THE INDIAN WOMAN AND HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE IN MILL CREEK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

by

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B.A., University of Victoria, 1967

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT

OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF

MASTERS OF ARTS

in the Department

of

Anthropology

ACCEPTED

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DATE 9 May 1974

We accept this thesis as conforming
to the required standard

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UNIVERSITY OF VICTORIA

April 1974

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ABSTRACT

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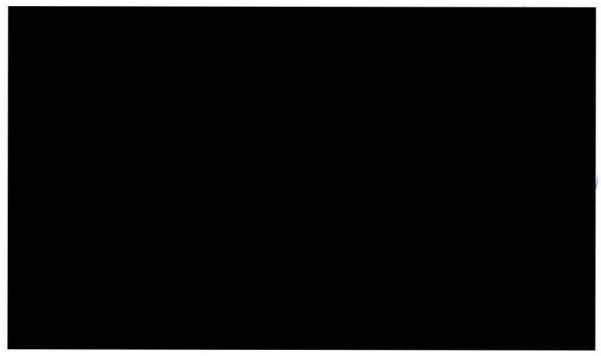
Within the past 30 years the Indians of Mill Creek, British Columbia, have experienced a change of economy from individual enterprise to that of wage labour as a part of the wider Canadian economy. The present division of labour tends to keep the women in the community, but forces the men to leave to find employment. The separation of the adult males from the females appears to weaken conjugal ties, leaving the mother-child bonds as the strongest and most enduring. It also produces conditions which have given rise to a unique household form: the matrifocal household. This form has been defined as one in which there is no regularly present male to fill the role of husband/father. The consistent adult member of the family is the mother.

This paper examines the conditions which resulted in a considerable number of matrifocal households in Mill Creek, and also offers some possible explanations as to why it is not the only, nor the most predominant household form in Mill Creek.



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INTRODUCTION

The Problem

Mill Creek is the fictional name of an actual community in northern British Columbia. It is similar to many small towns in northern British Columbia and the Yukon in its size, relative remoteness, economy, and the fact that Indians form a majority of the population.

This area has been the subject of several anthropological studies. As early as 1912 Teit (1917, 1956) was doing field work in the region. Honigmann has published several works concerning the Kaska Indians of Mill Creek. Of particular interest to this paper is his study of the contemporary culture of the Kaska, based on six months of field work done in 1945 (Honigmann 1949). Although not primarily concerned with their economy, he indicates that, "during nine or more months of the year, from the middle of August till late in May, the Kaska Indians are actively occupied in exploiting the resources of their sub-Arctic environment"(1949:61). Part of this exploitation was subsistence activity, but an important part was connected with fur trapping. Fur-bearing animals were trapped and the stretched pelts were taken to the trader "where the furs are sold, the seller is informed of the amount of his credit standing or receives an amount in cash. He is now ready to buy supplies " (Honigmann 1949:80-81).

At that time the Indians of the area were nominally, at least, independent producers and participants in a market economy. They traded their furs to the representatives of large companies but trapping itself was an individual and private enterprise. The Indians were not then involved in wage labour.

The period since Honigmann's study has been one of considerable change. The price of furs has declined markedly since 1945 and northern development has progressed with each year. For the white settlers development has meant increased income through wages or business opportunities and the acquisition of such amenities as running water, indoor plumbing, and electricity. The Indian settlement of Mill Creek seems to have received little economic benefit from the opening of the north, although it has not escaped the impact of development. At the household as well as the community level, the economy and society of Mill Creek have been increasingly integrated with the national economy and with the institutions of the wider, predominantly white society.

By 1968 fewer than 8 out of 28 households spent an appreciable amount of time trapping for furs and a very small portion of the food consumed was taken from the forest. Wage labour had become the principal source of income for the male population of Mill Creek, but since there was little employment to be found within the immediate community, the men were forced to leave their homes for long periods of time if they were to find employment.

Because of the division of labour which keeps the women in the home (see below: Women In The Household and Community), the women remain in Mill Creek with the children. A woman living alone with her children is eligible to receive assistance from the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development. For the area around Mill Creek, this assistance is computed on the same scale as that used by the Department of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement in British Columbia.[1] The woman may also receive a Child Allowance for each child under 16 years of age. With these forms of social assistance, plus possible housing assistance from

the band a woman may be quite independent, and does not require the financial support of a man. Thus conjugal bonds tend to be weakened by separation and social assistance and the ties between mother and child appear to be the major lasting bonds.[2]

The structure and composition of a household may be said to reflect the way in which its members adapt their style of living to immediate conditions. Where a patterned household form becomes evident in a community, it is possible as a result of similar adjustments to a similar set of circumstances. In 1968, 10 of the 28 households in Mill Creek were composed of women and their children, with no male consistently present to fill the role of husband-father. Although this household form is not the only form, nor the dominant form, the number of instances is large enough to warrant a closer examination and to allow at least a preliminary exploration of the circumstances that may have produced the distinctive pattern.

Fox holds that

> The irreducible and elementary social grouping is surely the mother and her children. Whatever else happens, this unit has to survive for the species to survive. It is not strictly necessary for any adult males to be in constant association with the mother-child unit. Providing it can manage to feed itself and defend itself and bring its young to maturity, then it can survive (1967:37-8).

There have been many terms applied to the mother-child unit. Stephens (1963) uses both "fatherless family" and "mother-child family." Bohannan (1963) uses "matricentric family" and Bernard (1966), "female-headed family," to cite just a few. For the purpose of this paper I shall use the term "matrifocal" which was defined by Solien (1959: Abstract)[3], as:

> a co-residential kinship group which includes no regularly present male in the role of husband-father. Rather the effective and enduring relationships within the group are those existing between consanguineal kin.

The matrifocal family is not to be confused with the consanguineal family. The latter form is a functioning unit comprised of a female, "consanguineally related males (especially brothers, mother's brothers, and sons) to whom she may turn for help in child rearing, housebuilding, and clearing of fields" (Solien 1969: 12-13), and also includes the often absent husband-father. The matrifocal unit as defined above include neither the consanguineal kin nor the husband-father.

In the case of Mill Creek we are clearly dealing with the latter form, but it may be noted that the existing system of social assistance has replaced the functions of the consanguineal kin.

Solien (1960:106) differentiated between the social units called families and those known as households.

> I propose that the family be defined as a group of people bound together by that complex set of relationships known as kinship ties, between at least two of whom there exists a conjugal relationship . . . . The household, on the other hand, implies common residence, economic co-operation, and socialization of children. Although the members of the household may be bound by kinship relationships, no particular tie is necessarily characteristic. In any given society a particular family may or may not form a household. Conversely, a household may or may not contain a family (1960:106).

Again, in the case of Mill Creek, it is the household--the matrifocal household--which is to be our point of reference. The search for circumstances that produce this distinctive household form has concerned many social scientists. Kunstadter (1963) reviews various hypotheses--demographic, historical, and functional--that have been proposed to explain the emergence of the matrifocal household.

The demographic hypothesis proposes that if an imbalance in the

ratio of men and women available for marriage occurs, it may lead to the emergence of matrifocal families unless the situation is contravened by institutions such as polygyny or delayed age of marriage for females. But, as Kunstadter (1963:58) points out, "although demographic conditions may generate the population conditions for the appearance of the matrifocal family, they do not in themselves offer a complete explanation of how the family is supported in the society."

The historical explanation, which appears to be widespread, was advanced by Frazier in 1939. The following brief survey is taken from Kunstadter's paper. Frazier attributes the high proportion of matrifocal families among North American Negroes to slavery and the separation of families by slaveholders. Kunstadter agrees that this explanation may be valid under the stated circumstances, but finds it "too specific to account for the world-wide distribution of this family form" (1963:59). Kunstadter's criteria for a satisfactory theory is one which has universal application and involves a minimum of variables.

In discussing the functional approach, Kunstadter uses examples from Smith, Greenfield, and Solien, who suggest that given a situation in which males are not able successfully to realize their family economic roles, the matrifocal family emerges.

> Solien, for example, in a study of the Black Caribs of Guatemala (which is actually the most widely comparative study so far), has stated the following requisites for the existence of the matrifocal family: 1) a society in which the traditional culture has been forcibly changed or dissolved through the intervention of forces from the Western world; 2) entrance into the Western economic system through migrant wage labor; and 3) possibly an imbalance of the sex ratio, resulting in a preponderance of females of childbearing age (Kunstadter 1963:60).

Kunstadter's own hypothesis is a refinement of the above. While he accepts that the society must be part of an economic system that is

larger than the local community, he points out that it is largely a matter of historical accident that the Western world has usually been the source of the more complex economies. Solien's second requisite, regarding migrant wage labor, implies a money economy.

> The importance of a money economy for the matrifocal family seems to be that money is associated with complex economies, and complex economies are necessary for the type of division of labor which separates most adult males from adult females within the local community (Kunstadter 1963:62).

In conclusion Kunstadter (1963:62-3) predicts that matrifocal households will appear in a community in direct proportion

> to the degree of physical separation of adult males and adult females involved in the division of labor. In order for this physical separation to take place, the group in question must be a part of a larger economic system, and that system, as a concomitant of its complexity, usually will use money as a medium of exchange . . . . We can add a negative requisite (i.e. a condition which must not exist) . . . . the matrifocal family will not develop when families migrate as wholes, or where there are patrilocal families which can take up the slack while males are away from the community.

Kunstadter's prediction is tautological and selffulfilling in that the definition he has used of a matrifocal household is one in which the males are often absent, and then he has predicted that matrifocal households will appear in a community in proportion to the degree that the adult males and adult females are separated. If the division of labour does not require that the men leave the village or if the families migrate as wholes, the household does not fit the definition of a matrifocal household. Kunstadter's prediction, then, is incapable of explaining the conditions that give rise to the matrifocal household. It is necessary to back up one step to look for the causes of separation. As Kunstadter points out, Solien's requisite of entrance into the western economic system through migrant wage labour is much too general, but Kunstadter is likewise too vague in looking at separation through the

division of labour.

This paper is a study of a community in which a considerable number of the households fit the above definition of a matrifocal household. It proposes to look at the kinds of economic activities in which the Mill Creek householders participate to determine whether or not the division of labour forces the adult males to separate from the adult females. If so, it would then be possible to predict that participation in specific economic activities would lead to a significant number of matrifocal households in the community. As this study is confined to Mill Creek, generalizations logically must be restricted to that universe. Expansion of the study to include other communities could well require looking at other variables which would raise the level of predictability. Some of these possible variables are discussed in the conclusions.

Kunstadter feels that Solien's third variable "should probably not be thought of so much as a cause of the matrifocal family, but as an additional effect of the division of labour involving separation of the sexes" (Kunstadter 1963:62).

Strictly speaking, there is not an imbalance in the sex ration. That is, the nature of a man's work may demand that he leave his residential unit for varying periods of time, while the nature of a woman's work allows her to remain in the community. The apparent imbalance in the sex ratio may be a product of focusing on a single constituent residential unit rather than on the community as a whole.

While it is doubtlessly true that the number of females resident in the community under discussion may outnumber the males at any one given time, the community regards those males who are temporarily absent

as part of its population, and those absent regard themselves as members of the community. Their absence being only temporary, they still form part of the marriage pool. If indeed there is an imbalance in the sex ratio of the marriage pool among the Indians of Mill Creek, it is in favour of the males as a considerable number of Indian women marry white men while it is most uncommon for Indian men to marry white women.

To summarize, in the past 30 years the Indians of Mill Creek have experienced a change of economy from individual enterprise to that of wage labour as a response to demands of the wider economy. The present division of labour tends to keep the women in the community but forces the men to leave to find employment. The separation of the adult males from the adult females appears to weaken conjugal ties, leaving the mother-child bonds as the strongest and most enduring. It also produces a condition which may give rise to a distinctive residential unit: the matrifocal household.

Using the studies of Kunstadter and Solien as guides, this paper examines conditions that appear to have given to a considerable number of matrifocal households in Mill Creek. It further looks at the division of labour in an attempt to see if specific economic activities lead to the emergence of the matrifocal household, and to offer some explanations as to why it is not the only, nor even the dominant household form.

Conditions and Methods of Research

Mill Creek was selected for study because it was close to my own home. I had some knowledge of the village and knew members of at least six households. Field research began in May 1968, when I rented a

teacherage located in the "Indian part" of the community. As an independent household I had more freedom than I would have had if I had lived with one of the Indian families. The importance of this freedom, to entertain whomever I wished, became clearer to me as I became aware of the feelings of the Kaska and the Tahltan had for each other.

In mid-August I left Mill Creek with seven Tahltan, to hunt moose. We crossed the Liard River, hiked through the bush, and camped for several days along the Dease River, returning to Mill Creek within the week.

On August 29th, 1968, I left Mill Creek, and returned in July of 1969, to spend a further ten days in the village collecting additional information, and visiting old friends.

My procedure in the field was that of traditional ethnographic research, involving establishing as close contact as possible with both the Kaska and Tahltan, observing their daily activities and whenever possible, joining them. Observations were recorded in a daily journal. As I was living alone, my contacts were limited to those hours of the day and night when I could visit my neighbours, or when they could visit me. Mornings were the only bad times to visit, as most people slept late. Parties, visiting, and even some work (such as cutting up game) continued on into the late night, so there were few hours during the rest of the day when it was not possible to visit someone.

In planning my research, it seemed advisable to collect data in such a way that I could be certain of receiving information from an unbiased sample of the population. Shortly after moving to the village, I drew a map of the settlement and all the buildings standing (see Figure 1). With the help of the Public School teachers and a teenaged Indian girl, I was able to learn who lived in each dwelling. I then made a list of all the women's names, and chose a sample (at least

part of which was selected randomly) for more intensive study. To choose a sample, I assigned each woman a number, and with the aid of a table of random numbers selected 25 percent for more intensive interviewing. However, as Mill Creek is a small community, it was not difficult to get to know everyone to some degree. The need for a sample became less important as my range of contacts widened, and eventually the use of the sample was discontinued. My observations and remarks were drawn from about 70 percent of the total population of Indian women in Mill Creek. All except two of the women originally included in the sample, were also included in that 70 percent.

In order to preserve confidences, all names have been changed.

THE SETTING

The settlement of Mill Creek is located in northern British Columbia, on the Alaska Highway, close to the Yukon Border. It is built on the northern bank of the Liard River, near the confluence of the Dease and Liard rivers. The general landscape is one of rolling, forested hills lying between the Rocky and Cassiar Mountain ranges.

History

The position of Mill Creek is at the junction of two large rivers, almost in the centre of what was, aboriginally, Kaska territory. Perhaps for this reason, it became a meeting place and trading site for the various nomadic bands of Kaska and travelling white traders. The Liard was first explored by J.M. McLeod in 1834, and later by Robert Campbell in 1937--both in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company.

> The area on either side of the Liard is sparsely settled, game was consequently prolific and to this day the Liard River area produces some of the finest fur on the continent. When the route to the Liard from the Pacific Ocean was discovered, the long dangerous trip along this violent river was abandoned and trading posts received their supplies from the Pacific.
>
> About this time the advantages of a store at Mill Creek were seen, and in 1837, an American named Robert Sylvester, was commissioned to build a large log structure suitable for a trading post and living quarters for two men (Meek 1962:119).

In 1926, the provincial police established a post at Point McNab on the Liard, one mile downriver from the present village. About ten years later, the Taku Trading Company store was built close to a slough approximately one third mile north-northeast of what is now Mill Creek. These trading posts attracted the local bands of Kaska Indians who began to make Mill Creek a seasonal camp.

At about that time, fear generated by serious epidemics of diphtheria in the villages of McDames, Dease Lake, and Francis Lake, drove the Kaska from those settlements. They congregated in a camp some thirty-three miles downriver from present-day Mill Creek, and from there, eventually moved to Mill Creek.

Mill Creek became something more than a trading post in 1942, when american army personnel and Canadian civilians began construction of the Alaska Highway. A large camp was built in Mill Creek to house men and equipment. The men liberally traded food, clothing, cigarettes, and liquor for the company of the local Indian women. Gradually more and more Indian families were attracted to settle in the area. By 1944 most of the construction workers and soldiers had left, and the barracks were converted into a hotel. That building now constitutes the hub of the village. The Mill Creek Indian Residential School (locally known as "the Mission") was built in 1950 and opened in 1951.

The Indians refer to the years between 1942 and 1960 as the "good years." Trapping was a steady and profitable occupation and according to the older Indians everyone worked in those days. The number of people who called Mill Creek home was much larger then, they say, and the town today has been described as a ghost town in comparison. The number of deserted and decaying cabins in the village would seem to indicate that the settlement once did have many more inhabitants. As was their custom, the Indians treated Mill Creek as a seasonal camp, while the remainder of the year was spent in the bush.

By 1960 the price of fur had dropped, and in that year the Hudson's Bay Company closed its post. Closing of the store meant that the Indians

had no convenient outlet for their furs. Many of the trap lines were abandoned, and it appears that a period of economic decline began.

Yet another event which was to have a great influence on the inhabitants of Mill Creek was taking place at this time. Until 1959, there were no liquor outlets within easy access of the village. The government stores of Fort Nelson and Whitehorse were the closest sources, and prior to 1959 it was not legal for Indians to buy or to be given alcoholic beverages. This is not to say that the Indians did not obtain any liquor. According to one informant the Indians could obtain alcohol from bootleggers in the area, or else manufacture it themselves. The process became simpler in 1959, when it became legal for Indians to buy liquor. In that year a beer parlour was opened in the Mill Creek Hotel. The effect of this establishment has been a profound change in the lives of the Indians. In the absence of a community hall or meeting house, the bar quickly becomes a place where adults could gather in the evenings. As many of the trap lines were abandoned when the Hudson's Bay store closed, the Indians had more time but less money on their hands. Their time, and what little money they had, were spent in the bar.

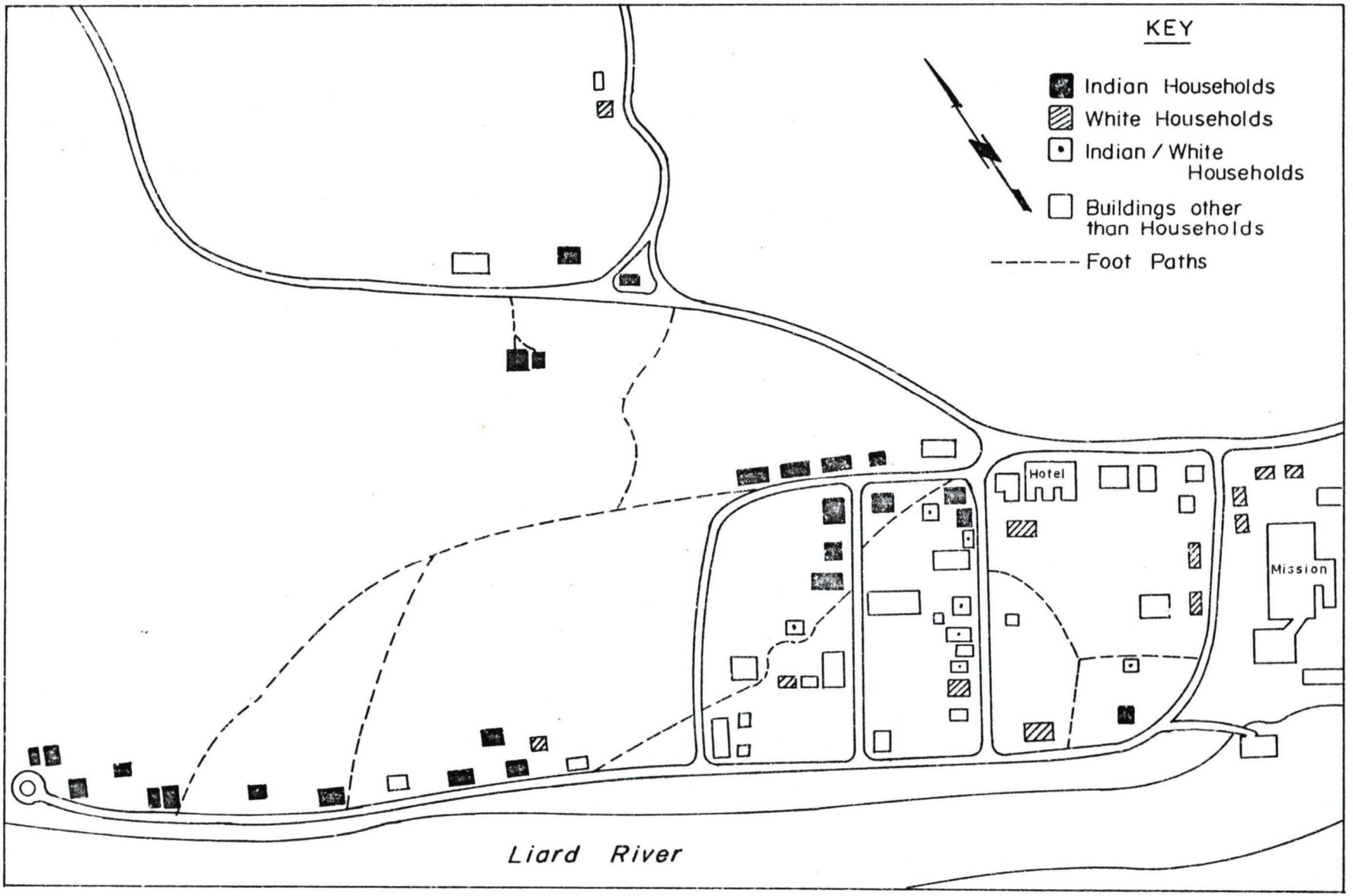
KEY
Indian Households
White Households
Indian / White Households
Buildings other than Households
Foot Paths
Hotel
Mission
Liard River

Figure 1.

The Village Today

The settlement of Mill Creek is scattered for a mile or more along the north bank of the Liard river. There is a cemetery on the south bank, but there is no bridge, so it is accessible in the summer only by boat or raft. In the winter it is possible to cross the river on the ice.

The community consists of Indian dwellings, white dwellings, the public school, the residential school, the Catholic Mission Church, the British Columbia Forest Service buildings, the hotel-store and garage complex, and many abandoned or unused buildings. The unused buildings include a cabin belonging to the British Columbia Fish and Game Department, the former Hudson's Bay store and warehouse, the Taku Trading Company buildings, an old hotel, and many mouldering log cabins.

Of the dwellings in the village, seven have been built with grants from the Band funds. In theory, the Band Council allots a housing grant of $8500 to band members they feel to be in need. If the individual is not able to contribute further funds of his own, a house is built (under the supervision of the Indian Agent) for the above amount. The building is done by contractors, and seldom involves the Indians themselves. Unless the individual makes a special request, the houses are built on one of a few standard designs. One design has three bedrooms and a kitchen-living room (Figure 2), and the second design has only one bedroom (Figure 3). The buildings are peeled-log structures, having wooden strips along the chinks on the inside for added warmth. The roofs are covered with aluminum, and the floors with linoleum tiling. All of these buildings are wired for electrical outlets and lights, but none of them has running water or indoor plumbing, nor is closet space provided.

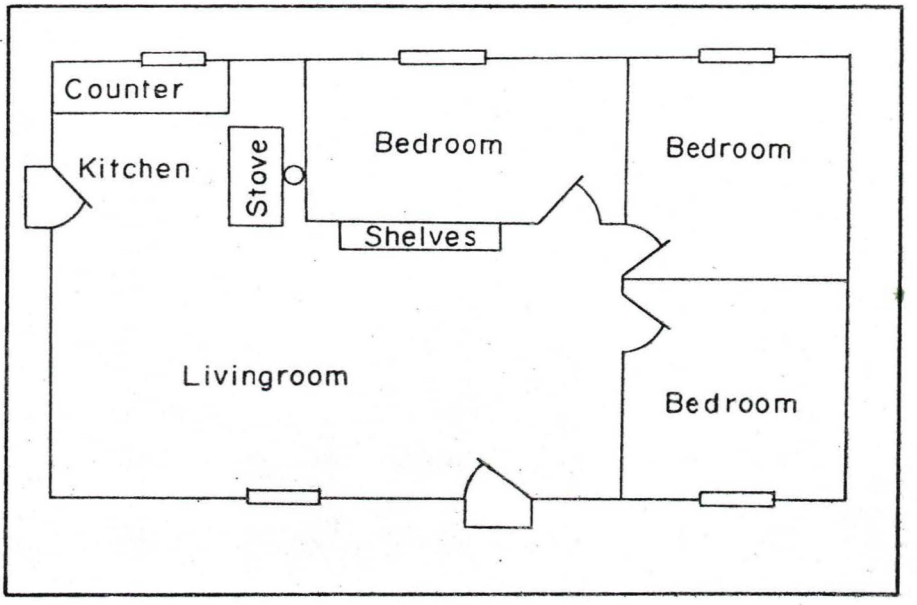

Figure 2.

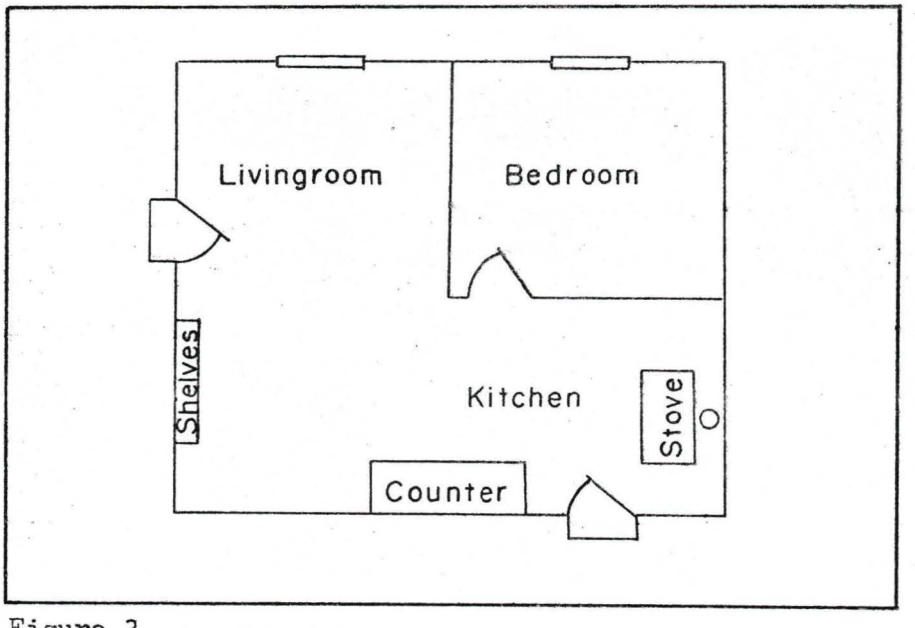

Figure 3.

The other Indian dwellings are not of a standard style, and they vary widely in size, age, and general state of repair. These cabins are often crowded, with large families, and sometimes extended families sharing a single house. Many have broken windows, leaking roofs, and ill-fitting doors. None of the Indian dwellings has running water or indoor plumbing. A pumphouse is located halfway along one row of houses, but those families living far from the pump carry their water from the river. Outhouses are often shared by several families, and at least one family of seven had none at all. During the school term, and even after school hours the children attending the Public School make extensive use of the school washroom facilities since the school has running water. The older girls wash their hair and sometimes even bathe in the school washroom.

Dwellings are sparsely furnished, with many items such as bunkbeds and tables with benches being home-made. The cook stove may double as a heater, although most homes have a barrel heater as well. Many homes have an army cot that serves as a sofa by day and a bed at night. Chairs are limited in number, but the wide variety in styles shows considerable imagination; one home has several restaurant stools placed around the table. The one essential piece of equipment seems to be the radio, which is played almost constantly. The more affluent households may also have a record player.

Decoration inside the cabins is usually limited to calendars from local businesses, and religious pictures. One family has a large number of houseplants, planted in brightly coloured bleach containers and set on plastic doilies.

In summary, the history of the area indicates a long period of relative isolation from the outside world. At that time the Indians

were fairly nomadic in their subsistence endeavors, and contact with the outside world was limited. However, in the short span of the past 30 years, the area has been opened for development, bringing increasing numbers of outsiders into contact with the Indians. With the drop in the price of furs, the Indians could no longer remain economically independent, and many households began to depend on assistance for maintenance and shelter. Houses in the village fall into two categories, those built by the Indians themselves, and those built by contractors with Band funds. Neither category includes the modern luxuries of indoor plumbing and running water, even though it is available to other parts of the community.

Demographic Profile

The Indian community of Mill Creek, as of 1968, consists of 187 residents, plus 140 children who live in the Residential School for ten months of the year. Only a handful of these children have families in Mill Creek, the others come from outlying villages in which there is no school.

The total population of Mill Creek is 260: 116 adults, 39 between 13 and 21 years, and 105 children. Of the total population, 130 (50 percent) are Kaska: 57 (22 percent) are Tahltan: 3 (1 percent) are Tlingit, and 70 (27 percent) are white. Although the Kaska represent only 50 percent of the total, they represent 66 percent of the Indian population.

Of the 187 residents, 72 are adults over 21 years of age; 33 are between 13 and 21 years; and the remaining 85 are children. Of the 72 adults, 32 (44 percent) are women, the other 40 are men (see Table 1 for a more complete demographic breakdown.)

The Indians who call Mill Creek their home are never all in the village at any one time. They may spend a great deal of time away from the settlement for various reasons at various times of the year (e.g. wage-work outside the community, on the hunt, trapping, away to school, or doing time in jail).

Besides the Indians there are 70 whites: 42 adults, 6 between 13 and 21 years, and 18 children. The British Columbia Forest Service has two men stationed in Mill Creek in charge of the local Forest Service installation; both are married and have children. The hotel complex (including the store, garage, and cafe) is owned and operated by partners, each of whom is married and has four children. Their business employs two bartenders, two waitresses, and a mechanic. The Residential School is staffed by six Sisters of St. Anne, three Brothers, two Oblate Fathers, four lay teachers and four supervisors. The Public School staff includes two teachers--a husband-wife team. There are also eight white men in the village living with Indian women, and there are two white bachelors.

Of the adult Indian population, 34 percent are legally married, 47 percent are involved in other unions and 18 percent are single. Of those between the ages of 13 and 21 years, none are married, but 4 (12 percent) are involved in other unions and have children by those unions.

THE HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY

Households

Household composition in the village covers a broad range, but can be divided into three groups as is outlined in Tables 1, 2 and 3. When research was begun in Mill Creek, there were two households in which an unmarried couple was "boarding" with the family owning the house. In both cases, neither member of the couple was related to the home-owning family, and both of these arrangements were short-lived. One ended because the boarders were not able to pay the agreed-upon rent, and gave the excuse that they were "too proud to go on welfare." The second was terminated when the daughter of the house-owner had an argument with the female boarder. Except for these two cases, households appear to act as corporate groups.

The household appears to be the largest corporate group, that is, the largest group possessing common property, and sharing in work for specific ends. Within the household few goods are regarded as personal, the majority of goods are pooled. Even the earnings of the teenagers are used to the common end. If, for some reason, the parents are unable to provide food and clothing, the teenagers may have to use their own earnings to buy these for younger members of the family.

The household usually lives under one roof, but in one or two cases the house has become too small and a second building has been built very close to the first. In this case the second building serves as a bedroom and the first as a combined kitchen, living-room and bedroom.

On page 21 Table 4 indicates 14 households in which the adult head of the household is married. Seven of these are composed of nuclear

TABLE 1

Demographic Profile of the Tahltan of Mill Creek

Sex	Age	Single	Legal Marriage	Other Unions	Total
Male (32)	over 21	7	3	3	13
	13-21	3	0	0	3
	under 13	16	0	0	16
Female (25)	over 21	0	5	6	11
	13-21	5	0	1	6
	under 13	8	0	0	8
Total		39	8	10	57

TABLE 2

Demographic Profile of the Kaska of Mill Creek

Sex	Age	Single	Legal Marriage	Other Unions	Total
Male (72)	over 21	5	9	13	27
	13-21	13	0	2	15
	under 13	30	0	0	30
Female (58)	over 21	1	8	12	21
	13-21	8	0	1	9
	under 13	28	0	0	28
Total		85	17	28	130

TABLE 3

Demographic Profile of the whites of Mill Creek

Sex	Age	Single	Legal Marriage	Other Unions	Total
Male (39)	over 21	13	10	5	28
	13-21	3	0	0	3
	under 13	8	0	0	8
Female (31)	over 21	9	7	0	16
	13-21	2	1	0	3
	under 13	12	0	0	12
Total		47	18	5	70

TABLE 4

Composition of Indian Households in Mill Creek

Marital Status	Household Composition	Number of Households	Sub Totals
	Nuclear:	7	
	Extended:		
MARRIED	a) nuclear family plus daughter her spouse and children	5	
	b) nuclear family plus son, his spouse and children	1	
	c) nuclear family plus children of absent daughter	1	
			14
	Nuclear:		
	a) man, woman plus children of this union	3	
COMMON-LAW	b) man, woman plus children, some or all of other unions	5	
	Extended:		
	a) man, woman plus woman's children of other union, plus woman's mother	1	
	b) siblings (brother and sister plus respective nuclear families	1	
			10
	Single Males: (two or more in house)	2	
"SINGLE"	Widowed or Separated Females plus Children	2	
			4
	TOTAL NUMBER OF HOUSEHOLDS		28

families only, and seven of extended families. Of the adult couples in these 14 households only one has been married less than five years, while the average length of marriage is 11 years. Of this group only one family has the characteristics of a matrifocal family in that none of the woman's three children are of the present union, and each child is of a different union. All three of the children have their mother's maiden surname.

Included in the "Married" group, are all those households that still operate traplines as a family unit during the winter months as well as those that are most in the practice of making long fishing and hunting expeditions in the summer and fall.

In the group entitled Common-law (Table 4), three households are composed of a couple and children of their union. As in the Married group, these unions are long-standing and appear to be relatively stable although not legalized, the average length of the unions is over ten years, and these families do not appear to be matrifocal in nature. Also under the "Nuclear" heading are five families in which some or all of the children are of other unions. They are unions, with one exception, that are fairly recent and have been preceeded, on the woman's part, with one or more other temporary unions. The average length of these unions is less than two years.

The group headed Common-law Extended, contains one household composed of an Indian woman who is legally married to a white, but is living with an Indian man. Also living with them are her three children of her marriage, and her elderly mother. I have included this family in the matrifocal family totals as the woman and her children are the constants in the unit. The dwelling belongs to the woman and, as her common-law

husband must leave the area to work, they are frequently separated. The ages of this couple are 27 and 29. They have lived together less than two years. The second household under this heading is made up of two common-law unions joined by a sibling (brother-sister) relationship. It is difficult to classify these families as neither of the couples has lived together for very long. One of the families has several children from the mother's former union. The average ages of the four adults is 25 years.

Finally, in the "Single" household category (Table 4) there are two households composed of women, one separated and one widowed, plus their children. These units are clearly matrifocal in nature. The women in these two households are 43 and 45 years old.

From the above it would appear that ten of the 28 households (about 36 percent) in the Indian village are matrifocal in nature. (It should be noted that these figures do not include those households composed of Indian women living with white men.)

Community Organization

Mill Creek is divided geographically, ethnically, and socially into three parts: a white section to the east; a Kaska section to the west, on the reserve; and between, an area inhabited by Tahltan, a few Kaska, and several Indian-white households (see Figure 1).

All three divisions are readily perceived by the Indians, but to the whites, the obvious distinction is between whites and Indians. Whites seem to be aware of "who hangs around with who," but do not know which households are Kaska and which are Tahltan. Most whites did not know the names of either tribe, but spoke of their neighbours

by the general term of "Indians."

However, within the Indian section of town, there is a definite division between Kaska and Tahltan. The reserve of 640 acres was established in April, 1916, "to be equally divided, upon survey, between the Liard and Francis Lake Tribe or Band, and the Nelson River Tribe or Band" (Province of British Columbia, 1916). These bands are all Kaska. Not all the Kaska in Mill Creek are now living on the reserve. Two families are living off the reserve in houses built and owned by the Department of Indian Affairs. In addition, a Kaska married to a Tlingit woman from Teslin is living at the edge of the white section of town.

The Tahltan live off the reserve, but the boundary is so circuitous that in fact the Kaska and Tahltan live side by side. At the time of this study, there were three Tahltan-white households, and three Kaska-white households. In all cases the white partner was male.

Most Tahltan came to Mill Creek from the Telegraph Creek area family by family, at different times. Although several of the families are related, they do not constitute a single, unified branch of the Telegraph Creek band. They have no chief in Mill Creek. Today, most of the Tahltan in Mill Creek still feel some ties to Telegraph Creek, as most have relatives there. During the summer, as many families as are able to find transportation make the journey to Telegraph Creek.

The ethnic divisions are made up of similar though not exactly parallel sets of relationships. The boundaries of the groups tend to be marked by the limits of circles of friends, of kin ties, and of partnerships. While no group has an official leader, each has individuals who will act as spokesmen from time to time. Within the groups, all individuals seem to interact freely with one other, but between

groups communication tends to be channeled through the spokesmen.

With the exception of the British Columbia Forest Service personnel, the whites are in Mill Creek because of the Indian population. The Residential School is there to educate the Indian children from the surrounding area. The priests cater to the needs of both the whites and the Indians in their congregation, but the location of their Mission in Mill Creek was determined by the presence of an Indian population. The white teachers and staff at the school, therefore, also find their occupations dependent on the Indians. Even the Public School teachers are in Mill Creek because of the Indians. Indian children make up the majority of their classes, and the families of the white children would not be there were it not for the Indians.

The hotel, cafe, garage, and store do a certain amount of business with travellers on the Alaska Highway, but the hotel is not very new or attractive, and many travellers prefer to drive on into Watson Lake where they can find more modern accommodations. In any event, the hotel exists mainly so that a beer parlour and cocktail lounge can be operated. One has only to sit in the bar for a few evenings to observe that a great deal of revenue is gained through the bar, and that it is primarily Indians who frequent the bar. Whites go to the cocktail lounge if they go at all.

Few, if any tourists buy clothing from the store, though some do buy grocery items. For their groceries, the whites of Mill Creek go to Watson Lake where there is greater selection and prices are lower. Only the Indians depend on the local store for the majority of their food and clothing.

If the whites are in Mill Creek because of the Indians, why are the

Indians there? Traditionally they met and camped there to trade--at first with each other, and then with the white traders, and eventually they settled there to be closer to the goods obtainable from the white traders, missionaries, and government agents. They now depend on the priests, the schools, the store, and the bar for what have become essential services.

While the groups rely on each other for their continued prescence in Mill Creek, their interaction is specific, rather than general. Certain segments of the white society meet with segments of the Indian society for special, fairly well outlined purposes. The teachers meet with the pupils for specified periods of the day, after which, in the case of the Residential School, the supervisors assume the responsibility of caring for the children. The Residential School teachers may never meet the parents of their students, as the children are brought to the school in September by bus and they remain there until the end of the school term when they are returned to their homes by bus. The Public School teachers have more contact with the parents, and may, in fact, be the only whites in the community to enter the homes of the Indians. Wives of the Residential School teachers and staff have little or no contact with the children or their parents.

The hotel owners and staff meet the Indians in a setting of proprietor-customer relations, in which the whites always have the upper hand. Even in the instances in which the Indians go to them with handmade leather articles to sell, the whites have the advantage as the Indians will eventually take whatever is offered. The whites want the handmade goods, as they greatly enhance the attractiveness of their store for the tourists, but they know that the Indians have no other

convenient outlet for their work, so will be forced to sell the articles at any price.

As all residents of Mill Creek are known to each other, at least by sight, there is a unity of residents that can be opposed to non-residents, but this grouping amounts to little more than a definition of a settlement whose members are but loosely tied by overlapping circles of friendship and kinship. The few activities which do include, or are open to, all members of the community, have at least two features in common: they take place on the "white side of town," and they are initiated by whites who have some professional contact with the Indians. I discovered no instances in which whites initiated activity that was not connected with their jobs, nor did I ever find that Indians were invited to take part in social gatherings at the homes of whites. Association of whites with Indians seems to be more a consequence of white occupations than a result of any desire to foster inter-group activities, and as whites are in positions of authority, they do all the planning and co-ordinating of activities, while the Indians play only minor parts in the carrying out of the plans.

Once a week, during the school term a free movie is shown in the Mission School auditorium. The films are rented by the school, primarily for the enjoyment of the Mission School children, staff, and teachers, but attendance is opened to the entire community. The movies constitute a popular source of entertainment, and are attended by almost everybody, although not everyone attends regularly.

Occasionally the Mission School holds concerts to which the entire village is invited . . . . usually scheduled close to Christmas and the

end of the school term in June. The planning is done by the school staff, and, quite naturally, children and staff from the Mission School have a larger involvement. However, the village children and some of the adult Indians may be asked to participate by singing or playing their guitars.

Once each year an interschool sports day is held in Mill Creek. All the children in both the Public School and the Mission School take part. Many of the mothers and pre-schoolers, and some of the men, go to the school grounds to watch. They follow the events with interest, but watch silently from some distance. In the evening following the sports day which I attended, an outdoor barbecue was held. The invitations, as always, were made by word of mouth, with the children acting as the main agents in spreading the news of the event. Although the word was passed around that "everyone is welcome," those who came were principally the parents of school-age children, and anyone who had previously had contact with the teachers throughout the school year. The teachers and staff of the two schools and members of the school board had planned and purchased the supplies for the evening. While at the barbecue, the whites who were not overseeing the cooking and distribution of the food sat on one side of the fire. The Indians arrived in small groups and sat together on the opposite side of the fire, where they watched silently, occasionally exchanging a few words in low voices. The stiffness was relieved finally, when George Jones arrived. Almost immediately he was handed a guitar, and began to sing and to joke with everyone. George is considered by the Indians and whites alike to be the best singer and guitar player in the area. He has sung semi-professionally in many of the cocktail lounges in the Yukon. He appears to be

gregarious and self-confident in such gatherings, and his presence seemed to set the others at ease. They began to join in the conversation and the singing.

The foregoing events represent a few almost traditional occasions when, at least nominally, the entire community is involved. But they seem to point out the divisions rather than the unity of the settlement.

Smaller organizations, such as the Public School Parent Teacher Association, have limited support. The teachers reported that white mothers attended the meetings, but only a few of the Indian mothers participated. Those who did take part, did so regularly. The teachers observed that the Indian women felt uneasy when in a group that also contained white women. They said it was often more satisfactory to go to the homes of the Indian children and to speak with the mothers privately.

Throughout the year, various sports teams are formed, again, under the direction of the Mission School staff. While I was in Mill Creek, men's and women's baseball teams were organized as well as the inter-school ball team for the children. The adult teams played in a league with Watson Lake and Upper Liard teams. The members were both whites and Indians. Although many were very good players, the Indians have to be asked repeatedly to join a team, and even once they committed themselves to play, they often did not attend practices or games unless coaxed.

The Boys' Supervisor from the Mission School organized these teams. He expressed some discouragement at the apparent lack of enthusiasm and said he had experienced the same attitudes towards his attempts to form winter sports teams. He felt that there were many talented players, but

a lack of cohesion and team loyalty defeated his efforts.

While the relationship of the congregation of the Church tends to be individualistic rather than group-oriented, and while the shared beliefs do not appear to lead to socal relations among the members of the congregations, the Church is one of the few uniting factors in Mill Creek. It provides some centralized control over the lives of the people as individuals, and brings them together at certain times for specific purposes such as religious services, and for entertainment. There is neither a Catholic Women's League, nor a Women's Auxiliary in Mill Creek. The whites and Indians do not attend Church services together, and do not linger after services to exchange greetings or to invite their neighbours home to tea, but they do look to the Church to hold those events, previously described, which bring them together from time to time, in an informal setting.

The majority of the population in Mill Creek is, at least nominally, Roman Catholic. Only one Indian family of eight persons, and four white families, a total of fourteen, belong to the Anglican Church. There is a Catholic chapel in the residential school, and another in a separate log building. During the school term, the children and teachers at the Residential School are expected to attend the services in the school chapel, so the turnout is generally high. Church attendance of the adults of the village is not regular. The Indians tend to turn to the priests when they need help as the priests represent a powerful link to the outside world. The priests control the hiring and firing of a limited number of jobs within the school, and are a valuable source of information concerning job opportunities throughout the surrounding area. Besides this, the Indians are aware that the Fathers maintain a

fairly constant contact with the Indian Agent in Watson Lake and, upon the priest's advice, assistance from that office may be given or cut off. The Fathers often participate in counselling those Indians involved in court cases. They represent sources of information as to court procedure, and as to how one may obtain money for the payment of fines.

As was mentioned above, Mill Creek is roughly in the centre of what was once exclusively Kaska territory, but, within the past ten to twelve years, many Tahltan have moved into the village. There are at least ten Tahltan households, and eighteen that are Kaska. There are several individuals who are at least partly Cree and Beaver, and in addition, there are two Tlingit women and one Loucheux woman.

The Kaska appear to resent the outsiders, especially the Tahltan who represent the second largest group in the village. The groups do not mix socially. Friendships are usually formed between men who work, hunt, trap, and/or drink together, and the alignments follow ethnic boundaries. Friendships among the women follow a similar pattern and are formed between women who work, gossip, and drink together. These friendships are almost entirely within their own ethnic group, Kaska or Tahltan, and almost everyone within the group is related either by marriage or by kinship ties. Women who were not kin sometimes become friends, but these friendships do not seem to last for a long time, and are easily broken by gossip and mistrust. The only lasting relationships seem to be among kin.

Kaska and Tahltan do not intermarry, although there are several households of mixed white and Kaska as well as white and Tahltan. There was one Tahltan women living with a Kaska man, although during the summer he left the area to work, and the woman began to live with

a Tahltan man. This incident is unusual, because not even the teenagers, who seem to feel less strongly about their band affiliations, form friendships across band lines. There is, however, one Kaska married to a Tlingit woman from Teslin. This woman is treated as an outsider by both the Kaska and Tahltan women. This was also the lot of the other Tlingit, and the Loucheux woman, both of whom left Mill Creek in the late summer.

Among the Indians, there is a belief that as Indians they are entirely self-sufficient, and able to live off the land. Great pride is taken in the ability to produce handmade tools, traps, and articles of clothing. But in marked contrast to the myth of self-sufficiency are the daily reminders that very few of them could survive as did their ancestors. Today they are dependent on the larger white society for food, clothing, and, to a degree, shelter. While pride is taken in producing handicrafts, very few of the villagers have or use knowledge of these arts. The young people have not taken the time to learn from their elders. This is also true of their ability to speak Kaska or Tahltan. At best the young people know only a few words of their languages. The exception in this case is the Roper family. Uncle George and Annie Roper speak Kaska to each other at home and in this way their children have all learned the language.

In summary, Mill Creek is divided into several groups; whites, Kaska and Tahltan. Geographically they are organized into a common community, but in terms of interaction, there is little unity. The Church and the schools provide some services which cross the group boundaries and, from time to time. draw the inhabitants together. However, for the most part activities are carried out and friendships

are formed within one's own group. In spite of the rather artificial nature of the cohesion of the community, whites and the Indians are dependent on each other for their continued existence in Mill Creek.

Economic Institutions

Although there are no commercial enterprises, except for the hotel-store-garage complex in Mill Creek, the town is situated in the midst of considerable economic activity. Large international mining companies, and many smaller companies have established claims in the surrounding vicinity. These organizations have crews working at exploration sites in the bush and at mining camps. Some companies have even established permanent townsites. The mineral and petroleum deposits of the region are now being discovered and developed as each year brings another influx of mining, petroleum and construction engineers as well as labourers and self-employed prospectors to the area.

To service the growing industries, communication must be increased. New roads are being built into the bush, but in the meantime, charter planes and helicopter companies are doing a good business. Advance work parties have already done research for the proposed dam on the Liard River about fifty miles down river from Mill Creek. The prospects of this dam and that of the promised railroad into Fort Nelson and Dease Lake are attracting new commercial enterprises to the area.

The increased economic activity means very little to the Indians in terms of economic benefits. Many of the new job opportunities demand an education level beyond that of the Mill Creek Indians, and many more jobs require special skills and work experience (e.g., as equipment operators) that they do not have, and cannot easily acquire.

It is true that there are numerous jobs available for unskilled labourers, but it is also true that the recent surge of economic activity has attracted large numbers of workers, mostly white, to move to the north in search of work. By and large, these workers are better equipped to compete for the available jobs than are the Indians.

In recent years, the unions have also moved into the north, and many companies will hire only union members. To join a union it may be necessary to move to another district, and the expenses of moving as well as the initial union dues, are prohibitive to the Indians.

Finally, even though an Indian man may be hired by a company, the location of the job may require him to leave his family for long periods of time. Worries connected with being away from home may eventually induce the man to quit his job, thus adding fuel to the old idea that Indians are not reliable and will quit after receiving their first paycheque.

Besides the new business ventures, there are the older ones which accounted for the existence of many of the old-timers in the region. Several logging companies turn out sawn lumber and peeled poles to meet the building needs of the people around Watson Lake and Mill Creek. Transport companies provide trucking services which bring into these small towns all the goods required for daily living. Maintenance crews work year-round to keep the highway open, and to keep the telephone, telegraph, and micro-wave lines in good repair.

And finally, there is the considerable tourist business. Hotels, motels, and service stations cater to travelers on the Alaska Highway. Much of the tourist business centers around fishing and hunting. The wildlife of northern British Columbia and the Yukon supports a great

many licensed big game outfitters who employ hundreds of guides to accommodate the hunters and fishermen who go north each year. Each outfitter has his own hunting territory which is designated by the Provincial Department of Fish and Wildlife. To qualify for a territory, a hunter must hold a Class A guiding license. Any hunter may obtain a Class C license providing he has worked with a Class A or B guide for three seasons. To obtain a Class B license, a Class C guide must work with a Class A or B for three seasons, and to obtain a Class A license, the hunter must spend a further three seasons under a Class A guide. Apart from the length of time that must be invested in such a procedure, there is considerable expense involved in establishing one's self in this business. The law requires that an outfitter employ a fixed number of Class B and C guides for every three members in the party. Cabins are erected at points throughout the territory for the convenience of the clients. As all of the territories are located many miles from any town and from the highway, hunting parties are either flown in by float plane or else ride in on horseback. Float plane docks must be built on suitable lakes, while corrals and barns must be built for the horses.

The hunt offers the men employment in which they can, and do, excel. It is generally recognized that the Indian guides are superior to the white guides, and for this reason, they are eagerly sought by outfitters. The hunt and preparations before it appeal to the Indians. They enjoy the work, and they enjoy the security of feeling adequate to the situation. There is also a feeling that, as Indians, they should be hunting and working with horses.

By and large, once hired, the men remain with the outfitter till the last hunt is in. This is the one type of employment which they very

seldom terminate before the job is through. Even teen-aged boys can find employment with the outfitters as horse wranglers. By wrangling for a few summers, a boy learns the rudiments of guiding and by the age of seventeen or eighteen, may be hired as a Class C guide. At times the women accompany their men on the hunt and earn wages as cooks or cook's helpers.

Besides the expenses involved in obtaining a hunting territory, an outfitter must have the qualities of leadership and the ability to maintain favorable relations among employees and clients. Beyond this, one must have a certain amount of business skill to advertize, make bookings, organize supplies, crews, and livestock, and to be responsible for the entire party. As a result, there are many Indians who excel at hunting, know the areas and the game trails, and have completed the required apprenticeship to obtain a Class A license, but who have neither the cash nor the sophistication to enter the business for themselves. There is one man in Mill Creek who did have his own territory, but was not able to handle the business and organizational aspects of outfitting. After two unsuccessful seasons, he was forced by circumstances to give up his territory.

The above summary of the economy of the broader area, is meant to give perspective to the economic situation of the Indians of Mill Creek. They live in a village of very little commercial activity which is surrounded by intense activity, and are able to exploit only a very small portion of the economic potential.

At a very general level, the economy of the Indians follows an annual round of activities as outlined below. The outline is not definitive. It may apply to some individuals in part only and to some

not at all.

In the late spring, wood cutting begins. Trees are felled, slashed, cut and stacked into cordwood for eventual sale to the mine in Cassiar. A private truck is contracted to pick up the wood and deliver it to the mines. According to the agreement, trucks can haul the wood as fast as it is cut, but there are always complaints from both sides. Cutters say that the trucks don't come for weeks, when they are most needed, and truck drivers say that they are called out only to find that the loads are not ready. The Indian Agent must try to keep the operation going, as it represents one valuable source of income for the Indians.

The major wood-cutting site is at Blue River, approximately forty-five miles by highway from Mill Creek. The men, and often the entire family, move to Blue River for the wood-cutting season. This settlement consists of tent dwellings, which have walls four to six logs high to supplement the canvas. There may or may not be a wooden floor in these buildings. Although they are supposedly temporary dwellings, some of these cabins are occupied throughout the year. Some wood-cutting does continue all winter, though most of the men stop and do not return until the spring.

With the onset of summer, many of the men of Mill Creek leave for the bush to prepare for the hunting season. There are four well established outfitters who make Watson Lake their headquarters. The outfitters transport the men to the bush where they repair cabins, corrals, docks, and barns. Each outfitter must either maintain his own string of horses, or else rent them from a rancher in the area. During the summer the livestock is rounded up, branded, and the young horses broken to the saddle or packboard.

Hunting seasons vary from one kind of game animal to another. The first hunts begin during the first week in August; the last end around the middle of October, at which time it becomes impractical and uncomfortable to hunt due to the snow and cold.

Those Indians not hired by the outfitters may find employment with construction or maintenance crews working on the Alaska Highway. During the summer months major repairs or alterations to the highway and the bridges are carried out. There are always extra men needed to work on the road crews. Few Indians at Mill Creek have the opportunity to learn to drive heavy trucks, so they are usually employed as general labourers, although there is one young man who attended the vocational school in Whitehorse and is now permanently employed as a grader operator on a highway maintenance crew.

Employment may also be had with the British Columbia Forest Service. Forest fires present a constant threat during the hot dry summers, and the Forest Service has the authority to conscript firefighters in time of need. Although firefighting does offer another source of income, it is an especially unpopular type of work. It is not unusual for the entire, unemployed, male population to disappear at the threat of being pressed into service.

Once the snows come to stay, around the end of October, those families who still maintain trap lines repair their equipment, pack their supplies, and leave for the bush. The equipment is all packed on their backs and on the backs of their dogs. Their lines may be one or two days walk away, or about eighty miles by highway. Once out on the trapline, these families return only periodically to bring in their furs and to take back more supplies. For a week or two at

Christmas, those families with children in the Residential School return to Mill Creek to spend Christmas with their children and to visit their friends. This is a time of many parties, and is surpassed only by the return from the hunt for excitement and activities. Shortly after New Year's the trappers return to their lines again. The trapping season extends from October to May.

In the past, every Indian family in Mill Creek could support itself by trapping, but nowadays there are fewer than eight families who trap for an appreciable portion of the season. This fact notwithstanding, there exists a feeling of the "rightness" of this occupation for the Indians, similar to the feeling of the "rightness" of the hunt. As one resident put it, "Every Indian in Mill Creek feels that he must trap a little to be able to call himself an Indian." Some may never get any further than talking of going trapping, while others may stay in the bush for periods varying from a few days to a few weeks.

There are other sources of income, but most of them are for short periods only--odd jobs of painting for the Forest Service or for the hotel, carpentry work and ditchdigging type jobs.

The economy of Mill Creek is based not only on wages but also on social assistance. The most common form of assistance is from the Department of Social Welfare or from the Department of Indian Affairs, two offices that work very closely as they provide many of the same services.[5] Status Indians are assisted by the Indian Agent while Non-Status Indians[6] (and whites) are assisted by the Department of Social Welfare.

Other forms of social assistance are provided by local groups such as the Catholic Church, the Elks Club, and the Baptist Church of

Watson Lake. These groups offer food, used clothing, and travel allowances to needy families and to students. The Lions Club of Prince George sponsors an annual Christmas party for the children of the Residential School. Members of the club fly from Prince George to Mill Creek laden with toys and candies which they distribute to the children.

The jobs described in the annual round apply to the men in Mill Creek. The contribution of the women to the economy is of a different nature, and although their contribution may or many not be as large as that of the men, it appears that the women control the economy of the household. The man's work is seasonal and is often piece work so that when one job is completed, there may be an interval when no work is available, or a period when no work is sought. In contrast, the woman's contribution is relatively constant and secure. She can count on receiving a monthly Family Allowance cheque, and if she is an unwed mother or a widow, she is eligible to receive other forms of assistance, such as grocery chits, and perhaps even a house to live in. Her man may, in fact, live with her, although he will disappear whenever the Indian Agent or Social Worker visits, as her social assistance may be cut off if she was receiving any support from a man.

Miss Langdon, the Social Worker for the Watson Lake area, said that the official policy of her office was to give cash assistance if the head of the family in need was felt to be a "dependable" person and had displayed some degree of competence at handling his own finances, otherwise it was given in the form of groceries or a grocery chit. She went on to say that she had not yet given cash assistance to anyone.

The women control the economy in yet another way: when the men do have money, the women soon relieve them of it. They simply wait until the men become intoxicated, and then take the money. Once they have it they dole it out to their man either as cash donations or by buying his liquor.

In summary, Mill Creek is located in an area of considerable economic activity, but the Indians of that village are able to exploit only a small portion of the action. In 1949 they were independent producers, but now they must compete for jobs within the context of the broader economic system or otherwise look to the broader society for social assistance. Subsistence activity is not an important part of the village economy which is based largely on wage labour and social assistance. Roughly speaking, men earn the former while women obtain the latter. A man's work outside the village may be for lengthy periods, but almost invariably ties to his household and village prompt him to terminate his employment. For this reason man's work is not year-round and his contribution to the household economy is sporadic. A woman's contribution, composed mainly of social assistance, is smaller, but much more stable as it can be counted on to continue year-round.

One apparent result is that, to a large extent, women control the household economy. With the assurance of social assistance women are fairly independent and do not require the support of a man. This independence may be a major variable in the formation of the matrifocal household.

Political Institutions

In the past, leaders were drawn from those individuals who best knew and understood the technology, customs, and rituals of his own people. Today, leaders appear to be those who best understand the technology, customs, and rituals of the white society, and can interpret them to their own people.

While there are no official leaders in the Indian community, there are spokesmen who, to a large extent, fill the role of a leader. They are those individuals who interact in the greatest number of circles in the community, and have the widest area of contact and influence.

The spokesmen for the whites are usually the priests or one of the school teachers, as they often have more contact with Indians than do other citizens. The bartenders may also act as spokesmen, as they have frequent contact with most of the adult Indians, and one bartender is married to a Kaska woman.

Uncle George Roper is often the representative for the Kaska. He is regarded by the Kaska, to be a "good Indian," and he is well liked by the local whites, who describe him as being sober, hard-working and honest. This seems to make George, and his family, a logical liaison between the Kaska and the whites.

George Jones, Walter Daniels, and Mrs. Baker all occupy this role for the Tahltan. George and Walter have become well known figures to all of Mill Creek through their singing and entertaining throughout the area. Mrs. Baker is one of the more willing supporters of the Public School Parent Teachers Association, and has the reputation among the whites as being one of the best mothers among the Indians.

The looseness of these leadership roles and the vagueness of their

position is not to be wondered at. If one looks to the description of Tahltan political organization in aboriginal times, we find that "the chieftainship even of old was more a position of honor than power . . . . Each family was a distinct organization, controlling its internal affairs, recognizing only the authority of its own chief, and meeting the other families on common ground" (Emmons 1907:28).

Aboriginally, leadership among the Kaska was similar to that of the Tahltan, according to Honigmann:

> The term "band" designates the microcosmic extended family group with its unrelated hangers-on or adopted children. Several such units occupying contiguous districts constitutes the unorganized and highly amorphous macrocosmic band for which we have used the term "tribe" . . . Each of the migratory bands recognized a headman . . . These leaders were premarily family heads so that, according to Chapple and Coon's system of analysis, true (i.e., interfamily) political organization remained only incipiently realized in aboriginal Kaska society (Honigmann 1954:84).

Among the Kaska, Andy Andrews is reported to hold the hereditary right to the title of Chief, but he does not exercise this right.

According to the Department of Northern Development and Indian Affiars, Mill Creek is under the jurisdiction of Chief Martin Barry and the Council of the Upper Liard Kaska. However, the villages are twenty-two miles apart, one in British Columbia, and the other in the Yukon. The arrangement is most unsatisfactory even though Chief Martin Barry is very conscientious. The impracticality of the intervening distance is compounded by presence of large numbers of Tahltan in Mill Creek who are without representation. At least partially due to the above, the Indian Agent performs in Mill Creek many of the functions which should fall to the chief.

It has been suggested by the Department of Indian Affairs, that a chief be elected who would represent both the Kaska and the Tahltan, but animosity between the tribes is so strong that, as yet, this suggestion has not been followed. Neither tribe would agree to having a chief from the other tribe. All that the spokesmen appear to lack to become official leaders is official recognition from the Department of Indian Affairs. However, this does not appear likely for the near future.

Besides the Band Council of Upper Liard there are other political institutions with which Indians have contact, but they are not based in Mill Creek. Almost every Household has, at one time or another, had some contact with the Indian Agent, the Social Worker, and members of the Watson Lake detachment of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police.

The attitude of the Indians toward the Indian Agent seemed to be summed up by River Joe, a ninety-three year old Kaska, who said to the Agent, "The Government hires you to take care of us Indians, so why aren't you taking care of me?" He had just received a new pair of glasses (for which the Department of Indian Affairs had paid), and felt that they did not work very well. He wanted the Indian Agent to do something about them. However, he related that the Indian Agent had given him new teeth, new glasses, and a hearing aid, and with considerable glee predicted, "they make a young man of me again."

I also heard complaints that the Indian Affairs office was in Watson Lake. "How does he know what we need," one woman said, "when he's up there and we're down here?" The consensus seemed to be that

the Indian Agent was there to take care of all the needs of the Indians. Their attitude toward the Social Worker was much the same, but as the Social Worker was often responsible for removing children from homes where they were not receiving minimum care, she was looked on as something of a busybody or a snoop. They did not feel it was her business how they cared for their children.

Similar attitudes were expressed towards members of the Royal Canadian Mounted Police. The Indians seemed to feel that they should be left to settle their differences among themselves without the intervention of the police. Only very rarely does an Indian call the police to report another member of the village, and then, only in the case of an emergency.

At present then, as in the past, the political structure of the village is but weakly developed. As there is no Chief and Band Council in Mill Creek, the Indian Agent has taken over many of the tasks usually performed by such a group. Several other government agencies, such as the Department of Social Welfare, and the Department of Public Health, along with the Department of Northern Development and Indian Affairs, provide services which make it possible for households, and even individuals to be independent from each other, but make it very difficult for them to be independent from the government agencies.

THE WOMAN IN THE HOUSEHOLD AND COMMUNITY

Tasks Performed By The Woman for Her Household

Not all I spoke with stressed the same items of duty, but the list compiled from the combined statements appears to be fairly comprehensive. At no time did the opinions of the informants conflict beyond the fact that some items were thought to be no longer relevant. "We used to do that, but now we don't."--This, with regard to tanning moose hides and making dry-meat.

It was generally agreed that a woman should do the cooking, house-cleaning and caring for the children.

Food and its Preparation

Usually the women prepare food once or twice a day. If the family is on hand, they may gather around the table and eat together. If they are not there, the food is left on the back of the stove or on the table where it is available whenever household members want it. During the school year, most of the mothers prepare lunch at noon time, as the children return to their homes during lunch hour. If the mother is not at home and if no food has been left on the stove, the eldest child will usually help the others to make jam or peanut-butter sandwiches. A mother may insist that her child eat his meat and vegetables before he may have cookies and other sweets, but this appears to be more of an effort to fill him up so that he won't eat too many cookies and "get a belly ache." However, because of the casual nature in which the meals are eaten, the mother does not always see to it that the children eat well-balanced meals, and when left to select his own food, the child often chooses bread and jam or cookies rather than meat and vegetables.

The food tends to be fairly basic: meat, fish, potatoes, rice, tinned vegetables, and sometimes tinned fruit. Rice is not necessarily used as a substitute for potatoes, and, at times, both are served at the same meal.

If used, bread is purchased at the store; however, in may households bannock replaces bread. All women and most men can make bannock from a simple standard recipe, and in fact considerable pride is taken in producing a good bannock. On the trail, the pre-mixed dry ingredients are carried in a plastic bag. At times the women may bake cookies (peanut-butter cookies seemed to be the favorite) but these items were more commonly bought at the store.

Although a great proportion of the food consumed is purchased from the local store, whenever possible, wild game is eaten. Moose is the most common game-food, but caribou, deer, mountain sheep, mountain goat, beaver, bear, groundhog, squirrel, and rabbit are also eaten. Not all these animals are to be found in the immediate vicinity, and a hunt of several days length may be required to bring back mountain sheep and goats.

Lake trout, Dolly Varden, greyling, and ling cod are caught in the Liard, Dease, and Blue rivers. Dolly Varden and greyling are taken from Mill Creek. Those Tahltan who have maintained their kin ties with Telegraph Creek, and who are able to make the journey to that area during the summer, bring back boxes of smoked salmon.

During the summer months, wild berries may be gathered and made into jam. Only once did I see a party of six or seven women picking raspberries on a hillside above the village, but several times I heard children announcing that their mother had made jam from the berries they

had picked. In August, while on a hunting expedition, two young women and I picked cranberries along the Dease River. One of the women later made them into jam simply by boiling the berries and adding sugar to the boiling fruit.

Only one household, that of Mrs. Barker, has a garden. The garden does not supply nearly all the needs of the household, but does make a significant contribution. It is surrounded by a fence high enough and strong enough to keep out even the largest dogs, and most of the children. The greatest part of the garden is planted in potatoes, the rest in peas, carrots, lettuce, and radishes. On either side of her front door, Mrs. Baker has placed old tires; the centre of each has been filled with earth and planted with flowers.

Besides cooking the meals, a woman is also responsible for doing the daily shopping. Although there are several large grocery stores in Watson Lake, where the prices are a bit lower, most of the Indians do their shopping in the small local store. The lack of transportation makes shopping in Watson Lake difficult for most households, but rather more important is the fact that almost every household in the village has a credit account with the local store. Groceries and most clothing items are purchased there, although some individuals use the catalogues to buy at least part of their clothing. Most items are simply added to the account.

Food is purchased in small quantities, which means that top prices are paid for commercial packaging. When paying cash, they hand the store clerk a handful of money and he calculates and returns the change. If he indicates that they haven't given him enough for the item, they look through their pockets for more. At least part of this procedure

probably stems from a difficulty with the English language against which the older villagers labour. Although the younger women have had more education and are well aware of the spending value of their money, all rely on the store clerk to keep track of their bills, and seem to accept unquestioningly his word as to the total which they owe.

Household Cleaning Chores

While all women felt that it was a woman's task to do the housework, most were somewhat vague about what specific chores fell under that general term. A few made more concrete examples, saying that the woman should sweep the floor, do the dishes, and wash the clothes for her family.

Mrs. Baker once sat surveying her walls and windows, and said that as soon as she got the cast off her leg (which she had broken in a fall down the cellar stairs), she would "sure get everyone working. These walls and windows need washing." This was the only reference to the washing of walls or windows as items of housework.

It is the woman's task to ensure that there is wood and water in the house and that the slop pail is emptied, but more often than not, she will relegate these jobs to one of the children.

Floors are periodically mopped by the women, or by an older daughter. Due to the amount of traffic of children, dogs, and visitors during the mopping operation, the floor is often no cleaner when the job is completed than before, but at no time did I hear child or beast scolded for tracking mud and dirt onto the clean floor.

Only three women mentioned the task of ironing clothes. I estimated that the majority of households have an iron of some sort, but am certain of only six. In these six households there are young women and/or

teenaged girls. The young women seem to be more concerned about this aspect of grooming than are the older women, who appear to place little value on it.

Child Care

Caring for young children is largely a matter of feeding, dressing, and putting them to bed. They are left to their own devices to amuse themselves, and an older child - a sibling or a neighbour child - is charged with seeing that the young one does not wander too far from the house. Caring for babies was usually described as a matter of changing diapers and feeding the infant. Either breast feeding or bottle feeding were acceptable.

Although many of the women nowadays go to the nursing station in Watson Lake to have their babies, it may still be the duty of a mother or older kinswoman to act as midwife to a daughter, or younger kinswoman. Agnes Roper had her children in the bush during the winter, while on the trap line. Her mother helped her to deliver both babies.

I observed that very often the household chores and the caring for young children and babies, are passed on to the eldest girl in the household. Once three teen-aged girls who were visiting my cabin watched as I finished mopping the floor. They asked me if I liked doing housework, and when I answered, "Yes," they said that they had liked to do housework when they were young, but now that they had to do all of it, they did not like it any more. At times the mother may be absent from the home for several days, during which time the eldest daughter assumes the mother's responsibilities. Younger children accept commands and reprimands from the eldest sister without questioning her authority.

A woman's duties are not all centered in the home. Although only a few households now go out on a hunt as a unit, most make short fishing excursions during the summer. Fewer than eight households run traplines regularly throughout the winter. However, on hunting, fishing, and trapping expeditions, a woman was expected to take an active part in carrying supplies, setting up camp, setting and collecting from her own traps, casting for or snaring fish, and helping to cut and clean the game brought in by the men.

I was taught to clean fish by a seven-year-old girl who explained that when her family went on fishing trips, the children had to clean the fish while both parents fished. The manner in which she handled the knife and fish indicated that she had had a good deal of practice.

It was not thought to be necessary, nor particularly desirable, for the women to stay in the immediate vicinity of the camp to tend the fire, nor for her to do the cooking. As women have their own set of traps to attend, it would not be possible for them to remain in camp to cook. In describing camp life on a winter trapping expedition, one young mother said, "Nobody cooks, we all cook. When I'm hungry I get something to eat. When somebody is hungry, he gets something to eat. Just when we get hungry we cook for us." I was later able to see something of this arrangement in action when I went on a short hunting trip with a small group of Tahltan. The only times we ate together was in the late evening before retiring when one of the young men made bannock over the open fire. We watched it eagerly till it was cooked, then ate it and washed it down with spruce tea.

During summer and fall hunts, the women may pick berries or fish while the men are hunting. If there are young children in the group,

they will stay with the mother. Either men or women may be in charge of cutting meat and fish into strips for drying and stringing them up on poles over the fire to dry.

A woman is also responsible for scraping, stretching, and tanning hides which she will then either sell, or sew into moccasins, mukluks, or jackets. These items may or may not be decorated with beaded designs. The value placed on the ability to sew and bead moosehide may be inferred from the statement of a young Kaska woman, "Joyce, now you learned how to make moccasins you could get a nice husband." While this was said in a teasing manner, it probably indicates some of the skills valued in a woman, and it may have been made to observe my reaction to the idea of having an Indian husband.

Tanning hides is a long difficult, and unpleasant task. There are few of the young women now who are able, or appear eager, to carry out this task. I saw many samples of beadwork done by young girls and teenagers, but none of them showed any interest in tanning hides, and all admitted that they had never tried it. A few had watched their mothers, but said it looked like too much work. They were surprised and amused that I wanted to learn.

Most women of age 45 and older are skilled at both tanning and decorating hides. Their work is greatly admired by Indians and whites alike.

When asked the duties of a woman as a daughter, it was vaguely indicated that a woman should "take care of her parents when they are old." This appeared to mean that they should be given food, clothing, and shelter when they could no longer provide such items for themselves. One informant added that a woman should make tea for her parents

when they are sick. To a large extent elderly women are relieved of most of their duties, and may spend their time visiting and sitting in the sun. Sometimes, however, the elderly mother is left to take care of her grandchildren for long periods of time.

In some cases, the observed behavior may indicate a very acceptable alternative to a woman's duties, that of relegating the duties to another. In this manner the woman who is the female head of a household may become something of an entrepreneur. She is responsible for ensuring that the tasks are carried out, but need not do them herself, and may pass them on to her daughter or granddaughter.

One of the questions with which this study was concerned was whether or not tasks were carried out in any routine order, either from day-to-day, or from week-to-week. While some very general patterns of living became evident, these appeared to be imposed from outside the Indian Community. As children were required to attend school five days of the week during the school term, a certain amount of routine was inevitable, at least in those households having school-aged children. Weekends were further distinguished from school days by the closing of the store and the bar on Sunday. One distinction which was not mentioned, is that Church services are held on Sunday. This too is a routine imposed from without.

For the most part, household chores were carried out when the need for them became apparent rather than routinely. The above notwithstanding, it is possible to make some broad generalizations as to the manner in which the women spend their time, but there are exceptions to almost every statement.

Usually the women arise between ten a.m. and twelve noon. They

dress in jeans or slacks of some kind, a light sweater, and canvas runners. If there are school-aged children in the household, they get up by themselves, dress, and go to school. If the children eat any breakfast at all, they must prepare it themselves. An older child may be made responsible for getting the younger children off to school in time. The children are often late for school, and there have been times when the teachers have had to go from house to house collecting children. This is not a common occurrence, except during the week when the guides and wranglers return from the hunt, and there are parties and excitement to keep the children awake all night.

At some time during the day the women will sweep the floor, bring in water from the river or from the pump, bring in wood for the stove, and cook some food. If her husband is at home, he may take over the jobs of carrying in wood and water. These jobs appear to be done in no particular order, at any time during the morning or afternoon.

At times the women heat water on the stove and wash clothes for all the household. Several of the homes have washing machines, but these are seldom in good condition, as they are often left outside to make room in the house. The majority of women must do their washing by hand. There appears to be no regular day on which the washing is done.

As was mentioned above, some of the women hold jobs in Mill Creek. One of the employers pointed out that even if the Indian woman is a good housekeeper in her own home, she may not make a good chambermaid or janitoress, as these jobs require that certain tasks be done every day, and at certain, fairly specific times. He said that the Indian women do not seem to appreciate the need or value of dusting a room

that was dusted the day before and does not look dusty today. He continued saying that the women could not see the point of doing chores in a definite order, although the order was supposedly the most efficient, and often designed to complement the work of another person.

Beyond the duties outlined above, the Indian women spend most of their time "walking around," a term used to cover a range of activities. It could mean sitting in the sun, going to the store, visiting a friend, or going to the bar. The purpose of "walking around" appears to be meeting friends and seeing what everyone else is doing or is going to do. Not far from the store, there is a wooden platform that appears to have been the floor of a house at some time. During the summer this platform was one of the favorite sitting spots for the older woman. Men usually chose the shade of the old Taku Trading Company building not far away. On the way to or from the store or bar, the women would stop to sit in the sun and visit. There might not be much conversation at all.. The pleasure of shared company with a minimum of talking often constituted a visit.

Going to the store to shop is closely linked to the pattern of visiting and gossiping, and is usually spread out as much as possible. No part of the village is more than three-quarters of a mile from the store, so it is possible, and appears to be desirable, to make several trips rather than purchase all the groceries at once. Certain times of the day are more popular for shopping than others. No one will go to the store early in the morning, as there would be no chance of meeting and talking with a neighbour at that time. The favorite time appeared to be between one and three in the afternoon as the sun would be warm and pleasant, and one could make plans for the evening. If a

person is "broke" or on the interdict list, they will choose to do their shopping later in the day, or in the early evening, with the possibility of meeting friends on their way to the bar. At that time gossip may be exchanged and the person out of funds may be invited in for a drink by a more affluent friend.

While "walking around" a woman may find someone who is going to Watson Lake, and decide to go along. She does not find it necessary to tell the children where she is going, or when she will return. If her husband is away from Mill Creek, she will go alone with her friend, but if he is in the village, she will get her husband to go with her. In Watson Lake they will probably look for friends and kin, visit all the stores, and eventually some of the bars. If they have no money they may sit in the hotel lobbies watching passers-by, and waiting for something to happen.

In the evening in Mill Creek, the bar is again the meeting place. People sit in small groups around the tables, but there is much chatting between the groups at different tables, and much table-hopping. If a person is on the interdict list, or has no money, he may sit in the lobby outside the bar to enjoy the company of the others as they pass in and out. Some of the young adults, who are too young to enter the bar, watch through the door. At closing time, several bottles or even cases of beer may be purchased and taken to the home of an individual where the party will continue.

The division of labour in Mill Creek is such that the women remain in the household, cooking, cleaning, and caring for the children even though the men may leave the village to work. A woman may occasionally engage in wage labour, but it will usually be within the community,

and she will continue to perform her household duties as well. Only occasionally will a woman accompany her husband out of the village to cook for a group of hunters. A small number of families still leave the village as a unit to trap furs during the winter. By working together on the trapline and the hunt, some couples are able to accommodate the usual division of labour, and yet avoid separating the household members.

Man-Woman Relationship

It is very difficult for an Indian man to find a permanent job in Mill Creek. There are no industries and the hotel is the only business. As was pointed out earlier, most of the whites in Mill Creek are there to service the needs of the Indians, but not to employ them. There are a few part-time jobs available at the Residential School and at various times during the year, odd jobs, such as fixing a roof or painting class rooms, may come up, but when the work is finished, the job is over. Most of these jobs arise during the summer vacation when the children are not in the school. There is one janitor at the Residential School, but this job is held by a white man. I do not know if it has ever been held by an Indian. The few full-time and permanent part-time jobs that do exist at the Residential School and the hotel, such as cook's helper, chambermaid, laundry maid, and janitress, are primarily for female workers. The men must leave Mill Creek in order to work. Very often this means leaving their wives and children behind, and being away from the household for long periods of time. Under ideal conditions, it might be more satisfying to the men to take their households with them, but this is rarely possible. Depending, of course,

on the job, housing may or may not be available for the household and if available, it may not be practical. Many jobs take the men into the mountains and forests to temporary camps where bunkhouses or tents are provided for them, but not for their families. If a man is guiding for a hunter, his wife may sometimes go along as a cook, but children become something of a distraction and nuisance under such conditions. In some cases there may even be cases of discrimination. At one time the Federal Department of Public Works would not supply housing for those Indian men that they did hire. They supplied housing for all white men, but not for Indian men, as it was felt that they would not take proper care of the housing facilities, and also feared that an extended family might move into housing meant for a single nuclear family. This policy was discontinued when a white foreman personally vouched for an Indian man and his wife, and was able to secure housing for them. Such discriminatory practices concerning housing still linger in some companies.

Even if housing is available, it may not be practical for a man to move his family from Mill Creek, as it may be too expensive, or there may not be a school available for the children. There are also kin ties in Mill Creek which deter housholds from moving from the familiar to the unfamiliar. A man may be able to move his family to a place closer to his work, but not to where he could commute to his job, and if he must be away from his family, it is just as practical, or more so, to leave them in Mill Creek where there are kin and friends to help in case of emergencies.

If a man is working and separated from his household, there may

be many factors worrying him. He may be lonesome for his wife and children, and he may worry about their safety. He may also worry over the faithfulness of his wife.

It is difficult to describe the actions of the women whose husbands are away without resorting to some speculation as to their motives and aims. Regardless of their intentions, the women seem to court disaster by their behavior. One woman told me in the bar, "I'm really going to get it when he comes home. He made me promise to stay away from the bar." In spite of the promises, the women do go to the bar to meet their friends and to join the parties afterwards. If they then have an offer of further excitement, they take it with little or no hesitation. The offers usually come from white men working somewhere in the area, or from transient white men, and only occasionally from a single Indian man. The offer is usually very casual, "I've got a bottle in the car, let's go for a ride," "Let's go to Watson Lake and have a party," or, "I'm going to Fort Nelson for the weekend, want to come along?" One of the commodities which white men can give, but few, if any, Indian men can, is transportation. Mobility appears to be valued. Many of the women--especially the younger women--expressed a desire to leave Mill Creek, but none of them has the means of transportation.

During the period of this study, I was able to observe the actions of many women whose husbands were away. Their behavior covered a wide range; from simply going to the bar to be with friends, and to see what was going on; to being picked up for a little fun; and, in two cases, to taking up prostitution.

When a man comes home after being away for a while, it will not take him long to find out if his woman has been faithful. At times

the wife will tell him as soon as he arrives, and if not, his neighbours will tell him. His reaction is to beat her up. This may mean nothing more than a few slaps, but more often takes on a more violent nature, and may result in broken bones and teeth.

Even when the man of the household is at home, there seems to be a great deal of suspicion and jealousy expressed. Couples often taunt and criticize each other in the bar, and in front of their friends. The type of criticism varies slightly from couple to couple; Maggie Roper repeatedly taunted Andrew MacDonald for not making enough money, for borrowing money from her and not paying it back, and for acting "stupid" when he drank; Hazel Grey continually reminded Walter Daniels that she was still legally married to a white man; Gertie Peter ridiculed Edward Roper about his behavior when he is drunk.

The duties of a woman in the role of wife overlap a great deal with those duties she performs in the role of mother. A man expects his woman to carry out the general housekeeping chores described above, and to care for the children. He also expects his wife to be a sex partner, at times a work partner, and often a social partner. That is, he expects his woman to accompany him on drinking parties even though this may conflict with her duties as a mother. A man will sometimes take the initiative in finding a baby-sitter for the children so that his wife is free to go to the bar with him. More often the woman makes such arrangements, but at times, especially if there are no tiny babies involved, the couple simply leave. When the children come home and find the parents gone, the eldest daughter takes command.

The criticism of the men tends to be that the woman is not a good housekeeper, that she doesn't take good care of the children, and that

she drinks too much. A man may call a woman a tramp, but a woman never criticizes a man for his sexual activities or his prowess as a lover.

Father Brown said he thought the women taunted their men into beating them just to clear their consciences. He pointed out that most of the women had been unfaithful to their men many times, and he thought that once the woman had goaded her man into beating her, she felt the score had been evened, and her conscience was clear.

It may also be that the woman is testing her man to determine if he still loves her. If she has lost her power to make him jealous or otherwise miserable, he may have lost interest in her.

In spite of the beatings, the women do not appear to change their behavior. A pattern of unfaithfulness, fighting, and reconciliation is built up between the couple. At times the women play the aggressor or she may press legal charges in order to get revenge. Of the 33 couples in the village, for only four I was not able to discover a history of fighting. Three of those four couples are in the 55-65 year age group, and have been married for many years.

The result of the conflict may be a long stormy relationship, such as that of Jack and Annie Moore. The Moores lived as a common-law couple for many years before marrying. Their four eldest children have their mother's maiden name as a surname while the youngest has his father's surname. The relationship between the parents has been hostile and amicable by turns:

> We met Jack and Annie Moore coming out of the bar as we walked by. Jack kept saying "Get home! I told you to get!" She didn't want to go so lay down on the ground. He pounded her and kicked her till her face was bleeding (Field Notes, May 21, 1968).

> I saw Jack and Annie walking home from the bar. Didn't know he was back from the hunt, but he looked happy and he walked with his arm around Annie (Field Notes, July 8, 1968).
>
> There was another knock at the door, and this time it was Annie. Her face was badly cut and bleeding, especially around the mouth. She asked where Jack was, and Tracy said she didn't know where he went. Annie said he had been beating her, but he wouldn't be doing it again. It was then that I noticed she was carrying a 22 in her hand (Field Notes, July 9, 1968).

Jack and Annie's behavior is not regarded as unusual by the villagers, although it is probably more common for such a relationship to be terminated. Usually the man leaves the household, and is, eventually, replaced by another. Lucy Reddick has three children, from three separate unions, and she is now married to a fourth man.

The situation which is created by the absence of the men from the village for long periods gives rise to a certain amount of aggression between couples. Relationships between couples tend to be peaceful and hostile by turns, and in a large number of cases, the relationship is terminated after a period of fighting. Of the 33 couples in Mill Creek, 18 have been together for less than five years, and eight of those for less than two years.

Mother-Child Relationships

Household composition is never stable and in Mill Creek, in some instances, it appears to be particularly transitory. Unions between men and women may last a few weeks, or for many years. The relative instability of the man-woman relationship, as outlined above, emphasizes the mother-child relationship as the only enduring bond. The children remain with their mother even though the father may move on and the mother establishes a union with another man. As the mother's influence is continuous, the mother is usually the source of authority to the child. She is responsible for teaching the children manners and values. She disciplines the children's behavior in the household and in the community. This task seems to have fallen to the woman by default in recent times, as so often the father is not at home to be a disciplinarian. Often the man of the household is not the father of the children, and in such cases his authority over the children seems to be limited to that imposed by force. The children may show resentment and open hostility to their mother's male partner. Florence Cormack complained about her stepfather saying, "Why did my mother have to go and marry that stupid Billy Reddick? All he does is drink up all her money!" But at no time did I hear children whose father was the head of the household expressing contempt or disrespect for their father.

In households in which the male head is the father of the children, the discipline of and authority over the children appears to be more evenly divided, and there is a clearer separation of boys receiving instructions and discipline largely from the father, while girls receive the same from the mother. The man may take his sons along on fishing, hunting or even working trips, but this is seldom the case if the man

is not the child's father.

The mother's discipline is commonly administered by loud scolding, many slaps, and by shaming or ridiculing the child. Older children who are left to care for younger siblings use the same method. The mother may not necessarily be very angry with her child but will, nevertheless, scold it in loud tones. In fact, at times she may try to comfort the child at the same time. I once saw a small child stand on a chair to reach something across the table. The chair slipped and the child fell forward striking his head. The mother's reaction was to yell, "Well, watch what you're doing, you stupid thing!" while picking up the child and rocking him in her arms.

At another time when a child was whining and crying, his mother began to tease and shame him by saying to the other children, "Just look at him cry! What a big baby, I guess we'll get him a bottle!" As the other children began to laugh, the child stopped crying immediately. Older children are also disciplined by shame, but in a slightly different manner. One who is being disobedient or insolent may be accused of "acting smart," or trying to "act like a big man." Such accusations are well able to alter the behavior of a child, teen-ager, or even an adult.

Some of the children related tales of the "olden times" to me, which they had heard from conversations between adults. Possibly the parents' amusement of the children is indirect; that is, it may be a matter of letting the children listen in on conversations in which the children do not take part, but which are directed at them.

Expression of affection also seems to be indirect. While there is very little physical display of emotion between mother and child,

parents often verbally express their affection for their children to another adult in the presence of the child. When I first met Tracy, Mrs. Baker said, "This is my girl Tracy, she sure is a nice girl. I sure am proud of her."

Parents whose children were away to school often said how much they missed their children, and the children similarly related how homesick they had been for their families. When telling of happy events I noted that parents would say, "We sure had a good time, all the kids were there!" They express a joy in being together, but it seems that the family seldom participates in activities as a unit. Their consciousness of being together was obviously more casually circumscribed than mine.

To a large extent, household activities revolve around the woman and her work. This may be due to her considerable economic control and her authority over the children. The man of the house may come and go without appreciably affecting the activities of the children. Only if the woman accompanies the man on a trip outside the home, are the children involved. At such times they may go along, or may be sent to stay with a neighbour or relative. If the mother has a job in another village, the household will be moved, but it is not usually moved to the site of the man's work. For example, when the men are hired to guide for a hunt, their families usually remain in the village. When Annie Moore went to visit her relatives in Ross River for the summer, the children went with her, and her husband followed at a later time.

The Woman in the Community

Mill Creek is composed of several similar though not completely

parallel groups which are held together by certain relationships that cross group boundaries and loosely bind the entire population into a community. The greater portion of the community is made up of Indian groups, and within these groups, the women represent a continuity of residence which the men cannot, due to the necessity of leaving the area to find work. As the women are more constantly in the village, they maintain a more enduring link with their own and the other groups. Contact between the household and the school is invariably channelled through the mother, as is contact with the Church. Even contact from without the community, such as the Department of Indian Affairs, Department of Social Welfare, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are more often than not made through the woman as she is more readily available and because of her influence in the family and the community. The apposition of the woman's availability or continuity in the community and her influence is at least partially circular in effect. The woman's influence on her children is more permanent than that of the father, and she is more available to contact than the father. It follows that representatives of agencies concerned with the welfare of the family, teachers, priests, Public Health Nurses, and Social Workers, seek the mother for consultation. Economic assistance from some of these agencies is most often given to the mother. Because of this contact and the economic assistance being made through the woman, her influence in the community is strengthened, among her own group and beyond.

Almost all families in the village had credit accounts with the local store. Since the woman is responsible for most of the shopping, the financial arrangements are usually made through her. Fairly regular

payments are made on the accounts by the women, when the family allowance cheques and grocery chits are received. Other less regular payments are made whenever a man or his wife have the money. The nearest bank is in Watson Lake, and so the Mill Creek Post Office (located in the store) and the Mill Creek Hotel are the usual places to cash cheques. This gives the proprietors the added advantage of knowing who has money and when. Even though the cheque may be for work done by the man, the store owners will put pressure on the woman to get the money from her husband to make a payment on the account.

The woman tends to have more contact with the Church not only because of her more continual proximity, but also because she will be the one to see that her children receive the rites of the Church and learn the rudiments of the religion.

Women seem to set the tone of the community, not only by their own life style, but by shaping the life style and the character of their children. The community makes certain demands on the woman if she is to remain a member in good standing. She must socialize and not cut herself off from her neighbours, or she will risk being called a snob. Within her own kin group she is expected to lend food (and money when possible) and look after the children of kin when possible. She is further expected to take part in drinking parties and to treat her friends and relatives to drinks when they are broke and she has money. In return she can expect the same kind of consideration.

Not only is the woman expected to support the community by maintaining her kin ties as outlined above, but also she is expected to participate in those activities which cross kin ties, such as attending sports events, movies, the Church, parties, and by taking part in the

gossip circles. A great deal of social control is brought to bear on the community through the gossip groups, which are largely, though not exclusively, women's circles. A person may set a good example by his or her behavior, but must not try to impose her values on others or press them to follow the example. To do so would weaken the example by implying superiority and invite gossip to the effect that the person was acting smart, acting big, or being a snob. In such an event the other members of the community would be quick to point out instances of a lapse from the good behavior.

Millie Francis was often the subject of this sort of gossip. "She's always talking like she's such a good mother," said one young woman, "but when she went off with Arnie she left her kids with a thirteen year-old girl for two weeks, who had to miss school just to take care of Millie's kids."

No one wants to be the target of gossip, and one is always made aware of it when one is the target. The subject has the choice of ignoring the gossip, altering the behavior under criticism, or confronting those he feels most responsible for the gossip. Although the usual result is for the individual to alter the behavior under criticism, fights and/or long term arguments sometimes result from an attempt at the latter. The worry, pressure and anger produced by being the subject of gossip frequently erupt during drinking sessions, and the individual may verbally attack the gossipers. She may call them liars and try to deny the charges, or may call them snoopers and tell them it was none of their business.

At one time Walter Daniels and Blacky Harper were good friends. Then Blacky began saying that Walter beat his wife too much. When

Walter began to feel the pressure he did not deny the charges, but said it was no one's business. The incident ended the friendship and a long period of hostility began between the two men.

The woman is also expected to protect the community from outsiders, in that she is expected not to share gossip with strangers, with the non-Indian residents of Mill Creek, or with "government people" (Social Workers, Indian Agents, Public Health Nurses, and the Royal Canadian Mounted Police are lumped together - often with others who are not government employees at all - as "government people").

It was a young man who told me that Millie Francis was disliked by many of the villagers "because she is a snob." Millie spent much of her time ingratiating herself to the whites by supplying them with bits of gossip from the village. This amounted to treason in the eyes of the Indians. She was soon excluded from the gossip circles, but was herself the subject of much gossip, to the effect that she was acting smart and trying to act like a white person. Millie's situation was somewhat complicated in that she was married to a white. At times they left the village and moved to another town where she associated mainly with whites. When they returned to the village to live Millie tried to make friends with the white residents of Mill Creek, resulting in an alienation from her neighbours and kin. Eventually the pressure of social controls applied through the gossip circles produced the desired effect. Millie appeared somewhat humbled and made an effort to strengthen her kin and community ties. As she and her husband later moved again, this story was probably to be repeated. However, it illustrates something of the working of the social controls in the community to protect that community and to maintain the status quo.

CONCLUSIONS

Several points have been emphasized in this study. The Indians of Mill Creek, once independent producers, now engage largely in wage labour to support themselves. Wage labour takes many of the men from the village for long periods of time. In contrast, the duties of a woman tend to keep her in the village where she represents a relatively stable link with other members of the community, the Church, the school, and various agencies. Periodic separation of the men from the women appears to weaken conjugal relationships and leaves the mother-child bond as the strongest and longest lasting. Due to social assistance provided by the larger community, and the employment which a woman may carry out within the village, the woman does not require the economic support of a man to maintain a household.

TABLE 5

Economic Activities and Household Forms 1968

Economic Activity	No. of Households	Matrifocal Expected*	Matrifocal Actual	Not Matrifocal Expected*	Not Matrifocal Actual
Hunting and Guiding	12	4.00	7	8.00	5
Trapping	7	2.33	1	4.67	6
Wood Cutting	7	2.33	6	4.67	1
Firefighting	12	4.00	8	8.00	4
Mining Exploration Labour	9	3.00	7	6.00	2
Highway Maintenance Labour	9	3.00	7	6.00	2

* Expected frequencies are calculated using the community ratio of 8 matrifocal to 16 non-matrifocal households.

This study further proposed to look at possible economic factors which could lead to the formation of matrifocal households in the community. The discussion of Kunstadter's hypothesis on page six pointed out the tautological nature of the hypothesis, and suggested that the way to break the tautology was to examine the nature of the economic activities practiced by the community, to see if they encourage development of the matrifocal household form. From earlier descriptions of Mill Creek economic activities, and lengthier descriptions of the woman's role, it can be seen that it is the predominantly male sources of income that relate to the relative separation of the sexes. In Mill Creek no sources of income were encountered which required prolonged periods of absence of the female from the household.

Table 5 lists six of the prominent economic activities in which male household heads participate, and notes the number of matrifocal and non-matrifocal households engaged in these activities. Obviously the "single" households (male or female centred) have been omitted from consideration.

The period of research for this study did not exceed four consecutive months spent in Mill Creek. Information gathered at that time, and previous acquaintance with some families in Mill Creek made it possible to base Table 5 on a one year cycle. However, to expand beyond that would not be justified as many households changed composition in that period. Table 4, for example, outlines the composition of households in Mill Creek as of 1968. But upon my return to the village the following year, I learned that two of these unions had broken up and the women had new partners. A third union, which had previously shown signs of dissolution, appeared to have stabilized.

The following description gives some indication as to how households were described as either matrifocal or non-matrifocal.

In Table 4, seven of the fourteen households in the "Married" group are described as nuclear. One can be considered matrifocal as the three children are of the wife's former unions. This marriage is of less than five years duration. The other six households in the group have some features in common--the average length of the marriage is over ten years, the household still operates a trapline as a family unit, and during the summer and fall they make extended fishing and hunting expedition. As the household works and moves as a unit the men have not been separated from the women for any great length of time.

None of the "Married, Extended" group have been described as matrifocal. In each case the marriage of the heads of the household is longstanding and fairly stable. In several cases the couple are elderly and do not constitute a part of the labour force. The elderly couple remain in charge of the household but rely a great deal on contributions from other members of the household. In one case both the man and his adult son have obtained work within commuting distance from the village, so have not been separated from their respective spouses.

Eight households are classified as "Common-law Nuclear". Three are longstanding unions over ten years as an average, and although not legalized, are relatively stable. None of these households has experienced separation. This group does not exhibit the characteristics defined as matrifocal. Also in the "Common-law Nuclear" group, are five households which do not appear to be matrifocal. They are composed of unions that are of an average of less than two years, and each has been

preceded on the woman's part, with one or more other unions. Some or all of the children in the household are of the mother's previous unions. All of the men in this group are periodically separated from the women by the necessity of working outside of the village.

There are two households in the "Common-law Extended" group. Both may be considered as matrifocal. The first consists of a couple, the woman's children of a former marriage, and her elderly mother. The house they live in belongs to the woman and her legal husband. Her common-law husband is often away from the village working, at which times she may have another male living with her. She and her common-law husband have been together less than two years. The second "Common-law Extended" household consists of siblings and their respective nuclear families. Neither couple has lived together for more than two years. One couple has several children from the mother's former unions. The second couple has no children. The house they occupy appears to be the property of the woman with the children. She and her common-law husband are often separated as he goes wood-cutting in the summer and guiding in the hunting season. The other couple are not separated as the man seldom works.

Of the "Single" group, the two households of widowed or legally separated females and their children, are matrifocal as in each case there have been males temporarily associated with the household while the constant members are the mothers and their children. The two households of single males are obviously not matrifocal, although from time to time one of the members may take up residence with a woman in the village.

In summary, then, of the twenty-eight households, including the

"single" households, ten are matrifocal and eighteen are not. For the purpose of calculating the coincidence of male economic activities and household forms, (see Table 5), the "single" households have been excluded. Of the twenty-four households excluding the "single" households, eight are matrifocal and sixteen are not.

Having described each household as either matrifocal or non-matrifocal, it is then possible to look at the economic activities of the male adults in an effort to relate matrifocality to participation in specific occupations requiring periodic separation of the adult males from their households.

In Table 5, the males of a household may be represented in more than one occupational category, but only once in each, so the total number for any one occupation will not exceed 24. As a rule, a man was included in an occupational category only if he spent two weeks or more of the season engaged in that activity.

Using the ratio of 8 matrifocal to 16 non-matrifocal households in the community, expected frequencies were calculated for each of the six most common forms of economic activities. A comparison of the actual tabulations by household form with the expected frequencies indicates that certain economic activities show considerable deviations from the expected frequencies. The number of matrifocal households participating in hunting and guiding, wood-cutting, firefighting, mining exploration labour and highway maintenance labour considerably exceeds the expected frequencies while they fall somewhat short of the expected frequency for trapping. Conversely, the number of non-matrifocal households participating in hunting and guiding, wood-cutting, firefighting, mining exploration labour and highway maintenance labour is notably less than the expected frequency, but larger than the expected frequency

for trapping. Table 5, then, would indicate that certain male economic activities correlate with specific household forms.

In summary then, the matrifocal household form is an important one in Mill Creek, but it is not the dominant form. Approximately 64 percent of the households are not matrifocal. Male economic activities fall roughly into six occupational categories, some of which require the males to be separated from their households for prolonged periods, and some of which can be carried out by household units. The households in which male economic activities require separation tend to correspond to those which fit the description of matrifocality. None of the economic activities carried out by women require that they be separated from their household. The above would suggest that the development of the matrifocal household form is, in part, a result of participation in specific economic activities.

The nature of this study, focused on a small community, over a brief period of time suggests but does not allow a close examination of variables that logically could influence the formation of the matrifocal household. The following are among those that come to mind.

1. The relative importance of the woman's sources of income: Although a woman earns less than does a man for the work she does, or through social assistance she is able to draw, her income tends to be steadier and more stable than a man's. In the long run, the security of her income may make it more important to the economy of the household than is the man's income.

2. The character of woman's work: This brief study has indicated that in Mill Creek a woman's work seldom requires her to be separated from the household for long periods of time. For the most part the

sources of income to which women have access, allow them to remain within the household and free to care for their children. If woman's work took her away from the household for long periods, one would logically predict that the instance of matrifocality in the community would be reduced.

3. Mobility: It is possible that the effects of separation of the adult males from the females could be reduced or eliminated if a man were able to commute to and from his job, or were able to locate his household close to his job, eg. in a housetrailer, hotel or rented accommodation.

All of these variables are worthy of further study and one may anticipate that the results will improve the predictability of the emergence of the matrifocal household in the community.

NOTES

1. In 1969 the monthly assistance rates used by the Department of Rehabilitation and Social Improvement (formerly the Department of Social Welfare) were as follows:

TABLE 6

Rates and Services of Social Assistance

Number of Persons (including children)	Food	Sundries, Clothing, etc.	Shelter	Total
1	$ 35.00	$15.00	$30.00	$ 80.00
2	$ 60.00	$30.00	$45.00	$135.00
3	$ 70.00	$45.00	$50.00	$165.00
4	$ 85.00	$55.00	$55.00	$195.00
5	$100.00	$65.00	$60.00	$225.00

2. Mill Creek is officially part of the Liard Band Kaska, and under the jurisdiction of the Chief and Band Council of the Upper Liard in the Yukon. However, because of the intervening distance, and also because of the large number of Tahltan living in Mill Creek, the Chief and Band Council have had little to do with Mill Creek, and the Indian Agent has, to a large extent, taken over the duties and decision making - concerning housing in that village.
3. Solien's Abstract was not available for study. This definition was taken from a quotation in Kunstadter's paper (1963).
4. Throughout this paper the term "village" is used when speaking of only "the Indian part" of Mill Creek. "The community" is used when referring to the entire town.

5. A status Indian is one who

(a) on the 26th day of May 1874 was, for the purpose of 'An Act providing for the organization of the Department of the Secretary of State of Canada, and for the management of Indian Ordnance Lands,' being chapter 42 of the Statutes of Canada, 1868, as amended by section 6 of chapter 6 of the Statutes of Canada, 1869, and section 8 of chapter 21 of the Statutes of Canada, 1874, considered to be entitled to hold, use or enjoy the lands and other immovable property belonging to or appropriated to the use of the various tribes, bands or bodies of Indians in Canada;

(b) is a member of a band
(i) for whose use and benefit, in common, lands have been set apart or since the 26th day of May, 1874, have been agreed by treaty to be set apart, or
(ii) that has been declared by the Governor in Council to be a band for the purposes of this Act;

(c) is a male person who is a direct descendant in the male line of a male person described in paragraph (a) or (b);

(d) is the legitimate child of
(i) a male person described in paragraph (a) or (b) or
(ii) a person described in paragraph (c);

(e) is the illegitimate child of a female person described in paragraph (a), (b) or (d); or

(f) is the wife or widow of a person who is entitled to be registered by virtue of paragraph (a), (b), (c), (d) or (e).

6. A Non Status Indian is

(a) a person who
(i) has received or has been allotted half-breed lands or money scrip,
(ii) is a descendant of a person described in subparagraph (i)
(iii) is enfranchised, or
(iv) is a person born of a marriage entered into after the 4th day of September 1951 and has attained the age of twenty-one years, whose mother and whose father's mother are not persons described in paragraph 11(1)(a), (b) or (d) or entitled to be registered by virtue of paragraph 11(1)(e),

unless, being a woman, that person is the wife or widow of a person described in section 11, and

(b) a woman who married a person who is not an Indian, unless that woman is subsequently the wife or widow of a person described in section 11.

7. The Interdict List is a list of names of persons who are denied, by law, the right to purchase and/or consume alcoholic beverages, for a stipulated period of time. A person's name was interdicted after several convictions for excessive drinking were incurred.

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Title of Thesis:

THE INDIAN WOMAN AND HOUSEHOLD STRUCTURE
IN MILL CREEK, BRITISH COLUMBIA

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May 8, 1974
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