

N-ík'wkw-mín: Remembering the Fur Trade in the Columbia River Plateau

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## ABSTRACT

This dissertation answers the question of how and why the history of the fur trade in the Columbia River Plateau is understood in the ways in which it is. It examines the construction of memory and commemorations of the fur trade era by different communities for their distinct purposes. The project methodologies include analyses of archival materials and publications created by fur traders and historians who were interested in their lives, and examination of historical monographs and their indexes and sources lists. Fur trade commemorations and public history events were scrutinized, as were newspapers for interviews with the historical actors driving public acts of memory and biographies of these individuals were examined. Artistic representations of the past in films, songs, comic books, advertisements, and greeting cards created are included in the analysis. People's understandings of the past are made in daily encounters of its representation, however seemingly trivial they may be. Indigenous Plateau peoples have created histories of the fur trade, and those histories have been largely ignored by settler historians and boosters, resulting in a historiography that has mostly omitted Indigenous voices that were present and speaking to those settlers creating fur trade histories. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, Plateau Indigenous peoples brought their histories into the same public forums where fur trade histories were heard in the region for non-Indigenous people to encounter. Examining the stories people told about the fur trade and why, this dissertation demonstrates that the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade has been and continues to be a tool used to further the social, political, and economic desires of its creators, who construct fur trade histories largely in their own image.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract .....	ii
Table of Contents .....	iii
List of Figures .....	iv
Introduction .....	1
Chapter One: In the Thick of It .....	40
Chapter Two: Building an Empire .....	97
Chapter Three: In the Service of Colonialism .....	156
Chapter Four: Layered Stories of Trade, Resources, and Sovereignty .....	215
Conclusion: Nłk <sup>w</sup> k <sup>w</sup> min .....	262
Bibliography .....	273

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1: “No. 5. Traite et distribution de liqueur”	80
Figure 1.2: “No. 6. Canots et traineaux indiens”	82
Figure 1.3: “Crossing the Bitter Root Mountains Nov. 1855”	91
Figure 1.4: “Military Post & City of Walla-Walla, W.T. in 1862”	92
Figure 1.5: “Old Fort Walla Walla”	93
Figure 1.6: “Fort Okinakane”	94
Figure 1.7: “Fort Nez Perce, 1841”	95
Figure 1.8: “Map of the Spokane Indian Reservation Showing Indian Allotments, 1910”	103
Figure 1.9: “Indians who were given a taste of melons grown by the Astor party at Fort Spokane came back for more!”	117
Figure 1.10: “Famous Landmark on Farm Recently Bought”	144
Figure 1.11: Christmas card, 1933	161
Figure 1.12: “Christmas Eve at Spokane House == December 1810”	162
Figure 1.13: “The Story of Spokane House”	166
Figure 1.14: “Ladies of Hope put on David Thompson skit”	167
Figure 1.15: David Thompson Memorial Fort, 1922	169
Figure 1.16: “Archaeologist Finds Flintlocks”	172
Figure 1.17: “Spokane House (1810-1826)”	181
Figure 1.18: Smith Funeral Home advertisement	185
Figure 1.19: “Modern Spokane House”	186
Figure 1.20: “Spokane House Banners Will Fly Again”	196
Figure 1.21: “Spokane House: Social Center of an Empire”	203
Figure 1.22: “Ross Cox of the Astor Company”	205
Figure 1.23: “Spokane House”	206
Figure 1.24: “The United States has Arrived in the Northwest”	207
Figure 1.25: “Finan McDonald is Such a Man!”	208
Figure 1.26: “Many Budding Romances Lead to Marriage Between the Handsome Maidens and the Traders”	209

## INTRODUCTION: Whose History?

In the Spokane dialect of the Salish language, there are more than twenty ways to talk about remembering the past, all of which contain a version of the root word, *nlk<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>min*.<sup>1</sup> These many varied forms of *nlk<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>min* reflect who is doing the remembering, as well as when and how something is remembered. *Nlk<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>min* reflects the complexities of recalling the past and seems an apropos title for a dissertation about the complexities of the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade. In his recent book, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America*, Thomas King examines varied and complex North American histories from a critical Indigenous perspective, observing that dominant histories of the continent often overlook its original inhabitants and their experiences with colonialism in the more than four hundred years since Europeans' arrival.

Most of us think that history is the past. It's not. History is the stories we tell about the past. That's all it is. Stories. Such a definition might make the enterprise of history seem neutral. Benign. Which, of course, it isn't. History may well be a series of stories we tell about the past, but the stories are not just any stories. They're not chosen by chance.<sup>2</sup>

The history of the fur trade in the Columbia River Plateau, a region located in what is now northeastern Washington state and southeastern British Columbia<sup>3</sup>, is similar to other North American histories: a "series of stories we tell about the past" that have not been chosen by chance. As Michel-Rolph Trouillot warned, however, this is not to say "we are prisoners of our

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<sup>1</sup> Tachini Pete, *Seliš Translation: English to Salish Dictionary* (Arlee, MT: Nk<sup>w</sup>usm, 2006), 349; conversation with Ann McRae, Spokane Tribal Language Elder, July 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Thomas King, *The Inconvenient Indian: A Curious Account of Native People in North America* (Toronto: Anchor Canada, 2013), 2-3.

<sup>3</sup> Definitions of where the Columbia River Plateau is located vary and are defined by geologic formations, as well as human and animal use, and watersheds. For a clearer visualization of the definition employed here, see David H. Chance, *People of the Falls* (Kettle Falls, WA: Kettle Falls Historical Center, 1986).

pasts and...that history is whatever we make of it,” but that histories are created.<sup>4</sup> Crafting history necessitates making selections, omissions, and emphasizing events and details more than others, or omitting some details altogether. It is telling stories that have been remembered and personalized by the creator to serve a purpose. The history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade, an economic enterprise with profound social, cultural, and political consequences, has been shaped by the social, cultural, political, and economic interests of its writers. The interests of all people captivated by this history influenced how they thought of historic fur trade events, and those with access to resources of historical dissemination had a voice in incorporating their interpretations into the region’s history. Early 20<sup>th</sup>-century Indigenous people did so through oral history, but such influence was largely limited to non-Indigenous upper and upper-middle class people. The history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was created predominantly by non-Indigenous settlers interested in promoting their region for further settlement and economic development, using settler fur trade histories as a tool to do so. Indigenous histories of the fur trade in the region were rarely included in published accounts unless they conformed to the interests of non-Indigenous authors. Nonetheless, Indigenous histories of the Plateau fur trade exist and act as powerful reminders that history is not neutral or benign and it has very real consequences for its subjects and their descendants.

Because this dissertation discusses the ways in which the fur trade era was remembered by different groups of people in different times and contexts, it is helpful to portray the status of these memories today in published works by professional historians and in the oral traditions of the region’s Indigenous peoples. While interpretation of the following events and circumstances varies, their existence is rarely challenged. Of course, as Thomas King suggests in the opening

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<sup>4</sup> Michel-Rolph Trouillot, *Silencing the Past: Power and the Production of History* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1995), Kindle edition, 158.

paragraph, historical interpretation is a largely subjective endeavor and the interpretations of events discussed here as contextual framework also informed how Columbia River Plateau fur trade histories were created. The narrative that follows reflects a series of events that have, with few exceptions, achieved the status of fact in most published works and oral histories of the region, as written in 2015, and creates a baseline from which to begin understanding the histories of the Plateau fur trade, but is not intended to be understood as historical “truth.”

The Hudson’s Bay Company (HBC) closed the Colville District in April of 1871.<sup>5</sup> This fur trade territory, the last in a series of bureaucratically-constructed HBC trade zones in the Columbia River Plateau, changed considerably in the minds of non-Indigenous people since they began arriving in the region in the early nineteenth century. There had been international interest in the fur-bearing animal resources west of the Rocky Mountains for more than a century, but when Meriwether Lewis and William Clark crossed the mountains at the behest of United States’ President Thomas Jefferson between 1804 and 1806, the competitive nature of this interest deepened. The nineteenth century was the height of the fur trade in the Columbia River Plateau and records left by those participating in the trade form much of the foundation for the ways in which it has been remembered in the two centuries since.

The Euro-American and Euro-Canadian fur traders in the Plateau did not enter into an uninhabited wilderness. For centuries prior to the arrival of men like Lewis and Clark, David Thompson, and Alexander Ross, Indigenous peoples made the region home, establishing trading and kinship networks that would later be utilized by fur traders. Indeed, the fur trade depended heavily on the knowledge, assistance, and labor of these Indigenous peoples. Although I was unable to find written sources from Indigenous Plateau peoples for this period, oral histories of the contact and fur trade periods exist, in written form, after being passed through generations.

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<sup>5</sup> “Fort Colville post history,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

Seven Spokane elders, Thomas Garry, Moses Phillips, Aleck Pierre, Charley Warren, John Stevens, and William Three Mountains, provided a statement recounting events from the era predating contact with Euro-Americans until 1887. Regarding Indigenous territory and social structures prior to Euro-Canadian arrival, the elders stated,

With the Indians names were given to different parts of the world. One part of the country with one name belonged to one tribe of Indians and another part of the country with another name belonged to a different tribe of Indians. The Sin-sla-quisish or Couer d'Alene had the country at the head of the Spokane Valley and around Couer d'alene lake. The Sin-too-too-oulish, or upper Spokanees, had the country about the Spokane river to a point about four miles below the mouth of the little Spokane. Sin-ho-man-na, or Middle Spokanes, had the country from a point about four miles below the little Spokane to the vicinity of what was afterwards known as La Pray's prairie. The Lower Spokanes had the country below (west) from La Pray's prairie.

Each tribe had its tribe name and everyone in the tribe took the tribe name. When members of one tribe came into the country of another tribe to fish, hunt or dig roots without the permission of that tribe, war was declared.

This was the law in early days among the Spokanes, Couer d'Alenes, Flatheads, Nez Perce, Okanogans and other tribes. Each tribe had head men called chiefs. When there was war the world was dark, then the head chiefs of the tribe would make a peace, and wipe out the blood as with a rag and make the world light again.<sup>6</sup>

This oral history, passed through generations of Spokane people, speaks to the longevity of Indigenous peoples in the Columbia River Plateau and the deep connections these communities maintained with one another and with the landscapes they inhabited.

As with elsewhere in North America, European diseases arrived in the Plateau before Europeans themselves. A smallpox epidemic raged across the continent between the years 1775 and 1782, killing approximately half the Indigenous population of the region and wreaking social

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<sup>6</sup> Spelling reproduced as transcribed. William S. Lewis, "Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country." William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 1.



havoc, as entire families died and extended kinship networks weakened.<sup>7</sup> Indigenous communities throughout the Plateau contracted smallpox, “but the disease is said to have been worst among the Spokane” according to James A. Teit’s early-twentieth-century oral sources.<sup>8</sup> As Michel Revais related to Teit, “[s]o many people died in some places that the lodges were full of corpses. Some of the ‘long lodges’ were quite full of dead and dying people. So many people died that they could not be buried, and the dogs ate the bodies.”<sup>9</sup> With communities overwhelmed by death and illness striking all generations, customs surrounding the treatment and burial of the dead may not have been carried out, causing cultural disruption. When George Vancouver visited the area now called Puget Sound in 1792, he noted the deserted villages scattered with human remains where previously thriving communities had existed in their place.<sup>10</sup> When, in late October of 1800, David Thompson accompanied LeBlanc and Charles LaGasse, two North West Company (NWC) employees, in search of furs and to reconnoiter the area west of Rocky Mountain House, the area’s Indigenous people had already experienced devastating smallpox epidemics.<sup>11</sup> LeBlanc and LaGasse wintered with the Kootenae people that year, establishing a trading relationship between them and the NWC.<sup>12</sup>

Though the Canadians may have been the first Euro-North Americans to interact with Plateau Indigenous peoples, they were not to be the last. In October of 1805, Meriwether Lewis and William Clark entered the Columbia River Plateau when they followed the Snake River beyond its confluence with the Palouse and finally arrived at the Columbia River. Lewis, Clark,

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<sup>7</sup> Elizabeth A. Fenn, *Pox Americana: The Great Smallpox Epidemic of 1775-82* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2001), 3.

<sup>8</sup> Teit, James A. and Franz Boas, ed., “The Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus” in *Forty-fifth Annual Report of the Bureau of American Ethnology, 1927-28* (Washington: United States Government Printing Office, 1930), 315.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 315-16.

<sup>10</sup> Fenn, *Pox Americana*, 9-10.

<sup>11</sup> One of the men Thompson referred to in his journal was probably Charles LaGasse and the identity of “LeBlanc” is not yet known. “Charles Lagasse biographical sheet”, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>12</sup> David Thompson, *Columbia Journals*, ed. Barbara Belyea (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2007), 10-11.

and their accompanying engagés documented the peoples, flora, and fauna of western North America at the request of President Thomas Jefferson. On October 13, at the confluence of the Palouse and Snake Rivers, Clark made his famous observation regarding Sacagawea that the “wife of Shabono our interpreter we find reconciles all the Indians, as to our friendly intentions a woman with a party of men is a token of peace.”<sup>13</sup> Clark also mentioned passing “Several houses evacuated [*sic*] at established fishing places,” possibly referencing homes of epidemic victims. Expedition member John Ordway noted seeing “a great number of fishing camps where the natives fish every Spring” and all of the men noted that they dined on salmon through this stretch of river, demonstrating the importance of the river and its resources for the area’s Indigenous peoples.<sup>14</sup> Archaeological digs in this area have since shown evidence that these villages could have each supported more than two hundred individuals. Interestingly, in an excavation in 1964, a Jefferson peace medal was recovered, directly linking the expedition to the site.<sup>15</sup>

The contest between American and Canadian fur trade interests escalated in this era, leading to increased activity in the region. In 1810 David Thompson sent NWC employees Jacques Finlay and Finan McDonald to establish a fur trading post at the confluence of the Spokane and Skeetshoo, or Little Spokane, rivers. As HBC Governor George Simpson commented on his visit to the post fourteen years later, “Spokane House is delightfully situated near the banks of the Spokane & Skichew Rivers in a fine plain or valley and surrounded at the distance of two or three miles by Hills clothed with Grass and fine Timber to their summits.”<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> “October 13, 1805,” University of Nebraska Press/University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries-Electronic Text Center, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>. See also Juliana Barr, *Peace Came in the Form of a Woman: Indians and Spaniards in the Texas Borderlands* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2007).

<sup>14</sup> “October 13, 1805,” *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> George Simpson, *Fur Trade and Empire: George Simpson’s Journal, Remarks Connected with the Fur Trade in the Course of a Voyage from York Factory to Fort George and back to York Factory 1824-1825; together with Accompanying Documents*, ed. Frederick Merck (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1931), 43-44.

Though it was a small post, it became a hub for considerable social and economic activity in the Columbia River Plateau. It also became a physical presence of the NWC on the Plateau landscape. Duncan McDougall of the rival Pacific Fur Company referenced in the Astoria journals of June 15, 1811 a letter dated “5<sup>th</sup> April last by Finnan [*sic*] McDonald” intended for “Mr. Stuart, Estekaadme Fort,” an unknown fort. The Astorians could not “make out the motive of...the Letter he brought” leaving historians to argue that the NWC men were simply alerting their rivals to their company’s presence in the Plateau.<sup>17</sup>

In August of 1812, John Clarke, a partner in John Jacob Astor’s Pacific Fur Company arrived at the confluence of the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers, and began constructing an American trading post, Fort Spokane. By December 27, Clarke “had constructed a snug and commodius [*sic*] dwelling-house, containing four rooms and a kitchen; together with a comfortable house for the men, and a capacious store for the furs and trading goods; the whole surrounded by paling, and flanked by two bastions with loopholes for musketry.”<sup>18</sup> American competitors in the fur trade had now set up shop in the Columbia River Plateau.

Ross Cox, a clerk in the American Pacific Fur Company (PFC), arrived to Astoria on June 11, 1813 to the news that “a total revolution had taken place in the affairs of the Company” and that “war had been declared the year before between Great Britain and the United States.”<sup>19</sup> Cox’s primary concern regarding the War of 1812 was a shipping blockade preventing the resupply of PFC posts on the Columbia River. According to Cox’s account, this is one of the primary reasons representatives from the PFC and NWC agreed that the latter would “purchase

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<sup>17</sup> Robert F. Jones, ed., *Annals of Astoria: The Headquarters Log of the Pacific Fur Company on the Columbia River, 1811-1813* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1999), 24-25.

<sup>18</sup> Ross Cox, *Adventures on the Columbia River, Including the Narrative of a Residence of Six Years on the Western Side of the Rocky Mountains, Among Various Tribes of Indians Hitherto Unknown* (New York: J. & J. Harper, 1832), 104.

<sup>19</sup> Cox, *Adventures*, 108.

all the furs, merchandise, provisions...stipulating to provide a safe passage back to the United States...for such members of [the PFC] as chose to return; and at the same time offering to those who wish to join the Northwest Company and remain in the country the same terms as if they had originally been members of that Company.”<sup>20</sup> Less than a month later, on July 1, 1813, Duncan McDougall noted in the Astoria journals that

An agreement has been formed with him [McTavish] on the part of the N. West Co. to avoid a Competition in the upper Country during the present season; the post of Spokane House is given over to them, and they are to abandon wholly the trade of the Columbia and flathead Country. He receives from us a small quantity of Goods amounting to upwards of Eight hundred Dollars, for which he is to render payment next spring at the forks of the Columbia in any manner that shall best suit our purpose. He has also consented to forward by their winter express a few despatches from us to Mr. Astor at New York.<sup>21</sup>

This agreement allowed the NWC men at Spokane House to move lodgings and shop from the cramped post built by Finlay and McDonald to the spacious now-former Fort Spokane so recently built by the Americans.

After years of competition in the North American fur trade, the two largest fur-trading companies in North America merged in 1821. The partners of the North West Company and the “Governor & Company of Adventurers of England trading into Hudson’s Bay...agreed to unite the whole Fur Trade carried on by the said parties into one Concern...in the name of the Hudson’s Bay Company.”<sup>22</sup> In October of 1824, Governor George Simpson of the HBC toured the Columbia Department and declared that it had “been neglected, shamefully mismanaged and [was] a scene of the most wasteful extravagance and the most unfortunate dissention.”<sup>23</sup>

Attempting to make the Company’s business in the area more efficient and of the opinion that in

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<sup>20</sup> Cox, *Adventures*, 108.

<sup>21</sup> Jones, ed., *Annals of Astoria*, 198.

<sup>22</sup> “Extract from Hudson’s Bay Company minute book, March 21, 1821; Proceedings at a General Court relating to the Amalgamation with the North West Company,” in *Documents Relating to the Northwest Company*, ed. W. Stewart Wallace (Toronto: The Champlain Society, 1934), 327.

<sup>23</sup> Simpson, *Fur Trade and Empire*, 43.

the Columbia there was “ample Field for reform and amendment,” he personally suggested changes to the post’s operations including altering seasonal cycles between posts to maximize “the best hunting season when Fur bearing animals are in their prime,”<sup>24</sup> expanding the vegetable gardens, and reining in the post’s consumption patterns.<sup>25</sup> Simpson even went so far as baptizing the sons of the Spokane and Kootenay chiefs, naming them Spokane Garry and Coutonais Pelly.<sup>26</sup> It was on this same visit that Simpson made arrangements to move one Plateau fur trade post from Spokane House to Fort Colville, closer to Kettle Falls. Simpson decided on the move to decrease the distance between the HBC post and the Columbia River.<sup>27</sup> When considering the neighboring “Spokan Indians” interpretation of this move, Simpson concerned himself only with their compliance, saying “The only difficulty in removing is that it may give offence to the Spokan Indians who have always been staunch to the Whites and induce them to Steal our Horses and annoy us otherwise, but those Gentlemen who are best acquainted with them think we have sufficient influence to prevent such evil.”<sup>28</sup> On April 13, 1825, Simpson disembarked from Spokane House with “the Indian Boys” Spokane Garry and Coutonais Pelly; Alexander Ross, who he had appointed to manage the “Missionary Society School Red River;” and several unnamed men.<sup>29</sup> In 1829, after inspiring the Nez Perce to send several other teens to school in Red River, Garry returned with them to the settlement. He stayed only a short time, returning home in 1831 after the death of his father to begin his teachings among his own Spokane

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<sup>24</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>25</sup> Ibid., 43, 48-49.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 138.

<sup>27</sup> Ibid., 134.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 135.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 136.

community and the Nez Perce.<sup>30</sup> Sadly, Coutonais Pelly died while still in Red River, being buried there on April 6, 1831, never again able to return home to the Columbia River Plateau.<sup>31</sup>

Throughout the 1830s, several groups comprised of Iroquois, Flathead, and Nez Perce people travelled to St. Louis in search of missionaries to bring Christian, specifically Catholic, teachings to the Columbia River Plateau, resulting in the arrival of Jesuits to the region soon after.<sup>32</sup> Before the Jesuits arrived in 1839, however, missionary Samuel Parker from the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions arrived along the Spokane River in 1836. He held several services among the Spokane before leaving the area, relying on “a good interpreter, a young man of their nation, who had been in the school at the Red river settlement” to translate the service into Spokane.<sup>33</sup> In addition, “one of the Nez Percés, a chief, who understood the Spokein language...translated the discourse as it was delivered, into the language of his people, without any interruption to the service.”<sup>34</sup> Parker was quickly on his way, soon to be replaced by Marcus and Narcissa Whitman and Henry and Eliza Spaulding, also from the American Board. In 1838, the Walkers and Eells established a mission at Tshimakain, which became the epicenter of protestant Christianity in the Plateau. Two Jesuits, Francis Norbert Blanchet and Modeste Demers, arrived to Kettle Falls in July of 1839, baptizing children and hearing confessions at Fort Colville. Overall, however, the Indigenous experience with Jesuit priests seemed a friendly encounter. As Gray Whaley argued in his examination of intercultural encounters of politics, religion, trade, sexuality, and settlement in what is now Oregon, the

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<sup>30</sup> Clifford Drury, “Oregon Indians in the Red River School,” *Pacific Historical Review* v.7 n.1 (1938): 57.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, 57.

<sup>32</sup> Jacqueline Peterson, “Sacred Encounters in the Northwest: A Persistent Dialogue,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* v. 12 n. 4 (1994): 42.

<sup>33</sup> Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains, Under the Direction of the A.B.C.F.M.* (Auburn: J.C. Derby & Co., 1846), 300.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*

“colonial fur trade joined and altered the existing networks of *Illahee*; it did not create them.”<sup>35</sup>

*Illahee* was Chinook jargon, “an encompassing...word for the land, soil, and home,” and Gray asserts that initial encounters between Indigenous people and fur traders and missionaries existed within the framework of *Illahee*.<sup>36</sup>

Following the Oregon Treaty of 1846 that established the international boundary between the United States and Canada, the HBC ended Plateau operations south of the forty-ninth parallel, relocating their traders to Fort Shepherd, above the new international border. The treaty, only twelve pages long and consisting of five articles, articulates four major decisions: setting the boundary between the western United States and Great Britain (now Canada) at the forty-ninth parallel; establishing “free and open” navigation of Puget Sound “to both parties;” establishing “free and open” navigation of the Columbia River and access to the “usual portages along the line” for the “Hudson’s Bay Company and to all British subjects trading with the same,” but reserving for the US government the right of “regulations respecting the navigation of the said river or rivers;” guaranteeing property rights of the “Hudson’s Bay Company and...all British subjects who may be already in the occupation of land or other property;” and confirming the property rights of the Puget Sound Agricultural Company, while also reserving the right of the US government to “obtain possession of the whole, or of any part thereof” should the government see fit.<sup>37</sup>

By August of 1848, the Oregon Territory was organized and the HBC began withdrawing its personnel and supplies from the region. Throughout the region, the HBC abandoned its fur trade posts. Fort Colville was entirely abandoned for Fort Shepherd in approximately 1857, Fort

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<sup>35</sup> Gray H. Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahee: U.S. Empire and the Transformation of an Indigenous World, 1792-1859* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 3.

<sup>36</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>37</sup> “Treaty between Her Majesty and the United States of America, for the Settlement of the Oregon Boundary,” signed June 15, 1846. United States National Archives.

Nez Perces was maintained until it was burned during the “Yakima War” in 1855 and entirely abandoned in 1857 following the desertion of Fort Vancouver for Fort Victoria. Fort Nisqually was one of the last posts maintained in the region by the HBC until it was sold to the US in 1869. The movement of HBC posts north of the forty-ninth parallel did not, however, indicate the end of the fur trade in this region, but rather changing routes, patterns of travel, and trading partners.

Protestant missionaries had been proselytizing in the Columbia River Plateau for a decade when Marcus and Narcissa Whitman were killed on November 29, 1847 at their mission near the Walla Walla River. In the midst of a measles epidemic that followed on the heels of a prominent Walla Walla man’s death, rumors spread among several Columbia River Plateau Indigenous communities that the Whitmans were responsible. Though there is still no consensus on the immediate cause for the murder of the Whitmans, the consequences of this violent event informed interactions between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people in the region for decades to come.<sup>38</sup>

Following the establishment of the boundary between the United States and the British colony of British Columbia, the American government attempted to negotiate treaties with Indigenous peoples of the region. The murder of the Whitmans further complicated this process, as the American military began treating the Spokane, Nez Perce, and Cayuse of the Plateau as culpable, and thus hostile. Battles broke out between the American Army and the Cayuse in February of 1848, sending the missionary Walker and Eells families to take refuge at Fort Colville before returning to Tshimakain. In 1853, the War Department sent a surveying party to the Columbia River basin to determine possible railroad routes through the region. This surveying party was met at Fort Colville by then-governor of Washington Territory, Isaac Stevens, who was surveying the area between Fort Colville and St. Paul. Stevens and Captain

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<sup>38</sup> Elliott West, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 50.



George McClellan left Fort Colville for Tshimakain, where they met with Spokane Garry.<sup>39</sup> Garry gave the men a tour of the valley surrounding the site of Spokane House, now gone, and he described the religious tensions between the protestant Spokane and the Catholic Coeur d'Alenes. Following this surveying expedition, Isaac Stevens recommended to the commissioner of Indian Affairs that the United States government negotiate with the Spokane for title to their lands, and by February of 1854, he advocated placing them on reservations.<sup>40</sup> In the following years, conflicts would arise between Indigenous peoples and the military, as they did between Colonel B.E. Bonneville and Spokane Garry in 1855.<sup>41</sup>

Attempts at treaty negotiations in the Plateau began in June of 1855, when Isaac Stevens proposed a shared reservation for the Spokane, Nez Perce, Walla Walla, Umatilla, and Cayuse peoples. Though Stevens did not succeed in convincing those assembled to agree to one treaty, he managed to form three treaty agreements, one with the Nez Perce, one with the Walla Walla, Cayuse, and Umatilla, and one with the Yakima. In those three treaties, five nations surrendered title to the United States for more than sixty thousand square miles of land. By July 16, Stevens was negotiating with the Flathead, Kootenai, Pend Oreilles, and Kalispel what would come to be known as the Hell Gate treaty, in which these four groups surrendered title to thousands of acres of what is now western Montana.

While Stevens was traveling the region conducting treaty negotiations, gold was discovered near Fort Colville. This discovery led to an influx of prospectors to the Plateau, and conflicts between the newcomers and the Indigenous peoples whose homeland they invaded. The HBC Chief Factor at the time, Angus McDonald, acted as an intermediary between prospectors

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<sup>39</sup> Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown, *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun*, exp. ed. (1970; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006), 86.

<sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, 88.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 90.

and the Indigenous people of the region.<sup>42</sup> By October of 1855, 500 American troops under the command of Major Granville Haller arrived in the Columbia River Plateau with heavy artillery. Following a three-day battle with the Yakima at Toppenish Creek, Haller and his remaining men retreated to the Dalles. Stevens responded to this Indigenous military victory by calling a treaty meeting for which he arrived at the Coeur d'Alene mission on November 24, 1855. He then requested the presence of Angus McDonald, and the priest and chiefs at Fort Colville, and pressed any miners in the region into military service. The rag-tag group of reluctant soldiers was named the "Spokane Invincibles" by press outlets at the time.<sup>43</sup> On December 4, 1855 Stevens met with a group of Spokanes, San Poils, Coeur d'Alenes, and the Jesuit priests Ravalli and Joseph Joset in the cabin of former fur trader Antoine Plante to press them into selling their lands and move to reservations. The Indigenous participants were not swayed. In his response to Stevens' reservation proposal, Spokane Garry expressed frustration with the governor's hastiness and his lack of interest in consulting with the communities beyond those in attendance.<sup>44</sup> Following this meeting, Angus McDonald of the HBC acted as informant to Stevens regarding the disposition of the Plateau Indigenous population.<sup>45</sup>

Isaac Stevens returned to the Plateau from Olympia in September of 1856 in an attempt to reach agreements with Indigenous groups who had not yet signed treaties. Following this meeting, Stevens was with Colonel E.J. Steptoe's army regiment when hostilities broke out between the regiment and a group comprised from several Plateau Indigenous communities. Again, the army retreated to the Dalles of the Columbia. Following these events, Stevens'

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<sup>42</sup> Ibid., 93.

<sup>43</sup> Ibid., 97.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 101, n43.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 103 n46.

rhetoric regarding force and interactions with Plateau Indigenous groups became increasingly belligerent.<sup>46</sup>

By May of 1858, Stevens and Steptoe decided a display of force was appropriate at Fort Colville. Steptoe marched more than 150 men, along with considerable heavy artillery, from Fort Walla Walla en route to Fort Colville. The army encamped on the Snake River on the evening of May 16 and, after finding no Indigenous people willing to provide canoes for the army to cross the Spokane River, decided to return to Walla Walla the next day. During their disembarkation the following morning, a shot was fired. The melee that followed left a dozen infantrymen and approximately the same number of Indigenous people dead.<sup>47</sup> Stevens responded to Steptoe's defeat with the declaration "that the present war will be crushed out with a strong hand."<sup>48</sup> Following Steptoe's defeat, former fur traders including Antoine Plante and Thomas Steiniger occasionally acted as mediators between the army, non-Indigenous settlers, and the Indigenous people living near the Spokane River.<sup>49</sup> By September, however, there was another battle between the army and the Spokane and Pend Oreille, this often called the Battle of Spokane Plains. General Wright, who led the army at Spokane Plains, claimed in his memoir to have threatened the Spokane, Pend Oreille, Coeur d'Alenes, and Palouse peoples with extermination, saying

come to me with your arms, with your women and children, and everything you have, and lay them at my feet; you must put your faith in me and trust to my mercy. If you do this, I shall then dictate the terms upon which I will grant you peace. If you do not do this, war will be made on you this year and next, and until your nation shall be exterminated.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>46</sup> Ibid., 105.

<sup>47</sup> West, *The Last Indian War*, 71.

<sup>48</sup> Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*, 112.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 115-16.

<sup>50</sup> Wright, quoted in Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*, 135.

Wright then followed these threats with the slaughter of nearly seven hundred horses belonging to a Palouse man, explaining that “without horses the Indians are powerless.”<sup>51</sup> The presence of the US Army drastically increased after 1858, as did the construction of roads between military posts, such as the Mullan Road. Many of the new American military forts were built on the site of or near existing fur trade posts and the fur trade continued throughout the tumult.<sup>52</sup> Often, fur trade posts such as Fort Colville and Fort Vancouver were the site of negotiations between representatives of the American government and those of Indigenous groups.

In 1861 as the Civil War began, troops rotated through the Plateau as more soldiers were needed in the East. There were few, if any, direct encounters between the military and the Indigenous peoples of the Plateau region for the duration of the Civil War, but the incursions onto Indigenous lands did not end. The first bridge across the Spokane River was built during the winter of 1864-1865 to facilitate easy crossings for miners in the region. Spokane people, including Spokane Garry, opposed the construction without proper compensation to the Indigenous people living at the site. As more miners and settlers entered the Plateau and encroached on Indian land, Indigenous people began seeking employment in towns along the Columbia River, as far as Portland.<sup>53</sup> Trading carried on between Plateau Indians and the US government at Fort Colville, however, with Indigenous people receiving tons of food each year as part of treaty agreements.<sup>54</sup> Between the years of 1869 and 1871, President Grant initiated and implemented his Peace Policy, redirecting the focus of Indian affairs from the purview of the military to that of missionary organizations. With this change in policy, the focus became the physical and the spiritual “wellbeing” of Indigenous peoples. The Peace Policy era was part of

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<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 136.

<sup>52</sup> Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*, 142.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 150.

<sup>54</sup> Ibid., 151.

the Reconstruction period in which political machinations resulted in Congressional failures to appropriate resources during a time of budget reductions and corruption, which resulted in horrific, if unintended, shortages in food and supplies for many Indigenous people then removed to reservations. It was in this period that the fur trade came to an end in the Columbia River Plateau and its histories began to take shape, just as the historical profession also began to take shape.

The history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was written by men who experienced the growing pains of a nascent profession at the turn of the twentieth century, and the history they created acted as a foundation for the “professional” histories that followed over the next hundred years. As Thomas King argued, however, the stories they told were not chosen by chance. They were carefully selected and curated to tell stories with meaning to their authors. As will be explored in the chapters that follow, the brief account provided here to situate Plateau history reflects the biases of its creator(s). It is gathered from socially dominant, predominantly male, global-capitalist, Euro-North American perspectives and as such, focuses primarily on nation-state building and the construction of narratives of progress.

The study that follows is largely grounded in a U.S.-centric perspective in part because of how the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was constructed in the nation-states of Canada and the United States. As Bethel Saler and Carolyn Podruchny argued, “[s]cholars based in Canada have featured the fur trade as the conception of the Canadian dominion, rooted in a mercantilist economy of resource extraction on the edges of empire, while scholars in the United States have dismissed the fur trade as a small stumble on the path of the inexorable tsunami of

republican civilization.”<sup>55</sup> The historiography of the Plateau fur trade is no exception and, as will be demonstrated in the chapters that follow, the historiography will advance as historians analyse this region’s past while utilizing borderlands as a meaningful framework of engagement. In the case of the Plateau, the American historiography of the fur trade is more plentiful than its Canadian counterpart, due in part to a more active community of amateur historians acting as resident boosters for the American portion of the region in the early twentieth century. That the American historiography in this region is more plentiful is ironic, since the history of the fur trade became a footnote in grand narratives of American history.

Understanding the process of creating history goes beyond reckoning with the biases of historians. Historical selections and omissions made in the crafting of history are certainly influenced by author bias, but also justified by the professionalization process foundations of the field of history. In his history of the American historical profession, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession*, Peter Novick explained that “in the case of history the only full-time practitioners before the era of professionalization were the high-income, high-status ‘gentleman amateurs’: the income and status of leading historians was higher before professionalization than it was afterward.”<sup>56</sup> Novick argues that the large number of “gentleman amateurs” writing history did not necessarily mean that they were creating low-quality work, since “much of the most distinguished historical work continued to be produced by those without Ph.D.’s or professorships” at the turn of the century, but it did mean that much of the foundational history written at this time was from a white, male, upper-class perspective.<sup>57</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bethel Saler and Carolyn Podruchny, “Glass Curtains and Storied Landscapes: The Fur Trade, National Boundaries, and Historians” in Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds. *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 289.

<sup>56</sup> Peter Novick, *That Noble Dream: The “Objectivity Question” and the American Historical Profession* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1988), 50.

<sup>57</sup> *Ibid.*, 48.

Early twentieth-century Plateau historians J. Neilson Barry and William S. Lewis, Novick's "gentleman amateurs," published dozens of articles on the Plateau fur trade in newly established journals such as *The Washington Historical Quarterly* and the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*. Barry and Lewis published excerpts of fur traders' journals and articles celebrating men of the fur trade as embodiments of Manifest Destiny.<sup>58</sup> Following the passage cited at the beginning of this chapter, Thomas King went on to say, "[b]y and large, the stories are about famous men and celebrated events" and this observation is true of the early history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade.<sup>59</sup> Wealthy white men told histories celebrating the creation of white wealth and expansion in North America, and these histories were hard to shake. It has taken nearly a century for the suppressed voices in Plateau settler fur trade histories to be heard beyond the communities who keep their stories alive.

Peter Novick's *That Noble Dream* addressed the changing nature of historical practice throughout the twentieth century and was widely criticized by his peers for seemingly lamenting the increased fragmentation of the discipline as historians began researching and writing about the lives of people not in positions of social dominance. Allan Megill articulated his suspicions "of attempts to overcome disciplinary fragmentation. In their most benign form, these attempts usually amount to a promoting of one or another vision of historical synthesis, one or another favored (but ungrounded) paradigm."<sup>60</sup> In the case of western North American history, such attempts often mean carefully selecting or entirely omitting Indigenous knowledge, and promoting Whig interpretations of the past, which, according to Herbert Butterfield

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<sup>58</sup> Manifest Destiny is the nineteenth-century American belief that the United States was "destined" to reach from the Atlantic to Pacific coasts, an ideology on which American expansionism relied and which historians including Amy Greenberg have argued was heavily influenced by American discourses around gender roles. See Amy S. Greenberg, *Manifest Destiny and American Territorial Expansion: A Brief History with Documents* (New York: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2011).

<sup>59</sup> King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 3.

<sup>60</sup> Allan Megill, *Historical Knowledge, Historical Error: A Contemporary Guide to Practice* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2007), 159-60.

“emphasize[s] certain principles of progress in the past...to produce a story which is the ratification if not the glorification of the present.”<sup>61</sup> Until the final decades of the twentieth century, much of the Plateau fur trade historiography extolled the fur trade as a tool of Canadian, British, or American empire-building efforts. Such celebratory historical narratives were common until the mid-1990s when historians including John C. Jackson, Wendy Wickwire, and Elizabeth Vibert began examining the fur trade in this region with an eye toward social interactions and Indigenous people’s experiences.

In North America, professionalization, field fragmentation, and progress narratives are all constructed from perspectives embedded within a colonial system. Linda Tuhiwai Smith argued,

...research became institutionalized in the colonies, not just through academic disciplines, but through learned and scientific societies and scholarly networks. The transplanting of research institutions, including universities, from the imperial centres of Europe enabled local scientific interests to be organized and embedded in the colonial system. Many of the earliest local researchers were not formally ‘trained’ and were hobbyist researchers and adventurers.<sup>62</sup>

Smith’s observation rings true for the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade and is in line with Novick’s history of the historical profession, as well. As Smith argues, the “significance of travellers’ tales and adventurers’ adventures is that they represented the Other to a general audience back in Europe which became fixed in the milieu of cultural ideas.”<sup>63</sup> In the case of Plateau settler fur trade history, early hobbyist historians represented western Indigenous “Others” to readers both in eastern North America and in the growing western towns and cities for which they were also boosters and investors and their depictions of “Others” became foundational historical knowledge for non-Indigenous and some Indigenous people living on the

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<sup>61</sup> Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965), v. Cited in Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 13.

<sup>62</sup> Linda Tuhiwai Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London: Zed Books, 1999), 8.

<sup>63</sup> *Ibid.*



Plateau. Histories of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade were built upon that Eurocentric foundation.

Much of the existing scholarship related to this geographic area is subsumed under the larger context of the Columbia River fur trade or is divided between ethnographic studies of coastal Salish speakers and plains Indigenous peoples. Early historical works concerning this region valorize European actors in the fur trade, emphasizing the merits of being “first” in the colonizing process.<sup>64</sup> Robert Ruby and John Brown’s “tribal history of the Spokane Indians” places their subject in the larger Pacific Northwest central plateau and examines Indigenous people within the context of the reservation period.<sup>65</sup> Ruby and Brown also coauthored with Cary C. Collins an encyclopedia of northwest Indigenous peoples that includes Plateau peoples.<sup>66</sup> Robin Fisher and Richard Somerset Mackie also researched the fur trade in the region inclusive of the Columbia River Basin. While Mackie’s analysis focuses primarily on the activities of the Hudson’s Bay Company with regard to economics and labor, Fisher’s follows the decline of a reciprocal system of economic exchange in British Columbia to one of “white dominance.”<sup>67</sup> Both are important studies of the economics involved in the fur trade but do not deviate from the Eurocentric models of settler fur trade histories.

This dissertation challenges these metanarratives by examining a frequently-overlooked corridor of trade and intercultural exchange, but also by dissecting the ways in which trade and

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<sup>64</sup> Rowland Bond, *Early Birds in the Northwest* (Nine Mile Falls, WA: Spokane House Enterprises, 1971-2); Cecil Dryden, *Up the Columbia for Furs* (Caldwell, ID: The Caxton Printers, Ltd., 1949); Dorothy O. Johansen, *Empire of the Columbia: A History of the Pacific Northwest* (New York: Harper & Row, 1957); James P. Ronda, *Astoria & Empire*. (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1990); John Scofield, *Hail, Columbia: Robert Gray, John Kendrick and the Pacific Fur Trade* (Portland, OR: The Oregon Historical Society, 1993).

<sup>65</sup> Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*.

<sup>66</sup> Robert H. Ruby, John A. Brown, and Cary C. Collins. *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest*, third ed. (1986, 1992; repr., Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 309-317.

<sup>67</sup> Richard Somerset Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains: The British Fur Trade on the Pacific, 1793-1843* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997); Robin Fisher, *Contact and Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1774-1890* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1977), i.

intercultural exchange are remembered within these communities. Similar work is being undertaken in nearby geographic areas, but not within the historiography for the Columbia River Plateau. The work of Keith Thor Carlson and Henry Pennier regarding the Stó:lō people of the Lower Fraser River in British Columbia examines Indigenous memory and identity within the context of colonialism, but remains primarily within the geographic confines of present-day British Columbia and is not specific to the construction of fur trade histories.<sup>68</sup> Alison Brown, Laura Peers, and members of the Kainai Nation examined a collection of photographs of Kainai people taken in 1925 by a British anthropologist, attempting to “develop and demonstrate culturally appropriate ways of researching, curating, archiving, accessing, and otherwise using museum and archival collections.”<sup>69</sup> The work of Peers and Brown is innovative and influential, but it, too, addresses regions other than the Columbia River Plateau and does not specifically examine the fur trade era and its history. Adele Perry’s research on the roles of race and gender in shaping the culture of colonial British Columbia informed the analysis here, in concert with the work of Elizabeth Vibert. Perry’s work acted as a reference point in the analysis of colonial enterprises and the ways in which race and gender were employed as tools in constructing empire or, in Perry’s words, “gender and race were a sharp edge of colonial politics, programs, and policies in mid-nineteenth-century British Columbia,” much as they were at times throughout the Plateau.<sup>70</sup> Anne Hyde’s work on the complexity of empire and interpersonal relationships in the West illuminates the power of individuals and families in negotiating

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<sup>68</sup> Keith Thor Carlson, *The Power of Place, the Problem of Time: Aboriginal Identity and Historical Consciousness in the Cauldron of Colonialism* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2010); Henry Pennier, ‘Call Me Hank’: *A Stó:lō Man’s Reflections on Logging, Living, and Growing Old*, eds. Keith Thor Carlson and Kristina Fagan (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006).

<sup>69</sup> Alison K. Brown and Laura Peers with members of the Kainai Nation, ‘Pictures Bring Us Messages’ *Sinaakssiiksi aohtsimaahpihkookiyaawa: Photographs and Histories from the Kainai Nation* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2006), 3.

<sup>70</sup> Adele Perry, *On the Edge of Empire: Gender, Race, and the Making of British Columbia, 1849-1871* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2001), 4.

political and economic networks in the first half of the nineteenth century with a broad view to the region of “the West.”<sup>71</sup> Hyde shows that the vast networks of the fur trade connected Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples across the North American continent and the globe, arguing “[t]he people of the fur trade shared the making of the world that would develop in this region in the early nineteenth century. Their children, friends, spouses, and partners would link them into a web of families that shaped dominant social and economic networks in the North American West until about 1860.”<sup>72</sup> Her research demonstrates that families and individuals matter within the context of empire and can influence imperial pursuits. It is a valuable look into this transitional era when empires were vying for power in the region and Hyde’s analysis influences my Chapters Two and Four by highlighting family networks and individual agency in the crafting of empires.

Late in the twentieth century, fur trade historians began examining the past in new ways that made visible previously invisible mechanisms of colonialism. Prior to these works, historians rarely questioned the perspectives or knowledge of fur traders who created the records used in drafting settler fur trade histories. In *Traders’ Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846*, Elizabeth Vibert investigated interactions between many Indigenous peoples and broadly-defined European fur traders in the large geographic area of the Columbia River Plateau, analyzing moments of interaction for points of understanding and misunderstanding.<sup>73</sup> Vibert’s work is utilized throughout Chapter One to understand the context in which fur trade writings were created and the ways in which the lived experience of traders shaped how they interpreted Indigenous peoples and their contact with them. Vibert argued that

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<sup>71</sup> Anne F. Hyde, *Empires, Nations & Families: A History of the North American West, 1800-1860* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2011).

<sup>72</sup> *Ibid.*, 20.

<sup>73</sup> Elizabeth Vibert, *Traders’ Tales: Narratives of Cultural Encounters in the Columbia Plateau, 1807-1846* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1997)

“[t]rader texts, like any others, are never objective; rather, they present their reader with multiple subjectivities, multiple ways of knowing the world” and this argument shapes the analysis in Chapters One and Two.<sup>74</sup> Plateau fur trade histories present “multiple subjectivities,” or ways of understanding the fur trade past, that are filtered through the lives and experiences of those doing the writing. Two years before Vibert’s book was published, John C. Jackson reviewed the lives of several fur traders working the Columbia River Plateau, mentioning Jacques Finlay and Finan McDonald, men who built early fur trade posts in the region.<sup>75</sup> Jackson’s approach was largely biographical in nature, as he chronicled the lives of the “forgotten Métis of the Pacific Northwest” in what he deemed “an informal, and admittedly incomplete, survey of the marginal people of the Pacific Northwest” that acts as a historiographical precursor of sorts to Jean Barman’s recent study of the Métis in this region.<sup>76</sup>

Historian Jean Barman’s research illuminates the varied pasts of both the fur trade and women in the Pacific Northwest. In her most recent book, which traces the families of more than 1,000 French Canadians who relocated to the Pacific Northwest in the first half of the nineteenth century, Barman examines individual lives of French Canadians to determine how they, “together with the Indigenous women in their lives and then their descendants, have in some fundamental ways made the Pacific Northwest we know today.”<sup>77</sup> Barman’s work is an excellent reconsidering of fur trade history in western North America, and clarifies “the marginalization, sometimes deliberate and sometimes unintentional, partly successful and partly unsuccessful, of the French fact (as well as the Native fact and the Métis fact),” as her quotation of Jocelyn

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<sup>74</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>75</sup> John C. Jackson, *Children of the Fur Trade: Forgotten Métis of the Pacific Northwest* (Missoula, MT: Mountain Press Publishing Company, 1995), 35-41.

<sup>76</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>77</sup> Jean Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014), 9.

Létourneau suggests.<sup>78</sup> This study shares sources and interviewees with Barman's book, but the analyses of the two projects vary greatly. Barman's work focuses on the lives and legacies of the French Canadians engaged in the Pacific Northwest fur trade, rather than the construction of the many fur trade histories that overlooked her subjects' lives and how those histories shaped the lives of Plateau peoples for more than a century.

Provincial, state, and international borders have complicated the formation of Salish-speaking communities with historical connections to the fur trade and the ways in which these connections are remembered. Building on the ethnohistoric methodologies of Arthur J. Ray, Jennifer S.H. Brown, Heather Devine, and Brenda Macdougall, this dissertation extends beyond current political boundaries to determine the ramifications of fur trade histories for Plateau Indigenous peoples.<sup>79</sup> This project contributes to the task of "bridging national boundaries," envisioning the Columbia River Plateau as a whole consisting of smaller sub-communities, furthering the work of historians such as Benjamin Johnson and Andrew Graybill, who hoped their edited collection, cited above, would "help in bridging the intellectual and spatial divides that all too often separate historians engaged with critical questions about a continent... where border-building and border-crossing have become central features of contemporary life."<sup>80</sup>

Alexandra Harmon's collection of essays on treaties in British Columbia, Washington, and Oregon informs the analysis that follows, as it demonstrates international influence (not only in correspondence between regional leaders such as Isaac Stevens and James Douglas, but also

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<sup>78</sup> Jocelyn Létourneau in Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> Jennifer S.H. Brown, *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Families in Indian Country* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1980); Heather Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves: Aboriginal Ethnogenesis in a Canadian Family, 1660-1900* (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2004); Brenda Macdougall, *One of the Family: Metis Culture in Nineteenth-Century Saskatchewan* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 2010); Arthur J. Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade: Their Role as Trappers, Hunters, and Middlemen in the Lands Southwest of Hudson Bay, 1660-1870* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1974).

<sup>80</sup> Benjamin H. Johnson and Andrew R. Graybill, eds. *Bridging National Borders in North America: Transnational and Comparative Histories* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 25.

through precedent set in the Proclamation of 1763) in American and British Columbian federal Indian policies.<sup>81</sup> European ideas of empire and colonialism were implemented on the Plateau in law, normalizing and enforcing non-Indigenous power in the region.

This project is also situated within the historiography of representation and public history, since it emphasizes commemoration and collective memory. In *Playing Ourselves*, Laura Peers analyzes Indigenous peoples' roles in attempting to "more effectively present an inclusive history."<sup>82</sup> Peers examines sites of public history throughout the United States, looking carefully at the role of Indigenous interpreters who portray Indigenous people from the past. Similarly, the work of Paige Raibmon examines Indigenous ways of representing themselves to non-Indigenous peoples and the ways those self-representations were interpreted, misinterpreted, or altogether ignored by their audiences.<sup>83</sup> Raibmon argued that "Whites imagined what the authentic Indian was, and Aboriginal people engaged and shaped those imaginings in return," and non-Indigenous imaginings of Indigenous people in the Plateau significantly shaped the history of the fur trade.<sup>84</sup> The work of Peers and Raibmon influences the interpretations of Indigenous and non-Indigenous representations of the past in this dissertation. In contrast to the historical interpretation examined by Peers, Indigenous Plateau people have largely refrained from "playing themselves," and when they have engaged in reenactment, such events have generally been on their own terms and not shaped by park programs and missions to the extent found by Peers in other parts of the United States and Canada. Instead, Plateau Indigenous people's self-representations bear similarities to those described by Raibmon in that they have

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<sup>81</sup> Alexandra Harmon, ed., *The Power of Promises: Rethinking Indian Treaties in the Pacific Northwest* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2008), viii, x, 6, 10, 15.

<sup>82</sup> Laura Peers, *Playing Ourselves: Interpreting Native Histories at Historic Reconstructions* (New York: Altamira Press, 2007), iv.

<sup>83</sup> Paige Raibmon, *Authentic Indians: Episodes of Encounter from the Late-Nineteenth-Century Northwest Coast* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005).

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, 3.

been categorized as more or less “authentic” by non-Indigenous onlookers, and valued or discarded accordingly, for use in the creation of fur trade histories. Tiya Miles, in *The House on Diamond Hill*, examines a former Cherokee plantation that is now a Georgia state park.<sup>85</sup> Miles analyses park rangers’ interpretations of the site, interrogating the multitudinous experiences of people who lived and worked there. She argues that public history sites can combine senses of nostalgia and “American Indian historical enchantment that capture deep and differing aspects of the American popular imagination,” an assertion similar to those of Peers and Raibmon in that the ways in which non-Indigenous people imagine Indigenous peoples and places often shapes their histories.<sup>86</sup> Since the voices of Indigenous peoples are largely missing from the interpretation of historical fur trade activities, this project will emphasize the ways in which that vacuum has been filled by park interpreters and Indigenous visitors. This dissertation embraces Miles’s challenge for historians to “pos[e] questions...[that] can point us toward new understandings of the meaning and value of historical sites to our sense of regional as well as racial identity.”<sup>87</sup> By questioning how Plateau fur trade sites are used in the creation and dissemination of the region’s history, the ways in which Indigenous peoples are reinscribing themselves in the landscape of their ancestors and controlling representations of their pasts become evident. They are putting colonial frameworks of authenticity to their own advantage, giving them a measure of political and economic control in the region, as non-Indigenous peoples are being pressured to recognize Indigenous sovereignty.

Because fur trade histories and the parks that celebrate them are tied to the land, environmental history methods are employed throughout this project. It builds on the

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<sup>85</sup> Tiya Miles, *The House on Diamond Hill: A Cherokee Plantation Story* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2010).

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, 14

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 17.

methodology of Keith Basso in examining the role of place in Plateau Indigenous cultures. Basso states in his study of landscape and culture among the Western Apache, “senses of place...partake of cultures, of shared bodies of ‘local knowledge’...with which persons and whole communities render their places meaningful and endow them with social importance.”<sup>88</sup> The landscapes inclusive of and surrounding the Columbia River (and beyond) are meaningful for local Indigenous peoples. How this meaning is constructed and maintained will be examined throughout the chapters that follow. Understanding fur trade histories necessitates understanding how those histories have portrayed human interactions with the environment and how the environment has been used as a tool to disseminate particular kinds of Plateau fur trade histories. Indigenous peoples in the region have consciously inserted themselves into discourses around environmental issues, asserting greater control of their ancient territories.

Finally, included in the chapters that follow are analyses of collective memory and forms of commemoration relating to the Columbia River Plateau fur trade. Collective memory is defined here as a social group’s way of recounting the past, whether by oral testimony, physical reenactment, or mass publications such as newspapers, or as Eviatar Zerubavel has called them, “the unmistakably social maplike structures in which history is typically organized in our minds.”<sup>89</sup> By examining the power relationships of the groups and individuals involved in formalizing collective memories that inform acts of commemoration, this work utilizes the methodological framework created by Jacques LeGoff who argues that dominant individuals or groups “make themselves master of memory and forgetfulness,” manipulating collective memory

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<sup>88</sup> Keith Basso, *Wisdom Sits in Places: Landscape and Language Among the Western Apache* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1996), xiv.

<sup>89</sup> Eviatar Zerubavel, *Time Maps: Collective Memory and the Social Shape of the Past* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 1.



in order to “dominate historical societies.”<sup>90</sup> The histories of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade has been created by multiple social groups, but those that are dominant, namely non-Indigenous people, have controlled the structure and content of Plateau settler fur trade histories, relegating Indigenous peoples to lesser roles than Indigenous memory and history suggest is appropriate.

In addition to LeGoff, this study also relies upon the methodology of Pierre Nora in analyzing both collective memory and place. Nora argues that the “memorial heritage of any community” is created through the construction of long-term communal memories of “*lieux*,” which can be anything from words and symbols to places that reflect the cultural memory of a community.<sup>91</sup> In order to properly deconstruct and understand the forms of commemoration that have arisen from the places of the fur trade, I employ the methods of John R. Gillis, as well as those of Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger. Gillis states that “memories and identities are...(subjective) representations or constructions of reality” that are “embedded in complex class, gender and power relations that determine what is remembered (or forgotten), by whom, and for what end.”<sup>92</sup> By constructing parks and monuments at the sites of former fur trade posts, Plateau people tied memories of the fur trade past to the places on the landscape where they were thought to have occurred, while overlooking Indigenous ties through burial and fishing grounds to those same places.

Tied to concepts of constructed collective memories and commemoration is the notion of tradition. To better understand and explain the performance of tradition relating to fur trade

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<sup>90</sup> Jacques LeGoff, *History and Memory*, trans. Steven Rendall and Elizabeth Claman (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 54.

<sup>91</sup> Pierre Nora, *Realms of Memory: Rethinking the French Past*, ed. Lawrence D. Kritzman, trans. Arthur Goldhammer (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), xvi-xvii, xxi.

<sup>92</sup> John R. Gillis, ed., *Commemorations: The Politics of National Identity* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1994), 3.

commemorations and reenactments, Eric Hobsbawm's work and his articulation that traditions "seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past," regardless of the historical reality informs this study.<sup>93</sup> It explores the rationale behind representations of the fur trade, attempting to expose the underlying collective memories informing them. To do so, the work of historians Guy Beiner, Linda Tuhiwai Smith, Julie Cruikshank, and Daniel Richter act as methodological inspiration.

Beiner demonstrates the importance of what is frequently called "folklore" (defined by Beiner as "the ways by which provincial communities [those beyond the 'limelight of national history'] narrated, interpreted, reconstructed, and commemorated their pasts"<sup>94</sup> in the interrogation of the past, specifically in circumstances where records traditionally utilized by historians (census documents, municipal records, journals) fail to mention the research subject.<sup>95</sup> In the case of the Plateau, Indigenous histories of the fur trade are often relegated to "folklore" status in dominant historical narratives because records of source creators (generally fur traders) did not corroborate Indigenous oral histories. Over time, however, archaeological and further archival research have supported claims made in Plateau Indigenous oral histories. Daniel Richter and Julie Cruikshank embrace Beiner's methodological suggestion, as they utilize oral history sources in their constructions of Indigenous histories, demonstrating the praxis of oral history in scholarly historical texts.<sup>96</sup> Cruikshank's methodology is of particular interest because she emphasizes the ability of oral histories to "make meaningful connections and provide order and continuity in a rapidly changing world," "subvert[ing] official orthodoxies"...and

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<sup>93</sup> Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger, eds., *The Invention of Tradition* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 1.

<sup>94</sup> Guy Beiner, *Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), 5.

<sup>95</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-14.

<sup>96</sup> Daniel Richter, *Facing East from Indian Country: A Native History of Early America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2001); Julie Cruikshank, *The Social Life of Stories: Narrative and Knowledge in the Yukon Territory* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998).

“challeng[ing] conventional ways of thinking.”<sup>97</sup> This respect for oral history ties directly to the research values Linda Tuhiwai Smith articulates for researchers of Indigenous peoples, which guide this research. Smith advocates a subject-driven, respectful, and context-aware approach to Indigenous research.<sup>98</sup>

In his recent book, *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence*, Boyd Cothran examines the occasionally unexpected ways we create memory and construct history. Cothran demonstrates the powerful role played by media and the arts in shaping how society thinks of events and people, how a society’s image of itself can influence the way it defines and treats “others,” and how those perceptions shape policy and legislation, which then have profound effects on the lives of people targeted by laws, but also on people decades, possibly even centuries, removed from the impetus of the legislation or rulings. Cothran argues, “we will never escape the material underpinnings of historical knowledge production. But by investigating the marketplaces of remembering that give shape and meaning to American cultural memory of the past, we can deconstruct the narratives with which Americans have made and remade identity as fundamentally innocent.”<sup>99</sup> Though this project does not deal primarily with innocence, it heeds Cothran’s call to more deeply interrogate the historical narratives we construct about each other and ourselves. Cothran’s work is also an examination of economic forces in the creation of memory and history, a thread this dissertation follows in the third chapter. While this work does not examine Indigenous economies as deeply as the work of John Lutz, Brian Hosmer et. al., Donald Fixico, or Roberta Ulrich, it examines the ways in which economic interests influenced historical narratives and commemoration projects

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<sup>97</sup> Cruikshank, xiii.

<sup>98</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 120.

<sup>99</sup> Boyd Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War: Redemptive Violence and the Making of American Innocence* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2014), 197.

in the Plateau.<sup>100</sup> Influenced by Lutz and Chalk Courchene, mentioned in Chapter Three, I would argue that the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade is also an example of *makúk* (a term in the fluid Chinook language of exchange for “exchange” and the title of Lutz’s book) because it is an ongoing exchange of stories, often misunderstood or misinterpreted by tellers and listeners alike, that “still shape[s] relations today.”<sup>101</sup>

Because this dissertation is largely an attempt to understand how a historiography was constructed, what lies ahead includes analyses of archival materials and publications created by fur traders and historians who were interested in their lives. In some cases, it was necessary to reverse engineer historical monographs by working backward from indexes and sources lists, navigating the intertwining networks of Plateau historians and the fur traders in whom they were interested. Understanding how and why the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was created has also required examining fur trade commemorations and public history events, scrutinizing regional and national newspapers for interviews with the historical actors driving public acts of memory and researching biographies of these individuals, which in some cases led to searches of prison, immigration, and legal archives. Representations of the past through the arts influence collective memory and films, songs, comic books, advertisements, and greeting cards created with the Plateau fur trade as subject are included in the analysis that follows.

People’s understandings of the past are made in daily encounters of its representation, however seemingly trivial they may be. Such sources were sought out for this project by scouring archives and visiting road-side historical attractions, visitors’ centers, local and regional historical

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<sup>100</sup> John Lutz, *Makúk: A New History of Aboriginal-White Relations* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2008); Brian Hosmer, *American Indians in the Marketplace: Persistence and Innovation among the Menominees and Metlakatlans, 1870-1920* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999); Brian Hosmer and Colleen O’Neill, eds., *Native Pathways: American Indian Culture and Economic Development in the Twentieth Century* (Boulder: The University Press of Colorado, 2004); Donald L. Fixico, *The Invasion of Indian Country in the Twentieth Century: American Capitalism and Tribal Natural Resources* (Boulder: University Press of Colorado, 2012); Roberta Ulrich, *Empty Nets: Indians, Dams, and the Columbia River* (Corvallis: Oregon State University Press, 1999).

<sup>101</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, xii.

societies and museums, used book stores, flea markets, and monitoring online memorabilia auction sites. Sources were selected based on whether they contained material about the Plateau fur trade, which meant that interesting sources about the fur trade in surrounding regions or about the Plateau, but not about the fur trade, were excluded from the study that follows or referenced in footnotes.

History is not kept only in the printed word or image, however, and a crucial element of this research was human engagement. While conducting archival research, I met with and interviewed anyone who was interested in the Plateau fur trade and its history, including academics, popular historians, archivists, state and national park rangers, park docents and volunteers, representatives from energy corporations, and historical reenactors. Fieldwork for this undertaking included many hours spent walking the Plateau with interviewees or interpreters who were excited to share with me their interest in the past. My methodology for human participants was both structured, as it was bound by York University's ethics protocol, but also unstructured, in that my source base was largely built through social networks. When meeting and interviewing someone, they unfailingly and generously offered the names of additional people with an interest in the Plateau fur trade. In this way, my network of interviewees grew exponentially, whether in Indigenous or non-Indigenous communities.

With regard to my research in Indigenous communities, a personal explanation is necessary. I am related, through the marriages of maternal aunts, to members of the Spokane and other Plateau Indigenous communities. I am not an Indigenous person, I consider myself accountable to my family members and their communities, and that sense of accountability has shaped my methodology in undertaking this research. In the process of interviewing Indigenous people, I was bound by York University's ethics protocol and I chose to follow the

methodological and philosophical guidelines outlined by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, and I also set parameters for research based on my personal ties to Plateau Indigenous communities.

York University follows the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and, because I interviewed Indigenous and non-Indigenous Plateau peoples about fur trade histories, my work adheres to this policy and I was approved through York's Faculty of Graduate Studies Research Ethics process prior to conducting fieldwork and interviews.<sup>102</sup> York's Ethics protocol required that I provide interviewees with a pre-approved list of questions prior to our meeting, supply and request a signature for "informed consent" in the research process, and provide interviewees with the opportunity to review and edit interview transcripts after their completion, all with the goal of creating "minimal risk" to participants. In addition to methodological protocols outlined by York University, I chose to follow those put forth by Smith, namely that research "has to be ethical and respectful, ... reflexive and critical" and it "also needs to be humble."<sup>103</sup> In the quotation above, Smith referred specifically to researchers conducting research within communities to which they belong and I chose to apply her guidelines to all interviews I conducted for consistency.

I chose not to interview my family members, because I felt that doing so would reveal more about my relationships and role in family networks than about the history I was interrogating, and because I felt that engaging with a wide group of people with varying knowledge and lived experience who expressed interest in working with me would provide a broad base of knowledge and understanding of fur trade histories. There is one exception to these personal restrictions – my uncle and cousin engaged me in a conversation about my research and

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<sup>102</sup> Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, "Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans," Accessed July 20, 2015: [http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2-2014/TCPS\\_2\\_FINAL\\_Web.pdf](http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/pdf/eng/tcps2-2014/TCPS_2_FINAL_Web.pdf).

<sup>103</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 139.

this conversation is discussed in Chapter Four. My personal sense of accountability to family and community influenced the network of Indigenous interviewees and interactions for this project, through both subtle and overt questions interviewees asked about my family before offering referrals for additional interviews. Family ties to the Spokane and Plateau Indigenous communities occasionally allowed me access to knowledge and people that may not have been offered to me if I were not in some way accountable to community members. In other instances, my personal kinship ties were not discussed, though I cannot be sure that people I met with didn't already know that I was related through marriage to community members. Community and kinship connections are a central element of Indigenous forms of collective memory on the Plateau and are a driving force behind the methodology employed in Chapter Four of this dissertation, as well as the interpretive framework employed throughout.

This dissertation seeks to answer the question of how and why the history of the fur trade in the Columbia River Plateau is understood in the ways in which it is. It is a project that examines the construction of memory and commemorations of the fur trade era by different communities for their distinct purposes. Examining the stories people told about the fur trade and why, this dissertation demonstrates that the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade has been and continues to be a tool used to further the social, political, and economic desires of its creators, who construct fur trade histories largely in their own image. While Indigenous Plateau peoples have created histories of the fur trade, those histories have for the most part been ignored by non-Indigenous historians and boosters, resulting in a historiography that has largely omitted Indigenous voices for 200 years, even though the voices were present and speaking to those settlers creating fur trade histories. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, however, Plateau Indigenous peoples brought their histories of the fur trade era into the same public forums where

fur trade histories were heard in the region – in state parks, commemoration events, and museums – for non-Indigenous people to encounter. Indigenous histories of the fur trade always existed, they just weren't always heard by non-Indigenous people and that silence profoundly shaped understandings of the fur trading past on the Plateau.

The concept of colonialism looms large in this dissertation and is worthy of a brief examination. I employ a broad definition of colonialism that encompasses what Tuck and Yang define as external colonialism, the non-Indigenous exploitation of North American resources and Indigenous peoples and their labor for the enrichment of European peoples and economies, and internal colonialism, “the biopolitical and geopolitical management of people, land, flora and fauna within the ‘domestic’ borders of the imperial nation. This involves the use of particularized modes of control – prisons, ghettos, minoritizing, schooling, policing – to ensure the ascendancy of a nation and its white elite.”<sup>104</sup> The term *colonialism* in this dissertation refers to non-Indigenous exploitation of physical resources and also the processes by which non-Indigenous settlers in North America have exerted social control over Indigenous peoples in efforts to assert and maintain dominance. Chapter One and Two examine some of the former types of colonialism, while Chapter Three includes more detailed discussions of how the latter form of colonialism has taken place in the Columbia River Plateau.

In order to fully understand what history creators were writing about when they constructed Plateau settler fur trade histories, Chapter One examines sources that referenced the fur trade in the Plateau while it was going on, from approximately 1809 until 1871, because these are the sources on which all histories of the trade were built. Post journals, correspondence, and annual reports of employees in the trade; journal observations of contemporaries working outside

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<sup>104</sup> Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education & Society* v. 1 n. 1 (2012): 4-5.



the fur trade; and the published narratives of all of these people are sources with which historians created the history of the fur trade era in the region. These documents also act as histories-in-the-making, depicting the Plateau fur trade as it happened, from the many different perspectives of contemporary observers. The written events and interpretations constructed during the fur trade era reflect the concerns of their creators and the perceived concerns of their intended audiences, “situated in place and time from the perspective of the present,” as Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn have suggested.<sup>105</sup> Experiencing the trade within their individual purposes for being in the Plateau, these authors and artists reflected their personal concerns and those of their intended audiences in the work they produced. These sources create the foundations for the histories of the nineteenth-century Plateau fur trade that began to take shape as the nineteenth century came to an end and American settlers began flooding the region.

As the fur trade era came to a close in the 1870s and settlers began pouring in to the region in the decades that followed, boosters and recent migrants constructed stories about the Plateau and the fur trade that was conducted there. The new histories, covered in Chapters Two and Three, that came to be written about the region relied on the memories of retired fur traders and their families, those of Indigenous people, and the writings and images they created. In the process of building an empire, Plateau boosters, historians, politicians, and newspapers constructed the fur trade as a foundation on which they built myths about themselves, their predecessors, and their region. The structures and products of empire they created focused largely on land and, by the interwar period, this became expressed through leisure. Throughout the twentieth century, non-Indigenous creators of Plateau fur trade histories used those histories as a tool, generating images and histories of the fur trade that reflected what they interpreted as

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<sup>105</sup> Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn, “Introduction to Special Issue on Memory,” *Representations* 26 (1989): 2.

ideal qualities of Plateau people, and they did so for the consumption of those people - people who looked a lot like themselves. Histories created by and for the consumption of non-Indigenous peoples on the Plateau depicted non-Indigenous actors in the fur trade as central to the region's character, while relegating Indigenous participants to historical diversions. For Indigenous people, however, fur trade histories came to be used as a tool for restitution in the decades following the second World War, acting as evidence in Indian Claims Commission cases of their occupation and use of Plateau lands and supplementing their ability to challenge the wrongs of the past.

For many Indigenous Plateau people, discussed in Chapter Four, fur trade histories were about exchange that took place in long-established trading places and it was just one of a much longer series of exchange events. Among twenty-first century Plateau Indigenous peoples, memories of the fur trade range between non-existent and those vividly shared between generations for two centuries. They have created diverse ways of remembering the North American fur trade and its legacies in their communities, but were rarely asked to participate in projects of commemorating the trade. Nonetheless, Plateau Indigenous peoples have maintained commemorative community traditions and have created ways of remembering the Plateau fur trade by engaging with non-Indigenous commemorative projects such as the David Thompson Bicentennial and participating in workshops with fur trade reenactors to educate teachers on the history and legacies of the fur trade for Indigenous people.

The story of the North American fur trade is complex. The varied histories of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade are as distinct as the many possible ways to speak of *ntk'kw'min* and their creation had social, political, and economic consequences for participants in the fur trade and their descendants. Histories of the fur trade in the Plateau have been created by

different people at different times for different purposes, but those histories have all reflected the desires of their creators and have been put to use in realizing those desires. Thomas King wrote that when “we imagine history, we imagine a grand structure, a national chronicle, a closely organized and guarded record of agreed-upon events and interpretations...welded into a flexible, yet conservative narrative that explains how we got from there to here.”<sup>106</sup> The history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade is less an agreed-upon, grand structure than a series of complicated *ntk'k'w'min* compiled over time and place for different uses. What follows is an attempt at understanding those compilations.

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<sup>106</sup> King, *The Inconvenient Indian*, 3.

## CHAPTER ONE: In the Thick of It

The limited extant records for the era in which the Columbia River Plateau fur trade operated, from approximately 1809 until 1871, are the foundation on which its historiography has been built. Post journals, correspondence, and annual reports of employees in the trade; journal observations of contemporaries working outside the fur trade; and the published narratives of all of these people are sources with which historians can check the authenticity and veracity of claims related to the fur trade era in the region. These documents also act as histories-in-the-making, depicting the Columbia River Plateau fur trade as it happened, from the many different perspectives of contemporary observers.<sup>107</sup> The written events and interpretations constructed during the fur trade era reflect the concerns of their creators and the perceived concerns of their intended audiences, “situated in place and time from the perspective of the present,” as Natalie Zemon Davis and Randolph Starn have suggested.<sup>108</sup> The many different depictions of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade presented in this chapter are the constructions of people either engaged in or observing the nineteenth-century Plateau fur trade as it happened; they were in the thick of it. Experiencing the trade within their individual purposes for being in the Plateau, these authors and artists reflected their personal concerns and those of their intended audiences in the work they produced. As Elizabeth Vibert stated regarding the writings of Plateau fur traders, “given their authors’ purposes, [traders’ narratives] are narrower and more contrived than many.”<sup>109</sup> These sources, contrived as they may be, create the foundations for the histories of the nineteenth-century Plateau fur trade that began to take shape as the nineteenth

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<sup>107</sup> When possible, I have used the original sources unless otherwise stated. There are some journals, such as that of Alexander Henry the Younger, that are no longer extant. In these cases I have used published versions of the source.

<sup>108</sup> Davis and Starn, “Introduction to Special Issue on Memory,” 2.

<sup>109</sup> Vibert, *Traders’ Tales*, 15.

century came to an end and settlers began flooding the region. To understand the power of these later histories, it is important to understand the sources on which they rest because, in the words of Trouillot, “[t]he ultimate mark of power may be its invisibility; the ultimate challenge, the exposition of its roots.”<sup>110</sup> This chapter explores the roots of Columbia River Plateau fur trade histories.

This chapter is arranged according to source creators: fur traders who wrote about their work, external observers of the fur trade who wrote about the trade, and external observers who painted and sketched the nineteenth-century Columbia River Plateau fur trade. The writings of fur traders include post journals and reports, letters and correspondence between men in the trade, as well as published works written by fur traders. Missionaries, railroad surveyors, and government representatives were external observers who wrote about the fur trade in this area. These same external observers also depicted the Plateau fur trade in imagery, as did an Indigenous person in contact with missionaries. This structure facilitates a more thorough understanding of the source materials used by future historians of the Plateau fur trade than does a chronological ordering of the history, as it immerses the reader in the context and concerns of the communities represented.

In 1810 David Thompson sent North West Company employees Jacques Finlay and Finan McDonald to establish a fur trading post at the confluence of the Spokane and Skeetshoo, or Little Spokane, rivers, tributaries to the mighty Columbia. Though it was a small post, it became a hub for considerable social and economic activity in the Columbia River Plateau. It also became a site for the physical presence of European fur traders, initially from the NWC and many of who were French Canadian and called “Montreal Men” by Thompson, on the Plateau

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<sup>110</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 158.

landscape.<sup>111</sup> The writings of fur traders Thompson and McDonald about their work and that of their colleagues and neighbours, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike, comprise extant primary source documents created within and during the Columbia River Plateau fur trade. These men were engaged in a global capitalist enterprise, collecting furs within hierarchically organized companies for transport to European markets in exchange for monetary compensation. Though their immediate concerns varied with time, place, and circumstance, men writing about the Plateau fur trade while furthering it constructed narratives concerned primarily with the profitability of the trade. In post journals and annual reports, they responded to their superiors' questions about the location of the posts, lay of the land, and the peoples they encountered in the process of procuring furs, but these responses were primarily concerned with business. Each report and journal tallied the returns, or furs, received by the post, enumerated any expenses, detailed the activities of men (and occasionally women and children) financially supported by the posts, and attempted to specify ways in which the company could increase profitability. While it is possible and important to glean far more from these documents than simply their economic information, it is also necessary to contextualize their content within their commercial objectives.

Beginning with David Thompson's assessments of the Plateau on his visit in the summer of 1811, fur trade documentation was thick with notations on location, weather, travel, and climate. Thompson's observations, more so than any others that followed, comprised detailed navigational remarks interspersed with quotidian concerns. For August 7, 1811, Thompson noted "A fine clear mornng – a little dist Thunder. At 4:30 Am set off, Co N5E 1M N13E¼ + 2/3M end of Co stopped abt 2H at a Village of 15 Men, gummed & boiled Salmon."<sup>112</sup> In the same entry,

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<sup>111</sup> Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women*, 43-4.

<sup>112</sup> David Thompson, Journal and Notebook no. 21, David Thompson fonds F443-1, MS 4427, Archives of Ontario.

Thompson observed “for Longde & Time by Aldeb[aran], Aquila[e], Jupiter &c. Latde by Obsn at Noon 46°:25’:23” N, by Acct 46°:33¾’N Longde 118°:20¾’ W.”<sup>113</sup> While the former portion of the entry described the activity and surroundings of Thompson and his men, both entries served his purposes. While in the employ of a fur trading company, Thompson needed to track progress toward the company’s goals of expanding trade in the region. Noting physical movement across the landscape, interactions with Indigenous people, and the activities of his employees served this end. Thompson also intended to create a detailed map of the western reaches of the continent. Noting his specific longitudinal and latitudinal position served this end. The physical location of fur traders on the landscape was important to track, both to the traders themselves and to the companies who employed them, and Thompson was but one of many to record his location and movements through the Plateau and the weather he experienced there.

Finan McDonald, stationed as a clerk at Spokane House, noted observations similar to those made by Thompson throughout 1822, as did James Birnie, McDonald’s replacement when he travelled to other posts in the Columbia District. Observations of the weather were often tied by implication to occurrences at the fort. On May 17, 1822 McDonald recorded that he “Sent to the Kettle Falls a supply of goods by Payette to purchase the skins that are reported to be there. People as usual employed at the Barrier, Pleasant weather.”<sup>114</sup> Conversely, on December 10 of the same year, Birnie griped that “Roundeau is off work with a sore hand & Paul being still on the Sick list Mr. Kennedy has reduced his rations one half in case it should be an imaginary sickness...The weather has been raining & blowing fresh all day.”<sup>115</sup> Neither entry made explicit the connection between weather and labour, but explanations were implied. May 17 was a “pleasant” day in which men and goods could be transported with relative ease and construction

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<sup>113</sup> Thompson, Journal and Notebook no. 21, Archives of Ontario.

<sup>114</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid.

of a fish barrier could be undertaken. On December 10, a day of rain and wind, McDonald suspected his labourers of faking illnesses to avoid work. In the context of the Spokane House Journal as a detailing of business activities that influenced company profits, noting weather and labour patterns became a form of explaining production or lack thereof.

Also pertinent to company concerns with progress and profit were the journals of traders sent in search of new supply sources, or untrapped beaver habitats. Observations on the weather in these documents explicitly linked progress and climate. In August of 1831, HBC employee John Work set out from the confluence of the Columbia and Spokane rivers to assess the availability and quality of furs in the southeastern reaches of the Columbia River Plateau. On August 21, he remarked that he and his crew “Embarked at an early hour but soon had to put ashore on account of a strong head wind, which did not abate till the afternoon” and again two days later, the “weather too stormy to admit of our marching, so that we did not stir all day.” Weather was not the only environmental factor influencing Work’s progress. A month later, on September 13, Work mentioned the “Overcast but very warm weather” in which he and his group “Continued our journey six hours, twenty-two miles E. to another small river, there was no water to encamp sooner. Many of the horses fatigued.” The following day, they “Proceeded on our journey two and one-half hours, eight miles E. to another small river. We were induced to stop earlier than usual on account of the country being burnt and dreading that we could not get grass farther on.”<sup>116</sup> The ability of traders to seek out new revenue sources in the Plateau was hindered by both weather and climate. Making a note of these obstructions explained progress to their superiors, and also described the region’s profitability potential.

Part of traders’ remarks regarding travel included the status of the posts they visited along the way. Not only were such stops an opportunity to restock supplies, they were also a chance for

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<sup>116</sup> John Work, “The John Work Collection,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.



these men to interact with others in similar circumstances, working in a familiar setting. In the 1824 journal of his travels to inspect the Columbia District, HBC Governor George Simpson stopped at posts along his route to resupply, but also to conduct his managerial duties, assessing the efficiency (more often remarking on deficiencies) of each fort and the employees found there. On October 28, Simpson noted that “Messrs...accompanied me to Spokane House leaving our Craft and people at the Forks...Here we found Messrs Finnan McDonald & Kittson Clerks and a large concours of Indians of the Spokane & Nez Perces Tribes encamped about the Fort. The remainder of this day and the 29<sup>th</sup> was occupied in making the following arrangements connected with the trade.”<sup>117</sup> Less than a week later Simpson was travelling again, leaving “our Encampment before Day break...got to Okanagan at 10 A.M....Here we found Mr Annance with some of the Thompson River people who had been sent by Mr McLeod for supplies brought up by Mr Ogden after the arrival of the Vigilant which could not be got at Fort George when they went for their outfits in the Summer on account of the non-arrival of the Vessel from England.”<sup>118</sup> At both Spokane House and Fort Okanogan Simpson resupplied and received word on the status of forts and ships in the district. On his travels in 1831, John Work also made mention of stopping at posts along the way. On August 30, he and his crew “reached the fort to breakfast, and found Mr. McGillivray and people all well. Some men who were sent from Vancouver to Colville with letters and for some supplies of horses and horse agents passed here on the...and have not yet returned, it is probable they are detained till the Colville people return from the Fhead [Flathead] summer trade.”<sup>119</sup> Fur traders’ journals elucidate the many activities traders undertook while stopping on their travels around the Columbia River Plateau, all within

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<sup>117</sup> George Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>118</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>119</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

the context of conducting the business of the fur trade. For these journals' creators, the activities of traders were reported in relation to their impact on company profits and losses.

Competition was a common subject of discussion during post visits. From 1809 to 1871, several fur companies competed with one another over the furs of the Columbia River Plateau. In addition to company rivalries, imperialist rivalries played out in this setting. The North West Company and the Hudson's Bay Company were British-run, while the American, John Jacob Astor, controlled the Pacific Fur Company and American Fur Company. Russian traders operated on the coast and for approximately a decade from 1823 until the late 1830s, the Rocky Mountain Fur Company, an American-owned overland company, competed for fur-bearing animals in the Plateau.<sup>120</sup> The activities of competitors and their effects on returns were mentioned often in traders' writings.

American explorers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark reached the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers on the southern edge of the Columbia River Plateau in October of 1805.<sup>121</sup> Though Lewis and Clark made little mention of their time in the Plateau, their presence in the region was of apparent concern to fur traders who were there decades later and was of

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<sup>120</sup> For more on fur trade company rivalries in the region, see Barton H. Barbour, *Fort Union and the Upper Missouri Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2001); Elizabeth I. Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company: Work, Discipline, and Conflict in the Hudson's Bay Company, 1770-1879* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1997); Hiram Martin Chittenden, *The American Fur Trade of the Far West, Vols. 1 and 2* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1986); Eric Jay Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire: The Epic History of the Fur Trade in America* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2010); LeRoy R. Hafen, ed. *French Fur Traders & Voyageurs in the American West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1993); LeRoy Hafen, ed. *Mountain Men and Fur Traders of the Far West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1982); LeRoy Hafen, *Trappers of the Far West* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1983); Johansen, *Empire of the Columbia*; Theodore J. Karamanski, *Fur Trade and Exploration: Opening the Far Northwest, 1821-1852* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1983); Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*; Mary Malloy, "Boston Men" on the Northwest Coast: *The American Maritime Fur Trade, 1788-1844* (Kingston, ON: The Limestone Press, 1998); Paul Chrisler Phillips and J.W. Smurr, *The Fur Trade* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1961); Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*; Ronda, *Astoria & Empire*; Scofield, *Hail, Columbia*; David J. Wishart, *The Fur Trade of the American West, 1807-1840* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1992).

<sup>121</sup> "October 13, 1805," University of Nebraska Press/University of Nebraska-Lincoln Libraries-Electronic Text Center, *The Journals of the Lewis and Clark Expedition*, accessed November 21, 2012, <http://lewisandclarkjournals.unl.edu>.

great interest to Astor, whose employees would follow their route in search of furs.<sup>122</sup> With the exception of the HBC post journals and annual reports, all of the fur traders active in the Plateau between 1809 and 1871 who left written records referenced the American Corps of Discovery expedition. Alexander Henry the Younger recorded their presence on the Columbia River near the Dalles.<sup>123</sup> In November of 1824, nearly two decades after the Lewis and Clark expedition, George Simpson noted the earlier presence of “Captns Lewis & Clarke of the United States Army...after ascending the Missouri Crossing the Rocky Mountains and descending this Stream to its junction with the Columbia” as he passed the confluence of the Snake and Columbia Rivers.<sup>124</sup> The fierce competition over furs led companies and their traders to take notice when potential competitors ventured into new territory. In the case of the Columbia River Plateau, HBC men were as concerned about Lewis and Clark bolstering American territorial claims to the region as they were wary of competition, ever-fearful that commercial or imperial rivals would gain control of the lands and resources from which they made their profits.

Fur traders employed by American firms were also cognizant of potential competition in the region. In the Astoria journals of June 15, 1811, Duncan McDougall of the Pacific Fur Company referenced a letter dated “5<sup>th</sup> April last by Finnan McDonald” intended for “Mr. Stuart, Estekaadme Fort,” an unknown fort. The Astorians could not “make out the motive of...the Letter he brought” other than to alert their rivals to the NWC presence in the Plateau.<sup>125</sup> In August of 1812, John Clarke, a partner in the Pacific Fur Company, arrived at the confluence of the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers, and began building an American trading post, Fort

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<sup>122</sup> Dolin, *Fur, Fortune, and Empire*, 194, 209. For a discussion of earlier competition among fur trade companies, see Ray, *Indians in the Fur Trade*.

<sup>123</sup> Barry Morton Gough, ed., *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814, Vols I and II* (Toronto: The Champlain Society: 1992), 215, 223.

<sup>124</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>125</sup> Jones, ed., *Annals of Astoria*, 24-25.

Spokane. By December 27, Clarke “had constructed a snug and commodius [*sic*] dwelling-house, containing four rooms and a kitchen; together with a comfortable house for the men, and a capacious store for the furs and trading goods; the whole surrounded by paling, and flanked by two bastions with loopholes for musketry.”<sup>126</sup> By 1824, George Simpson had devised his plan to create a “fur desert” in the southeast corner of the Plateau, coveting the “handsome Profits” that region’s “rich preserve of Beaver” could supply the HBC, a source “which for political reasons we should endeavor to destroy as fast as possible.”<sup>127</sup> American competitors in the fur trade set up shop in the Columbia River Plateau, proving that some post visitors came intent to stay for commercial and imperial reasons.

While competing fur traders in the Plateau may have jostled for business, at times imperial powers overruled them. Ross Cox, a clerk in the American Pacific Fur Company, arrived at Astoria on June 11, 1813 to the news that “a total revolution had taken place in the affairs of the Company” and that “war had been declared the year before between Great Britain and the United States.”<sup>128</sup> Cox’s primary concern regarding the War of 1812 was a shipping blockade preventing the resupplying of Pacific Fur Company posts on the Columbia River. According to Cox’s account, the fear of a blockade was one of the primary reasons representatives from the PFC and NWC agreed that the latter would “purchase all the furs, merchandise, provisions...stipulating to provide a safe passage back to the United States...for such members of [the PFC] as chose to return; and at the same time offering to those who wish to join the Northwest Company and remain in the country the same terms as if they had

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<sup>126</sup> Cox, *Adventures*, 104.

<sup>127</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>128</sup> Cox, *Adventures*, 108.

originally been members of that Company.”<sup>129</sup> Less than a month later, on July 1, 1813, Duncan McDougall noted in the Astoria journals that

An agreement has been formed with him [McTavish] on the part of the N. West Co. to avoid a Competition in the upper Country during the present season; the post of Spokane House is given over to them, and they are to abandon wholly the trade of the Columbia and flathead Country. He receives from us a small quantity of Goods amounting to upwards of Eight hundred Dollars, for which he is to render payment next spring at the forks of the Columbia in any manner that shall best suit our purpose. He has also consented to forward by their winter express a few despatches from us to Mr. Astor at New York.<sup>130</sup>

Following this agreement the NWC men at Spokane House moved lodgings and the shop from the post built by Finlay and McDonald to the spacious now-former Fort Spokane recently built by the Americans. When Simpson observed in November 1824 that Lewis and Clark had previously been at his current location, he also suggested “that the American Government claims the Sovereignty of the tract of Country...although it is perfectly ascertained that Lieut Broughton of Vancouvers Expedition had taken possession of the whole River and country adjoining it on behalf of Gt Britain as far back as October, 1792.”<sup>131</sup> By 1827, the writings of HBC men in the Columbia River Plateau were concerned more with overland expeditions of the Rocky Mountain Fur Company than those ascending the Columbia from the Pacific Ocean. In his Fort Colville report from that year, John Warren Dease enumerated the “Advantages of the Department” and in this reckoning related the news that

our outposts have for these few years back enabled us to get in those furs which would in our absence have fallen into the Hands of the Americans who hunt about the Snake Country not verry far from the Flat Head & Kootonais Posts. Our intercourse with the surrounding Tribes by supplying them with their principal wants has attached them to us and in case of opposition will give us an advantage over them providing they don’t undersell us.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>129</sup> Cox, *Adventures*, 108.

<sup>130</sup> Jones, ed., *Annals of Astoria*, 198.

<sup>131</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>132</sup> “Colville Fort Report on District, 1827,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

As American attempts to extract furs from the northwest changed, so too did the concerns of their competitors and as American claims to sovereignty over the western reaches of the continent grew, so did the concerns of British fur traders operating there.

George Simpson returned to the Columbia District in 1829 and in his writing from that voyage, his concerns over competition were more evident than in his earlier writings. In his dispatch to the London offices on March 1, 1829 Simpson devoted considerable time to HBC competitors:

It may now be proper, to draw your Honors attention to the operations of our opponents in that quarter. There was an American party in the Snake Country as long ago as 1809 or 1810, who established themselves at a place called (after their Leader) Henry's Forks; but who only remained one Season... Their next visit, was in 1824, when Genl. (a Militia Genl.) Ashley of St. Louis, (who notwithstanding his dignified title has had a number of ups and downs in life having been a Farmer a Shopkeeper, a Miner and latterly an Indian Trader) fitted out a large party of Trappers & Servants. Smith the conductor of one of his parties, joined our Expedition in the Autumn of 1824, and passed part of the following Winter at the Flat Head Post...and immediately afterwards in return for our hospitality and protection...laid his plans to decoy our Trappers and break up our Expedition, in which he succeeded. Ashley's returns that year amounted to between 5 & 6000 Beaver, a great part of which however was taken out of what is called the "Black feet Country", about the head Waters of the Missouri. In 1825/26 Ashley's party was made up by our Deserters, and a re-enforcement from St. Louis, to about 100 Men...and collected about the same quantity of Beaver; when, he retired from the business with a fortune, which in Dollars sounded large in the United States, and resumed his Shopkeeping concerns in St. Louis: but the fortune in question, was entirely nominal as the profits arising from the two prosperous years on the West side barely covered the losses sustained during the two preceding years on the East side of the Mountains; the fact therefore is, that Ashley gained merely a little *éclat* by his trapping speculations, notwithstanding all the bombast that appeared in the American News papers of 1824, 1825 & 1826 in regard to their "enterprising Countryman."<sup>133</sup>

Remarks about other traders and competitors were common in the writings of nineteenth-century fur traders discussing the Columbia River Plateau, but Simpson's remarks here were unique and worth citing at length in that they provided trapping details, took personal aim at the partners of a

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<sup>133</sup> "Simpson to HBC, March 1, 1829," Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

competing company, and revealed that Simpson was aware of fur trade business being reported in the American press. His concerns with the American imperial project were more prominent in this dispatch than in previous writings, as was his concern about disloyal employees.

For men responsible for managing others, a category in which most of these informants fell, the merits and faults of their peers and subordinates were often the subject of journal entries. Edith Burley argued in the context of the HBC that “finding suitable labour was an ever-present concern in the company’s history and its employees frequently failed to behave as loyal servants were supposed to,” concerns often mentioned in Plateau writings.<sup>134</sup> In November of 1810, Alexander Henry the Younger learned through an Indigenous woman “that our people are now living Encampment with the Flat Heads &c. If this report is true, it must be Mr F McDonald who must have abandoned his house.”<sup>135</sup> In this case, Henry and McDonald were peers. Under McDonald’s watch at Spokane House twelve years later, he remarked on the labour carried out by his underlings. On June 9, 1822 McDonald “fitted out Baptiste...and an Iroquois...with steel traps...to enable them to hunt beaver till the fall. They were to pay one half their hunts to the Company and if they broke or lost any of the steel traps they were to pay half price.” By July 3, however, “Baptiste...& the Iroquois who went off some time ago returned without doing anything. I have turned them out to provide for themselves.”<sup>136</sup> Similarly, John Work experienced labour management frustrations nearly a decade later, on his eastward reconnaissance mission. For the October 24, 1831 journal entry, Work fumed that “Four of our people, A. Finlay, M. Finlay, M. Plante, and A. Plante, quit the party and returned...contrary to my wish. These men are half Indians, and so whimsical that they cannot be relied more upon than Indians. Leaving me thus and weakening the party in a dangerous country is rascally

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<sup>134</sup> Burley, *Servants of the Honourable Company*, 2.

<sup>135</sup> Gough, ed. *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*.

<sup>136</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

conduct, they had promised to remain with the party two years. They are too lazy to keep watch. Beaver were taken.”<sup>137</sup> John Work’s frustration was palpable – this was one of the few instances in which he didn’t note the number of beaver skins collected in a day. Historian Carolyn Podruchny argued that “(d)eserting the service was an outright breach of the master-servant contract” and could serve multiple purposes including vacation, creating a space for negotiation, or to find better employment.<sup>138</sup> The writings of fur trade elites in the Columbia River Plateau suggest that labourers were in a position of power in negotiating with their employers, as Burley and Podruchny suggest, primarily because of the limited labour pool in the region and that a layer of labour conflict was included in the discourse of fur trade writings.

Venting about labour frustrations in journals intended for one’s superiors was not unexpected. The irritations experienced by men in the middle levels of the fur trade hierarchy are evident in each of the sources examined here, but the ruthlessness of Sir George Simpson’s writings in particular stands out. The man who managed the Hudson’s Bay Company for four decades maintained a “Character Book” of his employees, describing them in snide and elitist terms that separated himself from how he saw his employees. The men he observed in the Columbia River Plateau did not escape this fate. The character book may have been Simpson’s private reference index of employees not intended for an audience, and it was not published in his lifetime.<sup>139</sup> Alexander Ross was the victim of Simpson’s pen on October 28, 1824 when the latter described the former as a man “who feels no further interest therein than in as far as it secures to him a Saly of £120 p Annum and whose reports are so full of bombast and marvelous

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<sup>137</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

<sup>138</sup> Carolyn Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World: Travelers and Traders in the North American Fur Trade* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2006), 156.

<sup>139</sup> George Simpson, “The ‘Character Book’ of Governor George Simpson, 1832,” in Glyndwr Williams, ed. *Hudson’s Bay Miscellany, 1670-1870* (Winnipeg: Hudson’s Bay Record Society, 1975), 151-236.



nonsense that it is impossible to get at any information that can be depended on from him.”<sup>140</sup>

Less than a week later, on November 3, Simpson complained of Chief Trader John Dease’s sobriety:

This Gentleman I understand is very *sober* steady and attentive to his business, but his extreme *sobriety* rarely tasting and never exceeding one Glass of Wine in *public* when contrasted with certain reports of ancient Date, his appearance in the morning, want of appetite, the Oceans of Tea he Swallows and the deranged state of his nerves, I must confess looks a little suspicious; people are however wonderfully delicate in regard to each others character on this side of the mountain and although I have fished for information I can merely learn that he is a *great Tea Drinker*. Were he to drink a pint of Wine with his Friends on extraordinary occasions, get up earlier in the morning eat a hearty breakfast and drink less Tea I should have a much better opinion of him.<sup>141</sup>

This critique of Dease is singular in that it was the only time Simpson took issue with one of his men’s sobriety on the Plateau. More frequently found in traders’ writings than admonitions against sobriety were descriptions of their labourers’ over-indulging.

Alcohol was more difficult to obtain in the western reaches of the nineteenth-century North American fur trade than it was further east, mainly owing to the lack of a settled non-Indigenous population centre and because few people manufactured it locally. Alcohol was certainly available in the Columbia River Plateau, even if in limited quantities, and fur traders imbibed, creating a topic of discussion in their superiors’ writings. In some instances, clerks and factors were complicit in their employees’ drinking by supplying them with celebratory spirits in an attempt to create a “home away from home” for labourers, often during holidays celebrated by French Canadian voyageurs.<sup>142</sup> The morning after Alexander Kennedy’s assumption of management at Spokane House on November 5, 1822 the post journal indicated that “Last night Mr. Kennedy gave a ball being the custom of the place when the men have this for their winter

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<sup>140</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>141</sup> Ibid.

<sup>142</sup> Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 174; Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women*, 94-5.

grounds some of the men got a little intoxicated and wished to purchase rum but we never sell them that article here.” As the year 1822 neared its end, more parties were held at Spokane House and more alcohol consumed. On December 24, “This being Christmas eve the men had a dram of rum” and on the following day, “This morning the men came into the hall for the purpose of paying their respects to Mr. Kennedy & Mr. McMillon after receiving a few drams. They had the following allowance over & above their rations: ½# flour ½ pint spirits 1# Indian meal ½# grease. They passed the day very agreeably together.” To celebrate the new year on January 1, 1823,

our men had the following allowance over and above their rations – To each man is 1# flour 1# grease 1# Ind. Meal ½# sugar 1 pint berries 1 oz. pepper 1 oz. salt 1 pint spirits. The women had half a man’s allowance except the spirits. The men came and paid their respects to Mr. Kennedy and Mr. McMillan this morning after firing three rounds with the great & small cannon they came into the hall and were received by the store gentlemen very politely after receiving a few drams they give us another salut from the cannin & then went to enjoy their givings.<sup>143</sup>

On New Year’s Day nine years later, John Work described the festivities of his expedition: “The men and some of the principal Indians were treated with a dram and some cakes in the morning, and a small quantity of rum had been brought from the fort for the occasion.”<sup>144</sup> At times of celebration, employees’ drinking habits were not described as problematic. Other occasions, however, found traders inebriated and their superiors unimpressed. When John Work attempted to start his explorative journey into the southeast of the Plateau, he complained on August 18, 1831 that his men had been “at the sawmill, where they were sent a few days ago to drink the regale. Some of the men being in liquor I deferred starting till tomorrow.”<sup>145</sup> Podruchny has demonstrated that hangovers often delayed brigade departures in the fur trade, though she argued

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<sup>143</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>144</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

<sup>145</sup> Ibid.

that drinking “did not seriously threaten the social order of the fur trade.”<sup>146</sup> Alcohol was repeatedly mentioned in the writings of fur traders in the Columbia River Plateau, but it was seemingly not a cause for concern among clerks and factors unless it impaired traders’ ability to work.

As the incident with Work’s men above and the Spokane House post journal indicate, labourers in the Columbia River Plateau fur trade occasionally suffered from ill health. Along with the commonly recurring themes of weather, travel, competition, and labour management, employee health appeared frequently in the writings of Plateau traders. David Thompson began mentioning food-induced ill health among his men in early September 1811. On the fifth of the month, Thompson noted that he and his party were “unwell with eating dried salmon & Berries” and the following day, “Coxe very ill & most of us a little so.”<sup>147</sup> John Work’s expedition got off on rocky footing when some of the men were hung over and “Four of the men...are sick with the fever. They are very ill, but it is expected they will get better on experiencing a change of climate above the Cascades...In the evening two more of the men...were taken ill, but I suppose it to be the effect of liquor.” Three days later, on August 21, 1831, men in Work’s party were still “so ill that we could not proceed. Two more of the men...taken ill. Some of the others are very ill and one or two of them are getting better.” After two more days, “Some of the sick men very ill...becoming very weak. I much regret that they came away from Vancouver, it is impossible to attend them as they ought to be on the voyage, and what little medicine I had will soon be done.”<sup>148</sup> On his visit to the Plateau in 1825, George Simpson reported “5 Men labouring under the ‘Chinook love Fever,’” an unfortunate euphemism for venereal disease. Simpson went on to describe “one of our poor fellows [who] is in a horrible state and it requires all the professional

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<sup>146</sup> Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 170, 184.

<sup>147</sup> Thompson, Journal and Notebook no. 21, Archives of Ontario.

<sup>148</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

Skill of Mr Ross & myself to keep him at his duty.”<sup>149</sup> Maladies of various types visited traders in the Plateau and they were not averse to writing about them.

With mention of illness often came reports of healing, and the traders tried their hands at various forms of recuperation, for themselves and the Indigenous peoples of the Plateau. Governor Simpson’s stricken employee mentioned above had “no contemptable opinion of his own surgical talents having once performed a wonderful cure on himself in the *Short* space of *Two Years*” for recurring sexually transmitted disease.<sup>150</sup> John Work treated his employees’ illnesses to the best of his ability, writing “The Doctor furnished me with a small quantity of medicine for them,” though, as he stated above, that medicine didn’t last long.<sup>151</sup> On March 17<sup>th</sup> of 1823, the Spokane House journal recorded “We have had a few sick Indians all winter which we have given medicine to, but within this day or two the numbers has improved greatly.”<sup>152</sup> Six days later, the journal was updated with the following observation: “We have still a good many Indians on the sick list, one young girl paid the debt of nature this morning.”<sup>153</sup> Traders mentioned deaths experienced by both European and Indigenous communities in which they worked. Finan McDonald remarked that on May 31, 1822, “A band of Indians arrived from the plains with a dead child to bury near the fort at the tombe of its forefathers” referencing the burial ground near which Spokane House was built.<sup>154</sup> On his 1831 expedition, John Work briefly stopped the party on September 29 “owing to one of Satraux children, a little girl, who has been some time ailing dying this morning.”<sup>155</sup> Occasionally, a misreported death was corrected in the records, as was the case on June 5, 1822 when “A few Indians arrived from the

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<sup>149</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>150</sup> Ibid.

<sup>151</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

<sup>152</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid.

<sup>154</sup> Ibid.

<sup>155</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

plains, by whom we learn that the young man who was reported to be killed by the Coeur d'Alenes has come to life again.”<sup>156</sup>

Diet was occasionally the reason for ill health and even death, and much of the writing in the nineteenth-century Columbia River Plateau centred on food sources and ways to obtain more of them. Almost daily, traders made mention of food because, as Podruchny argued, the “quest for food dominated the fur trade and constituted a major concern for the men involved,” shaping “post life and determined the ease or burden of voyageurs’ work.”<sup>157</sup> At the end of November 1810, Alexander Henry’s men were away from the post, “Desjarlaix hunting. Fired at a Doe Moose but she escaped.”<sup>158</sup> David Thompson’s contingent “were obliged to kill a Mare for Food” on August 11, 1811.<sup>159</sup> The following day, he obtained from “a Spokane” some dried salmon and by August 17 the group had “Killed 2 Ducks & 1 Pigeon” and had “32 lbs of Salmon, dried” among them.<sup>160</sup> Hunting food occupied a considerable amount of traders’ time and is commonplace in fur trade writings, demonstrating that while traders were undertaking a commercial enterprise, they were also responsible for their own survival far from colonial outposts and spent considerable time and resources securing their own sustenance.

The Spokane House journal for 1822-23 contained daily entries about sustenance, including hunting and fishing activities, gardening, trading with Indigenous peoples, and receiving provisions from other posts. Since Spokane House was located on a tributary of the Columbia River, salmon were abundant and harvesting them consumed significant amounts of time and effort. A “barrier,” or fishing weir, was erected in the fashion of those used by the Indigenous Spokane people living near the fort. Daily tallies of the fur traders’ catches compared

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<sup>156</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>157</sup> Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 234, 235.

<sup>158</sup> Gough, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*.

<sup>159</sup> Thompson, Journal and Notebook no. 21, Archives of Ontario.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.

with those of the Spokane were noted in the post journals, with a hint of competition. On April 19, Finan McDonald wrote “The Indians caught 125 fish in their barrier, they brought me two of the largest trout.”<sup>161</sup> By mid-May, the traders were constructing their own barrier and accompanying drying racks and by June, the tallies of trader-caught versus Indian-caught fish were recorded. On June 22, McDonald remarked that he “got 7 salmon from our barrier – the indians can catch nothing in their barrier it being badly fixed the fish pop through it as fast as they come in” but on the 23<sup>rd</sup>, McDonald noted them “employed in fixing their barrier in a more convenient part of the River for catching fish.”<sup>162</sup> By July, the fish had turned. On July 14, McDonald noted that there were “11 Salmon from our Barrier. The Natives have got 140 in theirs.” The following day, the traders “got 11 Salmon from our barrier – the natives caught 230 in theirs.”<sup>163</sup> On August 28, fishing matters came to a head:

This morning as...Mr. McDonald went down to see our barrier, there happened to be some of the Indians there spearing the salmon coming up the river. Mr. McD spoke to them but they being in a canoe, put all his threats at defiance he lost no time in springing into the water & brock the canoe, The Chief of the place was much displeased and went and brock down nine of the palisades of the garden. His brother being more attached to the whites went and drove him away from the garden. He then wished to come to the fort for to disput with us. He was prevented by the Indians we not knowing all their intentions got our cannon loaded but one of them informed us it was only him who was displeased with what we had done. We killed 80 salmon in our barrier. There was a guard kept up all night in case some of the Indians were badly displeased.<sup>164</sup>

As becomes apparent from this entry, acts of violence and displays of aggression arose from attempts to access food. In this case, the “Chief of the place” retaliated for Finan McDonald’s violent outburst by destroying the fence around the traders’ garden. Food was the apparent

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<sup>161</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

source of the conflict, but also a way for Indigenous people to counterattack. Following this incident, McDonald's documentation of the Indigenous catch diminished considerably.

Salmon, trout, and wild game were staple food sources for people along the Columbia River, as were berries, roots, and mosses. For the traders in the Plateau, however, the incorporation of European foods (or foods they thought were European) was desired and they created gardens for raising familiar crops, seemingly more so after the HBC/NWC merger. April 19, 1822 at Spokane House saw "All the men and women belonging to the fort employed digging and preparing a piece of new ground and likewise the old piece of ground for the purpose of planting our potatoes." The following months' entries are dotted with references to labourers in the gardens, minding potatoes. In his annual report on the district, Alexander Kennedy argued strongly that the Spokane House post should be moved to the northwest, at Kettle Falls on the Columbia River. One of his arguments was the possibility for growing more crops there than was possible at the arid site of Spokane House.<sup>165</sup> On his tour of the department the following year, Simpson took Kennedy's suggestion seriously. Simpson arrived on October 26, 1824 "to the Kettle Fall about 1 o'clock P.M. where we made a portage... The Portage would be a good situation for a fort as the soil is tolerably good and extensive Gardens might be made and Fish collected in any quantity at little Expence: it has been suggested to me that Spokane Establishment should be removed to this place."<sup>166</sup> Upon arriving to Fort Okanogan, Simpson praised the "finest potatoes I have seen in the Country" and suggested that "Grain in any quantity might be raised here."<sup>167</sup> Simpson often wrote about the benefits of gardens to the HBC's bottom

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<sup>165</sup> "Spokane Report on District, 1822-1823," Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

<sup>166</sup> Simpson, "Governor George Simpson journals." For more on Simpson's interest in farming to sustain Columbia River fur trade posts and HBC entrées into large-scale farming in the region, see James R. Gibson, *Farming the Frontier: The Agricultural Opening of the Oregon Country 1786-1846* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1985).

<sup>167</sup> Simpson, "Governor George Simpson journals."

line, explaining on November 1, 1824 that “It has been said that Farming is no branch of the Fur Trade but I consider that every pursuit tending to lighten the Expence of the Trade is a branch thereof and that some of our Factors and Traders on the other side are better adapted for and would be more usefully employed on this side in the peaceable safe and easy occupation of Farming...” and he made suggestions to the Columbia Plateau traders that encouraged agriculture.<sup>168</sup> On his return through Kettle Falls on April 14, 1825 Simpson marked off the land on which he wanted the future Fort Colville built, also observing that “An excellent Farm can be made at this place where as much Grain and potatoes may be raised as would feed all the Natives of the Columbia and a sufficient number of Cattle and Hogs to supply his Majestys Navy with Beef and Pork.”<sup>169</sup> The Columbia River fur trade, according to George Simpson, needed to diversify the sources of their provisions and he filled many pages detailing how it should be done. By 1830, John Work was quite proud of the agricultural progress being made at Fort Colville, writing in the annual report “The farm at Colvile merits particular attention. At a very trifling additional expense and without interfering with the trade, I have little doubt it may not only render the place independent of the Indians for provisions, but furnish a sufficiency of grain and pork for the other establishments in the Columbia above Vancouver, and for New Caledonia.”<sup>170</sup> Work thought progress was being made at Fort Colville but he also thought there was much still to be done.

Although Governor Simpson recommended the posts raise livestock, few mentions exist of domesticated animals other than horses in the writings of Columbia River Plateau fur traders. Horses, however, garner considerable attention. Horses were the primary mode of transportation in areas with unnavigable rivers or no rivers at all. Much of the Columbia River Plateau is

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<sup>168</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.

<sup>170</sup> “Colville Fort Report on District, 1830,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.



unnavigable by water and for more than a decade the principal fur trading post in the region, Spokane House, fit just this description. The Spokane River, the tributary to the Columbia River on which Spokane House was located, ran too shallow for fully laden boats to reach. Loads of furs leaving the post or provisions arriving to it rode too deep in the shallow river to make water transport feasible. On his visit to Spokane House on October 28, 1824, Simpson noted “leaving our Craft and people at the Forks” of the Columbia and riding horseback, “the distance is about 60 miles and being well mounted we got to the Establishment in the same Eveng.” He described “the road tolerably good and the Country interesting being a succession of Hills plains and points of Wood the winding course of the River bringing it frequently to our view and adding much to the beauty of the scenery” between the forks of the Columbia and Spokane Rivers and Spokane House.<sup>171</sup> Simpson noted “The distance from Okenagan to Spokane House across land does not exceed 5 or 6 Days march with loaded Horses” suggesting that horses were also the preferred mode of transportation for this route.<sup>172</sup> The same was true of Fort Okanogan and Kamloops, which Simpson described as “the principal establishment Kamloops on Thompson’s River being situated on the banks of that Stream about Eight Days March from [Okanogan] due North with loaded Horses.”<sup>173</sup> Not only did transport to and from the Columbia require horses, but so, too, did travels to the smaller and more-productive Flathead Post and beyond in search of furs.

Finan McDonald left Spokane House in August of 1822 with dozens of horses to spend the winter with his family and a small contingent of men at the Flathead Post in order to collect and return to Spokane House with the “Flathead furs” acquired there.<sup>174</sup> The HBC often employed Indigenous men to care for their horses, as McDonald did upon returning from a short

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<sup>171</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

<sup>173</sup> Ibid.

<sup>174</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

trip to the mountains on July 29, 1822. McDonald noted that “After unloading the...horses they were given in charge to” Indigenous men “to take them to pasture” after which the men would be paid for the safekeeping of the beasts.<sup>175</sup> John Work’s 1831 expedition into the eastern regions of the Plateau required “one hundred and twenty horses to equip our party.” He found eighty at Fort Nez Perces, but he hoped to find the remaining forty among other posts in the district. As he noted, “Whether that number will be obtained from Colville I cannot say.”<sup>176</sup> Later in his journey, Work complained of the poor quality of horses and their difficulty on the route, writing that “[t]he road very hilly and slippery and miry, and exceedingly fatiguing both on the horses and people. Some of the horses gave up on the way owing to the bad road and the bad weather.”<sup>177</sup> Horses were often needed by Plateau traders and rarely in sufficient supply.

Indigenous people loaned some of the horses Plateau fur traders used, such as those McDonald “Paid the Indians sundry articles for” on June 4, 1822 to travel “to the Kettle Falls for fetching Old Baptiste’s...furs.”<sup>178</sup> Most of the horses acquired in the district, according to George Simpson, were “traded from the Nez Perces tribe and forwarded to Spokane” from the Nez Perce people, an Indigenous group whose homeland included the eastern portions of the Plateau, the western slopes of the Rocky Mountains, and some of the northern Great Basin.<sup>179</sup> In 1831 John Work complained when some of his employees purchased horses from a group of Nez Perce that “the people are such fools that they outbid each other and gave double the price they ought for a horse.”<sup>180</sup> Many of Work’s entries concerned feeding and caring for these animals. Horse theft was also a common theme in the writings of Plateau traders. Alexander Henry the

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<sup>175</sup> Ibid.

<sup>176</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

<sup>177</sup> Ibid.

<sup>178</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>179</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>180</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

Younger expressed concern in his journal “that a war party of Peagans and Fall Indians are just returned, with sixty horses stolen from the Flat Head Country, and that a fresh party are gone off for the same purpose, to steal horses.”<sup>181</sup> Horses amounted to a considerable expense for the fur traders and were a necessary implement in the trade, and often the traders expressed frustration at their dependence on Indigenous suppliers of these essential animals.

The activities of chasing after and caring for horses, tending gardens of potatoes, and hunting game kept the fur traders of the Columbia River Plateau busy both in undertaking these tasks and in writing about them. Labour such as this remained in the context of the business of furs and the process of collecting them from the natural environments of the Plateau and exporting them to markets elsewhere. One step in this process was maintaining a physical presence on the Plateau landscape in the form of buildings. These buildings, constructed primarily of wood, required maintenance and thus the attentions of their inhabitants, yet another subject of trader writings. Podruchny outlined four main areas of post labour at interior fur trade forts: “trading with Aboriginal peoples,” “the quest for food,” travel “throughout the year between interior posts,” and “post construction and maintenance.”<sup>182</sup>

The process of constructing posts in the Plateau was not well documented, with the exception of Fort Colville in 1825. After George Simpson decided to move the Spokane House post to Kettle Falls and on his way past the falls on April 14, he arranged for the new post’s construction by first asking permission of the local Indigenous people. He wrote of the process,

While the people were carrying I went to the Chiefs Lodge about a Mile above the Carrying place; had an interview with him and some of his principle followers and intimated my wish to form an Establishment on his Lands provided he undertook to protect it and assured us of his Friendly disposition. He received the proposal with much satisfaction and offered me the choice of his Lands in regard to situation or quantity. We selected a beautiful point on the South side about  $\frac{3}{4}$

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<sup>181</sup> Gough, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*.

<sup>182</sup> Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 205.

ths of a Mile above the Portage where there is an abundance of fine Timber and the situation elegendible in every point of view...Lined out the Site of the Establisht 150 feet Square on a bank facing and commanding a view of the River and I have taken the liberty of naming it Fort Colvile as both the Establishments that bore that Gentlemans Name were abandoned at the Coalition; likewise marked out the Garden and wrote Mr Birnie to Spokan House directing him to send a couple of Men across immediately to plant 5 or 6 Bushels of Potatoes, and to make the necessary preparations to remove the property on the arrival of the Brigade from Fort Vancouver.<sup>183</sup>

Once the posts were established, daily maintenance was recorded in post journals. Reports of “people employed collecting bush to make a fence” and “people employed in erecting palisades” are repeated throughout the Spokane House journal of 1822-23. On June 23, 1822, improvements to the post were made when “One man employed white washing the houses” and “Today all hands except sawyers putting up the ridge pole of the store & flag staff after we had finished it.” There was some excitement on October 4, when “About noon we were surprised with the alarm of fire in the big house but by a timely discovery we got it under upon examination we found the fire had taken from a hole in the chimney near the roof.”<sup>184</sup> The repairs necessitated by this fire kept the men busy for the coming months. Maintaining the posts was imperative for keeping labourers occupied when not engaged in procuring furs, but also to provide a location from which to conduct the business of the fur trade. The buildings of the fur trade would later become points of fascination for historical enthusiasts and historians who looked to them as evidence of non-Indigenous tenure on the land and as anchors of colonialism in the region.

The subject of animal furs, the object of the fur trade, is mentioned often in the writings of nineteenth-century traders on the Columbia River Plateau. Some of the traders working in this region were nonchalant in their recording of returns, the collected furs that would be sent to European and Asian markets, simply noting unspecified quantities and qualities of pelts while

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<sup>183</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>184</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

other writers drew detailed tables illustrating the returns of their particular post by species and number. When David Thompson travelled through the region in 1811, he repeatedly noted arranging packs of furs, such as on August 22, when “2 Packs of Furrs from the Oochenawgas” (Okanagan) were traded.<sup>185</sup> The journal at Spokane House is predictably full of trading furs, though descriptions of the exchanges are frequently vague. Finan McDonald often noted, “I traded 25 beaver skins” or “Traded a few beaver to day.” When McDonald left James Birnie to manage the post journal in the summer of 1822, the entries became a bit more descriptive, providing details about trades. For example, on October 4, Birnie reported that he “Traded from the Indians...84 beaver skins, 33 otters, for which we give three guns some powder & ball.”<sup>186</sup> Occasionally old caches of furs were found, such as the one mentioned by James Birnie, when in 1822 a “party of freemen have brought...80 damaged beaver belonging to the North West Company having been left there in cache by the Iroquois in the Spring 1820.”<sup>187</sup> The annual reports to the HBC from the posts were more detailed in their fur reports, as is to be expected. These reports were intended to provide a summary of the post and district production for the year and explain how many and what types of furs were collected, as well as trade goods expended.<sup>188</sup> In Alexander Kennedy’s annual report from Spokane House, he lobbied diligently to move the post to Kettle Falls, explaining Spokane House’s inadequate returns as a consequence of location and labour. Kennedy mused, “It occurs to me that most of these Freemen would be much more advantageously employed up the Columbia near the Border of the Rocky Mountains, where they

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<sup>185</sup> Thompson, Journal and Notebook no. 21, Archives of Ontario.

<sup>186</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman argue that the fur-trading system in place by the mid-eighteenth century “developed as a compromise between the customs and norms of traditional Indian exchange and those of European market trade,” thus it was “a mixture of economic, political, and social relationships” and, while post and district reports tally expenses and incomes of interest to European observers in a profit-driven system, they also reflect the interests and influence of Indigenous partners in trade. Arthur J. Ray and Donald Freeman, *Give Us Good Measure: An Economic Analysis of Relations Between the Indians and The Hudson’s Bay Company Before 1763* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978), 3.

would be more in our Power, and the Furs are of a much better quality,” a suggestion that George Simpson took seriously.<sup>189</sup> From the Kamloops post that year, John MacLeod used much of his report to justify the fluctuations in returns, blaming Indigenous politics for his post’s poor performance. The 1827 annual report from Fort Colville was much the same as those described above, with John Warren Dease providing the total returns for the year along with lengthy excuses for underperformance. John Work’s reports from Fort Colville for 1829 and 1830, however, differ considerably from those of his peers in their amount of detail. In 1829 Work included one page with a table of furs collected in the district, contextualized with a multiple-page description of their procurement.<sup>190</sup> The following year he included twelve pages of tables, breaking the fur tally down by species, location of retrieval, and source, whether by traders or Indigenous people.<sup>191</sup> The ways in which traders tracked incoming furs varied in form and content throughout the Plateau, depending on the person creating the document and the success of their post. The documentation of returns revealed the extent to which traders in an area interacted with local Indigenous people and how well traders hunted furs, but also how closely they attended to the interests of their employers.

In addition to the furs actually collected, traders often wrote of the bounty beyond, or the fur potential in areas other than those in which they were situated. In February of 1811, Alexander Henry wrote of the Flathead Country, “The Animals in which this Country abounds is the Red, Fallow & moose deer, Grey Sheep & White Goats, of the Fur kind. Beaver, Bear, Otter, and other kinds of skins of value are in abundance.”<sup>192</sup> In his attempts to convince the HBC to move the Spokane House post to Kettle Falls, Alexander Kennedy in 1823 explained:

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<sup>189</sup> “Spokane Report on District, 1822-1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>190</sup> “Colville Fort Report on District, 1829,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>191</sup> Ibid.

<sup>192</sup> Gough, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*.

There are a great many Indians along the Columbia who are yet little known to the Traders in this quarter, particularly those above the Kettle Falls, who seldom or never visit any of our trading posts, It is well known that that part of the country is rich in Beaver particularly near the Borders of the Rocky mountains, and by being nearer to these Indians, which we would, if a post was established at the Kettle falls we would have a better opportunity of acquiring an intercourse with them, and by introducing our goods amongst them, it might be the means of making them look after Beaver, instead of passing their time idly – half starved and half naked as they do now – at least there is a much better prospect of succeeding in a country where there is Beaver to be caught than where there is none.<sup>193</sup>

This passage illuminated Kennedy's desire to increase fur returns in the Columbia District to please his superiors and the means by which he thought such a change could occur. He also made clear the traders' need for Indigenous labour to secure furs in the Plateau. John Work's expedition into the eastern edges of the Plateau in 1832 were for the purpose of reconnoitering the fur bearing potential of the region. After months of travel and limited success, Work wrote about a group of his men sent to trap along a river, "It is expected they will make a good hunt as this part of the river is not known to have ever been hunted by whites."<sup>194</sup> Work was disappointed by the journey, discovering that American competitors had heavily trapped portions of the region while other portions yielded fewer beaver and other fur-bearing mammals than he had hoped. The promise of the bounty beyond drove the North American fur trade and traders' actions on the Plateau were no exception. They wrote about the expectation of abundant furs in regions unknown to them, but not to others.

Furs in the Columbia River Plateau were harvested in a variety of ways. As suggested, employees of the fur trade companies spent time trapping beaver and acquiring furs themselves, they were purchased from freemen, or traders who were not contracted with a company, but they primarily purchased furs from Indigenous people. Convincing the many different peoples of the

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<sup>193</sup> "Spokane Report on District, 1822-1823," Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

<sup>194</sup> Work, "The John Work Collection."

Plateau to hunt beavers for the European fur trade was not always an easy task and one that is referenced in the pages of traders' journals and reports. Finan McDonald mentioned on June 17, 1822 that he gave "a little tobacco to a number of the Indians with a long speech in order to encourage them to tent off from the fort, and go in search of beaver."<sup>195</sup> As the passage above written by Alexander Kennedy reveals, he hoped that the Indians of the Kettle Falls region would be more interested in trapping animals than were those who lived near Spokane House. John Work's detailed annual reports from Fort Colville in 1829 and 1830 track the numbers of furs received from the multiple Indigenous groups in the area and he explained in his accompanying prose that some groups were not interested in trapping for the traders. The fact that fur trade companies operating in the Columbia River Plateau needed Indigenous people's labour to make their commercial ventures successful led them to collect information about these expected labour pools, information that was penned by traders who lived and worked among the Plateau Indians and that would later be used by historians and government entities interested in Indigenous land tenure and use, as well as Indigenous history and culture.

Fur traders entering into the Columbia River Plateau in the early nineteenth century numbered in the dozens and were introducing their fur trade operations to the many thousands of Indigenous people residing in the region. To assess this new market for trade goods and potential labour pool for collecting furs, fur traders made considerable ethnographic notes on the Indian peoples of the Plateau. The observations and judgments written by the traders varied between Indigenous groups, but often reflected more about the traders than they conveyed about Indigenous people, as historian Elizabeth Vibert has demonstrated. Vibert's careful analysis of Plateau traders' writings and their depictions of Plateau Indigenous peoples convincingly argues that these writings are deeply influenced by the traders' personal backgrounds, including their

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<sup>195</sup> "Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823," Hudson's Bay Company Archives.



ethnic origins, family structure, education, and status.<sup>196</sup> Vibert's study examines why Indigenous people were described in certain terms, reflecting non-Indigenous gender, class, and social assumptions. This study is less concerned with why fur traders depicted Indigenous peoples as they did, a task skillfully undertaken by Vibert, than presenting those depictions as the basis of the historiography that followed their presence in the region. Traders' observations and assessments of Plateau Indigenous people are the sources future historians of the region used and continue to use in disseminating the histories of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade and Indigenous partners in the trade.

In their writings, traders remarked on the physical characteristics of Indigenous people, perhaps as description or perhaps as a means of assessing physical abilities of the labourers they hoped to gain. Whatever the reason for their existence, these remarks remain. On his journey to the region in 1811, David Thompson made what he may have deemed preliminary observations of a group of Sanpoil people he hoped would trade with his men. In a long entry for July 3, Thompson describes arriving to a Sanpoil camp and summoning the people there to join the traders in smoking tobacco. As they arrived, Thompson reported "the Chief then made a speech & they all followed him in File, & sat down round the Tent, bringing a Present of halfdried salmon with abt ½ Bushel of various Roots & Berries for food." After describing the speeches of the head man, Thompson described the people as follows: "The Women had all painted themselves & tho' there were a few tolerable faces among them, yet from the paint &c not one could be pronounced bearable. The Men are all of a mid Size – well made, moderately muscular, well Combed & of a tolerable good Mien. The Women, though, were all of rather small stature, clean made, & none of them seemed to labour under any bodily defect."<sup>197</sup> Thompson sized up

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<sup>196</sup> Vibert, *Traders' Tales*, xi.

<sup>197</sup> Thompson, Journal and Notebook no. 21, Archives of Ontario.

the physical ability of the men he encountered and the ability and attractiveness, albeit from his Euro-centric perspective, of Indigenous women. Of what he deemed the “Kettle Fall Tribe” in October of 1824, George Simpson wrote that “Tribe they appeared more wretched than any I had seen on the West side of the Mountains not having a single article of British Manufacture in their possession but a Gun & Beaver Trap; they were not sufficiently numerous to enable us to form any correct opinion of their disposition or habits.”<sup>198</sup> This was a rare moment in which a trader chose not to comment on Indigenous peoples and their perceived “dispositions.”

Fur traders were interested in Indigenous peoples’ physical health and strength not only in the interest of maximizing fur returns through Indigenous trapping, but also because Indian people assisted traders in various other forms of manual labour. As mentioned, Indigenous people tended the traders’ horses and hunted food for them. They also aided in the transportation of the many goods coming and going in the trade. When John Work and his men made portage at the Dalles on August 24, 1831, they did so “with the assistance of Indians [who] carried the goods to the sand half way across the portage.” The following two days, Work “proceeded to the little Dalles, where we had also to make a portage, and with the assistance of Indians had the baggage all across in the evening.”<sup>199</sup> The physical labour traders hoped to receive from Indian people required what they perceived as strength and this requirement influenced their observations.

Physical descriptions of Plateau peoples were augmented by commentary on their “character” or “disposition” in fur trade records. Alexander Henry wrote in February of 1811 that “The Kootonaes have the character of a brave and warlike nation... They are always at peace with their neighbours to the South and Westward of them,” an assessment that begs the source of

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<sup>198</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>199</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

Henry's information.<sup>200</sup> Of the district in 1823, Alexander Kennedy wrote "The Natives within this district are brave and independent, their wants are few and easily supplied, and they live constantly on what Nature bestows, without giving themselves much trouble to improve their state which industry might enable them to do."<sup>201</sup> In the same report and of the same people, however, Kennedy also wrote "The Spokane are a lazy indolent tribe who do not bring us one hundred skins in the course of a year, they think us much beholden to them for allowing us to remain on their lands, and as they generally remain near the House, we are at a great expense...by keeping an open House for them to smoke in constantly, besides supplying them gratis with Tobacco to smoke in their lodges."<sup>202</sup> These are the same people Simpson observed on November 3, 1824 "all busily employed in laying up Salmon for the Winter."<sup>203</sup> These contradictory remarks are not uncommon in traders' writings and, as Vibert has argued, reflected traders' dashed hopes for lucrative trading partnerships.<sup>204</sup> Frequently, Indigenous people who showed no interest in European trade items or trapping for the fur trade were described as lazy, indolent, or unproductive. MacLeod described Indigenous people near the Kamloops post as having "brought us a great share of the Kamloops trade this last Winter" but are "very insolent and troublesome to the whites when upon their lands or trading excursions but at the same time very peaceable when they come to the Fort to trade."<sup>205</sup> Of MacLeod's concerns, Simpson wrote on November 1, 1824, revealing his own interpretation of MacLeod's assessment of Indigenous politics:

The Indians of Thompson's River I understand have been more daring and independent since (MacLeod) has had the charge than they ever were before

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<sup>200</sup> Gough, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*.

<sup>201</sup> "Spokane Report on District, 1822-1823," Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

<sup>202</sup> Ibid.

<sup>203</sup> Simpson, "Governor George Simpson journals."

<sup>204</sup> Vibert, *Traders' Tales*, 126. Vibert references Mary Black Rogers's work on the same concept in the Arctic.

<sup>205</sup> "Spokane Report on District, 1822-1823," Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

which does not say much for his management as if any thing like proper treatment is observed towards the Natives they must necessarily become more attached to us in measure as our residence among and intercourse with them advances and I conceive that an Indian trader who cannot obtain personal influence and secure to himself the respect and esteem of the Indians he has been in the constant practise of dealing with for three years successively is unworthy the title he bears and unfit for the situation he holds.<sup>206</sup>

Three years later, John Warren Dease wrote in his annual report of the “Disadvantages of the Department: Indians Lazy. Addicted to gambling thus wants few and those they will hardly exert themselves to procure by hunting.”<sup>207</sup> Again, supporting Vibert’s argument, the fur trader assessed Indigenous character traits based on their willingness to work for the benefit of the traders. As Jennifer S. H. Brown argued, the traders complained of Indigenous laziness, when in fact they were “working at things of more interest to them than piling up furs to exchange for excess goods for which they felt no need.”<sup>208</sup> Much as Podruchny argued about fur traders using the removal of their labour as a source of power or tool of negotiation, Indigenous partners in the fur trade may have also used this strategy as a form of negotiation or resistance. They may, too, as John Work’s comment and Vibert’s analysis suggests, have considered the labour of the fur trade to be less important than other events and activities unfolding in their communities and they may have chosen to expend their energies elsewhere.

The number and locations of Indigenous people in the Plateau was frequently commented on in trader writings. Henry wrote of the Kootenai “Their numbers are but few. The whole tribe does not exceed fifty families...The Flat Heads and others are frequently intermixed with them, and join in their excursions to the Southward in search of Buffalo.” He added “Of the several

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<sup>206</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>207</sup> “Colville Fort Report on District, 1827,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>208</sup> Jennifer S. H. Brown, “The Blind Men and the Elephant: Fur Trade History Revisited. *Proceedings of the Fort Chipewyan and Fort Vermillion Bicentennial Conference*, Patricia A. McCormack and R. Geoffrey Ironside, eds., 15-19. (Edmonton: Boreal Institute for Northern Studies, University of Alberta, 1990), 17.

different tribes of Indians to the Southward and Westward of the Kootonaes, we are but only just beginning to be acquainted. Those with whom we...trade...are...the Flat Bow or Lake Indians; the Saleeish or Flat Heads; the Kully spell or Earbob Indians; the Skeetshures, or Pointed Hearts, the Spokanes, the Simpoils; the Sapetens or Nez Perces.”<sup>209</sup> In this entry Henry provided an inventory of business partners and a cursory outline of territory. In his 1829 report from Fort Colville, John Work wrote regarding Plateau Indigenous peoples’ origins, “On this subject they can give no satisfactory information...from tradition or otherwise being ignorant where they originally came, they talk a superstitious Indian story of their forefathers being placed in such as lands a situation by their Sinchelep/Little Wolf.”<sup>210</sup> While Work dismissed the Indigenous origin story as superstition, he also documented Indigenous people’s long-term tenure on the land by including its reference to being placed there by supernatural beings, rather than migrating there from elsewhere.

The status of relationships between groups of Indigenous people was also of interest to traders, as they hoped to maximize both the number of suppliers and patrons in the Plateau, and knowledge of Indigenous politics was necessary to do so. Between the summer of 1822 and spring of 1823, McDonald and Birnie mentioned several altercations between Indigenous groups in the environs of Spokane House. In June, “A number of Ear Ring Indians arrived for the purpose of attacking the Coeur d’Alenes if they found any near the fort. The Coeur d’Alenes on hearing of the approach of the Ear Rings ran off.”<sup>211</sup> From Kamloops the same year, John MacLeod wrote about a murder and its repercussions for nearby communities, including that of the traders there. MacLeod lamented “The murderers sent several articles...to the son of the Deceased...for his father’s death, which he rejected, and sent back with a rampage, that he was

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<sup>209</sup> Gough, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*.

<sup>210</sup> “Colville Fort Report on District, 1829,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>211</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

determined not to be satisfied with any other atonement than life for life. I am convinced that this affair will be materially detrimental to Thompsons River department at a future Period, as the greatest Part of our dried salmon is traded at Frasers River.”<sup>212</sup> MacLeod makes explicit his concerns over this disagreement rests with his need for food provisions from one of the groups involved.

Fur traders repeatedly mentioned playing the role of peacemaker between Indigenous groups. Rarely do they mention whether those for whom they thought they were making peace desired their assistance in this process. At Spokane House in the summer of 1822, Finan McDonald described himself advocating for peace among Indigenous people. On June 4, he remarked after receiving some Kalispell people at the post who were purportedly searching for Coeur d’Alenes to attack, “I got them persuaded to return quietly to their lands.” Several days later he “prevailed on them to refrain from going and making war on their neighbours the Coeur d’Alenes but they cannot forget former injuries.”<sup>213</sup> In July of the same year, McDonald wrote that he played peacemaker once again, “After a great deal of ceremony and presents from one tribe to the other a grand peace was concluded on amongst tribes assembled here, and the Chiefs of the different tribes are highly pleased with the conduct of the whites in assisting them to bring about so desirable an event.”<sup>214</sup> Reporting from Kamloops the same year McDonald reportedly brokered a peace between the Kalispell and Couer d’Alene people, John MacLeod wrote of his failed attempt to do the same among Indigenous people further north. After threats were exchanged between groups, MacLeod wrote that he “tried as much as I possibly could to dissuade them from going to war, but finding all my rhetoric only exciting their derision against

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<sup>212</sup> Ibid.

<sup>213</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>214</sup> Ibid.

myself, I was obliged to desist.”<sup>215</sup> During his visit to the Plateau the following year, George Simpson remarked on the habit of fur trade brigades choosing to “burn the palisades that surround the Graves of the Natives,” which Simpson considered “a most unwarrantable liberty” and decided the HBC and its men “should not however impose on their good nature as it cannot fail of giving offence and I mean to issue instructions that it be discontinued in future as it might some Day lead to serious quarrels.”<sup>216</sup> Peace was necessary for profitable trade and the traders took it upon themselves to play peacemaker between peoples, whether it was welcomed or not.

In the prose surrounding descriptions of Indigenous people and in passages relating moments of conflict on the Columbia River Plateau, the fur traders’ fear of Indigenous people is evident. While traveling through the western reaches of the Plateau in 1831 and 1832, John Work demonstrated moments of fear among his party. Afraid of Piegan people, they began night guard on October 16. By the 30<sup>th</sup> of the month, Work reported the “Blackfoot country...very dangerous” and mentioned that he and his men were “on their guard” for “marks of Blackfeet.”<sup>217</sup> The following day, the subject of Work’s fears materialized:

Before noon Champagne, Masson, and C. Riendeau arrived with the news that some of their traps had been stolen by the Blackfeet and that they suspected J. Cloutier was killed as three shots were fired (we heard the shots here) very shortly after he passed them, two other men...who were still farther up the river, it is feared were also killed. Our cannon was fired twice to apprise our men who were out of the enemy’s approach, and...they heard the shots fired at Cloutier, when one proposed to the other to be off, but were instantly fired upon by five or six of the savages from the bank, poor Letandre was wounded but they missed C who crossed the river and escaped to the mountains, both were taken so suddenly that they had not time or wanted presence of mind to fly to their arms. C thinks he saw only six Indians. A party...immediately went off to visit the place and found Cloutier and Letandre both dead, the former stripped of his clothes, neither of them were scalped or mangled, except that wolves or Indian dogs had devoured one of Cloutier’s thighs, he seems to have been killed instantly, both of his arms were broken below the shoulders and the balls passed through his breast, the

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<sup>215</sup> “Spokane Report on District, 1822-1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>216</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”

<sup>217</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

savages were so near that from the size and appearance of the wounds the wadding as well as the balls appear to have entered his body. Letandre seems not to have died so soon, he received two balls one passed through his left breast near his heart, and one through his back and belly, besides a knife was dashed into his head at the root of his nose, probably to dispatch him.<sup>218</sup>

The following day, Work wrote that he and his men “Buried the remains of our unfortunates who came to such an untimely end yesterday by the hands of the inhuman, murderous Blackfeet.”<sup>219</sup>

The following spring, some of Work’s party was so terrified of being attacked that they mistook their own playing children for “Blackfeet” and “went off full speed” to warn their colleagues.<sup>220</sup>

Work’s passages reveal the violence of conflict in the Plateau and the reasons for traders’ fears, some of which were heightened by their own assumptions about race and gender, as Vibert has argued.<sup>221</sup>

On his return from the Plateau in November of 1824, Simpson described a visit to their “Encampment by 60 odd Nez Perces who smoked and were very friendly with us but as they mustered strong and might be inclined to pilfer we embarked after Supper.”<sup>222</sup> Simpson was willing to smoke and eat with these Indigenous people, but he didn’t trust them enough to sleep among them. Later in the same journal entry, Simpson expounded on his fear of the Nez Perce people:

The Nez Perces tribe is by far the most powerful and Warlike in the Columbia and may be said to hold the Key of the River... Their lands to the South border on the Snake Country and with the Snakes they are almost continually at War. If a reconciliation is effected between those tribes it is by our interference and presents are made by us to both parties indeed their only object in coming to this temporary arrangement is to secure those presents; they then smoke a Pipe of Peace and part with professions of Friendship but their treaties are no sooner

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<sup>218</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.” It is also worth noting that this altercation occurred on Halloween, a day imbued with unpleasant connotations for nineteenth-century English and Scottish people, of which John Work was one. Work’s retelling of the event may have been influenced by the day on which it fell. Nicholas Rogers. *Halloween: From Pagan Ritual to Party Night*, New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 2002, 49-50.

<sup>219</sup> Work, “The John Work Collection.”

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, April 27, 1832.

<sup>221</sup> Vibert, *Traders’ Tales*, 255, 261.

<sup>222</sup> Simpson, “Governor George Simpson journals.”



ratified than broken as the moment the conference is over and we turn our back they are ready to pillage each others Women and Horses and cut each others throats. The Nez Perces might by mere weight of property be induced to allow us to pass through their lands to the Snake Country for a year or two while such a temporary peace existed but we have no security or guarantee for its continuance and in the event of a rupture they would identify us with their enemies the Snakes ...and if we were in self defence to kill any of the Nez Perces not only would we have thereafter to pass through an Enemy's Country on our way back with the returns & for fresh supplies but all communication between the interior and the Coast might be cut off which would be certain ruin and destruction to the whole Department...Furthermore our Freemen are composed of Europeans, Canadians, Americans, Iroquois, half breeds of all the different Nations on the East side the Mountain and the Women are Natives of every tribe on both sides; such a motley congregation it is quite impossible to keep under any controul or restraint; they would be constantly gambling buying chopping & changing of Women Slaves Horses & Dogs with the Natives, quarrels would follow as a matter of course and the consequences might be fatal both to the Establishment and Expedition. I therefore conceive that the less intercourse we have with the Nez Perces beyond what is absolutely necessary the better...<sup>223</sup>

Simpson's fear of the Nez Perces was rooted in their political and economic power in the Plateau and the ways in which Simpson feared they might wield that power to the detriment of HBC business. This passage illustrates Simpson's disdain for his employees, seemingly from an ethnocentric and racist appraisal of them, but also his lack of interest or respect for the inter-community politics that existed in the region, into which the HBC was inserting itself to conduct fur trade business. Indigenous groups on the Plateau had long-standing trading relationships with groups in adjoining regions like the Great Basin, Plains, and Rocky Mountains that themselves were part of larger North American Indigenous trade and information networks of which Simpson either knew or cared little.<sup>224</sup>

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<sup>223</sup> Ibid.

<sup>224</sup> On Indigenous networks of trade and communication in the region, see Theodore Binnema, *Common and Contested Ground: A Human and Environmental History of the Northwestern Plains* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2004); Ned Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land: Indians and Empires in the Early American West* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006); Colin G. Calloway, *One Vast Winter Count: The Native American West before Lewis and Clark* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2003); Robert M. Utley, *The Indian Frontier of the American West 1846-1890* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1984); West, *The Last Indian War*.

John Work and George Simpson expressed fears that the Indigenous peoples of the Plateau would harm or kill them, but also that they would take valuable trade goods and supplies from the fur traders. Bruce M. White has argued that this “fear of pillaging” was a common concern among fur traders, so much so that stories of pillaging became “a kind of occupational folklore” and stories of pillaging were shared among traders around North America.<sup>225</sup> White argued that, for some Indigenous peoples, pillaging “was the result of, if not the punishment for, a breakdown in normal social relationships,” something neither Work nor Simpson seemed interested in conveying to their intended audiences.<sup>226</sup> Instead, both men focused on the Indigenous threat of pillage, “something often feared but seldom experienced...the ultimate fear,” as White explained.<sup>227</sup> By telling each other and their readers stories of Indigenous attack and pillage, White argued that fur traders believed they were preparing themselves *should* Indigenous peoples ever attack or pillage them.

On occasion traders in the Plateau wrote about their own displays of force either in response to conflict with Indigenous people or in an attempt to assert dominance over their neighbours. When Alexander Henry the Younger wrote of feeling threatened after an encounter with Indigenous people on the Columbia River on January 19 of 1814, he communicated in his journal that he and his men “fired our Brass Swivel and then sent up a beautiful Sky Rocket. We had observed several smokes to rise in the interior at some distance behind the Village which we presume are the women and children.”<sup>228</sup> In the evening of July 29, 1822 James Birnie reported at Spokane House that the traders, “to gratify the natives...sent off some sky rockets & a hand

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<sup>225</sup> Bruce M. White, “The Fear of Pillaging: Economic Folktales of the Great Lakes Fur Trade,” in Jennifer S.H. Brown, W.J. Eccles, and Donald P. Heldman, eds. *The Fur Trade Revisited: Selected Papers of the Sixth North American Fur Trade Conference, Mackinac Island, Michigan, 1991* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 1994), 199.

<sup>226</sup> White, “The Fear of Pillaging,” 212.

<sup>227</sup> White, “The Fear of Pillaging,” 212-13.

<sup>228</sup> Gough, *The Journal of Alexander Henry the Younger, 1799-1814*.

grenade.”<sup>229</sup> Less than a month later and after some building improvements to the post, Birnie wrote that “the british flag was hoisted upon the mast head we gave a salute with our cannon” followed by celebrations.<sup>230</sup> By letting off grenades and pyrotechnics, the traders hoped to intimidate Indigenous peoples with technology. That these technologies were lethal only furthered their seeming efficacy as displays of force for fur traders.

Those traders working and writing in the nineteenth-century Columbia River Plateau were not the only people leaving records describing their activities. Indigenous peoples in the region were sharing their knowledge of the traders and their activities through oral histories, passed down through successive generations. These histories will be discussed in detail in Chapter Four. One Indigenous man who encountered the Jesuit Nicolas Point on his travels in the region between 1840-1847 created a series of drawings, two of which depict the fur trade. The first, captioned by Point “Traite et distribution de liqueur” illustrated what appear to be two moments of trade: both illustrations depicted an Indigenous man and a European man in the act of exchange. (See Figure 1.1) Each of the Indigenous men in the image carried jugs and wore brightly coloured clothing. Surrounding the European-looking man on the upper left was a store of trade goods, while the man in European clothes in the lower right sat seated on a European-style chair, both men trading with their Indigenous counterparts.

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<sup>229</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>230</sup> Ibid.

N<sup>o</sup> 5. Traite et distribution de liqueur



Figure 1.1: "No. 5. Traite et distribution de liqueur," Joseph P. Donnelly, S.J. *Wilderness Kingdom: Life in the Rocky Mountains: 1840-1847 The Journal and Paintings of Nicolas Point, S.J.* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967.)

Point captioned the second image “Canots et traineau indiens” and it depicted modes of transportation used in the Plateau and interior fur trade. (See Figure 1.2) The Indigenous artist, possibly a Blackfeet man, drew multiple images on one sheet, two of men in European dress rowing in boats, one of a man in European dress on a sled pulled by two dogs, and another of two European-looking men in a canoe. As with the previous image, there were also two birds sketched alongside the images of the fur trade. The artist of these images was familiar with fur traders, who had in the 1840s been established in the area for more than thirty years, and drew traders engaging in their quotidian activities of trade and travel. It is remarkable that these illustrations survive, due in part to the meticulous record keeping of Jesuits active in the region. While Jesuits, namely Nicolas Point and Pierre-Jean DeSmet, were active in the Plateau from the 1840s, their writings mention the fur trade in reference to the Indigenous converts the Jesuits hoped to influence. The writings of Jesuits do not appear as sources in the materials later produced to create Plateau settler fur trade histories and are therefore not further explored here.<sup>231</sup> Between the years 1809 and 1871, the years in which the fur trade was undertaken in the Plateau, several non-Indigenous visitors to the region wrote about their observations of the fur trade conducted there.

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<sup>231</sup> For more on Jesuit missionaries in the Columbia River Plateau, see Robert C. Carriker, *Father Peter John DeSmet: Jesuit in the West*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1995); Laura Peers, “‘The Guardian of All’: Jesuit Missionary and Salish Perceptions of the Virgin Mary,” in Jennifer S.H. Brown and Elizabeth Vibert, eds. *Reading Beyond Words: Contexts for Native History*. (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2003); Peterson, “Sacred Encounters in the Northwest,” 37-48; and Jacqueline Peterson and Laura Peers, *Sacred Encounters: Father DeSmet and the Indians of the Rocky Mountain West*. (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1993).

N° 6. Canota et traineaux indiens.



Figure 1.2: "No 6. Canots et traineaux indiens," Donnelly, S.J. *Wilderness Kingdom*.

Scottish naturalist David Douglas travelled through the area during his 1823–27 explorations of the continent. On April 11, 1826 Douglas wrote that he arrived at the confluence of the Spokane and Columbia Rivers, where he found trader John Dease and “took an opportunity of sending letters to England across the continent to Hudson’s Bay and then accompanied Mr. Dease to Kettle Falls on the Columbia, where a new establishment was about to be formed by him.” Douglas observed of the site of Fort Colville, “Of all the places I have seen this is by far the finest: high rugged mountains, fertile valleys, and this immense body of water dashed over a pitch 24 feet perpendicular, the country abounding with game.”<sup>232</sup> Upon reaching the former site of Spokane House on May 2, Douglas remarked, “Mr. Jacques Finlay was here, and obligingly undertook to repair the lock of my gun, and on this occasion I felt happy in having it in my power to give him some assistance in provisions. For several days he had nothing excepting a sort of cake made of *Lichen jubatum*, Linn., and a few roots of *Scilla esculenta* and of *Lewisia rediviva*.”<sup>233</sup> David Douglas described the people of the fur trade primarily as his guides and hosts and his observations of the trade in this region are limited to the comings and goings of individual Europeans, emphasizing those of George Simpson, John Franklin, and John Work, and conspicuously neglecting the Indigenous people engaged in the trade in this area. Douglas was a botanist and the bulk of his journals record plant species and ecosystems of the continent, only reflecting on its human inhabitants when immediately affecting his work.

The spring of 1835 brought Protestant missionary Samuel Parker to the Columbia River Plateau with the support of the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions with the proclaimed mission “to ascertain by personal observation, the condition of the country, and the

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<sup>232</sup> David Douglas, *Journal Kept by David Douglas During his Travels in North America, 1823-1827*. (London: William Wesley & Son, 1914), 62-63.

<sup>233</sup> Douglas, *Journal*, 63.

character of the Indian nations and tribes, and the facilities for introducing the gospel and civilization among them.”<sup>234</sup> In publishing his writings, Parker claimed to want to “benefit the original, the rightful owners, and (with the exception of a few thousand fur traders scattered in every direction over the territory,) the sole occupants of this wide field of uncultivated nature.”<sup>235</sup> In this statement, the author acknowledged Indigenous sovereignty in the Plateau while also conflating their tenure with that of fur traders. Parker’s journals, published in 1846, contained a “publisher’s note” alerting the reader that “Mr. Parker’s Tour through the Oregon Territory, is the only work published by any person who has been over the country generally, in *all seasons* of the year, for the express purpose of learning the physical condition of the country, and the natural and moral state of the Indian inhabitants” in an attempt to depict the work as an authority in its field.<sup>236</sup> Indeed, Parker (or an editor) wrote that all others writing on the Plateau

were engaged in the fur trade, and many of their observations upon different sections of the country are just, but their productions are deficient...and are mostly confined to personal adventures, anecdotes of battles with Blackfeet or Crow Indians, starvation and hair-breadth escapes. Justice to the public requires fidelity in the historian and traveler. It is not their business to originate facts, but to record them. The license given to poets, or writers of romance, cannot be tolerated here, and no flights of a lively imagination, or graphic powers in relating passing occurrences, can atone for impressions which are not in accordance with truth.<sup>237</sup>

Readers of Parker’s journals finish the front matter with the impression that fur traders’ writings were prone to “flights of a lively imagination” and were thus unreliable. Interestingly, Parker himself writes about “hostile tribes of Indians” among whom fur traders worked, including among them the very “Crows and Blackfeet” he chastised traders for writing about.<sup>238</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Samuel Parker, *Journal of an Exploring Tour Beyond the Rocky Mountains*, 17.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, vi.

<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, 25.



Similar to the writings of fur traders and others in the region, Samuel Parker described the fur trade posts he encountered, but from the perspective of a Protestant missionary assessing a potential mission field. In his descriptions of Fort Nez Percés, Parker emphasized those qualities of interest to potential missionaries:

The Fort is built of logs, and is internally arranged to answer the purposes of trade and domestic comfort, and externally for defense, having two bastions, and is surrounded by a stockade... This establishment is not only supplied with the necessaries of life, but also with many of its conveniences. They have cows, horses, hogs, fowls, &c. and cultivate corn, potatoes, and a variety of garden vegetables...<sup>239</sup>

Parker's assessment of the fur trade environment focused on comfort and also mentioned the importance of gardens, following George Simpson's self-sustainment logic. Similar to the writings of Plateau fur traders, Parker demonstrated his fear of Indigenous people. When he was obliged to travel in canoes manned entirely by Indian men, travelling through "places which have been battle grounds between traders and Indians," Parker stated he did so "without fear" yet his compulsion to name his fears betrayed him.<sup>240</sup>

Of the traders he encountered, Parker made glowing reports. He wrote that the "gentlemen" of the HBC were "worthy of commendation for their good treatment of the Indians," some of whom they had given religious instruction, "especially in regard to equity, humanity, and morality." Tellingly, Parker reveals in the same passage that the "long standing" company intended "to perpetuate the business; therefore they consult the prosperity of the Indians as intimately connected with their own."<sup>241</sup> Parker continued to explain that he hadn't heard a single story of Indigenous people harmed at the hands of fur traders, presumably because it wouldn't be in the traders' best interest to do so. Traders' own writings dispute this assertion.

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid., 131.

<sup>240</sup> Ibid., 132.

<sup>241</sup> Ibid., 132.

It was also in Parker's interest to depict the fur traders as kind to Indigenous peoples, since Parker was a missionary in the process, he thought, of opening a new mission field in the Plateau region. By creating for his readers an image of a region inhabited by potential Indigenous converts who lived peacefully with non-Indigenous fur traders, he depicted the area as safe and receptive to the work of future missionaries who might depend upon the knowledge and kindness of fur traders already living among potential Indigenous converts to Christianity. Such a depiction may have encouraged future missionaries while also pleasing Parker's sponsors.

While exploring the Columbia River Plateau, Samuel Parker encountered men in the employ of various fur trade companies and wrote about the competition between them. Parker spent considerable time with HBC men. He met Nathaniel Wyeth, an American fur trader, at the Dalles and described him as "intelligent and sociable," whose attempt to challenge HBC supremacy in the region was "attended with many disasters, and the loss of many lives – several of the men were drowned, and others killed by Indians."<sup>242</sup> Parker's assessment of American fur traders was not altogether favorable, writing "very few Americans who have engaged in the fur business beyond the Rocky Mountains, have ever succeeded in making it profitable...owing generally to their ignorance of the country, and the best mode of procedure...were inexperienced in the Indian trade, ...perhaps expected the golden fruits of their labour and industry...Hence the results have frequently been disappointment."<sup>243</sup> Parker seemed to praise fur traders in general for their treatment of Indians, but criticize his countrymen for their lack of business acumen.

Parker described the overall structure of the fur trade, primarily from an HBC perspective owing to his sources, and explained the articles of the trade to his readers. He occasionally questioned traders' motivations in engaging in their business and marveled that more of them

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<sup>242</sup> Ibid., 140.

<sup>243</sup> Ibid., 188.

weren't motivated by Christianity to make different choices than those they did. More than the traders themselves or even than George Simpson, their governor, Parker faulted "drunkenness" for "vulnerability and temptation" of both traders and Indigenous peoples in the Plateau.<sup>244</sup> In his descriptions of Plateau Indigenous peoples, Parker suggested that the fur trade and its accompanying goods had compromised their "moral disposition," which is otherwise "very commendable." He suggested that they "manifest an uncommon desire to be instructed that they may obey and fulfil all moral obligation" and that they deferred to authority in times of conflict.<sup>245</sup> Indeed, related Parker, "so correctly does the law written upon their heart accord with the written law of God, that every infraction of the seventh command of the decalogue is punished with severity."<sup>246</sup> In his writing, Samuel Parker was sowing the seeds of an as-yet fallow mission field.<sup>247</sup> Describing the Plateau fur trade and its interactions with his potential converts was part of this process.

The fur trade in what is now British Columbia between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples began as early as, and possibly earlier than, 1774, when a group of Haida exchanged goods with a Spanish ship navigated by Juan Pérez, and the trade expanded on land near the Pacific Coast in the 1820s.<sup>248</sup> Adele Perry argues that "[f]ormal colonial authority established on Vancouver Island in 1849 transformed a protocolonial presence to an overtly colonial one. But British Columbia remained firmly at empire's edge," acquiring a governor and legislature, but lacking much of the financial and martial support provided to other British colonies.<sup>249</sup> The

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<sup>244</sup> Ibid., 239.

<sup>245</sup> Ibid., 240.

<sup>246</sup> Ibid., 240. The term "decalogue" refers to the ten commandments of Christianity. The seventh commandment prohibits theft and is often interpreted to include adultery.

<sup>247</sup> Parker mistakenly thought he was the first person to teach Protestant Christianity in the Columbia River Plateau. Spokane Garry, a head man of the Spokane people, first brought sustained Protestant teaching to the region when he permanently returned from the Anglican Red River Mission School in 1831.

<sup>248</sup> Fisher, *Contact & Conflict*, 1-2, 24; Mackie, *Trading Beyond the Mountains*, 5-7.

<sup>249</sup> Perry, *On the Edge of Empire*, 10.

British used the colony in Victoria to expand settlement on the mainland, but the colonial government initially largely ignored Indigenous peoples, failing to bother engaging with them in treaties to extinguish title to lands claimed by non-Indigenous settlers, in part because the mainland was a distinct colony until 1866. This, of course, changed in 1871 when British Columbia joined Canada, and, as John Lutz stated, “the observation of, and record keeping about, Aboriginal People intensified with new structures of state monitoring.”<sup>250</sup> When the Fraser River gold rush began in 1858, the fur trade was no longer of much interest to miners, settlers, or even the colonial government, so few records of the Plateau fur trade’s remains were created at the time.<sup>251</sup> The process of colonization in British Columbia seemed removed from the fur trade, unlike events in the United States. Expansion of American interests into the Plateau left a considerable number of sources that referenced the Plateau fur trade.

As the latter half of the nineteenth century began, the United States government began surveying the new territories it obtained following the Oregon Treaty of 1846 that set the country’s northern boundary at the forty-ninth parallel from the Great Lakes to the Pacific Ocean. Boundary surveys were conducted, as were railroad surveys. Isaac Stevens, who was also governor and Superintendent of Indian Affairs of the Washington Territory, supervised surveys of the newly demarcated territory, including the Plateau. The British government negotiated in the Oregon Treaty that the HBC would continue to work the fur trade along waterways, but posts would begin to be abandoned. When Stevens visited the Plateau in 1853, he made observations of the fur trade and published them in his final surveys.

One of Stevens’s concerns, and presumably that of his superiors in the War Department, was the presence of fur traders in the region now governed by the United States. Stevens

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<sup>250</sup> Lutz, *Makúk*, 19.

<sup>251</sup> Fisher, *Contact & Conflict*, 95.

instructed Lieutenant Donelson, while surveying railroad routes in the Plateau, “to learn what you can in reference to the...Hudson’s Bay settlements; ...whether their influence is beneficial or prejudicial to American interests in their neighbourhood.”<sup>252</sup> In response to this directive, Stevens wrote “The only white inhabitants are the traders and employés of the Fur Companies, licensed traders in the unorganized position of the Territory. East of the Cascades, the employés of the Hudson’s Bay Company, and the Red river half-breeds living near the boundary line and near Red river, a portion in American and a portion in English territory.”<sup>253</sup> In striking contrast to the many references to “Blackfeet” in traders’ writings, Stevens informed the War Department that “Our intercourse with the several tribes of the Blackfeet nation was especially of the most cordial character, and for the last ten years have the traders of the Fur Company gone alone into their camps with large quantities of goods in entire safety.”<sup>254</sup> Either Stevens was unaware of fur traders’ trepidation of encountering “Blackfeet” and their violent past with them or he was intentionally reporting otherwise.

Utilizing the HBC express brigades as a means of conveying communications, Stevens reported in 1853 that Lieutenant Arnold, a man under Stevens’s direction, “reached Colville with his party on the 31<sup>st</sup> of October, and that after making the examinations required of the Columbia...should...go to Wallah-Wallah by land; and I am assured by that chivalric and American-hearted man, A. McDonald, Esq., the factor in charge of the Colville post...would

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<sup>252</sup> United States War Department, *Reports of explorations and surveys, to ascertain the most practicable and economical route for a railroad from the Mississippi River to the Pacific Ocean*. (Washington: A.O.P. Nicholson, 1855-60), 63.

<sup>253</sup> United States War Department, *Reports of explorations and surveys*, 147. The term “half-breeds” here refers to métis people, generally defined as the descendants of European and Indigenous peoples in the context of the fur trade. For more on métis people, culture, and history, see Chris Andersen, “*Métis*”: *Race, Recognition, and the Struggle for Indigenous Peoplehood* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2014); Devine, *The People Who Own Themselves*; Jackson, *Children of the Fur Trade*; Macdougall, *One of the Family*; Jacqueline Peterson and Jennifer S.H. Brown, eds. *The New Peoples: Being and Becoming Métis in North America* (Winnipeg: University of Manitoba Press, 1985); Nicole St-Onge, Carolyn Podruchny, and Brenda Macdougall, *Contours of a People: Metis Family, Mobility, and History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2012).

<sup>254</sup> United States War Department, *Reports of explorations and surveys*, 147.

render him every assistance in his power.”<sup>255</sup> Of the fur trade business being conducted at Fort Colville, Stevens reported that it “amounts to but little. Almost all of the trade of this kind carried on by this trading-post is through the smaller forts it supplies in the Flathead and Kootenaie country.”<sup>256</sup> On Fort Colville and its inhabitants Stevens wrote more extensively than any other post:

Fort Colville, upon the Columbia, above Kettle falls, is next in importance to Vancouver, though far interior to it in extent. It is situated on the second terrace, at some distance back from the river, the lower one being flooded in part during the freshets. The buildings consist of a dwelling, three or four store-houses, and some smaller ones used as a blacksmith’s shop, &c.; all of one story, and built of square logs. The whole was once surrounded by a stockade... This had been removed, except on the north, where it encloses a narrow yard on each side. One bastion remains... On the left of the front are seven huts, occupied by the lower employés of the company; they are of rude construction and much decayed... Fort Colville was once the post of a chief factor, the highest officer in charge of a station, and here the annual accounts of the whole country were consolidated previous to transmission across the mountains. The present force consists only of Mr. McDonald, chief clerk, a trader, and about twenty Canadians and Iroquois Indians. In former years goods were sent through this post to those north of the line, but this route is now abandoned. The amount of furs collected here is not large, and comes chiefly from the upper Columbia. They are principally bear, beaver, muskrat, marten, and fox skins. The beaver is not considered to be worth in London more than its cost when laid down there. About fifteen Canadians are settled on claims in this neighbourhood... They are former servants of the company whose time has expired, and who intend to be naturalized.<sup>257</sup>

On inspecting the post formerly known as Fort Nez Perces, Stevens wrote, “There are here three or four one-story adobe buildings... It is almost utterly valueless except as a station where horses can be kept for the trains... The force here consists of Mr. Pambrun, chief clerk, one interpreter, two traders, and six men, Canadians and Indians.”<sup>258</sup> Of Fort Okanogan, Stevens wrote, “There is no appearance of business here, and no goods on hand. One trader, a Canadian, was the only

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<sup>255</sup> Ibid., 58.

<sup>256</sup> Ibid., 300.

<sup>257</sup> Ibid., 419-20.

<sup>258</sup> Ibid., 419.

white man on the ground when we visited it.”<sup>259</sup> And of the Flathead post, to Stevens it was “an inferior post, in charge of a Canadian as trader and postmaster, with one Canadian and a half-breed under him.”<sup>260</sup> The picture Isaac Stevens painted to the United States War Department of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was that of a dying business, whose decaying buildings and employees would not impede American westward expansion, but could possibly aid it in some feeble way.

Also painting pictures of the American surveying expeditions to the west was Prussian-born American Army enlistee, Gustavus Sohon. As a member of John Mullan’s road-building party in the 1850s, Sohon’s paintings and sketches of the routes were compiled for the War Department along with Isaac Stevens’s reports. Few of Sohon’s artworks depict the Columbia River Plateau, but those that do have persisted in the historiography of the Plateau fur trade. His earliest depiction of the fur trade in this region depicts a pack train laden with trade goods.



Figure 1.3: Gustavus Sohon, "Crossing the Bitter Root Mountains Nov. 1855," Washington State Historical Society.

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<sup>259</sup> Ibid.

<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

“Crossing the Bitter Roots” portrays fur traders as isolated from other humans, enduring extreme living conditions and undertaking arduous, dangerous work in the company of animals. It is a romanticized portrayal. Another of Sohon’s renderings of the Plateau fur trade is vastly different from “Crossing the Bitter Roots,” showing a fur trade post, Fort Walla Walla, previously Fort Nez Perces.

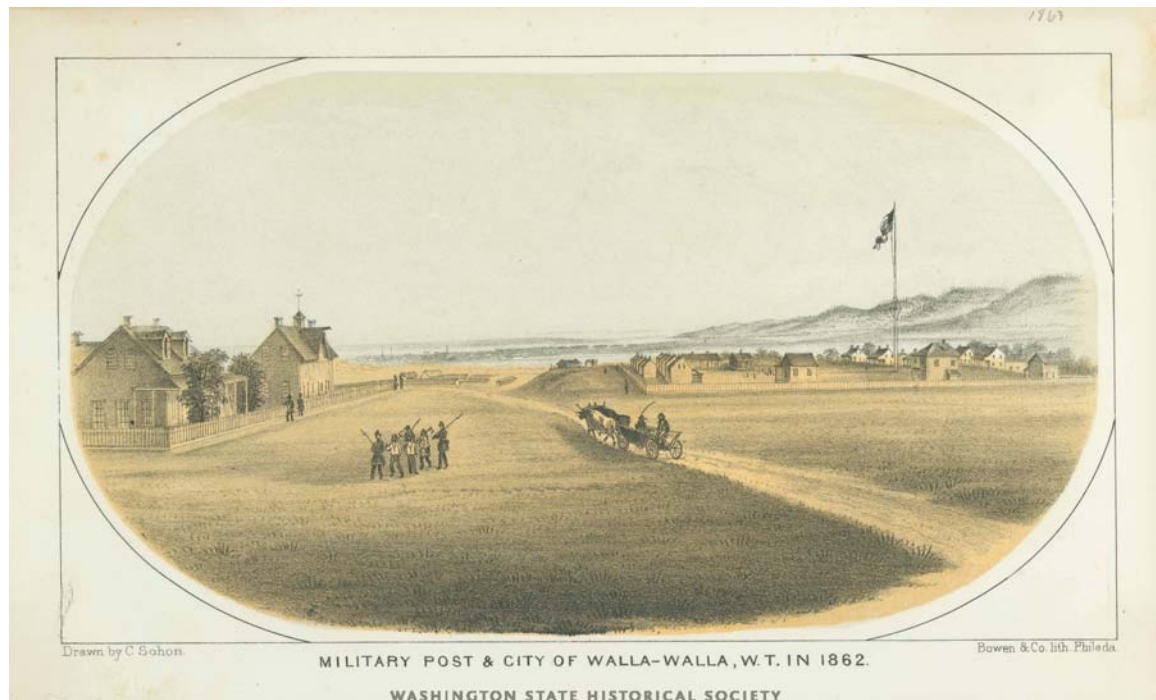


Figure 1.4: Gustavus Sohon, "Military Post & City of Walla-Walla...in 1862," Washington State Historical Society.

The depiction of the fur trade in Sohon’s drawing of Walla Walla is strikingly different from “Crossing the Bitter Roots” in that Walla Walla is seen as a busy, established location with an American military presence. This image was created ten years after “Crossing the Bitter Roots” and conveys none of the romanticism present in the prior image, instead communicating an established American presence on the Plateau landscape.

Multiple artists were employed to illustrate the railroad surveys and another artist on the survey expeditions through the Columbia River Plateau was American painter John Mix Stanley.



Prior to entering Stevens's employ depicting the routes intended for railroads, Stanley travelled the world painting romantic images of non-Euro-Americans. This experience influenced the ways in which Stanley chose to depict the mid-nineteenth-century fur trade in the Columbia River Plateau. His imagery of the Plateau fur trade is picturesque and idealized.



Figure 1.5: John Mix Stanley, "Old Fort Walla Walla, 1853" University of Washington Libraries' Special Collections.

The image "Old Fort Walla Walla" is in stark contrast to the depiction of this same location by Sohon, above. Stanley chose to portray the fort with Indigenous people and habitations, with no apparent American military presence. Stanley's Fort Walla Walla does not depict the promise of American expansionism in the same fashion as Sohon, instead portraying the Plateau as a vestige of Indian space on the American frontier. Stanley sketched Fort Okanogan in much the same way, but with a slightly more prominent European presence.

Interestingly, Stanley's image of Fort Okanogan is at odds with Stevens's description. Rather than a decrepit and abandoned trading post, Stanley shows the fort as active, with Indigenous people walking and sitting in the foreground, and activity around the palisades of the post.



Figure 1.6: John Mix Stanley, "Okanagans seen in front of Fort Okanogan, 1853." University of Washington Libraries' Special Collections. Stanley titled the engraving "Fort Okinakane," but it is titled "Okanagans seen in front of Fort Okanogan, 1853" in the University of Washington Libraries' Special Collections.

A dozen years before the American railroad surveyors, Gustavus Sohon, and John Mix Stanley arrived in the Columbia River Plateau, the American Exploring Expedition sent artist Joseph Drayton to Fort Nez Perces to capture the imagery of the place. The expedition, headed by Charles Wilkes, was sent to explore the Pacific Ocean and was on their return to the United States when they stopped at the mouth of the Columbia River and sent Drayton inland.



Figure 1.7: Joseph Drayton, "Fort Nez Percés, 1841," Oregon Historical Society.

In his sketch of Fort Nez Percés, Drayton illustrated a place of considerable activity that was decidedly not American. In his rendition, Indigenous people are at work near the post while men in European dress converse with them, a British flag flying overhead. Men in the leather garb of the fur trade were drawn standing near canoes, engaging with each other, opposite the solid walls of Fort Nez Percés. Drawn twelve years prior to the drawings of the railroad survey, this image depicted the Columbia River Plateau fur trade very differently and these images would be used accordingly in the historiography that followed them.

As the Columbia River Plateau fur trade era came to a close in the 1870s and settlers began pouring in to the region in the decades that followed, boosters and recent migrants constructed stories about the Plateau and the fur trade that was conducted there. The new histories that came to be written about the region relied on the memories of retired fur traders and their families, those of Indigenous people, and the writings and images described here. These sources and images were not created in a vacuum, but in the context of British and American colonialism and the global market in which the fur trade operated. As Vibert argued, such contexts acted as filters through which fur traders interpreted the Plateau and their experiences on it. The filtered writings of these men, the sources examined in this chapter, created the foundation of future historical interpretations of the nineteenth-century fur trade in the arid Plateau east of the Columbia River and west of the Rocky Mountains, interpretations that often served to further the interests of imperial powers.

## CHAPTER TWO: Building an Empire

In the spring and summer of 1891, Elizabeth Custer, widow of the infamous U.S. Army Lt. Colonel George Armstrong Custer, travelled to the Columbia River Plateau, writing columns for *Harper's Weekly* describing her adventures. In the July 1891 issue Custer wrote a two-page article titled "An Out-of-the Way Outing" detailing her inspection of a "new route" on the Northern Pacific and Canadian Pacific railroads between Spokane Falls, Washington and Revelstoke, British Columbia. "Much of the way," Custer wrote "lies through the wildest sort of country, where no white man has ever before penetrated."<sup>261</sup> She then detailed the many empire-building projects she witnessed on the journey. As historian Katherine Morrissey pointed out, Custer's descriptions of the Plateau fur trade dwelled "on the imaginary past" envisioned by non-Indigenous people, but she also searched for "remnants that told her story of the triumph of white civilization over 'wildness' and 'savages.'"<sup>262</sup> Custer's ambivalence about the structures and projects of empire on the Plateau are reflected in the writings and commemorations about the Columbia River Plateau fur trade created between the 1870s and 1930s. In this period, historians represented the Plateau fur trade as a foundation of empire, drafting progress narratives and establishing non-Indigenous "pioneers" on the landscape, while also engaging with a sense of nostalgia about the end of the fur trade era. Marc Bloch wrote that "a historical phenomenon can never be understood apart from its moment in time," and the phenomenon of empire-building

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<sup>261</sup> Elizabeth R. Custer, "An Out-of-the-Way 'Outing,'" *Harper's Weekly* July 18, 1891, 534. Courtesy of Victoria University Library (Toronto).

<sup>262</sup> Katherine G. Morrissey, *Mental Territories: Mapping the Inland Empire* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1997), 143.

historiography in the Columbia River Plateau is a product of the time in which it was written, a time in which history's writers also engaged in creating economic and political empires.<sup>263</sup>

Elizabeth Custer's visit to the Plateau came nearly a generation after the fur trade had ceased to be the major international economic force it had been in the region for more than fifty years, but she was early enough to have met with men (and presumably women, though she made little note of them) who were engaged in "the thick of it." On her arrival in the Colville Valley, Custer remarked that "the harvest was stacked in the fields, and all this golden grain was being garnered by the Indians, to whom it belongs." Puzzled by Indigenous agriculture, Custer remarked "I cannot express what a peculiar sight it was to me to witness the first savages I had ever seen at work in a wheat field" and explained this activity as a result of the policies of the HBC, "decided promoters of progress," and that "the half-breed sons of these educated men are now tilling the soil."<sup>264</sup> Rather than allow for Indigenous people's agricultural agency, Custer attributed the farming to the HBC and directly linked the wheat to children of the fur trade. In Custer's article, she used considerable space to describe her meeting with Ranald McDonald, by then sixty-seven years old and the eldest son of Archibald McDonald, former HBC Chief Factor at Fort Colville.<sup>265</sup> Describing her entourage's arrival at Fort Colville, Custer wrote "[w]hen we drew up in front of the larger house of the group, an old man came out, bowing and smiling, while half-breed children, chickens, and dogs scattered on either side. The men said 'Here comes Ronold McDonald himself,' but I had not heard his history and consequently could not account for his courteous manner and natural individuality."<sup>266</sup> The tourists then received a tour of Fort Colville, but Custer seemed more taken with McDonald, his family, and décor than

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<sup>263</sup> Marc Bloch, *The Historian's Craft: Reflections on the Nature and Uses of History and the Techniques and Methods of Those Who Write It*, trans. Peter Putnam (New York: Vintage Books, 1953), 35.

<sup>264</sup> Custer, "An Out-of-the-Way 'Outing,'" 534.

<sup>265</sup> "Archibald McDonald Biographical Sheet," Hudson's Bay Company Archives.

<sup>266</sup> Custer, "An Out-of-the-Way 'Outing,'" 534.

the former fur trade fort in which he lived. Her narrative places McDonald and his family in the milieu of the fur trade, ignoring their experiences among the trappings of empire rising around them.

When describing McDonald, Custer emphasized qualities she deemed anachronistic remnants of the fur trade era. She stated “I can scarcely think of anything more incongruous than this aristocratic old man, with his highflown expressions, of which we know nothing except in the literature of Sir George Grandison, and the tumbled down, dilapidated, untidy old buildings around him,” juxtaposing McDonald’s manners and the physical fur trade fort in which he lived. Indeed, she referenced a photo of “Ronold when he was in the outside world,” “dressed up and commonplace-looking,” to visually represent the otherness of the fur trade as an uncouth milieu in which educated gentlemen were out of place.<sup>267</sup> Custer considered the “outside world” of McDonald to be the world she and her readers inhabited, portraying him as a living historical relic who, when “dressed up and common-place looking” resembled any one of her entourage or her readers, when in fact he was someone very different to them – someone of the past. Custer’s assumptions about fur trade gentility were rooted in ignorance and perhaps nostalgia, but shared with the thousands of *Harper’s Weekly* readers, nonetheless. In describing McDonald’s home, Custer tied the space directly to the historic fur trade when she wrote that there were “[t]wo cumbrous wooden chairs, held together with wooden pegs; one, with arms and a slatted back, dated back to the carpenters of the Hudson Bay people. . . . There were guns and deer horns on the walls, and in this large, low, cheerful room I could picture the convivial party about the open fireplace brewing warm drinks, and pressing the guests to take ‘a drop more.’ One of the old Hudson bay men has since told me that they always expected the company they entertained to

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<sup>267</sup> Custer, “An Out-of-the-Way ‘Outing,’” 534. Custer’s depiction of McDonald as a bumpkin was challenged by McDonald himself in a letter to the *Kettle Falls Examiner*, in which he “rejected her characterization of him as a ‘prince of paupers.’” Morrissey, *Mental Territories*, 144.

end the evening under the table.”<sup>268</sup> Upon meeting the wife of McDonald’s nephew during her visit, Custer wrote “[a] bright-eyed half-breed woman was presented to us as Mrs. McDonald; and of some dark-skinned children I asked about, the old man waved his hand over them and said, ‘They are all McDonalds’; and no chief of the clan could have referred to his aristocratic progeny in a more stately manner.”<sup>269</sup> Again juxtaposing the modest surroundings and bustling family with McDonald’s mannerisms, Elizabeth Custer evoked for her readers an “imaginary past” of fur trade myth in which late nineteenth-century American notions of civilization were introduced to the Plateau, minimizing the close family ties which were evident before her, as well as the reality that McDonald’s education at the Anglican Red River Mission School was a direct product of the North American fur trade.

In her brief visit with Ranald McDonald at Fort Colville, Elizabeth Custer did ask about his experiences in the Plateau fur trade. Custer attempted to explain the fur trade economy to *Harper’s Weekly* readers when she explained that “[t]here was no money, but beaver was the standard of value. For instance, twenty beavers would be proffered for a horse, or ‘I’ll give a beaver for that skin’ – meaning that the offer was from five to six bits, equivalent to a dollar in the East.” McDonald reportedly reminisced with nostalgia, ‘Ah, madam,’ he said, ‘those were the halcyon days – no taxes, no money, no sheriff, no judge, no jury.’”<sup>270</sup> In this passage, Custer straddled the nostalgia for the mythological fur trade days of yore and the imperial, capitalist, present in which structures of empire such as government, banks, and laws dominated people’s lives, even in “out-of-the-way” Fort Colville.

Adele Perry argued in her recent study of the complex nature of kinship networks in colonial British Columbia that “[d]ifferent sorts of imperial intimacies made each other, and so

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<sup>268</sup> Custer, “An Out-of-the-Way ‘Outing,’” 535.

<sup>269</sup> Ibid.

<sup>270</sup> Ibid.



did economies and politics.”<sup>271</sup> The structures of empire, both Canadian and American, to which the elderly Ranald McDonald referred in 1891, were increasingly present in the Columbia River Plateau since the mid-nineteenth century through family networks and in the creation of political and economic institutions. As discussed in Chapter One, the U.S. government began surveying its northern boundary west of the Rocky Mountains in the 1840s and by 1846 the Oregon Treaty established the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel as the international boundary in the region. Throughout the 1850s U.S. government officials attempted to negotiate land-cession treaties with Plateau Indigenous groups while railway and road surveyors mapped the future routes of the North Pacific and Canadian Pacific Railroads and roads such as the Mullan Road. The province of British Columbia was created in 1871 and the state of Washington in 1889, both of which extended their legal jurisdictions over portions of the Columbia River Plateau. British Columbia did not negotiate land cession treaties with Plateau Indigenous peoples, therefore analysis of treaty negotiations in the Plateau focuses on the American side of the international border.

In May of 1872 American President Ulysses S. Grant established the Colville Indian Reservation by Executive Order, following decades of U.S. government inability to successfully negotiate treaties with many Plateau peoples.<sup>272</sup> The reservation was intended to hold all non-treaty tribes in the Plateau.<sup>273</sup> This order began a period of shuffling Indigenous people from reservation to reservation, breaking up families and communities, and restructuring the boundaries of reservations that continued until the establishment of the Kalispel Indian

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<sup>271</sup> Adele Perry, *Colonial Relations: The Douglas-Connolly Family and the Nineteenth-Century Imperial World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 257.

<sup>272</sup> In 1871, the United States Congress ended the practice of making treaties with Indigenous peoples, necessitating Executive Orders as the means by which reservations were created thereafter. For more on the transition from treaty-making in United States-Indian policy, see Kevin Bruyneel, *The Third Space of Sovereignty: The Postcolonial Politics of U.S.-Indigenous Relations* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007).

<sup>273</sup> Charles J. Kappler, ed. *Indian Affairs: Laws and Treaties, Vol. IV, Laws* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1929), Accessed April 1, 2014: [http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol4/html\\_files/v4p1056.html](http://digital.library.okstate.edu/kappler/vol4/html_files/v4p1056.html)

Reservation, also by Executive Order, in 1914. In 1881, the same year the Northern Pacific Railroad laid tracks through the town of Spokane Falls, Rutherford B. Hayes issued the Executive Order establishing the Spokane Reservation across the Columbia River from the Colville Indian Reservation.<sup>274</sup> The American government enacted legal structures to confine Plateau Indigenous peoples to reservations to establish American settlers on the landscape.

Settlers continued arriving in the Columbia River Plateau in increasing numbers. When word got out in 1883 that the Northern Pacific Railroad tracks along the Spokane River would connect to the westward-progressing tracks in Montana, more people squatted on Indian farms. The Northern Pacific Railroad encroached on Spokane lands to the point that one case against the railroad even progressed to the U.S. Supreme Court.<sup>275</sup> In 1884 Congress passed the Indian Homestead Act in an attempt to encourage Indian people to take title to land (with stipulations, of course, that the government held title in trust for varying lengths of time), but Plateau Indigenous people rarely did so. By 1887 the Dawes Act was passed, continuing some of the policies implemented with the 1884 Indian Homestead Act and encouraging non-Indigenous settlement in the Plateau, while dispossessing Indigenous peoples of their homelands. Effects of the 1887 Dawes Act were experienced on the Spokane Indian Reservation in 1906 when approximately 650 tribal members were allotted approximately 65,000 acres and remaining acreage was released for sale to non-Indigenous people in 1909. The U.S. Department of the Interior maps are divided into plats, “showing the location of timberland, prairie land, and cultivated land,” and include acreage and “quality of agricultural land and the acreage of grazing land.” Other notations on the maps refer to the “type of soil, and the quantity of timber.”<sup>276</sup>

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<sup>274</sup> Ibid.

<sup>275</sup> Northern Pacific Ry. Co. v. Wismer, 246 U.S. 283 (1918).

<sup>276</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Land Division. “Plats of the Spokane Reservation, 1910-1910,” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

Between 1924 and 1961, the Forestry Division of the Bureau of Indian Affairs was mapping forestry and grazing resources on reservations across the country, including in the Plateau.<sup>277</sup>

Between 1916 and 1936, the Department of Interior maintained records of “allotment adjustments, patent cancellations, and notices of openings of land to entry related to land disposal on the Spokane, Colville, Kalispell, and Yakima Reservations.”<sup>278</sup> Resource exploitation was of interest to the U.S. government and Plateau inhabitants. Indigenous and non-Indigenous Plateau peoples engaged in mining. The U.S. Department of the Interior recorded mining leases granted to individuals and businesses from 1916 onward.<sup>279</sup>

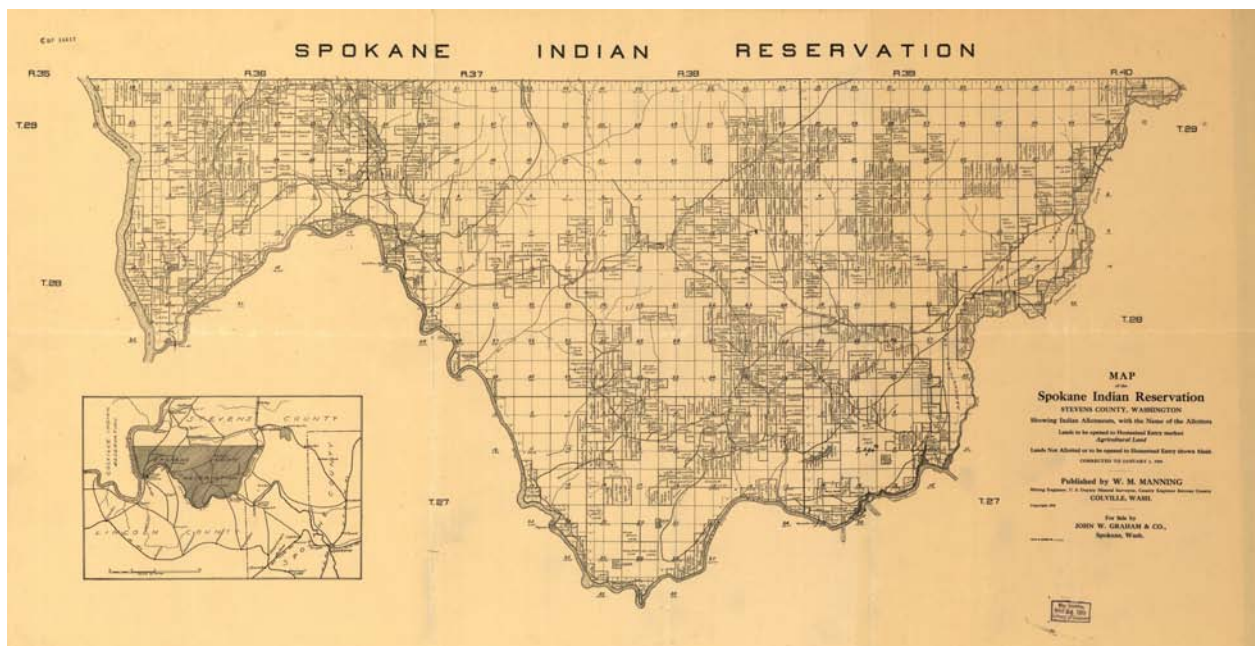


Figure 1.8: Map of the Spokane Indian Reservation Showing Indian Allotments with the Name of the Allottees, 1910. Library of Congress.

<sup>277</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Bureau of Indian Affairs, Forestry Division. “Maps Relating to Forestry and Grazing, 1924-ca.1961,” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>278</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, General Land Office. “Records Relating to the Disposal of Indian lands in the Spokane Land District, 1916-1936,” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

<sup>279</sup> U.S. Department of the Interior, Office of Indian Affairs, Land Division. “Lists of Tribal Mining Leases and Sureties on Spokane bonds, 1916-1917,” U.S. National Archives and Records Administration.

As more settlers moved to the region, demand increased for electricity and irrigation. In 1890, the recently organized Washington Water Power Company (WWP) built the first of seven dams on the Spokane River, located at Monroe Street in downtown Spokane, Washington. Next, the Little Falls and Nine Mile Falls dams were built on the Spokane River, along the southern boundary of the Spokane Indian Reservation and at traditional Indigenous fishing sites. Following the construction of these dams, salmon no longer returned to the rivers and creeks upstream from the Columbia along the Spokane River. By 1912, a reservoir formed between the two dams called Lake Spokane that submerged many Indigenous burial sites, traditional fishing grounds, and campsites, though not the site of Spokane House, which sits immediately downstream from Nine Mile Dam. WWP expanded rapidly, in part through investment in streetcar companies and due to the rapid influx of settlers to the Plateau region.<sup>280</sup> These dams, structures of American empire, prevented salmon from returning to their spawning grounds in the Columbia River Plateau and deprived Indigenous peoples of a significant source of food and culturally significant places.

By 1880, the U.S. Army began looking for a site to build a military post in the area of Fort Colville after experiencing difficulties in maintaining a military presence at the former fur trade fort. The railroad was under construction to make the spot easy to supply, and an elevated plain situated at the confluence across the Spokane River and south of the Spokane Indian Reservation made the location ideal for a military base. The army at Fort Spokane acted primarily as a supply post for the Spokane and Colville reservations and was decommissioned after eight years and the troops stationed there were sent to fight in the Spanish-American War, as the United States shifted their imperial focus from the West to a global stage. In 1899 Fort

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<sup>280</sup> “The Washington Water Power Company,” Lehman Brothers Collection, Harvard Business School Baker Library, accessed January 16, 2013, [http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/lehman/chrono.html?company=the\\_washington\\_water\\_power\\_company](http://www.library.hbs.edu/hc/lehman/chrono.html?company=the_washington_water_power_company).

Spokane became the offices of the Colville Indian Agency and buildings were repurposed for a compulsory Indian boarding school in 1900. Children from both the Spokane and Colville reservations were sent to the Fort Spokane Indian Boarding School until the school closed in 1908 following a series of scandals and rising resistance to the school from Indigenous parents. The site was repurposed again, this time as a sanatorium for Indigenous children with respiratory diseases, but the facilities were in disrepair and parents continued to resist sending their children to Fort Spokane. The sanatorium closed in 1910. By 1913, the Colville Indian Agency offices moved to Nespelem on the Colville Indian Reservation and the site of Fort Spokane was abandoned for five years. The old grounds were again opened as a tuberculosis hospital for Indigenous patients in 1918, but patients resisted the remote location of the hospital until it dwindled into closure in 1929.<sup>281</sup>

There are few structures of empire more imposing than the military and the presence of an American Army post and soldiers on the Plateau landscape was a palpable reminder to Indigenous and settler populations that the United States was in the process of building an empire. By repurposing the Army post into institutions meant to reshape the bodies and minds of Plateau Indigenous peoples, the U.S. government put to use an imposing, and perhaps simply convenient, location in its efforts to enforce Indigenous compliance in its empire-building, but the resistance of Indigenous peoples to the boarding school, sanatorium, and hospital indicates that structures of American empire on the Plateau were not respected by all the region's inhabitants.

Structures of empire were constructed largely by (or with the unambiguous approval of) American and Canadian governments on the Plateau as the twentieth century began, but

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<sup>281</sup> National Park Service, U.S. Department of the Interior. "A Cultural Crossroads: Fort Spokane Teacher's Guide," Coulee Dam, WA: Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area Education Program, 2005.

infrastructure and institutions were not the only ways in which to build empires. Institutions of knowledge, such as newspapers, universities, historical societies, and academic journals were created in the Plateau during this period. As Elizabeth Furniss argued in her study of historiography-as-mythology in Williams Lake, B.C., “[t]he hegemonic potential of frontier histories lies not only in the way that they celebrate European settlement of Canada and the subjugation of Aboriginal peoples. It also lies in their sheer bulk. Non-Aboriginal Canadians, for the most part, have privileged access to the material forces that control the production of public history,” something that was true in both the American and Canadian portions of the Plateau.<sup>282</sup> Regional newspapers such as the *Colville Examiner*, *Spokesman Review*, *Kettle Falls Examiner*, and *Spokane Daily Chronicle* published local, national, and international news, and were also used to further imperial goals through advertisements for land and the publication of pioneer myths and progress narratives, many of which incorporated historical representations of the Plateau fur trade. Plateau universities began springing up in the late nineteenth century: Eastern Washington University in 1882, Gonzaga University in 1887, Washington State University and Whitworth University in 1890, and Okanagan College in 1906. These universities employed faculty who studied and disseminated regional histories through the newspapers, historical societies, and academic journals that simultaneously appeared in the Plateau. The Oregon Historical Society was organized in 1898 and began publishing the *Oregon Historical Quarterly*, which published many Plateau fur trade histories. In 1906 the University of Washington began publication of the *Washington Historical Quarterly*, known today as the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, which published articles on the history of the Plateau fur trade. The Eastern Washington State Historical Society was founded in 1916 and included among its members local

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<sup>282</sup> Elizabeth Furniss, *The Burden of History: Colonialism and the Frontier Myth in a Rural Canadian Community* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1999), 188.

businessmen who wrote about settler fur trade histories in local newspapers and in the *OHQ* and *WHQ*. As David Wroebel has argued, these articles and the boosters who wrote them did not exert excessive power in their communities, but the authors were men of privilege and influence in the Plateau.<sup>283</sup> In the case of the early twentieth-century Columbia River Plateau, contrary to Wroebel's assertion that boosters wrote to counter their diminishing power and status in the West, the writers of Plateau settler fur trade histories wrote from a position of high status, perhaps to retain it, but not yet to counter a decline in influence. Such a decline arrived to the region several decades later. Some institutions of knowledge were supported by governments, others by entrepreneurs, and others by individuals, but in the period between the 1870s and 1930s all of them produced historical works about the Columbia River Plateau fur trade that in some way emphasized imperial projects of Britain, Canada, or the United States.

When Elizabeth Custer travelled through the Plateau in 1891, she romanticized the fur trade past and present she encountered while also documenting for *Harper's Weekly* readers the products of American and Canadian imperial expansion. Describing her rail travel toward Revelstoke, Custer wrote of her entourage “[l]eaving the sound of the stone-cutter, the blasting, the hammer of the carpenter, the rattling of the trowel of the bricklayer, all the din of the cars and bustle of the crowding vehicles of the intensely alive Spokane, we rolled soon into a fine forest, much of the way so free from underbrush it looked like a park; but we came frequently on openings where the new saw-mill steamed and fumed away as if it had grown there.”<sup>284</sup> Custer described the scenery as park-like, yet undergoing the processes of non-Indigenous settlement, referencing settlers' cabins, “the family linen waving on the line,” and “a settler with his wife

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<sup>283</sup> David M. Wroebel, *Promised Lands: Promotion, Memory, and the Creation of the American West* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2002), 13.

<sup>284</sup> Custer, “An Out-of-the-Way ‘Outing,’” 534.

and baby [who] came on the train.”<sup>285</sup> Elizabeth Custer was illustrating for her readers the physical structures of empire being built on the Columbia River Plateau, and also the people who erected these structures, furthering the process of empire. Appealing to notions of American independence and evoking yeoman farmer ideals, she wrote of Plateau settlers that “[t]here certainly is great individuality in these fearless Western people. Every one seems to go on his own appointed way, never looking to see if he is following or imitating his neighbour... There are few of the unlettered out here in this progressive world.”<sup>286</sup> Passages such as this evoke a pride in American expansion and perhaps even encouraged *Harper’s Weekly* readers to settle in the Plateau. Indeed, she depicted the Colville Valley as a “pretty horseshoe, which must have been an Arcadia to the Hudson Bay Company. They made its acres into fields, planted orchards, and built themselves a home,” both portraying the region as appealing and establishing the Hudson’s Bay Company as foundation-builders of empire.<sup>287</sup>

Custer’s coverage of imperial processes was ambivalent at times. She expressed shock when touring a mission church near Kettle Falls, “for across the front was the advertisement of a real-estate firm. I had heard corner lots talked of so much in the “boomy” towns that I felt myself almost turning into one, but here, where the railroad had just penetrated, it seemed too much for one to endure calmly who loved these wild places. I felt that I would like to go on a pilgrimage through our Eastern States, and beg people to hurry out here before all this interesting country is leveled off, smoothed down, and made tame and commonplace.”<sup>288</sup> A short hike later, Custer reported:

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<sup>285</sup> Ibid.

<sup>286</sup> Ibid.

<sup>287</sup> Ibid.

<sup>288</sup> Ibid.



a belligerent feeling came over me again at the sight of the stakes of the engineers around us, and I saw in anticipation manufactories and bustle, all the rocks covered with colossal advertisements, and I was heartsick to think this wild picturesqueness must be sacrificed to the invaders. When I found, however, the first invader, the owner of the town site, was an old soldier, it reconciled me a little.<sup>289</sup>

It is somewhat remarkable that Custer deemed settlement as equivalent to invasion in this passage, though it suggests that Custer valued homesteads rather than commercial enterprise as imperial force. Indeed, that learning the founder of the town site “was an old soldier” “reconciled” Custer to its existence indicated to her readers that her notions of acceptable empire included military and individuals, but not boosters. Custer’s interpretation is not a surprise, considering her fame and income were based on her role as widow to a famous dead American military figure.

As Elizabeth Custer and her entourage were travelling the new railroad through the Kootenay mountains from Fort Colville to Revelstoke, she wrote that “[t]he miners were constantly getting us to crane our necks to notice holes in the mountain-sides where Mother Earth was giving up her treasures, and they had many tales to tell of the life in that isolated region, where not a month since only trappers, fishermen, miners, and Indians ever penetrated.”<sup>290</sup> In this short passage addressing the extensive mining in the region, Custer produced for *Harper’s Weekly* readers images of a landscape previously inhabited only by fur traders, fishermen, miners, and Indigenous people that was quite recently penetrated by imperial interests. The Plateau “treasures” given up by “Mother Earth” were but one product of empire – Elizabeth Custer’s article was another. The content of “An Out-of-the-Way ‘Outing’” celebrated non-Indigenous settlement in the Columbia River Plateau, if at times in an ambiguous fashion, and the mere production of the article further evidenced American and Canadian empire in the

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<sup>289</sup> Ibid., 535.

<sup>290</sup> Ibid.

region. Custer travelled by newly constructed railroads for the purpose of writing adventure articles for *Harper's Weekly*, a publication whose readers were largely Americans living east of the Mississippi River. In the process of writing her article, Elizabeth Custer both narrated and constructed products of empire in the Plateau and described fur trade activities as foundational to that production.

*Harper's Weekly* was only one of many newspapers to print articles concerning the Columbia River Plateau fur trade near the turn of the twentieth century. Many local and regional papers published articles exploring the region's past and most of these emphasized settlement, or participated in the process of "firsting." Historian Jean O'Brien argued that the phenomenon of "firsting" "asserts that non-Indians were the first people to erect the proper institutions of a social order worthy of notice."<sup>291</sup> In focusing on the Euro-Canadian and Euro-American "firsts" (such as the erection of fur trade posts) in their articles, turn-of-the-century Plateau journalists delegitimized the social systems and institutions in place on the Plateau prior to non-Indigenous arrival. One such article accentuated the exceptionalism of fur traders on the Plateau, arguing that the "Spokane region is different from other sections in that the very first white men were educated and intelligent, the five who came to old Spokane Fort in 1812 were probably as well educated as any of us today. Their leader, Mr. John Clarke, was the partner of the most wealthy man in America, the famous John Jacob Astor, whose grandson was drowned on the Titanic a few years ago."<sup>292</sup> The unnamed author differentiates imperialism in the Plateau from elsewhere based on the education and social and economic connections of John Clarke, an employee of the NWC who then went to work for the Pacific Fur Company, conveying status to the region based on American social understandings of class and wealth. Describing the man as the embodiment

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<sup>291</sup> Jean M. O'Brien, *Firsting and Lasting: Writing Indians out of Existence in New England* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2010), xii.

<sup>292</sup> "Primitive Simplicity and Eastern Culture Meet in Pioneers of the West," *Spokane Valley Herald*, July 1922.

of exemplary empire, the author states “Mr. Clarke was a very capable and efficient man. Although extremely dignified and pompous... With him were four educated clerks, one of whom has written an interesting book.”<sup>293</sup> The newspaper article related events detailed in the writings of Ross Cox, also an employee of both the NWC and the PFC, emphasizing the difficulties fur traders experienced but miraculously overcame in the climate of the Plateau, often with the assistance of Indigenous peoples.<sup>294</sup> The article hints at the complicated networks of imperial European and American interests in the region by relating the changes in command at Spokane House. Referring to Fort Spokane, the PFC post, the author informed readers that

[t]he old fort was built in 1812 near the Spokane House, which had been built by the Northwest company the year before. ... The officers of both the Pacific Fur company, founded by Mr. Astor, and of the Northwest company, which was subsequently merged with the Hudson’s Bay company, were either Englishmen, Scotchmen or Americans... Along with these English speaking men were a large number of French Canadians, who paddled the canoes, traded with the Indians and traversed the wilderness. Naturally these Frenchmen had a large influence on the names and the spelling of Indian names, so that the French spelling of the old name “Spokan” has superseded the original until now the name is spelled Spokane – The French spelling of an Indian word.<sup>295</sup>

The article emphasizes European and American activities in the region only fleetingly mentions Indigenous peoples in a brief and peripheral manner. The representation of the fur trade that this article disseminated to Plateau readers was of Euro-American exceptionalism and settlement in the process of establishing an empire on the west coast of North America.

Another such newspaper article focused on “firsting” contains almost entirely quotes of O.A. Burnett from Athol, Idaho, “son of Spokane’s First Episcopal Minister, the Rev. C.C. Burnett, gives the following impressions of his family’s connection with the historic Spokane

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<sup>293</sup> Ibid.

<sup>294</sup> Ibid.

<sup>295</sup> Ibid.

House site,” a location revered at the time as the “first” fur trade post on the Plateau.<sup>296</sup> Burnett is quoted in the article remembering family interactions with Indigenous people, saying

...I believe that fall the folks built a home, log and frame, on the homestead, claiming but not filing on the land on account of the Indians living there. We continued to live there, fairly friendly with the Indians. There were always from three to four to maybe eight or 10 Indians’ tents and families. The principal family, which claimed the land, included Old Solomon, his son, John Solomon, and grandson, Tenas Solomon, who also had a family. Old Solomon told us he had traded with the trading company and acquired the buildings by swapping some horses.<sup>297</sup>

This recollection was followed by several paragraphs detailing locations of the buildings and speculating about their origins. Burnett provides valuable information about the prior Indigenous inhabitants of the land his family occupied, even including their names and familial connections. He nonetheless undermines the legitimacy of the Indigenous family’s tenancy and claims to the land by emphasizing his own family’s “first” in the region, stating “[m]y father, the Rev. C.C. Burnett, came to Spokane Falls, Washington territory, in the fall of ’83, and the family arrived March 15, 1884...My father was the first Episcopal minister in Spokane.”<sup>298</sup> It was through local and regional newspapers that empire-building through “firsting” became commonplace. By reading articles published in the *Colville Examiner*, *Spokesman Review*, *Kettle Falls Examiner*, and *Spokane Daily Chronicle* settlers and Indigenous peoples alike experienced the legitimization of “pioneers” and the subversion of Indigenous claims to the Plateau, often with the fur trade cast as the fulcrum of empire.

The NWC-cum-HBC fur trade post, Spokane House, became a point of fixation for Plateau newspapers interested in establishing non-Indigenous “firsts” in the region. In a

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<sup>296</sup> “Site of First Settlement in N.W., Spokane House, Gift: Son of Burnett’s Recalls Scenes,” *The Spokesman Review*, December 24, 1939.

<sup>297</sup> Ibid.

<sup>298</sup> Ibid.

particularly celebratory article about the post's establishment, the author lauds it as "[t]he first white man's residence in the Spokane country – in fact, some latter-day historians lean to the conviction that it was the first substantial white man's residence in the entire Pacific Northwest – was the fur-trading post, known as Spokane House."<sup>299</sup> There is no citation or reference to the "latter-day historians" mentioned, nor is an author credited with the article. Nonetheless, the article references unnamed historians, bolstering the legitimacy of its claims that although Spokane house was "[a]lmost forgotten today, it was virtually the cradle of the white man's civilization in this area. It was almost contemporaneous with Astoria at the mouth of the Columbia. Some historians are of the opinion it may have antedated Astoria by a few months."<sup>300</sup> The article references the 1811 communications discussed in the writings of Alexander Ross and included in Chapter One that suggested an imperial rivalry between the Pacific Fur Company and the NWC, but there is no mention of Ross in the article. Maintaining the preoccupation of historians of the Plateau fur trade, the article contains details of post locations, fixing non-Indigenous people on the landscape.

Also of interest to the author, and perhaps newspaper subscribers, were the details of the fur trade social scene: "Spokane House became a popular rendezvous for the different interior posts. It was the social centre. Its ballroom was the scene of gay diversions and social gatherings. Flute and fiddle furnished music for dances. There was a great fireplace with logs burning and illumination was provided at night by flaring flambeaus of pine knots."<sup>301</sup> Festivities were commonplace in the fur trade and, as Carolyn Podruchny has argued, "helped voyageurs create a sense of home away from home," creating "new memories and new traditions rooted in their new

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<sup>299</sup> "Spokane House First in West: Built in 1810, Closed in 1826, It Became Home of Whites," *The Spokesman Review*, April 19, 1936.

<sup>300</sup> Ibid.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

locations.”<sup>302</sup> The memories and traditions being created with imagery of fur trade revelry by early twentieth-century newspaper articles did not differ greatly in purpose from those being created by men engaged in the fur trade a century before them. Plateau settlers attempted to establish themselves on the landscape through familiar activities and traditions, often romanticized. Regarding Spokane House, the same article stated that “[c]olorful crowds were wont to gather there – Scotchmen in their tartans, French-Canadians with their picturesque apparel and stalwart, bronzed Americans – many of them mountain men of handsome physique.”<sup>303</sup> The author explicitly linked European traditions with non-Indigenous settlement on the Columbia River Plateau through the revelry of the fur trade.

Links between fur trade and empire became more explicit as the article explained that “[t]he war of 1812 between England and the United States was to change things. As an act of war, the Northwesters took Astoria for the Britishers and Spokane House went along with it, as well as other Astor posts. The British ensign was run up but life at Spokane House changed little.”<sup>304</sup> Here the newspaper author is indicating that while Spokane House was included in the theatre of the imperial War of 1812, the lives of fur traders, who were living embodiments of empire on the Plateau, continued with little interruption in familiar European fashion. The article stated, “By 1815, Spokane House had flourishing gardens where they grew potatoes, root crops, melons and cucumbers. Steaks from bunch-grass-fed cayuses were regarded a prime delicacy...The buildings were handsome for the period and a ballroom and a racetrack were real novelties for the frontier.”<sup>305</sup> Again, sources are not cited, but European-style buildings and agriculture at the post are illuminated in great detail. The merger of the HBC and NWC in 1821

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<sup>302</sup> Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 174.

<sup>303</sup> “Spokane House First in West: Built in 1810, Closed in 1826, It Became Home of Whites,” *The Spokesman Review*, April 19, 1936.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

is described as “the doom of Spokane house” and a short explanation of the move to Fort Colville is included. The sources for this newspaper article are unnamed, but passages resemble those in the writings of Alexander Ross, George Simpson, and the Spokane House post journals discussed in Chapter One. In the context of early twentieth-century Plateau boosterism, the author depicted events of the fur trade as precursors to American and Canadian empire on the Columbia River Plateau.

Early twentieth-century *Spokesman Review* articles referenced European-style agriculture, which, along with the details of building dimensions and locations, was a considerable preoccupation of journalists writing about the Columbia River Plateau fur trade. Foregrounding the agricultural activities of fur traders and minimizing those of Plateau Indigenous peoples was yet another way newspapers contributed to the narrative of empire in the region. In an article for the *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, another anonymous author contended,

Spokane House...seems to have shared honors with Fort George (Astoria, Ore.) in the development of agriculture in the Pacific northwest...History records that the Astor party – the Pacific Fur company – brought seeds with them in their voyage around the horn in the Tonquin. Some of these were planted at Fort George (Astoria) and others at “Fort” Spokane, as the Astors called their stockade, which stood adjacent to the Northwest company’s “Spokane House...The first vegetables and wheat were grown by the Astors at Fort Spokane in 1813.<sup>306</sup>

Once again, a Plateau newspaper asserted the Euro-American “firsting” of an activity associated with permanent settlement. Unlike most newspaper accounts delegitimizing Indigenous activity, however, this article asked “Did Indians Grow Crops?” and answered that “[t]here is some indication that the Spokane Indians may have continued to grow crops from seed obtained from the Astors, but definite proof is lacking. There is good reason to believe, however, that crops were grown around Astoria throughout the years after the Astors withdrew.”<sup>307</sup> In this and

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<sup>306</sup> “Spokane House Shares Honors for Earliest Crop Production,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, May 23, 1936.

<sup>307</sup> Ibid.

following passages, the article credited fur trade companies, British and American alike, with introducing agriculture to the Plateau and to Indigenous peoples, a contention that was refuted by accounts of Indigenous peoples at the time. Details of fur trade agriculture fill this article, with descriptions of planting and irrigation practices:

In 1825 the Hudson's Bay company planted a few barrels of potatoes at Spokane House. Definite instructions were given that the crop, when harvested, was not to be eaten, but was to be preserved for seed for planting at the new post at Fort Colville (now Marcus)...When Dr. Marcus Whitman came into the Inland Empire in 1836, he saw the Hudson's employees irrigating land at Fort Walla Walla. He later installed an irrigation system, which was copied by the Indians, at Waiilatpu.<sup>308</sup>

According to the author, both agriculture and irrigation were unfamiliar to Plateau Indigenous peoples prior to the arrival of Europeans to teach them. This logic of European tutelage continued in the article when the author remarked that “[t]he year 1830 is a notable one for Spokane county, for it marked the return of young Spokane Garry, a Spokane Indian, from Fort Garry (Winnipeg), where he had studied the ways of the white man, as student-guest of the Hudson's Bay company, for five years. Garry planted crops and interested the Indians in farming.”<sup>309</sup> Readers of this newspaper article learned from the text and accompanying demeaning image that Indigenous peoples only acquired agricultural knowledge when Europeans introduced it to them and in the Plateau region, these Europeans were involved in the fur trade. In this way, the history of the Plateau fur trade, specifically agricultural activities associated with the trading posts, became a tool for explaining the dissemination of European knowledge and the spread of American and British empire.

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<sup>308</sup> Ibid.

<sup>309</sup> Ibid.



# Spokane House Shares Honors for Earliest Crop Production



Figure 1.9: "Indians who were given a taste of melons grown by the Astor party at Fort Spokane came back for more!" *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, May 23, 1936.

The article provides compelling insight, however, into Indigenous agency with regard to agriculture. Referencing Colonel George Wright's violent aggressions against Plateau Indigenous peoples following their refusal to sign treaties with the U.S. government, the article states "When Colonel Wright put down the Indian uprising in 1858, his men destroyed thousands of bushels of wheat which had been grown and stored by the Spokane Indians. This act of destruction seems to have caused many of the Spokanes to abandon crops."<sup>310</sup> The act of abandoning crops could signal Indigenous people's reluctance to continue European-style agricultural practices after being attacked, while also demonstrating resilience and adaptability in the face of imperial violence. The article does not follow this logic, and instead mentions Indigenous seasonal gathering, informing readers that "[t]he early whites referred to the Indians as rovers, but much of their 'roving' was on a regular route. They caught and dried fish at one

<sup>310</sup> Ibid.

season, obtained venison at another and dug camas and other roots at other times. This routine required travel over wide areas.”<sup>311</sup> The article does not characterize harvesting camas and roots as agriculture. Implied is the assertion that “real” agriculture was sedentary, familiar to Euro-American settlers, and vulnerable to destruction by the military. To reinforce this assumption, the article closes with irrigation and census data for non-Indigenous settlers in the Plateau between 1860 and 1930.<sup>312</sup> Rather than highlight Indigenous agricultural history and agency in the Columbia River Plateau, the article suggested to readers that agricultural activities prior to non-Indigenous arrival to the region were not sedentary and therefore somehow illegitimate – that European-style agriculture introduced by the fur trade legitimized human occupation in the Plateau. Newspaper articles such as these perpetuated understandings of empire and produced knowledge for consumption by settlers, the builders of empire.

Newspapers were not the only source of settler fur trade histories in the Columbia River Plateau between the final years of trade in the region and the interwar period. Though newspapers surely reached a larger readership than the publications of academics and amateur historians, the historiographical footprint of the latter is significant, as policy makers and later historians referenced their work. In 1904, 1908, and 1909, a student of anthropologist Franz Boas named James Teit visited the Columbia River Plateau to undertake an ethnological study of the Indigenous people living in the region. He published his results, edited by Boas, in the 1927-28 Annual Report of the Bureau of Ethnology to the Secretary of the Smithsonian Institution.<sup>313</sup> Anthropologists, many under the direction of Boas, would enter the Plateau and nearby Rocky

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<sup>311</sup> Ibid.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.

<sup>313</sup> Teit and Boas, eds. “The Salishan Tribes of the Western Plateaus.”

Mountain regions over the following decades.<sup>314</sup> Though some, like Beatrice Blackwood of the Pitt Rivers Museum at Oxford, only stayed a short time, the generational and cultural consequences of their work endured for generations.<sup>315</sup> Teit's work, for example, was used as a primary source in the Indian Claims Commission hearings of 1974, alongside several other anthropologists' writings.<sup>316</sup> These documents have become a foundational source for government ethnohistorical information on Plateau peoples and their relationships to the land and resources of the region.

In the first decades of the twentieth century, several local settler men of wealth began pursuing Columbia River Plateau history. Of particular interest was determining the location of the former North West Company fur trading post, Spokane House. One of these men, William S. Lewis, a lawyer and member of the Spokane Historical Society, conducted interviews with several Spokane and Coeur d'Alene elders, as well as elderly non-Indigenous peoples whose families had settled near the confluence of the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers. Lewis wrote to Jesuit priests at missions in Montana and Idaho, inquiring about local Indigenous knowledge of the fur trade. Transcripts of Lewis's interviews and copies of his letters survive today, providing a wealth of information about the knowledge and interests of his subjects, as well as his own interests and biases. Lewis published articles on the history of the Plateau fur trade and multiple articles in *The Washington Historical Quarterly* under the names of his informants, usually long reproductions of letters between Lewis and men he declared to be "pioneers" of the Columbia

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<sup>314</sup> For more on Boas, his students, and the anthropological research conducted at this time, see Regna Darnell, *And Along Came Boas: Continuity and Revolution in Americanist Anthropology* (Philadelphia: J. Benjamins, 1998).

<sup>315</sup> Brown and Peers with Members of the Kainai Nation, *Pictures Bring Us Messages, Sinaakssiiksi aohtsimaahpihkookiyaawa*.

<sup>316</sup> Indian Claims Commission, Stuart A. Chalfant, Verne F. Ray, and Angelo Anastasio, *Interior Salish and Eastern Washington Indians IV* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1974).

River Plateau or occasionally “pioneer” obituaries.<sup>317</sup> Newly created professional historical venues such as *The Washington Historical Quarterly* legitimized the writings of Lewis and his peers and the content they produced laid a historiographical foundation upon which the academic history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade that emphasizes the trade as necessary to imperial projects has been built.

William S. Lewis’s interview and research notes are an insightful place to begin an examination of his work, since they demonstrate a significant departure between the knowledge he gained about the Plateau fur trade and that which he chose to publish. In October, 1916 he interviewed seven Spokane Indigenous elders: Thomas Garry, Moses B. Phillips, Aleck Pierre, Charley Warren, John Stevens, David John, and William Three Mountains. Lewis recorded the statements and wishes of these elders but chose not to use them in their entirety in his historical writings and failed to do as the elders directed him in their statements. Lewis’s omissions have resulted in a Columbia River Plateau historiographical legacy lacking in Indigenous voice and knowledge that exists and is readily accessible through archival research in Lewis’s papers, not to mention in Indigenous communities in and around Spokane. In the interview mentioned above, the elders related to Lewis some of their knowledge of the early Plateau fur trade. They told him,

The first white men came to our country were the ‘Frenchmen’. After that the Indians gave the name ‘Frenchmen’ to all the whites... When the Frenchmen first came they took out and showed the Indians a pocket knife with two blades, one open and one half open, and said to the Indians that if they did not listen to them, and do as they asked the knife would cut off their lives, and that unless the

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<sup>317</sup> John V. Campbell, “The Sinclair Party – An Emigration Overland along the Old Hudson Bay Company Route from Manitoba to the Spokane Country in 1854,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 7, no. 3 (1916); John E. Smith, “A Pioneer of the Spokane Country,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v.7 no.4 (1916); William S. Lewis, “Francis Heron, Fur Trader: Other Herons,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 11, no.1 (1920); William S. Lewis, “Reminiscences of Mrs. Delia B. Sheffield,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 15, no.1 (1924), William S. Lewis, “Reminiscences of Joseph H. Boyd,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 15, no.4 (1924); William S. Lewis, “Jacob A. Meyers Called by Death,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 17, no.1 (1926); William S. Lewis, “Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v.17 no. 1 (1926).

Indians gave the whites furs the knives would cut off their lives. At that time the Indians used all manner of hides, deer, elk, bear, coyote, wildcat beaver, and rabbit for clothing and covering for their lodges.<sup>318</sup>

Nowhere in Lewis's publications of the Plateau fur trade is this information present. Instead, Lewis regurgitated the information sent to him by representatives of the HBC Archives and reprinted the journals of fur traders who had worked on the Plateau.<sup>319</sup> Despite the relevant Indigenous knowledge he gained in this interview, Lewis chose to focus on non-Indigenous "firsts" in the Plateau, furthering the mythmaking of American Manifest Destiny.

Lewis's interview with the seven Spokane elders mentioned above was not his only Indigenous source of information on the Plateau fur trade. On May 28, 1916, Lewis interviewed a Spokane man called Curley Jim, who related considerable knowledge of the fur trade in the area, some of which would have been received favorably by Lewis and his contemporaries, casting the fur trade as the arrival of "wonderful things." Curley Jim remembered,

In the olden times, before the white men came, the Indians were very poor and in a crude condition...In the early days when the Indians saw anything like a kettle or a pail, they would say, "Isn't that a wonderful thing"; if they got it they would cut up the metal to make ornaments. The coming of the first white men as a benefit to the Indians, as they got knives, guns, flints and steel, blankets, cloth, kettles, hatchets, fish hooks, spear heads and needles from the traders. The coming of the traders was good for the Indians, they got more to eat.<sup>320</sup>

Curley Jim even reiterated the assertions of the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* regarding Indigenous agriculture (though it conflicted with the seven elders mentioned above) when he stated:

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<sup>318</sup> William S. Lewis, "Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country." William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 1-2.

<sup>319</sup> William S. Lewis, "Information concerning the Establishment of Fort Colville," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 16 no. 2 (1925); John Work, William S. Lewis, and Paul C. Phillips, *The Journal of John Work: A Chief Trader of the Hudson's Bay Co., during his expedition from Vancouver to the Flatheads and Blackfeet of the Pacific Northwest* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark, 1923).

<sup>320</sup> William S. Lewis, "Statement of Curley Jim." William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

When the Frenchmen, traders, were at Spokane House, the Indians watched them plant and raise grain, gardens and potatoes. They made holes with a hoe or stick and planted the potatoes. When the Indians saw them gather the potatoes and grain and vegetables in the fall and [sic] saw them cook and eat the potatoes, the Indians thought it was very good. From the Frenchmen, the Indians got their first seeds and raised their first gardens. The Indians used to have a big garden right here. When I was a small boy the Indians also had vegetable gardens and raised potatoes and grain, near Garden Springs; I could show you the place.<sup>321</sup>

But once again Lewis seemingly ignored the information Curley Jim shared with him. The only indication of interest in Curley Jim's interview is a checkmark on the transcript next to the following paragraph:

My father told me about the Frenchman at the mouth of the Little Spokane. He said they had lived in dug outs. When I was grown up they had gone. The holes and stones are there yet. The holes were near the burying ground; Indians were buried there. Near where Mr. Burnett built his cabin. On the flat. The spot at the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers [sic] was a great fishing place. The stones the Frenchmen had for fireplaces are near the holes.<sup>322</sup>

This notation reflects an obsession Lewis and his peers had for accuracy in locating the site of the former Spokane House. Lewis's notes and personal correspondence demonstrated a preoccupation with finding and commemorating the site of the former fur trade post. William S. Lewis was interested in placing non-Indigenous people on the historical Plateau landscape and his published work reflected this interest.

Although Lewis's publications provide a narrow glimpse of the Plateau fur trade, one focused on the activities of non-Indigenous traders and settlers, his notes and papers furnish considerable details about Indigenous and métis families and social encounters in the trade. In addition to the passages shared by the seven elders above, Curley Jim's interview relates such information. About a fur-trade family, Jim remembered

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<sup>321</sup> Ibid.

<sup>322</sup> Ibid.

Peone was an old Frenchman, a trader. When I was a small boy I was shown old man Peone, and was told that he was the father of the mixed bloods of that name; his sons were named Baptiste, William and Peone. The Peones are all descendants of the fur traders. A great many years ago, one of the Peon's sons, named Baptiste Peone, located on the Flathead Reservation in Montana. The Frenchmen, fur traders, mostly located in the Colville Country.<sup>323</sup>

And regarding the intercultural interactions that took place on the Plateau, Curley Jim recalled

In early times when the first white men came, the Indians thought them good; soon they found the white men like the Indians; some good some bad. In association with the whites, the Indians soon got so they could distinguish the good white men from the bad white men. When the white men first came among the Indians, most of the white men were good. Later when the Indians became fewer and the white men more plentiful, the white men became bad. Not as good as those who first came. The whites turned bad towards the Indians.<sup>324</sup>

Passages such as these in interviews with Indigenous people bring nuance to the history of the Plateau fur trade, complicating imperial progress narratives of Euro-Americans unfolding peacefully toward the west coast of the continent. William S. Lewis obtained this information but chose not to utilize it in his historical writings of the fur trade, instead favoring a non-Indigenous progress narrative.

Lewis was not oblivious to what Indigenous people were telling him, however. Unlike his contemporaries, he seemed increasingly conflicted about the effects of empire in North America as he encountered more Indigenous histories. During the same period in 1916 when Lewis interviewed Curley Jim, he also met with Nellie Garry, daughter of Spokane Garry. In the transcript of Nellie Garry's interview, she discussed her father's time as a pupil at the Red River Mission School and his teachings when he returned. She also mentioned the move from Spokane House to Fort Colville and, regarding the differences between French-Canadian North West Company employees and the predominantly English and Scottish labourers with the Hudson's

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<sup>323</sup> Ibid.

<sup>324</sup> Ibid.

Bay Company, Nellie Garry related to Lewis that “[t]he men at the trading post had been white men, not Frenchmen. They cut their hair short; the Frenchmen wore their hair long all around.”<sup>325</sup> Of course, there was also the obligatory mention of the Spokane House buildings and their locations: “I have seen the old cellar holes of the trading post on the Little Spokane.”<sup>326</sup> The interview with Nellie Garry is considerably shorter than the others, but contains details about the lives of a well-known Plateau Indigenous family and their encounters with the North American fur trade.

In 1917, Lewis published *The Case of Spokane Garry*, a biography of the famous Spokane leader. In comparison to other some missionaries’ and newspaper accounts of Garry’s life, Lewis’s assessment of the man was far more generous, if condescending. Historian John Fahey argued that in *The Case of Spokane Garry*, “Lewis’s aversion to injustice shows in his straightforward prose... (and) his conviction grew as he met Indians face to face on their reservations.”<sup>327</sup> While Lewis’s biography of Garry was unusual in its time, he did not include passages from the oral histories he collected, though he did cite the interviews with the seven Spokane elders, Curley Jim, and Nellie Garry mentioned here, and he included a photograph at Garry’s gravesite of five of the men interviewed.<sup>328</sup>

Less than a decade later, Lewis acted as attorney for the Colville Indigenous people in a case that went before the United States Supreme Court.<sup>329</sup> Though Lewis lost the case, his legal action on behalf of Plateau Indigenous peoples indicates his interest in resolving what his interviewees deemed injustices experienced at the hands of the U.S. government and American

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<sup>325</sup> William S. Lewis, “Statement of Nellie Garry.” William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>326</sup> Ibid.

<sup>327</sup> John Fahey, “The Case of William Lewis,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*, Vol. 91, No. 2 (Spring, 2000): 86.

<sup>328</sup> William S. Lewis, *The Case of Spokane Garry* (Spokane: Spokane Historical Society, 1917).

<sup>329</sup> *Supreme Court Reports* 186, 463 (1929).



settlers. Historians such as Fahey have been generous to Lewis in their assessment of his motives and it bears repeating that Lewis acted as a real estate agent and land speculator in addition to being an attorney. While he may have been acting in what he saw as the best interests of Plateau Indigenous peoples, most of Lewis's published works celebrated the non-Indigenous fur traders and settlers of the Columbia River Plateau, further marginalizing Indigenous peoples.

Continuing his quest for the location of the North West Company post Spokane House, Lewis contacted Reverend Joseph Carnana, to ask if he had encountered any Indigenous knowledge of the Plateau fur trade. Quoting a man named Chief Louis Wilsholeger, perhaps through Reverend Carnana, Lewis's transcript stated "[t]he white traders had all their trading houses and dwelling houses around the circle between the Spokane River and the mouth of the Little Spokane, South. There were other little houses and gardens which the Indians cultivated when the Hudson's Bay company went to Colville about 1823."<sup>330</sup> In the letter accompanying the transcript in Lewis's papers, a small map was drawn, illustrating the following statement, "North of the Mouth of the Little Spokane River I have marked the favorite Indian Camp, and a bridge on the Little Spokane River. The chief Indian burying ground was located some distance of 2 or 3 miles Northwest of this Indian camp."<sup>331</sup> The letter contains little more information and the transcription is short, but seven years later Lewis published a lengthy account in the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* titled "Old Indian Tells of Early Days When Whites First Set Foot Here: Chief Wildshoe Dwells on Scenes of Frontier Days – Knows Legends," suggesting he had developed a

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<sup>330</sup> William S. Lewis, "Statement of Chief Louis Wilsholeger." William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture. There is no indication in Lewis's papers that he spoke with Wilsholeger, but there are two letters dated December 1912, located immediately prior to this account, between Lewis and Rev. Joseph Carnana, S.J. that include the information transcribed into the "Statement of Chief Louis Wilsholeger." I believe the "Statement of Chief Louis Wilsholeger" is a revised version of Carnana's letter to Lewis, not the verbatim statement of Wilsholeger.

<sup>331</sup> William S. Lewis, "Statement of Chief Louis Wilsholeger." William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

closer relationship with the Indigenous man than his papers indicate and also altering the name of his informant.

From the outset, the reader was aware that the emphasis in this article would be on the “firsts” of settlers and “frontier days.” The newspaper article informed readers “Louis Wildshoe, a chief of the Spokane Indians now living on the Coeur d’Alene reservation, was recently in town and called in to see me to renew acquaintance. With the aid of Mr. Laflure as an interpreter, the old chief, who grew reminiscent, told me of early days in the Spokane country. Here is his story...” and in the opening paragraph, Mr. Wildshoe is legitimized by his proximity to “white” “firsts.” He stated:

My grandfather was a chief of the Spokane Indians when the first white man arrived... When my old mother-in-law was a little girl the white men built the first fort or trading post on the little flat, between the two rivers, at the mouth of the trout stream (Little Spokane) just north of here. These first white men were Seme – that is, Frenchmen. Seme is the Spokane word for wonder or astonishment. Pion (peone), after whom the prairie northeast of here is named, was one of the first Frenchmen.<sup>332</sup>

From a paragraph of firsting, the article proceeded to the locations of fur trade buildings. “The fort was built midway between the two rivers. The Indian cemetery was right at the mouth of the trout stream, north between the two rivers, just below the fort. The fort was built in a circle. (The Indians have no word for square.)”<sup>333</sup> Several passages were printed in bold type, such as **“Gates was the name of one of the first white men here. The first wagons used had two wheels cut out of big logs and with holes in the centre for the axle. They used these to haul stuff about the fort. The meat at the fort was principally horse and dog meat”** and **“From these first traders on the Little Spokane, the Spokane Indians began to get metal utensils; pots,**

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<sup>332</sup> William S. Lewis, “Old Indian Tells of Early Days When Whites First Set Foot Here: Chief Wildshoe Dwells on Scenes of Frontier Days – Knows Legends,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, August 21, 1919.

<sup>333</sup> Ibid.

**butcher knives, axes and guns. They also secured calico, clothing and blankets, and flint and steel to make fires,**” suggesting their importance over other content in the article because they provided evidence of Euro-American firsting.<sup>334</sup>

Although this newspaper article states it is a transcript of an interview with an elderly Indigenous man, there are consistencies in style and content with Lewis’s writings. While it is possible that Mr. Wilsholeger/Wildshoe visited Lewis in Spokane, it is striking that the themes emerging from Lewis’s newspaper article are again those of empire that legitimize non-Indigenous settlement on the Plateau through a perception of longevity and a narrative of progress being introduced to Indigenous peoples’ lives through fur trade goods.

In addition to Indigenous peoples, Lewis interviewed people he deemed “pioneers” of the region, who included the children of fur trade employees, some who were métis, and non-Indigenous settlers who came to the Plateau as the fur trade in the area wound down. Lewis published several of these “pioneer reminiscences” in *The Washington Historical Quarterly*, under his own name and under the names of his interviewees. Lewis’s published account of John V. Campbell’s reminiscences relates Campbell’s experiences migrating from the Red River settlement to the Plateau in 1854. The group travelled west across what are now the Canadian prairies to Fort Edmonton before turning south and crossing the Rocky Mountains near the Kootenay River.<sup>335</sup> Several children were born on the journey across the northern plains, including “a child born to Mr. and Mrs. Thomas Brown, a son who is now living in the Colville Valley. I saw him in the spring of ’55 as I had gone up to Colville to visit Mr. Thomas Brown before starting down to the Walla Walla country with Wm. Moar.”<sup>336</sup> Campbell also remembered

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<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Campbell, “The Sinclair Party – An Emigration Overland along the Old Hudson Bay Company Route from Manitoba to the Spokane Country in 1854,” 189-191.

<sup>336</sup> Ibid., 189.

of the group's time spent on the Bow River, "another youngster was born there to Mr. and Mrs. Robert Fleet, but the little one did not live but a few days."<sup>337</sup> It is possible that Campbell was referring to the Flett family, many of whom were engaged in the fur trade and some who married into Indigenous communities in the Plateau, including the Spokane. The Fleet or Flett family is not included in the tally of party members at the end of the article. On settlement in the region, the authors noted "One family, Mr. Thomas Brown, and his brother, Henry Brown, went up to Colville Valley and took what cattle and horses they wished with them to that country. Mr. John Moar and his family, with myself, remained at the Spokane. The rest of the party kept on the way down to Walla Walla."<sup>338</sup> Lewis inserted a "firsting" footnote: "Thomas Brown became one of the first white settlers in Stevens County. By an abortive act of the Territorial Legislature, passed January 18<sup>th</sup>, 1859, he was named as the first Sheriff of the newly created Spokane County, then embracing all the country north of the Snake River and east of the Columbia and Okanogan."<sup>339</sup> Through the details of settler family growth, especially births and migration, Lewis and Campbell narrated colonial expansion from the Red River settlement to the Columbia River Plateau. By including details of children born on the journey, the authors established a settler population born in the region, legitimizing their occupation of it. To further the legitimacy of these settlers, Lewis and Campbell explain that they brought livestock and European-style legal systems with them to found communities rooted in European values. The "pioneer reminiscence" of John V. Campbell produced a narrative of empire that was created on fur trade trails to be consumed by twenty-first century Plateau settlers.

Lewis's publication of Campbell's account includes crossing the recently established international boundary, an imperial creation that was not settled at the time of Campbell's

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<sup>337</sup> Ibid., 190.

<sup>338</sup> Ibid., 193.

<sup>339</sup> Ibid., 193n.

crossing. According to Campbell, “we crossed over to the American side of the international boundary line, which had not been surveyed at that time.” Lewis inserted in parentheses “(The boundary line was not surveyed until 1858.)” and Campbell’s account continued,

We laid over there for another three days, and found a Hudson’s Bay trader for the Kootenais by the name of John Linklater, a Scotchman, who had come up on his yearly trip from Fort Colville in the Colville Valley along the Columbia River. Mr. Linklater’s trading post was on the west side of the Kootenay River, and we were traveling down the east side. Mr. Linklater was the first white person we saw after leaving Fort Edmonton on the Saskatchewan River. He was very happy to see some white people there. At that time he was all alone in that country; there was not another white person nearer than three or four hundred miles to his station.<sup>340</sup>

This passage demonstrates that the fur trade was a continental enterprise, requiring labourers to travel between regions to different post assignments, which could require international crossings. It is also indicative of the use to which settlers put fur trade networks and employees in the process of migrating westward.

Campbell reported in the article that he and a friend built a log cabin along the Coeur d’Alene River and supplied it from Fort Colville, the HBC post on the Columbia River, south of the international border. On travelling in the area, Campbell discussed Spokane and Coeur d’Alene camps in vague terms, but provided details on other settlers, many of whom were in some way involved in the fur trade:

It took me three days to reach the first settlers in the valley. These were some of the Finlays; there were three brothers, close neighbours, Patrick, Koostah and Nicholas Finlay. . . . The original Finlay, Jacques Finlay, was in charge of the old Spokane post in the early days; I never saw him, as he died before I came to that country. What other settlers there were in the Colville Valley, besides the Finlays, were some Scotchmen, Orkneymen and a few French Canadians that had been employees of the Hudson Bay Company. These were married to some of the descendants of Jacques Finlay and some to the native women of the country. I think that there were just two settlers in the entire valley that had not been employees of the Hudson Bay Company; one Francois Morriceaux who was a

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<sup>340</sup> Ibid., 192.

trapper from the East side of the Rocky Mountains and one Canadian by the name of La Bien. I do not think that there were more than twenty-five or thirty settlers in the entire Colville Valley when I first came to that country in the spring of 1855. When I arrived at the Fort Colville there was quite a stir as the trader, Mr. Angus McDonald, was starting a pack train of 50 or 60 horses down to Fort Hope on the Fraser River for an outfit of goods to supply the Company's store at Colville.<sup>341</sup>

Campbell tells of working among various forts on both sides of the international border in the Plateau, including Walla Walla, Colville, and Fort Hope. After heading north from Colville, Campbell recalled, "I was with the Kootenais, just north across the International Boundary line."<sup>342</sup> In the 1850s and 60s, fur trade posts acted as supply depots of empire (railroad, boundary surveys, meeting settlers coming west after gold rush). William S. Smith produced historical works retelling the stories of "pioneers" and their interactions with fur traders, building a historiography of the Plateau fur trade that bolstered colonial projects.

Another of William S. Lewis's "pioneers" was John E. Smith, born in New Jersey, who took a ship to California at age fourteen, placer mined and freighted up the west coast, and ended up at Walla Walla.<sup>343</sup> Smith's account is similar in many ways to Campbell's, though from an eastern and southern geographic perspective. Smith agreed that "Fort Colville was the supply point for the boundary survey," and he recalled being "back and forth frequently taking supplies to the Okanogan Country. They were just starting to build the army post then. The town of Pinckney City – now Colville – was not yet started when I was first there. At the Hudson Bay trading post on Marcus Flats and about Fort Colville, in 1859, I frequently met old Angus McDonald, who was in charge of the trading post."<sup>344</sup> Smith's travels were more far-flung than those of Campbell and he remembered the year he "went to the gold rush on the Caribou, on the

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<sup>341</sup> Ibid., 196.

<sup>342</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>343</sup> Smith, "A Pioneer of the Spokane Country," 267-8.

<sup>344</sup> Ibid.

headwaters of the Fraser River, in British Columbia. In 1864, I returned to Walla Walla and resumed freighting by pack mules. I freighted into Boise, Idaho; into Wild Horse Creek, in the Kootenai Country, in B.C...I met Haines on the Boundary Line Survey and made the trip to the Caribou country with him in 1863.”<sup>345</sup> And, as with all of Lewis’s publications, there is mention of the specific location of post buildings when Smith is quoted as saying “About June 1, 1908, Professor Gilstrap, O.B. Gilstrap and another man came to my farm and asked me if I knew anything about the old ruins of Spokane House. I told them, no, and referred them to my neighbour...”<sup>346</sup> More so than in Campbell’s account, the history of the Plateau fur trade told by Lewis and Smith was one in which the networks of the fur trade intersected and overlapped those of empire. Trading posts and trading routes connected with international boundaries and the trails of miners in search of wealth. Pack mule trails between southern Plateau fur trade posts travelled through areas where army posts were being erected. Smith’s narrative of traveling in the Plateau emphasized the structures of American and Canadian empires, while his publication reified them.

William S. Lewis published many “pioneer” reminiscences and obituaries, among them several related to the lives of “children of the fur trade,” as historian John C. Jackson has called the métis descendants of fur trade employees and Plateau Indigenous women.<sup>347</sup> One such example is that of “Mrs. Mary Ann King,” whose obituary Lewis titled “Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest,” gracing King with considerable settler legitimacy. King’s genealogy is expertly documented by Jean Barman, who traces King’s family from Pierre Roi, a fur trader from Sorel,

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<sup>345</sup> Ibid., 274.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid., 276.

<sup>347</sup> Jackson, *Children of the Fur Trade*. For more information, see Martha Harroun Foster, *We Know Who We Are: Métis Identity in a Montana Community* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2006); Michel Hogue, *Metis and the Medicine Line: Creating a Border and Dividing a People* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2015).

Québec who later chose the name Peter King.<sup>348</sup> Lewis covered King's genealogy by describing her as

...the daughter of Patrick and Mary Finley, natives of Canada, and Washington, in those early days of the fur trade when this whole region was vaguely known as the "Oregon Country" or the "Columbia District" of the Hudson's Bay Company's territories...Her grandfather was Jacco Finlay, associate of the intrepid explorer, David Thompson, whom Jacco doubtless preceded in exploring the headwaters of the Columbia River and its Kootenai branch...John Work's Journal in the year 1828 published in the Washington Historical Quarterly records the death of Jacco Finlay at Spokane House in that year.<sup>349</sup>

Lewis linked King directly to the fur trade through her paternal grandfather, Jacques Finlay, and further explained her ties with the trade when describing her marriage at the age of 19 to "Peter King, born in Quebec in 1820, [who] came to the Hudson's Bay Post in the '40s and was a blacksmith with the company for several years, settling in 1851 on land three miles northwest of the present town of Chewelah, which land he secured from his wife's father."<sup>350</sup> In this second sentence, Lewis installed Mary Ann King as both an embodiment of fur trade history and a founding mother of a Plateau settler family.

Lewis lauded King for her skills, describing her as "one of the very best of women to tan a deer hide, make moccasins, gloves, and when it came to fancy bead work she was second to none" and with regard to her métis heritage, Lewis remarked that "[s]he was of mixed blood, far above the average, and very few like her inherited the good traits of both her ancestors."<sup>351</sup> If the progress narrative Lewis created was not clear enough for readers of King's passing, he added "Very few people were permitted to see as much change take place in a country as she did, from

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<sup>348</sup> Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women*, 255.

<sup>349</sup> William S. Lewis, "Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest notes" William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture; William S. Lewis, "Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* vol.17 no. 1 (1926).

<sup>350</sup> William S. Lewis, "Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest notes" William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture; Lewis, "Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest."

<sup>351</sup> William S. Lewis, "Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest notes" William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture; Lewis, "Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest."



the time when the aborigines held full sway over this entire domain, till this country developed and progressed to its present state.”<sup>352</sup> In her obituary, Lewis molded Mary Ann King into the embodiment of empire in the transition from the fur trade era to the “development and progress” of the early twentieth century.

In life and death, Lewis cast Plateau métis people as pioneers who bridged the historic fur trade and the booming Plateau of the twentieth century. Lewis interviewed George Herron, a descendant of a fur trade employee and a Colville Indigenous woman, and published his interview with a preface situating his non-Indigenous family within the Plateau fur trade. Herron recalled:

I am now 92 years of age, having been born at “Squalie” in the year 1824. My father was Frank Herron, an Irishman who had charge of the Colville trading post for the Hudson’s Bay Company. My mother was a half breed named Clark who belonged to the Colville tribe. Her father was a man named Clark. About the time I was a year old my father was called back to Canada, and my mother and I stayed with the Colville tribe near the trading post at Fort Colville. “Squalie” was a Hudson’s Bay Trading post at the mouth of the Columbia River. My father had charge of the entire line of Hudson’s Bay trading posts on this (East) side of the Mountains (Cascades), and I was born at “Squalie” while my father was on a trip of inspection. All this I was told by my mother. I knew several men by the name of Finlay living in the neighborhood. I recall two who were living with women of the Spokane tribe. They were old men then. One moved to the neighborhood of Chewelah afterwards. I think that some of their descendants are around the St. Ignatius Mission in Montana.<sup>353</sup>

Much of this information is contained in the published version, titled “Francis Heron, Fur Trader: Other Herons,” and is accompanied by a description of George Herron as “a staunch Republican and always takes, contrary to the majority of his race, an active interest in public affairs. He and his family are sincere adherents to the Catholic Church...In character he is a man of integrity and

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<sup>352</sup> William S. Lewis, “Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest notes” William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture; Lewis, “Oldest Pioneer Laid to Rest.”

<sup>353</sup> William S. Lewis, “Statement of Mr. George Herron.” William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

has always been considered a valuable and estimable citizen of his community.”<sup>354</sup> In his article, Lewis described George Herron’s family as rooted in fur trade history, emphasizing Herron’s European ancestors, while assuring readers that though this man was a direct link to the fur trade past, he embodied the qualities of settler communities by embracing religion and politics. This suggestion illuminates Lewis’s lack of knowledge about métis religious and political practices. Nonetheless, Lewis again constructs a narrative of progress through systems of empire from fur trade era “wildness” to twentieth-century settlement.

In Lewis’s publication of John V. Campbell’s experiences in the Sinclair Party resettling from Red River to the Plateau in 1854, he included Campbell’s explanation of his mixed European and Indigenous ancestry. Campbell is quoted, “My father was a Scotchman from Perth, Scotland; my mother a half breed, half French and half Indian, her maiden name was Elizabeth McGilvrary of Peace River, Canada. I was raised on the Peace River about two miles below Upper Fort Garry of the Hudson Bay company, Manitoba, Canada, and lived there until I started for the West in 1854.”<sup>355</sup> There is no further discussion of Campbell’s early life and family experiences near Upper Fort Garry and instead the details emphasize his European paternal lineage. The publication is arranged to appear as a continuous letter from Campbell to Lewis, though Lewis included a footnote alerting readers that “[t]his article was collated and prepared by Mr. William S. Lewis, from a series of letters written to him by Mr. John V. Campbell of Lilloett, British Columbia.”<sup>356</sup> I have found no indication of the questions Lewis asked of Campbell to solicit the replies he “collated” to produce the publication.

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<sup>354</sup> William S. Lewis, “Francis Heron, Fur Trader: Other Herons,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* vol. 11 no. 1 (1920), 32.

<sup>355</sup> Campbell, “The Sinclair Party – An Emigration Overland along the Old Hudson Bay Company Route from Manitoba to the Spokane Country in 1854,” 200.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, 187.

John Campbell lived and worked in proximity to the fur trade, growing up near and occasionally staying and working at HBC posts across the continent. He remembered,

...In the fall of 1859 when I returned to Colville I went to work on the Boundary line survey in the Kootenay Country; we worked summers and wintered at Colville. In the spring of 1860 I bought a small place and went to farming. I took a half breed woman for a wife named Louisa Burland. I remained on this farm for two years, when I was again hired by the Hudson bay Company to go among the Kootenai Indians in the Tobacco Plains. I had two boys with my wife, but they are both dead.<sup>357</sup>

Lewis's published article focuses on the pioneering aspects of Campbell's life, but a careful reader is able to pick out the more complicated details of his life as a métis man who lived and worked within the networks of the North American fur trade alongside people of multitudinous cultural backgrounds while also migrating across the continent and being included by non-Indigenous peoples as among the pioneering settlers of the Columbia River Plateau. Indeed, Campbell's complex life was reduced in Lewis's article to that of a Plateau settler who aided in imperial progress.

J. Orin Oliphant was a contemporary of William S. Lewis who was born on the Plateau in 1894 to settler parents and who became a history professor at the Washington State Normal School at Cheney, followed by Antioch College and Bucknell University. Oliphant's specialization was the history of cattle ranching, but during his time in Cheney he collected "pioneer reminiscences" and published "The Recollections of Ben Burgunder" in 1926.<sup>358</sup> According to Oliphant, Burgunder, "one of the oldest pioneers of the Inland Empire," documented his own experiences on the Plateau, but also collected those of other elderly men in

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<sup>357</sup> Ibid., 200.

<sup>358</sup> Manuscripts, Archives, and Special Collections, Washington State University Libraries, "Guide to the J. Orin Oliphant Papers," Accessed April 17, 2014: <http://ntserver1.wsulibs.wsu.edu/masc/finders/cg563.htm>; Ben Burgunder and J. Orin Oliphant, "The Recollections of Ben Burgunder," *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 17 no. 3 (1926), 190.

the region, some of whom had been engaged in the fur trade.<sup>359</sup> Both Burgunder and Oliphant were interested in collecting the stories of men who they deemed pioneers and who were involved in the settlement and “military history” of the region.<sup>360</sup>

In the first years of the twentieth century, Burgunder began correspondence with Donald McDonald, son of Angus McDonald, who acted as HBC Chief Trader at Fort Colville from 1858 until 1872.<sup>361</sup> Recalling what he knew of the fur trade era, McDonald wrote to Burgunder about the relocation of the HBC post from Spokane House to Fort Colville and the terms under which the HBC “sold out their rights to all possessions in through the coast in the sixties and finally vacated the Fort in 1871 – during the German & French war.”<sup>362</sup> McDonald also related to Burgunder bits of his family history in the Columbia River Plateau and Rocky Mountain regions, writing:

My father reached Colville by way of the head waters of the Columbia in, I think 1840, and Thomas Stensgar got to Colville in 1842, although both of them left Scotland in the same ship, but Stensgar was detained two years on the other side of the Rocky Mountains. Shortly after my father’s arrival, he was sent to Fort Hall, Idaho, stayed there a few years then came to the Flathead Post in about 1846 or 7, & from thence to Fort Colville in the 50’s.<sup>363</sup>

McDonald’s family history accentuated his father’s arrival from Europe and his actions in the fur trade. McDonald went on to state that his father, Angus, “...was at Colville, when Gov. I.I. Stevens and Gen. G.B. McClelland – the latter then a Captain – reached them in 1855, the same year that Governor Stevens treated with the confederated Indian tribes for this Flathead Reservation July 16, 1855, at Hell’s Gate, to which these Indians now are discontented for their

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<sup>359</sup> Burgunder and Oliphant, “Recollections of Ben Burgunder,” 190-1.

<sup>360</sup> *Ibid.*, 191.

<sup>361</sup> Donald McDonald was one of twelve children of Angus McDonald, HBC Chief Trader at Fort Colville from 1858-1872. “Angus McDonald” Biographical Sheet, Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

<sup>362</sup> Donald McDonald to Ben Burgunder, September 19, 1907 Ben Burgunder Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>363</sup> *Ibid.*

Reservation to open for the whites as well as them.”<sup>364</sup> In this passage of the letter, McDonald transitions from his father’s fur trade activities to the colonial and military activities of the American government. McDonald then discussed his own interpretation of treaties and Indigenous reactions to them:

The treaty reads that the Flathead Reservation will be opened & allotments made to Indians whenever the U.S. Presidents sees fit, but for all this the Indian feels humiliated, and it seems they cannot understand some of them, why their country from time immemorial has been theirs would be done as the white man wish. I told some of them that the Creator of their universe probably knows the best, & for the white to be among them.<sup>365</sup>

In the matter of two sentences about his family history, Donald McDonald related to Ben Burgunder a transition from European-born fur trade employment to interpreting imperial U.S. treaties and counseling Indigenous peoples on how to respond to them. In a letter several months later regarding a land sale, McDonald mentioned to Burgunder that he and his wife, daughter of Thomas Stensgar, lived on an allotment on the Flathead Reservation that he suggests was in her name, as he stated “[m]y wife is one of the heirs and is anxious to sell, in order to improve her allotment at once on this Flathead Reservation.”<sup>366</sup>

Ben Burgunder collected remembrances of elderly peoples living on the Plateau at the turn of the century, some of whom remembered events of the fur trade, and he compiled them and his own memoirs in tidy notes that he never published. Historian J. Orin Oliphant did as many early twentieth-century Plateau historians and published Burgunder’s, and thus parts of other pioneers’, reflections in scholarly publications such as *The Washington Historical*

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<sup>364</sup> Ibid.

<sup>365</sup> Ibid.

<sup>366</sup> Donald McDonald to Ben Burgunder, January 10, 1908 Ben Burgunder Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

*Quarterly*. The assembly and dissemination of such reminiscences included the tropes of “firsting” and “civilizing” the Plateau in the process of colonization and empire-building.

J. Neilson Barry, an Episcopal priest and amateur historian of the west, researched and wrote about various elements of non-Indigenous westward expansion including the Lewis and Clark Expedition and the North American fur trade. He is credited with writing more than 50 articles for the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* between the 1920s and 1940s.<sup>367</sup> Barry’s extensive correspondence with libraries, universities, individuals, and companies was eccentric and at times belligerent. Following such communication with faculty at the University of Idaho in 1953, librarian Lee Zimmerman responded, “Members of both the history and geography department are skeptical of his scholarship. He makes statements based only on his own authority and does not indicate from where he obtains his facts.”<sup>368</sup> Barry’s papers at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture contain extensive notes and genealogical information regarding Antoine Plante, a labourer in the fur trade who later ran a ferry across the Spokane River. Barry’s notes reference John Work’s journal for 1830-31, excerpts of which were published by T.C. Elliott in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* in 1910-1913.<sup>369</sup> In his research notes, Barry references articles published in *The Quarterly of the Oregon Historical Society* written by T.C. Elliott (Barry published articles in the same issues alongside Elliott’s work), as well as the book *The Journal of John Work: A Chief Trader of the Hudson’s Bay Co., During His Expedition from Vancouver to the Flatheads and Blackfeet of the Pacific Northwest* edited by William S. Lewis and Paul C. Phillips.<sup>370</sup> In one instance, Barry transcribed selected passages of a series on

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<sup>367</sup> “Guide to the J. Neilson Barry Papers 1932-1937,” Northwest Digital Archives, accessed March 11, 2014. <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv82426>

<sup>368</sup> Ibid.

<sup>369</sup> J. Neilson Barry Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>370</sup> J. Neilson Barry Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture; John Work, William S. Lewis, and Paul C. Phillips. *The Journal of John Work: A Chief Trader of the Hudson’s Bay*

Antoine Plante that appeared in the Spokane Daily Chronicle and noted specifics of Elliott's and his own articles that the author, Waldo Rosebush, did not include in the series.<sup>371</sup>

Most of Barry's correspondence regarding the history of the fur trade in the Plateau was written on his personal stationery marked "Barrycrest," the name he gave his home in Portland, but one letter from Barry to an unknown "Mr. Bell" is on Oregon Historical Society letterhead.<sup>372</sup> Barry was a long-time member of both the Washington and Oregon Historical Societies, but is not listed as holding an official title within the Oregon Historical Society. It is not clear how submissions to the *OHQ* were assessed or approved in this era, but it is interesting that Barry was a long-time member, possessed society stationery, and also published such a large number of articles in the journal, given the opinions of his scholarship expressed by historians and geographers at the University of Idaho. In lieu of the changing nature of the historical profession at the turn of the century, however, Barry's status as an "amateur" historian is less surprising perhaps than his excoriating treatment of other historians. As Peter Novick explained, in this period of transitional professionalization in the field of history, "much of the most distinguished historical work continued to be produced by those without Ph.D.'s or professorships."<sup>373</sup> Indeed, Novick argued that "in the case of history the only full-time practitioners before the era of professionalization were the high-income, high-status, 'gentleman amateurs,'" a description that fit Barry and his contemporaries well.<sup>374</sup> Barry's understanding of

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*Co., During His Expedition from Vancouver to the Flatheads and Blackfeet of the Pacific Northwest* (Cleveland: A.H. Clark, 1923).

<sup>371</sup> J. Neilson Barry Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture; Waldo Rosebush, "Antoine Plante – "Mountain Man": The First Permanent Settler in the Spokane Valley," *Spokane Daily Chronicle* December 6, 1933. Rosebush is not attributed as the author in the newspaper series, but he includes the series and its original publication information in the "Valley of the Sun Manuscripts, 1932-1933," Waldo Emerson Rosebush Papers 1930-1962, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>372</sup> J. Neilson Barry Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>373</sup> Novick, *That Noble Dream*, 49.

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*, 50.

the past was shaped by his position as a high-status, high-income gentleman in the Plateau who had both the time and resources to dedicate to a leisurely pursuit of the pasts that interested him.

J. Neilson Barry, like William S. Lewis, was a “gentleman amateur” interested in Columbia River Plateau history and, to an extent, promoting the region he now called home to further settlement, at times employing the history of the fur trade to this end. Barry’s assessment of Spokane House and the Plateau fur trade was incredibly romanticized. In a letter extolling the region’s fur trading past, Barry wrote:

...by no means overlook the most important point of all, old “Spokan” house, the headquarters of the Americans and of the British fur traders where every white man in the Inland Empire went to get supplies, his annual mail, and to deliver his furs, there was a place of barbaric splendor, the great dancing hall, the race track with thirty horses, the silver goblets of the partner of the wealthiest millionaire in America, one of which cost a life. the four henchmen with ostrich feathers in their caps, there occurred the dramatic announcement of the war of 1812 of the marriage of the huntsman husband, there was the wrestling bear, and the goats called “white man’s deer” there the superb dappled gray horse whose seventy mile gallop is historic. I could tell a lot about that romantic spot. only the cellar holes now remain. and the cabin built long afterwards by the Frenchman Bone, or Bonney, that insignificant cabin erected long after the old fortress had rotted, by the mail carrier, was recently moved to the site of the great stockade and unfortunately gives an impression of the fortress with its brazen cannon in the bastions having been on a par.<sup>375</sup>

Barry’s choice in this letter to illuminate the exceptional moments of the fur trade, when compared with the quotidian events referenced from journals and diaries of fur traders in Chapter One, reflected his preference for the fantastical in Plateau fur trade history, but also the non-Indigenous. Throughout this passage Barry referenced the products of empire, even referring to the Plateau region as the “Inland Empire,” a moniker that was becoming fashionable among

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<sup>375</sup> J. Neilson Barry to Mr. Bell, 23 January, 1923. J. Neilson Barry Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture. It is not clear from the text of the letter who Bell is, but the reference to scouts suggests this letter may have been suggesting information to share with a children’s scouting group, such as the one that erected a marker at the site of Spokane House in 1924. “Boy Scouts Mark Site of Famous Old Trading Post,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, May 5, 1924.



boosters at the time.<sup>376</sup> The language of empire was thick in this short letter, referencing American and British “headquarters,” “white men,” American wealth, the War of 1812, Frenchmen, and fortresses. For Barry, as with his contemporaries such as Lewis, Oliphant, and T.C. Elliott (a Walla Walla investment banker and prolific contributor to the *Oregon Historical Quarterly* and the *Washington Historical Quarterly*) who referenced one another’s work, the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was depicted in their historical writings as a forerunner of empire, a foundation on which American and Canadian settler colonialism was built.<sup>377</sup>

Historians in British Columbia at the time also represented the fur trade as a precursor of “civilization” in the Plateau, but with far less booster enthusiasm than their southern counterparts. In a 1940 article in *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly* on David Douglas’s time in the region, A.G. Harvey, a lawyer and alderman in Vancouver, deemed the Plateau fur trade era “the rather dull intervening period when fur traders ruled the country and their forts were the only outposts of civilization.”<sup>378</sup> In another article, the mainland B.C. fur trade was merely a precursor to the more exciting history of the Fraser River gold rush. In this article about administration of interior lands as non-Indigenous peoples’ interest shifted from furs to gold, F.W. Laing, who was secretary to the minister of agriculture, suggested that the fur trade era and HBC “ownership” of Plateau lands were mere back-story for the more interesting later period in

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<sup>376</sup> Historian Katherine G. Morrissey defines the Inland Empire as “a perceptual region composed of a series of settlements tied together by mental concepts,” also mentioning that it was initially defined geographically as “stretch[ing] from British Columbia down to Boise, Idaho, and from the western side of the Cascades to beyond the eastern slope of the Bitterroot Mountains. Railroad lines and river systems link the region’s towns to its capital, Spokane.” Morrissey, *Mental Territories*, 8, 5.

<sup>377</sup> “Guide to the Thompson Coit Elliott Papers 1903-1937,” Northwest Digital Archives, accessed March 11, 2014. <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv50289/op=fstyle.aspx?t=k&q=T.C.+Elliott>. One of Elliott’s *Washington Historical Quarterly* articles, “Spokane House,” was reprinted in pamphlet form by the University of Washington Press in 1930. T.C. Elliott, “Spokane House,” *The Washington Historical Quarterly* v. 21, no. 1 (1930): 3-7; T.C. Elliott, *Spokane House*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1930.

<sup>378</sup> A.G. Harvey, “David Douglas in British Columbia,” *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly* vol. IV (October, 1940), 221. On Harvey, see G.P.V. Akrigg and Helen B. Akrigg, *British Columbia Place Names* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997), ix.

which lands were “passed to private ownership by Crown grant in 1902.”<sup>379</sup> While some articles in *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly* were more attentive to the Plateau fur trade (indeed, many articles in 1937 were on the subject because Kamloops celebrated its anniversary that year), most cast it as less interesting than events that took place later or on the coast. They all, however, depicted the fur trade as an event in the unfolding of empire in the region. In “Fur-Trading Days at Kamloops,” F. Henry Johnson emphasized the rivalry of American and HBC fur trade interests in the area, but ultimately argued that Kamloops’ “fur-trading days” were a romantic era that was “ushered out” as the gold rush began and “[t]hings were no longer the same” in the region, evoking nostalgia for the bygone fur trade era.<sup>380</sup> Early twentieth-century Canadian historians considered the Plateau fur trade a worthy subject and portrayed it as a precursor to the gold rush era and settlement that was to follow.<sup>381</sup> Boosters in the B.C. interior put in considerable effort in the 1930s and 40s, as the work of Michael Dawson shows, to attract tourists from Vancouver and the United States, but historians who supported boosterism efforts in the interior emphasized the gold rush era rather than that of the fur trade.<sup>382</sup> Even Hubert Howe Bancroft, in his tome on the history of British Columbia, cast the history of the Plateau fur trade as more interesting in an American context than for B.C., writing that the Oregon Territory was “a mystic land, a region of weird imagery and fable.”<sup>383</sup> Before moving on to a detailed description of the francophone Willamette settlement and missionary activity around Spokane,

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<sup>379</sup> F.W. Laing, “Hudson’s Bay Company Lands on the Mainland of British Columbia, 1858-1861,” *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly* vol. III (April, 1939), 96. On Laing, see R.W. Sandwell, ed., *Beyond the City Limits: Rural History in British Columbia* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1998), 235n3.

<sup>380</sup> F. Henry Johnson, “Fur-Trading Days at Kamloops,” *The British Columbia Historical Quarterly* vol. I (July, 1937), 171, 184.

<sup>381</sup> For a more recent examination of settlement in B.C., see Cole Harris, *The Resettlement of British Columbia: Essays on Colonialism and Geographical Change* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 1997).

<sup>382</sup> Michael Dawson, *Selling British Columbia: Tourism and Consumer Culture, 1890-1970* (Vancouver: UBC Press, 2004), 4, 92, 124, 129, 135.

<sup>383</sup> 55

Bancroft simply noted geographical details of the B.C. portions of the Plateau.<sup>384</sup> Bancroft returned to the Plateau in a later chapter to recount “the Shuswap Conspiracy,” referencing the traders at Kamloops and their interactions with Indigenous peoples, a chapter that stands out in the historiography of the B.C. portion of the Plateau for its drama, but conforms to the trope of bewildered Indigenous people confronting technologically-superior Europeans.<sup>385</sup> Bancroft was a prolific historian and supporter of histories of the west that valorized non-Indigenous actors.<sup>386</sup> Historian Chad Reimer’s analysis of British Columbia history in the period between 1784 – 1958 indicated that the fur trade was a point of interest and pride among early-twentieth-century B.C. historians and boosters, but that the focus was on the maritime fur trade and individuals “from Drake through Cook to Alexander Mackenzie,” who were depicted as both fur traders and explorers.<sup>387</sup> The Plateau fur trade is largely overlooked in early B.C. historiography.

From writing scholarly articles and research publications about the Columbia River Plateau fur trade, early twentieth-century historians and enthusiasts moved to commemorate the history of the fur trade on the landscape through memorials and monuments. To do so, William S. Lewis and his fellow “gentlemen amateurs” avidly sought details about fur trade post locations, building styles and materials, and inhabitants. Some even purchased property they thought included the Spokane House site. In 1910, the *Spokesman Review* reported that Spokane man H.L. Moody bought “the Hurd farm at the junction of the Little and Big Spokane river, about 10 miles southwest of Spokane” for \$18,000.

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<sup>384</sup> Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of British Columbia, 1792-1887* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1887), 56.

<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, 135-156.

<sup>386</sup> See Hubert Howe Bancroft, *History of Washington, Idaho and Montana, 1845-1889* (San Francisco: The History Company, 1890).

<sup>387</sup> Chad Reimer, *Writing British Columbia History, 1784-1958* (Vancouver, UBC Press, 2009), 23; indicating that the coastal trade was the historical focus: 44, 71, 74, 80, 83-5, 87, 90, 92, 93, 100, 102; demonstrating the integration of the roles of fur trader, explorer, and occasionally miner: 64, 69, 77, 106, 117, 123.

Famous Landmark on Farm Recently Bought  
by H. L. Moody of Spokane for \$18,000

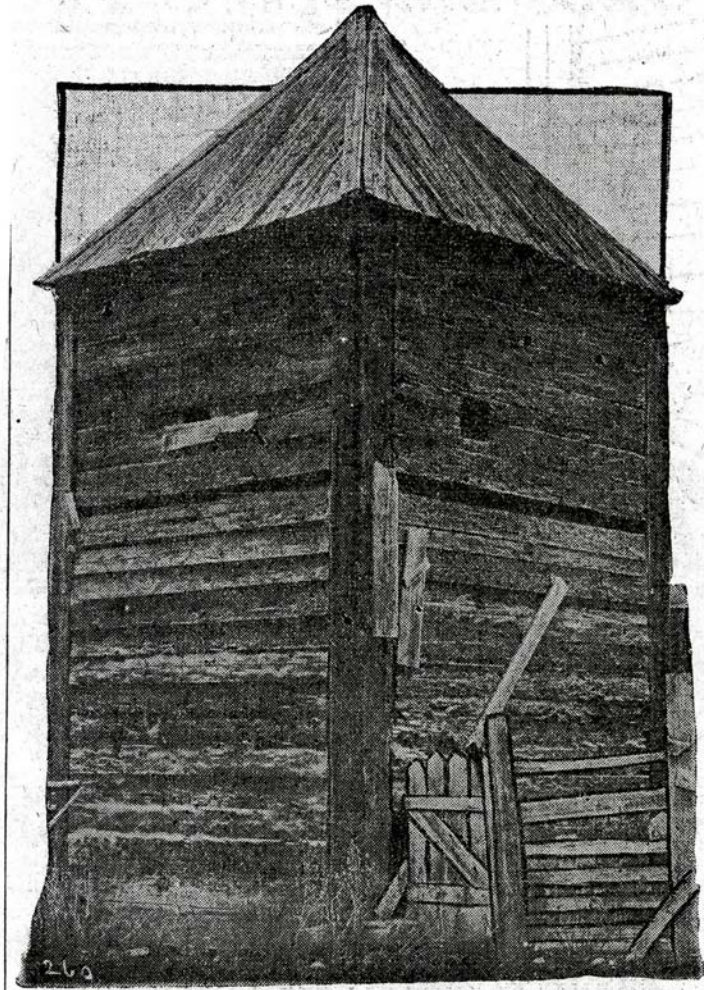


Figure 1.10: "Famous Landmark on Farm Recently Bought by H.L. Moody of Spokane for \$18,000," *The Spokesman Review*, May 15, 1910. Special Collections Department, Foley Centre Library, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

The photograph's caption claims that:

The rifle pit shown in the picture was built by the Hudson Bay company in the early part of the nineteenth century, when the company first set up a trading post in the northwest on the ground now owned by Mr. Moody. The photograph was taken by Frank Palmer, The logs are roughly hewn and are filled with bullets and bullet holes. This rifle pit, with the old trading cabin on the farm, are two of the oldest landmarks of civilization and the reminders of Indian war times in the Inland Empire. Mr. Moody, who is an advocate of historical preservation, is contemplating preserving the two landmarks. The farm will be his summer home

this year. It was this pit, according to Mr. Moody, which protected many of the white settlers against the Indians in the early part of the last century.<sup>388</sup>

It soon turned out that the building was not what Mr. Moody thought it was, but a later construction that had nothing to do with the fur trade. Claims such as these would hamper commemorative efforts in the Plateau over the next two decades.

In 1912, Lewis wrote to Jesuit Father George de la Motte, inquiring about the location of Spokane House, to which de la Motte responded that he had "...corresponded on the subject with Fr. Jos. M. Cataldo, SJ, who knows nothing on the subject, and furthermore is strongly inclined to believe that the Astor trading post never existed: such, it seems is also the opinion of the Old Nez Perces Indians whom he has consulted." Father de la Motte added that "[t]he only Indian who might possibly throw light on the subject is Louis Wilsholeger, who resided a long time in Spokane, and is a great lover of old Indian traditions... The old Indians usually agree in saying that the first white settlers who came in the neighbourhood of Spokane, resided near Colville."<sup>389</sup> Father de la Motte's suggestion may have been the impetus for Lewis reaching out to Wilsholeger, mentioned above.

Lewis wrote to another Jesuit father regarding the site of Spokane House, encouraging commemoration of the early eighteenth-century fur trade post and explaining what he saw as its historical significance. Lewis wrote,

The site of this old trading post is interesting historically as the first white settlement in this part of the country; from the old accounts it was a large and important trading post; a favorite camping and fishing ground of the Indians; that

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<sup>388</sup> "Famous Landmark on Farm Recently Bought by H.L. Moody of Spokane for \$18,000," *The Spokesman Review*, May 15, 1910. Special Collections Department, Foley Centre Library, Gonzaga University, Spokane, WA.

<sup>389</sup> Geo. De la Motte, S.J. to William S. Lewis, 21 October 1912 William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

there was a large burying ground there; and that the Indians cultivated the old post gardens after the post was abandoned.<sup>390</sup>

He was eager to receive information about the location of the post to commemorate its existence.

He began reaching out to the “pioneers” he interviewed about building specifics and transcribed several “statements” regarding memories of buildings at what was thought to be the site of Spokane House. Local resident James Monahan told Lewis:

I first saw the site of the old trading post near the mouth of the Little Spokane about 1862. It was located on the south bank of the Spokane River above the mouth of the Little Spokane on a flat between the two rivers...I saw the stone foundation of several buildings, one large building and about half a dozen smaller buildings. The buildings formed a square. The foundation of the larger building, if I remember correctly, formed the east side of the square. This was a large building 30 feet or more wide by 70 or 80 feet high and about two feet thick.<sup>391</sup>

Though he was able to provide Lewis with some of the specifics he sought, Monahan suggested additional sources of information, George Heron, a man whose reminiscences Lewis published (mentioned above). Monahan suggested:

George Hearn, or Hern, a half-breed, who if now living, resides on a farm between the mouth of Curlew and Republic, was born at this trading post. I frequently traded with him and talked with him. This post was the old Northwestern Fur Company’s post. Hearn could give more information than anyone else. Perhaps some of the old Indians at St. Ignatius Mission in Montana, who used to live here could give more information.<sup>392</sup>

Since Lewis’s notes of Monahan’s “statement” are not dated, it is not clear if Lewis reached out to Heron and to Father Carnana at St. Ignatius because of Monahan’s suggestion, but he did approach both men for information about the fur trade post.

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<sup>390</sup> William S. Lewis to Father Jos. Carnana, S.J., 22 October 1912 William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>391</sup> William S. Lewis, “Statement of James Monahan.” William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>392</sup> Ibid.

H.C. Burnett, also mentioned above, was another source of specific post location information for Lewis's quest to promote commemorations of the Plateau fur trade. Referencing his family's settlement in the Plateau, Burnett explained to Lewis that his father, "Charles Campton Burnett, settled on the point of land at the Junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers in November, 1883. At that time Indians were in possession of the land and were farming it in patches." Burnett then described buildings at the location:

About half a mile south of the mouth of the Little Spokane River and towards the Spokane River, there was then standing a log building built of peeled logs; the roof timbers were fastened together with wooden pegs and the roof was of cedar shakes, fastened on by wooden pegs. It had a log floor at that time. This building is still standing; it was re-shingled by my father. Major O'Neal, Indian Agent, at that time stated that as far as he could ascertain the building had been erected in 1832, and used as a trading post by the Northwestern Trading Company... West of this on the south bank of the Spokane River...there was then an old stone foundation, which in early days could very clearly be traced...It had the appearance of having been an old fort, or the site of a large building. Many of the stones were afterwards hauled away, and used by us and others in building. I believe that this foundation can still be traced. Inside of the foundation were several large holes, indicating the former existence of cellars, probably 20 feet square, (from edge to edge the several holes measured 26 ft., 28 ft., 16 ft., 16 ft., and 11 ft.,) I believe that this old foundation marks the site of the old Astor and Hudson's Bay Trading Posts.<sup>393</sup>

It was details such as these provided by Burnett and Monahan that fueled local boosters such as Lewis in their attempts at commemorating the Plateau fur trade. Conflicting statements from such men and those of the priests who questioned the existence of Spokane House altogether delayed commemorative projects while Lewis and his contemporaries sought to disentangle the details of fur trade post locations.

In addition to local historians, community groups became interested in efforts to remember the historic fur trade on the Plateau landscape. In 1924, Boy Scouts placed a painted

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<sup>393</sup> William S. Lewis, "Statement of H.C. Burnett." William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

stone marker to commemorate the site of “Spokane House, fur trading post and fort, founded at the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers in 1810 and famous in the history of the northwest.”<sup>394</sup> High school students wrote pieces in local newspapers urging for preservation and waxing poetic about the importance of Spokane House.<sup>395</sup>

As a result of the keen interest of local men of leisure such as William S. Lewis, the National Park Service evaluated the Spokane House site for historical significance in 1930 and a grassroots movement began among some of the Spokane townspeople to preserve the site as a place of historical interest. Lewis received letters of encouragement sent to the Eastern Washington Historical Society, of which he was secretary, offering evidence of buildings thought to be from the fur trade post which by that time had been gone for more than a century. One letter from Father Raymund F. Wood read,

Some time ago I wrote you in regard to preserving as an historical monument the site, if not the actual remaining building, of Spokane House, built by the Northwest Fur Co. in 1810, and consequently the oldest building now in the Pacific Northwest. Enclosed is a photograph I took a few weeks ago, showing the front and one side of the roofless building that now remains on the site. It is rather doubtful if this is the original building, ...However, one of the original builders, either Jaco Finaly or Finan McDonald continued to live at the site until about 1836, as is recorded by several of the Protestant Missionaries who came to this country after the fur traders had left. It is my belief that this building which I have photographed may be the one built shortly after 1825 or a little later; in which case it would still be almost the oldest building in the country, and on the original; site of the old days of 1811. For these reasons I think the site worthy of public recognition, and the erection of a memorial...would not be out of place.<sup>396</sup>

Father Wood encouraged commemoration of a building of unknown provenance with the same rationale the recipient of his letter, William S. Lewis, often employed in his historical writing –

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<sup>394</sup> “Boy Scouts Mark Site of Famous Old Trading Post,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, May 5, 1924.

<sup>395</sup> Kathleen Corrigan, “Preservation of Spokane house Location is Urged,” publication unknown, 1930s. Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>396</sup> Raymund F. Wood, S.J. to President, Eastern Washington Historical Society, 3 May 1939 William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.



that the fur trade era marked a beginning for the Columbia River Plateau and that workers in the trade were “original” in some way to the region. The implication is again the importance to Lewis, Wood, and others of “firsting” and establishing a European presence on the landscape, in this case in the form of a building. Enthusiasm such as this furthered the push for a state or national park to commemorate the Plateau fur trade.

In 1939, the boosters’ hopes neared fruition. An article in one local newspaper began, “The Spokesman-Review is gratified to announce an important acquirement for the state park system, the securing of title to the area of land at the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers.” The unnamed author went on to explain that “[i]t is the site on which the Northwest Fur company of Montreal and London established a trading post in 1810, under the English flag,” a matter of local importance because “[t]his was the first permanent white settlement in the west, as John Jacob Astor’s Fur company reached the mouth of the Columbia in 1811. Later, the American company established a rival post within one-quarter mile of the Northwest company on the same tract, flying the American flag, and for a time two flags flew over this area, always known as the Spokane House.”<sup>397</sup> The article discussed the chain of title to the land and fundraising to pay the mortgage, focusing on American legal definitions of land ownership and overlooking previous Indigenous occupation of the site. For readers of the *Spokesman Review*, this new park was to be a tribute to the fur trade, something described as originating in Montreal, London, and New York, and evidence of contested empires on the North American landscape.

Less than a week after the above article appeared, another Spokane paper announced to their readers that “Inland Empire residents will live again in the spirit of the old Hudson’s bay trading post at the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane rivers just as soon as it is practical

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<sup>397</sup> “Fur Trade Site Now Park Land: Spokane House Area Added to State System,” *The Spokesman Review*, November 11, 1939.

to reconstruct the old pioneer settlement there, according to Aubrey L. White. Last week he secured title to 70 acres of land, to be turned over to the state park commission, on which the old Spokane house of Hudson's Bay was built in 1810."<sup>398</sup> According to White, David Thompson and his men were confused about the location of the post when they established it, thinking "they were at the junction of the Spokane and the Columbia rivers when they established the trading post at the junction of the Spokane and Little Spokane," something that contravenes Thompson's journal's described in Chapter One. Nonetheless, White expected assistance in reconstructing the fur trade post, stating that "The National Monument association has assured me assistance will be given in reestablishing the old trading post as soon as title is acquired to the 70 acres and it is turned over to the state park commission. Development would be largely through the CCC and the monument association. Naturally, with the state park commission interested, the final accomplishment will come as rapidly as practical." The newspaper then elicited a plea to local readers, saying "Mr. White and others interested in the early Hudson's Bay history would like to know more about two old buildings now located on the site."<sup>399</sup>

In the enthusiasm for the proposed reconstruction project, local schools became involved in promoting fur trade histories and, as the *Spokesman Review* informed readers, "A model of the old Spokane House has been placed in room 102, Lewis and Clark high school, during the Inland Empire Education association meeting, and Mrs. J.W. Dunning will show early historical and Indian relics. Spokane House, with its palisades, bastions and trading post building, is a replica of the old trading post, the first white settlement in the Oregon country."<sup>400</sup> The article went on to name several "pioneer firsts" in the region and to emphasize that they were accomplished by "French Canadians, not half-breeds," a detail seemingly needing emphasis.

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<sup>398</sup> "Pioneer Hudson's Bay Post Will Be Reconstructed Soon," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, November 15, 1939.

<sup>399</sup> Ibid.

<sup>400</sup> "Spokane House' Replica Shown," *The Spokesman Review*, April 3, 1940.

Aubrey White made another appearance in local papers during his campaign to reconstruct Spokane House. On December 24, 1939, White wrote an article in the *Spokesman Review* in an attempt to educate readers about the history of the Plateau fur trade. As a way of establishing his credentials, White assured readers that he had “read many newspaper and magazine articles, and searched many books and records concerning Spokane House, and find that there has been much romancing, part of it based on facts and part on hearsay.” In an attempt to rectify this situation, White began a short history of the fur trade that he drafted as an imperial contest. “The story of Spokane House,” White began, “dates back to the rivalry of three great fur companies in the early 1800s, John Jacob Astor’s company of New York, the Northwest Fur company of Montreal, and the Hudson’s Bay Company of London and Montreal.” The author then canvassed many of the ethnic stereotypes associated with the different companies’ employees. Throughout the article, White referenced David Thompson’s writings and in a fastidious aside, White explained that he verified the exact longitude and latitude from Thompson’s journals with “county engineer, Clarence Griggs,” who “found there was only a difference of approximately 1 second.”<sup>401</sup>

Blending the themes of empire and recreation in the Plateau fur trade, White wrote that “[i]t was the policy of fur companies to start friendly rival posts near together for mutual protection, and thus the American and English flags were flown each day over this Spokane House area,” and then proceeded to detail the buildings, dance hall, and “gay times after trading hours” in the context of imperial rivalry. With regard to local Indigenous peoples, White informed readers that “[t]he Spokane Indians were a friendly tribe and the palisades were not constructed as a protection against invading tribes but to prevent pilfering. However, the gates

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<sup>401</sup> Aubrey L. White, “Old Shrine Saved: Spokane House Site, First Settlement in Northwest, to Be State Park,” *The Spokesman Review*, December 24, 1939.

were seldom closed.”<sup>402</sup> In White’s telling, then, fur trade defensive structures were to prevent Indigenous looting rather than conflict, and he lingers only briefly on the subject to cite the missionary Samuel Parker, mentioned in Chapter One, regarding the location of the Spokane House bastion in the 1830s. In this Euro-centric, paternalist account, the Plateau fur trade is depicted as a jovial imperial contest between European powers, in which the only concern regarding Indigenous peoples was that they might make off with trade goods.

Because Aubrey White was promoting the reconstruction of Spokane House, a pursuit in which others would follow, all to their disappointment, his article about “saving” the “Old Shrine” of Spokane House afforded considerable space to site and building details. White wrote that “[i]n 1835, Angus McDonald, one of the factors of the Hudson’s Bay company, found nothing of the old buildings, but reported that the site was a stopping place for friendly Indian tribes who held their potlatches there and caught and smoked fish.” White acknowledged, then, that fur traders wrote that the site remained important to Indigenous peoples after fur traders had abandoned it, but his focus was on commemorating the fur trade, not the centuries-long use of the location by Indigenous peoples. He moved on to quote an interview with a man born at Fort Colville:

In 1930, Alex. McLeod, who was born at Fort Colville in 1854 and who became a freighter between Walla Walla and Fort Colville, stated in an interview in *The Spokesman-Review*: ‘Some time in the early ‘70s, Peavine Jimmy (I never learned his true name) removed his roadhouse and tavern from Peavine prairie on the Kootenai trail, where I had stopped several times, to the mouth of the Little Spokane and established himself and built a roadhouse and tavern on the site of the old trading post...Peavine had put up quite a collection of buildings – there were no buildings of the old Hudson’s bay company standing even in those days.’<sup>403</sup>

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<sup>402</sup> Ibid.

<sup>403</sup> Ibid. The statement attributed to Alex McLeod in this article closely resembles another attributed to him in a letter from C.S. Kingston focusing on the buildings at the Spokane House site. C.S. Kingston to Jerome Peltier, 20 February, 1945. J. Neilson Barry Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture. In a follow-up letter, Kingston explained that he had taken the statement from the newspaper “nearly 20

The remainder of White's article provided readers a chain of ownership of the title of the property from Peavine Jimmy to 1939. In his appeal to the public for commemoration of the Plateau fur trade in the form of a reconstructed Spokane House, White emphasized its significance as a building block of empire and a place of non-Indigenous leisure in the region. Accentuating these themes was a savvy promotional technique – White was expecting Washington state government financial support for his project and anticipated that it would take the form of a state park. What better way to convince people to support this commemorative project than to demonstrate the fur trade's relevance to American empire and the interwar culture of leisure and automobile tourism? In his Christmas Eve newspaper article, White appealed to the interests of the audience from which he most sought backing.

When Elizabeth Custer toured the Columbia River Plateau in 1891, she witnessed remnants of the fur trade era, and expressed ambivalence at witnessing the building of American and Canadian empires in the region, but she also participated in and envisioned recreational development of the Plateau and its resources. Of the Colville valley, where she visited Fort Colville and Ranald McDonald, Custer admired the scenery and remarked, "It is soon to have a good hotel on a pine-covered bluff, which is sure to be admirably managed, as the railroad is imitating England, and building its own hostelries."<sup>404</sup> She could not have anticipated that in fifty years the area about which she spoke would be under water, due to extensive hydroelectric development, though it, too, provides considerable recreational possibilities. Upon reaching the town nearest Fort Colville, Custer explained to *Harper's Weekly* readers that "[t]he new hotel

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years ago" and that he knew the reporter. This second letter goes into more detail about building placement and construction, as well as speculations about grain threshing at the post. C.S. Kingston to Jerome Peltier, 26 February, 1945 J. Neilson Barry Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture.

<sup>404</sup> Custer, "An Out-of-the-Way 'Outing,'" 534.

built by the railroad looks off over a bluff on the Columbia...The dinner, too, put everybody in a frame of mind to enjoy the view...After the cigars of our party were smoked...the proprietor said, if we women didn't mind the express wagon and some peculiarly mismated horses, a driver whose livery was his shirt sleeves, and a delay of half an hour, he would have some seats made, and send us to the falls.<sup>405</sup> In these passages, Elizabeth Custer related her experiences of leisure on the Plateau while also encouraging her readers to imagine the recreational opportunities that would soon be theirs in this former fur trade region, as hotels and railroads were constructed across the landscape.

Wrapping up her journey and the article, Custer wrote about her experience crossing the international border en route to Revelstoke:

The sight of the red of the English jack on the steamer that plies on up the river so stirred the soul of an American tourist that he said some words that were too emphatic to be chronicled, and turned back to the cars, giving up a journey that no one should neglect. It takes but three days to go from Spokane to Revelstoke, and the steamer runs through the beautiful Arrow Lakes, while on either side the mountains become higher and higher, until Mount Bigbie lifts its head eight thousand feet among the clouds. If the Eastern traveler who has gone over the old well-trodden paths till he is satiated wishes wildness and picturesqueness and a place absolutely isolated, he should seek this wonderful region. And then, if the great glaciers are still a sealed book to him, it is only three hours from Revelstoke to where one can look on miles in width of these frozen slides.<sup>406</sup>

Crossing the border between Canada and the United States on a Columbia River steamboat reminded Custer and her fellow travelers of the contest of empires that had so recently been settled in the region, yet was emphasized in the projects and products of empire rising up around them. Though the international border seemingly provided finality for settlers regarding the contest between British and American interests in the Plateau, Americans continued building an empire in the face of insecurities surrounding Indigenous claims to the land. In the 1940s, the

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<sup>405</sup> Ibid.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid., 535.

North American fur trade continued to be a subject of interest that was shaped by the context of American and Canadian empire building that had gone on throughout the first decades of the twentieth century, but also interwar recreational and leisurely pursuits. In the process of building an empire, Plateau boosters, historians, politicians, and journalists constructed the fur trade as a foundation on which they built myths about themselves, their predecessors, and their region. The structures and products of empire that the people in this chapter created focused largely on land and, by the interwar period, this became expressed through leisure.

### CHAPTER THREE: In the Service of Colonialism

Throughout the twentieth century, non-Indigenous people created forms of remembering the Columbia River Plateau fur trade. Depictions of this history that reflected the imperial realities of Britain, later Canada, and the United States were discussed in Chapter Two. Those depictions that furthered imperialism's cultural expansionist goals will be examined here.<sup>407</sup> As Linda Tuhiwai Smith argued, following the late-nineteenth-century decline of formal colonies, "[c]olonialism became imperialism's outpost, the fort and the port of imperial outreach."<sup>408</sup> No longer simply the sources of raw natural resources, slave labour, or colonists' tax revenues, former colonies "were also cultural sites which preserved an image or represented an image of what the West or 'civilization' stood for."<sup>409</sup> Smith cited internal colonial struggles over issues such as identity and class. The history of the Columbia River Plateau shares many similarities with what Smith described, as evidenced in Chapter Two. In her words, "[w]ealth and class status created very powerful settler interests which came to dominate the politics of a colony" and "[c]olonialism was, in part, an image of imperialism, a particular realization of the imperial imagination. It was also, in part, an image of the future nation it would become."<sup>410</sup> Throughout the twentieth century, non-Indigenous creators of Plateau settler fur trade histories used those histories as a tool, generating images and histories of the fur trade that reflected what they

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<sup>407</sup> Cultural expansion is differentiated from physical expansion here because by the onset of the twentieth century, Euro-North American physical expansion into the Plateau had already occurred. Cultural expansion was the process by which structures of non-Indigenous economy and culture were introduced and reinforced in the region in attempts to mold identity in a similar fashion as elsewhere in the world. For more on the concept of American cultural and economic expansion, see Emily S. Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic and Cultural Expansion, 1890-1945* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982).

<sup>408</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 24.

<sup>409</sup> Ibid.

<sup>410</sup> Ibid.



interpreted as ideal qualities of Plateau people, and they did so for the consumption of those people. Those people looked a lot like themselves.

Elizabeth Furniss explored this phenomenon in British Columbia, arguing, “the dominant historical discourse remains relentlessly that of the European settlers and nationalists... These books are united by their common situation within the frontier myth. They focus almost exclusively on the challenges and triumphs of pioneers and colonial systems. Aboriginal people are either invisible in these histories or scripted as supporting characters who are quaint, child-like, or passive.”<sup>411</sup> Indigenous Plateau peoples were written into twentieth-century settler fur trade histories as part of the colorful background upon which pioneer feats were heroically enacted. They were depicted as relics of the past who faded into oblivion as the forefathers of American and Canadian nations on the Plateau marched toward the future. As Patrick Wolfe argued, “Indigenous people obstructed settlers’ access to land, so their increase was counterproductive” and, in the Plateau, their increase was in part countered through the telling of fur trade histories with vanishing or vanished Indians.<sup>412</sup>

This chapter is divided into three categories: recreation, consumption, and education. While some mid- to late-twentieth-century representations of Columbia River Plateau settler fur trade histories fit neatly into one of these categories, others are put to use in the service of two or more of these groups. All of them, however, were utilized in the service of colonialism, as defined by Smith, because they were created by and for the consumption of non-Indigenous peoples on the Plateau, depicting non-Indigenous actors in the fur trade as central to the region’s character, while relegating Indigenous participants to historical diversions. Again borrowing from Smith, “stark contrasts and subtle nuances... of the ways in which the Indigenous

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<sup>411</sup> Furniss, *The Burden of History*, 72.

<sup>412</sup> Patrick Wolfe, “Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native,” *Journal of Genocide Research* vol. 8, no. 4 (December, 2006): 388.

communities were perceived and dealt with,” such as those in historical representations of the fur trade, “make the stories of colonialism part of a grander narrative and yet part of a very local, very specific experience.”<sup>413</sup> Non-Indigenous creators of Plateau fur trade histories often depicted the trade in idealized images of themselves, marginalizing the Indigenous peoples living with them in the region. Ann Laura Stoler wrote, “colonial archives were an arsenal of sorts that were reactivated to suit new governing strategies. Documents honed in the pursuit of prior issues could be requisitioned to write new histories, could be reclassified for new initiatives...” and in the Plateau, fur trade documents held in colonial archives were repurposed in the twentieth century to construct histories of gallant fur trading frontiersmen who wrested a wild west from the mismanagement of disappearing Indigenous peoples.<sup>414</sup>

The Columbia River Plateau fur trade took place on the rivers and banks of the region. Because the fur trade was largely a water-based enterprise, commemorations of fur trade events occurred on or near rivers, and parks were built near former fur trade posts, also located close to rivers. In part because of this historical reality, and also because twentieth-century Plateau people often spent their leisure time near waterways, some forms of Plateau settler fur trade histories were created as recreational pursuits for a postwar population with extra time and income to spend. This middle-class population was both creating and encountering settler fur trade histories in correspondence, historical society gatherings, and social club projects that encouraged regional historical tourism.

The Columbia River Plateau is an arid place and water has long played an important role in its history. Indigenous peoples traveled on, fished from, and lived along the rivers that run throughout the region. Fur traders followed the rivers to the Plateau, exploited their animal

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<sup>413</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 24.

<sup>414</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009), 3.

resources, and used them to transport furs and goods throughout the continent and beyond. A century and more after the fur trade era, Plateau waterways continued to be used as a way of producing income in multitudinous ways. Considerable hydroelectric development takes place in this region and it is surprisingly diverse. United States federal government, public utilities, state, provincial, or local government, and private corporations own dams in the region, many of which were constructed following World War II. Many dams in British Columbia (BC) along the Okanogan River supply the lower mainland and coastal areas of the province, areas with far more population than the Plateau. The purposes of hydro development in the region vary – some generate electricity, or reduce flooding from spring melt, while others provide irrigation for the fruit groves in Washington’s Big Bend Country, and many, if not all of them, provide forms of recreation. Some hydroelectric projects, such as the Libby Dam Project, part of the larger Columbia River Treaty agreement, melded energy generation and recreation, as Philip Van Huizen examined. In the case of the Libby Dam, Van Huizen explains that Indigenous imagery and symbols were appropriated by dam planners “to make the project seem like a natural part of the Canadian-American Kootenay Basin,” an undertaking that relegated Indigenous visual representations to recreational decoration.<sup>415</sup>

In 1938, Washington State Parks and Recreation (WSPRC) purchased 480 acres including the point of land on which the site of Spokane House sits for \$4 from Spokane County. One year later, they purchased an adjoining 80 acres for \$10 from the Gordon family.<sup>416</sup> In the local frenzy over fur trade history that followed these purchases, historians, journalists, and

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<sup>415</sup> Philip Van Huizen, “Building a Green Dam: Environmental Modernism and the Canadian-American Libby Dam Project,” *Pacific Historical Review* vol. 79, no. 3 (2010): 418. For more on hydroelectric development along the Columbia River, see Richard White, *The Organic Machine: The Remaking of the Columbia River* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1995) and on hydroelectric development in a specifically Canadian context, see Matthew D. Evenden, *Fish Versus Power: An Environmental History of the Fraser River* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004) and Matthew Evenden, *Allied Power: Mobilizing Hydro-electricity during Canada’s Second World War* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2015).

<sup>416</sup> Washington State Parks and Recreation, “LANDS Inventory System,” received July 31, 2012.

artists weighed in on the importance of the fur trade to the Plateau. In addition to these voices, local developers and business people capitalized on the events unfolding at the sites of Spokane House and Fort Okanogan to sell their goods and services and some even went as far as inventing fur trade posts to encourage tourists to visit the Plateau.

Local historian and curmudgeon J. Neilson Barry, introduced in Chapter Two, jumped into the fray with letters to nearly anyone who dared to engage in Plateau history. And his letters could be vitriolic. When he disagreed with historical analyses, he let loose with both rhetorical barrels. In a letter to the director of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society regarding the unclear provenance of buildings at the Spokane House site, Barry wrote:

That there has been tolerated bumcombe in connection with a building of some squatter, apparently erected about the time of the Philadelphia Centennial, as though in any way whatever connected with the famous Spokane House; which had been abandoned some half a century before; and a quarter of a century after the last building had disappeared, is most shocking. It is utterly irrelevant whether Indians utilized it. They utilized many other things made by white men. Any publicity that involves deceit and humbug is reprehensible, and inevitably reflects discreditably upon the Society for tolerating it. This naturally brings up the validity of the site being represented. Since it now seems to involve State Park authorities, I shall be very greatly obliged to you for any information as to its validity.<sup>417</sup>

In his appeal to create “authentic” historical sites on the Plateau, Barry suggested tapping the tourists that he and his fellow Society members hoped would arrive in droves. He wrote, “There are a great many well-informed tourists. One nationally-known historian of the eastern states stated that he had been ‘burned up’ with indignation at one of the numerous ‘historical’ memorials in this region. If there be any authentic evidence, it should be made known, and the proof made available. Anything in the nature of humbug involves the Society.”<sup>418</sup> For Barry,

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<sup>417</sup> J. Neilson Barry to Oscar M. Waddell, 26 May, 1945. Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures, J. Neilson Barry Papers, Box 1, File 4.

<sup>418</sup> Ibid.

then, an ambiguously-defined authenticity was paramount for historical interpretation and tourists were both the audience and the potential source of “authentic evidence” for historical commemoration.

It wasn't long before fanciful images of the fur trade began linking the nineteenth-century Plateau fur trade with twentieth-century socialites. Depictions of the trade on greeting cards and party invitations began appearing in the 1930s (see Figure 1.11). By 1956, however, the images were more lavish, as were the greetings.

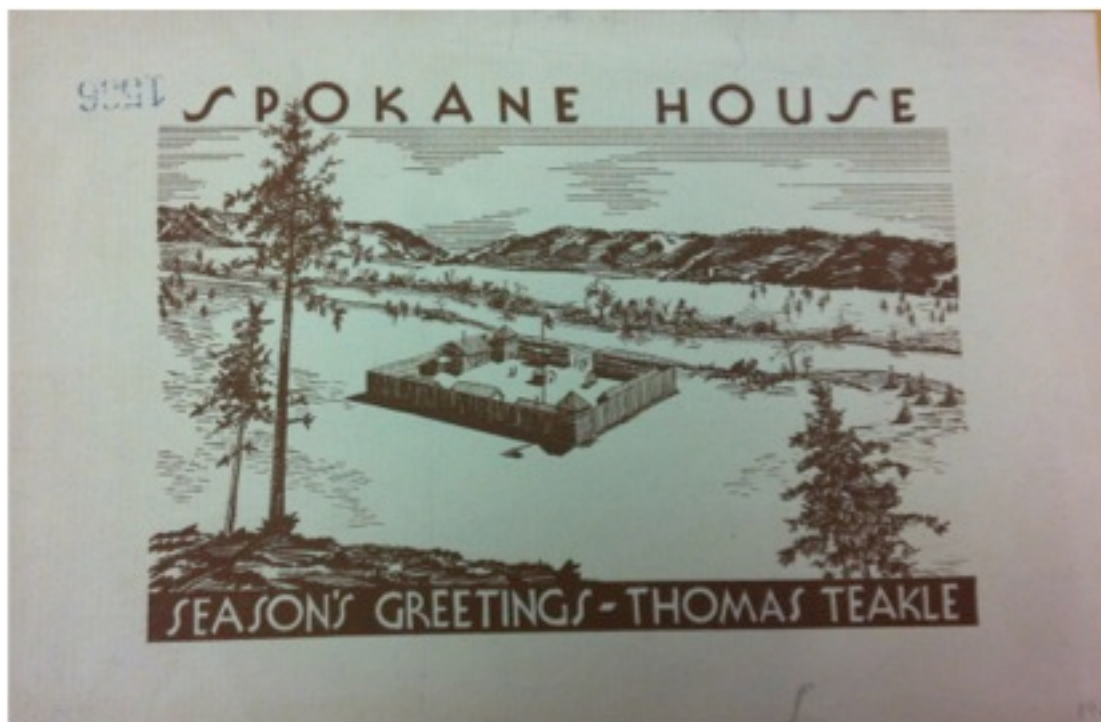


Figure 1.11: Christmas card, 1933. Washington State University Archives.

One such piece of stationery was a multiple-fold invitation to a posh holiday party (see Figure 1.12) and the fur trade is shown as a festive, if predatory, space. It is tempting to wonder what J. Neilson Barry would have thought of the Christmas card sent in 1956 by The Crescent Spokane Dry Goods Company. The cover depicted a party attended by fur traders of varying classes and

Indigenous people who enjoyed punch from a crystal or silver bowl served on a table set with a white tablecloth. The interior caption, citing the oft-quoted Alexander Ross, read:

Spokane House was built by the Canadian Northwest Fur Trading Company in 1810 at the confluence of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers, ten miles northwest of the present city of Spokane. It was the first trading post established in what is now the State of Washington. This imaginative scene of Christmas Eve at Spokane House was inspired by the words of Alexander Ross, who wrote in his *Fur Hunters of the Far West*....“At Spokane House there were handsome buildings. There was a ballroom, even, and no females in the land so fair to look upon as the nymphs of Spokane. But Spokane House was not celebrated for fine women only, there were fine horses, also. The raceground was admired...altogether, Spokane House was a delightful place, and time has confirmed its celebrity.”<sup>419</sup>



*Christmas Eve at Spokane House == December 1810*

Figure 1.12: "Christmas Eve at Spokane House == December 1810," The Crescent Spokane Dry Goods Co., 1956, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

Not only was the holiday card describing fur traders on the Plateau as erecting the “first trading post,” an act of firsting as discussed in Chapter Two, but it also exoticized both fur traders and

<sup>419</sup> “Christmas Eve at Spokane House == December 1810,” The Crescent Spokane Dry Goods Co., 1956, Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

the Spokane Indigenous women Ross described as “fair...nymphs.” Placed alongside Spokane women “were fine horses,” positioning women and racehorses as amusements for fur traders in a jovial, carefree environment.

A newspaper article in 1960 included B.C. Stork’s painting of Spokane House (see Figure 1.13) and labeled it the “first commercial enterprise founded in the state of Washington.” The article referenced other, less-publicized events of Plateau fur trade commemoration taking place that week by mentioning the “dedication of the new Fort Okanogan historical museum near Brewster, Wash,” describing Fort Okanogan as “the first American trade settlement in Washington state.” The unknown author used several paragraphs to detail the career of R.H. Cheshire, the HBC stores’ representative attending these events, perhaps in the hopes that history and an exotic foreign visitor would encourage visitors to drive out to the former fur trade posts.<sup>420</sup> In October of 1949, a flurry of newspaper articles marked the revealing of a “new monument erected near the site of Spokane House,” a monument that stands today.<sup>421</sup> Members of the Spokane County Pioneers’ Society, the organization that erected the monument, attended the dedication ceremonies for the “12-foot-high monument...of Washington granite and inscribed with pictures of early prospectors, trappers and Indians.” As an aside the article stated that the “area in which it was erected was a camping ground for Northwest Indians for centuries,” an area that was then becoming state park land.<sup>422</sup>

Automobile tourists in both the United States and Canada used newly-constructed highways to visit fur trade posts, real and fabricated. Although his work focuses on national parks in western Washington, David Louter remarked that the twentieth-century phenomenon of

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<sup>420</sup> “Ceremony is Set at Spokane House,” unknown newspaper, week of August 26, 1960.

<sup>421</sup> “Spokane House Dedication Set,” *Spokesman Review*, October 2, 1949; “Spokane House’s Marker Unveiled,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, October 3, 1949; “Monument Dedicated,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, October 2, 1949.

<sup>422</sup> “Spokane House’s Marker Unveiled,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, October 3, 1949.

the automobile “helped reinvent the nineteenth-century idea of national parks as products of America’s cultural achievements and vestiges of the nation’s disappearing wilderness for a modern, mobile audience.”<sup>423</sup> Plateau recreationists similarly engaged with their landscape and, through the efforts of fur trade enthusiasts and boosters, Plateau fur trade history. In 1941, a Spokane newspaper advertised an upcoming auto outing for interested readers, announcing “Spokane House at the junction of the Little Spokane and Spokane rivers, site of the northwest’s first permanent white settlement, will be the mecca of the Eastern Washington Historical society’s motor caravan leaving the public museum...at 2 p.m. this afternoon.” As if the excitement of a motor caravan weren’t enough, there was the promise that “O.M. Waddell, in charge of the museum, will lecture on the history of Spokane House, which played an important role in development of the Pacific northwest and the Inland Empire... This, it is expected, will be the final of the series of eight lectures and caravan trips.”<sup>424</sup> Not only was the former fur trade post a “mecca” for motor tourists, it was also a social event for those who could afford to join a motor caravan in 1941 and were interested in doing so.

Bringing visitors from afar to the Plateau was one way to generate interest in historical tourism and another was to take Plateau fur trade history on the road. On October 8, 1953 Joel Ferris, then-president of the Eastern Washington Historical Society and “investment banker, civic leader, and historian of Spokane,” was the invited speaker of the California Historical Society.<sup>425</sup> In his address, he repeated much of the “firsts” described in the literature surrounding the region’s fur trade history. He also encouraged his Californian audience to take a trip and

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<sup>423</sup> David Louter, *Windshield Wilderness: Cars, Roads, and Nature in Washington’s National Parks* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010), 4.

<sup>424</sup> “Caravan will Visit Site of Spokane House,” *Spokesman Review*, June 1, 1941.

<sup>425</sup> Joel E. Ferris, “Early Outposts of the Fur Trade Empire: A talk at the luncheon of the California Historical Society at the Palace Hotel, San Francisco,” October 8, 1953. Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures; “Guide to the Joel Edward Ferris Papers, 1949-1960,” Northwest Digital Archives, <http://nwda.orbiscascade.org/ark:/80444/xv75457>.



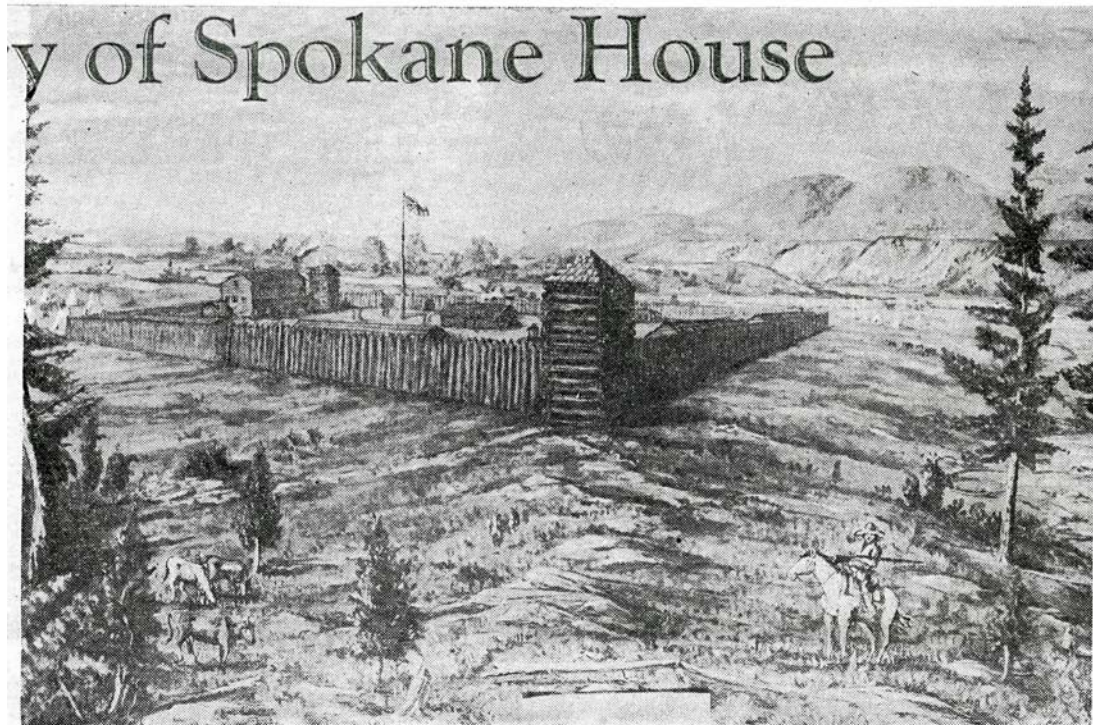
enjoy an educational vacation among the historical attractions in eastern Washington. Ferris spoke to an upper-middle-class audience, encouraging them to spend their money vacationing in the Plateau while simultaneously learning fur trade history.

In 1950, the Washington State Legislature allocated \$50,000 for the “acquisition, preservation, and development of historic sites” and the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission solicited participants in an Advisory Board. Of the Plateau-related priorities outlined in Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission correspondence, nearly half were fur-trade related. An emphasis on erecting highway markers is evident in the letters and the intent appears to be to make historical knowledge accessible to people who were not actively seeking it out.<sup>426</sup> In September of 1950, the Advisory Board on Historic Sites approved “the erection of not to exceed ten historical highway markers” at locations including Fort Okanogan, Spokane House, and Antoine Plante’s Ferry and to acquire ownership of the lands on which these sites were located.<sup>427</sup> The Advisory Board, much as Ferris had done on his visit to California, began to find ways to engage automobile tourists in new ways.

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<sup>426</sup> E.T. Becher to Father Paul P. Sauer, S.J., January 4, 1950. Special Collections Department, Foley Center Library, Gonzaga University, P. Sauer Papers 3:5.

<sup>427</sup> E.T. Becher to Mrs. Ruth E. Peeler, September 29, 1950. Special Collections Department, Foley Center Library, Gonzaga University, P. Sauer Papers 3:5.



Spokane artist B. C. Stork painted this conception of the famous early trading center. He also painted the cover scene. Stork's paintings are based upon a careful study of available records of Spokane House.

That left the old trading post to wilderness and the Spokane Indians. Gradually both the old establishment crumbled under the ravages of nature.

Figure 1.13: B.C. Stork, Reproduced from Margaret Bean, "The Story of Spokane House," *The Spokesman Review*, October 15, 1950

The same groups of people who in the 1950s referenced the fur trade in their holiday cards and invitations began arranging weekend jaunts and symposia to relive the fur trade. They held railway tours of fur trade sites throughout the Rocky Mountain and Plateau regions and local museums held reenactments. Images from these events show early settler attempts at fur trade reenactment in the region, with reluctant-looking women in braided wigs “trading” what appears to be a stuffed Jack Russell Terrier to a group of men in false beards (see Figure 1.14).

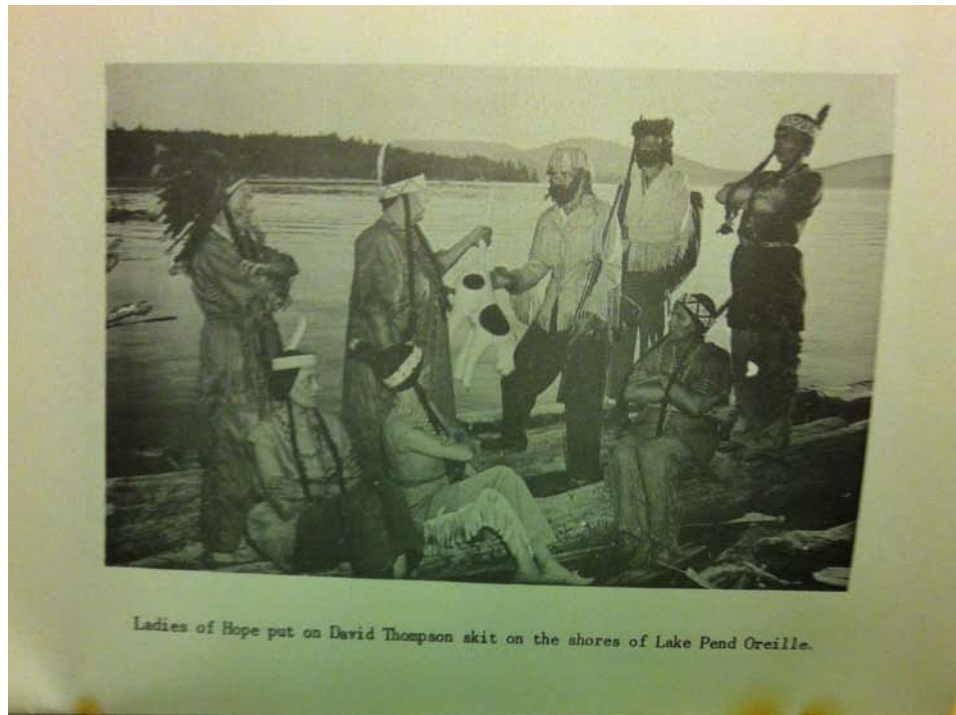


Figure 1.14: "Ladies of Hope put on David Thompson skit on the shores of Lake Pend Oreille," Bonner County Museum, "David Thompson Sesquicentennial booklet, 1959." Washington State Historical Society.

Historian Ben Bradley has examined one of the more ambitious attempts to celebrate fur trade history in the Columbia River Plateau through tourism. In the context of British Columbia's provincial attempts to increase automobile tourism in the region toward the end of the 1940s, roads were improved and "21 campgrounds, autocourts, motels, and hotels, providing accommodations for up to 400 travellers" were built and "boosters were styling Hope as BC's 'gateway to holidayland'" in the late 1950s.<sup>428</sup> While the town of Hope is west of the Plateau, the roads and amenities being built around it extended to Kelowna and Kamloops, both located on the Plateau.

Bradley also demonstrated how the history of fur trading activities in the region was paired with a new attraction to automobile tourism in the 1940s and 1950s. When a new museum

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<sup>428</sup> Ben Bradley, "By the Road: Fordism, Automobility, and Landscape Experience in the British Columbia Interior, 1920-1970" (PhD diss., Queen's University, 2012), 487-8.

was conceived of for the town of Kamloops, boosters used portions of the Old Fort Kamloops, which Bradley described as follows:

A noteworthy feature of the new Kamloops museum was the way it salvaged Old Fort Kamloops, the town's first museum, and incorporated as a kind of artifact and display case. Old Fort Kamloops had been left in Riverside Park when the museum first relocated in 1939; how it was used in the following decade is unclear. However, in 1949 it had been jacked up, loaded onto a flatbed truck, and transplanted to the front yard of the second Kamloops museum. When the third Kamloops museum was being built in the mid 1950s, Old Fort Kamloops was disassembled for the second time in less than 20 years, trucked to the new museum site, and reassembled inside the building on the second floor, where it housed displays about exploration, the fur trade, and gold rushes in the central Interior.<sup>429</sup>

Considerable thought and effort went into the design of the new museum and the locations of palisades and bastions that would surround it and the Parks Branch consulted museum planners about this site for other fur-trade-themed parks planned in British Columbia.<sup>430</sup> In this way, boosterism influenced the creation and dissemination of history in the northern Plateau as tourist attractions were created around sites of fur trade activities.

One distinctive example of fur trade history harnessed for tourism is the entirely fabricated David Thompson Memorial Fort. Analyzed at length by Ben Bradley, the fort was created solely as a tourist attraction "to draw wealthy auto tourists who visited the national parks in the Canadian Rockies into the village of Invermere."<sup>431</sup> Using explorer David Thompson's fame as a means to grab tourists' attention, "boosters and landowners" imagined and built a park inspired by the fur trade post Kootenae House, built by Thompson in 1807 near the selected spot for the David Thompson Memorial Fort. Community developers followed suit with a golf

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<sup>429</sup> Ibid., 508.

<sup>430</sup> Ibid., 609.

<sup>431</sup> Ben Bradley, "The David Thompson Memorial Fort: An Early Attempt to Make a Tourist Attraction Out of Western Canadian History," *Findings/Trouvailles*, October 2014, <http://www.champlainsociety.ca/david-thompson-memorial-fort/>. For detailed analysis, see Bradley, "By the Road," 345-86.

course, and a Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) camp. Funded in part by the HBC and CPR, the fort was also partially decorated with artifact donations from the HBC (see Figure 1.15). The resources required for the maintenance and operation of the make-believe fort never materialized and it was abandoned by the 1940s.<sup>432</sup> In British Columbia, fur trade history was used as much to lure tourists to the area as it was to entertain those visitors who already travelled the roads and railways of the province's interior in pursuit of recreational activities.

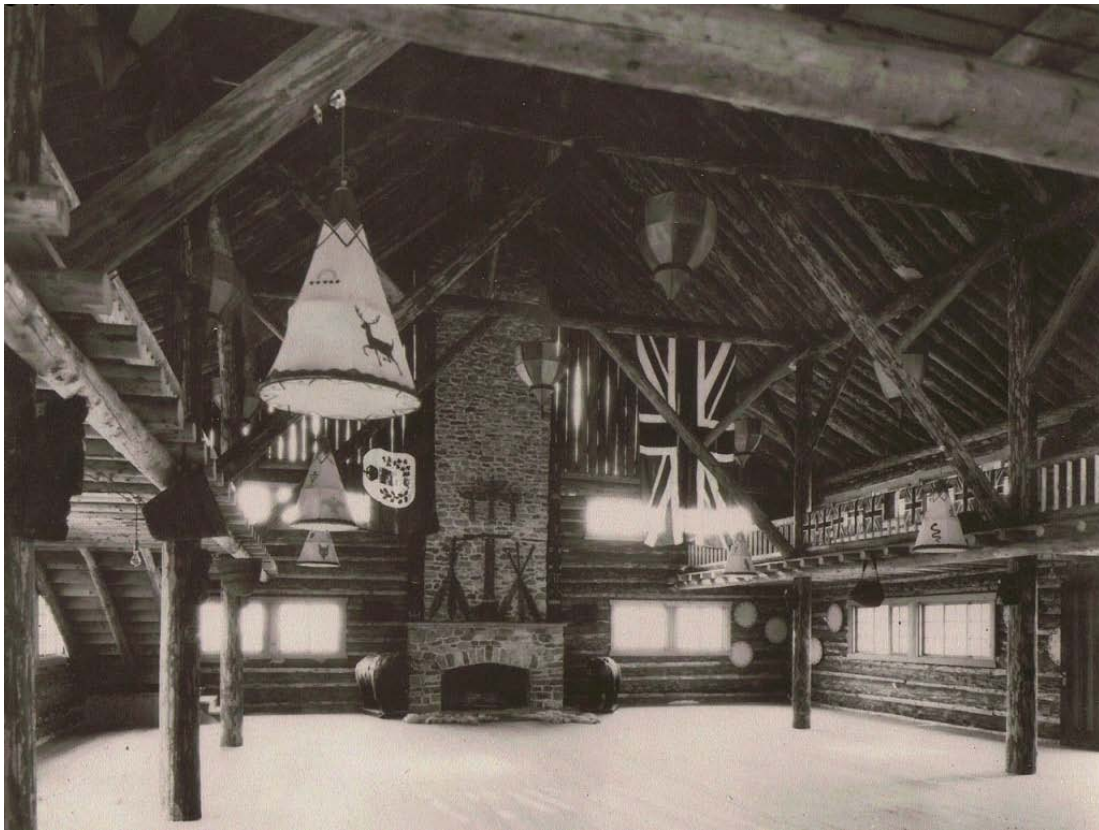


Figure 1.15: David Thompson Memorial Fort, 1922. Windermere Historical Society.

Although some businesspeople in B.C. chose to invent a fur trade post around which to construct a museum and tourist attraction, there were several non-fictitious fur trade posts in the Plateau that people began to see as potential sources of tourism revenue. In Washington, boosters

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<sup>432</sup> Bradley, "The David Thompson Memorial Fort."

enlisted the help of archaeologists to unearth fur trade history. Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission (WSPRC) contracted with National Parks Service archaeologist Louis Caywood, who conducted an excavation at the site of Spokane House from 1950 until 1953 and at Fort Okanogan in 1952.<sup>433</sup> Caywood directed excavations at multiple fur trade post sites throughout Washington State in the 1950s.<sup>434</sup> John D. Combes, an anthropologist at Washington State University, conducted a second excavation at Spokane House between 1960 and 1963, publishing his results in 1964.<sup>435</sup> In addition to the National Park Service archaeological report, the Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) published Caywood's account and analysis of his excavations.<sup>436</sup> Following the excavations, WSPRC began construction of the Spokane House Interpretive Center at the site and the center opened in June of 1966, ready to welcome tourists, some of whom they anticipated would recreate on the Spokane River, utilize the park's boat ramp, and stay in the adjoining campgrounds.

Fixations on the minutiae of the Plateau fur trade ramped up around 1950, as the remnants of several fur trade posts were found. Following archaeological excavations of post sites in the region in the early 1950s, illustrations of the fur trade were often replaced with photographs of "evidence" and drawings from excavations (see Figure 1.16). Reports on the findings of archaeologist Louis Caywood's excavations at Spokane House and Fort Okanogan appeared in the press. The *Spokane Daily Chronicle* informed readers that "[a]n Indian burial ground, mentioned in historical accounts of early-day fur traders, has been found by a government archaeologist near the site of the original Fort Spokane, at the junction of the

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<sup>433</sup> Louis R. Caywood, *Excavations at Two Fort Okanogan Sites, 1952*. San Francisco: National Park Service, 1954.

<sup>434</sup> Louis R. Caywood, *Final Report, Fort Vancouver Excavations*. San Francisco: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1955; Louis R. Caywood, *Exploratory Excavations at Fort Spokane, 1950*. Vancouver, WA, 1951.

<sup>435</sup> John D. Combes, "Report of Investigations No. 29 Excavations at Spokane House – Fort Spokane Historic Site 1962-1963," Pullman, WA: Laboratory of Anthropology Division of Archaeology and Geochronology Washington State University, 1964.

<sup>436</sup> Louis R. Caywood, *Spokane House*. Winnipeg: Hudson's Bay Company, 1956.

Spokane and Little Spokane rivers.”<sup>437</sup> The article went on to explain the state of excavations at the site and provide a brief history of the posts located there, reminding readers that “[i]t was the first white settlement in what is now Washington state, according to historians,” though which historians are not mentioned.<sup>438</sup> Of particular interest, however, were the remains of Indigenous people found by the archaeologist. “Three complete skeletons were unearthed,” Caywood reported to the *Chronicle*. “They were of an Indian woman, a girl about 15 years of age and a man. They had been buried in the customary doubled-up position” and were then examined by parks staff.<sup>439</sup> In a caption to a photo of Caywood standing with guns and a human skull printed in another newspaper the following day, the paper stated that “rifles, the bucket and five Indian skeletons were found.”<sup>440</sup> There was no mention of the Indigenous communities nearby whose ancestors these remains would have been and no effort appears to have been made at the time to repatriate the remains to local Indigenous communities. The human remains unearthed during excavations were treated much like the weapons and sundry goods found in other areas of the site – artifacts to be examined.

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<sup>437</sup> “Archaeologist Finds Indian Burial Ground,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, September 5, 1952.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>440</sup> “Archaeologist Finds Flintlocks,” *Spokesman Review*, September 6, 1952.

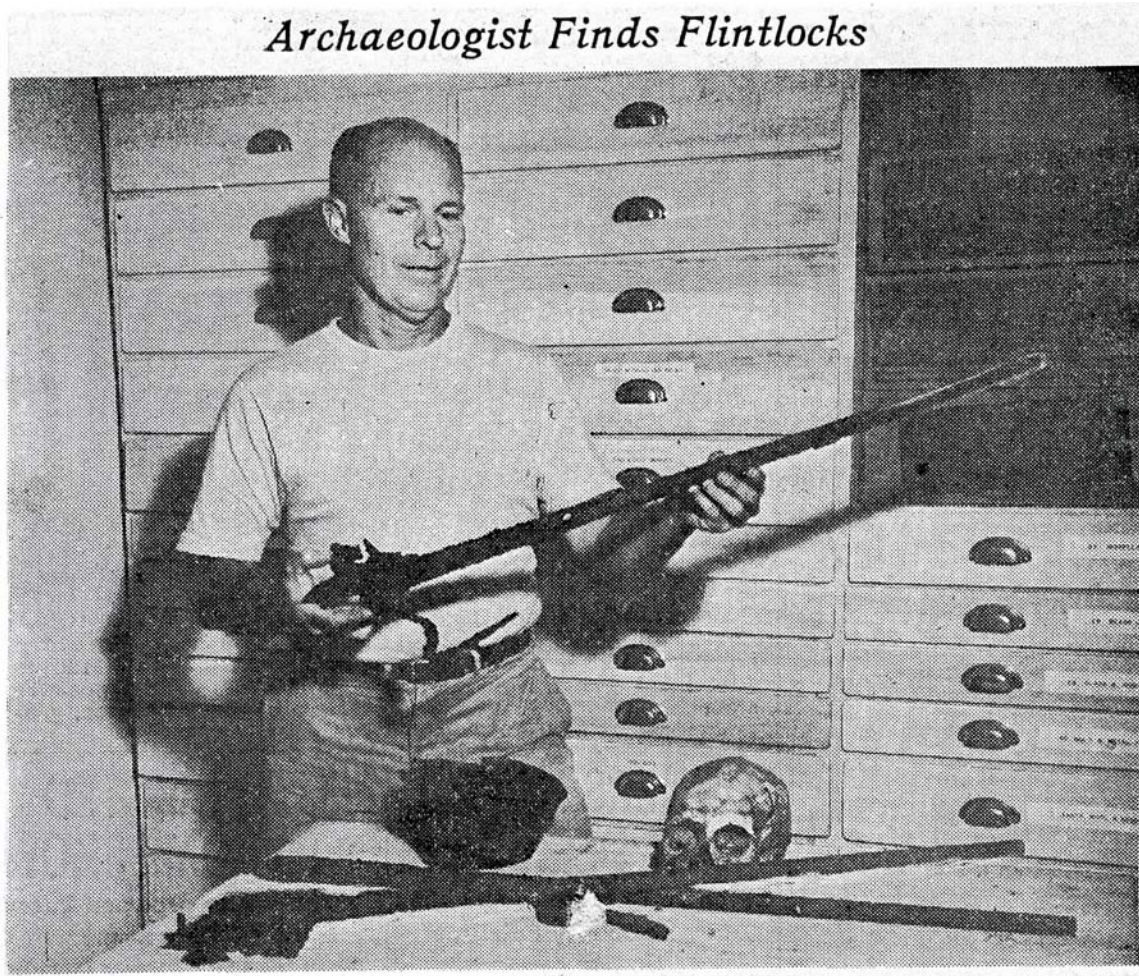


Figure 1.16: *The Spokesman Review*, September 6, 1952.

In the years while excavations of Plateau fur trade posts were ongoing, historians and journalists alike published articles about the area's history. In a story promoting Washington state parks, historian Albert Culverwell argued that the inclusion of historical information in state park displays "embraces phases of history, geology, anthropology, and archaeology, and is proving to be another inducement to the traveler to spend more time in our state."<sup>441</sup>

Culverwell's article explained the process the State Parks and Recreation Commission undertook to solicit advice from "some of the state's leading historians, anthropologists, geologists, and

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<sup>441</sup> Albert Culverwell, "State Parks Are Rich in History," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* July, 1954, 85.



foresters” about what information should be included in park interpretation at the former fur trade posts that were now state parks across Washington.<sup>442</sup> Culverwell considered these initiatives to be of “tremendous tourist value” and lauded a “program of planned tours for visitors interested in historic sites.”<sup>443</sup> Culverwell argued that the “ideal state park offers both beauty of surroundings and varied recreational opportunities, much of which must be developed by park personnel. Park people are finding that the park centered around a historic site offers from the start recreational and cultural advantages.”<sup>444</sup> After explaining how funding for these interpretive projects would be raised through driver’s license fees, Culverwell argued that “expenditure of these funds is money well spent, for more and more tourists are becoming interested in the historical attractions, thus providing an ever-increasing stimulation to trade in the local areas.”<sup>445</sup> By the year 2010, however, these fees were no longer sufficient to support such lofty goals for state parks, a subject that will be further explored later in the chapter.

On August 26, 1960 a “Sesquicentennial Observance of the Founding of Spokane House” was held in Spokane. Festivities began at the posh Davenport Hotel, proceeded to the Cheney Cowles Memorial Museum, then to the Spokane House site, and finally closed at the Ridpath Hotel in downtown Spokane. Guests included United States Senator John H. Happy; R.H. Chesshire, the General Manager of HBC Stores from Winnipeg, Manitoba; G.H.S. Jackson, British Consul General; and Percy Larke, Assistant Consul General.<sup>446</sup> The invitations to the event, billed as “AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT THAT YOU WILL WANT TO ATTEND,” called the festivities “an international event of significance...observing the...establishment of

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<sup>442</sup> Ibid.

<sup>443</sup> Ibid., 90.

<sup>444</sup> Ibid.

<sup>445</sup> Ibid.

<sup>446</sup> “Sesquicentennial Observance of the Founding of Spokane House, Program of Events,” Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

Spokane House, the first commercial establishment in Washington and Oregon.”<sup>447</sup> A handout created and distributed by the Spokane Chamber of Commerce also referred to Spokane House as the “first business establishment in Washington and Oregon” located on a site that “was an Indian camping ground long before and after the whites.” At this site, the pamphlet bragged, “[f]ishing was remarkable...[d]uring the Salmon run the Little Spokane was literally choked with fish.” The Spokane Chamber of Commerce published another pamphlet in 1955 listing the “Commercial, Financial and Cultural Resources” of the Plateau region. Among the golf courses, parks, and natural resource extraction industries such as mining, logging, and hydroelectric development were included “Historical” resources, including Spokane House, “the first trading post of the Pacific Northwest.”<sup>448</sup> The local Chamber of Commerce used the natural resources and recreational opportunities of the region in tandem with the history of the fur trade there to promote their businesses. In the event that readers missed their point, they made it clear that their tourist attractions were on par with other popular recreational destinations by stating that “[i]t is unsurpassed as a spot of historic significance in the entire Northwest, antedating such highly advertised places as Astoria and Nisqually.”<sup>449</sup>

Encouraging the motoring public to take Sunday strolls became increasingly popular in the Plateau during the 1960s. On September 15, 1963, the *Spokesman Review* newspaper published a piece encouraging locals to travel the Plateau, in particular to visit the “meeting of the waters of the Snake and Clearwater Rivers” on the Washington-Idaho border.<sup>450</sup> The article included driving directions, motel and campground suggestions, and descriptions of markers on

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<sup>447</sup> “SESQUICENTENNIAL OBSERVANCE OF SPOKANE HOUSE – AN INTERNATIONAL EVENT THAT YOU WILL WANT TO ATTEND,” Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

<sup>448</sup> Spokane Chamber of Commerce, “Important Facts Concerning Spokane, Washington and the Inland Empire.” Spokane: Visitors & Convention Bureau, 1955. Special Collections Department, Foley Center Library, Gonzaga University. File V152 “Spokane – City”

<sup>449</sup> “SPOKANE HOUSE,” Visitors & Convention Bureau of the Spokane Chamber of Commerce, Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

<sup>450</sup> Shirley Lyons, “Fall Journey Into Idaho Legend and History,” *The Spokesman Review*, September 15, 1963, 6.

the landscape to prevent travelers from becoming lost. The fur trade was counted among the romanticized pioneering firsts mentioned in the article. On the descent from “Lewiston Spiral Hill,” the article reads, “there is a historical sign that states that in 1811 a fur trading post was established here, but that it was not successful as the Nez Perce Indians considered trapping women’s work.”<sup>451</sup> Shirley Lyons, the author, included no further analysis or reference to Nez Perce people living in the area in 1963. The paragraph that follows discussed the “first capitol building,” the “site of the first school building, and the first legislative assemblies,” emphasizing to tourists that non-Indigenous “firsts” were important, while the complete omission of contemporary Indigenous people silently excluded them from the present.<sup>452</sup> The story is a compilation of driving notes, interspersed with references to Indigenous “legends” and directions to view petroglyphs with the unhelpful information that “[n]o one knows how old they are, the Nez Perce Indians have no history of them and they pre-date the Nez Perce it is thought at least a thousand years.”<sup>453</sup> In this small article, the Nez Perce people were removed from the present and denied a deep past in the Columbia River Plateau. With frequent references to Lewis and Clark, Lyons encouraged the Plateau motoring classes to drive across the landscape and consume history as they consumed the landscape within their vehicles.

In 1980, a group of non-Indigenous black-powder enthusiasts from the region formed the Friends of Spokane House organization (FOSH), a “nonprofit organization dedicated to promoting public awareness of the early fur trade” and an affiliate member of the Scottish Saint Andrews Society of Spokane.<sup>454</sup> Since its formation, this group has held annual encampments at

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<sup>451</sup> Ibid.

<sup>452</sup> Ibid.

<sup>453</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>454</sup> “About Us,” Friends of Spokane House website, accessed March 13, 2012, <http://www.friendsofspokanehouse.com/aboutus.html>. The term “black-powder enthusiast” refers to collectors and recreationists who research, build, purchase and fire weapons, such as muzzle-loading guns, that utilize black powder gun powder in competition and reenactment events or as individuals.

the Spokane House Interpretive Center, in which they reenact portions of Spokane House post journals from the years of 1822-23, providing interpretation for visitors about the nature of fur trade labour, economics, and the mechanics of fur trade technologies.<sup>455</sup> During the 1980s, several municipal, county, and state organizations cooperated in the creation and construction of the Spokane Centennial Trail, a paved walking and biking trail stretching nearly thirty-eight miles along the Spokane River from Coeur d'Alene lake to the site of Spokane House, at the confluence of the Spokane and Little Spokane Rivers. Spokane House is the end of this trail, along which markers interpret local historical sites, many related to the fur trade. Visitors who walk the trail on the second weekend in June will stumble upon members of FOSH, who every year hold their annual fur trade encampment reenactment that weekend.<sup>456</sup> Recreational encounters with fur trade history met reenactment in the 1980s and fur trade reenactment as a form of recreation continues today.

By 1992, state funding cuts to WSPRC led to staff losses at the Spokane House Interpretive Center and Riverside State Park. Avista, the new name by which the former Washington Water Power Company is known, provided funding to replace staff losses in the parks. Though Avista continues to fund some park interpretive events, such as portions of the recent David Douglas exhibit at the Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, it no longer funds Interpretive Center staffing expenses. Douglas, mentioned in Chapter One, traveled the Columbia River between 1825-1827 cataloguing plants and animals in the region, spending considerable time at the fur trade posts and among fur traders in the area.<sup>457</sup> In the first decade of the twenty-first century, WSPRC also worked with Jack Nisbet, local author of a recent book

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<sup>455</sup> Friends of Spokane House reenacts the years 1822-23 because these are the only years for which there are detailed extant post journals.

<sup>456</sup> Interview with Mark Weadick, July 13, 2012.

<sup>457</sup> Douglas, *Journal*, 254-255.

about Douglas's time in the Plateau, and some members of the Spokane Tribe to construct new interpretive displays in the vicinity of Spokane House and within the Spokane House Interpretive Center. The regional utility company, state parks, a local author, and a reenactor group have come together to provide interpretation of Plateau fur trade history for people recreating on public lands.

In 2005 the Friends of Spokane House published a document "to provide the Washington State Parks Department with the information necessary to seek funding for the on-site reconstruction of this trading post," referring to Spokane House.<sup>458</sup> In the years since the document's creation, FOSH has been working unsuccessfully to receive approval for reconstruction of Spokane House. In the summer of 2012, FOSH supported the Spokane Tribe's plan to construct a casino in the town of Airway Heights, with the hopes that this public support would encourage the Tribe to support the FOSH reconstruction of Spokane House.<sup>459</sup> It is certainly not a new occurrence for politics and the fur trade to intermingle, and today groups like FOSH and the Spokane Tribe find their interests commingling, once again bringing Plateau Indigenous people and the fur trade together in the reconstruction of their shared histories. In this instance, the Spokane Tribe has been more successful in its bid for a casino, while FOSH was denied permission to build a replica Spokane House.<sup>460</sup>

Throughout the twentieth century, attempts were made to create Plateau fur trade history that also served as recreation for those who would encounter it. State, provincial, and municipal parks created memorials and visitors' centres to attract automobile tourists, while also constructing signage to educate those travelers who may have encountered them unaware of the

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<sup>458</sup> Friends of Spokane House, "Fort Spokane 1823: Model Construction Documentation," Friends of Spokane House, 2005.

<sup>459</sup> Interview with Mark Weadick, July 13, 2012.

<sup>460</sup> Spokane Tribe of Indians, "News Room, STEP Spokane," Spokane Tribal Economic Project website. Accessed December 23, 2014. <http://www.stepspokane.com/news-room/>.

region's fur trading past. With tourism increasing, or at least hoped to do so, the region's business people found ways to incorporate fur trade history into the economy.

At the same time that parks and historical societies were attempting to lure tourists to the Plateau and to encourage Plateau residents to venture into the parks and historical sites of the region, local businesses and boosters wanted to entice those visitors to spend money in their businesses. Consumerism was not new to the West in the early twentieth century and consumption-as-entertainment had been alive and well for nearly a century in a region in which the Indian Wars took place. As Boyd Cothran stated, “[b]ooks, photographs, paintings, films, reenactments, and commemorations...reduced the complex and political nature of the Indian wars to consumable objects.”<sup>461</sup> Plateau fur trade history was a consumable good in the twentieth century, a product to be advertised alongside funeral services, dry goods, bank accounts, and clothing.

Spokane has long been the largest city in the Columbia River Plateau and, since Spokane House is the historic fur trade post closest to Spokane, it received more attention than other Plateau sites by regional journalists and historians. The excitement around the possibility of a park and memorial at the site of the former post was evident, as in one article claiming “[o]ne of the most important actions from a historical, recreational and publicity standpoint for Spokane has been taken by officers of the Inland Empire Press club of Spokane” after the group “voted to purchase 50 acres of land adjoining the 70 acres previously secured at the junction of the Little Spokane and Spokane rivers, thus completing the site of Spokane House.” This breathless announcement was important, it was suggested, because Spokane House was “where in 1810 the intrepid explorer and fur trader, David Thompson, established the first white settlement in the Oregon Country...becoming the first actual merchandising center in the Oregon district.”

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<sup>461</sup> Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 20.

Reconstruction, according to the article, had “long been the dream of a group of Spokane citizens.”<sup>462</sup> The emphasis here, then, was on the longevity of “merchandising” in the region and the need to preserve and commemorate a place of commerce, not necessarily surprising in the period of economic recovery from the Great Depression. This context of economic recovery may also explain why, while framing the fur trade as an activity of the past in the above article, the *Spokesman Review* also ran an article on the fur-bearing animals trapped by Washingtonians in 1937. The article calculated the twentieth-century US fur trade as a “\$65,000,000-a-year fur market” and expressed concerns over resource depletion through over-trapping, enumerated the various species of animals sought for their pelts in 1937, and called for tighter regulations on trapping to prevent animal extinctions.<sup>463</sup> The business of the fur trade in the late 1930s and early 1940s was both a harvesting and tourist enterprise.

The fur trade itself was earning Plateau people money, and it was hoped the tourism to Spokane House would do the same. In an attempt to ride the popularity of the fur trade post, the First Federal Savings and Loan commissioned a mural by artist Bertha Ballou for their downtown Spokane lobby. J. Neilson Barry, mentioned above, was a prolific correspondent and in another letter to John Lindsay, the director of First Federal, wrote,

That ridiculous mural and the astonishingly ignorant caricature of factual matters in the little booklet are very discreditable to your establishment.

The same intelligence, horse sense and gumption that are involved in evaluating loans or in making investments is the same kind of intelligence needed in evaluating records and other factual matters pertaining to past events and conditions. This glaring exhibition of gullibility in having been bamboozled by such absurd and distorted misconceptions reflects most deplorably upon the Board of Directors and those whom they employ [sic]. Since apparently, no one connected with your Board seems ever to have tried to inform himself of these

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<sup>462</sup> “Press Club Aids ‘Spokane House,’” *Spokesman Review*, November 14, 1940.

<sup>463</sup> “Washington Trappers in 1937 Took 35,159 Muskrats,” *Spokesman Review*, May 6, 1939.

factual matters, it would be well to realize what a black-eye has been given by itself to your Association.<sup>464</sup>

The 1948 commission depicted the fur trade at Spokane House. The building is now a nightclub and the mural has been painted over, but the Savings and Loan preserved the image in a booklet they distributed as advertisement (see Figure 1.17). Artist Bertha Ballou's rendering of the Plateau fur trade is a departure from her predecessors in several ways. Ballou's depiction of Spokane House in 1826 is a bustling, dusty scene with Indigenous and European people of different ages and genders engaging with one another. In an interview with the *Spokesman Review*, Ballou explained that she read excerpts of fur trade journals and met with local Indigenous peoples to try to understand her subject. Indeed, her depictions of Indigenous people were painted with the aid of Indigenous models who agreed to work with her. Barry and his contemporaries were furious about what they decried as inaccuracies in the mural, focusing on the building details and layout rather than the interpersonal interactions taking place.

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<sup>464</sup> J. Neilson Barry to John T. Lindsay, March 31, 1948. Eastern Washington University Library and Special Collections, James Neilson Barry Papers. The letter is addressed to John T. Lindsay, but there was no John T. Lindsay affiliated with First Federal Savings and Loan at this time. Two Directors, John T. Little and R.A. Lindsay, are listed on the printed pamphlet and Barry may have combined the two men's names.





Figure 1.17: Bertha Ballou, "Spokane House (1810-1826)," Mural at N. 120 Wall Street, Spokane, WA. Published in First Federal Savings and Loan advertisement, c. 1948. Eastern Washington State Historical Society/ Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

The "Story of Spokane House" was published in the pamphlet to accompany the reproduction of the mural, and a note credited E.T. Becher "for the historical material comprising" the contents of the booklet.<sup>465</sup> The pamphlet stated that Ballou's depiction was created "from painstaking sifting of Indian legend and trappers' tales."<sup>466</sup> The pamphlet emphasized the fur trading competition between John Jacob Astor's Pacific Fur Company (PFC), the HBC, and the North West Company (NWC) prior to the relocation of Spokane House to Fort Colville in 1826. Barry stated that the "historical site is not merely of local interest, but of

<sup>465</sup> "The Story of Spokane House," First Federal Savings and Loan advertising pamphlet. Circa 1948. Spokane: C.W. Hill Printing Co. Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

<sup>466</sup> Ibid.

national and international importance, because there American enterprise and free trade met, head-on, the British policy of monopoly.”<sup>467</sup> Barry took issue with the pamphlet’s lack of patriotism in failing to proclaim ultimate victory for “American free enterprise” over “British monopoly,” while overlooking the failure of the American company to take hold in the Plateau. After three pages of recounting the valiant nation-building undertaken by Astor at the site, Barry took specific issue with the pamphlet’s mention of “the burning of Spokane House” referencing “some trapper’s tales [that] have it that it was set afire following the death of an Indian from a contagious disease – others say the logs were burned as firewood by Indians, who used the site as fishing headquarters.”<sup>468</sup> Barry stated, “[t]here is not record of any fire. That is poppy cock.”<sup>469</sup> Barry also took offense at Ballou’s rendering of the bastions at Spokane House, arguing that she had depicted them too much like the American style of bastion “in the ridiculous mural.”<sup>470</sup> He closed with an acrimonious suggestion for future historical research, stating “That laughable mural, and the funny exhibition of booy ignorance in that comical booklet is liable to create question as to the gullibility of the Board in financial transactions.”<sup>471</sup> Barry’s last jab was to suggest that what he saw as historical inaccuracies in the lobby painting could cost the Savings and Loan customers if it went uncorrected. For some, plugging in to Plateau fur trade history could mean more customers and more money. For purists like Barry, it could mean the decline of customers and income.

The pamphlet that advertised the new mural used Spokane House and the Columbia River Plateau fur trade, both subjects taken quite seriously by J. Neilson Barry, as a hook for its

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<sup>467</sup> J. Neilson Barry to John T. Lindsay, March 31, 1948. Eastern Washington University Library and Special Collections, James Neilson Barry Papers.

<sup>468</sup> First Federal Savings and Loan Association, “Spokane House pamphlet to accompany Bertha Ballou mural in lobby at N. 120 Wall St., Spokane,” C.W. Hill Printing Co. Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures,

<sup>469</sup> J. Neilson Barry to John T. Lindsay, March 31, 1948. Eastern Washington University Library and Special Collections, James Neilson Barry Papers.

<sup>470</sup> Ibid.

<sup>471</sup> Ibid.

readers and it quickly transitioned to “as exciting drama as ever played - the conquest of the Northwest.” First Federal lauded the “harnessing of its rushing streams, the mining and logging of its hills, the tilling of its rich plains and fertile valleys-of the present glory and unfolding promise of Spokane and the Inland Empire” as an allegory of the success of the savings and loan itself and of settlers in the Plateau who sought homeownership with the aid of their loan programs.<sup>472</sup> First Federal Savings and Loan advertised their shiny new lobby mural by distributing a pamphlet about its subject, the Columbia River Plateau fur trade, while also disseminating history of the fur trade to its customers and to those whose business they hoped to capture.

The First Federal Savings and Loan Association was not the only financial institution to employ fur trade history in the attempt to attract customers. In 1930, The Old National Bank & Union Trust Company produced a pamphlet titled “Spokane House as it Probably Appeared in 1810.” In his introduction to the pamphlet, bank president W.D. Vincent stated that “[m]any people confuse Spokane House with the City of Spokane; they do not know where it was located; some think Spokane House is still standing. For this reason we of The Old National Bank & Union Trust Co. feel that the public will be interested in knowing the real facts concerning the establishment of the first place of trade between the whites and the Indians in this section.”<sup>473</sup> The tone of the introduction is paternal and the gravitas with which a bank president approached the knowledge of the past surely lent their pamphlet legitimacy. To further the legitimacy of the information shared in the pamphlet, however, the “material included in this pamphlet” was accredited to local and well-known historian T.C. Elliott. “Spokane,” the booklet informs

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<sup>472</sup> “The Story of Spokane House,” First Federal Savings and Loan advertising pamphlet. Circa 1948. Spokane: C.W. Hill Printing Co. Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

<sup>473</sup> “Spokane House as it Probably Appeared in 1810,” The Old National Bank & Union Trust Co., 1930, 4. Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

readers, was “the commercial center of a considerable area of the Inland Empire of Washington and northern Idaho, [and] is the logical successor of what was known in fur-trading days (more than one hundred years ago) as SPOKANE HOUSE, which then was a trade-center for eastern Washington, northern Idaho and western Montana.”<sup>474</sup> The pamphlet emphasized the commercial nature of the fur trade and highlighted Spokane House as a means of bringing commercial exchange to the Plateau. Readers are left with the closing thought, “History and romance lingers around this quiet and sheltered spot where the commerce and culture of Spokane had beginnings more than one hundred years ago; the most historic spot in the Spokane Country.”<sup>475</sup>

In the inter- and post-war period, advertisers eagerly tapped into the interest in local fur trade history to sell everything from funeral services to residential homes in new subdivisions. Though clearly establishing itself as a long-standing business in the area through the slogan “Since Spokane’s Early Days,” the tone of the Smith Funeral Home advertisement is seemingly at odds with the services rendered by their staff (see Figure 1.18).

“The traders,” it reads, were usually lonely and overworked and “welcomed assignment to Spokane House, where they could” party and “dance with the Spokane nymphs.” Quoting fur trader Alexander Ross, like the Christmas card mentioned above, this advertisement further embellished Ross’s writing, informing the reader that “there were no females in the land so fair to look upon, no damsels could dance as gracefully, none were so attractive” as the local Spokane Indigenous women.<sup>476</sup> There is no tie-in to funerary services, but people at the Smith Funeral Home clearly thought there was value in tying their business to the nineteenth-century fur trade.

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<sup>474</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid., 13.

<sup>476</sup> Smith Funeral Home advertisement, Fur trade clippings file, c. 1940. Eastern Washington Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

ua airport.

# Our Inland Empire

"To Its Builders"

**SPOKANE HOUSE**  
SOCIAL CENTER OF AN EMPIRE

No. 10

The traders, generally resigned to a rigorous, lonely routine, welcomed assignment to Spokane House, where they could swap stories, revel in boisterous celebrations and dance with the Spokane nymphs. Ross Cox wrote that there were "no females in the land so fair to look upon, no damsels could dance as gracefully, none were so attractive." Many of the traders, such as Ogden and McDonald, married Spokane women. The table provided voracious appetites with more "imported" Eastern and European food and spirits, so much so in fact, that Simpson reprimanded the Spokane employees for their extravagance in 1824. A renowned race track near by provided sport for the whites and Indians. There was even a library. The traders were comparatively well educated, many being "remittance men," younger sons from prominent families in Great Britain, forced to seek their fortune abroad because the eldest son inherited all.

*Since Spokane's Early Days*

## SMITH FUNERAL HOME

1124 W. RIVERSIDE  
*Main 2181*

Figure 1.18: Clippings file, c. 1940. Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

The same is true of the "Modern Spokane House" subdivision that never came to be. Aside from the illustration on the cover of their brochure, developers did not directly link their product with the fur trade (see Figure 1.19). In 1936 perhaps simply naming a housing development after a fur trade post was thought adequate to generate sales. Whether due to the Great Depression or World War Two, the development was not built. The developers' use of the historical fur trade as a marketing device, however, became a popular trend in inter- and post-war Plateau advertisements.

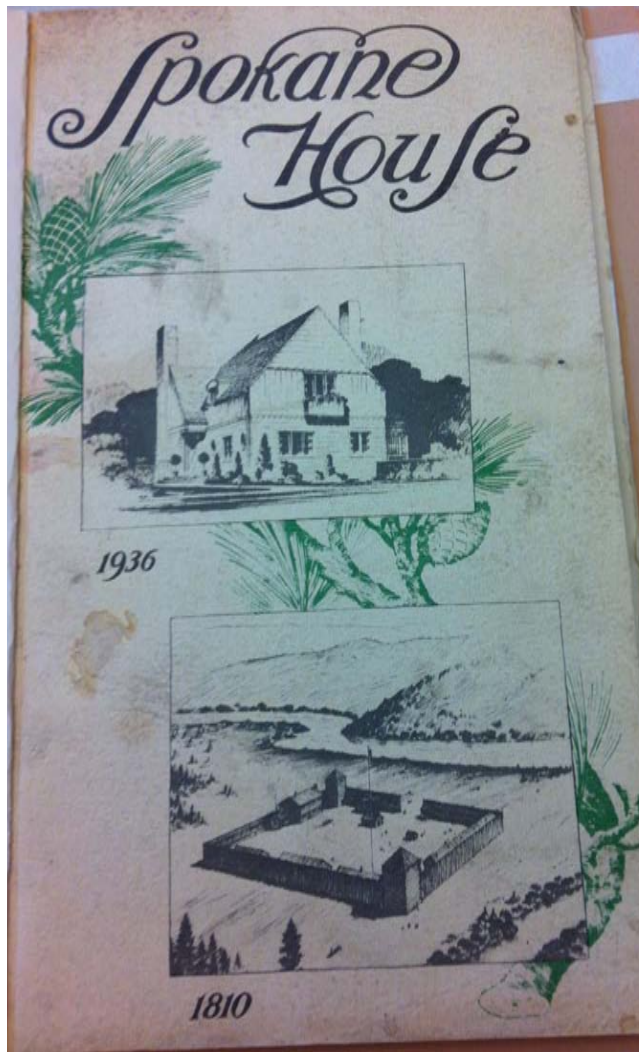


Figure 1.19: "Modern Spokane House," 1936. Northwest Room, Spokane Public Library.

History continued to be a consumable commodity on the Plateau in the 1960s. Articles on the value of Spokane House to tourism in the area were common and often referenced consumption. Joel Ferris, President of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, received Spokane House post journals from the HBC in 1951, using the occasion as impetus to write a newspaper article about the post, fur trade in the area, and the importance of knowing local history, encouraging people to take their families to the site of Spokane House.<sup>477</sup> Another

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<sup>477</sup> Joel E. Ferris, "New Light on Spokane House," *The Spokesman Review*, July 22, 1951.

article, also encouraging automobile tourists to visit Spokane House, began: “Spokane House! You never heard of it? Into the car then, and out Northwest Boulevard...then along the river road for about seven miles.” A description of the monument follows, then “The monument whets your interest. You drive through the gate and along the curving road to a prepared parking space overlooking the point of land at the junction of the two rivers...Sitting there in your car you can hear the whisper of the pines and the murmur of the river almost exactly as it must have been 150 years ago.”<sup>478</sup> As if selling her readers on the product that was historical tourism, author Neta Frazier then proceeded with a rewriting of the nursery rhyme “The House that Jack Built”:

This is the Spokane House that Jaco built.  
These are the fur traders who lived in the Spokane House that Jaco built.  
This is the search for the Northwest Passage that started the fur traders who lived in the Spokane House that Jaco built.  
This is the continent of North America that caused the search for the Northwest Passage that started the fur traders who lived in the Spokane House that Jaco built.  
This is Christopher Columbus who discovered the continent of North America that caused the search for the Northwest Passage that started the fur traders who lived in the Spokane House that Jaco built.<sup>479</sup>

The article, one in a weekly series that reviewed Plateau fur trade history, touted the new Spokane House Interpretive Center as a tourist attraction and encouraged families to partake in historical tourism while rewriting familiar nursery rhymes.<sup>480</sup>

Published alongside articles such as those of Neta Frazier, Shirley Lyons, and others who often omitted contemporary Indigenous peoples in their writing, were examples of consumable history that included twentieth-century Indigenous people. One such example is an article by Helen Clark about the velvet paintings of Indigenous peoples from the past and present by Walt Magner. Magner was an artist in West Yellowstone, Montana who painted and sold to motoring

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<sup>478</sup> Neta L. Frazier, “Spot Where Region history Began Gets Long-Deserved Recognition,” *The Spokesman Review*, June 13, 1965, 4.

<sup>479</sup> Ibid.

<sup>480</sup> Ibid., 5.

tourists velvet portraits of famous historical Indigenous leaders and occasionally accepted commissions for velvet portraits. “To escape the painstaking labour demanded by working on velvet,” Clark wrote, “Magner turns in the summertime to another form of art work, painting savage mugs for the young “Savages” who are employed in Yellowstone Park. He adorns these mugs with Indian figures, roly-polly little figures in ludicrous positions, and he puts slogans the young people wish inscribed in gold on the mugs, which he also trims in gold.”<sup>481</sup> The patronizing article was accompanied in print by photographs of Magner’s work and his contact information, should a reader be interested in purchasing one of his works. Indigenous people were often represented in the early 1960s Plateau as historical artifacts who were once tangentially relevant to the “pioneering” fur traders or as gimmicky artwork to be sold to “young ‘Savages’” who worked in the tourism industry.

More than twenty years later, in 1987 the Finan McDonald Clothing Company opened for business in Sandpoint, Idaho. Catering to the sailing tourists who summer on Lake Pend d’Oreille, the store sells high-end outdoor clothing, shoes, and jewelry. Their website explains, “Starting out as a different kind of men’s store, it specialized in natural finer clothing with an outdoorsy look and feel.” In 1998, a second store opened in Coeur d’Alene, Idaho, also a location popular with wealthy tourists who sail on Coeur d’Alene Lake and golf at the Coeur d’Alene Resort, known for the floating green on hole 14. On the store’s website, Finan McDonald is described as a

6’5” wild redheaded Scotsman, . . . an imposing figure around here back in 1807; when the average height of a man was just over 5’! He was one of the first Europeans to explore this area with the famous surveyor and explorer, David Thompson, and set up and ran many trading posts throughout the Inland Northwest and British Columbia. In many

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<sup>481</sup> Helen Clark, “Oil Portraits on Velvet,” *The Spokesman Review*, September 15, 1963, 4.



respects, Finan was North Idaho's first retailer! His great sounding name carries on today with Finan McDonald Clothing Company.<sup>482</sup>

More than two hundred years after Finan McDonald arrived to the Columbia River Plateau, his likeness and profession continue to be used to sell upscale clothing to tourists in the region.

The fact that Finan McDonald's image and past continue to be effective marketing tools may be in part due to the popularity of his former supervisor, David Thompson. As historian William Moreau stated in the introduction to his edited version of David Thompson's *Travels*, "Thompson's presence continues to pervade the places of the West, and he occupies such a place of prominence in the popular imagination that one may speak of a 'David Thompson awakening.'" <sup>483</sup> Between 2007 and 2011, for the bicentennial of Thompson's travels, small towns in Alberta, Montana, Idaho, British Columbia, and Washington used representations of Thompson and the fur trade to encourage tourists to stop in their towns and frequent local businesses. The bicentennial organization stated that these communities were those that "would like to reaffirm their region's history and future by exploring the evolution of our relationship to the North American continent since the fur trade," while also encouraging their tourism economies.<sup>484</sup> Daniel Francis wrote, "Whites set themselves the task of inventing a new identity for themselves as Canadian. The image of the Other, the Indian, was integral to this process of self-identification. The Other came to stand for everything the Euro-Canadian was not."<sup>485</sup> In the

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<sup>482</sup> "About Us," Finan McDonald Clothing Company, accessed March 15, 2012. <http://finanmcdonald.com/about-us.html>.

<sup>483</sup> David Thompson and William Moreau, ed., *The Writings of David Thompson: Volume I, The Travels – 1850 Version*. (Montreal Canadian University Presses E-books (OCUL) - York University, Champlain Society, & Centre for Rupert's Land Studies. Seattle, WA and Toronto: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), x.

<sup>484</sup> David Thompson Bicentennials, "Bicentennials" Accessed February 13, 2013. [http://www.davidthompson200.ca/eng/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=39](http://www.davidthompson200.ca/eng/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=33&Itemid=39)

<sup>485</sup> Daniel Francis, *The Imaginary Indian: The Image of the Indian in Canadian Culture* (Vancouver: Arsenal Pulp Press, 1992), 8.

Plateau, non-Indigenous peoples crafted the stories of their pasts by emphasizing non-Indigenous fur traders, marginalizing Indigenous pasts, and furthering local economies.

The historic nineteenth-century Columbia River Plateau fur trade was an economic enterprise and so it makes sense that twenty- and twenty-first century business people would capitalize on the images, stories, and personas associated with the trade to promote their businesses. These proprietors also engaged in the perpetuation of colonialism, however, by utilizing the fur trade images, stories, and personas that excluded or marginalized Indigenous peoples and emphasized the Euro-Canadian and Euro-American individuals involved in the trade. The consumption of Indigenous imagery and appropriation of Indigenous culture in multiple times and places has been well-documented.<sup>486</sup> Cothran argued, “[t]hrough the consumption of history, Americans have made and remade their self-identity as fundamentally innocent through remembering past episodes of violence” and in the Plateau, Americans and Canadians remade their self-identity by reconstructing a past without Indigenous peoples, in spite of the existence of Indigenous neighbours throughout the region.<sup>487</sup> By showing viewers representations of history comprised primarily of non-Indigenous peoples, these businesses constructed “a particular realization of the imperial imagination,” a realization that was familiar to its audience in that it largely reflected the audience it sought.<sup>488</sup>

It can be feasibly argued that all representations of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade educated their viewers. This category includes representations of the Plateau fur trade that were created for dissemination in scholarly settings, such as universities and public schools, were

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<sup>486</sup> See Philip J. Deloria, *Indians in Unexpected Places* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2004); Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998); Raibmon, *Authentic Indians*; Ruth B. Phillips, *Trading Identities: The Souvenir in Native North American Art from the Northeast, 1700-1900* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1998).

<sup>487</sup> Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 20.

<sup>488</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 24.

created by educators including professors and teachers, and were published in scholarly outlets including journals and textbooks. There is overlap between this and the chapter's previous categories of recreation and consumption, but the representations included here were created specifically with education as the maker's intent and with celebration of imperial and colonial experiences as the intended goal.

Historian C.S. Kingston in 1948 published "Spokane House State Park in Retrospect," an article-length overview of the past of the post, in the *Pacific Northwest Quarterly*. Kingston's apparent reason for penning the article was that "this historic ground, purchased by private contributions, has been transferred to the State Park Board to be developed and maintained as a memorial to the explorers and traders of early times."<sup>489</sup> In this case, Kingston considered the Spokane River, one of the region's natural resources, also an important historical site worthy of commemoration. Kingston was vice president of Eastern Washington College of Education and for nearly forty years acted as head of the history department there.<sup>490</sup> Kingston's opening paragraph stated that the post was "the first settlement of white men in eastern Washington" and that the site on which it was built "had been for untold years a famous fishing place for the Indians, where in the salmon season they gathered from all directions."<sup>491</sup> Kingston's analysis of fur traders' depictions of the post were measured and contextualized within the political climate of the time. In his overview, he sought out the sources mentioned in Chapter One, including David Douglas, Nathaniel Wyeth, and Samuel Parker as well as the Pacific Railroad Reports, oral histories he conducted, and articles from the *Spokesman Review* newspaper.<sup>492</sup> Kingston carefully navigated the conflicting information known at the time about the location of the post, a

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<sup>489</sup> C.S. Kingston, "Spokane House State Park in Retrospect," *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* v. 39, no. 3 (1948): 181.

<sup>490</sup> "C.S. Kingston, Long-Time EWC Professor, Dies," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, September 30, 1953, 1.

<sup>491</sup> Kingston, "Spokane House State Park in Retrospect," 181.

<sup>492</sup> *Ibid.*, 194-8.

source of considerable local debate, side-stepping the issue by stating it could be “left as a problem on the local antiquarian level.” For Kingston, “the recent acquisition of this historic ground by the State Park Board is a matter of general public interest” because the Board would “make the area more accessible to the public,” and “clarify its place in the development of the state.”<sup>493</sup> These goals were important, Kingston argued, because “[b]oth the history and the economic life of eastern Washington began here with the first settlement in 1810” and because “[f]amous men-Thompson, McLoughlin, Simpson, Douglas, Stevens-were once visitors at this place.”<sup>494</sup> Kingston, as with other Plateau historians in the mid-twentieth century, was also a booster.

In 1970, the Idaho Historical Society included an article by then-director of the Eastern Washington Historical Society, Albert H. Culverwell in its journal, *Idaho Yesterdays*. The article, titled “The Fascinating Pleasures of the Far-Famed Spokane House,” was originally given as a paper at the 1968 Pacific Northwest History Conference. Culverwell relied, as many of his predecessors and successors did, on the writings of Alexander Ross. Culverwell also relied heavily on other historians’ analysis of Ross’s description of the post and claimed that J. Neilson Barry “accepted Ross’s writings as accurate.”<sup>495</sup> Much as C.S. Kingston had done, in fact in nearly Kingston’s exact words, Culverwell argued that “the importance of Spokane House as an historic site is clear. Here was the start of both the history and the economic life of eastern Washington. Great men visited there, men who played a role in history – Thompson, Simpson,

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<sup>493</sup> Ibid., 199.

<sup>494</sup> Ibid.

<sup>495</sup> Albert H. Culverwell, “The Fascinating Pleasures of the Far-Famed Spokane House,” *Idaho Yesterdays* v. 14, no. 1 (1970): 5.

McLoughlin and Douglas, as well as a host of trappers and traders.”<sup>496</sup> Historian boosters begat historian boosters in the Columbia River Plateau.

A few years after Kingston wrote his plea for commemoration, a painting by B.C. Stork (see Figure 1.13) generated fewer furious letters to editors than other artistic renderings of the trade at the time. In her article accompanying the image and recounting the history of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, journalist Margaret Bean considered fur traders to be the region’s pioneers, “opening the way for settlement as civilization pushed westward.”<sup>497</sup> “The pioneer collections,” wrote Bean “include an old cannon from the Hudson’s Bay Company post at Colville, which, according to authentic record, was used by the English in 1759 on the Heights of Abraham during the attack on Quebec in the French and Indian War.”<sup>498</sup> Bean went on to describe the process by which Spokane House became a public park and the subject of archaeological excavations. It was clear in Bean’s article that the museum was intended to be a tourist site, “used extensively by scholars and students and is visited by thousands of people, not only from the Pacific Northwest but from all parts of the United States and from many foreign countries. Last year the number of visitors totaled more than 26,000.”<sup>499</sup> About Spokane House, Bean wrote “[i]t is the second oldest white settlement in the state; Neah Bay on the Straits of Juan de Fuca, established by the Spaniards in 1792, was the first.” The accompanying image of B.C. Stork’s painting was captioned as follows: “Spokane artist B.C. Stork painted this conception of the famous early trading center. He also painted the cover scene. Stork’s paintings are based upon a careful study of available records of Spokane House.”<sup>500</sup> Bean wrote often for

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<sup>496</sup> Ibid., 7.

<sup>497</sup> Margaret Bean, “Museum in a Gracious Setting,” *Pacific Northwest Quarterly* vol. 45, no. 3 (July, 1954), 93.

<sup>498</sup> Ibid.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid., 94.

<sup>500</sup> Margaret Bean, “The Story of Spokane House: Findings Stir Interest in Historical Post,” *The Spokesman Review*, October 15, 1950.

the paper and her articles were in large-format in an insert, intended for a broad audience and clearly meant to educate the reader on local Plateau history.

At about the same time that the Spokane House Interpretive Center was being completed, excavations at Fort Okanogan were wrapped up, and two decades after the David Thompson Memorial Fort had been abandoned, a new commemorative project with David Thompson at its center was revealed. In 1964, the National Film Board of Canada (NFB) produced the film *David Thompson: The Great Mapmaker*.<sup>501</sup> A short film of only twenty-eight minutes, it celebrated Thompson as a heroic, virtuous explorer with noble ambitions, typical themes of films directed by Bernard Devlin for the NFB. The fur trade was depicted as the greedy pursuit of wealthy aristocrats who would have foiled Thompson's noble aspirations to map the western reaches of the continent, had he not been such a determined fellow. Portrayals of Indigenous and francophone peoples in the film are derogatory at best, racist at worst. Francophone traders are shown attempting to bribe Thompson, who of course does not accept, and Indigenous people are shown in wigs, wearing face paint and costume headdresses, while speaking in halted, broken English. The Piikáni [Piegan, Blackfoot] people are described as "stern and hostile" and an impediment to Thompson's cartographic progress across North America. In the film, "finding the headwaters of the Columbia" River is not only crucial to expanding the fur trade across the Rocky Mountains, but also to the ambitions of empire it is assumed the audience understands. In the scene in which Thompson receives word that the American Fur Company has reached the mouth of the Columbia before he does, Thompson's character is visibly angry, but presses on out of a sense of duty. In the final moments of the film, the narration claims Thompson was the "first man to follow and map the Columbia" from its source, obviously overlooking the centuries of

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<sup>501</sup> National Film Board of Canada, *David Thompson: The Great Mapmaker*. Bernard Devlin, dir., 1964. Available online: [https://www.nfb.ca/film/david\\_thompson\\_the\\_great\\_mapmaker](https://www.nfb.ca/film/david_thompson_the_great_mapmaker).

Indigenous travel on the river, and also staking claim to the Columbia watershed for the British, and then Canadians.

In this period, the Canadian Parks Branch partnered with Parks Canada, following the lead of their American counterparts in producing more engaging films because, as historian George Colpitts remarked, “[b]y the late 1950s, documentary selections produced earlier by the federal government’s film bureau were hopelessly bogged down in natural history detail, out of date, or simply too tattered from repetitive viewings for continued use.”<sup>502</sup> Because NFB films were shown in schools and travelled around the country to be shown in schools and theatres, as well as in rural towns and even in campgrounds, they had broad audiences.<sup>503</sup> In her book on the history of the NFB and its relationships to Canadian governmental policy, Zoë Druick argues “NFB policy...is rooted in interwar theories of empire marketing, social science, the administered welfare state, and mass and adult education that encompassed both film form and modes of audience formation.” Druick calls “this logic of bringing coherence to a divided polity” “film acts” and suggests that film played a substantial role in implementing Canadian federal policies and creating a sense of Canadian identity.<sup>504</sup> An NFB film like *David Thompson: The Great Mapmaker* would have been shown to broad audiences across Canada with the purpose of furthering a sense of shared Canadian familiarity with the fur trade as a noble national past from which twentieth-century Canadians could learn lessons of perseverance while building a sense of nationalism.

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<sup>502</sup> George Colpitts, "Films, Tourists, and Bears in the National Parks: Managing Park Use and the Problematic 'Highway Bum' Bear." In Claire Elizabeth Campbell. *A Century of Parks Canada, 1911-2011*. (Calgary: University of Calgary Press, 2011), 154, 160-1.

<sup>503</sup> Colpitts, "Films, Tourists, and Bears in the National Parks," 162.

<sup>504</sup> Zoë Druick, *Projecting Canada: Government Policy and Documentary Film At the National Film Board of Canada*. (Montreal, Ithaca: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2007), 10-11.

A distinct American nationalist sentiment was present in some depictions of the Plateau fur trade in the 1960s and 1970s, perhaps a result of the impending American bicentennial. In 1960, the Eastern Washington State Historical Society announced the future opening of the Spokane House Interpretive Center and as part of the announcement and the opening ceremony, the HBC, British, Washington state, and American flags were flown, always with the American flag in the highest position (see Figure 1.20). For a group of people who were publicly enthusiastic about historical “accuracy” in depictions of the fur trade, it seems odd that they were comfortable with the American flag flying at all, let alone the Washington state flag, since the territory surrounding Spokane House at the time of its construction was neither American nor a part of the state of Washington. Perhaps the location of the center on recently-purchased state park land and the support of both the state and the National Parks Service helped them overlook this “inaccuracy,” but the emphasis on patriotism and American exploration were evident, and there was no mention of including British Columbia or Canada in the ceremonies.



Figure 1.20: *The Spokesman Review*, August 23, 1960.



The Spokane House Interpretive Center at Riverside State Park, intended to educate the public on the region's fur trading past, was dedicated on June 20, 1966. The program of the day's festivities stated "[n]ot only is the site of Spokane House important as the scene of the first permanent white settlement in Washington, but it also commemorates the one fort west of the Rocky Mountains that was kept continuously in operation by three different companies in the early years of the fur trade between 1810 and 1826."<sup>505</sup> The Master of Ceremonies was the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commissioner and the *Spokane Daily Chronicle* covered the opening of the Interpretive Center in an innovative way – by highlighting the role of the Appaloosa horse. According to Elvetta Lewis's article, "[t]entatively 10 members of the Palouse Empire Appaloosa club and their colorful mounts have been invited to take part in the ceremonies." Margaret Felt, "information officer for the state parks and recreation commission," was quoted saying "[t]here is an interesting story about an Appaloosa called Le Bleu, who 'saved the day' for the Pacific Fur Company of Spokane House, and we think it will add much to our dedication ceremony to have this horse represented."<sup>506</sup> In a flier that appears to have been published in the 1960s or 1970s, perhaps to accompany the opening of the Interpretive Center, the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission's Interpretive Services department attempted to provide a thorough, Plateau-inclusive, yet brief overview of fur trade history. It is one of the few pieces of Plateau parks interpretation that mentions eighteenth-century Russian fur traders on the western North American coast, perhaps a reflection of Cold War mentalities at the time. Although the flier is titled "Spokane House," the material within covers Fort Okanogan, Fort Walla Walla, and Spokane House, as well as sections on the three main fur trade companies operating in the region: the PFC, HBC, and NWC. The final sections of the flier discuss the

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<sup>505</sup> Spokane House Interpretive Center Dedication program, Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

<sup>506</sup> Elvetta P. Lewis, "Appaloosa's Role in History Cited," *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, June 16, 1966.

challenges and rewards of interpreting Plateau fur trade sites and the state of the fur trade when the flier was printed. As with all other promotional materials for the opening of the Interpretive Center, no mention of contemporary Indigenous peoples is made.<sup>507</sup> For the opening of the Spokane House Interpretive Center, emphasis was placed on educating the public about details of the fur trade, but carefully chosen details with which viewers were assumed to have some familiarity – Appaloosa horses, flags, and other posts on the Plateau.

Prior to the Spokane House Interpretive Center's opening, state historian Lloyd R. Bell was quoted in the *Spokesman Review* saying that “some of the ‘feeling and tang of the old trading post’ will be designed into the modern structure” and recounted, unattributed, the old canards of Alexander Ross by saying that “[t]his was one of the most pleasant trading posts...[i]n their letters and notebooks traders noted its pleasant summers, mild winters and the beautiful girls.” Discussing why an interpretive center was chosen over a reproduction, Bell told the newspaper that “[s]ince few authentic records are available and the replica would be too expensive...we decided on the museum. Besides other approaches would, in a sense, falsify history.”<sup>508</sup> The question of whether or not to reconstruct the fur trade posts of the Columbia River Plateau arose in the first decades of the twentieth century and continues into the twenty-first. Local history teacher E.T. Becher, mentioned above, wrote a letter to the editor in 1940 calling for archaeological excavations at the site and later reconstructions. To support his argument, Becher noted that he and his students had already collected artifacts, stating “we now have a fairly large collection of Indian stone implements and the like, which we have picked up on the site. We cover the history of Spokane House to the nth degree in our classes and have

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<sup>507</sup> “Spokane House: The Fur Trade,” Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission. Northwest Museum of Arts and Cultures.

<sup>508</sup> “Old Trading Post to Be Recreated,” *Spokesman Review*, March 17, 1965.

organized all material on the subject.”<sup>509</sup> Again in 1947, Becher sought public support to reconstruct Spokane House. The local paper announced that “[p]lans to restore Spokane House as a site of historic interest will be discussed at 4 p.m. Wednesday at a meeting in the Bemiss school of the Association for Childhood Education. The project will be outlined by E.T. Becher, social studies teacher at Rogers high school.”<sup>510</sup> Interestingly, the headline refers to the fur trade post as a “Pioneers’ House,” either as an error or perhaps to draw more attention to the event.

Between 1970 and 1974, three local books were written about Plateau history, all addressing the fur trade in the region, and used by educational institutions to teach regional history. In 1970, the prolific duo Robert H. Ruby and John A. Brown penned *The Spokane Indians: Children of the Sun*, an attempt to “view the Spokanes ‘from inside the tipi.’”<sup>511</sup> In their chapter dedicated to the Spokane people’s history with fur traders, Ruby and Brown introduced fur traders as “something sacred” and foreign arriving to the Plateau.<sup>512</sup> In this chapter, Ruby and Brown emphasized a Spokane oral history they collected in 1966 that portrays fur traders more favourably than a transcript of an oral history from 1916 that claims fur traders threatened Spokane people when they arrived to the Plateau. Though Ruby and Brown mention the 1916 oral history in a footnote, they paraphrase its contents and do not provide analysis of the claim that fur traders were thought to be sacred or of the threats mentioned in the 1916 oral history.<sup>513</sup>

Beyond these two Indigenous oral histories, Ruby and Brown rely on sources cited here for their

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<sup>509</sup> “Spokane House Last of Noted Sites Unhonored,” *Spokesman Review*, May 26, 1940.

<sup>510</sup> “Pioneers’ House Will Be Topic,” *Spokane Daily Chronicle*, February 4, 1947.

<sup>511</sup> Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*, xiv. Ruby and Brown have also coauthored *Half-Sun on the Columbia: A Biography of Chief Moses*, (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1965, repr. 1995); *The Cayuse Indians: Imperial Tribesmen of Old Oregon* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1972, repr. 2005); *The Chinook Indians: Traders of the Lower Columbia River* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1976); *Indians of the Pacific Northwest: A History* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1981, repr. 1988); *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1986, repr. 1992, 2010); *Dreamer-Prophets of the Columbia Plateau: Smohalla and Skolaskin* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1989, repr. 2002); and *John Slocum and the Indian Shaker Church* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1996).

<sup>512</sup> Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*, 33.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid.*, 35.

fur trade chapter, including William S. Lewis, T.C. Elliott, C.S. Kingston, and Louis Caywood.<sup>514</sup> Of the extant primary sources available on the topic, Ruby and Brown only reference the Spokane House post journals for 1822-23, John Work's journal, and David Thompson once each, and, keeping with historiographic tradition, rely heavily on Alexander Ross's published writings. In the Ruby and Brown version of Plateau fur trade history, Spokane House was a "mart and mecca," of trade where Indigenous peoples embraced traders and traders paved the way for missionaries.<sup>515</sup>

In his celebration of Spokane's preeminent families, Rowland Bond included a separate table of contents for "firsts" in the region, all of which were accomplished by non-Indigenous traders and settlers to the region.<sup>516</sup> This list of "firsts," which disregarded the centuries of Indigenous occupation of the Plateau, faces a reproduction of Paul Kane's painting, *Scalp Dance of the Chualpays Indians*, with a caption that reads "Drawn by Paul Kane in the 1840s, this scene is typical of native American ceremonials witnessed by Early Birds including Jacques Finlay. It represents the Spokane tribal 'scalp' dance. Note that the artist shows the native lodges as being both rectangular and circular. (Photo Courtesy of the Public Archives of Canada.)"<sup>517</sup> Fur traders figured prominently in Bond's "pioneers" to the Columbia River Plateau. Jacques Finlay received two chapters to himself, while Finan McDonald and John Jacob Astor were each covered in three chapters. Ranald MacDonal, son of fur trader Archibald McDonald, surpassed all with seven chapters devoted to his unusual life. Alongside these men in Bond's pantheon of Plateau "firsters" are Jesuit missionaries and American miners and businessmen who encouraged

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<sup>514</sup> Ibid., 37-45, 48-50.

<sup>515</sup> Ibid., 40.

<sup>516</sup> Bond, *Early Birds in the Northwest*, 7.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid., 6. The painting is now held at the National Gallery of Canada. Paul Kane, *Scalp Dance of the Chualpays Indians*, c. 1851-1856, oil on canvas, National Gallery of Canada (no. 103).

commercial development and resource exploitation in the region.<sup>518</sup> Bond credited Findlay with being “Spokane’s first citizen,” described Finan McDonald as “one of the most colorful figures ever to grace the Old West,” and called John Jacob Astor “a true pioneer, in spirit as well as in action,” for his efforts to exploit the natural resources of the Pacific Northwest.<sup>519</sup> *Early Birds in the Northwest* is an unabashed hagiography of the fur traders, missionaries, and businesspeople who arrived in the Columbia River Plateau seeking wealth, whether from furs, souls, or minerals.

Used as a textbook for Spokane-area schools in the 1970s, Edmund Becher’s *Spokane Corona: Eras & Empires* reads much like his letters to newspaper editors and his other writings examined in this chapter. Becher was a high school history teacher who wanted to “research (the) golden treasure trove of events” in the Columbia River Plateau’s past and “call its attention to thousands of children and adults” because he was “aware of the lack of factual, readable material dealing with the incomparable history of the Pacific Northwest.”<sup>520</sup> He argued that Plateau history “outshines most areas of the world because the Inland Empire was the last section of the North American Continent to come under the control and development of a single modern imperialistic nation.”<sup>521</sup> His chapters proceed from an analysis of the geologic past of the region in “Before Mankind Came to the Spokane Region” to fur traders’ arrival in “The First White Men in the Spokane Country.”<sup>522</sup> No early chapter is dedicated to Indigenous pasts in the area and Indigenous people only truly appear as people with agency in Chapter V, “Chief Joseph Frightens the Inland Empire.”<sup>523</sup> In his chapter on non-Indigenous arrival to the Plateau, Becher related contact stories of the Spokane people and included photographs of them in regalia and

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<sup>518</sup> Bond, *Early Birds in the Northwest*, 11.

<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, 13, 28, 53.

<sup>520</sup> Edmund T. Becher, *Spokane Corona: Eras & Empires* (Spokane, WA: C.W. Hill Printers, 1974), iii, v.

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, iii.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, vii.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*

spear fishing at Celilo Falls, and in one illustration paternalistically captioned “Famine was rare among our Northwest Indians,” Becher did challenge the stereotype of “starving Indians” in the historiography.<sup>524</sup> Becher also included illustrations of Indigenous peoples of the Plateau with tipis and longhouses, “welcoming the early trappers,” and astride horses, but there is little analysis of these illustrations in the text.<sup>525</sup> In an illustration depicting Jacques Finlay’s arrival to the Plateau, Becher labeled him “one of the first white men to see Spokane Falls,” while in the caption referring to his “half-breed” ancestry, emphasizing Finlay’s non-Indigenous heritage and ignoring the reality of métis people in the fur trade.<sup>526</sup> Indeed, later in the chapter Becher stated that “[n]ot one white man lived in” the Spokane River Valley after traders moved business from Spokane House to Fort Colville in 1826, even though he earlier acknowledged that Finlay and his family remained at the site of Spokane House until Finlay’s death a decade later. The nature of Métis identity appears to change according to Becher’s narrative needs.<sup>527</sup> The focus of this chapter was not, however, on Indigenous people, but on the fur traders and “explorers” who came to the region in the early nineteenth century.

Becher’s narrative of jolly fur traders who “liked Spokane House” because of the festive atmosphere and luxurious surroundings relied on Ross Cox’s writings and the problematic writings of early twentieth-century historians and in one illustration, Becher calls Spokane House the “social center of an empire,” referencing Ross Cox (see Figure 1.21).<sup>528</sup> It is often difficult to know from which sources Becher found the material in his textbook, as very little of it is cited. The book is celebratory of non-Indigenous labour and economic success in the region and the chapter about the fur trade emphasizes the economic importance of the trade to the region by

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid., 17, 19, 21, 23.

<sup>525</sup> Ibid., 24, 25, 27.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid., 35.

<sup>527</sup> Ibid., 50, 35.

<sup>528</sup> Ibid., 26, 33.

including tallies of goods and prices, explaining the distribution of fur trade profits among “the owners of the companies in Britain and the workers in the field,” and describing traders as “people who came here to make money.”<sup>529</sup> As a final reminder to his readers of what he considered important when constructing the chapter, he concluded it with a list of seven “firsts,” none of which involved Indigenous peoples who inhabited the region prior to the arrival of fur traders. Becher taught schoolchildren and their families that the site where the American flag first flew, the white men who first saw the region, the first white child born, and the first white business establishment on the Plateau were more important than anything else he may have covered in his chapter.<sup>530</sup>

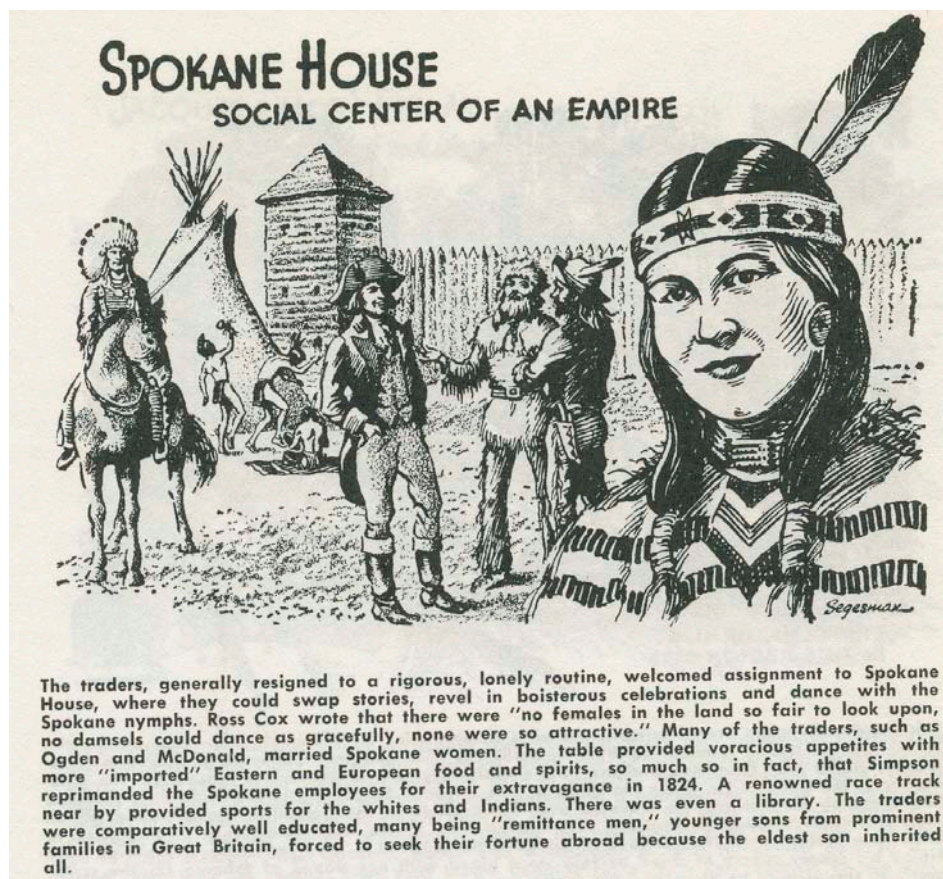


Figure 1.21: Edmund T. Becher, *Spokane Corona: Eras & Empires* (Spokane, WA: C.W. Hill Printers, 1974), 33.

<sup>529</sup> Ibid., 39, 50.

<sup>530</sup> Ibid., 50.

The textbook Becher wrote might have had a somewhat limited audience, probably restricted to public school children and their families, but the front matter indicated that the work within it was disseminated on a larger scale throughout the Plateau. All illustrations in the book were created by John Segesman and “originally were published in Spokane newspapers,” indicating that they would have had a relatively wide audience.<sup>531</sup> In his brief biography, Becher is described as a “Social Studies Consultant, Emeritus, for the Spokane Public Schools and vice president of the Eastern Washington State Historical Society.” Becher is also credited with “appointment as the first chairman of the newly created Advisory Committee on Historic Sites to the Washington State Parks and Recreation Commission,” mentioned in this chapter. As if these positions did not afford Becher enough of an outlet for the dissemination of Eurocentric Plateau history, he also “produced motion pictures on local history, including... a documentary on the construction and economic and social impact of the Grand Coulee Dam” and one on “the Spokane Indians which was nationally televised, and which won for him the title ‘Teacher of the Year.’” Finally, Becher also included consulting services he provided on “many educational films produced by educational television” in his biography. Becher’s celebratory histories of non-Indigenous peoples on the Columbia River Plateau seem to have had a broad audience whose knowledge of regional fur trade history would have reflected the content he privileged, emphasizing selected activities of “white” fur traders.

Comic books were used in the 1960s and 70s to portray Columbia River Plateau fur trade history with the hopes that it would better engage students with the past. In 1973 artist Ivan Munk published an illustrated history of the “Spokane Country,” depicting historical events of portions of the Columbia River Plateau. Fearing that students were woefully ignorant of local history, Munk teamed up with the Eastern Washington State Historical Society, long interested

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<sup>531</sup> Ibid., iii.



in fur trade history, to create a comic book. Meant for teenage consumption, the comic book's content is more entertaining than educational, in spite of the hope that it would be used in public schools. It did not sell well and only a few remaining copies exist today. As with depictions of the fur trade surrounding the unveiling of the Spokane House Interpretive Centre, the fur trade history told in "Spokane Country the Way it Was" was jingoistic, oversimplifying the complex nature of the multinational empire building that was taking place during the nineteenth-century Plateau fur trade. The comic book excessively lauds American traders and emphasizes masculinity, often misconstruing documented events. Indeed, in the first pages about fur traders in the region, no mention is made of the British traders who were also working in the area (see Figure 1.22).

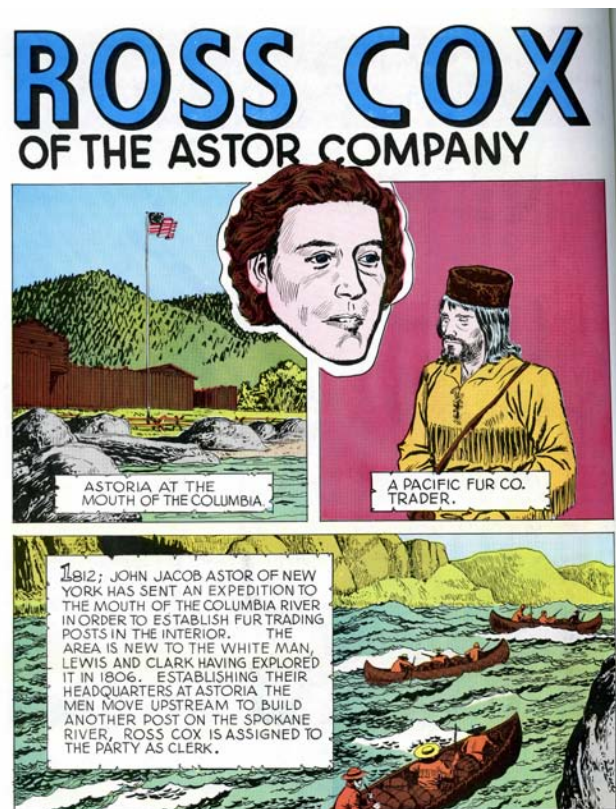


Figure 1.22: Ivan Munk, *Spokane Country the Way it Was* (Spokane, WA: Spokane Heritage Publishing Co., 1973), 8.

John Jacob Astor, the PFC, and Lewis and Clark are forefront in Munk's depiction of Plateau fur trade history. When his attention turned to Spokane House, Munk described the structure as "a small, rude cabin," juxtaposed on the next page with the proper-looking American fort built the next year, an event Munk announced with "the United States has arrived in the northwest" in large font under a shirtless trader beneath a waving American flag (see Figures 1.23 and 1.24).<sup>532</sup>

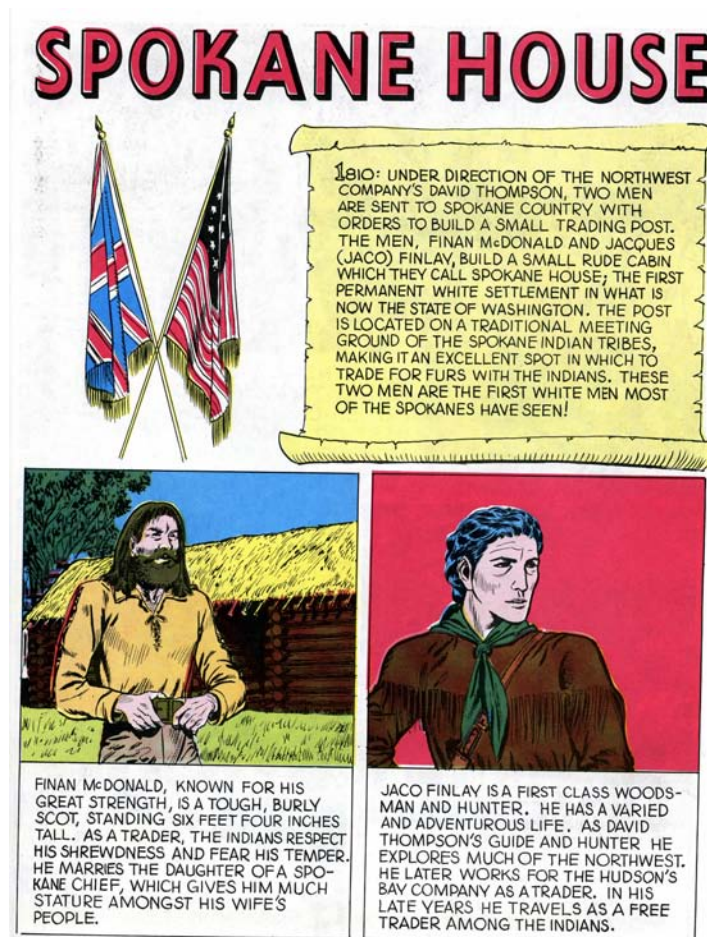


Figure 1.23: Ivan Munk, *Spokane Country the Way it Was* (Spokane, WA: Spokane Heritage Publishing Co., 1973), 21.

<sup>532</sup> Ivan Munk, *Spokane Country the Way it Was* (Spokane, WA: Spokane Heritage Publishing Co., 1973), 21-2.

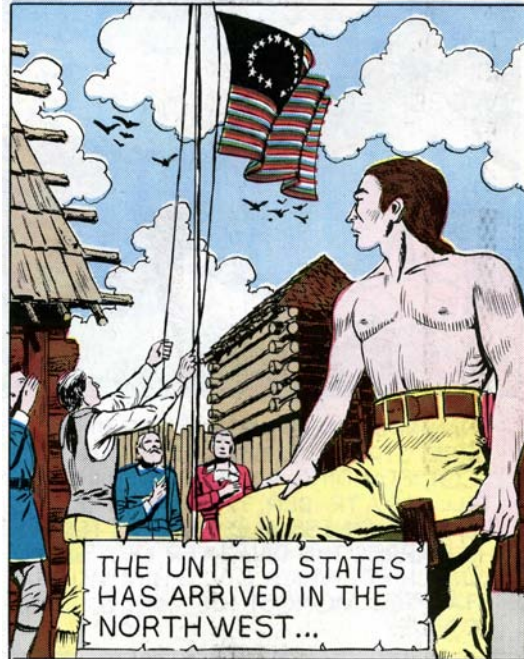


Figure 1.24: Ivan Munk, *Spokane Country the Way it Was* (Spokane, WA: Spokane Heritage Publishing Co., 1973), 22.

When compared with Munk’s depictions of Indigenous peoples, however, British traders were represented favourably. About the arrival of Finan McDonald and Jacques Finlay in the Plateau to construct Spokane House, Munk wrote “these two men are the first white men most of the Spokanes have seen!”<sup>533</sup> Thompson’s writings, as mentioned in Chapter One, refute this claim. McDonald is described as “a tough, burly Scot,” who “the Indians respect...and fear,” and whose marriage to an Indigenous woman Munk cites as the reason for his “stature amongst his wife’s people.”<sup>534</sup> While it is well documented that traders who partnered with Indigenous women enjoyed better access to trading partners than their peers, it is also well-documented that Plateau Indigenous people did not always “fear and respect” McDonald, also discussed in Chapter One.

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<sup>533</sup> Ibid., 21.

<sup>534</sup> Ibid.



Figure 1.25: Ivan Munk, *Spokane Country the Way it Was* (Spokane, WA: Spokane Heritage Publishing Co., 1973), 26.

Munk acknowledged Finan McDonald's temper and lack of restraint when dealing with his fellow traders (see Figure 1.25), but he overstated McDonald's authority with Plateau Indigenous peoples.

A subject of frequent reference in histories of the nineteenth-century Plateau fur trade, relationships between Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men did not escape Munk's interpretive artwork. In one frame, Munk depicted the courtship of a trader and an Indigenous woman, referring in his caption to the oft-quoted Alexander Ross's praise of Spokane women (see Image 26). Munk's illustrated history lacked analysis or contextualization of events and referenced without citation multiple earlier writings and depictions of the Plateau fur trade, some of which are factually and ethically problematic – references only those who read the earlier sources would know. If intended for an adolescent audience, it is nearly impossible to expect

teens to have been familiar with the sources, let alone the problems in analysis and creation with those sources, that Munk depicted as fact in his illustrated book.



Figure 1.26: Ivan Munk, *Spokane Country the Way it Was* (Spokane, WA: Spokane Heritage Publishing Co., 1973), 24.

In 1986, Robert Ruby and John Brown published another book that mentioned Plateau fur trade history. Intended as an encyclopedia of Indigenous peoples in the region, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest* did not include much discussion of the Plateau fur trade. In the entry for the Coeur d'Alene people, they are described as discouraging “non-Indian traders from entering their lands, [but] the Coeur d'Alenes in the early nineteenth century traded with them outside Coeur d'Alene country at posts such as Fort Spokane and Fort Colville and Kullyspell (Kalispel) House and Spokane House.”<sup>535</sup> As with their previous books, footnotes are rare or absent and, aside from a “suggested readings” section following each entry, it is not clear from where the authors received the information found in the book. The entry for the Spokane people briefly discusses the Plateau fur trade, crediting it with bringing Christianity to the Spokane via Spokane Garry’s education at the Red River Mission School.<sup>536</sup> One small paragraph outlines the changing posts of fur trade companies in the region and the subject is not

<sup>535</sup> Ruby, Brown, and Collins, *A Guide to the Indian Tribes of the Pacific Northwest*, 44.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, 310.

again broached. While the focus of the book is on main characteristics and brief histories of Indigenous peoples in the “Pacific Northwest,” by mentioning the fur trade in passing, it minimized the importance of Indigenous people’s roles and labour in the fur trade.

A popular author in the Columbia River Plateau, Jack Nisbet wrote two books about David Thompson and the history of the “Columbia River Country.” Nisbet’s books are well-received and local Plateau people are generally fond of his work, describing it as accessible and interesting.<sup>537</sup> His somewhat romanticized *Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson Across Western North America* emphasizes Thompson’s cartographic skills and relied primarily upon Thompson’s field notes.<sup>538</sup> Nisbet is a gifted storyteller and the book is engaging, telling the tales of Thompson’s travels, but through Nisbet’s more poetic prose and accompanied by Nisbet’s own travel notes, as he followed Thompson’s paths through the west. Nisbet stated in his front matter that he chose “to rely most on his original field notes,” which he does, but he also utilized Thompson’s *Narrative* and “other writings to clarify or embellish events” without in-depth analysis of the *Narrative* as a source.<sup>539</sup> Nisbet acknowledged that Thompson wrote the *Narrative* “after he retired,” but did not analyze the ways in which the *Narrative* would have been influenced by both the thirty-year span between his travels and when he wrote about them, or the dire financial situation Thompson was in when he engaged in penning the *Narrative*.<sup>540</sup> Jack Nisbet’s Thompson is a likable wandering soul with keen cartographic skills whose occasional moments of whimsy, such as noting “that bears make a humming noise when they

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<sup>537</sup> The cover of Nisbet’s 2007 reprint of *Sources of the River* claims the book is a “Winner of the Murray Morgan Prize,” but Nisbet is not listed among the award’s recipients on the website of the Tacoma Historical Society, who administers the award. “Awards,” Tacoma Historical Society, accessed December 20, 2014, <http://www.tacomahistory.org/Society/awards.html>.

<sup>538</sup> Jack Nisbet, *Sources of the River: Tracking David Thompson Across Western North America*, (1994; repr., Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2007), ix.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, 5, 50, 256; Thompson and Moreau, ed., *The Writings of David Thompson: Volume I*, xi.

lick their feet,” reveal an occasionally affable, quirky character.<sup>541</sup> *Sources of the River* is entertaining, as it is meant to be, but has also served for twenty-first-century Plateau readers as a reintroduction to their regional history and in that role, has reinforced the celebration of European fur traders in the region much like school curricula of the 1970s and 1980s.

Jack Nisbet did not ignore Indigenous peoples in his books. The final anecdote of *Sources of the River* is an engaging recounting of his canoe trip with an Indigenous elder and his son, which ends with a poignant suggestion from the elder. Nisbet quoted the elder as saying, “You talk about David Thompson. I’ve seen what he said. I’ve read Lewis and Clark. These men saw how the Indian had stored up food, and could provide for their needs. You think about the things that your explorers did not see.”<sup>542</sup> This is a powerful suggestion and a commanding way to end a book. In some ways, Nisbet follows the elder’s advice by looking at the history of the Columbia River Plateau, including the fur trade, in interesting ways to tell new histories in a gripping fashion.

In another book on Plateau history, *Visible Bones: Journeys Across Time in the Columbia River Country*, Nisbet spends considerable time telling the history of the Plateau itself – of its geology, ecology, and how these pasts have intersected with human pasts. He opened the second chapter of *Visible Bones* with an anecdote about a school group for whom he was a “guest teacher” and described how the children, some described as “tribal girls,” interacted with the natural environment.<sup>543</sup> It is a compelling introduction to a chapter about Plateau water resources (and salamanders), but it also reveals something about how twenty-first-century Plateau non-Indigenous people engage with their Indigenous neighbors. Nisbet is careful to include

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<sup>541</sup> Nisbet, *Sources of the River*, 6.

<sup>542</sup> *Ibid.*, 264.

<sup>543</sup> Jack Nisbet, *Visible Bones: Journeys Across Time in the Columbia River Country*, (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2003), 10.

Indigenous history in his writings and does so often. In this chapter introduction, however, he makes only one mention of Indigenous people, in a conspicuous sentence that seemingly holds no other purpose than to announce the presence of Indigenous people with knowledge of the land. “We passed blooming camas lilies, and one of the tribal girls described digging their roots with her grandmother.”<sup>544</sup> Nothing more follows about the girl or the camas. They seem like ornamentation applied to “embellish” the storytelling. Non-Indigenous reenactors, history enthusiasts, and locals who have engaged with his writing through his books, newspaper articles, and magazine publications speak highly of Jack Nisbet’s work. In the process of conducting interviews for this dissertation, though, I encountered multiple Indigenous people who knew Nisbet, knew of his work as a writer, or knew that he occasionally teaches classes at schools on local Indian reservations, but none who thought his work would be useful to my research. After being asked the oft-repeated question, “who have you talked to?” and hearing Nisbet in my reply, Indigenous interviewees often crinkled their noses, shook their heads, or moved on to other subjects. Non-Indigenous interviewees raved about Nisbet’s work. It was a glaring discrepancy. Jack Nisbet may have many fans among Indigenous Plateau peoples, but I did not encounter them and this may be due to his use of Indigenous peoples and their knowledge and pasts much as he employed the writings of the elderly David Thompson – as embellishment to flesh out chapters written to celebrate men like Thompson and David Douglas.<sup>545</sup> In the depictions of Plateau fur trade history discussed in this chapter, non-Indigenous people have created histories with Indigenous people on the periphery, as participants in events largely directed by European people, and rarely as individuals with agency.

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<sup>544</sup> Ibid.

<sup>545</sup> Nisbet also wrote a book about David Douglas, whose writings are mentioned in Chapter One. Jack Nisbet, *The Collector: David Douglas and the Natural History of the Northwest* (Seattle: Sasquatch Books, 2010).



I met with Jack Nisbet in the process of researching this dissertation. He was friendly, generous with names of people who he thought might be helpful to my work and a transcription of a post journal, and keenly interested in fur trade history. Nisbet has done considerable research about and among Plateau Indigenous peoples and, as Linda Tuhiwai Smith warned, research such as his can be a “significant site of struggle between the interests and ways of knowing of the West and the interests and ways of resisting of the Other.”<sup>546</sup> There is little evidence in Nisbet’s books of an effort to ask Indigenous peoples, here the “Other” and his sources, how his work could be put into service for them. Telling fur trade history that is inclusive of Indigenous presence and environmental realities is a new approach for the Plateau region and for this, Nisbet should be applauded. What, though, did the elder in *Sources of the River* mean when he told Nisbet, “You think about the things that your explorers did not see...Think about these things”?<sup>547</sup> Was he suggesting Nisbet look more closely at the river itself, ecological change, about what the explorers “could hear inside” themselves, or perhaps about Indigenous experiences of history’s creation? We do not know because Nisbet chose not to share his interpretation of these words, nor how they drove his research and telling of Plateau history.

From the late 1930s until the first decade of the twenty-first century, depictions of Columbia River Plateau fur trade history were often in the form of advertisements, patriotic and self-congratulatory commemorations of fur traders or events associated with the trade that were categorized as “pioneering,” and consumable tourist history. Patrick Wolfe wrote that “[w]hatever settlers may say – and they generally have a lot to say – the primary motive for elimination is not race (or religion, ethnicity, grade of civilization, etc.) but access to territory.

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<sup>546</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 2.

<sup>547</sup> Nisbet, *Sources of the River*, 264.

Territoriality is settler colonialism's specific, irreducible element."<sup>548</sup> Scholarly analyses of the North American fur trade began to shift in the 1970s, emphasizing and interrogating the ways in which Indigenous people had been excluded from the historiography, but this was not yet the case on the Plateau. Few of the many Plateau settler fur trade histories created for public consumption engaged meaningfully with Indigenous peoples and those that did often placed them in the distant, but not too distant, past and depicted them as non-threatening contributors to pleasant versions of the Plateau's history of colonialism. This may have been because the authors and boosters of such histories were attempting to emphasize what they saw as the positive elements of Plateau history or because they anticipated their tourist audiences were in search of celebratory consumable history while they recreated on vacations to the Plateau. The result, however, was a body of history and commemoration that silenced Indigenous pasts in the Plateau and further cemented the appearance of non-Indigenous settlers in the region. In this period, fur trade history was created on the very lands Indigenous peoples were using fur trade history to demonstrate were taken from them unfairly. For some people on the Columbia River Plateau, fur trade history was recreational, entertainment, and educational, but for others, it was a tool in the process of gaining restitution.

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<sup>548</sup> Wolfe, "Settler colonialism and the elimination of the native," 388.

## CHAPTER FOUR: Layered Stories of Trade, Resources, and Sovereignty

On August 1, 2012 I sat down at a restaurant in Wenatchee, Washington with Chalk Courchene and Sharon Seal. I had spent the summer interviewing people about the Columbia River Plateau fur trade and was often referred to Courchene. Courchene is enrolled with the Confederated Salish Kootenai tribes and is an in-the-flesh representation of the complexities of ancestry where indigeneity and the North American fur trade collide. During the course of the interview, Courchene displayed his tribal enrollment card, recalled his family links to Hudson's Bay Company (HBC) trader Francis Ermatinger, and demonstrated his famed knowledge of Plateau family trees. He was eager to talk about the fur trade, but this became a very different conversation than those recorded with historians and reenactors of the Plateau fur trade. Speaking of the confluence of the Wenatchee and Columbia rivers, Courchene told me, "Pacific Fur Company, David Thompson, Hudson Bay Company, they all stopped there to trade what they could. Normally they were looking for salmon because they were hungry... That was a big factor in... this area here is thirst and hunger, not so much as fur trade and a lot of times they would come to this area looking for horses."<sup>549</sup> Over the next several hours, our conversation wended from salmon and horses to furs, apples, irrigation, ancestry, and salmon again, with Courchene explaining how all of these elements of Plateau history were interrelated like one big, complex family network. "It's a layered story, here," he told me. "It all spins off into something else."<sup>550</sup>

The fur trade was not just about fur for Courchene's ancestors and other Indigenous peoples. It was about exchange that took place in long-established trading places and it was, and

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<sup>549</sup> Interview with Chalk Courchene and Sharon Seal, August 1, 2012.

<sup>550</sup> Ibid.

still is, just one of a much longer series of exchange events. Historians and commemorators emphasizing the Euro-Canadian and Euro-American fur trade posts in the region have lost sight of the centuries-long existence of trade on the Plateau, fixing the fur trade in time and place, in the nineteenth century at European fur trade posts. As explored in Chapter Three, history became a consumable commodity for non-Indigenous people, but for Indigenous people, fur trade histories became a tool for restitution following World War Two, providing evidence of their occupation and use of Plateau lands in efforts to challenge the wrongs of colonization. Among twenty-first-century Plateau Indigenous peoples, memories of the fur trade range between non-existent and those recounted by Chalk Courchene, which emphasize the intertwining of European and Indigenous economic systems. Columbia River Plateau Indigenous peoples have created diverse ways of remembering the North American fur trade and its legacies in their communities, in spite of historians and parks ignoring their stories in projects of commemorating the trade. In recent decades, Plateau Indigenous peoples have maintained commemorative community traditions, as well as engaging in ways of remembering the Plateau fur trade by taking part in non-Indigenous commemorative projects. Indigenous people's memories of the fur trade and its legacies for individuals and families tell full, layered histories of the North American fur trade and its consequences that include the voices of Indigenous participants and their descendants. Michel-Rolph Trouillot said, "the historical process is always messy, often enough contradictory" and Plateau Indigenous people, who have for millennia been rooted in the region's landscape, have their own histories of the area and its resources, of which the North American fur trade is but one layer.<sup>551</sup>

Chapter One examined some of the ways in which Indigenous people who lived during the fur trade era recorded their experiences of the trade. Indigenous artists painted gendered

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<sup>551</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 1,742.

moments of exchange and recounted their experiences to European, Euro-American, and Euro-Canadian explorers, missionaries, and artists who visited the Columbia River Plateau. Chapter Two explored some of the encounters with nineteenth-century empire building experienced by Plateau Indigenous peoples, some of whom shared their memories and those of their communities with the builders of empire. As the twentieth century began, Plateau Indigenous people recounted their experiences of the North American fur trade in the context of defending their territories and cultures from the colonialism they experienced, as detailed in Chapter Three. This chapter further examines the ways in which Plateau fur trade histories were shared in twentieth-century Indigenous communities and by Indigenous people in non-Indigenous communities. Ronald Rudin wrote, “the recollection of...traumatic moments is determined by both the nature of the event and the circumstances allowing its memory, particularly in public venues.”<sup>552</sup> Plateau Indigenous peoples recalled fur trade histories, traumatic and otherwise, in public venues within their own communities and occasionally in non-Indigenous commemoration events, and also in their families and homes, away from the gaze of those constructing dominant historical narratives.

While on a campaign tour of Canada in 1910, the “Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau Tribes of British Columbia” presented Premier Wilfrid Laurier with a “Memorial” on August 25 in Kamloops.<sup>553</sup> The document is reproduced on the website of the Shuswap Nation Tribal Council and is prefaced by a contextual essay introducing Secwépemc (Shuswap), Nlaka’pamux (Thompson), and Syilx (Okanagan) traditional law regarding land and resource use

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<sup>552</sup> Ronald Rudin, *Remembering and Forgetting in Acadie: A Historian’s Journey through Public Memory* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2009), 182.

<sup>553</sup> Shuswap Nation website, “The Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1910-2010,” Accessed March 29, 2015. Available at [http://shuswapnation.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/137543\\_ShuswapNation\\_Bro.pdf](http://shuswapnation.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/2012/09/137543_ShuswapNation_Bro.pdf).

and explaining events in the region leading up to Laurier's visit.<sup>554</sup> According to the introductory material,

Many of the Chiefs whose experiences and voices are reflected in the Memorial provide a link between the fur trade era and 1910. Thus, Chief Louis of Kamloops and several other Chiefs present at the 1910 Memorial reading were born in the 1830s or 1840s and had witnessed the time of the *seme7úw'i* and the arrival of the post-1850s newcomers through the colonial period. The political principles and values learned from the Chiefs long ago remain alive through their descendents and persist in the foundation of the present struggle.<sup>555</sup>

The memorial itself describes interactions between the Secwépemc, Nlaka'pamux, and Syilx peoples and European and Euro-American fur traders:

One hundred years next year they came amongst us here at Kamloops and erected a trading post. After the other whites came to this country in 1858 we differentiated them from the first whites as their manners were so much different, and we applied the term "real whites" to the latter (viz., the fur-traders of the Northwest and Hudson Bay companies. As the great majority of the companies employees were French speaking, the term latterly became applied by us as a designation for the whole French race.) The "real whites" we found were good people. We could depend on their word, and we trusted and respected them. They did not interfere with us nor attempt to break up our tribal organizations, laws, customs. They did not try to force their conceptions of things on us to our harm. Nor did they stop us from catching fish, hunting, etc. They never tried to steal or appropriate our country, nor take our food and life from us. They acknowledged our ownership of the country, and treated our chiefs as men. They were the first to find us in this country. We never asked them to come here, but nevertheless we treated them kindly and hospitably and helped them all we could. They had made themselves (as it were) our guests. We treated them as such, and then waited to see what they would do. As we found they did us no harm our friendship with them became lasting. Because of this we have a warm heart to the French at the present day. We expect good from Canada.<sup>556</sup>

The fur trade era, then, was remembered positively and fur traders were not depicted as violent colonizers on the Plateau, but good neighbors who respected Indigenous practices of hospitality on the land. Such neighborly behaviour made sense, since, as historian Jean Barman states, the

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<sup>554</sup> Another version of the document is posted on the Williams Lake Band website, "Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, 1910," Accessed March 29, 2015. Available at [http://williamslakeband.ca/?page\\_id=371](http://williamslakeband.ca/?page_id=371).

<sup>555</sup> Shuswap Nation website, "The Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1910-2010." The term *seme7úw'i* is translated elsewhere in the document as fur traders or "real whites."

<sup>556</sup> Ibid.

region “belong[ed] to no country and [was] without non-Indigenous governance,” leaving fur traders “without recourse to any larger body to which they could appeal should something go wrong.”<sup>557</sup> Fur traders who lived and worked among Plateau Indigenous peoples could, however, appeal to the legal systems in place within Indigenous communities and by acknowledging such existing systems, could avoid conflict.

The central focus of both the memorial and its contextual information is natural resource use. The introductory section reviewing ancient traditional law situates shared land use within this Indigenous legal system, stating “[o]ne fundamental principle of our traditional law thus laid out by Sk’elép thousands of years ago is that each nation collectively holds its respective homeland and its resources at the exclusion of outsiders. Outsiders ought not trespass our lands without our express permission.” It is clear that this principle does not exclude shared land and resource use, but that, as the contextual essay explains, “when Sk’elép [Coyote] invited the foreign Wutémkemoc [“a group of Coast Salish people sometimes called ‘transformers’”<sup>558</sup>] into our home as guests, noting ‘we should be friends but we should not interfere with each others’ work’ he was the first to establish a relationship between us as the owners and hosts of this land, and the outsiders as guests who were invited and should be treated with kindness but were expected to show respect and reciprocity.”<sup>559</sup> This expectation of respect and reciprocity is at the heart of the memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier. The roles and responsibilities of host and guest are woven throughout the memorial, creating a framework for understanding relationships with land and resources, as well as people.

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<sup>557</sup> Barman, *French Canadians, Furs, and Indigenous Women in the Making of the Pacific Northwest*, 76.

<sup>558</sup> Shuswap Nation website, “The Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier Commemorating the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary, 1910-2010.”

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*

Making clear the purpose of the chiefs' communication with Laurier, the memorial went on:

With us when a person enters our house he becomes our guest, and we must treat him hospitably as long as he shows no hostile intentions. [A]t the same time we expect him to return to us equal treatment for what he receives. Some of our Chiefs said, 'These people wish to be partners with us in our country. We must, therefore, be the same as brothers to them, and live as one family. We will share equally in everything half and half in land, water and timber, etc. What is ours will be theirs, and what is theirs will be ours. We will help each other to be great and good.' They have taken possession of all the indian [sic] country and claim it as their own. Just the same as taking the "house" or "ranch" and, therefore, the life of every Indian tribe into their possession. They have never consulted us in any of these matters, nor made any agreement, "nor" signed "any" papers with us. They have stolen our lands and everything on them and continue to use same for their own purposes. They treat us as less than children and allow us no say in anything. They say the indians [sic] know nothing, and own nothing, yet their power and wealth has come from our belongings. The queens [sic] law which we believe guaranteed us our rights, the B.C. government has trampled underfoot. This is how our guests have treated us - the brothers we received hospitably in our house.<sup>560</sup>

The memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier is a remarkable document describing Secwépemc, Nlaka'pamux, and Syilx understandings of land use and the roles of people in sharing resources responsibly within the framework of hospitality, juxtaposing them with settler understandings and behaviours. In this context, the Plateau fur trade was a comparatively positive experience for Indigenous peoples because traders initially respected Indigenous understandings of shared land use and hospitality, or at least lived in a way that upheld these frameworks.

The chiefs' pleas to Laurier have often been repeated by different Indigenous peoples in the Columbia River Plateau. Echoed over more than a century, Plateau Indigenous peoples have been explaining their concepts of land use and occupancy, detailing the ways in which they were deceived and dispossessed of resources necessary for survival by non-Indigenous settlers, and asking non-Indigenous people to live up to their promises. They explained,

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<sup>560</sup> Ibid.



Conditions of living have been thrust on us which we did not expect, and which we consider in great measure unnecessary and injurious... We condemn the whole policy of the B.C. government towards the indian tribes of this country as utterly unjust, shameful and blundering in every way. We denounce same as being the main cause of the unsatisfactory condition of indian affairs in this country and of animosity and friction with the whites. So long as what we consider justice is withheld from us, so long will dissatisfaction and unrest exist among us, and we will continue to struggle to better ourselves. For the accomplishment of this end we and other indian tribes of this country are now uniting and we ask the help of yourself and government in this fight for our rights.<sup>561</sup>

The “Memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, Premier of the Dominion of Canada” from the Secwépemc, Nlaka’pamux, and Syilx people provides Indigenous knowledge about land use and the ways in which settler populations upheld and violated frameworks of hospitality. The memorial also functions as it was intended, as a call to understand the relationships Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have with land, resources, and each other and to uphold the promises Indigenous and non-Indigenous people made to each other.

The frustrations voiced by the “Chiefs of the Shuswap, Okanagan and Couteau Tribes of British Columbia” are not unusual in that many Indigenous leaders across North America expressed similar sentiments about colonialism on the continent and in some cases used similar language to appeal for redress after experiencing dispossession at the hands of non-Indigenous settlers. In their complaint against the infamous “Walking Purchase,” the Delaware argued in 1740 that they “have Never sold & [they] Desire Thomas Penn Would take these People off from their Land in Peace that [they] May not be at the trouble to drive them off...” in order to live peacefully and with access to the resources they used for centuries.<sup>562</sup> Again, in 1771, another Indigenous group approached colonial authorities in an attempt to redress territorial encroachment. John Killbuck was a Delaware chief who spoke on December 4, 1771 to other

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<sup>561</sup> Ibid.

<sup>562</sup> Colin G. Calloway, ed. *The World Turned Upside Down: Indian Voices from Early America* (Boston: Bedford St. Martin's, 1994), 97.

Indigenous leaders and to the governors of Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia. He informed them that “in former times our forefathers and yours lived in great friendship together and often met to strengthen the chain of their friendship.”<sup>563</sup> He worried for the future of Delaware homelands, saying “We find your people are very fond of our rich land...we do not know how soon they may come over the River Ohio and drive us from our villages, nor do we see you brethren take any care to stop them.”<sup>564</sup> In 1865, Winnebago chief Little Hill testified before the United States Congress that the Winnebago no longer lived as they had in the past. “We used to live in Minnesota,” he told them “...in good houses...We used to farm and raise a crop of all we wanted every year...and then we were compelled to leave.” The Winnebago were promised comparable lands in South Dakota, but, as Little Hill informed Congress, “It was not a good country. It was all dust...We found out after a while that we could not live there.”<sup>565</sup> Similar sentiments were echoed across the Columbia River Plateau in the early twentieth century.

Six years later and more than five hundred kilometers south of Kamloops, where the chiefs presented their memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, seven Spokane elders (Thomas Garry, Moses Phillips, Aleck Pierre, Charley Warren, John Stevens, David John, and William Three Mountains) provided amateur historian and Spokane-area businessman William S. Lewis with a statement recounting events and cultural information relating to the Spokane people. The bulk of the events included in the transcript, dated October 20, 1916, fell between pre-contact with Euro-Americans until 1887, but the most impassioned portion of the oral history refers to the period between 1887 and the date of the interview, focusing on the dispossession of Spokane lands. William S. Lewis was researching the Plateau fur trade, but the information shared with him covered far more information, in both breadth and importance. Lewis quoted the elders saying,

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<sup>563</sup> Calloway, *The World Turned Upside Down*, 110-11.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, 113.

<sup>565</sup> Peter Nabokov, ed. *Native American Testimony* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 162-3.

“When we were compelled to move unto the reservation it was like putting birds in a cage. All the time since we have been waiting for some white men to come and tell us what to do.”<sup>566</sup>

Lewis’s notes and interjections in the “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country” refer to Euro-American accounts of the period, seemingly verifying those of the men before him, who demanded “to get matters settled up.”<sup>567</sup> While the statement addressed Lewis’s interests in the North American fur trade, it emphasized the values and concerns of early twentieth-century Spokane people, for whom territory was paramount.

During their interview with Lewis, the elders shared information about Indigenous peoples of the Columbia River Plateau, details of contact and intercultural relationships with Euro-Americans and Euro-Canadians, and geographical knowledge of territory and Indigenous ways of maintaining or recognizing territorial boundaries. The statement begins “With the Indians names were given to different parts of the world. One part of the country with one name belonged to one tribe of Indians and another part of the contry [*sic*] with another name belonged to a different tribe of Indians.”<sup>568</sup> In this section of the account, the elders described precise geographic features and pre-contact markers of the territorial boundaries for four groups: “Sin-too-too-oulish,” or Upper Spokane; “Sin-sla-quish,” or Coeur d’Alene; “Sin-ho-man-na,” or Middle Spokane; and Lower Spokane. Beginning their statement in this manner, the elders situated land and territory at the forefront of the information they chose to convey. While it is difficult to know whether the elders chose to forefront territory or whether they were prompted by the questions Lewis asked, the narrative they gave demonstrates its importance. They emphasized knowledge concerning territory and related it in both Indigenous and non-

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<sup>566</sup> William S. Lewis, “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country.” William Stanley Lewis Papers, Eastern Washington State Historical Society/Northwest Museum of Arts and Culture, 9.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, 1.

Indigenous ways. For example, territorial boundaries are described in both English and Salish terms:

The Sin-sla-quish or Coeur d'Alene had the country at the head of the Spokane Valley and around Coeur d'alene lake. The Sin-too-too-oulish, or upper Spokanees, had the country about the Spokane river to a point about four miles below the mouth of the little Spokane. Sin-ho-man-na, or Middle Spokanes, had the country from a point about four miles below the little Spokane to the vicinity of what was afterwards known as La Pray's prairie. The Lower Spokanes had the country below (west) from La Pray's prairie.<sup>569</sup>

While it is possible that Lewis interjected his interpretation of locations into the text, the content and structure of this passage serve multiple purposes. First and foremost, the elders established Indigenous occupation of a very specific portion of the Columbia River Plateau. They did so in the terms used by colonizing Americans at the time, referring to the non-Indigenous place names and markers of distance with which Lewis was familiar. At the same time, however, these men utilized Salish names for themselves and surrounding Indigenous communities and they made clear that French and English place names were not the first descriptors of the Plateau landscape. By employing phrases such as “the vicinity of what was afterwards known as,” the elders clearly yet subtly conveyed the existence of previous Indigenous knowledge of the landscape.

In addition to geographical and territorial information, the account is full of descriptions of Indigenous life in the region prior to, and following, the arrival of fur traders in 1810. To describe naming practices among these communities, the elders recounted that “(e)ach tribe had its tribe name and everyone in the tribe took the tribe name. When members of one tribe came into the country of another tribe to fish, hunt or dig roots without the permission of that tribe, war

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<sup>569</sup> Ibid.

was declared.”<sup>570</sup> In addition to explaining onomastic conventions among Plateau peoples, this passage also describes mobile societies that interacted with one another in the process of obtaining food. Harvesting important resources such as fish, game, and camas required people to move about on the landscape, interacting with one another, encountering each other’s territories. To do so peacefully, Plateau peoples either garnered the permission of their neighbors to enter their territory or initiated conflict. The passage continues:

This was the law in early days among [*sic*] Spokanes, Couer d’Alenes [*sic*], Flatheads, Nez Perce, Okanogans and other tribes. Each tribe had head men called chiefs. When there was war the world was dark, then the head chiefs of the tribe would make a peace, and wipe out the blood as with a rag and make the world light again.<sup>571</sup>

In this very short section of their account, the seven elders described pre-contact expectations of interpersonal interaction on the landscape, providing cultural context for their frustrations about later dispossessions. They illustrated existing political systems among Plateau peoples to which they appealed in turbulent times to restore peace. In a subtle yet convincing way, these men told Lewis that Indigenous peoples of this region were quite familiar with political structures and territorial boundaries long before non-Indigenous peoples began claiming land under the justification that previous inhabitants were either misusing land or were not civilized enough to use it properly.

The account goes on to illustrate Indigenous mobility in the Plateau region, as well as the details of resource utilization. People moved seasonally to harvest a variety of resources and “winter camping places were changed on account of the hunting from time to time. In the spring the Indians moved out into the plains hunting camas and other roots. They changed camp about

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<sup>570</sup> Ibid.

<sup>571</sup> Ibid.

every month.”<sup>572</sup> Regarding fishing, the elders explained that “(d)uring the big run of salmon there was also a camp along both sides of the Spokane river from the little Spokane to Hangman Creek and the big falls.”<sup>573</sup> Later, the elders explained the adoption of some agriculture:

The Indians learned to raise potatoes and vegetables from the Frenchmen. We used a hoe split out of a thorn [*sic*] bush with a crook on the end... (a)fter the traders came the Indians learned to raise potatoes, peas, grain, and corn with hoes. We had no plows. The land was cultivated with the thorn bush sticks such as we have described. The Indians also used a long sharp stic(k) with a smaller stick run through it in the center for a handle. They would stick this into the ground and use it to pry up the earth. The Indians cut their grain with a knife. Their garde(n)s would be where there was good land along creeks or springs. There were some near Hillyard, some on Peone prairie. There were some at Po-post-pu-mun and sil-lacques on the north side of the river near what is now Greenacres. There were also gardens along the little Spokane, along Hangman Creek and on the south side of the river south of the falls.<sup>574</sup>

Sections such as these provide informative details about life in the Columbia River Plateau, revealing much about concepts of territory and practices of land use in the region. The elders’ statement that “(t)he Indians learned to raise potatoes and vegetables from the Frenchmen,” referring to the francophone North West Company (NWC) traders who arrived in 1810, confirms entries in the Spokane District Journal kept at the HBC post of Spokane House for 1822-1823 that agricultural activities were afoot in the area.<sup>575</sup> The April 15, 1822 journal entry states “All the men and women belonging to the fort employed – digging & preparing a piece of new ground & likewise the old piece of ground for the purpose of planting our potatoes.”<sup>576</sup> It is clear from the journal that Indigenous people around the fort were familiar with its gardens and the importance of them to the traders, as they occasionally broke the fences or damaged crops in

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<sup>572</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>573</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>574</sup> Ibid., 4, 5-6.

<sup>575</sup> Early in the account, the elders stated “The first white men came into our country were the ‘Frenchmen.’” After that the Indians gave the name ‘Frenchmen’ to all the whites.” Lewis, “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country,” 1.

<sup>576</sup> “Spokane District Journal from the 15<sup>th</sup> April 1822 to the 20<sup>th</sup> April 1823,” Hudson’s Bay Company Archives.

retaliation for mistreatment by the traders.<sup>577</sup> This section also describes Indigenous agriculture taking place on some of the most coveted land in the valley, land that was later taken by non-Indigenous settlers.

Elders Garry, Phillips, Pierre, Warren, Stevens, John, and Three Mountains acknowledged to Lewis the emergence of agriculture among Plateau Indigenous peoples while making strategic reference to Euro-American values of improving the land. Such remarks would have made solid strategic sense, since Euro-American settlers, missionaries, and fur traders encouraged European-style agriculture in the Plateau, while often overlooking the Indigenous agriculture taking place there because it was unfamiliar to Euro-Americans. The elders described tools used by Plateau peoples for centuries to harvest wild camas roots that were repurposed to harvest potatoes once the tubers became a regular food source. The elders explained the ways in which Plateau Indigenous peoples had begun and continued to recognize and adopt Euro-American forms of land cultivation while also maintaining agricultural elements distinct to their culture. Recounting Indigenous agricultural activity further legitimized their tenancy on the land through the lens of Euro-American values. Threaded within the explanations of Plateau seasonal harvesting and agricultural development is a demonstration of Indigenous territorial knowledge and claims to the land in the context of people who were displaced and forcibly removed from farms because settlers determined that Indigenous agricultural practices were inferior to Euro-American agricultural practices.

Throughout the account, the elders discussed contact with Euro-Canadians and Euro-Americans, whether through the fur trade, missionary activities, intermarriage, or westward expansion. The seven elders reported to Lewis that “the first white men to our country were the ‘Frenchmen,’” referring to the Montreal-based fur traders (mainly from the NWC) who arrived

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<sup>577</sup> Ibid.

to the region in 1810 and initiated vexatious first encounters with Spokane people.<sup>578</sup> The seven elders related,

When the Frenchmen first came they took out and showed the Indians a pocket knife with two blades, one open and one half open, and said to the Indians that if they did not listen to them, and do as they asked the knife would cut off their lives, and that unless the Indians gave the whites furs the knives would cut off their lives. At that time the Indians used all manner of hides, deer, elk, bear, coyote, wildcat beaver, and rabbit for clothing and covering for their lodges. Another scheme of the Frenchmen was to show the Indians a doll, and claim that the doll was an evil spirit, and that if the Indians did not obey the Frenchmen, then when they died the doll or evil spirit would throw them into the fire. All this the Indians believed. This is what we hear from the old folks.<sup>579</sup>

The men shared with Lewis this contact story rooted in violence that, by the time of its telling in 1916, had persisted for more than a century. Unlike the interactions with fur traders described in the memorial to Sir Wilfrid Laurier, the history recounted to Lewis portrayed fur traders as violently coercing Indigenous peoples to participate in fur trade labour. Rather than coexisting in a territory, as the memorial to Wilfrid Laurier suggests, NWC fur traders who lived among the Spokane threatened them with death and spiritual harm “unless the Indians gave the whites furs.” Though some Indigenous interactions with fur traders, such as those of the Secwépemc, Nlaka’pamux, and Syilx, were largely positive encounters, many others, such as that of the Spokane, were not. As historian Ned Blackhawk stated, “[f]ur trappers, traders, and explorers either wrought the initial traumas or laid the basis for subsequent ones” for Indigenous peoples on the Columbia River Plateau and elsewhere in North America.<sup>580</sup>

After the NWC men’s arrival, American fur traders from the Pacific Fur Company (PFC) entered the region and little more than a decade later, in 1825, George Simpson, governor of the HBC, visited Spokane House on a tour of what the Company had deemed the Columbia District.

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<sup>578</sup> Lewis, “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country,” 2.

<sup>579</sup> Ibid.

<sup>580</sup> Blackhawk, *Violence Over the Land*, 9-10.



The elders related that the NWC and PFC built their fur trade posts on either side of a long-established cemetery, “(s)ome of the graves in the cemetery had long sticks above them with the white flags and hides tied to them; other graves were built around with logs like a cabin.”<sup>581</sup> The traders’ blatant desecration of burial grounds disrespected deceased Indigenous peoples and those who mourned them. As historian Carolyn Podruchny explained regarding fur traders’ graves, they were “very particular about the location of graveyards, wanting to ensure that the graves were protected,” demonstrating their cultural importance to the traders, making their desecration of Indigenous graves an insult in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural contexts.<sup>582</sup> Katherine Morrissey noted regarding nineteenth-century settler society, “the existence of a cemetery marks the presence of a settlement rather than a frontier. To set aside a piece of land dedicated to funerary rights is not the act of transient people” and this statement was as accurate of the Spokane as it was of the migrant settlers to which Morrissey referred.<sup>583</sup> It is evident from the elders’ statements that contact and relationships with fur traders in the region were unpleasant at times, and included threats of physical and spiritual violence, coercion, and the defacement of burial grounds.

Christianity came to the Spokane people through Spokane Garry and the elders recounted their community’s telling of these events.<sup>584</sup> The oral account does not name Simpson, but refers to his decision during the visit to send two Plateau Indigenous boys to the Red River Mission School, on the site of present-day Winnipeg, Manitoba, saying “the Frenchmen asked Illum Spokanee for his son to send away to educate as a white man. This son was Spokane Garry,”

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<sup>581</sup> Lewis, “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country,” 3.

<sup>582</sup> Podruchny, *Making the Voyageur World*, 84.

<sup>583</sup> Morrissey, *Mental Territories*, 16.

<sup>584</sup> A descendant of Spokane Garry thought his name at birth may have been Thomas, but recent research by Barry Moses and Brian Huseland indicates that Garry’s Salish name may have been Slough-Keetcha. Gertrude E. Finney, “Spokane Garry, First Citizen of the Inland Empire, Saw Indian Glory Fade Before Whites,” *Spokesman Review*, November 29, 1964, 5-6; Jim Kershner, “In the name of History,” *Spokesman Review*, September 1, 2013, D1, D7.

who, along with Kootenai Pelly, spent four years at the school before Pelly died and Garry returned home.<sup>585</sup> This account and that of George Simpson that preceded it document the removal of Indigenous children in the Plateau, a practice of colonial violence that continued in the area until Fort Spokane Indian Boarding School closed in 1914. After he returned in 1831 from several years at the Anglican Red River Mission School, Garry “taught both the young and old from his little book.”<sup>586</sup> The elders remembered:

(T)here is not much difference between Spokane Garry’s teaching to us and that of the later white preachers. Chief Garry’s first teaching to us was the ten commandments. He had a Bible and read to us... Thomas Garry now owns this book. Chief Garry showed the Indians the pictures and told them what was in the book. Sometimes when Chief Garry was absent, the older people who knew the pictures and the stories held the meetings. There were religious meetings ever(y) Sunday. Spokane Garry was the first teacher of the white man’s religion to the Indians in this part of the country. Indians came from Colville, Nez Perce, Okanogan, and from Montana to hear him.<sup>587</sup>

Because of Garry’s teachings, Spokane and other Indigenous people in the Plateau and Rocky Mountain regions learned about Christianity many years before non-Indigenous Christian peoples surrounded them. An “Indianized form of Catholicism” existed in the region since the arrival of fur traders in 1810, and Protestant missionaries travelled through the area in the 1830s, but it was not until the arrival of Jesuit Pierre-Jean De Smet in 1840 that a Catholic mission was built.<sup>588</sup> In their recollections, the seven elders Lewis interviewed in 1916 recounted one of the earliest Catholic-Protestant Indigenous conflicts among Plateau peoples, saying “Spokane Garry wanted to move this Catholic mission, but the Peones were a big family and they stated that they had all joined the Catholic Church and that it was impossible to move the Church. This was one

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<sup>585</sup> George Simpson’s journal also references this event, setting the date of the boys’ baptism and departure from the Columbia River Plateau as April 12, 1825. Simpson and Merk, ed., *Fur Trade and Empire*, 135-36, 138; Lewis, “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country,” 2.

<sup>586</sup> Lewis, “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country,” 5.

<sup>587</sup> Ibid.

<sup>588</sup> Peterson and Peers, *Sacred Encounters*, 22-23.

of the reasons why we went after Mr. Spalding as we will tell you later.”<sup>589</sup> Referring to Henry Spalding, a Presbyterian missionary who settled at Lapwai among the nearby Nez Perce in 1836, the men recalled that, following an earthquake soon after the completion of the Catholic mission, “(t)he Indians all thought that the end of the world was come. On account of this and the Catholics Spokane Garry called a meeting of the Spokane Indians at a place on the river a little above Spokane to talk matters over, and at another meeting held a little later four men were appointed to go to Kamia to bring Mr. Spalding to us.”<sup>590</sup> Garry, Phillips, Pierre, Warren, Stevens, John, and Three Mountains made clear that Christianity among Plateau Indigenous communities was directed largely from within.

In addition to adopting elements of European religions, Indigenous peoples also adopted Europeans into their kinship networks through intermarriage. The elders spoke to Lewis about marriages between Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadian newcomers and the resulting kinship networks. Specifically referenced were the offspring of NWC trader Jacques Finlay. This family, according to the elders, “were scattered all over. Some of the McCoys are Finlays. The Finlays were a great help to the Indians and were very good to us and we treated them as our own people. We adopted them and they got Indian allotments [*sic*] on the reservation. The Indians did not know the Finlays by that name but by the name of Schpa-spas, or blue-eyes.”<sup>591</sup> Also mentioned was the Peone family:

The first Peone came a long time ago and was a friend of the Frenchmen. He came a long time before the war with the whites (1858). His Indian name was Sea-al. The Indians gave him a woman for a wife. He was good (to) the Indians and raised a number of children. Baptiste and William were his sons. He had grandchildren. The Peo(n)e family is now the biggest family among the Spokanes.<sup>592</sup>

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<sup>589</sup> Lewis, “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country,” 7.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, 3-4.

<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

The account mentions additional families consisting of Indigenous women and non-Indigenous men that existed at the time of the interview and whose descendants continue to live on the Plateau in the present day. According to the elders, Indigenous communities absorbed mixed-heritage families, even acknowledging their receipt of allotments from the American government following the imposition of the Dawes Act in 1887. Passages about intercultural family formation are particularly revealing in the larger context of the account because they demonstrate points at which Columbia River Plateau Indigenous peoples and Euro-Canadians were able to cohabitate and successfully form lasting family and community bonds. Even when discussing family ties, however, the seven men managed to keep the subject of territory relevant. By mentioning allotment and the distribution of lands among Spokane families, they sustained a dialogue about Indigenous tenure on the land in the Plateau even as the American government redefined how that tenure was structured and by whom.

Thomas Garry, Moses Phillips, Aleck Pierre, Charley Warren, John Stevens, David John, and William Three Mountains were quite clear about their intentions for speaking with William S. Lewis. They closed their interview with the following:

When the Spokane Indians agreed to go to Colville, Montana, Coeur d'Alene and the lower Spokane reservation, we Indians said "we want to get paid for our land before we leave it." The government officials said "go move now, we will pay you later on." We then said: "All right, we will move." We did so and we haven't got a cent yet. This is an important matter with u(s). Stevens here is the older man. He stated what he knows. William Three Mountains is our judge. We want these things we have said told to the white people tha(t) we may receive what we were promised.<sup>593</sup>

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<sup>593</sup> Lewis, "Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country," 11.

No notes or highlighting exist on this portion of the transcript. No reference to these passages exists in the work of William S. Lewis or the historians who referenced his work.<sup>594</sup> Lewis ignored the expressed desires of his informants, privileging the Euro-centric details he sought over the larger contextual themes and explicitly-stated wishes the elders provided in the “Indian Account of the Settlement of the Spokane Country.” Though Lewis seems to have gained valuable knowledge about the Columbia River Plateau fur trade, the men with whom he spoke shared information with him that they deemed more important than simply fur trade history. Lewis chose not to relate the pleas of Garry, Phillips, Pierre, Warren, Stevens, John, and Three Mountains to the larger settler community.

Nearly thirty years after William S. Lewis conducted his interview with the elders, on August 13, 1946, the United States Congress passed an act creating the Indian Claims Commission (ICC). The ICC was tasked with hearing “the claims of ‘any Indian tribe, band, or other identifiable group of American Indians’ against the United States.”<sup>595</sup> Among the 370 original petitions filed with the ICC by the August 13, 1951 deadline (the final number reached 610) were claims from various Columbia River Plateau Indigenous groups who fell under American legal jurisdiction.<sup>596</sup> As with most ICC claims, the Plateau peoples charged American settlers with unlawfully dispossessing them of their lands or resources taken from those lands, charged the United States government with not fulfilling treaty obligations and/or underpaying Indigenous peoples for the lands taken under treaty, and alleged that the creation of dams such as the Grand Coulee and Chief Joseph dams unlawfully submerged tribal lands and damaged

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<sup>594</sup> Lewis, *The Case of Spokane Garry*; Drury, “Oregon Indians in the Red River School;” Clifford M. Drury, “Reminiscences of a Historian,” *The Western Historical Quarterly* v. 5 n. 2 (1974); Ruby and Brown, *The Spokane Indians*.

<sup>595</sup> Index, Indian Claims Commission Decisions, Oklahoma State University Library, 1. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/icc/index/IccIndexp001.pdf>

<sup>596</sup> Index, Indian Claims Commission Decisions, Oklahoma State University Library, 1. <http://digital.library.okstate.edu/icc/index/IccIndexp001.pdf>

fishing and mineral resources on which Indigenous peoples relied for economic and cultural support.<sup>597</sup> The last of the Plateau claims, that of the Colville for the inundation of reservation lands for the construction of Grand Coulee Dam in 1940, was settled in 1992.

In the Columbia River Plateau, ICC claims referenced injustices against Indigenous people that related to empire-building projects begun toward the end of the nineteenth century, discussed in the previous chapter. The dams, parks, and railroads constructed to expand the American and Canadian nations westward were a source of amusement and entertainment for American and Canadian travelers and a source of income for the settlers who worked in, and profited from, them. In the interwar period and again following World War II, fur trade histories in the Plateau became a form of settler recreation. History became a consumable commodity for the consuming classes. For Indigenous people, however, fur trade histories came to be used as a tool for restitution in the decades following the second World War, acting as evidence of their occupation and use of Plateau lands and supplementing their ability to challenge the wrongs of the past.

The creation of the ICC in 1946 provided Indigenous people south of the 49<sup>th</sup> parallel in the Columbia River Plateau a venue in which to demand redress for injustices experienced from the treaty period of the 1850s forward. Because the former HBC, NWC, and PFC fur trade posts in the Plateau were located along the Columbia River and its tributaries, most of the ICC claims for Plateau peoples reflected the realities of hydroelectric development that had been ongoing in

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<sup>597</sup> The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Montana v. The United States. Docket No. 61, Indian Claims Commission, September 29, 1965; The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America. Docket No. 175, Indian Claims Commission, March 21, 1967; The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians, or Charles E. Williams and Joseph Redthunder, as representatives of the Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America, Docket No. 175-A, Indian Claims Commission, December 31, 1959; Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, et al. v. The United States of America, Docket No. 181-C, Indian Claims Commission, September 29, 1978; The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America, Docket No. 175-B, Indian Claims Commission, April 7, 1984; The Confederated Tribes of the Umatilla Indian Reservation v. The United States of America, Docket No. 264, Indian Claims Commission, September 28, 1964.

the region since 1890. Some, however, related to compensation for lands taken under treaty agreements. Regardless of the reason for the claim, all claims included historical background that was researched by historians and archaeologists on behalf of both the United States government and the tribes that filed claims to act as evidence of Indigenous use and occupation of the lands and resources in question. Historian and anthropologist Verne Ray, who had published articles on Plateau Indigenous peoples, and anthropologist Stuart Chalfant acted as expert witnesses for most Plateau ICC cases.<sup>598</sup> These documents reference the fur trade era in the Plateau, and in some instances provide information beyond the celebratory and partial histories analyzed in the first half of this chapter.

The earliest ICC decision related to the Plateau was filed on the last day of the year in 1959. The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians, members of which live on the Nez Perce Indian Reservation in Idaho and on the Colville Indian Reservation in Washington, filed a claim for “unfair and dishonorable dealings resulting from [the United States’] acts in acquiring the cession of...lands.”<sup>599</sup> In the post journals and reports examined in Chapter One, the Nez Perce were most often noted for trading horses with fur traders, but rarely mentioned as trading furs. This information is upheld by the ICC testimony, but ICC documents also indicate that Nez Perce were more involved in trading once they were isolated on reservations.<sup>600</sup> A claim decided in 1967, stated that the Nez Perce “did not trade extensively in furs as was the case of other

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<sup>598</sup> Some relevant examples are Verne F. Ray, “Pottery on the Middle Columbia,” *American Anthropologist*, vol. 34, no. 1 (Jan. – Mar., 1932), 127-133; Verne F. Ray, “Sanpoil Folk Tales,” *The Journal of American Folklore*, vol. 46, no. 180 (Apr. – Jun., 1933), 129-187; Verne F. Ray, George Peter Murdock, Beatrice Blyth, Omer C. Stewart, Jack Harris, E. Adamson Hoebel, and D.B. Shimkin, “Tribal Distribution in Eastern Oregon and Adjacent Regions,” *American Anthropologist*, vol. 40, no. 3 (Jul. – Sep., 1938), 384-415.

<sup>599</sup> The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians, or Charles E. Williams and Joseph Redthunder, as representatives of the Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America, Docket No. 175-A, Indian Claims Commission, December 31, 1959, 220.

<sup>600</sup> The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians, or Charles E. Williams and Joseph Redthunder, as representatives of the Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America, Docket No. 175-A, Indian Claims Commission, December 31, 1959, 221, 224, 240.

Indian tribes who were in closer contact with the whites, but that some fur traders passed through a portion of the area and recorded the location of certain Nez Perce villages along certain streams.”<sup>601</sup> Both the Nez Perce and the United States government relied on the writings of fur traders Alexander Ross, Peter Skene Ogden, and Joseph Meek to make their respective cases that Nez Perce territory was either greater or less than they were compensated for by the US government.<sup>602</sup> In the case of the Nez Perce, fur trade histories were utilized to forward their claims against the US government that they had been undercompensated for lands ceded through the Treaty of June 9, 1863.<sup>603</sup>

The ICC claim for the Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes was decided on September 29, 1965, a claim for which fur trade histories were also used as evidence of Indigenous activity prior to the treaty era. In the case of the Confederated Salish and Kootenai, fur trade histories demonstrated their involvement in economic and religious activities with non-Indigenous peoples, and in doing so described the resources available to Salish and Kootenai people prior to being moved to the reservation.<sup>604</sup> One Plateau group without ICC claims is the Spokane, in part because the Spokane tribal government was only two months old when the ICC claim deadline passed in 1951 and they were unable to arrange the evidence for a claim before the deadline.

Arguably the largest of the Plateau ICC claims was that of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, split into two claims that were decided in 1978 and 1992. The claims that were settled charged the United States with “unfair and dishonorable dealings resulting

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<sup>601</sup> The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America. Docket No. 175, Indian Claims Commission, March 21, 1967, 28.

<sup>602</sup> The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America. Docket No. 175, Indian Claims Commission, March 21, 1967, 36, 54, 68-9, 72.

<sup>603</sup> The Nez Perce Tribe of Indians v. The United States of America. Docket No. 175, Indian Claims Commission, March 21, 1967, 1.

<sup>604</sup> The Confederated Salish and Kootenai Tribes of the Flathead Reservation, Montana v. The United States. Docket No. 61, Indian Claims Commission, September 29, 1965, 6-8.



from...acts in acquiring the cession of...lands” and for the loss of fishing, mining, and cultural resources with the inundation of the lands below the Grand Coulee Dam.<sup>605</sup> As with the Nez Perce, the Colville employed the work of Ray and the writings of fur traders to demonstrate that they depended on the salmon that no longer migrated up the Columbia River past the enormous dam and to show their occupation and use of the areas submerged with the building of Grand Coulee. Though there was considerable internal turmoil throughout the claims process, the Colville ICC claims were settled in 1978 and 1992.<sup>606</sup> In her recent analysis of the Colville Confederated Tribes experiences with termination, Laurie Arnold described the internal community politics involved in negotiating both termination and the ICC claims processes.<sup>607</sup> Arnold argued that the “Colville Confederated Tribes had used sovereignty to attain its goals – land restoration and an empowered tribal organization – while still acting as an independent body, not as a puppet of the BIA,” a considerable feat in the midst of termination battles and the ongoing ICC process.<sup>608</sup> The Colville Confederated Tribes utilized fur trade histories and their sovereignty to fight for restitution and self-governance.

In addition to the ICC claims and the historical context included in them, agreements between Indigenous groups and various hydroelectric development entities have also shaped the dissemination of fur trade knowledge in this region. Some such agreements explicitly require companies to fund education initiatives around Indigenous history and culture. In other cases, Indigenous people include community histories in agreement documents, an unexpected but exciting place to find Indigenous voices telling fur trade histories.

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<sup>605</sup> Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, et al. v. The United States of America, Docket No. 181, 181-A, 181-B, and 181-C, Indian Claims Commission.

<sup>606</sup> Laurie Arnold, *Bartering with the Bones of Their Dead: The Colville Confederated Tribes and Termination*. Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2012.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid.*, 122.

<sup>608</sup> *Ibid.*, 124.

Following World War I, the population on the Columbia River Plateau continued to grow and with it the demand for power and irrigation. The United States Bureau of Reclamation and a consortium of power companies joined forces for the construction between 1933 and 1942 of the enormous Grand Coulee Dam on the Columbia River, the resulting reservoir, named Lake Roosevelt, submerged the sites of Fort Colville and Kettle Falls, as well as innumerable Indigenous burial and fishing sites. The creation of Lake Roosevelt displaced thousands of people living along the river, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike. Recreational facilities grew alongside these gargantuan power-generation projects.

One of the largest hydroelectric projects in the region is the Grand Coulee Dam, planning for which began in the 1930s. The dam is located on a bend in the Columbia River in Washington, downstream from the Spokane Indian Reservation and in part on the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville Reservation). Because the Colville and Spokane Reservations were Executive Order reservations, created by an American President, in this case Ulysses S. Grant in 1872 and Rutherford B. Hayes in 1881, respectively, the US federal government did not consult with the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation (Colville) or with the Spokane regarding the construction of the dam. Discussions about revenue sharing with Indigenous peoples began in the 1920s, but once the project became a federal undertaking, previous agreements were nullified.<sup>609</sup> In the ICC claim mentioned above for this event, the Colville relied in part upon fur trade histories to demonstrate their use and occupation of the areas impacted by the construction of the Grand Coulee Dam. In doing so, the commission found that they had demonstrated that the 1940 Acquisition of Indian Lands for Grand Coulee Dam Act, which took 21,000 acres of reservation land and displaced 2,000 Colville community

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<sup>609</sup> For further reading on Indigenous peoples and hydroelectric projects along the Columbia River, see Andrew H. Fisher, *Shadow Tribe: The Making of Columbia River Indian Identity* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2010).

members, was “unfair and dishonorable,” as was the destruction of the rich Kettle Falls fishery, which was heavily documented in fur trade reports and post journals. The Colville ICC case was brought forward in 1951, then divided into two cases that were settled for \$3,000,000 in 1978 for fisheries losses and in 1990 and 1992 for lands taken by the federal government. The latter settlement amounted to a \$53,000,000 (about \$5,000 per member) initial payment followed by \$15,000,000 per year thereafter, partial stake in the output of Grand Coulee power generation, and lower utility fees on the Colville Reservation. The use of fur trade histories in the case of the Colville led to some restitution for lands and resources taken from them.

The Spokane Tribe, much like the Colville, experienced land, resource, and cultural losses with the creation of dams in the Plateau. Across the Columbia River from the Colville Reservation, the Spokane Reservation experienced inundation from rising river banks that changed the landscape and sustenance activities of its inhabitants. The previously inhabited and more fertile riparian zones along the riverbank were submerged and the new banks are higher into the arid, rocky mountains. The Spokane also claimed that the inundation increased their reservation’s isolation, as the river was no longer navigable. Both of these claims are documented in fur trade records, as is evidence that the Spokane lived along the river, from which 100 – 250 Spokane people were displaced with the inundation. Unlike the Colville, the Spokane have not negotiated a settlement over losses incurred due to the Grand Coulee Dam Project, in part because of their inability to file an ICC claim, as mentioned above, and also because the various alternative legislative pathways they have pursued have been unfortunately timed. Almost annually, however, a member of the US House of Representatives or Senate sponsors a bill calling for restitution on behalf of the Spokane.<sup>610</sup>

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<sup>610</sup> United State Congress, *Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Equitable Compensation Act*. S. 1448. 113<sup>th</sup> Cong., 2<sup>nd</sup> sess. (August 1, 2013); United State Congress, *Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane*

Though the Spokane have not yet been successful in gaining restitution for the Grand Coulee Dam project, they have experienced success where other hydroelectric projects are concerned. The Spokane reservation is located at the confluence of the Spokane and Columbia Rivers and there are six dams on the Spokane River, two of which are within the reservation. Avista, a private power company, owns and operates most of the dams on the Spokane River and has negotiated agreements with the Spokane Tribe for three: the Nine Mile (built in 1908), Long Lake (built in 1915), and the Little Falls (built in 1910). These agreements resulted from prolonged legal action and provide for reburials of Spokane ancestors' graves uncovered at drawdown (when reservoir water levels are low due to usage), site monitoring for looting and desecration, outreach, and consultation with the Spokane Tribe on any proposed changes to the agreement.<sup>611</sup> The Tribe has also voiced concerns about heavy metal pollutants from the Coeur d'Alene basin affecting Spokane River fish stocks and Avista is involved in monitoring fish and reporting results to the Tribe as a result of agreements negotiated since the 1970s.

Because the Columbia River and its tributaries do not follow the international boundary that separates Canada and the United States, international agreements were created in the postwar period to allow for the construction of hydro-development projects. While all of these projects in some way affect the lands and resources of Indigenous peoples in the Columbia River Plateau, developers rarely consulted Indigenous peoples in the period prior to 1980. The Columbia River Treaty between the US and Canada dates to 1964, and led to the construction of four dams - Mica (BC), Libby (Montana), Duncan (BC), and Keenleyside (BC) - intended for

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*Reservation Grand Coulee Dam Equitable Compensation Settlement Act*. S. 1345. 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. *Congressional Record* 157, no. 102, daily ed. (July 11, 2011): S4485; United State Congress, *Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Grand Coulee Dam Equitable Compensation Settlement Act*. H.R. 109-150. 109<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess. (June 23, 2005). All earlier versions are available through the *Congressional Record*.

<sup>611</sup> The Spokane Tribe sued Avista, formerly Washington Water Power, for trespassing due to a questionable claim to Little Falls's location the Tribe then asserted sovereign tax power, and imposed tribal taxes on Avista for operations located within reservation boundaries.

power generation and flood control. The treaty is up for renegotiation in 2024 and both the BC and US governments have launched websites related to the decade-long review process that began in 2014.<sup>612</sup> Indigenous governments are more involved in the current negotiations than they were when the original treaty was negotiated between 1944-1964, and the documentation of Indigenous use and occupation of the lands affected by Columbia River Treaty dams has already begun, some of which rely upon fur trade histories to substantiate, or at times refute, Indigenous claims.<sup>613</sup>

Waterpower was not the only resource being exploited in the Columbia River Plateau between 1940 and 1980. As part of the Manhattan Project, the United States Army in 1942 established the Hanford Nuclear Reservation on 670 square miles of the Plateau for the production of plutonium.<sup>614</sup> By the time the nuclear plant stopped production in 1971, enormous wealth had been created from the sale of electricity generated by the plant, devastating environmental pollution to the Columbia River Plateau occurred, and many people became ill from contamination related to the plant's operation. Indigenous survivors of pollution-related illnesses provided oral histories about their harvesting practices, some of which reference fur-trade era Indigenous practices, to support their claims that centuries-long practices were compromised because of pollution that caused illness among some Plateau Indigenous peoples.

In 1999, Viola Frizzel, Pauline Flett, Marie Grant, and Leona Wak Wak met with Martha Holiday, who interviewed the women about their lives and growing up in the shadow of the Hanford Nuclear Reservation. All three women were asked to talk about their family's food

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<sup>612</sup> Matthew Weaver, "Federal government collecting info for Columbia River Treaty," *Capital Press*, October 24, 2014. Available online, <http://www.capitalpress.com/Water/20141024/federal-government-collecting-info-for-columbia-river-treaty>; Army Corps of Engineers/Bonneville Power Administration, Columbia River Treaty 2014/2024 Review," Available online, <http://www.crt2014-2024review.gov>.

<sup>613</sup> Columbia River Inter-tribal Fish Commission, "Columbia River Treaty," <http://www.critfc.org/tribal-treaty-fishing-rights/policy-support/columbia-river-treaty/>.

<sup>614</sup> White, *The Organic Machine*, 81-82.

resources and harvesting practices prior to the Cold War era, which led them to discuss practices that had been ongoing since the early nineteenth century and changed in the twentieth. Frizzel, born “on the Spokane Indian Reservation at Wellpinit in October 19, 1924,” emphasized the importance of natural medicines in childbirth and recalled her family’s reliance on Indigenous agricultural practices, such as digging camas and bitter roots, picking huckleberries, service berries, chokecherries, and foam berries, and wild asparagus.<sup>615</sup> Frizzel lamented the limited or lack of availability of all of these resources in the late twentieth century, due to contamination from Hanford and nearby uranium mines. “I can remember seeing Hanford and being, you know, afraid of it,” she recalled, “It was something that we were told was bad stuff....bad medicine would come out of it.” Specifically referencing food resources, Frizzel said,

Oh my god – were we frightened...I don’t know whether it’s affected the roots down towards Wilbur and all through that area or the fish in that area. I really don’t know what has...I would suspect it would...When we worked on Nespelem, gosh we had grouse all the time...I think that is gone too...the Midnight Mine is very much alive with bad stuff yet...it is very much alive with contamination.<sup>616</sup>

When asked about her family health history, Frizzel stated, “my mom died of cancer. We have a high rate of cancer here...And I do think it contaminated a lot of people...there’s a lot of people have died of cancer here.”<sup>617</sup> Reflecting optimism about the future, though, Frizzel said that the Spokane community is “protecting what we have now” and she implored the “young people” who might read her oral history to “keep your culture.” “Always protect your culture,” she said, “protect your land...fight for that land, don’t ever, ever give it up. Don’t ever give your identity up. Be proud to be a Native American...proud of your land.”<sup>618</sup> In her powerful oral testimony, Viola Frizzel demonstrated that Indigenous agricultural practices in her family had been carried

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<sup>615</sup> Oral History of Viola Frizzel, Hanford Health Information Archives, Foley Library, Gonzaga University, recorded November 4, 1999, 1, 3-4, 7-8.

<sup>616</sup> Ibid., 15.

<sup>617</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>618</sup> Ibid., 18.

out for centuries before resources were no longer available or safe due to pollution and resulting health problems in the family.

Pauline Flett's oral history is similar to Viola Frizzel's and also references Indigenous agricultural practices. She told Holliday, "I grew up the Indian way. I learned everything from my mother and her aunt...helping, you know in the harvest of their gardens because that's what we had to live on."<sup>619</sup> Born in 1926, Flett discussed the animal husbandry practices her father learned in boarding school where "he had too many sad experiences that he didn't want his kids to go through," so he did not allow them to leave home for schooling.<sup>620</sup> Instead, Flett and her siblings learned from their grandparents, who "were very industrious. They had fruit trees and raspberries and strawberries and gooseberries."<sup>621</sup> "Oh, we were happy," she said. "I thought we had a good life."<sup>622</sup> She went on, describing how those resources became increasingly scarce over the decades and, with regard to bitterroots, she said "there isn't a bitterroot around...whatever it was, you know, it disappeared. We have to go further up...to find our roots now, further away. But at that time we used to get it right there."<sup>623</sup> Regarding "[c]amas and msai?, and carrots and onions," she said, "[w]e don't find them anymore."<sup>624</sup> Flett reported that it was difficult to find the foods her family had relied on since before contact with non-Indigenous peoples, which led to "lifestyle changes," weight gain, and diabetes for many of her family members. Her mother, though, died of pancreatic cancer in 1993.<sup>625</sup> Since her family could remember, they "had been pretty much disease free and then all of this is happening around us,"

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<sup>619</sup> Oral History of Pauline P. Flett, Hanford Health Information Archives, Foley Library, Gonzaga University, recorded November 4, 1999, 1.

<sup>620</sup> Ibid., 2.

<sup>621</sup> Ibid., 3.

<sup>622</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>623</sup> Ibid., 4-5.

<sup>624</sup> Ibid., 5.

<sup>625</sup> Ibid., 6.

referring to contamination and radiation from the nuclear facility and from the uranium mines.<sup>626</sup> “I blame all of that on Hanford and that,” Flett stated.<sup>627</sup> In her final words of the interview, Flett implored younger generations of Indigenous people in the Plateau to begin “learning of the medicines and your foods and everything...you can get a better understanding of food and health and well-being...[a] sense of well-being...acceptance of yourself.”<sup>628</sup> For Flett, as with Frizzel, Indigenous health and knowledge that had been passed through families since the pre-contact era was also key to healthy Indigenous identity in the twenty-first century.

When Marie Grant and Leona Wak Wak spoke with Holliday in July, 1999, they discussed similar experiences and upbringings as those described by Frizzel and Flett. Both women were familiar with digging for roots such as camas and bitterroot on the Plateau, a practice often undertaken in the fur trade era and long before. Both Grant and Wak Wak also discussed the importance of travelling for work to Indigenous peoples after they were forced to move to the reservations and left with fewer resources than they had in their pre-contact territories. The mines in the region “made for a lot of employment that was needed at that time,” Grant remembered, “[a]nd the one uranium dump was at Ford and since then, one sister died of cancer and a lot of people...have since died of cancer, on the reservation.”<sup>629</sup> Wak Wak’s mother travelled, working in aluminum factories, apple orchards, and hop fields.<sup>630</sup> The family harvested camas and berries like those of the other interviewees and, in the last quarter of the twentieth century, began to develop health problems they attributed to the pollution from mines and the Hanford nuclear facility. “[T]wo years ago,” Wak Wak said, “I was diagnosed with Sjogren’s

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<sup>626</sup> Ibid., 8.

<sup>627</sup> Ibid., 9.

<sup>628</sup> Ibid.

<sup>629</sup> Oral History of Marie K. Grant, Hanford Health Information Archives, Foley Library, Gonzaga University, recorded July 30, 1999, 4.

<sup>630</sup> Oral History of Leona Wak Wak, Hanford Health Information Archives, Foley Library, Gonzaga University, recorded July 28, 1999, 1, 3.



syndrome with an overlay of Lupus...The women that had cancer in the family were both young when they died from cancer.”<sup>631</sup> Of the community’s health, Wak Wak observed that “we have an awful lot of people that have had cancer in our area...there’s an awful lot of women on the reservation that have Lupus. There’s a large number of people that have diabetes and there’s a lot of people that suffer from allergies and asthma related diseases.”<sup>632</sup> Marie Grant’s father died of “cancer of the thyroid” which she attributed to his time working for a magnesite mine that was adjacent to lands routinely treated with DDT, a chemical that “just killed everything.”<sup>633</sup> Both Grant and Wak Wak linked Indigenous people’s loss of lands to lifestyle and diet changes that affected their health in detrimental ways, whether through exposure to hazardous chemicals and radiation or by forcing a change in diet and activity levels. All of the Indigenous women interviewed for the Hanford Health Information Network project made direct links between Indigenous forms of agriculture practiced prior to contact, and including farming methods learned from fur traders and missionaries, and healthier, happier lives. Such centuries-long practices were hindered, changed, or abandoned because of pollution from Hanford Nuclear Facility, affiliated mines, or hydroelectric projects. The women interviewed thought illness in Plateau Indigenous communities accompanied these projects, harming and killing their loved ones.

Global attention turned to Spokane in 1974 when it hosted the World’s Fair. The choice of this location for the environmentally-themed World’s Fair was ironic, since Spokane was surrounded by examples of environmental catastrophe. The fair was located near the Hanford

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<sup>631</sup> Ibid., 6.

<sup>632</sup> Ibid.

<sup>633</sup> Oral History of Marie K. Grant, 7-8. DDT is the common abbreviation for dichloro-diphenyl-trichloroethane, a synthetic insecticide used against mosquitoes in the prevention of malaria and typhus until 1972, when the United States Environmental Protection Agency issued a cancellation order for the chemical because of health risks to humans and environmental effects found detrimental to animals. DDT is currently classified as a “probable human carcinogen.” United States Environmental Protection Agency website, “DDT – A Brief History and Status,” Accessed April 5, 2015. <http://www2.epa.gov/ingredients-used-pesticide-products/ddt-brief-history-and-status>.

Nuclear Reservation that had just ceased its toxic emissions into rivers, ponds, and fields of the area three years prior; the grounds were built for the World's Fair above Spokane Falls and the multiple dams that prevented the return of spawning salmon; and the river was, and still is, tainted with heavy metals from mines upstream in the Bunker Hill Mine and Smelting Complex Superfund Site.<sup>634</sup> Nonetheless, the festival that was the 1974 World's Fair took place in the largest city on the Columbia River Plateau, among the evidence of surrounding pollution, on lands from which the Spokane people were removed without their consent, and at the falls where the once-plentiful salmon were no longer able to return. At the same time Plateau Indigenous people fought these offenses through the Indian Claims Commission, attempted to negotiate stronger agreements with utilities in the region, and used fur trade histories to support their causes, non-Indigenous people consumed the same histories of the fur trade as entertainment, as demonstrated in Chapter Three.

North of Spokane, in the Okanagan valley of southeastern British Columbia, Okanagan elder Harry Robinson met with historian Wendy Wickwire in 1977 and for more than a decade afterward, sharing his stories with her. In the first book the two compiled, *Write It on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*, Robinson included his history of the fur trade as follows:

They tell the Indian to get fur.  
Put in trap and get fur.  
Then they buy that and trade 'em.  
They trade, you know.  
They cheating the Indian at that time.

See the gun?  
See this gun here?  
See?  
They put this gun,  
They stand 'em on the ground like that.

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<sup>634</sup> White, *The Organic Machine*, 81-87.

Well, the gun is higher.  
In those days the gun is long.

And he stand that gun.  
Then they pile the hides from the ground.  
Build 'em right up even with the gun.

“All right, you take the gun. I take the hides.”  
And the gun, it was only about \$30.  
And then the hide, it was about \$900.

See?  
They traded that way.  
That was wrong.<sup>635</sup>

For Robinson, much like the Spokane elders who spoke with William S. Lewis in 1916, the fur trade era was remembered as a time during which non-Indigenous traders took advantage of Indigenous peoples. Strikingly different from the Memorial to Premier Wilfrid Laurier in 1910, Robinson did not remember fur traders as neighbors who respected Indigenous frameworks of hospitality, but as greedy men who cheated Indigenous people out of the fruits of their difficult labours. Robinson's recounting of the fur trade era was told in the context of a resurgence of Indigenous claims to the land in the face of increasing development and resource extraction.

In 1988 the Okanagan Tribal Council organized their community in response to land claims questions and conflicts occurring in southeastern British Columbia, and created “an historical booklet which would outline, the pre-contact history, the history of colonization and contemporary history.”<sup>636</sup> The premise of the text is that much of the region's history, as taught in schools and shared through newspapers and books, are lies. Indeed, the core chapters are titled “British Columbia's Lie,” “Lies in the Okanagan,” “Some Lies Come Out,” and “Current Lies.”

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<sup>635</sup> Harry Robinson, *Write it on Your Heart: The Epic World of an Okanagan Storyteller*, ed. Wendy Wickwire (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 2004), Kindle edition.

<sup>636</sup> The Okanagan Rights Committee and The Okanagan Indian Education Resource Society, *We Get Our Living Like Milk From the Land*, eds. Jeannette C. Armstrong, Delphine Derickson, Lee Maracle, Greg Young-Ing (Penticton, BC: Theytus Books, 1993/94), ix.

*We Get Our Living Like Milk From the Land* was a community effort and includes dedications and acknowledgements for contributions made by many Okanagan community members “who have successfully overcome many difficulties in order that the Okanagan people may begin the process of telling their story.”<sup>637</sup> As a community effort, the book begins with a thorough exploration of Okanagan origin stories and an explanation of how and why they came to be connected to their territory. In a powerful closing to the section on their forms of community governance, the authors concluded:

If the poor landless people from Europe had not been so busy fencing off properties for their governments, they might have learned a great deal from the sylix. We might not be living in the middle of the savageness we see every day in the news and on the streets everywhere. Perhaps if landless poor people in Canada would look at the unjustness which the legal system really protects, the way we see it, we would not be in the mess we are today. Perhaps they would know that they too have **human** rights, to live in health on the land in peace.<sup>638</sup>

The history of the fur trade is addressed in the larger context of European colonization of North America and is not isolated to the Columbia River Plateau. In fact, the only mention of the fur trade in British Columbia is in reference to Vancouver Island becoming a colony in 1849 with James Douglas, a former HBC officer, as governor.<sup>639</sup> For the authors of *We Get Our Living Like Milk From the Land*, the focus of the text is on land and non-Indigenous claims to Indigenous territories. Perhaps for this reason, regional interactions with non-Indigenous people are narrated from the appointment of Douglas as governor and the arrival in 1859 of gold miners to the Rock Creek area.<sup>640</sup> What follows are explanations and interpretations of land agreements and surveys of Okanagan territory. Everything in the booklet is centered on the land. The final appendix entry is a long table noting the “Tribe or Band,” “Name,” location, and acres inhabited

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<sup>637</sup> Ibid., ix.

<sup>638</sup> Ibid., 16.

<sup>639</sup> Ibid., 38.

<sup>640</sup> Ibid., 44.

of all Okanagan peoples.<sup>641</sup> Though not part of the main text, the authors also included in the appendix the text of the U.N. Draft Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Memorial to Sir Wilfred Laurier, Premier of the Dominion of Canada.<sup>642</sup>

In the preface, Tommy Gregoire, the Spokesperson of Confederated Okanagan Shuswap Traditional Alliance, is quoted as follows (translated from Okanagan):

This is the Creator's Land. It is our lifeblood. We are here to defend the land. Our situation is now risky. Everyone needs to know what the history really is. I am encouraged when my people defend the land. We have a right to be Okanagan. The Creator gave us that right. We have looked after that right by looking after the land. We cannot stop. Be brave because the future needs us to be.<sup>643</sup>

In the late 1970s and throughout the 1980s, fur trade histories told by Indigenous Plateau peoples were rooted in land and territory. The fur trade was included in the larger narrative of colonialism and dispossession, departing from stories of cooperation like the Memorial to Wilfrid Laurier, but in keeping with histories like that told to William S. Lewis in 1916. As natural resource development in the form of mines and hydroelectric projects continued on an increasing scale, Indigenous people countered them with oral testimony about their tenure on the land in an attempt to have their voices heard over the din of development.

Continuing the familiar theme of resource and land use, as population on the Plateau grew in the late twentieth century, so did the need for electricity. In 1994 WWP, now Avista, formed the Little Falls Agreement with the Spokane Tribe of Indians. The Wellpinit School District interprets this agreement as one that “recognized the sovereignty of the Tribe and its responsibility to the welfare of the river within the Boundaries of the reservation”<sup>644</sup> In 2005 and again in 2011, the *Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Grand Coulee Dam*

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<sup>641</sup> Ibid., 117-23.

<sup>642</sup> Ibid., 99-116.

<sup>643</sup> Ibid., x.

<sup>644</sup> “A Spokane Indian Timeline,” Wellpinit School District, accessed January 22, 2013.  
<http://www.wellpinit.org/timeline>

*Equitable Compensation Settlement Act* was introduced to, and died in, Congress. This bill was intended “to provide for equitable compensation to the Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation for the use of tribal land for the production of hydropower by the Grand Coulee Dam.”<sup>645</sup> It is not yet clear if the bill will be reintroduced to Congress.

The Spokane and Columbia rivers no longer provide the primary food source for Plateau people or the primary transportation route as they were during the height of the Plateau fur trade, but these river systems continue to contribute to the region’s drinking water and crop irrigation. Additionally, water sports such as boating, swimming, and fishing continue to be recreational pastimes for many thousands of Plateau people and visitors to the area. In the year 2000, the United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) placed the Midnite Mine, a former uranium mine located on reservation lands and lands of Spokane tribal members that supplied the United States Atomic Energy Commission (AEC), the entity that managed the nearby Hanford nuclear facility, on its National Priorities List of superfund sites.<sup>646</sup> The runoff and seepage through ground water from this site enters the Spokane and Columbia rivers.<sup>647</sup> Negotiations over the cleanup of this site are ongoing. For projects like the Midnite Mine remediation and hydroelectric expansion projects in the region, historical context is often included in the environmental assessment reports required by federal, state, and provincial laws.

In preparation for the expansion of the Waneta dam in southeastern BC and across the Columbia River from the site of the former HBC Fort Shepherd, portions of environmental assessment documents were dedicated to the fur trade histories of the area. The project report reads as follows,

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<sup>645</sup> *Spokane Tribe of Indians of the Spokane Reservation Grand Coulee Dam Equitable Compensation Settlement Act*, S. 1345, 112<sup>th</sup> Cong., 1<sup>st</sup> sess., *Congressional Record* 157, no. 102 (July 11, 2011): S4485.

<sup>646</sup> EPA Region 10, Office of Environmental Cleanup, “Midnite Mine Superfund Site: Spokane Indian Reservation Washington, Record of Decision,” (Seattle: Environmental Protection Agency, 2006), 2-6 – 2-8.

<sup>647</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-36 - 2-37.

The Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use Report for the project states that Hudson Bay records indicate Kutenai Indians traded furs at Fort Colville and Fort Shepherd (Waneta area). Further, the Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use Report notes a 1989 Kutenai National Resource Book prepared by the Kutenai Language Task Force intended for use by the local Kootenay area schools identified hunting and fishing areas that extended to the 49th parallel near the Waneta border. The Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use Report describes other known Ktunaxa sites, which include pictographs located six miles below Burton that indicate a battle between Indians from the south, (Colville). It also mentions Ktunaxa place names that include Fort Shepherd – Akankunawu and Pend d’Oreille River – Kamanquku.<sup>648</sup>

For the Waneta Expansion project, Indigenous people supplied the provincial government and consultants employed by the electric company with their community histories, some of which included Plateau fur trade histories, to be included as stakeholders in a project being undertaken on their territory. Indigenous histories became part of the governmental and corporate documentation of territorial occupation and fur trade histories were included as evidence to support Indigenous claims to territory.

In addition to historical context, archaeological digs are often required for such projects and the Waneta Expansion Project was no exception. With regard to archaeological findings, the report stated,

In the archaeology background of the Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use Report it states “No pre-contact cultural deposits or features were encountered in either study within the proposed project area.” The second quote found in the conclusion of the Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use Report is from Bjorn Simonsen’s Archaeological Impact Assessment of the Project, 2004, (Background Report #8). “Our findings are also consistent with the results of most of the previous archaeological field studies within the lower Pend d’Oreille-Columbia River confluence area, whereby little or no archaeological evidence of Aboriginal occupation has been observed by archaeologists working in the area.” The second quote continues, “On the basis of these findings, it is our opinion that the proposed Waneta Hydroelectric Expansion Project will have no negative impact on archaeological resources. Following from this, it is our opinion that additional archaeological investigations are not warranted for this project and we

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<sup>648</sup> Environmental Assessment Office and Fisheries and Oceans Canada, “Waneta Hydroelectric Expansion Project Assessment Report,” October 17, 2007, 50. Available at [http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/FABAB7E3-docs/report\\_e.pdf](http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/FABAB7E3-docs/report_e.pdf).

recommend the Waneta Expansion hydroelectric development proceed, as proposed.<sup>649</sup>

Although the decision above appears to contradict the histories provided by Indigenous peoples and acknowledging the possibility of Indigenous use of the area, the conclusion of the Aboriginal Interests and Traditional Use Report ends with the following paragraph,

Finally, Ktunaxa have long had an interest in the West Kootenay and the Arrow Lakes area as evidenced by Oral History, Ktunaxa name places and family relations. Although the proposed Waneta Expansion Power Project Area does not contain archaeological evidence of historic Aboriginal use, Ktunaxa people frequenting the West Kootenay area via the waterways, to war, fish, hunt, or trade furs at Fort Colville and Fort Shepherd exists in historical correspondence. The site specific area of the Waneta Hydroelectric Expansion Project lies within the realms of the Ktunaxa traditional territory. There is no doubt in the teachings of the Ktunaxa Elders that their ancestors occupied the Arrow Lakes area, as they refer to the region, including the surrounding Waneta Expansion Powerplant Project area. Archaeology evidence is unknowingly disturbed by sight-seers, picnickers, and hikers who frequent ancient Aboriginal settlements in parks, along rivers and lakes for recreation purposes.<sup>650</sup>

In what is a jarring disconnect of logic in the space of several paragraphs, the BC government concluded, based on lack of archeological evidence, that the proposed dam expansion should proceed because it was not a significant Indigenous site, but also that it was located at the confluence of the Pend d'Oreille and Columbia rivers where oral history, Indigenous place names, family relations, and fur trade histories all confirmed Indigenous use and occupation. In the instance of the Waneta Hydroelectric Expansion Project, Indigenous people told histories, including fur trade histories, that supported their territorial claims but were overruled by a non-Indigenous archaeological experts and further resource development proceeded.

In the spring of 2010, Spokane elder Melvin Abrahamson engaged me in conversation about why and how the history of the fur trade in the Columbia River Plateau had been written and depicted the way it had, with him initially stating that he did not know anything about the fur

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<sup>649</sup> Ibid.

<sup>650</sup> Ibid., 50-51.



trade in the region. After a brief pause, though, he asked if the fur trade was undertaken at Fort Spokane before it was an army fort and a boarding school. At this point his granddaughter Eryn chimed in, stating that the fur trade took place at Spokane House and that she and her classmates had taken a school trip to the Spokane House Interpretive Center.<sup>651</sup> Fort Spokane was built in 1880 as a U.S. Army fort, converted to a residential school for Indigenous children in 1898, then a tuberculosis hospital for those same children, and it also acted as the office of the Indian Agent. Today it is the central office for the Lake Roosevelt National Recreation Area, administered by the National Park Service. But it has never been a fur trade post. That Abrahamson conflated the fur trade post, Spokane House, with the military fort and residential school, Fort Spokane, (located approximately 80 kilometres from each other) and that his granddaughter corrected him, demonstrate some of the ways in which memories of colonialism have shaped the history of the fur trade as it is learned and shared in Plateau Indigenous communities. Indigenous people learned the fur trade histories discussed in Chapters Two and Three alongside their family and community histories and in the context of colonialism, and it is no surprise that narratives can at times become conflated, intertwined, or learned as integrated versions of the past.

The Spokane Tribe's Preservation Manager and Historian stated that if anyone in the community had memories to share about the Columbia River Plateau fur trade, other community members of different generations might contest those memories. Such contestations exist in part because the most elderly generation of Spokane people today are the children of boarding school attendees. The residential school at Fort Spokane closed in 1914. Attendees of Fort Spokane boarding school were not allowed to speak languages other than English, were separated from their siblings, dressed in Euro-American clothes, and reprimanded for behaving in ways deemed "too Indian" by their overseers, all familiar characteristics of residential school education in the

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<sup>651</sup> Conversation with Melvin and Eryn Abrahamson, June 2010.

US and Canada. Once students returned to their communities and reservations, the fears and behaviors instilled in them while at school often continued. Boarding school attendees rarely spoke to their children about Indigenous community history prior to the reservation era, leaving many in an entire generation of Spokane Indigenous people without the collective memories of their pre-colonial past. The generation who were the children of residential school survivors took it upon themselves to reconstruct collective memories from what they knew or learned from other sources, some of which were outside their communities. The parents of the elder who conflated Fort Spokane and Spokane House attended the Fort Spokane Indian Boarding School. So did their parents.

As the residential school survivors aged and became grandparents and great-grand parents, some began to share memories of their childhoods and those of their parents with their grandchildren. Such is the case for the family mentioned above. At times, the memories of these three generations contradict each other. Other times, they complement each other. In both cases, people's memories of colonialism, in the form of military conquest, assimilationist policies, or even experiences of twenty-first century public schooling, shape their interpretation of history. Acts of colonialism become conflated and the fur trade, American military campaigns, and residential schooling become intertwined in community memory.

In the course of the conversation with the grandfather and granddaughter, the granddaughter corrected her grandfather's statement, demonstrating intergenerational contestation the Preservation Manager warned might exist, but she also discussed the ways in which she and her peers corrected their non-Indigenous teachers and the park rangers about the history and culture of their Indigenous communities. In part as a response to Indigenous people's suggestions, Riverside State Park has begun erecting signage in the Salish language with the

input of Spokane, Kalispel, and Salish-Kootenai people. The park has also begun updating the Eurocentric visitor centre's exhibits to reflect the Indigenous knowledge of the fur trade era that is slowly being shared with them. Through these forms of remembering and resisting colonial narratives, Indigenous people are changing the way the fur trade is remembered in the Columbia River Plateau.

Beginning in 2011, Kalispel tribal elders and the fur trade reenactment group Friends of Spokane House, or FOSH, began working together to offer weekend-long continuing education workshops in which public school teachers, who receive continuing education credits from Montana State University (MSU) for participating, setting up camp, and learning fur-trading skills. The intent behind these workshops was mutually-beneficial: the fur trade reenactors were able to practice their skills with a captive audience and the Kalispel who participated were able to practice ceremonies, skills, and language that were being strengthened through the reinvigoration of their tribal culture programs. Both groups were interested in influencing public school curricula by further educating teachers on the history of the fur trade and Indigenous peoples in the region. The Kalispel participants introduced teachers to their tribal history, demonstrated and encouraged making moccasins, beading, making fish traps, and creating a camas oven. The group then harvested camas root, baked it with black moss, and ate it together. The reenactment group taught the teachers about fur trade goods, sign language, making pemmican, and the role of free hunters in the trade. In 2012, sixty teachers participated in the workshop held in Thompson Falls, Montana. Initially sponsored jointly through the Kalispel tribe and the David Thompson Bicentennials committee, the workshops later became supported by the Montana Humanities Council.<sup>652</sup>

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<sup>652</sup> Interview with Mark Weadick, July 13, 2012.

The focus of the workshops was fur trade history, and the Kalispel supporters and participants emphasized through their choice of curriculum what they thought educators should know about the context of the fur trading past in the Plateau region. They included skills such as making moccasins and beading because these activities yielded tradable goods sought by fur traders, but also goods that had been Indigenous creations long predating traders' arrival. The Kalispel included making fish traps and the harvest and preparation of camas in their demonstrations because, as Chalk Courchene said, food was a paramount concern among Plateau fur traders and they relied heavily upon Indigenous peoples for their nourishment. Finally, the Kalispel included their community history in the fur trade curriculum to demonstrate the interconnectedness of the families created on the Plateau after the arrival of traders as a reminder that the Kalispel lived in the region long before the fur trade arrived and are there today. Through their support of and engagement with the MSU continuing education workshops, members of the Kalispel Indigenous community are shaping the fur trade history taught in public schools, while also reminding scholars of the fur trade of the interconnected nature of the search for furs, Indigenous knowledge of land and resources, Indigenous skills, and multi-generational family networks.

The partnership between the Kalispel and FOSH is a successful example of non-Indigenous and Indigenous fur trade reenactment in which all parties may have different goals and reasons for the event, but the event is productive for all involved. FOSH has invited Spokane and other Indigenous Plateau groups to participate in their encampments at Spokane House and elsewhere, with no success.<sup>653</sup> Such reluctance is, in part, because the perception is that they are being invited to “dress up” in order to “play themselves,” a phrase used by historian Laura Peers

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<sup>653</sup> Ibid.

in her research on Indigenous interpretation at historic sites.<sup>654</sup> Dressing in regalia to partake in fur trade reenactments may, for some Indigenous peoples, require spending “much of their time and energy countering...stereotypes,” unpaid and unpleasant labour with little tangible benefit.<sup>655</sup> The Kalispel, however, have taken ownership in the reenactments in which they participate, co-designing the workshops with FOSH to highlight and emphasize the knowledge they deem important, rather than acting as theatrical garnish for non-Indigenous historical interpretation. In the context of Kalispel participation in historical reenactment, Peers’s assertion that “such programs matter, and...can potentially challenge...disempowering assumptions” about the past holds true.<sup>656</sup>

Indigenous forms of remembering and educating others on the fur trade also takes place during the hat contest at the Wellpinit powwow. For Dave BrownEagle, the sponsor and powwow emcee, as well as a local teacher, this contest is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century n-łk’w’k’w-mín, or remembrance, of the many forms of Indigenous adaptation in the Columbia River Plateau since fur traders arrived from the NWC in 1810. When introducing the hat contest, BrownEagle provides the audience a history of colonization of the Plateau, beginning with the arrival of fur traders.<sup>657</sup> The site of Spokane House, the first fur trade post in this borderlands region of southeastern British Columbia and northeastern Washington, is twenty miles from the powwow grounds where this dance is held as part of the Spokane Tribal Labor Day Celebration. BrownEagle stated that “[f]orced assimilation was not realized...The traditions and values of the people continues to be learned and practiced” and the hat became his inspiration for sponsoring

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<sup>654</sup> Conversation with Lynn Pankonin and Gena Peone, July 12, 2012; Peers, *Playing Ourselves*.

<sup>655</sup> Peers, xvii.

<sup>656</sup> Ibid.

<sup>657</sup> Dave BrownEagle, Introduction to Hat Contest, 2011 Spokane Tribal Labor Day Celebration.

the contest because he sees the hat as a symbol of Indigenous adaptation to change over long periods of time and in the face of significant adversity.

The contest begins after BrownEagle's family, who act as judges, walk into the arena and BrownEagle cues the drum chosen to sing for the event. Participation is open to any dancer who wears a hat and the variation in headwear supports BrownEagle's vision of the hat as a marker of adaptation. Headwear varies from year to year, but some dancers participate every year. One elderly woman wears a beautifully-crafted woven basket-style hat, several participants wear eagle feather headdresses, and each year there is at least one or two dancers who choose to don beaver-skin top hats, beaded and adorned with feathers. Each of these hat styles reflects inspiration by and adaptation to historical events in Plateau Indigenous pasts. The fur trade, then, is remembered through the hat contest as one point of change along a long continuum of Indigenous resilience and adaptation in the Columbia River Plateau. In BrownEagle's words, "[p]owwow is one of many ways that we connect with our past, present and build toward the future. Powwow is just one way and has become our shared celebration of endurance and continued existence!"<sup>658</sup>

In 2013, Colville-Okanogan elder Andrew Joseph, Sr. published his memoir, hoping much like Dave BrownEagle that "the younger generation might learn and benefit from (his) experience."<sup>659</sup> The bulk of *The Country of Sen-om-tuse (sn?amtus)* is stories of Joseph's life and the knowledge he gained from his family and community members. Joseph experienced considerable loss, including the death of his mother and sister, being removed from his family and raised by a foster family, and being humiliated by teachers and social workers, but these

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<sup>658</sup> Dave BrownEagle. "Short History of What is known today as Powwow," in Spokane Tribal 100<sup>th</sup> Annual Labor Day Celebration program (Wellpinit: Spokane Tribe of Indians, 2014), 6.

<sup>659</sup> Andrew Joseph, Sr. *The Country of Sen-om-tuse (sn?amtus): Growing Up the Traditional Colville-Okanogan Way* (Penticton, BC and Oroville, WA: Theytus Books, 2013), 10.

losses are not the focus of his memoir. Instead, Joseph tells stories he learned from his community to cope with loss and to navigate his world. Andrew Joseph, Sr. recalls his mother telling him once a year about his ancestor and namesake, Yun-gee-yeah-tlh-boosman, whose father was killed in approximately 1816 “for trying to stop the fur trade with the Hudson’s Bay Company.”<sup>660</sup> There is no further explanation of the event and the memoir moves beyond it to describe the mobility of Joseph’s family through regions now known as British Columbia, Alberta, Montana, Oregon, and Washington in the context of seasonal harvesting and interactions with other Indigenous peoples.<sup>661</sup>

*The Country of Sen-om-tuse (sn?amtus)* is both a memoir of Andrew Joseph, Sr.’s life and a collection of lessons he chose to share with readers. He stated his hopes that younger generations would learn from his stories and experience and his brief comments on the history of the fur trade can be examined with his wishes in mind. For Joseph, the history of the fur trade is violence in the face of Indigenous opposition. Beyond the killing of his ancestor, Joseph saw no reason to include further mention of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade and this omission is significant. Andrew Joseph, Sr. grew up in the heart of the Plateau fur trade region, just miles from both Fort Colville and Fort Okanogan, but he deemed the fur trade unworthy of reflection beyond the violence his ancestor met. For Joseph, the importance of memory and history lies in its utility for younger generations. He focused on the stories and lessons from which twenty-first century youth could learn about their culture and heritage, and also how to overcome times of adversity. *The Country of Sen-om-tuse (sn?amtus)* is a tool of hope and of optimism.

Chalk Courchene, introduced at the outset of this chapter, provides a final example of twenty-first century Indigenous memory of the fur trade. Courchene invited his friend Sharon

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<sup>660</sup> Ibid., 63.

<sup>661</sup> Ibid., 63-7.

Seal to join us for the interview he generously provided me. Seal also lives in the Wenatchee area and the two met during the David Thompson Bicentennial canoe brigade in 2011. Seal attended the event as a history enthusiast interested in the reenactment taking place on the Columbia River, but after meeting Courchene on the banks of the river and engaging in a conversation about fur trade history and legacies, she left with a completely different understanding of her home and her identity. During the course of their conversation, Courchene asked Seal about her family history and, as it is his impressive skill, they traced her family back to the fur trade era and she soon discovered her Sanpoil Indigenous ancestry. This realization led Seal on an intense, as-of-yet unfinished exploration of her community and family histories, histories in which the fur trade plays a central role, but only for some of her family members. She has since spent countless hours in local archives and historical societies trying to learn more about her family, while also learning more about the Sanpoil people, who are now one of the Confederated Tribes of the Colville Reservation, located just an hour north on the Columbia from where Seal has spent her life. She has begun writing historical articles on local history and spends time with Courchene learning about the many ways in which her family's experiences are part of a larger regional past. Having encountered both Indigenous memory and commemoration through Courchene, Seal is now a part of disseminating fur trade history through the articles inspired by her research finds.

Columbia River Plateau Indigenous peoples have created diverse ways of remembering the North American fur trade and its legacies in their communities, maintaining commemorative community traditions and engaging in ways of remembering the fur trade through non-Indigenous commemorative projects. In the words of Chalk Courchene, "It's a layered story,



here...It all spins off into something else.”<sup>662</sup> Indigenous communities’ memories of the fur trade and its legacies demonstrate the layered nature of the North American fur trade story and its consequences for Indigenous participants and their descendants. While history has become a commodity for the consumption among non-Indigenous people, the Indigenous people of the Columbia River Plateau have put fur trade histories to use in attempts to assert sovereignty and secure redress for lands taken, cultural sites desecrated, and resources destroyed in the process of colonization and empire. Fur trade histories for Indigenous communities have become one of many layers of evidence of their occupation and use of Plateau lands in their efforts to challenge the offenses of the past.

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<sup>662</sup> Interview with Chalk Courchene and Sharon Seal, August 1, 2012.

## CONCLUSION: $nlk^w k^w min$

Of the many ways to talk about remembering in the Spokane dialect of the Salish language,  $nlk^w k^w min$  is unique in its multiple meanings. A person uses  $nlk^w k^w min$  without other signifiers to indicate that they “remembered things” in the past and also that they “remembered it accidentally.”<sup>663</sup> Accidental remembrances are those not actively sought, but rather stumbled upon, perhaps in the process of remembering something else. They can also be remembrances not before realized – memories held whose origins are unclear, knowledge of the past gained without realizing it, or understandings of the past that were passed down through generations of behaviour, interpersonal interactions, celebrations and commemoration events, and a sense of the space and people around oneself. The making of Columbia River Plateau fur trade histories is  $nlk^w k^w min$ : acts of remembering the past and an accidental remembering of the past. It is a history created by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, but with non-Indigenous histories as the dominant narrative in which settlers promoted the region for their own communities’ economic development. Indigenous ways of remembering the Plateau fur trade are powerful counter-knowledge to such dominant narratives, asserting Indigenous sovereignty in the Plateau and reminding themselves and their neighbours that other interpretations of the past exist. Cothran argued that “[h]istory is a part of settler colonialism, for history is not just written by the winners; history helps to create the winners by serving as a tool of colonial oppression” and in the Plateau, fur trade histories have been a way to create and maintain a past in an effort to create and maintain the colonial realities of the present.<sup>664</sup>

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<sup>663</sup> Pete, *Seliš Translation*, 349; Barry F. Carlson and Pauline Flett, eds., *Spokane Dictionary* (Missoula: University of Montana Occasional Papers in Linguistics, 1989), 248.

<sup>664</sup> Cothran, *Remembering the Modoc War*, 18.

Michel-Rolph Trouillot wrote, “[h]uman beings participate in history both as actors and as narrators” and, as was demonstrated in Chapter One, this is true for the Plateau region.<sup>665</sup> Men engaged in the trade wrote about their experiences while in the midst of conducting the business and ongoing daily activities of life in the fur trade. Many different depictions of fur trade lives surface in these writings, all of which reflect the social and cultural lenses through which their experiences were filtered, as well as the interests of their creators and perceived audiences. The fur trade was foremost an economic enterprise and the writings produced by traders were meant primarily as business documents. While the environment, labour, politics, religion, and interpersonal relationships were all documented during the fur trade era, the central focus of traders’ writings was economics and the profitability of the trade. Likewise, missionaries and government surveyors who represented the fur trade in writing or imagery while it was ongoing did so from specific perspectives, with particular audiences in mind, shaping the narratives they created. Sources in this period, from approximately 1810 until 1871, became the foundations on which Plateau fur trade historiography was built, and to which future commemorations would turn for evidence supporting their justifications for commemoration.

Following the establishment of the international border between Canada and the United States with the 1846 Oregon Treaty, British fur trade interests, primarily the Hudson’s Bay Company, began a slow withdrawal northward, relocating posts within British territory, and the fur trade began its decline. By the 1870s, the Plateau fur trade era had come to an end and non-Indigenous settlers expanded the farming, mining, and ranching that existed in the region. The urban development and empire-building projects discussed in Chapter Two were part of the context in which Plateau historians began constructing histories of the fur trade. In this period, between the 1870s and 1930s, in which the historical profession was professionalizing, Plateau

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<sup>665</sup> Trouillot, *Silencing the Past*, 179.

historians were almost entirely wealthy non-Indigenous businessmen who viewed their historical contributions as civic duty or recreation. These men drafted histories rooted in the writings of fur traders that reflected the world in which they lived – a world in which empires and fortunes were built on the bountiful natural resources of regions like the Plateau – and they interpreted the fur trade as the precursor to empire. Indigenous peoples were being removed to Indian reservations far from the gaze of non-Indigenous settlers in towns, cities, and farming communities of the Plateau and were written into history as relics of an earlier era. History in this period was created in historical monographs, journal articles for newly-organized historical societies, and in local, regional, and national newspapers. Writers within and beyond the Plateau cast its fur trade history as the precursor to American, and later Canadian, empire, a depiction that often benefitted their status and personal interests.

In the interwar period, non-Indigenous histories of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade served the goals of empire in more subtle ways than historical works created in the first decades of the twentieth century. Examinations of the Plateau fur trade in this era depicted fur traders with qualities men in power in the Plateau considered ideal for forebears at the time: brave, masculine, noble, loyal, and non-Indigenous. Plateau settler fur trade histories were represented through recreation, consumption, and education in efforts to describe, yet also define, the character of the region and its people. Middle-class people encountered the fur trade in newly erected road signs and freshly created parks as they set out in mass-produced automobiles in conspicuous displays of comfort and leisure. They created settler fur trade histories by appropriating traders' writings and illustrating fanciful imagery of traders' lives for greeting cards, advertisements, and social club publications that were disseminated throughout the Plateau and they even went so far as to invent fur trade forts so motorists had a destination or distraction

for their outings. Such leisurely pursuits of fur trade history continued into the twenty-first century, as non-Indigenous people reenact Plateau fur trade post journals in weekend-long encampments and lobby to build replica fur trade forts in state parks. In these ways, non-Indigenous Plateau people consumed settler fur trade histories in familiar ways that encouraged them to identify with Plateau traders and these ongoing practices continually reinforced the structures of colonial power, which disempower Indigenous peoples, locking them away in an ancient and unreachable past, disassociating them from the present.

While public engagement with Plateau settler fur trade histories occurred through recreation and consumption, it also took place through educational settings including schools, universities, scholarly publications such as textbooks and teaching materials, and educators writing articles in regional newspapers. Educational materials produced about the Plateau fur trade celebrated imperial and colonial pasts on the Plateau casting the fur trade as a crucial step in the creation of the Canadian and American nations. The corpus of non-Indigenous Plateau fur trade histories created between the 1930s and 2010 silenced Indigenous inhabitants of the region, relegating them to roles of minor historical actors in a great drama of empire and progress. By crafting history in this way, Plateau authors, boosters, and educators placed Indigenous people in the non-threatening past, depicting the region as primarily non-Indigenous and without meaningfully engaging with the messy and unpleasant past and present of colonialism.

Indigenous peoples were never silent tools for imperial and national constructs. At the same time non-Indigenous Plateau people were creating and consuming fur trade histories that reflected how they saw themselves and what they hoped for the region's future, Indigenous Plateau peoples created and maintained their own ways of remembering and commemorating the region's fur-trade-era past. Strikingly divergent from non-Indigenous depictions of fur trade

history, Indigenous peoples represent this era as one part of a longer and larger series of events in the past, present, and future. This concept of the interconnectedness of life, events, places, and people is similar to *Illahēe*, examined by Gray Whaley and discussed in the Introduction and Chapter Four, the Chinook word for the concept of “the land, soil, and home.”<sup>666</sup> Indigenous fur trade histories examined in Chapter Four are diverse and tell varied stories about the fur trade, sometimes conflicting one another, but always emphasizing that the past is much larger than one event and isn’t simply the past at all. Indigenous histories of the Plateau fur trade are also stories about respect, reciprocity, and relationships with the land and with each other. These stories, much like their non-Indigenous counterparts, also sought to demarcate and claim territory and problematize non-Indigenous progress narratives and accounts of the fur trade. Plateau Indigenous peoples put their histories of the fur trade to use in the process of challenging settlement and resource development in their traditional territories, engaging with American and Canadian federal, state, and provincial entities and inserting their histories into the narratives of colonial systems. They told, and continue to tell, fur trade histories to each other in family gatherings, celebrations, powwows, and interviews as interconnected elements of community pasts that are part of who and where they are today. Plateau Indigenous peoples have put fur trade histories to use to assert sovereignty, challenge dispossession, educate, and demonstrate their relationship to the lands, people, and resources of the region. As the field of fur trade history moves into the twenty-first century, the Columbia River Plateau provides one of many possibilities for new historiography that integrates Indigenous and non-Indigenous perspectives on concepts of time, land, relationships, and ways of experiencing and interpreting the past.

This dissertation contributes to five main fields of historical inquiry: fur trade history, the history of memory and commemoration, histories of Indigenous resistance to colonialism, and

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<sup>666</sup> Whaley, *Oregon and the Collapse of Illahēe*, 3.

the history of the historical profession, and in the process engages with expanding the historiography of borderlands. Plateau fur trade history, as Vibert argued, is largely written through the perspectives of European fur traders and reflects their biases and ways of understanding the world, and as such silences the histories of Indigenous peoples in the region. Indigenous fur trade histories have been documented since the mid-nineteenth century, but as I have demonstrated, are rarely mentioned in fur trade historiography or are used selectively to highlight the activities of non-Indigenous people. Spokane, Okanagan, and other Plateau Indigenous accounts of the fur trade provide marginalized perspectives of a borderland region inhabited by many Indigenous groups who encountered fur traders in the context of their lives and communities, long established in the region. Indigenous histories of the Plateau fur trade cast it as one part of a much larger web of events, times, people, and interactions, in contrast to non-Indigenous narratives of the fur trade as a harbinger of civilization in an undiscovered region.

The fields of memory and commemoration studies are furthered by this project's demonstration of the ways in which memory and commemoration are used to construct social realities and how those realities differ in time and place. The history of the fur trade is not as predominant in nationalist narratives of the United States as it is in narratives of Canadian history, but in the Plateau, these familiar tropes were challenged. On the American side of the border in the Plateau, settler fur trade histories were cast in acts of commemoration and public history as a precursor to the common Jeffersonian agrarian myth. Fur traders were represented as the great men who laid the bedrock of democracy for yeoman-farmers who followed them, a narrative that is generally popular in Canadian commemorations of the fur trade. In the case of the Canadian portion of the Plateau, however, settler fur trade histories were largely overshadowed by the Fraser River gold rush and was thus commemorated less often and with

less gusto than was the gold rush, demonstrating the ways in which forms of commemoration varied across the international border.

The trans-border analysis provided in this dissertation demonstrates that, in some instances, the creation of history can reflect governmental policy. For example, the recognition or obfuscation of métis people in Plateau fur trade historiography is reflective of political realities because métis people have not been legally recognized as such in the U.S., in contrast to being federally recognized as Indigenous people in Canada. The concept of blood quantum to define indigeneity in the U.S. may have influenced how historians chose to classify their subjects, but, as the case of Mary Ann King demonstrates, some historians categorized métis people as either Indigenous or non-Indigenous by their status in the settler community or perceived assimilation into settler society. History in the Plateau, like policy, is shaped in part by border creation and, in that sense, the international border is very real. For many Plateau Indigenous communities, however, the border is less meaningful than for non-Indigenous historians and seeing the artificiality of nation-state borders reflected in oral histories such as those given for the Waneta Dam Expansion project research demonstrates that Plateau peoples conceive of the U.S.-Canada border differently and that difference is reflected in their telling of fur trade histories.

In addition to forms of commemoration, this dissertation illuminates the ways in which Indigenous memories of the fur trade era were used for more than a century to resist colonialism in the Columbia River Plateau. Indigenous people employed community and individual memory of the fur trade in challenging American and Canadian dispossession of lands and resources by providing statements to lawyers, historians, anthropologists, the United States' Congress, the Indian Claims Commission, the British Columbia Environmental Assessment Office, Fisheries



and Oceans Canada, the Environmental Protection Agency, and others to demonstrate Indigenous longevity and sovereignty on the Plateau. In these contexts, history is also testimony. Future Plateau fur trade histories that incorporate history-as-testimony will better reflect the varied interests of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Plateau peoples.

The central premise of this project is that history is made, not simply recounted, and it demonstrates that the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was carefully crafted to serve the purposes of its creators. Important scholarship on the constructed nature of history, including that of Marc Bloch, Peter Novick, Julie Cruikshank, Elizabeth Furniss, Thomas King, Jean O'Brien, and Michel-Rolph Trouillot, informed and inspired the analysis provided here. This dissertation furthers the understanding of the craft of history by revealing the methods and motives behind the making of the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade. Non-Indigenous settlers, predominantly men, created regional heroes of fur traders and settlers as evidence of their ancestors' (or predecessors') bravery in establishing industry and empire on the Plateau. Indigenous peoples, however, portray the fur trade as an economic activity that was a logical extension of centuries-old land use patterns and occupation, and also the introduction of outsiders whose descendants would later take Indigenous lands and resources, forcing Indigenous peoples onto reservations.

This dissertation employs methodological innovations in the blending of documentary, archival, commemorative, oral, and archaeological sources. The analysis of archival materials and publications created by fur traders and historians was accompanied by deconstructing historical monographs by working from indexes and sources lists, recognizing and understanding the networks of Plateau historians and the fur traders in which they were interested, and revealing how and why fur trade commemorations and public history events were created.

Considerable time was spent among newspaper clippings and biographies of Plateau historians, fur traders, boosters, and public servants. Examining films, songs, comic books, advertisements, and greeting cards created with the Plateau fur trade as subject demonstrated the ways in which the arts influenced how people understood the Plateau fur trade past, as did road-side historical attractions, visitors' centers, local and regional historical societies and museums, used book stores, flea markets, and online memorabilia auction sites. Because history is not kept only in the printed word or image, human engagement was a critical element of this research. I met with and interviewed many people engaged in remembering the Plateau fur trade past and spent many hours hiking and strolling the Plateau landscape with interviewees. My methodology for human participants was bound by York University's ethics protocol and built through social networks created as I conducted research in Indigenous or non-Indigenous communities.

My sense of familial and community accountability has shaped my methodology in undertaking this research. While bound by York University's ethics protocol, I also set parameters for research that respected my personal ties to Plateau Indigenous communities. Interviewees were provided with questions prior to our meeting, and were offered the opportunity to review and edit interview transcripts after their completion, all to create "minimal risk" to participants and to maintain community engagement in the project. I also chose to follow methods suggested by Linda Tuhiwai Smith, including that research "has to be ethical and respectful, ... reflexive and critical" and it "also needs to be humble."<sup>667</sup> My personal sense of accountability to family and community influenced the network of Indigenous interviewees and interactions for this research. Community and kinship connections are important in Indigenous forms of collective memory on the Plateau and are a driving force behind the methodology and interpretive framework employed throughout. I hope my example will encourage others to

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<sup>667</sup> Smith, *Decolonizing Methodologies*, 139.

subjectively situate themselves in the histories they write, and ground their histories in contemporary communities of the descendants of those under study.

While this dissertation contributes to historiographies of the fur trade, Indigenous resistance to colonialism, memory and commemoration, and the historical profession, it also prompts scholarly conversations that have yet to take place. A greater understanding of the role of the international border in shaping Indigenous and non-Indigenous knowledge of the fur trade could be had by further exploring community understandings of how the international border acts as a historical agent, shaping the lives of Plateau peoples. There are exciting projects of cultural and language resurgence happening among Plateau Indigenous peoples and following the ways in which such projects engage with the history of the fur trade will further understandings of Indigenous knowledge of the past, as well as how that knowledge compares to that created by non-Indigenous communities. Similarly, and in concert with Indigenous cultural projects, some state, local, and provincial parks are demonstrating an increased willingness to work with their Indigenous neighbours to update park interpretive displays and staff training to incorporate more Indigenous knowledge of the past into the public experiences at commemorative sites and parks. As such projects progress, this dissertation acts as a point of departure from which parks can chart a path toward a more inclusive public history. Much like the newly bilingual park signage appearing throughout the Plateau, this dissertation hopes to provide guideposts for creating history in which multiple perspectives are woven together. Finally, this project reminds readers that history is a conscious undertaking, a subjective process through which imperfect individuals create narratives about their interpretations of the past. History is not objective, and as studies of the craft progress, this project provides examples of the ways in which colonialism is so deeply ingrained in our society.

This project sought to answer how and why the history of the Columbia River Plateau fur trade was created the way in which it was. There is no single history of the Plateau fur trade, but rather histories created by people with diverse interests that influenced how they interpreted and portrayed the fur trade. A dominant narrative exists that promotes the region for settlement and economic development, casting fur traders as idealized versions of non-Indigenous authors and commemorators, but there are other understandings of the past that challenge this narrative, suggesting the history of the fur trade is instead “remembered things,” and also “things that were remembered accidentally” through acts of commemoration, celebration, and by sharing stories and interpretations of the past with others. *Nik<sup>w</sup>k<sup>w</sup>min*.

So, take a listen to these, a few times and think about it, to these stories, and what I tell you now. Compare them. See if you can see something more about it. Kind of plain, but it's pretty hard to tell you for you to know right now. Takes time. And then you will see.<sup>668</sup>

~Harry Robinson, Okanagan elder

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<sup>668</sup> Harry Robinson, *Nature Power: In the Spirit of an Okanagan Storyteller*, ed. Wendy Wickwire (Vancouver/Toronto: Douglas & McIntyre and Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1992), 19.

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