9-1-1988

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THE LAKE ST. CLAIR COMMERCIAL FISHERY: A CASE STUDY OF
WALPOLE ISLAND INDIAN RESERVE AND INDEPENDENT COMMODITY PRODUCTION

by

Alan Jones

A Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research through the Department of Sociology & Anthropology in Partial Fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts at the University of Windsor

September 1988
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the present study was to examine many of the myths surrounding the harvesting of natural resources by native peoples. The study focused on two of the more common themes, that of the Indian as the wanton destroyer of the natural world and the Indian as paragon of nature. It was discovered that both of these images of Indians were ways in which Whites had come to conceptualise Indians in terms of. Moreover, it was pointed out that these images of Indians, despite evidence to the contrary, have remained a part of how Whites view Indians since the days of first contact between Europeans and Indians. Historically the image of the Indian as the willful destroyer of nature has been used as an excuse for dispossessing Indians of their land because in the eyes of Europeans the only legitimate use of the land was for farming, which few native groups practiced.

After examining some of the persistent historical images of Indians this thesis argued that a more useful way to examine Indian harvesting of natural resources was to conceptualise their harvesting of these resources in terms of their relations with other classes in capitalist society. In
looking at the commercial harvesting of natural resources by Indians the commercial fishery of Walpole Island Indian Reserve was examined. The participation of Indians from the reserve in commercial fishing was viewed in terms of commodity production and the fishermen as independent commodity producers. As participants in a capitalist society commercial fishermen from Walpole and elsewhere, as well as other small producers like farmers, were subject to the constraints and pressures of capitalism which eventually forces these producers out of business and into wage labour. The form that these pressures and constraints take may vary from one situation to the next, but in the case of fishing have shown themselves through the increasing capitalisation that has characterised the commercial fishery. This has meant that fishermen have had to invest in larger fishing boats, more efficient fishing nets and other equipment, while competing for a declining resource. In the case of Walpole Island the commercial fishery that existed before the war was part of an economy based largely on exchange and characterised by a scarcity of cash and a certain spirit of cooperation. In contrast the fishery after World War II saw a very large decline in the number of individuals fishing and the few that remained in fishing no longer earned an equal share of whatever monetary value the catch brought but
instead were given a small percentage of the money received for the catch when it was sold. The relationship between the fishermen was more an employee/employer relationship, where the fisherman who owned the boats and equipment hired others to help in the fishing.

The study concluded that the independent producer faced an uncertain future under capitalism and the few remaining fishermen from Walpole would not likely be able to remain in fishing for long because of increasing intervention by the state, in its attempt to ban commercial fishing, the decline in the resource due to environmental degradation and the need to invest greater amounts of capital in the fishery in order to compete.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my appreciation to all those who helped in the completion of this study. The members of my committee provided helpful comments and criticisms of the work. Max Hedley's comments, patience and understanding were nonpareil throughout the course of this study. Seymour Faber and Barry Adam provided helpful advice for which I am grateful. The suggestions made by John Jacobs were also of great assistance. Dean Jacobs arranged many of the interviews on Walpole Island, provided helpful comments during them and assisted me in my search for information in the Nin. Da. Waab. Jig. files and library. Without his help the Walpole Island portion of this study would not have been possible.

I would also like to thank the Walpole Island Band Council for allowing me to conduct research on the reserve. In addition, I enjoyed the opportunity to interview Edsel Dodge, who also helped arrange a number of the interviews, Bill Day, Wilfred Lalean, Chief Tooshkeniq, Robert Williams, Winston Day, Parker Pinnance, Burton Jacobs and Roger Williams. They gave freely of their time and provided me with
most of the information on the Walpole commercial fishery that is contained in the present study.

A number of other individuals were also of assistance to me including Mike Weis and Doug Haffner of the Great Lakes Institute at the University of Windsor. Finally, Pardu Ponnapalli provided helpful comments and criticisms of the present study at an earlier stage, which were much appreciated.
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Chapter I

INTRODUCTION

The present thesis is an examination of the Lake St. Clair commercial fishery and the participation of Indians from Walpole Island Indian Reserve in it. More specifically, the present research is a refutation of some of the myths surrounding Indian harvesting of natural resources. Moreover, much of the literature on native harvesting of natural resources falls within the general category of human ecology literature, which has tended to be polarised in its perception of Indians. Generally speaking, the literature has tended to

1 Throughout this thesis the terms native, native people(s) and Indians have been used. However, whichever term one chooses there are bound to be difficulties with. As Knight (1978:8fn) has noted: "As a point of clarification where not referring to some specific group of individuals, I have used the terms "Indians," "native Indians," or "Indian people" in preference to the currently more fashionable "Native people." I have done so with the belief that such is still the general usage of most Indian people themselves and that "Native people" is partly the creation of the external mass media. None should consider "Indian" as used here to imply a distinction between status and non-status Indian people." On the other hand, as Berkhofer (1978) has correctly pointed out, the very term "Indian" is a misnomer since it implies one homogeneous group, when in fact the opposite is true. Having pointed this difficulty out the terms shall be used interchangeably in the present research for reasons similar to those of Knight's.

- 1 -
WALPOLE ISLAND INDIAN RESERVE

LOCATION MAP

Source: Nin Da Waab Jig

Figure 1: Walpole Island Indian Reserve Location Map
Walpole Island Indian Reserve

Source: Nin Da Waab Jig

Figure 2: Walpole Island Indian Reserve Map
imbue natives with certain values when it comes to these kinds of activities. Either they are the protectors of nature and have a full understanding of nature's intricacies or they are the deliberate annihilators of it. In both cases they are portrayed as though their activities are isolated and separate from the rest of society. In addition, the literature within political economy, that deals with fishing, has also often failed to describe Indian participation in the harvesting of natural resources commercially. There are at least two possible reasons for this; either Indians aren't engaged in these kinds of activities or they are but have been completely ignored. In either instance descriptions of Indian participation in commercial fishing, and similar activities, is largely absent from the literature.

Despite the fact that the commercial fishing industry in North America has been the subject of research by a number of social scientists many of these studies have either not examined the fishery from the vantage point of political economy or have done so in a rigid, positivistic manner. In the case of the former, the affects of capitalism on fishermen has been ignored. As for the latter, much time has been spent debating the best way in which to categorise fishermen. In both instances, however, the participation of Indians in fishing, or similar activities, has been ignored. In addition, the studies that have examined commercial fishing,
regardless of their philosophical approach to the problem, have generally focused on the fisheries on the west or east coasts of North America and not on the Great Lakes. Moreover, the few studies that have focused on the Great Lakes Region (Williams, 1981; Van West, 1983) have been ahistorical, very empirical, or both, in their approach to the subject matter. In the case of the Lake St. Clair fishery, very little is known about its history and development. The one study that has examined it (Williams, 1981) paid little attention to the native fishery, despite the fact that the native commercial fishery constituted an integral part of the Lake St. Clair commercial fishery, before its closure in 1970. Again, while the historical information on the fishery is small, it is quite possible that the Indian peoples located in the area had been fishing commercially for as long as non-Indians.

Part of the reason why there are no studies, or certainly very few, that examine Indian involvement in commodity production is that many of the studies that have looked at Indian harvesting of natural resources, whether for subsistence or otherwise, have tended to romanticise Indian involvement in these activities such that they see Indians living in a mystical-like relationship with nature. Others have tended to take the opposite approach in that they tend
to portray them as having no concern for nature at all and are essentially deliberate destroyers of it. Both of these views have been in existence since Europeans first came to the New World. The present thesis, however, argues that a much more useful way to examine the harvesting of natural resources commercially, whether this is trapping furs or fishing commercially, by native peoples is to view them as independent commodity producers, and not as though they were living outside and isolated from the capitalist system. Within the literature on independent commodity production there is considerable debate over the definition of the concept. However, for the present thesis the writings of Karl Marx have been used in developing the use of the concept, which is applied to Walpole Island as a case study to illustrate some of the effects capitalism has on small producers, such as those on Walpole Island.

The chapter following the present one examines the historical basis for many of the erroneous images of Indians that still persist today, for example the two mentioned above. It also shows that, in contrast to much of the written history of North America, including the Great Lakes Region, Indian involvement in wage labour and commodity production has been overlooked or ignored. What becomes apparent is that Indians were among the first commercial fisher-
men, on at least some of the Great Lakes, and before this were active in the fur trade. Neither of these activities were common activities, for native groups, before the arrival of Europeans and it was through their involvement in the fur trade that the social relations changed between many Indian groups.

The other portion of chapter two develops the concept of independent commodity production and it is argued that Indian commercial fishermen, like non-Indian fishermen, farmers and other small producers are basically subject to the same constraints and pressures of the capitalist system. An example of these can be seen through the decline in the number of these producers over time and the increasing capital requirements. In farming, this has meant that farmers have had to invest greater amounts of capital in larger equipment and at the same time farm larger and larger tracts of land. In the case of fishermen, this has meant that they have had to invest in larger boats, nets and other equipment. The increasing capital requirements have forced many of these producers out of business and often into wage labour jobs.

Chapter two is a discussion of the history of the Great Lakes Region and the rise of commercial fishing. It examines many of the technological changes that have taken place in the industry and how these have changed the nature of fish-
inquiry as well as the impact it has had on the resource itself. A discussion of the impact of government regulations is also dealt with.

Chapter three examines the history of the Walpole Island commercial fishery. It traces the rise of commercial fishing in the nineteenth century on Lake St. Clair and Walpole and compares the two to each other and the rest of the Great Lakes. The main focus, however, is on the changes that have occurred in the Walpole fishery beginning in the 1920s and up until 1987. As part of this it shows how many of the changes that occurred in fishing were part of other, larger changes that were taking place in the society over these years. Finally I have tried, whenever possible, to describe fishing and other aspects of reserve life in the words of the participants, which I believe provides a much richer description than would otherwise be possible.

The final chapter provides a summary of the research as well as the conclusions. In addition, suggestions for further research are discussed.

1.1 Methodology:

The present thesis, as mentioned, is concerned with the Walpole Island commercial fishery as it existed in the past, that is from the 1920s until 1987. This period was chosen
because the study relied on the memories of many of the commercial fishermen. The study ends in 1987 because this not only shows the remnants of the fishery but also provides over half a century by which to gauge the historical transformation of the fishery. Essentially there were two components to the research, the first of which involved an examination of some of the general literature on commercial fishing techniques and other aspects of the industry. In addition, information was sought on the historical development of the Lake St. Clair and Walpole commercial fisheries. Very little written information on either of these could be found, despite a fairly thorough search of the following libraries: the University of Windsor, the University of Toronto Robarts Library, the National Library of Canada, the National Research Council, the Department of Fisheries and Oceans, the International Joint Commission, and the Min. Da. Waab Jig. Library on Walpole Island. The library on Walpole Island also includes many of the records of Indian Affairs that have been placed on microfilm. A number of the available microfilms were examined in order to obtain information from early Indian Agent reports on Walpole Island, in hope that some of the reports might contain information on the early fishery on Walpole. Unfortunately, only a few comments could be found and given the way in which the microfilm
files were organized it would have taken a much greater amount of time and effort than was available to me, to search through the back files in an effort to try and find any relevant information on the fishery. The fact that relatively little information could be located would seem to indicate that it is not in a form readily accessible or is non-existent. In addition, a selection of Marx's writings were used to support the theoretical arguments in the thesis, as well as the literature on historical images of Indians, in order to develop the theoretical portion of the research.

The other aspect to the study involved interviewing nine members of the Walpole Island Band who were involved in the commercial fishery directly or indirectly, at the time of the interview or at some point in the past. The interviews were conducted on Walpole Island over a ten month period beginning with the first interview in March 1987 and ending with the last interview which was conducted in January 1988. In order to do this permission had to be obtained from the Band Council, so that the research could be conducted. Once permission was granted a small advertisement was placed in the Walpole Island newspaper asking people who were involved in the fishery to consent to an interview and to contact the band office if they were interested and willing to partici-
pate in the study. Interviews were subsequently conducted with ten band members, of which nine had been or were currently involved directly in the fishery. The tenth person was Chief of Walpole at the time of the research, and was able to provide the perspective of the Band Council on the fishery. In addition, Mr. Dean Jacobs, Research Director of Walpole Island, was present during a number of the interviews and provided additional information during them. At times, during some of the interviews, the researcher was asked to turn off the tape recorder and not record some parts of the interviews. Once the interviews were finished they were transcribed and shown to each subject, who were asked if they wanted any changes made to the transcription. Once the record of each interview was in a form agreeable to the individual, their permission was sought in order to deposit a copy of the interview in the Research Centre so that it would be available for further research and information purposes. In conducting this portion of the research one of the main difficulties encountered was the fact that only a small number of former or current fishermen were still alive and willing to be interviewed, making the overall sample of subjects, on which to draw from, fairly small.

The interviews were conducted in a similar fashion to what Merton has termed the "focused interview", the advan-
tage of which is that it allows both interviewer and subject more flexibility in the interview, than the traditional interview schedule. The interviews were, at the same time, focused on the desired aspects of the subjects' participation in commercial fishing, with the exception of the Chief, while, as Merton (1946) points out, leaving the interviewer "the freedom to explore reasons and motives, to probe further in directions that were unanticipated". Given the fact that little written information was available on the native fishery on Lake St. Clair the interviews were the main source of information. Secondary sources were used to gather the necessary historical and technical information on the fishery.
Chapter II

THEORETICAL ORIENTATION

The present chapter examines some of the more common myths that exist in regard to Indians, as well as the historical basis of these views. In addition to pointing out the fallacies in such views, possible explanations for the persistence of these views is also explored. It is argued that one way in which to overcome these idealistic views of Indians is to place their activities within the class structure of society. It is in this regard that the writings of Marx are drawn upon; in the latter half of the chapter, where the concept of independent commodity production is developed and applied to native producers. In placing their production and social relations within this context a better understanding of the forces affecting native fishermen is derived. In addition, it allows the similarities between native and non-native fishermen in this regard to emerge by identifying the common constraints and pressures of the capitalist system that affect both.
2.1 Historical Images of Indians:

Many of the idealistic views of Indians, as mentioned, can be found within the human ecology literature, much of which has tended to portray native peoples as though they were wanton over-exploiters of natural resources or ecological saints living a mystical-like relationship with nature (Feit, 1986). There are few accounts within the literature on native people that examine in any detail their participation in independent commodity production or the labour market, despite the fact that they have been participating in both for over two centuries. However, such views, when placed in a larger historical context, have persisted almost from the time of first contact by Whites, as Berkhoffer (1978:25-6) has noted:

The Centuries-Long Confusion and melding of what seem to us fundamentally different, even incorrect, ways of understanding human societies account for several persistent practices found throughout the history of White interpretation of Native Americans as Indians (1) generalizing from one tribe's society and culture to all Indians, (2) conceiving of Indians in terms of their deficiencies according to White ideals rather than in terms of their own various cultures, and (3) using moral evaluation as description of Indian.

Further, Berkhoffer asserts that White interpretation of Native Americans has been fairly consistent over time, even though the ways in which they have been expressed have changed. The image of the Indian as guardian of the natural
world has probably existed from the days of first contact between Whites and Indians in the New World. Accordingly, the first Europeans confronted a pristine world of virgin land, the forest primeval, and a wilderness that had existed for eons, uninfluenced in any way by humans. Implicit in such a view is the myth of a fallen humanity living in a fallen world (Cronon, 1983). This view is no less apparent in the writings of some of the early American writers, such as those of Henry Thoreau (1962:132) who wrote that:

When I consider that the nobler animals have been exterminated here—the cougar, panther, lynx, wolverine, wolf, bear, moose, deer, the beaver, the turkey, etc.—I cannot but feel as if I lived in a tamed, and, as it were, emasculated country. Is it not a maimed and imperfect nature that I am conversant with.

While Thoreau was lamenting the loss of an environment which never was, he appears to be among a minority in this respect; most associated such changes with progress. Perhaps Thoreau's concern over a fallen humanity is understandable; however, his understanding of the North American environment, prior to the presence of Europeans, was flawed. Despite the fact that Thoreau was aware of the presence of Indians in North America before a European presence, he is also under the dual misconception that the environment itself was static and that the Indians had not had any impact on it. Such a view ignores the fact that the Indians
were not only living in North America for thousands of years before the arrival of Europeans but also that they "had to a significant extent modified its environment to their purposes" (Cronon, 1983:12). Moreover, such modifications often included, but were not limited to, the burning of forests in order to clear the land for agriculture or other uses.

Pursuant to the theme expressed by Henry Thoreau, one of the more modern and popular views conceptualises what it means to be Indian in terms of environmental equilibrium. The focus here is on the culture of native peoples—that is, it holds that Indian cultures, or aspects of them, naturally leads to a stable ecological relationship between Indians and their environment. However, as Cronon (1983:13) has noted, there are also a number of limitations with this perspective:

Saying that a community's rituals and social institutions "function" unconsciously to stabilize its ecological relationships can lead all too quickly into a static and ahistorical view of both cultural agency and ecological change. If we assume a priori that cultures are systems which tend toward ecological stability, we may overlook the evidence from many cultures—even preindustrial ones—that human groups often have significantly unstable interactions with their environments.

Having briefly pointed out some of the arguments put forth to suggest that Indians are indeed paragons of nature, as well as some of the shortcomings with such a perspective, the antithetical contention is now examined.
The more prevalent theme, historically, of Indians and their relationship to the environment has tended to view them as wanton destroyers of wildlife and the land (Jacobs, 1980). This outlook was fairly common among many of the first Europeans to settle in the New World in the early seventeenth century. The fact that, at least from the point of view of the early settlers, Indians were destroying the land soon became justification to dispossess them of their lands. Rationalisations were easily found in the Bible, as Haigan (1980:66) has noted of the Massachusetts Bay Colony's first governor, John Winthrop:

> And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

The early Puritans and their successors appeared to have no problem in regarding the dispossession of the Indians as all part of God's will. Furthermore, they were quite willing to recognize Indian title to the lands they purchased when it suited their convenience; namely when they needed to convince the British Crown that it did not own all the land in the colony and therefore that land purchases from Indians were essentially no different than any other transaction of this type. While Christianity certainly shaped European views of Indians and provided an easy justification to take
their lands, there were other factors at work as well. The Puritans used more than religion to justify their conquest of Indian lands. As a people who were accustomed to keeping domesticated animals, the colonists lacked the conceptual ability to see that the Indians were practiseing a different, more distant, form of husbandry. The Indian male was seen as lethargic because he hunted and fished, while the women worked the land. As a result only Indian women appeared, to the colonists, to do legitimate work; while the men idled away their time in hunting, fishing, and wantonly burning the woods, none of which appeared to be genuinely productive activities to Europeans. However, Indian practices such as burning served a number of purposes, including a faster return of nutrients to the soil in a given area and increasing the total wildlife, as Cronon (1983:51) points out:

Indian burning promoted the increase of exactly those species whose abundance so impressed English colonists: elk, deer, beaver, hare, porcupine, turkey, quail, ruffed grouse and so on. When these populations increased, so did the carnivorous eagles, hawks, lynxes, foxes and wolves. In short, Indians who hunted game animals were not just taking the "unplanted bounties of nature"; in an important sense, they were harvesting a foodstuff which they had consciously been instrumental in creating.

Some colonists possessed a rudimentary understanding of Indian ecological practices. The more common view was that not only were practices such as burning wanton acts of destruction, but that the Indians were rendering themselves
poor in a land of plenty. This was reinforced by the fact that trees were regarded as valuable economic commodities that could be cut and sold. The fact that Indian conceptions of property differed from European made it all easier for the Europeans to deem Indian lands free for the taking. Since Indian property rights, in terms of land, shifted with ecological use and were usufruct rights, the Europeans saw this as uncivilized and felt no compunction to recognize any Indian right to those lands not being farmed by the Indians. As this impression took hold, religion became less important over time as a justification for taking Indian lands. Instead it became increasingly tied to the concept of land improvement, as defined by whites.

The apologia that the Indians were wasting, or not improving, the land had been in use for as long as religious reasons, as Hagan (1980:65) notes:

From the original settlements of whites in Virginia and Massachusetts in the early seventeenth century, until the breakup of most reservations by the first decade of the twentieth, one of the justifications frequently advanced for dispossessing the Indian was the ability of whites to better utilize the land.

In essence it was European concepts of land tenure, and not Indian, that were increasingly applied to justify white expansion on to new lands and the forcing of Indians on to smaller tracts or off the land completely. The methods by
which this was accomplished have been recounted elsewhere and need not be repeated here. Having briefly outlined the images of the Indian as ecological saint and as the wanton destroyer of wildlife, it is useful to try and explain the persistance of these, and other White images of the Indian, despite evidence to the contrary.

Perhaps the best explanation for the persistence of these images of Indians over the centuries, despite the fact that Indians themselves changed, has been offered by Berkhofter (1978:29); who points out that the answer lies, at least partially, in the perceived differences between Indians and Whites that gave rise to the image in the first place. Berkhofter elaborates:

Since Whites primarily understood the Indian as an antithesis to themselves, then civilization and Indianess as they defined them would forever be opposites. Only civilization had history and dynamics in this view, so therefore Indianess must be conceived of as ahistorical and static. If the Indian changed through the adoption of civilization as defined by Whites, then he was no longer truly Indian according to the image, because the Indian was judged by what Whites were not. No change toward what Whites were made him ipso facto less Indian.

It is, in part, due to the continuance of these misconceptions about what is or isn't Indian that has made it difficult for many to conceptualise Indians in terms of their involvement in the capitalist economy and not as though they were completely separate from the rest of society. Within
the literature on the fur trade era it appears as though the fur trade was the only activity that Indians were involved in, at the expense of all others (Tanner, 1987). Others have tended to portray Indian existence after the fur trade and the advent of the steam engine as one reduced to irrelevance in the economy established by white settlers (Knight, 1978). On the other hand, there are some accounts that detail Indian involvement in the developing white economy after the decline of the fur trade. Such descriptions indicate that, at least in the case of British Columbia, and possibly elsewhere as well, that Indians played an important part in the economy of the province and that they performed such varied tasks as fishermen, cannery workers, miners, seamen, longshoremen, lumberjacks, farmers, prospectors, and casual labour to mention only a few. However, as Knight (1978:8) has noted, very few descriptions exist of the important contributions Indians made to the early economy of British Columbia.

No region of native Indian societies has been more researched and written about than the North Pacific coast. Yet, throughout the extensive literature on BC Indian societies and history, one is hard pressed to discover the fact that, during the last quarter of the nineteenth century and on, Indian peoples everywhere in the province were working in the major industries of that period.

Despite the fact that Indians were working for wages or piece work, just as non-Indians were, it has not been uncommon for some to compare these activities to traditional
Indian activities. However, as Knight (1978:12) has noted, this is less than completely accurate.

A belief that life and work in canneries and commercial fishing was merely a minor modification of traditional subsistence practices and social patterns can only be sustained by an extreme romanticism or a general ignorance of what commercial fishing and canning was all about—or both. And yet, Indian commercial fishing entailed greater continuity with traditional roles than obtained in most industries in which Indians worked.

In the case of British Columbia Knight has provided a fairly extensive account of Indian labour, prior to 1930. Unfortunately, much less appears to be known about Indian labour in the Great Lakes Region. Despite the lucunae in this aspect of Great Lakes history it is quite likely that the rise of commercial fishing on Lake Huron was not all that different from its development on Lake St. Clair, at least in terms of Indian involvement. While the information on Indian fishing activities on Lake Huron is far from abundant, Peters (1981:27) has pointed out that merchants on that lake made use of Indian labour, in the early nineteenth century, when commercial fishing was first beginning: "They used the same local Indian and former White employees to produce salt fish for shipment south, instead of furs."

Moreover, Indian commercial fishing was fairly developed by the 1860s, a period which was also marked by conflicts between White and Indian fishermen, as Peters (1981:48-49) elaborates:
For example when the government leased the traditional Indian fishery at Lonely Island to a French fisherman in 1862 the angry Indians burned him out. The outbreak was interpreted by the government as a challenge to the operation and management of the commercial fisheries, and contrary to the treaties. A detachment of police was sent under the direction of the stipendiary magistrate and fisheries overseer, W. Gibbard. At Wikemikonq a skirmish occurred between police and about three hundred Indians. The uprising led to Mr. Gibbard's murder by one or more unknown persons, and the decision to leave the eastern peninsula of Manitoulin Island as unceded Indian territory to this day.

As Knight (1978) has pointed out, in the case of British Columbia, and Peters (1981) with Lake Huron, Indians were fairly active in wage labour throughout much of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the main reason, from the point of view of early merchants, for hiring Indians was that these various forms of commodity production, for example salting fish, working as commercial fishermen, working in canneries, and so forth, were all dependent on labour. They were, in other words, very labour intensive kinds of activities. White populations in many cases was far below that of the Indians and as a result merchants had no choice but to hire Indian labour. This is not meant to suggest that there were not other reasons as well but only to point out that these early industries would not have developed when they did without Indian labour. Furthermore, what these accounts also show is that Indians were actively involved in wage labour throughout much of the nineteenth century and that they are
neither ecolological saints or willful destroyers of nature, no more so than Whites. Moreover, as Knight (1978) has noted, there is nothing about Indian culture that prevents their participation in these kinds of activities. We now turn to an examination of the concept of independent commodity production in order to show some of the ways in which these small producers are affected by the processes of capitalist development.

2.2 Independent Commodity Production

The literature on independent commodity producers encompasses a broad spectrum of views, of which the writings of Karl Marx are the most germane to the issues raised in the present discourse. Of particular importance for the present thesis are those parts of Marx's work that focus on the effects that capitalism has on small producers, like fishermen. Hence the purpose of the present section is to examine some of the ways in which commercial fishermen have been viewed within aspects of the literature dealing with commercial fishing, before elaborating on the general concept of independent commodity production in the writings of Marx.

Within portions of the literature on commercial fishing there has been considerable debate over whether commercial fishermen constitute peasants (Van West, 1983); participants
in a capitalist enterprise (Antler, 1981); or petty commodity producers (Davis, 1983). Furthermore, the debate has not been limited to commercial fishermen alone. Some postulate that independent commodity production is a mode of production that is pre-capitalist and therefore must be destroyed before capitalism can fully develop. Others have argued that independent commodity production is essentially an immature form of capitalism that has resulted from the activities of petty capitalists; while still others regard independent commodity producers as a separate class in capitalism that possesses characteristics of both capitalists and the proletariat but belonging to neither. While these different perspectives have probably yet to be resolved to the satisfaction of all, most of the positions taken look toward the works of Marx, or neo-Marxists, to support their arguments. With this in mind, it is useful to examine the views of Marx on independent commodity production before proceeding further.

It is fairly common knowledge to most who have read Marx that he thought of human society as being distinguished by historical epochs each of which was characterised by specific phenomena that could only be understood by the recognition of the existence and specificity of those phenomena. These specific phenomena existed in the sphere of productive
relations. His position is well stated in his preface to A Contribution to the Critique of Political Economy (1987:252-63).

The general conclusion at which I arrived and which, once reached, became the guiding principle of my studies can be summarized as follows. In the social production of their existence, men inevitably enter into definite social relations, which are independent of their will, namely relations of production appropriate to a given stage in the development of their material forces of production. The totality of these relations of production constitutes the economic structure of society, the real foundation on which arises a legal and political superstructure and to which correspond definite forms of social consciousness. The mode of production of material life conditions the general process of social, political and intellectual life. It is not the consciousness of men that determines their existence, but their social existence that determines their consciousness.

Marx argued that the centre of every society contains a mode of production made up of the forces of production (land, plants, animals, etc.) and the relations of production (the definite economic, social, ideological and legal organizations by which humans collectively go about the creation of the necessities of life). However, he was not arguing that the forces of production necessarily created any given relations of production; only that the relations of production created would be appropriate to "a given stage in the development of the material forces of production", and that the "superstructural" aspects of human existence would be "conditioned" by the general mode of production in existence at the moment.
Another position advanced by Marx is that all of human history could be divided into four major epochs characterised by specific modes of production; namely the Asiatic, ancient, feudal, and modern bourgeois. It is apparent that capitalism falls within the modern bourgeois mode of production. However, in the sense that Marx used the term above neither capitalism nor independent commodity production are modes of production. Rather they are best viewed as sub-forms of the modern bourgeois mode of production, that general economic and social relationship whose primary specifying characteristic is the production of commodities — that is, production for exchange value rather than production for use value. Whatever else separates independent commodity and capitalist production, they clearly share that fundamental characteristic, commodity production, which specifies the modern bourgeois epoch.

A better understanding can be obtained by how Marx looked at capital, as the comment in Capital (III, 1967:814-15) indicates.

Capital is not a thing, but rather a definite social production relation, belonging to a definite historical formation of society, which is manifested in a thing and lends this thing a specific social character. Capital is not the sum of the material and produced means of production. Capital is rather the means of production transformed into capital, which in themselves are no more capital than gold or silver in itself is money. It is the means of production monopolised by a certain section of society, confronting living
labour-power as products and working conditions rendered independent of this very labour power, which are personified through this antithesis into capital.

The latter point is elaborated on in greater detail in Capital (1,1967:668).

In themselves money and commodities are no more capital than are the means of production and subsistence. They want transforming into capital. But this transformation itself can only take place under certain circumstances that centre in this, viz., that two very different kinds of commodity producers must come face to face and into contact; on the one hand, the owners of money, means of production, means of subsistence, who are eager to increase the sum of values they possess, by buying other people's labour-power; on the other hand, free labourers, the sellers of their own labour-power, and therefore sellers of labour. Free labourers in the double sense that neither they themselves form part and parcel of the means of production, as in the case of slaves, bondsmen, etc., nor do the means of production belong to them, as in the case of peasant-proprietors; they are, therefore, free from, unencumbered by, any means of production of their own. With this polarisation of the market for commodities, the fundamental conditions of capitalist production are given.

An important component of this philosophy is the wage labour relationship. This relationship occurs when those who possess wage labour are denied the ability to earn a living from commodity production, because they do not own the means of production. As a result, they are forced to earn a living by selling their labour-power, in competition with other sellers of labour-power, to those who own or control the means of production. The argument that the independent com-
modity producer represents a limited and underdeveloped form of capital is not in line with Marx’s use of the concept, who argued that these producers are the direct antithesis of capital. The differences in these two positions appears to stem from confusion over two kinds of private property, as noted in Capital (I, 1967:716):

In political economy there is a current confusion between two very different kinds of private property, one of which is based upon the producer’s own labour, whilst the other is based upon the exploitation of the labour of others. Not only do the economists forget that the latter kind of property is the direct antithesis of the former; they forget likewise, that the latter can only grow upon the tomb of the former.

A better grasp of why he went to such great lengths in declaring that independent commodity production was the direct antithesis of capital can be gained from his specific comments on the subject, which we now turn.

The concept of independent commodity production can be found throughout many of Marx’s writings, particularly in those places where he wished to develop historical models of capitalist development or to contrast the nature of specific phenomena in pre-capitalist and capitalist modes of production. In Volume III of Capital (1967:594) a contrast between forms of usury existent in pre-capitalist and capitalist economies is provided and referred to in the following manner:
The characteristic forms, however, in which user's capital exists in periods antedating capitalist production of are two kinds. I purposely say characteristic forms. The same forms repeat themselves on the basis of capitalist production, but as mere subordinate forms. They are no longer the forms which determine the character of interest-bearing capital. These two forms are: first usury by lending money to extravagant members of the upper classes, particularly landowners; secondly, usury by lending money to small producers who possess their own conditions of labour—this includes artisans, but mainly the peasant, since particularly under pre-capitalist conditions, in so far as they permit of small independent producers, the peasant class necessarily constitute the overwhelming majority of them.

Clearly, his comments indicate that he considered independent commodity producers as a pre-capitalist formation; and second insofar as conditions permit of small independent individual production, the majority of such producers will engage in peasant agriculture. However, regardless of whether Marx was correct in his assertion that "the peasant class necessarily constitute the overwhelming majority of them", the point is independent commodity production is a type of relationship that can be present in various types of social formations, not only capitalism but others too. It is clear from subsequent literature that has drawn upon Marx that the concept is not limited to the peasantry or agriculture, as Johnson (1972:145) has shown with Canada.

In Canada, historically, the petite bourgeoisie has been comprised of two groups, the independent commodity producers such as farmers, fishermen, and craftworkers, and the small bourgeois businessmen such as retailers, independent businessmen and rentiers.
An important part of the concept of independent commodity producers has to do with identifying a specific form of relationship in which producers provide their own labour and control or own their own means of production. Ownership of the means of production implies that the activities of fishermen are tied to the processes of capitalist development as a whole (hiring some labour and selling their own). Furthermore, it points to the central significance of the owners' labour for reproduction of the enterprise; however, the means of production are usually sustained by a reliance on the unpaid labour of family members, who don't necessarily share legal ownership, to maintain ownership of it. In the case of fishing, this signifies ownership of the vessel(s) and equipment needed to successfully exploit the resource base. Moreover, possession of the means of production also entails greater control in the work process and certain advantages over wage labourers—that is the frequency, speed and length of the labour process is controlled by the fishermen themselves. While they are subject to the vicissitudes of economic realities and pressures if they are going to meet their own subsistence needs, it does not vitiate the fact that ownership of the means of production is commensurate with greater autonomy and control over fishing activities. The concomitant significance was not lost on Marx (1965:67-8) who commented that:
The relationship of the worker to the objective conditions of his labour is one of ownership: this is the natural unity of labour with its material prerequisites. Hence the worker has an objective existence independent of his labour. The individual is related to himself as proprietor, as master of the conditions of his reality. The same relation holds between one individual and the rest. Where this prerequisite derives from the community, the others are co-owners, who are so many incarnations of the common property. Where it derives from the individual families which jointly constitute the community, they are independent owners coexisting with him, independent private proprietors. In both cases individuals behave not as labourers, but as owners—and as members of a community who also labour.

Marx believed that in such a society, of owner-proprietors, that every level of society reflects the objective needs of its members, as he (1965:74) elaborates:

The individual is placed in such condition of gaining his life as to make not the acquiring of wealth his object, but self-sustenance, his own reproduction as a member of the community; the reproduction of himself as a proprietor of the parcel of ground and, in that quality, as a member of the commune. The continuation of the commune is the reproduction of all its members as self-sustaining peasants, whose surplus time belongs precisely to the commune, the labour of war, etc. Ownership of one's labour is mediated through the ownership of the conditions of labour—the plot of land, which is itself guaranteed by the existence of the community, which in turn is safeguarded by the surplus labour of its members in the form of military service, etc. The member of the community reproduces himself not through co-operation in wealth-producing labour, but in co-operation in labour for the (real or imaginary) communal interests aimed at sustaining the union against external and internal stress.
Thus, in order for capitalist production to flourish, these characteristics of self-reliance and a social reproduction mediated by the commune—i.e., state and social life—must be destroyed first. The labour-proprietor must first be separated from the means of production, whether personally or communally held. This renders the producer dependent on capitalist production for reproduction and subsistence, depicted by Marx as primitive accumulation.

The concept of primitive accumulation was important in Marx's refutation of Adam Smith's model of private accumulation of capital. Marx differed with Smith's belief that the capitalist had accumulated his wealth through self-denial and savings. Marx conceived that under specific historical circumstances, the means of production were capable of being acquired by independent commodity producers. As a natural consequence most of the ensuing impact on society could inexorably lead to one that was suited to this form of production, as Marx (1967:713-14) has noted:

The private property of the labourer in his means of production is the foundation of petty industry, whether agricultural, manufacturing, or both; petty industry, again, is an essential condition for the development of social production and of the free individuality of the labourer himself. Of course, this petty mode of production exists also under slavery, serfdom, and other states of dependence. But it flourishes; it lets loose its whole energy; it attains its adequate classical form, only where the labourer is the private owner of his own means of labour set in action by himself; the peasant of the land which he cultivates; the artisan of the tool which he handles as a virtuo-
so. This mode of production pre-supposes parcelling of the soil and the scattering of the other means of production, so also it excludes cooperation, division of labour within each separate process of production, the control over, and the productive application of the forces of Nature by society, and the free development of the social productive powers. It is compatible only with a system of production, and a society moving within narrow and more or less primitive bounds. To perpetuate it would be, as Pequeur rightly says, "to decree universal mediocrity." At a certain stage of development it brings forth the material agencies for its own dissolution. From that moment new forces and new passions spring up in the bosom of society; but the old social organization fetters them and keeps them down. It must be annihilated; it is annihilated. Its annihilation, the transformation of the individualised and scattered means of production into concentrated ones, of the pigmy property of the many into the huge property of the few, the expropriation of the great mass of the people from the soil, from the means of subsistence, and from the means of labour, this fearful and painful expropriation of the mass of the people forms the prelude to the history of capital.

Independent commodity producers are not, however, immune to the pressures and effects of capitalist development. Accordingly Marx (1967:668) felt that this form of production would give way to the emergence of capitalist relations of production in which the producers would no longer own the means of production and would become wage-labourers who have only their labour to sell, as he elaborates:

The capitalist system pre-supposes the complete separation of the labourers from all property in the means by which they can realise their labour. As soon as capitalist production is once on its own legs, it not only maintains this separation but reproduces it on a continually extending scale. The process, therefore, that clears the way for the capitalist system, can be none other than
the process which takes away from the labourer the possession of his means of production; a process that transforms, on the one hand, the social means of subsistence and of production into capital, on the other, the immediate producers into wage-labourers. The so-called primitive accumulation, therefore, is nothing else than the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production. It appears as primitive, because it forms the pre-historic stage of capital and of the mode of production relating to it.

Whether or not the expected demise of the class of independent commodity producers is realised, the point to keep in mind is that today they are integrated into the capitalist economy. As a consequence, their activities are conditioned by processes resulting from capitalist development, in general, accumulation. It is important to keep in mind, as well, that native peoples are also bound up with capitalism as independent commodity producers, and that this relationship also applies to native producers, native peoples, and all who live in a capitalist society.

The effects of the participation of independent commodity producers in a capitalist economy can also be seen through their relations with other classes. Especially important are their relations with the merchants or the buyers, in the case of fishing, on whom the fishermen depend to sell their catch. Their relations with these merchants, as is true of all independent commodity producers, or all who sell commodities, is conditioned by the fact that the primary goal of the buyer is to make a profit, while at the same time pass-
ing as much risk as possible on to the independent producer. In the case of fishing, where the commodity itself is easily perishable and sometimes dependent upon fickle markets, merchants have often procured fish on a consignment basis from fishermen and failed to forward the agreed upon sum or no funds at all. In other cases buyers have provided fishermen with the necessary equipment on credit in an effort to secure their supply and reduce competition, thereby forcing the producer to accept a lower price for the product of his labour. While such actions, on the part of merchants has varied somewhat historically (Van West, 1983) and geographically (Antler, 1981) it nevertheless has been a common problem faced by commercial fishermen.

A major point to recognise within Marx’s theory is that the processes of capitalist development lead to increasing capitalisation, an eventual loss of ownership of the means of production through the separation of equipment from the owners and the eventual proletarianisation of the independent producer. These changes are gradual and may vary in the form they take geographically or for different producers but are nonetheless at the core of capitalist development. In the case of commercial fishing these changes are illustrated in the historical development of commercial fishing in the region, which is examined next.
Chapter III

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The present chapter is designed to provide a general overview of the history of commercial fishing in the Great Lakes Region and the concomitant rise of independent commodity production. It examines some of the historical changes that have taken place in the industry, including changes in the labour requirements, fishing technology and methods, and the general social organization of fishing. This will, it is hoped, provide the background by which to interpret some of the changes that occurred on Lake St. Clair and Walpole Island, while at the same time identifying some of the specific characteristics of the latter that set it apart. The historical transformation of commercial fishing has been shaped by the productive processes identified earlier and the changes that have occurred in the fishery are a result of the adaptation of fishermen to them, that has led to the elimination of some and the growth of others.

The settlement of European settlers in North America did not begin in earnest until the early seventeenth century. However, the presence of Europeans in North America had begun at least 200 years prior to this in the early fif-
teenth century. It was during this period that fishermen from Portugal, Breton and Bristol began visiting the coastal waters off of Newfoundland, Labrador and New England in search of fish, an important commodity in medieval Europe (Wolf, 1982; Cronnon, 1983). Later, however, they began to barter with local Indians for furs and other items. Furthermore, as Cronon (1983: 82) has noted:

For Europeans, such trade began as a casual adjunct to the cod fisheries, but in the second half of the sixteenth century, with the rising popularity of felt hats and the decline in European fur production, North American furs became a principle object of trade in their own right.

While this period marked the beginning of Indian involvement in the fur trade, the fur trade itself was not new to Europeans; its existence in Europe dates from the ninth or tenth century. Thus, from the very beginning it was not a North American phenomenon, but an international one (Wolf, 1982).

The first known Europeans in the Great Lakes Region were the fur traders, who probably first established contact with the Indians in the region sometime during the late sixteenth or early seventeenth century. By the year 1622 they had established contact with Indians living near modern day Sault Ste Marie (Tanner, 1974). Their presence came from a desire, or need, to secure new supplies of beaver as the fur trade continued its self-propelling, westward expansion. The expansion itself was fueled by the European demand for furs,
as well as the French-British trade rivalry, which in turn meant that new supplies of beaver had to be sought almost constantly as animal populations were decimated in the wake of this expanding trade in furs. Crucial to the trade from its very beginnings, was the cooperation of Indian groups as military allies in the early days of the fur trade, as the French and British fought for control of the North American hinterland, and also because the Indians had the knowledge and ability that the Europeans lacked, namely the ability to trap the beaver and other fur-bearing animals. Thus Indian labour was vital to the way in which the North American fur trade developed. However, contact with the fur trade also significantly altered the social relations and cultural habits of those Indian groups it encountered (Wolf, 1982).

One effect the fur trade had on Indian populations was that it served to increase the competition for hunting grounds, in order to meet the European demand for furs. This in turn influenced the manner in which warfare was carried out. One of the earliest examples of this was the Iroquois Wars, which was instigated by British-French fur trade rivalry, and lasted from 1640 to 1701. The Iroquois Wars consisted of a series of intermittent battles between the British supported Iroquois Confederacy of northern New York and the French supported Huron of southern Ontario. One of
the primary reasons for the attack was because the supply of
furs in Iroquois territory had become non-existent or was no
longer sufficient to meet their needs. The competition
between Indian groups for new beaver grounds was so intense
that various Indian groups went to war against each other in
order to gain new territory, once beaver had been decimated
in their own. A frequent result of such encounters was that
those who were unable to successfully defend their territo-
ries were forced to relocate elsewhere. Other influences on
Indian settlement patterns included the encouragement
offered by the French and British to Indian groups to settle
near forts or trading posts, as well as encroaching white
settlements, particularly from the late eighteenth century
onward which forced many groups from their lands. In short,
Indian participation in the fur trade changed the entire
ways in which social relations had been conducted between
Indian groups (Tanner, 1987; Wolf, 1982). Furthermore,
because of this: "Many native groups were destroyed, and
disappeared entirely; others were decimated, broken up, or
driven from their original habitats" (Wolf, 1982:193). Per-
haps the most important point to bear in mind, in regard to
Indian involvement in the fur trade, is that, in contrast to
much of what has been written on the topic is that, regard-
less of its affect on Indian groups, they were as much a
part of it as were missionaries, traders and soldiers.
Throughout much of the eighteenth century the fur trade continued to have a strong influence on many Indian groups living in the Great Lakes Region, as they continued to pattern their subsistence and general living patterns around the requirements of it. However, by the end of the eighteenth century its influence was waning as furs became more scarce in some parts of the region. This, in turn, was reflected in some of the differences that existed in the daily lives of various Indian groups, as Tanner (1987:125) has pointed out.

The daily and economic activities of tribal people varied considerably in parts of the Great Lakes Region. In the east, for example, Indians living on reservations in Canada New York, or Ohio harvested the products of farms and orchards like nearby white families. By contrast, Indians around Lake Superior were still locked into the seasonal demands of the fur trade.

The end of the eighteenth century not only distinguished by the end of the fur trade on the lower Great Lakes, but was also characterised by increasing white settlement and encroachment on Indian lands. At about the same point in time that commercial fishing was beginning on Lakes Ontario and Erie, followed by Huron, Michigan, and Superior at approximately ten year intervals (Regier and Applegate, 1972). While the demise of the fur trade was a major determinant in the rise of commercial fishing other factors, such as the development of local markets, aided its advance as well. The fact that white settlement in the region was
increasing also meant an increase in the availability of labour in an industry that was very labour intensive. As Tanner (1987:122) notes the year 1830 was noteworthy for a number of reasons, including the virtual end of the fur trade east of the Mississippi River as well as a period of increasing white settlement along the southern portion of the region.

The year 1830 historically marks the threshold of rapid white population advance along a band west of Lake Erie as a consequence of the completion in 1825 of the Erie Canal, linking the Mohawk River with Buffalo, New York. The spurt in Great Lakes Traffic, enhanced by the introduction of steam navigation in 1818, brought an influx of easterners as well as immigrant settlers from Europe into Upper Canada and the American Middle West in the 1830s.

3.1 The Rise of Commercial Fishing

As mentioned previously the earliest commercial fisheries began in the late eighteenth century on the lower lakes; as early as 1793 and 1795 on Ontario and Erie respectively. It is not clear when it began precisely on Lake St. Clair but most accounts seem to indicate that it was well under way on the American side by the 1820s (MacClaren, 1965; Kuchenberg and Leqault, 1973; Williams, 1981). Moreover, the rise in commercial fishing, at least in some areas of the Great Lakes, was a result of the decline in the fur trade but was also soon followed by the by the development of a commercial
lumber industry. As Peters (1981:27) has pointed out, in the case of Lake Huron, the commercial fishery arose from the ashes of the fur trade and was soon followed by the rise of the commercial lumber industry.

The early merchants on the lake began exploiting the fishery as a natural replacement for furs. They used the same local Indians and former white employees to produce salt fish for shipment south, instead of furs. The lumber trade was well under way by the 1850s, originally in response to increased British demand and later in order to supply an expanding American market. The lumber industry, like the fur trade, and, as discussed in greater detail below, the commercial fishery, "was forever on the move and forced to shift frequently in search of high quality timber, as accessible strands were depleted" (Peters, 1981:7).

3.2 Fishing Methods:

Perhaps the earliest methods used in Great Lakes commercial fishing were the seine (see figure 3) and hook and line, as Kuchenberg and Legault (1978:21) have documented.

A hook and line commercial fishery developed in Lake Erie about 1795 around the early settlement of Presque Isle, Pennsylvania. In the western part of the lake the seineing started in Maumee Bay and the Maumee River. Sauger, walleye and small mouth bass were the principal species caught, though the most desired was whitefish. Seining spread along the coasts of Ohio and Michigan and into the Detroit River peaking between 1856 and 1860.
Fishing methods have always varied geographically, as well as over time, primarily because shoreline and lake bottom can make some methods impractical and many types of equipment changed or became obsolete over time. In addition, some types of equipment are better suited to particular species and may be less popular with fishermen on some lakes. The seine net was not only one of the earliest methods used by commercial fishermen on the Great Lakes, it was also used by many Indian groups prior to the arrival of whites (Tanner, 1987). Seining is also one of the more labour intensive methods of fishing, requiring several men to haul it in. The greater the length of net used, the greater the number of men needed to set it and haul it in once full. Essentially the seine is used to sweep an area in shallow water, encircling all fish catchable by the mesh size used (Berkes, et al., 1983). Historically the seine net has been used primarily on Lakes Erie and St. Clair as well as the southern portion of Lake Huron and parts of Georgian Bay. The main reason for this was because of the ready availability of estuarial areas where fish school up heavily and the existence of many shallow areas with smooth bottoms, which are necessary preconditions for effective seining (Peters, 1981; Berkes et al., 1983). Seine nets were already out of use on the Great Lakes before the end of the...
nineteenth century, except for Lake St. Clair where they were used by non-Indian fishermen until the early twentieth century and by Walpole commercial fishermen until the 1960s (MacClaren, 1965; Berkes et al., 1983; field notes, 1987).

One of the first methods to replace the seine net was the pound net. The pound net (see figure 3) was first introduced on the lower lakes during the first half of the nineteenth century and is also one of the more labour intensive methods. The early pound nets were made from the remnants of seine nets, however within a few years the design of the nets had been greatly improved upon. The improved version consisted of a series of tunnels and a larger pot for collecting the fish. This form of net is very much like a wall of net hanging from stakes that have been driven into the bottom. The fish encounter the wall of net and swim along it and into a series of elaborate tunnels leading to the heart, or pot of the net, where they stay until they are removed by fishermen, in boats, using scoop nets. One advantage to this method is that it allows the fisherman to remove the desired species of fish, while allowing the undesired species to be set free. The net was originally used in shallow waters, near the shoreline, where they could be serviced easily from small boats. However, because of fishing competition from other nets, such as the gill net, (see figure 4) fishermen soon began using larger boats with longer stakes in order to
fish in deeper waters. Moreover, improvements such as better twine, smaller mesh sizes and larger pots served to increase the overall efficiency of the net. One of the main disadvantages of this net was that it required many men to move it, owing to its large size. Furthermore, once set, the net was very difficult to move to another spot since it usually took upwards of one day to set. They were used at one time or another on all of the Great Lakes. While some pound nets still remain in use, the gill net soon became the preferable method except on Lake St. Clair, where there is no record of them ever being used (Johnston, 1978; Williams, 1981).

The early gill nets "were developed from coarse cotton twine produced by the wives and daughters of the fishermen" (Kuchenberg and Legault, 1978:22). Such was the case with the early gill nets, which were first introduced in the 1820s on the lower lakes. Within twenty years of having been introduced gill nets had evolved into improved cotton and linen versions manufactured by professionals. These nets, as with the modern version, were set in the water in an extended position with weights on the bottom to hold it in place and floats on top. It is a method that is used in deeper waters and can be set to catch specific species of fish by adjusting the mesh size. Once the fish attempts to swim through the net it becomes entangled by the gills and
Source: Adams and Kolenosky, 1974

Figure 3: The Seine and Pound Nets
THE GILL NET

Source: Adams and Kolenosky, 1974

Figure 9: The Gill Net
THE OTTER TRAWL

Source: Adams and Kolenosky, 1974

Figure 5: The Otter Trawl
suffocates. The net is left in the water until the fishermen lift it out. Until the 1880s the net had to be hauled in by hand, however the invention of the steam lifter at that time reduced the number of crew members needed, although then, as now, the fish had to be removed from the nets by hand. Although the gill net, and later the steam lifter, reduced the total number of crew members needed it also allowed fishermen to exploit the resource more intensively. In increasing the yardage used, fishermen were able to catch greater quantities of fish and at the same time fish in deeper waters. However, by increasing the size of their nets it also necessitated the use of larger vessels and the steam lifter to pull the net from the water. Thus, while fishing efficiency increased it also required a simultaneous increase in the capital investment a fisherman needed in order to fish. Nevertheless, the gill net did afford a number of advantages over other fishing methods, at least from the standpoint of increased fishing efficiency, as Peters (1981:36) elaborates:

The gill net increased the capability of fishermen in several ways. It could be set and lifted by a small crew working from a sailboat, which reduced the manpower requirements and the need for a cleared beach and bottom over which to haul seines. Several gill nets could be fished at once with the same crews setting, processing the catch, and maintaining the cordage.
More recent technological advances have also increased the efficiency of gill net fishermen. Prior to the invention of synthetic fabrics, in the 1940s, fishermen were required to treat their nets with a tar-like substance in order to increase the life of the twine, which tended to deteriorate after a period of time in the water. They also had to be hung to dry on racks between uses. This was true of all or most nets, regardless of whether they were used inshore or offshore. The introduction of artificial fibers, as Regier and Applegate (1972:690) point out, virtually revolutionized the fishing industry.

The dominating event during this interval was the introduction of artificial fibers (nylon, perlon, etc.) into fishing nets—particularly gill nets. Earlier the steamship and mechanical net lifters had permitted greatly enhanced efficiency of operations on the larger lakes in the 1880s and 1890s. Particularly effective deep gill nets (with large vertical dimension) and deep trapnets (large trapnets fished in the hypolimnion in summer), used briefly in the Great Lakes in the 1920s and 1930s, had been outlawed because they were thought to be either too efficient or too unselective—-or perhaps both reasons were important. The artificial fibers that first appeared about 1948-53 were not outlawed. They were much more efficient, by a factor of two or three, than the earlier linen or cotton nets. This direct efficiency (catch per unit net per unit time) was further magnified by increased handling efficiency, since artificial fibers did not have to be dried, were not fouled as readily by aquatic organisms, were stronger and longer-lived, etc. The result was that a change in efficiency in fibers without a proportional decrease in nets fished did, in fact, permit a greatly increased fishing intensity with no appreciable change in fishing methods, and at a time when the general trend of technical advice was
toward more protection for the declining fish stocks.

Despite the benefits of synthetic fibers, the gill net has a number of disadvantages to it; including the fact that the fish tend to stay in the nets longer and as a result the quality of the fish deteriorates more quickly. The reason for this is that the gill net is not a live gear method. The fish swim into the net and are caught by the gills and eventually suffocate and die. The longer the fish remains in the water after it dies, the poorer the quality. This process occurs much more quickly in the summer when the waters are generally much warmer. In addition, the original investment in gill nets can be quite high, in part because several nets are usually required due to frequent repairs (Frick, 1965; Van West, 1983).

The trap net and hoop net are more recent variations of the pound net. While the trap net offers a lower initial cost than the pound net, it is very similar to it save for its smaller size. In a number of places on the Great Lakes the trap net has now replaced the pound net. The net is held open by weights and floats and is anchored in position in the water. However, it eliminates the need for stakes and may be placed over rock bottoms or moved to another location, if fish are found to be more plentiful there; hence in some ways it can be more efficient than the large pound
nets, which must remain stationary. Furthermore, it offers another added advantage in that it also has a covered pot, which the pound net lacks, thus preventing fish from escaping before the net can be lifted from the water and in addition, does not require as great an initial capital investment as is the case with pound nets. However, the trap net also requires a special boat in order to remove it from the water. Fyke nets also a variant of the pound net and are used in shallow water. As Kuchenberg and Legault (1978:33) have noted:

It consists of of two hooped nets connected by a lead. Fish running along the lead in either direction stand a chance of being caught. The hearts are smaller than in other impoundment gear and are kept in place with spreader stakes, and buoys mark their position. A fish entering the net travels through a series of tunnels until the pot is reached.

It is also lifted by hand and requires at least three, or more fishermen to lift it. Usually the net is held in place by a stake at the back and one at the end of each wing in front, which help to direct the fish into the heart (Frick, 1965). Another widely used piece of equipment in the Great Lakes commercial fishery is the hoop net. Its design is very similar to that of the fyke net, with the hoop net being somewhat smaller in size. These nets were fairly common on Lake St. Clair beginning in the 1880s and remained until the closure of the commercial fishery in 1970. However, they are
still used by the remaining commercial fishermen on Walpole Island.

A more recent innovation in the commercial fishing industry, on the Great Lakes, came in the early 1960s with the introduction of the otter trawl—a cone shaped net dragged behind the boat (see figure 5). Introduced primarily for the purpose of catching smelt it was adopted by many fishermen in part due to its lower cost in comparison to gill nets and some other types of fishing gear, as well as the fact that about half as many men are required than what is needed for gill netting. Another aspect of the trawl has been the relative ease and relatively low cost by which gill net tugs have been converted so that trawling can be carried out. Furthermore, it has proven a more efficient method by which to catch smelt because all that is required of the trawl net is that the net be lifted on board the vessel, the catch emptied and iced, and the net placed back in the water for another catch. In contrast, the use of gill nets, for the catching of smelt, would involve a much more time consuming and tedious procedure (Frick, 1965; Van West, 1983). It should be noted that trawling is both capital intensive and a fuel expensive method of fishing. The initial cost can be quite high, mainly because a relatively large and powerful boat is needed to pull the trawl through the water and these are generally more expensive than smaller vessels. Further-
more, pulling the trawl net through the water tends to consume large quantities of fuel. However, despite this the trawl net does offer some advantages over the gill net in that it can be dipped in on numerous occasions during the fishing day. On the other hand, gill nets require more time and effort to set or reset, thus making it difficult to move them as often (Frick, 1965).

3.3 The Boats:

In addition to the nets used, fishing boats were and are an important tool to the commercial fisherman. As has been the case with fishing nets, many changes have occurred in the types of vessels employed. In the case of pound net fishermen small open boats were used to install, move or otherwise service pound nets. However, these boats began growing larger in the nineteenth century in order to fish deeper waters. In the early days of pound net fishing, fishermen were not able to fish in waters over three metres deep. Moreover, the larger boats and improvements in the pound net soon allowed them to fish in waters that were fifteen to twenty metres deep. The reason for the progression into deeper waters was twofold; because fishing intensity had eliminated, or greatly reduced, fish populations that had previously been obtained closer to shore and therefore pound net fishermen had little choice but to expand their
operations to deeper waters; secondly, gill net fishermen had an advantage over those using pound nets because the gill net was more efficient at almost any depth and, unlike pound net fishermen, gill net fishermen did not have to rely on the seasonal migration of fish moving from shallower to deeper waters or the reverse, in effect allowing them to fish longer. The boats used for other types of fishing, such as gill netting, and in deeper waters were larger. In all cases though, the vessels were originally hand or wind powered until the late 1870s on the lower lakes and the 1880s on the upper lakes, at which time steam powered vessels were introduced as a replacement for sail (Peters, 1981; Van West, 1983). Prior to the advent of steam tugs, however, the Mackinaw sailboat was a vessel that was used for many things including, but not limited to, commercial fishing. These vessels were in general use on all the Great Lakes, including Lake St. Clair, although not generally for commercial fishing on St. Clair because of the shallow depths. Instead smaller, open boats were generally employed in commercial fishing. However, by the early 1900's gasoline powered boats begun to come into increased use, primarily for commercial fishing in the more shallow, inshore areas and to a lesser extent offshore as well (Peters, 1981). The larger tugs that became so common on the other
lakes were never in use on Lake St. Clair because the overall shallowness of the lake made them impractical, if not impossible, to use. In terms of motorized boats, however, Walpole was an exception to the general trend that was taking place elsewhere on the Great Lakes, in that motorized boats did not come into use much, if at all, before the 1930s, much later than for the rest of Lake St. Clair (field notes, 1987). On the larger lakes steam powered fishing tugs became the norm in the latter part of the nineteenth century as well as something that all fishermen were eventually forced to adopt if they were going to remain competitive with other fishermen. Steam powered vessels required fewer crew members to work them, and, like the diesel tugs that replaced steam tugs in the twentieth century, served to increase the capital requirements of the fishery, while reducing the labour costs and increasing fishing efficiency (Kuchenberg and Legault, 1978; Peters, 1981).

Aside from the elimination of steam powered tugs, in favour of diesel, there has also been a gradual increase in the size of the fishing tugs used in the Great Lakes commercial fishing industry, with the exception of Lake St. Clair. The main reason for this has been the greater efficiency of a larger vessel, which allows a greater quantity of fish to be taken at any one time. The pressures and constraints fisher-
men face due to the increasing capital demands and the decreasing returns, caused by pollution, quotas and other factors, has left fishermen with little choice but to become more efficient in their exploitation of the resource. One way in which they have addressed this problem has been to invest in larger boats. Moreover, it is not uncommon for most commercial fishermen to put in fourteen hour work days in order to accomplish this (Miller, 1985).

Another way in which commercial fishermen have sought to make themselves more efficient is to invest in expensive equipment that aids them in their search for fish. Investment in this form of equipment has only occurred in the last forty years, that is since the end of World War II, in part because the technology has become more readily available and also because it has become increasingly necessary, in many ways, if a fishermen is going to remain competitive. The innovations that have occurred since the second World War have included the installation of marine radios, sonar and radar equipment, auto pilots and small engines to lift the nets from the water, all of which serve to increase the efficiency of commercial fishermen, whether by locating the fish, or reducing the labour requirements. In any event, for most fishermen, this equipment has become a necessary part of competing for a rapidly declining resource while at the same time trying to earn a living from it.
Perhaps the main point to be gained from the above descriptions, as Regier and Applegate (1972:688) have noted, is that:

The fishermen with more and better nets, a faster and bigger boat, and better shore facilities were obviously more prosperous than others and became relatively more so as long as fish stocks would sustain pressure on them.

All of these changes, while gradual, have nevertheless affected all commercial fishermen. After the introduction of more efficient fishing methods, all fishermen had to eventually adopt it, as Kuchenberg and Legault (1978:21) have pointed out, if they were going to remain in fishing.

Whenever a new fishing technique proved superior, it was adopted by other fishermen as a matter of economic survival. This was true whether or not the long term effect was destructive to the total resource.

In the majority of cases this meant that additional capital had to be procured if a given fisherman wished to compete. As a result those unwilling or unable to compete have either dropped out of the commercial fishery completely, often choosing the security of a job as a labourer in industry, or pursue commercial fishing on a part-time basis. Examples of both can be seen on the Great Lakes. Furthermore, this trend is evident on the American and Canadian portions of the lakes. In the case of Lake Erie there are few or no commercial fishermen left on the American side of the lake.
Instead many have chosen to work at jobs in one of the many surrounding industries. On the Canadian side of Lake Erie there has also been an increase in the number of part-time fishermen in recent years (Van West, 1983). The commercial fishery on the Canadian portion of Lake Ontario was once a bustling trade in fish, however in recent years commercial fishermen have been declining in numbers and nearly all of those that remain are part-time (French, 1987).

There were other constraints on commercial fishermen, aside from the availability of capital and the problem of a declining resource, the decline itself due in part to fishing intensity that has steadily increased. Beginning in the nineteenth century, as had been the case with the fur and lumber industries, fishermen were constantly in search of new supplies of choice fish. As Peters (1981:29) notes in regard to Lake Huron in the 1860s:

> During this same period, more adventuresome traders like McGregor continued to expand their zone of activity northward, seeking out high quality inshore grounds.

Almost from the beginning of commercial fishing on the various Great Lakes fishermen, and others, have noted the gradual decline of the fishing resource. In some instances entire species have disappeared completely or become very rare. In turn, government—in part because of political pressure—has become increasingly involved in regulating the industry as a
whole. Moreover, on many parts of the Great Lakes, the provincial government has placed a moratorium on new fishing licenses and imposed strict regulations governing the type of gear fishermen are allowed to use. In recent years bans or quotas have also been placed on the commercial fishing of certain species of fish, often those species that brought a higher price in the market place, thus making it all the more difficult for commercial fishermen to earn a living from the enterprise. The pollution of the Great Lakes for nearly two centuries and the elimination of many fish habitats through shoreline modification or pollution has only exacerbated this. Furthermore, pressure by lobby groups, such as sports fishing associations, has usually resulted in changes to fishing regulations at the expense of commercial fishermen and, as Regier and Applegate (1972:688) note, have not always been directed at protecting the future of the resource.

Unfortunately, some aspects of the very restrictive measures aimed at the commercial fishery seem to be based on political expediency rather than sound biological considerations. These restrictions will very likely bankrupt the remnants of an already moribund commercial fishery rather than achieve a sorely needed regulatory framework based on the productive capacity of the different parts of the lake community. It is clear from long experience, however, that an appropriate form of effective control on the commercial fishery is long overdue.
All of these factors have helped to bring about a reduction in the number, or in the case of Lake St. Clair the elimination, of commercial fishermen on the Great Lakes. Fishermen who are forced to fish for species that are the least sought on the market must catch even greater quantities of these less desirable fish, in turn making it extremely difficult to remain in fishing when one takes into account the capital expense and high operational costs. In addition, because of pollution, many fish are not supposed to be consumed once they have reached a given size or are not fit for human consumption at all, further eliminating or reducing the markets for fresh fish. An examination of the markets for fish from the Great Lakes is next.

3.4 Markets and Products:

The markets for fish from the Great Lakes historically have been located in the United States, particularly the eastern and northeastern urban centres like New York City, and to a lesser extent smaller communities in the same area of the country. Throughout the Canadian portion of the Great Lakes, commercial fishing progressed much slower than in the United States. In fact, many of the communities on the lower lakes did not begin to fish commercially, much before the 1870s. Furthermore, this came about largely because of a
decline in the lumber and boat building industries, as well as the grain trade. Previously, many of these communities were more interested in these commodities than commercial fishing (Van West, 1983).

On Lake Huron commercial fishing had been in existence throughout much of the nineteenth century but as an industry it remained fairly small until the 1860s and 1870s at which time it began to expand rapidly. The markets for fish from the upper lakes were concentrated in Chicago and Detroit throughout most of the nineteenth century. The earliest attempts at marketing fish from the lake had begun in 1809, as Peters (1981:28) has noted.

The American Fur Company salted its first barrel of whitefish in 1809 and made a trial shipment from the Sault Ste Marie area to Detroit, but the War of 1812 slowed the development of the resource. Despite early attempts at developing the resource only a small portion of what was caught on the lake, prior to the expansion of the industry in the 1860s, was actually shipped south. In the early years most of it was consumed locally, traded to coastal traders, or shipped overland into the logging or pioneer agricultural areas. In the first half of the nineteenth century the fish that were shipped to the United States were shipped to the western states as a food supply for railroad crews (Peters, 1981).
The expansion of the market for Great Lakes fish in the second half of the nineteenth century and improved transportation links transformed commercial fishing itself, in many cases. The changes that occurred with the development of better markets for the fish and improved transportation links was different for Lakes Huron and Erie. It is difficult to say what impact they had on the other lakes since little information is available. However, in the case of Lake Huron improved transportation links meant that by the 1860s it was now possible for fish to be caught, cleaned and sent to the market within twenty-four hours. This was also made possible by the use of ice, as a replacement for salt, in preserving fish. In turn, by the early twentieth century the many ice houses that had been built along the lakes were no longer needed as refrigeration and freezing became possible. Improved transportation links also contributed to an increase in fishing intensity, as more fishermen began to fish for as long as the waters remained navigable, in order to meet the increased demand for fish. Prior to the growth in the U.S. markets, for fresh fish in the second half of the nineteenth century, fish were salted and shipped from Lake Huron to the markets by small seasonal operators. However, these were gradually eliminated by the growth of American fish companies that processed and shipped the fish
directly to the American market. The increasing control over
the Lake Huron commercial fishery by American companies was
also felt by many of the independent fishermen on the lake
who eventually became employees of the American companies,
fishing for a salary while the company supplied the equip-
ment and controlled the intensity of fishing. These compa-
nies were able to exert this control because no Canadian
markets existed; the Americans had invested large sums of
capital into small processing plants around the lake and
offered higher prices to fishermen, and as a result, had
eliminated any Canadian competition that might have other-
wise existed. Moreover, even though Canadian regulations
stipulated that all equipment and gear, used in Canadian
waters, had to be owned by Canadians, American companies
were able to circumvent, with relative ease, this law. In
order to avoid this regulation the companies acquired Cana-
dian fishermen as partners and incorporated in Canada, while
at the same time being controlled by managers in the United
States. Since the markets for fish were in the United
States and there was an import tariff on fish, no Canadian
could effectively market the fish in the United States, and
as a result many ended up working for an American company.
Although they imported fish from Canada, the American compa-
nies were able to successfully convince the U.S. government
that they should be exempted from the tariffs because they were American owned (Peters, 1981). The result for most fishermen, however, was that they were forced to ally themselves all the more with an American company.

On Lake Erie the fishery had a slightly different development. In some instances the fishery developed as a result of the decline in the lumber and grain trade in the 1870s. However, the other way in which the marketing of fish differed was that the fishermen negotiated directly with the agents of Peck Slip merchants, who were sent from New York City to negotiate prices for fish. These merchants hired agents to buy fish at the dockside from the fishermen but quite often the fishermen lost money to the merchants. The reason for this was due to the fact that all fish were shipped on consignment and money was never, or rarely, provided up front for the purchase. In the case of smaller villages, fishermen had to ship their fish on consignment because the Peck Slip agents did not operate out of these villages. With larger villages, however, the agents negotiated directly with the fishermen for the mutually agreed upon price but merchants seldom forwarded any money until after the fish were sold. The Jewish population of New York City was the main consumer of fish from Lake Erie from the 1870s and well into the twentieth century. Since the Merchants had a better understanding of the rules governing the
supply and demand of fish in New York, than the fishermen, they were nearly always able to use this to their advantage in dealing with the fishermen. Furthermore, when demand exceeded supply, or the merchants were in a position to lose money, they generally only forwarded a portion of the agreed upon price to the fishermen or nothing at all. This allowed the merchants, in most instances, to transfer their losses back on to the fishermen. During the 1930s the Peck Slip merchants were gradually replaced by local fish companies that arose in order to replace Peck Slip merchants. These companies invested in freezers, trucks, boats, fishing equipment, and purchased the fish directly from the fishermen before shipment to American markets. In addition, they also employed a number of fishermen themselves, but on a smaller scale than was the case on Lake Huron. Through their investment in freezers these merchants were also able to control the supply to the market and thereby stabilize the price to a large extent because they froze a part of what they purchased from fishermen and released it to the market during the periods when production was down, such as the summer (Van West, 1983).

Historically, commercial fishing on the Great Lakes has concentrated on a number of species. Whitefish were the most popular fish among the early fishermen until they began to decline on Lake Huron and the lower lakes in the second half
of the nineteenth century. By the end of the nineteenth century whitefish had been greatly reduced or eliminated through overfishing in many areas, and perhaps to a lesser extent because of pollution. However, before the effects of this decline had been fully experienced fishermen had begun to catch other species of fish at the same time. Among the other species fished were herring, lake trout, perch, and pickerel. In general, however, as a desired species declined another species, often previously considered undesirable, was found to replace it. Throughout all of the nineteenth and part of the twentieth centuries, fishery regulations were poorly enforced and largely ignored by fishermen; this was especially true of the upper Great Lakes. Furthermore, this contributed all the more to the decline of certain fish species and at least indirectly encouraged fishermen to catch as much as possible. This laissez faire approach to resource management, whatever its merits economically, had a disastrous effect on the fishery. Walpole Island and the Lake St. Clair fisheries are next.
Chapter IV

COMMERCIAL FISHING ON LAKE ST. CLAIR AND WALPOLE ISLAND

One of the main points of the present chapter is to reconstruct the historical development of the Lake St. Clair fishery and particularly as it applies to Walpole Island. In addition, it focuses on the visibility of some of the general trends identified in the previous chapter, the decline in the need for labour, increasing capitalisation, etc. Furthermore, it shows how native people are a part of the broader processes identified previously, while identifying some of the unique features of Walpole Island.

Lake St. Clair lies at the centre of a 175 kilometre long waterway connecting Lakes Huron and Erie and is located in the southwestern corner of Ontario and the northeastern part of Michigan at Detroit and its vicinity (Johnson, 1976; Williams, 1981). However, the lake is not generally considered to be a part of the Great Lakes, possibly because of its comparatively small size in relation to the other Great Lakes, having a total shoreline of only two hundred and seven kilometres--two thirds of which lies in Canadian terri-
tority. Despite having a surface area of approximately one thousand, one hundred and ten kilometres squared and an average natural depth of only three metres, the commercial fishery on the lake was more productive than the Lake Ontario fishery throughout most of the nineteenth century (Smith, 1894; Young, 1978; Williams, 1981).

The amount of available information that deals with commercial fishing on Lake St. Clair, particularly historical information, is minimal. At best, it presents a fragmented and incomplete picture of the fishery. Moreover, this is all the more true of the Walpole commercial fishery, where nearly all the information was derived through interviews with former Walpole fishermen. On the Canadian portion of Lake St. Clair commercial fishing began sometime in the first half of the nineteenth century. The precise date remains unknown, although it is thought to have begun as earlier as the 1820s or by 1838, depending on the source consulted. Furthermore, it has been speculated that (Prothero, 1973) before 1838 early settlers were too preoccupied with clearing the forests for farming to be overly concerned with fishing, other than possibly for their own subsistence needs. On the American side commercial fishing had apparently begun a few years earlier (Smith, 1894). On both sides of the border fish were marketed in surrounding agricultural
communities as well as in cities like Detroit, Michigan and Sandusky, Ohio, often being sold door to door (Van West, 1983). At a later date, with the advent of railroads and refrigeration, fish could be transported over greater distances. However, before this they were salted and shipped in barrels, beginning as early as 1826. Even at this early date some markets had been established in New York (Van West, 1983). Employment figures for the late nineteenth century indicate that by 1890 as many as six hundred people were employed, on the American side of the lake in the fishery, including the processing and related industries; nearly all of these people were part time workers. Unfortunately comparable figures on the Canadian portion of the lake are unavailable. In 1908 the State of Michigan closed the American portion of the lake to commercial fishing and has, ever since that time, limited it to angling. In Ontario the commercial fishery remained open until the discovery of mercury pollution in 1970. Written historical accounts of the early fishery on Lake St. Clair are sorely lacking, however, slightly more information is available on the types of equipment employed, such as nets and boats.

The equipment used in the commercial fishery on Lake St. Clair has generally consisted of seine nets, hooks, pound nets, fyke nets and more recently hoop nets. The seine net
was one of the earliest methods employed and was used in the marshy areas along the lake for the taking of carp. In the early days of the commercial fishery there were extensive marshlands along the shore of the lake, however, since the 1800s many have been filled in, leaving the area surrounding Walpole Island as one of the few remaining areas of natural marshland. Baited hook lines were also used by a small number of fishermen for the capturing of sturgeon and channel catfish. The introduction of the pound net from Pennsylvania in 1850 increased the profitability of the fishery and allowed fishermen to catch a greater variety of species such as pike, pickeral, perch, suckers, freshwater drum, herring and sunfish (Smith, 1894). As indicated previously, sailboats and rowboats were used throughout the nineteenth century, however, by the early 1900's sailboats were gradually phased out and replaced by small gasoline powered rowboats. Essentially the design of the boats has not changed all that dramatically since they were first introduced, however, the engines used have been improved upon greatly, allowing for greater speeds and power than in the past (Williams, 1981).

The number of fishermen employed in the fishery prior to 1946 remains unknown, however, even before the closure in 1970 this number had been declining from a high of ninety-four in 1946 to a low of forty by 1970, including licensed
fishermen from Walpole Island. It has also had been suggested that part of the reason for this decline may have been due to members of the younger generation seeking alternative forms of employment (Williams, 1981). The desired species for these fishermen from 1950 to 1970 was primarily yellow pickerel, which represented over fifty percent of their income for the period, although it only represented eighteen percent of the overall commercial catch (Young, 1975). Other species included thirty-eight percent carp, twelve percent suckers, nine percent catfish and twenty-three percent other species (Young, 1978). In general, the fish were sold live to Americans for pay fish ponds in Michigan, Ohio, New York and Indiana or, in the case of carp, to markets in Toronto and Montreal (Williams, 1981).

For non-Indian fishermen, on Lake St. Clair, the total capital investment in nets and other equipment varied from one fishermen to the next, however, figures range from a low of $20,000 to a high of over $100,000. Those with the greatest investment had invested in freezers, storage sheds, holding tanks, trucks and trailers (Williams, 1981). With the closure of the lake to commercial fishermen in 1970, because of mercury pollution, many commercial fishermen were given interest-free loans to tide them over until the reopening of the fishery, which was originally expected in a year's time or less (Williams, 1981). However, because of
continued high levels of mercury the fishery remained closed until 1980, at which time the Province of Ontario announced that it would re-open the fishery but only seven of the former fishermen would be licensed (this number was later raised to ten). Moreover, fishermen would face quotas and gear restrictions, that were not present in 1970, limiting them to certain parts of the lake and not allowing them to fish yellow pickerel or other game fish. These restrictions made it very difficult or impossible for fishermen to earn an income from fishing because of low prices and the few markets for the other fish. Aside from W. Williams none of the other former fishermen from Walpole Island were re-licensed in 1980. In 1986 the Province of Ontario bought the remaining commercial fishermen on the lake out, except for R. Williams of Walpole who had taken over his father's license, after the death of his father a few years prior. The Walpole Island fishery is examined next.

4.1 The Commercial Fishery of Walpole Island:

Walpole Island Indian Reserve, officially known as Reserve #46, has the joint distinction of being one of Canada's oldest as well as its southern-most Indian reserve. The reserve is located in the Canadian portion of the St. Clair River delta and is comprised of six islands, of which Walpole is
The largest. The other islands are Pottawatomi, Bassett, Seaway, St. Anne's, and Squirrel. The total land area of the reserve is approximately 23,469 hectares, nearly one-third of which is made up of marshland. Current on-reserve population is estimated to be about 1,600 (Nin. Da. Waab. Jiq., 1987).

The information on Indian land use and settlement patterns during prehistoric times must be gauged largely from archaeological evidence, often incomplete at that. In the case of Walpole, evidence suggests that the first presence of humans on it occurred at least ten thousand years ago (Nin. Da. Waab. Jiq., 1987). More recent evidence indicates that Walpole, and the surrounding area, was occupied by a "Central Algonkian-speaking group closely related to the historically documented Sauk, Fox and Kickapoo is most likely" (Nin. Da. Waab. Jiq., 1986:7). The presence of these people on Walpole may have been, for the most part, seasonal but in any event they appear to have abandoned the area in the period just prior to European contact; which "brings to an end a prehistoric record of over nine thousand years of human activity on Walpole" (Leighton, 1986:2).

Walpole band members, at present, trace their ancestry to three distinct tribes, the Pottawatomi, Ottawa and Ojibwa. These and other Indian groups were living on Walpole and
other areas around Lake St. Clair by the beginning of the eighteenth century, when the French founded Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit (later shortened to Detroit). Many Indian groups had been encouraged to settle near the outpost by the French, and often found it in their interest to do so, in hope that the Indian groups would bring their furs to the post in trade. Moreover, the founding of the outpost on the Detroit River "acted as a catalyst for the mixed native groups in the vicinity" (Leighton, 1986:6). Furthermore, while the number of Indians in the general vicinity of Detroit, including Walpole and adjacent areas, changed for various reasons throughout the eighteenth century, including inter-tribal conflict and the battle for furs between the French and the British, a native presence in the area remained constant throughout the eighteenth century (Tanner, 1987). The turn of the nineteenth century saw many changes throughout the Great Lakes Region, including the Detroit and Walpole Island areas. During the 1700s the British had forced the French from many areas they had once occupied in North America and throughout much of the second half of the eighteenth century there had been a British presence at Fort Detroit. However, by 1800 this had ended, at which time the Americans took possession of the fort. Indian settlement
patterns had also changed because of a number of factors; including the decline of the fur trade, American expansion into the Ohio Valley and the War of 1812. As a result of fear over a possible American retaliation, for siding with the British during the War of 1812, many Indian groups crossed the new international border into Upper Canada and settled near present day Amherstburg (Leighton, 1986; Tanner, 1987). In turn, this placed a serious strain on British supplies in the area and also brought about a change in British policy. The Deputy Superintendent of the British Indian Department, Alexander McKee, settled many of the Indians on the lands adjacent to the northeast corner of Lake St. Clair. However, few stayed there and instead were attracted to the already existing Indian settlement on the islands to the south (Leighton, 1986). The decision to relocate the Indians and their relocation to Walpole, along with the Pottawatomi and Ottawa refugees fleeing from American attempts to remove all Indians from Ohio, resulted in a marked increase to the population of Walpole. As Tanner (1987:126) has noted, the number of refugees:

became significant in the 1837-39 period during the final phase of the American program to remove Indians from southern Michigan, Ohio and Indiana to reservations in Kansas. This migration to Walpole was further encouraged by the British announcement in 1837 that Indians would have to be residents, not just visitors, in order to receive annual gifts from Canadian Indian agents.
White settlement in southern Ontario increased continually throughout the nineteenth century, often forcing many Indian groups to relocate to reserves. The growth of white settlement was such that "By 1870 virtually every Indian settlement in southern Ontario was located on an institutionalized reserve" (Tanner, 1987:126). Concomitant with the increased settlement was a decrease in the availability of game and a gradual adaptation on the part of many Indian groups, including those at Walpole Island to new subsistence patterns. Where previously land had been available for pursuing modes of subsistence based on the exploitation of natural resources, such as fish and game, the settlement of colonists in the region meant, as Jacobs (1983:5) has pointed out, that a transition had begun.

From a society based on an extensive migratory hunting and fishing existence, the Indians were forced to turn to agriculture as their main source of livelihood. In exchange for over 4,000,000 acres of land in Southwestern Ontario they were confined to one locality and were provided with the barest of farming implements and technical knowledge.

Farming on Walpole was not only small scale but was also mainly subsistence farming, where individual families farmed a few small acres in order to meet part of their own food requirements. In many cases this also allowed a small surplus which could be used in trade with other reserve members. The fact that this form of agriculture occurred was
largely the result of federal Indian policy, which encouraged reserve communities to become self-sufficient through farming. The fact that farming remained small scale may have been due, in part, to the limited development that was present on the reserve in this period and lack of adequate transportation links and markets for any surplus that might have been generated. Nevertheless, farming on Walpole increased gradually through the nineteenth century, reaching a peak in the early twentieth century. After 1902, however, poor crop yields and the appeal of jobs in the increasing number of industries in the area led to a decline in the number of Indian farmers (Jacobs, 1983). In some cases, the

4.2 Commercial Fishing Prior to World War II:

A major hindrance in attempting to understand the nature of commercial fishing, as it existed on Walpole before the war is the lack of written information on it, particularly before the early 1920's. Band members from the reserve undoubtedly fished the waters surrounding Walpole throughout the nineteenth century, just as their ancestors had done before them. However, what isn't known is the point at which those who fished began to sell fish or the extent to which it was done. Moreover, at what point does selling fish constitute a commercial enterprise? These questions become all
the more difficult to answer when one considers the fact that the only information available on which to base an answer is on the occasional mention of fishing activities, of the Indians from Walpole, in the reports of nineteenth century Indian Agents to their superiors. While the reports examined provided some information on the early fishery, they are of little value in attempting to determine the nature of the early fishery or its importance to band members in the nineteenth century.

Judging from the report of Indian Agent Alexander McKelvey, in 1883, commercial fishing on Walpole had been in existence for some time: "The catching of these fish, has hitherto afforded many profitable employment to quite a number of Indians" (Public Archives of Canada). The same agent reported in 1900 that excellent sturgeon fishing grounds could be found at the mouth of the Bass Channel, an area which was restricted for the use of Walpole band members. The agent's comments indicate that this area "provided large annual catches which were sold for good prices" (Public Archives of Canada). Thus the reports, despite the lack of

2 Given the amount of time available to the researcher, only a select few of the reports were examined. The reports are on Microfilm but have not been indexed in a way that would allow one to gain information on commercial fishing or a similar topic. Rather, one would have to look through all the available files in the hope of finding some mention of the specific topic. Thus, given the time constraints of the present study only a few of the available microfilms were examined.
detail on the fishery, indicate the existence of the Indian commercial fishery, at least from the latter part of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The written accounts of the Walpole fishery, aside from comments like those of the Indian Agent, are non-existent or rare. While the period after the Second World War provides an indication of the species caught and the landed values for the Walpole fishery, the rest, before and after 1946, relies mainly on the memories of those who fished during these years.

Commercial fishing on Walpole has always been an inshore fishery using fixed gear, made up of pound nets, trap nets, hoop nets, seines and baited hooks (Berkes, et al., 1983). Historically, the seine was the most commonly used equipment on Walpole until the post 1945 period, at which time hoop nets, baited hooks and pound nets came into increased use. The seine net was a very labour intensive method of fishing and required a minimum of four to six persons to haul it in once it was full of fish. Furthermore, fishing in the marsh areas around Walpole also meant that fishermen often had to clear weeds and other debris before setting their nets. The following comment by one of those who fished in the 1920s and 1930s provides some idea of just how much work was involved in fishing:

You gotta' cut all the weeds down so your net won't roll. We had to clear up so much muck weed and that, take all the sticks away so the net
won't tear up. There's a lot of work in fishing; the fisherman don't lay around, he works very hard, sometimes we worked all the night, it takes all night (B. Day, 1967).

The fishermen from Walpole have always derived their fishing income by directing their fishing efforts toward carp and various types of sunfish such as pumpkinseed, as well as other coarse species such as sheephead, bullhead, carp, suckers, catfish etc. These species are also commonly referred to in the collective sense as panfish. It is interesting to note that sport or game fish such as yellow pickerel were not caught by Walpole fishermen to any great extent. On the other hand, the non-native commercial fishermen were deriving fifty percent of their income from these fish by the time of closure in 1970. As mentioned previously the non-Indian fishermen did not use the seine net to any great extent after the early 1900's. A partial explanation for this is that it may have been a joint response to the declining marsh areas along that area of the lake as well as the increase in fishing efficiency that other methods afforded. In any event, the pound net was used increasingly by these fishermen from this period on. There is no indication of these nets being used by Walpole fishermen before the war, quite possibly because of the relative high cost of pound nets and the shortage of cash on the reserve with which to purchase them. In addition it seems likely that, in
contrast to the rest of the lake, Walpole had plenty of labour available on the reserve itself, thus making such an investment less imperative for Walpole fishermen than for the non-Indian fishermen. However, one major difference between the two is that pound net fishermen only need assistance in setting a pound net or moving it to another location and in removing the fish from the net by using a scoop net. Seine fishing, on the other hand, required several people to set the net and pull it in, once full. Regardless of the reasons, this was one of the major differences between Indian and non-Indian fishermen before World War II and right up until the late 1950's and early 1960's (Williams, 1981; field notes, 1987).

As mentioned previously, much of the area surrounding Walpole Island consists of natural wetlands, making the use of the seine net ideal. Moreover, fishing in these areas also required a specific type of boat because of the generally shallow depths. As a result the fishermen used flat bottomed row boats. In addition, they also used wooden boxes, called fish cars, that floated on the water to transport the fish in. These fish cars were made of wood and perhaps four metres long. The fish were transferred from the net to the fish cars, after which lids were placed on the fish cars to contain the fish. The fish cars were built to allow water
to flow over the fish, once moving, in order to keep the fish alive. When the fishermen were ready to transport the fish, the fish cars were connected in a train-like fashion and transported to holding ponds on the reserve or, as was the case after the war, were towed to Mitchell's Bay, where the fish were subsequently sold. In the years before and after World War II it was fairly common for those who participated in fishing to retain a portion of their catch to bring home. While it was not uncommon for fish to be given away before the war it seems to have been much less the case in the post-war years. This could also be said of the importance of fish in meeting local subsistence needs. Fish were of greater importance in this regard before, rather than after, the war (field notes, 1987). Other changes also began to take place in the years immediately following the war, evidence of which can be seen in the equipment used. At an earlier point in time the fishermen made nearly all of their equipment themselves, as the following comments illustrate:

We used to make all our own nets. In the winter time my brothers, my uncles, they'd all sit down and make their own fish nets. They'd buy the twine and they had a needle and they'd make their own nets. To buy them would have been pretty expensive at that time. You bought the material, made your own a lot better. My dad had a little shop there, he made his own wooden boats and he had his own blacksmith shop and he made all the lead weights himself there, so he saved a lot of money that way. All he had to buy was the twine and the rope and all the rest he made (P. Pinnance, 1987).
Another former fisherman also recalled that making the equipment was the norm for those who fished: "Well we all did. All of us fishermen made their own boats" (B. Jacobs, 1987). Despite the fact that small motorized boats began appearing in the early 1900's and were in use by most non-native commercial fishermen before World War I, Walpole fishermen did not begin to use them until some time later. One former fisherman recalls that as recently as the late 1920's and early 1930's the boats were still hand powered. Moreover, his comments also provide an idea of how the actual tasks involved in fishing with seine nets were carried out.

They didn't have any out-boards in them days. You had a flat bottomed-boat, with a pair of oars, with a platform on the back of the boat and the singles piled up on there and when they got all their fish they pulled it around in a semi-circle and let the seine unravel off the back. Then they had us young fellows in there with a duck boat, with a paddle, kind of splashing the water so the fish wouldn't get out. Those nets used to have a bag with wings on it and the bag, you used to have to chase the fish into this bag, otherwise they'd escape. But that was our job, getting in there, pounding the water to keep the fish from gettin' out (P. Pinnance, 1987).

Walpole fishermen did not begin using motorized boats until the latter part of the 1930s, around which time some began using automobile engines to power their boats. While most fishermen owned their own boats and equipment, others had it supplied by the St. Anne's Hunting Club that leased
land on the reserve from the band. Those that fished for the club were employed to fish for carp, because carp eat the eggs of sport fish like yellow pickerel (field notes, 1987).

In the period before the second World War fish caught by Walpole commercial fishermen were sold to an American buyer from the Michigan side of Lake St. Clair who came to the reserve to purchase the fish live and then sold them in United States. Many fishermen made small ponds, called fish ponds, on the reserve to keep the fish alive until such time as a sufficient quantity had been accumulated for the buyer, who might only visit Walpole once a week. One of the fishermen of the time recalls the way in which the fish were sold.

No this guy from New Baltimore bought em', a commercial buyer from the states, west of Algonac. They used to bring in great, big fish cars they called em', I'd say they were sixty by twenty feet wide and they carry ten, twenty tons of fish, live-weight, and they had a big cruiser. They'd transfer them from my Dad's fish pond, fish them out from in there. Then they'd take them across the states. They'd take about twenty tons at a time, they had a big cabin cruiser and attach that to the scowl. The scowl is submerged so fresh water is going through them all the time. You couldn't tow them very fast because you had to go slow, its all live weight (P. Pinnance, 1987).

Aside from those who fished for St. Anne's Club, and who were paid a wage for fishing, the other fishermen were paid by the number of fish they had as opposed to being paid by the total weight, usually five cents for each fish regardless of its size. This was the usual method of selling fish.
commercially until after the war. Once a fishermen received the money for the catch it was generally split evenly between the fishermen (field notes, 1987).

While some commercial fishermen were not self-employed, the fishery was primarily a family run operation. Moreover, a list of those fishermen who fished from the mid-twenties to the late-thirties provides some indication of the extent of commercial fishing on Walpole during this period. Usually a fishing crew consisted of four to six men, often a father and his son(s) or members of the extended family. Furthermore, there were at least twenty-two fishermen during the period before World War II, the total number fishing could well have been over one-hundred when one considers that each crew had between four to six men seine fishing. One former fishermen recalls some of those who fished in those days.

Yeah I stayed there until the late-thirties, maybe around about 36' or 37'. And these were, there was still some old fishermen there. Yeah there was old Mack Nahdee still fishing, Wesley Jones, Elijah Pinnance, Frank Blackbird, Dan Johnson, Alex (Butch) Bird, Wilson Naggs, George Payark. These were the old fishermen, some of them not all of em'. And the younger fishermen at the time were Henry and Benny Jones, Edward Pinnance and his gang, Alfred Day and Rufus Armstrong, Eddie Greenbird and his gang, Joseph and Clayton Peters, Elijah and Richard Blackbird, Norris, John and Bernard Nahdee (B. Day, 1987).

Members of the family. Family, and if you didn't have enough family you had in-laws and if you didn't have enough in-laws you went outside the family. It was pretty well a family thing (E. Dodge, 1987).
It is not clear whether all of these fishermen generally fished every year or the full extent of their activities during the season. Accounts of the fishery for that time indicate that, at least during the season, it was fairly common to fish as many as six days a week. Fishing season was in the spring and fall months, during which time the fish tended to bunch up in shallow water closer to shore, making it possible to capture them with the seine. Some fishing also occurred during the winter months but was fairly limited (field notes, 1937).

Commercial fishing was always seasonal on Walpole and carried out in conjunction with other activities, such as trapping, hunting or guiding. Nevertheless, during the fishing season it was an important source of cash for many band members. Moreover, fishing was only one of a number of ways in which the commercial fishermen, and others, from Walpole earned a living:

These commercial fishermen made their money. When fishing season ended they came into hunting. They guided for these American sportsmen, made good money guidin' and then when the duck hunting ended they went into trapping. (B. Jacobs, 1987).

Having discussed some aspects of commercial fishing on Walpole before World War II an examination of the period 1939 to 1945 is in order before turning to the post war fishery.
Commercial fishing on Walpole before World War II involved an extensive number of band members, however, the war had a significant impact on commercial fishing. Many of those who had been commercial fishermen before the war, particularly members of the younger generation, left Walpole to serve in the American or Canadian military service. Others left the reserve to work in one of the nearby factories producing military equipment. As the following comments illustrate, this greatly reduced the extent of commercial fishing on Walpole.

In the forties it started to taper off, a lot of em' started going into factory work, you know war factory making Manning boats and all that, easier money and not such hard work. I think for most of, well when the war came along a lot of the commercial fishing went away. Pretty near all the sons went into the service and left the parents to try to run the business. They got short handed and started slowly giving up the business. If they didn't go in the service they went into the war factory and worked. That slowed down the commercial fishing a lot (P. Pinnance, 1987).

Yeah the war broke out and fishing kind of went dead too, everybody went out and worked (B. Day, 1987).

The second World War appears to have been a period of great transition in the commercial fishery. By the end of the war most of the fishermen who were fishing before the war had dropped out of fishing entirely, nearly eliminating the commercial fishery entirely. Up until the time of the war, there were still quite a few men from Walpole involved in
commercial fishing. By the end of the war, however, this number had dropped considerably.

4.3 The Post-War Fishery:

The post war commercial fishery, on Walpole, differed in many ways from the fishery of a decade earlier. Some of the changes had to do with the markets, while others involved changes in fishing methods or technology. In addition, the role of government in regulating the fishery became much more prominent after the war. The present section will describe some of these changes and then place them within the larger context.

As noted earlier, in the years preceding the war, the seine net was the most common fishing method in use by Walpole commercial fishermen and remained so for a period of time after the war as well. However, by the mid to late 1950's this gradually began to change as the remaining Walpole commercial fishermen gradually began to adopt hoop and trap nets as well. However, while these methods were less labour intensive than the seine, they were also more costly, requiring a capital investment that seine nets did not. In order to adopt these alternative methods a number of Walpole fishermen, as well as some Mitchell's Bay commercial fishermen, took advantage of the sponsorship offered by Juben-
ville, himself a commercial fishermen from Jeannette's Creek. One fisherman recalls a number of fishermen taking advantage of this form of sponsorship.

Originally he did front most of the people in the area equipment; probably late 1950's, when at that point the equipment was being replaced. The break we had since 1955, I think. The same thing with Mitchell's Bay. I think there were three, four fishermen at that time. But he somewhat got a piece of the action so to speak. He brought in the buyers and I think the buyers paid him and he forwarded so much money to them. It wasn't until latter on that, I think he was getting twenty-five cents a pound but he was actually paying the fishermen eighteen cents a pound. And then he was able to get in there to where he was getting thirty-five, cut out the middle man. If he cut out the middle man he had a direct link to the market (M. Williams, 1988).

It remains uncertain the precise number of Walpole commercial fishermen who entered into a similar arrangement with Jubenville, aside from W. Williams. Eventually the relationship was severed and it was at that point in time that W. Williams also began to market his own catch for a time. However, before going into more detail on the marketing two things should be kept in mind in regard to the above. The first is that the adoption of less labour intensive fishing methods was accompanied by a change from wooden to aluminum boats, which served to increase the capital investment a fisherman had in the fishery, and that the less labour intensive methods obviously meant that fewer people were needed to aid in the fishing endeavour, a sharp contrast
from before the war. It is also possible that the increased capital investment in new, less labour intensive, methods was largely in response to a decline in the amount of inexpensive labour available on the reserve. The implementation of social benefits, such as universal health care, welfare and unemployment insurance, after the war was also made available to those living on Indian reserves as well. As a result the reliance on fishing was reduced. These benefits became available for many on Walpole, as well, and given the fact that commercial fishing required a lot of hard work, it is understandable that many no longer wished to work in commercial fishing.

The markets for Walpole commercial fishermen before the war, as mentioned, were almost exclusively in the United States, however after the war they were largely in Canadian cities like Toronto and Montreal. Walpole fishermen still sold from the reserve, mainly in the winter and to a lesser extent in the warmer months to American buyers who purchased fish to stock fish ponds in the United States. However, the majority of sales were generally to Canadian buyers. In the warmer months fish were usually transported by water in fish cars, in much the same method as before the war, except that they were now brought to nearby Mitchell's Bay, located in the Canadian portion of Lake St. Clair. After breaking free
of the sponsorship of Jubenville, W. Williams dealt directly with the market himself by delivering his own fish and eliminating the middle man. Despite his original success not much ever developed from it.

He made a couple of trips with the idea of getting into the carp market but he couldn't do it on a small scale with the truck he had; it was just a one ton type of thing. He had no problem getting rid of them but he had to do it on a large scale and when you doing it on a large they want you to sign some type of agreement that your going to deliver so much on a schedule and he couldn't really get into that (R. Williams, 1987).

Another factor that affected W. Williams' decision to not expand into the marketing aspect of the fishery was his preference for fishing itself, as a way of life, over the other aspects of the fishery. Throughout the late 1940's and most of the 1950s (see Table 1) carp was the main species caught, but by the 1960s had become far less important to commercial fishermen. Other species became more highly valued because of the higher price they brought on the market, as one fisherman explains.

The other area of the fishery came along and attracted. Without as much effort as going into the trap nets we were able to catch the panfish. We were getting a nickel a pound for carp for a long, long time. Then we went into the panfish, which was thirty-five cents (R. Williams, 1987).

In the years following the war and prior to the closure of the fishery in 1970, there were a total of nine commercial fishermen from Walpole Island, although only eight
fishing licenses owing to the fact that two of the fishermen were sharing a commercial license. However, there were seldom more than two or three commercial fishermen from Walpole fishing in a given year and by 1960 only one remained, although this number had increased to three licenses by the late 1960's, as shown in Table 1. Improved reporting procedures, implemented after the war as part of the provincial government's mandatory licensing and reporting, provide a fairly good indication of commercial fishing activity on Walpole for the years 1947 to 1970. Prior to the 1950's there was only one commercial fisherman from Walpole, and during the 1950's various other commercial fishermen from Walpole were engaged in fishing but for no more than two or three years before dropping out. The exception to this was W. Williams who began fishing in the early 1950's and fished every year, except for one, until the closure of the fishery. While N. Nahdee is the only known fisherman from Walpole fishing for the years 1947 and 1948, thereafter he filed reports with the provincial government for the years 1950, 1952, 1953, 1954, 1957, 1958, 1959, and 1960, the last year. Other fishermen included B. Nahdee in 1958 and 1953; B. Jones for two years in 1952 and 1953; W. Lallean in 1957, 1958 and 1959; A. Nahdee in 1957 only; S. Blackbird and B. Dodge for 1965 to 1968, inclusive; and R. Williams for 1968
and 1969. Of particular interest, in Table 1, is the extent of W. Williams fishing activities during the post war years. He was the most active and successful, economically, in the Walpole commercial fishery during the 1950s and 1960s. During his years as a commercial fisherman he was responsible for employing a fair number of band members himself. The total number may have been as high as seventy, with each person usually receiving ten percent of the total catch value.

The fact that fishermen were now paid ten percent of the catch also seems to be a change from the practice in place before the war, if only by virtue of the fact that before the war the catch, or the money, was usually divided equally between all the fishermen, as well as given away to those who helped pull in the net. Furthermore, this appears to have applied equally to both the independent fishermen from Walpole and those who worked for St. Anne's Club. The relationship between Walpole fishermen in the post war years took on a form more characteristic of employer-employee, where fishermen were given a ten percent share in the catch value instead of sharing equally. The reason for this may have been due to the fact that the capital investment required after the war was much greater than before. However, while W. Williams was an employer, of sorts, he was
Table 1: Landings and Values for Walpole Island

Commercial Fishermen 1947 to 1970

The table below lists the names of the active fishermen from Walpole Island for each of the given years as well as the reported weight of their total catch for that year, in pounds, and their reported earnings for that year in dollars. All figures are listed only for a particular year and are not cumulative from one year to the next.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>YEAR</th>
<th>ACTIVE FISHERMEN</th>
<th>SPECIES</th>
<th>LANDINGS</th>
<th>VALUES</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1947</td>
<td>N. Nahdee</td>
<td>Carp</td>
<td>5,395</td>
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<td>Carp</td>
<td>22,261</td>
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<td>1949</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1950</td>
<td>B. Nahdee</td>
<td>Carp</td>
<td>15,754</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N. Nahdee</td>
<td>Carp</td>
<td>8,790</td>
<td>$ 439.00</td>
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<td>1951</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1952</td>
<td>B. Jones</td>
<td>Carp</td>
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<td></td>
<td>N. Nahdee</td>
<td>Bullhead</td>
<td>42,483</td>
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<td>W. Williams</td>
<td>Carp</td>
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<td>B. Jones</td>
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<td>W. Williams</td>
<td>Bullhead</td>
<td>296,110</td>
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<td>N. Nahdee</td>
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<td>W. Williams</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Sunfish,</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Sunfish,</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Bullhead</td>
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<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Species</td>
<td>Quantity</td>
<td>Revenue</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>---------------------</td>
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<tr>
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<td>W. Williams</td>
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<td>Carp</td>
<td>6,000</td>
<td>$ 168.00</td>
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<td>N. Nahdee</td>
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<td>34,353</td>
<td>$ 822.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W. Williams</td>
<td>Carp, Bullhead</td>
<td>213,081</td>
<td>$ 9,163.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1960</td>
<td>N. Nahdee</td>
<td>Carp</td>
<td>1,527</td>
<td>$ 30.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>W. Williams</td>
<td>Carp, Sturgeon, Sunfish</td>
<td>65,275</td>
<td>$ 3,389.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1961</td>
<td>W. Williams</td>
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<td>7,120</td>
<td>$ 1,001.00</td>
</tr>
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<td>1962</td>
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<td>41,118</td>
<td>$ 7,147.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1963</td>
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<tr>
<td>1964</td>
<td>W. Williams</td>
<td>Carp, Catfish</td>
<td>59,501</td>
<td>$ 6,335.00</td>
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<tr>
<td>1965</td>
<td>S. Blackbird &amp; B. Dodge</td>
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<td>126,948</td>
<td>$ 3,230.00</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W. Williams</td>
<td>Carp, Catfish, Sunfish</td>
<td>88,541</td>
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<tr>
<td>1966</td>
<td>S. Blackbird &amp; B. Dodge</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>W. Williams</td>
<td>Carp</td>
<td>76,214</td>
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also subject to the fluctuations in the market, as well as the need to modernise his operations. It was through modernising that he began to rely less on the labour of others. This was at least partially due to the fact that the fishery had become less economically attractive to many on the reserve. While Williams employed between four and six individuals at a time, and was paying more than any other com-
mercial fisherman on Walpole he was unable to keep any of those working for him for more than a few years. Those that he did employ began working for him in their teenage years but sought out other opportunities, most often wage labour jobs off the reserve, before they had reached their twenties, as the following comments illustrate.

For Wally, I was, I think I was fourteen years old. Fourteen til' about seventeen. Then I worked for a farmer two years, then went to the foundry. I didn't like it, too hot. Then I worked for ChrisCraft, five years. Then I come back here. I don't know, I just didn't like being cooped up, too much heat I had a family, I didn't really quit fishing for Wally, it's just that the fishing wasn't too good, the prices kept coming down. The fish prices went down that year and all through the market the fish also went down (W. Day, 1987).

I guess it must have been thirty years ago, I'm fifty now, around there. I started commercial fishing with Wally Williams when I was sixteen years old. Well for one thing I got married. Also, I don't think I could have survived raising a family and doing that. It was good for a single guy, it was good for the money you made, for the good money one week and the not so good the next, it was good. For a single man it was a good living. It was good for a change, it was good for awhile. I worked here for awhile then on construction. I worked for awhile here on running heavy equipment for the Band and the American Shipment Company. And I moved over to Michigan, worked over there for quite a few years. The money was good, real good money, didn't compare to this side, now it does. The wages are pretty well even now, but at that time the money was more than here, per hour (Rbt. Williams, 1987).

The loss of available labour contributed greatly to the decline of commercial fishing on Walpole, even though it was
not a full-time occupation, even for the more enterprising fishermen like W. Williams. Rather, it was one of many ways that people earned a living. Commercial fishing was carried out to some extent nearly year round but it was usually combined with income derived from guiding, the trapping of muskrats for their fur and other activities.

4.4 Social Change on Walpole:

The post war years marked a period of fairly rapid social change for Walpole Island, as it did for many native groups in Canada, with the implementation of transfer payments and other social programs. In the case of Walpole the post war years served to quicken the changes that had begun much earlier. The economy gradually changed from one based mainly on subsistence to one where wage labour became increasingly prominent and important. As the following comments indicate, the years before the war on Walpole were marked by a greater reliance on each other.

You know, by my time, I'd say forty-five years ago, maybe a little over that, what people used to do, like my dad didn't hunt, and in order for us to get any muskrat or duck, well my mother did a lot of canning, and she always had a garden. She had chickens, and geese, turkey, and when she heard like Wesley Jones used to have fish well, she'd get something ready and she'd go and trade it off. They were always trading; what you didn't have, you knew somebody had it, and it was like that all the time. That's how the people survived (Brigham/Sands, 1984).
There was very little dependence on outside commodities, most of the things needed in the 1920s and 1930s were obtained on the reserve itself as the following comment indicates:

The only thing I remember my uncle buying was like, ah, lard maybe, not too much of that because at one time they used to have pigs and cows, and things like that so they had plenty. And flour and baking powder and salt... sugar, maybe a little bit of oil for our kerosene lamps. Maybe a new axe or whatever the men needed. And clothing (E. Thomas, 1984).

The self-reliance that existed in this period was not so much a matter of choice as it was of necessity. It was a time when there were no social programs such as unemployment insurance and welfare. People co-operated with each other and it was in their interest to do so, as the following comment suggests.

Nobody had welfare in those days, they'd swap. My dad would trade some fish for something and somebody else would bring some buckwheat. He also had a little workshop. He'd sharpen saws and grind grain for them, he'd have a little grinder that run off of gas, a one cylinder, gas, steam engine. Bring in a bag full of buckwheat or something and he'd grind it into flour for them and they'd give him a couple of quarts of it, things like that. But in those days people got along pretty good, like they'd trade. Somebody would have a squash to trade, he'd trade for something else. A guy would come over and they'd trade for fish, it was all bartering (P. Pinnance, 1987).

Commercial fishing was also a part of life for many during the 1920s and 1930s. It was a labour intensive activity
that depended on a pool of inexpensive labour. While not
everyone fished during those years those that didn't could
often obtain fish by helping pull in the net. Fish were sel-
dom sold to others on the reserve as some of the former
fishermen recall.

No, I don't think they made any money that way, but a lot of people went over there just to get
fish and they help pull the net in. That's a big help when you have somebody to help you. They'd
get fish to go home, all they want. A lot of them
done that, they helped out a couple of days and
get all they want. (E. Day, 1987).

No, we gave them away. If like somebody come over
and said, hey next time you come home can you
bring us. So we'd give em' away, help feed because
forty years ago on this reserve it was tough (E.
Dodge, 1987).

The gradual decline of commercial fishing after the
1930s, as mentioned, was influenced greatly in the increased
demand for wage labour in the region beginning in the late
1930's. As noted many of the younger commercial fishermen
from Walpole joined the armed forces with the outbreak of
war in 1939, while others sought employment in one of the
factories located close by. Wage labour was not new to Wal-
pole, in fact women from Walpole were working as domestics
during the 1930s, and at an earlier time as well, on nearby
Harsen's Island, for wealthy Americans. Moreover, men from
Walpole had been working in such diverse areas as an axe
factory near Sarnia Ontario and the glass factory in Wal-
laceburg, Ontario, at least since the early 1900's. However,
this work was often seasonal and part-time for most (Nin. Da. Waab. Jig., 1987). In addition, with the increased industrialisation in the area, many from Walpole were attracted to the higher pay and easier life that were thought to come from working at such jobs. As a result fewer were available or interested in commercial fishing, which resulted in a severe reduction after the war in the number of commercial fishermen. The decline in commercial fishing was part of the transformation that took place on Walpole as the economy became less of one based on cooperation and one increasingly dependent upon transfer payments and other government support in order to offset the high unemployment. The changes in the fishery were not unlike the transition that occurred in the subsistence type of farming that had existed before the war. Farming declined because of an inability to raise the necessary capital to purchase more modern equipment (Nin. Da. Waab. Jig., 1987). When the fishery was a part of the subsistence economy of the 1930s, and before, the capital requirements were nearly non-existent, largely because everything was made by the fishermen themselves. After the war, however, markets for fresh fish gradually declined while the capital needs of the fishery increased and fishermen were forced to purchase more efficient equipment that was also less expensive to operate. In other words, that required fewer people to operate or fish.
In fact capital remains a problem for those still commercial fishing in the area, as one commercial fisherman noted:

I think the big thing there is the basic capital to keep operating and you have to be equipped to handle winter fishing (R. Williams, 1988).

The deterioration in the resource and the increasing intervention of the state have only worsened matters for commercial fishermen, making it all the more difficult to earn any kind of an income from fishing.
Chapter V

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Summary

In the second chapter, White images of Indians, as they have existed from the time of Columbus, were discussed. The main reason for this was to provide an explanation for the persistence of many of these images to the modern day. Much of the human ecology literature that discusses Indian harvesting of wildlife or natural resources is still often based on two themes, both of which have existed since the days of first contact between Indians and Whites. On the one hand, many view the Indian as a paragon of nature, living in a mystical-like relationship with nature. On the other, many tend to see them as wanton destroyers of nature. Moreover, many historical accounts of the development of North America and the rise of various industries has also overlooked or ignored Indian involvement in the early development of these.

Chapter two also provided the theoretical orientation of the present study and elaborated on the concept of independent commodity production. Although Marx himself never used
this term, and there has been some debate within the literature over the appropriateness of independent as opposed to simple or petty commodity production. The term independent commodity producer was used in the present research to indicate the type of small scale production carried on by farmers and fishermen. The discussion was based largely on the writings of Marx and argued that these producers are gradually forced out of commodity production and into wage labour as a result of developments within the capitalist system.

The third chapter examined the rise of commodity production in the Great Lakes and traced its development through the rise and fall of the fur trade and showed that the development of commercial fishing and the lumber industries, for example, provided a replacement for the fur trade. In addition, a discussion of the fishing methods and technological changes, that have historically occurred within the commercial fishing industry, indicated that fishermen were forced to adopt new and more efficient techniques in order to remain competitive in the industry. In many cases the adoption of such techniques came at the expense of the resource.

The final chapter examined some aspects of the historical development of Walpole, followed by a discussion on the origins of the fishery in the 1800s and a more detailed look at
it from the 1920s to the present. Many of the changes that took place in the fishery were seen within the context of other changes that were taking place on the reserve, particularly as the economy became one where subsistence activities have come to play a much smaller role than they apparently did in the past. Today only two commercial fishermen remain on the lake and both are from the reserve. In addition, some of the differences between Walpole fishermen and the non-Indian fishermen of Lake St. Clair were also discussed.

5.2 Conclusion

In using Walpole Island as a case study, as well as the case study method in general, one must be aware of the drawbacks as well as the usefulness of the approach. While a cautious approach is necessary in over generalizing from one case study, nevertheless one of the main advantages of the approach is its ability to study a particular situation or phenomena in depth, in order to gain a detailed understanding of it. Nevertheless, the present research draws a number of conclusions.

The constraints affecting Walpole fishermen were very similar to those encountered by the other fishermen on Lake St. Clair. As noted earlier the lake was closed in 1970 to
commercial fishing because of high levels of mercury found in the water that had been caused by Dow Chemical of Sarnia and Wyandotte Chemical of Detroit. The lake remained open to anglers, who were encouraged to fish for sport and not consumption. With the closing of the lake to commercial fishing many of the fishermen banded together to form the Lake St. Clair Fishermen's Association, including three commercial fishermen from Walpole. As a result the government issued interest free loans to commercial fishermen who were actively fishing in 1969, including W. and R. Williams of Walpole who each received a total of $11,692.50 over a three year period. The loans were eventually forgiven but the lake remained closed to commercial fishing until 1980, at which time the provincial government announced that it would license eight commercial fishermen, but one of the criteria used in deciding whether a fisherman would be re-licensed was whether or not he was fishing in the year prior to the closure of the fishery. While the number of fishing licenses was later increased to ten, under pressure from the Fishermen's Association, only one commercial fisherman from Walpole, W. Williams, was re-licensed. The other fishermen from Walpole who applied were denied a license, commercial fisherman from Walpole Island was licensed, despite the fact that the Ministry had announced previously that the concerns
of Indians would be taken into account when new licenses were issued. However, given the fact that three former commercial fishermen from Walpole Island applied at the time but only one was licensed, native concerns did not appear to weigh too heavily with the provincial government. In addition, new quotas and gear restrictions were placed on those who received a license, which meant that they would be able to fish for coarse fish only, making it nearly impossible for them to earn a living from commercial fishing. The number of commercial fishermen dropped further a few years later when the Government of Ontario announced a buy out plan for Lake St. Clair. As part of the plan all licensed commercial fishermen at the time were offered a cash settlement to permanently give up fishing. All commercial fishermen were subsequently bought out by the province except for R. Williams, who chose to remain in fishing. Part of the reasons for his decision had to do with the life style involved with fishing.

No, the main component in my decision, I guess that's one way to put it. My father said that you'll probably be on this lake a lot longer, and he had been on the lake for a long time and why should you if you don't need the money. Originally the first offer wasn't very much. They closed the negotiations and also they threw another offer on the table. I received a call from the lawyer stating that they were going to have another offer, they were going to have an increase in the offer (R. Williams, 1988).
The desire on the part of the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources to end all commercial fishing on Lake St. Clair appears to be primarily a political decision. Sports fishermen far outnumber commercial fishermen and often belong to associations that actively lobby the government to ban all commercial fishing. Such groups usually allege that commercial fishermen are the ones responsible for the decline in certain species of fish. Despite the inaccuracy of this conception, sports fishermen lobby groups have been somewhat successful on other lakes in reducing or limiting the extent of commercial fishing and are suspected of having a similar effect on Lake St. Clair. Sports fishing is worth more economically to the province because it brings in tourist dollars but sports fishermen tend to be somewhat exclusive in the species of fish they seek, thereby creating an imbalance in species. To put it another way, sports fishermen usually catch game fish and without any harvesting of coarse species the habitat of game fish is threatened (Williams, 1981). This tends to support the contention of many commercial fishermen that political decisions are made over the management of the resource that are not necessarily in the best interest of preserving the resource for the future. This is perhaps all the more so for Walpole Island since the Ministry has little information on fish habitats in that area of Lake St. Clair:
The Ministry has very little information on the resource around Walpole Island. They have information on the rest of the lake from surveys and everything but very little on Walpole. So their making their decisions on use and quotas based on half the facts (D. Jacobs, 1988).

The importance of the Walpole Island area should not be underestimated since it is one of the few remaining natural breeding areas left on the lake. Many species require marsh areas, such as those found around Walpole, to breed in. However, until fairly recently there was little apparent interest by the Ministry of Natural Resources in the area (field notes, 1987).

The fact that politics enter into the decisions made concerning the management of public resources not only offers another constraint on an already declining industry, in the case of commercial fishing, but further complicates the issues for native peoples by the fact that they have treaties that often have clauses written into them that allow native groups to use the resources in much the same way as their ancestors had and without government intervention. The treaties, from the point of view of native groups, are not superceded by subsequent laws. Furthermore, many Indian groups often look to these treaties to defend their hunting and fishing rights, such as those contained in the Robinson Treaty, of 1850, which notes that the Ojibways shall have the:
full and free privilege to hunt over the territory ceded by them and to fish in the waters thereof as they have heretofore been in the habit of doing, saving and excepting only such portions of the territory as may from time to time be sold or leased to individuals or companies of individuals and occupied by them with the consent of the Provincial Government (Berkes and Pocock, 1983a:18).

The situation has become all the more abstruse by the fact that different levels and departments of government claim jurisdiction in the disputes, as Berkes and Pocock (1983a:18) elaborate.

The position of the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development is that no abrogation of treaty rights has taken place. The position of the Department of Fisheries is that treaty rights have been superseded, but these have been for the purpose of conservation of the fish populations. The position of the Department of Justice is that Her Majesty may without liability abrogate the terms of any Indian Treaty by passing competent federal laws such as the Fishery Regulations.

While the arguments for either side are far from simple some native groups have decided to take matters into their own hands. Such was the case with the Walpole Island Band Council which decided to issue its own commercial fishing license in 1987 to a former commercial fisherman from Walpole who was denied his request for re-licensing by the Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources on the grounds that they (the Ministry) felt it would be uneconomic (field notes, 1987). The Walpole Island Council is also involved in negotiations over the boundaries of the reserve which it says include the Canadian half of Lake St. Clair because
there is no record of it ever being ceded. The position of the council is thus:

...we feel we own the resource, including Lake St. Clair. So we're only doing what we have a legal right to do and an aboriginal right to do. We deal with the boundary issue of Walpole Island in a similar fashion, in that they have to prove that they have a claim to it and so far they haven't shown us anything. Any jurisdictional issues they say they get from the federal government and the federal government hasn't shown us that they own anything; so we feel we have the ownership and by virtue of that we should be issuing permits (Chief W. Tooshkeniq, 1987).

The issue involves more than jurisdiction over fishing; it is also an issue of control and an attempt, in this case by Walpole, to gain more control over the natural resources that much of the local economy depends on. Ideally, there would be some form of co-management of resources between native groups and the province, since very few native groups possess the necessary resources to supervise the large geographic areas that are usually involved, entirely on their own. Nevertheless, issues such as these have often placed native groups in a position of conflict with government and served to place further constraints on commercial fishing by Indians.

Other constraints faced by Walpole fishermen are the capital requirements of the fishery. A fisherman has to invest in nets, boats, live boxes or fish cars, as they are often called, as well as the base camp. All of this can require an
investment of three to four thousand dollars per year (field notes, 1967). With the prohibition of the commercial harvesting of the more profitable species in combination with the yearly investment needed and the percentage paid to those who help harvest the fish there is little money left from fishing for other things. Assuming one had a knowledge of the actual mechanics involved in fishing, an individual would still probably need a minimum investment of ten thousand dollars to get started today in commercial fishing (field notes, 1968). For those on Walpole raising the necessary capital has traditionally been difficult because they were not allowed, by federal law, to sell reserve land to anyone who is not also a member of the band, thus further limiting their access to capital. While pollution, quotas and the lack of capital have all placed constraints on the commercial fishery, the changes in the fishery were also part of the larger social changes taking place on the reserve before the war. The war acted as a catalyst for accelerating these changes but was not the sole cause.

Perhaps the foremost conclusion has to do with the persisting ecological themes that tend to be polarised in their views of the relationship of Indians to the natural environment. These themes have been elaborated on earlier and will not be repeated here. However, what is clear from them is
that they are of little use in trying to increase our understanding of contemporary issues facing native groups. On the other hand, trying to understand these issues necessitates that they be viewed in terms of their participation in the capitalist economy and not as though Indian reserves were islands that are apart from the rest of society. As mentioned, the error of the human ecologists has been in ignoring the economic realities native producers face. In contrast to this narrow view, the present research has examined them as independent commodity producers and argued that this is a more useful depiction precisely because it looks at Indian producers in terms of the capitalist economy. Indian fishermen were different in some ways from non-Indian fishermen but they were still participants in the capitalist economy, in much the same way as other fishermen and members of the working class are.

The fate of independent commodity producers, according to Marx, is sealed. Independent commodity producers would become part of the proletariat, and lose ownership of the means of production completely. In the present study the focus was primarily on the Walpole commercial fishery, however in looking at the commercial fishing industry for the Great Lakes as a whole, the future of the commercial fishing industry appears glum. The number of commercial fishermen has dropped almost steadily since the end of the second
World War. On Lake St. Clair the fishery had also been declining in significance in the same period, although the mercury pollution problem may have made the decision for many sooner than might have otherwise occurred. The future of the remaining fishing operations on Walpole is also in question. Government policies and regulations may lead to some end to the commercial fishing operations there or they not. What seems likely, though, is that the future of the fishery is in question, government regulations aside. Pollution from the Chemical Valley,3 upriver, has led to certain questions as to the safety in eating fish from the lake. Moreover, there are few remaining markets left for the fishermen and the fishery requires a relatively high capital investment, albeit much smaller than on the other Great Lakes, but an investment in nets and other equipment must be made. In short, the future of what remains of the commercial fishery at Walpole is doubtful.

3 Chemical Valley refers to the large concentration of chemical factories located in Sarnia, Ontario, on the St. Clair River, upstream from Walpole Island. The chemical plants located there often dump waste materials in the river, which in turn pose a health threat to the people living downstream from them, as well as to fish and other wildlife in the area. The mercury pollution problem in 1970 that led to the closure of the Lake St. Clair commercial fishery was due in part to chemical pollution from the Dow Chemical Corporation, located in Sarnia.
In carrying out the present research, certain gaps in the history of the commercial fishery on Walpole, as well as the lake as a whole, became evident. It remains uncertain whether accurate written accounts exist describing the origins of commercial fishing on Lake St. Clair and Walpole. This could be a subject for future research. Moreover, the history of the commercial fishery on Walpole is also incomplete and it would be interesting to examine it in greater detail in the period before the war and in particular during the war years. Finally, a more detailed comparison between the Walpole and the Lake St. Clair fishery would provide a greater understanding of the differences between the two, historically, as well as the influence that reserve life had in determining these differences.
REFERENCES


Miller, David. "3,000 Ontario fishermen fear quotas may end their jobs." In *The Sunday Star*, April 21, 1985.


Appendix A

INDIVIDUALS_INTERVIEWED_IN_THE_PRESENT_STUDY

1. Edsel Dodge
2. Bill Day
3. Wilfred Lalean
4. Chief William Tooshkeniq
5. Robert Williams
6. Ron Blackbird
7. Winston Day
8. Parker Pinnance
9. Burton Jacobs
10. Roger Williams

In addition to the interviews, Nin. Da. Waab J14. files provided transcripts of previous interviews, excerpts from which were used in the present paper.
Appendix B

VITA AUCTORIS

Alan Jones received a Bachelor of Arts (Honours Sociology) from the University of Windsor in 1985 and a Master's degree in Sociology from the University of Windsor in 1988.