Nuu-Chah-Nulth Labour Relations in the Pelagic Sealing Industry, 1868-1911

by

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B.A. University of Victoria, 1991

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in the Department of History

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University of Victoria

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0-612-21904-6
Supervisor: Dr. Eric Sager

ABSTRACT

This thesis presents an analysis of Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour relations in the Canadian pelagic sealing industry from 1868 to 1911. During the life span of the industry the dominant economy within British Columbia shifted from mercantile to industrial capitalism, and the economic role of aboriginal people changed from independent commodity producers to a wage labour force.

The process by which one set of labour relations replaces another cannot be taken for granted as the inevitable by-product of capitalist intrusion and dominance. Labour relations in pelagic sealing developed out of the existing relationship between Nuu-Chah-Nulth commodity producers and coastal traders. Strategies employed during labour negotiations represented adaptations of strategies used during commodity exchange. Despite their efforts, capital investors were unable to apply normal capitalist labour relations in sealing. They could not do so because capitalist labour relations had not supplanted the older form of co-operative labour relations.
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Many people have assisted in the research, analysis, and production of this study. To all of them I give my gratitude; in particular, I would like to thank the following individuals:

First, and last, I must thank my family, without whose love and support I could not have completed this work.

My appreciation is also expressed to the members of my committee. Dr. Eric Sager has consistently and respectfully supported both the research and the subsequent thesis. His enthusiasm and his criticism have, by turns, provided what was needed. Dr. Peter Baskerville taught me to say "three" rather than "a few"; the need for precision has more than once kept me on the right track. I would also like to thank Dr. Nancy Turner and Dr. Lawrence McCann for the time taken to read and comment on the final draft.

For their generosity in sharing both their ongoing research and their time, I would like to thank: Richard Mackie, John Lutz, Joan Goddard, Dianne Newell, Barbara Lane, David Farrell, and Susan Crockford.

I would also like to thank the staff of the British Columbia Archives and Records Service and Guy Matthias of the Maritime Museum of British Columbia for their assistance during the course of my research.

During the final preparation of this thesis Richard
Inglis, Eric Sager and Monica Perry provided essential aid. Jenny Godwin and Susan Crockford deserve special mention for their contribution to the production of the figures.

A special debt of gratitude goes to Richard Inglis and Jim Haggarty, for taking me out into Nuu-Chah-Nulth territory in a rubber boat, and to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth people I have had the pleasure to meet. The time spent on the land and the water have afforded me whatever insight into the lives of Nuu-Chah-Nulth people I may possess.
Chapter One

Introduction

This thesis presents an analysis of labour relations between Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers and non-aboriginal capital in the Canadian pelagic sealing industry from 1868 to 1911. The term pelagic sealing refers to the hunting of the Northern fur seal (Callorhinus ursinus) on the open ocean, as opposed to rookery hunting. Figure 1.1 indicates the migration route of the Northern fur seal. In late autumn the seals left their rookeries on the Pribilof Islands in the Bering Sea; on their return route in the early spring the seals congregated in large groups to feed at the various offshore banks and shoals along the Northwest Coast. Younger animals, especially pups and yearlings, also followed small schooling fish into the numerous bays and inlets along the coast.

Northern fur seals had been an important food source for many Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities along this annual migration route. The territory of the tribal groups which form the present-day Nuu-Chah-Nulth Nation extends from the Brooks Peninsula on the northwest coast of Vancouver Island to Sheringham Point. Figure 1.2 indicates the location

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1 Map adapted from "Map Showing the Annual Migration of the Fur Seals of Alaska," Alaska Sealing, ca. 1890, Pacific Northwest Coast Collection, University of Washington.

2 Also included are the culturally related Makah people of the Olympic Peninsula in Washington State. The Oregon Boundary Treaty of 1849 separated the Nuu-Chah-Nulth of Vancouver Island from their relatives on the Olympic peninsula. Economic and social relationships between the Makah and Vancouver Island Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities continue despite the international boundary between them.
Figure 1.2: Location of Nuu-Chah-Nulth Tribal Groups in the Nineteenth Century.
of Nuu-Chah-Nulth tribal groups in the nineteenth century.

The pelagic sealing industry developed on the west coast of Vancouver Island and the Olympic Peninsula in the late 1860s as a unique form of co-operative commodity production between Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters and local coastal merchant traders. In terms of the production process itself, the development of the pelagic sealing industry was "simply an outgrowth of the coastal sealing by Indians." Vessels owned by local coastal traders began to take hunters and their canoes to their hunting grounds offshore from Vancouver Island. The use of schooners to take the aboriginal hunters to local hunting grounds was extended along the entire migration route from California to the Northern Pacific. By the mid-1880s, sealing schooners were following the seals into the Bering Sea itself.

After 1886, the potential for large profits to be gained from pelagic sealing in the Bering Sea attracted regionally-based entrepreneurs. With the entry of schooners into the Bering Sea, changes to aboriginal technology were made, particularly in the substitution of guns for harpoons, which allowed for the increasing participation of non-aboriginal hunters in the pelagic sealing industry. By the

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3 The term "co-operative" is used here as an adjective rather than a noun. Thus the stress is on working together for mutual benefit rather than on collective ownership.

1890s, pelagic sealing, which had begun as a locally based, small scale production process, had become a resource-based industry of consequence within the economy of British Columbia.

The extension of pelagic sealing into the Bering Sea initiated a conflict between the American and British governments over the exclusive rights of ownership and access to the Pribilof seal herds. After 1894, increasing restrictions were placed on operations on the coast and in the Bering Sea. By the early years of the twentieth century, a combination of over-harvesting and government regulations led to diminished profits, and ultimately, to the collapse of the industry. Pelagic sealing was prohibited by International Treaty between the United States, Britain, and Japan in 1911.

Graph 1.1 illustrates the growth of pelagic sealing from the late 1860s through 1911. The industry peaked in 1896, when there were approximately 60 Canadian-based schooners in operation. Compared to other resource-based industries in British Columbia, the Canadian pelagic sealing

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Graph 1.1: Total Number of Canadian Schooners in Operation, 1868-1911.
industry was relatively small scale and short-term. Nonetheless, sealing was considered by the players at the time to have been the fourth major resource industry of the late nineteenth century, behind lumber, fishing, and mining.  

There were three stages in the development of the pelagic sealing industry. Stage one, the so-called "Pioneer Period," represents the local development of co-operative commodity production undertaken by Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers and coastal merchants, from ca. 1868 to 1885. The second stage is marked by the growth of pelagic sealing as a regional resource-based industry through the late 1880s and early 1890s prior to the enforcement of governmental restrictions on production in 1894. The final stage of pelagic sealing is represented by its decline through the late 1890s to its ultimate collapse in 1911.

With the exception of the five seasons between 1890 and 1894, the majority of labour in pelagic sealing came from Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities along the west coast of Vancouver Island. During the Pioneer Period, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were essentially the sole source of labour within the industry.  

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7 The exception in this period was the participation of the Haida Nation: Charles Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 5; Peter Murray, The Vagabond Fleet: A Chronicle of the North Pacific Sealing Schooner Trade
After 1886, an increase in the employment of non-aboriginal labour and technology threatened to displace the Nuu-Chah-Nulth from the industry. After 1894, however, with the banning of firearms in the Bering Sea, Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour gained an advantage which it held for the remainder of the industry. Graph 1.2 indicates the number of schooners in the Canadian pelagic sealing industry employing aboriginal labour compared to the total number of schooners in the years 1868 through 1911.8

Until recently, the history of the relations between aboriginal labour and non-aboriginal capital has been a topic conspicuously absent from historic treatments of resource industries in British Columbia. The importance of aboriginal labour to the economic growth of the Province is now acknowledged, as a direct result of the ground-breaking

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8 For the period prior to 1889 the primary source is Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing". After 1889 Victoria Sealing Company records indicate which schooners carried "Native" and "White" hunters: Sealing Report 1889-1911," F I/BS/Sel, BCARS. Not all "Native" hunters were Nuu-Chah-Nulth; other First Nations, notably the Haida and Straits Salish, also participated in schooner-based sealing. Nonetheless, the evidence suggests that this participation was only a factor during the peak years of the industry between 1890 and 1896. See especially: "Commissioner’s Report, Pelagic Sealing Commission," Canada, Sessional Paper, No. 79 (Ottawa: Queen’s Printer, 1916).
Graph 1.2: Number of Native-Crewed Schooners and Total Schooners, 1868-1911.
work of Rolf Knight.Knight's work, and other general studies that followed, explored the broad range of options for wage labour available to aboriginal communities.

John Lutz has examined the importance of aboriginal labour in the economy of the European newcomers. In his survey of aboriginal wage labour in the provincial economy up to the mid-twentieth century, Lutz has offered more systematic confirmation of Knight's conclusion that aboriginal labour was not marginal. While acknowledging the dramatic changes in economic activities of First Nations communities, the author has also pursued the extent to which elements of indigenous economies persisted. In particular, Lutz has provided an explanation for the acceptance of wage labour by First Nations communities within the context of their own institutions, especially the potlatch. Lutz points also to the need for intensive local "case studies."

Previous historiography has run the risk of over-

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9 Rolf Knight, *Indians at Work: An Informal History of Native Labour in British Columbia, 1858-1930* (Vancouver: New Star Books, 1978). This work immediately stimulated interest in the topic of the role of aboriginal labour, as acknowledged by the authors of later works.


generalizing about "Indians" or "native-white relations" as though province-wide conclusions could be drawn in the absence of detailed local studies.

The groundwork laid by economic anthropologists working within a substantivist framework encouraged the development of new models which acknowledged that traditional formalist or neo-classical theories are specific to the rise of industrial capitalism in western Europe. Economic exchanges can no longer be viewed as independent phenomena, governed by allegedly universal economic motives or norms; economic interaction is embedded in culture. The use of the substantivist approach on the Northwest Coast, however, has reinforced the focus on the circulation of goods (through such reciprocal and redistribution systems as the potlatch), at the expense of an investigation of other aspects of the relations of production such as the division and control of labour. More importantly, in defining one set of criteria for the analysis of non-capitalist societies and another for capitalism, the use of the substantivist approach makes it difficult to discuss the interaction

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between the two systems.\textsuperscript{14}

Recent research by ethnohistorians of the Northwest Coast has moved beyond the work of earlier ethnographers, who were forced to filter out the effects of contact in their attempt to reconstruct "traditional" societies. In particular, feminist scholars are meeting the challenge of the investigation of complexities of changing economic roles of aboriginal women.\textsuperscript{15}

It has been argued that where anthropologists tend to see too little change, historians tend to see too much.\textsuperscript{16} The characterization of aboriginal people as a necessary class of wage labour set up a false dichotomy between subsistence and wage economy. Knight for example, suggested that it was "extreme romanticism" to equate the traditional processing of fish with the assembly-line processing of fish in the early cannery industry. One action is that of a

\textsuperscript{14} Donald L. Donham, \textit{History, power, ideology: Central issues in Marxism and anthropology} (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), pp. 12-14.


participant in a self-sufficient subsistence economy; the other, that of a worker in a wage economy. Nevertheless, for many aboriginal women in British Columbia, both activities were an integral part of an economic cycle that included both subsistence and wage labour. Lorraine Littlefield has examined the compatibility of wage labour with aboriginal women's traditional productive roles within their subsistence economies.

In all of this recent work, limited attention has been given to certain theories applied elsewhere in the world to explain the failure of indigenous economies to develop in the post-colonial world. Such theories include dependency theory and the theory of articulating modes of production. Lutz cites some of the sources on Latin America, but does not attempt a systematic test of dependency theory and its derivatives in the British Columbia context. More often dependency theory has crept into the analysis indirectly, with reference to the actions of the Canadian state. Certainly dependency theory influenced those scholars who

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emphasize the role of the state in the suppression of such
pre-existing relations of production as the potlatch and in
the failure of government agents directly responsible for
the economic welfare of aboriginal communities to support
the development of independent economic enterprise.

The role of government policy in the process of
marginalization of First Nations communities is a popular
theme within the history of "native-white relations" in
British Columbia. The most recent treatment of the cannery
industry, although it does not directly follow the
dependency theory model, does emphasize the effect of
government regulations on the economies of those First
Nations communities that made up the aboriginal work force
within the industry. Such regulations protected capital
investment at the expense of aboriginal fishers.20 Such
studies, however, give the actions of government a
determinant role in the relationship between aboriginal and
capitalist economies. In his investigation of the
effectiveness of the "Indian policy" of the Canadian
government, J.R. Miller notes:

just as their ancestors often shaped the conduct
of the fur trade and served as equal partners in
military alliances in the seventeenth and
eighteenth centuries, Indian peoples of the late
nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were
actors who pursued their interests and struggled
to preserve their identity. They resisted, evaded,

20 Dianne Newell, Tangled Webs of History: Indians and
the Law in Canada's Pacific Coast Fisheries (Toronto:
University of Toronto Press, 1993).
and defied efforts to control their decision making, limit their traditional rites, and deprive them of their children.\textsuperscript{21}

A focus on the role of the state obscures the actions of the principal players in the relationship: labour and capital.

The theory of articulating modes of production was developed by economic anthropologists as explanation for the process of capitalist domination during the colonial experience in Africa.\textsuperscript{22} Historical materialism is a theory which concentrates on the history of the capitalist mode of production. The concept of mode of production can be applied to any society.\textsuperscript{23} Where two modes of production connect in economic interaction, they are said to articulate with each other.

Because of its focus on process, this model has particular relevance to changing labour relations. This theory holds that there is an initial period of mutually


\textsuperscript{23} A mode of production is defined here as the combination of productive forces and the relations of production which provide for the maintenance of a society. Productive forces are defined as the relations between producers and the technology and resources necessary for production. The relations of production are those specific social relations which determine the process of production and the distribution of the resulting product. The social relationship between producers can be a co-operative and mutually beneficial one, or one based on dominance and subordinance.
beneficial articulation between the domestic and capitalist modes of production. Specifically, what capitalism initially needs from the colony is labour. In colonial Africa, pre-existing domestic economies had, at least seasonally, surplus labour. Wages could remain relatively low, because old production communities still bore many of the costs which in Western European capitalist relations must be included within wages. Because capitalism prefers a cheap labour pool from which labour can be drawn if and when it is needed, the dismantling of the old mode of production was not to the immediate benefit of capitalism or its agents.

The focus of the articulating modes of production model on the extraction of surplus labour from the domestic community is not co-incidental. Because a mode of production is itself a model which describes a theoretical relationship between social phenomena (productive forces and relations of production), it is not open to either direct or indirect quantitative observations. One solution to the problem of the lack of empirical data has been to focus on the way in which surplus labour is appropriated from the direct producer. Thus, a theoretical relationship can be observed in its manifestation as an historical process.24

Applications of this model in the African context have

shown that, despite the fact that the result of economic interaction seems to always be one of the subordination of indigenous economies to capitalism, the process is specific to time and place. Each encounter between capitalism and non-capitalism has its own history. Anthropologist Reini Raatgever suggests that:

The capitalist system enters into specific relations with the system it encounters in a particular locality; the form which ultimately emerges represents a specific, complex union of the pre-existing systems, both the capitalist and the non-capitalist one.  

Thus, the investigation of such encounters not only illuminates understanding of indigenous economies, but also the local development of capitalism.

Initial applications of this model to the Northwest Coast, however, were less than satisfactory. Sociologists Rennie Warburton and Stephen Scott for example, have investigated the short-term, transitional period of beneficial interaction between Northwest Coast aboriginal economies and mercantile capitalism during the maritime fur-trade. The authors' position is that:

rather than destroying native social organization and its indigenous economy [mercantile capitalism] preserved them, incorporating them into a growing world capitalist market.  

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During the maritime fur trade, aboriginal people maintained control over the means of production, including control over labour power, labour process and access to resources. In the post-fur trade period, however, the commodification of land, labour, and resources seriously disrupted native social and economic organization as agents of industrial capitalism extended their direct control over the production process.27

The authors do not provide empirical evidence for either the processes of extension or disruption. The authors do suggest, however, that it was specifically "capitalist wage-labour relations" that "pav[ed] the way for the subsequent disastrous decline in the well-being of Native peoples in the province."28 The articulating modes of production model is not explicit as to exactly how and why the breakdown of the mutually beneficial articulation occurs, other than the observation that:

the articulation of old and new relations is always unstable. The domination of the capitalist mode invariably leads to a weakening of the old production community.29

The assumption is that traditional capitalist wage labour relations were merely imposed upon aboriginal workers, as

27 Ibid.

28 Ibid.

29 Geschiere, "Imposing capitalist dominance through the state: The multifarious role of the colonial state in Africa," van Binsbergen and Geschiere, eds., Old Modes of Production and Capitalist Encroachment, p. 117.
part of the larger process of capitalist expansion and domination during the late nineteen century. In addition, the effects of the interaction with domestic economies on the reformulation of capitalism has not been given more than lip-service.

The existence of a period of mutually beneficial relations between First Nations people and itinerant or resident fur traders is a common theme in British Columbia historiography. Another common theme is the history of the processes whereby Europeans "extended their jurisdiction, occupied land, managed a resource base, developed an Indian policy, and established sites for the exploitation of the sea coast and interior land mass." Warburton and Scott's thesis is, in many ways, simply another manifestation of the "settlement frontier" thesis: aboriginal people lost control over their lives, suddenly and irrevocably, with the rise of industrial capitalism because they were powerless to deal with such a dramatic change. In short, they were victims of progress.

A recent application of the modes of production model to the cannery industry has addressed the specific issues

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30 See for example, A.J. Ray and Donald Freeman, 'Give Us Good Measure': An Economic Analysis of Relations Between The Indians and the Hudson's Bay Company Before 1763 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1978).

within labour relations beyond the fur trade period.³² Alicja Muszynski’s study of aboriginal cannery workers has stressed some of the differences in labour relations experienced by aboriginal and Asian labour in the industry. The author suggests that the domestic economies of aboriginal workers were still "at least partially intact." Investors in the cannery industry were able to take advantage of this fact and could thus pay aboriginal workers the lowest possible wage.

Domestic economies in British Columbia, however, had been "articulating" with mercantile capitalism in relation to the extraction of surplus labour since the late eighteenth century. Muszynski’s data would suggest that the period of mutually beneficial articulation between Northwest Coast and capitalist modes of production was still in operation well into the twentieth century. This conclusion can be compared to Warburton and Scott’s conclusion that such interaction ended with the fur trade. What has not been addressed in the case of the entry of aboriginal labour into the cannery industry, is the process of change in the relationship during the period of the development of mercantile to industrial capitalism in the Province.

In summary, the changing role of aboriginal people from independent commodity producers to wage labourers is often assumed to be the inevitable result of the arrival of capitalism, or it is seen as the unproblematic consequence of a change from traditional self-sufficiency to dependency. This thesis begins with a very different assumption: the process by which one set of labour relations replaces another cannot be taken for granted as the inevitable by-product of capitalist intrusion and dominance. The processes must be understood within a specific historical context.

The pelagic sealing industry has a number of advantages for the historian who wishes to examine larger processes in a local context. The life span of the pelagic sealing industry incorporated broader changes within British Columbia as it moved from a fur trade economy to a resource-based industrial economy. Of particular relevance to this discussion are the shift in dominance from mercantile capitalism to industrial capitalism, and the related change in the economic role of aboriginal people from independent commodity producers to a wage labour force. The pelagic sealing industry began within the context of a period still dominated by mercantile capitalism, and ended within the period dominated by industrial capitalism. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth were principal players during the decline of the trade economy, in their role as independent commodity producers. They were also principal players during the rise of the
resource-based industrial economy, in their role as a contracted wage labour force in the pelagic sealing industry. Industrial capitalism did not arrive fully developed at the doorsteps of Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities on Vancouver Island in the twentieth century; it had grown up in their own neighbourhood. This situation allows for a look at an actual, not an assumed, process of change from a trade economy to a wage economy within a specific aboriginal society within British Columbia.

Despite the intriguing possibilities, labour relations within the pelagic sealing industry have been treated peripherally. The focus of historians of the pelagic sealing industry has been the international dispute over ownership and access.\(^{33}\) Sealing has also been used as an example of over-harvesting of a natural resource.\(^{34}\) Details of the economic growth and collapse of the industry have

\(^{33}\) Recent overviews include Murray, *Vagabond Fleet*. Earlier treatments include F.W. Howay, *British Columbia from the Earliest Times to the Present* vol. 2 (Vancouver: S.J. Clarke, 1914), pp. 459-466; Wright, "A Brief History".

also drawn attention. For the most part, historians of the sealing industry have focused on the end result of co-operative production during the Pioneer Period, rather than the context of its development. The focus has also been on how the success of co-operative production led to the growth of sealing as a resource industry, rather than its impact on the existing relationship between aboriginal labour and merchant capital. With the entry of schooners into the Bering Sea, and of regionally-based entrepreneurs and non-aboriginal labour into pelagic sealing, the general practice of historians has been to shift the focus of their investigations from the west coast of Vancouver Island to Victoria, and from local economic development to the effects of the dispute over ownership and access on the regional economy.

The role of labour within the industry has been largely reduced to the issue of technology. Paterson and Wilen for example, have compared the economic effects of the use of aboriginal versus non-aboriginal technology and labour in the years between 1886 to 1910, within their study of the decline of the industry. The authors make brief reference to the differences between the two forms of labour in hiring practices and the structure of labour on board the schooner; they make no attempt to go into other aspects of labour

\[35\] Paterson and Wilen, "Depletion and Diplomacy".

\[36\] Ibid., pp. 100-107.
relations which might have relevance to the discussion of
the effect of labour costs on the exit of capital investors
from the industry. In particular, the authors assume the
stability of labour compensation, and although they make
reference to two occasions when there were "pressures strong
enough to warrant an increase in regulated wages," they do
not attempt to identify what these pressures may have
been.\footnote{Ibid., p. 104.}

The difficulties incurred by capital investors in
labour negotiations with the Nuu-Chah-Nulth throughout the
period of growth and decline are well-documented. Peter
Murray for example, makes reference to such difficulties
throughout his overview of the industry.\footnote{Murray, 	extit{Vagabond Fleet}.} Moreover, agents
of the Victoria Sealing Company, in their presentation to
the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing in 1913, insisted
that the inability to obtain Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters was an
important factor in the exit of schooners from the industry
in the ten years prior to the Treaty ban.\footnote{See for example, testimony of A.R. Langley, Victoria
Sealing Company to the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing,
vol. 3. In the index to volumes 3 and 4 of the public
hearings of the Commission there are no less than eighteen
entries under the heading "Difficulties in getting crews".

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or simply ignored.\(^4^0\) There have been few attempts to investigate the reasons why Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour represented such a "problem" to capital investors.

The focus of this thesis is on the specific process of the development of industrial labour relations in the pelagic sealing industry. Two aspects of industrial relations, the production process and product distribution, are addressed directly. The other traditional aspect of industrial relations, ownership of the resource, was outside of the control of both labour and capital. Initially, because fur seals were hunted while on their annual migration route rather than on land, they were deemed, like fish, to be a common property resource.\(^4^1\) Later, when pelagic sealing threatened the monopoly of American rookery owners, the issue of access to the resource became a conflict fought in the international arena. Unlike the fishing industry, however, in the sealing industry

\(^{4^0}\) The counsel for the Federal Government, F.J. Curran said that the Company's argument that it could not find men to take out the schooners was "weak." The Commission had many [white] witnesses who said they had tried to get work and the Company had turned them down (Murray, \textit{Vagabond Fleet}, pp. 205, 220, 230).

\(^{4^1}\) Wallace Clement has noted: "Since small producers do not 'own' the resource (fish) there is little pressure for capital to directly appropriate the means of production". "Canada's Coastal Fisheries: Formation of Unions, Cooperatives, and Associations," \textit{Journal of Canadian Studies}, vol. 19, no. 1 (1984), pp. 7; Clement also provides a useful definition of terms to describe the process of the development of industrial relations within the fishing industry (pp. 7-9).
government regulations formulated to resolve this conflict initially worked to the advantage of aboriginal labour at the expense of capital investors.

Chapter Two investigates the context for the development of pelagic sealing as a form of co-operative commodity production in the mid-nineteenth century. Primary sources for this period are the accounts of traders and government agents concerned with the development of local resources and the potential for local economic development. Wherever possible, Nuu-Chah-Nulth accounts are used to supplement the historic documents.

Chapter Three investigates the "Pioneer Period" of pelagic sealing from 1868 to 1885. The transition from independent commodity production to co-operative production required adaptations of traditional Nuu-Chah-Nulth production and distribution processes. The descriptions of traditional Nuu-Chah-Nulth production and distribution processes within shore-based sealing are taken from published and unpublished ethnographies, as well as contemporary descriptions by both aboriginal people and non-aboriginal observers. My purpose here is to describe the practical aspects of such processes, and to describe the behaviour of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, rather than their motivation.

The principal sources for the development of pelagic sealing in the Pioneer Period are written almost entirely
from the viewpoint of the merchant investor. Such sources focus on the aspects of the development of pelagic sealing which reflect their priorities, such as production figures. Those aspects of co-operative production which reflect Nuu-Chah-Nulth priorities, such as the role of community leaders and the establishment of a protocol for labour negotiations, have been extrapolated from later accounts.

Chapter Four investigates the growth of pelagic sealing as a regional resource-based industry from 1886 to 1894. The focus is on the differences in labour negotiations and on board relations between schooners employing aboriginal and non-aboriginal labour and technology during this period. More specifically, this chapter examines the persistence of Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour relations within the period of transition between co-operative commodity production and capitalist commodity production.

Chapter Five presents an overview of Stage Three, the period of decline from 1894 to 1911. Although the industry peaked in the years from 1892 to 1896 seasons, in terms of numbers of schooners in operation, the government regulations imposed in the 1894 season had immediate consequences on production. Of particular relevance was the restriction on the use of guns in the Bering Sea. As production declined, especially after 1900, non-aboriginal labour and regionally-based investors began a rapid exit from the industry. Those schooner owners who remained were
forced to deal with pre-existing Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour
relations.

The primary sources for both the period of growth and
the period of decline are the data contained within the two
government investigations into the industry. The first
series of investigations was conducted by representatives of
the British and American governments in the period from 1891
to 1893 in preparation for the Tribunal of Arbitration, held
in Paris in 1893. The second series was conducted by the
Canadian government in 1913 and 1914, in relation to claims
resulting from the prohibition of sealing in 1911. Both
of these sources contain verbatim testimony from
participants in the industry, as well as contemporary
interpretations and summaries of such testimony in the form
of Commissioners' reports. Other valuable sources are the
records of the Victoria Shipping Owners and Masters Sealing
Association and the Victoria Sealing and Trading Company.
These records include meeting minutes, correspondence and

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43 Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing, 1913-1914, RG 33-107, vols. 1-10, Public Archives Canada.
the log books from the various sealing schooners.  

Chapter Six presents some of the implications of this thesis for the current understanding of the process of economic interaction between the Nuu-Chah-Nulth and capitalism into the twentieth century.

44 Company records are primarily held at B.C. Archives and Records Services (BCARS) as "Victoria Sealing Company Records," Add Ms 16. Additional records, including schooner log books are held at the Maritime Museum of B.C., Victoria.
Chapter Two
Local Conditions

The pelagic sealing industry developed on the west coast of Vancouver Island and at Neah Bay, Washington in the mid-nineteenth century. The British Commissioners to the Tribunal of Arbitration reported in 1892 that the industry had developed as a outgrowth of coastal hunting by aboriginal sealers and noted that

the industry thus developed in consequence of peculiar local conditions had never elsewhere appeared as a factor of commercial importance, and that in so far as we have been able to discover by inquiries specially directed to this point, no vessels carrying hunters for the purpose of taking seals at large on the sea-surface had ever before frequented any seas anywhere.45

This chapter investigates two of the "peculiar local conditions" leading to the development of this unique form of sealing. These conditions are the revival of a trade economy on the Northwest Coast, and the return of the fur seal.

The re-establishment of sustained trade relations in the early 1850s brought a revival of a trade economy to the west coast of the Olympic Peninsula and Vancouver Island. The limited documents concerning this trade suggest many

similarities with the maritime fur trade period of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Coastal trade on the west coast of Vancouver Island during the mid-nineteenth century was carried out, for the most part, by independent entrepreneurs. Small vessels owned and operated by these traders made annual or semi-annual cruises to various ports of call along the coast, leaving Victoria with trade goods and returning with oil, fish, and furs. Intermittently, temporary trading posts were also established.

There were also many similarities in the roles of both the Nuu-Chah-Nulth producer and the coastal merchant in this period as those which have been documented for the earlier maritime fur trade. Coastal merchants retained their traditional role as middlemen, trading for commodities and then packaging and transporting them to the next level of

46 Most of the descriptions of this period come from official Colonial correspondence, newspaper articles and the reminiscences of traders and missionaries. See for example, W.E. Banfield, Correspondence to Colonial Secretary 1860-1862, GR 1372, f. 107, BCARS; Columbia Mission Annual Reports. (London: Columbia Mission Society, 1869); James G. Swan, "The Indians of Cape Flattery, at the Entrance to the Strait of Fuca, Washington Territory," Smithsonian Contributions to Knowledge, vol. 16 (1869). Limited data also survives in Victoria port entry and departure records. See Reginald Roy, "Port of Victoria Harbour Master, Clearances and Entries, Victoria," Add Mss 1073, Vols. 1-8, BCARS.

47 Analysis of the economic roles of both parties are found within the substantial body of work on the overland fur trade, including Ray and Freeman, 'Give Us Good Measure'.
market in Victoria, San Francisco, or London. Initially, coastal traders viewed their presence alone as sufficient stimulation for increased production of the desired commodities and continued to concern themselves primarily with the traditional axiom of merchants: buy cheap and sell dear. Merchant capital had no investment in the primary production process, although traders were often involved to varying degrees in such secondary processing as curing fish and skins. Traders continued to be dependent upon aboriginal labour for commodity production. Especially in those outlying areas such as the west coast of Vancouver Island, there was no competition from a resident, non-aboriginal, labour force until well into twentieth century.

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth retained their role as independent commodity producers. Both the production process and the distribution of the resulting product remained under Nuu-Chah-Nulth control. The basis of the relationship between merchant and producer, commodity exchange, continued in the trade economy of the mid-nineteenth century. Three aspects of the interaction are highlighted.

First, trade negotiations for particular commodities took place at the end of the production season. In the

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48 A set of characteristics of the maritime fur trade economy has recently been compiled in James R. Gibson, *Otter Skins, Boston Ships, and China Goods: The maritime fur trade of the Northwest coast, 1785-1841.* (Montreal: McGill University Press, 1991). It must be noted that Gibson's descriptions of economic behaviour are taken exclusively from the perspective of the non-aboriginal participant.
Northwest Coast trade economy, even when trade was in kind rather than in cash, prices were generally set. Nonetheless, negotiations against such a standard of value were commonplace prior to the commencement of actual trade.  

Second, as in the maritime fur trade, merchants did not deal with individual producers. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth viewed trade as an important economic activity within a community's territory and as such it was managed by community leaders. An important part of the role of manager was to negotiate prices for producers. This aspect of trade is highlighted in an account of negotiations in the oil trade at Barkley Sound where in 1853, estimated four or five hundred "of the Nitanat tribe of Indians" visited a local trader:

In the morning we allowed their chief to come on board and remain to do the trading for the people. . . the owners of the articles remaining in their canoes alongside, while their chief would receive whatever they wanted in return and hand it to the persons in the canoes; this [sic] would then leave and another come in the same manner.

The obvious advantage to the merchant was in the ease of the

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49 For the maritime fur trade see Gibson, *Otter Skins*, p. 116. There is nothing to indicate a change in this pattern after 1841. See for example, a description of the difficulties encountered by the Hudson's Bay Company at Victoria, with the lowering in value of the standard "made beaver." "Fort Victoria Journals, 1845-1850," unpublished MS, B226/a/1, HBC Archives, Winnipeg.

negotiation process: one individual versus four or five hundred. The disadvantages lay in the issue of protocol. The interaction between community leaders and coastal merchants often resulted in protracted delays before trade itself could commence, as they required "ceremonies, introductions, gift exchanges, and price negotiations."\textsuperscript{51} In addition, individuals would not trade without reference to their leaders.

Nuu-Chah-Nulth chiefs were accomplished and knowledgeable traders, continually looking for the best deal and taking advantage of local competition to drive up commodity prices. G.M. Sproat, who resided in the Port Alberni area in the early 1860s, noted that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were "acute, and rather too sharp at bargaining."\textsuperscript{52} The astuteness of Nuu-Chah-Nulth traders had long been the common lament of the maritime fur trader.

Third, although far-lying coastal communities were politically independent, there were close personal and economic ties between them which allowed for the ease of inter-village communication. Sproat noted that in the 1860s:

\begin{quote}
News about prices... travels quickly to distant places from one tribe to another. If a trading schooner appeared at one point on the shore and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{51} Gibson, \textit{Otter Skins}, p. 115. For additional discussion of early protocol see pp. 114-116.

offered higher prices than one usually gives, the Indians would know the fact immediately along the whole coast.  

As in the earlier maritime fur trade, once a higher price was offered at one community by one trader, no lower price would be accepted. Producers along the coast would merely withhold their goods until other traders were forced to follow suit.

On the surface, the economic roles of trader and commodity producer during the mid-nineteenth century remained the same as in the sea otter trade, and the relationship between producer and trader remained one of simple commodity exchange mediated through community leaders. Nonetheless, the market itself had changed. There was no longer a single commodity of consequence: the sea otter. Through the 1840s, the new colony of Vancouver Island, under the auspices of the Hudson's Bay Company, was beginning to develop a more diversified economy based on localized resources, which ranged from cranberries to salted fish. Moreover, coastal traders were no longer merely

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53 Ibid. Compare the statement of Meares at Clayoquot Sound in 1787: "the different Tribes communicate with each other and we must purchase every Skin at the same Price and with the same Articles or meet with considerable delay and trouble." Cited in Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 118.

sojourners, as they had been in the maritime fur trade. As residents in the Colony, traders began to explore the potential of local resources. It was to the advantage of both producers and merchants to develop the production of new kinds of resources.

On the west coast of Vancouver Island, remnant populations of sea otter survived, which provided a limited opportunity for trade in this still highly-valued commodity. There was also a limited market for other furs and for fresh and dried fish. The initial commodity of consequence, however, was the oil from fish and sea mammals. The demand for oil came from the growing logging industry in the colony and in Puget Sound.55

The new diversified economy had an immediate effect on Nuu-Chah-Nulth commodity production. The primary change that accompanied diversification was the change in production requirements. In comparison to the sea otter trade, the value of each individual "piece" was insignificant. A form of "mass production," therefore, was required in order to produce an equivalent profit. The

University of British Columbia, 1993.

55 W.E. Banfield, "Vancouver Island. Its Topography, Characteristics, etc.," Victoria Gazette, 14 August to 3 September, 1858; Swan, "The Indians of Cape Flattery," p. 29. Dog-fish and sea mammal oils were also used as lamp fuel. The Makah, Clayoquot, Ahousaht, and Oiaht communities were the principal producers of whale and other sea mammal oil; other Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities on Vancouver Island were primarily producers of dog-fish oil.
Nuu-Chah-Nulth had to adjust their level of production to the market’s requirements. The case of the production of dog-fish oil in the 1850s presents a clear example of such mass production. Between 1854 and 1858 at Port San Juan, the Pacheenaht, a community of only approximately forty adults, produced between 5,000 and 6,000 gallons of oil per year. As ten dog-fish livers were required in order to produce one gallon of oil, the annual volume of oil produced represents the catching and processing of up to 60,000 fish.\textsuperscript{56} By 1874, Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities in Barkley Sound were producing 20,000 to 25,000 gallons of oil per year, which required the catching and processing of as many as 250,000 fish.\textsuperscript{57}

Within Nuu-Chah-Nulth subsistence production, there were precedents for the mass production required by the oil industry, such as the spring herring and fall salmon fisheries which involved the whole community. The local seasonal abundance of commodity species was also a factor in the ease of mass production. There is no evidence to suggest that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth had problems with the increased

\textsuperscript{56} Banfield, "Vancouver Island: It’s Topography, Characteristics, Etc.," Article II, \textit{Victoria Gazette} 14 August, 1858; see, also, the description of oil production and trade in Chief Charles Jones with Stephen Bosustow, \textit{Queesto: Pacheenaht Chief by Birthright} (Nanaimo: Theytus Books Ltd., 1981), p. 27.

\textsuperscript{57} George Blenkinsop, "Report to the Commissioner of Indian Affairs 23 September 1874," RG 10, Records Relating to Indian Affairs, Black Series, vol. 3614, f. 4105, p. 19 [hereafter cited as Blenkinsop Report].
demands on the community labour pool. On the contrary, they appear to have successfully incorporated large-scale commodity production into their subsistence seasonal round.⁵⁸

Another significant change in the trade economy of the mid-nineteenth century was the addition of a new level of market. The establishment of Fort Victoria by the Hudson's Bay Company created a new regional market for Vancouver Island. Through the 1850s and 1860s regional markets were also developing in the Puget Sound area. Most independent traders on the coast bought and sold at these regional markets. A coastal trader's profit occurred on two levels of exchange: one, the mark-up on trade goods exchanged with the producer and, two, the profit on the sale of the resulting commodities. Regional markets gave some advantage to coastal traders in the form of competitive prices for both trade goods and commodities. At the same time, local traders could not prevent access by the producer to trade at the regional level. Figure 2.1 provides a comparison between the markets in the sea otter trade and the commodities trade.

Figure 2.1: Comparison between Sea Otter Trade and Mid-Nineteenth Century Commodities Trade

Vancouver Island Commodities Markets 1790's

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Producer

Local Market (trading vessels)

International Market (Canton)
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Vancouver Island Commodities Markets 1860's

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Producer

Local Market (trading vessels)

Regional Market (Victoria, Neah Bay)

International Market
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of the mid-nineteenth century. During the maritime fur trade period, the market in sea otter skins was based in Canton. The aboriginal producer only had access to the local market, as represented by the coastal trader.

In direct contrast to the maritime fur trade, Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers now had direct access to the regional market, in addition to the local level of market represented by the coastal trader. Consequently, Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers had access to the same buyers at Victoria that non-aboriginal coastal traders did either directly, or through Nuu-Chah-Nulth middlemen and were thus able to completely bypass the local level.

Until the early decades of the nineteenth century, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth had carried out shore-based fur sealing as part of their subsistence economy. Tom Sayach'apis, a Nuu-Chah-Nulth from the Barkley Sound area who was born ca. 1843, noted that in his grandfather’s time:

They used to have the skins hanging up, roasting them with salalberry bushes. They would eat the fat on them after the fur was burned off.59

The aboriginal pelagic seal hunt operated from sea mammal hunting stations on coastal islands and was conducted up to thirty miles offshore. Subsistence shore-based hunting had been practised by many Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities, including those of the Makah, Clayoquot, Ahousaht, Ucluelet, and

Sheshaat, during the maritime fur trade period.\textsuperscript{60} Fur seal skins, however, had not been a trade commodity. During the height of the sea otter trade fur seal skins had comparatively little value.\textsuperscript{61} Any profit to be gained required a high volume of production. As fur trade historian James Gibson has noted, the limited demand for fur seal skins was satisfied "by slaughter rather than by barter."\textsuperscript{62} Commercial fur sealing was represented, for the most part, by rookery hunting conducted by Europeans.

The Pribilof rookeries in the Bering Sea had been managed by commercial interests since 1799 in order to prevent the wholesale slaughter of other areas.\textsuperscript{63} Nonetheless, a severe reduction of the Pribilof herds throughout the early decades of nineteenth century led to

\textsuperscript{60} See the testimony of Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters in Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. VI, pp. 145, 223; vol. III, p. 311. Archaeologist C.E. Gustafson has refuted Drucker’s statement that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth did not seal prior to contact with Europeans, "Prehistoric Use of Fur Seals: Evidence from the Olympic Coast of Washington," Science vol. 161 (1968), pp. 49-51. The testimony to the Fur Seal Arbitration referred to above, also supports Gustafson’s position.

\textsuperscript{61} Busch, War Against the Seals, pp. 5, 11. The average price for a fur seal skin in Canton from 1791 to 1820 was about $0.90 compared to about $50.00 for a sea otter skin.

\textsuperscript{62} Gibson, Otter Skins, p. 253.

\textsuperscript{63} Unregulated schooner-based rookery hunting in the southern Atlantic and Pacific Oceans for the Southern (Arctocephalus australis) and Antarctic (Arctocephalus gazella) species of fur seal through the late 18th and 19th centuries resulted in the near extinction of the herds (Busch, War Against the Seals, pp. 26-28).
their disappearance from the B.C. coast by about 1830.  
Accounts given in the 1890s suggest that most Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities had abandoned subsistence sealing by about 1830. The British Commissioners learned from the Makah for example, that

> on several occasions a number of Indians lost their lives at sea while hunting, and consequently for about twenty years the hunting was practically given up.  

On Vancouver Island the Commissioners heard similar testimony from the Nuu-Chah-Nulth at Clayoquot Sound:

> long ago many of them were drowned when hunting independently, and this mode of hunting has come to be considered very dangerous.

Seal hunting was not intrinsically dangerous, unlike whale hunting where hunters could be towed far out to sea or capsized by a flip of the whale's tail. It was the location of the hunt, far from shore, and the timing of the seal migrations which began in late December, that made hunters vulnerable to late winter and early spring storms.

The period of Nuu-Chah-Nulth abandonment of shore-based sealing coincided with the Pribilof decline. In particular, a decline in young seals would have forced Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters further and further offshore after more mature animals and thus made them more vulnerable to the effects of

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65 Ibid., p. 223.  
66 Ibid., p. 145.
bad weather.

Within the Nuu-Chah-Nulth world view, the disappearance of the seals was not coincidental to the increasing loss of life amongst Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters. Sayach'apis' account of subsistence sealing presented above, also notes that about the time his grandfather came of age:

They say that they did harm to the furs seals because they killed many people in sealing; the people of old died in sealing. So they made an end of the furs seals by poisoning. ...For that reason the furs seals ceased to be.67

The mid-nineteenth century marked the return of vast numbers of Northern fur seals to their migration routes along the west coast of the Olympic Peninsula and Vancouver Island on route to the Bering Sea rookeries. In part, conservation in the form of rookery quotas had resulted in the recovery of the Pribilof herds.68 The Makah began

67 Sapir and Swadesh, "Native Accounts," p. 45. While providing an explanation for the disappearance of fur seals within Nuu-Chah-Nulth territory, Sayach'apis' account also illustrates the uneasy relationship between hunter and prey; an unsuccessful hunt could result not merely in the failure to capture the animal, but also in the death of the hunter. A hunter's family, especially his children, were also at risk. There is a description of this form of "revenge sacrifice" against the sea otter in: Sapir and Swadesh, Nootka Texts. Tales and Ethnological Narratives with Grammatical Notes and Lexical Materials. (Philadelphia: Linguistic Society of America, 1939), pp. 183-185.

68 A table provided by Patterson and Wilen, "Depletion and Diplomacy," p. 187 shows the effect of quotas on the Pribilof populations through the 1850s. Cf. the general discussion of the effects of rookery hunting on the seal herd in Scheffer, et al., "History of Scientific Study".
sealing again about 1853. It was not until 1862, however, that fur seals were observed in great numbers on the halibut banks offshore from Barkley Sound. Sayach'apis related:

at the time when I got married the seals had come back. We again had people engaged in sealing. . . I did not go sealing right away when it first came into season. I went to Victoria to peddle them . . . After the white people saw how good the fur was that I brought, they started buying them. We then set out from time to time to go sealing...

The re-establishment of shore-based sealing on the off-shore fishing banks, after a "lay-off" of a generation, was stimulated by the re-establishment of trade.

Nonetheless, shore-based fur sealing as a significant form of commodity production was a slow starter. As the

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71 Sapir and Swadesh, "Native Accounts, p. 45. In this account, Sayach'apis also notes that the Ucluelet, whose winter villages were located in Ucluelet Inlet, a prime location for spawning herring, were the first community in Barkley Sound to re-establish sealing. The Sheshaht took part in the active pursuit of seals from "sealing stations" on the outer islands of Barkley Sound within range of the offshore banks most frequented by migrating seals.

72 The Haida at Masset, and the Nawitti, Tsimshian, Kitkatla, and Heiltsuk people on the north coast of the mainland, began shore-based sealing for trade about this time. The significant difference between these hunters and the Nuu-Chah-Nulth was that guns were employed "from the first." Report of the British Commission, pp. 138-143.
Report of the British Commissioners suggests:

the price offered for the skins of the fur-seal was still insufficient to tempt the Natives to engage systematically in the somewhat hazardous business of its capture.\(^{73}\)

The presence of a large number of seals was not, in itself, sufficient to stimulate Nuu-Chah-Nulth production to the required levels. Even with the possibilities for profit provided by the significant increase in herd size, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth shore-based seal hunt remained subject to annual variations in migration patterns and the vagaries of weather. Large herds could be present close to shore in periods of fair weather, or far offshore while the coast was rocked by storm after storm.

Shore-base sealing continued to be limited by the issue of safety for the producer. Although the skills and technology developed by Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters had been adequate for subsistence seal hunting, they were inadequate for commercial scale production. Shore-based hunters could not consistently exploit the expanding market for seal skins.

A potential solution to the problem of increasing production to commercial levels, while protecting the producers, was presented in Neah Bay as early as 1865. The

\(^{73}\) Report of the British Commission, p. 146. There is inconsistent information on the early trade in seal skins from Nuu-Chah-Nulth shore-based production. Initially, it appears to have been confined to the southern end of Vancouver Island and Neah Bay.
local American Indian agent chartered a schooner to take Makah halibut fishermen to the offshore fishing grounds. This charter was initiated by the agent in order to promote the Makah fishery "with less danger than is now incurred in canoes." According to a deposition given to the British Commission, as early as the following year, Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters on Vancouver Island approached local trader Hugh McKay and "represented to him the difficulties and dangers of following the seals far from land in open canoes and asked him to take them out in his schooner." 

At the same time, the herds were now so large as to become obvious to the crews of schooners on the coastal trading cruises. The most widely cited account of the origins of pelagic sealing, written by Charles Spring in 1927, notes that in 1868 a schooner captain in the employ of Spring & Co. became anxious "to get after them with a crew of Indian hunters on the Surprise feeling sure that success would be the result." 

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74 Barbara Lane, "Makah Economy Circa 1855 and the Makah Treaty - A Cultural Analysis," unpublished MS, presented as testimony in State of Washington v. Moses 79 Wn 2d 104, 1773, n.d., pp. 41-42. As noted above, fur seals frequented the same halibut banks to which Vancouver Island Nuu-Chah-Nulth fishermen had access.

75 Testimony of Joseph McKay, Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. VI, p. 242. Joseph McKay's deposition is not specific as to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth community involved. It appears to be generally accepted amongst the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, however, that the Pacheenaht were the pioneers of pelagic sealing on Vancouver Island (ibid., p. 151).

76 Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 2.
The collaboration represented by the schooner *Surprise* was the beginning of a new articulation of aboriginal and European technology. The collaboration grew out of earlier relationships in which neither side was dominant. These were not relationships of subordination and superordination characteristic of a mature capitalist system. They were still the mutually beneficial relationships between independent traders and commodity producers. As the British Commissioners evaluated the situation, it "naturally occurred to both" to join forces.77

This chapter investigates the Pioneer Period of the pelagic sealing industry from the late 1860s to the mid-
1880s. Unlike fishing, logging, and mining, pelagic sealing was not a traditional European resource-based industry in which aboriginal labour had to find a role. Pelagic sealing was specifically a Nuu-Chah-Nulth resource industry in which merchant capital had to find a role. Nonetheless, schooner-based sealing required adjustments to the traditional Nuu-Chah-Nulth shore-based sealing production and distribution processes.

The first section of this chapter describes the adjustments made to the production process. Two elements

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78 The primary sources for this chapter include Spring "Origin of Pelagic Sealing"; testimony taken from Fur Seal Arbitration, vols. III and IV; Blenkinsop Report. These contemporary sources do not cover all aspects of schooner-based sealing. Consequently, some information from later accounts has been extrapolated; non-contemporary information, however, is identified as such.

are compared between shore-based and schooner-based sealing: technology, and the organization and control of labour. The focus of the second section is on the adjustments to Nuu-Chah-Nulth rules of distribution as a result of the addition of the schooner to the production process. The final section describes some effects of broader economic changes on the role of merchant capital and the role of Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers during this period.

The first practical issue in the new co-production was the problem of combining Nuu-Chah-Nulth and non-aboriginal technology. In the mid-nineteenth century Nuu-Chah-Nulth continued to rely heavily upon traditional skills and technology in both subsistence and commodity production, despite access to non-aboriginal technology such as guns.80 In the case of fur sealing, although guns were available they were seldom used. According to many accounts, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth believed that use of guns frightened off the seal herds, driving them from the bays and inlets, and making

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80 Inglis and Haggarty have noted that based on historic period descriptions of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth whale hunt, the only technological change after seventy years of contact with Europeans was the change from mussel shell to iron harpoon heads. Richard Inglis and James C. Haggarty, "Pacific Rim National Park Ethnographic History," unpublished report prepared for Parks Canada, Ottawa, 1986, p. 58.
them more difficult to approach on the open ocean. The weapon of choice was a spear with a detachable harpoon head; it is variously referred to in the literature as a spear or a harpoon. The unit of production in shore-based fur seal hunting was the "canoe." Each canoe consisted of a hunter, a paddler, and a steerer, as well as the various technology appropriate for the hunt, including the harpoon, floats, line and the canoe itself.

In practical terms, co-production entailed the use of a schooner as a base of operations for Nuu-Chah-Nulth canoes. On the maiden voyage of the Spring and Company schooner Surprise and Clayoquot and Kyuquot hunters in 1869, the unit of production consisted of traditional shore-based sealing canoes which carried three people, the hunter and two crew members. According to Spring's account, these canoes proved to be "entirely too large" to effectively hoist up and down from the schooner; the next season, however, the Pacheenaht provided "much more suitable canoes" which required only the hunter and one crew member. The change from a three-

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82 Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 2. See also, testimony of Circus Jim, Makah, Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. III, p. 380. Drucker ("Nootkan Tribes," p. 46) has noted that northern Nuu-Chah-Nulth, who did not have a tradition of shore-based sealing, adapted hair seal hunting technology to fur seal hunting when they began hunting off shore in the 1880s. They used a smaller canoe, which required only a harpooner and a steersman in each canoe and a hair sealing harpoon.
person to a two-person canoe was the only substantive change in Nuu-Chah-Nulth technology in order to accommodate the schooner-based hunt. Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters continued to avoid the use of guns. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth "canoe" became the standard for the balance of the pelagic sealing industry whenever Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters were employed.

The non-aboriginal unit of production was the trading vessel. Initially, some of these vessels were of small tonnage. For example, the vessel Hugh Mackay used in 1866 was a sloop which was "too small to carry two or three canoes on deck." McKay subsequently built a schooner "for the purpose of sealing".83 Later, schooners large enough to carry both canoes and crew were purchased or charted especially for the sealing industry.84

The second issue of co-operative production was the problem of the organization and control of labour within the primary production process. Several aspects of this issue are highlighted: the timing of sealing in relation to other

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83 Testimony of Joseph McKay, Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. VI, pp. 151, 242. This schooner, the Favorite was registered in 1868 and became was one of the dominant sealing vessels on the coast in the Pioneer Period. MacKay's account, however, conflicts with that of Charles Spring's who describes the early life of the Favourite as a cargo vessel prior to its involvement in sealing ("Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 5).

economic activities, the division of labour within the production process, and the organization and control of labour.

Both subsistence and commercial activities within the Nuu-Chah-Nulth economy were dependent upon local and seasonal access to resources. Like other well-documented economic activities such as the salmon and herring fisheries, shore-based sealing was a part-time seasonal occupation; the timing of the hunt was relative to other subsistence activities. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth season for shore-based sealing on the off-shore banks was April, May and June. The timing of the hunt did not necessarily coincide with the annual appearance of fur seals along the coast. As the Report of the British Commission noted:

The actual time of the beginning of the hunt depends chiefly upon the date at which such fine

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85 Wayne Suttles, "Variation in Habitat and Culture on the Northwest Coast," in Coast Salish Essays (Vancouver: Talonbooks, 1987), pp. 26-44. Suttles' thesis has been accepted by many anthropologists working with Northwest Coast cultural systems as the basis for understanding the relationship between economic and social processes. See for example, Andrew P. Vayda, "A Re-examination of Northwest Coast Economic Systems," Transactions of the New York Academy of Sciences, vol. 23 (1961), pp. 518-624.

86 As noted above, there were two areas of access to the migrating seal herds, close to shore within the larger sounds along the coast, and on offshore fishing banks. In the late winter months, when younger seals came into the sounds and bays after herring, they could be taken with relative ease on an opportunistic basis. It is unknown whether or not the movement of younger seals was an annual event and thus could be both predicted and relied upon as a source of food. This discussion, however, refers primarily to sealing on the off-shore banks.
weather as is described as "sealing weather" sets in. The close of sealing is, on the other hand, largely governed by the arrival of the particular season at which immemorial custom requires that fishing of some other kind - generally halibut fishing - shall begin. 87

The shore-based hunt was a community activity. During the shore-based season, between ten and fifteen canoes would go out together to the hunting grounds. 88

The timing of the hunt, including the weighing of the importance of a seal hunt in light of other available options for economic activity came within the authority of the community chief. Nuu-Chah-Nulth chiefs, as resource managers, had an important administrative role in economic affairs, including the allocation of labour, the timing of production activities, and resource conservation. 89 As with any economic activity of consequence, community leaders also had an important role during the hunt itself. Although there is no direct evidence for the role of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth chief in shore-based fur sealing, a description of an historic sea otter hunt provides a useful analogy.

All the hunters set out together. The head huntsman was either the chief who owned the water where the hunt was to be, or a noted sea otter hunter to whom the chief delegated the place. Usually the chief himself directed proceedings. When the weather signs were auspicious, the head

huntsman announced that preparations were to be made to go out next day... If the next morning was clear and calm, the hunt director (the chief or his delegate) told the men to launch their craft.90

The role of the hunter was to harpoon the animal. Sea mammal hunting, in general, was considered both a hereditary profession and a skilled trade that required a period of apprenticeship. Success in such endeavour was dependent upon a hunter’s "preparation," which included extensive ritual activity. The right to perform specific ritual activities was a part of an individual’s inheritance. The importance of ritual preparation in sea mammal hunting meant that most hunters were also men of high status.91

In the mid-nineteenth century, fur seal hunting as a career appears to have been less restrictive than whale hunting. Whaling was confined to men of the highest status; "any able-bodied man" could be a fur seal hunter.92 Nonetheless, in Nuu-Chah-Nulth terms, the hunter was a skilled role.

A shore-based fur seal hunter also required a crew, consisting of a canoe steerer and a paddler. Assistants were also responsible for skinning the animal and likely also for

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91 Edward Sapir, "Notes on Sea Mammal Hunting".
processing the skin.93 Initially, the skin was stretched and dried "in accordance with Native custom"; later, the skins were salted in barrels.94 An individual hunter most often requested assistance from close family or household members. Thus the unit of production in shore-based sealing was based most often with the hunter’s family or household. A hunter’s assistants might be adolescent boys (some as apprentices), older men (often former hunters), or women of all ages (wives, sisters, or daughters).95 In Nuu-Chah-Nulth terms, the role of the hunter’s assistants was considered unskilled labour in that anyone could do it. An observer of the hunt noted:

No great importance is attached to the man who steers as it requires no special skill to keep the canoe on the course desired; but to the skill of the one who stands in the bow and throws the spear

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93 The various jobs within Nuu-Chah-Nulth resource production were related to some degree, to the categories of age, and gender. The general rule in the division of labour by gender was that resource procurement was a male activity and resource processing a female activity.

94 Report of the British Commission, p. 146. Early processing techniques caused the fur to fall off in clumps. Initially, the value of fur seal pelts was in their use as a felt or leather. The salting technology which preserved the fur as well as the skin was not perfected until about 1858 (Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. III, p. 579).

95 Because of the special relationship between women and sea mammals, it is inconsistent with what is known about the Nuu-Chah-Nulth world view that a woman would be a hunter. The large number of claims by Nuu-Chah-Nulth women to the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing in 1913, suggests that there were no restrictions on women as crew members during the hunt. The testimony given by these women to the Commission also suggests that this role may have been restricted to women outside the child-bearing years.
depends the success of the hunt.\textsuperscript{96}

As in all economic activity, however, success in sealing was dependent upon the assistance of others.\textsuperscript{97}

During the early development of schooner-based sealing, the so-called "coast cruise" took place offshore from Vancouver Island within Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunting grounds during the traditional shore-based season in April, May and June. The evidence suggests that initially, only those communities who were currently active in shore-based hunting participated in these early voyages. The trading vessels were used during their "off season." For the most part, the schooners took the hunters to the local hunting grounds 20 to 30 miles offshore from Barkley and Kyuquot Sounds and would "come in every time a storm would come on and stay in the harbour when the wind was blowing."\textsuperscript{98}

Schooner owners were responsible for the general provisioning of the schooner and for the crew which maintained and operated the vessel. The schooner crew was also responsible for raising and lowering the hunting canoes.


\textsuperscript{97} Even those household members who did not participate in the hunt itself had an important ritual role in sea mammal hunting. This ritual component continued when shore-based sealing was re-established for the commodities trade. See Charles Moser, \textit{Reminiscences of the West Coast of Vancouver Island} (Victoria: Acme Press, 1926), p. 104.

\textsuperscript{98} "Evidence of Captain Victor Jacobson [sic]," n.d. [1913], I/BS/J15, BCARS, p. 619 [hereafter cited as Jacobsen Testimony].
into the water. The seal hunt itself remained a Nuu-Chah-Nulth production. The organization and control of the community's labour remained an internal process. The organization and control of the "canoes", including the daily decision to begin and end the hunt, and any on-board negotiations between hunters and schooner captains was the job of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth "boss."

The role of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth boss was a continuation of the role of the chief as an administrator of community economic activity. Prior to the hunt, the role of the boss recalled the prominent role of the chief in post-production trade negotiations. The general practice was to hire on an entire crew from one village community. Rather than a schooner captain negotiating with individual hunters, he negotiated with community leaders for the number of canoes required for a sealing voyage. During the hunt, the role of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth boss echoed the role of the hunt director in shore-based sealing, including the decisions


100 The term "boss," although in general use by non-aboriginals to describe this role, was not a Nuu-Chah-Nulth term. Drucker's term "hunt director" likely more closely approximates the role.

101 The following discussion on the various roles of boss, hunter, and steerer on board the schooner is based primarily on testimony to Fur Seal Arbitration and the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing.
regarding the overall timing of the hunt and daily decision-making, especially in relation to weather.

The canoe and the hunting gear belonged to, and were the responsibility of the hunter. The hunter was also responsible for obtaining a steerer and for the maintenance of his gear. The evidence suggests that the hunter continued to rely on family and household members for assistance.\(^{102}\) The steerer was responsible for skinning the seal, although most schooner owners took the responsibility for salting the skins.\(^{103}\)

The final issue in co-operative production was the post-production problem of how to divide the spoils. Nuu-Chah-Nulth rules of distribution in shore-based pelagic sealing were fairly straightforward. Although the fishing ground belonged to the chief, once captured, a sea mammal belonged to the hunter. With ownership, however, came the responsibility for its proper distribution. According to Drucker, for sea mammals in general: "The only rule was that a feast should be given with the fat and flesh: the giver

\(^{102}\) There is little evidence for the presence of women on board sealing vessels during the Pioneer Period. The lack of evidence, however, does not mean that they were not present. See discussion in Margaret Jolly, "The Forgotten Women: A History of Migrant Labour and Gender Relations in Vanuatu," *Oceania*, vol 57 (1986), pp. 111-139.

\(^{103}\) Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 5.
could divide the portions as he liked. Thus the hunter was responsible for distribution of the meat of the fur seal.

In fur sealing, paddlers and steerers took part in the feast, in recognition of the fact that the successful hunt was dependent upon their assistance. Sayach’apis notes that in the period when fur seals were solely a food commodity, assistants did not receive any other compensation for their help. Within a trade economy, however, a community’s resources became a source of wealth beyond the level of subsistence. Other considerations for the compensation of labour were then made. When shore-based sealing was re-established in the mid-nineteenth century as a form of commodity production for trade, the skins were divided equally between the hunter and the crew, each participant received a third share.

The shore-based sealer was permitted to keep the proceeds of trade. Nonetheless, community obligations remained. In addition to the obligation to reward assistance in economic endeavours, Nuu-Chah-Nulth rules of "tribute" dictated some form of payment by resource users to the

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104 Drucker, "Nootkan Tribes," p. 253. This statement excludes the hair seal which had very particular rules of ownership and distribution. Various parts of the whale were also distributed under a strict set of rules.


106 Ibid.
manager of the resource territory. According to Drucker, there was no set amount of tribute. Each individual "gave all they could spare," as they knew that the chief would give a feast.\textsuperscript{107} Thus, in addition to the distribution between the hunter and steerers, Nuu-Chah-Nulth rules of tribute suggest that chiefs might have received a certain percentage of the catch for their own use at a subsequent feast in return for the use of the hunting ground. Although there is no direct evidence for what the fur seal hunt director got for his trouble, a description of historic period sea otter hunting provides a useful analogy:

It was expected that they [the hunters] would potlatch with the proceeds, giving presents to the chiefs and people. Sometimes if a chief wanted to give a big potlatch he asked hunters for any sea otter skins they had, but always rewarded the givers.\textsuperscript{108}

Following the first schooner-based seal hunt, in Charles Spring's account, a verbal agreement was made between the captain and the hunters to split the proceeds as follows: one-third of the total catch to the schooner, "as her share for taking them out to sea," and two-thirds to be "divided between the two hunters in each canoe".\textsuperscript{109}

\textsuperscript{107} Drucker, "Nootkan Tribes," p. 251.

\textsuperscript{108} Drucker, "Nootkan Tribes," p. 253. Sea otter skins, however, had social value in the period prior to contact with Europeans, fur seal skins did not. Drucker states that such gifts were spoken of as "help to the chief" (p. 272).

\textsuperscript{109} Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 2.
Additional renumeration was also given by the vessel owner to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth boss. The boss was given a bonus for the organization of the "canoes" brought on board. He was also given a percentage of the total catch taken during the voyage.110

As in shore-based sealing, the canoe's share of the skins belonged to the hunter. Later accounts suggest that the skins were initially given to the boss, who then distributed them amongst the hunters.111 The hunter was then responsible for paying his assistant. During the hunt, the role of the hunter was given more weight than that of the steerer. The hunter and steerer continued to take an equal share of the catch as had been the practice in shore-based sealing. It is not known whether Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers continued to provide the hunt director with traditional tribute. Nonetheless, traditional distribution in terms of feasting could still occur outside of the new value of the skin as a trade commodity. It was the skin, and not the body, of the animal that had exchange value. A Pacheenaht sealer noted: "We sell the skins, eat the flesh, take the oil out of the blubber and use the paunch for

110 There is no specific reference to this additional renumeration in accounts of the earliest period of sealing. Later accounts contained in Fur Seal Arbitration and the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing suggest that it had been common practice from the first.

holding it."  Thus, hunters were able to continue community and household obligations.

Within the new form of co-operative production in pelagic sealing, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth took advantage of the safe haven accorded by the schooner in order to improve production. In addition to control over production during the hunt itself, the evidence suggests that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth retained control over other aspects of the production process. The schooner for example, moved in and out of the home port at regular intervals during the coast cruise. 113 There were practical considerations concerning the timing of this movement, such as the need for fresh food and water, or the onset of bad weather. There is also evidence to suggest that this movement was often directly related to aspects of traditional Nuu-Chah-Nulth production and distribution.

For example, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth continued to place a great importance on the ritual activity associated with traditional sea mammal hunting. The local missionary at Ucluelet, Melvin Swartout noted that "every ten days" the sealers would return home to visit friends and practice such ritual. 114 Another factor was the continued importance of


113 See for example, the log book of the schooner Onward for 1886 season, cited in Murray, Vagabond Fleet, pp. 85-88.

114 [Melvin Swartout], "On the West Coast of Vancouver Island by Charles Haicks [pseud.]," 1954, F/62, BCARS. See also the testimony of schooner owner Andrew Laing, Fur Seal
feasting on seal meat and blubber. Sealing for commodity production did not preclude the use of the "flesh and fat." Schooner captain Victor Jacobsen related that in the early years the Nuu-Chah-Nulth "went more for the flesh for food than for the skins." Consequently schooners came in every five days to dry the meat.  

Merchants continued to take advantage of Nuu-Chah-Nulth skills and technology in commodity production. The new option for merchant capital was to become directly involved in aboriginal production. Co-production, however, required an adaptation of the traditional European economic relationship between capital investors and commodity producers. In the European fishing, whaling, and sealing industries, workers received a share of the profits in lieu of wages, the so-called "lay" system. The one-third to two-third split between schooner owner and Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters can be compared for example, to the Newfoundland schooner-based seal hunt in the mid-nineteenth century. In the Newfoundland sealing industry, one-half of the catch went to the vessel owner and one-half to the hunters.  

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115 Arbitration, vol. III, pp. 334-335. Ten days was an important time interval in Nuu Chah Nulth ritual.

116 Jacobsen Testimony, p. 619. To this extent the Nuu-Chah-Nulth used co-operative production to enhance the domestic economy.

116 Busch, War Against The Seals, pp. 54-55. The vessel captain received a set royalty per skin. The vessel owner’s costs were not deducted before distribution; the price the hunters received, however, was based on the value of the
The weight of distribution in favour of Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers reflected the ancillary role of the schooner to Nuu-Chah-Nulth production.

Nuu-Chah-Nulth rules of distribution between the hunter and his assistants had already been altered to accommodate the change from subsistence to commodity production in sealing. The role of the schooner may have been viewed by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth as merely representing the third crew member in shore-based sealing. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth continued to use the same distribution pattern of one-third of the catch to the schooner owner and two-thirds to the hunters when they entered the industry with their own schooners in late 1880s.¹¹⁷ The continued use by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth of the pattern of distribution initiated during the Pioneer Period implies that it had been a mutually acceptable arrangement between producers and traders.

Additional renumeration to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth "boss" in a form of a bonus given prior to the hunt suggests an adaptation of additional renumeration to community leaders during commodity exchange. The payment of a percentage of the catch to the boss after the hunt was likely viewed by the schooner owner as payment for services rendered on board

the schooner. The schooner captain also received a percentage of the catch in addition to his wages. Both forms of renumeration, however, may have been viewed by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth as equivalent to the traditional tribute given to the resource manager.

The initial verbal terms of agreement remained in effect through the 1870s. The period of post-production distribution remained essentially one of commodity exchange. Skins were traded "on the spot" at the end of the voyage. The value of the skins, in cash or in kind, was determined initially by the length of the skin, later by its grade. A written contract proposed by the American Indian Agent at Neah Bay in 1881 clarifies the mutual advantage hunters and schooner owners had gained through the

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118 William Brennan, sailing master, noted in 1892 that "the most skilful hunter among the Indians on board is called 'captain,' and it is his duty to tell his men when and where to lower their canoes for hunting, and to transact all business between them and the captain of the vessel" (Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. III, p. 362). Various log book crew lists in the Victoria Sealing Company Records, BCARS, also suggest that the boss was called "captain." The term "captain" may better describe the schooner owners' view of the authority of the boss in relation to the schooner captain and thus provide some explanation for the additional renumeration for that role.

119 Blenkinsop Report, p. 16.

120 Johan Adrian Jacobsen, Alaskan Voyage 1881-1883: An Expedition to the Northwest Coast of America, Translated from the German Text of Adrian Woldt by Erna Gunther (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), pp. 57-58.

initial verbal terms of agreement. Whitner notes that this proposed contract stated that:

the Indians agreed to seal exclusively for the master of their schooner and to give one-third of the catch to the vessel. . . The master would furnish a safe vessel and pay the members of the crews the highest Neah Bay prices for the remaining two-thirds of the catch.\(^{122}\)

The schooner-based sealer gained the best market value for their two-thirds of the catch, in addition to the original advantage of safety and resulting increased production over the shore-based sealer. In addition to their one-third share, schooner owners also gained preferred access to the product. Within their continued role as traders, this situation gave schooner owners the advantage over other local buyers.

Initially, schooner-based sealing was a marginal success. During the late 1860s there were only one or two cruises per year. For the merchant, pelagic sealing appears to have remained peripheral to trade. Through the 1870s, however, rapidly rising prices stimulated production in the sealing industry.\(^{123}\) By 1874, there were eight or nine schooners in operation.

\(^{122}\) Robert L. Whitner, "Makah Commercial Sealing, 1860-1897: A Study in Acculturation and Conflict," unpublished paper prepared for the Fourth North American Fur Trade Conference, 1981, p. 6. There is no indication that written contracts were used on Vancouver Island at this time.

\(^{123}\) Rising prices in the 1870s appear to relate directly to the development of the process which created a more desirable product from seal skins.
The economic climate, however, was rapidly changing. In the mid-nineteenth century, Victoria stood as a "regional metropolis on the frontier of capitalism."\(^{124}\) As prices for fur seal skins increased, regionally-based fur dealerships also arose in direct competition with the Hudson's Bay Company. Many of these dealerships were based in San Francisco; others represented the rise of local entrepreneurs.\(^{125}\)

During the 1870s, shore-based sealing continued in direct competition with schooner-based hunting.\(^{126}\) Rising prices and the growth of the regional market had an immediate effect on the new pelagic sealing industry. At the same time, the development of regional markets also served to increase competition for commodities to the advantage of the producer. As London auction prices rose, the intensity of local competition for access to seal skins increased. In their continuing role as coastal traders, schooner-owners used the same strategies to gain access to shore-based caught skins that had been used in the later years of the


\(^{126}\) Spring notes that initially, trade in the shore-based catch "fell off through the best hunters being engaged on the schooner" ("Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 3). In 1874, however, about one-half "or rather more," of the yearly catch still came from shore-based sealing (Blankinsop Report, p. 16).
maritime fur trade as a result of stiff local competition. Such strategies included the payment of advances to shore-based hunters and the payment of bonuses to influential community members. Trading stores were also established within Nuu-Chah-Nulth territories in order to encourage Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers to establish a preferred trade.

Over time, alliances between independent traders grew into trading companies. Such alliances did not eliminate the intensity of competition at the local level. In the early 1870s, for example, in a year of "keen" competition between the two primary trading firms, Nuu-Chah-Nulth shore-based sealers in Barkley Sound benefited from

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127 See Gibson, *Otter Skins*, pp. 126-129, 131, 135 for the use of these strategies by American traders in early nineteenth century and the response by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth.

128 Both the intensity of local competition and the importance of fur seals as a commodity are highlighted in a diary entry by James Swan in 1879. Swan reported that an agreement was made between a Neah Bay trader and an influential Makah hunter if the hunter "would get his friends to sell their skins to the Neah Bay trader, he would be paid a bonus of $20,000 at the end of the season" (cited in Whitner, "Makah Commercial Sealing," p. 4).

129 By 1881, there were nine stores along the coast, one in nearly every Nuu-Chah-Nulth community (DIA Annual Report 1881). These stores were owned by either Boscowitz and Company or Spring and Company (Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing").

130 See the brief discussion on the early formation of these partnerships in Murray, *Vagabond Fleet*, pp. 16-18.
During this period the Nuu-Chah-Nulth began to increase their level of direct participation in the regional economy. Although trade vessels were coming to the coast, at the end of the shore-based sealing season Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters paddled off and went to Victoria. There they sold their seals. With the money, they got white blankets; some bought forty or sixty blankets. Shore-based sealing remained a risky proposition. In 1872, for example, between 8,000 and 9,000 pups and yearlings were taken in or near Juan de Fuca Strait. The following year only 600 to 700 older animals were taken. Moreover, in 1875, Nuu-Chah-Nulth traditions of sealing disasters were dramatically borne out when upwards of seventy shore-based canoes were lost in a late spring storm. In consequence, shore-based sealing was again "all but abandoned." Schooner owners gained a distinct economic advantage in being able to offer a safer alternative to shore-based sealing. Spring notes that in the years after 1875, schooner owners benefited from the disaster by being able to "secure the

131 Blenkinsop Report, p. 16. Three thousand skins were purchased from Barkley Sound hunters for over $20,000 of trade goods at invoice prices, an average of over six dollars per skin. As Victoria prices in the 1870s averaged between $3.00 and $4.00 per skin ($4.50 for a large skin), I interpret this to mean that the prices paid on the coast were considerably higher than those paid in Victoria and thus local traders took a substantial loss.


best hunters without trouble when wanted”. 134

As the 1881 contract noted above suggests, schooner owners had begun to exert an exclusive right to purchase the catch of the hunters operating from their vessels. This advantage was not lost on the local merchants as, in effect, they were able to block access by the producer to the open market (see figure 3.1). Shore-based sealers could sell their skins either to local trading stores or to the regional fur dealers. Schooner-based hunters could only sell their skins to the schooner owner. Thus co-production effectively satisfied the need of coastal merchants for reduced competition with both local and regional buyers.

During the late 1870s, profits from both the commodities trade and pelagic sealing were invested in the sealing industry. Schooners were added to the fleet of the pioneering firms of Spring and Company and Boscowitz and Company. Schooners were purchased or chartered specifically for the sealing season. In some cases, the need for capital for expansion brought additional investors such as regionally-based fur merchants into the industry. Former employees of coastal trading companies also bought schooners (or shares thereof) with their profits and operated as independents. By 1880, there were approximately ten

134 Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing," p. 6. This time, however, the abandonment of shore-based sealing was short-lived and reappeared as an alternative or supplement to schooner-based hunting.
Figure 3.1: Comparison between Schooner-Based and Shore-Based Fur Seal Trade, 1880s

Shore-Based Fur Seal Trade

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Producer

Local Market (stores and vessels)

Regional Market (Victoria, Neah Bay)

International Market (London)
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Schooner-Based Fur Seal Trade

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Producer

ACCESS BLOCKED

Sealing Schooner

Local Market (stores and vessels)

Regional Market (Victoria, Neah Bay)

International Market (London)
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schooners in operation.\textsuperscript{135}

The early 1880s marked another period of rapid growth in the regional economy. The primary change was the regional development of resource extraction industries, such as mining, logging, and fishing. In the ten years between 1881 and 1891, British Columbia went from fourth place to first place as "the manufacturing province of the Dominion in proportion to population."\textsuperscript{136} Prices for traditional trade commodities also began to drop rapidly.\textsuperscript{137} By the mid-1880s, there had been a significant change in the role of merchant capital in British Columbia. John Lutz has noted:

The merchants of early British Columbia played key roles in financing primary and secondary manufacturing and the capitalists involved in primary manufacturing did not appear reluctant to invest in secondary manufacturing.\textsuperscript{138}

Like the coastal trader, merchants all over the Province

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\textsuperscript{135} Spring, "Origin of Pelagic Sealing".

\textsuperscript{136} Dominion census, 1891 (cited in John Lutz, "The Rise and Fall of Secondary Manufacturing on the Industrial Frontier: British Columbia 1860-1910," unpublished paper presented to the Second Canadian Business History Conference, Victoria, 1988, p. 9). Lutz notes that in those years the non-aboriginal population "increased by 100 percent, while the manufacturing output grew by over 300 percent."

\textsuperscript{137} Bryan Palmer has noted that there was a general deflation of commodity prices of about twenty-five percent in the years between 1873 and 1886. Working Class Experience: Rethinking the History of Canadian Labour, 1800-1991 (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart Inc., 1992), p. 120.

\textsuperscript{138} Lutz, "Rise and Fall," pp. 19-20.
were increasing their investment in resource-based industries. Also notable was the growth of the secondary processing manufacturing, initially represented by oil reduction plants and salteries which were established in order to maximize production. This period also marked the beginning of the rise to prominence of the cannery industry, an effect of new technology. Secondary processing in the logging industry was also coming on line. In the ten year period between 1881 and 1891, secondary manufacturing represented the majority of output in the manufacturing sector.  

Where conditions were right, large scale agricultural concerns were developing.

These changes also resulted in an expansion of the role for the still dominant aboriginal population within the Province, as the need for labour within these growing industries increased. For those First Nations people resident in isolated coastal communities, participation in regionally based industry required movement outside of the home community. Through the 1880s, the primary role of aboriginal labour began to shift, from locally-based independent commodity production to regionally-based wage labour.  

On the west coast of Vancouver Island the local

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139 Ibid., p. 22.

140 Lutz, "After the Fur Trade." It is important to note that well into the 1890s, local commodity production continued in addition to the new opportunities for participation in wage labour outside of the community.
Indian Agent noted as early as 1881, that falling prices for furs and oil had begun to draw Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour outside of their home communities to participate in the hop industry in Puget Sound and canneries on the Fraser River.\textsuperscript{141}

These regional changes had an immediate effect on the sealing industry. Like other traditional commodities, the price of fur seal skins dropped sharply after 1880, from an average London auction price of $14.00 in 1880, to $7.80 in 1881.\textsuperscript{142} In the sealing industry, unlike logging and fishing, there was no opportunity for merchants to become involved in secondary processing. The patent for treating furs remained in the control of a London firm. The manufacture of clothing and other items was centred in London, and in the United States.\textsuperscript{143} The increasing capital investment required of coastal traders in pelagic

\textsuperscript{141} DIA Annual Report, 1882, p. 56. During the early Pioneer Period competition for Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour in sealing from other forms of commodity production was not a factor as each had its own season. The majority of the coast cruise still fell within the traditional season of shore-based sealing. Moreover, with the demonstrated success of pelagic sealing as prices rose through the 1870s, oil production began to be left to the women and older men. There continued to be no significant competition with subsistence economy (Crockford, "Changing Economic Activities," pp. 35-39).

\textsuperscript{142} Paterson and Wilen, "Depletion and Diplomacy," p. 97.

\textsuperscript{143} See Busch, War Against the Seals, pp. 143-144, for a brief discussion on the difference in the number of people employed in the secondary and tertiary levels of fur processing as opposed to those in primary production process in North America.
sealing was directed solely to the primary production process. The response of both investors and producers was to extend the range of the coastal cruise, from local hunting grounds to include the whole of the fur seals' migration route from California to the North Pacific. By 1882, schooners were travelling to the Fairweather Grounds off the Alaskan Coast, and by 1883, had begun to enter the Bering Sea offshore from the rookeries themselves. By 1884 there were approximately fourteen schooners in operation.¹⁴⁴

By the end of the Pioneer Period, the coast cruise extended from January to June. For both hunter and trader, this expanded season provided a successful counterbalance to significant fluctuations in market prices and the unpredictable annual movement of the seal herds.¹⁴⁵ The expanded season, however, also reflected the distinct change in the role of the coastal merchant in his relationship to the producer. Previously, coastal trading required little from the merchant other than he show up at the end of the production season to negotiate the trade of commodities. By the 1880s, not only did pelagic sealing require increased

¹⁴⁴ These schooners continued to be used in the off season for the coasting trade, additional evidence for the continued importance of commodity production on the coast at this time.

¹⁴⁵ Precise production figures are not available for this early period of schooner-based sealing. Spring's figures of 1000 skins per vessel per season appear to be convenient rather than precise. The Report of the British Commission discusses the difficulty of pinning down numbers (p. 281).
capital investment in what remained essentially a Nuu-Chah-Nulth production, but for the first time, the coastal merchant required direct access to labour in addition to the resulting product. The capital outlay required in the outfitting of schooners for the extended sealing season, meant that the schooner owner also needed some prior assurance that hunters would work from his schooner.

The schooner owner did not pay wages as such to the aboriginal hunter. Renumeration consisted of a "lay" share of the profits of the sealing expedition. As a result of the initial terms of agreement between merchant and producer, the cost of labour remained tied to the market price of the seal skin. Several changes occurred in the early 1880s which appear to be connected to attempts to control labour costs through the control of lay wages. In 1881, there was a wholesale change in the sealing industry from trade in kind to a cash payment for skins.166 About this time, the price per skin offered to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunter for his share of the catch began to be set prior to

166 DIA Annual Report 1881. Precisely what precipitated this wholesale change is not clear, but it is likely tied to falling commodity prices. In the 1850s and 1860s, although Nuu-Chah-Nulth were familiar with money, they preferred to trade only in commodities (Banfield, "Vancouver Island"). Through the 1870s, local trade began to be carried out both in cash and in kind (Blenkinsop Report). Although barter was practised well into the twentieth century, by the 1880s, a cash economy had begun to dominate commercial activity all over the Province.
the voyage.\textsuperscript{147} The 1881 "contract" described above suggests that, initially, the pre-production price offered represented the local market price. By the mid-1880s, however, a disparity had arisen between the local market price and the price offered to Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters at the onset of the sealing season. The price to be gained from each skin following the hunt became part of the labour agreement and was set to the advantage of the capital investor, rather than to the advantage of labour.

Thus at the beginning of the 1885 season, when the average market price for seal skins in Victoria was about $6.00, sealers were being offered a set price of only $2.50 for a large skin. A report from the Victoria \textit{Daily Colonist} in April of that year demonstrates both the resistance of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth to such a disparity and the new vulnerability of schooner owners in their need for access to Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour. The article stated:

\begin{quote}
The Indians engaged in catching seals off the west coast have struck for higher renumeration. They demand $5 for every skin captured. The sealers find it impossible to accede to the demands and
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{147} The first specific reference to this practice is found for the 1885 coast cruise (Moser, \textit{Reminiscences}, pp. 141-142), but was likely already common practice. I am assuming here that this change was precipitated by the change from post-production commodity exchange to the payment of cash for skins. There is, however, an element of "chicken and egg" about this relationship, which is intriguing, but cannot be fully developed at this time.
are preparing to abandon the catch."¹⁴²

This action was clearly viewed by the industry as a labour dispute.¹⁴⁹ As it is described in the diary entries of the resident missionary at Kyuquot, however, the breakdown in negotiations in the 1885 season highlights aspects of pre-production labour negotiations which were similar to earlier post-production trade negotiations.¹⁵⁰

In mid-January, the captain of a Spring and Company schooner arrived at the main village community in Kyuquot Sound to invite Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters to come aboard for the coast cruise, with an offer of $2.50 for a large seal skin. According to the resident missionary, the Kyuquot came to the conclusion "not to go out sealing at all." The concept of a set price was not new to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth. In the commodities trade, such set prices had always been open to negotiation. In the commodities trade, if the negotiated price was unacceptable, the producer had the option to withhold the commodity. As prices to be paid for each skin were set prior to the voyage, negotiations over the price were done prior to production. In schooner-based pelagic

¹⁴² "Strike at the Sealing Grounds," Daily Colonist, April 22 1885.

¹⁴⁹ Palmer notes that labour disputes in the British Columbia mining industry were commonplace through the late 1870s. The Knights of Labour had also established a presence in British Columbia by the early 1880s (Working Class Experience, pp. 123-124).

¹⁵⁰ Moser, Reminiscences, pp. 141-142.
sealing, if the negotiated price was deemed unacceptable, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth had the option to withhold their labour.

Through February, the missionary reported, speeches were made "at every makmak gathering [feast] not to seal for less than $5." The winter months were the traditional potlatch season. Councils were held at feasts and potlatches within and between communities to compare information and to determine a collective course of action.\textsuperscript{151} Solidarity had always been an important aspect of Nuu-Chah-Nulth negotiations. Holding out for a "bottom line" price quickly lost effectiveness as a strategy if other communities signed up at the lower set price. Nuu-Chah-Nulth councils were held to determine a collective course of action both within, and between communities, on various matters of mutual importance.\textsuperscript{152} The composition of councils held during the period of sealing negotiations were likely not confined only to bosses and hunters, but may have been also held for all community members affected by the general economic decisions being made.

Through March schooner owners made no raise in the initial offer. As the above newspaper article suggests, the options for the owners in response to labour solidarity were limited: tie up the schooner for the season, or raise the

\textsuperscript{151} The \textit{Colonist} article suggests that the decision not to seal for a set price of $2.50 per skin was not confined to Kyuquot.

\textsuperscript{152} Drucker, "Nootkan Tribes," pp. 366-367.
price. At the beginning of April, news arrived at Kyuquot that the price for seal skins was being raised to $4.00 per skin. At that point, some hunters agreed to start sealing. During this period of negotiations for their labour, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth successfully applied strategies that had been effective in the fur trade economy: collectively holding out for the best price. Competition between schooner owners for labour in pelagic sealing, as in the trade economy, worked to the advantage of Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers.

By the end of the Pioneer Period there had been a change in the relationship between merchant capital and Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour in pelagic sealing: from a tangible post-production commodity exchange to an intangible pre-production agreement, essentially the verbal promise of the exchange of labour for cash. The period of post-production negotiation had been eliminated. In its place was a new period of labour negotiations which took place prior to production. The labour itself, however, remained a form of piece work. In pelagic sealing, the focus of the exchange of labour for cash remained on the commodity, the seal skin. Although the focus of negotiations between capital and labour changed from the price of commodities to the price of labour, labour negotiations, for both the Nuu-Chah-Nulth and the capital investor remained firmly linked to the market value of the seal skin. The change to a cash economy meant that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth had a standard unit of value for a
fur seal skin, which could more easily be compared at the various levels of market. Their experience in the commodities trade allowed them to take full advantage of this change.

Labour relations had changed to include pre-production negotiation and superficially resembled a capitalist exchange of labour for cash. Nevertheless, these labour relations cannot be reduced to those of capitalist wage relations. The relationship had developed out of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth experience with commodity trading. The result was neither capitalist nor pre-capitalist. The result was a mix of capitalist and Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour relations unique to this locality and this industry.
Chapter Four

Growth of the Industry:
1886 - 1894

The pelagic seal hunt in the Bering Sea was characterised by a different set of conditions than found on the coast cruise. As the seals massed close in shore to the rookeries, hunting did not require the stealthy approach of the hunter upon animals on the open ocean. The use of open boats, as opposed to canoes, and the use of guns (rifles and later shotguns) instead of spears, effected a more efficient slaughter, similar, in many ways, to European schooner-based rookery hunting of the early nineteenth century.

During this period, the "pioneers" of the industry such as Spring and Company, and Boscowitz and Company, continued to expand their sealing operations. After 1886 profits from the Bering Sea Cruise also began to attract the interest of new investors to the industry. The first new investors were individuals who had long associations in the coastal trade such as Victor Jacobsen, Andrew Laing, and Morris Moss.

By 1889, the sealing industry also began to attract regionally-based entrepreneurs, further broadening its capital base. Representative of this expanding capital base of the sealing industry were R.P Rithet, E.B. Marvin, and
Thomas Earle. Such investors had interests in many other enterprises, notably, the fishing and logging industries. Thus began the second stage of pelagic sealing as a regionally-based resource industry.

Changes in aboriginal technology to increase production in the Bering Sea also allowed for the introduction of non-aboriginal hunters into the industry in direct competition with Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters.\(^{153}\) Graph 4.1 shows the percentage of all schooners that were crewed by aboriginal hunters to the total number of schooners in operation through the years 1883 to 1894. Between 1883 and 1887 the percentage of schooners carrying aboriginal hunters dropped from 100 percent to sixty percent. Over the next five years the proportion of schooners employing aboriginal hunters declined steadily to a low of thirty-eight percent in 1891.

Paterson and Wilen have provided an analysis of the economic consequences of the use of aboriginal and non-aboriginal technology and labour in the years after 1886.\(^{154}\) They conclude that the increase in the use of non-aboriginal labour prior to 1894 was tied to a clear division of technology along "racial" lines: aboriginal hunters continued to use spears and canoes and non-aboriginal

\(^{153}\) It may be suggested that the technological change was made specifically to accommodate non-aboriginal hunters, who had no skill in either the piloting of canoes or the use of spears.

\(^{154}\) Paterson and Wilen, "Depletion and Diplomacy," pp. 99-118.
Graph 4.1: Native-Crewed Schooners as a Percentage of Total Schooners, 1883 to 1894.
hunters used the more productive guns and boats. In their analysis, the authors suggest that the increased productivity of non-aboriginal sealing technology did not necessarily translate into substantial profits for the schooner owner. The use of non-aboriginal technology and labour required a greater capital outlay in order to outfit the schooner for the sealing season. The changes in aboriginal hunting techniques by non-aboriginal sealers resulted in use of three-man boats as opposed to two-person canoes. The schooner owner was responsible for outfitting the non-aboriginal hunter with provisions, guns, ammunition, and boats, as well as the wages for his boat steerers and pullers.

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth provided their own canoes and gear, as well as most of their own provisions. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth continued to avoid the use of firearms in pelagic sealing on the Coastal Cruise, especially in the local hunting grounds. In the Bering Sea, their experience showed that a large percentage of seals killed with shotguns or

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155 The Nuu-Chah-Nulth generally brought their own food on board, although the schooner was responsible for providing fresh water. According to a former ships mate: "Indians brought smoked herring roe, salmon, whale meat, halibut and fish oil" and were supplied by the boat with an allowance of pilot bread, flour and baking powder and tea. B.A. McKelvie, "The Saga of Sealing," Add Mss 1115, Box 3, f. 10, p. 5, BCARS; see also deposition of William Brennan, sealer, Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. III, p. 360.
rifles sank and were lost.\textsuperscript{156} Almost all seals that were harpooned, being connected to the canoe by lines and floats, were subsequently captured. Schooner owners themselves acknowledged that the main benefit in the use of Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour was that they were cheaper.\textsuperscript{157} Despite the greater capital outlay for non-aboriginal hunting technology, however, there was a slight advantage to the schooner using non-aboriginal hunters. During the years 1886 to 1893, "on the average, white hunters returned more profit per vessel."\textsuperscript{158}

Paterson and Wilen's analysis focuses on technology and on the capital expense of the two forms of labour, and does not provide an adequate explanation for the increasing use of non-aboriginal labour within the industry or why there was "a slower entry of vessels using Indian hunters" in the years prior to 1892. The authors note that the issue of an economic advantage to be gained in the use of non-aboriginal technology was a matter of "ambivalence" within the early period of growth.\textsuperscript{159} In fact, Paterson and Wilen acknowledge that their own figures show that prior to 1893

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{156} The estimate of this loss was more than half of those animals shot. See for example, the testimony of Moses, Nitnat Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. II. p. 310; testimony of Wilton C. Bennett, ibid., vol. III, p. 356.
\item \textsuperscript{157} Murray, \textit{Vagabond Fleet}, pp. 161-162, 227.
\item \textsuperscript{158} "Depletion and Diplomacy," p. 115.
\item \textsuperscript{159} Ibid.
\end{itemize}
an "Indian crew was more likely to return with positive profits."\textsuperscript{160}

The question remains as to which schooner owners used aboriginal technology and which used non-aboriginal technology. A simple analysis of Victoria Sealing Company records and other sources indicates that during those years, the "pioneers" of the industry such as Spring and Company and Boscowitz and Company continued to use Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters, as did some of the new investors to the industry such as Victor Jacobsen, Andrew Laing, Morris Moss, and William Munsie, who had long associations on the coast. The most rapid entry into the industry was represented by those regionally-based investors who were involved in many different enterprises. Such newcomers to sealing used non-aboriginal technology and labour almost exclusively.\textsuperscript{161}

The choice between employing aboriginal and non-aboriginal hunters was not just a choice between different technologies. There was also a difference in the relationship between labour and capital investors. This relationship was different with respect to both hiring practices and to the structure of labour relations on board the schooner.

\textsuperscript{160} Ibid., p. 115.

\textsuperscript{161} This analysis is based on a comparison of known schooner owners with records indicating the composition of the schooner crews. The existence of multiple owners within the share system of schooner owners prevents the analysis from being definitive.
By 1889, schooner owners had formed an association in order to protect their interests in the international conflict over access to the Pribilof herds. A secondary purpose for the Victoria Shipping Owners and Masters Sealing Association was to set prices for labour. These prices included the monthly wages for the captain and crew as well as the contracted price per skin for hunters, both aboriginal and non-aboriginal.\textsuperscript{162} The coast cruise extended from January to June. In addition, schooners left the coast for the Bering Sea Cruise in July and did not return until October. Non-aboriginal hunters were signed on the voyage in Victoria, under the formal maritime contracts in use during the period, the so-called Articles of Agreement. From 1886 through 1895, the set price for non-aboriginal hunters was $2.00 per skin.\textsuperscript{163} With a full complement of hunters and crew assured, the schooner then left Victoria for the sealing grounds.

In the case of schooners employing aboriginal hunters, the schooner was outfitted with crew and supplies for the

\textsuperscript{162} "Depletion and Diplomacy," p. 90. Not all schooner owners, however, belonged to this association.

\textsuperscript{163} As a comparison, daily wages for general labourers in 1883 were only $1.75 to $2.00 per day, wages for skilled tradesmen were $3.50 - 4.00 per day. By 1890, the wages for general labourers had scarcely improved and the top wages for skilled tradesmen had only risen to $6.00 per day (Lutz, "Work, Wages and Welfare," p. 85, Table II). Although hunters worked on the lay system and only received payment for skins actually brought on board, considerable profit for a skilled hunter could be realized in the course of a successful sealing season.
season and then left Victoria for the west coast of Vancouver Island to hire on the Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters. For the most part, owners continued to hire the crew for each schooner from a single Nuu-Chah-Nulth community. Labour negotiations for the coast cruise began in January. It was to schooner owners' advantage to also get a commitment for the Bering Sea Cruise at this time.

Throughout the late 1880s and early 1890s, labour negotiations continued to result in verbal agreements, rather than written contracts. Although technically, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were operating as contracted labour within the industry, Articles of Agreement were in very limited use. The hiring of the "canoe," consisting of hunter, steerer and hunting paraphernalia, continued to be negotiated through community leaders, in their role as labour bosses. The boss, rather than the schooner owner, selected the individual hunters for the cruise.

The contract price for aboriginal hunters from 1886 to 1895 was $3.00 per skin. The fifty-fifty split between hunter and steerer, initiated during the Pioneer Period, remained standard throughout the life of the industry. Thus each member of the canoe realized $1.50 per skin.\textsuperscript{164} The additional payment to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth boss, which had previously taken the form of a percentage of the total catch

taken during the voyage, was standardized to a cash equivalent of about $0.10 per skin, often referred to simply as "boss money."°

It is clear from Company records that each owner agreed to adhere to the set price in order to eliminate competition between schooners in an attempt to prevent the Nuu-Chah-Nulth from playing one schooner against another. In theory, this price changed only once between 1889 and 1909.° It was expected that agents would adhere to this price and not give in to the demands of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters. Solidarity amongst schooner owners was a strategy designed to counteract the solidarity amongst the Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters.

Initially, the set price was not significantly lower than local and Victoria market prices. The lower price offered to the schooner-based hunter was also offset by the more consistent production returns realized from schooner-based sealing, than could be realized from shore-based sealing. In addition, the issue of safety had been recently reconfirmed when, in 1883, thirty-six sealers from northern

165 Ibid.

166 Within the original proposed by-laws of the Association, schooner owners agreed to other practices which were specifically designed to inhibit competition. Victoria Sealing Company Minutes, 30 October 1889, Add Mss 16, BCARS.

167 "Depletion and Diplomacy," p. 104. The authors cite the Victoria Sealing Company Minute Books and the Daily Colonist for their analysis of wage and piece rates during this period.
Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities were drowned in a late spring storm. More importantly, the most productive sealing season, the Bering Sea Cruise, could only be accessed by schooner-based hunters.

A series of events through the late 1880s, however, began to lessen the attraction of the sealing industry for the Nuu-Chah-Nulth. Extreme weather conditions during the coast cruise of 1887 resulted in the loss of the schooner Active with twenty-eight hunters on board, nearly the entire adult male population of the Kelsemaht community. The use of schooners to ensure the safety of the hunter was no longer assured. Moreover, in 1887 and 1888 American patrol boats seized several Nuu-Chah-Nulth-crewed schooners in the Bering Sea. Hunters aboard vessels that were seized lost not only their profits, but also their canoes and hunting gear.

Other economic opportunities became more attractive. At the Fraser River in the 1889 season there was "so large a run of salmon as to be unprecedented." In 1890, the West Coast Indian Agent wrote:

> There seems to be an increasing demand for Indian labour at the salmon fisheries and elsewhere, so that there is a growing tendency on their part to travel... The majority of the inhabitants are away for the whole of the summer.

Canneries and hop fields could provide employment for entire

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168 DIA Annual Report 1883, pp. 43-44.
170 DIA Annual Report 1890, p. 122.
communities.\textsuperscript{171} Of particular importance to the Nuu-Chah-Nulth was the fact that younger children and elders did not have to be left behind. Pelagic sealing remained a somewhat restrictive profession, relative to expertise and experience. Although there was some opportunity for older men, women, and adolescent boys to participate as steerers, hunters were primarily adult males.\textsuperscript{172}

In addition, by the early 1890s London auction prices had risen significantly and the disparity between the contract price and the market price in Victoria had become substantial. Graph 4.2 shows the changes in contract prices, average London auction prices, and when available, Victoria market prices for fur seal skins between 1880 and 1894.\textsuperscript{173} This table shows the considerable fluctuations in market prices from year to year; it also shows the growing

\begin{itemize}
\item In the canneries, there was a strict division of labour by age and gender. Men were hired as fishermen; women and children were hired to clean and can the salmon; children were used primarily as helpers, to stack crates, and so on. See Newell \textit{Tangled Webs of History}.

\item The focus of the contemporary accounts of women on board sealing vessels into the 1890s is on their role as cook. There is evidence in this period for the increased participation of women in the role of steerer. Their presence on board, however, appears to have been directly related to their close family relationship to the hunter.

\item Average London auction prices taken from "Depletion and Diplomacy," p. 103, Table 10. Victoria prices from 1880 to 1892 are taken from \textit{Fur Seal Arbitration}, vol. VI, pp. 509, 523, 534. After 1893, Victoria prices are taken from various sources including DIA Annual Reports. There is no consistent source with which to compare the rise and fall of local and regional prices throughout the entire industry.
\end{itemize}
Graph 4.2: Comparison of London, Victoria, and Contract Prices, 1880-1894.
discrepancy between contract prices for schooner based sealers and the market prices realized by schooner owners.\textsuperscript{174}

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth began to give more weight to their other options. In response to rising local market prices in commodities, some communities committed themselves to oil production or halibut fishing, which precluded their participation in the extended coast cruise.\textsuperscript{175} Rising local prices for seal skins made shore-based sealing a more attractive option during the season of the coast cruise.\textsuperscript{176} In 1891, for example, Barkley Sound shore-based sealers took nearly 1,500 skins to Victoria at twelve dollars per skin.\textsuperscript{177} At this time, however, only the Barkley Sound, Clayoquot Sound, Hesquiaht, Pacheenaht, and Ditidaht

\textsuperscript{174}See discussion of the general seal market in "Depletion and Diplomacy," pp. 95-99.

\textsuperscript{175}DIA Annual Reports. Commodity prices continued to fluctuate from year to year during this period.

\textsuperscript{176}In 1888 for example, when the Victoria market price was in the $5.00 range, the price offered to the hunters was only $3.00 per skin. The profits of shore-based sealing were divided by three. Thus, 100 skins at a market price of $5.00 per skin would realize $166.67 per person. The same 100 skins, at $3.00 per skin, divided by two, would realize only $150.00 per person. By 1891, with the Victoria market price at $12.00 per skin, 100 schooner-caught skins would still realize only $150.00 per person, while 100 shore-based caught skins would realize $400.00 per person.

\textsuperscript{177}DIA Annual Report 1891, pp. 118-119. Within any given shore based season, success was localized. By the time the seals passed by the more northern Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities the weather was too rough to go out. In 1895, the situation was reversed.
communities reaped any advantage from shore-based sealing. Other communities sealed entirely by schooner.\textsuperscript{178} Nonetheless, it was precisely those communities who remained most active in shore-based sealing that had the most experienced and thus the most valued hunters.\textsuperscript{179}

Consequently, the timing of the arrival of the industry agent was important. If he arrived before the shore-based sealing season began, he might catch the hunters when they were short of cash. Similarly, the captain might also hope for bad weather which would discourage shore-based sealers from going out.

The expansion of the coast cruise and the addition of the Bering Sea cruise resulted in an increased time commitment from pelagic sealers.\textsuperscript{180} The decision to participate in hop production and cannery work required that families wait to begin to travel until sealing had finished. In addition, the timing of the Bering Sea cruise made it mutually exclusive of hop field or cannery work.

Community leaders began to travel outside of their home

\textsuperscript{178} DIA Annual Report 1893, pp. 118-119.

\textsuperscript{179} Ohiaht hunters for example, had a reputation as being particularly skilful whale and seal hunters and were "highly regarded by the masters of the sealing fleet," McKelvie, "Saga of Sealing," p. 135-136.

\textsuperscript{180} Pelagic sealing on the northern coast demanded additional travel time, up to forty days travel each way, dependent upon the weather. The addition of the Bering Sea cruise extended the combined pelagic sealing seasons from January to mid-October.
communities prior to the Bering Sea season, in order to determine the prices offered by other industries, principally the canneries at the Fraser River and the hopfields in the Fraser Valley. Nuu-Chah-Nulth community leaders were also recruiting bosses for the hop and cannery industries. The set price prior to production provided the Nuu-Chah-Nulth with the means to evaluate the increasing number of options for their labour prior to the beginning of the sealing season.

One option for the industry agent was simply to wait and hope that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth's other options were unattractive. Low prices in other industries might induce hunters to join up by default. Prices in the cannery and hop fields also fluctuated significantly from year to year, as indicated in a letter written from Alberni, June 1891:

They said that they would go to the Fraser River fishing, and sent 2 over to Vancouver to find out how things were, they are back today with a very poor account of the fishing, so I guess that will settle that part of it. Today they say they would go out for the amount given by the Co...

Another option was to make private deals with individual

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181 See discussion in Newell, Tangled Webs of History on the role of a Kwakwaka'wakw labour boss in the fishing industry, pp. 78-79.

182 During this period both fishermen and cannery workers were paid a daily rate by the canneries, Knight, Indians at Work, p. 82. Hop pickers were paid by the bushel.

183 Victoria Sealing Company Records, Correspondence Inward, Add Mss 16, BCARS (hereafter cited as Victoria Sealing Company Correspondence), 23 June 1891, vol. 3, f. 4.
hunters, such as offering a higher price per skin to the best hunters.\textsuperscript{184} The evidence, however, suggests that industry agents were unable to persuade individuals to make the decision to go sealing while discussion within the community was ongoing. Such incentives offered in private were usually pointless as an individual would not commit to accept any offer until the views of others were known: the hunters simply stalled until the community decision had been reached. An agent in the process of negotiations with several Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters noted:

Most of the Indians is down in the Sound fishing including the Boss... I have about 5 canoes partly promised but they dont want to commit themselves before they all get together.\textsuperscript{185}

Regardless of decisions made by schooner owners prior to the season to control labour costs through maintaining the set price, industry agents were well aware of the ongoing decision-making process with the community. The options available to the agent in the face of community solidarity against the acceptance of the set price were as limited as they had been in 1885: return the schooner to Victoria, or raise the price. The option to raise the price seems to have been employed fairly frequently, although such a move risked incurring the wrath of the other captains immediately, and,

\textsuperscript{184} This practice appears to have been more common after 1895. See discussion in A.R. Langley testimony to the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing, vol. 8, pp. 51-52.

\textsuperscript{185} Victoria Sealing Company Correspondence, 22 January 1901, vol.3, f. 3.
of the owners in Victoria down the line. More commonly, however, agents made increasing use of options which had been commonplace during the trade economy: the payment of advances and the *cultus potlatch*.

Advances were used primarily to encourage Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters to commit to participation in the Bering Sea cruise when arrangements were made for the coast cruise in January. Thus the schooner owner could be assured of a crew when the schooner left Victoria in June, rather than having to renegotiate a new crew. This practice could backfire for the agent, as agreements were verbal, rather than formal contracts. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth, however, quickly came to anticipate the payment of advances and those owners who refused to use them were likely to lose their crews.\(^{186}\)

The practice of *cultus potlatch* was distinct from the payment of advances. The term "*cultus potlatch*" is an old Chinook term meaning "present" or "gift."\(^{187}\) *Cultus potlatch* in pelagic sealing was clearly an adaptation of protocols established during trade negotiations. Schooner

\(^{186}\) Murray, *Vagabond Fleet*, p. 192.

\(^{187}\) See for example, Edward Harper Thomas, *Chinook: A History and Dictionary of the Northwest Coast Trade Jargon* (Portland, Oregon: Binfords & Mort, 1912), p. 62. The Chinook term "*cultus*" is derived from a Nuu-Chah-Nulth term meaning "useless"; the term "potlatch" is from a Nuu-Chah-Nulth word meaning "to give." The inference is that such renumeration was not like a true potlatch gift which implied some form of reciprocity on behalf of the receiver. As no specific return was expected, it was a true gift, in the European sense of the word.
captains gave such gifts of cash or goods to bosses and other community leaders as part of the initial negotiation process. Such gifts were also offered to the hunters as an incentive to come aboard the vessel. During the "strike" in 1885, for example, schooner owner William Spring had travelled by canoe to Kyuquot Sound where he "gave four boxes of biscuits to the natives of Kyuquot, and left, satisfied that the Indians were willing to go out sealing on a schooner." In later years, cultus potlatch often took the form of a cash bonus for each canoe brought on board. All manner of material goods were also regarded as potlatch. Local store records for example, list food and other goods as cultus potlatch. The offer of cultus potlatch was anticipated by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunter as a bonus for agreeing to come aboard a vessel, rather than a form of wages. In Nuu-Chah-Nulth terms, cultus potlatch meant

188 There is a good description of this pre-negotiation gift exchange in McKelvie, "Saga of Sealing," Box 3, file 2, pp. 50-53.

189 Moser, Reminiscences, pp. 141-142. This is the earliest reference to the practice of cultus potlatch. Accounts of the Pioneer Period do not make specific reference to this practice. Discussions in Fur Seal Arbitration and the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing, however, suggest that it was commonplace from the late 1880s through to the end of the industry.

190 See for example W.T Dawley, Correspondence [Clayoquot Store], 1899-1915, Add Mss 1076, BCARS. Applying credit in local "company stores" against lay wages earned was also common as it was in the sealing industry on the Canadian east coast (Busch, War Against the Seals, pp. 54-55). Cultus potlatch, however, was not an advance on wages.
"something for nothing."\(^{191}\)

The presentation of gifts during the negotiation period represented an adaptation of a traditional trade strategy by which industry agents could influence the community decision-making process and thus gain an advantage over the competition. A schooner captain's public support of an individual with influence in the community, through contributions to a feast or potlatch held during the negotiation period, was far more effective than any attempts to make private deals with individual hunters. Moreover, success in labour negotiations depended upon this tradition; those who refused to use it were forced to go without a complement of Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters. Schooner owners justified this practice in part, by calling it a "bounty" given to the hunter for agreeing in January, to come aboard for the Bering Sea in June.

Owners were forced to continue to use traditional bargaining techniques to encourage Nuu-Chah-Nulth

\(^{191}\) A description of cultus potlatch given by the West Coast Agency Indian Agent in 1929 illustrates this concept. This explanation refers to the gift of a totem pole by Captain Jack of Mowachaht to the Viscount and Lady Willingdon. The concern here is whether or not the Viscount was expected to reciprocate with a gift of his own. The agent explained:"If it was given as a cultus potlatch the Indian would not expect anything in return as the words "cultus potlatch" means something for nothing, but if it was just given by way of an ordinary potlatch naturally the Indian would expect some small present in return." Superintendent Ditchburn to DIA Superintendent General Scott 22 May 1929, RG 10, vol. 4087, f. 507, 787-28. BCARS mf. B-359.
participation. The process of labour negotiations ultimately became as protracted as negotiations for commodities had been, sometimes taking weeks while schooners sat loaded and ready to go.

On board relations between the schooner captain and sealers were also dependent upon the choice of technology. Figure 4.1 illustrates the difference in how labour was structured on each vessel, depending upon the technology and labour used. Crew members aboard all sealing schooners were salaried employees. The relationship between the schooner captain and the crew was subject to the formal "Articles of Agreement." Under such a labour contract, the authority of the captain was paramount. Crew members could be sent to jail for breaking the terms of the contract, for example, for failing to come on board, for jumping ship, or for failing to follow direct orders while on board.192

On schooners using non-aboriginal technology, both pullers and steerers were salaried employees. Regular crew members could volunteer as boat pullers.193 Hunters were contracted under formal Articles of Agreement, which brought them also under the force of law. Thus production during the hunt was under the direct control of the industry

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192 A sealing schooner log book in 1897, for example, notes the punishment of two weeks hard labour for the cook for "willful insubordination" to the captain. Log book of the Triumph, Victoria Sealing Company Records, Add Mss 16, vol. 139.

193 McKelvie, "Saga of Sealing," p. 5.
Figure 4.1: Comparison Between Structure of Labour Aboard Vessels Using Non-aboriginal and Nuu-Chah-Nulth Hunters.

Vessels Using Non-Aboriginal Hunters

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   Captain
     /\    \\
    /   \  /
   Hunters Steerers Pullers (Cook) Crew
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Vessels Using Nuu-Chah-Nulth Hunters

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   Boss                         Captain
      \                          /\
      \                        /  \\
      Hunters                 Cook Crew
      \                      /    \\
      Steerers
```

Labour aboard schooners using Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters, however, was still structured much as it had been in the Pioneer Period. Only the schooner captain and crew were salaried employees. A cook, often a Nuu-Chah-Nulth woman or unmarried man, was also usually part of the crew. As noted above, although both the Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters and steerers were technically contracted labour, such contracts were verbal rather than formal. Relations between schooner captains and the hunters on board continued to be mediated by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth boss. Moreover, the boss continued to control the most important aspects of decision-making process in relation to the hunt. Consequently, on those schooners continuing to utilize aboriginal technology, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth maintained a large measure of control over the production process.

In addition, Nuu-Chah-Nulth priorities continued to dominate in relation to the onset and duration of the sealing season itself. The coast cruise for example, could begin as soon as the herds moved into the area in the early spring. Nonetheless, the onset of the sealing season was often delayed until the Nuu-Chah-Nulth season of winter potlatch ceremonies had concluded. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth

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194 Although the cook was a salaried employee, this position was most often held by the wife of one of the hunters. It is likely that her duties took place under the direction of the boss, rather than the schooner captain.
hunters merely refused to come on board and schooner owners had no way to compel them. Former schooner mate Ernest Jordan described such a situation when in 1894 a group of schooners lay waiting for "several weeks" until the ceremonies were over.

such affairs were of more importance to the Indian than the White man's employment, so the sealing captains awaited their conclusion before they could sail with a crew of contented hunters. 195

During the season itself, if there was any conflict with the schooner captain, hunters merely jumped ship and paddled home. 196 The end of the coast cruise was also set by internal Nuu-Chah-Nulth priorities. Victor Jacobsen noted that by 1887:

As soon as the salmon season started, the Indians would quit sealing and go to the salmon fishing and then hop picking. 197

Nuu-Chah-Nulth control over the onset and duration of the Bering Sea Cruise had more serious implications for the schooner owner as it was the most profitable cruise. 198 The length of the Bering Sea season, however, took Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters and their assistants out of the subsistence economy for an extended period of time.


197 Jacobsen Testimony, p. 619.

198 Paterson and Wilen, "Depletion and Diplomacy".
Moreover, unlike the coast cruise, the distance of the voyage precluded any visits home for several months. In some cases, conflicts began to arise in relation to the maintenance of the subsistence economy of the home communities. In particular, the extension of the schooner-based sealing season into the Bering Sea created a potential conflict with the Nuu-Chah-Nulth fall salmon fishing in late September and early October. Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters often insisted on returning home early. An early return was also demanded if the Nuu-Chah-Nulth determined the hunt was unsuccessful, in the presence of continued bad weather, especially fog, and in the event of inauspicious omens such as a death on board the vessel.

According to American Fisheries officer, A.B. Alexander, as late as 1893, there was "no law in British Columbia regulating the conduct of Indian hunters on sealing vessels, and the result was that every possible advantage was taken of the situation." There was no legal recourse for the schooner owners if the hunters lobbied to return

199 See for example, Charles Spring testimony to the Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing, vol. 1, p. 27.

200 See for example, Murray, Vagabond Fleet, pp. 226. See also the discussion in "Arguments by Counsel," Statement of Claim Presented on the Part of the Government of her Britannic Majesty to the Bering Sea Claims Commission, n.d. [1897], vol. 3 pp. 131, 182-183.

201 A.B. Alexander, "Observations During a Cruise," p. 129. Alexander notes: "The Indians have had the opportunity heretofore of dictating their own terms" (p. 132).
home. Without a formal contract, schooner captains had no real authority. Although too far from home to merely jump ship, it became commonplace for hunters to throw their canoes and/or their hunting gear overboard, thus effectively ending the hunt. As the equipment belonged to the hunters, the schooner owner had no legal recourse against such action.

Thus many aspects of the original co-operative production remained into the 1890s. Schooner owners had not become "employers" in the sense of having control over the production process. Indeed, the evidence suggests that many of the schooner owners who continued to use Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters also continued to identify themselves as traders rather than employers. In 1887, for example, in the aftermath of the seizure of the Boscowitz and Company vessel

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202 Ibid., p. 129; McKelvie, "Saga of Sealing".

203 The most infamous example was the so-called "mutiny" aboard the C.D. Rand on a cruise to the Asian coast in 1894. In this case, however, the captain claimed that he had been physically threatened as the Nuu Chah Nulth attempted to take over control of the vessel. The Nuu Chah Nulth were charged with "piracy and revolt." They maintained, however, that they "simply wanted to return to their homes." The charges were dropped against the majority of the hunters, although six men were imprisoned. Significantly, the next season, these same sealers were engaged by another schooner for the Bering Sea cruise. Murray, Vagabond Fleet, pp.158-159; "Report of Agt. Devlin re mutiny of Barclay Sound Indians on the sealing schooner 'C.D. Rand'," RG 10, vol. 3929, f. 117,175.

204 See for example, testimony of Andrew Laing in Fur Seal Arbitration, vol. III, pp. 334-335.
Anna Beck by an American patrol boat, the captain stated:

I purchase the seals from the Indians for the owners of the schooner, and I have no control whatever on the natives after they leave the vessel in their own canoes.²⁰⁵

Murray has presented this statement as evidence of a "ingenious defense" designed to protect the captain and vessel owner from prosecution, and notes that such a statement "would have been news to the Indians."²⁰⁶

Nonetheless, this statement reflects the continuance of the traditional relationship between merchant capital and Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers. Predictably, the merchant remained more interested in access to the resulting product than in control over labour. The increase in production and exclusive access to the product remained the real advantages of co-operative production to investors. Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour relations remained a product of co-operative production relations, containing elements of both capitalism and of aboriginal production relations. The relationship between Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour and schooner owners was still not an employer-employee relationship; still less was it a classic bourgeois-proletariat relationship that one might expect within capitalism.

²⁰⁵ Cited in Murray, Vagabond Fleet, p. 64.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. A similar argument by the captain of the Araunah was also used in relation to the seizure of the vessel on the Asian in 1888, which Murray refers to as a "specious argument that the Indians were working under contract and the schooner was not responsible for their actions" (p. 102).
The "strike" in 1885, however, had been the first indication that schooner owners were beginning to have serious trouble gaining access to Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour. By the 1890s, the protracted labour negotiations and the continued Nuu-Chah-Nulth control over the timing of the sealing season resulted in increasing frustration on the part of schooner owners on being the last to leave for the sealing grounds and the first to come home. Even former traders such as Jacobsen, Laing, and Boscowitz began to abandon Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour relations in favour of the more clear-cut relations present with the use of non-aboriginal labour.

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Chapter Five
Decline of Pelagic Sealing Industry: 1894 - 1911

By 1894, the increase in the employment of non-aboriginal labour threatened to push the Nuu-Chah-Nulth out of the industry. Developments outside of the control of either labour or capital, however, had already begun that would reverse this downturn. Escalation in the conflict between rookery owners and pelagic sealers resulted in the complete closure of the Bering Sea fishery during the 1892 and 1893 seasons, while an investigation into the effects of pelagic sealing and the issue of ownership of the Pribilof herds was conducted by the British and American governments.

As a result of arbitration hearings, regulations were issued by the British and American governments in May of 1894. The new terms included restrictions on the coast cruise. No pelagic sealing was permitted during May and June along the coast; coastal sealing was restricted to shore-based sealing by aboriginal hunters.\(^{208}\) On the northern cruise pelagic sealing was prohibited in the Bering Sea from May 1st to July 31st, and at any time within sixty miles of the Pribilof rookeries. Thus schooners were restricted for the most part to the Fairweather Grounds off

\(^{208}\) Murray, Vagabond Fleet, p. 75; Howay, British Columbia, pp. 463-464.
the Alaskan coast. In addition, guns were banned from use in Alaskan waters; only spears could be used.

The final stage of the pelagic sealing industry was characterized by the rapid exit of both non-aboriginal hunters and the schooners that carried them, as a direct result of government restrictions on the industry. In the Bering Sea and on the Asian Coast, the productivity of non-aboriginal hunting had been dependent upon hunters being able to come in close to the rookeries to fire upon the seals where they were most numerous. Paterson and Wilen’s analysis indicates that in the years after 1895 the use of non-aboriginal technology

was only profitable if the white hunters’ productivity was substantially greater than that of the Indians. Otherwise, the extra costs involved would not be adequately covered by additional revenue.\(^{209}\)

Thus the Asian Cruise became the last bastion for those schooner owners committed to the use of non-aboriginal labour as firearms were still permitted off the Russian and Japanese coasts. The Asian Cruise was not as productive as the Bering Sea Cruise had been.\(^{210}\) Moreover, schooners once again became subject to seizure by patrol boats, when the Russian government attempted to extend its sovereignty over Copper Island and its surrounding waters.


\(^{210}\) Jacobsen Testimony, p. 931.
On the Bering Sea and coast cruises, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth regained their prominent role in pelagic sealing. Graph 5.1 presents the percentage of native-crewed schooners to the total number of schooners in operation between 1894 and 1911. In the five years following the imposition of regulations on production, the percentage of schooners using aboriginal labour rose dramatically, from forty-four percent in 1894 to eighty-eight percent in 1899.

Schooner owners were forced to use Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters in order to stay in the hunt. Accordingly, the membership of the Victoria Sealing Association renewed attempts to incorporate aboriginal labour into existing capitalist labour relations. Specifically, schooner owners agreed to use formal Articles of Agreement, rather than verbal contracts. Renewed attempts also were made to ensure that agents in the field would continue to maintain the set price. In 1895, the Indian Agent noted in the Annual Report:

This year an agreement was made by the captains and owners of sealing schooners to have a uniform price for skins and a standard of payment, also to engage all Indian crews on signed Articles. Indians sealing from schooners with their own

21 Other aboriginal communities, notably the Haida and Coast Salish First Nations also participated in schooner-based sealing during this period. Haida sealers, however, "were experts with old muzzle-loaders that they favoured for marine hunting" (McKelvie,"Saga of Sealing," pp. 151-156). Thus the ban on non-aboriginal technology did not give the Haida the same advantage that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth received.
Graph 5.1: Native-Crewed Schooners as a Percentage of Total Schooners, 1894 to 1911.
canoes and gear to receive $3.00 for each skin delivered on board and a $20.00 bounty for each canoe...most signed on this agreement.\textsuperscript{212}

The practice was to have each Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunter sign an agreement to accept the set price prior to the beginning of the sealing season in order to eliminate any further negotiations at sailing time. The amount of the extra costs of Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour, including the acceptable amounts for \textit{cultus potlatch} (referred to in the agreement as a "bounty"), and "boss money" were also set by the Company membership.

In addition to standardization of the hiring process, the desired effect of the use of formal contracts was to give the weight of law to the labour agreements. Under law, failure to come aboard under the agreed price could result in imprisonment. In addition, any protracted delays in the onset of the sealing cruise could result in fines against the perpetrators. Alexander noted in 1895 that "Indians are now held accountable as much as White men for the success of the voyage."\textsuperscript{213}

\textsuperscript{212} DIA Annual Report 1895, pp. 160-161. In correspondence the Indian Agent noted that the Ucluelet attempted to mount a protest against this action but "nothing came of it" ("Journal Alberni - Henry Guillod, 1881-1895," Acc. # 91-5829, f. 3, p. 236, BCARS).

\textsuperscript{213} Alexander, "Observations on a Cruise," p. 129. Other changes occurred at this time. Some schooner owners became responsible for purchasing canoes for the voyage. These canoes were sold back to the hunter at cost at the end of the voyage (McKelvie, "Saga of Sealing," p. 45; William Munsie, Letterbook 1895, I/BS/M92, BCARS). Hunters seldom made their own canoes and a canoe barely lasted a season.
The use of formal Articles, however, did not provide any advantage to the agent in the process of negotiations. There was nothing to compel the Nuu-Chah-Nulth to sign these agreements. In that respect, the situation remained as has been described in the previous chapter. Prices continued to fluctuate through the period. By the turn of the century, seal prices were again on the rise and would reach an unprecedented high of $31.00 per skin at auction in 1909. Graph 5.2 presents a comparison of London auction prices, Victoria prices, and contract prices, between the years 1895 and 1910. In seasons when the seals were numerous offshore, schooner owners continued to have difficulty in persuading the Nuu-Chah-Nulth to commit to participation in the coast cruise in the early spring. In 1896 at Clayoquot Sound, for example, competition between store buyers drove the local price up to $9.25 per skin, although the Victoria price was only $8.50 per skin. The set price remained at $3.00 per skin. Local stores were not the only market for shore-based skins. Sealing bosses were also making the journey to Victoria to investigate the regional prices for skins.

More importantly, competition from other industries

To some degree this purchase was part of the process of encouraging hunters to join a particular schooner; on the other hand, the vessels owners claim to ownership would inhibit the custom of throwing the canoes overboard when the hunters wanted to go home.

continued to intensify, especially within the cannery
industry on the Fraser River and at Rivers Inlet. After the
mid 1890s fishermen employed by mainland canneries were paid
a set price per fish rather than a per diem rate. This
situation allowed Nuu-Chah-Nulth men to more easily compare
the potential income to be gained through the two options of
fishing or sealing prior to the beginning of the sealing
season. Thus the protracted negotiation period continued to
be a factor in labour relations.

Schooner owners were also still obliged to pay out the
extra costs involved in the employment of Nuu-Chah-Nulth
labour as represented by advances, boss money, and cultus
potlatch. Despite the prior agreement among owners to
restrict the payment of advances and the size of the cultus
potlatch, competition remained between schooners lying at
anchor. An account written by the Reverend Melvin Swartout,
sealing master at Ucluelet captures some of the flavour of
the intensity of competition for Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour in
this period.

Large sums of money were offered to the different
hunters as advance payment of services, as an
inducement to the Indian to agree to join the
vessel; Indians are button-holed and engaged in
confidential conversation on the reservation; they
are visited in their houses, or invited to the
cabin of the schooner, every method for obtaining
good hunters and brave, - better and braver than
those secured by the rival schooner, - is
exploited by the enterprising white.

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215 Knight, *Indians at Work*, p. 82.
In fact, it is not the fault of the various captains engaged in the sealing industry if the native's estimation of his own importance has not swelled to enormous proportions...\textsuperscript{216}

Some schooner owners refused to participate; for them, the negotiation process as a whole was an aggravation and cultus potlatch in particular, was viewed as a form of blackmail. Murray has noted that in June, 1897:

Joe Boscowitz tied up his four schooners rather than pay $3 a skin to the Indians, who he said were getting the best of the industry. They were demanding, and being given, large contributions to potlatches, Boscowitz said, and there was not enough profit to warrant such troubles with the "savages."\textsuperscript{217}

Others joined the competition for hunters with enthusiasm. Ernest Jordan for example, describes the situation at Barkley Sound in 1896 when several schooners had left without crews because the Ohiaht chiefs had announced that no one could join a schooner until a whale had been killed. . . Captain Balcom had used these Indians on previous voyages and he was anxious to get them again. He knew that he must be patient, as [the seal hunters] were hereditary whale hunters and could not depart before a kill.\textsuperscript{218}

When word came that the whale had been killed, the captain offered to tow it back to the village, hoping that his assistance would persuade the hunters to join his vessel.

\textsuperscript{216} Swartout, "On the West Coast of Vancouver Island," pp. 142-145. Swartout, who was also the local missionary, was resident at the community of Ittatsoo, Uculuelet Inlet, between the early 1890s and 1900.

\textsuperscript{217} Murray, \textit{Vagabond Fleet}, p. 181.

\textsuperscript{218} McKelvie, "Saga of Sealing," p. 137.
While the whale was being distributed and the community feasted the vessel captain quickly signed a full crew of hunters.219

Contracts were signed during the negotiation period in January for both the coast and the Bering Sea cruises. The pelagic sealing season, however, had been divided into two distinct periods, separated by the two-month closure of the coast cruise to schooner-based hunting. The coast cruise now ran from January to the end of April; the Bering Sea cruise opened in August, but schooners had to begin leaving the coast by early July. The length of time between agreements signed in January and the onset of the Bering Sea season in July, often resulted in a new economic climate. When it came time for hunters to board the schooners for the Bering Sea season, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth often began a new period of negotiations.

Thus the problem remained as to the enforcement of the contract in July, when the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were to be coming on board for the Bering Sea cruise. The use of written contracts enabled the industry to enlist the support of government in enforcing these agreements. In light of the isolation of the Vancouver Island coast, for a time, the federal government responded by providing access to Department of Fisheries patrol boats to assist schooner captains at the beginning of the Bering Sea Cruise. There

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219 Ibid., pp. 137-141.
were, of course, cases in which Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters were apprehended and jailed for failure to honour their agreements. Nonetheless, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were not intimidated by such actions. The logbook entries of the schooner Carrie C.W. at Opitsat, Meares Island in the summer of 1898 illustrate Nuu-Chah-Nulth resistance to such intimidation. These entries effectively demonstrate the intensity of labour negotiations in this period.

The Clayoquot hunters involved had previously signed agreements on the Carrie C.W. and the Saucy Lass for the standard price of $3.00 per skin ($1.50 per person):

July 1: Indians, that is, my crew and the crew of the "Saucy Lass" struck today for a Second Cultos Potlatch of $8 per man, that is, in [addition] to the $5 per man paid in Feby, which we did not agree to pay. They said they would be satisfied and go on board without further trouble and as the time is up for sailing rather than have trouble consented to pay it when their cloths comes and is on board but consider it nothing more or less than Blackmail but will leave it until the end of the voyage for just and lawful settlement.

July 3: moved vessel to outer Roads today and set flags and trying by every means to get Indians on board. They say they will not go until Jimmy Jim returns from Victoria. They are aided and abetted in their contrairyness by both bosses who have worked in everything against me and the interests of the vessel.

July 6: ... as the Indians have refused to come on board unless I agree to pay their $2 per skin per man requested Captain Walbran [of the Fisheries vessel Quadra] to assist me. He called it mutiny.

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220 See for example, "Nootka Indians Prevent Arrest of Tribesmen for Desertion," Daily Colonist, November 29 1904. As one of the fugitives was a nephew of the chief, community leaders refused to give the men up to the authorities.
of my and "Saucy Lass" crews and explained to them their duty to go on board; also they all acknowledged their signatures on articles. He gave them until next morning to be on board or go to jail.

July 7: The Indians have all elected to go to jail unless I agree to pay them same as [the] "Libbie" and [the] "Aurora" [who are] paying $2 per skin per man. And I requested Captain Walbran to take them to jail but he said he could or would not take but a few. He also considered and advised me under the circumstances to agree to pay or promise to pay the $2 asked which I have decided to do and leave the whole matter to be legally adjusted on my return to Victoria. It is simply the greatest outrage I ever experienced but have to get justice for the owner of my vessel on my return from this annoying voyage. 221

Even the weight of law and the threat of imprisonment had little effect in the face of Nuu-Chah-Nulth determination to maintain their right to a competitive market for their labour.

The situation on board the Carrie C.W. in 1898 was not an isolated incident. That same year, the Department of Indian Affairs sent a circular to local shipping masters which forbade them "to sign any crews on the sealing schooners until the vessels are ready for sea." 222 This

221 Log book, Carrie C.W., 1898, Victoria Sealing Company Records, Add Mss 16, vol. 79, BCARS. It is not known what "justice," if any, the schooner owner received. Moreover, although the Carrie C. W. does not appear on the schooner lists for 1899, it does reappear in 1900 with a crew of Ehattesaht and Pacheenaht hunters.

222 Swartout to Shipping Master, Ucluelet, 9 February 1899, RG 42, Records of the Marine Branch, vol. 57, f. 15623, Public Archives Canada. This circular represents one of the very few acts of direct intervention between the Department of Indian Affairs and the agents of the sealing industry.
circular had been sent as a direct result of the troubles arising out of the changes of circumstances between the date of signing and the date of sailing. The effect of this circular was to work to the advantage of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, as agents were now compelled to participate in two separate periods of negotiation, a situation they truly wanted to avoid.

The number of vessels in operation continued to fall, from high of 65 in 1896 to 25 in 1899. In 1898, the Victoria Shipping Owners and Masters Sealing Association re-formed as the Victoria Sealing and Trading Company, a joint stock company which held title to the most of the remaining schooners. As well as sharing profits, members of the re-formed company made a new commitment to secure wages and to prevent competition for hunting crews. By this time the majority of non-aboriginal hunters had left the Canadian industry, many joining the fleet operating out of Japan, as that country did not recognize the 1894 regulations laid down by the American and British governments and, therefore, continued to use guns offshore from the Bering Sea rookeries. Only a few Canadian schooners continued to

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223 The precise number of schooners who remained independent from the Company is difficult to ascertain, but the evidence suggests that between three and five "outside" schooners were operating after 1900. Palmer characterizes the period between 1895 and 1920 in Eastern Canada as a time when "corporate mergers became the hallmark" and "enclaves of entrepreneurial capital drifted toward corporate production" (Working Class Experience, p. 157).
operate on the Asian Cruise after 1897. Those investors who remained in the industry were now almost completely dependent upon Nuu-Chah-Nulth technology and labour.

London auction prices rose sharply after 1900. The evidence suggests that Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers were receiving $4.00 per skin by 1900. Continued Nuu-Chah-Nulth resistance to the contract price forced the Company to raise it officially from $3.00 to $4.00 per skin in 1901. That same year, the Company also attempted to discontinue the payment of "boss money." It had been long understood that the responsibilities of the sealing boss to his community held far more weight than any sense of loyalty to the schooner owner in return for the payment of additional renumeration. In the Company's view, as was so aptly put in 1898, the sealing boss more often "worked in everything" against the industry agents and the interests of the vessel owner. In addition, one of the primary disadvantages in employing aboriginal labour was that vessels had to be sent fully outfitted before the hunting crew had been secured. Thus a new policy was also instituted in 1901, in order to eliminate the expense and aggravation of conducting labour negotiations for the Bering Sea while the schooner sat offshore from the west coast villages. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth, through the local shipping masters, were to inform the

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Company when they were ready to leave for the Bering Sea Cruise.

Correspondence between local shipping masters and the Company through the 1901 season indicates that both these new policies were ill-advised. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth wrote letters to local agents, but not to state that they were ready to sign. The agent in Dodger Cove wrote in early January that:

> a letter arrived [here] from Ahouset stating that 10 tribes was represented there at a Potlach and they came to the conclusion to demand $6.00 per skin that has [stopped] the Indians here from Shipping and the Situation looks Bad at present."225

Similar correspondence from agents in other areas suggests the movement of Nuu-Chah-Nulth representatives from community to community during the period agents were attempting to negotiate.

Keeping the vessels in Victoria until the Company received requests from the Nuu-Chah-Nulth was particularly misguided as recruiters from the canneries made their offers known long before the onset of the fishing season. This situation put extra pressure on schooner owners to get their offers in early. The Company agent at Ahousaht wrote:

> The Indians are receiving letters offering inducements to go to Fraser River so if you want to send another schooner, you don't want to lose any time or it may be too late; we of course would

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225 Victoria Sealing Company Correspondence, 27 Jan 1901, vol. 3, f. 3.
much rather the Indians went sealing than fishing.\textsuperscript{226}

Bound by the Company to adhere to the set price, agents wrote for permission to offer a bonus "to lure them away" from salmon fishing.\textsuperscript{227}

The Company conceded the error in withholding additional vessels until the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were ready to sign and dispatched more schooners to the coast. The disparity between the contract price and the local market price, however, remained an issue. A schooner captain who had arrived in Barkley Sound in February found the shore-based season in full swing and wrote:

Indians is getting lots of skins off the shore and they can get $10 per skin at Suttoms [store] for them and they tell me they will not go out on a Schooner while they can make twice as much fishing off shore...they all say they will go to Bering Sea but not on the Coast at $4.00 per skin.\textsuperscript{228}

The attempt to discontinue the payment of boss money met with a similar lack of success. As one agent wrote: "I was obliged to pay a Boss as they would not go without one."\textsuperscript{229}

Despite the difficulty in getting the Nuu-Chah-Nulth to  

\textsuperscript{226} Victoria Sealing Company Correspondence, 10 May 1910, vol. 3, f. 8. By the turn of the century canneries at Rivers Inlet were also sending steamers to collect aboriginal workers living in remote coastal communities (Newell, \textit{Tangled Webs of History}, pp. 79-80).

\textsuperscript{227} Murray, \textit{Vagabond Fleet}, p. 195.

\textsuperscript{228} Victoria Sealing Company Correspondence, 3 Feb 1901, vol. 3, f. 3.

\textsuperscript{229} Ibid., 17 February 1901, vol. 3, f. 3.
sign on in 1901, the option to raise the price seems to have been viewed as a last resort. Communication along the coast was such that if only one schooner raised the price, in spite of agreements made in Victoria, negotiations completely broke down elsewhere. As the captain at Opitsat, Meares Island explained:

The Clayoquot canoes came from Ahousat and spread the news that Clarence Cox was paying 10 cents per skin more, I suppose it must be the Boss money, but the Indians say he is paying 10 cents more to the canoe and now they have stopped signing and wont even look at Captain McPhee and I let alone speak to us...they think now that the Captains have begun to fight between themselves and will hold out a hope to get more.\(^{230}\)

The dismal failure of the Company's strategy is summarized in a letter from Ucluelet in January 1901:

Indians say that they have gained 2 points and expect to get all they want from the Co. The 2 points are sending the schooners down before they ask for them, and boss money.\(^{231}\)

Despite the lack of success in 1901, however, the Company appears to have been determined to not give in to the demands of labour. In 1902 schooner captains were firmly instructed to engage your Indian crew upon the terms and conditions named in the VSC Ltd scale of Wages, and we would also instruct you to pay no monies or goods or hold out any inducements in procuring your crew beyond the price and conditions

\(^{230}\) Ibid., 26 January 1901, vol. 3, f. 3.

\(^{231}\) Ibid., 26 January 1901, vol. 3., f. 3.
contained in the Co’s scale of wages.\textsuperscript{232} The result of the stringent application of the Company’s instructions was obviously not foreseen: fourteen schooners bound for the Bering Sea Cruise returned to Victoria because "the Indians were said to have refused to sign at the offered prices."\textsuperscript{233} As in 1885, Nuu-Chah-Nulth solidarity in their refusal to accept the set price, once again resulted in a successful strike action against the industry.

In addition, the Company had lost $12,000 in advances, given on the strength of verbal agreements made in January, when the Nuu-Chah-Nulth failed to come on board for Bering Sea in June. The Company was aware that the Department of Indian Affairs generally disapproved of the practice of the payment of advances and would not support their efforts to recoup this loss. The Company, however, did receive Department approval for their request to once again be able to sign hunters on Articles of Agreement for both seasons in January, and thus give the illusion, at least, of legal protection for the advance payments.\textsuperscript{234}

In the 1903 season only twenty Company vessels went out

\textsuperscript{232} Ibid., "Instructions to Master of the Carrie C. W.,” 1902, vol. 3, f. 3.

\textsuperscript{233} Murray, Vagabond Fleet, p. 196.

and "half the fleet was idle." Through the following years the idle schooners lay at anchor in Victoria, rapidly deteriorating, with the owners anxious to sell. Moreover, the Company was no longer maintaining the vessels still in operation. The issue of safety for Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters once again came into question following the loss of the schooner Hatzic in 1902 with twenty-four Kyuquot hunters aboard. The Sheshatht chief for example, advised his people "not to go out any more, and not be like the Kyuquot Indians who went to sea and got drowned." 

Nonetheless, auction prices for skins were still rising rapidly and although profits for both schooner owners and labour were not as high as they had been, good money could still be made in a successful season. In testimony to the Royal Commission, A.J. Langley, as representative of the Victoria Sealing Company's interests insisted, however, that although the Company continued to show a profit after the 1905 season, schooners remained idle because they could not get crews. "I put it down to the fact absolutely that they could not get crews." 

The issue of the disparity between contract and market

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235 Murray, Vagabond Fleet, p. 197.

236 Testimony of Mr. Bill, Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing, vol. 5, p. In 1906, the schooner Fawn went down; all hands were lost including twenty men from Nootka Sound.

price intensified as that disparity increased. The isolation of Nuu-Chah-Nulth communities did not inhibit their awareness of rising prices. The role of sealing bosses as mediators between merchants and producers required that they be fully aware of market prices, both locally and regionally. In 1905, for example, the local agent at Hesquitw wrote regarding the coast cruise:

At the time Captain Byers was here all agreed to go out sealing for about six weeks. Now since Constant come back from Victoria he told Indians to stay on shore and seal from shore and Wilson Brothers will ship all [their] seal skins to London for sale. He told Indians that he got for his seal skins $20.00 each so that they will make more money by staying on shore. I think that Wilson Bros done very mean thing to us storekeepers and Sealing Co. as well for sake of making five dollars they spoiled our [Business] for long time to come... 238

The Nuu-Chah-Nulth boss, Constant, showed a better understanding of the operation of the free market than the agent did. Moreover, it was clear that the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were also aware London market prices. A letter from the agent at Kyuquot that same year indicates that a Nuu-Chah-Nulth representative from Clayoquot arrived by schooner to inform the Kyuquot and that the London price was now $30.00. 239

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238 Victoria Sealing Company Correspondence, 26 Jan 1905, vol. 3, f. 10.

239 Ibid., 10 March 1905, vol. 3, f. 10. The representative also informed the Kyuquot that one schooner was offering $7.00 per skin.
Throughout the lifespan of sealing industry, there were neither licensing practices which were discriminatory against aboriginal producers, nor regulations to prevent the sale of seal skins realized through aboriginal production. Despite the extent of non-aboriginal investment in the pelagic sealing industry, there were no regulations which interfered with the sale of the skins produced by independent aboriginal sealers. Shore-based sealing could, and did, continue in direct relation to the vagaries of the market and the availability of seals. The Company's insistence on keeping the contract price at $4.00, when local store prices were three to four times higher, and Victoria prices higher yet, did not help their cause in convincing the Nuu-Chah-Nulth to come aboard for the coast cruise. Even the local agent at Hesquiaht advised in 1905 that: "if [the Company] dont raise [the] Price of skins a little it would not be [of] use coming here."\(^{240}\)

Although apparently steadfast in their refusal to raise the set price of skins, company agents did increase the amount of advances and cultus potlatch. In the 1905 season for example, a Company agent travelled to Alberni with $5,000 in cash to pay Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters for a single schooner in advances and "bonuses." Individual hunters were

\(^{240}\) Ibid., 26 Jan 1905, vol. 3, f. 10.
offered bonuses of fifty to one hundred dollars each.\textsuperscript{241}

As production declined in the Bering Sea, however, the payment of advances to secure crews more frequently backfired, for the Nuu-Chah-Nulth, there was little to be gained from the voyage beyond what they had already been paid.\textsuperscript{242}

Moreover, by 1906, when the Victoria price was $22.00 per skin, the Company was forced to offer $8.00 on the schooner, the highest yet, in order to get any Nuu-Chah-Nulth to sign on.\textsuperscript{243} Although fewer schooners were coming to the coast, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth continued to use their status as a skilled labour force to drive the set price up. The Indian Agent noted in his annual report for 1907 that although some hunters had signed at $8.00 for the coast cruise they are holding out for more for the Bering Sea trip and owing to the scarcity of labour, the schooner-owners may have to pay this, but they claim that they can not do so at a profit, and rather than pay the same another year, they would withdraw their schooners, which would prove a disastrous thing for the Indians.\textsuperscript{244}

The few schooners who went out for the 1908 season were compelled to pay up to $10.00 per skin. According to the

\textsuperscript{241} Langley testimony to Royal Commission on Pelagic Sealing, vol. 3, pp. 352-353.

\textsuperscript{242} Murray, \textit{Vagabond Fleet}, p. 192.


\textsuperscript{244} DIA Annual Report 1907, pp. 242-246.
Indian agent the hunters were not only holding out for high prices, but were also "demanding excessive advances and in some cases rather taking advantage of the sealing companies." 245

The response of the Company was predictable. In the 1909 season the Indian Agent noted that by March no Company schooners had been sent out for the coast cruise, and the Company apparently had no plans for the Bering Sea cruise. 246 Other evidence indicates that five Company schooners were eventually leased out to independent operators for the Bering Sea Cruise. In addition, there were five other independent schooners in operation that year. 247

The industry, however, was essentially over. In 1910, in anticipation of the impending Treaty, no Company schooners were sent out. Only the five independent schooners were sealing in the year pelagic sealing was banned.

The evidence appears to support the industry's claim that the difficulty in obtaining aboriginal labour was an important factor in the exit of capital investors from the industry. For the capital investor, the advantage of wage as a form of renumeration, is that it is adjustable. The

245 DIA Annual Report 1908, p. 253. Murray notes that only two Company schooners sent out in order to continue the impression that the sealing industry was still alive in anticipation of future compensation from the federal government (Vagabond Fleet, pp. 213-214).


247 Murray, Vagabond Fleet, p. 214.
employer can adjust such variable costs with relative ease, especially where trade unions are weak or non-existent and where a labour surplus exists. Wages in the sealing industry were adjustable on paper in Victoria. Nonetheless, despite all the efforts of the Victoria Sealing Company to apply normal capitalist labour relations in sealing, they had not reduced the status of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunter to that of an employee. Industry agents could not adjust the cost of labour as they chose. They could not do so because capitalist labour relations had not supplanted the older form of co-operative labour relations. Labour, in short, had not been commodified.
Chapter Six
Conclusion

The development of the pelagic sealing industry required the combination of Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunting skills and technology and non-aboriginal capital investment and technology in the form of coastal schooners. Initially, pelagic sealing was a joint venture, in which labour and capital were equal partners. Production remained largely within Nuu-Chah-Nulth control and the verbal terms of agreement between Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters and schooner owners reflected traditional Nuu-Chah-Nulth rules of distribution.

At the beginning of the Pioneer Period, the terms of agreement between Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers and coastal traders strongly reflected the economic status quo of the commodities trade. The weight of distribution in favour of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth producer reinforced the continued importance of commodity production. By the end of the Pioneer period, however, it became apparent that there was a distinct disadvantage in co-operative production for the Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealer. Although the skins still belonged to the hunter, as per Nuu-Chah-Nulth rules of ownership and distribution, sealers were no longer free to trade the skins competitively.

With the local development of a cash economy, the
schooner owners' preferred access to schooner-caught skins opened the door for the establishment of a set price prior to production. Falling prices for commodities stimulated the expansion of production beyond the resource territory still under the direct control of Nuu-Chah-Nulth chiefs. The role of capital investors expanded from middlemen to incipient industrial capitalists. This period also reflects the related expansion in the role of Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour from independent commodity producers to a contracted labour force.

The establishment of a set, contract price was an important factor in the process of the changing role of Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers from independent commodity producers in a trade economy to a contracted labour force in a wage economy. Through the initial terms of agreement between schooner owners and Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers lost their access to the open market for their commodities. As merchants increased their capital investment in Nuu-Chah-Nulth production, they began to require direct access to Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour, as well as access to Nuu-Chah-Nulth produced commodities. Accordingly, during the period of expanded production in the early 1880s, schooner owners began their first attempts to overlay traditional European wage-labour relations onto the original terms of agreement, by establishing a set price for labour prior to production.
The focus of the interaction between capital investors and Nuu-Chah-Nulth producers changed, rather abruptly, from negotiation for commodities to negotiation for labour. Strategies used by both schooner owners and the Nuu-Chah-Nulth during labour negotiations, however, represented adaptations of those strategies employed during commodities exchange. Moreover, Nuu-Chah-Nulth priorities prevailed in relation to the production process, and to a large extent, the co-operative nature of production continued.

During the period of growth, two sealing technologies existed side by side. An emphasis on technology has led historians to treat non-aboriginal sealing as an merely an outgrowth of the Nuu-Chah-Nulth form. Nonetheless, each form had a different set of relations between capital and labour. Labour relations between schooner owners and non-aboriginal hunters were merely expressions of traditional European maritime labour relations such as those found in rookery fur seal hunting. Labour relations between schooner owners and Nuu-Chah-Nulth hunters had a different history; they developed out of the existing economic relationship between Nuu-Chah-Nulth commodity producers and non-aboriginal coastal traders in the mid-nineteenth century. Of particular relevance was the continued use of "boss money" and cultus potlatch, which represented a form of renumeration to labour above and beyond traditional capitalist wages. Such renumeration had social value rather
than exchange value as it was clearly a "manifestation of the relationship between the parties participating in the exchange."\textsuperscript{248}

For those schooner owners who were still operating largely within the old form of mercantile capitalism, the continuation of such renumeration was initially accepted as an anticipated expense. With the expansion of the role of merchant capital to include increased investment in resource industry, schooner owners attempted to eliminate these extra labour costs associated with old trade relations. The Victoria Sealing Company was formed, in part, as an association of employers, in order to counteract the solidarity of Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour. As the earlier formation of trading companies had failed to eliminate competition for commodities, this attempt also failed. The combination of Nuu-Chah-Nulth resistance and continued competition among schooner owners for Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour contributed to the failure of capital investors to change these aspects of the old economy which did not fit into their view of the new order.

However frustrating the protracted process of negotiations and the lack of control over the production season was for the "pioneer" schooner owners, they had some tolerance for old trade relations. Outsider investors were less tolerant of necessity for continuation of old patterns, 

\textsuperscript{248} Raatgever, "Analytical tools," p. 303.
especially with the availability of non-aboriginal hunters with whom labour relations were relatively clear-cut.

Competition from non-aboriginal labour and technology which arose in this period is generally considered an important factor in the process of economic marginalization of aboriginal labour during the period of the British Columbia settlement frontier. Indeed, during the initial period of growth of pelagic sealing, an increase in the employment of non-aboriginal labour and technology threatened to push the Nuu-Chah-Nulth out of the industry. After 1892, however, developments outside of the control of either labour or capital reversed this downturn. Such regulations which came into force during the course of the industry worked, in fact, to the advantage of aboriginal over non-aboriginal labour. At the height of the industry, imposed restrictions on the production process kept the Nuu-Chah-Nulth in the hunt.

After 1895, as non-aboriginal hunters left the industry, capital investors were forced to deal with a previously established set of labour relations. Accordingly, schooner owners renewed attempts to incorporate aboriginal labour into existing capitalist labour relations. One strategy was to standardize the hiring process through the use of standard maritime labour contracts. Schooner owners also renewed their attempts to reduce the extra labour costs associated with the continuance of older trade relations.
The reformulation of the Victoria Sealing Company in 1898 represented another attempt to achieve solidarity of purpose in reducing the competitive spirit during the hiring process.

By this time, however, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were well established as a skilled labour force within the industry, and continued to protect their economic interests. The Nuu-Chah-Nulth maintained their resistance to both the disparity in lay wages and the elimination of boss money and cultus potlatch. They also successfully countered attempts by the Victoria Sealing Company to initiate policies which would reduce the effectiveness of their negotiation strategies. In the face of the Company ultimately achieving a successful stance of solidarity against Nuu-Chah-Nulth demands, labour initiated strike actions against the Company which brought success in the form of increased lay wages.

By 1885, many of the factors were in place that should have brought Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers within traditional capitalist labour relations. The introduction of the set price should have effectively blocked access by the Nuu-Chah-Nulth producer to the open market. The change in the role of Nuu-Chah-Nulth sealers, from independent commodity producers to a contracted labour force, should have resulted in the loss of Nuu-Chah-Nulth control over the production process and to some extent, control over their labour. As the industry expanded, schooner owners organized in an
attempt to interfere with the free labour market in order to gain a measure of control over access to Nuu-Chah-Nulth labour. None of these assumed processes, however, took place according to expectation. Confronted by such a strongly united labour force, schooner owners could only react. Despite the use of bargaining skills based in the eighteenth century, the Nuu-Chah-Nulth were able to hold their own against the imposition of twentieth century wage labour relations by capital investors.

The situation in the sealing industry is best understood, not in terms of a dependency model, but in terms of a specific articulation of modes of production, within a specific location and a specific industry. Only by understanding the local construction of such an articulation can we begin to see the larger context of "native-white relations". Only out of such local studies can synthesis eventually emerge. It is also important not to reduce the process of articulation to a timeless phenomenon. The point of this thesis is that the articulation itself is a dynamic process, involving changes over time as labour relations and technologies continue to interact.
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