Contact and Conflict on the Atlantic and Pacific Coasts of Canada

L. F. S. UPTON

The contact years on the Atlantic coast were spread out over centuries, on the Pacific coast over decades.[1] European fishermen were probably in touch with the Micmacs of Acadia as early as 1500; a handful of French colonists was established there by 1650; British settlers arrived in 1750, but the area was not extensively populated by outsiders until the 1780s. Before contact, the number of Micmacs has been estimated at anywhere from 16,000 upwards, but after 1600 the population hovered around the 3,000 mark and stayed remarkably constant until recent years.[2] The Micmacs, alone among Canadian Indians, fought for their lands, holding the British at bay for almost fifty years with the support of France, which had conceded Acadia to Britain in 1713 but refused to allow its new owners quiet enjoyment of the land. The collapse of French power in America ended Micmac resistance.[3] At about the same time that the Micmacs were adjusting to the reality of British control, the Indians of the west coast — upwards of 50,000 in number — were receiving their first visits from Europeans, more than 250 years after the Micmacs had first entertained such strangers. The newcomers came to trade, and they traded under a number of flags. However, the west coast of the nineteenth century did not become the scene of great power rivalry on the same scale as had the Atlantic coast in the eighteenth. International disputes were

[1] The standard work on the Micmacs is by the anthropologists W. D. and R. S. Wallis, *The Micmac Indians of Eastern Canada* (Minneapolis, 1955). Alfred G. Bailey, *The Conflict of European and Eastern Algonkian Culture 1504-1700* (2nd ed., Toronto, 1969) is an excellent account of the early contact period. The years that follow are examined in L. F. S. Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists: Indian-White Relations in the Maritime Provinces, 1713-1867* (Vancouver, 1979). The best histories of contact along the Pacific coast are Wilson Duff, *The Indian History of British Columbia* (Victoria, 1964) and Robin Fisher, *Contact & Conflict: Indian-European Relations in British Columbia, 1713-1867* (Vancouver, 1977), to whom I am indebted for the title of this article.

[2] For speculations about the size of pre-contact populations, see Virginia P. Miller, "Aboriginal Micmac Population: A Review of the Evidence," *Ethnohistory*, 23 (1976), pp. 117-27.

[3] Olive P. Dickason, *Louisburg and the Indians: A Study in Imperial Race Relations, 1713-1760* (Ottawa, 1976).

settled by compromise and it was in the interest of no party to enlist the Indians in a war on its behalf.[4] The west coast Indians thus avoided entrapment in European power politics. Some ninety years elapsed between the appearance of the first white navigators and the first push of white settlement — not as long a period of grace as the Micmacs enjoyed, but longer than was granted many Indian peoples.

The contrast between these two histories is vast, for they occur in different times and places, hundreds of years and thousands of miles apart. Time made a difference to the principal actors involved. The nineteenth-century European was not the same as his seventeenth-century predecessor. The Micmac of 1600 was patently different from, say, the Haida of 1800. The accommodations that whites and Indians made to each other were of necessity affected by these differences. The boreal forest of eastern Canada was not the same as the rain forest of the west coast, nor could it support the same standard of life. But through these disparate histories run several themes that do, nevertheless, bind the two together. The process of contact followed a course that was largely determined by the coastal nature of the land and its accessibility by sea. Consequently, the shape of that experience was markedly different from what it was elsewhere in Canada, where the whites approached the Indian residents either overland or by seasonal river navigation. The contact experiences on the east and west coasts of Canada have more in common with each other than they do with similar events in any of the interior regions.

The first and most obvious similarity was the coastal environment — the ocean, the inlets, the rivers, the evergreen forests — that played a critical part in determining the life of the Indians and would, one day, mould the life of the whites who supplanted them. Drucker's description of the resources available to the west coast Indian applies also to the Micmacs. "From the sea and river, fish . . . could be taken in abundance. Some of the fish appeared only seasonally, but were easy to preserve. The sea also provided a tremendous quantity of edible mollusks. . . . More spectacular was the marine game; hair seal, sea lion, sea otter, porpoise and even whale. On shore, land game too abounded. Vegetable foods were less plentiful, although many species of wild berries were abundant in their season."[5] However, the Micmacs did not develop as complex a material culture on this basis as did the west coast Indians, for the

[4] John S. Galbraith, *The Hudson's Bay Company as an Imperial Factor 1821-1869* (Toronto, 1957).

[5] Philip Drucker, *Indians of the Northwest Coast* (New York, 1963), p. 3.

western environment was milder and supported a more sedentary life. The Micmacs had no straight grained cedar ready for the splitting and had to content themselves with simple shelters of bark stripped from their trees. Nor did they develop a complex society with the stratification and ceremonial found on the west coast.[6] Their basic unit remained a band that was little more than an extended family, for they were forced to hunt game in late winter each year, and the hunt could best be pursued by small groups. But it was for only two months of each year — February and March — that the coasts and rivers failed them. When those lean weeks were over, they came together in increasing numbers and from April to October lived on the coast — usually at the mouth of a river at the head of a bay — at village sites to which they regularly returned. In the autumn they began to move inland along the rivers, taking fish and waterfowl as they dispersed themselves into smaller units to prepare for the winter hunt.[7] It was this hunt that prevented the development of Micmac society along west coast lines; that diffused authority among numerous band chiefs; that simplified their ceremonial and limited their material possessions to what was portable. But it would be wrong to depict the Micmacs as a people endlessly wandering the forests in search of food, for they had resources to be sedentary for at least half of each year. It would also be wrong to ignore the fact that the natural development of their social life was distorted by European intrusions a full 250 years before those same influences went to work on the west coast.

When Europeans came to these coastal people, they came from over the seas. Of course, all Europeans came to North America from over the seas, but not all the Indians who met them perceived this fact. The stereotype European on the coasts would be very different from the one encountered on the inland fringes of settlement. Europeans travelled in boats. The people in these boats were male, were still domiciled in their country of origin, were in America for a predictably short time, and were employees answerable to an authority they had to recognize since they would be returning home in a matter of weeks. Their boats were their homes in America and they had no need to establish settlements. They did not approach the new land in the possessive way pioneers adopted in the interior. They had the advantage of a demonstrably superior technology in their ships, which enabled them to travel distances that the

[6] Wallis, *Micmac Indians*, chaps. IV, XI.

[7] Bernard G. Hoffman, "The Historical Ethnography of the Micmac of the Sixteenth and Seventeenth Centuries" (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis, University of California at Berkeley, 1955), pp. 129-32.

Indians could not comprehend; but this advantage was offset by the fact that since they had come to the Indians (and not vice versa) they were regarded as suppliants from distressed as well as distant lands.[8]

Throughout the sixteenth century Europeans made landfall in North America for shelter, repairs and recuperation. There were probably several hundred landfalls a year in Acadia by mid-century.[9] Trade was an incidental, for the fishery was the important economic activity; trade goods were simply the surplus hardware of the fishing industry. Trade for fur and hides became organized in the seventeenth century, but its cycle remained geared to the fishing seasons. Europeans knew the location of the summer villages and knew where the Indians would be each year. Therefore there was no need to establish land posts in order to concentrate the Indians for the convenience of traders. The few whites who tried permanent posts had difficulty competing with the ship-borne traders who found their profit not only in furs but also in fish.[10] On the west coast, there were differences in detail. Europeans opened trade not as an offshoot of an established industry but as a thing in itself. They came with specialized trade goods in a few large, specialized ships, and anticipated a lucrative market for their furs in China. The difference was partly that of the passage of time: of 150 years' experience of trading with the Indians; of superior navigation; of global trade. The Hudson's Bay Company founded land-based posts, but these were developing a maritime pattern of trade until cut short by the great divide of 1846.[11] The basics were the same as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries: no desire for acquiring land, no incentive for settlement, no motive to displace Indian suppliers. The coming together of European and Indian interests along a narrow range of mutual interest was shown by the argot of Micmac, Basque and French spoken along the shores of Acadia by 1600, and in the Chinook mixture that had achieved the same status along the west coast by 1850.[12] Any European impulse to remove or annihilate or acculturate the Indians was stifled in these coastal areas.

[8] "For if France . . . is a little terrestrial paradise, art thou sensible to leave it? And why abandon wives, children, relations and friends? Why risk thy life and thy property?" Chrestien Le Clerq, *New Relation of Gaspesia*, edited by W. F. Ganong (Toronto, 1910), pp. 104-05.

[9] Bernard G. Hoffman, *Cabot to Cartier* (Toronto, 1961) *passim.*

[10] Nicolas Denys, *The Description and Natural History of the Coasts of North America (Acadia)*, edited by W. F. Ganong (Toronto, 1908), pp. 445-46.

[11] For example, Galbraith, *Imperial Factor*, pp. 135-37.

[12] Marc Lescarbot, *Nova Scotia: A description of Acadia*, edited by H. P. Biggar (London, 1928), p. 183; Melville Jacobs, ed., *Texts in Chinook Jargon* (Seattle, 1936).

The evergreen forests that provided the Indians with their material culture bespoke a soil too poor to attract European families; the fish that provided the staple of life could be harvested from boats offshore; the furs that justified the new trade could perfectly well be acquired by the Indians. The process of contact began to lengthen out into a routine of trade conducted by European men and an Indian society. This type of restricted white contact had some benefits for host people, who might profit from a new efficiency. A fowling piece loaded with shot would kill half a dozen ducks that before had had to be taken one at a time; a metal cooking pot made a band more mobile in the winter hunt; an iron hatchet made a warrior more lethal. But what was done with the extra leisure thus gained? In the case of the Micmacs, the routine of life was destroyed by the need to hunt for furs at all times of year to pay for trade goods.[13] On the west coast, the more efficient European tools led to an efflorescence of art and ceremonial, but the desire to buy the new goods brought on increased hostility with inland tribes.[14]

Occasional contacts with the whites promoted change even though no European was domiciled on Indian land; occasional contact also brought disease and a rapid loss of population. The decline was not only physical but spiritual as well, for the close alliance between the spirits and health in native belief alienated the Indians from their traditional spiritual supports.[15] There was a large but unknowable decline in the Micmac population in the sixteenth century; certainly by 1600 they were aware of being the survivors of a people vastly shrunken in numbers.[16] The proportionate loss on the west coast was probably not as large, but Duff, for example, gives a figure for the whole of British Columbia of 70,000 in 1835 and 28,000 fifty years later.[17] In both areas, however, the Indians had enough time to absorb these terrible losses before settlement was upon

[13] Denys, *Acadia*, p. 442; Calvin Martin, "The European Impact on the Culture of a Northeastern Algonquin Tribe: An Ecological Interpretation," *William and Mary Quarterly*, new ser., 31 (1975), pp. 3-26.

[14] Fisher, *Contact*, pp. 20-21.

[15] A thesis ably argued in Calvin Martin, *Keepers of the Game: Indian-Animal Relationships and the Fur Trade* (Berkeley, 1978). This book received the 1979 Beveridge Prize of the American Historical Association for the best work on the history of the United States, Canada or Latin America. Anthropologists have criticized it severely.

[16] In 1611, Chief Membertou remembered that he had seen Indians, "as thickly planted there as the hairs upon his head." Reuben G. Thwaites, ed., *The Jesuit Relations and Allied Documents* (Cleveland, 1886), I, p. 177.

[17] Duff, *Indian History*, p. 39.

them. If the settler had been paramount, and not the sea-borne trader, these losses would have gravely weakened the Indian societies.

The spread of new disease was the first result of the Europeans' visits to the east coast; then came trade goods; then the missionaries. The priests who came to Acadia presented a direct challenge to spiritual beliefs already undermined by disease, and the newcomers were listened to, since it was assumed that they might provide an explanation of the changes that were occurring. These missionaries had to live on the charity of the Indians for they had no white settlements to turn to; they could not restore their faith in the sanctuary of a colonial church, nor attend to the familiar spiritual needs of fellow-Europeans. Consequently the early missionaries had to understand and in large measure accept the Micmac way of life. There were no "praying villages" where the Indians could be grouped in facsimiles of European society in the name of an assimilation that would paradoxically save them from the vices of Europeans. The purely spiritual impact of the missionaries was further diluted when they acted as highly pragmatic war chiefs leading resistance to Britain in the eighteenth century.[18] There was, of necessity, compromise and a synthesis of ideas and ceremonial evolved into a form of Micmac Christianity that the people could identify with and cleave to as peculiarly their own without doing total violence to their traditional beliefs. This Christianity, being French in origin and militant in practice, continued to form a line of demarcation between Micmacs and English colonists long after the wars were over.

There was no missionary activity on the west coast in the first sixty years of contact. Again, this is partly a matter of timing. The missionary impulse had declined somewhat or diverted itself to other areas of the world. But where there were settlers in the nineteenth-century Canada there were also missionaries, no longer going before but with them. The absence of one meant the absence of the other, and this had not been the case in the seventeenth century. The delay in settlement imposed by the trader also delayed those who would destroy the Indian's spiritual world in hopes of his salvation. When settlers arrived on the coast, so did the missionary and so did the "praying village."[19] But at least there had been an intermission during which the Indians had learned to cope with one facet of European culture at a time.

[18] Micheline Dumont Johnson, *Apôtres ou Agitateurs: La France missionaire en Acadie* (Trois Rivières, 1970).

[19] Jean Usher, *William Duncan of Metlakatla* (Ottawa, 1974); Fisher, *Contact*, pp. 132-34.

The delay in the settlement of the two coasts was not entirely due to the prominence of the trader: it was also because the areas took a long time to fit into European imperial strategies. Acadia, as it developed in the seventeenth century, was overshadowed by Boston just as mid-nineteenth-century British Columbia lived in the shadow of San Francisco and Portland. The southern coasts were staked out first, for there lay natural harbours together with the fertile hinterlands that the more northerly coasts lacked. The English fishing industry, when it required land bases, found them in New England and provided that area with settlers.[20] The French put a few dozen colonists in Acadia and reserved their major effort for the inland area of the upper St. Lawrence safe from marauding navies on the Atlantic shore. Neither France nor Britain had any role for Acadia to play until France constructed the fortress town of Louisburg in the eighteenth century to cover the exposed flank of Canada. The British, eventually, countered with their military town of Halifax. On the west coast, the New Caledonia department of the Hudson's Bay Company was very much a holding operation against Russians and Americans; in terms of the strategy of trade, its function was to guard the southwestern flank of the Mackenzie Valley.[21] Neither coastal area was regarded as of much intrinsic value, but each found a role as protector of distant and far richer territories.

The changes that took place and led to white settlement were fortuitous as in neither case were they based on the inherent capacity of the land to support white families. The founding of Halifax was a military decision backed by £600,000 of public money poured into a neglected corner of the empire in the space of six years. Here indeed was a Nova Scotia "gold rush" of immense proportions, drawing in profit seekers of all descriptions. When the rush passed, it left an exhausted, weak and purposeless colony behind it, but it also left some settlers. The British Columbia gold rushes had the same effect on that colony, and left the same languor in their wake. Nova Scotia was snatched from obscurity by a second fortuitous event, the independence of the United States and the expulsion of 30,000 Americans to the last habitable coastal possession Britain held on the Atlantic.[22] British Columbia waited for a railway, and when that came had to wait all over again for the boom decade that began the twentieth century before settlers came in large numbers.[23] These sudden influxes of

[20] George Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia's Massachusetts* (Montreal, 1973), pp. xiii-xiv

[21] Galbraith, *Imperial Factor*, pp. 9-11.

[22] W. S. MacNutt, *The Atlantic Provinces, 1712-1857* (Toronto, 1965), pp. 89-95.

[23] M. A. Ormsby, *British Columbia: A History* (Toronto, 1958), pp. 343, 357-59.

population put the Indians in a new light and did so almost instantaneously. The Micmacs had long been enemies of the English, but their defeat had been a matter of priority. But once Halifax was founded, its military value depended on the British having a firm grip on its landward approaches and the Indians could not be permitted to endanger it any more than could the French. The British moved in families to back up their military forces. In British Columbia the gold rush was quickly followed by the whole paraphernalia of colonial rule, a matter previously of no priority at all: the issuing of land grants, the establishment and enforcement of British law, the creation of volunteer forces for *ad hoc* services against the Indians. Within a year the old inhabitants of the area had passed from being partners in trade to being obstacles to progress.[24]

The events that overwhelmed the Indians followed from the coastal nature of the two areas. When the blow fell, it fell swiftly. Halifax was to be the North Atlantic summer base of the Royal Navy and such it became. The movement of people and material in such quantity and with such rapidity could only have been accomplished by sea transport, and only the quest for naval supremacy could have justified the vast expense. The rapidity of events in British Columbia would also have been impossible without sea access. If gold had been found at Bow River in 1857, for example, the difficulty of getting there would have diffused the impact on the local Indians and left them with some measure of control over the situation. Against the mobility and carrying capacity of European shipping, the coastal Indians had no defence.

Throughout the contact period the coastal Indians were peculiarly vulnerable to sea power. For one thing, control of the sea determined which group of Europeans would ultimately displace them. Even in the late seventeenth century, English shipping dominated the coastal waters of Acadia and made possible the repeated attacks on Port Royal that finally gave the area to Britain. Naval power made it practical to supply land forces over great distances, whether at Halifax or New Westminster. Just as the Royal Navy was the guarantor that Nova Scotia would be British, so too was it the guarantor of a *British* Columbia. The navy was not only for use in great power conflicts; it also had a role to play in "pacifying" the natives. Landlocked Indians might meet white invaders on terms of near military equality, but those on the coast had to be prepared to face floating batteries of cannon and small but well trained landing parties of professional fighters. When the Micmacs attacked a

[24] The swiftness of the transition is emphasized in Fisher, *Contact*, pp. 104-06.

trading post on the Miramichi River, HMS *Viper* proceeded to the spot (under French colours), put out a long-boat (under American colours, for this was during the American Revolution), seized sixteen Indians and carried them off to its next port-of-call, Quebec City. Revolutionary efforts to organize a coalition of Micmacs and Malecites to fight the British disintegrated as another warship, HMS *Vulture*, made her leisurely progress up the Saint John River.[25] On the west coast there was a name for this sort of thing: "forest diplomacy." The Royal Navy collaborated with the Hudson's Bay Company and, later, the colonial governments, to keep the Indians in line. When three British deserters were murdered by members of the Newitty tribe near Fort Rupert in 1850, a corvette was sent to the scene to apprehend the murderers. A landing party drove the Indians out of their village and set it on fire. A second expedition returned the following year and again "stormed and burned" the camp. Royal Navy ships were sent on similar missions against the Indians until the 1880s.[26]

The coastal Indians were not without their own means of naval action. The sea-going canoes of the west coast are well known, and the Micmacs had sea-going capability at least from the beginning of the seventeenth century. The Micmac canoe was small and not a craft for the open sea; some may have crossed the narrow waters from Cape Breton to Newfoundland, but if they did, it was more by accident than design. However, the desire for sea travel was so strong that among the first European artifacts acquired were shallops (long-boats) and the Micmacs were adept at handling them in their own sea fishery. These boats, oar-propelled or under sail, would have the same range and carrying capacity as the largest Haida canoe and enabled the Micmacs to ply the coastal waters and short stretches of open sea. A Micmac settlement at St. George's Bay, Newfoundland, dates from the 1720s and is the only example of Indian overseas expansion: it was made possible by the shallop.[27]

Interior Indians defended their hunting grounds, coastal Indians their fishing sites and shoreline. When Micmacs seized a number of English

[25] Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, pp. 75-77.

[26] Barry M. Gough, *The Royal Navy and the Northwest Coast of North America* Vancouver, 1971), pp. 90-93; Gough, "Official Uses of Violence against Northwest Coast Indians in Colonial British Columbia," in James W. Scott, ed., *Pacific Northwest Themes: Historical Essays in Honor of Keith A. Murray* (Bellingham, Washington, 1978), pp. 43-69.

[27] The first Micmacs that Marc Lescarbot saw in 1606 were sailing a shallop with great skill, Lescarbot, *Nova Francia*, p. 84; Ralph T. Pastore, "Micmac Colonization of Newfoundland," (paper presented at the annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association, 1977); Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, pp. 1, 64, 157-58.

fishing boats at Cape Sable in 1715 and held the crews to ransom, they justified their action by stating that "ye Lands are theirs and they can make Warr & peace when they please."[28] The shallop was frequently used against the British, and a formidable enemy it was, especially if the victim were a two-man fishing dory. A shallop could be mounted with swivel guns and a crew of well-armed Indians formed a highly mobile strike force. The British fishing station at Canso fell to amphibious attack in 1720; in July 1722 Micmacs captured eighteen vessels in one coastal sweep and it required two naval sloops to defeat them. The British took countermeasures, hiring Wampanoags in whaleboats to terrorize the Micmacs. But the fisheries were never entirely safe: on at least one occasion a boat was seized off Newfoundland and sailed back to Cape Breton.[29] Micmac resistance through the seizure of boats and the killing or capturing of their crews can be paralleled by similar incidents on the west coast. The Indians of Clayoquot Sound captured an English ship, the *Kingfisher*, in 1864 and murdered its crew. Two warships (one aptly named the *Devastation*) were sent to take the murderers and, in a coastal sweep, killed thirteen Indians and destroyed nine villages and sixty-four canoes by shellfire.[30] The British did not waste cannonballs on the flimsy bark wigwams of the Micmacs, but the west coast longhouses were fixed installations worthy of their floating batteries.

As the period of trade passed, through the medium of sea power, to the period of settlement, it is noteworthy that neither coast was acquired from the Indians by treaty. The interior of British North America was eventually covered by treaties of land cession made in accordance with the royal proclamation of 1763, the coasts never. Inland, the process of consultation, gift-giving and promise-making was regularly performed and recorded with legal formality by government agents. With the slight exception of Governor Douglas' private treaties covering a small portion of Vancouver Island — treaties that formed no precedent for the public acquisition of Indian land — similar procedures never took place on the coasts.[31]

Is this more than just coincidence? The British claimed the land of Acadia by right of cession from France and made no enquiry into the

[28] Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, p. 40.

[29] W. A. B. Douglas, "The Royal Navy and the Canso Station" (typescript); Rawlyk, *Nova Scotia*, pp. 126-32; Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, pp. 40-45.

[30] Fisher, *Contact*, pp. 168-69.

[31] Peter A. Cumming and Neil H. Mickenberg, eds., *Native Rights in Canada* (2nd ed., Toronto, 1972), chaps. 12, 17.

nature of that title. That transfer took place fifty years before the proclamation, but Cape Breton and Prince Edward Island were newly acquired territories in 1763 and Indian rights there were simply ignored. The British government made no attempt to enlighten the ignorance of successive colonial administrations, and the Indians concerned were too few to be of any account. On the west coast, the poverty of the crown colony and the refusal of the imperial government to expend the British taxpayer's money led to the straightforward seizure of Indian land, a necessity that became a virtue overnight and has remained the law ever since. Such resistance as there was in the early days was put down by naval demonstrations and land forces. It could be argued that the military factors that made it the better part of wisdom to treat with the inland Indians did not apply on coastlines within the range of naval guns, where the British enjoyed as much mobility as the Indians and could bring their forces to bear at will. One warship was worth a dozen forlornly stockaded posts, isolated and incommunicado in the forest wilderness.

Land cession treaties in the interior were not simply tokens of a change in ownership; they were the bench marks of a revolution in the use of an area's resources. This change could be plotted, it could be made visible. Not so on the coasts: the forest and the sea would still dominate. When the whites did come to settle and live off the resources of the coastal lands, they found that they had to live within the same bounds as had the Indians. Elsewhere the deciduous trees could be levelled and the prairie grasses ploughed for farmsteads, but not on the coasts. True, the settler's axe rang out, but the farmer remained peripheral to the coastal societies which were as dependent on the forest and the fishery as ever the Indians had been. Europeans replaced Indians as the work force that exploited these resources. On the prairies, by contrast, settled farmers replaced mobile buffalo hunters as the new people brought a new economy with them. On the coasts, employment remained largely seasonal and therefore casual; periods of intense activity alternated with idleness in a cycle unknown to the pioneer farmer. The transition from Indian to settler economy was to an extent masked by an identity of resources.

The first effect of this identity was to increase tension. Both natives and whites prized the same areas because they prized the same resources. "Indian gardens" in Nova Scotia — cleared sites of traditional camps — were in the best locations for whites as well; the fishing spots best for one were best for the other; control of the rivers took an additional importance as whites floated logs on them or powered sawmills at the expense of the fish runs. Similarly on the west coast, the prime points of white

interest exactly corresponded to the Indians'. In the long run, the Indians of the coasts might have been expected to adapt to a white economy that had a basis familiar to them. While the Micmacs were too few to be important as a labour force, they were to be found in the forest industry of New Brunswick and were especially valued as log drivers on the rivers. They shot porpoises and sold the oil commercially; they fished for profit. They worked in wood and sold their wares to the settlers: barrels, axe handles, and, later, hockey sticks and pit props. Their woven baskets found a steady market, and not just among tourists. They were employed as railway construction workers and stevedores. But they were always marginal workers, and in an economy that was itself increasingly marginal there was little chance for steady employment.[32] On the west coast, Indian labour was the basis of the economy in the first generation of white settlement. The scope of employment was similar: in the forests, on the docks, in the fisheries. Traditional artifacts continued to be made, largely for collectors. New industries such as fish canning employed seasonal labour, more successfully on the west coast than the east. The Indian in a sawmill is a far remove from the artisan who built a longhouse; but possibly not as distant from his ancestor as the buffalo hunter with a hoe in his hand.[33]

How far did the coastal fact influence the course of Indian-white relations? The sea-borne approach of Europeans imposed different terms of contact than that of overland settlers, and different terms of power too. The prolonged gap between first contact and significant settlement was not unique to the coasts, for it was the common lot of the prairie Indians. But there the power factor was missing and the whites had no choice but to maintain a minimal presence for 200 years. On the coasts, the ability to proceed to rapid conquest and rapid settlement lay with the Europeans, if they chose to exercise it. Only with the building of the Canadian Pacific Railway did whites have an equivalent power on the prairies. This power — of mass movement and effective communication with established

[32] Philip K. Bock, *The Micmac Indians of Restigouche* (Ottawa, 1966), pp. 42-54; William C. Sayres, ed., *Sammy Louis: The Life History of a Young Micmac* (New Haven, 1966); Upton, *Micmacs and Colonists*, pp. 129-30, 173-74.

[33] Although the differences were great enough. As Rolf Knight puts it in his *Indians at Work, an Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia* (Vancouver, 1978), p. 16: "Only the most unregenerate romantic can . . . find no major difference between the occasional tree felling of aboriginal times and . . . commercial logging." See *passim* for Indian adaptations to a white economy; H. B. Hawthorn, C. S. Belshaw and S. N. Jamieson, *The Indians of British Columbia: A Study of Contemporary Social Adjustment* (Toronto, 1958); James Spradley and James Sewid, *Guests Never Leave Hungry: The Autobiography of James Sewid, a Kwakiutli Indian* (Montreal, 1972).

centres — was not exercised on the coast until many years had passed. The topography of the two coasts was of prime importance. Being unable to bend the environment to their will, whites directed their colonizing efforts to parts of the continent that were more amenable to their ways of family life. Only accident forced settlers on to the coastal lands, and then they had to live on the same terms as the Indians.

This article is being published in both *Acadiensis* and *BC Studies* to promote a comparative approach to regional studies in Canada, and we are grateful to the editor of *Acadiensis* for agreeing to share the article with us.