



Pimachiowin Aki World Heritage Project Research Summary **Anishnaabeg in the Fur Trade of the Petit Nord**

For generations, Anishnaabeg from Pimachiowin Aki area hunted fur-bearing animals and took their pelts hundreds of kilometers to Euro-Canadian trading posts on Hudson Bay, Lake Superior and Lake Winnipeg. Pimachiowin Aki, located within a region known as the Petit Nord (Little North), remained unknown to the fur merchants until the 1770s when they were invited to visit the region and build trading posts.

This happened long after the fur trade frontier had penetrated into the far northwest of the continent along the Mackenzie River basin. The late development of the Euro-Canadian fur trade in Pimachiowin Aki was the result of complex human and geographical factors. This headwaters region consisting of rivers flowing into Hudson Bay, Lake Winnipeg and Lake Superior was difficult to access because navigation required numerous portages over rapids and waterfalls.

Anishnaabeg leaders also played a role in shaping the development of the fur trade. They guided the newcomers into their territory and selected places where trading posts were to be built. They played rival traders against one another and obtained the best prices for furs in a competitive environment. However, the fur resources were soon exhausted and the merger of the North West and Hudson's Bay Company in 1821 signaled an end to the competitive period.

The brief period of fur trade competition meant that the Anishnaabeg were relatively less impacted by Euro-Canadians than the Aboriginal people in other regions of Canada. Many returned to a self-sufficient way of life that was not dependent on Euro-Canadian goods. This paper will explore the development of the fur trade in Pimachiowin Aki, and assess its impact on the Anishnaabeg.

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