08

**Fall**

Research Paper Outline

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Research Paper Outline

Research Question/Thesis: How the arrival of European women impacted the fur trade, particularly Indigenous women involved in the fur trade in Rupert’s Island; particularly Red River Settlement in the mid to late 1800’s.

Statement:

The arrival of European women, particularly European wives to fur traders greatly impacted Indigenous women. Indigenous women were not seen as suitable anymore to be wives to European men, they were looked down upon and this could ultimately lead to the destruction of the relationship between Indigenous peoples and Europeans.

Body 1: Indigenous women involved in the fur trade

1. Marriage between Indigenous women and white men who came to Canada (settlers)
   1. “As the only females available in the Indian Country, Indian women were taken as marital partners by the traders and actually became an integral part of the fur-trade society, an option that as never open to their male counterpart” (Sylvia Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties, p. 75). Marriage *à la facon du pays* (Sylvia Van Kirk, “The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society” in Neglected Majority, p. 28)
   2. “Since colonization was envisaged, no white women accompanied the fur traders” (Van Kirk, Neglected Majority, p. 27)
   3. “…the women must bee seen as active participants in the developing complex of Indian-white relations” (Van Kirk ,Many Tender Ties. 75)
2. Roles Indigenous women partook in
   1. “They clean and put into a state of preservation all Beavr. and Otter skins brought by the Indians undried and in bad condition. They prepare Line for Snow Shoes and knot them also without your Honors servants could not give efficient opposition to the Canadian traders…and are useful in a variety of other instances…” (Van Kirk, ““The Impact of White Women on Fur Trade Society”, p. 27)
   2. “The presence of the traders allowed certain enterprising Indian women to greatly increase their influence and status, individuals such as… were able to work themselves into positions of genuine power” (Van Kirk, Many Tender Ties p. 77)

Body 2: Arrival of European Wives and their Experiences

1. European wives arriving at the colonies, particularly Frances Simpson
   1. “Although Frances Simpson was undoubtedly a very pretty and cultivated young lady, her sheltered upbringing and delicate constitution made her an unlikely candidate for the role of Governor’s lady in the inhospitable wilds of Rupert’s land” (Neglected Majority, p. 40)
   2. “…this sense of isolation was augmented not only by her educated British background but by her high rank as the governor’s wife…” (Strangers in Blood, p. 129)
   3. “Simpson contributed himself to the’ copper-colored mates’ of his officers” (p. 129)
   4. “with the arrival of Frances Simpson, the Governor seemed determined to create an all-white elite in the settlement” (Many Tender Ties p. 204)
2. Views and attitudes
   1. “My cloke has come down. It is lined with a fine sort of scarlet worsted cloth, has both hood & cape & looks well…silk bonnets are trimmed with the same as the bonnets are made of, a good many twistings that I am sure cd not be done in Campn” (Letters, p. 33)
   2. “The people here all wear straw bonnets…” (p. 34)
   3. “she says she was s complete savage, with a coarse blue sort of woolen gown without shape & a blanket fastened round her neck” (p. 36)
3. Treatment of Indigenous women by European wives
   1. “European ladies were expected to treat native females with the polite condescension that a genteel woman would show to her servants or persons of lower rank” (Many Tender Ties pp 205-206)
   2. Mrs MacMillan’s behavior in holding herself aloof from native women was considered most appropriate (Many Tender Ties p. 206)

Body 3: Shift from Indigenous women to European women

1. Influence of European women on the fur trade society
   1. “Governor Simpson, he declared, had performed an immeasurable service in bringing this charming creature to the Indian Country because her coming heralded an improved standard of morality and gentility” (Neglected Majority p. 42)
   2. “the governor’s lady was extolled as the ‘brightest star’ in Red River society, but her very presence tended to reinforce class distinctions in the settlement… one mixed blood officer in the Company observed ‘things are not the same footing as formerly’” (Neglected Majority p. 45)
   3. “…keeping them [country wives] in the background rather than exposing them to the slights and snubs which they might now encounter in the changing social climes of Rupert’s Land.
2. Decline of Indigenous women’s position in the fur trade society
   1. “…in more established areas, particularly at Red River, a country wife was no longer acceptable” (Neglected Majority p. 47)
   2. “It now became fashionable for a Company officer to have a European wife
   3. “Marriage a la facon du pays was now no longer acceptable, especially with the presence of missionaries” (Neglected Majority p. 48)
   4. “Mixed blood wives such as…who had once been at the top of the fur trade hierarchy, must have bitterly resented the white ladies who caused them such a loss in status” (Many Tender Ties p. 207

Bibliography

Brown, Jennifer S. H. *Strangers in Blood: Fur Trade Company Families in Indian Country*. Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1980.

Hargrave, Letitia. Letitia Hargrave to Mrs. Dugald Mactavish. May 21, 1840. *In Letters of Letitia Hargrave.* Edited by Margaret Arnett Macleod, 34-36. New York: Greenwood Press, 1969.

Kirk, Sylvia Van. *Many Tender Ties: Women in Fur-trade Society, 1670-1870*. Winnipeg, Manitoba: Watson & Dwyer Publishing, 1980.

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Statement of Process Documents

After hearing about this assignment, at first I wanted to focus on women and how they impacted the fur trade. I further narrowed this down to Indigenous women because I thought that there were missing in this discussion. After further research I realized that the voices or perspectives actually missing are those of European women. After extensive research, I changed the direction of my research. I knew I still wanted to focus on women and how they impacted the fur trade, but instead of Indigenous women, I changed my focus to European women.

While doing research on this topic, I found it very difficult to access primary sources. Most of the primary sources that were quoted in books or online were paper based and are stored in archives in either Ottawa or Manitoba. The primary source I use is a collection of letter of Letitia Hargrave, one of the European wives of an influential personal working for HBC in Rupert’s Island. In her letters she mentions other European wives and her life in Rupert’s Island. While trying to look for my primary sources, I came across various secondary sources that were useful to my research topic, and coincidently, they were all books.

As mentioned previously, I planned to focus on the role and impact of Indigenous women in the fur trade, but later changed to European women. Going into the research all I knew was that Indigenous women married Europeans in order to advance the fur trade; this made me to think as to what happened to European women. Where were they? Did they have any views into European men marrying Indigenous women? After I decided to change direction, I had thought that the European’s women impact would have been positive, like the Indigenous women. I was very wrong to think this. After going through my sources, I found out that the arrival of European women were detrimental to Indigenous women, especially those that were directly involved in the fur trade. This idea was fascinating to me, and reading further into the differences of European women and Indigenous women made me understand more why European women threatened Indigenous women’s impact in Rupert’s Island in mid 1800’s.

Before this research, I never really gave much thought as to why marriage between Indigenous women and European women reduced or stopped immediately. This could also explain why the relationship between the Europeans and Indigenous people worsened. Before the arrival of European women, Indigenous women were values, but this diminished and stopped following their arrival. I still wonder if the impact of European were all negative, or if there were actually some instances in which they helped further the fur trade, like Indigenous women. I wonder if the wives that arrived weren’t wives of high-ranking officials, if this would change anything. I also question what other factors resulted in the decline of Indigenous women involved in the fur trade.

Fore next time, I would choose a topic that has more information written on it. Since I focus on European women there isn’t much written on them, most of them returned back home, and the fact that they were not much of an impact economically would make them less important to write documents or accounts on them.