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Stage One: Separate Worlds

THE HISTORY OF THE RELATIONSHIP between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples in North America begins, of necessity, with a description of the period before contact. Aboriginal nations were then fully independent; as described by the Supreme Court of Canada, they were "organized in societies and occupying the land as their forefathers had done for centuries."¹

Europeans arriving in North America attempted to justify their assumption of political sovereignty over Aboriginal nations and title to their lands on the basis of a re-interpretation of prevailing norms in international law at the time, in particular the doctrine of discovery. This doctrine is based on the notion of *terra nullius* — a Latin term that refers to empty, essentially barren and uninhabited land. Under norms of international law at the time of contact, the discovery of such land gave the discovering nation immediate sovereignty and all rights and title to it.

Over the course of time, however, the concept of *terra nullius* was extended by European lawyers and philosophers to include lands that were not in the possession of 'civilized' peoples or were not being put to a proper 'civilized' use according to European definitions of the term. The following passage from the sermon of a Puritan preacher in New England in 1609 captures the essence of this re-interpretation of the idea of land empty of civilized human habitation:

Some affirm, and it is likely to be true, that these savages have no particular property in any part or parcel of that country, but only a general residency there, as wild beasts in the forest; for they range and wander up and down the country without any law or government, being led only by their own lusts and sensuality. There is not *meum* and *teum* [mine and thine] amongst them.

So that if the whole land should be taken from them, there is not a man that can complain of any particular wrong done unto him.²

Upon the 'discovery' of the North American continent by Europeans, according to this doctrine, the newcomers were immediately vested with full sovereign ownership of the discovered lands and everything on them. When faced with the fact that the lands were inhabited by Aboriginal peoples, European commentators, such as the preacher Gray, popularized the notion that Aboriginal peoples were merely in possession of such lands, since they could not possibly have the civilized and Christian attributes that would enable them to assert sovereign ownership to them. Over time these ethnocentric notions gained currency and were given legitimacy by certain court decisions. The argument made by the attorney general of Ontario in *St. Catharines Milling and Lumber Co. v. the Queen*, for example, is part of this tradition:

To maintain their position the appellants must assume that the Indians have a regular form of government, whereas nothing is more clear than that they have no government and no organization, and cannot be regarded as a nation capable of holding lands. ...

It is a rule of the common law that property is the creature of the law and only continues to exist while the law that creates and regulates it subsists. The Indians had no rules or regulations which could be considered laws.³

Despite evidence to the contrary, the argument that Aboriginal people merely roamed over the land and were not in the habit of cultivating the soil, as was the practice in Europe, was picked up and developed in the latter part of the seventeenth century by the English philosopher John Locke. His writings were highly influential in legitimizing in the minds of non-Aboriginal politicians and lawyers the almost complete takeover of Aboriginal lands by Europeans. As summarized by James Tully, professor of philosophy at McGill University, Locke began with the idea that Aboriginal peoples were in a pre-political state of nature — the first stage in a process of historical development through which all societies go:

In the first age there is no established system of property or government and their economic activity is subsistence hunting and gathering. In contrast, the European civilized age is characterized by established legal systems of property, political societies and commercial or market-oriented agriculture and

industry. This first set of contrasts makes up the background assumption of the 'stages view' of historical development which tends to be taken for granted in political (and economic) theory down to this day.

Second, the Aboriginal people of America, possessing neither government nor property in their hunting and gathering territories, have property rights only in the products of their labour: the fruit and nuts they gather, the fish they catch, the deer they hunt and the corn they pick. Unlike citizens in political societies, anyone in a state of nature is free to appropriate land without the consent of others, as long as the land is uncultivated...⁴ Illustrating his theory throughout with examples drawn from America, Locke draws the immensely influential conclusion that Europeans are free to settle and acquire property rights to vacant land in America by agricultural cultivation without the consent of the Aboriginal people...

Whereas the second set of arguments justifies appropriation by alleging that the Aboriginal people have no rights in the land, the third set of arguments justifies the appropriation by claiming that the Aboriginal people are better off as a result of the establishment of the commercial system of private property in the land. Locke claims that a system of European commerce based on the motive to acquire more than one needs, satisfied by surplus production for profit on the market, is economically superior to the American Indian system of hunting and gathering, based on fixed needs and subsistence production, in three crucial respects: it uses the land more productively, it produces a greater quantity of conveniences, and it produces far greater opportunities to work and labour by expanding the division of labour.⁵

These kinds of arguments, which distorted the reality of the situation and converted *differences* into *inferiorities*, have had surprising longevity in policy documents and in court proceedings up to the present day. As modified by the courts, they are at the heart of the modern doctrine of Aboriginal title, which holds that Aboriginal peoples in North America do not 'own' their lands, although they now have the legal right in Canada to demand compensation if they are dispossessed of them by the authorities.

Not all courts have endorsed without reservation the self-serving notions created to justify the dispossession of Aboriginal peoples from their lands and the denial of their inherent sovereignty. This was particularly so, for example, in the later judgements of Chief Justice Marshall of the Supreme Court of the United States, such as that in *Worcester v. Georgia* in 1832:⁶

America, separated from Europe by a wide ocean, was inhabited by a distinct people, divided into separate nations, independent of each other and the rest of the world, having institutions of their own, and governing themselves by their own laws. It is difficult to comprehend the proposition, that the inhabitants of either quarter of the globe could have rightful original claims of dominion over the inhabitants of the other, or over the lands they occupied; or that the discovery of either by the other should give the discoverer rights in the country discovered which annulled the pre-existing rights of its ancient possessors.⁷

Centuries of separate development in the Americas and Europe led to Aboriginal belief systems, cultures and forms of social organization that differed substantially from European patterns. Although this is generally accepted now, there is often less recognition of the fact that there was considerable diversity among Aboriginal nations as well. They were as different from each other as the European countries were from each other. Moreover, they often still are. Thus, the use of a term such as Aboriginal obscures real differences among the various indigenous nations. It was not only differences between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal peoples that shaped relations between them in the post-contact period; it was also differences among Aboriginal nations, and among European societies.

These differences remain important to the present day. They are not the dead artifacts of history, of value only to those who choose to study the past. Rather, they speak to the origins of cultural patterns that find (or seek to find) expression in contemporary times, in contemporary forms. These differences are at the heart of the present struggle of Aboriginal peoples to reclaim possession not only of their traditional lands, but also of their traditional cultures and forms of political organization.

To respect the diversity among Aboriginal nations, we have chosen to illustrate certain distinctive patterns of culture and social organization by selecting five particular instances from different geographic regions. The first account deals with the Mi'kmaq of the east, the people of the dawn. This is followed by descriptions of the distinctive forms of social and political organization among the Iroquois and the Blackfoot. For the discussion of Pacific peoples, our emphasis is on social customs and economic relationships among the nations of the northwest coast. For the North, we have chosen to highlight innovation among Inuit.

1. People of the Dawn: The Mi'kmaq

Like other Aboriginal nations, the Mi'kmaq of the present day look back to their roots, seeking to understand from their oral traditions where they came from and how their culture and forms of social organization developed.

The word Mi'kmaq means the people who lived farthest east; hence they are often referred to as the people of the dawn. It is appropriate, therefore, to begin this account with a Mi'kmaq creation story in which the power of the sun plays a prominent role. It is one of several versions told in the region, and it outlines the relationship between the Creator, the people and the environment. The account continues with a description of forms of social organization and of other seminal events recorded in the Mi'kmaq oral tradition.

In the creation story (see box, next page), the traditional belief system of the Mi'kmaq accounts for the origins of the people and of the earth with all its life forms, providing a vivid image of the Great Council Fire giving out sparks that give life to human form.

The Mi'kmaq were taught that the spark of life in living things has three parts: a form that decays and disappears after death; a *mntu* or spark that travels after death to the lands of the souls; and the guardian spark or spirits that aid people during their earth walk. While the form is different, all *mntu* and guardian spirits are alike but of different forces. No human being possessed all the forces, nor could human beings control the forces of the stars, sun or moon, wind, water, rocks, plants and animals. Yet they belong to these forces, which are a source of awe and to which entreaties for assistance are often addressed.

Since all objects possess the sparks of life, every life form has to be given respect. Just as a human being has intelligence, so too does a plant, a river or an animal. Therefore, the people were taught that everything they see, touch or are aware of must be respected, and this respect requires a special consciousness that discourages carelessness about things. Thus, when people gather roots or leaves for medicines, they propitiate the soul of each plant by placing a small offering of tobacco at its base, believing that without the co-operation of the *mntu*, the mere form of the plant cannot work cures.

Mi'kmaq were taught that all form decays, but the mntu continues. Just as autumn folds into winter and winter transforms into spring, what was dead returns to life. The tree does not die; it grows up again where it falls. When a plant or animal is killed, its mntu goes into the ground with its blood; later it comes back and reincarnates from the ground.

Each person, too, whether male or female, elder or youth, has a unique gift or spark and a place in Mi'kmaq society. Each has a complementary role that enables communities to flourish in solidarity. Like every generation, each person must find his or her gifts, and each person also needs to have the cumulative knowledge and wisdom of previous generations to survive successfully in a changing environment. In this respect, oral accounts such as the creation story served not only to communicate a particular story, but also to give guidance to succeeding generations on the appropriate way to live — how to communicate with other life forms, how to hunt and fish and respect what is taken, and how to take medicines from the earth. Stories that feature visions and dreams help to communicate lessons learned from the past.

A Mi'kmaq Creation Story

On the other side of the Path of the Spirits, in ancient times, *Kisúlk*, the Creator, made a decision. *Kisúlk* created the first born, *Niskam*, the Sun, to be brought across *Sk•tékmujeouti* (the Milky Way) to light the earth. Also sent across the sky was a bolt of lightning that created *Sitqamúk*, the earth, and from the same bolt *Kluskap* was also created out of the dry earth. *Kluskap* lay on *Sitqamúk*, pointing by head, feet and hands to the Four Directions. *Kluskap* became a powerful teacher, a *kinap* and a *puoin*, whose gifts and allies were great.

In another bolt of lightning came the light of fire, and with it came the animals, the vegetation and the birds. These other life forms gradually gave *Kluskap* a human form. *Kluskap* rose from the earth and gave thanks to *Kisúlk* as he honoured the six directions: the sun, the earth, and then the east, south, west and north. The abilities within the human form made up the seventh direction.

Kluskap asked *Kisúlk* how he should live, and *Kisúlk* in response sent *Nukumi*, *Kluskap*'s grandmother, to guide him in life. Created from a rock that was transformed into the body of an old woman through the power of *Niskam*, the Sun, *Nukumi* was an elder whose knowledge and

wisdom were enfolded in the Mi'kmaq language.

Nukumi taught Kluskap to call upon *apistanéwj*, the marten, to speak to the guardian spirits for permission to consume other life forms to nourish human existence. Marten returned with their agreement, as well as with songs and rituals. Kluskap and his grandmother gave thanks to Kisúlk, to the Sun, to the Earth and to the Four Directions and then feasted. As they made their way to understand how they should live, Kluskap then met *Netawansum*, his nephew, whom Kisúlk had created in his human form from the rolling foam of the ocean that had swept upon the shores and clung to the sweetgrass. Netawansum had the understanding of the life and strength of the underwater realms and he brought gifts from this realm to Kluskap, including the ability to see far away. They again gave thanks and feasted on nuts from the trees.

Finally they met *Níkanaptekewísqw*, Kluskap's mother, a woman whose power lay in her ability to tell about the cycles of life or the future. She was born from a leaf on a tree, descended from the power and strength of Niskam, the Sun, and made into human form to bring love, wisdom and the colours of the world. As part of the earth, she brought the strength and wisdom of the earth and an understanding of the means of maintaining harmony with the forces of nature.

They lived together for a long time, but one day Kluskap told his mother and nephew that he and his grandmother Nukumi were leaving them to go north. Leaving instructions with his mother, Kluskap told of the Great Council Fire that would send seven sparks, which would fly out of the fire and land on the ground, each as a man. Another seven sparks would fly out the other way and out of these seven sparks would arise seven women. Together they would form seven groups, or families, and these seven families should disperse in seven directions and then divide again into seven different groups.

Like the lightning bolts that created the earth and Kluskap, the sparks contained many gifts. The sparks gave life to human form; and in each human form was placed the prospect of continuity. Like Kluskap before them, when the people awoke naked and lost, they asked Kluskap how they should live. Kluskap taught them their lessons, and thus he is named "one who is speaking to you" or the Teacher-Creator.

Source: This segment is based on a story taken from the ancient teachings of Mi'kmaq elders. The ancient creation story was compiled by Kep'tin Stephen Augustine of Big Cove, New Brunswick. See *Introductory Guide to Micmac Words and Phrases*, compiled by Evan Thomas Pritchard, annotations by Stephen Augustine, observations by Albert Ward (Rexton, N.B.: Resonance Communications, 1991). Another version is recounted by Reverend D. MacPherson in *Souvenir of the Micmac Tercentenary Celebration* (St. Anne de Restigouche: Frères Mineurs Capucins, 1910).

Internal peace was maintained among the families by dividing up the national territory into seven districts, each with a chief, and by acknowledging family rights to certain hunting grounds and fishing waters. District and territory divisions depended on the size of the family and the abundance of game and fish. These families made up several small gatherings or councils. From each settlement of kinsmen and their dependents, or *wigamow*, the Holy Gathering, also known now as the Grand Council of the Mi'kmaq (*Santé Mawíomi*) was created. The Mawíomi, which continues into the present time, recognizes one or more *kep'tinaq* (captains; singular: *kep'tin*) to show the people the good path, to help them with gifts of knowledge and goods, and to sit with the whole Mawíomi as the government of all the Mi'kmaq. From among themselves, the *kep'tinaq* recognize a *jisaqamow* (grand chief) and *jikeptin* (grand captain), both to guide them and one to speak for them. From others of good spirit they choose advisers and speakers, including the *putu's*, and the leader of the warriors, or *smaknis*. When the birds begin their migration south, *Inapskuk*, the symbolic wampum laws⁸ of the Mi'kmaq alliances, are read and explained to the people.

At the annual meeting, the *kep'tinaq* and Mawíomi saw that each family had sufficient planting grounds for the summer, fishing stations for spring and autumn and hunting range for winter. Once assigned and managed for seven generations, these properties were inviolable. If disputes arose, they were arbitrated by the *kep'tinaq* individually or in council.

The Mi'kmaq were neither settled nor migratory. The environment of their birth has always been suited best to seasonal use so that, compatible with the rhythms of the earth, families were responsible for a hunting ground, a fishing river or waters and a planting home, and they travelled to other resources throughout the year. They lived within the beauty and cycles of their lands. Given this deep attachment to the land, it is not surprising that all natural features within the Mi'kmaq territory have ancient names in the Mi'kmaq language, names that bear witness to their continuous use and possession of

them. The trees, the shore, the mist in the dark woods, the clearings were holy in their memory and experience, recalling not only their lives but also the lives of their ancestors since the world began. This sacred order was never seen as a commodity that could be sold; it could only be shared.

The Mawíomi maintained peace and continuity by sharing the history and experiences of the Mi'kmaq through the ceremonies and stories of ancient times and the reading of the wampum laws. The Mi'kmaq continue to honour and receive strength from the seven directions and the seven entities in their gatherings at the great council fires. The honour and feasting are rekindled in the great fire, symbolic of the Great Spirit Creator, the power of the sun, of the earth, and of the lightning that caused the creation of Kluskap. In honour of Nukumi's arrival, the rocks from which she came are heated and water is poured over them in the sweat lodge. Thanks are given for her arrival and for the rebirth of all nations. The burning of sweetgrass honours Netawansum's arrival as thanks is given to the Four Directions and above, and to the ground and to one's heart and soul. In honour of the mother's arrival, the leaf and the bark of a tree and the stems are placed in the carved stones of grandmother, and the *tamaqn* or pipe is smoked.

In these ceremonies and rituals lies the path to the knowledge and wisdom of the spirits of the ancestors.

2. Iroquoians and the Iroquois

The Iroquoian peoples encountered at the time of earliest contact with Europeans were made up of many nations speaking related languages and occupying neighbouring territories. They included the Cherokee Nation in what is now Tennessee,⁹ the Tuscarora, Nottoway and Meherrin nations of North Carolina and Virginia, the Five Nations and Conestoga of New York and Pennsylvania, and the Hurons of central Ontario. Other northern Iroquoian communities were the Wenro, Neutral, Erie and Tobacco nations in the lower Great Lakes area and the Laurentian Iroquois, who occupied substantial settlements at Hochelaga (Montreal) and Stadacona (Quebec City) at the time of Jacques Cartier's explorations in 1535.¹⁰ The closeness and duration of relationships between these latter groups and other Iroquoian nations is not clear, because their languages, which would normally provide a means of tracing linkages and ancestry, disappeared with little or no documentation.¹¹

The Vision of Three Crosses

At the beginning of the cycle of *Jenoo*, the ice age, *Nakúset's* spirit came to an elder in a dream. The elder was approached by a young man carrying three crosses. He offered the old man the crosses telling him that each cross had a purpose in the survival of the people and, if used accordingly, the people would benefit by them. One of the crosses would serve the people in times of conflict with nature and with others. Another of the crosses would grant them safety on their long voyages and new experiences. The last cross would serve them in deliberations of councils, to aid them in making proper decisions for future generations. When the elder awoke, he called the village council. The three crosses and their meaning were explained, and he drew the symbols of the vision. This knowledge was widely shared with the other families and as instructions were followed, the famine lifted.

Under the vision of the three crosses, the families allied in a nation of Cross-Bearers and adjusted to the hardships of the *Jenoo*. They survived enormous environmental changes by travelling to the southern and western doors. Their knowledge, language and culture were enriched by their travels, through which they met many other peoples. In addition, their understanding of the life forces and resources of the land and sea was expanded. The people continually reorganized themselves.

When the *Jenoo* retreated, they returned to the eastern door of the tundra by canoe, following the rivers and the herds of animals. Using the seeds they carried with them, they renewed the tundra with many different plants, and many generations since then have aided the tundra in transforming it into many different forests. They have watched the earth, rivers and oceans respond to the force of melting water. As harvesters of the land and experts in manufacturing hunting and fishing equipment, they developed lances, spears, spear throwers, bows and arrows, birchbark canoes and fishing stations.

When the people returned to the northern Atlantic coast and tundra, they lived in small families. Slowly these families grew into seven groups of the Nation of Cross-Bearers, and they became known as the people of the dawn, the keepers of the eastern door.

Source: This story is based on unpublished material prepared by Marie Battiste and J. Youngblood Henderson for the Mi'kmaq Grand Council and on material from Father Chrestien Le Clercq, *Nouvelle Relation de la Gaspésie* (Paris: 1691), chapter X. The French original and an English translation are found in William F. Ganong, trans. and ed., *New Relation of Gaspesia with the Customs and Religion of the Gaspesian Indians* (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1910; reprinted New York: Greenwood Press, 1968).

At the time of contact, Iroquoian nations, besides having common language roots, shared a number of cultural features. They lived in semi-permanent villages that they moved every 10 to 20 years, building new homes and clearing fields for the cultivation of corn and other crops. They practised a mixed economy of hunting, fishing, and gathering plants, nuts and berries and, in some places, maple sap.

The Hurons and the Five (later Six) Nations, whose societies have been documented most extensively, belonged to clans identified with animal or bird totems, traced clan affiliation through the female line and were matrilineal. That is, the man joined the household of the woman he married. Extended families related to a senior woman shared a longhouse and included the elder woman's unmarried sons, her daughters and their husbands and children.

Longhouses were typically 15 to 40 metres in length and about five metres in width, constructed of upright poles, with cross poles at about three metres in height and rafters, also made of poles, creating an arched roof. The whole structure was covered with elm or ash bark, rough side out, flattened, dried and cut in the form of boards. Houses were subdivided at intervals of three or four metres, with one compartment on each side of a central passage-way. Entrances to the longhouse were located at each end, with an emblem of the clan featured at one entrance.

Two families would occupy each compartment and share a fire in the central passage. One longhouse might accommodate 10 to 20 families, and villages of 100 to 150 houses were common. The largest villages were estimated to house up to 3,000 persons. In earlier times the villages were surrounded by palisades for defence against attacks. Outside the palisades were the corn fields, often consisting of several hundred acres of cultivated land, subdivided into planting lots belonging to different families and bounded by uncultivated ridges.¹²

The Five Nations — Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga and Seneca — were known by different names. They were collectively called Iroquois, the Iroquois League, the Iroquois Confederacy and, after the Tuscarora Nation was adopted into the Confederacy in 1715,¹³ the Six Nations. Their name for themselves was, and continues to be, Haudenosaunee, people of the longhouse. The name derived from the instructions of the founder of the confederacy, who declared that once they had concluded peace among the nations and had adopted a unifying good mind, they would live as one family with a longhouse that stretched from Mohawk territory in the east (the Mohawk River and Schoharie Creek just west of Albany, New York) to Seneca territory in the west (the Genesee River at Rochester, New York).¹⁴

The confederacy served not only to suppress conflict among its member nations but also to secure their territory from the intrusion of neighbouring nations. Their environment was rich in all the resources they needed to maintain themselves. They were therefore well positioned politically and economically, as well as geographically, to engage with colonists and colonial governments in trade and politics. In their struggle to gain control of trade and later lands, European powers competed for the allegiance of the Haudenosaunee through the seventeenth and much of the eighteenth century.¹⁵ The pivotal role of the Haudenosaunee in colonial history¹⁶ made them the objects of intense interest on the part of ethnologists and historians. Additionally, the resurgence of interest in their traditional forms of governance among the Iroquois themselves has awakened renewed interest in the origin, structure and effectiveness of this ancient confederacy.¹⁷

Just how ancient is a matter of contention. On the basis of archaeological and linguistic evidence and the examination of physical traits, scholars have debated whether the Iroquois culture emerged in northeastern North America or migrated from elsewhere. A number of scholars concur now that Iroquoian culture has existed and evolved continuously in the historical homeland just described for 4,000 to 6,000 years.¹⁸ Although there is evidence of rapid and unexplained culture change between ancient times and the time of contact, some scholars argue that these are best explained by culture borrowing, via extensive trade networks and geographic shifts among neighbouring peoples, rather than by displacement of other culture groups by Iroquoian newcomers.¹⁹

Continuity can be established between the culture practised at excavated sites, dated around 500 BC, and the culture of the Haudenosaunee as

encountered at the time of contact. There is evidence of the introduction of corn cultivation and a shift to a less mobile way of life between 500 and 800 AD. Artifacts at excavation sites and remains of houses indicate that by 1300 the longhouse was the standard dwelling, and the complementary social institutions were almost certainly in place or emerging. Significantly, there is evidence of violent death and cannibalism in this period as well.²⁰

The Haudenosaunee have less concern than non-Aboriginal scholars with establishing a date for the origin of the confederacy. They state simply that the League of Peace was in place before the arrival of Europeans on the eastern seaboard. Since the Haudenosaunee maintain an oral ceremonial culture by choice, written versions of their traditions are at best approximations of the laws and protocols that give substance and cohesiveness to the confederacy.²¹ To provide a few glimpses of the workings of the confederacy we refer to historical and ethnographic accounts and to a presentation made to the Commission by a highly esteemed historian and ceremonialist, Jacob (Jake) Thomas, a chief of the Cayuga Nation.

According to oral tradition the Five Nations at one time were enmeshed in wars and blood feuds:

This is what was happening at the time the Creator made mankind. He put us on earth to get along. He gave us love. He gave us respect, appreciation, generosity.... But for the longest time it didn't work. Maybe it worked for a while, but then people began to forget what they were instructed.... He instructed us, this is the way we should be, but we forget. Then we start things that we're not supposed to do on earth, go against one another....

We also had cannibalism, cannibals, in those days. That's what I'm talking about. We never ever hide those stories, what happened in those days, so our children will learn how our people were way, way back.

Chief Jacob (Jake) Thomas
Cayuga Nation
Akwesasne, Ontario, 3 May 1993²²

In this period of conflict and bloodletting, a child was born to a Huron woman who lived with her mother on the north shore of Lake Ontario.²³ After many signs indicating his special character and mission, the Peacemaker²⁴ set out

across Lake Ontario in a stone canoe to bring a message of peace to the warring Five Nations.

In Mohawk territory the Peacemaker encountered Hiawatha, an Onondaga who had been driven mad with grief at the loss of his family through sorcery. The Peacemaker consoled Hiawatha, restoring his mind with words that were subsequently incorporated into council proceedings and called variously thereafter the words of the Requickening Address, the Welcome at the Woods' Edge, Rubbing Down of the Body, or the Three Bare Words if spoken without the use of wampum.

The Peacemaker and Hiawatha together drafted the Great Law of Peace, which became the constitution of the Haudenosaunee, with each article symbolized by a string of wampum.²⁵ The central message of the law is summarized as Righteousness, Health and Power.²⁶ According to tradition, the Peacemaker said,

I carry the Mind of the Master of Life...and my message will bring an end to the wars between east and west.

The Word that I bring is that all peoples shall love one another and live together in peace. This message has three parts: Righteousness and Health and Power — *Gáiwoh*, *Skénon*, *Gashasdénshaa*. And each part has two branches.

Righteousness means justice practiced between men and between nations; it means also a desire to see justice prevail.

Health means soundness of mind and body; it also means peace, for that is what comes when minds are sane and bodies are cared for.

Power means authority, the authority of law and custom, backed by such force as is necessary to make justice prevail; it means also religion, for justice enforced is the will of the Holder of the Heavens and has his sanction.²⁷

The rule of peace was to be achieved by persuading leaders of nations to reflect on the good message, for, as the tradition teaches, the power of the good mind could take hold of the most vicious cannibal and transform him into an emissary of peace.

The Peacemaker and Hiawatha succeeded in persuading first the leaders of the Mohawk, then in succession the leaders of the Oneida, all but one of the Onondaga, the Cayuga and the Seneca to the way of peace. However, Atotarho, a powerful Onondaga chief, whose head was covered with snakes and whose body and mind were twisted, rejected the good message. Through the combined strength of the chiefs of the Five Nations, who approached his dwelling singing a song of peace, and the eloquence of Hiawatha, who explained how the law would work, and the spiritual power of the Peacemaker, who could make straight both mind and body, Atotarho came to accept the message of peace. He was made chairman of the council of the League of Peace, and the central council fire was placed in the territory of the Onondaga.

To mark the peace that had been concluded, the Peacemaker uprooted a great white pine tree, and his words establishing the symbol of the tree of peace are recorded in the Great Law:

I, Dekanawideh, and the confederate lords now uproot the tallest pine tree and into the cavity thereby made we cast all weapons of war. Into the depths of the earth, down into the deep underearth currents of water flowing into unknown regions, we cast all weapons of strife. We bury them from sight forever and plant again the tree. Thus shall all Great Peace be established and hostilities shall no longer be known between the Five Nations but only peace to a united people.²⁸

The Great Peace was not to be restricted to the Five Nations alone. The law also provided

Roots have spread out from the Tree of the Great Peace...and the name of these roots is the Great White Roots of Peace. If any man of any nation outside of the Five Nations shall show a desire to obey the laws of the Great Peace...they may trace the roots to their source...and they shall be welcomed to take shelter beneath the Tree of the Long Leaves.²⁹

The Condolence Ceremony

The condolence ceremony to raise up a new chief began with attention to the grief of the family, clan and nation that had suffered loss. The words and ministrations were carried out by the nations and clans, which sat on the opposite side of the council fire.

We have met in dark sorrow to lament together over the death of our brother lord. For such has been your loss. We will sit together in our grief and mingle our tears together, and we four brothers will wipe off the tear from your eyes, so that for a day period you might have peace of mind.... This we say and do, we four brothers.*

Now hear us again, for when a person is in great grief caused by death, his ears are closed up and he cannot hear, and such is your condition now.

We will therefore remove the obstruction [grief] from your ears so that for a day period you may have perfect hearing again... This we say and do, we four brothers.

Continue to hear the expression of us four brothers, for when a person is in great sorrow his throat is stopped with grief and such is your case; now, we will therefore remove the obstruction [grief] so that for a day period you may enjoy perfect breathing and speech. This we say and do, we four brothers. The foregoing part of the condolence ceremony is to be performed outside the place of meeting.

The practice of memorializing agreements in wampum goes back to the founding of the Confederacy. Wampum belts of varied design are objective representations of the principles of democracy institutionalized in the Great Law of Peace. The Hiawatha wampum belt, for example, depicts the founding of the Confederacy, with two nations represented by rectangles on either side of the Onondaga, the Firekeepers, who are represented by a pine tree. One of the duties of the Onondaga Nation, as Firekeepers, is to care for the belts and strings of wampum that have been preserved as repositories of Haudenosaunee culture and law.

The ceremony then moves to the place of meeting. A drink of medicine

is offered that, "when taken and settled down in the stomach it will pervade the whole body and strengthen him and restore him to a perfect form of man." The signs of death are wiped away from the seat of the mourners and the dark mood that has settled on the mourners is lifted with these words:

When a person is brought to grief by death he seems to lose sight of the sun; this is now your case. We therefore remove the mist so that you may see the sun rising over the trees or forest in the east, and watch its course and when it arrives in midsky, it will shed forth its rays around you, and you shall begin to see your duties and perform the same as usual. This we say and do, we four brothers...

We therefore cause you to stand up again, our uncles, and surround the council fire again, and resume your duties...

Now we return to you the wampum which we received from you when you suffered the loss by death. We will therefore now conclude our discourse. Now point out to me the man whom I am to proclaim as chief in place of the deceased.

* The four brothers' side of the Confederacy Council consisted of the younger brothers, Oneida and Cayuga, together with adopted nations, the Tuscarora and the Tutelo. See Michael K. Foster, "On Who Spoke First at Iroquois-White Councils", in *Extending the Rafters* (cited in note 11), p. 203.

Source: The quotations are from *Parker on the Iroquois* (cited in note 26), Book III, pp. 110-113.

Although each of the Five Nations retained autonomy in internal affairs, each had chiefs appointed to a central council, which met at least once a year. Fifty titles to denote the rank of chief were established and distributed unequally among the Five Nations. The Mohawk had nine seats in council, the Oneida nine, the Onondaga 14, the Cayuga 10, and the Seneca eight. However, the different weight of representation did not give any nation an advantage, since decisions were made by consensus.³⁰

Consensus decisions were reached by the following process: the Mohawk, Seneca and Onondaga were designated the Elder Brothers; the Oneida and Cayuga were the Younger Brothers. The Elder and Younger Brothers sat on

opposite sides of the council fire while the Onondaga, the Firekeepers, took their place on a third side.

Counselling began with the Mohawk chiefs conferring together, and having reached a decision, their speaker announced it to the Seneca. If these tribes found they were in agreement, the speaker of the "Three Brothers", who was usually a Mohawk, announced the decision of the "Three Brothers" side to the chiefs of the opposite side. In like manner, the chiefs of the Oneida and Cayuga arrived at a decision, which was then announced by the speaker of the "Two Brothers" side...³¹

The matter might be passed back and forth across the fire several times before agreement was reached. The Firekeepers would then summarize and confirm the decision. If no agreement could be reached, the Firekeepers might defer a decision or, if it was an urgent matter, they could break the impasse by taking a position.

The chiefs of the central council, sometimes called sachems or confederate lords, were nominated by clan mothers, the senior women in families entitled to make these nominations. According to tradition, a woman, Jigonhsasee, was the first person to accept the message of peace and power. The Peacemaker called her the Mother of Nations and declared that women would have the responsibility of naming chiefs to their titles and offices.

There was considerable consultation among household members, clan members and co-residents of the village in the choice of a chief. The nominee had to have the support of councils involving both men and women at each stage of consultation, and finally he had to win confirmation for his lifetime position at a general council of the confederacy, where his character from childhood was under scrutiny. Men were the speakers in council but women played an active advisory role. Women were also responsible for warning chiefs who failed to represent the interests of the people and for removing them from office if they did not heed the warnings.

A new chief was installed in his position as a sachem of the Confederacy Council in a condolence ceremony, which has been passed down in the oral tradition since time immemorial.³²

In addition to the titles of peace chief, which were passed down through families, there were pine tree chiefs who attained non-voting positions on

council through merit. There were also speakers designated to bring forward matters specifically on behalf of the women or the warriors, or to announce decisions reached by the sachems. "Speakers were chosen for their ability to grasp principle and fact, for rhetorical gifts, and for retentive memory in a society in which most men and women were walking archives."³³ In colonial times, such speakers were very influential, often being identified by recorders when the decision makers for whom the speaker was the voice remained anonymous.

The Confederacy Council was responsible for external affairs, which included trade, alliances and treaties. They also made decisions on engagement of the Confederacy in war, although individual nations, villages or families could mount war parties in situations where their own interests were affected. Confederate lords relinquished leadership to war chiefs in times of war, since the lords were selected for their dedication to the ways of peace. The qualities of character required of them are described in the Great Law:

The Lords of the Confederacy of the Five Nations shall be mentors of the people for all time. The thickness of their skin shall be seven spans — which is to say that they shall be proof against anger, offensive actions and criticism. Their hearts shall be full of peace and good will and their minds filled with a yearning for the welfare of the people of the Confederacy. With endless patience they shall carry out their duty and their firmness shall be tempered with a tenderness for their people. Neither anger nor fury shall find lodgement in their minds and all their words and actions shall be marked by calm deliberation.³⁴

To give substance to the notion that all the nations were of one family, the Great Law established that the clans, which are said to pre-date the founding of the confederacy,³⁵ were to transcend national boundaries. Thus a member of the Bear clan would be related to all members of the Bear clan in any of the Five Nations. When he travelled he could expect to receive hospitality and be treated as a brother by his Bear clan relatives wherever he travelled, and he had to be careful not to fall in love with a sister encountered in his travels, because only marriage outside the clan was permitted. If the Five Nations made war on one another, brothers would be raising their hands to kill brothers.

To dampen conflict over trespass and property, the Great Law established common access to hunting grounds:

"We shall have one dish," said Deganawidah, "in which shall be placed one beaver's tail, and we shall all have a co-equal right to it, and there shall be no knife in it for if there be a knife in it there will be danger that it might cut someone and blood would thereby be shed."³⁶

The whole of Haudenosaunee society was knit together in bonds of biological and attributed kinship, and each relationship carried with it reciprocal obligations. Matters of common interest were discussed first in the household or extended family, second in the convocation of clans to which the family members belonged, then in the groups of clans that made up a 'side' of the village council house, next by the council of the nation and ultimately, if the matter was of international scope, in the council of the confederacy. Decisions of the confederacy council followed, in reverse order, a similar path of consideration and acceptance or rejection in councils in each unit of society.³⁷

Since the confederacy chiefs had no mandate to enforce decisions within the nations, their power rested solely on the respect their positions commanded and their skill in weaving consensus from the disparate positions represented in council deliberations. Authority to provide for the needy and care for the sick rested with mutual aid and medicine societies, which appear to have been village-based, although the rules of hospitality that bound biological relatives and clan members to share food and shelter with kin ensured that no one was destitute. Family and clan members carried responsibility for resolving disputes, which were more likely to entail offences against the person than violations of property rights. Strenuous efforts were made to reconcile the persons and the families of victim and offender, for the consequences of the blood feuds that once prevailed among them were kept fresh in their memories through recitals of the Great Law.³⁸

How the integrity of a wholly oral tradition is maintained over generations is described by Leon Shenandoah, the contemporary holder of the Onondaga title of Atotarho, the most honoured position in the confederacy council. As a small child he was taken to a Seneca man to have a curing ceremony performed. An old man at the ceremony stood up and announced, "You are that boy!" — the one who would have a high position when he grew up.

It was already decided, when I was young, what I am doing today. My mother didn't say anything, but that's probably why she pushed me along this path.

We made a special point of going to ceremonies. When there was a ceremony in the longhouse, I wouldn't go to school. My mother said, "You're not going to school. You're going to the ceremony". That made me glad. I didn't like school. So I grew up going to the ceremonies all the time, and in time I learned how to run the ceremonies and to be in charge. And now it is getting to be a time when someone else must learn and take over from me.

When I was young and I first began to listen to the chiefs, one of the two men I have known in this lifetime who held the title of Tadodaho [Atotarho] stood at council and said, "You must watch what we are doing and listen to what we say. Someday we will not be around and others must succeed us." He met with the group I was with, and it sounded like he was talking to me. Since then I have tried to live that way — as though he were talking to me.³⁹

In his testimony to the Commission at Akwesasne, Chief Jake Thomas also spoke of the long apprenticeship necessary to fulfil the role of sachem: "I have sat, you might as well say, for fifty years, to gain my knowledge."

William N. Fenton, a prominent scholar of Iroquoian cultural history, who set the pattern for much of the research conducted since the 1930s,⁴⁰ has taken a number of carefully grounded positions: (1) that the political structure of the Iroquois League is ancient in origin and that it has remained stable over a long period;⁴¹ (2) that "In the crucible of Indian and White relations the patterns that had governed Iroquois life for centuries became compelling and forced the White people to approach the Indian in a highly ritualized way that was completely foreign to European ways of thinking";⁴² and (3) although versions of the oral tradition differ from one ceremonialist to another, and while some elements of culture have dropped out and others have been inserted, the underlying structure persisted, "so that when one compares the paradigm of the Condolence Council [for installing confederacy chiefs] of today with the protocol of the earliest alliances and treaties, essential parts are recognizable and seemingly identical." Fenton concludes that ethnohistory is best served by applying insights from contemporary accounts of Aboriginal persons knowledgeable in their culture, along with documentary records that are fragmentary and sometimes blatantly biased by the political or economic motives of the colonial participants, to achieve an in-depth understanding of early relations.

The Haudenosaunee have quite a different test for the authenticity and authority of the traditions that have been passed down orally and that they

practise today. As Chief Thomas explained, "That peace is supposed to work. It's the power of the words of the Creator where they came from, of unity, being of one mind, a good mind. That's what makes power."

3. The Blackfoot Confederacy

The boundaries of the territories of the Blackfoot Confederacy in the period after 1756 were the Rocky Mountains on the west, the Yellowstone River in the south, easterly into the Cypress Hills, and northward to the North Saskatchewan River. The Siksikawa (Blackfoot), the Kainaiwa (Blood), and the Pikuniwa (Peigan) were members of the confederacy that shared a common language and culture, and they were joined by their allies the Tsuu T'ina (Sarcee) and the Gros Ventres.

The confederacy's neighbours on the plains included the Crow and the Dakota, traditional enemies, who were to the south and southwest; the Assiniboine, with whom they shared the Cypress Hills area to the east; and the Cree, with whom they were often at war, to the northeast.

Existing as politically distinct nations, the members of the confederacy occupied well-defined territories and were economically self-sufficient. While the confederacy allied them in the protection of their lands and the security of their nations, each member nation was politically independent — laws and protocols did not allow interference in one another's internal affairs except by invitation. Nevertheless,

Often their members intermarried; frequently they united to hunt, to fight, or to celebrate as related peoples joined in a common enterprise. This constant intermingling...and the communal reliance upon the buffalo, forged lasting bonds. From this common experience developed a reality, a traditional collective consciousness specific to the Blackfeet.⁴³

The Blackfoot have been referred to as Tigers of the Plains, and certainly there was conflict among the nations inhabiting the plains area and beyond. However, it often took the form of raiding parties to capture horses and take revenge, or to prevent illegitimate incursions on their respective lands, rather than to capture territory. Generally, the nations of the plains were content to live within the territories given them by the Creator as their collective property, and this they defended. The westward advance of the fur trade and non-Aboriginal settlement upset this balance and created conflicts between those

who were displaced and those upon whose territories they were forced to relocate.

The introduction of the horse in the early eighteenth century greatly increased the mobility of the plains peoples.⁴⁴ Unlike the more sedentary woodland and agricultural nations, they used large territories to support their hunting and gathering economies. Relations with neighbouring nations for trade and land use were secured through various forms of peace treaties and protocols. Peaceful relations existed as long as these arrangements were respected — wars erupted when they were not. The Blackfoot epitomized plains cultures: "Of all the Plains Indians, the Blackfoot were most feared because of their daring, relentless spirit, their skill with weapons, and their amazing horsemanship."⁴⁵

The land was considered a mother, a giver of life, and the provider of all things necessary to sustain life. A deep reverence and respect for Mother Earth infused and permeated Indian spirituality, as reflected in the Blackfoot practice of referring to the land, water, plants, animals and their fellow human beings as "all my relations".⁴⁶ Relations meant that all things given life by the Creator — rocks, birds, sun, wind and waters — possessed spirits. According to their beliefs, the Creator had given them their own territory and entrusted them with the responsibility of caring for the land and all their relations. This responsibility to protect their inheritance for future generations was embodied in the Blackfoot creation story:

In later times...Na'pi said, "Here I will mark you off a piece of ground," and he did so. Then he said: "There is your land, and it is full of all kinds of animals, and many things grow in this land. Let no other people come into it. This is for you five tribes [Blackfoot, Blood, Peigan, Gros Ventre and Sarcee]. When people come to cross the line, take your bows and arrows, your lances and your battle axes, give them battle and keep them out. If they can get a footing, trouble will come to you."⁴⁷

In Blackfoot, the word for earth is *ksa'a'hko*, which means 'touching the earth with the feet'. It meant that the land was an original grant from the Creator, and it was a grant to a specific people — not a grant in terms of individual ownership, but a grant in accordance with their world view and philosophy, for 'all my relations'. These relations among all living things were essential in maintaining the continuity of creation, for if the relational network were interfered with, imbalances would occur and the process of creation could

come to a halt.⁴⁸

Stories, legends and ceremonies transmitted these laws to assure the continuity of the nation and prevent unnecessary destruction of animals and nature:

Creation is a continuity, and if creation is to continue, then it must be renewed. Renewal ceremonies, songs and stories are the human's part in the maintenance of the renewal of creation. Hence the Sundance, the societal ceremonies and the unbundling of medicine bundles at certain phases of the year are all interrelated aspects of happenings that take place on and within Mother Earth.⁴⁹

Sacred sites were located in mountains and hills. Along with rocks, rivers and lakes these sites were designated for various purposes — vision quests, burial sites, recreational or medicinal uses, sundances and meeting (council) places within the Blackfoot territorial domain. Each site was named for its unique quality and special role in the rituals of the nation and became part of the living landscape to be visited and revisited each year. Gifts were left to pay tribute to the spirits that lived there.

The plains peoples were profoundly spiritual, and each day at sunrise they gave thanks to the Creator for the gifts bestowed upon them. In pipe ceremonies and spiritual ceremonies, all of creation was enjoined in the celebration of life and in supplication lest they be found unworthy.

Since the entire universe was believed to be inhabited by spirits, both good and evil, rituals were performed to ward off evil and to keep the world balanced on the side of good. Cosmic forces and celestial bodies were revered as powerful beings, since cosmic forces regulated seasons and migration patterns. Medicine wheels connected the stars and the universe with the earth.

Since the spirit (soul) would return automatically to its maker, the people of the plains did not worry about death or the hereafter but concerned themselves with the care of living things around them:

...the entreaties of an Indian's prayer are devoted entirely to his earthly existence. He does not seek to have his sins forgiven, neither does he beseech any deity to make of him a righteous person, so that he may be

eligible for the abode of the blessed, because that principle is foreign to his belief. He believes that there is only one specific Hereafter, where all Indians, irrespective of how they have conducted themselves during their sojourn on earth, will go. This Hereafter is called by them the "Big Sands".⁵⁰

Plains peoples were great believers in the supernatural, and dreams influenced daily movements and decision making. Vision quests provided guidance from the Creator, and medicine men and women, the old and the wise, predicted events and foretold the future through visions. Designs, pictographs and totems received in visions were painted on teepees and other personal articles.

The Blackfoot gathered once a year for their annual Many Lodges Gathering (sundance) in June or July:

At such gatherings, all the main warrior, religious, women's, children's and police societies held their own special and unique ceremonies. It was a time for spiritual renewal and purification and the fulfilment of spiritual promises made to the Creator for the benefit of a loved one. Such ceremonies were performed in the main Sundance lodge situated in the middle of the huge teepee circle. It was also a time for visiting long missed relatives. It was a courting time for the young adults. Important decisions for the whole nation were made at these gatherings by the Head Chiefs and the Minor Band Chiefs, e.g., whether or not to make peace treaties or war on neighbouring enemy tribes. It was also time for exchanging gifts of all kinds and transfer ceremonies of sacred bundles, teepees, and society memberships. It was a great joyous occasion.⁵¹

The Sacred Pipe was given to the Indian nations by the Creator to pray with in search of wisdom, guidance, knowledge, and to bind all the relations together. In prayer and supplication, the ceremonial pipe was offered to the Great Spirit and to the Four Directions — east, south, west and north — to Father Sky, and then to Mother Earth. The sacred pipe linked man to his Maker, to the planet, animal, plant and spirit worlds, to his fellow human beings, and to himself. It created unity and harmony between all the powers of the universe and joined them in prayer. Smoke from the Sacred Pipe, which carried prayers and offerings to the Creator, were helped on their way by the thunderbirds, with the eagle at the apex of the thunderbirds. Smoking and touching the pipe were acts of consecration and imparted peace and truth to all who touched it and partook of the ceremony.

The pipe invoked the Creator in healing, in deriving wisdom and guidance in times of trouble, in seeking knowledge in councils for decision making, and in obtaining blessings when decisions were made. Nothing but good could come from the pipe; anything bad or negative was banished in the presence of the Creator. The pipe was a testimony to the truth and honour of all sacred pacts undertaken in councils and among indigenous nations and, later, in the making of treaties with the Crown.

Natural medicines were carefully gathered at various locations and in different seasons of the year and preserved so that a continuous supply was available year-round. Such medicines served the people well in the normal course of events, but they were not effective when foreign diseases, with which they had no prior experience, made their appearance.

Cleanliness, in both mind and body, was practised as part of the daily ritual. For example, water and steam in sweat lodges were used for cleansing the mind, the spirit and the body throughout the seasons. Sweat baths, sweetgrass and other herbs acted to cleanse the mind and body before entering into sacred or healing ceremonies such as the pipe ceremony or the sundance. Diet and their active, outdoor way of life combined to make the people of the plains healthy and robust until the diseases brought by Europeans and the destruction of their food supply, especially the buffalo, destroyed the balance of their societies.

Blackfoot land had all the natural elements required to sustain the nation. Theirs was a hunting and gathering economy, and although the buffalo was their staff of life, other big and small game, as well as migratory and other birds, supplemented their diet. The berries, plants, herbs and root crops that grew naturally on the plains were harvested in a routine that was anything but nomadic, a term that has tended to signify a haphazard use of the land.⁵²

The wide variety of meats, fruits and vegetables assured the Blackfoot children of magnificent physical development. Although lesser animals were used for food, the buffalo was considered the superior food by the plains peoples.

Seasonal movements were largely synchronized with the movement of the buffalo and other animals and the ripening of plants, foods and medicines. Groups had rather fixed patterns of movements on the plains during the

summer and as they moved in their annual cycle from spring to summer and fall to winter. In their wintering sites small separate groups lived along sheltered, wooded river bottoms within reach of the buffalo and within reach of other groups to ensure protection against enemies.

People of the plains nations were able to preserve and store large quantities of meat (jerky), sometimes mixed with mint and sage, for the long winter months. Pemmican made from sun-dried strips of meat was shredded, mixed with rendered oil from the buffalo and with berries and dried vegetables, and stored. Long forays were made to trade with other nations, a trade in which pemmican, buffalo robes, Blackfoot weapons and other goods were exchanged for shells, beads, pipestone, paint and religious products. Trading with the Ute and Paiute nations for salt at Salt Lake was also frequent.

It was the buffalo, however, that remained the basis for their economy because it provided for virtually all their needs. The buffalo supplied working tools, drinking vessels, storage containers, shields, transportation equipment and shelter — the average lodge or teepee required perhaps 15 buffalo hides. Clothing was made from buffalo and other big game hides, tanned and worked until it was soft and pliable leather. Fringes and dyed quill designs were added for decoration. Headwear and footwear were fur-lined in winter and made lighter in summer. Buffalo, bear, elk, mountain goat and other large game provided robes, blankets and clothing for warmth in winter.

Because they were the means of ensuring a viable economy, horses became the measure of a person's wealth by the early nineteenth century. Horse trading was extensive throughout the plains, and training and breeding of horses required a great deal of time and energy. Stamina, agility and speed were the attributes of a valuable horse.

The relationship between the buffalo and the plains peoples was one of respect and interdependence in the sense that, if the people protected the buffalo, the buffalo would protect them by supplying their most important resources. The buffalo were revered as true soul mates because, like the people who chased them, the buffalo were believed to have a free and indomitable spirit.⁵³

The buffalo is considered sacred by the Blackfoot. In Blackfoot myths, the buffalo was the first animal given to the Blackfoot by the Creator for food. It is the totem of the oldest and continuing sacred societies of the Blackfoot: the

Horn Society. The Horns conducted their ceremonies during the annual sundance.⁵⁴

The destruction of the buffalo and the economy of the plains peoples was unsurpassed in its terrible impact — widespread starvation ensued, and they could no longer produce the food, clothing and shelter they needed. More than anything else, it dealt a mortal blow to the spirit of the plains peoples from which it would take a long time to recover:

But now the face of all the land is changed and sad. The living creatures are gone. I see the land desolate and I suffer an unspeakable sadness. Sometimes I wake in the night, and I feel as though I should suffocate from the pressure of this awful feeling of loneliness.⁵⁵

In Blackfoot culture, descent was recognized through both the paternal and the maternal line. Men and women contributed to the continuance of the nation in different ways. For example, men were providers of food and protection, while women were responsible for overseeing the domestic side of tribal life. Although women were the backbone of these societies, providing for many of the material needs of the tribe, they were also the teachers, inculcating tribal laws and customs in every facet of tribal life. Where men sought valour and respect in manly deeds, the survival of the nation also depended on the moral and spiritual strength of the women.

Like Mother Earth, women were held in high esteem as givers of life and were protected and sheltered by the nation. Some played powerful roles. Among the Blackfoot, for example, women of impeccable character presided over the sundance. Among the Peigan, the term *Ninaki* was used to indicate a chief woman or favourite wife, who was accorded certain exceptional privileges and prestige in areas typically associated with men. The 'manly hearted women' excelled in every important aspect of tribal life — property, ownership, ceremonialism and domestic affairs.⁵⁶ As well, the Blood had a society for women called the *Motoki*, which conducted rituals to honour the importance of the buffalo to their culture.

The Blackfoot ethical code was imparted to the young through oral history and traditions. Social and moral codes were rigidly enforced, and premarital social interaction was conducted in public. In addition, children were taught by example. Girls and boys used play modeled after the adults' behaviour and were thus imbued with the values of the society — industriousness for girls

and hunting ability and bravery for boys.

Young men learned horsemanship and were trained to be equestrians of the plains. Summer and winter games occupied the young, while socializing, tea drinking, visiting and storytelling occupied the adults during long evenings. Blackfoot youth and men enjoyed passing the time with gambling and games of chance.

Status was earned by individual achievement and provided the incentive to succeed. Wealth was measured by the ability to provide a plentiful food supply and indirectly by the number and quality of horses in one's possession. Careful management of breeding stock increased the number of horses and, correspondingly, one's wealth. Horses were critical to the economy and defence of the nation, and the material wealth of the individual depended to a great extent on the number of horses at his disposal. Raiding for and breeding horses were the principal means of increasing their numbers. The number of horses available at any given time often meant the difference between life and death in situations that presented a threat.

Although it was the exception rather than the rule, men who were good providers had several wives, because many women were war widows and needed a provider, and because the production of food, clothing and shelter was difficult and required the labour of many hands. The families of the chiefs and other good providers extended their largesse to the poor, the old and the indigent. Because of the tradition of sharing and the lack of many types of accumulated wealth (e.g., permanent dwellings), the passing on of social status through inheritance was limited. Rather than accumulation, the culture emphasized the exploration and expansion of the spiritual dimension.

While land was owned collectively by the Blackfoot people, individual ownership of property existed, aside from land, and could be transferred from one individual to another. No one could appropriate the property of another member, and the right of individuals to defend their property was part of the nation's law.

In their social organization, the Blackfoot and allied nations were notable for their use of organized societies to carry out particular administrative, spiritual and other functions. There were at times eight different societies officiating at the various hunting, social, ceremonial and political gatherings of the nation, each with different responsibilities.

Police or warrior societies carried out the orders of the political chief and of the war chief if he was in control. These societies served to police tribal life and to settle disputes, being responsible not only for punishing offenders but for rehabilitating them as well.⁵⁷ Youth served in different societies as they grew older and were given more responsibility according to their age and abilities. By their 20s they served as camp police, patrolled at night, acted as guardians during the hunt, protected the band, and carried out punishment.

Absolute governmental authority was exercised only at special occasions such as the annual tribal hunts or the 'Many Lodges Gathering'. The police societies (All Brave Dogs and Black Soldiers Society) were used to the greatest extent by the Chiefs to carry out 'executive orders' and instructions on how to maintain the camp or who was responsible for a number of important government functions and roles of key tribal government officials. The greatest of the Chiefs would not personally or directly command a recalcitrant individual to fall into line. That duty or order was carried out by a member of the police societies.⁵⁸

The secret Horn society oversaw the buffalo hunt and participated in the sundance. When communal hunts were held in the summer and fall, order and discipline prevailed.

Adults who broke the law were held up to public ridicule and embarrassment. Their social standing was so diminished that it sometimes drove offenders into self-imposed exile or battle. The tremendous power of public censure did much in itself to curtail dishonourable conduct, misbehaviour and violence. Transgressions and other deviant behaviour were dealt with by consensus in council with the chief, the war leader and the heads of families.⁵⁹

Punishment and penalties were meted out for murder, theft, adultery, treachery or treason, cowardice, and greed or selfishness. Although murder was rare, when it occurred the aggressor was stripped of his property and revenge by relations was allowed. Theft required the full restoration of the property after apologies were made. Adultery could sometimes result in death, but divorce was allowed in some cases by returning gifts provided at the time of marriage.⁶⁰ A woman could leave her husband because of cruelty or neglect, or a family or other type of intervention might occur. There was, however, enormous social pressure to preserve the family unit and ensure couples stayed married. Divorce was discouraged and marriage looked upon

as permanent, since the inability to preserve them meant that relational networks would break down and weaken the social structure of the nation.

Treason, where it involved the security of the nation, meant death on sight. Cowardice was rewarded with ridicule, and greed, when a person acted selfishly against the interests of his people, was dealt with severely. A greedy person, or a person with an acquisitive nature, was quickly ostracized in tribal life.

Hunting expeditions were managed carefully and anyone who interfered with the buffalo hunt by disrupting it or contravening orders was dealt with swiftly and effectively by having his horse seized, his riding gear destroyed and his other possessions taken.⁶¹ However, taking responsibility for one's behaviour and offering restitution usually allowed the offender to return to the tribal structure. "Conformity, not revenge, was sought, and immediately after a promise to conform was secured from the delinquent, steps were taken to reincorporate him into the society."⁶²

Plains nations tended to be band-centred during most of the year, but nation-centred during the summer months. The band, the smallest political unit, was built upon the extended family. Bands lived separately for most of the year and came together annually for major summer ceremonies and communal hunting. The band had to be small enough to sustain its economic base yet large enough to protect itself. Bands were fluid and mobile political units operating year-round and made up the larger political unit of the nation, which met in council annually.

Leaders or headmen of bands held office throughout the year, but those who officiated and acted as spokesmen at the nation level exercised authority at that level only when the nation met in annual council. "The most influential band chief became recognized as the head chief of his tribe. However, his rank was of little significance except during the period of the tribal encampment in summer. Even then his role was more that of chairman of the council of chiefs than of ruler of his people".⁶³

Leaders were not elected to office, but gained recognition for their contributions to the band and the nation and for personal qualities such as wisdom, honesty and strength.⁶⁴ Two essentials for leadership were an outstanding war record and a reputation for generosity. Leaders had to be warriors of proven mettle with the ability to protect the band and to carry out

acts of revenge, or war, against the enemy. Generosity was equally important:

A chief could receive and maintain his status only by lavish generosity to the unfortunate. Therefore, charity, next to a fine war record was the basis for achieving and maintaining high standing. Especially among the Blackfoot tribes, a man aspiring to become a leader sought to outshine his competitors by his feasts and presents given to others, even at the cost of self-impoverishment. Once selected, he was expected to give away with one hand what he had obtained with the other. Greed...was not a Blackfoot virtue and was despised as a personal trait....Care of the poor was one of the recognized responsibilities of the band chief. Should he fail in this duty, his leadership position was seriously jeopardized.⁶⁵

Persuasion through oratory played no small role in maintaining leadership. Oratory and the individual's experience and accomplishments frequently determined the stature of a leader:

Council meetings were usually attended by the head chief, the war chief, and the heads of leading families. Decisions were made by consensus, rather than by majority vote, and the head chief seldom tried to give direct orders to the other councillors. He knew they were too proud and independent to be intimidated and that they could always withdraw from the camp if they disagreed with him.

Instead the head chief tried to win adherents through oratory; when he felt he had enough support, he would announce his own intentions. If there was a dispute as to whether the camp should move north or south, the chief might present his arguments, gain support, and then say that he was going south. He did not order the others to follow, but he knew that they would probably go with him.⁶⁶

Leaders who lost the respect of their members lost their following:

The Blackfoot had a system of informal leadership. The "chiefs" were "leaders only by the consent and will of their people". They had no power except that of personal influence. A head "chief" was not formally selected; he "attained his position simply by a growing unanimity on the part of the head men of the bands as to who should hold the position". If the band headman opposed the desires of the members of his band, the band simply deserted him and got

another headman. The tribal councils were likewise informal; they were just gatherings of the band headmen.⁶⁷

The civil and military system of government of the Blackfoot, described by David Thompson, was orderly and well managed:⁶⁸

[They] had a civil and a military chief. The first was called Sakatow, the orator, and his office was hereditary in the family. He was responsible for order and discipline throughout the tribe, and had under his command a company of couriers who travelled from one camp to another delivering orders of the day, and collecting news. The information thus gathered was made known to the lodges each day at sunset, somewhat after the fashion of a town-crier. In addition to his couriers, the civil chief had charge of the police force, whose function it was to quell all civil disturbances, keep order in camp, and strictly supervise the nightly games of chance with which the young men entertained themselves.

The war chief, on the other hand, concerned himself solely with the training of his young men in the arts of war, and in leading his tribal forces against the enemy.⁶⁹

The proliferation of mobile plains cultures increased the range of encounters among nations, leading at times to conflict. War was sometimes seen as a game, with horses the bounty and prestige that could be achieved by carrying out formalized deeds of skill and bravery — for example, through counting coups, which involved touching (not killing) the enemy with a weapon.

Trespassing on a nation's territory without previous arrangement or warning often ended in warfare. Intruders, in search of furs and buffalo to supply trading posts, often ventured into the lands of plains peoples, causing them to push the invaders back. The Blackfoot and Cree, who had many altercations, made periodic efforts to settle their differences by making peace treaties.⁷⁰ Raiding for horses or revenge also created conflict and war. The Blackfoot generally raided for booty, and the booty was usually horses.

Revenge, as a system of retribution, was essentially an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth, and was customary for Blackfoot and other plains nations. When one of their people was deliberately killed or injured, action was taken against the offending band or nation. Retribution was meted out swiftly to the first persons of the offending nation who were encountered, rather than the

specific individuals guilty of misconduct.

A fierce love of freedom and independence, balanced by responsibility to the Creator, the nation, the land and the others who inhabited the earth were the dominant characteristics of the plains tribes. They carried out their responsibilities of stewardship of the land for all their relations and for future generations. This stewardship remained intact until the buffalo, their lifeblood and soul mate, disappeared and the plains people were confined to smaller and smaller areas of land by non-Aboriginal settlement.

Because of their individualism and independence, the Blackfoot failed to unite with other plains nations to defend and protect their common interests during the spread of settlement to the western plains.

The Great Plains Indian was a firm individualist. No single person ever held total influence over any Blackfoot tribe. A Chief ruled by the "will of the people" so long as he remained true to his duties and continued to provide sound leadership. Individualism prevented the Great Plains Indian tribes from forming a great alliance against the armies of the Canadian and U.S. governments. This was fortunate for the soldiers and white settlers alike, for the Great Plains Indian tribes constituted the best light cavalymen the world has ever known. Had they united, the course of Canadian and American history and politics could indeed be very different today.⁷¹

The Blackfoot, like all plains nations, suffered greatly from the crush of settlement and the resulting changes in the social, political and environmental landscape; but throughout they tried to continue to live in the traditions of their ancestors. Despite the *Indian Act* and constant attempts by governments to destroy their traditional governments and spiritual ceremonies, many Blackfoot people continue to apply traditional values in the selection of their leaders and in the internal and external relations of their governments.

Over the years the Blackfoot have also been engaged in revitalizing and renewing their traditional forms of government, their ceremonies and all their relations with the physical and spiritual world around them.

4. The Northwest Coast

The Pacific coast of present-day Canada is a region rich in food and other

resources. In pre-contact times, the environment supported concentrations of population greater than in any other part of Canada, with the possible exception of southern Ontario where various Iroquoian nations practised farming.⁷² Tribes or nations throughout what is now coastal British Columbia, extending north to Alaska and south to California, shared elements of material culture and social organization. Well-established trade networks throughout the coastal region and into the mountainous interior allowed for easy exchange of prized materials and manufactured goods, while intermarriage between groups served to transfer social and ceremonial practices as well. Despite the commonalities of culture, which we will sketch through specific examples, the distinct identities and origins of at least seven major groups are evident in the distinct language families found in the northwest coast region: Tlingit, Tsimshian (including Nisg_a'a and Gitksan), Haida, Nuxalk (Bella Coola), Kwakwa ka'wakw (formerly known as Kwakiutl), Nootka and Salish.

The land and waters of the region not only provide the means of sustenance in abundance, but they also prescribe the boundaries of human habitation. In the north, towering mountains of the Coastal range, cut by deep river canyons with sheer cliffs rising hundreds of feet, make travel difficult, except by water or through a few passes. In the south, river beds follow gentler gradients all the way to the rounded hills of California. Offshore currents moderate the climate and generate water vapour, which is carried to the coastal mountains where it condenses and creates the heavy rainfall characteristic of the region. Vegetation is dense, consisting mainly of thick stands of fir, cedar, spruce, yew and, in the south, redwood.⁷³

Peoples of the northwest coast typically occupied permanent villages during the winter season and migrated to berry grounds and fishing stations during spring, summer and fall. Ancient garbage piles made up largely of shellfish shells preserve clues to village life in ancient times and indicate that people have lived in communities in the region for 5,000 to 8,000 years.⁷⁴

Permanent houses were fashioned from the plentiful cedars, which yielded planks as large as two metres wide and 10 metres long. Tsimshian houses, for example, were 15 to 20 metres long on each side, with roof plates and floor sills cut into, and securely joined with, huge upright cedar logs. Vertical wall planks were fitted into grooves in the roof plates and sills, and gable roofs were supported by ridgepoles. Planks were removable and were carried on canoes, catamaran-style, to transport household goods to fishing sites in the summer season. Plank houses, or longhouses, accommodated 20 or

more related persons and were grouped in villages of 500 or more persons. Houses were situated in a manner that reflected rank and social relationships, with the house of the highest ranking chief in the centre. According to legend, the various kinds of animals lived in similar ranked villages, either in the forest or beneath the sea.⁷⁵

Detailed descriptions of northwest coast material culture and social relations are derived from anthropologists' accounts in the post-contact period, but they illuminate technology and intellectual culture reaching deep into the past. Examples from the Kwakwa ka'wakw are presented by way of illustration.

The Kwakwa ka'wakw used cedar wood and bark for purposes other than housing. Canoes ranging in length from two to 20 metres were hollowed out of single logs and steamed to expand their width. Cedar planks were also used to make all manner of containers. Bentwood boxes were made by precisely scoring a plank on both sides, steaming it to make it flexible, and bending it to a ninety-degree angle. The fourth seam was pegged or sewn together and a bottom and lid added. In their roughest form they could be used for temporary storage, but careful crafting to make boxes airtight, and decorating them with family crests, raised the craft to an art form. Boxes were used to store food and ceremonial regalia, to cradle children and to bury the dead.

Excerpts from Sir Alexander Mackenzie's Journal July 1793

A well-marked route to the Pacific...

They [the Aboriginal guides] assured us that the road was not difficult, as they avoided the mountains, keeping along the low lands between them, many parts of which are entirely free from wood. According to their account, this way is so often travelled by them, that their path is visible throughout the whole journey, which lies along small lakes and rivers. It occupied them, they said, no more than six nights, to go where they meet the people who barter...

Setting out on the trail...

Our guides conducted us along the lake through thick woods, and

without any path, for about a mile and a half, when we lost sight of [the lake]. This piece of water is about three miles long and one broad. We then crossed a creek and entered upon a beaten track, through an open country, sprinkled with cypress trees.

Help along the way...

In about an hour we came to the edge of a wood, when we perceived a house situated on a green spot, and by the side of a small river. The smoke that issued from it informed us that it was inhabited. I immediately pushed toward this mansion.... I proposed to visit the fishing machines, to which the woman readily consented, and I found in them twenty small fish, such as trout, carp, and jub, for which I gave her a large knife...

Meeting carriers along the way...

Every man, woman, and child, carried a proportionate burden, consisting of beaver coating and parchment, as well as skins of the otter, the marten, the bear, the lynx, and dressed moose-skins. The last they procure from Rocky-Mountain Indians. According to their account, the people of the sea coast prefer them to any other article. Several of their relations and friends, they said, were already gone, as well provided as themselves, to barter with the people of the coast; who barter them in their turn, except the dressed leather, with white people who, as they had been informed, arrive there in large canoes.

Through the mountains...

.and by [the guide's] advice I proposed to them to conduct us along the road which had been already marked out to us. This they undertook with out the least hesitation; and, at the same time, pointed out to me the pass in the mountain, bearing South by East by compass.

More hospitality at friendly village...

We continued to descend till we came to the brink of a precipice, from whence our guides discovered the river to us, and a village on its

banks.... When [the host] observed our design, he placed boards for us that we might not take our repose on the bare ground, and ordered a fire to be prepared for us. We had not been long seated round it, when we received a large dish of salmon roes, pounded fine and beat up with water, so as to have the appearance of a cream.... Having been regaled with these delicacies, for such they were considered by that hospitable spirit which provided them, we laid ourselves down to rest with no other canopy than the sky; but I never enjoyed a more sound and refreshing rest, though I had a board for my bed, and a billet for my pillow.

An historic inscription...

I...mixed up some vermilion in melted grease, and inscribed, in large characters, on the South-East face of the rock on which we had slept last night, this brief memorial — ‘Alexander Mackenzie, from Canada, by land, the twenty-second of July, one thousand, seven hundred and ninety-three.’

Source: W. Kaye Lamb, ed.. The Journals and Letters of Sir; Alexander Mackenzie (Cambridge:Cambridge University Press for the Hakluyt Society. 1970).

Sheets of bark were stripped from trees, which might be felled or left standing. The smooth inner bark was beaten to make the fibres flexible for loom weaving of material for capes, skirts and blankets. The same bark, separated into even strips, was woven checkerboard style to make mats for serving food or lining sleeping quarters, for house insulation and partitions, and to protect canoes from the hot summer sun. Cedar roots and branches were gathered to sew planks together and to make utility baskets for storage, gathering and washing shellfish.

Although the environment was lush, it did not offer sustenance without effort. The Kwakwa ka'wakw used an intimate knowledge of the woods and waters to exploit the wealth around them and sophisticated technology to recover and preserve available foods. Although everyone was expected to acquire the skills to work common materials into products for everyday use, there were also specialists who apprenticed as carvers and artisans or doctors who understood the healing properties of various plants. Tools in use at contact, such as adzes, chisels and knives made of shell, stone or bone, survive today in basically the same design, now made of metal.

The surplus commodities generated by the knowledge and technical skills of people of the northwest coast not only provided security and leisure but also supported ceremonial life, centred around the feast or potlatch and trade between neighbouring and distant peoples. The practice of potlatching was intimately tied to the rank-ordered social organization of northwest coast societies. We draw particularly on accounts of the Tsimshian for illustration.

In describing the arrangement of houses we noted that households normally included 20 or more members of an extended family. In the northern part of the region these relationships were traced through the mother. In the southern part they were traced more often through both mother and father. In addition, families were related to one another in looser groupings sometimes referred to as clans, sometimes as lineages or houses. Segments of several clans might be represented in a single village. Clans traced their origin to an ancestor who was either an animal that could assume human form or a human being who had encountered such a supernatural being. The ancestor was the originator or the recipient of special gifts, which might be represented in names, crests, songs, stories and entitlements to harvest the fish, game and plants of certain places. Only the descendants of the common ancestor could exercise the privileges bestowed, and the relationship with the spirit benefactor had to be maintained by ceremonial observances and correct behaviour.

Names were inherited and carried with them different status and prerogatives. Thus, within a clan there would be a principal chief who carried the most prestigious name, while others in the lineage would have varying, lesser ranks. The clans making up a village would occupy different ranks, and chiefs of the various different villages, when represented at ceremonies, would all occupy recognized places in the overall order of prestige.

Potlatches provided occasions to acknowledge and confirm this social order ceremonially. They were convened to mourn deaths, bestow names, erase the shame of accidents or ceremonial errors, recognize succession to titles and economic rights, and acknowledge marriages and divorces. The seating of guests and the value of gifts distributed accorded strictly with the prestige of each chief and lineage member. Attendance at the event and acceptance of gifts distributed confirmed that the participant had 'witnessed' the business being conducted. For example, if a chief died and a new chief assumed his name and rights over his territories, the new title holder would convene a feast where the boundaries of the territories would be recited. If the guests

from other clans and neighbouring territories considered that the claims being made were wrong, they had an obligation to say so. Claims to territory, when validated through feasts, could not subsequently be overturned, because the memory of witnesses was a record as reliable in an oral culture as a deed in a registry office was in a literate culture.

The chief hosting the potlatch had the authority to convene the feast and to collect surplus goods from clan members to feed the guests and distribute presents, but his ceremonial position did not give him authority over members. Being a good host and showing generosity brought respect not only for the chief but also for the members of his clan. The desire to uphold the honour of the clan motivated clan members and their relatives to contribute. Although the chief could not command, he did have influence in decisions about village defence or the well-being of members, but these decisions were normally taken in consultation with other ranking members of the household and/or chiefs of other clans represented in the village.

Villages functioned autonomously, although villagers that were related linguistically or connected in trading relationships often came together ceremonially to cement relations. Conflicts within related groups such as the Tsimshian were known to occur over boundaries or the insult or even murder of a chief. Feasts were a means of avoiding or resolving such conflicts. Europeans observed that the potlatch was a way of fighting with property rather than with weapons.

Obviously, potlatches could be convened only by clans favoured with surplus resources harvested and manufactured from their environment. Accumulating goods for distribution at a potlatch could go on for years if the claims to be validated were of major significance to the clan. Not only the clan members contributed to the preparations. The rule was that persons had to marry outside their clan, with the result that every individual was related to two clans. In a matrilineal society such as the Tsimshian, a chief was a member of his mother's clan. However, his father and his father's relatives contributed to the cost of hosting feasts and were subsequently repaid for their contributions, with interest.

The potlatch was so essential to maintaining boundaries, limiting trespass, and securing harvesting rights and social order that Tsimshian and other west coast peoples were willing to risk and endure imprisonment rather than give up potlatching when the practice was outlawed by an 1884 amendment to the

*Indian Act.*⁷⁶

Gifts distributed to witnesses at potlatches included objects of everyday use and others elaborated and decorated for ceremonial value: utensils, blankets, boxes, canoes and copper plates. One of the most valued items, which might be distributed or ceremonially burned at the feast, was oolichan grease. The oolichan is a member of the smelt family; the fish is harvested in great quantities and pressed to remove its oil, which is valued as a preservative for other foods and as a condiment. The fish is so rich in oil that, after pressing and drying, it can be threaded with a wick and burned as a candle; thus the alternative name 'candlefish'.

Oolichan oil was a principal item traded between coastal peoples and others of the interior of what is now British Columbia. The trade highways, called grease trails, over which trading partners carried oolichan grease, furs and other goods, were well known and well travelled. A particular grease trail, stretching more than 300 kilometres from the upper reaches of the Fraser River to villages of the Nuxalk (Bella Coola) on the Pacific coast, became a part of Canadian history with the publication of Alexander Mackenzie's diaries in 1801. Mackenzie was led by his Aboriginal guides across otherwise impassable mountains, along a grease trail marked by the travels of countless Aboriginal traders, though his debt to those who preceded him was not mentioned in his famous inscription on a rock face in Dean Channel commemorating his achievement in being the first European to cross the breadth of the continent.⁷⁷

5. Inuit Innovation

Inuit of the Canadian Arctic are a distinct people, different from other Aboriginal peoples in Canada by virtue of their origins and physical make-up, their language and their technology. For most of their history Inuit, like other Aboriginal peoples, have passed on knowledge to succeeding generations orally. The record of their culture is therefore told in their stories and legends and written in the archaeological remains of the places they have been.

The archaeological record is pieced together from scattered sites where the remains of houses and communities, tools and other implements of daily activity, as well as the bones of the animals that served as food, provide a picture of life in past times. Remains of pollen, seeds and marine life map the advance and retreat of sea ice and vegetation and variations in climate.

Oral history stretching beyond the reach of personal knowledge — "my grandfather's grandfather's time" — is less concerned with precise chronology than with recalling important events that have relevance for people today. Such an approach to the past seeks to explain why things are as they are, thus seeming to merge with a mythical past that is outside ordinary time and yet present today as part of the continuous cycle of death and rebirth.

The archaeological record of the Arctic and oral accounts of Inuit support each other in affirming that Inuit inhabiting what is now Alaska, Canada and Greenland — who speak variations of the common language, Inuktitut — descend from a people who migrated from what is now Alaska to Canada and Greenland. These were the Thule people, whose arrival in Canada archaeologists date at approximately 1000 AD.⁷⁸ However, the Thule did not arrive in an empty land, for there were already people living in these northern regions. These earlier people, called Dorset by archaeologists and Tunit by Inuit, were the descendants of an earlier migration, around 2500 BC, that also originated in Alaska or Siberia.⁷⁹

Research on the languages and physical remains of circumpolar peoples shows that Inuit share racial and linguistic characteristics with the Aleuts of the islands lying off the Pacific coast of Alaska as well as with the peoples of northeastern Siberia. The exact times and paths of the various migrations are uncertain, although Inuit legends tell of the encounter between their most recent ancestors and the Tunit. The Tunit were said to be a gentle race, great hunters of seals, with whom Inuit lived for a time before quarrels erupted and they were driven away. The Tunit are thought to have occupied most of the present Inuit lands, from the coasts of Hudson Bay, through the central and high Arctic, to northern Greenland and Labrador and beyond that to Newfoundland.

The distinguishing characteristic of historical Inuit culture is their way of life, which has enabled them to live year-round on the tundra, north of the tree line, in conditions demanding great resourcefulness, inner strength and quiet patience. Inuit oral tradition links these qualities with the requirements of survival in a harsh environment. Thus, Inuit used snow, animal skins, bone and stone, the elements indigenous to their environment, to fashion "a technology more complex than that of any other pre-industrial culture, which allowed not only an economically efficient but also a comfortable way of life throughout arctic North America".⁸⁰ Given the extraordinary and characteristic

adaptive powers of Inuit, the following brief sketch of Inuit culture focuses on technical adaptations before sustained European contact.

The movement of Inuit and their ancestors across the northern landscape was propelled by changes in climate and technology that in retrospect seem quite dramatic. It is apparent that there have been successive periods of cooling and warming since 2500 BC, the date ascribed to the earliest sites of human occupation. The Dorset culture flourished between 500 BC and 1000 AD, when the climate was colder than today. Technology uncovered at Dorset sites includes harpoons adapted to hunting walrus and seals in open water, fishing gear, snow knives and ivory plates to protect the runners of sleds (suggestive of hunting on winter ice), and carved soapstone pots and lamps. Decorations on harpoons and other implements, carved wooden masks, and wood, ivory and bone miniatures of animals, birds and human figures suggest a well developed intellectual and ceremonial life, the nature of which is still a mystery.

Rectangular winter houses, large enough to accommodate two to four families, had a central cooking area flanked by sleeping platforms. They were constructed of sod and stone, dug partially into the ground and probably covered with skins.

The eastward movement of the Thule coincided with a marked warm period between 900 and 1200 AD. The normal climate at that time was similar to the rare warm seasons experienced now, and the boundary of the northern forest was 100 kilometres north of its present location. Sea ice was certainly less prevalent across the high Arctic. Archaeologists associate the rapid expansion of the Thule culture across the Arctic to Greenland with the accessibility of large whales, which were important to their economy and for which their hunting technology had been adapted in Alaska. The development of skin floats attached to harpoons made tracking and retrieval of whales during the hunt more efficient. Skin boats — umiaks eight to 10 metres long and kayaks, which accommodate one person — made their appearance in this period.

People of the Thule culture harvested whale, seal, and walrus from the sea and caribou and musk-ox from the land, and they supplemented this diet with waterfowl and fish. They manufactured clothing, houses and implements from the materials at hand, using skills resident in every family. Houses were a variation on those found in Alaska, built of stones and whale bone rather than

logs:

A Thule winter house is usually an irregular oval in outline, measuring roughly five metres from side to side. At the front is an entrance tunnel built of stone slabs or boulders, and usually sloping downwards to form a cold-trap that prevents cold air from entering the house. The interior of the house is divided into two sections. In the front is a floor area paved with flagstones and with one or two cooking areas in the corners. At the back, raised about 20 centimetres above the floor, is a flagstone platform on which the family members slept side by side, with their feet toward the back wall. Storage lockers are located beneath the sleeping platform, which is covered with a springy mattress made of baleen cut into strips and tied together in loops.... The roof of the house is dome-shaped, held up by rafters of whale jaws and ribs set in the stones of the outer wall and tied together at the top. This frame was covered with skins, then with a thick layer of turf and moss, and, finally, probably thickly banked with snow. Such a house must have been almost perfectly insulated and probably required a ventilation hole in the roof. The house was heated with blubber lamps.⁸¹

Food and fuel were stored during summer months in caches surrounding winter village sites. The villages typically contained several houses, accommodating perhaps 50 people in all. Hints of the sociability enjoyed in Thule households are found in the etchings on implements, decorations on the women's combs and needle cases, and small carved birds or bird-women figures used in hand games. Toy bows, toy cooking pots, wooden dolls and spinning-tops made from the discs of whale vertebrae are found in all Thule village sites, indicating the attention that must have been given to the care of children.

Technology for harvesting the seals that appeared at breathing holes in the sea ice, together with snow probes and snow knives, which are found often at Thule sites, suggest that hunting on the sea ice was practised in late winter, when periods of daylight lengthened in the high Arctic. Summer hunting involved building fish weirs for trapping and spearing fish and drive fences of piled stones to direct caribou herds to water crossings, where animals could be speared from kayaks. Varied traps were built to catch fox and bear. Thule inventions have been found from Alaska to Greenland. Thus travel, whether by sled or boat, and exchange of technology seem to have been both frequent and relatively easy, indicating the existence of a loose but widespread link among Thule communities.

During the warm period when the Thule people were extending their communities eastward across the Arctic, the Norse were moving westward and establishing colonies in Greenland. Inuit and Norse stories seem to agree that the two peoples came into contact and conflict, perhaps as a result of the Thule moving southward. Other evidence of intercultural contact is found in iron artifacts at Thule sites, some of which are thought to be products of trade with the Norse of Greenland.

Inuit Snow Houses

Snow houses were in use by Inuit at the time of earliest recorded contact, but their emergence as a feature of Inuit life cannot be dated because melted snow houses leave no remains to be excavated.

Construction of a snow house requires intimate knowledge of the properties of snow, appropriate tools for preparing the building blocks, and skill in engineering. Edmund Carpenter, an ethnographer of Inuit culture, describes the construction as a personal, even spiritual experience as well as a feat of technology:

An Eskimo* doesn't mould his igloo from the outside looking in, but from the inside looking out. Working from the centre, he builds a series of concentric circles, tapering upward conically. When the keystone at the apex has been set in place, Eskimo and structure are one. Only then does he cut the small hole at the base through which he crawls — in effect, doffing his igloo.**

A snow house can be constructed by an accomplished builder in a few hours with readily available materials. It offers the minimum resistance to Arctic winds. Snow has insulating qualities, making the dwelling warmer than a tent and equally suited to the lifestyle of a mobile people. The invention of the stone lamp to burn the blubber of sea mammals was essential to provide light and a small amount of heat in fully enclosed snow houses. Snow houses in turn made it possible for people to live on the sea ice and harvest seals during the winter, thereby opening large areas of the central Arctic to human habitation in harsh climatic conditions.***

* 'Eskimo' is no longer used because of its origin as a non-Inuit term with negative

connotations. The word 'Inuit' means 'the people' (singular, Inuk) and is the term by which Inuit refer to themselves. (Pauktuutit, *The Inuit Way: A Guide to Inuit Culture* [Ottawa: Pauktuutit and National Library, 1990], p. 4.)

** Carpenter, *Eskimo Realities* (cited in note 83), p. 24.

*** Ernest S. Burch Jr., "The Eskaleuts — A Regional Overview" and "The Caribou Inuit", in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience* (cited in note 43), p. 112; McGhee, *Canadian Arctic Prehistory* (cited in note 79), p. 43.

When Europeans began to have contact with Inuit in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries the commonalities of Thule culture had given way to regional variations that are now explained as adaptations to a 'little ice age' that began to set in around 1200 AD. The tree line receded southward by a hundred kilometres. The re-establishment of sea ice in the high Arctic made settlement there less feasible. In some regions the economy based on whaling was replaced in the harsher winter seasons by dependence on ice-loving marine mammals, especially the small ringed seals that made breathing holes in the sea ice. Communities became smaller and more mobile than they had been earlier, and technology adapted to different harvesting conditions — either devised anew or reminiscent of Dorset innovations — assumed greater prominence.

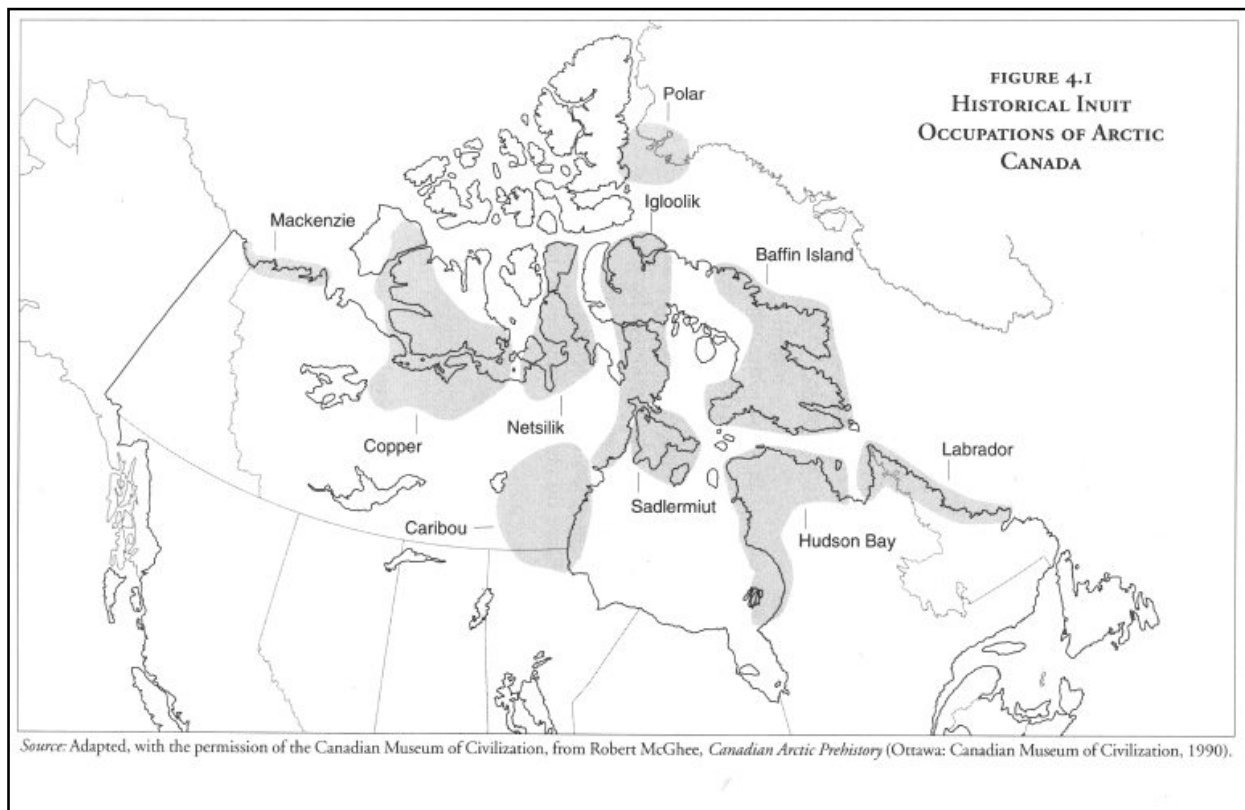
The snow house or igloo, clothing made of caribou, seal, and other animal skins, and the kayak are elements of technology used widely by Inuit in the early years of European contact. The making of snow houses and clothing are described in the accompanying boxes.

The kayak, engineered of driftwood and animal skins, was ideally suited to marine hunting and has been adopted virtually without change in design for modern international sporting competition. These familiar expressions of inventiveness have taken on great significance as symbols of Inuit adaptability.

Inuit of different regions clearly share many characteristics rooted in their common ancestry. Variations in culture apparently derive from adaptations to local conditions, whether created by changing climate or intercultural contact. Inuit oral history has received little attention in reconstructing the story of the Inuit past, with the result that written reports are erratic in coverage and rely heavily on archaeological finds and on European or southern Canadian perspectives more generally.

A publication of the Canadian Museum of Civilization suggests that distinct Inuit culture groups can be identified with nine regions: Labrador, Arctic Quebec, Southern Baffin Island, Northern Baffin Island and Foxe Basin, Southampton Island, Western Hudson Bay and the Barren Grounds, Central Arctic Coast, Mackenzie Delta, and the High Arctic.⁸² These regions are represented on the accompanying map (Figure 4.1). The culture of each of these groups has been shaped by the land and its particular historical experience.

The Labrador Inuit have had the longest sustained contact with European whalers and traders and, from the 1770s, Moravian missionaries. Little is known of the pre-contact culture of Inuit of northern Quebec. Inuit of the high Arctic had disappeared by the time of European contact, possibly starved out or forced to move to open-water areas in northern Greenland. Inuit of southern Baffin Island maintained their traditional way of life until the mid-1800s when European whalers and traders arrived and introduced rapid change. People of the Igloodik area in northern Baffin Island abandoned whaling culture and permanent winter houses for snowhouse villages on the sea ice and dependence on walrus, fish and caribou. They remained independent of European trade until the late 1800s.



Inuit Clothing

Inuit women used caribou and seal skins in particular for the manufacture of clothing suited to the rigorous demands of the Arctic climate. Caribou hide was preferred for parkas and leggings. The skin, when worked, was light and soft and had dense, upright hairs, which provided ideal insulation against extreme cold. The seal skin is water repellent and was used for boots, which had to be waterproof, especially in the wet summer season. The transformation of animal skins into clothing is a complex process; simply skinning an animal and using its hide as protection from the cold produces an object that, on drying, becomes as stiff as a board and has less insulation.... The skin must be processed chemically...cleaned, dried, smoked and softened to produce a fur or leather from which clothing can be cut...

[Arctic Inuit] brought with them [to the New World] patterns of tailored clothing that were developed in Asia during the previous few thousand years. These patterns are similar to those brought to Europe...from the

Asiatic steppes about 5,000 years ago... Working with stone knives, bone needles and sinew thread, Inuit women made clothing that is still considered by many Arctic travellers to be finer than any produced by the weaving mills or the chemical factories of the south...

Source: Robert McGhee, *Ancient Canada* (Hull: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989), pp. 70-71

The Sadlermiut of Southampton, said to have spoken a strange dialect, were wiped out by disease in 1900. Their rich hunting grounds were occupied by Inuit of the northwestern coast of Hudson Bay. By the 1800s, Inuit of the Barren Grounds inland from the west coast of Hudson Bay had adopted a way of life based almost entirely on harvesting fish and caribou. They seldom, if ever, visited the coast to practise the marine culture of their ancestors. Occupancy of this territory had shifted over the centuries between ancestral Inuit and Dene, with Inuit moving south in colder periods and Dene moving onto the barren grounds in pursuit of rich caribou herds in summer and retreating to the forests in winter. As the tree line moved north or receded, so did the boundary between Dene and Inuit territory.

Copper Inuit and Netsilik of the Central Arctic Coast split their year between the interior, where small bands fished and hunted caribou and musk oxen, and the coast where they gathered in groups of up to a hundred, building snow house villages on the sea ice, where they depended on seals harpooned at breathing holes. Copper Inuit and Netsilik worked copper and soapstone found in their region to make tools, lamps and pots that they traded as far west as northern Alaska.

Inuit of the Mackenzie Delta in the western Arctic were separated from their more easterly relations by a stretch of abandoned coast along the southern shore of the Beaufort Sea. They resembled Alaskans in their way of life, spending their winters in large winter houses made of driftwood, and hunting beluga whales in summer. Excavations at the village of Kittigazuit in the Mackenzie Delta indicate that up to a thousand people lived there, participating in a whaling economy that persisted for at least 500 years.

The rich variety of adaptations displayed in these regional cultures supports the assessment of contemporary Inuit that, as a people, they have always been resourceful and inventive. The adaptation of carving to the demands of the modern market place is a contemporary expression of sensibility and skill

honed with long practice. Everyone in traditional Inuit society was expected to acquire the skills that turned the raw materials of the environment into implements for survival. Going beyond that practical obligation, Inuit turned their hands and imaginations to creating graceful and symbolic objects that established a connection between the human spirit and the spirits that lived in the elements of their environment.

In the twentieth century ethnographers and art collectors have captured and recorded glimpses of the spirit that infused traditional Inuit culture. Edmund Carpenter, writing in 1973, spoke in the following terms of the Aivilimiuk Inuk who taught him much about Inuit art and philosophy:

Ohnainewk held a baby walrus tooth in his palm, turned it slightly, and there, unmistakably! Ptarmigan almost burst through the surface. As he cut lightly here, indented there, he spoke softly, diffidently; he was not passive, yet his act of will was limited, respectful: respectful to the form that was given.⁸³

Knud Rasmussen, a Danish ethnographer who assembled extensive accounts of Inuit life in the early part of this century, recorded and translated the poetry of Iglulingmiut, from which we quote two examples.

The Great Sea
Has set me adrift,
It moves me as the weed in a great river,
Earth and the great weather
Move me,
Have carried me away
And move my inward parts with joy.

...

I will walk with leg muscles which are strong as the sinews of the shins of the little caribou calf. I will walk with leg muscles which are strong as the sinews of the shins of the little hare. I will take care not to go towards the dark. I will go towards the day.⁸⁴

Love of the land and the will to face the challenges of an arduous life with optimism, as expressed in these poems, are aspects of culture that the Inuit continue to maintain and value.

6. Conclusion

The preceding accounts were chosen in part on the basis of the geographic regions in which the Aboriginal nations described are found. As the accounts illustrate, diversity marked Aboriginal cultures and forms of social organization in the pre-contact period. Some Aboriginal nations were able to accumulate wealth while others were not; some were more hierarchical than others; some had matrilineal rules of descent while others were patrilineal or bilateral; and some developed sophisticated confederal structures that grouped several nations together. That these patterns should vary by geographic region is not, of course, accidental, since the physical environment played a significant role in influencing culture and social organization.

Although these social, cultural and political differences are substantial, the accounts also suggest patterns that are shared by many, if not all, Aboriginal nations. These similarities begin with understandings of a people's origins, with emphasis on the act of creation. In these accounts, as we have seen, people are placed on the earth by the Creator along with, and in an equal relationship to, other natural elements that have also been endowed with the spark of life and that are therefore worthy of respect.

In the Mi'kmaq creation stories, for example, human beings develop from the natural world (a leaf, the foam of an ocean wave, the spark of a fire) and derive much of their knowledge as well as their subsistence from it. Unlike most non-Aboriginal human-centred philosophies, Aboriginal belief systems are cosmocentric, emphasizing the whole of the cosmos, in which human beings are but a small part. They hold that many parts of nature have souls or spirits. Hence there is a reverence for the natural order and a sense of wonder before natural phenomena such as the spark of fire, the sun in Blackfoot cosmology, or the great sea of the Inuit poem.

The accounts often reveal elaborate social structures built around the nuclear and extended family. These are grouped into a band, clan, district or community all of which, in turn, may be part of a larger nation that may itself belong to a confederacy of many nations and to a larger language group. Governance is usually decentralized, with local units coming together or sending representatives to the councils of the nation or confederacy. In the councils of decision making, individuals are generally equal, and deliberations typically continue until consensus is reached. Leaders thus tend to guide,

counsel and speak on behalf of the people; they typically do not exercise the authority to make unilateral decisions or to impose their will. Where conflict arises, an effort is made to bring the contending parties together and to find a middle ground. This is in keeping with an ethic that respects diversity and acknowledges that there are many different ways to accomplish a particular objective.

The accounts also reveal the ultimate importance to Aboriginal societies of their spiritual relationship to the land. This arises not only because of dependence on the natural world for life itself, but also out of the belief that human beings were placed on the earth at Creation and given special responsibilities to serve as stewards of the natural environment. Through a very long history of living in close harmony with the environment, adjusting as required to changing social and environmental conditions, Aboriginal peoples accumulated an enormous amount of knowledge and wisdom and passed it on orally from generation to generation.

Across the ocean, the various peoples of Europe also showed themselves to be as diverse as Aboriginal peoples. Their cultures and social structures developed along entirely different lines, however — a story far more familiar to most Canadians than that of Aboriginal peoples.

Between 900 and 1400 AD, much of Europe had evolved into highly stratified societies involving a rigid, hereditary social class structure. Monarchs were at the apex of the hierarchy, but a powerful nobility existed as well. They were in charge of vast estates requiring large numbers of serfs to contribute their labour or taxes in exchange for tenure on a small plot of land and military protection.

By 1400, however, the feudal system was clearly in transition:

Throughout Western Europe, in the early "modern" age, roughly from 1400 to 1600, societies were in transition from a social order characterized by agricultural self-sufficiency and rigid hierarchies to a new order in which trade and impersonal market-based relationships were becoming increasingly important. Although the traditional landowning elite persisted, in cities and towns new leaders emerged whose wealth came from organizing the trade that linked far-flung territories. This new elite was allied with increasingly powerful monarchs whose attempts to constrain the nobles led to the emergence of nation-states, wherein government bureaucracies rather than

individual landlords made the rules that ordinary people were forced to obey. Within the cities, too, lived the intellectuals, whose growing curiosity about how the universe worked led them away from the teachings of the church and toward lines of inquiry that produced both the knowledge and some of the incentive to search for undiscovered lands.

In this age of transition Europe was a complex continent. Not only did incredible opulence sit side by side with grinding poverty, but religious devotion also co-existed with greed and bloody warfare; humanist interest in scientific advance and new forms of artistic and architectural expression co-existed with religious and racial bigotry; and a willingness to accept female monarchs co-existed with the profound oppression of women in society at large. These contradictory tendencies existed as much within European states as between them.⁸⁵

The monarchs of the major European countries were becoming increasingly powerful during this time, forging alliances with traders and intellectuals in urban areas while becoming increasingly ascendant over the nobles and their fiefdoms in the countryside. The formation of standing armies under royal control, a council of ministers responsible to the monarch rather than to the lords, centralized bureaucracies to implement royal decrees and courts to enforce them — these were all important features of the new political order.

One of the early accomplishments was to facilitate the expansion of trade, both internally by overcoming the local taxation and extortion regimes of nobles and princes, and externally by countering marauders on the high seas. Taken together, these changes set the stage for European expansion overseas:

The decay of the old feudal order and its replacement by a social order characterized by centralized and competing monarchical states, increasing emphasis on trade, and growing intellectual curiosity made Europe the likely candidate for overseas expansion. Population pressures provided monarchs with an incentive to search for new resources and later to support the founding of colonies. The trade-oriented capitalists of the rising cities provided encouragement and finance for such ventures. Finally, the Renaissance intellectuals provided both the theoretical speculations and the technological advances that made the search for new areas of the globe appear possible and desirable. In sum, the interests of nation-building trade, and science conspired to create an "age of discovery."⁸⁶

Of course, European expansion into Africa, Asia and the Americas was not unprecedented, for at the same time other far-flung empires dominated by Turks, Hindus, Muslims, Islamics and Chinese existed. For Europe, too, colonial ventures were well-established features of European society several centuries before the first recorded trans-Atlantic voyages of 'discovery' to the 'new world' at the end of the fifteenth century. Trading posts, usually in the form of tiny enclaves inside Muslim cities, had been established during the Crusades and were thriving by the time of Columbus's first voyage in 1492. The Portuguese had also been settling colonies of merchants in West Africa and the Coromandel Coast of western India.⁸⁷

The motivations of the early European explorers and settlers are, according to one source, "difficult to know and impossible to generalize. In most cases one thing led to another, and initial intentions changed according to new circumstances".⁸⁸ Portugal's expansion into northwestern and western Africa was driven initially by the crusade against Islam but was then attracted by the profits to be made from the discovery of gold dust, ivory and slaves. By the time Portuguese explorers found an ocean route to the Indies via the Cape of Good Hope, the prospect of acquiring a direct trade route for eastern spices and manufactured goods — thereby countering the Venetian overland trade — became the dominant motive.

Similarly with Spain in the Americas, the original motivation for Columbus's voyage was to sail west in search of a northwest passage to India. Once silver and other precious metals were found, however, and it became clear that large haciendas and plantations could be established with forced indigenous and imported labour, economic considerations became increasingly important.

It is significant that Spain and Portugal were at the forefront of the first western European expeditions to the Americas. Having just completed a centuries-long struggle to free themselves from the Moors, the people of Spain and Portugal were driven by nationalism and religious fervour to a far greater extent than other European nation-states with less tragic recent histories. Without the Moors as opponents, the discovery of the New World seemed to offer Spain an outlet for adventure and aggression, while the ease of subsequent Spanish conquests indicated, to the Europeans, the superiority of their civilization and religion.⁸⁹

The 1493 division of the New World between Spain and Portugal by the Pope was ostensibly to secure Christian conversion, but in fact, the papal donation justified in Spanish minds their acquisition of the lands and resources of the peoples found in Central and South America. Thus, for a generation they simply extracted gold, silver and slaves from the indigenous Americans — another infidel people not unlike the Moors in their estimation — using military compulsion, often with gruesome results. The twin notions of peaceful trade under treaties and the assimilation of the *Indios* into Spanish society found their way into official Spanish policy only in the 1550s. They were still poorly realized ideals two centuries later.

The earliest Basque, Breton, French and English contacts in North America were aimed initially at extracting fish and other resources from the sea, rather than gold or silver from the ground, and involved considerably less use of force. This early pattern of relatively peaceful and incidental contact gave way by the early seventeenth century to a new system of relations based on treaties and trade with the indigenous inhabitants. In the next chapter, we describe the essential characteristics of this early, often co-operative, relationship.

Notes:

1 *Calder v. Attorney-General of British Columbia*, [1973] Supreme Court Reports (hereafter S.C.R.) 313 at 328 per Judson J.

2 Robert Gray, “A Good Speed to Virginia”, quoted by H.C. Porter, *The Inconstant Savage: England and the North American Indian 1500-1600* (London: Duckworth, 1979), p. 357.

3 *St. Catharines Milling and Lumber Company v. the Queen* (1887), 13 S.C.R. 577 at 596-597.

4 Locke adds the criterion that “there is enough, and as good left in common for others”. John Locke, *Two Treatises of Government*, ed. Peter Laslett (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), II, p. 27.

5 James Tully, “Aboriginal Property and Western Theory: Recovering a

Middle Ground”, in *Property Rights*, ed. Ellen Frankel Paul, Fred D. Miller, Jr. and Geoffrey Paul (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 159.

6 This decision was the third and most important of the cases referred to as the Marshall Trilogy after the U.S. Supreme Court chief justice under whose leadership they were handed down. In *Johnson v. M’Intosh*, 21 U.S. (8 Wheaton) 543 (1823), the doctrine of Indian title — later adopted in Canada almost in its entirety — was articulated. In *Cherokee Nation v. Georgia*, 30 U.S. (5 Peters) 1 (1831), the phrase “domestic dependent nations” was first coined to describe the self-governing status of Indian tribes within the borders of the United States. In *Worcester*, aside from debunking the discovery doctrine, Chief Justice Marshall fleshed out his vision of tribal self-government in a more complete and concrete way. A leading text describes that vision as postulating “largely autonomous tribal governments subject to an overriding federal authority but essentially free of state control.” See Charles F. Wilkinson, *American Indians, Time, and the Law: Native Societies in a Modern Constitutional Democracy* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1987), p. 24. The *Worcester* decision is still an important case. Since 1970, state and federal courts in the United States have cited it more than any other case, with the exception of three seminal non-Indian constitutional decisions from the same Marshall court (Wilkinson, p. 159, note 126).

7 31 U.S. (6 Peters) 515 at 542-543.

8 Wampum was made traditionally of quahog (clam) shells, drilled and threaded into strings or woven into belts. Wampum of various colours carried different symbolic meanings. Wampum strings and belts were used as aids to memory and to validate the authority of persons carrying messages between communities and nations.

9 Contemporary place names are used throughout for ease of identification.

10 The Iroquoians on the St. Lawrence had been replaced by Algonquins by the time of Samuel de Champlain’s explorations in 1603.

11 Marianne Mithun, “The Proto-Iroquoians: Cultural Reconstruction from Lexical Materials”, in *Extending the Rafters: Interdisciplinary Approaches to Iroquoian Studies*, ed. Michael K. Foster, Jack Campisi and Marianne Mithun (Albany, N.Y.: State University of New York Press, 1984), p. 264.

12 Details of Iroquois society are drawn from Lewis Henry Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (Secaucus, N.J.: The Citadel Press, 1962), book II, chapter VI, pp. 313-320 and following.

13 Other dates are sometimes cited for the Tuscarora adoption; 1715 is the date given in Morgan, *League of the Iroquois*, p. 24.

14 William N. Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change in the Process of Iroquois Treaty Making", in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy: An Interdisciplinary Guide to the Treaties of the Six Nations and Their League*, ed. Francis Jennings, William N. Fenton, Mary A. Druke and David R. Miller (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 1985), p. 7.

15 For a discussion of the role of another Iroquoian nation, the Wendat (Huron) in the fur trade, see Chapter 5.

16 See Paul Williams and Curtis Nelson, "Kaswentha", research study prepared for the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples [RCAP] (1995), for a discussion of treaties between the Haudenosaunee and colonial powers. For information about research studies prepared for RCAP, see *A Note About Sources* at the beginning of this volume.

17 In 1987, the U.S. Senate passed a resolution acknowledging the influence of the Haudenosaunee system of government on U.S. constitutional development, but the extent of that influence is debated. See Elizabeth Tooker, "The United States Constitution and the Iroquois League", *Ethnohistory* 35/4 (Fall 1988), pp. 305-336; Donald A. Grinde, Jr., *The Iroquois and the Founding of the American Nation* (San Francisco: The Indian Historian Press, 1977); and Bruce E. Johansen, *Forgotten Founders: How the American Indian Helped Shape Democracy* (Boston: The Harvard Common Press, 1982).

18 See Marianne Mithun, "The Proto-Iroquoians: Cultural Reconstruction from Lexical Materials", and James V. Wright, "The Cultural Continuity of the Northern Iroquoian-Speaking Peoples", in *Extending the Rafters* (cited in note 11).

19 Dean R. Snow, "Iroquois Prehistory", in *Extending the Rafters* (cited in note 11).

20 Snow, “Iroquois Prehistory”, p. 256.

21 From 25 June to 6 July 1994, Chief Jacob Thomas gave a public recital of the Great Law of Peace, the foundation of Haudenosaunee law and government. Spoken in English, the recital took place at the Six Nations Territory near Brantford, Ontario, over a 12-day period. It was recorded on videotape, a copy of which is in the archives of the Royal Commission. Access to the videotape can be obtained through the National Archives of Canada.

22 Transcripts of the Commission’s hearings are cited with the speaker’s name and affiliation, if any, and the location and date of the hearing. See *A Note About Sources* at the beginning of this volume for information about transcripts and other Commission publications.

23 According to tradition, the birthplace of the Peacemaker was the present location of the Tyendinaga Territory on the Bay of Quinte, a place selected by Joseph Brant for resettlement of Mohawks who were allies of the British during the American War of Independence.

24 The name Deganawidah is used throughout some accounts of the founding of the Iroquois Confederacy. The Haudenosaunee themselves use his name only in ceremonies. In deference to this convention, we use the preferred title, the Peacemaker, in this account.

25 Under the articles of the Great Law, anyone speaking while holding wampum was under the strictest obligation to speak the truth. See Michael K. Foster, “Another Look at the Function of Wampum in Iroquois-White Councils”, in *The History and Culture of Iroquois Diplomacy* (cited in note 14).

26 The Iroquois words evidently do not have exact equivalents in English. “Righteousness, Health and Power” are found in Paul A.W. Wallace, *White Roots of Peace* (Santa Fe, New Mexico: Clear Light Publishers, 1994), pp. 39-40, a publication endorsed by prominent chiefs of the Haudenosaunee. Arthur C. Parker refers to “the Good News of Peace and Power” in *Parker on the Iroquois*, ed. William N. Fenton (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1968), Book III: The Constitution of the Five Nations, p. 72. Jake Thomas, introduced earlier in this chapter, translated the principles as “Peace, Power and Righteousness” in his testimony before the Commission at Akwesasne on 3 May 1993.

27 Wallace, *White Roots of Peace*, p. 39-40.

28 *Parker on the Iroquois* (cited in note 26), Book III, p. 9.

29 *Parker on the Iroquois*, p. 9.

30 Consensus meant that all the council agreed to support the decision taken. It did not necessarily mean that all nations were unanimous in their opinion. Rather, for the good of the community, members would refrain from pressing dissenting views, knowing that in future councils their commitment to the common good would win respect and deference to their opinions.

31 John A. Noon, *Law and Government of the Grand River Iroquois* (New York: Viking Fund Publications in Anthropology, Number 12, 1949), p. 39, as quoted in Thomas S. Abler, "The Kansas Connection: The Seneca Nation and the Iroquois Confederacy Council", in *Extending the Rafters* (cited in note 11), p. 83.

32 The ceremony for installing chiefs is called a condolence because the death of the chief who has vacated the position must be properly acknowledged. Members of his nation, clan and family who are grieving must be comforted and restored to a good mind through the ministrations of the members of the 'clear-minded' side of the council — those who have not suffered the same loss. Only when this has been accomplished are the mourners urged to look up and see that the sun still shines, there is work to be done, and the candidate for chief is standing by, ready to take the place that has been left vacant.

33 Fenton, "Structure, Continuity, and Change" (cited in note 14), p. 13.

34 *Parker on the Iroquois* (cited in note 26), Book III, p. 37.

35 Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (cited in note 12), p. 81, is not definite about whether the clan system predated the founding of the Great Law. Chief Jake Thomas was clear on this point: "We talk about the clan system. That's where it originated, from the time of the Creation." (Akwesasne, 3 May 1993).

36 Wallace, *White Roots of Peace* (cited in note 26), p. 72.

37 Fenton, “Culture, Continuity, and Change” (cited in note 14), p. 12.

38 See Fred Voget, “Anthropological Theory and Iroquois Ethnography: 1850 to 1970”, in *Extending the Rafters* (cited in note 11), p. 350; and Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (cited in note 12), pp. 330-334.

39 Chief Leon Shenandoah, Tadodaho [Atotarho], “Foreword”, in Wallace, *White Roots of Peace* (cited in note 26), pp. 13-14.

40 Fred W. Voget: “Anthropological Theory and Iroquois Ethnography: 1850 to 1970” in Foster et al., *Extending the Rafters* (cited in note 11), p. 347.

41 William N. Fenton, “Foreword”, in Morgan, *League of the Iroquois* (cited in note 12), p. xvi.

42 Fenton, “Structure, Continuity, and Change” (cited in note 14), p. 6.

43 William E. Farr, *The Reservation Blackfeet, 1882-1945: A Photographic History of Cultural Survival* (Seattle: University of

Washington Press, 1984), p. 4. The term Blackfeet is common in the United States, but in Canada the preferred usage is Blackfoot. See Hugh A. Dempsey, “The Blackfoot Indians”, in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience*, ed. R. Bruce Morrison and C. Roderick Wilson (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart Limited, 1986).

44 John C. Ewers, *The Horse in Blackfoot Indian Culture*, Bureau of American Ethnology Bulletin 159 (Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1955), pp. 2-19, traces the introduction of the horse to the northern plains. Horses were introduced to Mexico by the Spanish in the middle of the sixteenth century and spread gradually from one indigenous nation to another.

45 E.A. Corbett, *Blackfoot Trails* (Toronto: The Macmillan Company of Canada Limited, 1934), p. 4.

46 The concept of interrelatedness is discussed in Leroy Little Bear, “The Relationship of Aboriginal People to the Land and the Aboriginal Perspective on Aboriginal Title”, research study prepared for RCAP (1993).

47 George Bird Grinnell, *Blackfoot Lodge Tales* (published originally in 1892; reprinted, Williamstown, Massachusetts: Corner House Publishers, 1972), pp. 143-144 [footnote omitted].

48 Little Bear, “The Relationship of Aboriginal People to the Land” (cited in note 46).

49 Little Bear, “The Relationship of Aboriginal People to the Land”.

50 Mike Mountain Horse, *My People the Bloods*, ed. Hugh A. Dempsey (Calgary and Standoff, Alberta: Glenbow-Alberta Institute and Blood Tribal Council, 1979), p. 53.

51 Andrew Bear Robe, “The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance, Including its Future Possibilities Within Canada”, research study prepared for RCAP (1994).

52 Nomadic means wandering or roaming, which is misleading, since plains people systematically harvested the land in cycles and moved from site to site, from season to season, to harvest but also to conserve natural resources. Perhaps a more appropriate word might be ‘mobile’, since their homes and material goods were completely portable.

53 In later attempts to domesticate the plains buffalo when it was almost extinct, those that were rounded up and placed in captivity died. The opinion was expressed at the time that the buffalo, unused to captivity, died of a broken spirit. The wood buffalo, on the other hand, fared much better in captivity.

54 Little Bear, “The Relationship of Aboriginal People to the Land” (cited in note 46).

55 The words of an old plains Indian of the Omaha Nation lamenting the life he and his people had once known along the western banks of the Missouri, in what is now Nebraska. Peter Nabokov, ed., *Native American Testimony: A Chronicle of Indian-White Relations from Prophecy to the Present, 1492-1992* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1991), p. 184.

56 Beatrice Medicine, “‘Warrior Women’: Sex Role Alternatives for Plains

Indian Women”, in *The Hidden Half: Studies of Plains Indian Women*, ed. Patricia Albers and Beatrice Medicine (Lanham, Maryland: University Press of America, 1983), pp. 267-280.

57 Symmes C. Oliver, *Ecology and Cultural Continuity as Contributing Factors in the Social Organization of the Plains Indians* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1962), p. 62.

58 Bear Robe, “The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance” (cited in note 51).

59 This material draws on information in Bear Robe, “The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance”.

60 Contrary to some accounts, gifts were not for dowry purposes, but rather signified the establishment of a new and permanent relationship between families.

61 Bear Robe, “The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance” (cited in note 51). However, a person who took his punishment well usually had his property replaced.

62 Oliver, *Ecology and Cultural Continuity* (cited in note 57), p. 62.

63 John C. Ewers, *The Blackfeet: Raiders on the Northwestern Plains* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1958), p. 97.

64 Marie Smallface Marule, “Traditional Indian Government: Of the People, by the People, for the People”, in *Pathways to Self-Determination, Canadian Indians and the Canadian State*, ed. Leroy Little Bear, Menno Boldt and J. Anthony Long (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1984), pp. 36-37.

65 Bear Robe, “The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance” (cited in note 51).

66 Dempsey, “The Blackfoot Indians” (cited in note 43), p. 388.

67 Oliver, *Ecology and Cultural Continuity* (cited in note 57), pp. 58-59.

68 David Thompson was a British Hudson's Bay Company trader who arrived in Blackfoot territory in 1787 and lived near the Blackfoot for many years. See Bear Robe, "The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance" (cited in note 51).

69 Corbett, *Blackfoot Trails* (cited in note 45), pp. 6-7.

70 In 1867 an historic peace was made between the Cree and Blackfoot at Peace Hills, near Wetaskiwin on the Battle River. Hostilities broke open again when the Cree made incursions into Blackfoot lands and continued until Crowfoot and Poundmaker were able to make peace again in the 1870s.

71 The Great Plains extended south to Texas and northeast and northwest to northern Saskatchewan. The number of Great Plains Indians was estimated at 200,000 around 1800, with the Blackfoot Confederacy numbering 30,000. See Bear Robe, "The Historical, Legal and Current Basis for Siksika Nation Governance" (cited in note 51).

72 Olive P. Dickason, *Canada's First Nations: A History of Founding Peoples from Earliest Times* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1992), p. 63.

73 Philip Drucker, *Indians of the Northwest Coast*, Anthropological Handbook Number Ten (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Company, Inc., for the American Museum of Natural History, 1955), pp. 3-4.

74 Robert McGhee, *Ancient Canada* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1989), p. 132; Peter Macnair, "From Kwakiutl to Kwakwa ka'wakw", in *Native Peoples: The Canadian Experience* (cited in note 43), p. 502.

75 McGhee, *Ancient Canada*, p. 128.

76 Margaret Seguin, "Lest There Be No Salmon: Symbols in Traditional Tsimshian Potlatch", in *The Tsimshian, Images of the Past: Views for the Present*, ed. Margaret Seguin (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1984).

77 In the 1970s there was extended discussion between Parks Canada, the British Columbia government and communities represented by the Union of

British Columbia Indian Chiefs regarding the designation of the Alexander Mackenzie Grease Trail as a conservation and recreational corridor. First Nations communities located in or near the proposed corridor were interested in having acknowledgement of the contribution of their forebears to mapping of the continent. They were equally interested in protecting the terrain from uncontrolled incursions by logging and development companies. The Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail, which includes the grease trails, was designated in 1987 as a heritage trail under the *Heritage Conservation Act* and as a designated forest recreation trail under the *Forest Act*. Consideration is being given to expanding the official name of the trail to incorporate the concept of the grease trail. B.C. Ministry of Forests, Ministry of Tourism and Ministry Responsible for Culture, *Alexander Mackenzie Heritage Trail: Management Plan for Trail Portions on Public Forest Lands*, Appendix 1, "Memorandum of Agreement" (9 June 1987, published June 1993).

78 The Thule people are named after a Greenland site where the archaeological remains of a Thule camp were first excavated.

79 Robert McGhee, *Canadian Arctic Prehistory* (Ottawa: Canadian Museum of Civilization, 1990), p. 22. Much of the general information in the next few pages is drawn from this work.

80 McGhee, *Canadian Arctic Prehistory*, p. 79.

81 McGhee, *Canadian Arctic Prehistory*, p. 95.

82 McGhee, *Canadian Arctic Prehistory*, pp. 105-106.

83 Edmund Carpenter, *Eskimo Realities* (New York: Holt Rinehart and Winston, 1973), p. 61.

84 Knud Rasmussen, "Intellectual Culture of the Iglulik Eskimos", in *Report of the Fifth Thule Expedition, 1921-24 VII/1* (1929, reprinted by AMS Press Inc., 1976), pp. 123, 166.

85 Margaret Conrad, Alvin Finkel and Cornelius Jaenen, *History of the Canadian Peoples: Beginnings to 1867*, volume 1 (Toronto: Copp Clark Pitman Ltd., 1993), p. 49.

86 Conrad, Finkel and Jaenen, *History of the Canadian Peoples*, p. 76.

87 D.K. Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires: A Comparative Survey from the Eighteenth Century* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1966), p. 3.

88 Fieldhouse, *The Colonial Empires*, p. 5.

89 Thomas R. Berger, *A Long and Terrible Shadow: White Values, Native Rights in the Americas, 1492-1992* (Toronto/Vancouver: Douglas & McIntyre, 1991), pp. 2, 13.