

Fig. 1. Map of the Great Slave Lake area.

CHANGING PATTERNS OF INDIAN TRAPPING IN THE CANADIAN SUBARCTIC

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THE importance of trapping to the Indians of the Canadian Arctic and Subarctic is a matter of historical fact, and the changes brought about in the traditional Indian way of life by the introduction and development of a trapping-trading economy have been well documented for many tribes throughout Canada by historians and anthropologists. The author's field work at Snowdrift, a Chipewyan community at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake in the Northwest Territories, provided information about recent acculturative factors affecting the trapping pattern. The purpose of this paper is to show that these factors are not peculiar to Snowdrift alone, but are widespread and appear to be altering the significance of trapping in the present-day economy of peoples throughout the eastern and western Subarctic.

I

The community of Snowdrift is located on the southeastern shore of Great Slave Lake in a region that is entirely within the area of Precambrian rocks (see Fig. 1). The eastern end of the lake has an extremely intricate shoreline with large numbers of bays and innumerable islands. The country around the village is characterized by wooded, rolling hills from 500 to 1000 feet above sea-level; many lakes of various sizes dot the area; the vegetation and fauna are essentially subarctic in character.

Snowdrift, with a population of approximately 150 persons in 1961, is a very recent village whose physical existence in its present form goes back no more than 10 years. However, the area has been a focal point for residents of the surrounding region since 1925 when the Hudson's Bay Company established a post at the site of the present community. Prior to that time the population at the eastern end of Great Slave Lake consisted of an unknown number of Chipewyan families who hunted, fished, and

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trapped throughout the area and moved about the country as single families or groups of families. Most of these families traded at Fort Resolution, a long-established post on the southwestern shore of the lake, and considered that community to be their trading centre. When the Snowdrift post was established many of these families, together with some who had traded at posts to the south and southwest on Lake Athabasca, shifted their centre of activity to the new post. Factors responsible for the recent concentration of a permanent population at Snowdrift are not, however, specifically connected with the fur trade. They include (1) the increase in government services that have reduced reliance on income derived from trapping, (2) the recent establishment of a federal school in the village, (3) improved housing, and (4) wage-employment.

The yearly round of subsistence activities at Snowdrift includes fall fishing near the village, winter and spring trapping, a certain amount of hunting throughout the year for moose and caribou, and some wage-employment during the summer. Winter and spring trapping keeps men away from the village for varying periods of time, usually not more than 2 weeks at a time, and the late summer and early fall run of caribou usually takes many families to the extreme northeastern end of the lake for a period of about 2 weeks to 1 month during late August and early September. Opportunities for wage-employment in the form of commercial fishing and tourist guiding are of growing importance, and there is also a government sponsored road-way clearing project that takes many young men away from the village during January or February.

Trapping begins officially on the first of November when the season for most fur bearing animals opens. The area that has been used by Snowdrift trappers is bounded on the north by Walmsley and Clinton-Colden lakes, on the east by Whitefish Lake, on the south by the southern Taltson River-Nonacho Lake area and on the west by the Doubling-Meander Lake region (see Fig. 2). This is a large area but the majority of trappers have not trapped to the peripheries of the region in recent years. In 1961, for example, only one man trapped north of Narrow Lake in the Doubling Lake-Meander Lake area and only occasionally do trappers extend their activities as far north as Clinton-Colden Lake or as far east as Whitefish Lake. In fact, the number of trappers who operate beyond the tree line is very small indeed. During the winter of 1959-60, when fox prices were relatively high and the animals few in the wooded country, only three men trapped in the Barren Grounds. Most men do a large part of their trapping within a radius of from 65 to 80 miles from the village and the Taltson River-Nonacho Lake area is the centre of concentration.

The length of time that the trappers stay away from the village varies considerably. A very few men go out in the late fall, return for Christmas and stay several weeks, then go out again and do not return until late in the spring. However, a much larger number return frequently to trade furs and obtain supplies. Most informants maintained that they seldom stayed out more than 2 weeks before returning to trade. Thus a great deal of

time is spent in travelling to and from the trap lines. A man seldom comes to the village without staying at least a week.

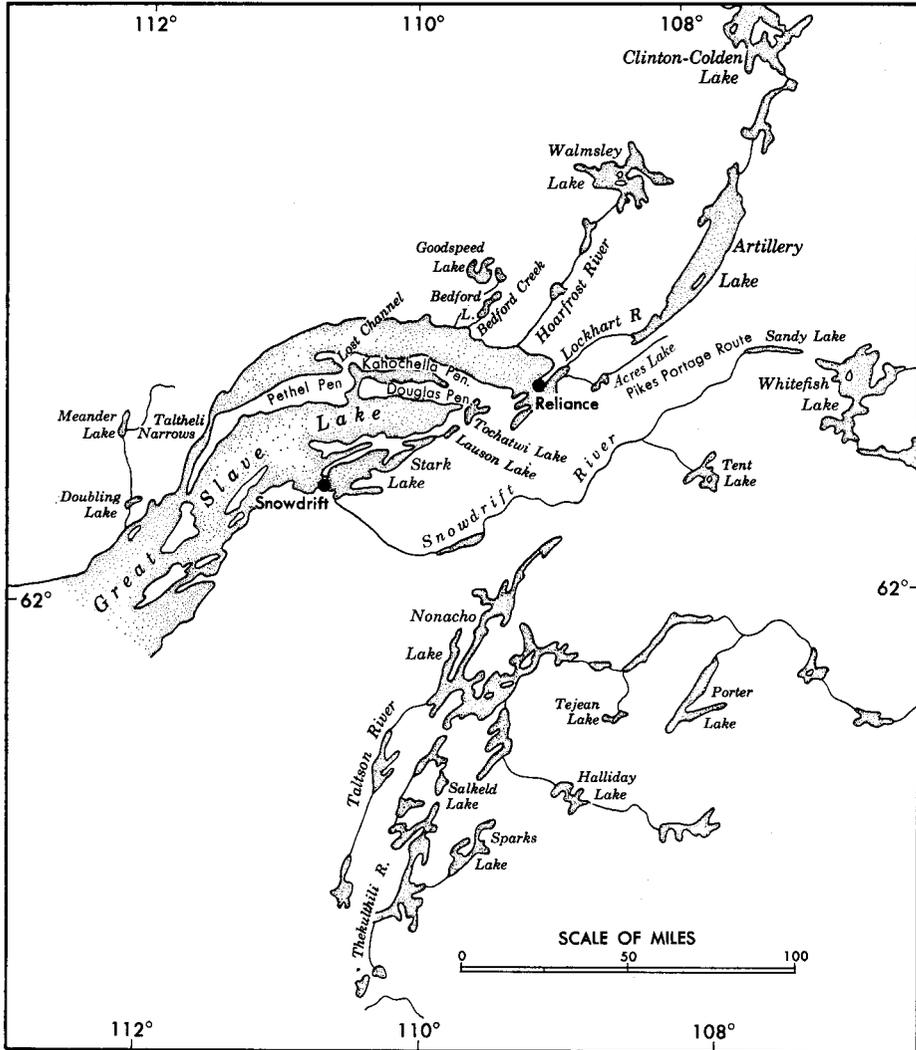


Fig. 2. Map of the region around Snowdrift.

Trappers always have to do a certain amount of hunting because the supplies they take with them from the village usually consist of little more than staples, regardless of the amount of credit they have received from the Hudson's Bay Company manager. The most important hunting during the winter and spring is for caribou. Some men feel very strongly that their

dogs should be fed on caribou meat during the winter, especially when they are being used on the trap line; thus, there are trappers who will not set nets while they are on the line, but will spend time hunting instead of trapping. When they are unsuccessful, they must feed their dogs flour or cereal from their own food supply and therefore run out of these staples rapidly and must return to the village. It seems certain that for many



Fig. 3. Checking the net at a trapper's camp.

trappers, looking for caribou is the most important thing they do on the trap line and always takes precedence over trapping. Some men are even unwilling to leave the village if no caribou have been reported in the area where they trap.

In this connection, it is worth commenting on a statement made about 30 years ago by a manager of the Hudson's Bay Company store at Snowdrift. He believed that the success of the Snowdrift Indians as trappers was directly related to the presence or absence of caribou in the trapping

areas. At the time this statement was written into the records, fur prices, particularly for white fox, were very high, but unless caribou were reported in the Barren Grounds, the Indians would not go there to trap foxes. Thus trapping seems, to some extent, to have been incidental to hunting even as late as 1925 or 1930. The same is true today even though caribou meat is no longer quite as essential a food item as it was 30 years ago.

The existence of clearly defined family trapping territories among the Chipewyan has been the subject of some dispute. At least one early observer believed that these territories did exist (Seton 1920, pp. 150-1), while another has denied their existence (Penard 1929, p. 21). It must be admitted that the evidence collected at Snowdrift does not support the theory of family trapping territories. Most informants stated that they had learned to trap in one of the areas trapped by their fathers and afterwards often continued trapping in that area. However, few trappers could be found who had trapped more than 5 years in any single area. Two or three years was the more usual length of time, depending on how successful the trapping was in a particular locality. Some trappers had trapped at one time or another throughout most of the area within a 100-mile radius from the village. During the winter of 1961, one trapper relocated his trap line in the middle of the season because he felt that the snow was too deep in the region where he had originally set his traps. Consistent opposition to trap line registration on the part of the villagers is a further indication that they desire freedom to determine for themselves where the trapping is best.

There can be no doubt that the total area trapped by Snowdrift residents has been shrinking steadily in recent years, particularly since the Indians began to live permanently around the trading post. The factors primarily responsible for this situation have already been mentioned. However, it is worth discussing them in more detail, particularly as they relate to the changing trapping pattern.

The payment of family allowance on a monthly basis provides an additional form of income that can be obtained at regular intervals. This has meant that trappers, even when they normally trap without their families, are reluctant to be away from the post when there is a cheque to be cashed. Other government services such as rations and old age pensions have a similar effect and the income from these sources reduces the reliance on income derived from trapping.

The recent establishment of a federal school in the village must be regarded as a stabilizing feature whose effects will mainly be felt in the future. However, even in the winter of 1961, when the school was only in its second year of operation, many families were beginning to realize and accept the fact that their mobility during the trapping season would be reduced. Several families who had previously spent most of the winter in the bush on their trap lines have been forced to change their pattern of operation. Now only the heads of these families go out on the line and the tendency is for them to return to the village at frequent intervals. It should be emphasized that it is the most vigorous, and therefore usually

the most successful, trappers who take their families with them on the trap line; it is the activities of these men, usually middle-aged with large families, that have been most affected by the construction of the school.

Improved housing should probably be considered as being closely associated with population stability since the people appear to be interested in improving houses that they are going to live in all or most of the year. The Canadian government has encouraged this by instituting home improvement and home building programs. Thus it is possible to note a greater contrast between the difficult, uncomfortable life on the trap line and the comfortable, gregarious life in the village. It is probably also safe to say that the discomforts of a bush trapper's camp are more difficult to tolerate when the trapper is alone or with another man rather than with his family. It is little wonder, then, that the trappers tend to become easily discouraged and desire to return frequently to the comforts of their homes in the village.

Wage-employment is, as yet, not of much importance to the people of Snowdrift during the winter months. However, in recent years the government has introduced a roadway-clearing project at the northwestern end of Great Slave Lake. This project, which involves Indians from every community in the Great Slave Lake area, takes many men away from Snowdrift during January or February. Government policies for the Indians in the Great Slave Lake area include developing an alternative means of livelihood to trapping and the roadway-clearing project is thought of as a step in that direction. So far, the Indians of Snowdrift have only participated in the project after Christmas when the main trapping period has ended. Thus its direct effect on trapping has not been great. An indirect effect, however, must be taken into consideration. During December 1961 the author noted that many trappers were not particularly worried about their lack of success and adopted a definitely desultory attitude toward the whole trapping procedure. The feeling was that since a comparatively large amount of money was to be earned clearing roadways in January, it was not necessary to worry about the number of mink or marten trapped in November and December. Thus we must think of this government project, as well as others more extensive that are likely to follow in the years to come, as being another factor that greatly influences the Snowdrift trapping pattern.

If one is prepared to say that the total area trapped by Snowdrift men is shrinking, then it is equally certain that the region around the village is not being trapped as efficiently or effectively as it might be. At first glance there appears to be a contradiction here. If the Indians no longer trap to the peripheries of their areas because of their desire to visit the village frequently, why is it that they do not trap more intensively than formerly in the area close to the village? The answer to this is that the factors that are responsible for the shrinking of the total Snowdrift trapping area also operate to reduce trapping effectiveness and, in short, to reduce the number of hours spent by the men on their trap lines.

Keeping these factors in mind, it is not difficult to understand why trapping has become increasingly unpopular with the Snowdrift Indians. Never-

theless, one would suspect that enthusiasm for the activity might have remained relatively high if definite and predictable benefits continued to be derived from it. This, however, has not been so. Not only is life on the trap line very hard and carried out under extreme climatic conditions, but the rewards are unpredictable. It is this last point that is of particular importance. As Honigmann has pointed out for the Attawapiskat Cree (1962, pp. 89-90), "the enthusiasm which is an important motivating factor in the Indian hunter and trapper is keenest when his efforts promise to bring him not a few but many animals." This is also true for the Indians of Snowdrift and this enthusiasm is also observable when the prices paid for furs are high. Honigmann further points out that in some societies



Fig. 4. Harnessing the dogs for a day's work.

relative scarcity of resources means that people will work harder. At Attawapiskat, and also at Snowdrift, the reverse is true. It is the author's opinion that at Snowdrift it is the extreme fluctuation of fur prices as much as anything else that has had a discouraging effect upon the Indians' interest in trapping as a means of making a living (VanStone 1961, pp. 17-18). This fact, along with others previously mentioned, has simply meant that the men, with few exceptions, are spending less time on their trap lines regardless of how far these lines are from the village. During the main trapping period, which extends from about the first of November until Christmas, most of the village trappers are on their lines for no longer than 4 weeks.

In recent years there has been only a moderate amount of trapping after Christmas. The value of mink and marten pelts drops rapidly after the first of the year and only white-fox pelts continue to be in prime condition. Thus, largely because of the unwillingness of most Snowdrift trappers to go into the Barren Grounds to trap white foxes, there is relatively little trapping activity until muskrat and beaver trapping begins in the spring.

II

The material on contemporary trapping presented in the preceding pages leaves the distinct impression that this activity is a changing aspect of the Indian economy and that, particularly in recent years, this change has been rapid, extensive, and influenced by factors that are characteristic of Indian acculturation throughout much of Canada, particularly among subarctic peoples in the east and west. Therefore it seems probable that the changing pattern of trapping at Snowdrift can be duplicated in other parts of subarctic Canada. Whether and to what extent this actually is so will now be examined.

Although neglected for many years by anthropologists, both the eastern and western Subarctic of Canada have recently received more attention, particularly with regard to problems of social and cultural change. Much of this work is still unpublished, and, unfortunately, even the available reports do not deal with trapping in such a way as to make them comparable with the information collected at Snowdrift. This is, of course, not the fault of the investigators but stems from the particular emphasis of the various research designs. Nevertheless, enough information does exist so that some statements can be made about similarities in trapping patterns, particularly with regard to the problem of area utilization as it was described for the Snowdrift Chipewyan.

Turning first to other studies in the western Subarctic, it is found that Helm (1961, p. 24), in describing trapping activities of the people at "Lynx Point", a Slave Indian community on the Mackenzie River near Fort Simpson, notes that the time spent on the trap lines varies considerably. Most of the men have short lines and seldom spend more than 1 or 2 nights on the trail. Those with longer lines may set up tents and spend as much as 2 weeks in the bush. Only one old man in the community has a winter trapping camp in the bush and stays away from the community as long as 2 months at a time. Helm mentions that in spite of the definite economic advantages of such an arrangement, most "Lynx Point" trappers would prefer more frequent visits to the community because they do not like the social isolation of trapping-camp life. They prefer the comforts of their own homes where children can be more easily tended, and they like to be near the store. Although not specifically stated by Helm, one gets the definite impression that there are as many factors that draw the trappers of "Lynx Point" closer to the community as in Snowdrift, and that it is only the older trappers

who think in terms of long periods of intensive trapping with infrequent visits to the post.

A similar situation can be said to exist among the Dogrib Indians of Lac la Martre. Here, according to Helm and Lurie (1961, pp. 40-41), a trap line is set only an overnight distance from the village, and even an extended trapping tour undertaken by several men together seldom lasts more than 2 weeks. The authors also mention that an important factor affecting the fur take at Lac la Martre is the increasing access to other sources of income, "both in terms of providing less arduous income activities and of cutting down on time-energy remaining for trapping" (p. 40).

In the eastern Subarctic the picture is somewhat less clear and is complicated by the Indians' trapping in many areas in government apportioned and registered trapping territories. This means, for one thing, that a trapper may construct a log cabin at a convenient point on his trap line and generally will not hesitate to improve his line, both by using it better and by providing greater comfort. A Snowdrift trapper, on the other hand, seldom traps more than 4 or 5 years in the same area and for that reason hesitates to make elaborate preparations or improvements on any one trap line. Thus the trapper in the eastern Subarctic, if he is working a registered trap line, presumably finds that there is less contrast between life in the bush and in the village, at least as far as physical comfort is concerned. His cabin and other improvements are also likely to commit him as far as intensity of trapping and time away from the village is concerned. Therefore, he would be less likely to abandon all or part of a line because of distance from the community or fluctuations in fur prices. Thus the trapper in the eastern Subarctic would seem to be less susceptible to some of the influences that are affecting trapping areas in parts of the west.

Although the situation appears, then, to be more complex in the east than in the west, it is nevertheless possible to isolate the factors under discussion. At Northwest River in the Melville Lake region of Labrador, for example, there was during the early 1950's a growing tendency for the Montagnais Indians to spend more time near the trading post. McGee (1961 p. 56) indicates that with greater dependence on the Hudson's Bay Company store, the summer camp has increasingly become a base of operations from which the Indians move out and to which they return frequently. Wives and children are usually left at the camp, which discourages the trappers from staying away for long periods of time. In emphasizing the importance of pensions and relief payments as part of the total picture of changing trapping patterns in the Melville Lake region, McGee further points out that more Indians now have a basis for credit at the Hudson's Bay Company store that is not connected with the trading of fur. It is possible for a family to subsist more or less entirely on relief allotments and other forms of unearned income (1961 pp. 56-57). "Because of the availability of welfare money, and because of the resident missionary with a church and school, the number of individuals who do not go to trapping grounds has grown rapidly to encompass at least 25 per cent of the (Northwest River) band"

(p. 57). It should be emphasized that those families living permanently in the village have given up trapping entirely and are living on welfare payments and some wage-employment during the summer. Trapping areas close to the Northwest River have been taken over by whites so that it is impossible for an Indian to operate a trap line from the village. Since these trends described by McGee were already well established at the time of his field work in 1951 and 1952, it is probable that they have continued and become more significant during the past 10 years.

Moving west into northern Ontario, we find that at Attawapiskat many inland trappers leave the village shortly after the beginning of the new year and do not return until Easter. However, some remain in the community until the end of February. A large number of trap lines are located relatively close to the coast and the trappers who work these lines leave their families in the village and, consequently, return frequently during the trapping season. Men who trap beaver on Akimiski Island also leave their families at the post and make a number of trips to the island by sled. These men remain away from the village for about 10 days at a time and then return, each visit to the post lasting about 1 week (Honigmann 1962, p. 89). Thus one receives the distinct impression of diminishing use of trapping areas and the gradual development of a more sedentary community life. Honigmann's field work was done in 1947 and 1948 and it should be emphasized that although trends that point toward changes similar to those documented for the west are observable, traditional trapping patterns were still of considerable importance. Thus we learn that in the two seasons, 1944-45 and 1945-46, 43 per cent of the listed Attawapiskat trappers operated within 60 miles of the post and that these men earned 36 per cent of the trapping income for these years. On the other hand, 57 per cent of the trappers operated at a distance greater than 60 miles from the village and earned 64 per cent of the income. It is obvious from these figures that greater proportionate earnings are achieved by those men who travel farther from the post into the area where fur bearing animals are more plentiful (Honigmann 1962, p. 121). It is possible too, in the light of previous statements, that these trappers work harder because of the greater potential rewards awaiting their efforts. At any rate, it will be seen that there were still many factors that in 1948 encouraged Attawapiskat trappers to maintain a trapping routine involving long absences from the community.

In describing field work among the northern Ojibwa at Pekangikum in northwestern Ontario, Dunning (1958) has little detailed information to offer concerning changes in trapping over time, but he does document some of those factors of economic and social change that have been seen to influence trapping at Snowdrift. Thus we learn that government buildings, a school, a nursing station, and houses have been constructed on the reserve within the past 10 years. This, together with a steady increase in government subsidy of the economy until it constituted more than 41 per cent of the total income in 1955, has resulted in a change in the pattern of residence in summer "from domestic units spread widely over the trapping territories

to a cluster of population at each of two centres" (Dunning 1958, p. 565). The author points out that this concentration of population "could not have occurred under the condition of the traditional hunting and trapping economy" (1958, p. 565), and we can assume that such a fundamental demographic change has had a definite effect on the pattern of trapping, very likely in the direction that has been documented here for other communities.

At Winisk, less than 200 miles northwest of Attawapiskat on Hudson Bay, Liebow and Trudeau (1962) say that the construction of a radar base between 1955 and 1957 offered the Cree Indians of the area alternative ways of making a living. Prior to the construction of the base each family group would leave for its own trap line area in late September, return for a week at Christmas or Easter or both, to sell furs and obtain food supplies, and then go back to the trap line until late May or June. Thus there would be only a little more than 2 months during the summer when all families were in the village. The authors also say that some families had only a few miles to travel to their trap lines and it seems safe to assume that they visited the post more frequently (Liebow and Trudeau 1962, pp. 193-194). With the construction of the radar base, the pattern outlined above changed almost immediately to nearly complete dependence on wage labour and year-round residence in what became a community (1962, p. 195).

It certainly would be difficult to find a more dramatic example of the preference that subarctic Indians have for wage labour over trapping as a means of making a living. The reasons for this preference, documented in some detail for the Winisk Cree by Liebow and Trudeau and for the Snowdrift Chipewyan by the present author (VanStone MS.), are of no concern in this context. What is of particular interest is the great change in trapping patterns, actually the almost total disappearance of trapping, in response to the sudden introduction of an alternative means of making a living. What is seen here is the rapid culmination of a process that is going on also in other parts of the eastern and western Subarctic.

In a paper discussing changing settlement patterns among the Cree-Ojibwa of northern Ontario, Rogers (1963) gives the clearest statement of the series of trends that have already been noted for Snowdrift and other areas. He finds that there has been an increasing tendency for larger groupings of people to come together and remain more sedentary for a longer period of the year than formerly. This change to larger settlements and a more sedentary existence can be mainly attributed to the impact of Euro-Canadian culture in much the same way as can be documented for other parts of northern Canada. With regard to trapping, Rogers documents certain changes in the yearly cycle at Round Lake, Ontario, as follows:

"With the advent of fall the men make ready for the coming season of trapping. When the time arrives, primarily during October, nearly half the population of the village departs for their winter camps, located as a rule within the boundaries of their trapping territories where they will reside until just before Christmas. During this period some of the men will occasionally

return to the village to sell their furs and obtain more supplies. Some trappers take their families with them, others leave them in the village. Those men who exploit the area in the immediate vicinity of the settlement do not establish winter camps in the bush but rather operate directly from their homes in the village." (Rogers 1963, pp. 75-6).

This pattern continues with the return of those trappers, who have been in winter camps, to the village for Christmas. After Christmas, trapping is again resumed but some men do not return to their bush camps; rather they "borrow" a territory, or, more likely, secure permission to trap in a territory, near the village.

It appears, then, that at least half the Round Lake trappers trap near the village. Some have done so since the post was first established, but for others this form of trapping represents a break with the old tradition of winter trapping camps. In his Round Lake study, Rogers (1962, p. C36) states that in spite of the growing tendency for trappers to exploit areas close to the village, there has been no noticeable lowering of the yield per trapper. It is probable, however, that this will occur in the future. What Rogers does not state, and what would be of particular interest in this connection, is just how frequently those trappers who do stay in winter camps before Christmas return to the village to sell furs and obtain supplies. Another point of interest would be whether the number of trappers who return to the winter camps after the holiday festivities is declining or remaining approximately the same. One would suspect that the number of men staying in the village after Christmas is growing.

At the risk of reading more into Rogers's information than it actually contains, it could be said that among the Round Lake Ojibwa the trapping pattern is undergoing changes similar to those noted for Snowdrift and other communities in the eastern and western Subarctic. Namely, there is a general decline in the efficiency with which the total available trapping area is used. Less time is being spent on the trap lines and more either in the community or going to and from the community. These are general statements that seem to apply, to a greater or less degree, wherever fur-bearing animals are being trapped today in subarctic Canada.

It would, of course, be naive and over simplistic to suggest that the factors responsible for this situation are everywhere exactly the same or are taking place at the same rate. However, it is probable that lack of uniform documentation over the entire area prevents, to some extent, the easy recognition of those similarities and parallel developments that do exist. One factor that complicates this situation and about which little has been said here is time. Even such information as has been presented indicates that changes in trapping patterns have not taken place at an equal rate. Thus it is the opinion of one experienced field worker that in many areas, particularly in some parts of the eastern Subarctic, the Indians trap more today than they did a hundred years ago (Rogers, pers. commun.). This may be true in the west as well since the proliferation of trading posts and the availability of consumer goods on a large scale, both of which have en-

couraged trapping, have occurred during the past 30 or 40 years. Similarly, although it has been possible to make general statements about the decline in trapping effectiveness and land use, which apply over the entire area of subarctic Canada, it is undoubtedly true that statements of this kind must be tempered by the recognition that the concentration of Indian populations in permanent communities has sometimes resulted in greater use of the trapping area near the community as the trappers have increasingly withdrawn from the peripheries. This is not true at Snowdrift but it is at Round Lake, and there are indications that it may also be true of other communities in the eastern Subarctic.

All this appears to suggest that in spite of conditions that are working to the detriment of continued interest in trapping, there are still a number of important factors that tend to insure that it will be a long time before this means of livelihood entirely disappears. Undoubtedly the most important of these, at least in the western Subarctic, is that trapping remains the only source of income besides uncertain wage-labour, relief, and welfare. It is unlikely that very many Indian groups will desire, or be permitted, to live entirely on unearned income, and it has been only under unusual circumstances, such as at Winisk, that wage-employment opportunities in any part of the Subarctic have existed in sufficient abundance and permanence to enable the Indians to make a complete change in their means of subsistence. Even if job opportunities were to increase considerably, it is by no means certain that trapping would rapidly disappear. There exist, in many areas, factors that encourage a continued interest in trapping. In the east, the logging and mining industries, as well as tourist guiding, have tended to keep the Indians in the bush and helped to maintain their interest in and close association with the environment they know thoroughly. Commercial fishing and the growing importance of tourist guiding has had, and is likely to continue to have, a similar effect in the west. It must also be remembered that trapping has been important in the eastern Subarctic for more than 300 years and in the west for nearly as long. Time is an important factor in consolidating adaptive forms of culture and it required perhaps a dozen or more generations for patterns of socialization, family holdings, and marriage preferences based on trapping to be built up and strongly consolidated in both the east and the west. Indeed it is the strength of these developed patterns that is likely to determine the reaction of any one group of Indians to the introduction of the various factors mentioned above that have the potential to inhibit trapping.

In this connection one point in particular must be examined; that is the presence or absence among subarctic Indians of normative pressures to hunt and trap. Although information on this point is not as complete as it might be, the author feels that this is not a significant factor among Indians in the western Subarctic. At Snowdrift, for example, the men seemed to take very little pride in their trapping skill, and the author never heard comments about the pleasures or compensations of bush living. In the Mackenzie-Great Slave Lake area the field worker will hear a great deal

about how the Indian is most happy and content when he is in the bush on his trap line, but these comments always seem to originate with local whites and never with Indians. At Snowdrift all informants maintained that they would give up trapping at once if an opportunity for steady wage-employment presented itself (VanStone 1961, p. 19). It has been previously noted (p. 166) that the "Lynx Point" trappers prefer the comforts and conveniences of the village to the social isolation of the trapping camp.

The extent to which this is also true in the east can only be surmised since, with one exception, the authors cited in this paper have not discussed the matter. However, it seems clear that there were definitely more strongly developed normative pressures to hunt and trap than have been documented for the west. For example, in speaking of the more or less permanent Indian population living in the vicinity of Seven Islands on the coast of the St. Lawrence, Speck notes that for the period of his field work, between 1915 and 1925, these people could claim no prestige through their close contact with whites and assimilation of white values. Both social and financial prestige lay with the interior hunters and trappers. The coast people are spoken of as being glad to give up their precarious employment and restriction of freedom, should the opportunity arise, for "the adventure and possible greater profit of furs of the big woods" (Speck and Eiseley 1942, p. 222). With reference to general aspects of Montagnais-Naskapi economy, Lips (1947, p. 387) makes a similar statement. The Naskapi have always been hunters and trappers and they wish always to remain so. McGee, writing about the people in the Northwest River region of Labrador is more explicit concerning the compensation of bush living as opposed to the more comfortable life in the village, and his statements have added significance because he is dealing with the more or less contemporary scene. First of all, trappers are close to good caribou territory and are thus in a position to satisfy their need for meat. Secondly, old people who might have difficulty getting on alone at Northwest River have relatives who will keep them supplied with meat and firewood on the trapping grounds; in other words, it is not so easy to ignore old people in a trapper's camp. Finally, and perhaps most important of all, in the bush, for young and old alike, there are no non-Indian sanctions on conduct to worry about (McGee 1961, p. 58).

It cannot be denied, therefore, that factors exist throughout the Subarctic, although perhaps most notably in the east, that work to maintain interest in and dependence on trapping as a means of livelihood. These are essentially conservative factors and they arise from a tendency to associate trapping with the old Indian way of life that is right and good and as a reaction against the insecurities and uncertainties of the newly developing community life and increased contact with whites. It seems, nevertheless, to be true that in most if not all parts of the Subarctic, factors favouring the persistence of trapping as a major economic undertaking are in rapid decline. That is why the trends and changes described in this paper have, for the most part, become significant within the past 15 years, or even much more recently than that.

By way of summary and conclusion, then, it can be said that in most subarctic communities there are, at the present time, factors operative which tend to reduce the reliance on income derived from trapping. These factors, which for the most part involve additional sources of income, have also been effective in developing tendencies toward sedentary community life. The Indians are turning increasingly toward wage employment and dependence on various forms of government assistance as they attempt to achieve a higher standard of living. It is not surprising, therefore, that both Indians and white administrators are agreed that one of the most important problems facing the people of subarctic communities today is the need to achieve financial stability and to be free from the uncertainties that are characteristic of an economy based on trapping.

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