



# Kai'Kos'Dehseh Dené

The Red Willow River (Christina River) People

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A Traditional Land Use Study of the  
Chipewyan Prairie First Nation

Nicomacian Press

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# ***Chipewyan Prairie First Nation***

GENERAL DELIVERY, CHARD, ALBERTA T0P 1G0 TELEPHONE: 780-559-2259 FAX: 780-559-2213

Dear Reader:

The Chief and Council began this Traditional Land Use study in the fall of 2003 to ensure that the traditional knowledge of our Elders and ancestors is recorded and protected. An important part of this study was to research and document the original lifeways of our people and to trace the changes that occurred in the use of our traditional lands after the arrival of the settlers and to current times. Our ancestors stayed in the more northern regions to regularly harvest barrenland caribou and migrated further south during the fur trade, settling in Chipewyan Prairie. These lands and the areas used most intensely are presented in Figure I.

Our lands are being used for many industrial activities such as oil sands mining operations, oil extraction operations, forestry and pipelines. This study will be used in dealings with industry and environmental issues. It will form the basis of continued monitoring of the traditional lands by the Elders and traditional resource users. It is also my hope that this publication will be used to teach the younger generations about their heritage and to keep our culture and traditions alive.

I would like to thank the Elders and land users of our community for contributing their traditional knowledge to this study. I would also like to thank the sponsors for their support of this important project.

Sincerely,

Chief Walter Janvier



**Chief Walter Janvier.**

*Photo courtesy of Syncrude Canada*

Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation Elders, Interviewees, and Active Traditional Land Users<sup>1</sup>



Fred Cardinal



Jean P. Cardinal



Mondeste Cardinal



Maxime Janvier



Mary Jane Herman



Adelaide Janvier



David Janvier



Agnes Lemaigre  
(McDonald)



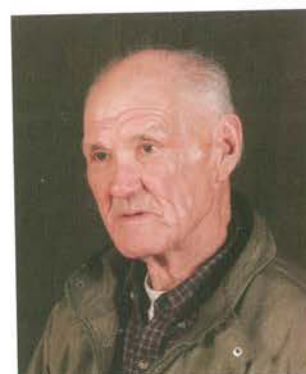
Jean Marie Janvier



John James Janvier



James Janvier



Narcisse Janvier

<sup>1</sup> Elder photographs taken 2006, courtesy of Syncrude Canada.

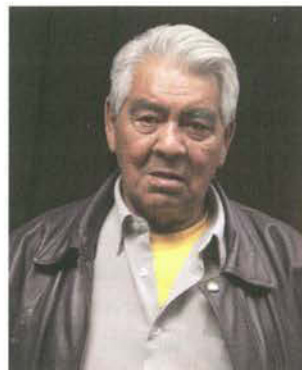




Alma Nokohoo



Alfred Lemaigre



John Lemaigre



Marie Agnes Herman



Ernest Morris



Jean B. Morris



Thomas Morice



George Nokohoo



Harry Janvier-Morice

### Mising Photos

Lena Black  
 Jack Herman  
 Yvonne Janvier  
 Everest Janvier - deceased  
 Lawrence Janvier - deceased

## Preface

This book is dedicated to the Elders and land users of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation Traditional Lands who contributed their knowledge and wisdom to this study. This book could not have been produced without their interest, participation and contributions.

The First Nation is also very grateful to the companies and agencies that supported the Traditional Land Use Study (TLUS). These organizations include: Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Albion Sands Energy Inc., Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Conoco Phillips, Connacher Oil & Gas Limited, Cumulative Environmental Management Association (CEMA), Devon Energy Corporation, Enbridge Pipelines, EnCana, First Nations Forestry Program, North American Oil Sands Corporation, Opti-Nexen, Japan Canada Oil Sands Limited, Petro-Canada, Suncor Energy Inc., and Syncrude Canada Limited.

The Chipewyan Prairie Dené Traditional Land Use Study was started in 2003 through the initiative of the Chief and Council and interested community members. The purpose of the study was to identify and document the traditional lands of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation. Fish Creek Consulting was retained to manage the project. Barry Hochstein of Four Medicines Consulting served as project manager during 2003 and 2004. Dr. Jim Tanner of Fish Creek Consulting was the Project Manager during 2005 and 2006. Tammy Duke was originally hired as the community Project Coordinator, and then Shauna Janvier and Traci Janvier continued in this role. Betty Kennedy, Director of the CPDFN IRC, also contributed as Project Coordinator throughout 2005 and 2006. Audrey Laroque provided technical assistance. The lead translator during the interviews and committee meetings was Agnes Duke. Denise Fleming of the CPDFN IRC provided ongoing community and administration support for the project. The Elders who attended the Committee meetings were Harry Janvier-Morice, David Janvier, George Nokohoo, Marie Agnes Herman, and Yvonne Janvier. Chief Walter Janvier and Thomas Morice served as ex-officio contributors. Thank you to all the community members who made this project possible.

Barry Hochstein conducted the GIS, GPS and other

technical training. The training included GIS (computer mapping), GPS, data gathering and storage, computer use, and interview techniques. Once the initial training was completed, the CPDFN traditional land use contributors reviewed the information that was available including their knowledge of CPDFN traditional lands, other land use studies, and historical reference materials, and a project schedule was established.

The second stage of the project included the questionnaire design and the selection of Elders and land users to be interviewed. The technical contributors and Elders designed the questionnaire. The land users to be interviewed were chosen by the committee and approved by the Chief and Council. The interview process started at the beginning of 2004 and the final interviews were completed in March of 2006. The third stage of the project included historical research and ground truthing of gravesites, cabins and spiritual sites, which was conducted the winter of 2004 and 2005.

The final stage of the study included report and book preparation. The book composition was started in the summer of 2005. Jessica Kent of Fish Creek Consulting compiled the information from the Elder and Land User Interviews and was the primary author of the final document. Dr. Jim Tanner of Fish Creek Consulting contributed to the written sections of the book and assisted with the final edits. Traci Tanner of Fish Creek Consulting provided archival and historical research for photographs, which are included in the book; Traci Tanner also contributed to the writing and editing. Leanne De Boni of Fish Creek Consulting contributed to the production and editing. Josh Holden contributed to the Dené language section in Chapter 16 and to the Dené spelling found throughout this book. Many of the CPDFN Elders and Land Users provided family and community photographs that are included in the document. Audrey Laroque and Betty Janvier assisted with community photographs included in the book. Syncrude Canada Limited took the Elder photographs. AXYS Environmental Consulting produced the traditional land use maps in the document. Thanks are also extended to Francomedia.com for the layout and design of the book and to Mint Printing for the final printed production.



## *Introduction to site maps found throughout this book*

During the interviews, the Elders and land-users pinpointed the locations of important traditional use sites, including traditional routes and trails, cabins, cultural and other historic sites, as well as the sites where furbearers, big game, fish, birds, berries, and other resources were hunted, trapped, fished, and gathered by the CPDFN people. The information used to produce the maps was derived from the interviews conducted for this study. The Elders and land users have acquired extensive knowledge, which has been passed down from generation to generation, about the land which the Chipewyan Prairie people have occupied. Unfortunately, not every Chipewyan Prairie Elder or land user was interviewed for this study. Since many have passed away, these maps are not exhaustive of

all the significant sites, nor do they attempt to represent the numbers of resources harvested. The maps do however provide an indication of the significant sites and locations of the CPDFN traditional land use.

Figure 1 (on page viii) represents a map of the traditional lands of the CPDFN. This map identifies the area where 95% of the big game activities of the Chipewyan Prairie people occurred, as defined by the sites identified during the interviews for this study. The entire area covered by the map represents the lands from where the CPDFN people have traditionally made their living and maintained their traditional lifestyle.

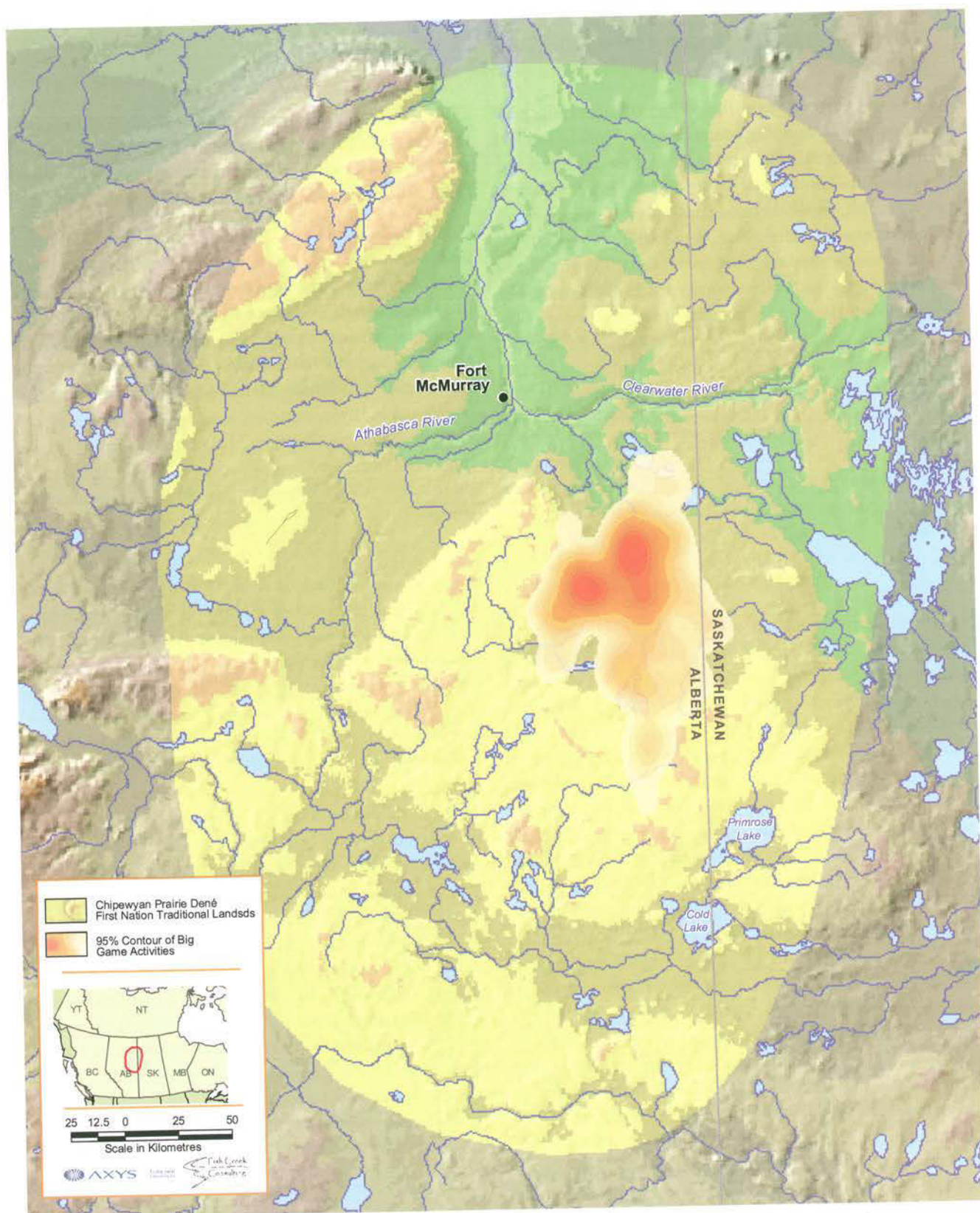


Figure 1 Chipewyan Prairie Dené Traditional Lands



# Chapter 1

## Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation Traditional Lands

### Introduction

The Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation is an Athabascan speaking people, who call themselves *Dene Sų́hné*, meaning "The Original People". From time immemorial, the Dené and their ancestors have been hunting, trapping, fishing and gathering on their traditional lands, which they call, "*Dene Sų́hné*" (The Dene Sų́hné lands). According to anthropological and archaeological theories, the Native peoples of North America arrived on this continent about 10,000 years ago from Asia, crossing a land bridge that spanned the Bering Strait. Before this time, much of western Canada was covered with vast glaciers that had absorbed huge quantities of water that lowered the average sea levels. During the last Ice Age, the shallow seas dropped about 300 feet and created a mile wide grassland steppe linking Asia and North America together with the "Bering Land Bridge". Across this vast steppe, plants and animals traveled in both directions, and humans entered the Americas in search of large game animals.

It is believed that, the Chipewyan Dené ancestors, derived from those first humans that migrated across Beringia from Siberia into Alaska and the Yukon. Before European contact,

the Chipewyan were the most numerous and widely distributed of the Northern Athabascan groups. They were nomadic Peoples who followed the caribou herds in Boreal forest-tundra areas that stretched from near Hudson Bay, north of the Seal River in northern Manitoba, to the mouth of the Coppermine River north of the Arctic Circle in the northwest.<sup>2</sup> Figure 1.1 shows an estimation of the northern Dené traditional lands. The south east portion of the figure shows the Chipewyan lands.

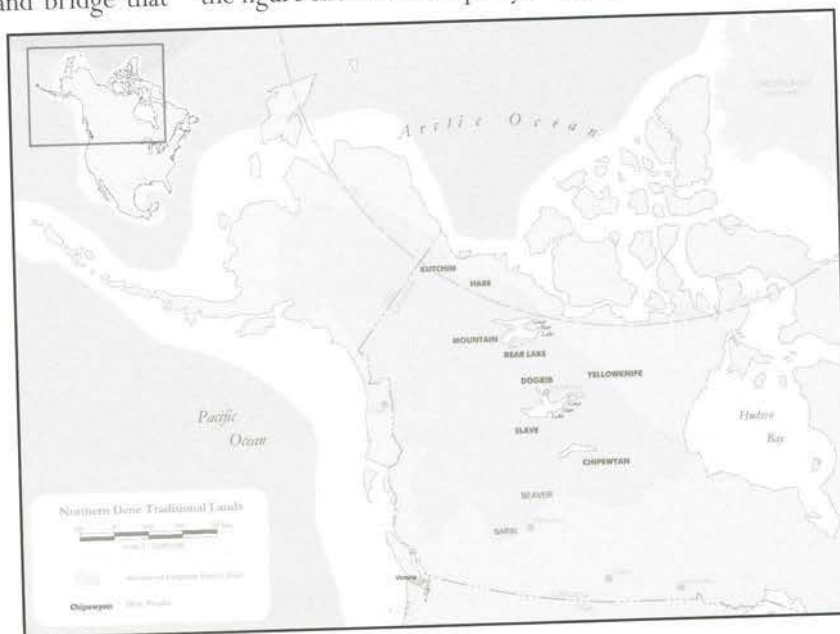


Figure 1.1 Northern Dené Traditional Lands<sup>3</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Smith, J.G.E. (1981). Chipewyan. In: Helm, J., ed. Handbook of North American Indians, Vol. 6, Subarctic. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution. 271-284.

<sup>3</sup> Map compiled from information gathered by Fish Creek Consulting, during the Athabascan Chipewyan First Nation Traditional Land Use Study (2003).



Although some Chipewyan groups had entered the European fur trade by 1715, most of the population was reluctant to leave their bountiful caribou economy. By the late 1700s more Chipewyan began to rely on the fur trade. As they became more involved in the fur trade, they moved further south and westward between Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake. Increasing participation in the fur trade affected Chipewyan land-use and occupancy patterns, as did the adoption of European technologies.

The Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation and their ancestors have endured many changes throughout history. Despite this, many people today have retained an intricate knowledge of and relationship with their traditional territory and its resources. However, the reduction in the traditional way of life continues to threaten the identity and culture of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené Peoples.

While many of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation members continue to fish and hunt on their traditional lands today, several members have had to move to nearby cities and towns. This has made it more difficult for them to continue in traditional hunting and gathering practices.

For this reason, it is so important that we document the aspects of the Elder's experience and traditional knowledge. The purpose of this Traditional Land Use Study is to collect, record, and protect information about the historical and current traditional land use activities of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation (CPDFN). This study incorporates detailed land use information collected from 26 Elders and current resource users of the CPDFN, as well as data obtained through additional historical, archaeological and anthropological research.



Pre-historic Northern Fish Camp Diorama. Photo courtesy of the Syncrude Gallery of Aboriginal Culture, Royal Alberta Museum.

# Chapter 2

## *Early Pre-Contact Culture and Land Use*

This Chapter describes how the early ancestors of the CPDEN moved into North America, with their tools, language, land use activities and migration patterns. The migrations likely started during the decline of the last ice age approximately 10,000 years ago. The sites and artifacts left behind by the first Peoples allow archaeologists to describe

and formulate explanations about their early cultures and land use activities. By integrating the Chipewyan migration legend and early European explorer accounts with the archeological evidence, we can gain a more holistic insight to the activities of these early ancestors.



*View of the Athabasca Glacier. Photo courtesy of the Heritage Community Foundation.*



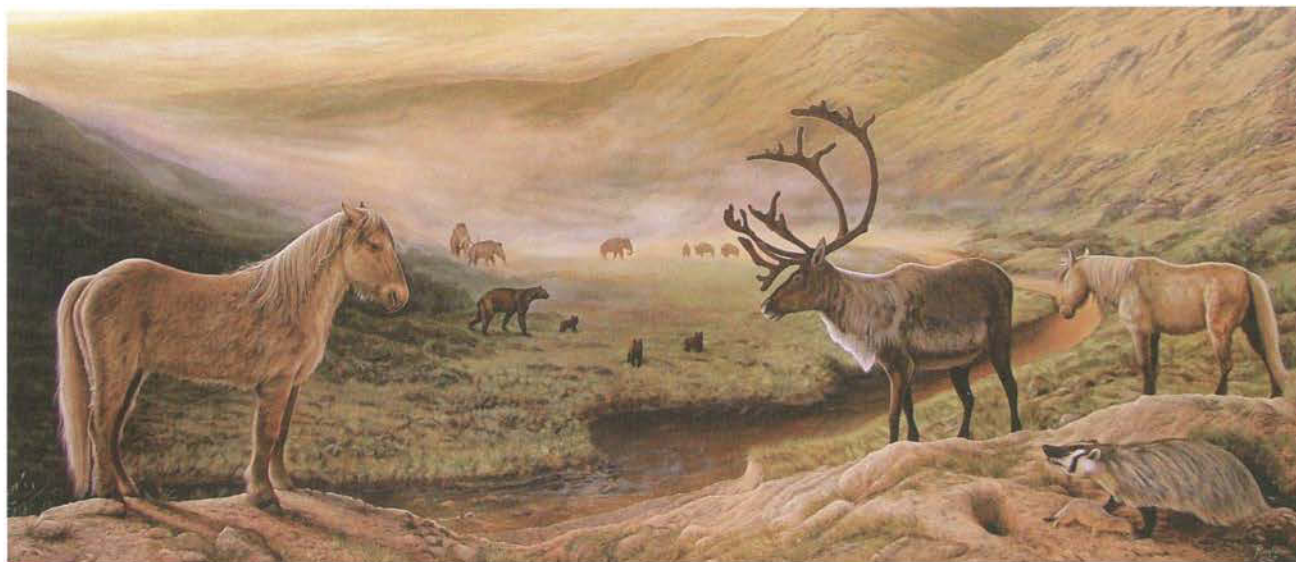
## Glacial Changes and Animal Migration

Geologists believe that there were ice-free corridors that existed during periods of the late Pleistocene geological age (the Wisconsin age), ranging from 75,000 to 14,000 years ago in northern North America.<sup>4</sup> Although the climate was harsh during these times, it is believed that game animals could have moved across this new available landscape. Archaeological remains show that about 18,000 years ago when Alberta was covered by ice, animal populations did reside northwest and south of the province.<sup>5</sup> These species included large mammals like the

woolly mammoth, camel, bison, horse, bighorn sheep, giant beaver, giant sloth and predators like wolves, lions and short-faced bears. As the glaciers receded, the animals were able to migrate into Alberta. By the beginning of the Holocene Epoch (about 10,000 years ago), the last Ice Age was coming to an end. During this time, many of the larger mammals like the woolly mammoth became extinct, while other smaller animals like the bison, caribou and wapiti or elk survived.



Comparison of Ground Sloth, Yukon Horse, Giant Beaver and Modern Beaver. Painting by George Teichmann "Rinaldino". Courtesy of C. Caldwell Productions. (2003)



Yukon Beringia 20,000 BC. Mountain scene showing horses, ancient caribou and American badger in foreground, woolly mammoths and giant short-faced bears in background. Painting by George Teichmann "Rinaldino". Courtesy of C. Caldwell Productions. (2002)

<sup>4</sup> Dickason, O.P. (1997). *Canada's First Nations: A history of founding people from earliest times*. Second Edition. Oxford University Press: Toronto, Ontario, pg.3, from Young, S.B. (1988). *Beringia: An Ice-Age View*. In W.W. Fitzhugh and Aron Crowell, Eds, *Crossroads of Continents: Cultures of Siberia and Alaska*. Washington: 106-110.

<sup>5</sup> Berry, S. and J. Brink. (2004). *Aboriginal Cultures in Alberta: Five Hindered Generations*. The Provincial Museum of Alberta, pg.1.

## Human Migration

As the glaciers melted and lands opened in the northwestern subarctic area, human groups migrated in the search for large animals. The most widely accepted anthropological theory states that a series of migrations of people from Asia crossed over to North America during times when intensification of the Ice Age lowered the sea level.<sup>6</sup> This transformed what is now known as the Bering Strait into a land bridge, commonly referred to as Beringia, connecting Siberia and Alaska.<sup>7</sup>

Figure 2.1 is a representation of what Beringia may have looked like. Between 11,000 and 12,000 years ago, this bridge was “ice-free” which opened a corridor running from Alaska and the Yukon, across northeastern British Columbia, and along the eastern slopes of the Rockies in Alberta, in which human and animals populations could have traveled.<sup>8</sup> As a result, some of the oldest archaeological sites in Alberta have been discovered along these eastern slopes.<sup>9</sup>

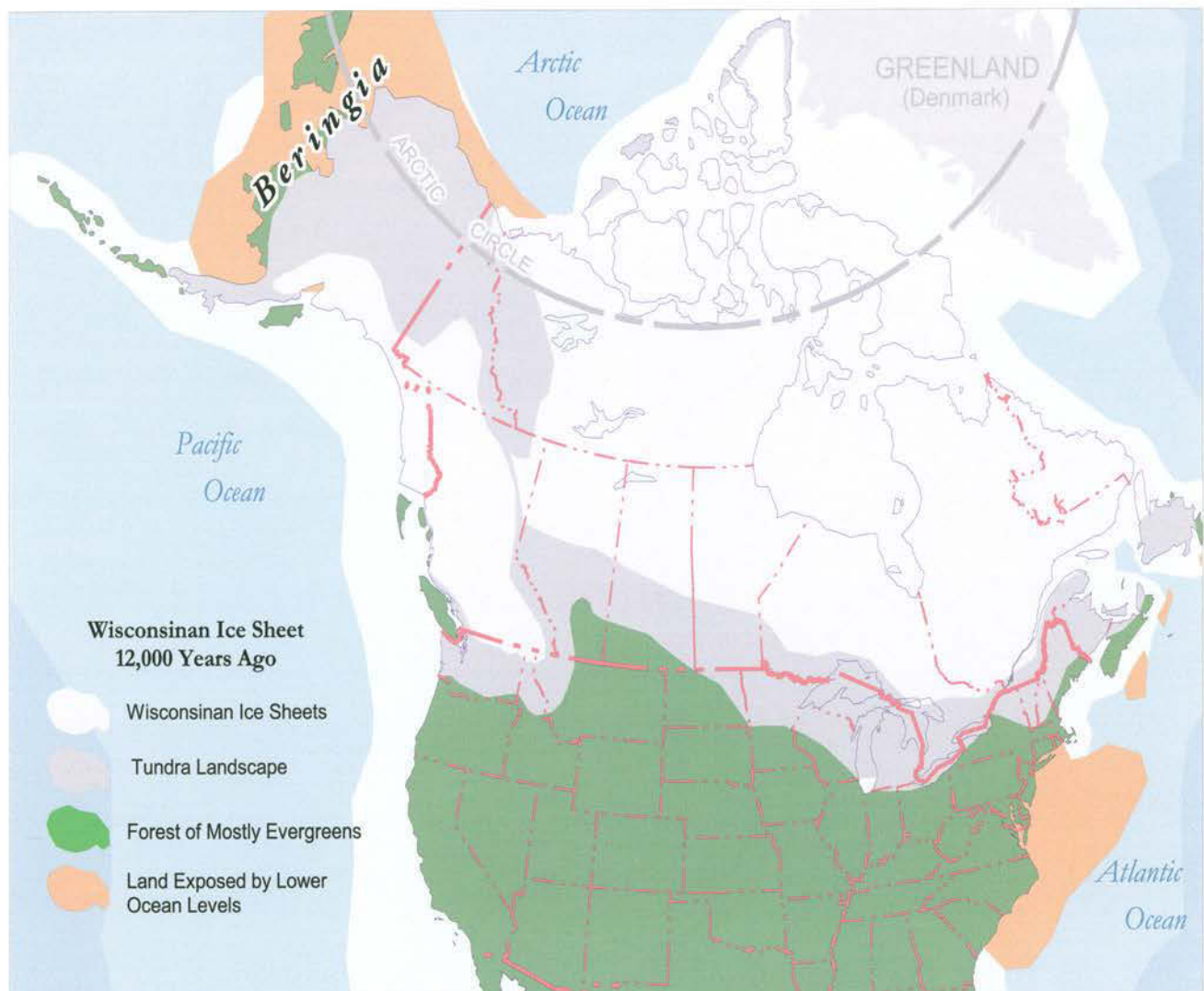


Figure 2.1 Beringia<sup>10</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Similarities in stone tool technology suggest that the North American northern people came from Siberia.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, Dickason, O.P. (1997), pg.3.

<sup>8</sup> Ives, J.W., Beaudoin, A.B., and M.P.R. Magne. (1989). Evaluating the Role of a Western Corridor in the Peopling of Americas. Prepared for the Circum-Pacific Prehistory Conference. August 2-6, 1989, Seattle, Washington. Archaeological Survey of Alberta, pg.2.

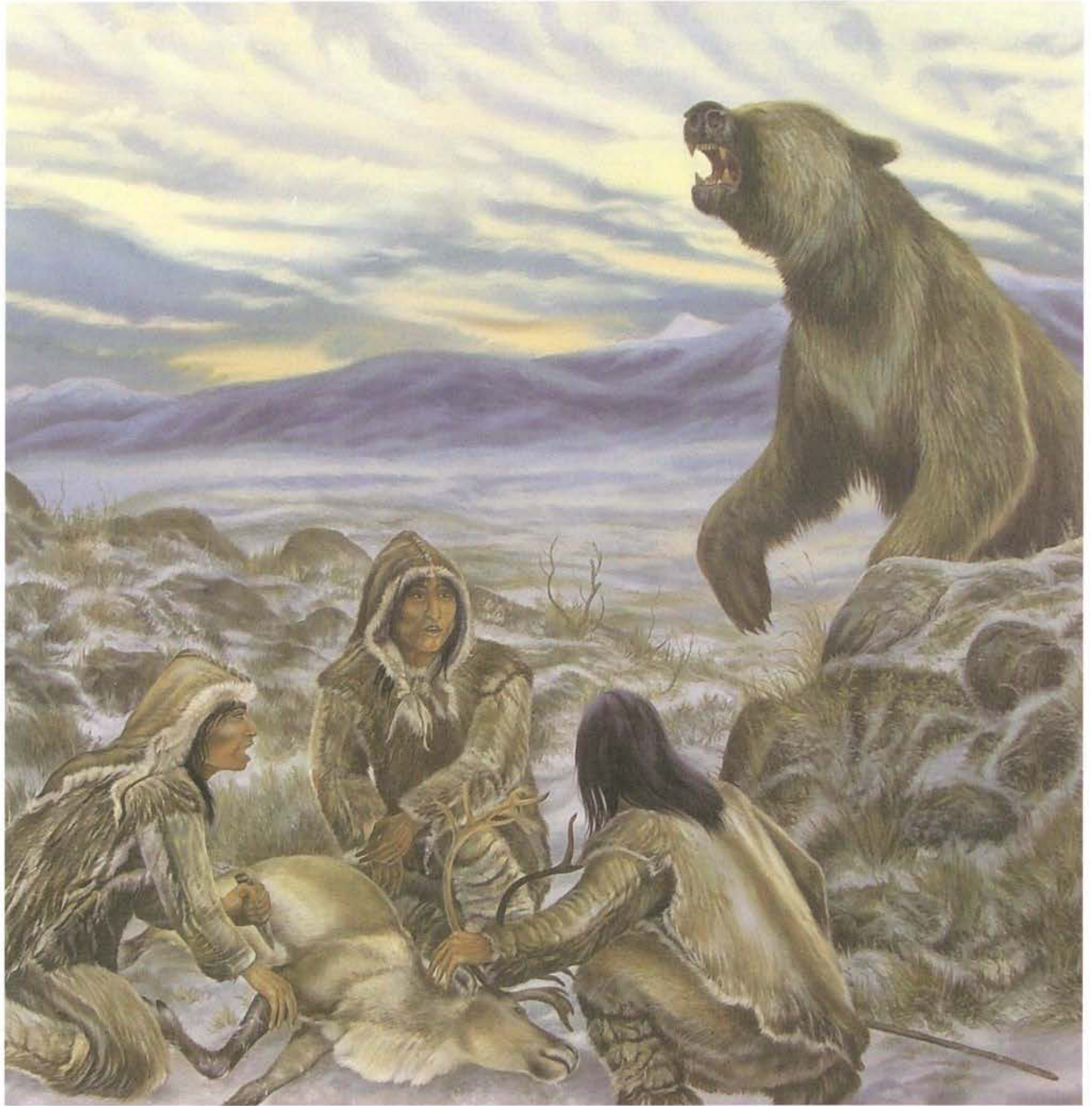
<sup>9</sup> Ibid, Berry and Brink (2004), pg.1.

<sup>10</sup> Map compiled from information gathered by Fish Creek Consulting, during the Athabaskan Chipewyan First Nation Traditional Land Use Study (2003). Based on the Atlas of the North American Indian, Waldman (2000) and The Sand Dunes of Lake Athabasca, Jonker and Rowe (2001).



Another migration theory depicts these earliest Peoples crossing Beringia and travelling along the Pacific coast from Alaska and northwestern Canada. These Peoples could have stayed in North America or even traveled as far as South America. Since water contained in the glaciers had resulted in lower sea levels that exposed more land

along the coast, it is believed that travel along the coast may have been preferred during this time.<sup>11</sup> It has been suggested that these routes would have been easier and faster than land routes, while also providing an abundance of food resources from the Sea.<sup>12</sup>



Short-faced Bear and Hunters. Painting by George Teichmann "Rinaldino". Courtesy of C. Caldwell Productions. (2002)

<sup>11</sup> Ibid, Berry and Brink (2004), pg.1.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid Ives et al. (1989), pg.2, from Fladmark (1979).



### Chipewyan Migration Legend

Many Aboriginal people believe that “they were always here” and did not come from some other place. Also, many of the First Nations, including the Chipewyan Dené, have legends and stories that speak about their origins, journeys and migrations.

A Land Bridge theory is preserved in Chipewyan mythology.<sup>13</sup> In one such legend, two giants, “Yak’ékt’ini” and “Bets’iuli”, engage in a fierce fight in the Arctic Ocean. A Dené man, whom Yak’ékt’ini was protecting, saved him by cutting the back of Bettsinuli’s ankle with an axe made from a giant beaver’s tooth. Bettsinuli fell backwards into the Sea and his body created a bridge across the two continents. His feet landed on the Arctic shore, his body became the mountains, and his head reached the area where the Chipewyan live.

Early explorer Alexander Mackenzie and Jesuit priest, Father Emile Petitot recorded the stories about, “the time of giants” from the Chipewyan people. Father Petitot who conducted ethnographic research in Cold Lake, Alberta notes that the southerly Dené call themselves “Tthil’ahot’iné” or “the people who live at the head of the tall giant (‘Yak’ékt’ini)”. Petitot also documented that the western Dené referred to the Rocky Mountains as “Tl gonankkwene” meaning the backbone of the giant.<sup>14</sup> Mackenzie stated that the Chipewyan people told a story about their ancestors great journey from another country where they had traversed a great lake, which was narrow, shallow, and full of islands.<sup>15</sup>

13 Coutu, P.R., and L. Hoffman-Mercredi. (1999). *Inkonze: The Stories of Traditional Knowledge, A history of Northeastern Alberta*. Edmonton: Thunderwoman Ethnographics, p.16.

14 Ibid, Coutu and Hoffman-Mercredi (1999), pg.17.

15 Ibid, Coutu and Hoffman-Mercredi (1999), pg.19.

### Human Prehistory in Alberta

Whether Alberta was first populated by people travelling south through an ice-free corridor or north after entering North America along the Pacific coast, or even some combination of the two, the oldest known archaeological sites in Alberta date from about 10,000 to 12,000 years ago.<sup>16</sup> It is likely that, by about 8,000 years ago, the Athabaskan Dené peoples could be found living in the subarctic interior or the Boreal forest region.

Excavations of stone tools including spear points, arrowheads, knives, scraping tools and pottery provide evidence of the earliest Peoples in this region. The majority of artifacts found in northeastern Alberta are from small groups of sites found along lakes and rivers. These are the areas where the early Peoples hunted large game, fished and snared small animals for survival. Some of the earliest artifacts found in the Boreal forest resemble those used on the Plains to the south and in Alaska to the northwest.<sup>17</sup>



Example of an Alberta Point and Scottsbluff Point.  
Alberta points date from about 8,900 to 9,500 years ago.

*Photo courtesy of the Provincial Museum of Alberta.*

16 Ives, J.W. 1993. The Ten Thousand Years before the Fur Trade in Northeastern Alberta. In P.A. McCormack and R. Geoffrey, Eds. *The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies*. Canadian Circumpolar Institute Research Series No.3. Pp. 5-31. Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta, pg.5.

17 Ibid, Berry and Brink (2004), pg.22.





**Native Pottery Bowl.**

*Photo courtesy of the Provincial Museum of Alberta.*

Archaeologists recognize three early periods in northeastern Alberta's history:<sup>18</sup> the Early Prehistoric Period (12,000 to 8,000 years ago), the Middle Prehistoric Period (8,000 to 2,500 years ago), and the Late Prehistoric Period (2,500 to 500 years ago).

### **Early Prehistoric Period (12,000 to 8,000 years ago)**

Ice-free conditions began between 11,000 and 12,000 years ago in northeastern Alberta. Pollen evidence indicates relatively open, nearly treeless vegetation, comprising of sage, grasses, sedges, willow and a variety of herbs existed up until about 11,000 years ago.<sup>19</sup> By 10,000 years ago, an early version of the boreal forest existed that was initially dominated by white spruce, with increasing abundance of black spruce, birch or shrub birch.

The earliest cultural tradition in North America is referred to as the Northern Plano tradition. Distinct spear points have been found in Alaska dating to about 10,500 years ago and in the Lake Athabasca region about 8,000 years ago.<sup>20</sup> Over time, the Northern Plano Tradition gradually formed into the Shield Archaic Tradition, estimated to exist from 6,500 to 2,600 years ago.

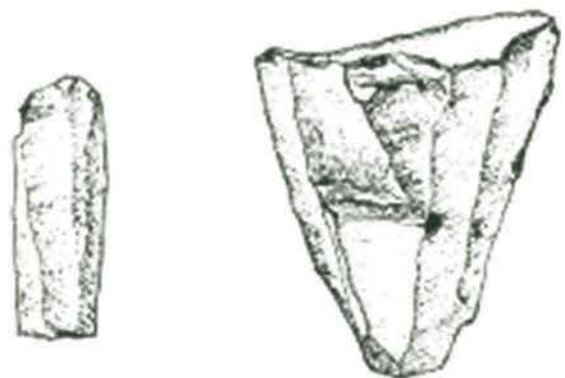
Some of the earliest tools found in Alberta have been excavated from Gardiner Lake Narrows, Eaglenest Portage in the Birch Mountains and the Fort MacKay area.<sup>21</sup> These tools include spear points shaped like lance

heads, projectile points, and knives. Although none of these artifacts can be dated, it is speculated that these tools are related to the initial human settlement of early northeastern Alberta, comprised from those who migrated across Beringia from Siberia into Alaska and the Yukon.



**Bone awls used to make holes in leather and hides for sewing.** *Photo courtesy of the Provincial Museum of Alberta.*

The Microblade technology is the most common in northern Alberta. Discoveries near Fort McKay and Fort Vermillion reveal pieces of chipped chert that were used to produce small blades. These 'microblades' were placed into handles made of either bone or antler, to create a specialized tool that was likely used when hunting smaller game. It is believed that the Inuit and the Athapascans used this technology up until the historic times.<sup>22</sup>



**A microblade (left) and a core (right) from which a microblade has been struck (actual size). Microblades were used as the cutting edges of spear points and knives.<sup>23</sup>**

<sup>18</sup> Ibid, Ives (1993:7) based on Vickers (1986), pgs.12-13.

<sup>19</sup> Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.5.

<sup>20</sup> Athabasca Chipewyan First Nation (ACFN) (2003). Traditional Land Use Study, pg.11.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.9.

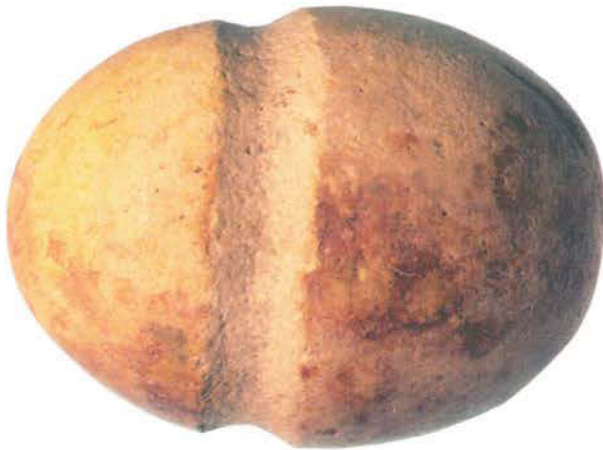
<sup>22</sup> Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.13.

<sup>23</sup> Diagram courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Civilization. [www.civilization.ca/cmhc/archeo/grbear/056c.htm](http://www.civilization.ca/cmhc/archeo/grbear/056c.htm).

### Middle Prehistoric Period (8,000 to 2,500 years ago)

During the Middle Prehistoric Period, significant climate change took place in Alberta. This period is generally characterized as being much warmer and drier in comparison with present or previous climatic conditions. As the climate warmed, present-day vegetation patterns emerged. The landscape composition of the region changed as pine and elder moved into the region after 8,000 years ago. Essentially, modern, mixed wood boreal forest vegetation predominated in northeastern Alberta by about 6,000 years ago.<sup>24</sup>

These changes likely influenced the people and encouraged them to modify their "tool kit."<sup>25</sup> Not only were smaller points used, they were also attached to lighter spears. These tools were specific enough for the jobs required, yet general and simplified enough to allow the continued nomadic movement of the People.



**Hammerstone.** Photo courtesy of the Provincial Museum of Alberta.

### Late Prehistoric Period (2,500 to 500 years ago)

Artifacts dating from about 2,000 years ago through to the historic period, have been located in the Lower Athabasca area, the Birch Mountains, the Caribou Mountains, and around Lake Athabasca. It is believed that these artifacts represent the direct ancestors of

Athapaskan speaking people. The tools discovered from this period have been found in close proximity to caribou crossings and good fisheries in an environmental setting that showed little change from previous periods. Many of the tools, including knives and points, recovered from this time period are even smaller, suggesting that the people spent more time reworking them. What is important about this period is that it shows how dominant the Athapaskan-speaking People were in northern Alberta in the last 1,500 to 2,000 years, particularly in the Peace/Athabasca Delta region.<sup>26</sup>

### The Taltheilei (Dené) Ancestors and Migration

The Taltheilei Dené caribou hunters from the western subarctic region started to move eastward towards the taiga (boundary between the Boreal forest and barrenlands) of northern Alberta and British Columbia between 2,500 to 1,200 years ago.<sup>27</sup> <sup>28</sup> The Athabaskan Dené peoples are believed to have descended from these Taltheilei peoples of the Arctic and the barrenlands.<sup>29</sup> The Taltheilei are named after the Taltheilei Narrows on Great Slave Lake in the North West Territories.

The oldest known Taltheilei Dené archaeological sites occur on the northeasterly flowing Thelon and Dubawnt Rivers that span the Mackenzie/Keewatin District boundary. These sites range in age from 2,650 to 1,850 years old. Each site lies within the Beverly caribou range, which stretches south to both the Slave River and Lake Athabasca. It is speculated that these southern areas may have been the winter residence of the early Dené people when they made their initial barrenland adjustment to the caribou migration.

Earlier sites have been found throughout Great Bear Lake to northern Manitoba and from Lake Athabasca to the large lakes on the lower Thelon River. These sites date back to 2,500 to 1,850 years ago. It is thought that this extensive population spread indicates very rapid barrenland adjustment and alignment of Tribes with the regions four caribou hunting populations.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, Ives (1993), pg. 7.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.13, from Dumond, D.E. (1987:32-56).

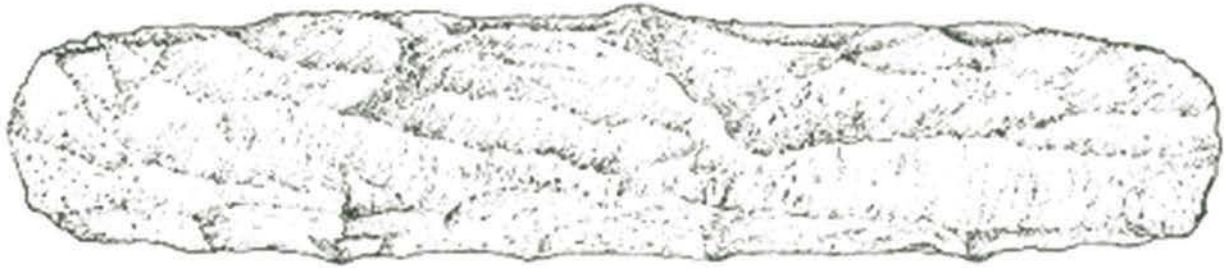
<sup>26</sup> Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.15.

<sup>27</sup> Ives, J.W. (1990). A Theory of Northern Athapaskan Prehistory. Boulder: Westwood Press and the University of Calgary Press.

<sup>28</sup> Gordon, Bryan H.C. (1977). "Chipewyan Prehistory", pp. 72-76 in Prehistory of the North American Subarctic: The Athapaskan Question, edited by J.W. Helmer, S. Van Dyke and F.J. Kense. Archaeological Association of the University of Calgary. EHRAF Collection of Ethnography. New Have, Connecticut: NO.62. Computer File, pg.72.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid, Gordon (1977), pg.72.





Double-bitted adze (axe) of the "Taltheilei" tradition (actual size).<sup>30</sup>

### The Cultural Chronology of Great Bear Lake<sup>32</sup>

	HISTORIC PERIOD	YEARS AGO
A.D. 1950	Inuit visit NE corner of lake	
A.D. 1850	Recent outcamps Caribou fences	185
A.D. 1750	Home-territory contact	
A.D. 1500	Indirect contact with Europeans	500
A.D. 1250	<b>Late Taltheilei Tradition</b>	
A.D. 1000		1000
A.D. 750		
A.D. 500	<b>Middle Taltheilei Tradition</b>	1500
A.D. 250		
0		2000
250 B.C.	<b>Early Taltheilei Tradition</b>	
500 B.C.		2500
1000 B.C.	<b>Arctic Small Tool Tradition</b> (Pre-Dorsel Palaeo-Eskimo)	3000
1500 B.C.		3500
2000 B.C.	<b>N.T. Docks Phase, Northwest Microblade Tradition</b>	4000
2500 B.C.	<b>Great Bear River and Franklin Tanks Sites</b>	4500
3000 B.C.		5000
3500 B.C.		5500
4000 B.C.		6000
5000 B.C.	<b>Acasta Lake</b>	7000
6000 B.C.	<b>Northern Plano Southeast of Great Bear Lake</b>	8000
7000 B.C.		9000
8000 B.C.		10,000
9000 B.C.	<b>Melting Ice Cap</b>	11,000

<sup>32</sup> Cultural Chronology at Great Bear Lake Table courtesy of The Canadian Museum of Civilization.  
[www.civilization.ca/cmc/archeo/oracles/grbear/056e.htm](http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/archeo/oracles/grbear/056e.htm).

### The Dené Ancestors Move East

The period between 1,850 and 1,400 years ago represents an easterly movement of early Athabaskan groups across the northern transitional forest/tundra zone. The archaeological sites that have been discovered are dispersed within a much smaller range than the earlier sites of the Beverly range. In the tradition of their predecessors, these early Dené people continued to hunt barrenland caribou. They followed a north-south migratory pattern based upon the movement of the herds. Although sites continue to be discovered throughout the southeast district of Mackenzie, more sites are being found along Lake Athabasca, northern Manitoba, and southern Keewatin. This archaeological evidence suggests a definite easterly movement by the Dené of this region.<sup>31</sup>

### Chipewyan Expansion and Migration

The Dené population dispersed as far as the American Southwest and Southern Plains and as a result, Athapaskan speakers are now represented by the Apache and Navajo in the south, and to the east as far as Manitoba. Although it is not clear, the population expansion may have been due to population increases or perhaps to a volcanic eruption that occurred in northern British Columbia around 2,000 years ago.<sup>33</sup>

The Dené legend of the "Mountain which Melted" details a great flood, followed by volcanic eruptions that resulted in the separation of the People. According to this legend, they 'ran away in all directions, no longer being able to understand each other's language', indicating culturally distinct and separated people.<sup>34</sup> Of the Dené population, the Chipewyan expanded to have the largest population and landmass of any northern group. By the early part of the

<sup>30</sup> Photo courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Civilization.  
[www.civilization.ca/cmc/archeo/grbear/056f5e.html](http://www.civilization.ca/cmc/archeo/grbear/056f5e.html)

<sup>31</sup> Ibid, Gordon (1977), pg.75.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid, Ives (1993), pg. 16, from Workman (1979) and Derry (1975).

<sup>34</sup> Ibid, Coutu and Hoffmann-Mercredi (1999), pg.36 from Petitot, 1976:21.

1700s, the Chipewyan People had a barrenland/Boreal forest population of approximately 4,000 people.<sup>35</sup>

### Language and the People

The Chipewyan First Nations refer to themselves as, Dené, meaning “The People”. The Chipewyan language is part of the Athapaskan linguistic group. The name Chipewyan derives from a Cree term “witshipecan” meaning, “pointed skins”. This was representative of the

style of their parkas and shirts that had pointed tails at both the front and the back. The French referred to the Chipewyan as the “Montagnais” while the British called them the “Northern” or “Northard Indians”.<sup>36</sup> The word Athapaskan is also from a Cree word meaning, “a place where grass is everywhere,” which could be inferred to represent the Peace/Athabasca Region, the largest fresh water delta in the world.<sup>37</sup> The importance of the Athabasca Delta region lies in the areas wealth of natural



Dené Summer Tunic; Traditional Pointed Skin. ca. 1875.

*Photo courtesy of the Canadian Museum of Civilization VI-Z-184.*

<sup>35</sup> Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.15, from Mooney, 1928 and quoted in Ibid, Gordon (1977).

<sup>36</sup> Dempsey, H. (1988). Indian Tribes of Alberta. Glenbow Museum.

<sup>37</sup> Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.17, from Ives (1990).



resources, which supported the Aboriginal peoples with food and clothing for centuries. For this reason, the Athabasca Delta became the centre of the early fur trade in the region.

Approximately 50 different North American communities currently speak the Athapaskan languages.<sup>38</sup> There are three major Athapaskan language communities:<sup>39</sup> the Pacific coast groups which extend through northern California and include the Upper Umpqua, Tututni-Chasta Costa, Galice-Applegate and the Chetco-Tolowa; the southern Athapaskan groups (or Apachean) in the southwestern United States which include the Apache, Navajo, Mescalero, Jicarilla, Chiricahua, the Kiowa Apache and the Lipan located on the adjacent Plains; and the Chipewyan Dené who belong to the northern Athapaskan group. Other Chipewyan groups in Northern Canada include the Beaver, Slavey, Yellowknife, and Dogrib. These groups inhabit areas throughout their traditional lands, which they call "Denendeh". Throughout Canada, these areas include parts of northern Alberta, British Columbia, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, and the Northwest Territories. Figure 2.2 shows the geographic areas of the Athapaskan language groups in North America.

Linguists have long believed that the original homelands of the Athapaskan peoples were northern North America, as this is where the greatest diversity of Athapaskan languages exists.<sup>41</sup> The only other language in the world similar to Athapaskan is Eyak, formerly spoken on the lower reaches of the Copper River in southern coastal Alaska. It has been suggested that the Pacific coast Athapaskan speakers that migrated as far as northern California, originally departed from their homelands somewhere in southern Alaska, southern Yukon and perhaps northern British Columbia. This migration would have occurred sometime prior to 1,500 years ago.<sup>42</sup> The Navajo and Apache Peoples migrated into the American Southwest and southern Plains left this same homeland approximately 1,200 years ago.<sup>43</sup> It is around this same time that the Canadian and Apachean Athapaskans migrated to the Mackenzie Basin.

38 Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.17, from McFadyen, C.A. (1974).

39 Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.17.

41 Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.16, from Sapri (1915); Krauss (1973); Dyen and Aberle (1974); Krauss and Golla (1981).

42 Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.16, from Krauss and Golla (1981), pg.68.

43 Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.16.

### Dene Syllabics<sup>40</sup>

Δ a (a)	▽ e (ē)
Δ an	▽ en
< ta	▽ be
C da	U de
B ka	9 ke
d la	U le
L ma	7 me
D na	T ne
u ra	2 re
h sa	L se
h ya	4 ye
z za	10 ze
E cha	W che
U dha	7 dhe
U tha	7 the
C' tta	U' tte
E ttha	U tthe
E t'a	U t'e
Δ i (ee)	▽ o (oo) nasal
Δ in	▽ on
^ bi	> bo
U di	U do
P ki	U ko
U li	U lo
7 mi	L mo
9 ni	B no
h ri	4 ro
U si	7 so
h yi	7 yo
z zi	10 zo
E chi	W cho
U dhi	U dho
U thi	U tho
C' tti	U' tto
E tthi	U ttho
E t'ci	U t'co (tthoo)

40 Dene Syllabics information compiled from CPDEN Traditional Land Use Study interviews.

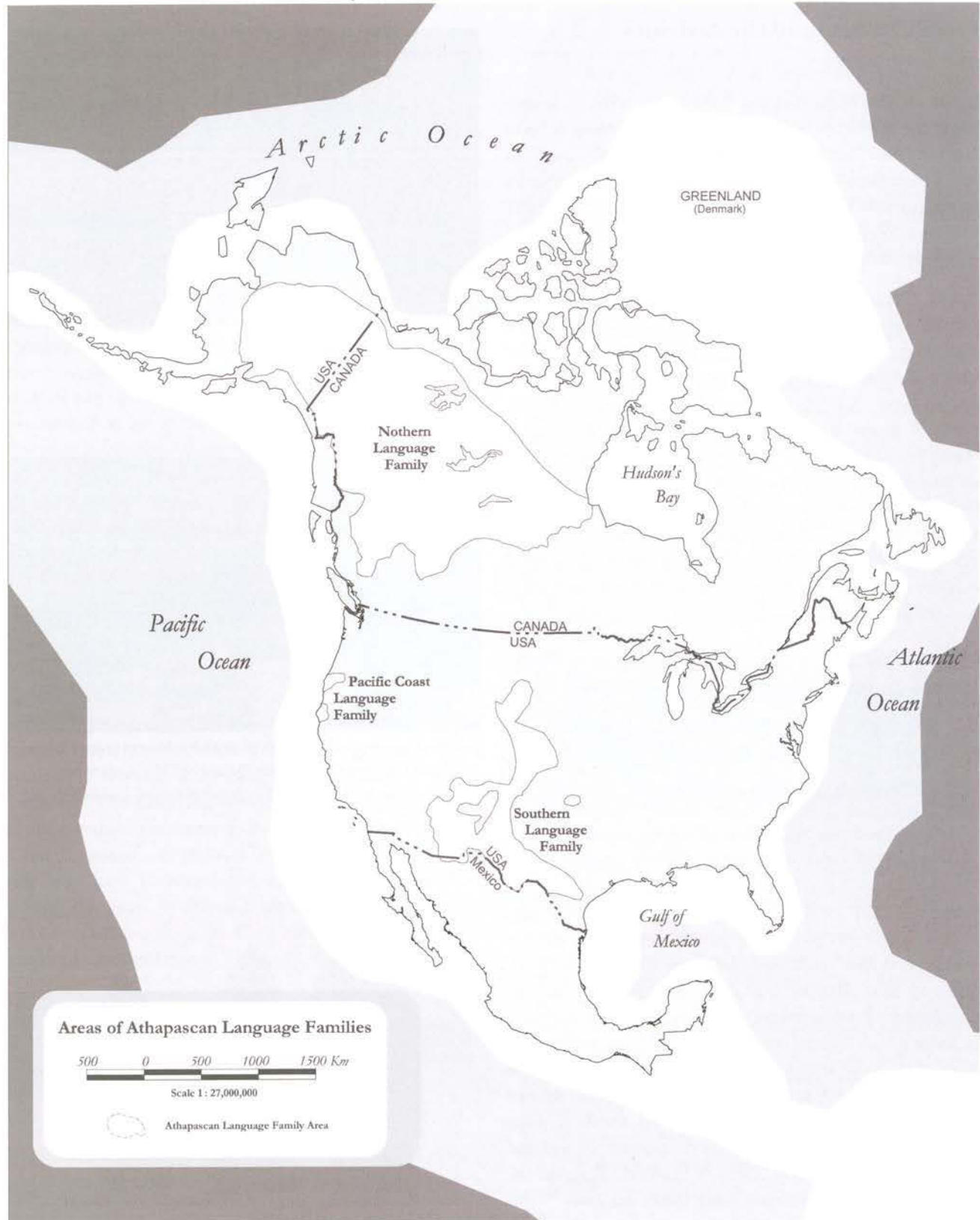


Figure 2.2 Athapaskan Language Groups<sup>44</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Map compiled from information gathered by Fish Creek Consulting, during the Athapaskan Chipewyan First Nation Traditional Land Use Study (2003). Derived from the Atlas of the North American Indian, Waldman (2000).



## Proto Contact Land Use Activities and Territories

Based on the archaeological record and what is known about the resources in the region of northeastern Alberta and other northern areas of Canada, we can get an idea about what the land use activities and traditional territories of the pre-contact Chipewyan Dené might have been. We can also compare early accounts about these Aboriginal people from fur traders, explorers and missionaries.<sup>45</sup>

Before contact with European explorers, the Chipewyan people were hunter-gatherers who adopted ways of life according to their environmental conditions. During the spring and summer months they hunted caribou, moose, beaver, bear, muskrat, waterfowl and fished in the barren grounds. In the winter, they likely returned to the taiga transition zone to hunt caribou, moose and other small animals. When the resources were plentiful and predictable, large groups of people met seasonally at gathering places. One such site is “?Enák’erik’á” (Cree Burn Lake) – a 5,000 to 8,000 year old site, which contains archaeological remains of a set of ancient pre-contact campsites and stone tool workshops.



Athapaskan Trade Bead Strand, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-277.

There was likely considerable trade and exchanges of gifts between these groups, as well as with groups who resided well beyond their traditional territories. The trade between different First Nations was necessary given the uneven distribution of resources between groups and the necessity to form good relations and alliances.<sup>46</sup> Arrowheads and other tools were frequently traded and evidence of these foreign materials is present in the archaeological record of Alberta.<sup>47</sup> Spear Points found at the Gardiner Lake Narrows and Eaglenest Portage sites are made of material that is unique to the area north of the Keele River in the Northwest Territories, more than 1,000 km away.<sup>48</sup> This suggests long distance trade relations and also supports the Dené legend of western migration.



Archaeologists at work north of Fort McMurray, Alberta.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Saxberg, LifeWays of Canada.



Archaeology site north of Fort McMurray; part of what is being called the Quarry of the Ancestors.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Saxberg, LifeWays of Canada.



Three spear points found in Alberta's oilsands.

Photo courtesy of Nancy Saxberg, LifeWays of Canada.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid, Gordon (1977), pg. 76, from Hearne (1795) and Mackenzie (1801).

<sup>46</sup> Ibid, Dickason, O.P. (1997), pg. 56.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid, Barry and Brink (2004), pg. 3.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid, Ives (1993), pg. 18.



Proof of ancient human activity is being found at hundreds of archaeological sites in the Athabasca lowlands, a region that was almost a complete void in the archaeological record just a few decades ago.

Archaeological evidence shows that the Athabaskan people migrated into northern Alberta at least 2,500 to 1,200 years ago.<sup>50 51</sup> John Ives speculates that the Athapaskan speakers moved

south and east into northern Alberta, while the Algonquin speakers made a more westward expansion from northern Manitoba and Saskatchewan.<sup>52</sup> Ives concludes that in pre-contact times, the Algonquin people were established as far as the upper reaches of the Churchill drainage, while the Athapaskan speakers were beyond this in the Athabasca River and Peace River drainages. More specifically, the Chipewyan territory stretched north of the Churchill or English River to Ile a la Crosse, Buffalo Lake, and the Athabasca River to the east side of Lake Athabasca. The west end of Lake Athabasca and the Peace River were considered Beaver territory at this time.<sup>53</sup>

There were likely two major cultural traditions in the Lake Athabasca region during this time. Although both groups had access to bison and caribou, the people occupying the western portion of the lake were oriented toward bison hunting, while those residing in the eastern portion of the lake were more oriented toward hunting caribou.<sup>54</sup> The Churchill River system was likely a pre-history transitional zone that both the Chipewyan and Cree occupied or utilized at different times. While this may have increased the likelihood of conflicts in Aboriginal times, it may not have been quite as serious as later conflicts, when the Cree and then the Chipewyan acquired rifles and fought over guns.<sup>55</sup>



**Barnett Flintlock; Model 1871; London.** The ownership of this gun has been attributed to Cree Chief Poundmaker. Photo courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Digital Collection. Reference Number HBC 2327 B.

Before contact with Europeans, the Chipewyan Dené people primarily harvested caribou for their livelihood. Their traditional territory was related to the migrations of the caribou herds. There is debate regarding the traditional territories and boundaries of the Athabaskan (Chipewyan) and Algonquin (Cree) groups.<sup>56</sup> Gillespie (1975) and Smith (1975) suggest that the Cree were the inhabitants of the Lake Athabasca and the Athabasca River region since Aboriginal times and that the Athabaskan people, the Chipewyan, were intruders into Cree territory as a result of the fur trade.<sup>57 58</sup> Yerbury (1976) and others suggest that the Dené occupied the Lake Athabasca area and were forced further north by the Crees who had acquired flint rifles from the fur trade.<sup>59</sup>



**Sandy banks of Athabasca River, below the mouth of the La Biche River.**

*Photo courtesy of the Tyrell Library, University of Toronto.*

56 Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.17, See Gillespie (1975); Ives (1990); Russell (1991); Smith (1975); and Yerbury (1976).

57 Gillespie, B.C. (1975). Territorial Expansion of the Chipewyan in the 18th Century. Document 19, eHRAF Collection of Ethnography.

58 Smith, J.G.E. (1975). The Ecological Basis of Chipewyan Socio-Territorial Organization. Document 20, eHRAF, Collection of Ethnography.

59 Ibid, Yerbury, J.C. (1976), pg.248.

50 Ibid, Ives, (1990).

51 Ibid, Gordon (1977), pg.72.

52 Ibid, Ives (1993), pg.17.

53 Mathewson, P.A. (1974). The Geographical Impact of Outsiders on the Community of Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. Master's Thesis, Department of Geography, University of Alberta. 183pp.

54 Yerbury, J.C. (1976). The Post-Contact Chipewyan: Trade Rivalries and Changing Territorial Boundaries. *Ethnohistory* 23/3: pg.259, from Wright (1975:137).

55 Ibid, ACFN (1993), pg.35.



# Chapter 3

## *The Fur Trade Period and the Chipewyan*

This chapter describes the Chipewyan Dené people from the time of European contact and the early fur trade in the mid 1700s, through to the late fur trade of the mid 1800s. The Chipewyan people became more involved in the fur trade resulting in technological adaptations, territory adjustments, and traditional lifestyle changes.

### **Early Fur Trade Period**

Although the Chipewyan people first made contact with Europeans in the 1680s along Hudson Bay, they did not trade with the European fur traders at this time.<sup>60</sup> The Cree did begin trade with the Europeans and established themselves as middlemen by trading with



Hudson Bay Company buildings, York Factory, Man. 1925. Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-020002.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid, ACFN (1993), pg 23 from Yerbury (1976), pg.237.



other aboriginal peoples to obtain furs. First to obtain flintlocks from the European traders, the Cree were able to force the Chipewyan north and east out of the Churchill headwaters between 1694 and 1714. They also pushed the Beaver west out of the Athabasca region and the Slaves to the west of Great Slave Lake. The Cree expansion resulted in intense Chipewyan – Cree warfare. As a result, many Chipewyans were killed at the hands of the Cree who were armed with guns and looking for furs. During this period, the Chipewyan had still not participated in the fur trade, were trapping solely for their own traditional use and did not have guns.

In the early 1700s, the fur traders at York Factory were interested in expanding the fur trade west and had still

been unable to convince the Chipewyan or “Northern Indians” to partake in the fur trade. Within the Chipewyan oral history, there is a story that tells about the beginning of the Chipewyan involvement with the fur trade.<sup>61</sup> Evidence of this story is also recorded in the York Factory Journals<sup>62</sup>. Jesuit priest and ethnographer, Emile Petitot, recorded a translation of the name “Thah Nádelthur” or “Thah Náltth'er” from a Cold Lake Elder as meaning, “Jumping Marten” or “Falling Marten”.<sup>63</sup> “Ttha'naltther” is also translated to mean, “falling sand” in the Dené language. Elders today have retained very accurate accounts of the story of Ttha'naltther and how she encouraged peace between the Cree and Chipewyan peoples.



Finding Her People, “Ambadress of Peace” A Chipewyan (Ttha'naltther) makes peace with the Cree, 1715. Hudson's Bay Archives, Provincial Archives of Manitoba. Artist Franklin Arbuckle. Photo courtesy of Fort Chipewyan Museum.

<sup>61</sup> Ibid, Coutu and Hoffmann-Mercredi (1999), pg.98.

<sup>62</sup> Ibid, Coutu and Hoffmann-Mercredi (1999), pg.123.

<sup>63</sup> Ibid, Coutu and Hoffmann-Mercredi (1999), pg.98, from Petitot (1894), pg.424.



### The Story of Thah Nálth'th'er

Thah Nálth'th'er was a young woman captured by the Cree's during one of their Chipewyan raids of the early fur trade in 1713.<sup>64</sup> She traveled to Fort York with the Crees as their slave. In November 1714, having escaped from her captors, Thah Nálth'th'er spoke with Captain James Knight, the Chief Factor at York Factory trading post, about the treatment of her people at the hands of the Cree.<sup>65</sup> She described her home as a warmer place compared to York Fort and it is possible that she gave the first descriptions of the tar sands of her homelands.<sup>66</sup>

With this knowledge, James Knight organized an expedition in June of 1715, comprised of William Stewart, a company trader who spoke Cree, Thah Nálth'th'er who also spoke Cree, Captain Swan, a Cree Chief, and other Southern Cree, "to make peace with those Indians bordering on the Western Seas".<sup>67</sup> Thah Nálth'th'er and the group traveled an estimated 1000 kilometres by the time they reached the area northwest of Lake Athabasca. By distinguishing Cree and Chipewyan snowshoe tracks, Thah Nálth'th'er finally found her people hiding to avoid the Cree. With much spirit and force, Thah Nálth'th'er persuaded the Chipewyan men to make peace with the Cree. The Cree and Chipewyan proceeded to "smoke the peace pipe, exchange gifts and hostages, and discuss the trapping and processing of furs for trade at Fort Churchill."<sup>68</sup>

Based on the descriptions from Thah Nálth'th'er and the writings of Captain James Knight and other York Factory tradesmen, researchers have attempted to draw conclusions about the proto contact territories of the Aboriginal people in the Peace-Athabasca region. Although this information is valuable, it appears that the Cree invasions – powered by rifles, had impacted the location of the Chipewyan people.<sup>69</sup>



Chipewyan Indians at Churchill. 1894.

Photo courtesy of Tyrell Library, University of Toronto.

64 Ibid, ACEN (2003), pg.26.

65 Ibid, Coutu and Hoffmann-Mercredi (1999), pg.125.

66 Ibid, Coutu and Hoffmann-Mercredi (1999), pg.125.

67 Ibid, Coutu and Hoffmann-Mercredi (1999), pg.125.

68 Ibid, Yerbury (1981), pg. 244, from (Kenney 1932:55-56).

69 Ibid, ACEN (2003), pg.26.

### The River Named "Peace"

By 1717, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) opened Fort Churchill (Prince of Wales Fort) in order to trade with the Chipewyan.<sup>70</sup> The Chipewyan began to act as middlemen between the HBC and the western Tribes such as the Dogrib and the Yellowknife.<sup>71</sup> The Chipewyan middlemen were now bypassing the Cree middlemen to trade directly at the Prince of Wales Fort in Fort Churchill. As more Chipewyan became involved in the fur trade, intensive competition over trading and trapping areas occurred between the Algonquians and Athabascans. Although relative peace had been made between the Cree and Chipewyans closer to Fort Churchill, cases of intertribal war and conflict continued over the next several years, especially between the more westerly groups in the Athabasca region.<sup>72</sup>

With warfare escalating in the summer of 1761, the fur traders continued to promote peace between the two groups. They appointed a Chipewyan named Matonabee, who was proficient in both the Cree and Chipewyan languages, to mediate a peace treaty between the Cree and Chipewyans.<sup>73</sup> Matonabee and his party were well supplied with goods to encourage peaceful trading; however, it took several missions to establish peace between the Cree and Athabaskan people. During the winters of 1764 and 1765, Matonabee was able to secure a Treaty between the Cree and the Beaver at Peace Point. This is the origin of the name 'Peace River'. Matonabee was given many gifts for his service and was requested to guide Samuel Hearne on his famous journey among the Chipewyan between 1769 and 1772.

### The Chipewyan Way of Life during the Early Fur Trade

During the period when the Chipewyan were becoming more involved in the fur trade, the people maintained most of their social and cultural life ways with minimal involvement and dependence upon the Europeans.<sup>74</sup> Between 1769 and 1772, when Samuel Hearne had lived and traveled with the Chipewyan, he reported that many of them still, "...live generally in a state of plenty, without

70 McCormack, P.A. *Becoming Trappers: The Transformation to a Fur Trade Mode of Production at Fort Chipewyan*. In *Rendezvous: Selected Papers of the 4th North American Fur Trade Conference*, 1981, pgs. 155-173.

71 Ibid, Yerbury (1981), pg.33.

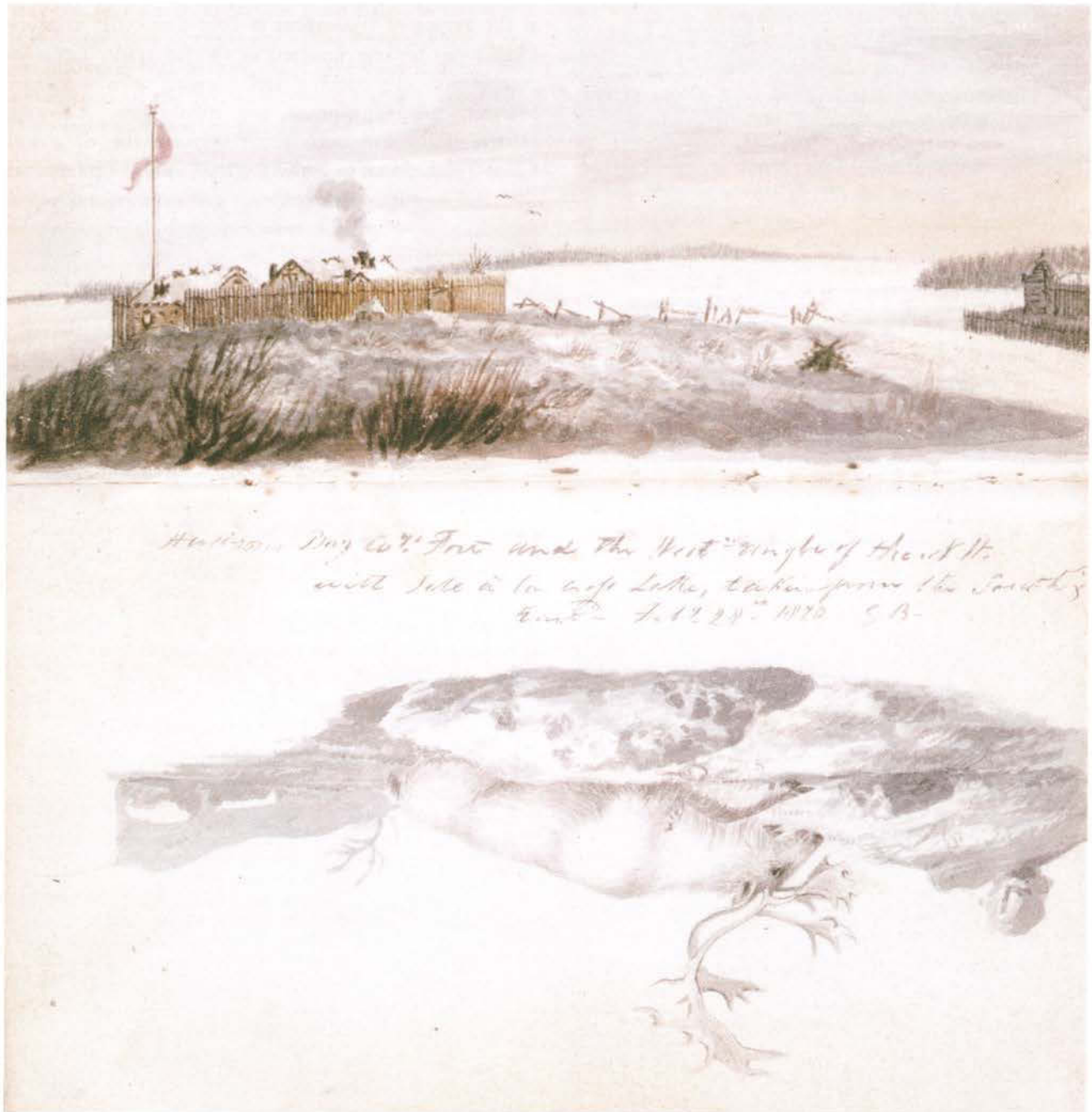
72 Gillespie, B.C. (1976). *Changes in Territory and Technology of the Chipewyan*. *Arctic Anthropology*. XIII-1: 6-11.

73 Ibid, Gillespie (1976) pg.34.

74 Smith, J.G.E. (1978). "The Emergence of the Micro-Urban Village among the Caribou-Eater Chipewyan." *Human Organization*. Vol. 37, No.1 (Spring 1978): 38-49.

trouble of risk; and consequently must be the most happy, and, in truth, the most independent also.”<sup>75</sup> The caribou continued to supply almost all of their needs and a small quantity of fur was sufficient to obtain the few items of European goods and supplies that they needed.

However, with the demand for fur by the European traders so high, subtle changes to the Chipewyan traditional way of life had begun to occur. The quantity of furs produced by the Chipewyan began to increase. As a result, the Chipewyan people spent more time in the full Boreal forest, not necessarily in the seasons or locations related to the caribou migrations.<sup>76</sup>



The Hudson's Bay Company and North West Company forts at Ile-a-la-Crosse. 1820. By George Back.

Image courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number C-145920.

<sup>75</sup> Ibid, Yerbury (1976), pg.248, from Hearne (1971), pg.80.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid, Gillespie (1976), pg.8.



### Establishment of Interior Trading Posts

By the mid 1770s independent traders or “pedlars” from Montreal moved into the Athabasca region. The pedlars based from Montreal, were not content to wait for the Aboriginal people to make the long journey east, therefore, they decided to move into the area themselves. One of these independent traders, Peter Pond, traveled the Methye Portage<sup>77</sup> route in 1778 and built “Pond’s House” in Fort Chipewyan, 40 miles south of the Athabasca River. This opened up the Athabasca

country to the fur trade. Pond had great trading success with the Chipewyan and Cree at his new post and other traders were attracted to the Athabasca region, such as Alexander Mackenzie. Following his success, Pond partnered with other independent traders to form the North West Company (NWC).<sup>78</sup>

In 1788, the newly formed NWC established a new post called Fort Chipewyan on the south shore of Lake



Hudson's Bay Company Post, Lac la Biche. Photo courtesy of Tyrell Library, University of Toronto. Reference Number P10148.

Athabasca. Fort Chipewyan was originally known as Old Fort Point, and was not ideally located to effectively service the fur trading industry. Because of this, Fort Chipewyan was moved across the lake to its current site near the mouth of the Peace River sometime around

1796 or 1797. Fort Vermilion was another post built on the Peace River. It was created in 1788, and along with Fort Chipewyan, it is often credited as being the oldest continuously inhabited town in Alberta.

<sup>77</sup> The Methye Portage is also known as the Portage la Loche.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid, McCormack, pg. 162.

people's diet. Still, it was the European rifle that caused the most dramatic change in the Chipewyan traditional culture and activities.<sup>82</sup> After trading began with the Europeans, the traditional bow and arrow hunting methods were gradually replaced with the rifle. For the

most part, the Chipewyan continued to use traditional hunting methods throughout the 1800s, particularly for the caribou hunt. As the technology of the rifle improved, this led to more efficient hunting of large and small game and birds.



**Flints and Strike-a-light.** Flints were common trade goods. Photo courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Digital Collection. Reference Numbers HBC 73-218 A, B.



**Linen Thread and Sewing Needles.** Photos courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Digital Collection. Reference Numbers HBC 60-21 A and HBC 60-18 C



**Copper kettle.** Copper kettles were introduced by the Hudson's Bay Company in the late 1700s for Aboriginal trade. Photo courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Digital Collection. Reference Number HBC 57-46.

82 Ibid, Sharp (1977), Ibid Gillespie (1976).



## The Fur Trade Period and the Chipewyan



**Native trading fur for a gun. 1920.** Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number C-038173.

Besides European trade goods, there were other technological adaptations that significantly altered the traditional culture of the Chipewyan throughout the early fur trade period. One of these adaptations was the Chipewyan adoption of the Algonquin style birchbark canoe. The traditional Chipewyan canoe was generally used to cross lakes and rivers and to spear caribou at water crossings. It was smaller, about 12 to 13 feet long and about 2 feet wide, and lighter. It had a wooden frame covered with caribou hides. This vessel was similar to a kayak and could hold one person, while another person could be placed flat in the front of the canoe.

On the other hand, the Cree canoe was larger and described as, "18 feet long and 2 feet wide with a woman and man at each end with goods and children in the middle."<sup>83</sup> These larger birchbark canoes gave the Chipewyan greater capacity to transport more furs and travel greater distances, especially on the large lake and river systems. By the 1790s when trading posts were established along the Churchill River, Lake Athabasca and Great Slave Lake regions, the Chipewyan had adopted the Cree style canoe. While this required a larger amount of effort to build and likely encouraged more use of the waterways instead of

the former overland routes traditionally preferred by the Chipewyan,<sup>84</sup> the larger birchbark canoes provided greater versatility, safety, and carrying capacity than the traditional Chipewyan canoe did.<sup>85</sup>



**Chipewyan Knife, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-76.



**Athapaskan Bow Loom, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-218.



**Athapaskan Arrow, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-175.

<sup>83</sup> Ibid, pg.9, from Graham (1969), pg.9.

<sup>84</sup> Ibid, ACEN (2003), pg.39.

<sup>85</sup> Ibid, Sharp (1977).



**Large birchbark canoes used formerly to reach the interior for the caribou hunt, left behind in the spring, 1926.** *Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-020024.*

Another major change to the culture of the Chipewyan was the use of the dog team. Dog teams came into use after the fur trade brought the Chipewyan into the Boreal forest.<sup>86</sup> Although the dog team had been used in Aboriginal times, it was not used extensively. The use of dog teams greatly increased the rate and distance of winter travel for the Chipewyan. Not only put to use during the winter, dogs were also used as pack dogs during the summer. However, the dogs had to be fed year round and transported in the summer months. As a result, fishing for dog food became important and more time consuming. Supplies such as toboggans, harnesses and whips had to be regularly constructed and repaired. Trails also needed to be maintained throughout the winter. All of this greatly altered the traditional activities of the Chipewyan people.



**Chipewyan Dog Whip, Western Subarctic.** *Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-57.*

<sup>86</sup> Ibid, Sharp (1977).



### A Vital Role - First Nations and the Fur Trade

The First Nation peoples had an integral role in the fur trade.<sup>87 88</sup> From the beginning of the fur trade in Canada, the Aboriginal people were the primary trappers, hunters, traders, and middlemen. They were active in the harvesting, processing, sorting and transporting of furs before they were exported. Aboriginal men and women contributed their skills, experience, time, and energy to the fur industry. The Native people also contributed traditional knowledge, technology and products that greatly contributed to the Europeans ability to survive in this unfamiliar country. Examples of this include the:

- Canoe;
- toboggan;
- snowshoe design and construction;
- navigation skills, and;
- Aboriginal food processing such as making pemmican and other means of preserving meats, fish, and berries.



**Chipewyan Toboggan, Western Subarctic.**

*Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-114.*

87 Brown, J.S.H. (1993). *Fur Trade History as Text and Drama*. In P.A. McCormack and R. Geoffrey, Eds., *The Uncovered Past: Roots of Northern Alberta Societies*. Canadian Circumpolar Institute Research Series No.3. Pgs. 81-88. Canadian Circumpolar Institute, University of Alberta, pg.93.

88 Ray, A.J. (1974). *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press. 249pp.

### Late Fur Trade: Late Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries

#### Chipewyan Movement

With the establishment of the interior trading posts, some Chipewyan groups began to move into areas southwest of their traditional territory in the taiga and barren lands. It is thought that the rivalry between the fur trade companies was partly responsible for drawing these groups from their forest-tundra environment southward into the full Boreal forest.<sup>89</sup> Another factor that influenced the Chipewyan movement was the small pox epidemic of 1782.

The Bands remaining in the traditional Chipewyan territory were known as the Caribou Eaters, the "En eldili dene." The groups that migrated west and southwest became known as the Athabascans, "Dene des k'é nádé", the people living on the river or "K'éstélé k'é hot'iné", the people living among the trembling aspen. Other groups moved into the interior forest to the south and these people were identified as the "Thilanottine", those who dwell at the head of the lakes, or as Emile Petitot recorded, "the people who live at the head of the tall giant."<sup>90</sup> These Bands were located south of Lake Athabasca and included the Chipewyan Prairie and others such as Buffalo Narrows, Cold Lake, Ile-a-la-Crosse, Dillon, and Patuanak.

As the Chipewyan involvement in the fur trade intensified, there was a growing dependence of the aboriginal people upon the European traders and the posts for survival. While many of the Chipewyan became more involved in the fur trade, some Bands still continued to maintain their northern cycles based upon caribou migrations.<sup>91</sup> Many groups at least maintained seasonal rounds to the barren grounds for the caribou hunt. Those who continued this traditional activity were able to maintain a certain level of independence from the Europeans and the fur trade.

89 Ibid, Gillespie (1975).

90 Ibid, Coutu and Hoffman-Mercredi (1999), pg.17.

91 Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.29.



### Disease Epidemics

The European traders introduced devastating diseases into the Aboriginal populations. The small pox epidemics wiped out major portions of the population. The influenza pandemics also took their toll. These diseases hit the Aboriginal people harder because they had not developed the same immunities as the Europeans. The small pox epidemic of 1782 was particularly devastating to the Cree people of the area. The Chipewyan were able to migrate further southwest after the epidemic wiped out a large portion of the northern Cree population. Fur traders that had moved into the area took note that the Chipewyans considered themselves strangers to the area at that time.<sup>92</sup> Alexander Mackenzie had encountered the Beaver and other Athabascans living in the Clearwater River area in 1788, indicating they were no longer confined by the Cree to the Peace River area.

92 Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.30, from Garvin (1927:120).



**One mile above Clearwater River. Natives enroute to their hunting grounds. 1878.** Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number C-001132



**Chipewyan Indian skinning caribou.** Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-020401.

### Annual Rounds in the Boreal Forest

The “Tháláhot’íné” represent the southern Chipewyan population along the Churchill River and westward toward the Cold Lake vicinity of present day Alberta.<sup>93</sup> Apparently, some of the Chipewyan of this southern group became associated with the Ile a la Crosse trading system and became known as “K’éstélé k’é hot’íné” or “poplar house people” in reference to early traders’ forts built in the area of poplar or aspen logs.<sup>94</sup> A Chipewyan Elder of this southern group, Sarah Bell, born in approximately 1870, recalled the nomadic movements of her people.<sup>95</sup> She passed down this traditional knowledge to Moise McIntyre of the English River Band in the early 1940s. Moise McIntyre described two major annual rounds of the Chipewyan living in the northern Saskatchewan region around the headwaters of the Churchill River. Figure 3.1 shows the northern and southern annual rounds of the Chipewyan people as described by Sarah Bell.

### The Southern Cycle

The Chipewyan groups who traveled south wintered in small multi-family camps in the area between the headwaters of the Foster River and Cree Lake. Prior to spring break up, they would be camped near groves of birch trees where they would construct their new birchbark canoes. As spring progressed, the families would travel by canoe to their summer gathering place at Big Island near the Ile a la Crosse post. Here they would fish near Beaver River and Buffalo Narrows and trade furs at the post for supplies in preparation for the coming winter. This would also be a time for families to have celebrations. During August, small groups of families began moving south and southeastward from

93 Jarvenpa, R. and H.J. Brumback. (1984). The Microeconomics of Southern Chipewyan Fur Trade History. Pgs. 147-182 in Shepard, K, Ed., The Subarctic fur trade: native social and economic adaptations. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press. 194 pp.

94 Ibid, Jarvenpa and Brumback (1984), pg.152, from Curtis (1928), pg.3 and Jarvenpa (1989), pg.43-44.

95 Ibid, Jarvenpa and Brumback. (1984), pg. 153-155.



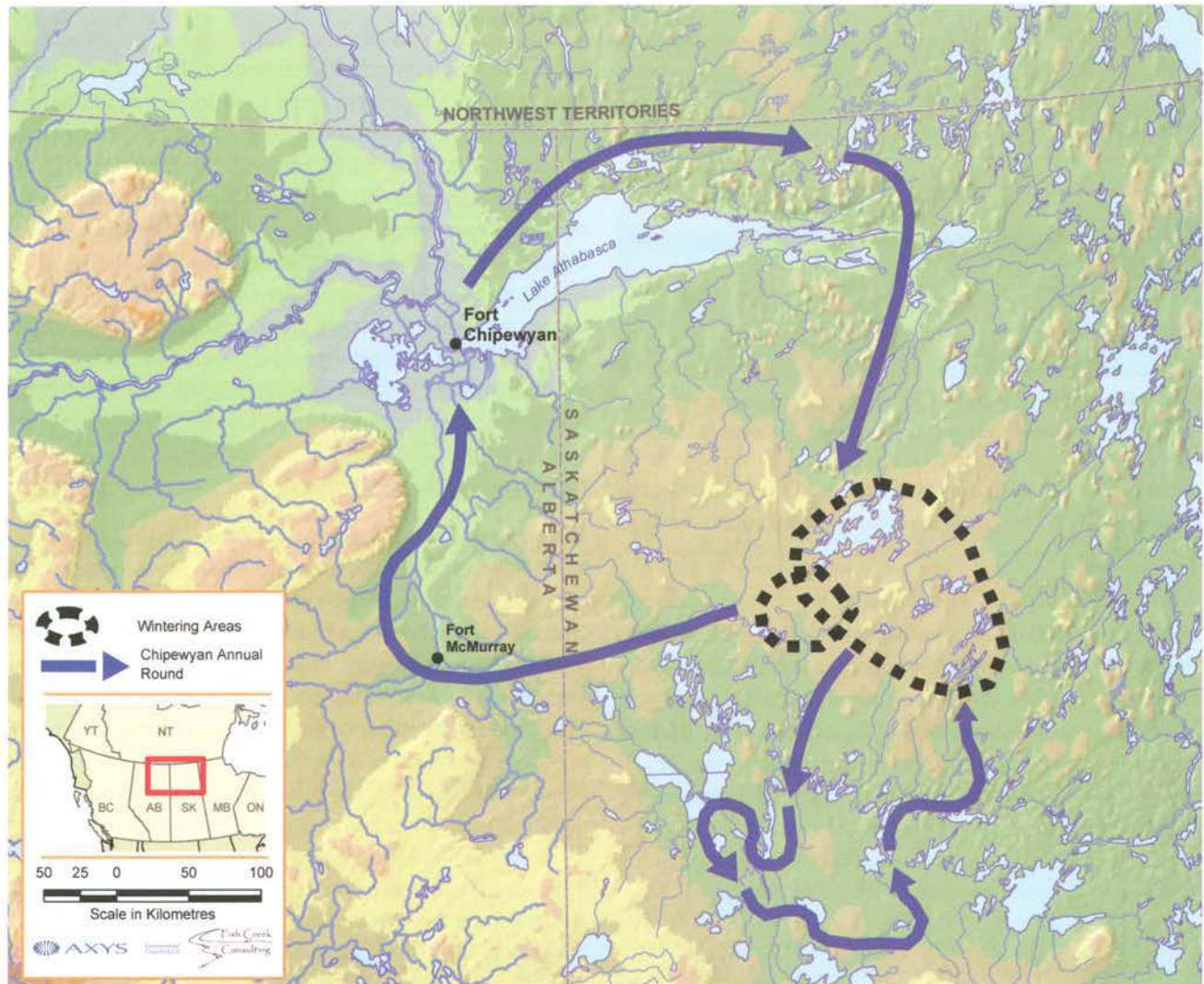


Figure 3.1 Chipewyan Annual Rounds of the 1800's

Ile a la Crosse by canoe. In the fall, they would follow a circular route northwards through the Churchill River or Souris River back to Foster Lakes where they would then divide into their winter hunting and trapping groups.

### The Northern Cycle

The northern cycle involved Chipewyan who generally traded at posts outside the Ile a la Crosse district and summered near the edge of the barren grounds. These people would spend their winters hunting and trapping in the Black Birch Lake area and the region west and southwest of Cree Lake. This was the southern extension of the annual round. After spring break up, these groups would gather at the headwaters of the Clearwater River and travel the river westward to its confluence with the

Athabasca River at what is now known as Fort McMurray. Some families had a brief trading visit at Fort McMurray and others traveled further north on the Athabasca River to trade at Fort Chipewyan. This northern group positioned themselves along major fall-winter migration corridors in order to harvest large numbers of southward moving caribou in October and November.

The northern group moved in a clockwise direction, while the southern round moved counter clockwise. These two cycles loosely overlapped in the winter hunting grounds around Cree Lake providing opportunities for intermarriage and social exchange between the two groups. These rounds are an adaptation to the fur trade and show the close integration and interdependence of the early





**Souris River Post, Churchill River, Saskatchewan. 1926.** *Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-020068.*

commercial fur activities and the traditional harvesting livelihood.<sup>96</sup> The description of these annual rounds reflects the current locations of Chipewyan settlements in northern Saskatchewan and Alberta.

Although the CPDFN Elders are not able to recall the same annual cycles as Sarah Bell, we do know that many of the originating families came from the Garson Lake and Lac La Loche area in Saskatchewan. Chipewyan Prairie became a summer gathering place for several of these families in the late 1800s and early 1900s. The other lake areas in the region were also used as the people followed the available fish and game. These ancestors may have been related to the groups of the southern cycle explained by Sarah Bell.

The CPDFN Elders explained that the fur trade continued into the early and mid 1900s. They recall traveling to the Fort McMurray post and other local merchants in the area to sell furs. Francis Raboud, Bill Tatum, Cheecham Village and the store at Mile 224 were common places for the CPDFN people to trade and sell furs up until the 1950s and 1960s. Although the demand for furs diminished, many of the CPDFN people continued their traditional practices of hunting, trapping and fishing and supplemented their income with seasonal work. All of these traditional activities continue today, although mainly on weekends or at particular times throughout the year.

## Conclusion

Since the first contact with European fur traders, many aspects of the Chipewyan Dené traditional way of life have gradually been adapted and changed. When the Chipewyan people first entered into trade with the Europeans in the early 1700s, their traditional way of life was maintained with minimal dependence on the fur trade.<sup>97</sup> As the Chipewyan people became more involved with the trade, they became less nomadic and more dependent on the trading post visits where they obtained trade goods and supplies like sugar, flour and lard. During this period, trapping became a major focus supported by traditional hunting and fishing for subsistence. By the time the interior fur trade posts were established in 1788, the Chipewyan people were involved significantly in the fur trade.

The migrations to participate in the Boreal forest fur trade changed the relationship with the barren land caribou, which the Chipewyan people had relied upon for generations. By the late 1800s, some Chipewyan groups, including the Chipewyan Prairie Dené, had moved further south and west beyond the range of the barren land caribou. The Chipewyan and other Aboriginal communities were now leading a far less nomadic life with the establishment of “micro-villages” or log cabin settlements. Although the people continued to hunt, trap, fish, and gather based on the seasonal availability of the local animals and plants, their traditional nomadic range of thousands of kilometres was now centred around their permanent log cabins and summer hunting and fishing camps.



**Close-up of cache left by Chipewyan natives while taking furs to trading post. These are often left on islands. 1926.** *Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-020010.*

<sup>96</sup> Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg.42.

<sup>97</sup> Ibid, Smith (1978), pg.38.

# Chapter 4

## *Conflicts and Negotiations*

The 1800s was a period of great conflict and struggle for the Aboriginal people in northern Canada and in North America in general. More immigrants were arriving in eastern Canada and the United States and more land was needed to accommodate them. When settlers began to move west, it caused conflict between the Europeans and the existing Aboriginal communities in the region.

This chapter discusses the hardships and conflicts that this westward settlement caused between the Canadian Government, the Métis, and the First Nation communities. It also explains the Treaty negotiations that resulted from these hardships as the Aboriginal people struggled to maintain their traditional lands and livelihood.



Natives at Fort McMurray, 1893. Photo courtesy of Tyrell Archives, University of Toronto. Reference Number P10177.



## Land Transfers

In 1861, the “Indian Wars” erupted in the United States. Increasing conflicts between the Government and Natives also developed in Canada. After Canadian Confederation in 1867, there were a series of expeditions into Rupert’s Land in pursuit of pushing European settlement further west. Shortly after in 1869, the HBC transferred its rights to Rupert’s Land to the Government of Canada. This drastically changed the long-term trading relationship between the First Nations and the HBC. Previously, the HBC had protected the interests of the Aboriginal communities and tried to help them in times of hardship. However, now the Natives could no longer rely on the HBC for provisions or credit, and the responsibility of the Natives now fell squarely upon the shoulders of the Canadian Government. Unlike the HBC, the Government did not feel any obligation toward the Aboriginals “with whom it did not have a formal agreement”, nor did the Government see any purpose in making a Treaty with Natives whose land was apparently of such little value.<sup>98</sup>

This transfer of responsibility from the HBC to the Government particularly alarmed the Métis who feared that the Government would push their People away from their traditional territory along the Red and Assiniboine

ivers. Consequently, they established a provisional Government of their own and elected Louis Riel as their leader.<sup>99</sup> With this, the infamous ‘Red River Uprising’ or the ‘First Riel Uprising’ soon occurred, where the Métis seized Fort Garry in 1869 and successfully prevented the newly appointed Canadian Governor from entering their territory. This conflict ended with negotiations between Louis Riel and the Canadian Government, which resulted in land to the Métis people. With this agreement, Manitoba was admitted into Confederation in 1870. However, the Government’s promises of land to the Métis were never fulfilled, forcing much of the Métis community to migrate further west.

## Native Hardships and Treaty Negotiations

During this time, the Dené people, including the CPDFN ancestors, continued to live off the land but were faced with intensive competition from the new white trappers and free traders. The new competition and the relative depletion of many big game animals, such as the buffalo, and furbearers permanently changed the cycles and livelihoods of the Chipewyan Dené and other Aboriginal groups in the region. This, combined with disease and flu epidemics, resulted in desperate appeals to the



Meeting with Natives on north shore of Lake Athabasca, Alberta. Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada, PA-031902.

<sup>98</sup> Ibid, Fumoleau (2004), pg.14.

<sup>99</sup> Ibid, Dickason, O.P. (1997), pg. 243.



## Conflicts and Negotiations

Government and the HBC by the First Nations and Métis groups. The missionaries in the northern area opposed the way in which the Government was treating the First Nation groups and also made appeals. Post factors and local newspapers made several reports of Native starvation, disease, and hardship during the 1870s.

After admitting Manitoba into Confederation and in anticipation of further European settlement, the Government and the First Nations of western Canada entered into the Treaty negotiation processes. Figure 4.1 shows the numbered Treaties one through eight. The purpose of these Treaties was initially to secure the lands of the First Nations Peoples to use for European settlement, industry, and agricultural development. Between 1871 and 1875, the Government initiated Treaties 1 through 5 with the First Nations in what was then part of the new province of Manitoba and the Northwest Territories - now parts of northwestern Ontario and southern Manitoba, Saskatchewan and Alberta.

The Government faced more resistance with the First Nations in Treaties 6 and 7 regions as the people were suffering greatly at the hands of westward settlement and had many concerns. European settlers were moving onto the prairies at a rapid rate and as they moved westward, they were displacing the First Nations peoples

from their land. The plains and woodland buffalo had virtually disappeared from this region and other big game animals like deer, were no longer as plentiful as before. More and more of the people were now facing starvation and diseases like smallpox effectively destroyed entire Aboriginal communities. Big Bear, a prominent Cree Chief had refused to sign Treaty 6. He argued that forcing the Cree Nations onto reserves was denying them freedom on their own land and that the Treaty terms were insufficient. Other Chiefs, such as One Arrow and Poundmaker also started listening to Big Bear because their people continued to suffer.

Treaty 6, which covered central Alberta and Saskatchewan, was signed in 1876 at Carlton and Fort Pitt. Chief Big Bear initially refused to sign Treaty 6 and peacefully continued to fight for his people's rights. However, with the buffalo gone, the Cree of the Prairies were now facing starvation, and after six years of searching for solutions, Big Bear reluctantly signed Treaty 6 on December 8, 1882. Treaty 7 was signed a year later in 1877 at the Blackfoot crossing of the Bow River and Fort McLeod and included the Blackfoot, Sioux, and Tsuu T'ina First Nation (Dené) of southern Alberta. After obtaining enough land for settlement, the Treaty process was halted until the signing of Treaty number 8 in 1899.

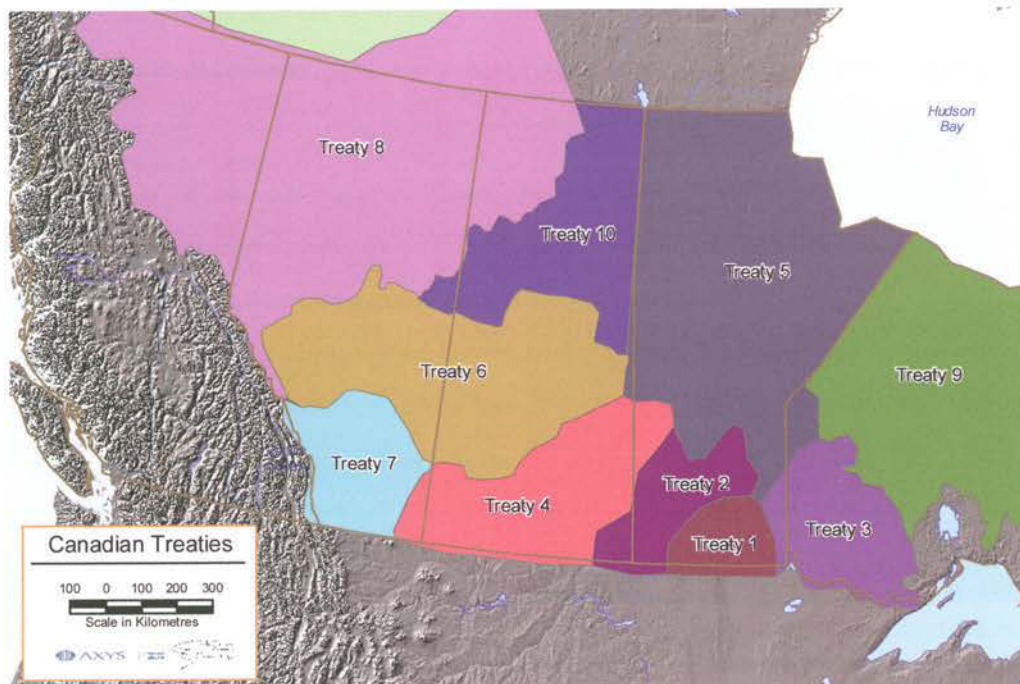


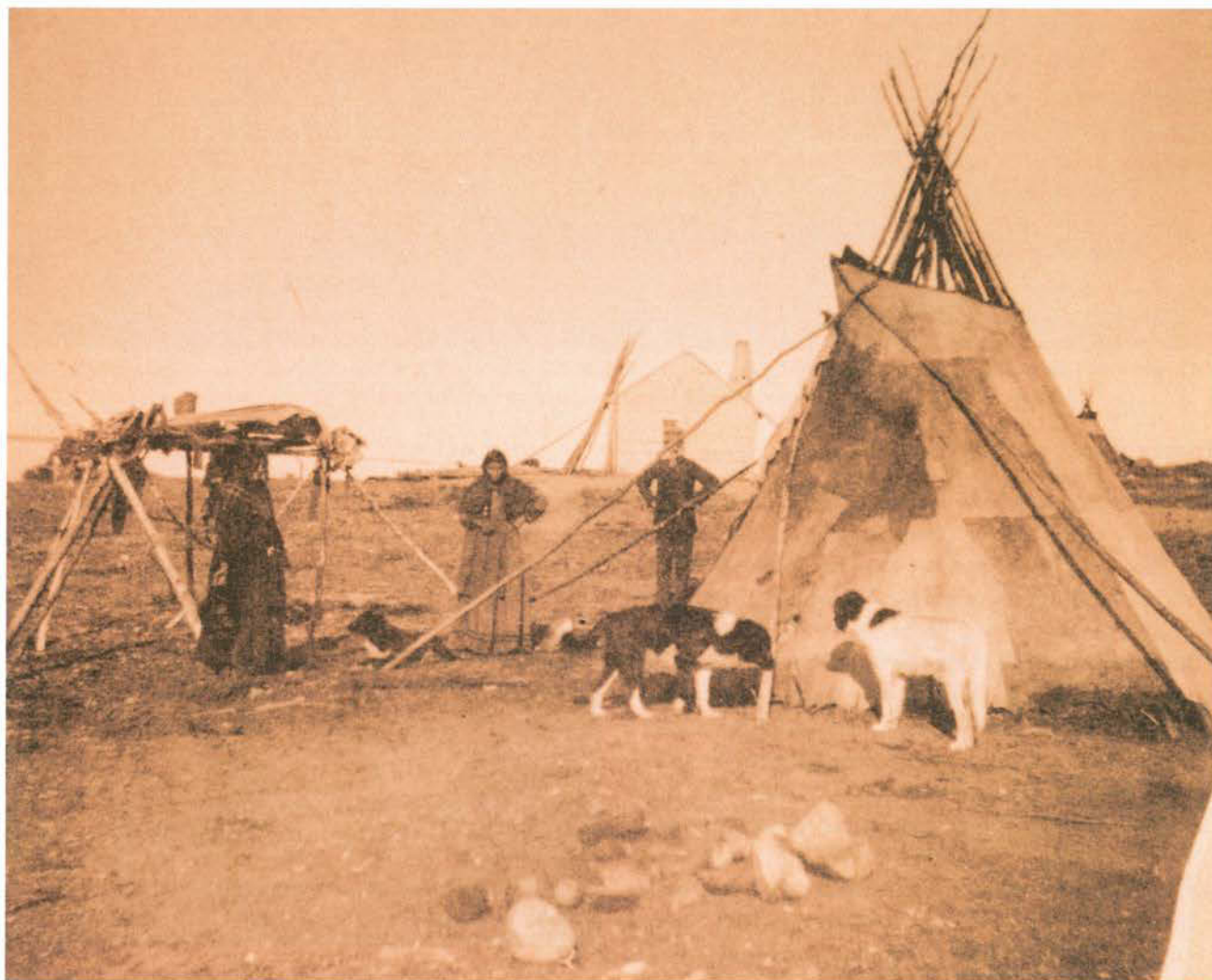
Figure 4.1 Treaty Areas



As reported in the Treaty 8 document, “the Chipewyan and Cree Indians of Fort McMurray and the country thereabouts”, signed on August 4th, 1899.<sup>104</sup> The CPDFN Band was not part of the signing of the Treaty 8 at this time. Subsequent adhesions were signed between 1900 and 1914 with several individuals and family groups from isolated communities including Chipewyan Prairie. Paul Cree's son Raphael remembers four communities or Bands in the Fort McMurray area at the time of the Treaty 8 signing: Willow Lake (now Gregoire Lake), Chipewyan Prairie (now Janvier), Fort McKay and Clearwater.<sup>105</sup>

The basic assurances the First Nations wanted from Treaty 8 were freedom to hunt, trap, fish and move freely

in their traditional lands. With wildlife being exploited by the fur trade and intense competition from the non-Aboriginal trappers, the Peoples traditional way of life was being threatened. It was the assurance by the Treaty Commissioners and missionaries who helped in the negotiations that eventually led the First Nations in the area to sign. Bishop Breynat, interpreter for the Treaty Commissioners at Fond du Lac, claims that the Chipewyan Indians, “...would never have consented to Treaty if they had not received the solemn guarantee, given in the name of the Crown, not to be molested in their habits of life as woodsmen, living through hunting and fishing and that they would be protected against competition from the whites and their methods of exterminating fish and game.”<sup>106</sup>



Chipewyan Tent, Fond du Lac, Lake Athabasca. 1892. Photo courtesy Tyrrell Archives. University of Toronto. Reference Number P10594.

<sup>104</sup> Official report of the Treaty 8 Commission, September 22, 1899.

<sup>105</sup> Newton, Peter. (1993). Interview with Raphael Cree conducted January 4th, 1993. Swann & Associates, Pg.8

<sup>106</sup> Fumoleau, R. (2004). As Long as this Land Shall Last. Calgary: University of Calgary Press. Note 24, Appendix XI, “Canada's Blackest Blot”, by Bishop Breynat, at 504-505.

# Chapter 5

## Chipewyan Prairie Settlement

In the late 1800s, gold was discovered in the Yukon and thousands of settlers, adventurers and prospectors traveled the Athabasca and Mackenzie rivers enroute to the Klondike gold fields. It was around this time that the ancestors of the CPDFN began to establish permanent cabins and residences located close to their winter trapping areas. In the summer, they moved to the edge of a lake or river, then back to the winter trapping cabin in the late fall. The trappers themselves would make seasonal visits to the trading posts and other small merchants, or the new free traders would compete by visiting these groups of cabins or micro-villages. This chapter discusses the Chipewyan Prairie settlement, the original families that occupied the area, the reserves that were set aside for Native traditional land use, and the census data pertaining to the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

### The Settlement

The CPDFN Elders talk about how their parents and grandparents would move to where the fish and game were located. This would be alongside a river or lake in their traditional lands surrounding the current reserve areas. People were hunting, trapping, fishing, gathering and living at Winefred Lake, Cowpar Lake, the Chipewyan Prairie area (Bohn Lake) and also using the many other lakes and rivers in the region.<sup>107</sup>

### The Families

The original founding families of the Janvier Band were Dené peoples from the Garson Lake area in Saskatchewan. Their original settlement was about 6 to 8 kilometres from the Alberta/Saskatchewan border on the Saskatchewan side at Garson Lake. These families were descendents of Paul Janvier. At the time Treaty 8 was signed at Fort McMurray in 1899, these Dené families had been regularly meeting during the summer months along the Christina River.<sup>108</sup> There were connections between families from many different areas in northeastern Alberta and northwestern Saskatchewan.

*The original "Clans" that built Janvier were<sup>109</sup>:*

*A Bunion of Rabbits Clan*

*Sagista Clan*

*Chicken Neck Clan*

*Old Man Clan*

*Porcupine Foot Clan*

<sup>107</sup> Details about the traditional land use activities are discussed in Chapters 7 through 12 and locations are shown in Figures 7.1 through 12.1.

<sup>108</sup> Janvier et al. (1993). Traditional Land Use and Occupancy Study: Janvier and Chipewyan Prairie. Final Report. Jean Marie Janvier (pg. 14) and Paul Janvier Interviews (pg. 16). ANDC, Fort McMurray, AB.

<sup>109</sup> Thomas Morice. (2006). CPDFN Traditional Land Use Study interview.



continue to use the traditional lands for hunting and fishing and other traditional practices.

Today, CPDFN is part of the Chipewyan Nation, which consists of 27 Communities, with a population totalling 27,000 nation members in Northern Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and the Northwest Territories. Table 5.1 shows the total registered population of CPDFN was 678 as of December 2006 and Table 5.2 shows the current reserve settlement information.<sup>116</sup> Due to lack of opportunities on the reserve, about half of the CPDFN members have had to move to major centres such as Fort McMurray or Lac La Biche.

**Table 5.1 Total Registered Population as of December, 2006**

Residency	Number of People
Registered Males On Own Reserve	180
Registered Females On Own Reserve	146
Registered Males On Other Reserves	4
Registered Females On Other Reserves	1
Registered Males Off Reserve	172
Registered Females Off Reserve	175
Total Registered Population	678

The family names from the different areas of Alberta and Saskatchewan that are in the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation today are listed below. Despite the Cree, French and English names of some of the CPDFN, the language spoken by the community is Dené. Names come from individuals absorbed into the culture.

Bouchier	(Ft. McKay/Ft. Chipewyan, Alberta)
Black	(Black Lake, Saskatchewan)
Cardinals	(Lac La Biche/Saddle Lake, Alberta)
Herman	(La Loche, Saskatchewan)
Janvier	(Garson Lake/La Loche, Saskatchewan)
Laboucane	(Garson Lake, Saskatchewan/ Big Bay – near Lac La Biche, Alberta)
Lemaigre	(Garson Lake, Saskatchewan)
Nokohoo	(Loon Lake, Saskatchewan)
Piche	(Anzac, Alberta)

**Table 5.2 Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation Reserve Settlements**

Reserve Name	Location	Hectares
Janvier No. 194	97 km SW of Ft. McMurray	2486.7
Cowpar Lake No. 194A	North shore of Cowpar Lake in TWP 80 RGE 3	143
Winefred Lake No. 194B	North end of Winefred Lake TWP 76 RGE 4	450

<sup>116</sup> Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. (2007). Registered Population as of December 2006. Available: [http://sdiprod2.inac.gc.ca/FNProfiles/FNProfiles\\_DETAILS.asp?BAND\\_NUMBER=470](http://sdiprod2.inac.gc.ca/FNProfiles/FNProfiles_DETAILS.asp?BAND_NUMBER=470)

# Chapter 6

## *Development and Decline*

This chapter focuses on the historical events and developments that occurred in the Janvier area beginning in the early 1900s. The region was essentially a fur trading area populated by Aboriginal people and traders who lived off trapping and country foods. Fort McMurray was the closest settlement and as the fur trade diminished, other industries developed.

The first significant industrial changes were in transportation; the river became a commercial transportation highway, improving access to the north and making room for the developments of industries like salt, fishing, forestry and oil and gas. The first industry to develop in the area was a commercial fishery. However, larger development did not occur in Northeast Alberta until the oil sands activities began in the mid 1960s.



**Fort McMurray situated at the junction of the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers.**

*Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number C-003266.*



## Transportation

During the fur trade, dog and horse teams were the mode of travel in the north throughout the long winter months. Birchbark canoes were the main form of transportation in the spring and early fall. Canoes moved trading goods north and furs south over the Athabasca River. However, beginning in the 1820s, the York boats of the Hudson's Bay Company took over this task. As the population increased and industries appeared, the two main waterways

were increasingly utilized: the Athabasca River through Fort McMurray and the other via the Peace River.<sup>117 118</sup> Steamboats were introduced in 1883 when the HBC built the S.S. Grahame. Local Cree and Chipewyan people were instrumental in the transportation industry at this time, acting as guides and drivers of the boats.



Hudson's Bay Company Steamer "Grahame" at Fort McMurray, Alberta.

*Photo courtesy of the Glenbow Archives. Reference Number NA-4035-98.*

The arrival of the railroads made the north more accessible. The Alberta Great Waterways Railway (now Northern Alberta Railway) began construction in 1915 on the railway line connecting Lac La Biche and "Old Waterways" (now called Draper). This railway covered a distance of almost 280 kilometres and was completed in 1922. The remainder of the trip to Fort McMurray was made either on boat or horse. By 1928, the rail line was extended to the

mouth of the Hangingstone River at the site of present day Waterways. Railway slidings and facilities were constructed at Chard and Conklin, 10 and 25 miles southwest of the Janvier reserve, which serviced many of the First Nations people traveling to Lac La Biche or Fort McMurray for supplies. At this time the few tiny settlements along this rail line including Chard and Conklin, consisted primarily of First Nations, Métis and non-status First Nations.

<sup>117</sup> Hansen, E. (1988). A Brief Review of the Development of Transportation in the North. Pgs. 83-85 in McCormack, P.A. and R.G. Ironside, Eds. Proceedings of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermillion Bicentennial Conference. September 23-25, 1988. Provincial Museum of Alberta. Edmonton, AB. Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, Edmonton, AB., pp. 319.

<sup>118</sup> Zaslow, M. (1988). Transportation Change and the Development of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermillion Districts, Alberta. Pgs. 20-24 in McCormack, P.A. and R.G. Ironside, Eds. Proceedings of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermillion Bicentennial Conference. September 23-25, 1988. Provincial Museum of Alberta. Edmonton, AB. Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, Edmonton, AB., pp. 319.

## Development and Decline

Air travel began in the 1920s, which to a certain extent ended the isolation in the North. This was the beginning of airmail service. Planes were landing at the “snye” in Fort McMurray in the late 1920s. Within a few years, commercial fishing took off and products were flown out to eastern markets. This new form of transportation afforded some men travel to distant traplines by airplane.

In 1963, construction began for a gravel highway (Highway 63) and in 1967 the road was completed; an all-weather

gravel road from Fort McMurray to Edmonton was now available. However, Janvier remained relatively isolated. In 1986, secondary Highway 881 provided an all weather road from Janvier to the communities of Fort McMurray to the north and Lac La Biche to the south.<sup>119</sup> The changes in transportation brought more roads, industry and people to the North. Some of the Chipewyan Prairie Elders said that after the Highway 881 came in, life slowly changed and animals seemed to fade away.



Late spring mail, leaving Fort McMurray, Alberta. Ca. 1930. Photo courtesy of the Glenbow Archives. Reference Number NA-1628-39.

## Industries and Services

As the fur markets declined and road access increased, other industries grew. Commercial fishing was a large, profitable business beginning in 1926. Tons of whitefish from Lake Athabasca were processed at the McInnes Fish Company plant in Waterways. The McInnes Fish Company provided wage labour jobs for Aboriginal people in the area. Rock

salt bed discoveries occurred between 1907 and 1912 and by 1929, the Alberta Salt Company constructed a salt plant at the mouth of Horse Creek. Industrial Minerals Ltd. built another salt plant in 1937. Rock salt was a viable business here until 1950. Logging and lumbering also became an important part of the economy.

<sup>119</sup> The Alberta Government has begun further highway improvements including twinning Highway 63 north of Fort McMurray from the Suncor Access to Fort MacKay and south of Fort McMurray to the junction with Highway 881 and completing the paving of Highway 881.



### Cold Lake Air Weapons Range

In 1952, the provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan leased provincial lands to the Government of Canada for the purpose of creating a weapons testing range, comprising 1,241,000 hectares (3 million acres), on the border of northern Alberta and Saskatchewan. As a result of the lease, adjacent Alberta First Nations communities such as the Cold Lake First Nations (CLFN), the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation (CPDFN), and the Canoe Lake Cree Nation (CLCN) in Saskatchewan, lost access to this important section of their traditional lands. The range, originally known as the Primrose Lake Air Weapons Range, is now known as the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range (CLAWR).<sup>120</sup> On July 12, 2002, the Cold Lake First Nation community settled the long-standing grievance related to their removal and denied access to the CLAWR.<sup>121</sup> Presently, the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation is negotiating a comprehensive Land Claim Agreement over the loss of use of Traditional Lands in the CLAWR.

120 INAC. (2002). Backgrounder Grievance on Creation of Cold Lake Air Weapons Range Settled. Available:

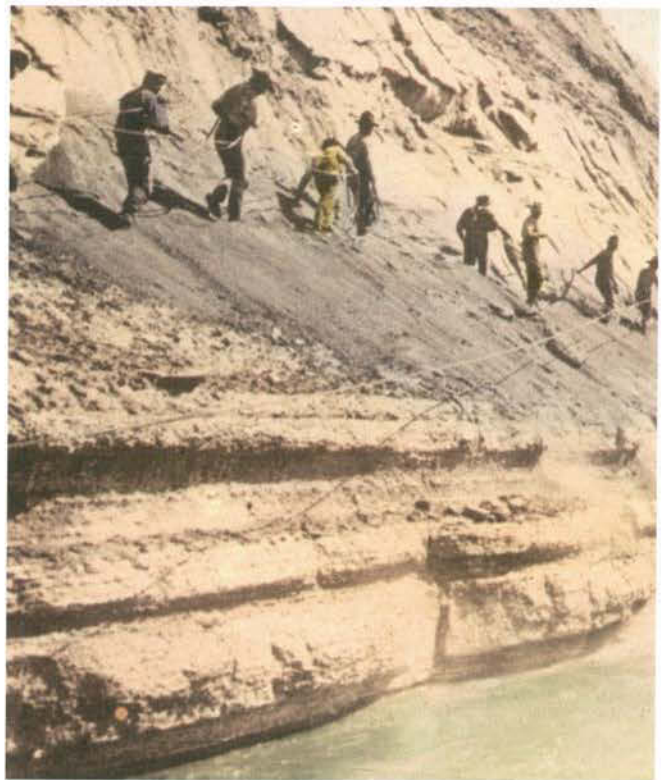
[http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/m-a2002/02168bk\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/m-a2002/02168bk_e.html)

121 INAC. (2002). Grievance on creation of Cold Lake Air Weapons Range Settled. English Bay, Alberta, July 12, 2002. Available:

[http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/m-a2002/02168bk\\_e.html](http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/nr/prs/m-a2002/02168bk_e.html)

During World War II, in the spring of 1942, the Canol Pipeline Project was undertaken and Fort McMurray became the base for the project. This increased economic activity in the Fort McMurray area for the duration of the construction. Also, First Nations people were employed at the radar sites. During the World War II years, as part of the mid-Canada defence line, "Site 800" was built in the Anzac area, with the assistance of the USA. This development brought about increased population and jobs for local residents of the region. Site 800 closed in 1965 resulting in the loss of some population and jobs.

During the 1950s natural gas was discovered in the Janvier area. The Chard gas field is located immediately west, south and north of the reserve. Drilling in the field began as early as 1957, but it wasn't until the mid 1960s that major industrial activity began in the region. The construction of the Great Canadian Oil Sands (Suncor) plant, north of Fort McMurray, occurred between 1964 and 1967. This created some employment opportunities. It also marked the beginning of intense pressure that further restricted the traditional livelihood of the CPDFN and other First Nation groups in the region.



Tar sands in Alberta. 1920s. Photo courtesy of the National Archives in Canada. Reference Number e-000009459.



## Game Acts Ignore Aboriginal Livelihood

The North-West Game Act came into effect on January 1, 1896, and placed severe restrictions in subsequent years on the hunting of most large mammals including moose, deer, and caribou, the main staple of the Aboriginal food supply. This represented a new phase in a complex debate regarding Aboriginal traditional hunting and trapping rights. The new restrictions exacerbated the losses from competitive hunting pressures from the immigrant and “white” trappers and hunters. There were also several periods of game depletion. Perhaps the most devastating was the loss of the Plains and Woodland bison in the late 1800s. This loss influenced the conservation movement, which opposed unregulated exploitation of these animal resources. Aboriginal hunting was misunderstood and treated in an equivalent manner to the weekend sportsmen by the wildlife laws and policies. The Treaty guarantee of the traditional Aboriginal livelihood was ignored.<sup>122</sup> In 1918, the Migratory Birds Convention Act signed by Canada and the United States further restricted hunting.<sup>123</sup> In 1946, the Game Act was revised and required trappers to obtain a license to trap and a certificate of registration authorizing trapping on a specific trap line.

<sup>122</sup> Passelac-Ross, M.M. (2005). *The Trapping Rights of Aboriginal Peoples in Northern Alberta*. CIRL Occasional Paper #15. Canadian Institute of Resource Law: Calgary, AB.: 79pp, from Donihee (2002), pg. 15.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, Dickason (1977), pg. 354.

After World War II there were significant increases in services for the Janvier communities. While the Catholic Church constructed a church and a school in Janvier during the 1930s, improvements to the educational facilities didn't occur until 1958 when the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs built a permanent school in Janvier. The Government also began to provide more social services. Alberta Power serviced Janvier with electricity in 1965. The Government serviced the community with portable water wells in 1972. By the mid 1980s, Janvier's utilities were enhanced by the construction of a water treatment plant and installation of a buried potable water distribution system.

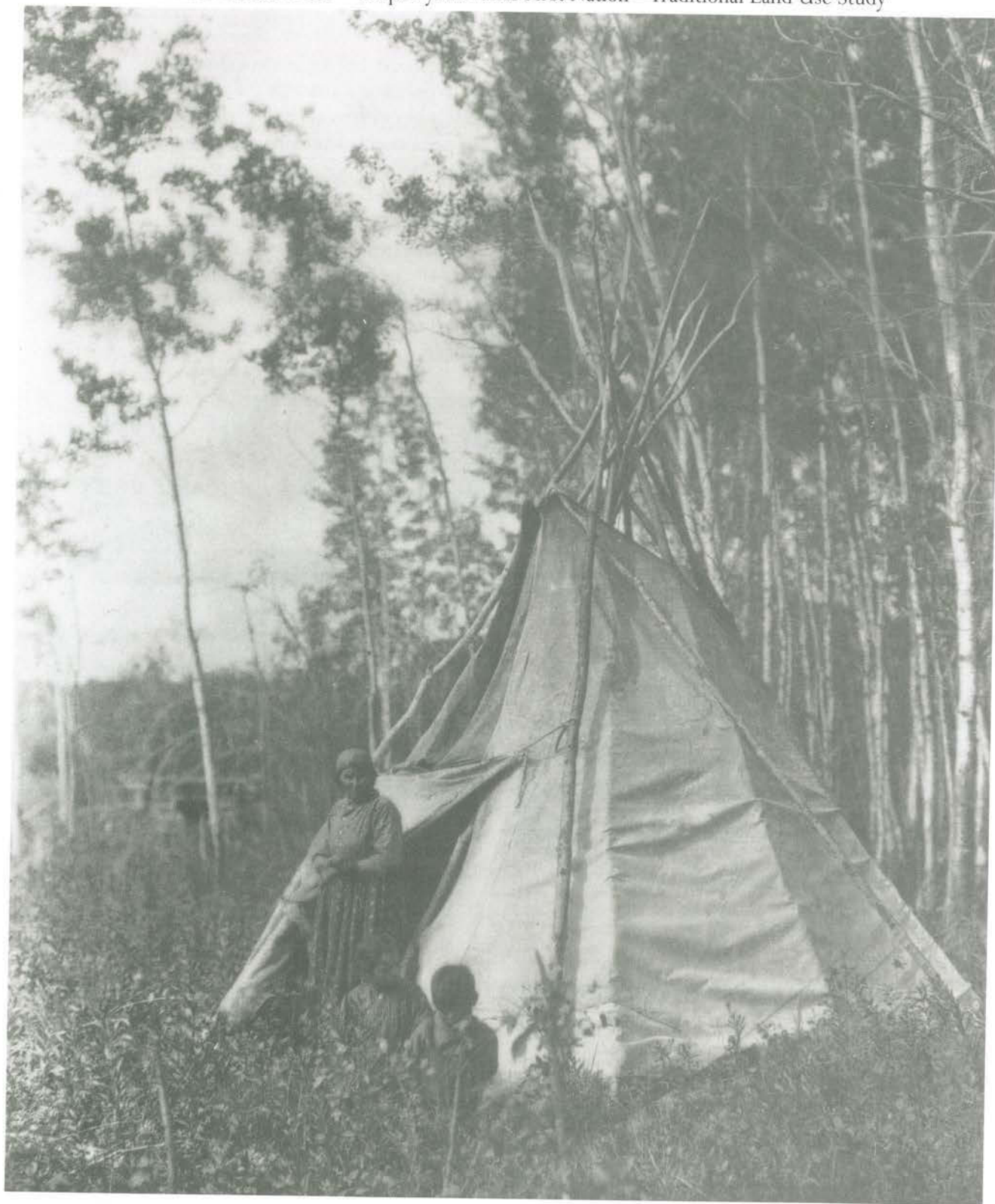


*Schoolhouse. Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dene First Nation.*

## Conclusion

Previous chapters have provided an overview of the period from the entrance into the fur trade in 1715 to the signing of Treaty 8 in 1899. This Chapter focused on the more recent developments of the 1900s. During the 1960s and 1970s, the First Nations of the region had to cope with the oil and gas industry, mining projects, the creation of thousands of kilometres of seismic lines, new roads and paved highways. The fur markets had severely declined by this time and the last of the HBC fur posts were discontinued. The lives of the people were centralized to the reserves and communities where there was an increased demand for goods and services. The traditional way of life that had existed for generations was rapidly changing.





Chipewyan camp among aspen trees, 1926. Photo courtesy of the Glenbow Archives. Reference Number NA-1700-96.

# Chapter 7

## *Traditional Land Use Activities*

This chapter documents the traditional routes, trails, cabins and historic sites that the CPDFN Elders and land users recorded during the interviews conducted for this study. The chapter also includes a description of the traditional land use activities and annual rounds that the CPDFN people maintained up until the 1960s and 1970s.

### **Cabins and Trails**

The more intensively used CPDFN traditional lands include approximately 14,400 square miles, extending east of Athabasca River to just east of the Saskatchewan border, and from present day Fort McMurray, south into

the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range. The Elders discussed various locations and uses for the trails and cabins located within their traditional territory. Figure 7.1 shows the approximate location of these cabins and trails.

#### **John Lemaigre:**

*"Old buffalo trail from Janvier to the Birch Mountains"*

*"Sagi 'tsa Trail to Barren Lands."*

*"Indian Trail – Janvier east to west – used it as a skidoo trail like a northern highway"*

#### **Alma Nokohoo:**

*"Trails from Hay Creek to Willow Lake and to Cowpar Lake from Janvier."*

#### **Agnes Lemaigre:**

*"Cabins at Garson Lake and trails from Garson Lake to Christina Crossing."*



**Harry Janvier:**

*"Campsites and cabins used for hunting all around Chipewyan Prairie."*

**Yvonne Janvier:**

*"People in my grandparents and parents days, used to travel by foot all the way from Cold Lake, La Loche, Garson Lake, Gipsy Lake and other areas."*

**James Janvier:**

*"Trail to Logan Lake from Chipewyan Prairie – across bombing range to Logan Lake/Heart Lake area – they would buy horses there (Big Bay) then travel to Cold Lake and hitch a ride sometimes to Lac Ste. Anne (Dad's road)."*

**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"I would travel by dog team to Winefred Lake about 30 km. I would travel along the winter trail; this was only a winter trail."*

**Fred Cardinal:**

*"In between north Watchuk Lake and south Watchuk Lake we stayed there – that's where my stepfather used to hunt and trap – along Newby River, there are a lot of cabins and camps."*

**Agnes Lemaigre:**

*"Cabins at Garson Lake and trails from Garson Lake to Christina Crossing."*

**Alfred Lemaigre:**

*"Trails from Garson Lake where our family cabin was in the village to Birch Lake where we had another cabin to Gipsy Lake and then Gordon Lake where there were 2 more cabins."*

# Traditional Land Use Activities

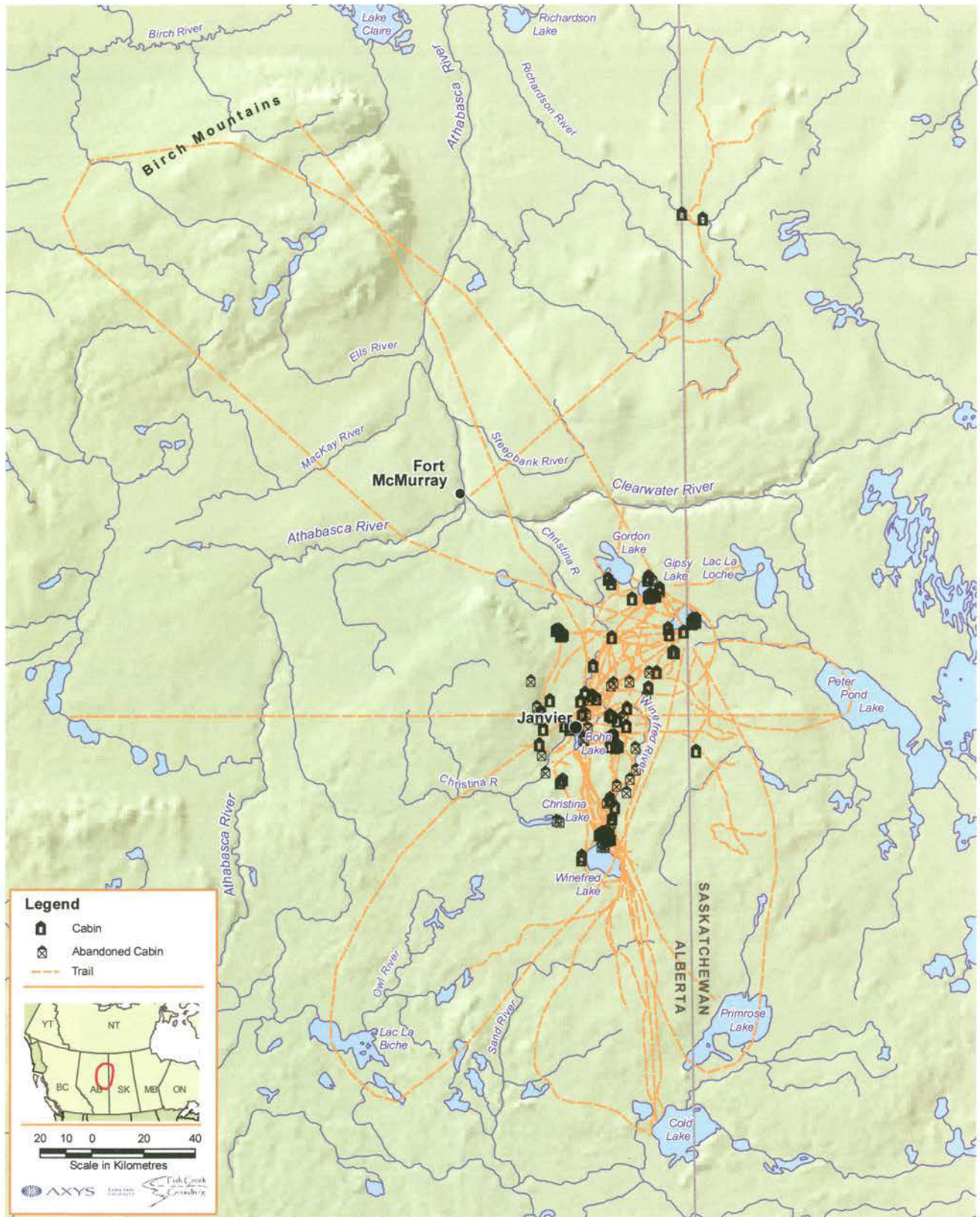


Figure 7.1 Cabins and Trails



## Historic and Cultural Sites

During their interviews for this research, the CPDFN Elders not only identified cabins, but also gravesites and spiritual sites. These sites are very sacred to the People and many of the Elders did not want to disclose specific details about these cultural sites. The approximate locations, however, are displayed in Figure 7.2.

Many of the sites occur around lakes and rivers, primarily in Alberta with a few in Saskatchewan. For instance, many sites are found around Gipsy Lake, Garson Lake, and Christina Crossing/River, which are all areas north of Janvier. Other areas near Chipewyan Prairie and south

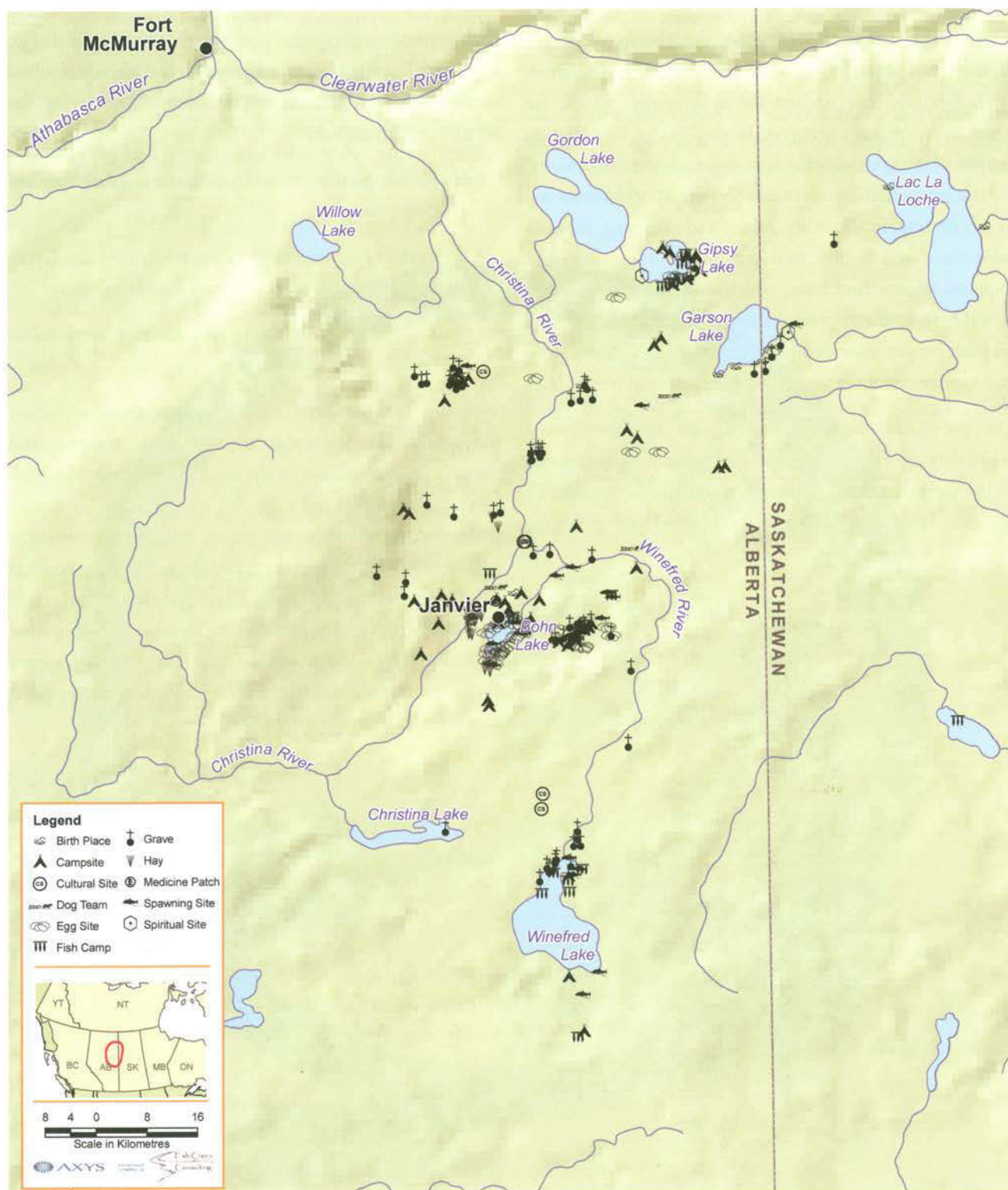
include the Janvier Reserve and Bohn Lake, Cowpar Lake, Winefred River/ Lake, and Christina River/Lake. Important cultural sites in Saskatchewan include areas near Dillon Lake in the south and Lac La Loche further north.

### John Lemaigre:

*“Burial grounds at Garson Lake and Gipsy Lake; most of the clans lived around Gipsy Lake and 40 or 50 families are buried around there.”*



Chipewyan Grave, Northern Alberta. 1899. Photo courtesy of the Glenbow Archives. Reference Number NA-949-129.





## Annual Rounds

Prior to the arrival of Europeans, the Aboriginal people depended on game, fish and wild plants for their livelihood. With European contact and the development of the fur trade, many changes occurred in the lives of First Nation peoples. However, despite trapping competition and the fluctuating availability of resources, the People continued to rely on trapping, hunting, fishing and gathering, for both subsistence and commercial purposes. These activities required a large land base, which meant that the People would have to travel great distances. The Elder and land user interviews show that prior to 1970, the CPDFN were able to maintain most aspects of the traditional way of life.

The people of the region responded to the seasonal availability of different resources. Being very connected to the environment, the people travelled and worked by the sun. Traditional activities for hunting and gathering

took place throughout the year as needed and as available. Extensive knowledge and respect of local animals resulted in taking certain animals at particular times during the seasons. For example:

- No female game were taken in spring because they are rearing young;
- no ducks or grouse were taken when they are laying their eggs for two weeks or so in the spring, and;
- only certain fish in spring and summer were taken while they were spawning.

Typically, families lived in the bush in tents or cabins during the fall, winter and spring while trapping and hunting. In the summer they would move from the bush and set up camp at the edge of a lake or river for fishing and gathering of berries and plants. Summer was the time for social activities, such as feasts, games and dances that often revolve around "Treaty Days." Families would travel into the forts nearby around Christmas and Easter time for celebrations and possibly some trading. The trappers themselves would make seasonal visits to the trading posts to sell fur and purchase supplies.



**A Brace of Grouse.** Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 1023407.



**Chipewyan Canoe, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-13.



**Chipewyan Canoe Paddle, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-100.

## Traditional Land Use Activities

Living in the north required specific travel adaptations during each season. The people often needed to cover long distances. Before the fur trade, walking was the primary means of travel. Hide moccasins were used in warm months and snowshoes allowed movement through deep snow. The waterways were a main route of travel year-round. People walked along frozen rivers and lakes. After spring break, they paddled canoes through marshes to hunt muskrat,

beaver, and waterfowl. The fur trade brought many changes to how people travelled. Dog teams pulled toboggans, allowing greater distances to be covered quicker. Horses were also used to haul items and carry people.

The Chipewyan performed various traditional activities throughout the year. Figure 7.3 shows a visual representation of the typical annual rounds and is followed by a seasonal breakdown of the traditional land use.

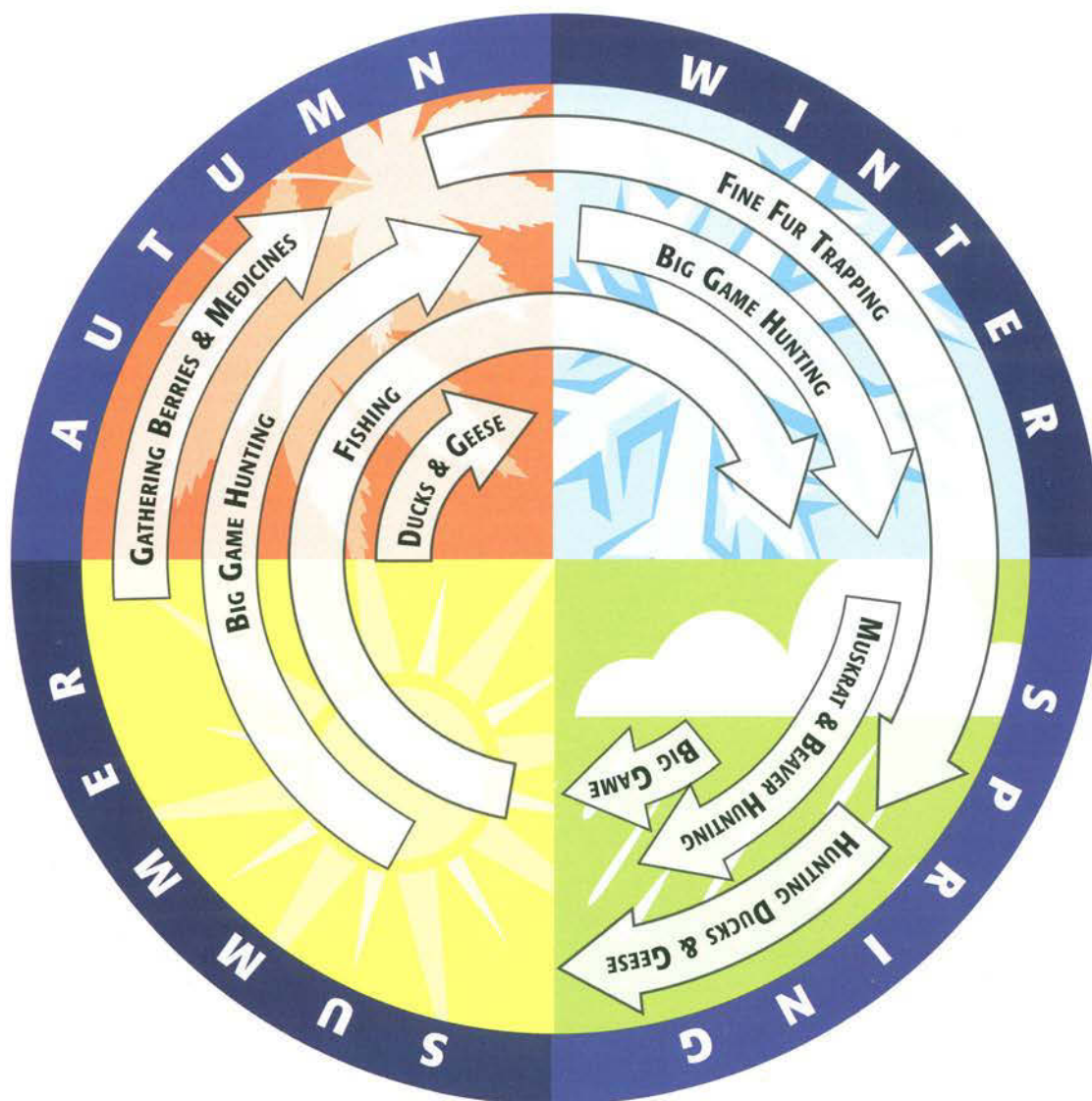


Figure 7.3 Annual Rounds<sup>124</sup>

<sup>124</sup> Information gathered from the CPDEN Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study



### Late Summer and Early Fall

Late summer and early fall was a busy time for hunting, trapping and preparing for the winter months. Time was spent fixing trapline cabins. Garden and potato harvesting occurred in the fall as did the preparation of traps and other equipment that would be used for the coming trapping season. Extra wood for winter would be collected and stored during the late summer and fall. Although berries and medicines were picked during the summer months, this activity would continue into the early fall. Drying, canning and jarring of berries would occur at this time.

In September and October, men went hunting mainly for moose, generally for two to four weeks at a time. Bear would be taken if seen. Anywhere from 1000 to 4000 fish would be caught in about one month of fishing. If the fish

harvest was sufficient, these fish would also serve as dog food all winter. Dry meat and dry fish were prepared for winter. Early fall was an important time for bird hunting, just before the ducks flew south. By mid October some trappers would leave for fine fur trapping on the trap line.

### Late Fall and Winter

Dog sled travel began after the small lakes and streams had frozen and enough snow had fallen. Before this time, it would be difficult and dangerous, if not impossible to travel. By mid-November the men, usually with two or three partners, would begin trapping for furbearers along traplines for weeks at a time. The trappers would come home in December for trading and Christmas celebrations.



Dog sled. Photo courtesy of the Fort Chipewyan Dené First Nation.

## Traditional Land Use Activities

Lynx, beaver and muskrats were used for fur and meat. Hunting in the winter primarily occurred in conjunction with trapping trips. Trappers would watch for signs of woodland caribou, moose, deer and occasionally barren land caribou. Other small animals like squirrel and rabbits would also be snared regularly. Sometimes a hibernating black bear would be taken if a trapper discovered a den. Grouse was commonly hunted and occasionally ptarmigan. Winter fishing would occur as needed by setting nets or placing hooks through holes in the ice. These would be checked every couple of days.

### Late Spring and Summer

The winter break-up started in early April and marked the beginning of spring. The muskrat and beaver harvest took place in April and May. Fish were spawning in the

spring. This was the time to harvest fish and make dry fish and collect oil. Eggs were collected in May and some bird hunting was also done. Many families cultivated gardens by the end of May, producing potatoes, turnips and other vegetables. May through August was usually spent camping with other families alongside a river or a lake. Many social events took place at this time.

Groups would fish, and collect berries, plants and medicines together. Fish that was not immediately consumed would be sun-dried, as it is difficult to store fish in the warmer seasons. This would preserve the fish for several months and it was used for dog food and human consumption when other fresh foods were not available. If needed and time permitted, bull moose and black bears would be taken during the summer and any extra meat would also be sun-dried and smoked for later consumption.

### Maxime Janvier:

*"After Treaty days in June they used to make gardens and fences, we used to just mix it all up; hunting, trapping, gardening, making fence, picking berries in July until we finished.*

*Johnny gave me a house and I was happy. My mom had TB and I sold the house. I had sold the house for \$20.00 after my mom had gone to the hospital. This was during the time when my dad passed away from TB. My mom and I fixed up my dad's house and we hunted rabbits, chicken, squirrels, and other animals. We used to clean the animals in the dark with candlelight. My mom would be sewing making parkas, or moccasins and hats and she used to wake me up when she was done and called me, 'my little boy'. My mom was like a man. She hunted and worked like a man, we use to go and check our own snares early in the morning. Summertime we use to fish. My mom and I we fished for food and dog food, not to mention amount — but lots. Pierre would leave in the fall and also Julian and they worked. They would come back for Christmas and back in the spring, like May 15th. My uncle and other family members did summer fishing."*



Maxime Janvier with Harry Janvier. Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.



**Mary Agnes Herman:**

*"I used to haul water, wood, fix or sew clothes when my husband was gone hunting, I used to use dog team to haul wood. I didn't stop hunting 'til my kids grew up. Any animal I killed I used to clean and use their leftover for clothing. I used to pick berries around Hook Lake and surrounding area from Hook Lake canoeing to "Tha ba choh" all the way to do hunting, fishing, picking berries and use to stay at Cowpar Lake in a camp. My husband did all the fur bearing in winter from October 'til May and they used to take muskrat from under the ice. Fall time we used to store our fish away for winter, they put nets under the ice for fish. I did that with my dad and also made fishhooks in spring for the spawning fish (April). Summertime we collected strawberries, chokecherries and during the last week of July, we collected raspberries. In August, we collected blueberries, and during September we collected chokecherries and June we collected saskatoon berries."*



Raspberry. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 97168.

# Chapter 8

## Trapping

Since early Aboriginal times, the Chipewyan Prairie Dené peoples have trapped furbearers for food, clothing, medicines and various other traditional uses. However, during the early 1700s, the HBC lured many Chipewyan people into the commercial fur trade. Since that time the Chipewyan people have changed many aspects of their livelihood. One such change involved

moving from a life based on the barrenland caribou to a traditional subsistence supported by participation in the commercial fur trade. This study interviewed land users who still practice or who have practiced this lifestyle. The information gathered here includes the periods before 1970, after 1970 and after 1985. Most of the active trapping occurred before 1970.



Beaver Lodge. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 585029.



The furbearers trapped by the CPDFN included squirrel, weasel, wolf, lynx, marten, fisher, fox, coyote, mink, rabbit, otter, beaver, and muskrat. Table 8.1 lists the Dené names of these furbearers. While caribou and other big game supplied major sources of red meat, other meat from the rabbit, muskrat, beaver, and squirrel was also regularly consumed. Furbearers such as the marten, lynx, fox, wolf, fisher, weasel, and otter were valued more for their pelts than their meat. Because of this, they were used mainly for clothing, crafts, and trade. Bears were also trapped and shot for their skins and sometimes for meat. This chapter provides details regarding commercial trapping, as well as information on various trapping locations, seasons, and equipment traditionally used by the CPDFN.

### Trapping Locations

There are many trapping areas that were identified by the CPDFN land users that are concentrated near the Janvier, Chard and Cowpar communities. These areas included Bohn Lake, Cowpar Lake, and the rivers and creeks that interconnect with these lakes. Trapping areas north of Janvier included Gordon Lake, Gypsy Lake, Birch Lake, and along the Christina and Clearwater Rivers.

**Table 8.1 Traditional Names of furbearers**

Beaver	Tsa or Tsá
Muskrat	Dzen
Lynx	Chíze
Marten	Thah
Fisher	Thah chogh
Ermine/weasel	Thaŋk'alé
Squirrel	Dlíe
Wolf	Nūnie
Fox	Nāgídhe
Wolverine	Nābie / NāghayéGah
Rabbit	Gah
Mink	Tthaŋjuzi
Porcupine	Ts'i

CPDFN trappers ventured further north to the Athabasca and Richardson River area near Fort Chipewyan. They were also familiar with and frequented areas in northeastern Saskatchewan. Trapping areas south of the Janvier Reserve were concentrated around the Winefred River and Winefred Lake areas. However, some trappers travelled further south to the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range near Underwood Lake and Primrose Lake. In all these areas, the people would support themselves by hunting while pursuing their trapping.

Figure 8.1 shows the trapping areas as indicated by the CPDFN Elders and land users during their interviews for this study. This map provides an indication of some of the traditional routes that were used by the CPDFN people.



**Timberwolf.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

## Trapping

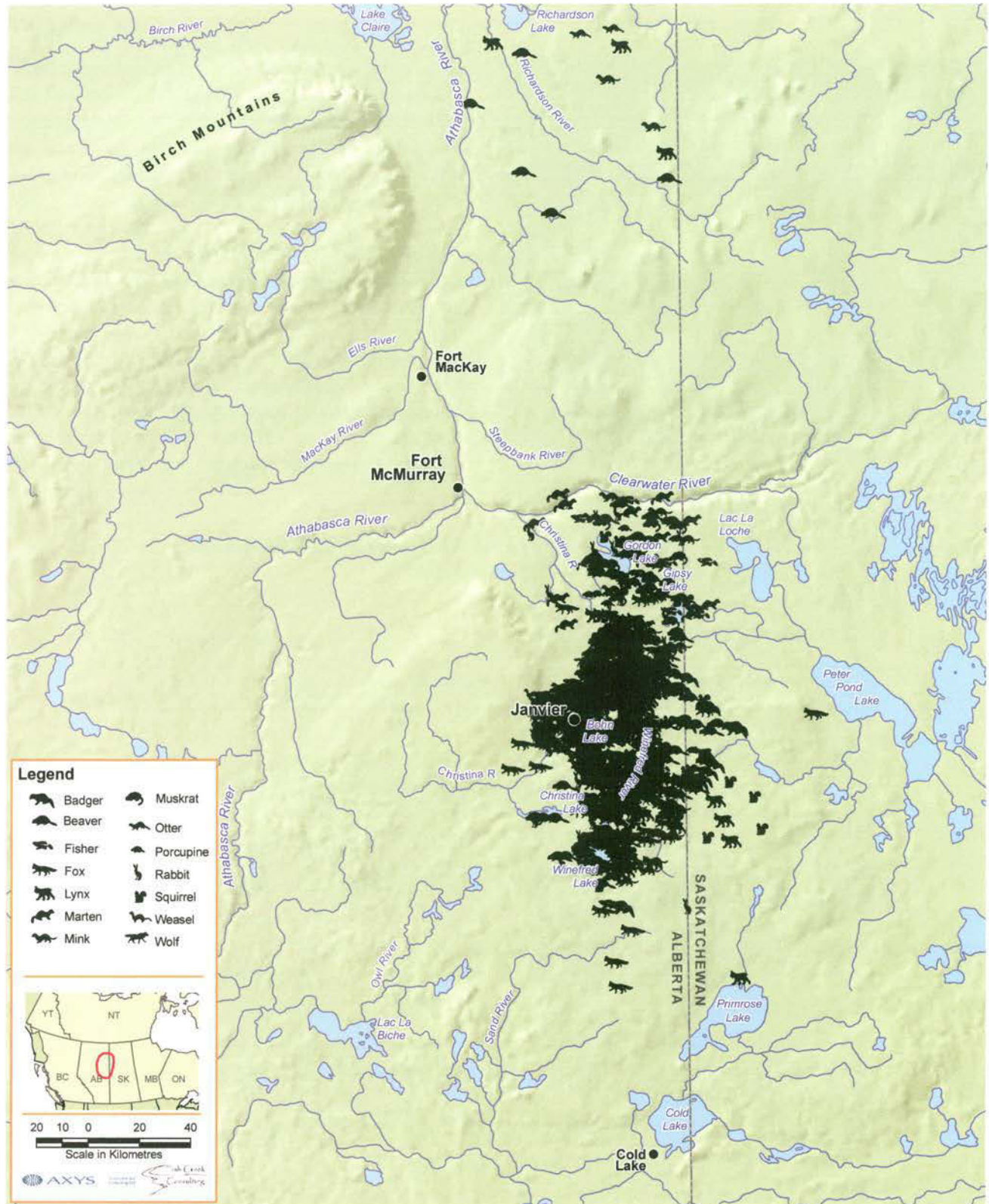


Figure 8.1 Furbearers



**John Lemaigre:**

*"From 1957 to 1968, my brother-in-law and I trapped all the way from La Loche Lake up along the Richardson River and Douglas River across from Fort Chipewyan."*

*"My Grandfather trapped and hunted all the way from Garson Lake to Muskeg Mountain in the spring time for Beavers."*

*"We trapped and hunted down south from Garson Lake to Finlay Lake, McAdam Lake, Graham Lake and down further south to Primrose Lake. Many squirrel, lynx, weasel, mink, beaver and muskrat."*

**Yvonne Janvier:**

*"People in my grandparents and parents days, used to travel by foot all the way from Cold Lake, La Loche, Garson Lake, Gipsy Lake and other areas."*

**David Janvier:**

*"Winefred trap line to Saskatchewan border along Dillon River (best place for muskrats). Also, Winefred River to Grist Lake down to bombing range."*

**Everest Janvier:**

*"Trapping from Janvier to Cowpar."*

**Jack Herman:**

*"Fall trapping for lynx, otter, mink, fisher, squirrel, weasel, along the rivers from Chipewyan Prairie to South Watchusk Lake and Barney Lake, across back to Chipewyan Prairie."*

**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"I would hunt rats or beaver around Bohn Lake and Cowpar Lake from March until May. I would try to kill beaver along Christina River in winter."*

**Alfred Lemaigre:**

*"Trapping from Garson Lake to Birch Lake, Gipsy Lake and Gordon Lake. Lots of squirrel, lynx, weasel, muskrat and beaver."*

### Trapping Seasons

There are two major trapping times: winter trapping for fine furs and spring trapping for muskrat. Although the trapping season started in fall and continued throughout the winter months into early spring, muskrat season did not begin until late winter and lasted through early spring. The trappers would often be out in the bush October through to mid April. During this time, they would make visits to nearby towns and communities to sell furs and also to partake in celebrations with family and friends during Christmas and Easter. Before the 1970s, during the dogsled times, it was not unusual for the trappers to only be with their families a total of two weeks throughout the trapping season. Their ability to travel changed however, once snow machines were introduced. They were able to travel faster, and thus could make more frequent trips to and from the traplines and the family cabin.



**Canadian Lynx.** Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 1536105.

#### **John Lemaigre:**

*"I would leave October 10 until December 10 for trapping fine furs. We took 6 dog packs and left on the boat from the Bay at La Loche. We used the dog pack because there wasn't snow yet. We travelled all the way up the Richardson River to Douglas River near Fort Chipewyan and came back. We left again Easter Monday for muskrat, beaver and otter trapping. We would come back after about a month and a half."*

#### **Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"In winter I would go on my dog team to the bush, I kill the animals and use the dog team to transport."*

#### **Maxime Janvier:**

*"November 15 was season open until 3 or 4 days before Christmas. We sold our furs so we can celebrate Christmas. After Christmas, go back to trap until about May 15 we go back and forth to store and trapping area."*



**George Nokohoo:**

*"2 months big game vs. every day trapping."*

**Jack Herman:**

*"When we were trapping and see moose (bull) we kill it."*

**David Janvier:**

*"All day trap October through May; shoot moose when we see it."*

**Harry Janvier:**

*"Trappers have long hours - early morning until evening 12:00 midnight. 14 miles to check traps, snares. 1. You must move all the time 2. Drying clothes 3. Baking bannock 4. Evening is for skinning animals."*

## Spring and Winter Trapping Harvests

The type and number of furbearers harvested each season would differ depending on many variables including trapper preferences, trapping limits, the weather, and animal populations. During the Elder interviews it became apparent that the typical fur harvest tended to decline, especially after 1985. To better understand

this occurrence we asked the land users to estimate their harvest during three different time periods, prior to 1970, after 1970, and after 1985. Table 8.2 depicts a typical spring trapping harvest, while Table 8.3 shows a winter harvest during these three periods.



**Preparing the beaver for skinning.**

*Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*



**Skinning the beaver.**

*Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*

## Trapping

Table 8.2 Spring harvests for furbearers<sup>125</sup>

	Prior 1970	1970-1984	1985-present
Beaver	50	15	Very little trapping occurred during this period ↓
Otter	6-50	10	
Muskrat	50-500	50-100	
Squirrel	200-1000	50+	
Rabbit	100+	30+	

Table 8.3 Winter harvests for furbearers<sup>126</sup>

	Prior 1970	1970-1984	1985-present
Beaver	15	10	Very little trapping occurred during this period ↓
Lynx	10-20	10	
Fisher	5-10	1-5	
Squirrel	500+	500+	
Wolf	5	2	
Fox	5-10	5	↓
Rabbit	100+	100+	
Otter	2-5	2	

## Setting Traps

Typically, trappers reported that they had to travel fifteen to twenty miles in order to get to their trap line. When there, they would then travel the entire trap line, which averaged

about twenty to twenty-five miles. As explained by the Chipewyan Prairie Elders and traditional land users, some trappers had longer distances to travel, while some had less.

### John Lemaigre:

*"Trapping from La Loche to Douglas River; it would take 6 dog packs to go that far; we start by going out and setting the traps and then come back to the cabin – that would take about 2 weeks. Then we go and snare squirrels. We would make about three different lines – south or north; then you come back and you have to dry all your squirrels. From there we have to go back north again along all the rivers and camp."*

### Lawrence Janvier:

*"76 miles from Chipewyan Prairies – to trapline and all around and back. Check traps every 2 days or you lose out because of other animals."*

<sup>125</sup> Data compiled from the CPDEN Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study (2004).

<sup>126</sup> Data compiled from the CPDEN Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study (2004).



**Jean Morris:**

*"We set traps; stay one month, check traps every morning, beaver / muskrat. We check different areas on trapline."*

**George Nokohoo:**

*"2 hours to travel on trapline, I used traps only for mink and snares for beavers. Checking traps starts at 4 a.m. and return at night. Not easy work. Trapping was survival back then. People relied on trapping until welfare came along. Women would set snares and get rabbits. I set my traps 1 day and check them every second day. One day to set snares check every 2nd day - back and forth."*

**Jack Herman:**

*"To transport depends how far, like if we're on canoe. Also in spring we kill, leave it for people to pick up (up to 10), to share all in one day. Time spent depends on how many traps, also to have to shoot them; we go for 1.5 months in spring. To travel on trapline takes 4 hours to walk 1 way."*

There were typically 50 to 200 traps and snares set up on a trap line. Some trappers had less, about 20 to 50, while others had up to 300. The type of trap used varied, depending on the furbearer being trapped. A trapper may have forty traps set for muskrat and only ten traps set for lynx and mink. The time spent making and setting traps

depended on the number and type of traps being used. It could take anywhere from two to fifteen minutes to set a traditional trap and anywhere from ten to twenty minutes to set a modern trap. In general, traps would be checked every second or third day.

**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"To make a traditional trap for lynx – put bait in house takes less than 10 minutes."*

**Jack Herman:**

*"15 minutes to make sticks and house then snare/trap inside – traditional trap."*

**Jean B. Morris:**

*"Traditional trap – ½ hour for lynx - make a small house, put trap in it; 20 minutes for a modern trap."*



**Learning to set a trap.** *Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*

### Commercial Trapping

Credits would often be given to trappers at local stores throughout the summer for basic groceries and supplies. In the winter, the money made from selling pelts would be used to pay the bills. Fur prices depended upon the market prices and quantities obtained throughout the

season. Both fur prices and quantities would fluctuate depending on factors such as over-harvesting, animal depletion, and trapping regulations. Natural factors and environmental changes also affected the availability of furbearing animals and pelt prices each year.



**Everest Janvier:**

*"We would go trapping starting November 15 until before Christmas – then would sell the fur for \$.05 to \$.25 a pelt. Collect all pelts and go to Cheecham, there was a store there. Sold the fur and maybe got \$20.00, back then \$20.00 was lots. That got the basic food like flour, tea, sugar, lard, etc. It wasn't like the way it is now. \$20.00 wouldn't give us much because of the different kinds of foods. Tobacco with cigarette paper cost \$.15 now about \$12.00. They would travel with two dog sled toboggans and \$20.00 would fill both toboggans with food. Clothing was very little and inexpensive, nowadays if children don't have TV and certain materials they feel like they have nothing. If we were to live like the old days now, we would feel rich."*



**Everest Janvier and Family.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

**Yvonne Janvier:**

*"Sold fur to Harry Steponwich to buy groceries."*

**Lena Black:**

*"Family allowance was only \$6.00/month and my Dad used to get credit at the store for groceries all summer then he would pay his bill in the winter – he would pay from the money he got from pelts."*

**David Janvier:**

*"\$1400 small baby lynx back then"*

## Trapping

### Maxime Janvier on trapping:

*"February through May 15 checking traps; used to have lots of traps, lost lots due to oil companies and people taking them. I used to make \$6000.00 part time trapping. Before 1970, I usually killed about sixty beavers. After 1970, there were sixty or more beavers and now it is only about ten. I don't hunt now."*

Table 8.4 1955 prices for pelts<sup>127</sup>

Animal	Price (Currency of the Day)
Squirrel	\$0.30
Muskrat	3.00
Weasel	0.25
Mink	30.00 - 40.00

### Alfred Lemaigre:

*"Our family trapline at Garson Lake to Birch Lake, Gipsy Lake and Gordon Lake for squirrel, lynx, mink, beaver and muskrat would bring more than \$600.00 per trapping season for groceries."*

## Furbearers and Traditional Clothing

Although some Elders said they only used pelts to sell, others used them for making clothes or other personal items for the family. Some items included jackets, purses, gloves, moccasins, wrap arounds for babies,

and toboggan covers for sliding. Time spent skinning; fleshing and stretching hides would vary. One trapper indicated that four hours, one day a week was spent on this traditional activity.

### Harriett Janvier:

*"I spent eight hours to skin and stretch beaver hide."*

**Mary Jane Herman:** *"I made rabbit blankets, braided rabbit pelts - stretch rabbit pelts on boards, dried and sewn together for blanket."*

### Jack Herman:

*"When we return from trapping we have to stretch every fur bearer - it takes 2-3 hours then we don't worry the next day. Beaver would be used for hats, jackets, and moccasins. Rabbit was used for felt inside moccasins, and foptails for parkas."*

127 Maxime Janvier, (2004). CPDEN Traditional Land Use Study interview.



**Dené Traditional Hand-made Items**



**Chipewyan Coat, Western Subarctic.** *Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-270.*



**Chipewyan Storage Bag, Western Subarctic.** *Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-82.*



**Dené Mittens, Western Subarctic (c1953-1958).** *Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-300 a-b.*



**Athapaskan Shirt, Western Subarctic.** *Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization.*

## Trapping



**Athapaskan Pointed Skin, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-255.



**Athapaskan Moccasin-trousers, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-244.



**Chipewyan Gloves, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number III-DD-147.1-2.



**Chipewyan Boots, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-88 a-b.





Chipewyan Yoke, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-122.



Chipewyan Fur-trimmed Moccasins, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-123 a-b.



Chipewyan Moccasins, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-67 a, b.

## Seasonal Occupations and Trapping

Most of the men who were interviewed for this study said that they were full-time hunters and trappers prior to 1970, although they did occasionally take on seasonal occupations to supplement their income. After the 1970s, many of the men had different types of seasonal jobs working in forestry, firefighting, road construction, fisheries on the railroad, or working for oil companies. Typically, they would start work in the spring after the trapping season and work until the fall, when the hunting season began. With this, they were able to supplement their income while continuing to hunt and trap throughout the fall, winter and spring months.

Most of the female Elders who were interviewed said that they were homemakers prior to 1970. After the 1970s however, some of the Chipewyan Prairie women worked outside of the home, especially if their children were older. These women worked as caregivers, community workers, school cleaners and cooks. After the 1970s, the Chipewyan Prairie people were unable to live solely upon hunting and trapping as in the past. Many Band members have gone on to school, found work in many different capacities, and moved into larger cities. Those who have remained on the reserve continue to trap, hunt and fish, mostly on the weekends, during specific seasons.

## Traditional Knowledge of Furbearers

The Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation Elders and land users hold traditional knowledge about the furbearers that they and their ancestors have been using for thousands of years. Information about the rabbit and beaver was shared during the interviews for this study.

### RABBIT – Alma Nokohoo

Rabbits always live alone in the bush. They mate four times per year and the females give birth to four to eight young at once. They always run away from fire. Every seven years the rabbits disappear, then when they return there are lots. Fox and coyotes hunt rabbits. We hunt rabbit anytime, all year round. We live off it. We prepare



## Trapping

a gun, sometimes snares, and a sack to hunt this animal. When in snares, they bend a tree and the snare bounces up with the rabbit, to hide it from the crows and ravens. We skin the rabbit from the feet to the head then cut the feet and hands off. We use the skin for shoe felts in winter. We eat the meat. The unused parts were given to the dogs to eat but now they are thrown away. We would feed and share this animal with each other; we helped each other a lot in the olden days.

### BEAVER – George Nokohoo

The beaver live together in family groups. The Beaver live in the water and keep moving. During the fall, they store food to prepare for winter. In the winter they stay in their house; in spring and summer they swim around and look for other areas for food. During the springtime the males and females start looking for each other to have young ones. They give birth in the beaver house and they have three or four at once. Once this animal was found dead in the beaver house because of old age. The population of

this animal changes from year to year because the beaver is always moving.

Timber wolves, lynx and wolverine hunt this animal. Our people hunt this animal starting in the fall until spring break up. To prepare for the beaver hunt, we watch the wind; check where beavers are at, where they feed; be quiet, sit and wait; look and sneak around the area. We use guns to hunt the beaver. Traditional rules are to not over kill, respect the animals and no abuse. We only take what we need, not more. To skin the beaver, you must cut from the feet to neck and flesh. After hunting this animal, you watch where you put the meat, clean the camp area – you can't play around. With the scraps, a hole is made near the cabin and they are placed in; the bears will have them later. Traditionally, we hunt the beaver for fur and food. We sell the beaver skin for money and we eat the meat. Beaver castor is used as medicine. We would smoke the Beaver meat and share it with family and friends. Now we don't do this anymore because of Fish and Wildlife conditions.



**Rabbit.**

*Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 270301.*



**Beaver with a Big Stick.**

*Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 611525.*





**Smoking rack.** *Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*

# Chapter 9

## Big Game

This chapter outlines the big game animals traditionally hunted and used by the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation. Although moose was the main big game animal traditionally relied upon for food and clothing, the CPDFN people also hunted whitetail and mule deer, woodland caribou, and occasionally black bear, barren land caribou and bison. The hunt for big game animals has declined for many of the CPDFN community since the 1970s. This deterioration is attributed to many factors including a change in animal migrations and populations,

over harvesting, loss of habitat and pollution. The people are no longer living out on the land conducting their annual cycles. Many of the Band members are now employed full-time in non-traditional positions.

This chapter also discusses the big game harvesting areas, hunting seasons, and transportation methods. The Elders and traditional land users of the CPDFN also share some traditional knowledge regarding individual big game animals.



**Cow Moose Grazing.** Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 1408271.



**Skinning a Moose.** Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.



## Harvesting Areas

The Elders are very knowledgeable regarding the best big game hunting areas. Hunting locations indicated by the Elders are shown in Figure 9.1. Many of these areas surround the lakes, rivers, and creeks in the region.

### North

- Gordon Lake
- Gipsy Lake
- Birch Lake
- North and south Watchusk Lake
- Christina River

### East

- Cowpar Lake and River
- Acaster Lake
- Graham Lake, River and Creek
- Dillon Lake and Creek

### South

- Winefred Lake and River
- Grist Lake
- Christina Lake
- Jackfish River
- Cold Lake Air Weapons Range

### West

- Chard area
- Railway line area
- Waddell River
- Kettle River
- Crow Lake
- Pony Creek

### Harry Janvier:

*"I know where the deer are, open prairie where the wind blows, no cut line, I found tracks, shoot, clean, and I take home."*



**White Tail Deer Running.**

*Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 1456739.*

# Big Game

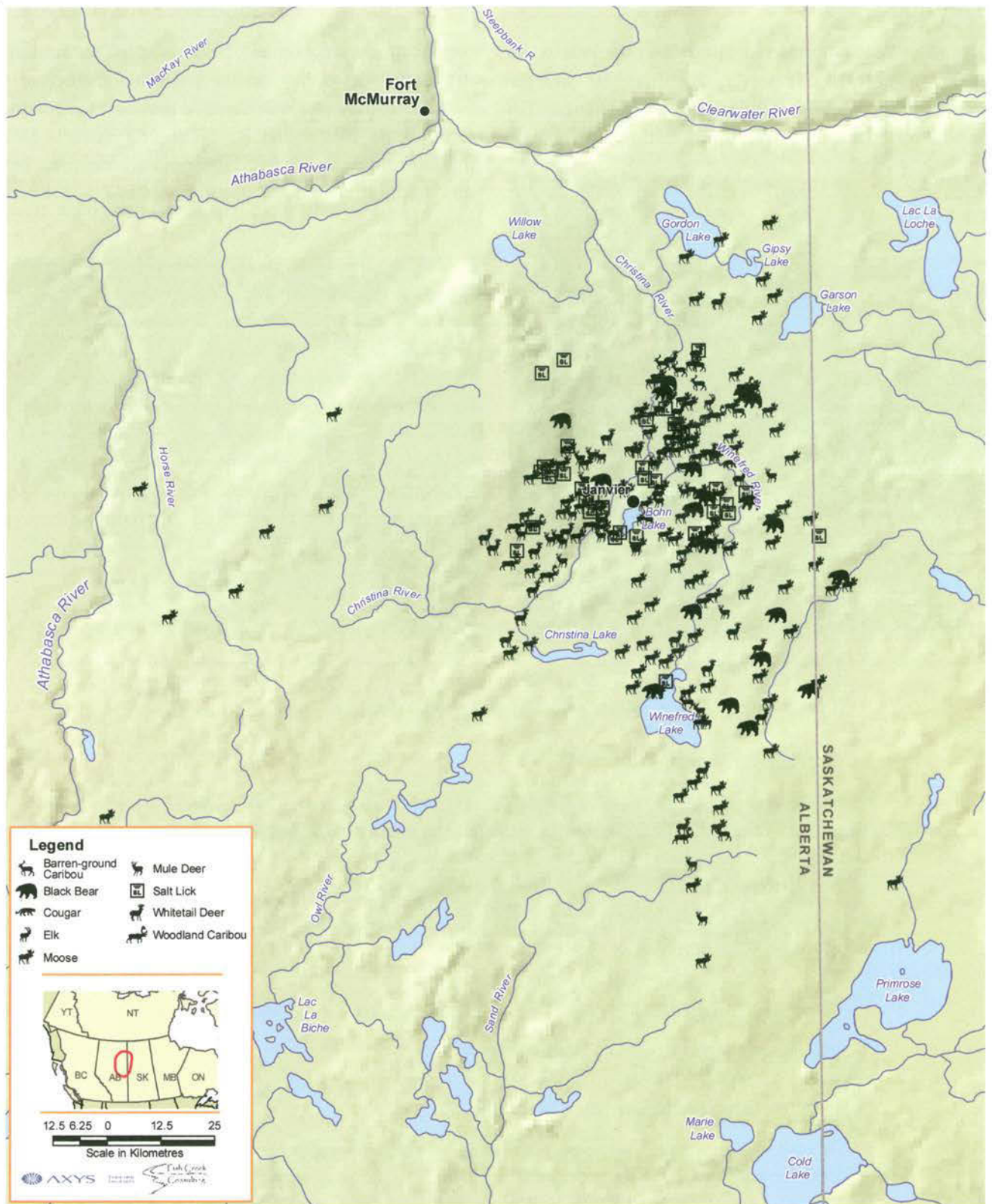


Figure 9.1 Big Game



## Hunting Seasons

Big game hunting occurred throughout the year when meat was needed. However, fall is the best time for hunting big game, mainly moose. During the fall moose hunt, the men would go hunting two to four



*A Successful Moose Hunt. Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*

weeks or more at a time. The time spent on hunting would vary depending on the individual hunter and his luck. It may take one day, five days or even longer before a kill. After the fall hunt, trapping season began. Although there was no specific time allocated to big game hunting in the winter, game was killed as it was seen.

Sometimes animals were too skinny after the long winter to be worth hunting. Also at this time, many animals were having and rearing their young. Because of this, big game would only be taken in the spring if absolutely necessary. If a moose had to be taken during the spring or summer, only a one or two year old bull moose would be killed; no cows would be taken at this time. To replace the big game during the spring and summer months, fish and smaller animals such as squirrels, rabbits and chickens would often be taken.

### Jack Herman:

*"Often go out for 2 weeks at a time to go hunting, if we get lucky when we see it then we go home."*

### Everest Janvier:

*"Men went in the bush for 2 weeks in the fall. Take the family in bush, near salt licks and rivers, easier to track moose, to track go against the wind. They stay in bush from October to December."*

### Maxime Janvier:

*"We start September 15<sup>th</sup> – when moose comes out to fight. Hunt only when we need it because i'm busy working."*

### George Nokohoo:

*"Hunting time varies because we hunted when needed."*

### Everest Janvier on summer hunting:

*"Main reason for hunting is for food, only when needed. Moose stay by water to keep mosquitoes away. Summer hunting was done to keep surviving until big game comes back in fall."*

## Transportation Methods

Prior to 1970, the winter hunting transportation was usually by dog team with a sleigh or toboggan. Snowshoes would also be used. During the summer and fall, hunting was done on foot, horse, or with a truck or canoe. In the 1960s and 1970s, the motorized skidoo replaced the dog team. After a kill, the time spent transporting the meat would depend on the season and on how far away

from home or camp the hunt had occurred. It could take anywhere from one to three days to transport. Most often, hunters travelled in at least pairs for safety reasons. Family members such as fathers, sons or brothers would often go on hunting trips together. This companionship also provided the hunters with support.



Chipewyan sleigh used on lake ice in spring, 1926. Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-020012.



The Janvier Brothers. Left to right – Gordon Janvier, Walter Janvier, Alvin Janvier, and Marcel Janvier.

Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

### Everest Janvier:

*"Transporting the meat may take longer if they are far from home, because they may have to cover with spruce trees to keep from spoiling and keeping it away from other animals."*

### Fred Cardinal explains:

*"I always go hunting with someone in case if I get hurt I need some one there to go and get some body."*

### George Nokohoo:

*"Transporting depends how far sometimes across river, lakes, etc."*



## Traditional Uses

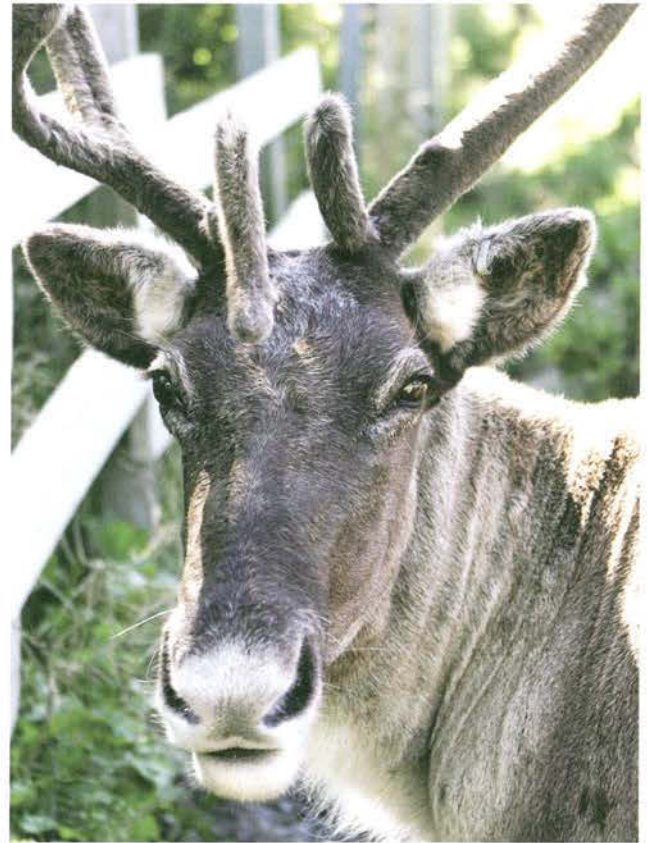
Animals were hunted and trapped for food but their hides were also used to make coverings, mats, clothing, and other household and cultural articles. Traditionally, animal bones were used in soups and to make utensils such as hide scrapers, sewing needles, knives, and other tools. In general, all parts of the animal were utilized. The innards were used to make rawhide sinew, which was used as thread for sewing. Also, different animal organs were used for medicinal purposes and were also used spiritually in ceremonies. The CPDFN has always depended on wildlife for their subsistence. A description of the big game animals traditionally hunted by the Band members is presented below.

## Caribou (Et’thenn)

There are two subspecies of caribou, the barrenland caribou and the woodland caribou.<sup>128</sup> The less migratory, larger woodland caribou were generally available only to those Chipewyan who moved to the area south of Lake Athabasca, such as the Chipewyan Prairie people. The barrenland caribou range from the northern tundra forest rarely travelled very far into the boreal forest, except immediately south of Lake Athabasca.<sup>129</sup> However, there have been times where the barrenland caribou have migrated further south.

The CPDFN ancestors relied on caribou hides and meat for their survival. As the caribou population began to decline, the people began to supplement their diet with moose meat and other available big game, small animals, fish and waterfowl. Prior to 1970, most of the Elders and land users reported hunting more woodland caribou and less barrenland caribou. Fresh caribou meat was usually available in the fall and winter months. In the spring, dry caribou would still be consumed from the fall and winter harvest.

Harry Janvier remembers that about fifty years ago there were many woodland caribou in the Hook Lake, Winefred



**Male Caribou.**

*Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 286262.*

Lake, and Egg Lake muskeg areas. The barrenland caribou herds could be found further north near Black Lake. George Nokohoo recalls that in the 1950s, barrenland caribou passed through the area from Garson Lake. An Elder said that the woodland caribou came in herds about 60 years ago but not anymore. Another Elder blames the 1960s flood for the caribou’s disappearance. Since then there has been next to nothing of both the barrenland and woodland caribou. Nowadays, only small herds of 6 to 9 animals or individual woodland caribou will be sighted. Since the caribou populations have declined, there have been various restrictions placed on caribou hunting.

### David Janvier on caribou and hunting areas:

*“We have woodland caribou nowadays, not barrenland caribou. Hunt around Janvier, Chard for caribou – towards Chard and Christina River before Waddell Creek.”*

<sup>128</sup> Ibid, Smith (1975), pg.400.

<sup>129</sup> Ibid, Smith (1975), pg.401.

## Bear (Sas)

Black bear hunting would commonly occur during the late summer and fall after the bears spent the spring and summer feeding. A good time to hunt bear was in the evenings when the bears are harvesting on berries. Sometimes bear would be taken in the winter if a den was discovered. Bears are too skinny in the spring after hibernating all winter long. The CPDFN Elders and land users indicated they would typically harvest one or two bears during the summer, fall and winter months.

Bear was harvested for its meat, but mainly for its fat and hide. Ninety five percent of the Elders interviewed said that, prior to 1970, bear meat was readily available during the fall season. Bear fat was used for frying, making bannock, and dry meat and at one time, for preserving pemmican. Bear hide would often be used as a mattress for men on hunting and trapping trips. Traditionally, bear parts, such as gall bladders and paws were also used for medicinal and ceremonial purposes.

### **Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"Kill bear underground in winter – sometimes with gun."*

## Deer (Yáhtoé)

White-tailed and mule deer would be harvested throughout the year. Most of the Elders said they would hunt about one or two deer per season for meat. David Janvier reported that there are still many white tail deer around the area, but not as many mule deer.



**Young Black Bear.**

*Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 993986.*



**Bear Skin.**

*Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*



**Mule Deer Buck.**

*Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 1234516.*



## Bison (Tl’oghijere)

The CPDFN Elders and land users have not hunted bison for many years. Harry Janvier explained that about 100 years ago there were many bison on the landscape, now there are none. Fred Cardinal said that he did see one bison run into a bush in Conklin nine years ago, but that’s it. Elders in the community talk about the old buffalo route to the Birch Mountains from Chipewyan Prairie. Many buffalo heads have been found along this route. In the journal records of Peter Fidler, he describes the Chipewyan people harvesting bison during his time with them in the late 18th Century.<sup>130</sup>

### Everest Janvier:

*“1950s – Barren Buffalo’s around Chipewyan Prairie area.”*



**Big Bison.**

*Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 781199.*

## Moose (Denié)

Most of the Elders and land users interviewed said that they hunted at least one or two moose each season and in the fall, maybe three or four. During the interviews, the Elders explained how nothing was wasted from the animal that was killed. Moose bones made great scrapers and arrows; even the insides of the moose were used for dog food. Different traditional uses of the moose are explained below.

### Dry Meat and Grease

Women would smoke and dry the moose meat, and extract the fat for grease. The time spent on each of these activities would vary depending on the amount of meat and the number of women working. Fat extraction was typically done right after a moose hunt. Two to three animals were needed to produce about one full pail of grease. The fat and grease were separated by cooking it throughout the day. The grease would then be used to make the dry meat in preparation for the winter months. Throughout this study, hunters explained that the meat rotted very quickly during the summer months. Because of this, the dry meat was made as soon as an animal was shot during the hot months. Moose meat was always highly valued by the CPDFN people and is still consumed regularly.

### Maxime Janvier:

*“September is hunting season for moose – dry meat (hard lard); bear was major for making grease lard, they don’t leave nothing, they put grease in the guts tube to save and store.”*

### Yvonne Janvier:

*“My grandfather left Gipsy Lake; he had no gun, only a tea pot. He caught a little moose by hand. He hung on to it until some of his family came along and they killed that little moose with a stick club. Everyone was so happy they had a little feast; of course being hungry and no food. People used to travel by foot all the way from Cold Lake, La Loche, Garson Lake, Gipsy Lake and other areas. In those days, people used to travel with less or no food at all and they traveled long ways to get food, this was my grandfather and parents days.”*

<sup>130</sup> Ibid, ACFN (2003), pg. 108, from MacGregor (1998).



**Drying Meat.** Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-045374.

### Cutting the Moose

The men generally cut the meat right after the hunt. This activity could take anywhere from one to three hours. Below, Harry Janvier describes the steps to skillfully cutting a moose:

1. Shoot the moose
2. Cut the head off
3. Lay moose on back
4. Cut upper brisket area
5. Cut to the tail - across to one leg then to other leg bottom, then upper legs
6. Cut legs off in four pieces
7. Along the back, cut two strips of meat
8. Cut around the belly, cut the belly cover
9. Pull out the guts (cut the throat piece)
10. Cut the ribs



**Bull Moose.**

Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. PA-008145



## Preparing the Moose Hide

The time needed to prepare moose hide varied. Mary Jane Herman recalls making twenty hides per year and each would take her two full days. Yvonne Janvier says that it takes her about one week to prepare a hide if she is working on it regularly. Lena Black only made two hides throughout her life and each took her a full month to prepare. Times for hide preparation also changed depending on the season. Hides were usually prepared during the spring and

fall, only because the winter months are too cold. Often, animal skins from winter would be stored until spring, so it would be easier to make the hides. In the winter, the moose would be skinned right away before it froze and in the summer, it would be cut and covered with trees, for pick up the next day.<sup>131</sup> Table 9.1 shows the basic steps and estimated times to making moose hide.

**Table 9.1 Moose Hide Steps<sup>132</sup>**

Step	Notes	Time
Making frame	Men used 4 logs (dry tammak) and nail together	1 day
Cutting slits	Women cut slits at edges	1 hour
Stretching	Stretching and putting on frame	1 hour
Fleshing	With 2 women helping	2 hrs-1 day
Drying and scraping hair	Depends on season	1-5 days
Mixing and applying softener	1 hour to mix and ½ hour to apply	1.5 hours
Initial smoke	Collect rotten wood; smoke hair side	2 hours
Soaking	Until soiled	1 day
Softening it (working it)	Until the hide is stretching in all directions	1 hour
Wringing and drying		2 hours
Scraping	Making hide even by scraping	4 hours
Collecting rotten wood		½ day
Sew holes/material on bottom		2 hours
Final smoking	Over fire 1 hour (1/2 hour each side)	½ day



**Chipewyan Skin Scraper, Western Subarctic.**

*Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-80.*

<sup>131</sup> Mondeste Cardinal. (2004). CPDFN Traditional Land Use Study interview.

<sup>132</sup> Data compiled from the CPDFN female Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study (2004).

## Traditional Knowledge of Big Game Animals

Two important big game animals that have always been hunted by the CPDFN are the moose and bear. The traditional knowledge about these animals was provided from the CPDFN Elders and land users that were interviewed for this study.

### MOOSE – Harry Janvier and Mary Jane Herman

The Bull Moose lives alone. When fall comes, the male and female come together during the night. After they mate, they go to the river to wash off their scent. The female is about four years old when it first has its young. She has one or two young. The moose move in from all directions and areas. They live at the riverside, around the muskeg, where the food grows – high dry places. Wolves from up north come to hunt moose. They bite the ankle of the moose and cut off the muscle. Five or six wolves will eat one moose during the night. The moose stay close to water where they can swim away from wolves. Old people know how to hunt moose.

We hunt moose by foot and snowshoes in winter. We also used dog teams in winter and horse pack in summer or a

canoe in summer on the lake or river. We hunt the moose when it drinks water in the morning and late evening from the lake or river. We wear hunting moccasins. We bring a gun, axe, file, and knives. We also bring bannock and dry meat. On a cold day, the moose can hear a long way. You have to watch the wind; the wind has to be right – if the wind blows towards the moose, you go against the wind. We also watch the tracks; if the tracks are fresh, the man will go into the bush after the moose. We only hunt what we need – one or two animals – when we are out of meat. We are like wolves – we hunt when we are hungry, nothing wasted, we respect.

The moose is important traditionally – the meat for food and the hide for clothing and supplies. The uses remain the same even today. We share the meat with other families, the Elders and single mothers. The unused parts are put in a clean area, away from people, far away in the bush. The Bull Moose has a hanging under the neck; some people take that and hang it on a tree. We must give respect to the moose – it gives us life and feeds us. The moose will come to you in a dream – it will tell you it will need to feed you, give its' life – that's when you know when to shoot the moose.



Moose and her Calves. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 1106930.



## BLACK/BROWN BEAR – Mondeste Cardinal

The bear stays with its cubs and protects them from predators. They eat berries and during fish spawning, they eat fish. In the winter they sleep. They mate during the spring to produce offspring. The bear would have to be about three years old to give birth. The offspring is delivered wherever they are living. They produce about three offspring. Every year the bear produce more offspring.

During fires, they run away and would not burn. The wolves are predators mainly during the sleep period. We hunt bear in August during berry season. There are really no traditional rules for hunting this animal. A 30-30 gun is used to hunt the bear. When we hunted bear in winter, we used a dog sled. When hunting this animal we would get about four, and this was because many were available around berry season. When hunting the bear, you need to be upwind from the bear, so it cannot smell you, otherwise they would run away. The women were not allowed to step over the bear, if they were around during the killing.

The bear is skinned using a knife, same with the cutting.

They are skinned from the neck down and the arms and legs are cut off. The unused portions would be burned - until today we do the same. The bear is important for food, bear grease and hide. The bear hide was used for sled blankets. This animal would also be shared with family members.



**Black Bear caught in leg-hold trap. Ca. 1900.** Photo courtesy of the Glenbow Archives. Reference Number NA-207-139.



**Brown Bear.** Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 1189878.

# Chapter 10

## Fishing

Traditionally, fish have played a vital role in the lifestyle of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation. Fish was a staple in the People's diet. Throughout this chapter, the fishing seasons, harvest, tools, and traditional uses of fish by the Chipewyan people are discussed. The approximate fishing locations traditionally used by the CPDFN are also displayed.

### Fishing Locations

The CPDFN Elders and land users have extensive knowledge of the best fishing spots in the various lakes, rivers, and creeks throughout their traditional lands. The people understood the specific spawning times and other knowledge required to successfully harvest the fish at appropriate times throughout the year. The Elders indicated many fishing areas as well as the various types of fish caught within those areas. The fish that were mainly harvested by the Chipewyan Prairie people were jackfish, whitefish, pickerel, trout and suckers. The Dené translation for these and other fish are provided in Table 10.1. The approximate spawning and harvesting locations frequented by the CPDFN people are shown in Figure 10.1.



**Catching a Pike.**

*Photo courtesy of iStockphoto.com. Reference Number 846858.*



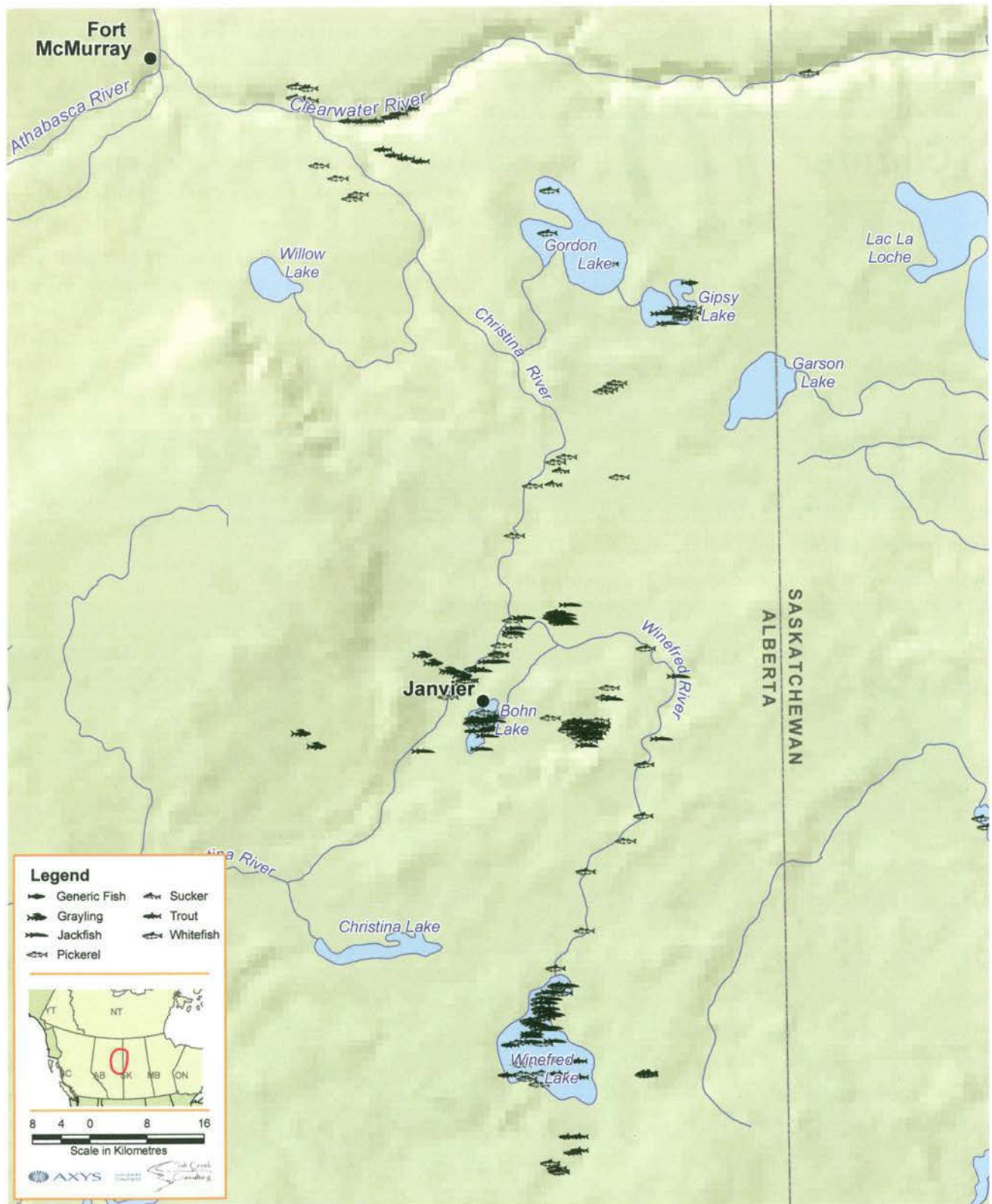


Figure 10.1 Fish

**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"Fishing — Christina River for pickerel and jackfish, no whitefish; Fish spawning at Bohn Lake and Cowpar Creek. Hook lake for fishing in winter."*

**Fishing Seasons and Harvest**

The people would fish all year round but mostly in the summer and fall before freeze up and at various spawning times. During the summer and early fall months when families were camping and settled around the edge of a lake or river, groups of two or more people would regularly fish together. Although they did set up nets in the rivers or lakes they also frequently fished with hooks. The summer and fall was the time that the Chipewyan Prairie people would stock up on fish for the upcoming winter season.

At any one location they would catch thirty or more per day

**Table 10.1 Traditional Names of Fish**

Jackfish/pike	Uldai
Whitefish	Tu
Pickerel/walleye	Elch ui
Grayling	Sat ie/Ts et ite
Burbot	
Sucker	Egothechae
Trout	Tuezane

with a net and eight to ten by hook. An average trapper's family would have 1000 to 4000 fish stocked before winter freeze up. They would usually fish three or four days per week, up to four hours a day. Some people would spend two or more weeks at a time fishing every day. Many Elders indicated that, prior to 1970, there was an abundance of fish to harvest, especially whitefish and jackfish. However, they described that due to factors such as loss of habitat, over-harvesting, and pollution, fish populations have steadily declined throughout the traditional lands of the CPDFN people.

**Everest Janvier:**

*"Families fished until sunset. The men fished and women cleaned and dried the fish. Children helped haul in the fish."*

**Fred Cardinal:**

*"Five people would stand and fish about 200 feet apart. This was at Hook Lake, Christina Lake and along the river."*

**Mary Jane Herman:**

*"In the fall, alongside the Garson Lake shore, many Dené will come and make fire along side of the lake. Men set nets in the lake; fish are hanged by the tail on sticks and stored in fish storage huts (lua sheth zetha)."*

**Harry Janvier:**

*"Gipsy Lake (camp) — The Dené would come in the fall; October 15th on for about two weeks - no leaves then, just before freeze up. Whitefish come to shore for spawning then — put nets out in morning."*



**Trout.** Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 1003816.



**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"Fall time to make dry fish – this would take about two days in total to cut and dry and complete everything."*

**John Lemaigre:**

*"There wasn't a lot of fish at Garson Lake, so all the families would go to Gipsy Lake – twenty families or more would stay there in the summer from May to October – they would stay about 1 kilometre apart. We fish for the wintertime – some people may kill up to 4000 fish for food for themselves and the dogs."*



**Drying Fish.** Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada, Reference Number PA-022455.

### Traditional Uses

Fish were a staple of the CPDFN diet, especially during the summer months. Fresh fish were always shared between family members and neighbours. Fish were used to make fish oil frequently used in medicines. Traditionally as well as present day, the Chipewyan Prairie Dené prepare fish for consumption based on their local, social, and cultural practices. Fresh fish is often fried, roasted, used in soups, or dried. Both fresh and dry fish was available throughout every season. Thousands of fish would be drying in storage huts during the fall in preparation for the winter months. Chipewyan families spent entire days drying fish in the fall. The Elders reported that whitefish was used to make dry

fish because it stays soft when it dries. Dry fish was made to be used for both human and dog consumption mainly during the winter and other times throughout the year.

Fish were essential in supporting a trapper's dog team. Although many of the Elders indicated that fishing for the dogs was not a separate task, it was essential to have enough fresh and dry fish for their teams, especially before 1970 when dog teams were the main form of winter transportation. The fish used for dog food included the smaller unwanted fish, such as suckers and burbot, the insides of the fish, or the leftovers.

#### Everest Janvier:

*"The fish were cleaned and then the rest went for dog food. We didn't fish specifically for dogs."*

#### Fred Cardinal:

*"If we catch sucker with a net, it's for the dogs except the head, I eat that."*

#### Mondeste Cardinal:

*"Fish for dogs about six fish for two dogs; this was done everyday. Burbot for dogs only."*

#### Alfred Lemaigre:

*"Gipsy Lake always provided fish for us to survive – it fed us good all our lives; there's lots of fish in there for ourselves and for the dogs."*

### Fishing Tools

Nets, snares and hooks were commonly used as tools for fishing. Historically, fish traps and spears were also used, but not in recent times. Many Chipewyan Prairie people made their own fish hooks out of bone or other material that was readily available to them. Usually, these traditional hooks took only a few minutes to

make. Nets were also hand made by the CPDFN people. These were usually made out of purchased twine and unlike the hooks, would take a couple of days to make. Although in the old days, nets were made of willow bark. The tools needed for fishing would be made at least once or twice a year as needed.



**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"I would set fish snares, about 5 snares, and it would take about 4-5 minutes per snare. I would make 20 per year. This is for jack and pickerel. Winefred Lake the jackfish were very large and I had to use hooks, not snares."*

**Jack Herman:**

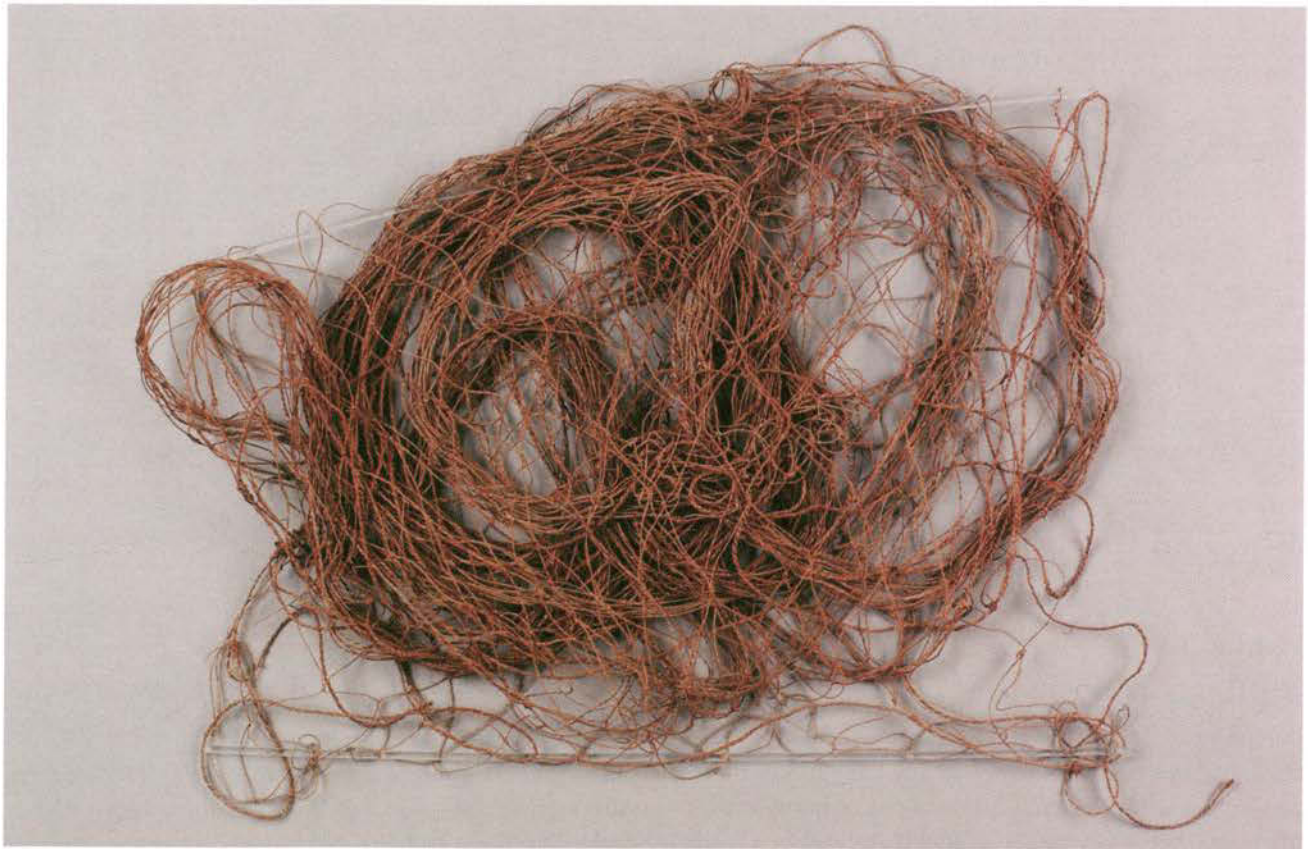
*"There were hooks made of safety pins from baby diapers and also use nails for hooks and bacon for bait."*

**Everest Janvier:**

*"Fishing with nets during spawning times."*

**John Lemaigre:**

*"Take the bottom of willow and take the string of it all the way to the top. That's how the net was made in the old days."*



Athapaskan Fish Net, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-137.

## Commercial Fishing

In addition to traditional fishing, the commercial fishing industry became a large part of the regions economy. Although some of the Chipewyan Prairie people were employed in the commercial fishing industry, most of the Elders commented that they did not sell fish. To them, fish was a resource to feed their families and dogs. Many Elders said that they, "didn't sell fish; only McInnes – the

whitemen." The first McInnes Fish Company icehouse was built in Waterways in 1926, which began the commercial fishing operation on Lake Athabasca. At that time, the railroad was used to transport the fish to markets as far as eastern Canada and the United States. Other smaller operations also existed. Some of the CPDFN people worked for wages at Waterways during the summer time.

### Mondeste Cardinal:

*"I would go to Winefred Lake, fish for Charlie Thom; Charlie would pay \$5 / day sometimes up to 30 days. Plane arrives Charlie goes to sell fish. I would take the winter trail (CPDFN) and fish for jack, white, and pickerel."*





# Chapter 11

## Birds

The Chipewyan Prairie Dené hunted many different types of birds. Although ducks were the main birds harvested, they also hunted mudhens, geese, grouse (commonly called chicken), ptarmigan, and occasionally cranes, swans and blackbirds. This chapter contains information regarding the types of birds the Chipewyan Dené traditionally hunted. The traditional bird hunting locations, seasons and uses are also discussed.

### Traditional Bird Hunting Areas

The traditional areas for bird hunting are represented in Figure 11.1. The Chipewyan Prairie people understood the routes that were regularly used by waterfowl and upland game. Because of this, they hunted in many of the same areas year after year. These areas included those concentrated around Cowpar Lake, Bohn Lake, other lakes and prairie areas.



Feather.

Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 642200.



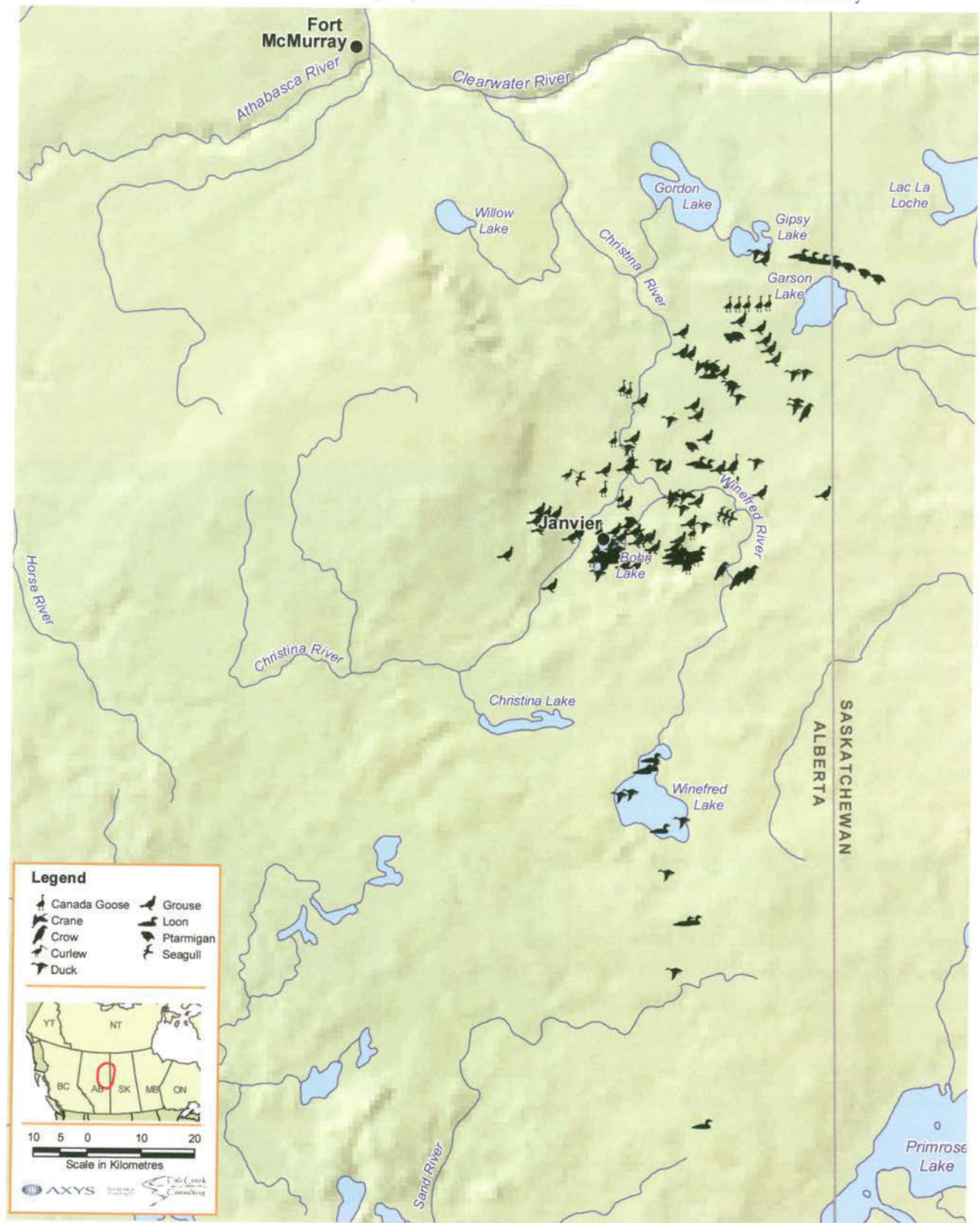


Figure 11.1 Birds

Table 11.1 provides a list of the various birds harvested by the Chipewyan Prairie First Nation along with the Chipewyan Dené translation.

**Table 11.1 Traditional Names of Birds**

Duck	Cheth
Mallard	Cheth chogh
Canvasback	Tháyewé
Goose	Hah
Grouse/Chicken	Eltathaze
Willow Ptarmigan	Gaspa
Crane	Del
Swan	Gagos
Loon	Dádzeni / Dádzené
Pelican	Koráchá
Ptarmigan	K'asba

### Bird Hunting Seasons and Equipment

Waterfowl were typically harvested in spring and fall and upland game birds were harvested year round. Some Elders only hunted waterfowl during the fall, while others hunted waterfowl in the spring when the birds returned from the south. During the spring and summer months, the Chipewyan Prairie people hunted grouse, mallards, mudhens and black ducks before they laid their eggs. However, many of the Elders explained that the best time to hunt ducks was the fall.

The Elders referred to the months of September and October as “fallen in water” because the ducks were so fat that they couldn’t fly. The people would continue to harvest until the birds flew back south for the winter. Ptarmigan was the only bird hunted during the winter.

It was usually the men in the family who would do the hunting, but occasionally women would accompany men on bird hunting trips. Most of the Elders interviewed mentioned that they would hunt birds in the early morning. Guns and slingshots were the tools used to hunt birds. Snares were also used for grouse or “chickens”. Some hunters would make thier own shells for their guns. A hunter may take up to 60 birds on a typical fall hunting day.



Mallard  
Drake



Canvasback  
Duck



Canadian  
Goose  
Flying



Willow  
Ptarmigan

*Photos courtesy of istockphoto.com*

*Reference Numbers 1128575, 1188154, 1296029 & 727018*



**Harry Janvier:**

*“Birds from north - just before freeze up at Cowpar. Ba ty in kai - white wing feather duck: fall time they eat too much they can’t fly, to fat, only this duck, duck fat is 1 / 2 inch, family will get about 5 to 10 ducks - we shared this duck. Make oil from duck.”*

**Fred Cardinal:**

*“We don’t clean them, we freeze it until January and it’s just like fresh ducks. If you clean it and put in fridge, the taste goes away.”*

**Traditional Uses**

Birds provided an additional meat source for the CPDFN people. Game birds were often eaten at special celebrations such as Christmas and New Year. Birds were not only harvested for their meat, but also for their eggs, feather and skin for the use in crafts and supplies.

The CPDFN collected eggs at the nesting sites of black ducks, mallards and mudhen in the spring and early summer. Eggs could be found along grassy lakeshores, in low bushy areas, open nests, and burnt or sandy areas. The number of eggs harvested would vary but Elder, John Lemaigre, said they would find a couple of dozen or more eggs at certain times.<sup>133</sup> Traditional egg gathering sites were at Bohn Lake, Cowpar Lake, Winefred Lake, Little Big Lake, Tuaze (Lake by LaLoche) and many other areas around Chipewyan Prairie.

Birds were also valued for their feathers; they were used to make various household and personal items such as blankets, pillows, storage bags, weatherproof pouches and crafts. Most often, the women would do the cleaning, plucking and collection of feathers. Loose feathers would also be gathered anytime as they were found. It would typically take from five to fifteen minutes to clean and pluck a bird. It would take a 100-pound flour bag full of feathers in order to make one blanket. This could take up to 60 ducks. Loon storage bags and pelican pouches would be made for storing supplies on hunting and trapping trips. These bags were waterproof and were made from the skin of the bird. It would take two to three hours to make four bags.

**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*“I would set off in the early morning to start bird hunting for 5 days. I would collect feathers and store them in a flour bag. It may take about 2 hours to collect the feathers from 20 ducks.”*

**David Janvier:**

*“Big ducks were safe for storage for the Christmas season along with Turkey. We get our canned berries out and celebrate with our killings.”*

<sup>133</sup> John Lemaigre. (2006). CPDFN Traditional Land Use Study Interview.



David Janvier beside Christmas Tree. *Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*



Chipewyan Loon Bag, Western Subarctic.

*Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of  
Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-48.*



Pigeon Eggs. *Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 1110990.*





# Chapter 12

## *Berries, Plants and Medicines*

Traditionally, many different plants, shrubs and berries were gathered throughout the year by the CPDFN to accompany their diet of meat, fish and waterfowl. Although cranberries and blueberries were most commonly picked, other berries such as raspberries, strawberries, saskatoon berries, chokecherries, and mooseberries were also gathered when in season. The

gathering of plants was also an important traditional activity for the Chipewyan Prairie Dené people. Various plants, roots, shrubs and bark were collected throughout the year for consumption, medicinal, religious, and ceremonial purposes. This chapter discusses the gathering locations, seasons and traditional uses for both berries and plants by the CPDFN.



Chipewyan Basket, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-33 a,b.



## Berry Harvesting Seasons

Berry picking occurred at different times throughout the early spring, summer, and early fall, depending on when the fruit was ripe. Several families would camp together by a lake and pick berries before freeze up. This

traditional activity could last anywhere from two weeks to two months, depending on the family groups involved and the harvest for that year.

### Marie Agnes Herman:

*"I used to pick berries around Hook Lake and surrounding area; in the summertime we collected strawberries, chokecherries and during the last week of July we collected raspberry. In August we collected blueberries and during September we collected chokecherries and June we collected saskatoon berries."*

### Jack Herman:

*"Camp for two weeks with parents and other Elders. Four to five tents and families. Mother did canning and stringing."*

### John Lemaigre:

*"Every summer we picked berries at Garson Lake. Just about everybody. The old ladies boiled the berries and they put them under the muskeg."*

### David Janvier:

*"My wife did the canning and drying. Wife and children picked berries mainly because I'm hunting. I did too sometimes while we were camping."*



David Janvier and Family. Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

## Locations

The Elders indicated approximate berry harvesting locations within the Chipewyan Prairie Dené traditional lands. These are shown on Figure 12.1 and some of the special areas indicated by the Elders are listed below:

- Big Prairie (Chipewyan Prairie)
- Bohn Lake
- Cheecham Lake
- Cowpar Lake
- Christina Crossing
- Garson Lake
- Gipsy Lake
- Hook Lake
- Willow Lake (Gregoire Lake)
- Tower Road

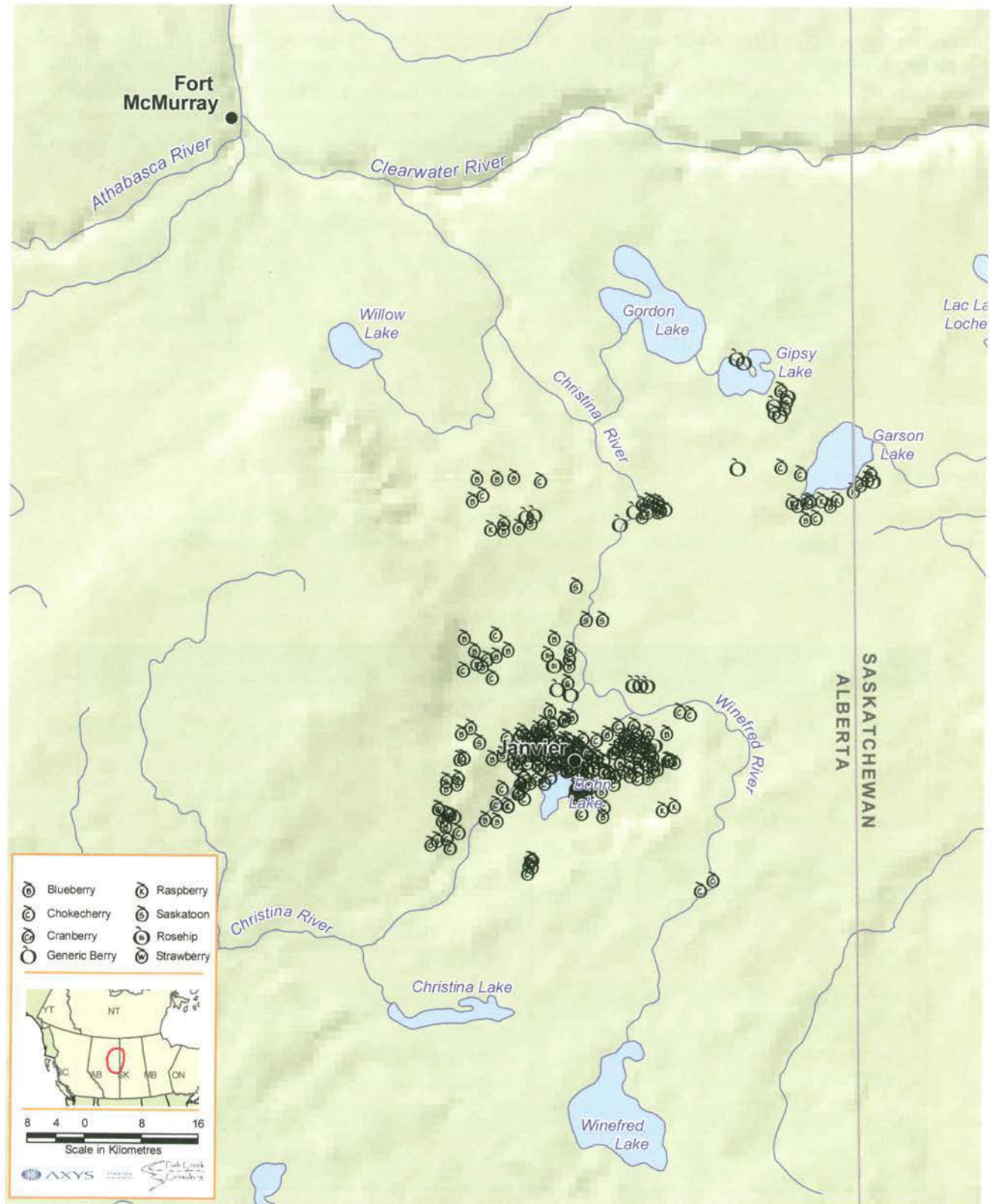


Figure 12.1 Berries



## Berry Harvesting

Normally women and children would spend most of the day picking berries when in season. Sometimes the men would help if they were not hunting. A female Elder recalls, "...we mothers would put our young children in a "hobil" so we could collect berries." A family may pick up to twenty pounds or more per day and over 100 pounds

during the berry season. The amount of berries picked each season was determined solely on availability. In general, the amount and quality of berries available in any given year would depend upon whether the trees, shrubs or plants were frozen during the spring flowering period.

### Mondeste Cardinal:

*"I'll pick twenty pounds of blueberries, I do this in one day. To get to blueberry patch two hours to get there and half a day to pick and clean the berries then ready to pack it back home."*

## Uses of Berries

Table 12.1 shows the various berries with the Dené names that the Chipewyan Prairie Elders discussed in their interviews. Also provided within this table is information on the traditional uses for berries and the time of year that they were gathered.

Table 12.1 Berries<sup>134</sup>

Berries	Harvest Time	Use	Description
Blueberry (Sháthchodh)	July - August	Eaten fresh/ For sale	For canning - E.g., 200 jars in the fall
Cranberry (Highbush=Ts'útseljíe) (Lowbush=Jíe sųhné)	Early spring (after snow melt) Fall	Eating fresh/ storage	Large amounts picked in fall and stored over winter - E.g., 20lb per/box X 5 boxes
Mooseberry (Deníjíe)	August	Eating fresh/ storage	Good to can – similar to cranberries
Raspberry (Káljíe)	End of July	Eating fresh/ storage	Sometimes canned
Strawberry (Edzíaze or Ídzíaze )	June – July	Eating fresh/ storage	Jam
Saskatoon (K'íhjíe)	June – July	Eaten fresh	
Choke cherry (Black and red) (jje yerí)	September	Eaten fresh	

<sup>134</sup> Data compiled from the CPDFN Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study (2004).

Although berries gathered by the CPDFN were primarily used for the family to eat fresh, dried or canned, they were also sold to various local merchants for money to buy groceries and supplies. Some of the Elders explained how this worked.

**Everest Janvier:**

*"They would set up camp at Cheecham from July to September (when berries freeze). They would sell the berries for five cents a pound. They travelled from Garson Lake to Cheecham to do so. Around Garson Lake they picked and jarred for themselves."*

**Fred Cardinal explains:**

*"Around 1950 my mom used to sell berries to buy extra food and supplies (flour, lard, sugar, tea, from the store) for our family – that was the only way to make money. The rest of the food came from the land."*

**Mary Jane Herman:**

*"Berries were for sale only, big boxes at Cheecham's store – a Lebanese buyer (a man named 'See thou thin na'). Lots of people camp at Cheecham, many white tents. Dené sell berries for supplies, many boxes of berries went out on the train."*

**George Nokohoo:**

*"In the 1950s, people would set up tent at berry areas. They would pick many boxes and sell them for \$4.50 per box. That was good money then. They would take it to the store and sell them. The store keeper would take them to the train and send them off to places like Edmonton."*

**Everest Janvier:**

*"Travel to Cheecham to sell berries for five cents per pound."*

**Storage**

Most of the berries that were dried and stored were cranberries. Not all of the Elders indicated they dried berries, but those that did said it would normally take one to two days to string and dry berries that had been gathered. Cranberries would then be stored on top of a

high rack, in a canvas sack outside on the meat rack. Some would store them underground or in a makeshift cellar. Many other types of berries collected would be either canned or jarred for winter use.

**Harry Janvier:**

*"Only cranberries were stored raw, others were canned. We pick and stored for winter, in wooden boxes, natural. You can still pick in early spring when the snow is gone. Men will pick for his wife for a treat."*

**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*"I put berries in jars, then boil and leave for winter. If it's not sealed the berries will not last for winter."*



## Loss of Berry Harvest

Many of the Elders talked about the loss of berries throughout their traditional lands. Although in previous times a family could earn money by selling berries to store owners, the short supply of berries available now makes this impossible.

### Lena Black:

*"Lots of people used to come from all over for berries, there used to be lots of berries here in Chipewyan Prairie, they called it Big Prairie, that prairie was just covered with blueberries."*

### Adelaide Janvier:

*"When I was 13 years old there were a lot of berries – 100 pound flour bags full of different types of berries just around Bohn Lake alone. It looked just like a red rug lying down. Now people wouldn't believe there used to be that much berries around because now there is nothing or not much in the area. It is lonely out there now since everything has changed; no trees, no birds, nothing at all now a days."*

## Plants and Medicines Season and Harvest

Many of the Elders explained that medicinal plants were usually only collected by a medicine man or woman in the community. "Sa tsee na ha zi / sa ze na" is the Dené translation for medicine man or woman. Other Elders said that they would collect certain medicinal plants as they were seen while hunting or doing other activities. Generally, plant medicines were collected between July and September but some, like the red willow, could be collected throughout the winter. There was no set amount to harvest each year. This is because the Chipewyan Prairie people know medicines, and would therefore take only what is needed at the time. The Elders did, however, provide some examples of harvest amounts, times and uses:



Choke  
Cherries



Cranberries



Picked  
Blueberries



Fresh  
Strawberries

*Photos courtesy of istockphoto.com*

*Reference Numbers 248835, 898802, 117319 & 695266*

**Mondeste Cardinal:**

*Rat root (twenty pounds for winter)*  
*Spruce gum (a five pound pail)*  
*Mint (half a bag)*

**David Janvier:**

*Birch sap (ten pounds per season)*  
*Rat root (ten pounds per season)*

**Yvonne Janvier:**

*Ratroot (ten pounds per season)*

**Everest Janvier:**

*"Only when the medicines are found, they gather enough for what they may need for it. It didn't take days or hours. Only as you see it. Tree sap in spring, rat root in summer and Labrador mint in summer."*

**Fred Cardinal:**

*"Collect rat root one day and lasts me all winter (five to six months), only use as needed for coughs and colds and tapeworms - drink lots of rat root for tapeworms, never came back from 1964 until today."*

**Yvonne Janvier:**

*"I remember watching my grandmother collecting childbirth medicines to clean the uterus."*

**Harry Janvier:**

*"All medicines picked in July, all plants have flowers up to July 15 - watch the sun and moon before gathering."*

**Maxime Janvier:**

*"Only collect in fall time (August to September), before freeze up, before leaves down. I use to use the stuff for bait to get lynx. Also, mint tea, rat root, and white flower stem for traps."*



## Medicinal Plants and Uses

Commonly collected plants included rat root, spruce gum, and willow fungus. Some non-plant medicines were also harvested such as beaver castors, moose stomach and skunk juice. Mint was also liked and picked by most people to make tea throughout the year. Birch sap was collected to make syrup that accompanied meat and fish. Throughout

this study the Elders shared their knowledge about some of the medicinal plants and animal parts they harvested and how they were traditionally used. This information is shown in Table 12.2 and 12.3. Harvesting locations are not shown due to the sensitivity and confidentiality of this very sacred knowledge.

**Table 12.2 Medicines – Plants & Roots<sup>135</sup>**

Medicine - Plants/roots	Harvest Time	Use	Description
Sprucegum (ʔEldzeghé)	Spring and fall	Health Sores/puss	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Place on sores and then remove after several days</li> <li>• Sometimes mixed with fat</li> <li>• For chewing</li> </ul>
Tree balsam	Anytime	Cleaning sores	
Black spruce	Anytime		
Willow fungus	Anytime		
Rat root (Dzení)	Spring/Summer  Fall (Hook Lake)	Heart problems Coughs/colds Tapeworms Stomach/head aches Baby Thrush	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Used in a tea</li> <li>• Dry, snap and chew</li> <li>• Sometimes mixed with fat “zandele” to clean babies mouths including rat root juice and bear grease.</li> </ul>
Whitestern flower	Summer/Fall	Stop nose bleeds or cuts	
Red willow	Can be collected in winter	Tobacco	• Ceremonial, spiritual
Whiteflower	Summer/Fall		
White Yarrow	Summer/Fall	Colds	
Acorns	Anytime	Sores	• Boiled
Poplar tree juice (K'estué)	Anytime	Sores	• Extracted
Raspberry root	Summer	Diarrhea	• Boiled
Birch sap	Early spring along riverside June	Syrup  Eat with fish	• Chop the tree in half and you'll find or collect as much as needed – you will see the sap coming out and you boil it until it becomes like syrup
Birch Tree	Fall best time	Good health Blood pressure Stomach problems Mosquitoes	• Horseshoe shape – extract from tree, dry and then mash up
Mint	Summer as seen	Health	• For tea

<sup>135</sup> Data compiled from the CPDFN Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study (2004).

Table 12.3 Medicines – Non-Plant<sup>136</sup>

Medicine - Non-Plant	Harvest Time	Use	Description
Moose stomach (Kalada Dení chayú / Dení bér)	Anytime	Sores	• Fresh moose stomach
Beaver castor	Spring	Itching/scratching	
Pig fat	Anytime	Mosquito Bites	• Put on bites and heals in 3 days
Skunk juice	Anytime	Cough/colds	
Bear Parts	Anytime	Health	• Bear paws, gall bladder, stomach, feces

### Mary Agnes Herman,

*“Ka la da (Moose stomach) – Fresh moose is good for sores. I used this on my daughter. I tried everything and nothing worked. So one day, my husband went hunting for moose and I asked him to bring back this “Ka la da” and he brought it back in a pail. Then I poured it all over my daughter’s head and it worked until today – she never got sores on her head again.”*

*“I used Beaver castor on my son – his hands were always itching and scratching, so I used that beaver castor on him. I used it once or twice then he was all healed up – he never got itchy again.”*

### Everest Janvier,

*“One time my brother had an infected eye, my father treated it with every medicine around but it would not heal. After not having any sleep and a lot of pain for months, my father decided and told my brother that they have no choice but to break the puss behind his eye with a needle that was burnt at the point. My brother said do what you have to do – he was in much pain. So my father broke the puss, a lot of puss leaked out of his eye. Then, they used tree sap to clean the area. My brother lost sight in the eye, but was healed. That is why they had called him Na Ketha, meaning, one eye.”*

*“Another time my brother came to Janvier and was covered with sores from head to toe, my grandfather used spruce gum, rat root with fat to clean all the sores. By the time summer was over all his sores were gone. My grandfather and father were great healers.”*

<sup>136</sup> Data compiled from the CPDEN Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study (2004).



**George Nokohoo:**

*"Never collected traditional medicines because the stories the priests and nuns at the convent told me. I was brainwashed by the nuns and priest. One time one medicine man came out and told us look around you, that's all medicine, but you have to be a special person (gifted). Whitemen won't find it."*

**Adelaide Janvier:**

*"I use to heal my children with pig fat when they got lots of mosquito bites, which would turn in to scabs. I would put it on them and they would heal in 3 days. Flies actually got stuck on my children due to the fat. It was the best medicine for that."*

**David Janvier:**

*"My Grandpa says everything is in the bush, all the medicines are right there."*

**John Lemaigre:**

*"In the old days, my grandmother she used to do Cree medicines; she showed me medicines, their uses and how to get them but nowadays people hardly use them."*



Mint

Spruce Needles



Birch Bark  
Peeling off  
a Log

Cluster of  
Acorns



*Photos courtesy of istockphoto.com  
Reference Numbers 1293862, 1533415, 263200 & 972895*

# Chapter 13

## *Traditional Diet*

Between the micro village period and 1970, the traditional diet of the CPDFN people varied and changed according to the seasons and the availability of different

animal and plant food sources. Storage and preservation methods also increased the availability of their traditional food sources throughout the year.



*Preparing Meat. Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*



### Food Storage and Preservation

Traditionally, foods harvested were stored by burying them underground in the muskeg or makeshift cellars. Eventually, refrigerators and freezers replaced underground food storage. Smoking, sun drying and salting were methods used to preserve meats and fish for use throughout the year. Drying and canning berries and vegetables preserved these food sources and allowed them to be eaten through the winter and spring seasons.

Of the CPDFN Elder's who were interviewed, most said that wild meat was a main portion of their traditional diet and that it was eaten everyday. Moose was the most common meat consumed. Woodland caribou was regularly consumed in fall and winter before the 1970s. Muskrat was also highly valued during the spring hunt. If muskrat were not available, the Elders said that they would replace it with other meat sources such as beaver, rabbit, squirrel, moose, or duck. Muskrat was such a favourite that some Elders reported that they would hunt them even when they were low in numbers. Fish was a staple of the diet especially during the summer months. Birds were also regularly eaten especially for celebrations and feasts.

Fresh meat, fish, berries and vegetables were regularly shared among families of the Band. This often included three to four families and their Elders. The practice of sharing hunted meat among immediate family members continues throughout the Chipewyan Prairie community today.

Tables 13.1 to 13.4 show the percentages of fresh and dry foods generally available during the fall, winter, spring and summer seasons, prior to 1970, as indicated by the CPDFN Elders interviewed for this study.<sup>137</sup>

**Table 13.1 Fall – Averages of Fresh and Dry Food**

FALL			
Fresh	Percent (%)	Dry	Percent (%)
Moose (Denié)	100	Caribou (Etthén)	59
Rabbit (Gah)	100	Moose (Denié)	95
Fish (Łue)	100	Bison (T'oghejeré)	0
Grouse (Eltélé / K'asba)	100	Waterfowl (Iyese)	14
		Fish (Łue)	91
		Vegetables/ berries (Nūneshaze/Jié)	91

**Table 13.2 Winter – Averages of Fresh and Dry Food**

WINTER			
Fresh	Percent (%)	Dry	Percent (%)
Caribou (Etthén)	73	Caribou (Etthén)	41
Moose (Denié)	100	Moose (Denié)	86
Bison (T'oghejeré)	0	Bison (T'oghejeré)	0
Rabbit (Gah)	100	Fish (Łue)	64
Fish (Łue)	95	Vegetables/berries (Nūneshaze/Jié)	86
Lynx (Chíze)	68		

<sup>137</sup> Data compiled from the CPDFN Elder interviews for this Traditional Land Use Study (2004).

## Traditional Diet



*Ribs. Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*



*Muskrat. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 434767.*

### Fall and Winter Diet

During the fall fresh moose, rabbit, fish and grouse were all plentiful food sources. Some dried moose, fish, berries, caribou, waterfowl and vegetables were also consumed at this time. During the winter fresh moose, rabbit and fish were available, along with caribou and lynx.

### Spring and Summer Diet

While some dried foods were eaten in the spring, this was a time when fresh food was in abundance. Fresh muskrat, fish, beaver, rabbit and moose were eaten during this time. Muskrat was consumed on a daily basis during the spring muskrat season. Harry Janvier said in spring, "one person

might consume 1.5 muskrats per day." Consumption of muskrat was usually in the early spring because as the season progressed, they developed a strong odour. As George Nokohoo said about eating muskrat, "not too much because of mating and smell; I only eat muskrat in winter because it tastes good."

During the summer months, fresh fish, berries and vegetable were all available in great quantities. Fresh rabbits, moose and bear were also available during the summer. Dried foods consumed during this time were moose, berries, fish, and muskrat.

**Table 13.3 Spring – Averages of Fresh and Dry Food**

SPRING			
Fresh	Percent (%)	Dry	Percent (%)
Muskrat (Dzen)	100	Caribou (Etthén)	45
Moose (Denié)	91	Moose (Denié)	91
Waterfowl (Iyese)	10	Bison (T'oghejeré)	0
Rabbit (Gah)	95	Fish (Łue)	91
Fish (Łue)	100	Vegetables/berries (N̄neshaze/Jié)	95
Beaver (Tsa or Tsá)	95		



Table 13.4 Summer – Averages of Fresh and Dry Food

SUMMER			
Fresh	Percent (%)	Dry	Percent (%)
Moose (Denié)	95	Caribou (Etthén)	1
Rabbit (Gah)	100	Moose (Denié)	95
Vegetables/berries (Nūneshaze/Jíe)	100	Bison (T'oghejeré)	0
Fish (Łue)	100	Muskrat (Dzen)	86
Bear (Sas)	95	Fish (Łue)	91
		Vegetables/berries (Nūneshaze/Jíe)	95

### Changes to the Traditional Diet

The traditional diet of the CPDFN people has been ever-changing since the 1970's as a result of a reduction of traditional hunting and gathering. As previously mentioned, many factors contributed to the decline of traditional activities. More people were pushed into the workforce and as a result could not spend as much time engaged in

their traditional use activities. As industrial development increased beginning in the 1960s, many disruptions have occurred to wildlife habitat within the FMFN traditional hunting, trapping and fishing areas. Animals now show signs of reduced health, and their numbers have declined dramatically.



Camp scene of a Chipewyan woman pounding moosemeat to make pemmican. 1929.

*Photo courtesy of National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-020387*

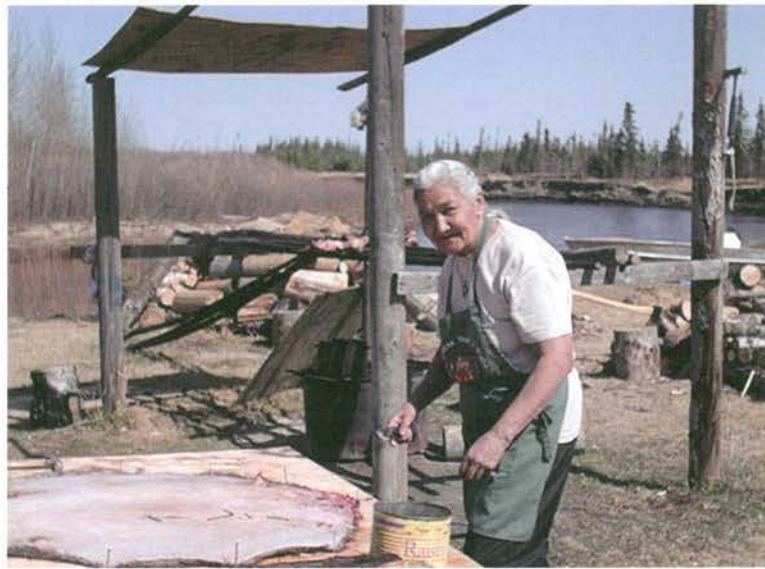
## Traditional Diet

With the reduction of traditional hunting and gathering, the people started supplementing their diet with more store bought foods like bologna, eggs, bacon, bread, chicken, potatoes, canned goods, and packaged products. As a result of a change in diet, the people are suffering from more health problems such as diabetes and heart disease.

Despite the changes in traditional harvesting, many CPDFN Band members continue to rely on meat from moose, deer, fish and birds. Many continue their seasonal hunting trips to ensure that their families are fed with their traditional foods.

### **Mary Agnes Herman speaks about the changes in diet and how this has negatively affected her people's health:**

*"Day and night people work for their living, they made their own garden and hunted for food. We were strong and healthy people in our day. Now people depend on stores and I see that a lot of us are poor in eating healthy food. Nowadays, just junk food and stuff, for us living off the land was healthy."*



**Tanning Hides in front of the Christina River.**

*Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*





# Chapter 14

## *Daily Life and Cultural Activities*

The CPDFN people had many daily chores living off the land. Many of the Elders explained that they did not go by a clock, rather, they went by the sun. A routine was followed that ensured everything ran smoothly. This chapter incorporates additional information about

the daily lives of the CPDFN that was shared during the interview stage of this study. This includes information about the traditional workload, daily household duties, and cultural activities that the people engaged in throughout the year.



*Campfire. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 1252879.*



### Collecting Firewood

Prior to the 1970s, a typical day would start with building a fire. Firewood was collected almost everyday. Extra wood was gathered for winter storage in the late summer and fall. Many people said they would collect firewood every second day but every family had their own schedule and method. A horse or dog team was commonly used to transport wood.

#### Fred Cardinal:

*"Ten loads would last ten days, and then I'm done and feel free to go hunting. This took one day hauling by dog team. I do this all year round if I'm going on land to hunt and trap, I get ready for my wife."*

#### Alma Nokohoo:

*"I used to help my father and husband - It takes a while because we go and cut and then come back and pile up - all day practically."*



**Alma and her Father.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

### Daily Household Activities

The daily tasks were generally divided by sex and age. For example, men would trap, hunt and fish for big game while the women, elderly, and children hunted for small game and gathered berries. Men were also responsible for cutting and sawing wood while the children and dogs would be responsible for hauling and stacking the woodpile. Water also needed to be hauled on a daily basis. The women would take over these tasks in absence of the men during hunting and trapping trips. Older siblings were often responsible for taking care of their younger siblings.

For the most part, the duties of the Chipewyan women revolved around the household and childcare. Housecleaning, washing the floors, cooking, and washing clothes was all considered women's work. They would assist their husbands by checking rabbit snares, hunting chickens, picking eggs, and checking fishing nets. Women skinned and stretched animal hides and prepared furs as the men brought them in. Women also did the drying and smoking of meat and fish. It was mostly the women, children and elderly who picked berries, dried them, and made jam for use throughout the winter. The women made clothing, footwear, and other supplies needed for the family.



**Chipewyan Indians on a rat and duck hunt. 1918. Garson Lake, Alberta.**

*Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number PA-017947.*

### Hauling Water

Besides firewood, water was hauled on a daily basis. Water was needed for every meal, which was typically three times per day. The people set up tents and cabins near creeks and rivers in order to access fresh water for drinking, cooking and washing. In the summer, someone in the family would have to go back and forth to retrieve water with a bucket as needed. Horses were often used to haul water. In the winter, several days' supply may be brought up in an oil barrel from a water hole in the ice. Block ice or snow was also collected in winter and melted over the fire. After the 1970s, wells were built and this traditional activity came to an end.

### Everest Janvier:

*"Until 1970s, we got water from the creek and muskeg when we needed to cook, drink. The whole family took turns. Now we use man made wells. Now, we can't trust to drink water from any nature."*

### Fred Cardinal:

*"We usually made water with block ice or snow; snow for washing and if for drinking we boil it first."*



Water buckets. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 1046566.

Some of the older female Elders said that traditionally, they would make the family clothing. The women made their children's clothing such as dresses, overalls, shirts, undershirts, and knitted socks. They made similar items for the men. They also did all the clothing repairs and patchwork as needed. The Chipewyan women were especially adept at making moccasins, mukluks, jackets, hats, mittens, and gloves from moose hide and fur from beaver and rabbit. Many of these items were decorated with beads and embroidery, another great talent possessed by these women. Some women also spent time crafting hairpins, clips, earrings, necklaces, and purses. Many of these items are still made today.



Woman's dress; Athapaskan; MacKenzie River area; Early 20th century. Photo courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Digital Collection. Reference Number HBC 61-149.





Mittens; MacKenzie River; Early 20th century. Native-tanned smoked moose hide mittens collected by Captain Frederick Mayhewin in the early 20th century during his trip down the Mackenzie River with a Hudson's Bay Company brigade. Photo courtesy of the Hudson's Bay Digital Collection. Reference Number HBC 61-148 A,B.



Chipewyan Sewing Bag, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-69.



Chipewyan Tobacco Bag, Western Subarctic. Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-14.

## Trapping and Hunting Preparations

Additional hunting and trapping tools and supplies were also required. Many of these items were made from moose hide previously prepared by the women. The men would generally prepare equipment like guns, rifles, shells, snares, traps, knives, files, dog packs, and loon bags to carry their catch. The men were also responsible for preparing items such as the birchbark canoes, snowshoes frames and webbing, dog whips and harnesses, toboggans/sleighs and wrappers needed for trips. Since the men stayed out longer during the fall and winter trips, more preparation was needed for these trips and many of the supplies and equipment would be made during the summer.

The woman made items such as wrap arounds, blankets, pillows, canvas, moccasins, gloves and other clothing needed for the long journeys. Many of these items were made during the summer or other times of the year, as they were required. Upon return from hunting and trapping trips, the women would then wash everything and both the men and women would do any necessary repairs.



**Chipewyan Snowshoe Needle, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-61.



**Chipewyan Hunting Bag (c1905).** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-Z-248.



**Chipewyan Snowshoes, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-37 a-b.

The women would typically prepare bannock and other food supplies like lard, tea, sugar, and salt for the hunting and trapping trips. Usually a sack was made to carry all of the supplies. The men and the women of the CPDFN often worked together to prepare these items. For example, a woman would sew the canvas sleigh wrapper and her husband would put it on the birch wood sleigh that he had made. Some of the CPDFN people still make these traditional supplies and materials today.

### John Lemaigre:

*"In the summertime we get everything ready; the moccasins, mitts, socks, everything."*

### Jack Herman:

*"It takes a while to find the equipment. Make bannock, take tea, sugar, don't forget the jam. If going for 2 weeks, you have to collect the things you need. To get ready takes about 1 week, because you have to travel quite a ways make sure we have enough food, snares, shells, and when the stores run out of equipment then you have to wait for the next ship in on equipment."*

### Everest Janvier:

*"Willows to cover meat, keep from spoiling; gun, lunch (bannock, tea, lard), knives/files, dog pack. How much depending on what and how long you are gone, for example: 2 hour duck hunting - need only bannock and teas. Two day big game hunt - need more supplies. Women did the packing. Snares, stings, rope, gun, traps, food - bannock, lard, tea, sugar."*

### Harry Janvier:

1. Rabbit snare, fox snare, traps, axes, hunting knife, file
2. Moccasins
3. Tea, flour, sugar, lard, frying pan - cast iron
4. Shells, canvas packsack, feather blanket, canvas cover, bear hide for mattress or to sit on or caribou hide
5. Horse pack, dog pack - horse carried equipment
6. Firewood is there naturally by the cabin, by the land

### David Janvier:

*"Springtime is when we make a canoe. To make a Birch bark canoe usually takes about one month to complete."*



## Trapline Cabins

Time was also set aside for fixing the trapline cabins. Most of the Elders interviewed said that the time for cabin repair was usually in the summer and fall, or when needed. Depending on the damage, this activity would take one or two people about two days to complete.

### John Lemaigre:

*"Every fall we would use mud and clay, grass and hay to fill holes on the outside of the cabin."*



**Cabin.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation

## Farming

As the nomadic lifestyle of the Chipewyan Prairie people diminished, many began to tend livestock and grow vegetable gardens. The Elders shared some examples of this.

### Lawrence Janvier:

*"Also some families had farms with cattle and vegetable gardens. While some members of the family were off hunting and trapping, some were tending the cattle and vegetable gardens."*

### Adelaide Janvier:

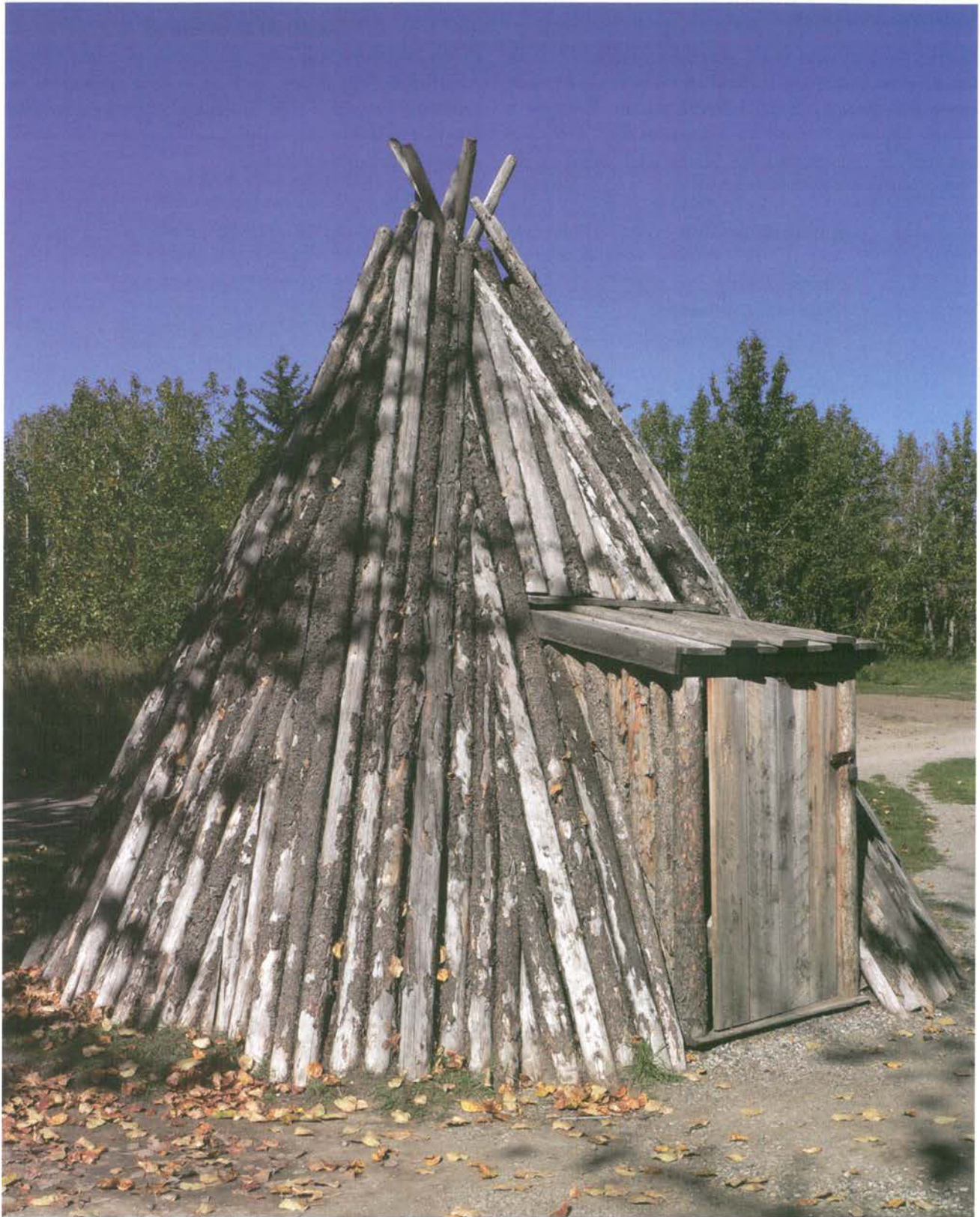
*"We used to have a big garden here in Janvier with lots of different types of vegetables. I used to make butter: all we used to do is churning cream — 2 pails of milk (per cow) in a big barrel. The cows would get away from us if they knew that they didn't have enough milk for their young ones."*

## Traditional Homes

The CPDFN people built their own homes. In the old days, the people lived in traditional teepees and log homes. The traditional teepee was made of two-inch birch logs and the cracks were sealed with moss. The door was made of moose hide or canvas. Mud was used to make the stove. Log homes were also built and many

still stand today in the old communities at Garson Lake, Gypsy Lake and many other areas. John Lemaigre described the Lorant family "long house" at Gypsy Lake, which had a slanted roof and three sharp corners; there was a mud and rock fireplace and chimney for year round cooking.<sup>138</sup>

<sup>138</sup> John Lemaigre. (2006). CPDFN Traditional Land Use Study Interview.



Traditional Pole Teepee. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com. Reference Number 882002.



## Cultural Activities

During the interview stage, questions were asked about the different leisure and cultural activities that the people engaged in throughout the different seasons. However, it became apparent through the interviews that leisure was not really a concept that the Elders used. Many of the

Elders said there was never much time to relax. Others considered daily duties, such as making snowshoes or preparing for winter trips, as leisure. Still, others recalled different types of cultural and diverse activities they would engage in throughout the year.

## Spring Activities

- Berry picking
- Baseball (homemade)
- Dance/play music (guitar & fiddle)
- Horseshoes
- Ride horses and young cows (Play cowboys & Indians)
- Hide & seek
- Monkey see-monkey do
- Climb trees
- Boxing
- Hunting/trapping

### Everest Janvier talks about spring activities:

*“Teaching children to hunt. Some people have gardens; women prepare them and look after them while men are hunting. Hand games were played, baseball, made ball out of moose hair, not much leisure due to workload for whole family to survive year round. Activities for men were learning to hunt and survival.”*



**Chipewyan drum, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-84 a,b.

### Summer Activities

- Baseball and football
- Swimming
- Horse riding
- Camping and Canoe trips
- Drumming and Hand games
- Ball, tag game, racing
- Play cards (deuce wild)
- Make arrows/practice all day
- Bingo
- Movies
- Horseshoes
- Guitar
- Cowboys & indians
- Hide & seek
- Monkey see-monkey do
- Hunt chicken

#### Everest Janvier on summer activities:

*"Make baseball with moose hide, hand games, make arrows, make slingshot, make canoes, making snowshoes (for hunting 5ft long, for walking on roads/trails 3 ft long), make sleigh, harness for dogs - maybe every 2 years depending."*

### Fall Activities

- Bingo
- Baseball and football
- Card games
- Tag game
- Racing
- Make own games
- Play outside
- Play ball if not cold
- Horse riding
- Hide & seek
- Sliding, skating
- Make arrows
- Hunting

#### David Janvier on fall activities:

*"In the fall, we would make snowshoes, dog harnesses, and toboggans. Make dog collars with moose hide/hair and get ready for trips."*



Chipewyan children with toy sled. 1929. Photo courtesy of the Glenbow Archives. Reference Number NA-1258-94.



### Winter Leisure Activities

- Sliding and skating
- Card games
- Play in snow
- Dog team riding
- Bingo
- Checkers
- Racing and jump race

### Cultural Celebrations and Gatherings

Many of the CPDFN Elders and land users explained that their communities always made time for cultural celebrations and times where extended family members could gather together. Often, the men would come home from trapping and hunting for roundups, dances and Christmas and New Years celebrations. Treaty Days were always celebrated in June, and Pow-Wows, traditional

dancing, and other cultural activities were also regular events during the warmer months.

Many of the traditional cultural activities and practices have been carried forth and continue through to the present day. Dené communities from Alberta, Saskatchewan and the Northwest Territories gather several times a year for roundups to celebrate.

#### John and Alfred Lemaigre:

*"Many times a year we get together – all the surrounding Dené people from different communities - Janvier, La Loche, Dillon, Buffalo Narrows and even up from up north – Fond du Lac, Black Lake and even the Territories - we all go to each others communities for roundups – we have traditional dancing and feasts."*



**Pow-Wow with Chipewyan Natives. 1885.** Photo courtesy of the National Archives of Canada. Reference Number C-018954.

# Chapter 15

## *Female Perspectives on Traditional Life*

Women had an integral role in the livelihood of the Chipewyan Prairie people. The questionnaire that was administered for the traditional land use study incorporated a special section specifically for female Elders and traditional land users. Along with traditional activities performed by the First Nation women, marriages, childbirth, beliefs and education are all topics covered within this chapter.

### **Marriages**

Many of the CPDFN Elders who were interviewed spent their lives in arranged marriages. Typically, the women's parents and or the Elders of the community would be in charge of selecting the appropriate husband. Adelaide Janvier recalls her father starting arrangements for her about six months before the wedding. Yvonne Janvier explained that the criteria for choosing a husband were usually based upon three things: knowledge of the family; wealth; and whether they felt that the man being considered would be a good provider.

Traditionally, friends and family helped out with the marriage preparations and often, they would be the one's to hand-sew the clothing to be worn by the bride and groom. In later years, a Catholic Priest performed most Chipewyan Prairie Dené marriages and the bride and groom were expected to attend confession the day before the ceremony. Many Elders recall an uncle or family member shooting a gun off at the end of the ceremony and then partaking in a wedding dance and feast to celebrate.



**Old Church.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.



## Child Birth

For the Elders that were interviewed, families tended to be large ranging from five to twenty children. Although many of the female Elders who were interviewed gave birth at home with the assistance of a midwife or family members, some gave birth in the hospital. Often a gift would be given to the midwife in thanks for her assistance with the birthing process. For example, the midwife may be invited to a celebration with a special feast or meal prepared. Steps were taken to prepare for the birth process. Sometimes the woman was sent away for about a month prior to the birth. Some of the female Elders recalled being told not to lift any heavy objects. They also remember relatives helping out with daily chores around the home while they were pregnant. Those women, who gave birth at home, mentioned taking herbs and medicines before or after childbirth. For home births, the midwife prepared the birthing supplies; assuring there was warm water and a basin, scissors, thread, and something to sleep on.

During childbirth, other children were usually taken care of by older siblings or relatives, since the father was usually off hunting, trapping and doing other work needed to take care of the family. Some of the Elders

mentioned experiencing miscarriages or losing children at birth and occasionally, mothers were lost during childbirth. A few of the female Elders interviewed had lost their own mothers that way. Traditionally, if a woman was able to, she would breastfeed her children. Yvonne Janvier explained that, “the nuns showed her how to breastfeed, but they went by time, where as she fed the children anytime, when they got hungry.” Yvonne Janvier also commented that, “tea and meat make the best breast milk.”

The female Elders explained that they resumed their regular duties between five and ten days after giving birth. Agnes Lemaigre shared how she feels things have changed for women giving birth today: “nowadays the doctors tell us our due dates, before the older ladies would know when baby would be born. Before we would stay in bed for ten days, (leaving) only to use washroom, nowadays they have children, then they send them home right away.” After childbirth, some female Elders explained that it was their custom to wrap the afterbirth in a cloth and hang it up in a tree. Another custom was to put the umbilical cord behind something when it fell off; others mentioned they just threw it away.

### **Yvonne Janvier tells of myths surrounding pregnancy and womanhood:**

*“When you are pregnant, you don’t tie up dogs, no chewing gum, no skinning rabbits, and don’t be afraid of anything because it may cause the baby’s umbilical cord to wrap around the baby.”*

*“As women, out of respect, you are not allowed to step over any killings. It will bring bad luck for the men. Also, when you have your monthly, you do not bother any animals. When women are on their time, they are not allowed to go in the cold; they said you might get sick.”*

### **Alma Nokohoo also explains about specific beliefs during pregnancy:**

*“Only wear skirts or dresses, no jewellery. Don’t be surprised, scared, or make fun of people - or your child will be like that.”*

## Child Rearing

Many of the female Elders talked about being the main caregivers of their children when their husbands were out hunting and trapping. There were many similarities among the women, especially regarding breastfeeding their babies

and the use of natural diapers. Below are some comments on child rearing shared by the female Elders of the Chipewyan Prairie:

### Marie Agnes Herman:

*"In the bush, trapping, hunting, teaches my girls how to raise their family. Even now still try to teach my children and grandchildren."*

### Adelaide Janvier:

*"Raised with breast milk, used diapers - not pampers, raised my children alone, always cooking for my children."*

### Lena Black:

*"Breastfeed; take care of them; they play outside in summer, inside in winter. Raised my children in Chard until 1969."*

### Agnes Lemaigre (McDonald):

*"I breastfed my children. I had a hobil to be able to do my duties. I used moss bags for diapers."*



**Bathing the Children.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.



**Chipewyan Baby Carrier, Western Subarctic.** Photo courtesy of Canadian Museum of Civilization. Reference Number VI-D-66.



## Beliefs and Education

Most of the female Elders indicated that their children were educated in the Catholic school system. Schooling has become increasingly important in the Chipewyan Prairie Dené culture and was deeply reflected during

the interviews. Below are some comments on religion and education beliefs shared by the female Elders of the Chipewyan Prairie:

### Marie Agnes Herman:

*“Catholic-Religious; All my children went to school and they’re still in school.”*

### Yvonne Janvier:

*“With the older children we stayed in the bush (Winefred Lake) and the children were sent to residential school. David brought schoolwork for the younger children and they did it and returned in May to school. We were very supportive of educating our children and all of them graduated.”*

### Adelaide Janvier:

*“Three (children) have Grade twelve, All are Catholic; I had to give my children away to educate them. Sent three kids to Blue Quills.”*

### Agnes Lemaigre (McDonald):

*“All my children were baptized catholic. When the children got older they went to school in LaLoche. We moved from West LaLoche to LaLoche for our children to go to school.”*

### Alma Nokohoo:

*“Catholic beliefs and all my children went to school - all graduated and some grandchildren.”*



Russell Janvier’s Graduation. Left to right – Adelaide Janvier, Russell Janvier and Rhonda Cardinal. Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

## Women's Activities

Activities specific to women were discussed in the previous chapter. However, some of the female Elders provided additional comments that help describe their daily routine. These daily activities are listed below:

### Marie Agnes Herman:

*"Raised children and worked very hard. I used to take water, wash their clothes in the river, patch their clothes, and collect wood – cut and pile up. I did all of this until my children grew up. I used the dog team to get wood. I started going trapping after my oldest child was able to watch their siblings; hunt anything and eat. To get berries we went on horse back and camped with the children."*

### Yvonne Janvier:

*"Taking care of the children, making dry fish and dry meat; visit Grandma; berry picking; making moose hide and moccasins; and food preparation."*

### Lena Black:

*"Raising my children in Chard; helping my sister with moose hide; make dry meat; wash clothes, clean house; we worked very hard."*

### Agnes Lemaigre (McDonald):

*"Taking care of my children, making clothing for my children, cooking fish, no bread; always made bannock. I had a rough life, family and people around area helped each other all the time."*

### Alma Nokohoo:

*"I would take care of my children, did house duties, stayed home when my husband was in the bush. No welfare - had to make a living."*



**Washing Clothes.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.



**Newspaper Drymeat.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.





# Chapter 16

## *Environmental Changes, Losses of Traditional Livelihood and Language, and Placenames*

The Chipewyan Prairie Dené traditional lands, livelihood and language have been impacted by fires, floods, resource extraction, and the imposition of the Euro-Canadian culture and language. This chapter will explain how these changes have impacted the ability of the Chipewyan Prairie people to maintain their traditional lifestyle, culture and language. This chapter also identifies traditional placenames of different areas within the traditional lands of the CPDFN. Traditional placenames demonstrate both the historical and present day significance of the language and how it connects the Dené people to their lands.

### **Environmental Changes Fires and Floods**

Fires and floods have caused many changes in the environment and have drastically affected the animal and plant cycles in the region. The CPDFN Elders were asked to recall fires and floods they remembered throughout their lifetime. They were also asked about any changes in the environment these may have caused. This information is listed below.

#### **Fire dates:**

1964	Auger Tower (covered 19 square miles)
1964	We lost a lot of moose this year; they were all burnt
Late 1960s	Big prairie; Birch Mountain, House River - past Conklin, Grist Lake, Bombing range area
Late 1960's	Animals had burns on them; were scarce because they ran from fires
1980s	Grist Lake everyone had to leave
1985	Lac La Biche district, Slave Lake, mountains, Bow River area, whole Alberta
1994	Mariana Lake twice

#### **Flood dates:**

1948	Prairies (April/May)
1950	Spring; all of prairies
1951/52	Prairies (Early May)
1958	Spring; all of prairies
1961	(May) very high waters; moved from Big Prairie
1962	(April) Flooding last time was about 50 years ago - we had to move to across the river up on the hill, where Christina river and Winefred river meet. We had our camp there.
1980	Prairies (late July) Tatum's store was flooded but he didn't move his family because he was too stubborn and they still ran the store and sold groceries
1983	Water levels very high



**The Christina River often flooded the prairies in Chipewyan Prairie:**

*“All the areas were flooded; we had to use canoe to come up from prairies by the river. The water would be very high (10-15 metres) after a flood; there would be water up to the banks of the prairies.”*

**Mary Agnes Herman remembers a flood in the 1970’s:**

*“I remember once back in the 70s it flooded. The storekeepers, Bill Tatum and his wife, didn’t want to come up on the high banks, so they stayed; and his store and all of their livestock were all flooded out. But his livestock were captured and were brought up to the banks. People used to go shopping in boats and canoes, it was a really high flood.”*

Flooding often had a huge affect on animal populations. Some of the Elders noted that a number of rabbits drowned and numbers were lowered after a major flood. One Elder noted that ever since the 1960s flood, many animals disappeared and didn’t come back. For example, there was next to nothing of the caribou populations left after the flood. An elder reported that the muskrat population always increased the year of a flood, and then returned back to normal the following year.

**Loss of Traditional Life**

The CPDFN Elders and land users have witnessed many changes in the environment and animals, especially since the development of the oil sands in the 1960s. There has been loss and destruction of the traditional resources that have been used by the CPDFN for generations.

**Lena Black:**

*“Nowadays ever since the oil companies start coming around and Alpac taking trees, all of our animals are going away. These animals will never be the same again due to no trees and too many cut lines, for example, if the Alpac take the trees where would the squirrels live. So they have to look for other locations to live, the rabbit cycle is every 7 years. Nothing will ever be the same again.”*

**Everest Janvier:**

*“Squirrels were many once. Now everything is gone, no blackbirds, robins, different kinds of birds, ducks, geese, lots of them now hardly any. Where did all the animals go? Ever since the companies start coming we have no wildlife at all. No clean water to drink from the stream. Now everything is polluted and the animals don’t taste the same — our land animals are all taken.”*

Some animals like bear and wolves have started to come back, and deer are plentiful in the area. Others mentioned that the woodland caribou are coming back but the barrenland caribou are all gone. Most of the Elders agree that all of the furbearers have decreased in numbers since the 1970s. While some of the animals may be increasing, many Elders say that of those animals that are still around,



Woodland Caribou. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 820729.

they tend to be sick in one way or another. Others comment that the fur is not as good now as before and the meat does not taste the same, especially the rabbit. Fred Cardinal stopped hunting and trapping altogether in the year 2000 because he claims that animals are now “poison food.”<sup>139</sup>

In addition to the decline in animals, plants and habitat, many Elders and land users mentioned that the wildlife workers interfere so much with their traditional activities, that harvesting could never be the same as it once was.



Dead Fish. Photo courtesy of istockphoto.com.  
Reference Number 887863.

**Mary Agnes Herman:**

*“One time my husband and I were hunting on skidoos so he told me to go and track down the moose while he was to wait on the other side. All of a sudden, I saw a moose lying down on the snow behind some twigs. This moose almost attacked me. This moose was sick and almost got killed by wolves or by some other animal because there was a puss on the moose; but this moose almost got me. It died later on that same day. That is how I know there was a puss on the moose.”*

**John James Janvier:**

*“...we are losing everything because of pollution.”*

**Mary Agnes Herman:**

*“Before 1970s people would purchase traplines, but we trapped anywhere except for other people’s traplines. We were never really watched by wildlife workers like nowadays. Nowadays, we are always watched and we can’t get anything from anywhere or we will be charged.”*

**Alfred Lemaigre:**

*“I can’t trap at my father’s trapline near Garson Lake because of the Fish and Wildlife officers. I would like to be able to take my sons there for trapping and hunting but we will get charged if we are found. I don’t understand why we can’t use our trapline. It was never sold and it was just taken away from us.”*

**David Janvier:**

*“Last 20 years we can’t kill lots, by law we’re only allowed 4-5 depending on how big your trapline is. Now we can’t live off the land like before.”*

139 Fred Cardinal. (2004). CPDFN Traditional Land Use Study interview.



## Loss of the Dené Language and Traditional Placenames

Some of the most important Dené words are the placenames, these are the names that were given to those areas that were most important to the livelihood and spirituality of the CPDFN. In an effort to have the placenames remembered and used, the Elders and land users have shared them in Table 16.1. They explained how a Chipewyan name was often created from how a place looked or what was significant about that area. For example, Fort McMurray in Chipewyan is “Th'lēna” which translates as “two rivers join” because of how the Athabasca and Clearwater Rivers meet together. Table 16.1 provides the Chipewyan placename; it's meaning in English and the English name. On page 136 and

137, there are two tables side-by-side, which show some different placenames known within the community for the same place. This demonstrates the personal relationship that each Elder and land user has with their environment. The variability in spelling also highlights the fact that for a long time, the Dené language was oral and thus spelling was of little importance. Figure 16.1 and 16.2 are placenames maps of the Chipewyan placenames provided by the Elders.

## The Decline of the Dene Language

Josh Holden, *MSc in linguistics*

The CPFN way of life, wealth of knowledge and history are taught through the Dene Sḡhné language. The Dene vocabulary is unique, rich in cultural meaning, and reflects specific native concepts. For example, words such as eldzłlnı (moonlight, literally “reflected sun”), ts'orek'ı (tamarack tree, literally “the fire-starter”) and dene k'áze eya ha nedíé (field sagewort, or “medicine for sore throat”) demonstrate both their pre-contact scientific knowledge and the symbolic meanings the Dene attribute to their lands. Dene grammar can also be complex and different from English. For example, the words ‘put’ and ‘give’ in English have nine different translations in Dene Sḡhné, depending on the shape and consistency of the object handled.

Dene Sḡhné belongs to the Athabaskan language family, one of the largest in geographical area, stretching from Alaska and the Arctic Ocean to the south-western United States. Dene Sḡhné, Dogrib, Slavey, Gwich'in and Koyukon in Alaska, Navajo and Apache in Arizona all descend from a common ancestor language. Although Dene Sḡhné still counts thousands of speakers, it is threatened by severe pressure from English.

Early fur traders and missionaries sometimes learned Dene languages as a practical necessity in the region, and a few started Dene-language educational projects. Later, however, the residential school imposed Euro-Canadian culture on North American native societies. School authorities often abused students for speaking aboriginal languages, even amongst each other. In addition to forced labour, and physical and sexual abuse, aboriginal children faced psychological torment as

they were told that their languages and cultures were evil and obsolete. Despite nearly insurmountable obstacles, many Dene children were able to keep their language alive in secret. Some elders recall organized defiance, regularly whispering in Dene to each other in the dark after the adults had gone to bed.

Canadian residential schools pushed aboriginal languages to the brink of destruction. It is an error, however, to assume that the disappearance of the schools resulted in an environment in which the Dene language could thrive again. Language loss was inseparable from, and a catalyst for, the general social upheaval in the assimilation era. Language loss robbed people of the cohesion of a common identity and cut troubled youth off from the stability of the elders' teachings. Too often Dene who had internalized contempt for their language were never exposed to alternative prospects and avoided teaching it to their children.

In recent times, the accelerating pace of globalization is threatening these smaller languages worldwide and increasing the dominance of English. The economic necessity of speaking English is overlaid on a much larger set of factors weighing against the Dene language. According to the 1996 Canadian census, only 44 percent of Dene-speaking people used the language at home with their children in the sample communities, against 77 percent in 1986. Only 10 percent of children were fluent in the language. The situation is brighter in a few communities where people of all ages still speak Dene, but without vigorous support the survival of Dene Sḡhné even as a spoken language is in considerable doubt.

Languages die when civilizations vanish. The Dene Sḡhné language, with its precise vocabulary and particular structure, is an expression of the unique experience and knowledge the Dene people have accumulated during thousands of years of

living on these lands. If the Dene language is not maintained in an environment in which it can thrive, the associated traditional knowledge and nuhech'anié - the Dene way of life, will be at risk.

Table 16.1 Dené Placenames Translations

English Name/ Mapped Name	Dené Name	English translation of Dené Name
Unnamed River (flowing east from Long Lake)	Thar'ne'te'dehseh	Long River
Egg Lake	Kai'kos'thu	Red Willow Lake
Hangingstone River	Te'cheth'dehseh	Horse River?
Descharme River	Gos'dehseh'haza	Whooping Crane River
Descharme Lake	Gos'thu	Big Whooping Crane Lake
Dupre Lake	Gos'thu'haza	Smaller Whooping Crane Lake
Simonson Lake	Than'thu	Axe Lake
Sabine Lake	Hara'thu	Walking Across the Water Lake
Agar Lake	Ki'ha'thu	Goose Lake
Duns Lake	T'who'hugay'thu	Spear Fish Lake
Firebag Lake	Asth'des'la'thu	End of the Lake
Firebag River	Asth'des'la'dehseh	End of the Lake River
Richardson River		
Smart Lake	Nu'neth'ki'thu	Where the Wolves Eat Fish
Bourassa Creek	Sa'ca'tha'thu	Bear Lake
Large Unnamed River	Thous'dehseh	
Unnamed Lake northwest from unnamed River	Anah'te'ta'thu	Cree Scalping by Dene River
Douglas River	Aza'la'haza	Small Person River
Unnamed Lakes	Na'tha'thel'thu	Many Lakes Join Together
Finlay Lake	Tan'cha'thu	Leaf Lake
McAdam Lake	Ga'da'thu	Upper Lake
Graham Lake	Wol'sen'thu	Black Duck Lake
Acaster Lake	Thu'choh	Big Lake
Unnamed Lake (below McAdam lake)	Sha'ska'thu'haza	Over the Hill Lake
Unnamed Mountain at AB/SK border (just above Graham Lake)	Wol'sen'sheth	Mountain
Dillon River	Sa'le'ha'agre	Buffalo River
Primrose Lake	Ha'thu	Geese Lake
Athabasca Lake	Kai'till'thu	
Athabasca River	Kai'till'dehseh	
Birch Mountains	Na'goth'cheth	Lichen Hill

Dene spelling provided by Jessica Kent of Fish Creek Consulting in consultation with CPDEN members Alfred Lemaigre and John Lemaigre.



Table 16.1 Dené Placenames Translations

English Name/ Mapped Name	Dené Name	English translation of Dené Name
Janvier	Glo'ta'la	Big Prairie
Garson Lake	Dos'thu	Whitefish Lake
Birch Lake	Ke'thu	Birch lake
Gordon Lake	Gos'thu'choh	Swan Lake
Gipsy Lake	Ol'doe'thu	Jackfish Lake
Old Country Road from Christina River to Gipsy Lake	Old Country Road	Old Country Road
Lac La Loche	Ni'tal'as'thu	
Formby Lake	Be'ka'thu	Island Lake
North Watchusk Lake	Kai'thu	Willow Lake
Formby Lake Creek	Be'ka'thu'dehseh	
South Watchusk Lake	Kai'cha'thu	Beyond the Willow Lake
Unnamed River between N & S Watchusk Lakes	Thu'tan'len	Between Two Lakes
Newby River	Kai'dehseh	Willow River
Hook Lake	Ja'thas'thu	Hook Lake
Winefred River	Doe'dehseh	Big Jackfish River
Winefred Lake	Doe'thu'choh	Big Jackfish Lake
Cowpar Lake	Ol'di'was'thu	Bony Fish Lake
Cheecham Lake	D'was'thu'haza	Small Bony Fish Lake
Christina Lake	Ol'di'zan'thu	Black Jackfish Lake
Bohn Lake	Cha'la'thu	Duck Lake
Unnamed River between Bohn Lake and Winefred River (flows north from Bohn Lake and also crosses Cowpar Creek)	Cha'la'dehseh	Duck River
Small unnamed Lake near Cowpar Lake	Da'thu	Horn Lake
Cowpar Creek	Do' dehes'h'aza	Bony Fish Creek
Kimowin Lake	So'thu	Fish Lake
Baker Lake	Er'kis'chan'thu	Pencil Lake
Sacred Hill/Gravesite – also put on Spiritual Sites Map (Near Indian Trail (AA))	Zan'gu	Gravesite
Indian Trail – also put on Trail Map (From Baker Lake across border to Lac La Loche)	Ena'thu'lu	Indian Trail
Cambell Lake	Thu'was'choh	Little Big Lake
Edwin Creek	Gos'dehseh'aza	White Swan Creek
Nora Lake	Gos'thu'da'thu'aza	
Unnamed Creek or River running south from Gordon Lake to Christina River	Gos'thu'dehseh	
Unnamed Creek or River running from Birch Lake to Christina River	Kai'thu'dehseh	
Fort McMurray	Th'lana	Where Two Rivers Meet
Christina River	Kai'kos'dehseh	Red Willow River
Clearwater River	Dehes'h'na'tha	The Oldest River
Cheecham River	D'was'dehseh'ha	Small Bony Fish River
Willow Lake	Ke'tha'thu	Birch Cup Lake
Gregoire River	Ke'tha'dehseh	Birch Cup River
Small unnamed lake (East of Willow Lake near railway tracks)	Thar'ne'te'thu	Long Lake

Table 16.1 Dené Placenames Translations

English Name/ Mapped Name	Dené Name	English translation of Dené Name
Janvier	Dene T'oghtélé	Dene Prairie
Garson Lake	Łuaztué	Little Whitefish Lake
Birch Lake	K'itué	Birch lake
Gordon Lake	Gostúchogh	Big Swan Lake
Gipsy Lake	Huldáichotué	Big Pike Lake
Old Country Road from Christina River to Gipsy Lake	Old Country Road	Old Country Road
Lac La Loche	Njtelaztué	Muskeg Lake
Formby Lake	Hokátú	Island Lake
North Watchusk Lake	K'átú	Willow Lake
Formby Lake Creek	Hokátú dezé	Formby Lake River
South Watchusk Lake	Kai'cha'thu	Beyond the Willow Lake
Unnamed River between N & S Watchusk Lakes	Thu'tan'len	Between Two Lakes
Newby River	K'ái dezé	Willow River
Hook Lake	Jethaztú	Little Fishhook Lake
Winefred River	Doldezé	Pike River
Winefred Lake	Doltúchogh	Pike Lake
Cowpar Lake	Doghostú	Bony Jackfish Lake
Cheecham Lake	Dostúaze	Little Pike Lake
Christina Lake	Huldázentú	Black Jackfish Lake
Bohn Lake	Chelatú	Two-Points-Together Lake
Unnamed River between Bohn Lake and Winefred River (flows north from Bohn Lake and also crosses Cowpar Creek)	Chéladezé	Two-Points River
Small unnamed Lake near Cowpar Lake	Dáitú	North of Cowpar Lake
Cowpar Creek	Do' dehseh'aza	Bony Fish Creek
Kimowin Lake	Łotú	Fish Lake
Baker Lake	T'íschentué	Pencil Lake
Sacred Hill/Gravesite – also put on Spiritual Sites Map (Near Indian Trail (AA))	Sagú betulué	Sagú's Trail
Indian Trail – also put on Trail Map (From Baker Lake across border to Lac La Loche)	Enátulú	Cree Trail
Cambell Lake	Tuazchogh	Little Big Lake
Edwin Creek	Gosdesaze	White Swan Creek
Nora Lake	Gostúdatúaze	
Unnamed Creek or River running south from Gordon Lake to Christina River	Gos'thu'dehseh	
Unnamed Creek or River running from Birch Lake to Christina River	Kai'thu'dehseh	
Fort McMurray	Elídlíne	Where Two Rivers Meet
Christina River	Kai'kos'dehseh	Red Willow River
Clearwater River	Dehseh'na'tha	The Oldest River
Cheecham River	Doghosdésaze	Bony Jackfish River
Willow Lake	Ke'tha'thu	Birch Cup Lake
Gregoire River	Ke'tha'dehseh	Birch Cup River
Small unnamed lake (East of Willow Lake near railway tracks)	Dárenedhtú	Long Lake

Differences from the previous table by Jessica Kent, Alfred Lemaigre and John Lemaigre, were provided by Josh Holden in consultation with CPDFN members Walter Janvier and Thomas Morice.



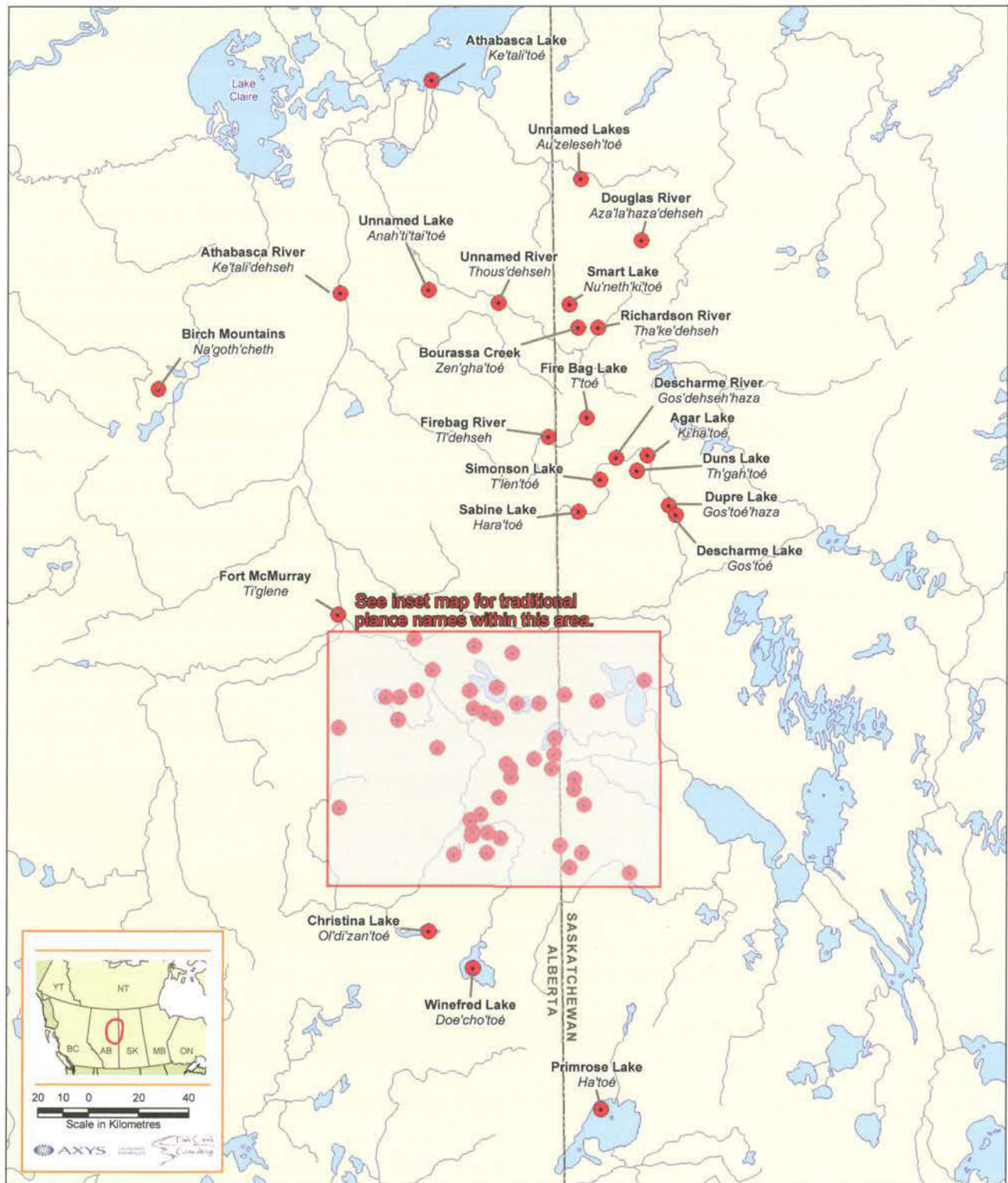


Figure 16.1 Dené Placenames Map

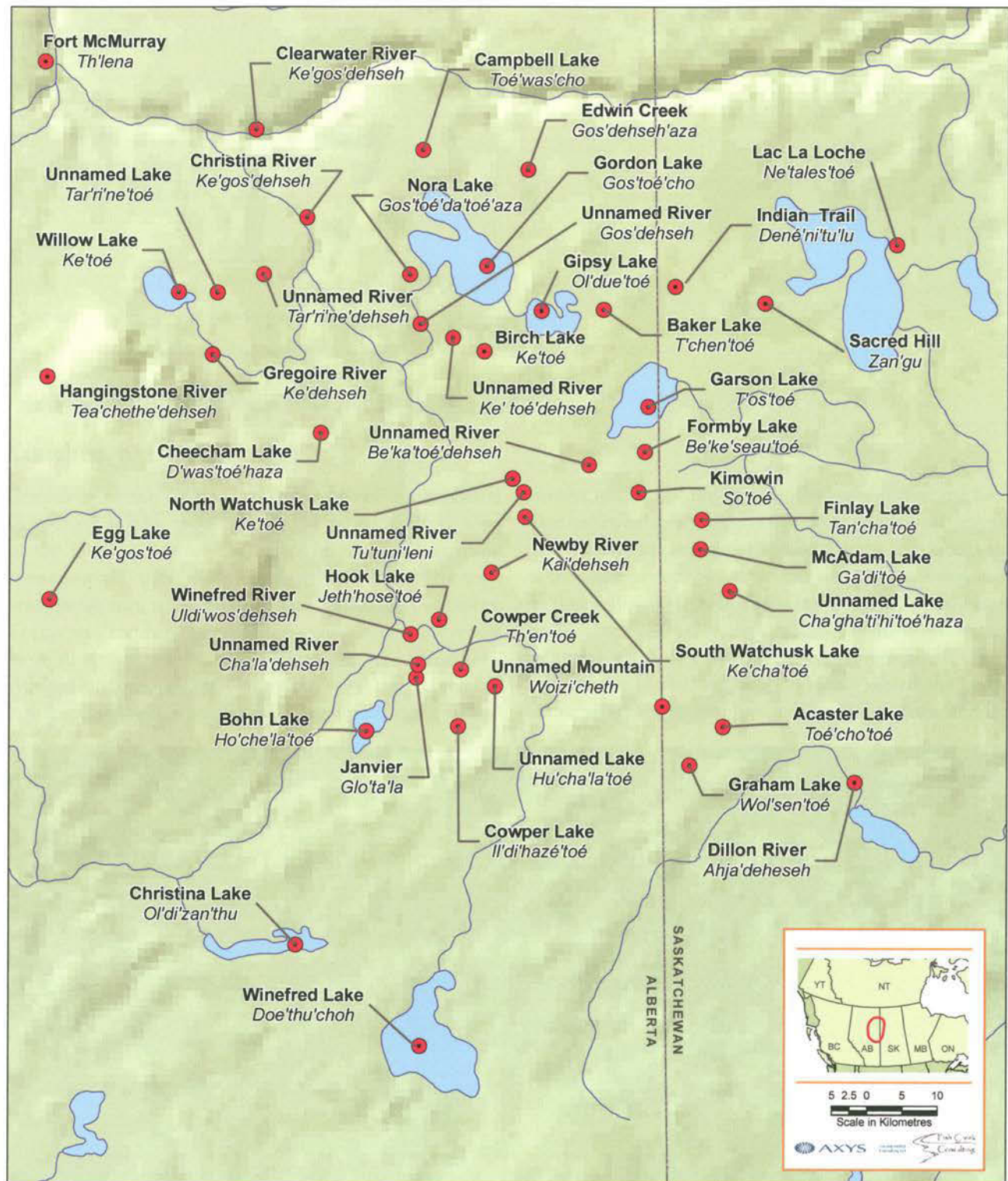


Figure 16.2 Dené Placenames Inset Map





# Chapter 17

## *Conclusion and CPDFN Elder and Land User Biographies*

### Conclusion

Ancestors of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation have lived in the taiga and boreal forest regions west of the Hudson Bay for thousands of years. From time immemorial, they have made their living through traditional means of hunting and gathering. Before European contact, the Chipewyan were the most numerous and widely distributed of the Northern Athapaskan groups. They traveled very long distances intercepting the barrenland caribou migrations.

Since entering the fur trade in the early 1700s, the Dené have endured many changes in their traditional ways of life. As they became more involved in the fur trade, some of the Dené groups began to utilize the boreal forest areas further south from their traditional territory of the barren lands. Several technological and economic adaptations occurred, such as constructing larger birchbark canoes and the use of the dog team, which enabled the people to transport more supplies and fur and to travel further



Deer Walking in the Sunset. Photo courtesy of iStockphoto.com. Reference Number 1325813.



distances. Dené Bands began to settle in micro-villages in the boreal forest during this time. By the 1900s up, the CPDFN continued to live traditionally off the land but were faced with intensive fur trade competition combined with the fluctuations in the availability of resources and increased development.

This study has shown that the traditional land use territory of the CPDFN people once extended from Hudson's Bay to northern Alberta. Recent land use areas are more concentrated near the CPDFN settlement of Janvier but still include a large territory extending north past Fort McMurray, west to the House River area, east of the Saskatchewan border and south into the Cold Lake Air Weapons Range. The use of these areas has significantly declined since the development of oil, natural gas and tar sands starting in the 1960s. Many CPDFN members have been forced to leave their community to take work in communities like Fort McMurray, Lac La Biche, and Edmonton. Many of the younger CPDFN members are losing their culture and language and have fewer opportunities to participate in traditional activities.

Since the 1960s, the development in the north has gradually damaged the environment, including the water, land, air, animals and plants. The CPDFN community is extremely concerned by the loss of animals and fresh plants throughout their traditional lands. There is also great concern about the increase in disease of their people caused by the continued industrial use and pollution.

It is hoped that the tremendous contribution made by the CPDFN Elders and land users to this traditional land use study and publication will support the continued development and utilization of the community's traditional knowledge and activities.

The CPDFN Traditional Land Use Study Committee anticipates that the results from this study will be used by the CPDFN Chief and Council as a co-management tool in their dealings with industry on land use and environmental issues. It will form the basis for the continued monitoring and protection of the natural environment within the traditional lands of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

**"Our way of life will never be the same again."**

**Adelaide Janvier, CPDFN**

## CPDFN Elder and Land User Biographies

### Lena Black

Lena was born in October of 1945 in Chipewyan Prairie. Her parents trapped in the Winefred Lake area. Lena's Dad raised her since 1952, when her Mom passed away giving birth. Her Dad was born in 1902 and came to Cowpar Lake in 1912. Lena's marriage to Fred Black in June 1961 was arranged. They moved to Chard after they got married so Fred could work on the railway. They had seven children together. They moved to Fort McMurray in 1970, and then returned to Janvier in 1972.

After moving back to Janvier, Lena started making moose hide and hunted for big game for one month during September. Her Dad used to go to Garson Lake by horse toboggan to bring back dry fish and berries. She recalls lots of people coming to Chipewyan Prairie for berries. She said that there used to be lots of berries there. They called it 'Big Prairie' because there were so many blueberries covering the area. Lena said, "I never trapped or hunted, my husband did that but we usually set squirrel snares as

a past time, when I wasn't doing anything at the cabin. I showed my children how to live off the land – the little things I knew."



**Fred Black and Family.** Photo courtesy of the  
*Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*

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### Fred Cardinal

Fred was born in Chipewyan Prairie in January, 1936. Both his parents were from the CPDFN and trapped on the #629 trapline. When Fred was 14, his dad passed away – he died of Tuberculosis so they told his family they had to leave their house; they pitched up a tent for his family. He had eight siblings, some who are now passed away. Fred was married to Delia in a Catholic church on July 10, 1945. This was an arranged marriage. Fred and Delia had seven children together. One baby girl passed away at birth. Fred worked on the railroad for five years until 1963. He was a foreman from 1970 until becoming

Chief of the CPDFN in 1978. He held this position for four years.

Whenever Fred had time he was hunting, trapping and fishing. He said he would go to Hook Lake once a week where they would fish with snares and hooks and make dry fish. He said, "when I go hunting I go hunting, if I go trapping, I do trapping. I go hunt moose when we need food." Fred said he never used animals for clothing he just sold pelts. He stopped hunting in the year 2000 because he felt the wildlife was contaminated: "Life will never be the same again."

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### Jean P. Cardinal

Jean is the younger brother of Fred and Mondeste, who also both participated in the traditional land use study. He was born in Janvier in September 1941. His father passed away when he was nine years old and he lived with his mother and siblings. Other related families also lived close by while he was growing up. Jean married Maria in 1963

at the age of 22 and they had six children. Thier marriage was not arranged. He worked in forestry during the spring and summer. He also worked seasonally on the railroad. When he wasn't working he would hunt, trap and fish as needed.



### Mondeste Cardinal

Mondeste was born in 1930 in Janvier, with Grandma Margrette acting as midwife. His parents lived in Chipewyan Prairie and had the #629 trapline. When Mondeste was twenty, his father, James Cardinal, passed away. He lived with his Mom and sister after that and helped raise his younger brothers. He had one daughter with Angelic Janvier. When he was a young man, he enjoyed playing guitar and liked to sing Hank Williams songs. Mondeste worked seasonal jobs on the railway during the spring and summer until hunting and trapping season began in October.

Before the fall and winter season, he prepared by fixing

the cabin, making bannock, cutting wood, buying groceries, and getting his guns and snares ready. He would kill moose and deer in the fall and his sister would make the dry meat. While he was on the trapline, he would hunt for big game everyday. He sold furs in Fort McMurray, RR 224, and Raboud’s store. He also fished whitefish, pickerel and jackfish throughout the year. When asked about living on the land and teaching children, Mondeste said, “My parents taught me and raised me in the bush. My father would tell me how and what to do when hunting. He also said ‘don’t shoot the mothers of the calves because the babies would die, due to lack of milk’. I teach my oldest grandson to watch the way you hunt and trap.”

### Jack Herman

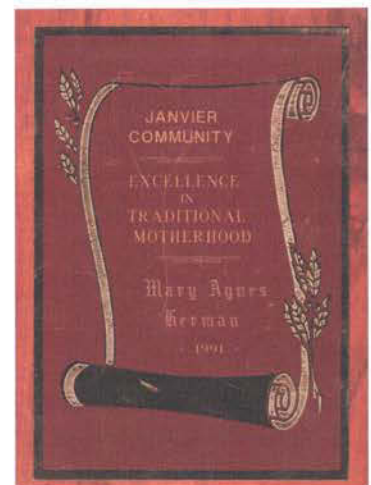
Jack is 47 and was born in Fort McMurray. His parents are from Cripple Creek, just north of Chipewyan Prairie. They hunted, trapped and fished at North Watchusk Lake, Barney Lake, and Cowpar Lake. When Jack was growing up, he lived with his Mom and Dad and eight siblings. He got married in 1980 to Monique Herman and they adopted their first child. After that, Monique gave birth to four more. Jack worked at different jobs over the

years including Bactel (now Syncrude) and Bill Tatum’s store. Jack shared a lot of the traditional knowledge he has with respect to hunting, trapping and fishing. He said, “Dad used to tell me a lot about how to live in the bush: how to respect the animals, set traps and nets, no messy areas around, how to hunt, and certain ways to do things. I taught my two older sons a little bit, but nowadays there is education - you need that now.”

### Marie Agnes Herman

Marie Agnes was born in West La Loche, Saskatchewan in 1937. Her parents were also from West La Loche. When she was young, her family moved from West La Loche to La Loche for school. Her father hunted up north from La Loche. She was married to Alex Herman in 1953 at the age of 16. She gave birth to 21 children; six passed away as babies. After she was married, they moved to Teeg Lean River for many years until they moved to Janvier. Mary Agnes explained that

during childbirth, the midwives would usually let her stand up to give birth. After the baby was born, they would lay her on the bed to treat her for the afterbirth. Mary Agnes says, “The way I was raised is how I teach my children. We all stayed in the bush, my husband taught the boys how to hunt, respect the land, don’t misuse the land. We live off the land still today - even my great grandchildren.”



**Excellence in Traditional Motherhood.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

### Mary Jane Herman

Mary Jane Herman was born in 1911 in Garson Lake, Saskatchewan. She was the oldest Elder that contributed to the traditional land use study. Mary Jane's parents were from Garson Lake and they hunted, trapped and fished in that area. She had 13 children with her husband, Batisé Herman. She says that her marriage was not arranged – "it was my only will, I found my own." All of her children were born at home with the help of a midwife. She used to make clothes for the family; beautiful dresses, moccasins,

mukluks, jackets, hats, mittens and gloves. She would stretch rabbit pelts on a board, dry them and sew them together to make rabbit blankets and braided rabbit pelts. She remembers many Dené families gathering alongside the shores of Garson Lake and making fires. The men would set nets in the lake, and the fish would be hung by the tail on a stick and stored in fish storage huts. Mary Jane said that the traditional way of life is the only way of life – the life we know.

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### David Janvier

David was born and raised in Chipewyan Prairie. He was born in May 1937. His parents hunted, trapped and fished at Winefred Lake and Cowpar Lake. Growing up, he lived at Winefred Lake with his parents, grandparents and auntie. He said that there were two houses similar to a tree house and they didn't live by any other families. David married Yvonne in 1959 and their marriage was arranged. He had one child from a previous relationship and then nine children with Yvonne.

David is a traditional hunter and trapper who worked at various seasonal jobs from February to August to make ends meet. He explained

that he started trapping with his father when he was twelve along their Winefred trapline, to the Saskatchewan border, along the Dillon River (this was the best place for muskrats). They also trapped from Winefred River to Grist Lake, then down to the bombing range. He used to fish at Jumbo Lake where there were many fish, mainly trout. He said that the fish would spawn at the same place every year but after a few years, they seemed to slowly disappear. He said that his parents showed him and his siblings how to hunt, trap and respect the land. David says that, "love, care, and respect is gone amongst people."



**David Janvier.** Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.

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### Everest Janvier

At the time of his interview, Everest Janvier was 75 years old. Sadly, he passed away in September 2005. Everest was born in Garson Lake in 1928. His parents were from Gipsy Lake and his father hunted near Gordon Lake and the surrounding area. Everest remembered that while growing up, there were fifteen people he lived with, but eight died. Six other families lived close by, but they weren't related. His marriage to Corona was arranged in 1960 when Everest was 32 years old. They had five children together. After their wedding, they lived in Janvier. Everest would work every spring and summer after trapping. He worked in the fishing industry for McInnes at Waterways for \$0.65 per hour. He also worked as a firefighter for 57 years. He explained that the first time he saw a white man

and a school was when he was working at Waterways; he was about 14 or 15 years old. Everest was very traditional and knew the traditional lifestyle of living off the land by fishing, hunting and trapping.

When asked about teaching children he said: "In the old days, we used to have John James Janvier transport the children on caboose even in cold weather. They packed frozen bannock for lunch. Now children have the bus, hot lunch and it's not good enough for them. Adults need to encourage children to go to school. Our children are smart and as parents, we need to push them more and more to get the proper education. They will be able to live like the white man, because our way of life will never be the same."



### Harry Janvier-Morice

Harry was born in Garson Lake, Saskatchewan in 1930. Before they moved to Chipewyan Prairie, his mother was from Christina Crossing and his father was from Buffalo Narrows. His parents hunted, trapped and fished at Gordon Lake, Rich Field, and Cuts Creek. When growing up, Harry lived with his family in Chipewyan Prairie. He had ten brothers and sisters. His grandparents lived with him until he was six years old and they lived near many other relatives. Elders arranged their marriage when he was 21. After Harry was married,

he lived with his Father for a short time, but then made his own home close by. Harry and his wife had four children. Harry would work various seasonal jobs after trapping in the spring and summer. He also raised cattle, hunted, trapped, and fished. When asked about springtime leisure Harry said, “We ran; we had too much fun. The bush is alive – man can run and never fall – we’ll never fall. Dené People live alike with the animals. Happy, no stress, no headache. Good meals – good food – we are healthy.”



**Harry Janvier-Morice.**

*Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie  
Dené First Nation.*

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### James Janvier

James was born in Cowpar Lake in 1944. His parents were from Chipewyan Prairie and hunted, trapped, and fished at Winefred Lake. While growing up, he lived mostly with his parents in Chipewyan Prairie, but would live at Garson Lake for two weeks out of the year with his grandfather, Alphonse Piche. There were nine people in the family. When he was a child, James remembers going to Gipsy Lake to fish for two months straight when school was out – they would travel with a packhorse. James never married, but he and his partner Flora had three children together.

They also raised another child as their own who was given to them by one of Flora’s relatives. James and Flora lived together until Flora passed away. At the age of 15, his father told him to leave and said he was old enough to go and work, so James started working on the railroad when he was 15. He worked from spring to fall ever since that time. James would hunt, trap and fish during the other seasons out of necessity. He said that “back then we had no clock, our clock was the sun; it was also used as a compass – we travel by the sun.”

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### John James Janvier

John James was born in “Glotala” (Chard) on December 1, 1935. His parents were also from Chard and they would hunt and trap near the Cowpar Lake and Winefred Lake areas. While growing up, he lived with his Grandma Margaret, his mom and dad, and his four siblings. He was in the hospital until

five years of age due to illness. He never married or had children. John James would work seasonal jobs such as firefighting and carpentry. The other times of the year he lived traditionally by hunting, trapping, and fishing.



**John James Janvier.**

*Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie  
Dené First Nation.*

### Lawrence Janvier

Lawrence was born in 1936 in Chipewyan Prairie and was 68 at the time of this interview. Lawrence is greatly missed since his passing in October 2004. His parents were also from Chipewyan Prairie and they hunted on the #616 trapline. There were eight children in his family and they lived close to their grandparents, aunt, and uncle. Lawrence was married in 1963 to Mary. This was an arranged marriage. They had five children. They lived in various places including Chard, Cheecham, Anzac and then back and forth from Chipewyan Prairie to Chard. Since he was 15 years old, Lawrence worked at various seasonal jobs

like the railway, labour, and operators positions. His family also raised cattle. Lawrence would hunt and trap during fall, winter and early spring. His trapline was 76 miles from Chipewyan Prairie all around and back. He said he would check traps every two days, otherwise he could lose out because of the other animals may take his catch. About his parents teaching him and teaching his children, he said, "Dad taught me. We stayed and kept our cattle, veggies and horses. We needed to work. I worked all my life. My children went to school and I worked all the time."

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### Narcisse Janvier

Narcisse was born in Garson Lake and lived in Chipewyan Prairie while growing up. He was 69 at the time of this interview. His parents lived in Garson Lake and Chipewyan Prairie and would hunt, trap, and fish near Garson Lake and Winefred Lake. He lived with his Dad while growing up and there were always four to five other people who lived with them. There were other related families that lived by. When Narcisse was 21, he married and had five children. His marriage was not arranged. When asked about hunting moose,

Narcisse said, "I never really went hunting, if I needed moose, it would come to me. I never had to hunt." Narcisse was a traditional trapper and he would also fish. He said that for him, there was no separate time for hunting and trapping. During the summer months, Narcisse worked different jobs at McInnes, Hudson's Bay, and for Bill Tatum. He said that he taught his family and friends what he knew and experienced. "I was taught by my father to hunt and trap through observation."



**Narcisse Janvier.** *Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*

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### Adelaide Janvier

Adelaide was born and raised in Janvier. Her parents were also from CPDFN and they trapped around Cowpar Lake, Bohn Lake and past Chard. Adelaide was born in February 1938. In June 1957, she married Maxime Janvier at the age of 19 years old. They had eight children together. Adelaide never went to school because her mother died giving birth and she was the one who had to help raise her siblings. She said that her Dad taught her how to raise her children in the bush. Adelaide remembers working very hard, sometimes having to carry sixteen pails of water during a day. She was

always busy cooking, cleaning and taking care of all the children. Her husband was always working. The fun times were going to town once a month and making moose hide and jackets. She recalls one year there were lots of caribou and her husband got seven of them. She remembers having to send her children away to school at Blue Quills: "it was hard for me and I felt like I would never see my children again. It was one of the hardest times in my life."



## Maxime Janvier

Maxime was born and raised in Chipewyan Prairie. His birth date is December 24, 1933. His parents were also from Chipewyan Prairie and they would hunt, trap and fish from Cowpar Lake to Winefred Lake. While growing up, Maxime lived with his mom and Dad; his Dad passed away in 1948. He had four siblings, one passed away. Maxime shared some thoughts about when his father died, "My dad died in 1948 when I was fourteen. After that, I took care of my mom, sometimes my late uncle Matiwan Lemaigre would stay with us all summer until trapping and hunting season started up, then he'll go back on the land. I used to miss him a lot, then he got married to Katherine Cardinal and he moved on to his own life with her. Then my mom and I took care of my sisters, and brothers.

In those days we lived down in the prairies. Not only us, but there was other families that lived around us, like maybe six. All of them were related to us." He married in 1957 by an arranged marriage to Adelaide. He says, "After I got married and the ceremony was over, I went back to work

that very same day. We lived in Chard. I was working at the railroad tracks. I worked on the railway almost all my life." Maxime and Adelaide had eight children. Maxime would hunt, trap and fish when he wasn't working. He remembers, "We started in the fall to hunt. September is hunting season for moose. We made dry meat (with hard lard). Bear was major for making grease lard; they don't leave anything. They put grease in the guts tube to save and store. Fishing and hunting was at the same time. November 15th trapping season opened until three to four days before Christmas. We sold our furs so we could celebrate Christmas. After Christmas we go back to trap until about May 15<sup>th</sup>.



**Maxime Janvier.**

*Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie  
Dené First Nation.*

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## Jean Marie Janvier

Jean Marie was born in 1911 in Garson Lake. His mother was also born in Garson Lake and his father in La Loche. His parents hunted and trapped in these areas. He said he lived with his Grandpa (Weesa Herman) while growing up

and many other families and relatives lived closed by. Jean Marie got married when he was 25 years old at Christina Crossing.

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## Yvonne Janvier

Yvonne was born in La Loche in March 1943. Her parents were from Garson Lake and trapped at Kimowin Lake (Ke da tu) and Gipsy Lake in the summer. Her grandparents raised her. There were six people living in one house when she grew up and many other relatives lived close by. Yvonne married David Janvier in 1959. Her marriage was arranged and Yvonne says "they gave us away at that time if they knew the family was wealthy or good providers." They had nine children and lost four.

Yvonne and David moved to Janvier and pitched a tent with a bed, table and stove to live in. Family and friends helped them build a house in 1959. With their first child, Yvonne

and David camped at Winefred Lake to hunt and trap. They didn't have much. They moved back to Janvier just before Christmas and sold their furs to Harry Steponwich to buy groceries. They harvested potatoes. Moose hide was made for the children's clothing and sometimes they sold it if the children were already clothed. In the summer time they would go in the bush for berries and then they would either freeze or sell them. It was all bushes around Janvier at that time – 1960. Yvonne and her husband taught their children by "not abusing the land; hunt, trap, berries, respect animals - only use for food, don't waste – until today, I tell my grandchildren this."

### Agnes Lemaigre (McDonald)

Agnes was born in 1934 in Saskatchewan but she's not exactly sure where because she never knew her biological parents. Phelomine and Fred Piche raised her in West La Loche. She moved to Janvier in 1980 after her husband passed away. She was married when she was fifteen and they had eleven children; some at home with a midwife and some in the hospital. Agnes's husband taught her children about bush life. Elders taught her. She learnt how to do moose hide when she was a child. She worked

hard and took care of her children. She made all of her children's clothing. She cooked fish and bannock. The women sometimes did the fishing – they would go out on the canoe two at a time and set the nets during the afternoon and evening. The next morning they would check to see what they caught. Agnes said, "I had a rough life. Family and people around area helped each other ALL THE TIME."

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### Alfred Lemaigre

Alfred was born in La Loche in February 1949. He grew up with his parents and eight siblings in Garson Lake, Saskatchewan. He often spent summers with his grandparents at Gipsy Lake. Alfred explained that the Garson Lake community was very close knit with several related families living near each other in small cabins. His family moved to South La Loche for the kids to go to school. Alfred's father had a trapline that went from Garson Lake to Birch Lake, Gipsy Lake and Gordon Lake. They continued to use this trapline up until about 1970.

Alfred married in 1975 and had nine children with his wife. They raised their family at the Christina River Reserve in La Loche. Alfred enjoys sharing his knowledge about the land of his people and the animals they survived from. He continues to hunt throughout the year to ensure his family has their traditional meat of moose and deer. However, he has not been able to use his father's trapline at Garson Lake because of trouble with conservation officers. He would like to be able to use this trapline at Garson Lake again and to be able to pass this down to his children.

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### John (Johnny) Lemaigre

John is 75 and was born in the bush at Kimowin Lake. A midwife helped deliver him in the bush. His Grandmother raised him at the old Whitefish Lake (Garson Lake) community. John's Grandfather, Alfred Piche, on his father's side was the Chief at Whitefish Lake. John's family trapped and hunted between Garson Lake and Gipsy Lake. In 1957, John fell in love and married. John and Corane had 9 children together and raised their family in La Loche. They have 40 grandchildren and great grandchildren. In 1960, he built a house with help from Indian Affairs.

John traveled great distances on his trapline with his brother-in-law. They would travel two weeks from their community at Garson Lake and later at La Loche, all the

way to Richardson River across from Fort Chipewyan. They would leave in the fall time with the dog team and return before Christmas to trade. They would leave again in the spring for muskrat and beaver trapping. John also trapped, fished and hunted down south to Finlay Lake, McAdam Lake, Graham Lake and down even further south in to the Primrose Lake area. Although John began working as a Carpenter, even until today, he continues to hunt in the CPDFN traditional lands throughout the year, mainly for moose and deer. John holds an abundance of traditional knowledge about the land, animal and plants and he was happy to share information about traditional stories, medicines and the traditional way of life.



### Ernest Morris

Ernest was born and raised in Chipewyan Prairie. He is 52 years old. His father was originally from Buffalo Narrows, Saskatchewan. Ernest's parents would hunt, trap, and fish at Winefred Lake and Cowpar Lake. He had eight siblings. While growing up he lived with his family; there were other related families that lived close by. Ernest was never married and does not have children. He worked seasonal jobs after the hunting and trapping season ended. He worked on

the railroad, in forestry, and on the pipelines. In the spring, Ernest would trap beaver, muskrat and otter. He said he would only hunt big game in the spring if it was really needed because they were having young ones. Ernest would camp across the river at Big Prairie during the summer and pick berries to sell for food. During the fall, Ernest said he "would go hunting until we get a moose; sometimes one week straight."



**Ernest Morris Janvier.**

*Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie  
Dené First Nation.*

### Jean B. Morris

Jean is 61 and has lived in Chipewyan Prairie since he was born. His parents were also from Chipewyan Prairie and mainly hunted and trapped at Winefred Lake and Bohn Lake. While growing up he lived with his family. Several other related families lived close by. Jean was never married and did not have any children. In the summer, Jean would work as a firefighter. Jean shared a lot of his traditional knowledge about hunting,

trapping and fishing. When asked about spring trapping Jean said "we set traps; stay one month; check traps every morning for beaver and muskrat – we check different areas of trapline." In the fall he said he would spend, "all day, everyday walking, setting and checking traps." Jean said, "My parents taught me to respect the land; only take what is needed; respect Mother Earth."



**Jean Morris.**

*Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie  
Dené First Nation.*

### Thomas Morice

Thomas was born at Winifred Lake in 1960. His parents are Harry Janvier-Morice and Mary Louise Janvier. His father is a hunter, trapper, and fisher. He raised cattle, and worked in seasonal occupations. His mother worked with the grey nuns as an orderly at the Ft. McMurray Regional Hospital and assisted in the delivery of babies. Thomas has three siblings living in the region. In his early years, Thomas traveled frequently with his family, by dog team and horse team. In 1968,

his family moved back to Janvier.

Thomas has spent most of his life on the land. He works for AlPac full-time and still maintains the traditional lifestyle of his forefathers; hunting, trapping and fishing – he even uses the old trails that they had formed.

Thomas has six children and six grandchildren. He enjoys bringing them out on the land and showing them the traditional ways.



**Thomas Morice.**

*Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie  
Dené First Nation.*

### George Nokohoo

George was born in 1937 in Chipewyan Prairie. He was raised by his mother and never knew his father. His mother was Cree and Chipewyan and was from Fort McKay. His Grandfather was Cree and fled Loon Lake, Saskatchewan in fear of being prosecuted for his involvement in the Riel Rebellion of 1885. His grandfather trapped at Hay Creek. His marriage to Alma in 1961 was arranged and they moved around from Fort McMurray, Edmonton, Fort Chipewyan, and Conklin before settling permanently in Janvier. They also lived seasonally at traplines 224RR and 235RR. George is the only elder interviewed who attended a residential school at a convent. He never collected traditional medicines because of the stories the Priests and nuns at the convent told him. One time, one medicine man came out and told him, look around you, that's all medicine, but you have to be a special person to find it – white man won't find it. George uses a lot of humour when telling his stories and sharing his traditional knowledge. He says that, "I taught myself and Elders taught me. I learned the hard way; nobody was there to teach me."



**Alma and George Nokohoo.**

*Photo courtesy of the Chipewyan Prairie Dené First Nation.*

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### Alma Nokohoo

Alma, born in 1945, was born and raised at Christina Crossing. Her parents hunted and trapped at Christina Crossing, Gipsy Lake and Garson Lake. Father Tanto married Alma and George in Janvier in 1960. They lived in CPDFN after they were married and had seven children. Some of her children were born at home with a midwife and others in a hospital. Alma looked after the house and children while her husband did the hunting

and trapping. She said that back then, there was no welfare and you had to make a living. During the summer her family would stay at different places for a week at a time to gather berries, like Cowpar Lake, Willow Lake or Christina Crossing. Some berries would be sold and the rest would be kept for the family. Alma's advice to her children was to, "respect the land; listen to the Elders."



**Alma Nokohoo.**

*Photo courtesy of the  
Chipewyan Prairie  
Dené First Nation.*



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