Ottawa: Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, 1971), 26.
 - 37 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 26.
 - 38 McCormack, “*We Like to be free in this country*,” 71-79.
 - 39 December 7; December 30; January 1; January 4; January 7; January 18; January 19; January 21; 1916/17, Glenbow Archives, Calgary [hereafter GA]. Nagle Diary, Family Files, M8018 file 10. Also, see Nagle’s Accounts, 1916-17, *Ibid.*, file 20.

- 40 McCormack, "We like to be free in this country," 80-81; 254-58.
- 41 C.V. Tench, "Free-Trading in the Arctic," *Wide World*, November 1926, 131-139. The article appears in University of Toronto Archives (Hereafter UofTA) Harold Innis Files, "Notes on the Fur Trade in Canada," 1939, B72-003/007 file 3.
- 42 Ray offers the most complete overview of the industrialized processes and the way mechanized treatments of furs affected prices, "Fur Trade in Transition," *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 50-95.
- 43 Frank Tough, *As Their Natural Resources Fail: Native People and the Economic History of Northern Manitoba, 1870-1930* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 98; 260.
- 44 Peter Baker, *Memoirs of an Arctic Arab: A Free Trader in the Canadian North, 1907-1927* (Saskatoon: Yellowknife Publishing Company Ltd., 1976), 76.
- 45 George Colpitts, "The Domesticated Body and the Industrialised Woman's Fur Coat in Canada in the Interwar Period," in Patrizia Gentile and Jane Nicolas, eds. *Contests and Contestations: The Body in Canadian History*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2013), 134-153; Toby Morantz, *The White Man's Gonna Getcha: The Colonial Challenge to the Crees in Québec* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 97.
- 46 R. Turner Wilcox, *The Mode in Furs: The History of Furred Costume of the World from the Earliest Times to the Present* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1951), 155.
- 47 Frank G. Ashbrook, "Trade Names in the Fur Industry," *Journal of Mammalogy* 4, no. 4 (November 1923), 216-217. See Colpitts, "The Domesticated Body," 134-40.
- 48 Harold Innis, *The Fur-Trade of Canada* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1927), 140-141; Cyril J. Rosenberg, *Furs & Furriery* (London: Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, 1927), 39-43; 331; 348.
- 49 H.S.M. Kemp, *Northern Trader* (London: Jarrolds, 1957), 136-137.
- 50 Alyne LaBel, "Une vitrine populaire: Les Grands Magasins Paquet," *Cap-Aux-Diamants* 4:2 (1988-89), 45-48. Paquet fur factory advertisement, *La Patrie*, 6 November 1909, 11.
- 51 Joan Sangster, "Making a Fur Coat: Women, the Labouring Body, and Working-Class History," *International Review of Social History* 52 (2007), 256-257.
- 52 Table 10 Classification of Establishments According to Number of Employees, 1925, DBS Report, 1925, p. 8. D. Simpson, "The Sales Organization of the Fur Trade," UofTA, Box 4 Commerce Undergraduate Theses, 1928.
- 53 This total is derived from annual statistics offered in Canadian "total" production in reports 1921-1939, DBS Reports, "Fur Goods and Fur Dressing Industries," (Ottawa: Ministry of Trade and Commerce, 1921-1940).
- 54 "Tourists — buy a fur coat before you leave Canada," ad by A.J. Alexandor Furs, "Canada is the land of fine furs. Nowhere else in the world are they so

- beautiful or so reasonably priced...." *Ottawa Citizen* (5 July 1928). Roy K. Moulton "Moulton says this is not a land of Milk and Honey," *Milwaukee Sentinel* (27 August 1926). See also, Roe Fulkerson, "Imogene and Andrew," *Miami News* (22 October 1929).
- 55 Rosenberg, *Furs & Furriery*, 27-28.
 - 56 Tough, quoting Jan, "As their Resources Fail," 267.
 - 57 Sydney Augustus Keighley, *Trader, Tripper, Trapper: The Life of a Bay Man* (Winnipeg: Rupert's Land Research Centre, 1989), 45; 57-59.
 - 58 "Titanic battle for control of the fur trade," *Montreal Gazette* (19 April 1920).
 - 59 Gerald Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews: A People's Journey* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2008), 199; See also Gerald Tulchinsky, *Taking Root: The Origins of the Canadian Jewish Community* (Toronto: Lester, 1992; and Louis Rosenberg, *Canada's Jews: A Social and Economic Study of Jews in Canada in the 1930s* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993[1939]), 10.
 - 60 Tulchinsky, *Canada's Jews*, 203. Also, "Exiles, Lured Back by Nazi Promises, Clapped into Jail," *Canadian Jewish Chronicle* (7 July 1933).
 - 61 Table 10 Classification of Establishments According to Number of Employees, 1925, DBS Report, *Fur and Fur Goods Industries*, 1925, 8. A useful listing of all enterprises, by name and address, by province, in 1926-27, is found in List of Fur Goods Establishments," 1927 DBS Report, *Fur Goods & Fur Dressing Industries in Canada*, 1927 (Ottawa: Ministry of Trade and Commerce, 1929), 14-17. See also DBS Report, 1921-22, p. 2. See George Colpitts, "Conservation, Science, and Canada's Fur Farming industry, 1913-1945," *Social History-Histoire sociale* 30, no. 59 (May 1997), 77-108.
 - 62 Rosenberg, "Furs and Fur Goods," in *Canada's Jews*, 178.
 - 63 Ibid, 179.
 - 64 Ibid.
 - 65 Alan Davies, ed., *Anti-Semitism in Canada: History and Interpretation* (Waterloo: Wilfrid Laurier University Press, 1996), 125.
 - 66 Pain Furrier Ltd. Fond, with photo of float, GA, NA-3919-1.
 - 67 Irwin Huberman, "The Jews of Fort McMurray," *Heritage* (Spring 2003), 6-7. See, Martha Hardin Kushner file, The Jewish Archives and Historical Society of Edmonton and Northern Alberta archives [hereafter JAHSENA).
 - 68 Martha Kushner is quoted in Paula E. Kirman and Debby Shoctor, "A Warm, Fuzzy Feeling: Jews in the Fur Business," *Heritage* (Fall 2009), 6.
 - 69 Treyder Ed is presented, as well as excerpts of his translated Yiddish account, in Kirman and Shoctor, "A Warm, Fuzzy Feeling," 4-6.
 - 70 Kirman and Shoctor, "A Warm, Fuzzy Feeling," 5.
 - 71 I am using Esther Leven's translation, January 1989, JAHSENA, Typescript, of Hanson's narrative in Elhanan Hanson File, 1-3.
 - 72 Kirman and Shoctor, "A Warm, Fuzzy Feeling," 5.
 - 73 Ibid; files on Martha Hardin Shushner, Thodore Herschell Aaron file (related to Abe Aaron, and references to Fred Ramelson and Shep Slutker) see JAHSENA biography files.

- 74 Outfit Report, 1916, Mackenzie, Hudson's Bay Company Archives, Winnipeg [hereafter HBCA], A.74/46, 3-4.
- 75 Mackenzie Outfit Report, 1916, HBCA, 3-4.
- 76 Fur Trade Annual Report, Outfit 252, 19 January 1923, HBCA, RG 3/1A/6.
- 77 L. Romanet, 4 October 1923, Annual Report of the Mackenzie District, 1923, HBCA, RG 3/2/1.
- 78 Arthur Jan is quoted in Tough, "As Their Resources Fail," 263.
- 79 Arthur J. Jan Transcript, 1964, "Memories of 56 years in Manitoba, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia, 1903-1960" Provincial Archives of Manitoba [hereafter PAM]. MG8 B41.
- 80 L. Romanet report, 14 December 1926, Fur Trade Department Annual Reports from District Officer Outfit 256, HBCA, RG 3/2/2.
- 81 Ibid.
- 82 Ibid.
- 83 Quoted in Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 162.
- 84 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 162. The Depression years ruined Northern Traders Ltd. Its stock on hand was purchased at 40 cents on the dollar by the HBC by 1931, and the company's trading posts were eventually absorbed by 1946. Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 163.
- 85 The HBC report from 1924 is quoted in Tough, "As their Resources Fail," 260.
- 86 Jacob Baltzan's memoirs are excerpted in Kirman and Schoctor, "A Warm, Fuzzy Feeling," 9.
- 87 "Fur Trader Believed to have been Murder Victim," *The St. Maurice Chronicle*, (17 February 1944); and, "Accused Montreal Fur Dealer Slayer Found of Unsound Mind," *The Shawinigan Standard* (1 November 1944).
- 88 See Margaret Spufford, *The Great Reclothing of Rural England: Petty Chapmen and Their Wares in the Seventeenth Century* (London: Hambledon Press, 1984), 10-13; 34-37; David Brown's introductory comments to: "The Autobiography of a Pedlar: John Lomas of Hollinsclough, Staffordshire (1747-1823)," *Midland History* 21 (1996), 156-166; on the French peddler, see Abel Châtelain, "Lutte entre colporteurs et boutiquières en France pendant la première moitié du XIXe siècle," *Revue d'histoire économique et sociale* 49, no. 3 (1971), 359-384; Abel Poitrineau, "Petits marchands colporteurs de la haute Planèze d'Auvergne à la fin de l'Ancien Régime," *Annales du Midi* 88, no. 129 (1976), 423-36.
- 89 Mildred A. Duncanson manuscript, Esmeil Muhammed "Sam" Jamha recollections, GA, 5, M8348.
- 90 Ibid, 9.
- 91 Ibid, 21.
- 92 Ibid, 27.
- 93 Ibid, 32.
- 94 Ibid, 20.
- 95 Ibid, 65.
- 96 L. Romanet Annual Report, 4 October 1923, Mackenzie River District

- 1923, HBCA, RG 3/2/1.
- 97 Milne became a buyer “with the slim and doubtful teaching I received,” and throughout his first winter, “I had to guess and trust to luck and hope for the best,” when he purchased from his trappers, *Jack Milne, Trading for Milady's Furs: In the Service of the Hudson's Bay Company* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1975), 120-121; HBCA. John Charles Boyd transcript of interview with J.W. Anderson, 1959, 28. HBCA, E.93/11.
- 98 Jack Milne, *Trading for Milady's Furs*, 104. See Romanet's careful accounting of Mackenzie post debts, singling out Fort Ray's trader who was “severely reprimanded” and bonus cut for large debts, Annual Report from District Officers, Outfit 254 [1924] 17.
- 99 D. Simpson, “The Sales Organization of the Fur Trade,” 1925, UofTA, Box 4 Commerce Undergraduate Theses, 57-60.
- 100 Tough, *As Their Resources Fail*, 278
- 101 Ibid, 280.
- 102 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 164-165.
- 103 Romanet Report, Outfit Report, HBCA, A74/54.
- 104 Fur Trade Department's Annual Reports, 4 February 1920, HBCA, RG3/1A/4.
- 105 L. Romanet, 4 October 1923, Annual Report of the Mackenzie District, 1923, HBCA, RG 3/2/1.
- 106 Ibid.
- 107 Ibid.
- 108 L. Romanet, Report of the Athabasca District, 1926, Outfit 256, HBCA, RG 3/2/2.
- 109 Jan, “Memories of 56 Years,” 26.
- 110 Ray, *Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 88-89.
- 111 See insert No. 2, in Paul Carl Mehmel Autobiographical Sketch, from J.W. Anderson Fonds, HBCA E.93/19.
- 112 Minutes 1920, Volume I, p. 34, Minutes of the Canadian Advisory Committee July 29-May 1921 HBCA, RG2/1/2.
- 113 W.S. Lecky report, “Report on the Purchasing Methods of the Hudson's Bay Company, Winnipeg, 17 December 1920, HBCA, A.90/1 fos 1-163.
- 114 Field Notes: Mackenzie River Trip, 1924, UofTA, Harold Adams Innis Fonds, B72-0003/006(2).
- 115 Ibid.
- 116 Ibid.
- 117 Jan, “Memories of Fifty-Six Years,” 20-21.
- 118 Jan quoted in Tough, *As their Resources Fail*, 280.
- 119 Jan, “Memories of Fifty-Six Years,” 46.
- 120 George Wenzel, “I was once independent’: The Southern Seal Protest and Inuit” *Anthropologica*, 29, no. 2 (1987), 195-210.
- 121 Baker, *Arctic Arab*, 76.
- 122 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 106. Cash, and most features of “modernization,” cannot be generalized throughout the north. Even

- in the 1950s, there was significant variety of cash-trapping in the north, some going towards "self-reliant" lifestyles and some more simply to maintain the subsistence hunt. However, as Clancy points out, the direction in the fur trade was to transform trapping in the postwar years into fully a commodity export, with cash as an important outcome. Clancy, "State Policy and the Native Trapper," 201.
- 123 Ashton Alston interview transcript, 13 August 1958, by J.W. Anderson, p. 20, HBCA, E.93/10.
- 124 Innis Field Notes, 1924.
- 125 Ibid, see, especially, notes at Resolution, 1924.
- 126 Baker, *Arctic Arab*, 43.
- 127 Second Interview by Isabel Loggie with Mr. Garry Garbitt of Moberly Lake, BC, September 1955, as part of the GA Peace River Oral History M 4560, file 31.
- 128 Innis Field Notes, Resolution notes, 1924
- 129 Ibid.
- 130 Ray discussed Baker's trade and nickname, *Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 164, *Arctic Arab*, 36.
- 131 Baker, *Arctic Arab*, 38.
- 132 Ibid, 67-68.
- 133 Ibid, 43-45.
- 134 Ibid, 76.
- 135 Ibid, 103.
- 136 Kemp, *Northern Trader*, 50-51; 87.
- 137 Ibid, 90-93.
- 138 Ray, *The Canadian Fur Trade in the Industrial Age*, 88.
- 139 Kemp, *Northern Trader*, 97.
- 140 Tough provides an overview of tripping in northern Manitoba, quoting a Norway House journal in 1885 that "heavy expenses in keeping men and dogs employed running to the hunting camps to collect skins, which is unavoidable when opposition is in the vicinity." Tough noted that post trippers, frequently visiting winter camps in a season, reduced aboriginal costs. Tough, "*As their natural resources fail*," 225. Podruchny provides detail of the roles traders played when they were sent as individuals or in pairs to native camps. They provided intelligence, collected debts, traded or controlled trade in the practice of trading *en dérrouine*. Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 62; 201-205; 220-21; 223-27.
- 141 Kemp, *Northern Trader*, 161-162.
- 142 Ibid, 161.
- 143 Tough, "*As their Resources Fail*," 280-281.
- 144 Robert Kindersley, Governor, preface remarks in William Schooling, *The Hudson's Bay Company, 1670-1920* (London: The Hudson's Bay Company, 1920), xiii.
- 145 Lyall recorded that this slang expression was well used by this period, Ernie Lyall, *An Arctic Man: Sixty-Five Years in Canada's North* (Halifax: Formac,

- 1979), 47.
- 146 Peter Geller, *Northern Exposures: Photographing and Filming the Canadian North, 1920-45* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 116-119.
- 147 Charles Sale, "Governor's Speech," *Ottawa Citizen* (15 July 1927).
- 148 Romanet's Report, "Competition," 1923, HBCA.
- 149 "Competition," in Mackenzie River District Report 1923, HBCA.
- 150 "Itinerant Traders," LAC. See RG 85, Vol. 764, file 5066.
- 151 "Fur Companies Fight 'Gypsies' for Business," *Edmonton Journal* (February 11, 1926), 2, clipping in LAC, RG 85, Vol. 764, file 5066.
- 152 "Fur Companies Fight 'Gypsies.'"
- 153 Baker identifies Stewart as a "chum" of Cornwall's, and that one of the Northern Traders' Gerry Murphy had seen Cornwall's words later used verbatim by the Minister, *Arctic Arab*, 192.
- 154 Memorandum, NWT & Y branch, 25 February 1926, LAC, RG 85, Vol. 764, file 5066.
- 155 G.F. Fletcher's report, November 121, 1922, LAC, RG 18 Series F-1, Vol. 3172, Files G846-8 — Fort Chipewyan Patrol Reports, 1923.
- 156 P.C. 1146, 19 July 1926, in *Canada Gazette*, LX:5 (31 July 1926), 382-383
- 157 Usher, *Fur Trade Posts of the Northwest Territories*, 18.
- 158 Ibid, 20.
- 159 He cites P.C. 807, 18 May 1929, in Usher, *Fur Trade Posts of the Northwest Territories*, 20.
- 160 See letter Max Finkelstein to Minister, 6 November 1926, LAC, RG 85, C-1-a, Vol. 768, file 5066. Tough offers some insights into Finkelstein's purchase of the Northern Traders, and other trading concerns that might have been related to him. "*As their Resources Fail*," footnote 39, 358.
- 161 Finnie to A. Brabant, 30 October 1926, LAC, RG 85, C-1-a, Vol. 768, file 5066. The new regulations against "non-resident" trapping license fees, however, created problems for native trappers needing to travel farther afield. For this issue, and Finkelstein's defence of native hunting rights beyond their traditional territories, see footnote 62, Ken Coates, referencing Finkelstein's petitions to government, "The Sinews of their Lives: Native access to Resources in the Yukon, 1890-1950," *Aboriginal Resource Use in Canada*, 62; 182.
- 162 Baker, *Arctic Arab*, 192.
- 163 Ibid.
- 164 Ibid.
- 165 Ibid.
- 166 Ibid.
- 167 P.C. 1146, 19 July 1926, in *Canada Gazette*, LX:5 (31 July 1926), 382-383.
- 168 See letter from James Ritchie, superintendent of "G" Division, including remarks by district inspector, 22 June 1926, LAC, RG 85, C-1-a, Vol 768, file 5066.
- 169 J. Bartleman, "Issue and Control of Credit," Hudson's Bay Company, Fur Trade Conference, 1936, Winnipeg, HBCA, RG3/17E/4, Appendix "D."
- 170 Keighley, *Trader, Tripper, Trapper*, 57-59.

- 171 More academic work needs to be directed to the Jewish fur fashion and retailing sector and its continued buying sections in the postwar period. JAHSENA, the Southern Alberta Jewish Historical Society, and such organizations as the Fur Council of Canada as well as the Provincial Archives of Ontario and the National Archives of Québec (Montreal) have separate biographical and family files of note.
- 172 Morochuk, *Formidable Heritage*, 291.
- 173 Michael I. Asch, "Capital and Economic Development: A Critical Appraisal of the Recommendations of the Mackenzie Valley Pipeline Commission," in *Interpreting Canada's North: Selected Readings*, eds. Kenneth S. Coates and William R. Morrison (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman), 299-308.
- 174 Gabrielle Slowey, *Navigating Neoliberalism: Self-Determination and the Mikisew Cree First Nation* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008), 11.